

Sirius nodded in understanding; there was only one way a muggle woman would birth a Rosier heir, and it was not pretty. No wonder Helen Ashford looked so scared.

"I'm Sirius Black, it's nice to meet you both," he said, nodding at the pair. "Please, read this for me." He held out the parchment, on which Harry had written the address. The younger Ashford read it first, and sucked in a sharp breath as the house came into view. Her mother squeaked when she suddenly became able to see the enormous manor house. "This is the Pottery," Sirius said with a sweeping gesture and a slight smile, doing his best to put the two women at ease.

"I— like Harry Potter?" Niamh asked hesitantly. Sirius nodded.

"It's his ancestral home, yes. Due to the extensive wards on the place, he's turned it into a bit of a safe house for the time being."

Niamh seemed to relax at the knowledge, and squeezed her mother's hand. "It's okay, Mum," she assured quietly. "We'll be safe here."

Sirius led them up the drive, already thinking over which of the families there might be willing to help the Ashfords settle in. They had a couple of other muggles in residence; parents of muggleborn Slytherins who would be considered a disgrace to their *noble* house. And the two women would have to share a room, but that would be fine.

They would make it work. For their safety, they would have to.

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Despite Hagrid's insistence the year before that he didn't begrudge Harry dropping his class for NEWTs, Harry still wanted to make sure there was no bad blood between them. So, after he'd changed and eaten lunch following the endless quidditch trials, Harry went back outside, heading for the hut at the edge of the forest.

He knocked on the door, raising his eyebrows when it only opened a crack, one dark eye narrowing at him. Then it opened all the way, revealing Hagrid's smiling face. "Oh, it's you! Come in, come in," he urged, gesturing Harry inside. The half-giant was wearing a flowery apron, and seemed to have something cooking on his grill.

"Who did you think it was?" Harry asked in bemusement, scratching Fang between the ears as the dog lolloped over to him. Hagrid huffed.

"Thought it might be Ron and Hermione. Got a bit of a bone to pick with them. Neither of 'em are in my class," he added at Harry's look.

"I'm not in your class, either."

"Yeah, but you apologised for it, didn't yer?" Hagrid retorted. "Those two, not a word! After I asked 'em to help me with Grawp and all!"

Harry had no idea who or what a 'Grawp' was, and by the end of the explanation his jaw was practically on the floor. "You kept a *giant* in the forest for half of last year?" he said