

Reaching for another sandwich, he grinned. “So, tell me — how hard should I go on the temper tantrum in front of the others?”

Dumbledore wanted a broken, grieving teenage boy, isolated from his friends and loved ones?

Harry would deliver that and more.

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They were up in Harry’s room for a few hours before Sirius knocked, letting them know the meeting was over and dinner would be ready shortly. “I’d offer you the tour, but quite frankly, the less you see of this god-awful place, the better,” the animagus remarked to Harry as they walked downstairs. The twins had apparated away to go check on a potion they were brewing, while Ginny had disappeared to pester Tonks into staying for dinner.

“It is a bit... grim,” Harry agreed, looking around at the peeling wallpaper and dark wood panels. “Was it any better when you were a kid?” He couldn’t imagine growing up in a place like this.

“Bit cleaner,” Sirius said. “But the decor hasn’t changed. I swear, if I’m stuck here much longer I’m gonna gut the place and remodel it. Might be a fun project once you’re all back at school.”

“If the house will let you,” Harry half joked. The dark magic soaked into the walls was practically tangible; he got the feeling it would fight any renovations. Sirius grinned, baring his teeth.

“That’s half the fun of it, pup! Quiet, now.” He put a finger over his lips, stepping cautiously into the main hall, gesturing towards a heavy velvet curtain covering most of one wall. Harry assumed it was not in fact a window.

“Your mum?” he whispered. Sirius nodded.

“She’ll be the first thing to go, as soon as I can figure out how. I’ll knock the damn wall out if I have to.”

The kitchen was still the hub of activity, though most of the Order members had left. That was a shame; Harry was curious to meet them. He noticed Snape had gone, too.

“Harry!” Ron goggled at him from across the table. “When’d you get here? Where have you been?”

“In my room. Got here a bit after two.”

“Your room? You’re sharing with me, mate. Mum said.”

“Yeah, turns out Sirius cleared out his old room for me, so I’ll be in there.”