

If they'd had more time, Harry would have loved a full tour. As it was, he promised to come back for one as soon as summer began, though he wasn't sure if he was emotionally ready for it; the elves said they had kept everything as it was, including James' childhood bedroom. And Sirius' room, from after he'd run away from home.

But for now, all he saw was the entrance hall, the basement stairwell, and the ward room. Sirius had to wait outside, as he was not technically a member of the Potter family, not by blood or marriage.

But he had already instructed Harry on what to do, so Harry stepped forward and placed both hands on the glowing red wardstone; a perfectly smooth crystal about the size of a dragon egg. Immediately magic washed over him, a hundred times more intense than the magic of the gates. His knees almost buckled with the force of it, but Harry pushed his Potter magic to the forefront, making his intentions clear. He was not there to cause harm, only to claim his birthright.

The battle of wills took several minutes, but eventually Harry felt the pressure ease as the wards accepted him. They lingered, a presence in the back of his mind. It was... odd; he could feel the two elves, feel Sirius in the house. His godfather had explained what it was like to hold house wards, especially *old* house wards, but it was still strange.

Sirius was grinning when Harry rejoined him in the stairwell. "Done it?" the animagus asked, beaming when Harry nodded. "Brilliant. Well done, pup." He bit his lip, hesitating. "There is one more thing I considered. But I'm not sure if you'll want it. And I completely understand if you don't." Harry raised an eyebrow. "I thought we could do a Fidelius charm on the property."

Harry went wide-eyed, and Sirius misunderstood the reaction, face flashing with hurt. "Yeah, no, of course not — not after the last one, that's just—"

"No, Sirius, I didn't say that," Harry protested. "I was just surprised." It made sense; an extra layer of protection for those who needed it. "Can we do a Fidelius charm?"

"I mean, I know how, if that's what you're asking. I can make you the Secret Keeper. If you want to. Then at least you won't have to worry about the people you welcome here sneaking in anyone unsavoury."

"Let's do it," Harry said decisively. It certainly couldn't hurt.

The spell was surprisingly less complicated than Harry had expected. "It's not all that difficult, but it takes power," Sirius explained. "And it relies so heavily on trust that a lot of people are too scared to use it." With a Fidelius, there was no consequence to the Secret Keeper sharing the secret, no monitor of how many or who they shared it with.

But Harry wasn't going to tell anyone who didn't need it, and so when he portkeyed back from Grimmauld to Snape's rooms after hugging Sirius goodbye, it was with the location of Potter Manor sitting safe and sound in the back of his head, along with his new awareness of the wards. He looked at Snape, and smiled briefly. "The Pottery can be found on the northeast