

“Petunia? Who is this man?” Vernon boomed, stepping up towards the stranger in his home as if he had any hope of intimidating Severus Snape. Snape’s eyes trailed over him in disgust.

“He’s one of *them*, Vernon. He went to school with the boy’s parents!” Petunia took a step towards her husband, whose face began to turn red, and he puffed himself up even further.

“Now look here, you,” Vernon started, pointing one fat finger at Snape’s face. “You have no right to come into my home and— and frighten my wife! We took the boy back like the old man told us, the rest of it is our business!”

“Are you quite finished?” Snape asked, boredom in his tone. Vernon spluttered, face growing even redder, a vein throbbing above his temple. Harry wondered in vague amusement if this would finally be the moment the man had a stroke. “Potter, pack your things.”

“I can’t, sir,” Harry replied evenly. “They’re locked under the stairs.” He’d picked the lock and smuggled some of his books and such up his first night back, like he had done last year, but the rest was still locked in his cupboard.

Snape waved a hand, and the padlock on the cupboard fell off, broken. All three Dursleys flinched. Harry laughed when he saw Dudley with his back to the wall, trying to make himself look as small as possible — an incredible feat, at his size — with his hands over his fat bottom. His pig tail had obviously left some fond memories.

With the cupboard open, Harry dragged his trunk and Hedwig’s empty cage out. His cheeks turned pink in shame when he felt Snape peering over his shoulder, taking in the small space; the ragged cot that had never left, the broken toys piled lovingly on one side, the clear signs that someone had once lived in there. Harry shut the door quickly. “Do I need all of my things, sir?”

“I *refuse*,” Vernon cut in, “to let this *man* undermine me in my own home! You’re not going anywhere, *boy*.”

Harry flinched at the snarled word despite himself. To his utter shock, Snape placed a hand on his shoulder, staring Vernon down in a way that had made even seventh years wet themselves in fear. Vernon let out a tiny ‘meep’, his moustache trembling.

“You’re even more of an idiot than I thought you were if you believe you can order me around, *muggle*,” Snape said sharply. “Potter is coming with me. For the rest of the summer. We may need to... drop in, from time to time. It wouldn’t do for certain people to realise he’s no longer living here. But you will allow him to come and go as he pleases. Or I might just have to share a few childhood stories with some of your lovely neighbours, Petunia. There are some rather... interesting tales, don’t you recall?”

Petunia looked like she was about to faint in horror. “Fine, take the boy,” she said, waving a hand. “Just get out! I don’t want you anywhere near my family!”

“Believe me, Petunia, I have no desire to be near your... family.” Snape’s eyes turned to Dudley, making it abundantly clear what he thought of the boy. Dudley whimpered. “Get a move on, Potter. Your godfather is waiting.”