

“The guard will be outside the house, right? Why don’t we just claim I’m being locked in my room all summer. Wouldn’t be the first time.” Something dark flashed across Sirius’ face at that admission, but it was gone in an instant.

“That could work. Someone would notice when owls don’t arrive, though.”

Harry frowned; he hadn’t thought about that. “I’ll talk to the twins.” If anyone was able to think of a way to circumvent magical supervision, it was them. “If it comes down to it, I can say the Dursleys have forbidden me from getting any post all summer. Again, not the first time. The twins will back me up, they know what my aunt and uncle are like.” Ron did too, but he wasn’t likely to say anything in Harry’s favour these days.

“It gives us options. See what the twins think, and let us know. Severus will come to pick you up as soon as it’s safe to do so. We haven’t confirmed how strict the monitoring is going to be, yet, but it looks like it’s just gonna be someone invisible hanging out by your house. Having a bunch of charms and the like over your house would be a dead giveaway.”

The voices in the background grew louder, and Sirius cursed. “I’ve got to go. Talk to the twins, and I’ll see you soon. Love you.” He didn’t wait for a reply before ending the call, leaving Harry staring at his own tired reflection.

If Dumbledore’s meddling stopped Harry spending time with his *real* family this summer, there would be hell to pay.

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The first of July dawned bright and clear, and Gryffindor Tower was a flurry of activity as everyone packed up their trunks and made their way down to the Entrance Hall. Even more than usual, everyone was eager to get home. Even Harry, for once, though he had to hide his enthusiasm. He trusted Sirius when the man promised he wouldn’t leave Harry to the Dursleys. They’d figure it out.

The hall was much more full than usual, with the Durmstrang and Beauxbatons students getting ready to leave as well. Harry was a lot more sad than he thought he’d be watching them go; he’d made friends with a surprising number of the foreign students over the last few months, not just Fleur and Viktor. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Boris and George kissing, and smiled sadly. Neither of them were serious about each other, and would part on good terms, but it was still unfortunate that things had to end.

Surrounded by people promising to keep in touch and owl each other, Harry squeezed his way through the crowd to find Fleur and Cho hugging each other tightly, both with tears in their eyes. Fleur beamed at him when he approached. “Arry!” She released Cho and grabbed him, kissing both his cheeks. “We will see each uzzer again soon,” she promised. “I am trying to get a job ‘ere, to improve my Eenglish.”

“And to see a bit more of Bill Weasley, too, I bet,” he teased, remembering the outrageous flirting before the third task. God, that felt like months ago. Fleur’s cheeks pinked.