

Summary: A closeted and in denial gay Remus. An angry at James who is allegedly cheating on her Lilly, a bottle of firewhisky and thirteen years and nine months later Sirius Black escapes from Azkaban.
Warnings: SLASH and mention of child abuse

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Fawn or Cub?

Chapter 1- Memories from the past

Remus Lupin woke with a start. He pulled his sweat soaked t-shirt from his body and, giving it up as a bad job, took it off. He got out of bed and stumbled to the bathroom, opening the tap and soaking his face and hair. He rested his elbows on the sink and kept his head down with one hand gripping the back of his neck.

It had been a while since he dreamt about that night. He had hated himself that night. He took advantage of Lily, no matter what she said about it afterwards. She had been upset with James and thought he was cheating on her, which she found out later wasn't true. He was just a natural flirt but he loved her and never tried anything with anyone else.

But that night James had gone on an assignment for Dumbledore. A secret assignment, and not for the first time. And he had told her nothing; again, just that he had to go out. He confessed the truth later when he came home in the morning to find her packing her bags. He said he'd never cheat but that Dumbledore had told him to tell no one. He begged her to stay and she did, he never knew the real reason Lily almost left. He never knew Lily had gone to one of their friends for comfort, that she at first had fought with Remus for him to tell her who James was seeing and he had fought back saying he didn't know. James never knew they both gotten drunk and that both Lily and Remus used each other; Lily to get back at James and Remus to escape his fears. He never knew they had sex and Remus hated himself for that every day since. He hated how he used Lily, how he betrayed James and most importantly how he betrayed his feelings. James never knew Remus had been hurt and scared of his feelings for years, and that that night he had tried to prove himself wrong just to realize he had been right all along.

James never knew and it was for the best. He never knew how jealous Remus was of him, how Remus had hoped the baby Lily was expecting was his and when he saw how the baby looked just like James his hopes were dashed. James never knew how Remus had loved Harry not because he was his friend's son but because he could have been his son, and that he had wanted him to be his. James never knew and Remus hated himself for feeling this way.

He walked back to his bed and dropped on it, sighing loudly. He looked at the bed stand and took the frame there. He was holding Harry. Harry loved his Uncle Mooney and Lily told him that she wanted to name him godfather but in times like the ones they were living there was a big chance the godfather would have to raise Harry and the hatred that was running around about werewolves would make sure

that Remus would not be granted custody. So they named *him* godfather, and he got them killed. Remus would never forgive him, he couldn't even think of his name without hurting.

Remus had tried to obtain custody of course but to no avail. He tried to find Harry but Dumbledore wouldn't say where he stashed the boy. There were rumors he was with Muggles, but Remus didn't know who and he had faith Dumbledore wouldn't have given him to Petunia. He couldn't have been that stupid! He was at Lily's wedding; he saw the hateful words that Petunia, who had only gone because her parents dragged her, told Lily. No Dumbledore knew better than that. Even if he didn't, Remus didn't know where Petunia lived or what her husband's name was; he thought it might be something with a V, Vagner maybe? Who cares?

Harry would be thirteen tomorrow and Remus smiled. He had been at Hogwarts for two years now. On the first of September both of those years Remus had gone to the platform and tried to spot him but had no luck. He'd try again this year and maybe he could tell Harry he was a friend of his parents and would ask to meet him at Hogsmeade. Harry would be having his first Hogsmeade weekends this year. With the thought of meeting his cub again Remus drifted back to sleep and dreamed of better days where a giggling child listened to him reading stories in different voices.

"Remus," the toddler called in a very adult voice. "Remus are you there?"

Remus found it quite weird for Harry to be talking in Albus Dumbledore's voice and slowly came out of his slumber and looked to where the voice was calling. "Remus! This is urgent."

Remus got up and fetched the first shirt he found; it wouldn't do to talk to the headmaster half naked.

"Headmaster?" he said as he entered the living room of the small cottage he inherited from his parents.

"What brings you here so early?"

"Bad news I'm afraid," Albus' head said from the fireplace. "May I come through?"

"Of course," Remus said and in a whoosh of green flames Albus Dumbledore arrived and Remus invited him to sit.

"Have you seen the *Prophet*?" Dumbledore asked.

"No, I was asleep," Remus said. "I'm afraid I slept in today."

"Remus," Dumbledore started cautiously. "I don't know how to tell you this, so I think I better be blunt."

There was an escape from Azkaban."

Remus' blood froze and his heart skipped a bit. He couldn't be talking about-

"Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban last night."

"Harry," was the first thought in Remus' mind and he only realized he blurted it out when Dumbledore said:

"He is safe and will be until school starts. I plan to send an escort to take him to the Hogwarts Express."

Remus nodded dumbly and Dumbledore continued, "I had already been thinking of offering you this but given the circumstances it has become imperative that you accept. No one knows Sirius Black as well as you do."

Remus laughed bitterly, "The man I thought I knew would never have become what Black became. I don't know him."

"You know his habits even if you don't know his motives," Dumbledore explained. "That is why I need you at Hogwarts. Would you come and teach Defense Against the Dark Arts and help protect Harry? There is no doubt Black will try to finish what he started."

Teach? At Hogwarts? Him? Be close to Harry? Maybe tell him about James and Lily? And how he was Uncle Moony? Of course he wanted to. And to have a pay check and not worry that his savings would run out was a pleasant thought too. His parents had left him a sizable sum and this cottage when they passed away; but after fourteen years of living mostly off that money and having a few odd jobs here and there, he knew he had to be smart about it. He still had enough to go on for many years, especially since he tried his best to keep a low budget. He did invest some; not much because not many people wanted to do business with him, but he could not deny that being able to support himself with his own money would do a lot for his ego. And a Hogwarts salary could be a good saving since he wouldn't have living and feeding expenses for a year. He could even maybe rent out the cottage while he was at Hogwarts and have another source of income guaranteeing more money for his savings for later rainy days. He could not fool himself; jobs for him were hard to come across and there was a big chance that he would have to live most of his life depending of what he had inherited. He could not waste a good opportunity to add to that money even if there was a lot. And then there was his cub.

"Off course I will Albus but what about-"

"Dealt with. I will be providing the Wolfsbane for you; as a matter of fact I'll bring the first batch for the next full moon."

Remus nodded smiling. The Wolfsbane would be a huge relief; he rarely came across a Potions Master able to brew the potion and the Apothecary never sold them, afraid of being tagged as dark because of it. And unfortunately, he had always been rubbish at Potions; if he tried he'd probably poison himself.

"I will ask another favor. If you could please ride on the train, I would feel better than having just the conductor and the trolley witch as defense."

"That would be good Albus," he nodded. "The full moon is just the day before and I don't usually feel up to Apparating or Flooing long distances right after it, so I would be pleased to have another way to get to Hogwarts."

Dumbledore rose and Remus followed suit. They said their farewells and Remus could not help but feel extremely giddy thinking of a young lad he would be seeing soon.

Far away from him that same young lad wasn't feeling all that giddy. As a matter of fact Harry Potter was having one of the worst birthdays ever. He had to rid his room of all his magical evidence and send Hedwig to the Weasleys. He didn't like not having a way to call for help. After ruining his windows last year, as Uncle Vernon put it, and giving their phone number to one of his freaky friends, the Dursleys had reverted to their nasty selves from before his Hogwarts letter had arrived. Harry was once again

often deprived of food if he didn't finish his chores to satisfaction, which he obviously could never do. He was worked to the bone and beaten every time Vernon took a fancy. Of course, Vernon knew how to do it without leaving visible marks; he had years of experience after all. Never touch anything that can't be hidden under clothes. Harry sighed, the reprieve he got the last two summers because of the scare Hagrid had given the Dursleys was too good to last. He knew that normal people wouldn't think that was a reprieve- after all he had been locked up, Uncle Vernon had beaten him and they had given him little food- but it was a lot less beating and more food than he had been given before his Hogwarts letter arrived.

To top it off, Marge Dursley was coming today and Harry knew the only reason he was not back to his cupboard was because he didn't fit in there with his trunk and there was no way Vernon would let his trunk out and not locked away.

Harry sighed again. This would be a long week. He hoped the Weasleys returned from Egypt soon so he could join them.

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Remus happily scribbled one lesson plan after the other on his new stack of parchment . A week ago he had no job, now he was almost done with his lesson plans for the first term. Dumbledore had decided on the booklist because he had needed to send the owls to the students but Remus had found no fault in the list and the books he added to his plan could be easily borrowed from the library to add to the students' studies.

As he finished the last of his plans Remus sighed happily and looked around his room. He would have to start packing. He had spread the word to some friends that he would be renting out his cottage for a year. He didn't want some stranger in the house who could very well destroy it, so he thought that having someone referred to him was the best course of action. He never expected to get an answer so soon. Kingsley Shacklebolt, a former Order member had fire-called him that morning telling him he would stop by later with a prospect.

Remus looked at the clock and nodded. He would have some time to start packing before the meeting. He had also researched some protection spells and wanted to put them on and around the house, but he would have to do them later. He hoped they would prevent anyone from damaging his property.

With a wave of his wand he conjured some boxes and started putting away his books in a very organized and catalogued manner. There was no reason to be messy; after all he still had three weeks left, and even if he didn't have he wasn't a slob like Si- *him*. He hated that he hardly ever went a day without thinking about *that man*. He had been such a big part of Remus' life that he had marred all of Remus' good memories. He was always there. And there was a time Remus thought he always would be.

A knock came from the door and Remus hastened to answer. He opened the door and smiled brightly at Kingsley and...er...a very strange young woman!

"Hey there Remus. Here is your future tenant," Kingsley said happily.

"Oh, yes," Remus got out of his shock. "Where are my manners? Please come in."

Kingsley and the girl, who was sporting shockingly purple hair and clothes that wouldn't be amiss at one of those heavy metal Muggle concerts entered and she promptly started examining the place.

"Shacklebolt says you rent this cheap," she said directly.

"Yes," Remus answered. "I am only renting for a year so I thought that cheap would be good. I'll leave the furniture and anything else you think you might need."

"That's good. We don't get paid enough to buy furniture."

"We?"

"She is a fellow Auror. Fresh out of the Academy and looking for a way out of her parents' home."

"Definitely," the girl said. "I can't stand mum's fussing anymore. Every time I come home she asks. Oh, Nymphadora are you hurt? Are they working you too hard, are they-"

"Nymphadora?"

The girl's head snapped and she narrowed her eyes pointing her wand threateningly at Remus.

"Shacklebolt said you were a smart bloke. Gonna be a teacher and everything. Then use that brain and never, ever call me that again. My name is-"

"Tonks," Remus said and she brightened as if she had never threatened him.

"Why yes! I think we will be great friends Mr.- er- Kingsley?"

"Didn't I say his name?"

"No." she glared at him.

"Lupin," Remus said extending a hand. "Remus Lupin."

Tonks flushed a nice shade of scarlet and she tripped as she took a step back. When Remus and Kingsley went to help her she whispered, "You're my chocolate frog prince."

"Excuse me?" Remus asked and Tonks hastily got up and brushed herself off.

"Nothing. So, what's the rent?"

"How are Andromeda and Ted? I haven't seen them since- er."

"They're fine. I wouldn't mention Black to them though. Mum never believed his guilt. She is still petitioning every year for a trial she says he didn't get, but never gets anywhere. Dad tried to tell her that we had to be all mistaken about him but he stopped after a while to avoid fighting. She also tried to get custody of the boy, Harry. Said that as the cousin of the godfather she should have the right to but Dumbledore cut her off by saying he was with blood kin. I understand him. By mum's reasoning the Malfoys could get the Boy Who Lived."

Remus gulped; he had had his doubts too, but there was no getting around Si-his guilt. He had been the Secret Keeper. Then he realized what Tonks had said.

"Blood kin?"

"Yes."

"But James had no family left and the only-no he didn't?" Remus asked shocked.

"He didn't what Remus?" Kingsley asked feeling a little left out.

"The Muggles! Dumbledore put Harry with Lily's sister and her husband!"

"What," Kingsley asked. "That hag that came to the wedding?" Kingsley asked astonished.

"What's the problem?" Tonks asked.

"Nothing if you're Muggle and not related to Lily Evans. But since Harry is, Dumbledore had to be mad to put him there," Kingsley said. "Honestly, those people. They were nasty. They only came to the wedding because Lily's parents made them. And they were rude to everyone. And at the reception Bromelia-

"Petunia," Remus amended.

"Yes, well, Petunia shrieked at Lily that she was a freak, that she didn't want anything to do with her and her freak husband and that she hoped we all died! Right there in front of everyone. Poor Lily ran away crying and it took James and Alice a long while to convince her to not let her sister ruin her big day.

Petunia and her husband were escorted out by me, Frank, Remus, Peter and er- well we didn't let them forget not to ever darken any of our footsteps again."

"What did you do?" Tonks asked eagerly.

"Nothing illegal," Kingsley said evasively and not very convincingly. "There were three Aurors in the group. But I can't believe Dumbledore would let a baby with them."

"Maybe he just said that to get mum off his case," Tonks shrugged. "Albus Dumbledore wouldn't give The Boy Who Lived to people who would hate him."

"No, he wouldn't right?" Remus asked trying to convince himself. Anyway he would make sure he hadn't. Unfortunately for Harry, he had. And after a week of torture with Aunt Marge, who approved of Vernon's heavy hand, Harry had enough. He had endured it the best he could. He took every blow stoically, every insult, but when the woman started bad mouthing his parents enough was enough. Harry could take anything but *no one* insulted his parents who had died to save him. No one!

And so that was why, after blowing up his Aunt, trying a great escape, almost being run over by a triple-decker and eaten by a huge dog, learning about escaped mass murderer Sirius Black, and talking to the Minister of Magic himself, Harry was confusedly staring at the ceiling of his very own room at the Leaky Cauldron.

Harry hugged the pillow with his belly full for the first time that summer and smiled; tomorrow he would go buy some healing salve for his bruises and have the whole Alley to himself. These would be the best three weeks of his life!

Chapter 2- Meeting Harry

"And if you need me or if anything happens, you just have to Floo Hogwarts," Remus said and then as an afterthought he added. "I also put an anti-flames charm around the fireplace, the living room and in the kitchen, in the bathroom, the bedrooms-"

"Why would I need an anti-flame charm in the bathroom?" Tonks asked.

"You never know," Remus shrugged.

"Relax," Tonks said. "I'm not seven and clumsy anymore."

"No, you're twenty-one and clumsy," Remus muttered.

"I'll pretend I didn't hear that," Tonks said firmly. "Well, thank you for accepting me as your tenant and giving me a whole year to find a suitable place within my budget."

Remus smiled, "Thank you. I was really dreading this whole renting affair. I am glad I'm leaving the place with someone I know."

Tonks smiled and then her smile turned in a familiar smirk, which tugged at Remus' heart, "As I said, I'm not seven anymore and in love with my chocolate frog prince. Who knows how many orgies I'll have here," she said wistfully and Remus glared at her.

"There better be no orgies Ms. Tonks," he said sternly and she burst out laughing.

"Well, then *Professor*, go on," she shooed him away with her hands. "Go teach your little students. Don't forget to get around Hogsmead. I'm sure there are plenty of nice, respectable young blokes just waiting for the bookish type. Oh, don't blush like that. As I said I'm not seven anymore. Besides, mum always knew. Now shoo."

"Yes, right," Remus stuttered as he grabbed his battered suitcase with the words *Professor R. J. Lupin* carved in it, where all his possessions were shrunk. It had been a graduation gift from the other Marauders. A joke because Remus had been such a bookworm they said he would go back to Hogwarts to teach. Apparently they were right.

Remus Flooed to the Leaky Cauldron; there was no other way around that. He wasn't about to Apparate after transforming last night. But he hated the Floo, especially after the full moon. Granted, it had been better with the Wolfsbane, but he still needed a day to rest and he hadn't had it. He stumbled into a large family that was getting ready to leave and Remus wondered if they would be able to. The kids kept running back up for forgotten things. How many were there? He thought he counted seven, two girls and five boys; probably all his future students. All had red hair, except one girl, and there was one boy bent over his open trunk whose hair he didn't see but he could bet the color anyway.

"Have you found the tonic?" one asked.

"No, I was sure I gave it to you last night after I fetched it," the hidden boy said and his voice sounded vaguely familiar.

"Here Ron," Remus heard another one say as he left the pub. "You left it on the nightstand."

Remus hailed a cab and asked for King's Cross, and saw two black official looking cars parking right behind where he left. He shut his eyes for a bit while they rode to the station.

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Coming early had been a good idea. Remus managed to bypass all the students and secure himself an empty compartment and promptly got comfortable. For the first time in two years he was not looking for Harry. He knew he'd see him later so he wasn't worried. He heard the compartment door open and three teenage voices inquiring as to whether he was awake, who he was and if he was alive. Remus chuckled inwardly; only children could be so blunt! He didn't move, he wanted to sleep and they would be more comfortable if they thought he was asleep. He recognized two of the voices from the Leaky Cauldron and had that familiar feeling again. He almost jumped a mile high when the boy with the voice he couldn't place started talking about Mr. and Mrs. Weasley having an argument about Sirius Black and him.

Discreetly he opened his eyes and looked at the reflection in the window and his heart soared. James was there! Well, not James; he knew it was Harry, but he looked just like James when they were...first years actually. He was a tad small for his age, Remus thought with a frown. The other boy was clearly taller. Weasley, Weasley, there was an Arthur Weasley who had married Fabian and Gideon's older sister. They did have lots of children from what he remembered of the Prewetts' tales of their nephews. They were especially fond of a pair of twins. But he didn't remember them mentioning a niece. Remus raked his brain and found a memory of the Prewett brothers' funeral. He James, and Si-Black had approached the sister and she was heavily pregnant, so maybe they never met their niece. Poor woman, she had been devastated.

He watched as Harry explained about Black wanting to come after him. He didn't seem scared, Remus smiled. Brave boy, he just hoped he wasn't reckless, like they all had been. Remus concentrated on Harry's voice; it still bothered him. He thought it would be like James' since everything else was, but no it reminded him of someone else, but who?

Harry had grown so much since he last saw him, Remus thought a little bitterly. How he would have loved to be there to see him grow, maybe visit him even if he wasn't allowed to raise him. Did he live with the Weasleys? He had mistaken them for being part of the same family before. But no, Harry wouldn't call his adoptive parents Mr. and Mrs.

Remus was not able to sleep again; he kept watching the kids interact. He was relieved when Harry said Uncle Vernon wouldn't sign his Hogsmeade form. The thought of Harry out in the open with Black on the loose gave him shivers. His relief was short lived when something that Harry said sunk in; *Uncle Vernon* did not sign the form. An icy chill ran through him at the thought of what that meant. Despite all his hopes and all Dumbledore's wisdom the old man had put Harry with Petunia. Remus had to restrain himself from jumping up and start examining Harry thoroughly. The thought of what Petunia could have done to him in twelve years sent shivers down his spine. Harry's lack of height and thinness gave a whole new meaning for him now. Oh, he had some people to *talk* to as soon as he got to Hogwarts!

He kept quiet when the girl tried to wake him; he wanted to know more and if he was awake the kids would clam up.

A boy entered the compartment with clear intent of bullying them and Remus almost got up when the boy insulted Ron. But instead he tried another approach, he snored slightly to remind them he was there and he was so proud when Harry jumped at the chance of using his presence. The boy just said "New teacher," as an answer to the blond's, demand of who he was and got ready to act in case the blond was dumb enough to try something. That was so cunning of Harry, even James would have praised such a Slytherin act which he wouldn't have managed; both he and Si- Black would have punched the blond, or Severus in their case, though by the looks of that kid and the fact that Harry called him Malfoy he must be Lucius Malfoy's son which would make his father a fair target too, even if he was older. The boy did seem to have his father's survival instincts since he promptly called his cronies in retreat. *Git.* Remus reprimanded himself, *"Remus Lupin, don't start labeling the students. You have to be fair to all of them! Even Malfoys!"*

Remus tried to keep observing the boys but his exhausted body was calling for him and before he knew it he had closed his eyes and sleep overtook him. He was dreaming of running in the woods with a dog, a huge black dog when suddenly the dog leapt on his lap and grazed his thigh with its sharp claws.

Remus opened his eyes to feel a bushy tale against his hand. There was darkness and chaos. The train had stopped and there were more kids in the compartment than before. They kept talking and he couldn't hear a thing over them.

"Quiet," he roared. He conjured flames to be able to see and looked around. "Stay where you are," he ordered. He was about to leave the compartment to see what was going on when the door slid open and he heard a loud howl and a child's desperate plea followed by his worst nightmare, Dumbledore's voice: *"He did it Remus. He betrayed them and killed all those people. He will rot in Azkaban."*

When he thought things couldn't get worse Harry collapsed in a dead faint and Remus' heart went even colder. He turned with rage toward the Dementor and roared, "None of us is hiding Sirius Black under our cloaks, Go."

The Dementor did not move and Remus summoned his happiest memories. Baby Harry sleeping in his arms, and a hug from a black haired boy saying he would never leave Remus. Remus conjured a huge dog that chased the Dementor away. A bitter taste was left after the second memory; the promise had been broken.

He turned to Harry and saw Hermione and Ron trying to revive him. He let out a breath he did not know he was holding when Harry started to move. He sat relieved on the bench next to another boy he never saw before. He reminded him of someone and when the boy gave him a shy smile he remembered the same smile on Alice Longbottom, so he must be Neville.

He handed chocolate around and explained what that Dementor had been and went to talk to the conductor. He made sure no other Dementors lingered and when he spotted a boy with a Head Boy badge he told him to gather the Prefects and go around handing out chocolate.

"Ask the trolley witch and tell her Professor Lupin said that Dumbledore will pay for all the chocolate," he smirked. That will teach the old man to do stupid things. Remus still wanted to have a little chat with the Headmaster but he was not feeling guilty about charging anything to Dumbledore.

The conductor was shaken but started the train straight away. Remus also stopped to send an owl to McGonagall informing her of the Dementor's search and of Harry collapsing, and asked for Madam Pomfrey to take a look at the boy when the train arrived. He headed back to the compartment.

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"Petunia! Petunia! Are you out of your bloody mind? Petunia!"

"Remus, calm down," Dumbledore said from his seat.

"I am perfectly calm. Had I not been calm I would have barged in and demanded answers right in the middle of the Great Hall; instead I acted completely professionally and waited for the feast to end to demand answers!"

And he had, he also had the pleasure to help Harry and his friends from that little snot, and a snot he was. Malfoy had checked him out and raised his little arrogant nose. Like he was better than Remus just because he wore silk robes!

"So? I'm waiting for a reasonable explanation as to why you put my cub with those monsters!"

"I am sure you are exaggerating. I am sure they would never harm their own blood," Dumbledore tried to placate him.

"Where you not at the Potters' wedding Dumbledore? Did you not hear and see how they acted? Or are you just blind?"

"They may not have cared for him as I wished but by accepting him they activated the protection Lily left her son. He is safe from Voldemort and his Death Eaters as long as he calls Petunia's house home."

"And can he?" Remus asked tiredly leaning over Dumbledore's desk, resting his hands flatly on it.

"Because I spent a whole afternoon hearing that boy talk and not once did he refer to it as home. He called it the Dursley's. He doesn't think of it as his home. I'm willing to bet he calls Hogwarts his home Albus. Does your protection work so well or will you bet all your chips on Voldemort thinking it does?"

"The protection saved him in his first year, as long as he returns once a year-"

"The protection saved him before the first year was over then. Before he came to Hogwarts did he have anywhere else to call home? Have you tested it since then? And even if it works who will save him from the Dursleys?"

"They would never-"

"Your blind faith Albus is both your best quality and worst flaw," Remus sighed tiredly and defeated. "I am going to retire. I had no chance to rest properly yet."

With that Remus left Dumbledore's office and walked wearily but purposely towards the hospital wing. He had one more visit to make. As he entered the ward Madam Pomfrey was busy putting away bandages.

"As gorgeous as ever my lady," Remus bowed low and Madam Pomfrey gave a start. She wagged her finger at him and said sternly:

"Don't you try your charms on me young man. They have never worked and never will."

"You wound me madam," Remus said putting his hand on his chest. "I always thought I was your favorite."

She blushed a little, "Well, you were one of my most frequent patients."

"One of! I thought I won the prize!"

"Oh, yes you did," she said as she pulled two chairs and summoned some tea, motioning for him to sit.

"But I have another young man who is well on his way to succeeding in stealing it from you. As a matter of fact, thank you for giving me such a good excuse to see him; I had to come up with one last year. I assume he is the reason you are here."

Remus raised an eyebrow and asked grimly, "Why would you want to see him when he arrives?"

"To make sure he is healthy. I was not impressed in his first year with his first physical exam. Even less by the fact that he had almost no medical records."

"How was his physical?"

Madam Pomfrey huffed, "I can't tell you that."

"You can if you suspect abuse. I am his teacher and therefore legally responsible for him."

"I went to Albus and he believed Harry's version that he was roughhousing with his cousin."

"Of course he did," Remus grimaced rubbing his temple. "That's the worst part; he actually did believe him. Albus never wants to believe the worst."

"I told him that Harry is a child who must be scared to come out and say anything else. He had no bruises on him at the time, but he had too many scars for a normal boy. He was underfed, his growth has been stunted and I had to change his glasses prescription because they hadn't ever been updated. As a matter of fact Harry drew quite a blank face when I asked him when he went to the Optometrist. Which makes sense since the only medical record I did get was one Optometrist prescription when he was seven. He told me he got that on a day that the school had organized for different doctors to check all the children. Honestly! I bet the only reason those Muggles bought the glasses was because the school knew Harry needed them. Last year he was better, again he had no bruises but he had spent some time with the Weasleys where he actually got fed and this year was the same, but I heard he spent the last three weeks at the Leaky Cauldron."

Remus rubbed his eyes tiredly and looked out the window. He needed to get close to Harry so he could help him.

"You need rest," Madam Pomfrey said firmly. "The full moon was last night and I bet you had no rest today. Tomorrow I want you to rest all day long. We have a whole year to save Harry."

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"I'm sorry you are all paying for my acts. But that was just too funny to pass up," came a voice from behind Harry. Harry looked up squinting at the figure that sat besides him on the Entrance steps.

"Hi Professor."

"So is Severus being too harsh?"

"Severus?"

"Professor Snape," Remus chuckled.

"His name is Severus?" Harry asked bewilderedly.

"You didn't know?" Remus asked.

"Teachers don't have first names," Harry said wisely.

"True," Remus nodded. "I believe Professor Flitwick only acquired a first name in my seventh year.

Although, Minnie always had one; your father always called her Minnie."

Harry laughed, "My father must have had guts then. Did you know him?"

"Oh yes," Remus said with a fond smile. "The best friend I could have asked for. We were roommates and he was determined not to leave me be."

"Really? I never met a friend of my dad's- that is, who wasn't at teacher of his. I mean the Professors and Hagrid speak of him but I never met someone who went to school with him," Harry said excitedly.

"Severus did," Remus said simply.

Harry wrinkled his nose, "Yeah but Dumbledore says they hated each other."

"Oh, yes they did," Remus nodded slowly. "Tends to happen when you are after the same girl."

"What?" Harry shrieked. "Who were they after?"

"Your mum Harry," Remus laughed. "Severus had been her friend before school even began. I think they were neighbors or something, and James was always after her."

"Professor Snape? Neighbor with a Muggleborn?"

"I think his father was a Muggle and his mother a witch, but I'm not entirely sure."

"Professor Snape having parents and being in love with my mom? Ewww!" Harry shuddered.

Remus laughed, "Seriously Harry. He isn't giving you kids too much grief because of Neville's boggart, is he?"

"Yes," Harry shrugged. "No change there. His name is very appropriate. What's yours?"

"Remus."

"Remus, that's different. I guess all wizards have different names, Albus, Rubeus- I don't have a proper wizarding name- Harry, even Hermione has one," Harry made a face. "Well, guess I'll be just Harry. At least no one will laugh like with Malfoy- honestly who names their kid Draco?"

"He has a cousin named Nymphadora."

"Poor girl, being Malfoy's cousin."

"She is okay her mother too. They are the white sheep of the Black family."

Harry's eyes widened and he asked in a shocked voice, "Black? As in-"

"Yes," Remus answered tightly. "He happens to be Narcissa Malfoy's cousin."

"Wow, guess it runs in the family then," Harry nodded thoughtfully.

"I guess," Remus said with a distant look. "Nymphadora is fine though. She is an Auror—a Dark Wizard catcher," he explained at Harry's blank look. Harry nodded again.

Neither saw the pair of deep grey eyes that was watching them painfully and with longing, seeing both present and past. Deep grey that longed to be with the two people he loved most in the world, to sit there and laugh with them to tell them what he knew and beg for forgiveness.

A never forgotten argument replayed in his mind.

"You took advantage of him!" he had roared.

"I wanted to get back at James! I was drunk! He was drunk! I didn't force him to do anything!" Lily had pleaded.

"He was confused and you pushed him!"

"Oh, so that is the only reason he would be with me?" she cried angry.

"Yes!"

"Why? Am I that ugly? James doesn't seem to think-"

"He's gay. Remus is gay! Haven't you noticed he never had a girlfriend?"

"I just thought- I never saw him with a boy," she said in a small voice.

"Because he has never been with one. He doesn't have the courage to. His father was always very much against homosexuals and Remus always was afraid of disappointing him. He already thought his parents put up with enough with him being a werewolf. To add gay to the mix," Sirius answered frustrated.

"His father just died," she said softly.

"Yes, and I kissed him, right after the funeral. God, I love him so much," Sirius said running a hand through his hair. "Always have. I kept waiting for the best moment and he was there- so lost- I just... he ran, he pretended nothing happened. He ran and the next day you-"

"And he tried to prove himself wrong. He tried to make his father proud," she said softly. "I didn't know. I was drunk and hurt Siri...I didn't know," she sobbed, "I don't want to lose James, I can't lose my friends either."

Sirius embraced her, held her tight to his chest and whispered into her hair, "I won't let that happen."

In the end they all lost everything and the innocent paid the price. But he would make it right. He vowed that to James and Lily's memories and to the two people he loved. He watched as the older prodded the younger to go inside, and he kept watching as they entered the castle away from his view.

xxx

Remus closed the door to his quarters and walked to the couch. He dropped heavily on it and exhaled slowly. He didn't know what possessed him to bring up Si- *him* with Harry.

He lay back on the couch and did the unthinkable; he propped his feet on the coffee table. He rested his hands on his stomach and watched the ceiling with a faraway look.

Why did he have to betray them like that? Why did he have to betray *him* like that?

Remus hated the fact that no matter how much he tried to hate him, how unforgivable Black's acts had been, he still loved him. He still wanted to get lost in those grey eyes that seemed to know him better than anyone else.

Remus turned to the side and lifted his feet on the couch hugging his legs. He rested his forehead on his knees.

Nothing had ever happened between them. He had been so scared to admit what he had always known, and he hadn't wanted to be in love with Sirius because of what it meant. What would his parents have thought of him? They had been so dedicated to him that the thought of disappointing them was unbearable.

At thirty-three, Remus knew that eventually his parents would have accepted him like he was, loving whoever he loved. But at fifteen, nineteen, he had been terrified of his feelings.

After Sirius kissed him the day after his dad's funeral Remus avoided him like the plague. He hadn't known what to do. He never stayed alone with him, and when the mere presence of Sirius ripped at his heart he started avoiding him all together. He began to meet his friends at times he knew Sirius wouldn't be there and would leave if he arrived; and he volunteered for missions every chance he got. By the time James and Lily died, Remus had managed to go three straight months without seeing him and the last time he saw him was that night.

Remus still couldn't understand why, but after leaving the Potters and before killing Peter, Sirius stopped by his house. He never said a word about James and Lily being dead, no Remus learned that from Dumbledore the next day. He knocked, Remus opened the door, and Sirius lunged and kissed him like never before.

"I love you Moony. Forgive me. I'll make everything right," he whispered in his ear and Apparated away and Remus was left staring at an empty space. And now he stared at an empty wall thinking of the man he still loved.

Chapter 3- Full moon effects

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"I am glad we clarified that boggart issue Harry," Remus said as he sipped the Wolfsbane that Severus had just left. He had found Harry wondering the halls while his friends were at Hogsmeade and seized the chance to start a habit of having tea with Harry, which he intended to make a common occurrence. "Professor, I don't think you understood me," Harry said eyeing the goblet worriedly. "Snape really wants the DADA position and he does seem to loathe you in that special way he has reserved for loathing me and he knows poisons!"

Remus had to try hard not to laugh. He looked at Harry seriously and said, "He is also a Slytherin and Professor Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey know he is brewing this for me. Too many witnesses," he winked but Harry didn't seem to calm down so Remus tried another tactic, "A couple of years ago Hagrid asked me for some pictures for you. He was in a rush so I sent what I had in hand but I did canvas my storage later and I actually brought some with me. Would you like to take a look?"

That perked Harry right up and both spent the rest of the afternoon looking at pictures and Remus told Harry all about what was going on in each one. Remus tried to probe Harry about his family but Harry was very adept at changing the subject subtly and by the time Remus realized the tactic, they had gone in a completely different direction.

Xxx

The dog padded through the empty corridors. The sun had risen but you couldn't see it through the downpour of rain. That suited Padfoot well. The darkness masked him and the earliness of the hour guaranteed he would meet no one.

He followed the scent he knew so well to a portrait. He transformed and said softly, "I solemnly swear I am up to no good." He smiled as the door opened; dear old Moony. He entered cautiously, his heart beating madly. He quickly spotted who he was looking for sleeping naked on the rug. He approached slowly and knelt down thanking all gods that Moony slept like the dead after the full moon and a herd of rampaging hippogriffs couldn't wake him.

He brushed some of Remus' hair away from his face and smiled as he inspected Remus for wounds. He was glad but a tad confused to see none. He had already thought it was strange that Moony did not go to the Shack, which was where he looked last month, and instead stayed in the castle. He honestly did not know what possessed him to risk it especially after his near catch on Halloween, but he so wanted to see Moony, touch him, smell him. He inhaled deeply and smiled; the same shampoo he used since he was eleven. Some new scars, new lines and his hair had some gray strands. But by far he looked better than how Sirius did.

He carefully picked him up and took him to the bed where he tucked him in and kissed Moony's temple gently. He left quickly and did not hear the whispered "Sirius."

Xxx

Harry was worried about Professor Lupin. He really liked him, and Snape was a git but maybe he was being truthful when he said Lupin was ill. Harry didn't want him to be sick. Yes, Lupin had asked some uncomfortable questions about if Harry was treated well at home and Harry had skillfully turned the subject around. What good would it do? It didn't do any good when he started school and Miss Smith called social services. The Dursleys lied their arses out and that was that. All Harry got was the cupboard and no food. That time Uncle Vernon refrained from hitting him for a while to avoid suspicion. Then he came back with a vengeance when he thought they were in the clear. It didn't do any good when he asked Dumbledore if he could stay here during the summer. He even offered to help Hagrid but Dumbledore said he had to go back home, that he would be safe. Home, puft. That was never home. Until Hogwarts Harry didn't know the meaning of home.

But, even trying to pry, Harry very much liked Lupin. He didn't know why. There was just something about him that called to Harry. So he walked to where Lupin had told him his quarters were in case he needed something. Harry knew that it was weird for a teacher to do that but he figured Lupin liked talking about his parents and Harry liked listening.

"I solemnly swear I am up to no good," Harry chuckled as he said it. What a weird password.

Harry entered the room and found the living room empty. The door to the bedroom was open and he cautiously peered inside. Lupin was sleeping and Harry didn't think he was allowed to intrude. So he closed the door and took out his school bag and put the packet he was holding on the table. He started to do his homework while waiting for Lupin to wake up.

Xx

Remus stirred slowly stretching his sore muscles. He turned around and hugged the pillow to sleep a little more. Suddenly he opened his eyes. Where did the pillow come from? He looked around and saw he was in his bed. He distantly remembered dreaming of a time when Padfoot would come and tuck him in after the full moon. But Sirius couldn't have been there, Remus thought, or hoped. He was still convincing himself Sirius used Dark Magic and not Padfoot and the secret passages to get in the castle on Halloween. He had not slept that night. Canvassing the corridors, dreading to find him there, feeling guilty for keeping his secret and hyperventilating at the thought of what would have happened if Harry had been in the tower and Sirius had gained entrance.

He groaned into his pillow mortified as realization dawned. Albus or Poppy must have come to put him to bed, and he was NAKED! And he would have to see them again. He tried suffocating himself in the pillow but when that failed he got up and went for a hot shower.

As he dressed himself after the shower he kept blushing at the thought of seeing Albus. He opened his door and stopped suddenly on his track. Harry was biting his lower lip in concentration over some book. "Harry?" he asked and Harry jumped.

"Oh, Professor! Are you okay? Should I call Madam Pomfrey? Snape said you were ill. I brought lunch," he finished his rambling, pointing at a parcel next to his books. He squinted at Remus and asked.

"Should you be up?"

Remus chuckled softly. He couldn't help but think it adorable how Harry was worried about him. He sat on the couch facing Harry and said, "I'm fine. I just needed a little rest. Thanks for lunch," he finished unwrapping the parcel. "So how was class?"

Harry scowled and Remus frowned. Albus never told him who would be substituting him today but by Harry's face it wasn't good, "Snape was awful!" the boy ranted. "He said you were disorganized and were too easy on us and then he chose a topic from the end of the book where he knew we wouldn't have covered so early! And he told us to do two rolls of parchment on it!"

Snape, great! What was Albus thinking? Snape had been making snide remarks every time they met; even though Remus tried to keep those meetings at a minimum he had to see Snape for his potion and be grateful.

"That's just Severus being Severus Harry. As you said, he doesn't like me much. He has his reasons. Don't worry. You don't have to do the essay about- er- what did he approach?"

"Werewolves," Harry said glumly and Remus had to work very hard not to gulp and faint.

"Oh, yes...Werewolves. Yes, no we won't be talking about them for a while." *Never if I can help it.* "There is no need to do the essay. Tell your friends." *And I will go kill Snape. Greasy git! How could he? He wasn't allowed to, Dumbledore said so! Oh, I am so going to rat him out!* Remus thought to himself.

Trying to keep a nonchalant act Remus asked, "And what has you so concentrated?"

"What? The bane of my existence that's what! Snape- Professor Snape," Harry amended after a stern look from Remus. He had let Harry pass with not calling him that too many times. "Write a three roll essay on shrinking potions."

Remus looked over Harry's book and said, "I can't help you there. I would do you a disservice."

"I am rubbish at it," Harry sulked.

"I am sure you're not. Your mother was brilliant and your father was not as brilliant but good too. I am sure you would do well with- er- good incentive."

Harry raised an eyebrow skeptically and Remus noticed the bags under Harry's eyes for the first time. He frowned worried.

"Bad night?"

"What?" Harry asked and Remus elaborated.

"You look tired."

"Oh," Harry shrugged. "I didn't sleep at all."

"Why not? You are not worried about Si- Black are you? You are safe Harry."

"I know, the problem wasn't Black. I just can't sleep on nights of the full moon," Remus choked at that and Harry worriedly ran to his side and patted his back.

"Er- why is that?"

"Dunno but I never could. I get restless. I only noticed the pattern of the full moon when I was eight. I had a teacher who was all into the stars and their influences and how the moon influences the tidal waves and she liked me and noticed just what mornings I would come to class tired. So she asked me and I told her that sometimes I was too restless to sleep and she helped me make a chart of what nights. She thought I was like the sea and felt the pull of the moon", Harry laughed and Remus' mind went in overdrive. Could Harry be his? Or was that just a coincidence? Harry looked so much like James there was no way.

Harry handed Remus his lunch and said firmly, "You should eat Professor. Then I can call Madam Pomfrey so she can check you out," he finished leaning forward and touching Remus' forehead.

Remus couldn't help it; he laughed and said. "Yes sir."

Later that day Remus had the satisfaction of watching Severus Snape, bat of the dungeons, being scolded like a naughty child.

Xxxx

Remus watched Harry sleep. He had missed the game on Poppy's orders.

"If you go out on the rain the day after the full moon Remus Lupin you will be confined to my Ward for a very long time!"

He had stayed indoors waiting for the Gryffindors to come cheering; instead it was the Hufflepuffs and before them he had seen Dumbledore hovering a stretcher with a familiar form on it. Remus' heart had sunk and he ran to the Hospital Wing going through the secret passages and beating Dumbledore there. Poppy had guaranteed Harry hadn't broken any bones and he had regained consciousness while Remus had been in her office talking to her, and his friends had been at his side. Now he was sleeping and Remus was watching.

He had helped Poppy undress and dress him and saw for himself the scars she had gone on about earlier in the year. He had fumed inside and sent Dumbledore an icy stare. But Dumbledore would only be convinced if the abuse hit him on the face. There was no other way; he had to get Harry to tell him so he could do something. But the boy was squeamish with his secrets, almost like another boy he knew. A boy who had been scared of his friends' reactions to his furry little problem.

Xxx

The dog whined. He wanted to know how his pup was after that nasty fall, but he had had to run from the Dementors. He watched from the border of the Forbidden Forest and saw one light flickering from a window. He knew the Hospital Wing was in that part of the castle. He kept watching and could see the form of a man seated against the window. He was looking at someone inside but Padfoot would recognize Moony anywhere. He felt a little relieved to know that Moony was taking care of his son.

Xxx

"So Hagrid," Remus started. He had come to see Hagrid and stayed for some rock cake and reminiscing. He had wanted to make sure Hagrid had some mead in him before he broached the subject. "I hear you were the one to go fetch Harry on his first year. How were the Muggles?"

"Nasty pieces of work," Hagrid said. "Didn' want Harry coming they didn'. He didn' even know about magic and thought his parents died in a car crash! A CAR CRASH! JAMES AN' LILY POTTER! CAN YE BELIEVE THAT?"

Remus flinched at the yell but stored the information.

"And he was skin and bones. So small, could pass as an eight-year-old not eleven. When he came back I asked him if everything was all right and he said the Dursleys were afraid of his magic and had left him alone. I don' even think he realized back then how wrong that sounds."

So Harry's skills in averting questions were honed at Hogwarts. Why? Didn't his Muggle friends ask questions? Didn't their parents? What about his teachers? Didn't anyone in the Muggle world suspect something?

"And he was so excited when I gave him Hedwig," Hagrid said and he started to sob and Remus was sure he may have exaggerated with refilling Hagrid's mug of mead, "Said that she were the first gift he ever got!"

"WHAT?" Remus cried as his eyes widened.

"I expect he don't remember what his parents gave him," Hagrid sobbed.

"Hagrid-" Remus started patting the man's arm but Hagrid wasn't done.

"And in his second year those Weasley boys had ter go and free him. At first I thought they were joking but them twins told me when I had them for detention that there were bars on his window and they were starving him! George or maybe Fred, can't tell which, said he thought he saw a bruise when they were hoisting Harry into the car cause his Uncle tried ter grab him back! But then he said Harry denied it later on."

"Hagrid," Remus asked rubbing his temple. He was getting a headache and he was really close to go and trample a certain twinkling wizard. "Did you tell Dumbledore this?"

"Sure did. But he said Harry is safe there from Death Eaters and well we know they are not all locked up. And You-Know-Who isn't dead. Just a year ago Harry faced him-"

"WHAT?"

"Didn't yeh know?" Hagrid asked a little shocked.

"Do I look like I knew?" Remus shrieked. Remus rested his elbows on the desk and started. "Hagrid, start telling me about Harry's first two years," he lifted a hand. "From the start."

Xxx

"Demented possessed teachers, idiot teachers, Basilisk!" Remus muttered as he walked back to the castle. "Old coot, completely senile."

He was positively fuming at all the trials Dumbledore had put his cub through. How could he? Harry was a child, a child! A child who should have been pampered and loved and instead he was probably abused, certainly rejected and had handled things that even adults shouldn't have to. And did anyone stop and see how that affected Harry? Did anyone talk to him when he unwillingly killed a teacher in self-defense? When he faced a Basilisk and a shadow of the man who killed his parents? No, they just assumed the hero never wavers. He can stand everything. Well, he was going to change that.

Xx

Harry was going to have the time of his life. He was curious about who the Marauders were, and was certain Professor Lupin must know; after all, the map opened with the same password as his quarters. But Harry knew that if he asked Lupin he would confiscate the map. Lupin may be a nice teacher but he was still a teacher. The last time Harry had gone to visit him he had been a little weird though, asking if Harry was okay. If he wanted to talk about what happened. After quite a while of Harry not having a clue what Lupin was going on about he finally said that Hagrid told him about Harry's adventures and Harry quickly blushed and assured Lupin he was fine. He wasn't about to tell Lupin that sometimes he had nightmares about Voldemort, young Riddle, getting eaten by the Basilisk, Ginny dying and killing Quirrell. Lupin would think him a wuss. No one ever asked him anything about what happened. They expected him to take it all in stride and he was sure Lupin must be the same. He just wanted to confirm that Harry wasn't bothered and was ready for anything else the Wizarding World sent the Boy Who Lived's way. Harry would have quite preferred for someone else to be The Boy Who Lived but there was nothing he could do.

So he just patted the map and decided to live with his curiosity and continued on his way to Hogsmeade.

Chapter 4- Sirius talk

Remus was delighting himself in a mug of hot chocolate. In a few days it would be the full moon again and Remus was a tad bitter about not being able to spend Christmas with Harry because of that. He jumped out of his skin a spilled a bit of chocolate when the portrait door opened and revealed a furious looking Harry. Remus waved his wand to clean the chocolate while Harry stalked to him and growled angry:

"You lied to me!"

"Excuse me? No I didn't."

"Yes you did you never told me who Black was! What he did! You said you were my parents' close friend. There was no way you didn't know!"

The blood drained from Remus' face and he gulped painfully. He put the mug down and got up shakily walking towards Harry. He grabbed Harry by the shoulders but the boy wasn't looking at him; he had a firm defiant scowl on him that was between anger and hurt and was hugging himself. Remus pulled Harry's chin up and said:

"I'm sorry. I ...I wanted to protect you from being hurt...I wanted to protect myself from being hurt..."

Remus said lost, "He was one of my best friends, I thought I knew him, I though he'd never betray us. Remember when I told you about Andromeda, his cousin? I thought he was like her, that he had walked away from all that his family believed in and we all paid too high a price for believing him."

Harry nodded and Remus could see his eyes had an odd shine to them that told him he was holding back tears. "One day, I'll tell you my story and you'll understand how important my friends were to me," If he ever had the guts to tell Harry about Moony. "You'll understand that the night your parents died I lost everything I held dear to me. I lost James, Lily, Peter and Sirius because I learned the Sirius that I loved so much never existed," at Harry's disbelieving look he said honestly. "I did Harry and so did your father. We would have died for him. That night I lost you too. Dumbledore sent you away and didn't tell me where."

"That's why you never visited?" Harry said softly and Remus nodded. He saw something in Harry's eyes from that simple phrase; longing, and a desperate hope.

"Harry," Remus said firmly. He knew this wasn't why the boy had come but he had an opening. "Do they hurt you?"

Harry shook his head firmly and tried to get out of Remus' hold but Remus thought it was more in denial of the situation than an actual answer. "Harry you have to tell me. I can't help if you don't. We can tell Dumbledore, he can alert the authorities and you'll be out of there."

"No, I won't! That doesn't work!" Harry cried as he finally managed to break free and Remus was left watching him run away. What had he meant by that doesn't work?

Xxxxxxxx

Hermione and Ron were a little confused by the fact that Harry had not mentioned what they had learned about Black once. He had shut himself in his four-poster bed and only reemerged the next day as if nothing had happened. They had gone to visit Hagrid and had started helping him on Buckbeak's case. Hermione tried to talk about Black a few times but Harry just answered:

"I don't want to talk about that."

And if that wasn't enough they were now sitting in the middle of a teacher's, a *teacher's*, quarter having tea. Since when did teachers invite students to their quarters for tea?

"So," Lupin said pleasantly. "You two and Harry have been best friends for a while now, correct?"

"Yes," Hermione answered as she glanced at Ron asking silently for answers.

"How well do you know about Harry's home life?"

"Excuse me?" Ron asked bewildered.

Lupin put down his teacup on the coffee table between them and sighed. "I don't know if Harry told you, but I was good friends with his father."

"He mentioned it, yes," Hermione said. "That's why he comes visit you."

"Yes, well. I happen to know Petunia Dursley a little and have concerns about her and her husband's treatment of Harry. If I had some proof maybe I could act and get Harry a better living arrangement."

"You mean get Harry out of the Dursleys?" Ron said eagerly. "Really? You could do that? Because they are awful. Second year they were starving him and me and my brothers had to pull bars off his window. We told mum but she didn't believe us. She thought we were trying to get away from punishment."

Ron could swear he saw Lupin frown.

"Well, I thought that maybe, if we can prove Harry is in danger there he could live with someone else. Someone who would care for him," and Ron thought there was a little longing in Lupin's voice. "But Harry has to talk and I haven't been able to make him—"

"But you can't take Harry," Hermione said bluntly and Ron goggled at her.

"Of course he can Hermione! He wants to take care of Harry! You know, take care instead of starve!"

"No, I mean— er—" Ron was astounded. Hermione was blushing and at a loss for words. "I don't think the Ministry will let Professor Lupin take him."

"That's why we have to prove they are hurting Harry. So he can," Ron said tiredly and quite confused by Hermione of all people not understanding. He was so focused on her that he missed Lupin tensing and narrowing his eyes at Hermione in suspicion.

"I wasn't thinking of myself Hermione," Lupin said calmly. "I was actually thinking that there would be people who would be better choices than the Dursleys."

"Yeah, my parents for example," Ron said proudly.

Lupin smiled at Ron and continued, "So, do you think you can tell me anything?"

Hermione looked at Ron, "Well, Harry was never specific, at least not to me. He just says he doesn't like them."

"He told me he lived in a cupboard, and never got gifts or new clothes but then he told me that that wasn't because they were poor. His cousin gets spoiled rotten, and they do live in a nice neighborhood."

"Yes, and even if they didn't have money I know for a fact that James and Lily's will granted whoever took Harry in quite a generous allowance that would be able to comfortably provide all four of them alone. That added to Vernon's paycheck and they are quite well off," Lupin said and Ron fumed at the thought that the Dursleys were enjoying Harry's money while Harry got nothing.

"Like I said, in second year we had to rescue him because he wasn't answering our letters. He was locked in, his door had a cat flap and there were bars on his window. And I'm quite sure they were starving him. He didn't verify that. After that first chat on the train where Harry told me about his life he never went so deep again."

"Why?" Lupin asked. "What changed?"

"Maybe he saw what everyone expected from him and got embarrassed," Hermione said. "A lot of people thought he would have been pampered. Professor Snape says it all the time. So maybe he became embarrassed that he was the opposite and just shut up."

"Yeah, remember how Malfoy made fun of him for not going home on our first year?" Ron said.

"Harry might have told Ron that first time because he was used to people knowing everything but then he got to a place where they didn't know the details and he had friends, and he just preferred to let them still be that way," Hermione said and blushed. "I did."

"What?" Lupin asked worried. "Hermione, do you have any problems-"

"No," she hastened to say. "My parents are great. But, well, I always made strange things happen and I like to study, so the kids at school were mean, and I didn't have friends. When I came here I thought everything would be the same and then I had friends and stopped being the freaky know-it-all. I know this doesn't compare to what Harry goes through, but last year, after we went to Diagon Alley Mr. Weasley wanted to get together at my home and I really did everything for that not to happen because I was scared Ron and Harry would meet the kids from my neighborhood and know how they treated me. Mum and dad talked to me later and made me realize I was being foolish, but, well," she shrugged. "That was how I felt at the time."

"We wouldn't care," Ron said defensively and winced internally because he had once been mean to Hermione for being a know-it-all.

"I know," she smiled. "But I was embarrassed."

"And maybe Harry is too," Lupin mused. "Good work Hermione. Maybe we have to approach this in a different way. Let him know we don't think any less of him because of how he is treated." He leaned forward and said seriously, "I need you to start working on him slowly but steadily. He has to say something before the year is out or else he'll go back to the Dursleys."

Ron and Hermione nodded firmly. They rose and Hermione smiled to Lupin, "Thanks Professor Lupin."

Xxx

Remus had a lot to think about. He tapped his tail on the rug rhythmically as he replayed the conversation he had with Harry's friends. That made sense. From all he learned, Harry had seemed to gain his evasive ways after he started Hogwarts. Since he had been secretive since starting Hogwarts Remus didn't understand why Harry would change once he got here but Hermione was right. Hermione, she was a problem. Remus thought she might be one to realize his secret but now he was sure she knew. He just hoped she kept quiet. She didn't seem to be irked by him and was trying to help him, so maybe she didn't care. He fell asleep imagining taking Harry to live with him in his cottage, given that the cottage would still be standing up; he didn't like the sound of the crash he heard the last time he Flooed Tonks to make sure everything was fine, and why the hell did Kingsley answer the call? The next morning he woke in his bed once again, and once again was mortified at the thought of either Poppy or Albus tending to him while he was naked. He had yet to muster the courage to ask which one had done that and neither gave him any hint. He just tried to go back to sleep the rest of Christmas day off.

Xx

"Hey there kitty," Sirius smiled as Crookshanks trotted towards the bed at the Shrieking Shack trailing a huge piece of roasted turkey with his mouth. "What do you have there?" he said as he patted the cat's head and took the turkey leg. He took a bite and said through a full mouth, "Thanks." He munched a little and regarded the cat. "So, did Harry like his present?"

The cat seemed to nod and jumped out of the bed, turned a little on the spot and lay down. "Good," Sirius smiled satisfied. "I went to see Moony again today. I know, I know, that's risky. Don't look at me like that! But I couldn't help myself." Sirius smiled as he remembered putting his Moony to bed. "We gotta find you a name kitty, because it's mental enough of me to be talking to a cat, but to an unnamed cat at that!"

Crookshanks just ignored Sirius who continued eating his chicken leg and started regaling Crookshanks with the tale of the Marauder's Christmas both at Hogwarts, at the Potter's and once at Lupin's cottage. "And Mrs. Lupin sure knew how to cook! That she did! "

"Yes, you always did say that. One would think you didn't appreciate my cooking," a stern voice came from the door. Sirius jumped a mile high and landed at a crouch on the bed in a good position to flee. "Honestly, don't act like that," a tall, elegant, witch with long black hair and an aristocratic face huffed as she waved her wand and conjured a table. With another wave of her wand a tablecloth flew from the basket she was carrying and a sumptuous dinner was set on the table. The woman scrutinized Sirius and pursed her lips putting her hands on her hips. "This won't do at all Sirius. Being on the run is no excuse for being a slob." She once again pointed her wand at Sirius who raised his unarmed arms in protection and she cast a *Scourgify* on him. With another wave of her wand his matted hair became clean and brushed, tied back at the nape of his neck. Sirius looked astounded.

"Andy?" he asked unsure, and for the first time the woman smiled warmly and opened her arms in invitation. More than a little bewildered Sirius accepted the invitation and threw himself in his cousin's arms hugging her firmly, his body racking in sobs.

"I didn't do it," he pleaded.

"Sh, Siri. I know. I've always known. Shh," she said as she smoothed his hair. She kissed his forehead and looked back down at him. "You look like you need a good meal."

"Kitty brought me food," he mumbled, but he couldn't pretend he wasn't starved for the first decent meal in twelve years.

"I'm going to pretend you didn't eat something a cat brought you," Andromeda rolled her eyes and pretended not to hear when Sirius said he had worse. She ushered him to the table and drew two chairs. She watched as he ate with gusto but noticed he didn't eat much. She swallowed her anger at the knowledge that her favorite cousin had to have been denied much food for years that he wasn't able to eat more without making himself sick. When he looked apologetic she waved him off.

"I didn't think you would eat everything. I charmed the basket to preserve the food so you'll still have it for a while. There is more in there and we can put all that is left here at the table too. I don't want to come often in case I attract attention. It took me this long to be able to go anywhere without being followed by an Auror. I am afraid I made my opinion about your guilt too well known."

"How did you find me?"

Andromeda gave him a shrewd look and snorted, "You are being a tad obvious Sirius. It's a miracle no one else thought of this place. I know of at least three people at Hogwarts alone who know what this place means for you."

Sirius nodded. After he had been sorted into Gryffindor his mother had sent him a Howler and Dumbledore a letter letting them know that she would not be handling any problems Sirius caused. Yes, he was still supported by his parents; after all they wouldn't have him soiling the family name even more by being a charity case. But other than that, his parents had promptly ignored him. At home it was like he was invisible. Andromeda had volunteered to deal with any school related situations and she had always been the one to receive notice of Sirius' misconducts, including the Whomping Willow incident which led into her having to be appraised of Remus' condition.

"Moony didn't come here for the full moons," Sirius said vacantly.

"He must be taking the Wolfsbane potion," Andromeda nodded thoughtfully and at her cousin's blank look, explained what the potion was and how it worked. She saw him smile for the first time at the thought of the boy he didn't think she knew he loved having such a relief. She shook her thoughts away, *they aren't boys anymore; they are men, hurt men.*

"Nymphadora is renting his cottage," Andromeda said disdainfully. "Humph, she wants to be independent. As if I smothered her or anything."

"Dora, little Dora is living alone?" Sirius asked shocked.

"Exactly my thoughts! Living alone! Being an Auror! Getting herself into danger-"

"AUROR! Little Dora is old enough to be an Auror? Little Dora who called Remus her chocolate frog prince after she got hurt and he helped her and gave her a chocolate frog while me and James laughed at her clumsiness is an AUROR? Little Dora who I made fun of for her childish and quite useless crush is old enough to be an Auror?"

"Well," Andromeda shrugged as if the admission was painful, "She is twenty, almost twenty-one. But I say she is still too young to-"

"I'm old..." Sirius moaned burying his head in his hands. Andromeda stood up, walked to him, kneeled next to him and rubbed his back. She knew his moan was more than vanity. The world kept going, people still aged and grew up and he had missed them all. He missed most of Dora's and Harry's lives. Andromeda remembered how devoted Sirius was to his godson.

"I tried getting custody of him," she said quietly and she knew Sirius knew who *he* was.

He looked at her, "I found him at Petunia's. I wanted to see him once. He was running away. He was so angry. He looked like he had no idea what the hell he was going to do or where to go but was damn sure of where he did not want to be. I know that look; I know how that feels."

Andromeda rested her head on his shoulder and gave him a grim smile; she knew how that felt too. She squeezed him and then got up. "I have to go before Ted starts noticing my absence and decides to call my friends only to find out I went nowhere. I said I was visiting Elizabeth while he and Dora are at his parents. I also have to grill Dora. I know she is seeing someone but she won't tell me who," Andromeda finished in an affronted tone and Sirius smiled. He got up and hugged her. "I put some of your clean clothes in the basket too. Most of your things are with me; I took them home when I closed your flat. I also put a spare wand there. It's Uncle Orion's that I got from Grimmauld."

"Thanks," he said hoarsely.

"I couldn't find your bike."

"Hagrid has it," Sirius said. "That is, if he didn't destroy my bike in rage. Hagrid can be a tad emotional." She kissed his cheek once again and brushed a tear off. "Take care Siri. I'll try to see you again. Or at least send you food."

Only after she left he noticed that she never did ask for an explanation of what happened and Sirius smiled. Andromeda did truly believe him. He went to the basket and where there was also a mirror; he smiled again at his cousin. She was definitely sneaky.

"Andy!" he called.

Andromeda's face appeared, "Not now Siri, I'm almost at my in-laws. Tonight I'll call you when I am in my study and can take notes and you'll give me all the details I need for your defense."

"Will do. Love you Andy."

"I love you too Siri."

Xxx

"A Firebolt? No I didn't give him a Firebolt. I couldn't afford a Firebolt! I didn't give him anything, I know that's against the rules!"

McGonagall sighed and sat down on Remus' couch, "I know, I just thought maybe you decided to go against the rules; after all, you always did regard him as almost your nephew. I remember you wanting to take him in-"

"Yeah, instead you and Albus dumped him at the Dursley's..." he shut up at a scolding glare from his former Head of House and sat down.

"Do you know who could have sent him such a gift?"

Remus looked at her and understood her worries, "I only know one person with interest in Harry who would think a Firebolt is a great gift and would have the means to buy one."

"And would know the broom would be too much of a temptation, wouldn't they?"

"But he can't just waltz in Diagon Alley and buy one," Remus argued.

"No, but Gringotts won't stop him from accessing his vaults and he could owl order in some way,"

Minerva said. "We'll have to test the broom. Better not take any chances."

"Albus didn't-"

"No," she said sternly. "He knows better than to break the rules like that."

Remus snorted but covered it up with a cough.

"I'll help test the broom. If Black did send it, he was just plain cruel with Harry."

Xxxxxx

Why? Why? *Why?* Why had he agreed to teach Harry the Patronus charm?

If reliving bad memories wasn't enough, Remus' heart almost stopped every time Harry fainted. What was he doing to his cub? But Harry was so determined to keep going; he was just like Lily. People usually said James was the stubborn one, but you couldn't beat Lily. The difference was that she had such a good girl's face that no one realized she had a head harder than concrete.

Remus munched on his chocolate and sighed. For years he had imagined how things had gone down that night. Now he knew, and everything just fit. It was so like James to sacrifice himself to stall Voldemort and give Harry and Lily time to flee. He very much wished they had been able to. And Lily, dear Lily.

How could anyone think such a lioness would do any different than stand and defend her cub? Taking another bite Remus watched the fire. *Why did you do that to them Siri?* He thought. *Why?*

Xxx

"Don't you think he deserves it? For what he did to my parents; for what he did to you?" Harry asked Remus over his Butterbeer. They had just finished the last Patronus lesson before the Gryffindor versus Ravenclaw match and had been discussing Dementors when he stupidly had brought up the headline he

read that morning. The headline that had made his blood freeze and his heart stop. *"Sirius Black sentenced to the Dementor's kiss."*

"I don't know if anyone deserves that fate Harry," he answered slowly and Harry nodded thoughtfully. But he wasn't being honest. Even though he wanted to hate Sirius, he hadn't managed to and he couldn't bear the thought of him dying or losing his soul. Somewhere deep down Remus still had the foolish hope that someone would tell him that there had been a terrible misunderstanding and Sirius was innocent. And if Sirius died that hope would die too and he didn't know how to live without that.

xxxxxxx

Great Remus! Just bloody great of you! Remus berated himself while glaring at the old piece of parchment that he had tossed on top of the coffee table in his quarters. He knew that he should have told Harry he was one of the Marauders. After all, Harry wasn't stupid and he knew that the password to his quarters was the same one that opened the map. But he hadn't had the guts to risk Harry understanding what his nickname meant.

And then he had been quite harsh using Lily's and James' deaths to guilt trip Harry. He, better than anyone, knew that at Harry's age one thought oneself invulnerable. Hadn't he and his friends gone out on full moon nights thinking nothing could happen? Harry had just been acting his age. He probably thought he was in no danger whatsoever. But when he realized Harry had left the relative and quite questionable safety of the castle he just lost it.

But honestly, not even a week ago *Si-Black* had entered the castle and had been so close to Harry, just feet away from him. Remus shivered at the thought of what could have happened. He had been startled from his thoughts on seeing Prongs galloping through the Quidditch pitch at the Gryffindor vs.

Ravenclaw game and the deep longing for his fallen friend had been reawakened that afternoon when the alarm sounded and all teachers started sweeping the castle again. He canvassed the castle with his heart in his mouth and had to restrain himself from running to Gryffindor Tower to check every inch of Harry or punching Snape for his comments and his suspicious and not one bit covert glares. He did go to the Tower and checked on Harry who was awake with all the other Gryffindors under the excuse of accompanying McGonagall to give them news.

Harry probably hates me now and will never open up to me. It's been hard enough getting him to talk.

He snorted. Hard time; he hadn't even managed to get him to talk. He obviously didn't buy Harry's "I'm fine with everything that happened to me" and he certainly did not manage to get Harry to talk about the Dursleys. The year was drawing to an end and he had no idea how to help Harry short of kidnapping him and taking him to his cottage. He rubbed his temples to ward off a headache and glared at the Marauder's Map as if it had insulted him somehow and then he laughed as he remembered the only bright spot on this crappy afternoon and grabbed the map to read once again the insults to Snape that were still etched there.

xxx

"Miss Granger," Remus said when he found Hermione at the library. "Have you and Ron made any progress?"

Hermione's eyes widened and her mouth went in an 'o', "Hum, er- you see Professor, there was a fight, and the broom, and Scabbers dying, and then Buckbeak being sentenced and we had to start looking for an appeal, and... no..." she finished lamely.

"I see," he said sitting down. "I heard about the fight. Harry did feel bad about fighting with you because of a broom, but boys at that age aren't the most sensitive of people."

Hermione shrugged sheepishly as he continued, "I'm glad you all made up, but I really need you two to bust up his confidence. I tried to broach the subject again, making it clear I don't think any less of him, but he is one sneaky little bugger."

Hermione nodded and promised they would get right into it, but right now Remus thought they would need a miracle to get Harry away from his relatives. Especially since Harry had at first avoided him right after the map incident until Remus had held him after class and asked why he stopped going to his quarters. Harry had shrugged, mumbled something incoherently and stared at his shoes. Remus had laid a gentle hand on his shoulders and said softly.

"Because you made one mistake Harry, doesn't mean I don't want to be friends anymore. I know you won't risk your life again. I might have been a little harsh but you must understand I was worried. I love you Harry. And don't want anything to happen to you."

Harry's head had snapped up so fast Remus didn't know how it didn't come right off.

"You do?" he had asked shocked.

"Since you were born cub, since you were born. I explained to you why I wasn't around before. But now that I found you again I won't lose you ever again. You can always count on me for anything, no matter what. You can tell me anything Harry." he finished staring straight into Harry's eyes. And although their tea time resumed Harry did not change his slippery way of changing the subject.

Chapter 5- Cub

Remus couldn't help the conflicting feelings he had as he heard Sirius ask Harry to live with him and Harry accept without hesitation. Yes, he was happy that his love was innocent, that Harry would get away from the Dursleys; that's what he had been trying to do all year long, but he couldn't help feeling a little twinge of jealousy. He wanted to be the one to take Harry away. He wanted Harry to go live with *him*. How could he now if Sirius just jumped in front of him? He yanked at the chain forcibly as he crawled out of the tunnel making Peter stumble. Peter gave him a scared look and he gave back a little sadistic smile. *Yes I did it on purpose*, the smile said. He would feel pleasure in seeing Peter suffer for all he'd done, to James, to Lily, to Harry and to Sirius. Remus stole back a glance, *Sirius*. He didn't look as bad as Remus had expected. Sirius mentioned Andromeda had helped and Remus had been grateful. He bit his lips like a teenager. Would Sirius still love him after he betrayed him like that? He left him rotting in Azkaban. Yes, Sirius embraced him but he had started the hug, he had relished in his scent, in feeling those arms around him. But Sirius was probably just shocked. Once he had time to think, Remus didn't know if Sirius would want anything to do with him, he'd hate him, no matter what he said twelve years ago.

Remus sighed and was about to look back and ponder a little more on him losing the two people he loved, because of course Harry would hate him too now that he knew he was a werewolf who left his godfather to rot in Azkaban when he felt his body stiffen. He barely had time to panic as he remembered he forgot the potion and that Ron was chained to him when his limbs began to morph and Remus was delegated to the back of his mind with no chance to control his actions, just watch and feel what Moony felt. And Moony smelled fresh prey just next to him.

He heard Sirius yell, and a few moments later he felt Padfoot collide with him, Moony was about to attack Padfoot when he suddenly stood still and sniffed, there was something else Moony smelled, something more important than prey, something he'd been denied; he smelled his cub. Padfoot kept snarling and posing for attack if Moony decided to attack and for a fleeting second Remus' mind in the back of Moony's thought he was hesitating in hurting him, but the biggest thought to take over him was that Moony wouldn't be fooled and Moony smelled his cub which could only mean one thing; Lily lied to everyone.

Moony's vision zeroed on Harry and he had one thought, get to his cub, then Moony saw his cub trying to get the rat. Moony knew that rat and he knew he could catch him and Remus thought that if Peter escaped all was lost. Surprising Padfoot, Moony retreated without ever touching him and ran towards the forest and after the rat.

Xxx

Sirius transformed back in confusion. He had been waiting for Moony to attack him to get to the children but instead Moony had remained still and suddenly had just run in the opposite direction, with no desire

to fight whatsoever. He turned back in confusion and saw Harry and Hermione looking desperate and Ron stunned on the floor.

"He escaped Sirius," Harry cried desperately. "He escaped!"

Sirius heart froze as he noted the absence of Peter, his one chance to be free to be with Remus and Harry.

"Where?"

Harry pointed to the forest. To where Moony had run and Sirius heart sank even deeper. There was no way he would find the rat after he had this much head start, and with Moony on the loose he had to get Harry and the others inside. Maybe he could get Dumbledore to listen with Harry and Hermione's help. He picked up Remus' wand and pocketed it next to the one Andromeda had given him and felt a little stab of guilt at hiding that wand all along, even when Remus gave the kids back their wands. Well, could you blame him for being wary?

With Snape's wand he moved to levitate both Snape and Ron when a chill ran through him, a horrible, familiar chill. He looked up and saw hundreds of Dementors approaching.

"Think happy thoughts!" Harry cried to Hermione and Sirius couldn't help but feel proud as he saw Harry draw his wand ready to protect the group. He remembered Harry yelling at Snape that Remus had been teaching him the Patronus. *Could he do it? He may be able to with my help. Could I conjure one?* He thought.

Yes, I could. The proud feeling was chasing away the coldness and he could remember why chasing the Dementors away was important. He was going to live with Harry and Moony. No matter if Peter had escaped, he'd find a way. He grabbed Harry's hand and cried.

"You can do this! Together Harry! On three: one, two, three!"

And in unison they cried:

"EXPECTRO PATRONUM!" and Sirius couldn't help the gasp as he saw Prongs and Moony galloping straight towards the Dementors and making them back away. He always knew his Patronus was Moony, but seeing a form of Prongs again made him smile sadly.

"Is that-" Harry asked and Sirius answered.

"That's Prongs, that's your- that's James' form," he cupped Harry's cheek and said. "No matter what Harry, James loved you more than life itself, and always protected you, even after his death." He finished pointing at the two Patronuses that had managed to chase the Dementors away. Both of them came back and gave a little bow.

Harry extended his hand and tried to touch Prongs as he disappeared, "I know. He tried to save mum and me. Professor Lupin said the Patronus is something that makes us feel safe, and ever since I learned about how my parents died to save me, I think of them when I'm scared," he finished smiling.

Sirius was about to pull Harry into a hug when Hermione gave an ear splitting scream.

"Hermione!"

"Professor Lupin is back!" she cried pointing at somewhere in the dark, and sure enough Moony was trotting happily back. Sirius transformed and was ready to attack but Moony wasn't attacking he was balancing something in his mouth and trotting straight towards Harry. Padfoot snarled and Moony just gave him a look that could only be interpreted, as "Are you thick?" It was so much like Remus that Sirius could swear Remus was in control. He was so dumbfounded that he did nothing as Moony went straight to Harry and proudly dropped something near Harry's feet. He couldn't help it; he transformed back as Harry caught the squirming rat and promptly stunned it.

"I guess he caught Pettigrew," Harry shrugged looking at him and handing him the rat.

Moony, to everyone's surprise nodded happily and then butted Harry's hand.

"I think he wants praise," Hermione said as if she really didn't know if she was dreaming or not.

Harry bent down and scratched a werewolf's head. A ravaging werewolf! A ravaging werewolf who had no Wolfsbane that night, and the ravaging werewolf purred like a puppy and then licked Harry's exposed face.

"Ugh! Professor Lupin, that's gross!" that only got him another lick.

Sirius really didn't know how he not only managed to not faint but to also levitate Snape and Ron towards the castle and the Headmaster's office all the while being accompanied by a docile werewolf, who was acting giddy, which was quite unlike Remus.

He heard Harry and Hermione laugh at Moony's antics and couldn't help but shake his head. Maybe he was dreaming, and none of this was happening.

And as they tried in vain naming candies and finally had the entrance to the Headmaster's office being opened by an amused Albus Dumbledore he decided that yes, this was a dream and no he didn't want to wake up.

"Sirius, what a pleasant surprise. I assume you children have a lot to tell me?"

Xxxxxx

As he watched Remus sleep, Sirius couldn't help but think over everything that happened. Dumbledore listened to him right there in the entrance. At first Sirius wondered why he didn't take them to his office, but when Dumbledore took Peter and told Sirius to escort everyone to the hospital wing, Sirius couldn't help but have that feeling that everything would be all right and Dumbledore would solve everything. He didn't quite understand what Dumbledore told Hermione about three turns helping save an innocent life but apparently the girl did because once they were in the hospital wing she locked herself in the bathroom while he and Harry were busy trying to get Madam Pomfrey not to hex him and told her that the Headmaster was the one to send them there.

"If I was a lunatic murderer I wouldn't have brought them to you!" he cried exasperated and Moony barked his agreement.

Pomfrey glanced at Moony warily and Sirius hissed, "Not helping Moony. Stay invisible."

"Did he have his Wolfsbane?" she asked.

"Yes, interesting development there. Hum, no," he said slowly. "But he looks tame," he offered.

Pomfrey huffed and pointed her wand at him, "Apparently Azkaban did not change you Mister Black. But you do have a point, so I will give you the benefit of the doubt. Get on that bed!" she said sternly and Sirius sat as automatically and quickly as if scorched; Harry snickered but did the same when he got a glare from the dragon.

"Now, where is Ms. Granger?"

"Here," Hermione chirped happily as she came into view. Sirius didn't miss the confused glance Harry gave his friend nor the little smile she had. Oh, he knew that smile; he had sported that smile many times. Young Ms. Granger was up to no good. He couldn't help but smile too.

Pomfrey had clucked and tsked, and mended Ron's leg, and some of Snape's bruises; apparently he had been hit in the head, imagine that. She gave him a potion and said he would sleep until morning. Sirius imagined she didn't want him waking and having a war in her infirmary. She had given Harry and Hermione chocolate and healed their scratches, then she proceeded to wave her wand on him and tsked again before handing him chocolate and wrote furiously on a piece of parchment.

"Not as bad as I expected but you are in serious need of nutritional supplements. I'm prescribing some potions for you to take during the next month and then I expect you back here for evaluation," she said sternly and left.

"Well, hum, at least she has faith I'll be freed?" he smiled at Harry.

"She is not the only one," a voice said pleasantly from the door and Sirius stiffened as he saw Dumbledore and Fudge enter. From the corner of his eye he saw Moony had the presence of mind, God only knows how, to hide under a cupboard. Harry jumped in front of Sirius and cried.

"He's innocent. We gave you Pettigrew and-"

"Calm down Harry," Dumbledore said. "We questioned Peter with Veritasserum. He is in his way to a holding cell at the Ministry while he awaits his trial.

"Humph, so he gets one," Sirius muttered crossing his arms. "I didn't get that courtesy. Could have saved a lot of people a lot of grief."

"Hum, er, yes, Mr. Black," Fudge stuttered, "And the Ministry is terrible sorry for this terrible mistake of the *last administration*. Hum, we would of course like to do what we can to correct-"

"His pardon would be nice," Harry piped in.

"Yes, I already signed that," Fudge produced a parchment that Harry took quickly and scanned with a pleased look before giving it to Sirius. "I of course will give a statement to make sure everyone knows of your innocence and of our capture of Peter Pettigrew."

"Your capture?" Hermione muttered.

"We want to amend any mistake of the previous administration as I said and anything you want-"

"Harry's guardianship," Hermione piped in sweetly.

"Hum, er, I understand Mr. Black is Harry's godfather but I don't think Harry would want to leave-"

"I do," Harry said simply and Sirius smiled.

"He does," he said. "So, I guess he can come home with me as you will speed up that process won't you Minister? You know, in the name of making amends." Sirius said catching on to Hermione's manipulation. That girl was dangerous; such a good friend for Harry to have.

"Well, er-"

"You wouldn't want to deprive Harry and Sirius of the time that they should have together would you Minister? The time the *previous administration* robbed them of," Hermione asked and Sirius could swear he saw a proud twinkle in Dumbledore's eyes.

"I am sure Cornelius will speed the process up," Dumbledore said. "Won't you Cornelius?"

"Yes, of course. I shall be leaving now for that, yes, er, immediately." And with that, the flustered Minister left and Dumbledore had just one more request.

"Harry, I never told you this, but I placed you at your Aunt's because of your mother's sacrifice. Your mother's protection, which saved you in first year needs to be renewed each summer. The protection will work while you call the place where your mother's blood dwells home Voldemort can't touch you there," he raised a hand to stall the protests, "No matter how many homes you have. But you need to go back for at least two weeks every year."

Sirius had seen Harry's face fall at that and he even saw a little fear. He heard Moony growl from where he had come to stay protectively next to Harry and he once again thanked Hermione's brain when she said:

"The protection works for the Dursleys as well right?" she asked and Dumbledore nodded. "And they are not stupid, they must want the protection or they'd just have given Harry away, sorry," she winced.

"I know," he whispered sadly.

"I guess we can kind of blackmail them, say we don't need the protection, that we have other means and that we are just ensuring they have it. And with that convince them that the two weeks Harry is there his guardian has to be there too. I mean, a grown wizard should be enough to halt their nastiness."

"Yes," Sirius said. "That's the only way Harry goes back there. If either Moony or I can go with him." Moony nodded his approval and Sirius saw Harry smile at that and his heart soared. He squeezed his pup's shoulder.

"I think we can work with that. I'll contact Petunia."

"Erm, sir. You might want to do that personally," Harry said. "They tend to flee from owls."

"I'll do just that Harry. Why don't you stay in your new guardian's quarters today?" he asked and at the three puzzled looks he got he added. "Oh, I'm sure the last Marauders will surprise no one by rooming together and catching up on lost time."

Sirius narrowed his eyes at the smiling headmaster. Who did he think he was? Besides, he bet Moony didn't even want him; he probably had some boyfriend waiting for him somewhere.

"Oh, and Sirius. I managed to keep Pettigrew's answers away from your little secret. That might be useful someday."

They had said goodbye to Hermione at Gryffindor tower and had gone to Remus' quarters. Harry had passed out in the spare bedroom and at first Moony had popped into bed with him. Sirius had carried him to his room before sunrise so he wouldn't wake Harry once he transformed back. And speaking of waking up, Remus started stirring. He opened his eyes and looked straight at Sirius.

"You've been tucking me in all year long?"

Sirius shrugged, "Yeah."

"Do you have any idea how mortified I've been thinking Albus or Poppy had seen me naked?"

"Poppy has seen you naked before," Sirius offered and ducked as Remus threw a pillow at his head.

"Aren't you mortified I saw you naked?"

Remus blushed and hid his face in another pillow. Sirius got up and sat on the bed.

"What happened last night?"

Remus moved the pillow and sighed, "I don't know. At first it was as usual, Moony's mind taking over and I watching from the back, unable to take control. But then Moony picked up a scent and at first it was like we both agreed and then Moony was just not there anymore, he was gone and I was in control."

"Like with the Wolfsbane?"

"No, with the Wolfsbane the roles are reversed, I am in control but I can feel Moony in the back, caged like I usually am. But this, was just like he left, like I was all alone in there. Just like I feel any other day of the month. Moony only shows up on full moons; I don't feel him any other time, but he is there on the full moon, yesterday he wasn't."

"What did you smell?"

Remus looked at Sirius and Sirius saw hesitation. He took his wand and summoned a robe. He got up and dressed.

"I loved James like a brother," he said roughly. "I- I was confused, and drunk, I would never have- she came on to me because she was angry, that's no excuse I know. I took advantage of her-"

"You smelled your cub?" Sirius asked. "Moony smelled Harry and his presence made you keep your mind. I never knew that could happen-"

Remus turned around sharply and hissed, "You *knew*?"

"She told me," Sirius said nervously. "When she found out she was pregnant. She was scared. She loved James and was scared he'd leave if he knew. I was scared he would too and that maybe they would both leave if they broke up. It was like they were our glue. We always met there; they were the center."

Without a center where would we be? And you were always away. Never telling where you went and disappearing for days at a time-

"I was infiltrating the packs-

"I know that now!" Sirius cried desperately, his eyes begging Remus to understand. "But I didn't then and I didn't know what to do. All I knew was people were dying and I couldn't lose any of you. I couldn't lose James and Lily. I couldn't lose you. That's why I never confronted you when I got suspicious of your disappearances. I was scared you'd confirm my suspicions and I would lose you. You were the strong one, and Peter was just such a coward. We knew that the traitor had to be one of us. You were the only choice left. I thought Peter wouldn't have the guts to go to Voldemort. Moony, you have to believe me; I never thought you'd betray us. I just didn't have any other explanation. And even so I didn't want to believe it. I just didn't want to lose any of you. So I helped her. I know it was wrong to keep Harry from you but I did and I am so sorry," Sirius voice had taken a teary edge, "If I could change it I would, but I can't. Please Remus!"

"How? He looks like James," Remus asked tensely as he paced the room hugging himself anxiously.

"A mixture of charms and a potion with James' blood to tie it all up. It will hold until Harry takes the antidote that has his blood from before the spell was put on him, and that is in a box with a conservation charm in my vault. We did it right as he was born. We were lucky; James was out on an assignment and didn't make it in time to see Harry being born so he never saw his real features. By the time James made it back it was already done. I was the only one besides Lily and the Healer who saw him. And the Healer didn't know James and I sent her away before James arrived so she never suspected anything. He changed right in front of our eyes. The only thing that was the same were his eyes. He always had those eyes since he was born. He didn't have those blue eyes that later change color like all babies do-

WHACK

Sirius found himself on the cold floor nursing his smarting jaw.

"How could you?" Remus hissed steaming.

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry doesn't cut it Sirius! Sorry doesn't erase twelve years that I spent alone! Sorry doesn't erase twelve years that he spent with those- those – *people!* I could have raised him all along! The Ministry can deny me custody of a friend's son but not of my son! It's the law!" Remus bellowed.

"M sorry," Sirius mumbled once again and Remus darted towards the door. "Remus," Sirius scrambled on his feet and ran after his friend. "Where are you going?"

"To talk to my son," Remus hissed.

"You can't- not like that- Remus be reasonable, you're always reasonable."

Remus turned around sharply and spat in Sirius' face, "I've had enough of being reasonable!"

He stalked to the door and yanked it open just to come face to face with a wide-eyed Harry.

"You were loud," Harry offered faintly.

"You heard?" Remus asked softly.

"I- yes," Harry answered lost.

"I didn't know Harry," Remus said. "I suspected, I hoped, but I didn't know."

Harry nodded jerkily but when Remus stepped closer inching his hand forward, he backed away and took off at a run out of their quarters.

"Harry-" Remus called after him and made to run in his direction.

"Give him time Moony." Sirius said stopping Remus with a light touch on his arm.

Remus looked back and saw a bruise forming on Sirius' cheek. He touched it gently.

"Sorry, I don't know what got into me," he turned his face away, embarrassed.

"I deserved that," Sirius said cupping Remus' cheek and turning his face so their eyes met.

"I may have made a humongous and selfish mistake but I did that out of love. I love you Moony. I love you like I've had since I first started noticing boys. I know you must have moved on but I-"

He was interrupted by Remus kissing him. When he pulled back Sirius' eyes were wide and startled. He touched his forehead to Sirius' and said softly:

"I love you too. I can't forgive this Sirius... what you did. But I once forgave *you*, and I'll do it again. Because I love you and these years without you were torture. I want you in my life. I want us to be a family; you, me and Harry. If he'll have us."

"He's just confused," Sirius said, kissing Remus' tears away. He slowly pulled Remus' body closer.

"I never- I wanted you, and I didn't have you, I never-"

Sirius smiled, "You tell this to anyone and ruin my reputation and I'll kill you. But I haven't either. I wanted you and then I was a little held up for a while."

Remus snorted wetly, his laugh mingling with his tears, "I guess we'll figure this out together then."

"Of course, after all. We can't let the world know we're a couple of thirty-four year old virgins. I mean, I bet we're a first, clergy aside."

"I don't know," Remus teased. "I've always pictured Severus as-"

"MOONY! Don't kill the mood!"

Xxx

"I think we should call Madam Pomfrey. Maybe this is some kind of delayed reaction to the Dementors," Hermione said worriedly and Ron nodded. They were sitting in front of Harry who had run into the common room as if he was being chased. He looked for them, sat on an armchair and proceeded to look vacantly ahead.

Ron snapped his fingers in front of Harry.

"Maybe we should call Sirius and Professor Lupin."

That got a reaction.

"My dad."

"What about your dad Harry?" Hermione asked helpfully.

"I don't know how I look!" Harry screeched.

"Well there's a mirror over there," Ron said.

"But that's a lie!"

"No it's right over there!" Ron said offended.

"But I don't look like that! Sirius said there was a potion and a charm and he's my dad, and that's why I get restless on full moons!" Harry cried as if he had just had an epiphany and ran back out of the room leaving his two gobsmacked best friends behind.

"Did you get any of that?" Ron asked.

"No."

Xxxx

Harry ran back to Remus' quarters barking the password and barging in Remus and Sirius in a very compromising position. No they weren't having sex; they had decided to take things slowly but, well, they had been having fun. Remus quickly pulled his robes closed as did Sirius and he stuttered:

"Er- Harry-"

"You're gay?" Harry asked in confusion. Remus was a little relieved not to hear disgust in his voice but maybe Harry was just shocked.

"Yes, Harry."

"But you and my mom?"

"That was a mistake Harry. I- when I was young I didn't accept that I liked boys, that I loved Sirius and Lily, she had been angry at James, she thought he was cheating on her. Which he wasn't," he added hastily, "We got drunk, she wanted to get back at him. And I was, well, I was so confused that I wanted to prove myself wrong. That I didn't love Sirius, that that was just because I'd never been with a girl. That backfired in my face," he finished. At Harry's look he said. "I know that's no excuse Harry but I never forgave myself for betraying James like that. If I had been sober I would never have done it and neither would your mother. I don't want you to think she was like that. But I am glad we were drunk or we wouldn't have you."

Harry nodded jerkily. "You didn't know right? That's why you left me there?"

"I didn't. I suspected., but you looked so much like James."

"Did my da- did James know?"

"He is still your dad Harry. He loved you more than life." Remus said firmly. He might want his place as Harry's father but he knew James deserved his.

Harry nodded, "Did he?"

"No, or at least I don't think so," Sirius said. "There was one time I suspected he knew. While Lily was still pregnant, we were at an Order meeting where James acted very weirdly and aggressively towards

the three of us, but then he was just his usual self afterwards and he was so proud when you were born that I'm sure he was just in a bad mood that day."

"I don't know what to think," Harry said lost. "I always wanted for my mom and dad to come rescue me. To show up and say that there had been some misunderstanding and they were alive. I don't know how to act or even what to call you."

"Call me Remus," Remus said. "If one day you're comfortable you can call me dad."

"We still need to get to know each other Harry," Sirius said coming closer. "I know you and Moony have been together all year long but that was as teacher and student. We need to learn how to be a family. That will take time and adjustment. Lucky for us, we have all the time in the world. If you'll accept us of course." He finished hopefully.

"I," Harry said biting his lips. "I want to try. I guess."

Remus smiled and had to restrain himself from hugging Harry.

"Just, you know. Can you keep that in the bedroom," Harry said flushing furiously to match Remus' blush. Sirius just laughed.

Xxx

Epilogue

Becoming a family had been... *different*, was what Remus would say. They had given Harry the antidote and his features had changed slightly. To their surprise he had kept some of James' features.

Dumbledore had researched the potion they had used and said that it had been an adoption potion, making James a third parent and the charm just served to suppress Remus' features and turn them into James'. Harry's hair had become a tad more manageable and shade lighter. His hands had changed to resemble Remus'; his ears, which had been like James', had changed too and were now a cross between Remus and Lily's ears; his face had been round like James' and had become a little more angular. And of course, Harry's voice, that had bothered Remus all along was just like his at that age, as Sirius pointed out. All in all none of the changes were extremely noticeable to anyone who wasn't close to Harry and everyone else could just blame them on puberty.

Remus was glad for that; Harry Potter's life was already complicated and newsworthy enough without a scandal. This was best kept private. And with Dumbledore's help Remus and Sirius had adopted Harry instead of Remus recognizing the paternity. This way, most people just thought Harry had started calling his adoptive father dad.

That was one of the best days of Remus life. Harry had just called him dad like that without even noticing one day at breakfast.

"Pass me the butter dad," he had said and Remus had stared shocked. When Harry raised his head he asked.

"What?"

"You just called me dad," he said faintly.

"I did?" Harry asked and Remus and Sirius nodded.

"Well, if that's okay with you," Harry said awkwardly. Remus smiled and got up.

"That's perfect Harry," he said kneeling in front of Harry and hugging him. "Perfect," he said hoarsely, with misty eyes.

They had also found out James had known all along when Harry read a letter that James had left in the Potter vaults to which Harry would only have access at seventeen, but that Sirius had access now.

Dear Harry,

I hope you never have to read this letter and that Padfoot has a little sense to give this to you only when you are old enough to understand .I thought hard of what my last message to you should be and decided that you should have the truth.

First and foremost I want to tell you my son, that I love you more than life itself. You gave me joy during a time of sorrow.

I truly hope I have had the opportunity to tell you this in person but I must also tell you here.

Harry, you may know that when we love someone we sometimes do unthinkable things to keep them close. We become scared of losing them and because of that, sometimes we lie by omission. In a time of war that fear is increased immeasurably.

I lied by omission to your mother. I never told her that on one of the many Death Eater raids that I was sent to as an Order member, I was cursed by one Death Eater. It was not a fatal curse but a somewhat more cruel one ; when your mother told me she was expecting I knew you couldn't be mine for that curse had turned me sterile.

Your biological father is one of my best friends, Remus Lupin. If you by any chance do not know him look for him. He is a good man. I do hope that by now you know the truth and are able to have both your fathers around , but I know that may not be the case.

Now you might be thinking I am some kind of magnanimous soul to be able to forgive Remus and Lily so easily, but that is not the case. Well, you see, I may have been aided by a little accident.

Your mother had tried to leave me because she thought I was cheating on her when I was on missions for Dumbledore. I never told her where I went and she thought the worst. I know now that she must have sought comfort in someone and maybe find a way to get back at me. I was so afraid of losing her I said nothing, but of course I tried to find out who. My first thought had been her childhood friend and my childhood enemy Severus Snape. That would be the perfect comeback. It was only at an Order meeting when I saw the way Remus was acting strange when Lily announced her pregnancy that it hit me. It was him, my own best friend!

My first instinct was to rip him apart but Dumbledore was there. Then I saw how Sirius was trying so hard to get Remus and Lily talking, but Remus seemed to be avoiding both of them, so of course I thought my best friend, best man, brother was in on this charade too and wanted to rip him apart as well. However, Dumbledore was still there. So I acted very maturely by snapping at all of them every chance I had during the meeting. Lily had enough of that, as you know your mother is not a force to be reckoned with, and she threw me out of the room and told me to wait in one of the rooms like a naughty child!

I of course, paced and fumed for a long time until I thought the meeting might be over and walked back to the drawing room and was quite surprised to find it empty.

Now, what does that have to do with anything? You see, back then Headquarters could only be entered or left with a password that changed daily, and as I had entered with Sirius, I didn't know the password and couldn't even use the Floo. I was locked in! I sent a Patronus message but your mother thought it would do me good to stay locked in until the morning!

So, as you can see, I had a lot of time to cool off and start thinking rationally. I happened to know that Remus fancied a certain mangy mutt we all know. As a matter of fact I am quite certain the only person still in denial was him. Well, I remembered that the day your mother tried to leave was also about two

days after Remus' dad had been buried and Sirius had come to my doorsteps in hysterics because he had kissed Remus.

I know Remus; he is loyal to the point of foolishness. He would never jeopardize our friendship, so there had to be extenuating circumstances. He, he. I can't help but remember how many times Sirius tried that line on Minnie!

After cooling off I was able to realize that if I said something I might lose everything so I stayed quiet once more, and I gained what I never thought I would have: a son! A son I love so much and an heir to take the Potter name forward.

I hope that I have mustered the courage to tell you all that I know and can share you with Remus but if I haven't I apologize and can only say I am scared of losing you Harry. You are and always will be my baby.

Your father,

James Potter

Remus had felt a mixture of relief for his friend had forgiven his betrayal and a little hurt for he had lied to him too. But he couldn't deny he loved James, and forgave him as he had Lily and Sirius.

Then of course there were the awkward moments like the day Harry came to them looking worriedly and asking to talk to them.

Harry looked at Remus warily and biting his lip he blurted, "I don't think I'm gay."

Remus stared at Sirius lost and then turned to Harry, "That's okay son. I didn't think you were, and you're young-"

"But you are!" Harry cried.

"Yes," Remus said calmly. "But you don't have to be."

"But I want you to be my dad and I'm not-"

Remus stopped Harry's nervous babble by taking his hand, "Harry, you are my son no matter what. I don't care if you're different from us."

"But my Aunt and Uncle-"

"Were morons who didn't appreciate what they had," Sirius said flatly. "We love you Harry, just like you are."

Harry nodded but Remus knew that they would have to reassure him many times more. He sat next to him and put an arm around his shoulders.

"We're a family Harry, no matter what. You me and Sirius."

"I like living here with you and your puppy," Harry said leaning in the embrace.

"Hey, I'm not a-"

"Me too," Remus answered. "And you can even play fetch with my puppy from time to time if you want."

"I don't play fetch," Sirius cried.

"Fetch," Remus threw a pillow and Sirius caught it. "See."

He winked and Harry chuckled. Remus and Sirius always tried to lighten up the mood after a serious talk. Like the ones about his "adventures" at Hogwarts when they finally found out Harry was still having nightmares about them and Sirius had to prevent Remus from Flooing to Hogwarts and killing Dumbledore- Sirius made a show of telling Harry to write down the day when he had been the responsible one and not Remus- and the ones that came after the two hellish weeks with the Dursleys. Afraid of Sirius and Remus, who both decided to go with Harry, the Dursleys hadn't laid a hand on Harry but they had abused him verbally enough until Remus packed all their stuff with a wave of his wand and announced they were leaving, forever. Petunia paled and begged them to stay. They did so, only because Remus knew how much having a safe haven from Voldemort meant for Harry. If not for that, the Dursleys would have gotten what they deserved. And Remus wouldn't have to do anything. He would just need to stop restraining Sirius and sit back to enjoy the show.

Remus had tried to talk to Harry about what the Dursleys had done in the past, but at first Harry wouldn't say anything. He was embarrassed. So Remus and Sirius mainly did the talking, reassuring Harry that the Dursleys were wrong and there was nothing Harry could have done. Slowly Harry started telling them what had happened to him and Remus could only hold him and try to heal him the best way he could. This was one of the times Remus hated the war. If they hadn't needed the protection he would have brought charges up against the family. They should pay for what they did. Instead, they got away free and that grated on Remus' nerves. But there was nothing he could do.

Dumbledore invited him to come back the next year as the History teacher. Apparently he had managed to convince Binns to retire, and had wanted to call a friend for the DADA position because of the Triwizard tournament because Fudge had managed to fumble his way while taking Peter to a holding cell and lost him. The stupid Minister had forgotten to alert the Aurors to place anti-Animagus wards and Peter had transformed when the Aurors released his cuffs and ran just through their feet.

Dumbledore said he would feel better knowing that three more Order Members would be in the castle, since Sirius would accompany Remus as his spouse. Dumbledore was especially pleased with the fact that since that full moon in June, Remus had kept his mind unaided every time. They couldn't explain it and could only believe that it had something to do with Harry, but the only way to test that theory was for other werewolves to stay with their children at the full moon and that wasn't about to happen.

He had also had to remind Snape of his promise not to reveal anything about Remus. Snape had been livid at Sirius' freedom and tried to get Harry and his friends expelled for being out of grounds and attacking a teacher. Dumbledore decided there were extenuating circumstances and since they were at the end of the year there was no use in detention. So Harry and his friends had instead gone to celebrate Buckbeak's escape with Hagrid. No one knew how, but apparently Buckbeak had managed to escape from right under the Minister and the executioner's noses. Remus thought Dumbledore knew how and he had the vague feeling this had something to do with Ms. Granger's time-turner.

The following years hadn't been easy. Remus almost died of a heart attack a hundred times over during the Triwizard Tournament and Voldemort's return. The Ministry had sent a spy to Hogwarts and she had managed to torture Harry right under their noses because Harry was afraid she'd find out about Remus' lycanthropy and take him away from his father. Remus had been livid at the end of the year when he saw the scars on his son's hands and Dumbledore had to ship Dolores Umbridge to St. Mungo's in a rush so Remus didn't kill her.

Then, right before Remus found the scars, Sirius almost fell through the Veil of Death at the Ministry of Magic when Harry had seen a vision of Voldemort torturing Remus and had been unable to reach them because Umbridge had fired Remus on the grounds of inappropriate behavior. Umbridge stated that Remus living together with someone to whom he was not legally married was against Hogwarts' rules and a bad example to the students.

All of this happened right after Dumbledore had to leave because the Defense study group Harry had put together had been caught. Remus and Sirius had gone to Grimmauld Place, which was serving as Headquarters for the revived Order of the Phoenix.

Unable to reach them Harry had rushed to save Remus. Sirius had been dueling Bellatrix Lestrange next to the veil and she hit him with a stunner. Both Harry and Remus thought he'd gone through and it was all Remus could do to stop Harry from following Sirius. He couldn't lose both of them was all he thought. But then, in a moment of distraction Harry had followed Bellatrix out of the Hall. Remus had run after them but they had taken both lifts He just managed to get in the Atrium in time to see Voldemort possess Harry and taunt Dumbledore into killing him.

His son was in agony and there was nothing he could do. He threw himself forward with no thought to his safety and embraced Harry's body. In a scream of anguish Voldemort left Harry and later Dumbledore said that was because Harry was full of love; Harry said that when his dad embraced him all he could think of was all four of his parents. Dumbledore had portkeyed them to his office at Hogwarts where he and Harry had sat for what felt like ages feeling numb. They had stayed in that same position they were when they took the portkey, slumped on the floor hugging each other, until Dumbledore arrived with Sirius by his side They couldn't believe their eyes and had both lunged at the man.

Apparently on seeing where Sirius was fighting, Dumbledore had sent a shielding charm at the archway, which made Sirius roll through the shield and fall to the side of it. But from where they were it looked like he had fallen through. Even Bellatrix, who had run instead of watching what happened, must have thought so from her taunts.

He had been a little bruised and frantic once he had been awakened and not seen Remus and Harry around but he was fine.

Harry's sixth year was rough. Voldemort came out of hiding and everything was tense. Dumbledore had wanted Remus to infiltrate the pack but Sirius pointed a major setback; everyone knew Remus Lupin had adopted Harry Potter there was no way he could be subtle. Remus found a friend he had made

during the first war to help in his place but dealings were difficult. Throughout the year Albus told Harry about Horcruxes and Harry relayed his knowledge to his parents and friends and Remus started having a sinking sensation he did not say out loud for fear. But deep down he knew. He knew Voldemort had made an extra Horcrux and he just didn't want to think his baby would have to die. He researched frantically for methods of destroying Horcruxes without destroying the vessel but found nothing. At the end of the year Albus Dumbledore was killed by none other than Snape, and all seemed lost. Later Sirius confronted Remus as he became more agitated and depressed and Remus confessed about the Horcrux. Sirius vowed they would not lose Harry.

Everything escalated quickly, suddenly Voldemort took over, the Order was being chased and Harry, Ron and Hermione were on the run. They had been plotting ways to get to the Horcruxes from Grimmauld Place, after Harry, Ron and Hermione had escaped from Bill and Fleur's wedding. They had abandoned the place after Snape's betrayal but Remus had known that was the only safe place for them to go and he and Sirius had joined them. Miraculously, after learning of his brother's attempt to destroy Voldemort, Sirius and Kreacher found an understanding. The kids had gone to the Ministry to try and get a Horcrux. Remus couldn't use Polyjuice because he was a werewolf and even Sirius acknowledged that the three kids would work better together than if he was one of them. They never came back. Remus only had time to get a Patronus telling them to leave when he saw Harry, Ron and Hermione Disapparating from the window leaving a stunned Death Eater behind. The kids had been afraid the Death Eater could get inside but that was not the case, and Remus and Sirius kept using the place as a safe house and Order headquarters.

He had seen Harry briefly when he received a message from Bill that the kids were with them. Harry had told them he had destroyed a Horcrux and that they knew where to find another but said nothing more. The next day Harry, Ron and Hermione were gone with a message, "I love you dad." They would see each other again only in the final battle.

Xxxx

"So Snivellus was good in the end...who would have thought?" Sirius mused. He, Remus and Harry were seated in the front steps of Hogwarts surveying the battlefield, now empty.

"I think good is going to far love, but definitely on our side," Remus said and looked at Harry who was watching Ginny. He pulled him in a hug and said, "Go to her. Don't let seventeen years pass," he finished motioning to Sirius with his head.

Harry nodded and hugged him back, "I'm glad you are okay dad," he said thickly and then turned and hugged Sirius, who was at his other side, "You too daddy's puppy."

"Okay, stop with the daddy's puppy. If you hadn't been gone for so long I'd curse you."

Harry smiled and ran away. Sirius scuttled closer to Remus and threw his arm around the man who was watching Harry. "See? Told you he would manage okay."

"He almost died! What am I saying he did die and came back by a miracle," Remus said shakily hiding his face in Sirius' robes.

Sirius kissed his head and whispered, "I know. But he's okay. We all are. Look there," he said and Remus looked at where Sirius was pointing to Tonks and Kingsley hugging and kissing, "We are all fine and now those two get to go home to their Teddy just like we get to go home with our Harry."

Remus smiled and kissed Sirius. Yes, they would be fine.

The end

Xxx

A/N: I hope you enjoyed and thank you all for reading.

Humongous thanks to SWaddict1986 for betaing!

I know I didn't say who lived and who died but I wanted to leave that open for your imagination.
