

## Chapter 37

To Harry's relief, he didn't have to wait long; Snape arrived at eleven in the morning the first day of summer, and glared at Aunt Petunia while Harry gathered the few things he'd unpacked.

The sight of the enormous manor house eased a tension Harry hadn't even realised he was carrying, but he gave a puzzled frown when Remus was the only one to greet them. "Where's Sirius?"

"Come inside, we'll explain over tea." Remus hugged him, but didn't say anything more until they were comfortably ensconced in the living room, a tea set on the coffee table with a plate full of homemade raspberry scones; Ceri was delighted to have Harry home again.

"First off, Sirius is fine," Remus assured, before Harry could worry too much. "But you might not see much of him this summer. Dumbledore has... persuaded him to offer up one of the other Black family properties as headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix."

Harry had heard a little about the Order, from Remus and Sirius' stories of his parents. Dumbledore's resistance against the darkness. "The Order has re-formed, then?"

Remus nodded. "As soon as Sirius and I left Hogwarts, Dumbledore had us gathering up the old crowd. He asked Sirius if he could use the house maybe three days after Voldemort returned. It all happened very quickly — clearly he's had his plans waiting for a while now." The werewolf didn't look impressed. "We can't tell you exactly where it is — it's under a Fidelius charm — but it's in London. Unfortunately, because Dumbledore has no idea about this place, he believes Sirius has been living on the run for the last year, and has *invited* him to live at headquarters."

He looked about as pleased with Dumbledore inviting Sirius to live in his *own house* as Harry did, and even Snape made a face. "He's being watched, too, then," Harry surmised, crestfallen. "Cooped up in that house under Dumbledore's thumb as much as I'm supposed to be at the Dursleys'?"

"That's about the sum of it, yes. Sirius will get away to come here whenever he can — he's been quite happily cultivating a rather grouchy persona, to excuse away shutting himself in his room for hours at a time — but I'm afraid you won't be seeing as much of us all as you did last summer. Albus knows I have my own place, though he doesn't know where it is, and he knows I don't currently have a job, so he expects me to be at headquarters quite often."

"And as far as Albus is concerned, he owns my soul, my body and every minute of my time," Snape cut in with a grimace, "so it's hard to say what he'll be expecting of me this summer."

"Between the three of us, we should manage to always have someone here to keep you company," Remus assured. "But things may be a bit quieter for the next month or so. With any luck, Dumbledore will agree to move you shortly after your birthday, as usual."