

Disclaimer for "The Marauders read Power of Hogwarts": I don't own the Harry Potter series and I definitely don't own the Midnight Series

Disclaimer for "Powers of Hogwarts": This story is loosely based on the Half-Blood Prince which is not mine. This story will also contain facts that were in the Half-Blood Prince. If you haven't read the book and don't want to be spoiled, don't read.

This story is also a continuation of Midnight Guardian, Trials of a Champion and Burden of a Destiny. Reading those stories first will probably help understand this one.

"The Marauders Read Power of Hogwarts"

"MOONY!" was the cry heard through the night at Potter Manor. It had not been the first but would be the last. Mr. Harold Potter had once again raced to the boys room and to his bewilderment he had had to race once to the guest room where Lily had been in the middle of a nightmare also calling for Moony and sobbing her heart out when she woke up. This time he found that Remus, Lily and James were trying to shake a thoroughly trashing Sirius Black. Now normally he would have said something

about the girl in a nightgown in his son's room but tonight he said nothing. He was honestly baffled at what was going on.

After finally rising Sirius who had taken one look at them and then latched himself at Remus as if the boy would vanish in thin air Harold asked;

"Do you kids think you can go back to sleep?"

The four teens shook their heads and Mr. Potter sighed. He took a peak at the watch.

"Well, it's almost four. I guess you could just get up. Why don't you get dressed and go make yourselves some breakfast? Don't wake the elves though!"

The four subdued teens nodded and Mr. Potter went back to bed. He had no idea why they couldn't sleep but he had a long day ahead of him and needed some rest.

"Are they asleep?" Mrs. Potter asked worried once he went back to bed.

"No, they decided to just wake up."

"Oh," she said vaguely. "I best wake up then and get breakfast ready."

"No way, if those four did something that is keeping them from sleep let them deal with it!" Mr. Potter said as he held his wife close. As he closed his eyes he missed the worried frown of his wife and had no idea that she was worrying about one Harry Potter.

After a very subdued breakfast the four teens went back to James' room and flopped down on their respective spots.

"Now what?" Remus asked.

“Now we wait. The book never came this early- ouch!” James stopped talking and rubbed his head when another book dropped on his head from the air. He took it and first read the note attached.

“Thought you’d want this earlier. Don’t take everything at face value.”

Lily took the note, “Who do you think wrote this?”

“Must be whoever is sending us the books,” Remus said examining the note. “The handwriting looks familiar.” He frowned. “What do you think they mean by don’t take everything at face value?” Lily shrugged.

“Power of Hogwarts,” James muttered. “Well, the title is better than the last one at least,” he shrugged and started reading.

Chapter 1

A New Life

“Hopefully one where Padfoot is with you Harry!” Lily said firmly.

War. W.A.R. Three simple letters that when put in the proper order can cause so much damage. War can bring out the best in people, it can bring out the worst in people and it can make people realize just how precious (and short) mortal life really is, especially if you are one of the deciding factors of which way the war will end.

War forces children to mature too early, facing horrors and pain that the most experienced of adults cringe away from. War also forces one to see that even the smallest of victory comes with a price.

That was how Harry James Potter felt. At the age of fifteen he had seen more horrors than he cared to remember. His parents had been murdered by the dark wizard Voldemort.

"WE KNOW! STOP MAKING ME RELIEVE MY DEATH!"

"James, shush or your dad will come," Lily hushed him.

He had survived only to spend twelve years at the Dursleys, his only living relatives, as what could only be classified as their servant. His years at Hogwarts had been a mixture of joy and pain. He had finally made friends but had fought for his life nearly every single year. He had faced Voldemort multiple times, saved his best friend's sister from death, fought a Basilisk, held back Dementors to save his godfather, witnessed the death of a classmate, and faced a corrupt Ministry head on when a Ministry appointed teacher tried to silence him.

However, those events weren't what pushed Harry Potter over the edge, causing him to leave the world he had grown to love despite the trials he had faced over the years. He could handle it all and so much more as long as his family was with him but it wasn't meant to be. Harry still didn't like to think about that night. He still had nightmares of the night he had been taken from Hogwarts to the Department of

Mysteries where he faced off against Death Eaters. Members of the Order of the Phoenix (including his guardians Sirius Black and Remus Lupin) had come to his rescue, led by Headmaster Albus Dumbledore but that had been one of many mistakes. Harry had once again faced Voldemort but this time he had been beaten and nearly killed before Professor Dumbledore came to his rescue. The Dark Lord had been detained from the Department of Mysteries but in the end it wasn't enough. In the end he had lost one of the people who made his life worth living.

He had lost Remus.

"It's okay Paddy," Remus said shakily as he patted Sirius' back while the boy clung to him and bawled his eyes out. "I died for Harry. Harry is worth dieing for." He said as much to calm himself as to calm Sirius. He looked at the other two for help but when he saw that both were crying and clinging to each other he lost all hope.

Waking up in the hospital wing at Hogwarts and seeing his fallen guardian was all it took for Harry to realize that he was a danger to those he cared about. Remus was only the first of the long line of people who would die because they were trying to protect one teenager who found trouble like a magnet. He had managed to leave that night with the help of Hogwarts and Fawkes before anyone realized that he had even awakened. To save those he loved Harry walked away knowing that he was making himself a target for Voldemort. He was magically protected by Fawkes but that wouldn't stop people who know what the-boy-who-lived looked like to realize that Harry was indeed him.

“Then go back home Harry! Please!” James begged.

Upon leaving the wizarding world nearly a month ago Harry had taken up a new identity: Jonathan Orion Evans. He figured that everyone would be looking for a ‘Harry James Potter’ or even ‘James Evans’ so Harry had used the middle names of his guardians with his mother’s maiden name.

“That’s so sweet of you Harry,” Lily wiped her eyes. “Now do as your father says!”

In addition, Harry had managed to purchase colored contacts that changed his intense green eyes to a deep blue ones. He hated covering up his eyes since they were the only feature he had inherited from his mother but his eyes were too distinctive. Everyone knew Harry Potter had green eyes. Harry also made an effort to hide his messy black hair and lightening bolt scar at all times. When he was out, he wore a hat. When he was at work, Harry wore a surgeon’s cap.

“Work?” Sirius asked raising his head from Remus shoulder.

Oh yes. Harry’s current job was at a local hospital where he worked as an orderly. Obtaining the job had actually been a complete accident on Harry’s part. He had just arrived in Muggle London and being the trouble attracting person he was, witnessed a severe five car accident. Harry didn’t hesitate. He hurried to help along with a few others, one of them being a doctor at a nearby hospital. Harry and the doctor worked side by side until help arrived. The tall, middle aged doctor had been impressed and after the accident had been cleared struck up a conversation with Harry who introduced himself as Jonathan.

“Jonathan,” Remus whispered. “Thanks Harry.”

Harry had admitted that he was an orphan of murdered parents but claimed to be seventeen instead of nearly sixteen. He also admitted that he had hit a spot of trouble lately and had lost someone dear to him. The doctor, Doctor Henry Rolands, was sympathetic to Harry’s story and decided to help him out. As it turned out, two hundred and fifty pounds didn’t last very long. Harry wasn’t able to find an apartment he could afford and had to sleep at the hospital. When Dr. Rolands discovered this, he offered his guest room. Harry had originally declined but after two weeks of pestering from the overprotective doctor, Harry gave in just to shut the man up. He still often slept at the hospital since he was normally paged when he wasn’t scheduled to work but a few hours away from the chaos was always a nice change.

“Lily, what are you doing?” James asked.

“I’m writing the nice doctor’s name down. We ought to send him a thank you basket or something.”

“Yes, because he won’t find that odd at all!” Sirius snorted.

Working at the hospital had brought a lot of surprises Harry’s way. After a week of working, Harry discovered that he could vaguely sense other people’s actual emotions if he concentrated hard enough. It wasn’t anything definite just a faint glimmer of what people were feeling at the moment. It had helped Harry immensely and had slowly become a more reliable ability. It was still faint but Harry liked it that

way. It didn't do well to be bombarded by someone's emotions when you were trying to do your job.

Remus pointedly stared at James who ignored him completely and kept reading.

Harry's other magical surprise wasn't as welcomed as the first. He was starting to grasp his empathic ability

"James!" Remus prodded as James had coughed at exactly the words 'empathic ability'. "Could you re-read that please?"

"Don't want to," James moaned in a small voice.

"The first step to acceptance is acknowledgement James," Lily encouraged him.

"Empathic ability," James said miserably. "But the ministry can't know!" he begged hysterically.

"They won't," Sirius assured him. "We- er- I'll make sure of that," he finished miserably.

while talking to a sick little girl in the children's ward when all of a sudden his hands started to glow faintly. It was only for a moment but Harry felt extremely weak afterwards while the girl felt better than she had in a long time. She was still ill but her road to recovery had taken a jump start. This minor healing ability that he had was difficult to practice since he couldn't make the ability work when he wanted it

to. It was more like it worked when it wanted to leaving Harry to tag along for the ride.

“Well, that’s unexpected,” Lily blurted out of words.

The healing ability had come in handy when it worked and when it didn’t drain Harry completely but it was still risky. He had to be extremely discrete since he really couldn’t tell anyone that he could heal people. Over the next two weeks Harry had learned how to sense when the ability was coming which gave him a small warning but he still had a long way to go to control it completely. He didn’t know if these were temporary powers or permanent but since he hadn’t had any sort of outburst since that night at the Ministry, Harry was guessing that his magic had finally matured completely into these powers. He knew he should ask someone but he had no one to turn to. Everyone in the wizarding world believed he had abandoned them.

“I’m sure we’re frantic with worry Harry James so come back home now!” Sirius ordered.

Harry’s only connection to the magical world surprisingly was Fawkes, Professor Dumbledore’s phoenix. The bird usually appeared once a week to check on Harry, dropping off the latest issue of the ‘Daily Prophet’ so Harry was kept up to date. It was through that route of information that Harry had learned of the Ministry’s formal declaration of Voldemort’s return and the appointment of Rufus Scrimgeour as the new Minister of Magic. Harry had also learned that ten Death Eaters had been

arrested that night including Peter Pettigrew, Barty Crouch, Jr., Lucius Malfoy, and one of the Lestrange brothers. (Harry couldn't remember which one.) They had all been sentenced to Azkaban but who knew how long they would stay there before Voldemort broke them out again.

Harry had also noticed advertisements for Weasley Wizarding Wheezes at number ninety-three, Diagon Alley. It seemed that the Weasley twins had indeed opened the joke shop that they worked so hard inventing products for last year. There had been plenty of reports concerning safety during these dark times along with several Death Eater attacks that caused several deaths, including Order of the Phoenix member Emmeline Vance. Surprisingly, there also hadn't been any articles about his disappearance which Harry figured was to ensure that Voldemort didn't find out about it. Too bad that was Harry's entire reason for leaving.

"Well, we're not letting him know!" Sirius scowled.

"Poor Emmeline," Lily sobbed. "She's so nice."

Every time Harry saw Fawkes he would ask two questions: "how's Sirius" and "how's everyone else".

"You could just go home and see for yourself," Remus offered.

He would always receive the same answer. Fawkes would look at Harry sympathetically before letting out a sad trill as if he was saying 'they're alive but

missing you'. It took every ounce of self restraint not to give in and return home to Black Manor but Harry couldn't. He couldn't risk Sirius meeting the same fate as Remus.

Sirius rolled on the bed in agony moaning, "Why, why must he be so stubborn!"

So Harry went through the motions of working at the hospital trying to master his new abilities while training himself any way he could that wasn't magical since he didn't know how strong Fawkes' protection was. He had no doubt that people were waiting for him to use magic and alert everyone to where he was. Considering what had happened just before he left, Harry figured that there were a lot of people who wanted a word with him.

Living as a Muggle did take some adapting on Harry's part. He had gone from a world of magic to a world of technology with very little training. His co-workers found it funny that Harry had never used a computer or a pager before.

"A what now?" James asked.

"Muggle gadgets James, don't worry your pretty little head with them," Lily said patting his head.

"You think my head is pretty," he grinned stupidly and Lily smacked him.

Thankfully he was a quick learner since every ward in the hospital quickly learned how good he was with people. It wasn't uncommon for Harry to be in the children's

ward one minute and the emergency ward the next trying to calm someone down although it was almost impossible to pull him out of the children's ward between the hours of seven and nine o'clock every night.

The children had quickly grown to love Harry's bedtime stories of a world of magic with the evil wizard Riddle facing off against the Phoenix Knights. The nurses and doctors in the ward often stood in the background and watched as Harry captivated every child in the room no matter how old they were. Most of the adults felt that Harry had an overactive imagination with the preciseness he used to describe the goblins, trolls, centaurs, and dragons but didn't voice their opinions since the children were happy.

That was usually the way things were with Harry. Doctor Rolands had discretely mentioned Harry's difficult life to his fellow doctors so everyone simply kept an eye on young 'Orion Evans' (John was a rather popular name so everyone just called Harry 'Orion' or 'Ori' for short).

Remus glared at Sirius.

"Not my fault I'm unique." Sirius shrugged.

They were there for him if he needed him but Harry usually just forced himself to stay busy. Working at the hospital kept Harry's mind off of everything happening

outside the walls of the hospital. Working kept his mind off of the fact that he had just lost a father.

Lily strangled a sob, "M'okay," she mumbled when James rubbed her arm. Remus kept looking forward with a stony mask and Sirius gave him a quick hug.

Like every day, the sound of Harry's beeping pager would pull him out of his accidental nap in the employee lounge. Opening his eyes, Harry blinked away the cloudiness from sleeping in his contacts before glancing at his watch. It was almost six in the evening. Grabbing his pager, Harry suppressed a groan when he saw that he was needed in the emergency ward. He had amazingly slept for two hours without a nightmare but he had hoped for another hour of sleep before his long evening shift.

Holding back a yawn, Harry pulled himself to his feet and clipped his pager to the waistband of the hospital issued pants he wore before leaving the lounge for the emergency ward. That was probably one of the best perks of this job. His attire was provided for. All of the money he made went directly into an account that Doctor Rolands had helped him open at a nearby bank for Harry to use when needed. It had been difficult since Harry had no form of identification but luckily Doctor Rolands knew someone at the bank and had a few strings pulled.

Reaching the emergency ward, Harry was almost knocked over by the overwhelming feelings of frustration and fear. He quickly regained his bearings and looked around to see that the entire waiting room was full with people and it looked like the doctors and nurses were running around frantically. Snapping out of his shock, Harry quickly approached the nurse's station and was instantly grabbed by a long blond haired nurse named Anna who was only a few years older than him. "A bus collided with a truck, Ori," Anna said quickly. "Dr. Rolands wanted you to assist him. He's in Examination Room Eight."

Harry nodded and hurried to small room and looked through the small window to find the tall doctor with graying-brown hair talking to a girl in her mid-teens with short blond hair that was on the examination table. There were two adults also in the room seated next to the table who had to be her parents. The mother looked exactly like the daughter only about twenty years older while the father had light brown hair and looked like he had put in some serious manual labor for a long period of time. The parents were unmarked while the girl had a few bumps and scrapes in addition to her right ankle that was already that looked badly swollen. Closing his eyes, Harry concentrated on the occupants of the room and could sense nervousness and fear along with protectiveness. He quickly pushed the feelings aside and knocked on the door.

The door opened to reveal a smiling Dr. Rolands. "Ori," he said cheerfully as he stepped aside to let Harry enter. "Thanks for coming so fast." Dr. Rolands closed the

door once Harry entered and turned back to his patient. "Juliet Swanson, Mr. and Mrs. Swanson, this is Orion Evans. He is going to help me out tonight. I swear that he and I haven't lost a patient yet."

Harry looked at Dr. Rolands with a raised eyebrow. There were sometimes Harry just couldn't understand the doctor's strange sense of humor. "You are rather odd," Harry said seriously. "You know that right, doctor?"

Dr. Rolands looked at Harry and smiled. "I'm not odd, Orion," he said sounding like he was gently reminding Harry of something they had discussed before. "I am unique. Now, why don't you prepare Juliet while I go search for those x-rays."

"See, he's like me," Sirius said.

"If you're unique Sirius that means no one can be like you," Remus said slowly.

"Spoil sport!"

Harry nodded and moved toward the examination table while Dr. Rolands left the room. He prepared the table Juliet was on so she was a little more comfortable, aware that the Swanson family was watching his every move. He could feel their curiosity towards him overpowering the rest of their emotions. Glancing at them, Harry forced a patient smile before saying: "you can ask your questions. I don't mind."

“How did you know?” Mrs. Swanson asked in surprise.

Harry shrugged his shoulders. “Because everyone does,” he said simply. “I get it more when I’m called down here to work than upstairs because up there everyone just thinks I’m a volunteer. I’m not a doctor, just an orderly. Dr. Rolands usually asks for my help because I’m the only one here who can stand his odd sense of humor without taking offense to it.”

“No offense but you still look rather young even for an orderly,” Mr. Swanson said skeptically. “You don’t look a day older than sixteen.”

Harry bit back a smile. At least he was finally looking close to his age. For years everyone thought he looked two years younger than his actual age until his long awaited growth spurt last year. He was finally at an average height for his age and with the muscle he had put on from training over the past few years was no longer the scrawny little kid that had lived with his Aunt and Uncle in a cupboard under the stairs. “I’m seventeen, actually,” Harry lied smoothly as he pulled up a chair and sat down. “I’m told that when I’m thirty I’ll be grateful that I look younger than what I am.”

Mrs. Swanson smiled compassionately. "But it's probably extremely annoying right now," she said. "So...Orion, that's a rather unique name. Your parents must have a thing for Astronomy."

"The whole bloody family!" Sirius cried exasperated. "I really don't know how Narcissa escaped the fate."

Harry shrugged his shoulders noncommittally. "My middle name's Orion," he said. "First name is actually John. It just became too confusing with so many Johns working here so everyone started calling me Orion." Out of the corner of his eye, Harry could see Juliet trying desperately not to stare. He winked at her and saw her blush before looking away quickly.

Mrs. Swanson noticed the exchange and let out a laugh. "Orion, please excuse our daughter," she said. "Juliet's a little shy."

The door opened as Dr. Rolands entered with the x-rays. Juliet luckily only had a severe sprain. Harry helped Dr. Rolands bandage the injured ankle before retrieving a wheel chair while Dr. Rolands gave the Swanson family some final pointers before declaring them free to go. When Harry returned, he carefully put Juliet in the wheelchair sending her parents into laughter at the sight of her red face before they wheeled her out.

Harry continued helping Dr. Rolands with some more injured people until seven o'clock arrived and he was forced to leave for his nightly visit to the children's ward. He hurried up three flights of stairs before running down hallways until he reached his destination. Sliding into the room, Harry was welcomed by a roar of cheers of excited children. He took his normal spot in the center of the room and waited patiently for everyone to calm down which surprisingly only took a few moments.

Glancing around, Harry noticed that there were a few parents seated off to the side looking on with smiles on their faces. It wasn't uncommon for a few to sit in since their children often talked about Ori's stories. Clearing his throat, Harry turned his attention to the children. "Now, where were we?" he asked curiously.

"You were going to tell us about the enchanted lake tonight, Ori," answered a little six-year-old boy excitedly.

"Ah, yes," Harry said with a nod. "Thank you, David. The enchanted lake in front of the castle holds many secrets known only to those who are brave enough to dive into the dark depths. Everyone knows of the large squid that likes bask in the sun and even play catch with the stones people throw him from the shore. Everyone knows of the Grindylows and also are extremely aware that they should stay away from them."

“What are Grindylows, Ori?” asked a nine-year-old boy with short black hair.

Harry turned to him and smiled. “Grindylows, Jack, are very small water creatures,” he said quietly causing all of the children to lean forward excitedly as if they were learning a bit secret. “They are very small when compared to humans but don’t let their size fool you.” Harry slowly walked towards Jack and gently wrapped his fingers around Jack’s wrists. “They are very aggressive and will attack anyone who invades their waters with their long and powerful fingers.” Jack gasped as Harry released Jack’s wrists and turned to the entire group. “If you ever see one, be sure to have fish with you. They certainly prefer that to humans.”

Relieved sighs filled the air along with a few chuckles from some of the parents.

“But like I said, everyone knows about them,” Harry continued as he moved back to the center of the room and motioned for everyone to be quiet. “What they don’t know and don’t dare to discover is the secret village in the deepest depths of the lake. This village contains beings with their own language that can not be understood above water. If they were to speak to a human above the surface it would only sound like screeches and give you a rather painful headache very quickly.” Harry thought for a moment before raising his hand and bringing it down as if scratching against an invisible wall. “Think of the sound fingernails make on a blackboard.” Quite a few shuddered at the description. “Under water, however, their voices hold

a sort of melodic tone, none of us humans could ever have. They have grayish skin with long and wild, dark green hair. Their eyes are yellow and always watching. They are warriors of the water, noble creatures and expert swimmers with their powerful silver tails—”

“—Mermaids!” a five-year-old girl with long red hair shouted out.

Harry turned to the little girl and smiled. “Merpeople, Emma,” he corrected gently.

“Would you all like to hear about them?”

At everyone’s nod, Harry continued explaining about the merpeople and the mysteries of the lake in front of Hogwarts. Of course he had never given the ‘castle’ a name or the real reason it was there since it would cause a lot of problems if the Ministry ever found out but these were kids who didn’t know that Harry’s ‘fantasy world’ really existed. He could also sense that for two hours every night these kids weren’t feeling the woes of their ailments and was just glad that in a small way he was helping them get through these trying times.

Once story time was over, Harry helped tuck the children in before leaving the ward. He could see the smiles on their faces as they drifted off to sleep. Seeing them in their beds reminded Harry of the numerous times he had been in the hospital wing

at Hogwarts. He remembered waking up and seeing Sirius and Remus there waiting for him. They always waited for him. *They had done so much for me and I never got the chance to thank them for it.*

“There was no need for thanks,” Remus said huskily.

Walking back to the emergency ward, Harry fought back the tears that threatened to come as everything hit him quickly. He knew he would never deal with Remus’ death as long as he stayed here but this job was only temporary. Every place he went could only be temporary because staying in one place too long would make everyone around him a target. He was determined not to risk anyone else because Voldemort was obsessed with him. In the grand scheme of things, his life really didn’t matter.

After all, his life had been determined for him before he had even been born.

Sirius wiped his eyes in his sleeves and almost jumped when a voice said from behind James, “Now those red eyes are not a good omen. Tell me everything now.”

Mrs. Potter sat on her chair and waited.

“When did you come in?” James asked.

“In the grand scheme of things. Now tell me the rest quietly, Harold is sleeping.” And they did, and by the time they finished they were all crying and Mrs. Potter had Remus in a hug and was smoothing his hair.

A/N: Welcome back and thanks for reading and reviewing.

Not mine.

Chapter 2

Past Reminders

Walking down the empty hospital hallway during the early morning hours, Harry tried to focus on the present but his mind kept drifting to the past. He couldn't help thinking about the day he had started feeling other people's emotions.

James stopped reading and looked around suspiciously.

"There are no ministry employees lurking in your bedroom James," Lily said annoyed.

"Better safe than sorry," James said back.

He had been in the middle of his shift, helping in the intensive care ward when all of a sudden he could feel soft waves of pain and confusion. He was confused and frightened at first. Were these emotions coming from Voldemort? He hadn't felt

anything from the Dark Lord for quiet some time and even when he had it wasn't anything like he was feeling now. Voldemort's feelings were always overwhelming. These emotions were more like a gentle breeze around him.

"You know, now that I think about it, I bet the way Harry feels Voldemort's emotions through their connection is enhanced by his empathy," Remus pondered.

"Oh, thank you Moony, because knowing Snake face has a connection with Harry wasn't bad enough!" Sirius complained. Remus shrugged.

Startled, Harry started to look around for the source of the faint emotions and finally found an elder man connected to endless machines in a nearby room. The man had a painful look on his face and was moaning softly. Harry didn't waste any time and ran for help. As it turned out, the patient's sedatives and painkillers were wearing off causing him to awaken too soon. The patient was once again sedated and with that, the faint emotions stopped. Harry hadn't 'felt' anything else until that night in the children's ward. It had only lasted a moment but it had been a sign that it wasn't going to be a one time occurrence.

It had been difficult to work through the strange ability at first especially since he couldn't tell anyone about it. What could he tell them? They didn't believe in magic let alone the ability to sense someone else's emotions. He was alone to deal with it while his own emotions were still so hard to control.

"So you go back home and ask Sirius for help," Mrs. Potter said reasonably.

Lily patted her arm and shook her head, "We already tried that."

Waves of sorrow and pain tended to release the hold he kept on his own feelings towards his guardians, friends and everything else he had been through which he had fought so hard to bury.

At times it felt like this newfound ability was taunting him, punishing him for leaving the way he did. He always seemed to pick up the negative emotions but then again, not many were happy about spending time in a hospital. It had taken a lot of patience and a lot of practice with his Occlumency studies but slowly Harry had managed to keep a barrier between his own emotions and everyone else's most of the time. He still had weak moments but they only came when he was extremely exhausted now.

Harry had to admit that he wasn't surprised about his empathy. There had been a few instances over the past few years where Harry had been able to sense things, especially in Care of Magical Creatures class.

Remus looked pointedly at James who cried defensively, "I already admitted to him being an empath! What else do you want?"

There had also been the emotional outbursts whenever he grew extremely angry. All in all, it made sense but it was sort of anticlimactic. The powerful outbursts had been painful at times but they had helped him face off against Voldemort and Death Eaters. He wouldn't have that luxury anymore. He would be completely on his own.

It was hard for Harry to figure out whether he was scared or relieved to know that.

Of course Harry couldn't confidently say that the outbursts were indeed gone forever since it had only been a month since he had one but he had to admit that he actually felt more comfortable with himself than he had in a long time. It was rather ironic that Harry would finally be comfortable with his magical side in Muggle London (a place that could never see that side of him) but perhaps it was for the best. Harry had made the mistake in the past by revealing that he wasn't exactly normal. People had believed that he was evil just because he could speak to snakes. If they discovered what he could do now...

"Yes, Harry, tell no one," James instructed and amended at the glares he received, "Except Padfoot and- Just Padfoot. No one else!" he finished lamely going back to reading after coughing to clear his throat that had constricted at his almost slip.

Harry let out a sigh as his shoulders slumped forward. He knew it was pointless to wonder about things that could never be. Going back would put everyone in danger again. Replaying the days before he left over in his mind, Harry had to wonder if he had been insane to listen to a voice that sounded like his dead father. He didn't know what pushed him to believe the warnings. He just felt like he had no other choice.

"Well dear, I wouldn't say insane," Mrs. Potter said slowly. "Incredibly foolish yes, but not insane."

After that night Harry's head had been rather silent. He had heard nothing from 'his father' and his connection to Voldemort was basically nonexistent, not that he was complaining about the latter. He just wished he could find out if he had just imagined the entire thing or not. *Or if I'm completely out of my mind.*

Harry couldn't remember how many letters he had written to Sirius and Professor Dumbledore about what happened that night

"Yes!" Sirius cried.

only to throw them away at the last minute.

"No," Sirius moaned.

He just couldn't bring himself to admit to anyone that he had made a life altering decision based on a voice in his head, no matter how right it felt at the time. Harry had just discovered one of his guardians had died and heard that is other one would die if he stayed. He did what he felt he had to.

"Hey, Ori!"

Snapping out of his thoughts, Harry quickly turned around to see a fellow orderly, J.J., running towards him. J.J. was one of the many Jonathan's working in the

hospital. He was a few years older than Harry and a few inches taller. His light brown hair was a bit on the long side and tended to block his bluish-green eyes. J.J. was probably one of the most outgoing people Harry had ever met. Everyone had been extremely surprised when J.J. had taken Harry under his wing to show him the ropes since their personalities were completely opposite. Where J.J. liked to cause a scene, Harry preferred to remain in the shadows. That was probably why they got along so well. Harry didn't try to compete with J.J. and J.J. took away all the attention that Harry didn't want.

"I like this bloke," James nodded.

"Yes, you would," Lily snorted.

"I'm surprised you're working the late shift," Harry said with a smile. "Aren't you usually still out at some pub around this time?"

J.J. stared at Harry in offense. "Orion, why do you always think the worst of me?" he asked. "I'm never at a pub at—" he glanced at his watch "—four in the morning. My shift normally starts at six and I need at least three hours of sleep to function. Not all of us are insomniacs like you."

"THREE HOURS OF SLEEP!" Sirius cried horrified.

"Don't worry Paddy," Remus patted Sirius in the back, "No one will take away your eight hours of beauty sleep."

"I'd rather have ten," Sirius said hopefully and the others rolled their eyes.

"I am not an insomniac," Harry said defensively.

J.J. nodded and patted Harry on the shoulder. "Sure kid," he said clearly not believing Harry at all. "Just so you know Rolands is looking for you...again. I wish you would tell me what you did to him. That guy used to be such a git towards us, me particularly. Now he's like an overprotective father." Harry stiffened at the comment but J.J. didn't seem to notice. "Not that I'm complaining or anything. I'm just curious."

Harry shrugged his shoulders noncommittally. "I didn't do anything," he insisted. "He wanted to help me out and I accepted. Maybe he's just grateful that you trained me so he didn't have to." That was a lie. Harry knew that Dr. Rolands was appreciative that the orderlies had kept an eye on him, especially during the first couple of weeks. He had been extremely withdrawn from everyone except the patients in the hospital when he started working. With time Harry had become more personable but he still kept a distance between himself and everyone else. He wasn't looking to make friends. Friends always got hurt.

"Sirius, stop banging your head on the headboard," Mrs. Potter scolded.

"Yeah, you may lose the brain cells you don't have," Remus said flatly. Sirius stopped banging his head and glared at the snickering Remus.

J.J. stared at Harry skeptically for a moment. "Fine, don't tell me," he said with a shrug. "I go out of my way to help you out; allowing you the privilege of learning from my experience and this is how you repay me." J.J. inhaled sharply as he turned away as if he were about to cry but didn't want Harry to see.

Harry rolled his eyes and shook his head slowly. J.J. would do anything for a laugh unfortunately Harry wasn't really in a laughing mood at the moment. Who would be at four in the morning? "Overacting a bit, aren't you?" he asked as he enfolded his arms across his chest.

J.J. shot Harry a scowl. "You are no fun, Orion," he said then gave Harry a light shove towards the lift. "C'mon. Let's go find the good doctor and then we can decide how to waste the time remaining in our shift." Reaching the lift, J.J. pushed the 'down' button. "You clearly need some cheering up, stat. I think I shall have to prescribe a few hallway games to be administered immediately."

Harry decided to remain silent as he rubbed his eyes tiredly. J.J. always liked to talk in 'doctor language' when it came to causing trouble. Most of the orderlies found it funny at the number of ailments J.J. could solve by means of hallway games. In the early morning hours working at the hospital was extremely boring. Visiting hours were over and the majority of the patients were asleep. From what Harry had learned, J.J. had invented the 'hallway games' in an act of desperation to pass the

time. They could be something as stupid as taking a food tray and finding out who could slide longer on the recently mopped floors to wheelchair races through the hallways of one floor.

"I definitely like this J.J. He is marauder material," Sirius beamed.

The doors to the lift opened. Harry followed J.J. in before leaning against the wall and closing his eyes. He already knew what Dr. Rolands was going to say. It had been three days since Harry had left the hospital meaning that it had been three days since he had slept in an actual bed. Once Harry's shift ended at eight he would be ordered to go to the Rolands home and rest until his shift tonight. *Well, at least this way I wouldn't disturb anyone with my nightmares.*

As the lift descended, Harry once again fell into his thoughts of the past month away from the wizarding world. He remembered the panic he had felt when his healing ability had surfaced. For a while he had actually thought that he would never be able to touch any living creature again without draining himself. That didn't stop others from touching him, though. Harry quickly learned that it was only his hands that he had to worry about. It made sense that since his magic had been channeled through them for years with the use of a wand.

After a few more 'healing episodes' Harry had been able to recognize what could only be described as magic in him rushing to his hands moments before his hands

faintly glowed. Normally it happened while Harry was in the middle of talking to a patient about their illness. Harry could only assume that this ability worked because of Harry's compassion towards people or something like that. It wasn't exactly a scientific explanation and he wasn't too eager to test it out on everyone in the hospital to find out for certain so at the present time it would have to do.

The sound of the doors opening pulled Harry out of his thoughts. He glanced over at J.J., ignoring the concerned look on his face, and motioned for J.J. to lead the way. He was receiving too many of those looks lately...well, he had always been on the receiving end of concerned looks. People just weren't discrete about it anymore. Harry followed J.J. out of the lift to notice that they were approaching the office area of the hospital. *Dr. Rolands must be finally tackling his paperwork.*

J.J. stopped in front of the fourth door on the right and knocked before opening it. "Found him wandering the I.C.U.," he said as he entered with Harry following.

Dr. Rolands was sitting behind his desk that was overrun with stacks of papers. He took a long look at Harry before returning his attention to J.J. "Thank you, J.J.," Rolands said as he stood up. "You may return to your duties." J.J. nodded and left without another word, closing the door as he did so. Dr. Rolands slowly walked around his desk and stood in front of Harry for a moment before letting out a sigh.

“Forgive me for being blunt, Orion, but you look exhausted. When was the last time you had a decent night’s sleep?”

“Never,” Lily answered bluntly.

Harry looked away as he shrugged his shoulders. Truthfully, he hadn’t slept well since he had left Hogwarts but he wasn’t about to tell anyone why that was the case. Harry had gone through the nightmare phase last year when Cedric Diggory died. Sirius and Remus had helped him through it then. They understood that he felt guilty and helped Harry realize that he had done everything he could to save Cedric.

But had he done everything he could for Remus? Harry would never know for certain. At the time, he had thought he was doing what he needed to in order to ensure that Sirius and Remus were spared from Voldemort’s rage. At the time he had believed that Remus would survive the injuries given to him by Peter Pettigrew’s silver hand.

“Harry James Potter, if you don’t stop this nonsense right now I vow to come back as a ghost and haunt you until you go back to Padfoot!” Remus said in such a stern voice that instead of crying again because of Remus’ death James, Lily, Sirius and Mrs. Potter were nodding frantically. James even let an, “Yes, sir!”

Dr. Rolands' voice pulled Harry out of his thoughts. "Take a seat, Orion," he said softly and waited until Harry did so. "I suspect you know why J.J. brought you here." Harry nodded. "Orion...John,

"Yes, John is much better than Orion," Remus said smiling.

"Don't listen to him Dr. Rolands!" Sirius cried.

I know you still feel like you're imposing on me but I assure you that is just not the case. I enjoy having you around. You're a good kid, everyone here can see that. You have honestly been a godsend since you started working here. You are helping so many people. Why do you feel that you don't deserve the same?"

"That is an issue that will take years to answer," Mrs. Potter sighed.

Harry opened his mouth to answer when all of a sudden a faint stinging pain flared from his scar. The conversation instantly forgotten, Harry closed his eyes and bowed his head as he quickly ran through all the necessary steps for clearing his mind. The problem was the pain just wouldn't go away. It wasn't extremely painful but it was more than what he had felt in a long time. He could feel faint touches of anger and annoyance and instantly fought to push them away. *Not now! Why am I feeling him now?!?*

The emotions slowly faded but the pain remained. It was then that Harry was aware of the hand resting on his back. Distant hints of worry faded in and out. He opened

his eyes and raised his head to see Dr. Rolands with a concerned look on his face. In his haste to push Voldemort out, Harry had completely ignored the fact that he wasn't alone. He had ignored the fact that he was currently in the room with a Muggle doctor of all people.

"What's wrong, Orion?" Dr. Rolands asked in his 'doctor tone'. He instantly looked into Harry's eyes before resting a hand against Harry's forehead. "You're burning up! Why didn't you tell me you weren't feeling well? What are your symptoms? Aches? Pains? Dizziness? Nausea? How long has this been going on?"

"He reminds me of Madam Pomfrey," James said. "In a less threatening way."

Harry swatted Dr. Rolands' hand away in annoyance. He wasn't about to let his scar headaches become an area of study in a muggle hospital. "I'm fine, sir," he said firmly. "It's just a minor headache that took me by surprise. It's really nothing to worry about."

Dr. Rolands shook his head as walked back to his desk, opened one of the drawers and pulled out his keys. "I'm taking you home," he said firmly. "You need at least a day's rest. You have a fever and you're exhausted." Harry moved to protest but Dr. Rolands silenced him with a look. "I'm sure J.J. can cover for you or the remainder of your shift unless you would like me to admit you and run every single test I can come up with."

"Okay, he is as threatening as Madam Pomfrey," James amended.

Harry scowled and looked away. He knew Dr. Rolands would follow through with the threat just to make a point. The man had a stubborn streak to him that could rival anyone Harry had ever met. In some ways Dr. Rolands reminded Harry of Madam Pomfrey, the Hogwarts medi-witch that Harry had come to know rather well over the years. The thought made Harry wonder if stubbornness was a requirement for being a doctor or a healer.

“Then Harry will be a great Healer,” Lily nodded.

“That’s just mean Lily,” Remus said. “True but mean.”

Dr. Rolands moved to the door and opened it before turning and motioning for Harry to exit first. Letting out a sigh, Harry stood up and walked out of the office. He wasn’t surprised to see that J.J. was waiting for him. There was no doubt that J.J. had actually intended on following through with the ‘hallway games’. Dr. Rolands closed the door behind them and rested a hand on Harry’s shoulder as his eyes fell on J.J.

“Please notify your supervisor that Orion had to leave early due to illness,” Dr.

Rolands said professionally.

J.J. looked at Harry worriedly for a moment then shifted his gaze to Dr. Rolands and nodded. “Will do, doctor,” he said.

Dr. Rolands ushered Harry towards the lift and pressed the 'down' button. It took every ounce of self control for Harry not to move away from the doctor. J.J.'s comment about Dr. Rolands acting like an overprotective father had made him feel incredibly uneasy. He didn't want a father figure but he knew J.J. was right. Dr. Rolands had changed. Dr. Rolands had grown to care about the teen he had taken in. *That* would have to change.

The ride to Dr. Rolands' home was a quite one. With his scar still aching, Harry rested his forehead against the cool window. He was still dressed in his hospital attire since Dr. Rolands had insisted that they leave immediately, knowing that Harry would try to find a way out of leaving if given the chance. The sun had yet to rise which made the temptation to sleep even more inviting. Closing his eyes, Harry let his thoughts drift and was surprised how quickly he was able to relax. Maybe he was more than just a little tired.

The car came to a stop, startling Harry out of his partial daze to see that they had reached Dr. Rolands' house. It was a modest three bedroom house that reminded Harry a lot of his aunt and uncle's house on in Surrey. The major difference was that Harry was actually welcomed at Dr. Rolands' house. He wasn't treated like a freak and a slave. Perhaps that was what felt so wrong among other things. *Nothing is as it should be because of Voldemort. I should be home with Sirius and Remus waiting for my OWL scores to arrive.*

"Then go home!" James moaned.

Following Dr. Rolands into the house, Harry closed his eyes and focused on the feelings around him and let out the breath he wasn't aware he was holding when he didn't sense any odd emotions nearby. He could feel a hint of tiredness and knew that there were a few people in the neighborhood that were pulling themselves out of bed. Feeling like an intruder, Harry quickly pushed away the feelings and walked up the stairs to the guest room that he currently occupied. He refused to call it his room. His room was at Black Manor just as his home was Black Manor.

"And guess what? There is nothing like going home," Mrs. Potter said hopefully and waited.

Mindlessly, Harry entered the guest room and went through the routine he normally followed before crawling into bed.

Mrs. Potter huffed at Harry's lack of acknowledgement of her semi-order.

The moment his head hit the pillow, Harry could feel himself drifting off to sleep. He would worry about everything after a few hours of rest when he had a clearer head. He refused to make any more rash decisions. Any more rash decisions could get him killed. *"Or worse, expelled,"* as Hermione would say.

"Hermione reminds me too much of Moony. I can remember him using exactly those words when we were training to be Animagus," Sirius said fondly and then said in a high pitch voice, *"You can get horribly maimed, killed or worse, expelled."*

"My voice is not that girlish!" Remus protested.

As Harry fell into darkness, he didn't notice the gentle hands that tucked him in and checked for signs of illness. If he had, Harry would have insisted that he was fine then insisted that Dr. Rolands return to work. He knew it was cruel for him to be so cold to someone who had given so much but it was necessary. Harry could not become attached. The pain that came with caring was too much to handle.

It was a mixture of bright sunlight and the feelings of feathers against his face that brought Harry out of his slumber. Opening his eyes, Harry had to smile at the bright red feathers that blocked his vision. It seemed that someone else was catching up on some needed rest. Ever since that night when Fawkes had helped Harry leave the wizarding world, the phoenix had a tendency of appearing while Harry was sleeping and stayed by Harry's side until he awoke. The long visits made Harry wonder if Professor Dumbledore was at Hogwarts to notice how often his phoenix was gone for hours at a time.

"He probably doesn't think that is strange behavior. He might think Fawkes is just out hunting," Mrs. Potter said and then she huffed, "Old coot."

Turning onto his side, Harry gently pet the bird's soft feathers and bit back a laugh at the content trill Fawkes let out. It didn't take much to make Fawkes happy. *Just like*

Hedwig. Just like his 'family' in the wizarding world, there wasn't a day that passed without Harry hoping that his owl, Hedwig, was all right. He was surprised that he hadn't seen her at all in the past month but he figured that it was probably better this way. Everyone knew Harry Potter had a snow owl. She was just too easy to track to chance it.

Fawkes finally lifted his head and looked at Harry who smiled before reaching for his glasses. Sliding them on, Harry blinked as everything came into focus, along with Fawkes' sympathetic gaze. Harry let out a sigh as he sat up and once again caressed the bird's feathers. He glanced at the clock on the bedside table and could hardly believe it was early afternoon already. He had slept longer than he thought he would.

Returning his attention to Fawkes, Harry fell into the routine that he took whenever Fawkes visited. "How's Sirius?" he asked softly. Fawkes let out a soft gloomy trill as if to say 'he still misses you'.

"Of course I do!" Sirius cried.

Harry nodded as his gaze fell. "And everyone else?" Instead of answering, Fawkes nudged a rolled up issue of the 'Daily Prophet' towards Harry who took the hint and unrolled the newspaper and looking at the front page. Harry could hardly hold back his shock at the headline along with a picture of the Dark Mark underneath it.

THIRTY-THREE MUGGLES DEAD!

YOU-KNOW-WHO SIGHTED IN MUGGLE LONDON!

“WHAT?” the four teens cried and Mrs. Potter looked grim.

Aurors and Law Enforcement officials were called into action at four o'clock this morning as You-Know-Who officially made his presence known. Eye-witnesses claim that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named personally lead the attack on a Muggle neighborhood in London that killed thirty-three Muggles and injured twelve more. You-Know-Who and his followers appeared to be moving from house to house searching for something or someone.

“I don't like the sound of that,” Remus said grimly.

“He was definitely searching for someone,” an eye-witness revealed. “He told his followers to ‘find him’ and was really angry when they didn’t find the person.”

“Wanna bet I know who he is looking for?” Sirius bit his lips.

With You-Know-Who's hatred towards Muggles, many believe that You-Know-Who was searching for a witch or a wizard living in that area. The Ministry has quickly issued an order for all witches and wizards in or around the attacked area to send word to the Department of Law Enforcement for possible relocation for their own safety.

“Until we discover who You-Know-Who is targeting, we must act to protect those who may be caught in the crossfire,” Minister Scrimgeour stated. “We realize this may be an inconvenience to many but we hope that we will find You-Know-Who’s intended target quickly.”

This is the first attack since You-Know-Who lost ten of his followers in a Ministry raid in the Department of Mysteries, including Peter Pettigrew, Lucius Malfoy and Barty Crouch, Jr. (who everyone believed died in Azkaban years ago). Is this merely a retaliation to send the wizarding world into a panic or is there something more to You-Know-Who’s actions? Is there really someone in Muggle London that You-Know-Who is willing to search every house for?

“Oh, yes, please ask the obvious and give Harry stupid ideas!” Lily growled.

“They haven’t given him any ideas-“

“And you have been reading about your son for how long now? It’s obvious he’ll do something stupid to protect the Muggles!” she shrieked.

Harry let out a sigh as he set the newspaper down. He should have known Voldemort had been up to something when his scar started hurting. Voldemort’s action left a pain in the pit of Harry’s stomach. There was a chance that Voldemort was searching for someone else but if history was any indicator then that chance was slim to none. It was clear that Voldemort had discovered that Harry Potter was no longer protected by Albus Dumbledore and was currently hiding in Muggle London. The

question now was what to do about it. Harry wasn't ready to face him again but could he really stand by and let people continue to die because of it?

Lily gave James a dirty look.

No. If working at the hospital had taught Harry anything, it was that every life is precious and worth fighting for no matter how futile the effort may seem. It didn't matter if the person was a wizard, witch, squib, or muggle. There was no difference. A life was still a life. Muggles were just like witches and wizards. They were simply trying to make it through the day. Harry had to hold back a snort. It seemed that in his effort to not care, he had grown to care more than he had ever imagined.

Quiet waves of compassion brushed against Harry causing him to return his attention to Fawkes. The red and gold bird let out a soft reassuring trill. Harry let a smile escape as he gently scratched Fawkes' head. "It looks like we've run out of time, Fawkes," he said quietly. "I can't run again. Running would only put more people in danger but I can't stay either." Fawkes let out another compassionate soft trill. "If Voldemort *is* looking for me then I need to be seen somewhere other than Muggle London. I just wish we knew for certain."

Fawkes leapt into the air and flew over to windowsill before landing. Pushing off the bedcovers, Harry curiously followed the bird to the window and looked out. He didn't see anything out of the ordinary. He noticed that Mrs. Jansen was tending her garden across the street and a few children were riding bikes nearby. All in all,

nothing looked out of the ordinary. By habit Harry closed his eyes, reached out and could sense hints of happiness, excitement, tiredness, and...irritation?

Harry forced himself to relax and reached out once again and this time felt a touch of anger and hate in addition to the irritation. Opening his eyes, Harry looked out the window again, trying to find where the negative feelings were coming from but still saw nothing out of the ordinary. He turned to Fawkes who was watching him intently. "They're here, aren't they?" he asked. "They're here looking for me."

"No! How did they find him?" Remus cried worried. "RUN!"

Fawkes let out an affirmative trill sending Harry into motion. There was no time to waste. If Death Eaters were indeed in the neighborhood than Harry's presence was putting everyone else at risk. He quickly cleaned up and packed what he could in his backpack. He needed to get far away from here. There were plenty of families on this block alone. Harry didn't want to think of them being killed because of him, something he knew Voldemort wouldn't hesitate to do.

Was this a rash decision? Most likely but Harry truly believed that he had no other choice. He knew the children who lived in this neighborhood. He knew the families. They *were* good people who didn't deserve to be dragged into a war concerning a world they didn't even know about. This neighborhood didn't deserve to be wiped out for any reason, especially one man's obsession.

Once he was packed and attached his wand holster that held his holly wood wand to his right wrist, Harry grabbed some paper and a pen from his bedside table. He knew he couldn't go without leaving some sort of note for Dr. Rolands no matter how vague it would have to be. It couldn't be the exact truth but Harry didn't want to completely lie to the doctor either. *Unfortunately I don't have much of a choice.* With not much time to waste, Harry quickly wrote a generic note thanking Dr. Rolands for everything but something had come up forcing him to leave.

With an action that reminded Harry so much of a month ago, Harry left the note on his pillow and grabbed his backpack before approaching the patiently waiting Phoenix. He still wore his glasses since he everyone knew the-boy-who-lived had glasses and looked nearly identical to his father. Harry still looked a lot like James Potter but there now were differences than set them apart. Other than Harry's green eyes, Harry's hair was shorter and kept somewhat neat with some muggle products that J.J. had introduced him to. He was stockier than James Potter ever was from the physical training he had endured over the past few years but the Potter genetics still made him lean, not that Harry minded. He had received more than enough attention during his fifth year because he had put on a little muscle.

Fawkes let out a soft trill as he took flight and landed on Harry's shoulder. No words needed to be said. In the past month Fawkes and Harry had in a way reached a silent understanding between them. Fawkes knew what needed to be done and Harry trusted Fawkes' judgment.

"I don't," James snorted.

Closing his eyes, Harry felt a flash of warmth for a moment and knew that he was no longer in Dr. Rolands' home. He opened his eyes and noticed that he was on Charing Cross Road, across the street from the Leaky Cauldron. The weight disappeared from his shoulder as Fawkes took flight before vanishing with a flash of flames. Inhaling deeply, Harry mentally thanked Fawkes before returning his attention to the Leaky Cauldron.

This was certainly going to be interesting.

"The Leaky Cauldron?" Sirius asked in disbelief.

"He wants people to see him so Voldemort will leave the Muggles be," Mrs. Potter explained.

"But there may be Death Eaters there!" Sirius shrieked.

"I think that's what he is hoping," Remus said biting his lips.

A/N: Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Chapter 3

Two Worlds, One Threat

Once traffic was clear, Harry crossed the street and, with a deep breath, entered the Leaky Cauldron. The tiny, grubby looking pub was surprisingly crowded. The place wasn't as full as it normally was but there were still plenty of people sitting at the tables and standing at the bar. Standing behind the bar was Tom; the old bartender who was rather bald and resembled a toothless walnut. Harry didn't know a lot about the man, only that he was an extremely friendly, especially to Hagrid. All in all, the place hadn't changed at all since he had been here with the Weasleys nearly four years ago.

Before Sirius and Remus entered my life. He hadn't been to Diagon Alley after that. He had been shielded at Hogwarts after his 'kidnapping' for the summer before his third year for 'protection'. For the summer before his fourth year, Harry had picked up everything at Hogsmeade. Last summer, Harry hadn't been allowed to even leave Black Manor. It had felt so weird to actually have a parental figure at first but Harry

had quickly grown to welcome the protectiveness Sirius and Remus had for him. In his eyes, Sirius and Remus could do no wrong.

"I'll give you Remus," Mrs. Potter said slowly. "But Sirius? Really?"

"Mrs. P, I'm hurt. When have I ever done anything wrong?" Sirius asked theatrically.

"We don't have the time needed for the long list that would come, Paddy," Remus patted Sirius' head. "Let Prongs read."

Sirius and Remus had been the family he had always wanted.

Harry quickly pushed the thoughts out of his head and walked through the pub.

Distant waves of nervousness and fear brushed against him. Evidently the article in the 'Daily Prophet' had left quite a mark on the wizarding community. *Unless something else has happened that I don't know about.* Harry continued walking, showing no sign that he was aware in the slightest of what others in the room were feeling. Most would feel it was an invasion of privacy. Harry agreed but, considering what was happening, he needed to be cautious.

"Exactly Harry. Use all the advantages you have," James agreed.

"See, how he changes his tune fast," Remus muttered.

"Hey! I already admitted! How long will you remind me that I didn't want to believe he was an empath?" James cried.

“As long as we can rile you up,” Lily answered flatly and was met with a glare.

He walked out of the pub and into a small, walled courtyard. The door closed behind him, blocking the gentle waves of emotions. Harry let out a relieved sigh. There were times when he forgot what it had been like before his empathy had manifested. It had become second nature for him to reach out for confirmation or denial to what his other senses told him. Harry hadn't met a person yet who could hide their emotions completely. Some people were extremely talented in keeping their emotions from surfacing but Harry could still sense what they were hiding. He would need that talent in order to determine friend from foe, especially in the wizarding world.

“Yes, Harry. You need that desperately!” James cried.

Flicking his right wrist, Harry grabbed his wand and tapped the wall in a similar fashion that Hagrid had shown him almost five years ago. The brick he had touched trembled then wiggled before a small hole began to appear, growing wider and wider until a large archway stood in place of the wall revealing a cobbled street that twisted and turned out of sight. He could almost hear Hagrid's voice, welcoming him to Diagon Alley. It felt like a lifetime ago. So much had changed since then. He had changed so much since then.

Re-holstering his wand, Harry stepped through the archway aware that it instantly turned back into a solid wall, blocking him from the Leaky Cauldron. He started

towards Gringotts at a casual pace, waiting for someone to shout out his name but the funny thing was: no one did. No one seemed to even notice him. In fact, Harry finally realized that no one noticed him in the Leaky Cauldron either. He hadn't thought much of it at the time because everyone had been engaged in their own conversation but Tom usually greeted everyone that entered. *Well, he at least acknowledged when someone entered.*

Slowing his pace, Harry cautiously reached out again and could feel soft waves of emotions similar to what he had felt in the pub in addition to impatience. He discretely stepped out of the crowd and took a good look at the scene in front of him. People were hurrying from store to store clearly desperate to finish their shopping as soon as possible. Harry had to wonder if there was something going on that he didn't know about. Why were people so worried when Voldemort was attacking Muggle neighborhoods? If anything, Diagon Alley should be considered a safe area.

And I'm about to turn it into a battlefield. How thick could I be?

"Everyone has their shortcomings now and then," Sirius said sympathetically. "Now that you realized yours all you have to do is go back to the safety of Grimmauld Place and we'll be all happy." After that Sirius stared at the others for a while and then said faintly putting a hand to his heart, "I did not just say the safety of Grimmauld Place and happy in the same sentence?"

"I'm afraid you did Paddy," Remus said patting Sirius' back reassuringly.

Harry suddenly didn't know what to do anymore. He couldn't announce his presence in Muggle London and risk the lives of people who had no idea of Voldemort's existence but he couldn't risk the lives of witches and wizards either. No one deserved to be caught in the crossfire. Whatever was going to happen, Harry had to make sure that it was some place secluded, if there was such a place in London.

What I really need is someone to talk to but no one would understand what I'm trying to do...what I have to do.

"I am not even going to address that issue," Mrs. Potter said tiredly.

Closing his eyes, Harry turned around and started walking back to the Leaky Cauldron. He didn't know what to think, especially considering the fact that he was walking down Diagon Alley in broad daylight and no one had noticed. It was almost like he was walking around wearing his father's invisibility cloak that he had left in his trunk except for the fact that people walked around him. Everyone realized that someone was there, they just weren't aware of who that person actually was.

Suddenly, Harry remembered what he had been told the night he left Hogwarts. *"He is using his own magic to protect you, my child. He is shielding you from being found unless you want to be found."* Fawkes' protection was still there, shielding him from recognition. Harry couldn't believe he had forgotten about that in his need to forget

everything that happened that night and the night before. At the time it had been what he needed to do in order to survive. However, Harry didn't have the luxury anymore. *I want to be found. I need to be found.*

"Nooooooooooooo," James moaned.

A cool, soft breeze caused Harry to shiver slightly as he waited for the archway to reappear. His body was moving on autopilot as he walked through the archway and into the Leaky Cauldron. Remembering that night brought back so many images that Harry had fought to forget for the last month. He didn't want to remember Remus that way. The kind, gentle and protective man didn't deserve to be remembered as a victim of silver poisoning. Those purple lines all over Remus' face and arms...the visual proof of what affect Pettigrew's silver hand had towards werewolves made Harry sick to his stomach.

"Not just you," Lily said looking sad.

No. Harry refused to remember Remus like that. Remus had always been the voice of reason, always managing to find a solution in the chaos. Remus had always been the one to keep Sirius in check...

Remus puffed his chest proudly. Sirius glared at him.

well, except when the situation demanded for Sirius' overprotective nature to take hold. The Remus Lupin Harry wanted to remember was the man who taught him the

Patronus Charm, the man always offered an ear to listen to whatever had Harry stressed out and the man who always explained whatever strange behavior Sirius displayed.

“I’m afraid Harry, not even Moony and his wisdom can explain that,” James said flatly. Sirius nodded for a second until James’ words seemed to sink in and he proceeded to glare at James and the others who were snickering.

James’ head suddenly turned and he narrowed his eyes at the door.

“James?” his mother asked.

“I thought I heard something?”

“What?” Remus asked.

“Laughing.”

“That was us James,” Lily snorted.

“Yes, and not very polite I might add,” Sirius said crossing his arms. James looked at him and shrugged.

Unfortunately Harry couldn’t block that final look at his guardian out of his mind. It was permanently imprinted, coming forth whenever Harry thought about Remus and bringing all of the emotions that he felt that night with it.

Walking through the Leaky Cauldron towards the front door, Harry was so immersed in his own thoughts that he didn’t notice how the conversations around him slowly

came to a halt or the gasps that seemed oddly loud in the silence. Several people moved closer for a better look at the young man who kept his gaze lowered and his shoulders hunched forward slightly. No word was spoken until the young man who looked remarkably like the-boy-who-lived walked out of the Leaky Cauldron but afterwards...

Harry just kept walking, trying to decide what he should do. He walked down Charing Cross Road and reflexively kept his body relaxed but aware. Once again he pushed the thought of his family to the back of his mind. He was in Muggle London now and knew he couldn't afford to be caught off guard. He had seen the affects of being caught by surprise while working in the emergency ward at the Hospital.

The sound of two *cracks* behind him forced Harry to quickly turn around a reflexively flick his wrist so his wand was in his hand, ready to defend himself if necessary. He knew the sounds most witches and wizards made from Apparating all too well. At the moment, Harry would welcome an enemy but unfortunately what he was facing was something a lot worse. He was facing members of the Order.

A strangled "Yes!" was heard.

James stood up in a flash and opened the door. He peered outside but saw nothing. All the others followed.

"You heard that didn't you?" James asked.

“Yes,” Mrs. Potter said narrowing her eyes, “But there is nothing there. Let’s go back to our places. No James, leave the door open.”

They all went back to their places and for some strange reason Mrs. Potter took her wand out and started tapping her hand with it.

And Nymphadora Tonks and Kingsley Shacklebolt were probably two of the worst Order members that he could be facing at the moment (other than Sirius, of course). Both were Aurors which would make any sort of escape extremely difficult but that wasn’t the worst of it.

“Mhm,” was heard very faintly. James made to stand up again but a look from his mother had him continue reading.

Tonks was a member of the Black family and had proclaimed herself Harry’s ‘Honorary Aunt’, always adding humor to Black Manor. She was also horribly stubborn, just like Sirius and Remus. Harry knew he would have to face them eventually but he had hoped it would be after Voldemort found out that Harry was no longer in Muggle London. Everything depended on it.

Timid waves of nervousness and relief washed over Harry, clearly coming from Tonks. Kingsley was a little harder to read. The man seemed to be guarding his emotions rather well but Harry could still feel a hint of urgency and relief. These were not the emotions he needed to be feeling at the moment. “What are you two doing here?” Harry asked cautiously.

"You know," Mrs. Potter said conversationally. "I remember Harold talking about a trainee called Kingsley Shacklebolt. Your father was praising him and saying Kingsley would be as good as him one day, but honestly, I hope he is better or else poor Harry is doomed."

"MUM! Dad is a great Auror!"

"Yes, Mr. P is the best!" Sirius cried.

Mrs. Potter frowned and said with a strange glint in her eyes watching the empty space behind James, "Not so sure. He is lacking in stealth."

"Dad is very stealthy!" James defended his father. Lily and Remus on the other hand followed Mrs. Potter's gaze.

Tonks took a step forward but stopped when Harry took a step backwards. "Harry, we need to take you home," she said gently. "You're not safe out here. You-Know-Who is looking for you. He has been for weeks. The sooner we return you to Headquarters the better. Sirius—"

"—is safer this way," Harry interrupted.

"AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" Sirius growled and moaned and pulled his hair.

He was not going to let Tonks play the sympathy card. He already had more than enough guilt on his plate without Tonks adding to it. "I know Voldemort is looking

for me. Why do you think I'm here? Shopping? Wasting the day away? Death Eaters are searching through Muggle neighborhoods, killing families...innocent families." Tonks moved to take another step forward but was held back by Shacklebolt. "I don't expect you to understand but accept that this is the way it has to be."

This time Shacklebolt took a small step forward ever so slightly. "Harry, do you really think you can take them all on yourself?" he asked calmly. "Such a move is nothing short of suicide. We can't let you do that. You're still a kid, Harry. It's not your job to protect everyone. It is ours to protect you."

"No comment?" Mrs. Potter asked the air behind James.

"Mum," James said worriedly. "Are you feeling well?"

"Perfectly fine."

Harry looked directly at Shacklebolt, his eyes narrowing in anger. "At what cost?" he asked through his teeth. "I'm not a kid. I haven't been one for quite some time." At Tonks and Shacklebolt's sympathetic gazes, Harry bit back the urge to shout at them. Why couldn't they understand that he didn't have the luxury of being 'just a kid' anymore? The cost of people protecting *him* was just too great. Protecting *him* had cost Remus his life.

The sound of multiple *cracks* once again from behind forced Harry to quickly turn around but this time there were nearly a dozen cloaked and masked Death Eaters with their wands at the ready. Harry instantly found himself being pulled backwards as Shacklebolt placed himself in front of Harry while Tonks kept a grip on his arm. The two Aurors had fallen into 'protect Harry at all costs' mode, something that was bound to get them killed.

"Tonks, take Harry and go," Shacklebolt said quietly as he pulled out his wand. "Take him to Headquarters. You know our orders."

Tonks nodded and pulled Harry close but nothing happened. "I can't Apparate!" she said anxiously. "We're trapped. We have to run for it."

Shacklebolt let out a frustrated groan. "Just go!" he ordered.

"Yes, go! Stop staling! Get my baby out of there!" Lily cried desperately.

Before Harry could even protest he was being pulled by his arm towards the Leaky Cauldron, leaving Shacklebolt to face the Death Eaters alone. It wasn't long before Harry and Tonks ran face first into an invisible barrier. *So much for running for it.* Shaking the shock out of his head, Harry didn't have time to think before arms wrapped around him and pulled him to the ground. A curse sailed over their heads. The battle had begun.

“This is not good,” Tonks said as she pulled out her wand and stood up with her free hand still holding onto Harry’s arm. “Sirius is going to kill me.”

“Yes I am. Couldn’t you just have grabbed him and Apparated him home? No, you just had to chat!” Sirius cried angrily.

“They were trying to persuade-“

“Persuade in a safe place!” Sirius cut Remus out.

Shacklebolt was already trying to hold off the Death Eaters as curses and jinxes fired back and forth. Harry had to admit that the man was good. Even though it was twelve to one, Shacklebolt fought with a sense of instinct that Harry had never seen before. Shacklebolt moved in a way that allowed him to avoid being hit *and* being in a position to hit his opponent more effectively. Tonks started to attack the invisible barrier, still trying to find a way out although Harry had a feeling that she wasn’t going to succeed.

Not knowing what else to do, Harry pointed his wand at the Death Eaters. He needed to do something! He couldn’t just stand aside and watch! “*STUPEFY!*” he shouted. “*PROTEGO MAXIMUS!*”

Caught by surprise, the Stunning Spell hit one of the Death Eaters who fell to the ground with a thud. The rest of the group appeared to be slightly bewildered by the

semi-transparent blue tinted shield that appeared at the end of Harry's wand, separating them from their prey. Harry instantly focused on pushing all of his strength through his wand and into the shield as he approached Shacklebolt. He knew that the shield wouldn't hold up for long, especially with eleven conscious Death Eaters firing spells and curses. Shacklebolt stared at Harry in amazement for a brief moment before he returned his attention to the obstacle in front of him.

The Death Eaters were also surprised at the intense shield but quickly snapped out of their stupor and resumed firing curses. Each curse sent a quick flash of pain through Harry's body, something that Shacklebolt quickly noticed. The Auror repeated the protection spell, adding his own strength to the shield and sharing the impact of the spells that were quickly increasing in quantity. Even with the additional support, Harry could feel the shield slowly breaking down. If the attack continued, Harry knew the backlash from the shield breaking would most likely render all of them unconscious.

Closing his eyes, Harry bowed his head and concentrated on the magic he was pouring through his wand. He needed to alter the collapsing shield. He needed to delay the inevitable for just a moment longer. No one else would die because of him. His life was no more important than Tonks or Shacklebolt's. They were a part of his family along with the rest of the Order...just like Sirius...and Remus.

Harry let out a gasp as a sudden rush of power coursed through him similar to his 'healing episodes'. It wasn't anywhere near as powerful as his outbursts but it would have to do. His eyes quickly opened for him to see the shield thin itself out and wrap around Kingsley, who was staring at the shifting shield in disbelief. A chorus of 'Crucio' filled Harry's ears as Kingsley went flying backwards, leaving Harry to receive the majority of the blast when the shield collapsed. Intense pain flooded his body as the area around him exploded. Harry couldn't bring himself to move, let alone scream as he landed on the ground with heavy pieces of the street that he had been standing on a moment ago landed on him, burying him. He could vaguely hear someone shouting his name but it sounded a world away.

"Okay, that's it!" a voice said angrily from behind James and James jumped as his father materialized out of nowhere and then flung a familiar Cloak on James' lap as he grabbed the book from James. "SHACKLEBOLT! HOW THE HELL DO YOU LET A TEENAGER TAKE THE BRUNT LIKE THAT? YOU ARE THE AUROR HERE! AND HARRY, LET THE AURORS DO THEIR JOB! You don't weaken yourself with a shield to protect those who are supposed to be protecting you!" with that Mr. Potter took his wand and conjured an armchair next to Mrs. Potter and sat huffing.

The three boys gaped at him, James kept turning and pointing and opening and closing his mouth like a fish. Mrs. Potter looked at her husband with pursed lips and asked, "Since when have you been spying on us?"

Mrs. Potter had the grace to flush, "Well, you were being loud."

"Since when?"

“Well, I woke up when Sirius said something about sleep. And then I came here and heard all of you talking and what I heard was very fishy. So I grabbed the cloak that I had confiscated at the start of summer and-“

“Spied on us?” Lily asked crossing her arms sternly.

“Well, er, well,” Mr. Potter babbled but then he turned defensive, “Hey! From the little I could sum up you five are reading about the future and that is highly illegal, and dangerous and-“

“Oh, shush Harold. So you want us to stop, so we can be legal? Fine, give me the book and I will burn it,” Mrs. Potter said extending her hand.

Mr. Potter eyes widened and he grabbed the book protectively, “Er, no, I mean, we can’t *not* know what happens! He is the middle of a battle here! Er, we can figure the legalities after we read.”

“Though so,” Mrs. Potter snorted.

“Er- could you explain to me why Harry is running away like this. I didn’t really have a good listening spot,” Mr. Potter said.

“Yeah,” Remus chuckled. “We heard.”

“HEY! I am very stealthy!”

“We know honey. I was just trying to get your pride hurt so you would show yourself. Now, your grandson-“ the five quickly summed up the happenings of the last three years of Harry’s life and a very shocked Mr. Potter started reading.

Distant voices called out spells to alert Harry that the fight was still going on above the rubble. He tried to move but the weight on top of him made it impossible. Harry's thoughts instantly shifted to his wand only for him to realize that it wasn't in his right hand any longer. He could feel a slight warmth against his chest, exactly where the pendants Sirius and Remus gave him for Christmas rested. If Sirius was wearing his, he would now know that Harry was in trouble.

Dizziness crept in as Harry fought to maintain consciousness. He could feel the stones on top of him being moved slowly, decreasing the weight that had been placed on his aching body. Voices started to increase in volume but they were too distorted to make out. Hands roughly grabbed his arms and pulled him out of the debris causing Harry to cry out as pain screamed through his entire body. He was released and fell to the ground with a thud. The remnants of his backpack was roughly pulled off and tossed aside. That was all it took for Harry to know that he was in the hands of the enemy.

"GET POTTER OUT OF HERE! WE HAVE OUR ORDERS!"

"Shacklebolt! Where are you? You are so getting the grilling of your life next training session you have with me!" Mr. Potter growled.

Harry finally forced his eyes to open partially only to realize that he had lost his glasses but did notice an overabundance of black to confirm his suspicions. His panic had set in as a Death Eater grabbed him by the shirt and lifted his upper body off the

ground. Harry instantly tried to break free and was instantly knocked into a dazed and the Death Eater back fisted him. The next thing Harry felt was a familiar tug behind his navel followed by an overabundance of nausea before he was slammed, back first on the hard floor.

At that moment Harry was too consumed by pain to acknowledge any more. Exhaustion and pain fought to push him into unconsciousness but Harry fought back to stay awake. He had to fight back. He had to find some way to escape even though it would be extremely difficult at this point. Harry could barely move let alone fight. He had no idea where his wand was so dueling was certainly out of the question.

The sound of someone approaching startled Harry out of his thoughts. "What happened!?! " an angry deep voice snarled. "You were supposed to bring him back unharmed! The Dark Lord will be furious to find him in this condition!"

"I hope he shows his fury on the Death Eaters and not Harry," Remus fretted.

Harry's captor stood up and roughly grabbed the injured teenager by his shirt and started to drag him. "We didn't have a choice!" the Death Eater snapped back. "Dumbledore's Order got there first. We had to fight for him. Besides, having the brat half-dead is better than not having him at all!" The Death Eater slowed his pace before entering a dark and musty room. "Bloody Gryffindors. Snape wasn't lying when he said Potter was the worst of them."

“Stop you’re complaining,” the deeper voiced Death Eater said in annoyance. “The Dark Lord is coming tonight so I suggest you do something to make him a little more presentable. Call Snape if you have to. I need to adjust the wards so the old fool can’t find us.”

“Yes, call Snape. So he can take Harry to safety,” Lily said hopefully.

“Or, we can find out what his true loyalties are,” Sirius said grimly.

“Isn’t Snape the boy that is mentioned in most of the notices we get from Hogwarts?” Mr. Potter asked.

“Yes, and he extracts his revenge on our son in quite a childish manner,” Mrs. Potter said pursing her lips. “He is the Order’s spy. Or so Dumbledore says. I am reserving judgment right now.”

Harry tried to squint in order to make out where he was but the darkness in addition to his muddled mind made it impossible. There was a brief screeching sound before Harry was lifted and tossed like a rag doll, sending screaming pain through his body as he collided with the floor. He heard another screeching noise then a click.

Squinting once again, Harry could only groan when he finally made out that he was in some sort of cell. This was bad...*extremely* bad. He was trapped without a wand and currently unable to move. At the moment he couldn’t think of how this could get any worse.

At least everyone else is still safe.

“James,” Mr. Potter said seriously. “WHAT THE HELL DOES YOUR SON THINK HE IS DOING? HE IS THE KID HERE?”

“We have been asking ourselves the same thing for a long time now dad!” James sighed.

“Harold,” Mrs. Potter said dangerously.

“Yes,” Mr. Potter said properly cowed.

“LANGUAGE in front of the children. You are not in your training camp!”

“Okay,” Mr. Potter squeaked.

Lily smirked approvingly and James glanced worriedly at her.

It wasn't much of a consolation but at the moment it was all Harry had. He had no idea if Tonks and Shacklebolt were okay or if anyone else had been injured. He had no idea if Sirius had arrived only to see Harry disappear with a Death Eater.

“And died from a heart attack!” Sirius cried.

“You better die from a heart attack only *after* you rescued Harry!” James ordered.

This was certainly one of your worst ideas ever, Harry mentally scolded himself. Once again he had rushed off without thinking everything through. He never considered what he had to do *after* he had been spotted.

“Well Harry, I know we’ve just met...and I hate to agree...but probably, yes, that was a crappy idea,” Mr. Potter nodded.

Some things never change.

Harry didn’t know how long he was trapped in a partial doze before the sound of angry voices echoing brought him back to consciousness. His entire body was throbbing in pain which made any sort of movement impossible. Breathing had even become somewhat difficult without pain. He could only assume that development was a result of his treatment after the explosion. Harry didn’t even want to think about what a few minutes with Voldemort would do to him now.

Echoing footsteps quickly alerted Harry that at least two people were coming. He could do nothing but listen as they came closer and closer. His eyes remained closed as the two individuals entered the room. Silence filled the air for what felt like an eternity. Concentrating, Harry could vaguely feel hints of irritation, fear

and...concern? That was a surprise. *Unless they called Professor Snape. Even so, I must look horrible for Professor Snape to actually feel concern.*

“Yes, but is he concerned because you are hurt or because Voldemort won’t like that you are already hurt?” Sirius asked.

“We’ll find out soon,” Remus answered.

The cell door creaked open. “I see you didn’t bother handling your cargo with care,” a familiar voice drawled. “Are you certain he’s even alive?”

“Did he just call my baby *“cargo”*? Lily asked outraged.

“He does have a part to play,” Mr. Potter shrugged.

“Leave the Auror outside Harold!” Mrs. Potter ordered. “If Lily wants to be outraged, she may!”

“He’s breathing,” answered the impatient voice of his captor. “Just do what you can! The Dark Lord will be here in a few hours. We need to have Potter at least conscious by then.”

“What a humanitarian,” Remus snorted.

A hand rested on Harry’s shoulder causing him to stiffen slightly and let out a soft moan as pain sparked from the movement. Harry could hear his kidnapper leaving

but remained completely still until the footsteps were too distant to make out clearly. The hand moved from his shoulder and gently rested on his forehead nearly shocking Harry and how cold the hand was. Hands carefully maneuvered Harry so that he was lying flat on his back. Harry bit his lower lip to hold back the cries of pain that screamed through his body. Why couldn't Snape just leave him alone?

"You've really done it now, Potter," Professor Snape sneered softly as he burrowed an arm underneath Harry's shoulders and carefully propped the teenager into a somewhat upright position, Harry's head naturally tilting backwards slightly as he let out another moan of pain. "Sometimes I wonder if you even have a brain in that thick head of yours." There was a rustle of clothing followed by popping sound. "This is a powerful healing potion, Potter. Try not to waste it by spitting it out."

"He is either being very convincing in his role or he is a jerk!" Mr. Potter said.

"That's just Snape being Snape dad," James shrugged.

The potion was poured down Harry's throat with ease. Almost immediately Harry could feel the pain throughout his body slowly decreasing. Everything suddenly felt extremely hazy. A distant voice was talking to him but he couldn't make out the words. Another potion was poured down his throat before Harry felt himself being lifted off the floor and placed on something firm and warm but was still held somewhat upright. Suddenly his shirt vanished, allowing Harry to feel the chilling air. He opened his eyes partially but couldn't make out anything.

“Scourgify,” Professor Snape said, breaking through the haze. “Ferula.”

Harry let out a gasp as bandages wrapped around his ribcage and his wrists. He was then gently lowered completely onto the firm surface and, in the blink of an eye, had a comfortable shirt on. The haze intensified, forcing Harry to close his eyes again and drift off. He barely realized that his legs had been checked over and bandaged before the remnants of his pants were transfigured into a pair of pajama bottoms. His shoes were removed and he was covered with a blanket. All Harry knew was that the pain had finally gone away.

The pain seemed to return only a moment later only this time it was coming from his scar. It didn't take long for Harry to realize what was going on. Voldemort was coming. As difficult as it was, Harry forced himself not to panic...well, at least not let his panic show. There really was no way to refrain from panicking considering the current situation. Harry knew he wouldn't last long in any sort of fight at the moment. Although the pain wasn't anywhere near what bad as it was before, Harry still had difficulty actually moving his limbs. They felt extremely heavy for some reason.

Pain seared from his scar as footsteps filled his ears. Harry focused on his breathing, pushing any sort of thought out of his mind. His chest ached but at least it didn't

actually hurt to breathe anymore. The pain from his scar slowly decreased to more of an annoyance than anything. As the footsteps became more distinct, Harry could feel subtle waves of anger, annoyance and eagerness. He hated that feeling, especially when it came from Voldemort.

Harry fought to remain completely still and relaxed as he heard three individuals enter the room. The cell door creaked open. A set of footsteps slowly approached Harry but the fifteen-year-old remained still, lying on his back with his head turned away. His scar prickled in pain, altering Harry that it was Voldemort who was approaching. He quickly focused on nothing but his breathing, trying desperately to ignore the waves of negative emotions that were pouring from Voldemort. There was so much hate and anger brushing against him. Harry wanted nothing more than to push it away but he didn't know how.

The silence was broken by Voldemort's high pitched voice. "I assume Potter refused to come quietly," he hissed as he turned and looked at the two Death Eaters standing outside the cell. "I trust this is your handiwork, Severus."

"Yes, my Lord," Professor Snape said obediently. "You made it clear that you wanted Potter physically unharmed when he was captured. Was I wrong to tend to his wounds?"

There was a brief silence. “No Severus,” Voldemort said firmly. “I do want him physically capable of defending himself. I want everyone seeing me defeat a *healthy* Harry Potter. However, I will need you to prepare a magic suppressing potion as soon as possible. The boy has a rather annoying habit of escaping my clutches. I trust the old fool is calling in every favor at the moment. Does he suspect anything, Severus?”

“So, he wants everyone to *think* he defeated a healthy Harry Potter,” Remus growled angry. “Not taking any chances are you snake face?”

“No, Master,” Professor Snape answered. “The old fool still believes that you are trying to recruit Potter.”

“And I really want to know if that is true,” James said with a grimace.

Voldemort let out a hiss. “If Potter wasn’t so stubborn I would be,” he spat. “The boy is too devoted to his precious guardians. Is the blood traitor still confined?”

“Confined where?” James asked worried. “They don’t have Sirius too do they?”

“No,” Mr. Potter answered and kept reading.

“Yes, my Lord,” Snape sneered. “Dumbledore seems to believe keeping the mutt under lock and key is the only way to ensure Potter’s return.”

“Excuse me? *WHAT?*” Sirius shrieked. “I want to look for Harry and find him!”

“But,” Remus carefully said wincing. “He does have a point. I mean, Harry’s whole reason for running away is to keep you safe, so, if he thinks you’re safe, at least he wouldn’t do stupid things.”

“Except he did,” Lily pointed out.

“Er, yes, well,” Remus said lost for words.

A hand tightly gripped Harry’s shoulder in a matter that he hadn’t felt in years. Harry quickly sat up, ignoring the pain that shot through his body as he looked straight ahead at nothing in particular. His mind worked quickly to cover for the reflexive action. He had only one chance. He just hoped that Voldemort would believe it. “I’m up, Uncle,” Harry said groggily. He shakily pulled back the blanket and moved to slide off of the cot. “I’m sorry for oversleeping. I’ll make breakfast and start my chores. I promise.”

“Oh, he is smart,” Mr. Potter said please. “Let them think you’re out of your mind and underestimate you Harry!”

A hand grabbed his chin and slowly tilted Harry’s head upwards. Harry quickly forced himself to think of his life at the Dursleys and nothing else. Green eyes met red for a moment before Harry’s eyes rolled backwards and he collapsed back on the cot.

“Interesting,” Voldemort hissed as he stepped back. “Severus, I want to know the full extent of his injuries as soon as possible, especially any head injuries. Memory problems could work in our favor. Also, I want him guarded. No one, other than you,

Severus, is to enter this cell without my permission. Truden, you will take the first watch. If any harm comes to Potter, you will be punished...severely. Do you understand?"

"Y—yes Master," came a fearful reply.

Voldemort walked out of the cell then out of the room without another word.

Tension filled the air as Professor Snape slowly entered the cell and moved directly for the cot in the corner. Hands gently checked Harry's wounds before he was given two more foul tasting potions. Waves of hate and anger were replaced with waves of concern and fear. Harry turned his head towards where his Potions teacher was kneeling. He didn't know what to say. He didn't know if it was wise to say anything.

"What was all that about?" Truden asked in annoyance. "Since when are prisoners treated like royalty?"

"I highly doubt Potter will be treated like royalty, Truden," Professor Snape sneered as he rose to his feet and walked out of the cell. "It would be wise to remember your place. Those who question the Dark Lord find that they don't live for very long. If the Dark Lord wants Potter to remain untouched then we have no choice but to obey."

“And you better obey Truden, or you’ll have to deal with me and Voldemort!” Sirius hissed.

Lily leaned forward and whispered to the book, “And honestly Truden, I don’t know which one is worst.”

The cell door closed as Truden let out a huff. “I can’t believe this,” he spat. “I’m stuck playing babysitter to a pampered Gryffindor.”

At the sound of Professor Snape leaving the room, Harry listened to Truden grumble for nearly another hour before drifting off. He didn’t know if Voldemort actually believed the act but that was only one of his many problems. He didn’t like the thought of a magic suppressing potion. He had read about them while studying for his OWLs and knew that they could be dangerous if the dosage wasn’t exact.

Whatever Voldemort had in mind Harry knew it wasn’t going to be pleasant. In a way he wished Voldemort was still adamant to convince him to turn. At least then Harry knew what to do. He knew what to expect.

It was clear that Voldemort had not been as inactive as what the ‘Daily Prophet’ had implied. He had just been extremely discrete on what he had been up to. Harry had a feeling that he would come face to face to exactly what that was extremely soon.

“I hope not,” Lily said worried.

A/N: Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Chapter 4

In the Hands of the Enemy

“We already know that! No need to state the obvious!” James growled angry.

“That’s just the title,” Remus pointed out.

“Well, I’d rather have a title like “Successful rescue and Voldy is dead” than this one,”

James huffed.

The sensation of something pricking his right arm quickly pulled Harry out of his slumber.

“Oi! Stop prickling Harry’s arm!” Sirius cried.

He instantly opened his eyes to see a somewhat blurry woman with long blond hair leaning over him. Confusion quickly set in his clouded mind. He tried to move but found that his wrists and ankles were held in some sort of restraints. Panic quickly overruled any other thought as Harry frantically tried to pull himself free. What was going on? Why was he bound like this?

A hand grabbed his right arm to hold it in place, only increasing Harry's panic. He continued to fight against the restraints and quickly found himself trapped in a full body bind. Harry could do nothing but stare as the woman's attention returned to his right arm. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry noticed that there was something attached to his arm that was slowly changing color...to red. His weeks at the hospital instantly came back to him. He recognized what was being done to him. This woman was drawing blood for some reason.

"And the reason can't be any good," Remus said grimly.

Closing his eyes, Harry tried to calm himself down but it was rather difficult. He couldn't move whatsoever. He was completely helpless, something that Harry hated. His frustration got the better of him as Harry opened his eyes to see the woman pulling the needle out of his arm and walking over to the far side of the cell and setting the syringe down on something that Harry assumed was a small table since he really couldn't make it out. The woman walked back to Harry, pulled out her wand and with a swish, healed the slightly bleeding mark on his arm.

"There now," the woman said shortly. "Was that really so bad?"

"Is she serious?" Sirius asked slowly. "He is restrained, in a cell in Voldemort's dungeon and she asks if that is bad?"

Harry doubted she expected a reply since she hadn't removed the body bind. She wrapped her fingers around his wrist and checked his pulse for a moment before letting out an irritated sigh. "I can see that you're not going to make this easy on yourself, Potter. No matter. I can finish my work with you in a body bind. The Dark Lord isn't a patient person and he wants these results as soon as possible."

Results? What results?

"We want to know as well!" Lily said exasperated. "And where is the Order that hasn't come to rescue you yet?"

"She does have a point," Remus said. "Snape must have had plenty of time to tell the Order Harry's location."

"Yes, but if the Order swoops in right after Snape showed up Voldemort will know he is a traitor and- er-" Mr. Potter faltered at his wife stern gaze, "Yes, where is the Order? They've had plenty of time!" he amended.

Harry could only watch as the woman waved her wand over him causing a subtle greenish-silver mist to form. The woman walked over to the table and grabbed a few items before returning to Harry's side. Harry could barely make out that the woman had a quill in one hand and a clipboard with a piece of parchment attached to it in the other. She stared at the mist for a long moment before she started taking notes. The only sound that could be heard was her quill striking against parchment.

“How odd,” the woman said softly. “Magical levels in the normal range.” She placed her quill in her mouth then grabbed her wand, waved it again and watched as the mist slowly expanded until it completely surrounded Harry. After a few moments, she pocketed her wand and grabbed her quill out of her mouth to continue taking notes. “Now that is interesting. It appears that the Dark Lord was right about you, Potter. There *is* actually something odd here.”

“What does she mean by that?” James said in a mixture of anger and worry. “My son isn’t odd!”

***Odd?* Odd wasn’t a good thing. Harry had wanted to hide his empathy for as long as humanly possible, especially from Voldemort.**

James glared at his father. Mr. Potter fidgeted a bit and then leaned to his wife and whispered, “Why is he glaring?”

“You work for the Ministry,” she explained but that did Mr. Potter no good.

James narrowed his eyes and shook a finger at his father, “And the Ministry better not learn that Harry is an empath.”

“As if I would tell,” Mr. Potter huffed offended.

“Better safe than sorry,” Remus shrugged.

The last thing he wanted was for his new abilities to be used against him or worse, against the Order of the Phoenix. *Against Sirius*. No. Harry would rather die than betray his family. No matter what Voldemort had in mind, Harry wouldn't give in regardless of what it cost him.

The woman banished the mist then returned to taking more notes before she turned away and walked back to the table. At the moment, Harry really wished he had his glasses so he could see what she was doing. He could hear soft clinking noises of glass hitting against glass. Closing his eyes, Harry tried to make any part of his body move despite the fact that his body was still bound physically and magically. He needed to escape before anyone discovered anything else.

The sound of echoing footsteps quickly snapped Harry out of his thoughts. Opening his eyes, Harry could only listen as the footsteps intensified in volume. His scar wasn't hurting any more than what it had been which meant it wasn't Voldemort who was coming. Forcing his eyes closed, Harry fought to calm himself down as he tentatively reached out with his senses and felt faint hints of curiosity, impatience and annoyance. Anger and frustration slowly started to creep in. Whoever was coming certainly wasn't going to be in the best of moods.

The footsteps slowed as the individual reached the room and entered. Harry forced himself to keep his eyes closed for the time being. He figured it was the safest option

at the moment. "Master is demanding an update," a deep voice ordered. "He wants to move ahead with his plans."

"You may inform the Dark Lord that I am still running tests," the woman shot back. "I told him it would take at least two hours to run the necessary tests. If he wants to know what is so special about the Potter brat then he needs to be patient. I have found an oddity and I'm currently looking into it. You may tell him that."

"It's your funeral, McDaniels," the man huffed then left, his footsteps once again echoing loudly.

Mr. Potter summoned a piece of parchment and a quill and wrote down while muttering, "Blond, woman, McDaniels, Truden."

"What are you doing Mr. P?" Lily asked.

"Writing down the names of the Death Eaters so I can arrest them," he answered.

"With what proof?" Remus asked. "A book from the future."

Mr. Potter huffed annoyed then started writing again, "Find some proof."

The sound of something slamming against the table startled Harry into opening his eyes quickly. "Blast it all!" McDaniels cried in frustration. "How am I supposed to work if he doesn't give me the time to run the tests?"

"Yes, we feel so sorry for you about these horrible work conditions. You should join the Death Eater union- oh no wait- I guess snake face will respond to your demands with the Killing Curse, so then better just suck it up!" Sirius cried at the end.

She turned around and pointed her wand at Harry. "*Finite Incantatem.*" Harry felt his body relax and turned his head to look at the somewhat blurry Death Eater.

"Better," she said with a nod. "Now that you're not in the middle of a panic attack, perhaps you can answer a few questions."

Yeah, right. Having a causal discussion about his magical anomalies with a Death Eater was certainly not on his list of things to do. There were times when Harry had to wonder if any of these people actually had a brain. These people were holding him prisoner for the very person who was behind the majority of the hardships Harry had faced in his life. How could they think he would willingly tell them anything?

McDaniels approached Harry, her wand firmly pointed at his head. "There are ways to make you comply, Potter," she said casually. "The Dark Lord doesn't want you touched to keep your overall mind intact but there are methods that can cause intense pain without pushing one into insanity. I assure you that they are extremely

painful." A cruel smile appeared on her face as she moved her wand down to his chest. "Tell me how you are able to control your magic so well, Potter."

"Because he is a Potter," Mr. Potter said flatly.

Lily gaped and then turned to James patting his hand gently, "Now I know where you get your big head from."

Harry stared at the woman for a long moment before he turned his head away and stared at the blurry bars of the cell. There was absolutely no way he was saying anything. Truthfully, he really didn't believe he could control his magic at all, if his outbursts were any indication. It was his magic that controlled him, not the other way around. Even now, Harry still didn't have any actual control on when his healing ability decided to kick in. For the past few years, uncontrollable magic had been the norm for him.

Intense pain suddenly overruled his body, causing him to convulse regardless of the restraints that were holding him in place. Harry was too shocked to scream or do anything but succumb to the pain. It felt like his entire body was being completely torn apart. The pain was so intense Harry didn't even realize that the pendant he was wearing was extremely warm against his chest. What felt like an eternity was actually only a few minutes before the intense pain suddenly vanished, leaving an

exhausted and heavily breathing teenager. His entire body ached too much to even consider moving.

"SHE HURT HIM! THAT BITCH HURT MY BABY!" Lily screamed.

"Don't worry Lily, we'll get her, and she'll get what's coming to her," James said with a dangerous glint in his eyes that was mirrored in the other occupants in the room. Mr. Potter adding crimes on McDaniels name in his list, until suddenly his quill stopped and he looked at Lily and then at his wife bewildered.

"Er, honey," he said tentatively to his still fuming wife, "Not to take away the seriousness of the moment, but er, Lily just swore."

Mrs. Potter looked at him and then at Lily, "Oh yes," she said shaking her head, "Lily, language!"

Mr. Potter nodded satisfied as if all was well in the world again.

McDaniels pocketed her wand. "Think about it, Potter," she said coldly. "I would *sincerely* hate to make your stay with us even more unpleasant than it's bound to be." Without another word, she turned and walked back to the table and continued running her tests on Harry's blood.

Closing his eyes, Harry could do nothing but listen to the clinking noises made from across the cell. That was the last thing he knew before darkness quickly consumed him.

Intense pain from his scar quickly brought Harry out of his dreamless sleep. It took him a moment to realize that he was still bound to the cot in a cell in a hideout for Voldemort. His entire body was aching and his mind felt extremely sluggish. It took Harry a moment to realize that the rapid pounding he was hearing was in fact the footsteps of two people were approaching. By the increasing pain of his scar, Harry could only assume who one of the individuals was.

“No, no, no,” Lily shook her head desperately. “No!”

James hugged her and ran a hand through her hair trying to calm her down.

Closing his eyes, Harry tried to think about anything but the pain. He tried to clear his mind and concentrate on his Occlumency lessons but even that didn't work. Intense anger and impatience flooded in so quickly that Harry felt like he was being suffocated. He hadn't felt anything like this from Voldemort since before he started Occlumency. Why was this happening now? How was this possible? *Don't panic! Focus on breathing and only breathing!*

As difficult as it was, Harry forced himself to concentrate completely on breathing but the constant echoing footsteps and the increasing pain made it incredibly difficult. He needed to mentally be some place else. It was the only option he had.

He remembered the times in the Marauder Quarters he would spend with Sirius and Remus just staring at the fire in the fireplace. He felt completely safe there, knowing that Sirius and Remus were there sitting beside him. That was where Harry longed to be.

A distant high-pitched and annoyed voice pulled Harry's attention away from the flames. *"I have given you more than enough time, Audrey. Tell me what you've found."*

"No, please don't tell him anything Audrey," Remus begged and Mr. Potter added the name to his list.

A frightened female voice answered as calmly as humanly possible. *"My Lord, I apologize for the delay but it was necessary. I came across some abnormalities that I wanted to re-examine. Most of them I still don't understand. I trust you are aware of the magical reserves that are present in every magical being—human and otherwise?"*

"Oh yes, do start explaining things to Voldemort as if he knew nothing and take all the time in the world," Mr. Potter snorted. "That will go well."

The high-pitched voice was even more irritated now. *"Get on with it!"*

There was a moment of silence before the woman's voice spoke again. *"My Lord, I'm trying to explain. On the surface, Potter is completely normal. It wasn't until I preformed more in depth scans on his magic that I found an oddity. It seems that Potter is able to tap into his reserves at will to make his spells stronger. It would explain how Potter has managed to suffer from magical exhaustion so often, if what Snape has told you is correct.*

"SNIVELLUS WHAT?" Sirius shrieked. "Why the bloody hell is Snivellus telling Voldemort about Harry's magical exhaustion when we've been trying to hide it all along? I knew it! He can't be trusted!"

"As much as I agree with you Sirius," Mrs. Potter said pursing her lips. "The next time you swear I will *Scorgify* your mouth young man"

Sirius huffed and crossed his arms, "Snivellus still told."

"Maybe Dumbledore told him to. You may notice Voldemort still doesn't know about those outbursts," Remus pondered. "I mean, Snape has to give Voldemort *some* information or he would get suspicious."

Mr. Potter nodded with Remus but the other four members of the group kept their scowls on.

"Snape better start proving where his loyalties lie," Lily mumbled. Apparently all her good will towards Snape was evaporating fast.

Also, several scans revealed that Potter seems to have more 'active magic' than the normal witch or wizard. I can't explain it. This 'active magic' is being constantly used but I can't determine what for. I've never seen anything like it before."

Harry didn't know whether to be nervous or relieved by this news. They had discovered that something wasn't normal but they hadn't discovered what that actually was. *Just because they haven't figured it out yet doesn't mean they won't.* Dread flooded in and before Harry knew it, the Marauder Quarters were dissolving into nothingness. The pain from his scar returned but it wasn't as intense as it had been moments ago.

The voices were clearer now. "I see," Voldemort said thoughtfully. "And this justified disobeying my orders?"

"Master—"

"SILENCE!" Voldemort roared. Harry's body instantly tensed although the motion went unnoticed by those in the room. "Because of your impatience, you may have jeopardized everything! My plans do not revolve around your discoveries!"

Voldemort lowered his tone so it was nothing more than an icy whisper. "You have

overestimated your importance to me. You *will* be punished for your insolence.

Leave us. I will deal with you shortly.”

“She should really know her boss and not think she can get away with doing what she wants when the punishment to disobedience can be torture and death,” James pointed out.

“Especially since obeying her boss and not poking on Harry’s private business is very beneficial to us,” Sirius nodded.

Harry opened his eyes a bit as the cell door creaked open for McDaniels to hurry out of the cell and out of the room. He could see two somewhat blurry figures enter and knew this was bad...extremely bad. Closing his eyes again, Harry concentrated completely on his restraints. He wasn’t going to let them do anything to him without a fight. He wasn’t going to let Voldemort succeed no matter what it cost him.

Alohomora, Alohomora, ALOHOMORA!

A rush of warmth brushed against him as Harry felt the pressure against his wrists and ankles disappear. Without his glasses, Harry knew he would have to rely mainly on his other senses. He quickly pushed all thought out of his mind as he simply acted. He heard someone approaching and the moment they were close enough, Harry punched the Death Eater in the face with as much strength as he could gather with his right and while his left instantly reached for their right hand and pulled the wand out of the Death Eater’s hand. The Death Eater stumbled back a few steps which gave Harry the perfect opportunity to stun them.

“YES!” Sirius and James cried together.

“Now run Harry, run like the wind!” Remus urged but Mr. Potter had a doubtful expression on his face.

The Death Eater fell to the ground with a thud as Harry pointed his wand to the blur that was Voldemort. Harry slowly slid off the cot and stood, his bare feet coming in contact with the cold floor. His entire body was on alert, ready to strike at a moment’s notice. Eagerness and anticipation filled the air. That certainly wasn’t what Harry was expecting. It was almost as if Voldemort had been waiting for this to happen.

“It appears I have quite the advantage, Harry,” Voldemort said casually. “You can’t even see me. How are you supposed to fight me?”

“My point exactly,” Mr. Potter nodded grimly, hating that he was agreeing with Voldemort. “He should have faked being unconscious and waited until Voldemort was gone.”

“Except Voldemort would have probably enervated him and tortured him and then killed him,” Lily growled.

“We don’t know,” Mr. Potter nodded. “I don’t think old snake-face wants to dispose of Harry so quickly and this way he is just going to make Voldemort double the guards.”

“I’ll manage,” Harry said as he took a small step towards the cell door.

“Is that so?” Voldemort asked simply as he pulled out his own wand but didn’t point it at Harry. “Is that what *your father* is telling you now? You seem willing to do anything...even abandon your current family for him, for their *protection* of course, but you still abandoned them. If he told you to join me, would you obey?”

“SEE?” James cried desperately. “I told you that was a trick!”

Harry stared at Voldemort in horror. There was only one way Voldemort could know about that. “That was you?” he asked softly. Harry couldn’t believe it. Occlumency hadn’t worked after all. Voldemort had never been blocked from his mind. All of the *support* had been part of a plot to gain the trust of a distressed teenager in order to remove him from any sort of protection whatsoever. *And I blindly accepted it all. I must be the thickest person on the planet.*

“I’d really like to say you weren’t Harry,” Remus said wincing, “But, well- er- that was fishy. But you were distressed. We understand.”

Voldemort slowly twirled his wand between his fingers. “Wormtail has been extremely helpful in providing information about your late father and precious guardians,” he said; his pride seeping into his voice. “I must say that I probably know them better than you do, especially your father.”

“That backstabbing traitor knows nothing about me!” James cried angrily.

“Unfortunately, he does,” Lily said grimacing.

Harry tightened his grip on the wand in his hand as he fought to keep his emotions under control. He couldn't allow himself to make any mistakes at the moment. "I highly doubt that," Harry said through his teeth. He wasn't about to get into a discussion about his father with Voldemort. Thinking of a possible escape was a higher priority followed by a way to confront Sirius with everything that had happened.

Without any sort of warning, Harry found himself lifted off the ground and slammed into the bars to the left, his shoulder making the initial contact. Pain shot down his arm and back, stunning Harry as he was then flew backwards into the bars, his head and back receiving the majority of the contact. His mind was a clouded mess as he fell onto the cot, bounced slightly and rolled onto the floor, dropping the wand in the process. The pendants against his chest heated slightly. Harry could feel a tear fall. Sirius would know that something had happened and would be helpless to do anything about it.

Voldemort flicked his wand at the Death Eater who started to stir. "Did you really think you had a chance against me, Harry?" he asked casually. "I have underestimated you in the past but not anymore." The Death Eater glanced around in confusion before he quickly stood up. "Your defiance is admirable. One has to

wonder what the Muggle-loving fool ever did to win such loyalty.” Voldemort looked directly at the Death Eater. “Administer the potion.”

“What potion?” Mrs. Potter asked worried.

The Death Eater reached into his robes and pulled out a small object before he knelt down in front of Harry who was still too dazed to do anything but watch. A hand roughly turned Harry’s face away a moment before Harry felt something pierce his neck. He tried to fight back but he was quickly overwhelmed by nausea and dizziness. His body started to convulse as he struggled to breathe. He felt like he was suffocating. It was as if something he had relied on for his very survival was being harshly ripped away.

Pain flooded his body as the convulsions lessened. Exhaustion quickly set in making it extremely difficult for Harry to hang onto consciousness. There was a void around him where the soft waves of emotions should have been. He felt absolutely nothing for the first time in a month. Harry gasped for breath as he realized that his empathy and most likely his magic were gone. He would completely defenseless now.

“The suppression potion,” Lily answered grimly. “Coward,” she hissed to Voldemort.

“Well?” Voldemort asked impatiently.

“Potter’s magic is suppressed, Master,” answered the quiet voice of Professor Snape.

“He will need to be monitored for the next forty-eight hours for any signs of allergic

reaction. His initial reaction was more severe than I had anticipated...unless you want him die from suffocation, my Lord.”

“Snivellus,” Sirius hissed angrily glaring daggers at the book.

“If he is on our side, that potion was faulty,” Lily said stonily. “I guess we’ll find out soon enough.”

Harry felt himself being carelessly lifted off the floor and levitated to the back wall. Chains appeared out of thin air, connected to the wall and attached themselves to Harry’s wrists. Everything else was banished from the cell as Harry fell to the floor with a thud. He let out a painful moan as pain shot through his body. With extreme effort, Harry managed to even out his breathing but the simple action had pushed him past his limit. Voices became too distorted to understand.

He blacked out.

A small crowd of cloaked figures stood before him, fear radiating off of each of them. It was pitiful that these were all that remained of his elite at the moment. These were whom he was forced to trust with his most important of plans all because a certain teenager continued to be a thorn in his side. *Not anymore*, he reminded

himself. *That* thorn was now locked away and deemed harmless; something that the entire wizarding world would soon witness for themselves.

The room was barely lit just like the rest of the abandoned Manor. Regardless of the precautions taken, he wouldn't risk his plans ruined because someone happened to notice a light on. The old fool's Order and the Ministry were bound to be searching high and low for their savior. Harry Potter's abduction had caused a mass of hysteria throughout the wizarding world. Many had already declared him dead since there had been plenty of witnesses to pass on the state they saw Potter in before he vanished.

"The time has come for all of you to prove yourselves as a member of the Inner Circle," he said coolly. "Harry Potter is no longer a threat. All that remains is destroying his connection to the Muggle-loving fool and his sanity. My spies tell me that the blood traitor—Sirius Black—has been leading the search for his precious godson. He has left the security of his home. I want Black brought to me alive and coherent. I want Potter to watch his beloved godfather die."

"What? No? You leave Sirius alone!" Lily cried and James launched himself onto Sirius repeating "thank you" over and over while Sirius patted his back reassuringly.

The crowd of Death Eaters stood proudly now, eager to fulfill their assignment. Sirius Black was an enemy to many of them, especially Bellatrix Lestrange since Sirius was

actually her cousin. No one said a word, though. Ever since Audrey McDaniels, everyone treaded carefully when they stepped foot in the Manor. Nothing less than total obedience was accepted which meant that Harry Potter was certainly off limits.

"What happened to McDaniels?" Remus asked.

"I really don't want to know," Mrs. Potter muttered.

The figure before them pulled out his wand and all lapse in attention vanished. "I want the blood traitor here by tomorrow evening," he continued. "Do not fail me. There have been too many failures as of late. Harry Potter was brought here by a stroke of luck on your part and stupidity on Potter's. Black won't be as easy. Go."

The Death Eaters hurried out of the room like the scared animals that they were.

Now alone in the large room, he walked to the fireplace and sat down in a nearby chair. He stared at the dying fire for a moment before a smirk formed on his face.

"Hello Harry," he said softly. "I know you saw everything. Don't worry. Your godfather will be joining us soon. I'm sure he's simply *dying* to see you."

"STOP TAUNTING HIM!" Mr. Potter growled.

Harry woke up with a gasp followed by a wince when he realized that his scar was burning in pain. Closing his eyes tightly, he tried to focus on anything but the pain until it decreased to a more manageable annoyance. It was then that Harry realized

that his back was aching badly and his left shoulder was throbbing. Sitting up and resting against the wall was a challenge. Any movement only made his pain increase.

The restraints connected to his wrists had enough leeway so that he could sit up or lie down but nothing more than that. Tilting his head backwards against the wall, Harry couldn't believe how empty and alone he felt now. The gentle and reassuring waves of emotions that he had become so dependent on for reassurance in the past month were now gone. Suddenly everything felt a lot more frightening. He would no longer know if anyone entering was being truthful or not. He could no longer trust anything but his instincts which wasn't exactly comforting. His instincts had gotten him in this mess to begin with.

Slowly, Harry opened his eyes but couldn't make out anything in the darkness. He couldn't push away the overwhelming dread at the thought of Sirius being in danger. Closing his eyes again, Harry didn't bother fighting the stinging sensation that always came before tears. He didn't hold back as the tears began to fall. This was his fault. He had no one to blame but himself. If he had only spoken to someone about the voices before running off...if only he had thought things through...if only he hadn't run away...if only...if only...

Voldemort was right. Sirius *would* be heavily involved in the search because Harry would do the same if Sirius had been captured. Sirius *would* put himself at risk and

would sacrifice his life if it were necessary. Without Remus, Sirius was bound to do something rash. *Just like I did. Just like I always do.* Harry bowed his head as the tears fell freely, not caring if anyone was nearby to see him. The thought of Sirius facing the same fate as Remus was just too much to bear. *Dad, Mum, Remus...please keep Midnight safe. I can't lose him too. He's all I have left.*

"Don't worry Harry," Sirius said hoarsely. "I won't do anything rash. I am very level headed."

The others, who also had bright eyes looked at him strangely.

"I think he bumped his head," Remus whispered to the others.

A thought suddenly hit him. Could this be a trick? This was just the thing that Voldemort would pull. He had learned the hard way never to believe anything when Voldemort was concerned. This was something that Voldemort would do. He would leave Harry in suspense until it was too late for anything to be done about it. *Unless I try to find some way to warn the Order.* Harry just wished he knew how.

Concentrating, he tried to silently call Fawkes but the phoenix never arrived. Harry figured it had to do with his magic being suppressed and tried to focus on other ways of escape. As much as he wanted to dwell on the current situation, he knew that wasn't going to solve anything. Remus and Sirius had always told him that it was important to keep your wits about you in a crisis. Sooner or later, someone's bound to make a mistake.

Personally, Harry was hoping for sooner rather than later but he couldn't just wait around for the opportunity to present itself. Voldemort certainly wouldn't. Patience wasn't exactly a quality that Dark Lords had. Regardless of what happened, Voldemort wanted Harry dead. Breaking him was just a perk, something to brag about to a world that put their faith of survival in a teenager. Of course, no one actually said that the wizarding world contained those gifted with logical sense.

Releasing a shaky breath, Harry tried to regain his focus. He was currently chained up in a cell with no possible access to his magic. That meant two things. One: it was going to be significantly more difficult for him to get free. Two: chances were that Voldemort's followers wouldn't consider him much of a threat anymore. He would be underestimated. He would need to be if he stood a chance against Death Eaters.

"Yes, exactly. Now use that to your advantage," Mr. Potter coaxed.

"Focus on what you can control." Sirius and Remus had worked so hard to make Harry concentrate on the current problem in order to think clearly. As much as Harry hated it, he couldn't do anything about Voldemort's plan to capture Sirius until he found a way to escape. He couldn't risk passing on a warning to Professor Snape since he had no idea if anyone was listening in. No. He wouldn't risk Professor Snape's position like that. *Unless I make myself out to be someone who is completely out of their mind and pass the message that way.*

“I wouldn’t trust Snivellus all that much,” James said flatly. “He doesn’t seem to be helping much now does he?”

“Maybe he didn’t have the opportunity,” Mr. Potter offered.

“Or maybe he didn’t want to,” Sirius answered.

The sound of echoing footsteps quickly pulled Harry out of his thoughts. He instantly began to calm his breathing and relaxed his body as if he were sleeping. The footsteps grew louder and the echoes decreased. There was only one coming which meant this was probably a checkup to make sure that their prisoner hadn’t died yet. *More than likely they don’t want to miss out on a chance to ‘avenge their Master’ and, more importantly, avenge themselves.*

The footsteps abruptly stopped just before the individual reached the room Harry was in. Muffled voices could be heard for a split second before the door opened. Harry remained perfectly still, listening as the Death Eater opened the door, slowly entered the room, unlocked the cell door and opened it. Keeping his breathing even was a struggle for Harry. He really hated not knowing what was coming. He hated that his abilities had been stripped away when he needed them the most.

“Still out of it,” muttered the deep voice of the Death Eater as he approached. “It would be so easy to kill you Potter but the Dark Lord demands that you remain

alive.” The Death Eater crouched down in front of Harry, grabbed Harry by the chin and raised it upwards to see Harry’s face. “It’s absolutely amazing how so many can fear one so young, even when you are completely defenseless.” The Death Eater released Harry’s chin and watched as the boy’s head fell forward before standing back up. “Don’t worry, Potter. You should have company by this evening. Then the real fun begins.” Harry felt something that felt strangely like a pair of glasses being slid on his face. “The Dark Lord wants you to see the blood traitor’s death with your own eyes. From what I hear it should be quite a sight.”

The six readers smirked evilly as the Death Eater handed Harry an advantage.

It took every ounce of self control Harry had to prevent himself from reacting to the news. They expected to have Sirius by tonight? That meant a few things. First, it wasn’t nighttime yet which gave him at least some sort of time frame. Second, he would have to find a way to escape as soon as possible. Time was no longer on his side. In fact, time was his enemy. The longer he took, the more at risk Sirius was.

Unless this is another trick to make me do something incredibly stupid.

Unfortunately, Harry couldn’t afford take the risk. As much as he wanted to make his guardians proud, Harry knew that he would have to act first and think later. It was no longer a question of how he could escape without anyone noticing. It was a question of what would he be willing to do to save someone he loved? How far

would anyone go? Harry already knew the answer. He would do whatever he could to protect Sirius. He couldn't bear to lose another guardian.

"You won't!" Remus said firmly and for good measure glared at Sirius who nodded fervently.

Harry let out a gasp as he fell to the floor and started to convulse. Pain flared from his wrists every time he moved them. The sound of his chains moving was the only sound for what felt like an eternity before Harry suddenly found himself in a full body bind, something he hadn't prepared himself for. It took an enormous amount of self control for Harry to keep his eyes closed and listen. The Death Eater once again crouched down and placed a hand on Harry's chest. A moment later Harry felt the restraints removed from his wrists and heard them fall to the floor with a *clank*. The body bind was removed, allowing the Death Eater to take a closer look at Harry's wrists.

"That's my grandson! Faking a seizure! Genius!" Mr. Potter said proudly.

He wasn't going to get another chance at this.

As quickly as possible, Harry kicked at the Death Eater's head while manually disarming him. The glasses he was wearing quickly adjusted to his prescription allowing Harry to actually see his target. Adrenaline poured through his veins as

Harry pulled his hand free and punched the Death Eater in the solar plexus and kicked him once again in the head as hard as he possibly could. The Death Eater fell to the ground in a daze as he struggled to breathe. Harry silently thanked Sirius and Remus for teaching him about pressure points in the human body. It certainly would make this a lot easier.

While Mr. Potter read the boys punched the air as if they were fighting.

With a few well placed punches, the Death Eater was unconscious and Harry moved as quickly as he could. He changed clothes with the man, pocketed the wand and slipped on the Death Eater's cloak. The man was slightly taller than him and had brown colored hair instead of black but turned the right way, the Death Eater could give him the chance he needed to escape. Harry quickly repositioned his decoy so any distinguishing characteristics were hidden. He ripped off a portion of the Death Eater's shirt and gagged the man then attached the restraints onto the limp wrists. He would have to move quickly yet discretely. *I will also have to find a way out of here without looking like I'm trying to leave.*

Rising to his feet, Harry pulled the hood of the cloak he was now wearing to hide his face in darkness. He inhaled deeply, gathering his courage and walked out of the cell. Adrenaline was still coursing through his body, silencing and sign of pain. It was probably the only thing that kept him moving at the moment. *As soon as this is over with I can worry about any injuries I may have.*

Walking out of the room, Harry noticed the Death Eater guard who was reading the 'Daily Prophet', apparently bored out of his mind. "You didn't do anything noticeable, right?" the guard asked although he sounded like he cared in the slightest.

"The brat started to panic like a frightened animal," Harry growled, trying to make his voice sound like his decoy's. "Don't worry. He's only stunned."

The guard nodded and returned to reading.

"Stupid Death Eater," Sirius mumbled. "Go Harry!"

Harry held in a relieved sigh as he turned to the left and walked down the hallway at a casual yet brisk pace. His entire body was on alert, ready to strike at a moment's notice. His head remained still but his eyes were continuously moving to locate any sort of exit. He saw another hallway on the left and instantly turned to move out of the Death Eater's line of sight. Harry let out a brief sigh of relief and started to check each door but only found small empty rooms.

Harry was about to turn around when he opened the last door on the right and stopped short at the sight of what could only be described as a large weapon's closet. Stepping inside, Harry didn't hesitate in grabbing what he could. He quickly removed his cloak and strapped on a belt that would hold a sword and a chest harness that could hold a few knives just in case. Once he had all of the weapons in their correct places, Harry quickly put the black cloak back on and hurried to find a way out.

"Smart," Remus beamed proudly.

The hallway veered to the right. Harry could barely hold back his excitement when he saw a window at the end of the hallway. It wasn't the most preferred way out but it was still a way out. He just hoped that this wasn't a multiple floor abode. He really wasn't looking forward to jumping out a window only to break a leg. That would certainly put a quick halt to his escape and any hope to warning Sirius or the Order.

Harry continued checking doors but only found empty rooms. He was nearly halfway to the window when the sound of footsteps made him stop in his tracks. As quickly and quietly as possible, Harry hid in a nearby room and remained completely still. He closed his eyes and covered his mouth as the footsteps grew louder, competing with his thundering heartbeat in his ears. *Calm down! Panicking will solve nothing!* Breathing deeply, Harry tried to calm himself as he listened to the footsteps walking

past his hiding place. He could feel his hands shaking as he waited for the footsteps to fade into nothing. *It's now or never.*

As quietly as possible, Harry opened the door and peaked out into the hallway only to see no one. He couldn't risk being cautious anymore and hurried to the window. He had to escape now or he never would. After a moment of searching, Harry found the latch to unlock it and opened the window to see that he was on the second level. Certainly not as bad as it could be. He carefully crawled onto the windowsill, ignoring the sparks of pain from his wrists. With a final breath, Harry jumped out the window and landed on the ground in a crouched position. His ankles throbbed on impact causing Harry to wince. He let out a shaky breath before he stood up and ran as fast as he could. Reaching in his robes, Harry pulled out the stolen wand and tossed it into some hedges nearby. He really had no use for it and couldn't take the chance of anyone tracking it. He didn't know where he was going but at the moment, anywhere was better than where he had just been.

A collective sigh of relief was heard as Mr. Potter turned the page.

"Now, go home Harry," Mrs. Potter ordered.

A/N: Thanks for reading and reviewing.

Chapter 5

The Long Road Home

“KSOMM814! WHAT’S UP WITH YOU AND THE ANGSTY TITLES? I WANT THE ROAD HOME TO BE SHORT AND SMOOTH!”

“And I want to keep my hearing intact James,” Lily snapped rubbing her ear that had been dangerously close to James. After a while she stopped and frowned, “Though I too rather the road be quick.”

Harry didn’t know how long he ran until he came across a dirt road but from the appearance of the setting sun, it had been quite a while. He was extremely tired, sore, hungry and thirsty but he had forced himself to keep moving. The added weight of his weapons had only made the task more difficult. He didn’t know how long he had been held captive but considering how weak his body was feeling, Harry could only assume that it had been at least a few days since he had eaten anything. Deep down, Harry knew he wouldn’t last too much longer before dizziness started to set in. If working at a hospital for a month taught him anything, it was how to recognize the signs of exhaustion.

He also knew it wouldn’t be long before someone realized that the person in the cell wasn’t Harry Potter. Once that happened, Voldemort was bound to retaliate and Harry certainly wasn’t looking forward to that headache. Harry now knew that his Occlumency training hadn’t actually stopped Voldemort at all. It had simply been a ploy to catch Harry at the right moment, a moment when Harry hadn’t been thinking

about anything other than the death of one guardian and the possible death of another.

“Yes, and who was supposedly teaching Harry Occlumency?” Sirius asked crossing his arms.

“Things do keep putting Snape in quite a bad light, don’t they?” Remus asked bitterly.

So much could have been avoided if I had talked to someone. Why did I trust a voice in my head rather than logic? I let Voldemort take my grief and twist it to suit his own purpose. I really must be the thickest person on the planet.

“No, Harry. You’re not. Don’t worry. That will always be Sirius,” James said soothingly.

“Yeah Harry, don’t worry th- HEY! I’M NOT THICK!”

“Sirius no shouting, James stop teasing Sirius!”

“But mum! How will I have fun then?”

Shaking the thought out of his head, Harry stuck out his wand arm and prayed that it would work. Sirius and Remus had told him once about an emergency transport service for witches and wizards. Would it still work if someone’s magic had been suppressed? Harry could only hope because he didn’t think he would be able to make it home on foot. He didn’t even know if he had been going in the right direction.

A deafening BANG was Harry's answer. Jumping backwards, Harry saw a violently purple, triple-decker bus had appeared out of thin air in front of him. There was gold lettering over the windshield that spelled 'The Knight Bus'. The thing was positively huge. Harry had never seen a bus like it before but quickly snapped out of his thoughts and reminded himself that Voldemort's lair wasn't too far away.

"Well, at least he hasn't eaten in a while," Remus said relieved.

"REMUS, my baby not eating is a horrible thought!" Lily scolded.

"Trust me Lily, when entering the Knight Bus, the more empty the stomach, the better," Mr. Potter said grimly rubbing his stomach.

A thin and pimply young man wearing a purple uniform jumped down onto the dirt road. "Welcome to the Knight Bus," he said loudly. Harry instantly reacted, grabbing the conductor by the uniform and shoving him back on the bus. "Hey!" the conductor cried. "Get off!"

"Get the bus moving," Harry ordered through his teeth. "Unless you want to come face to face with Voldemort's finest, of course."

"I'm confused," James said.

"You're not the only one," Mrs. Potter answered.

The conductor winced at the mention of Voldemort's name before paling and hurrying to the driver, an elderly wizard wearing very thick glasses. Harry followed the conductor into the bus only to notice that there were no seats. Instead, there were six brass bedsteads that were placed next to curtained windows. Burning candles were in brackets next to each bed. This was absolutely the strangest bus Harry had ever seen. Thankfully all of the beds were empty at the moment.

There was another loud BANG and Harry quickly grabbed hold of the nearest bed to prevent himself from landing flat on his back as the Knight Bus took off. Looking towards the driver, Harry saw the conductor staring at him fearfully. *He must think I'm a Death Eater.* Letting out a sigh, Harry sat down on the bed and pulled back the hood of his cloak to reveal his face. He knew it was the only way for the conductor to believe that he wasn't an enemy.

"Well, er- with the attitude back there, what did you expect?" Remus winced.

"He was worried he was being followed," Mr. Potter explained.

The conductor gasped in shock as he took a few steps forward as if to get a better look. "Blimey," he said softly. "You're Harry Potter! Ern, its Harry Potter!"

Harry could only shake his head in exasperation. "Look, I don't know what's been going on but I need to get far from where we just were," he said tiredly.

The conductor had apparently recovered from his shock and approached. "Where do you need to go, Mr. Potter?" he asked eagerly. "You're our only customer at the moment so we don't have any other stops to make. I'm Stan Shunpike, by the way and the driver is Ernie Prang." Harry saw Ernie looking at him and nodded a hello which earned him a nod from Ernie in return. "I can't believe it," Stan continued in an amazed tone. "Harry Potter! The entire Ministry has been searching for you for the past three days, you know."

Harry closed his eyes and let out a sigh. Well, at least he knew how long he had been there now. He didn't know why but he had thought it had been longer even though he had been unconscious for most of the time. "Three days?" he asked quietly. "It's only been three days?"

Stan rested a hand on Harry's shoulder. "Should we take you to St. Mungo's, Mr. Potter?" he asked gently. "If you're hurt—"

"Take him to Grimmauld Place!" Sirius ordered. "Dumbledore will call Madam Pomfrey."

"Maybe St. Mungo's—"

"Is not worth the risk because of your fear of Madam Pomfrey, James. There may be spies there and they would find out about Harry's abilities. No, Sirius is right," Mr. Potter said.

"I'm not afraid of Madam Pomfrey," James huffed offended.

"—it doesn't matter," Harry interrupted. "It won't be long before Voldemort knows I'm gone. Where are we exactly?"

"Nearing London," Stan said carefully. "But if you're injured—"

"—no," Harry said firmly. He wasn't about to put the lives of everyone in St. Mungo's in danger because of this. Besides, going to St. Mungo's would only waste time that he didn't have. Making sure Sirius was safe was all that mattered. His injuries could wait. "I'll be all right. If you could drop me off at King's Cross Station, I'd appreciate it." Harry took off his glasses and tried to rub the oncoming exhaustion out of his eyes. "Oh, I'm afraid I don't have any money so if I could have an address to send it too—"

"—don't worry about it, Mr. Potter," Stan said, leaving no room for argument. "It's the least we can do but I don't like leaving you in the middle of London with the

current state of things. What about Sirius Black or even Dumbledore? They're in charge of the search for you! They would want to know you've escaped!"

"Yes, we would!" Sirius cried. "Thank you Stan!"

Harry slid his glasses back on his face and met Stan's gaze. "Would you return home if it meant putting your family in danger?" he asked.

Moans were heard all around.

"Until I know I'm not being followed, I can't take the risk." Actually, Harry was worried that Voldemort was still in his head and would discover where Order Headquarters was but he wasn't about to reveal that. The more he thought about it, the more Harry realized that his original plan to run home and warn Sirius wouldn't work. All he had to do was to keep a lookout and make sure Sirius was still at home and not in Voldemort's clutches. After tonight, Harry would find some way to approach his guardian in a neutral setting, a setting that wouldn't give anything away to Voldemort.

Mr. Potter started banging the back of his head against the soft back of the armchair.

There had been many things about his capture that didn't make sense to Harry. Voldemort had the perfect chance to dive into Harry's mind for information but he didn't. He could have discovered so much but the Dark Lord kept his distance and let some sort of medical researcher search for information that he could have learned in a fraction of the time. Why? What was Voldemort playing at? Did he already know and this was just another way to mess with a teenager's mind?

“Or, he was scared of what would happen if he entered Harry’s mind?” Remus said slowly tapping his chin with his finger. “Interesting.”

“Okay Moony,” Sirius said patting Remus’ back. “We’ll let you research that after we finish reading.”

It was now a constant fear. Was Voldemort in some corner of his mind? His scar had hurt continuously throughout the past few days but Harry had assumed that it had been because he had been near Voldemort for so long. *So many mistakes have already been made because of assumptions and here I am making more.* Harry really didn’t know what to do. What do you do when you can’t even trust your own mind anymore?

Stan took a step back and studied Harry for a moment before he shook his head sadly. “I still don’t like it, Mr. Potter,” he said. “Couldn’t we drop you off at the Ministry instead? There’s bound to be someone there who could help you out.”

“There’s also bound to be spies working for Voldemort there,” Harry countered. “The further I stay from the magical world the better at the moment. It’s too hard to tell whether someone is a friend or an enemy.” Glancing at his wrists, Harry noticed blood and quickly hid them in his cloak. He could feel the tiredness seeping in and fought to keep it at bay. “I can take care of myself,” he said softly. “Trust me.”

“NO STAN! Don’t trust him! Take him to Hogwarts!” Lily cried.

“To the castle that helped him escape the first time around?” James asked. “No way! Take him to Grimmauld Place!”

“Stan doesn’t know about Headquarters James!” Lily snapped back.

“But Hogwarts isn’t a good option!” he argued back.

“Hogwarts is the only op-“

“Enough you two. Stop arguing and let’s keep reading!” Mr. Potter said sternly and Sirius and Remus clapped. Their clap slowly died at the double death glares they received.

There was nothing more to say. Harry wasn’t going to give in no matter what was said. He knew he really didn’t stand a chance against Voldemort or the Death Eaters with his magic suppressed. He had handled one Death Eater by catching him by surprise but Death Eaters rarely traveled alone. Their safety was guaranteed in numbers. It was a human trait that Harry had learned long ago. Attackers attacked when they were certain they would succeed. Defenders acted when they were certain the attackers could be defeated. Fear was definitely a powerful motivator.

There was very little sunlight left when the bus had come to a stop. As he rose to his feet, Harry pulled the hood of his cloak over his head to hide his face. He didn’t have much of a choice. The face of Harry Potter was too recognizable. Harry had a feeling that Muggles were probably aware of his disappearance by now making it

increasingly difficult to remain anonymous. *Just stay in the shadows. That's really all I can do.*

"King's Cross Station, Mr. Potter," Stan said quietly.

"Thank you, Stan," Harry said politely and he walked over to the doors. "Thanks for everything." Before Stan or Ernie could say anything, Harry stepped off the bus and took in his surroundings. The train station was extremely crowded forcing Harry to quickly blend into the lines of traffic. With a loud *BANG*, the Knight Bus vanished from sight but Harry seemed to be the only one to notice. *I guess that means there are no other witches or wizards in the area.*

Harry kept his posture relaxed but alert as he stepped out of the main crowd and veered left. It was about a twenty minute walk if you used the main streets but Harry couldn't exactly take that route. There were too many people who would notice a cloaked figure walking down the sidewalk. *Merlin forbid any child see me and run away screaming. That would put an end to this little task real quick. Just what I need is someone alerting the Muggle authorities and causing a ruckus. I might as well put up a flashy sign saying: 'Find Harry Potter Here'.*

Luckily the number of people outdoors decreased dramatically once Harry was far enough away from the train station. Soon, Harry had no difficulty staying out of the light provided by the street lamps and retreated to darkness and shadows provided by large trees and shrubs when it was absolutely necessary. So far there had been no sign of any witch or wizard whatsoever. Harry didn't know whether that was a good or bad sign. What if no one was at the house? What if they were somewhere that wasn't nearly as protected, leaving Sirius vulnerable?

"Will you stop worrying about me and go home already?"

"This kid really needs someone to explain to him who is the adult there," Mr. Potter said. "Talk about role reversal." Then he looked at Sirius and tried to picture him as an adult and failed miserably as the boy started making faces at James.

Harry was nearly halfway there when a searing pain erupted from his scar. Harry bit back a cry as he hurried for cover in a grouping of large shrubs and sank to his knees. Grabbing his forehead, Harry was barely aware that he was rocking back and forth as the pain slowly increased. Anger flooded his entire body. He felt the intense desire to hurt...to kill...*No! Get out of my head! I don't want to hurt anyone!*

His world suddenly dissolved into a dimly lit room large enough to fit an army. He was standing in front of nearly two dozen kneeling Death Eaters. Two of them were holding a man whose face was hidden by what could only be described as a cloth

bag. The prisoner was trying to stand bravely but it was easy to see that he was trembling in fear. Absolute silence filled the room. No one dared moving in fear of being subjected to the wrath of their leader.

“All of you are here tonight because while you were here, Harry Potter managed to escape,” Harry hissed. “A teenager was walking around and NO ONE NOTICED ANYTHING!!!” The majority of the Death Eaters flinched in fear. “You are supposed to be the cunning and the sly but you were outsmarted by a bloody Gryffindor that was NOTHING MORE THAN A MUGGLE!!! ALL OF YOU *WILL* BE PUNISHED FOR YOUR FAILURE!!!”

Harry turned his attention to the prisoner. “As for you, I had hoped that your precious godson would be able to physically witness your death but this will have to do,” he spat as he pulled out his wand. He approached the prisoner and pulled the bag off to reveal the face of fear filled face of Sirius Black.

“NOOO!” the women cried.

“That’s not me! That’s not me! He said the prisoner was trembling in fear and I wouldn’t give Voldemort the satisfaction! Harry, that’s a trick!”

“It’s such a shame that the-boy-who-lived must become an orphan once again,” he said mockingly. “I’ll be sure to tell your godson ‘hello’ for you.”

Sirius tried to break free from the two Death Eaters and was instantly hit with a Cruciatus Curse. Pain coursed through Harry's body but no screams reached his ears. Both Sirius and Harry seemed to be using every bit of strength they had to remain silent. Harry was barely aware of the warmth against his chest coming from the pendants he had received from his birthday. He wanted to hold it but couldn't bring his body to move. Finally, the wand was lowered and the pain lessened dramatically. Sirius looked up and glared hatefully. There were a few bruises on his face and his bottom lip was bleeding. Whatever happened, Harry knew Sirius had put up a fight.

"Okay, maybe that is me," Sirius said in a small voice. Remus hugged him close and started rubbing his back.

"You'll be okay Padfoot."

Harry knew what was coming as the yew wand with a phoenix feather core rose and pointed at Sirius' head. He wanted to stop this. He needed to stop this somehow but he was too exhausted and in too much pain to do anything but watch. He wanted to tell Sirius to run for it but the words were stuck in his throat. He had never felt so helpless in his entire life. It was just like Remus all over again. He was too late for Sirius just like he was too late to for Remus.

The pain from his forehead started to decrease but not before Harry heard: "*Avada Kedavra*" but this time it was Voldemort's hateful voice who said it and not his own.

Green light flooded in followed quickly by darkness. Opening his eyes, Harry found himself surrounded by shrubs once again and couldn't hold back the despair that consumed him. This was not supposed to be happening! None of this was supposed to be happening! Sirius was supposed to be safe at home, not captured by Voldemort!

Mr. Potter held Mrs. Potter as she cried desperately and James held Lily. Remus had never let Sirius go and was surprised when his friend was ripped from his embrace by the two females who had proceeded to hold tight to him while they all cried. Coughing to clear his throat and hide his misted eyes Mr. Potter kept reading.

At that moment Harry wanted nothing more than to die. The pain in his heart was excruciating. Sirius and Remus had been his entire life. What was he supposed to do without them? How was he supposed to survive without them? He could still see the fear in Sirius' eyes. Fear that he had never remembered seeing before. Fear that he never knew existed...

***Wait a minute!* Was it possible? Was this just another trick? Could he dare to hope? Could Sirius actually be alive and this was just a ploy to make Harry do something incredibly stupid...again?**

"Yes, yes," Mrs. Potter nodded hopefully as she patted Sirius head. "A trick. You are fine honey," she finished to Sirius.

Harry didn't know what to do. He really didn't think he could take any more pain.

This was so much worse than the Cruciatus Curse. Nothing could compare to the pain that losing your family. Was this what Sirius and Remus had felt when the Potter's had been killed? How in the world had they managed to keep going?

Lily hiccupped a little sob and James hugged her again with a sad expression. Mr. and Mrs. Potter looked haunted at the thought of their son's death.

Several soft *cracking* noises quickly pulled Harry out of his thoughts. He knew that sound. It was the sound of Apparating. Reaching in his robes, Harry wrapped his fingers around the sword resting by his left hip. It no longer mattered who had arrived. Harry's mind had retreated to the basic instinct of survive and protect.

"You there," a familiar voice called out. "What are you doing here?"

Harry slowly rose to his feet, ignoring the sparks of pain that came from the movement, and turned to see four individuals standing a safe distance away from him with their wands out. He couldn't make out their faces in the darkness but he could tell that there were three wizards and one witch. The witch was thin but not overly so. The three wizards were lean but had enough muscle on them to make them appear intimidating. "What I am doing here is my business," Harry said coolly. "It would be best if you let me be."

“Yeah, just sod off,” Remus muttered wiping his reddened eyes with the back of his hand. The other five people in the room were so shocked at *Remus* telling someone to ‘sod off’ that Mrs. Potter forgot to reprimand him.

One of the wizards took a step forward and raised his wand to point at Harry’s chest.

“It would be best if you identified yourself,” he said. “We will not hesitate to use force if necessary.”

***And neither will I.* Harry knew he had heard that voice before but he couldn’t remember from where. “That’s easy for you to say considering that it’s four against one,” Harry countered. “Perhaps you should introduce yourselves first.”**

“Yeah, you, you... rude people!” Sirius cried.

“I’ll let that lame insult pass on the grounds that he is still in shock,” James whispered to Lily who giggled in a sad way.

“Maybe we should just stun him,” one of the wizards said quietly. “If he could help us find Harry...”

“Harry?” Mr. Potter asked perking up. “Not Potter?”

Harry’s eyes widened. He definitely knew that voice. There was no mistaking the voice of a fellow former champion. “Viktor?” he asked cautiously as he took a step

forward. He couldn't believe it. What was Viktor Krum doing in London? "Viktor Krum?" With shaky hands, Harry released his hold on his sword, lifted his hands up and pushed back his hood to reveal his face.

Viktor raised his wand and light filled the alley. Harry raised his hand to shield his eyes from the light but before he succeeded he found himself pulled into a fierce embrace. Pain screamed through his body causing Harry to cry out. He was instantly released and fell to his knees gasping for breath. Lights flashed in front of his eyes but after blinking for a few moments, everything returned to normal. Someone knelt down in front of him and rested a gentle hand on his shoulder. Looking up, Harry paled at the sight of Sirius' concerned face

"YES!" Sirius cried jumping up. "I'm alive!" James joined him in standing and jumping with him and hugging him. Remus brought the two down on the bed and they fell on top of each other. Mr. and Mrs. Potter and Lilly were laughing happily at them.

before pulling out his sword and positioning it in front of Sirius' neck.

"Er, Harry?" Lily asked worried.

Sirius stared at Harry in shock before nervously looking down at the sword. "Harry, what are you doing?" he asked. "It's me. It's Midnight. Don't you remember?"

Harry's hands were shaking as he tried to keep the sword in place. Why did the sword feel so heavy all of a sudden? "In the past three days I have had my entire world ripped out from under my feet," he said in a shaky voice. "I just saw you die by Voldemort's hand so forgive me if I don't take anything on face value. If you're really Sirius Black then you'll have no problem proving it."

Sirius nodded slightly and with a *pop*, a large, shaggy black dog was sitting where Sirius had been.

"Illegal activity," Mr. Potter mumbled. "My own children."

"Aw, Mr. P," Sirius cooed. "I knew you loved me!"

That was all it took for Harry to drop the sword and wrap his arms around the dog's neck. Tears filled his eyes as the realization of everything hit him at full force. Sirius was still alive. Voldemort had failed. It really had been a lie, a trick to make Harry do something stupid. *It wasn't real. That look on Sirius' face wasn't real.*

With another *pop*, Sirius was back and carefully wrapped his arms around Harry.

"Thank Merlin you're okay," he said as he buried his face in Harry's messy hair. "How did you escape? What were you thinking? Where have you been? Do you have any idea what it's been like not knowing whether you were alive or dead for the past month? How could you leave like that?"

"Honestly, you don't have the months that will take for Harry to explain," Remus said.

"GET OUT OF THERE!"

"I'm sorry," Harry said weakly. His arms relaxed as he felt the rest of his strength leaving him. After so long, he was too tired to do anything. He just wanted to sleep but he feared that if he did, he would wake up to find this all a dream. The last thing he wanted was to be back as Voldemort's prisoner. "I'm so sorry. I—I was just trying to protect you."

"Protect me?" Sirius asked in confusion. "Harry, I'm supposed to be protecting you. I'm the adult here. If something had been wrong you should have said something and we would have faced it together with the Order as backup if it was necessary."
Sirius let out a shaky breath. "We've always faced problems as a team. Why couldn't you trust us this time?"

A hand rested on Sirius' shoulder as the witch knelt down, her face and short purple hair finally being revealed. "Sirius, we should get Harry back to Headquarters," interrupted Tonks as she picked up the sword Harry dropped. "Harry needs a healer and Dumbledore needs to be notified. There will be plenty of time to ask questions later."

"Yes, smart girl!" Mrs. Potter praised.

"Is that Nymphadora?" Mr. Potter asked.

"Yep, she's an Auror," Sirius said proudly and Mr. Potter paled significantly.

"That girl is a menace," he whispered and James turned to Lily.

"See? What did I say?"

"No!" Harry protested as he tried to break free of Sirius' hold but failed. "I can't go back there! Please!"

Sirius carefully repositioned Harry so their eyes could meet. The confusion on Sirius' face was undeniable. "Harry, we need to keep you safe," he said firmly.

"Headquarters is the only place that Voldemort can't reach you."

Harry shook his head as he desperately grabbed hold of Sirius' shirt. "You don't understand," he said painfully as his gaze fell to the ground. "Voldemort...he's in my head. He's always been in my head. Occlumency never worked. He's been there the entire time waiting and then after Remus..." Harry couldn't stop the tears from falling. How could he convince them on something he couldn't even explain? "He'll find out about Headquarters. He'll know...I can't...I can't go back there. Please, I just wanted to make sure you were safe and not captured."

“Well there’s nothing we can do about it now, Harry,” Sirius said leaving no room for argument. “I’m not leaving you to fend for yourself so you have no choice but to come home. Right now healing your injuries is what’s important. If I have to stun you and charm the house to keep you there, I will,” Sirius glanced at Tonks who nodded in agreement. “Now, can you walk, Harry?” Harry nodded reluctantly and was slowly helped to his feet by Sirius and Tonks. Sirius wrapped an arm around Harry’s waist while Tonks held on to Harry’s left arm. “All right, just close your eyes, Harry.”

“Finally!” James sighed relieved.

Harry did as he was told and suddenly everything went black. He felt like he was being pressed very hard from all directions; he could not breathe, there were iron bands tightening around his chest; his eyeballs were being forced back into his head; his eardrums were being pushed deeper into his skull. A split second later it was over and Harry was ushered forward by Sirius and Tonks. He was still consumed with fear about returning to Headquarters. The pain from his scar had decreased significantly but there was still enough pain to make Harry nervous. Everything about this made him nervous. He really wished he knew for certain if Voldemort was still in his head or not. He hated not knowing whether he was a danger to others or not.

“We’re almost there, Harry,” Sirius said reassuringly as they stepped on the worn stone steps of Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place with Charlie Weasley leading the way.

Charlie pulled out his wand and tapped on the door once. Several loud, metallic clicks were heard before the door creaked open. Charlie hurried in, followed by Sirius and Tonks who helped Harry inside with Viktor bringing up the rear. The door was closed as quietly as possible to prevent Mrs. Black from waking. Silence was maintained as they passed Mrs. Black's covered portrait and continued towards the kitchen.

"Charlie, use the fire to call Dumbledore and Poppy," Sirius said quietly as he and Tonks half carried Harry into the kitchen. "Viktor, grab the first aid kit."

The two wizards nodded and did as they were told while Sirius and Tonks carefully removed the Death Eater robe Harry was wearing. Harry couldn't bring himself to protest even if he wanted to. Haziness had set in along with sparks of dizziness. He felt like he was trapped in a fog of his own dread. He knew he would have to face everyone and also knew that they could never understand why. How could they understand what it had been like to lose a guardian only to hear the voice of someone long gone telling you that your remaining guardian would die if you stayed? They would never understand how important family was to Harry. Family was everything. Those moments when he had thought Sirius had been killed...

“Just hang on, Harry,” Sirius said gently as he removed the chest harness. “Merlin, you certainly were prepared for a fight. I guess we were lucky you recognized Viktor’s voice.” Receiving no response whatsoever, Sirius glanced nervously at Tonks before he pulled out a chair and helped Harry sit down. He bit his lower lip as he knelt down in front of Harry and carefully removed Harry’s shirt in order to see what damage had been done. “Snape told us everything, Harry,” he continued, eager to fill the silence. “We know that Voldemort tricked you by pretending to be James that night and we know that he had your magic suppressed.”

“And did he tell you where to find Harry, or did he just enjoy torturing you with not being able to help and knowing Harry was being tortured?” Lily asked bitterly.

Viktor hurried into the kitchen with the first aid kit and gasped. “V—what did they do to him?” he asked. “He’s covered with bruises!”

Sirius carefully checked if any ribs were broken as he looked into Harry’s clouded eyes for any sort of recognition. There was none. Harry just stared straight ahead at nothing in particular. “Viktor, hand me the smelling salts,” Sirius said nervously. Viktor did as he was told. Sirius opened the small bottle and placed it under Harry’s nose. This time there was a reaction. Harry flinched away and would have fallen out of the chair if Tonks hadn’t caught him.

Sirius set the smelling salts on the table as he looked away. "Tonks, Viktor, could you two give us a moment?" he asked in a wavering voice. Viktor nodded and left but Tonks hesitated. Sirius knew why. The past month hadn't been easy for any of them but it had been the hardest on Sirius.

"Of course it has. I've been worried sick with Harry running around in the muggle world with Doc Rolands and J.J, and then Voldemort torturing him, and I didn't sleep well last night because of that worry-

"I think the book is referring to future Sirius who didn't actually know where Harry was," Remus said slowly and Sirius made an expression of dawning understanding.

"Tonks, please just trust me," he pleaded. This time Tonks nodded and left the room. Rubbing his eyes, Sirius pulled up a chair and sat down so that he was facing his godson. "Harry, please look at me."

Slowly, Harry's gaze shifted until green met blue. Pain met pain. Regret met regret. Both godfather and godson knew there was so much to say but neither of them could bring themselves to speak. Harry knew that any apology would be meaningless and Sirius knew that any sort of lecture would only increase the guilt that Harry already felt. The lecture would certainly come and Harry would probably be apologizing for a long time to come.

"You know? I find myself curious to see Sirius of all people handing out a lecture," Mr. Potter said and Sirius smiled sheepishly.

“Listen Harry, I know we have a lot to talk about,” Sirius said at last as he grabbed his wand and waved it over Harry’s wrists, banishing the dried blood. He then pulled out a roll of gauze from the first aid kit. “Running away like you did was probably the worst thing you could have done but...I guess I understand why you felt you had to leave.” Sirius gently wrapped the gauze around Harry’s left wrist and hands until it was nearly impossible to move. “You’ve always felt like it was up to you to protect everyone, but you have to understand that your father left *you* in *my* care.” Sirius moved on to Harry’s right wrist. “He would never ask you to put yourself in danger because of me.”

“Yeah! Give him the talk Sirius!” James cried.

“I must say I am impressed,” Mr. Potter nodded and Sirius puffed his chest proudly.

Harry bowed his head in shame. He didn’t know why but he felt extremely uncomfortable with how compassionate Sirius was being. A part of him wanted Sirius to be angry because he knew he deserved it. Harry deserved whatever punishment Sirius gave him for causing as much worry as he did.

“Like Padfoot will ever punish Harry,” Remus snorted and Sirius glared at him.

“I can so punish him!” he pouted.

Remus burst out laughing and Sirius pouted even more.

He has done so much for me and all I do is cause problems. All I do is put people in danger. All I do is get people killed.

Moans could be heard.

A soft knock on the door ended the conversation. "Sirius?" Tonks asked as she opened the door partially and poked her head through the opening. "Dumbledore and Poppy are here."

Sirius nodded as he looked over his shoulder at Tonks. "Let them in," he said as he sealed the gauze put the access back in the first aid kit.

Harry kept his head bowed as the door opened completely. He heard several people enter and gasp. Realistically, Harry didn't think that his injuries were *that* bad. Yes, he was in pain but it was nothing like what he had been in before. The pain from his scar was only a minor annoyance now which was a blessing. He didn't know how much longer he could have handled the constant headache.

Madam Pomfrey was instantly at Harry's side, waving her wand for a diagnosis as she placed her medical bag on the table. "Bruised ribs, minor concussion, exhaustion, dehydration, magical suppression, and strained muscles in the left shoulder," she announced before she lowered her wand and opened her bag. "I suppose considering where you were we should be grateful you are even alive, Mr. Potter."

“Harry’s afraid that Voldemort is in his mind, Dumbledore,” Sirius said as Madam Pomfrey reached in her bag and pulled out four vials of different colored potions. “He says that Occlumency never actually worked.”

Madam Pomfrey waved her wand again and the chair Harry was sitting in transformed into a reclining chair. “Sit back, Mr. Potter,” she ordered and waited for Harry to obey. She handed him potion after potion which Harry downed obediently, trying his best to ignore the awful taste of each one. After the third one, Harry had to work extremely hard not to lose his stomach. After the fourth potion, Harry desperately wanted someone to knock him out. He felt extremely woozy and downright ill.

Sirius’ voice quickly pulled Harry back to the realization that there were at least three other people in the room. “Are you sure this should be done now?” he asked worriedly. “Aren’t there side affects when someone’s magic is unsuppressed?”

“What? What do you want to do? If Sirius says no then it’s no!” Lily said sternly.

Harry slowly looked up at saw Professor Dumbledore looking at him sympathetically before looking directly at Sirius. “His magic may be unstable for a few days but it would give him more protection than he currently has,” Dumbledore said patiently. “Harry’s magic has always acted as defense mechanism, especially when Harry was in danger. *If* Voldemort were to attempt to enter Harry’s mind, his magic is really the

only protection he has. He's just too exhausted to physically fight a mental attack at the moment."

Sirius let out a sigh. "Poppy?" he asked desperately.

"Normally I would be against such an action with a patient in Mr. Potter's state but these aren't normal circumstances," Madam Pomfrey answered sincerely. "I can only say that a mental attack from You-Know-Who is the last thing Mr. Potter needs at the moment. As a matter of fact, any stress whatsoever is the last thing Mr. Potter needs."

"Yes, we definitely want to keep Voldemort out of his mind," Remus nodded firmly.

Harry didn't like where this conversation was going. Unstable magic? What would that mean for his empathic ability? Having the ability had been trying at times but manageable when he only felt a hint of other people's emotions. If he were overpowered by them...Harry shuddered at the thought. There was also the possibility of his outbursts returning. That wasn't a favorable option either. He definitely didn't want to hurt anyone.

"HARRY! LET THE ADULTS DECIDE!" Mrs. Potter cried annoyed.

"That's okay honey. Don't worry, Harry will do as they tell him," Mr. Potter said patting her hand to calm her down. Mrs. Potter just huffed.

“I don’t like this,” Sirius said hesitantly. “You’re talking about how exhausted he is but you want to add on unstable magic in addition to what he’s already going through. If Voldemort was going to attack him wouldn’t it have happened by now?”

“Voldemort would wait until Harry is the most vulnerable and unable to retaliate before it was too late,” Professor Dumbledore answered. “He’s most likely waiting until Harry falls asleep.”

“Would be just like him!” James growled. “Stupid snake face.”

***That makes sense.* The majority of Harry’s visions had taken place when he was sleeping. That was why he was always told to clear his mind at night. The problem was that it hadn’t worked then with his magic why would it work now? Harry didn’t know what to think. He didn’t know what to believe. He didn’t know what to do. At the current moment, Harry had absolutely no confidence in making any sort of decision.**

“That’s understandable dear, you’ve been through a terrible ordeal. Let Sirius decide,” Mrs. Potter said soothingly. Mr. Potter on the other hand was regarding teenage Sirius and pondering how wise letting him decide anything was.

A hand waved in front of his face, pulling Harry out of his thoughts to see Sirius, Professor Dumbledore, Madam Pomfrey, and Tonks looking at him worriedly. Unable

to think of anything to say, Harry could only look away. What was he supposed to say? *I don't think restoring my magic would be a good idea since I recently discovered that I'm empathic and I'm afraid the overabundance of emotions would drive me insane.* That would go over well.

"Yes," Lily said. "So they can help you."

"ARE YOU INSANE LILY?" James cried. "Don't tell them Harry!" he begged.

"No one there will tell the ministry James," Lily huffed.

"Better safe than sorry," James said evenly.

Professor Dumbledore, however, seemed to pick up on Harry's uncertainty. "Is there anything you wish to tell us, Harry?" he asked tenderly.

Harry shook his head. In the Muggle world, keeping secrets had been mandatory. No one believed in magic let alone the ability to sense someone else's emotions and the ability to heal. Would it have to be the same in the wizarding world? He had never heard of anyone with any kind of specific abilities like this before. This sort of thing wasn't normal, that much was clear. How would people react? How would Sirius react?

"I don't care Harry, tell me!"

"You know, that is quite weird," Remus said. "I mean we are reading about Sirius not knowing something while he knows," he finished pointing at Sirius. The others nodded.

Sirius pulled up a chair and sat down next to Harry. No words were said as Sirius wrapped an arm around Harry's shoulders and pulled him close. It was a simple action that made Harry crumble instantly. He had never been so confused in his entire life. He just didn't know what to do anymore about anything. He barely felt someone taking his left arm, placing it on the table and holding it in place. All that he was actually aware of was the fact that his godfather, the man who had every reason to hate him was at his side, comforting him.

"WHY WOULD I HATE YOU HARRY?"

"Harry is very confused," James said.

"We'll then he better un-confuse himself!" Sirius huffed.

"Just so you know I'm only allowing this because Harry's petrified of Voldemort being in his head," Sirius said protectively. "You better hope there are no complications with this, Dumbledore. I didn't get my godson back just to lose him again."

"And I will do everything in my power to ensure that doesn't happen," Professor Dumbledore insisted. "I know you still blame me for what Harry has faced but I give you my word I only want the best for him. Keeping Harry safe and helping him

recover are my sole concerns. Whatever side affects Harry may have from this pale in comparison to the alternative.”

“He does have a point,” Mr. Potter said grimly.

Madam Pomfrey pulled out syringe from her bag and checked to make sure there were no air bubbles. “This may sting a little, Mr. Potter,” she said sympathetically.

“Try to remain still. Receiving any less than a full dose could be dangerous.”

Harry felt Sirius tighten his hold moments before he felt a prick in his left arm.

Almost instantly, Harry started to feel what could only be described as a tingling sensation starting in his left arm and quickly passing through his entire body. The sensation quickly changed to pain as Harry felt his senses heighten. It was like a door had opened suddenly, allowing everything in that had been blocked out. Harry was vaguely aware that his body was shaking as emotions hit him at full force. They weren’t like gentle waves anymore. They were more like blasts of wind that couldn’t be ignored. He was instantly overwhelmed with feelings of concern, sympathy, nervousness and even fear.

Instincts overrode any sort of logical thought. Getting away from the overpowering emotions was all that mattered. Everything around him felt too alive to make any sense. Pushing Sirius away, Harry turned so quickly that he lost his balance and fell backwards out of the chair. He could vaguely hear someone cry out but he couldn’t tell who it was. Pulling himself up to all fours, Harry could only wait as magic pulsed

through him along with the foreign emotions. He was just too tired to even try to fight it.

Slowly, the madness started to calm down, alerting Harry to how quiet it actually was. He raised his head to see that there were several more people in the kitchen and it was significantly brighter. He couldn't make out who they were but at the moment it didn't matter. They were causing him pain that made them the enemy. He was in survival mode right now. Deep down he didn't want to hurt anyone but he needed stop the pain.

"STOP HURTING MY BABY!" Lily cried.

"They don't know they are hurting him," Mrs. Potter tried to explain.

"Yeah, because *someone*," Sirius said slowly glaring at James, "didn't want him to tell them."

"Like Harry listened to me," James snorted.

A figure tentatively moved closer, increasing the sensations of concern and bringing a new emotion...protectiveness? This person didn't want to harm him but he was nevertheless. Harry quickly backed away from the figure and pushed out his hand in a defensive gesture, begging the man to stay away. Instantly, the blasts of foreign emotions vanished. He felt incredibly empty as everything came into focus. The room had returned to its natural lighting for Harry to see Sirius, Professor

Dumbledore, Madam Pomfrey, Tonks, Charlie Weasley, Professor McGonagall, and Viktor Krum through a semitransparent blue tinted barrier staring at him in shock. Harry's eyes widened in horror. What was going on? He started to pull his hand back when Dumbledore's voice stopped him.

"Harry, lower the shield," Professor Dumbledore said calmly. "We won't hurt you. You are safe now. Do you understand?"

Harry was too preoccupied with the blue tinted shield that flickered every time he moved a finger to answer. This was certainly a new development. His shock had dissolved into curiosity. This shield was actually blocking everyone's emotions from reaching him. Harry could feel himself weakening but he didn't dare attempt to lower the shield. He didn't think he could handle being bombarded by all of the emotions again.

As rational thought returned, questions started to filter in Harry's mind. How was he doing this...without a wand? This wasn't summoning a wand or even minor healing. This was a powerful shield that was normally difficult to create *with* a wand. He knew he was in the middle of a magical outburst but he still shouldn't be able to do this. What did it mean? Was this related to the *oddity* that Death Eater...McDaniels had discovered?

No. No it can't be.

Reluctantly, Harry lowered his hand and watched as the shield vanished. Emotions quickly washed over him but it wasn't as forceful as before. The emotions had dimmed slightly allowing Harry to actually focus on those who were currently watching him but he knew he wouldn't be able to withstand it for long. The sooner he could find some solitude the better although he had a feeling that solitude was the last thing he was going to be granted.

Arms wrapped around him, pulling Harry into a firm chest. He didn't have to look to know who was holding him. Burying his face in Sirius' chest, Harry closed his eyes and tried to ignore the concern, protectiveness and love that were pulsating off of the man. Any thought that Sirius would hate him for what had happened was forgotten.

"Sirius, stop trying to suffocate yourself with the pillow. It's completely pointless, you are sitting up, all that will achieve is you'll faint, dropping the pillow and therefore starting to breath again," Mr. Potter said flatly.

"But Mr. P," Sirius whined. "Look what Harry is thinking. ME? Hating him?"

"Calm down Paddy," Remus patted Sirius back. "Harry will see the light...eventually."

That acknowledgement allowed Harry to do something he hadn't done in a long time...relax. The pain from his scar was lessening to only an annoyance which was a relief. He was too tired to even attempt to fight off a mental attack at the moment.

Slowly the emotions faded until they were once again gentle waves that served as a comfort rather than a headache. It didn't matter that there were people in the room talking about him. All that mattered was that he felt safe and protected for the first time in a long time. He couldn't bring himself to worry what tomorrow would bring because at the moment he was at the one place he had so desperately wanted to be at. He was home.

"Finally!" the six cried together.

A/N: Sorry for the delay. I was working freelance but now I was invited to work full time and because of that I had no time to spare for writing. Though this is great news for me as I am loving my new job, for fanfiction this means I won't be posting as often as I did. Don't worry, I will never abandon this, so if I stay a long time without posting there is no need to fret.

Thanks for reviewing and reading.

Chapter 6

Confessions and Clarifications

Darkness was everywhere, suffocating and absolutely frightening. There was no fighting it, no escaping it. Harry couldn't move, he couldn't breathe. The darkness had entered his lungs, freezing them with fear. It was almost like it was alive, attacking anyone who dare oppose it. It was impossible to fight back. How do you fight something you can't see? How do fight when you can't even move?

"Let Harry go!" James cried.

"But who has him?" Remus asked worried. "He was home, he was safe! Sirius where are you and why aren't you protecting Harry?" he asked frantically, shaking Sirius.

Pain coursed in the darkness, making it impossible to feel anything else. His limbs were on fire, his chest was screaming and his scar felt like it was tearing at the seams. Harry wanted to cry out, wanted to scream as loud as he could but his vocal cords refused to work. He tried to move but something was holding his arms and legs in place. He wanted to fight. He tried to fight but he couldn't break free. He was trapped.

"Harry Potter," a familiar high pitched voice hissed evilly. "Did you honestly think you could escape me? There is no escape for you. I will always be here, in your mind,

waiting for the one piece of information that will destroy Dumbledore's little Order.

You will be my spy and there's nothing you can do about it."

"YES THERE IS!" Lily cried.

"Occlude Harry! Kick him out!" Mr. Potter tried to coach Harry.

No! I would rather die than help you! I won't betray them! They're my family! Harry started to panic. His greatest fear had become a reality. He was a danger to those he cared about. He didn't know how Voldemort pulled it off but it didn't matter. They were better off without him.

"You misunderstand, Harry," Voldemort said casually. *"You will die. There is no question about that. If you had only accepted my offer this could all have been avoided. I would have spared them but now...now I shall enjoy the pain that their deaths will cause you. Enjoy your freedom while you can, Harry."*

"As if he would spare anyone," Mrs. Potter snorted. "Don't believe him Harry."

NO! YOU WON'T TAKE THEM FROM ME! Panic had shifted into desperation. He didn't care what it cost him personally. He wasn't going to let Voldemort take anyone else. The pain was pushed away and replaced with intense warmth that filled his entire body. His lungs thawed, allowing him to breathe. Light started to crack through the darkness like a sheet of dark glass that was slowly breaking to allow the sunlight to finally shine through.

“NO!” Voldemort shouted angrily. ***“YOU CAN’T FIGHT IT! IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO FIGHT!”***

“Guess it’s not that impossible,” Sirius said sticking his tongue out to the book.

Harry struggled to calm himself down and clear his mind of thought. Occlumency may have failed to keep Voldemort out completely but it had kept the Dark Lord from learning anything of importance. *I seem to have a habit of defying the impossible. Get out of my mind, Tom, and stay out!*

The remaining darkness quickly dissolved as light completely surrounded Harry. Voldemort’s high pitched shriek could be heard as it faded into nothingness. Distant voices could be heard but Harry couldn’t make out what was being said. The light slowly faded into darkness but this time there was no pain. It was a comfortable darkness. His body relaxed and his limbs were released from whatever had been holding them in place. He felt someone take hold of his hand as fingers ran through his hair in a soothing manner that only two people had ever managed to accomplish. Soft waves of nervousness and concern brushed against him followed by a comforting warmth.

“Thank God,” Lily sighed relieved.

Opening his eyes as much as possible, Harry saw the somewhat blurry figure of his godfather staring at him. He blinked tiredly, unable to find the strength to do

anything else. He felt like he had just finished an intense training session with Sirius after working a double shift at the hospital. Fingers continued to run through his hair causing Harry to reflexively close his eyes again. He couldn't bring himself to question what had just happened. He couldn't even bring himself to speak.

"It's all right, Harry," Sirius said softly as he tightened his hold on Harry's hand.

"Everything's okay now. Poppy's confident the potion Voldemort gave you is out of your system now." Harry forced his eyes to open partially and stared at Sirius with a confused look on his face. "It was a potion that would slowly weaken your mental defenses until you were nothing more than a puppet." Harry inhaled as sharply as he could. "But you don't have to worry anymore. Poppy gave you the antidote, Harry. It's over. This entire mess is finally over."

"Stupid Voldemort," James grumbled.

Harry couldn't believe what he was hearing. Occlumency hadn't failed after all? It had all been because of a potion? Struggling to stay awake, Harry could only wonder what else had been done to him when he had been unconscious. Was it really over or was this only just the beginning? *Please let it be over, let this entire nightmare be over. I don't know how much more I can take.*

"Occlumency may not have failed now," Remus said grimly. "But it obviously wasn't working properly before."

“Rest, Harry,” Sirius said breaking the silence. “We can talk about everything later when you’re feeling better. Poppy said that sleep is the best thing for you. She was rather upset at how much weight you’ve lost. I think we may need to borrow Dobby for the rest of the summer or maybe I should offer him to work for us instead of Dumbledore. Merlin knows he would probably be happier here although he might get bored from time to time.”

“Sir’us,” Harry mumbled in a scratchy voice as his eyes slowly closed. “You’re babblin’.”

“When doesn’t he?” James sighed.

“Excuse me,” Sirius said annoyed putting his hands on his hips. “I never babble. I speak directly and clearly.”

“Since when?” Lily whispered to James and everyone besides Sirius, who was glaring fiercely, burst out laughing.

Sirius let out a chuckle. “Yes I am,” he admitted as he released his hold on Harry’s hand and pulled the bedcovers up to Harry’s chin. “You just gave me a scare, kiddo. We couldn’t wake you and you were in so much pain...well, I’ve never actually witnessed one of your scar headaches so it was sort of an eye opener.” Sirius let out a sigh as he carefully wiped the perspiration from Harry’s forehead. “Go to sleep, Harry. I’ll be right here, I promise.”

“Yes Harry, I promise. And I’ll never ever let you out of my sight again,” Sirius agreed.

“Er, Sirius, he’ll be going to Hogwarts and-” Mr. Potter started but was silenced by a fierce glare from Sirius who hissed.

“Harry is not going back to that unsafe school, staffed with incompetent people and Snivellus.”

“Well, now Sirius. That’s an exaggeration!” Mrs. Potter exclaimed.

James and Lily shrugged at her as if agreeing with Sirius.

“Harry did get kidnapped from right under their noses twice,” Lily reminded them.

‘Lily! Don’t feed Sirius’ obsessions,” Remus said sternly. “I am sure adult Sirius will not be so irrational,” Remus nodded crossing his arms with an air of finality. Sirius snorted and covered it up with a cough.

That was all it took for Harry to give in and fall into a peaceful sleep for the first time in a long time. He didn’t have to sleep with his wand under his pillow or worry any noise that was made during the night. He was home, in his own bed and Sirius was there. He was safe.

A cool draft brushed against his chest, pulling Harry reluctantly out of his dreamless sleep. He was still so tired but the cold air wouldn’t go away. It kept teasing him,

urging him to wake up. Groggily, Harry reached for his bedcovers but couldn't find any. He let out a groan in protest as a gentle hand rested on his shoulder to hold him in place. Fingers started to run through his hair, serving as a distraction as a cold substance was rubbed on his chest.

As his mind started to clear, Harry was able to notice the subtle waves of concern and sympathy. Whoever was in the room clearly meant him no harm. Hands rubbed a sore spot near his ribs causing Harry to inhale sharply. When the motions abruptly stopped, Harry slowly opened his eyes to see the somewhat blurry figure of Madam Pomfrey leaning over him. He blinked at her in confusion before shifting his gaze to see that there were two other people in the sunlight filled room. One person was sitting at his bedside while the other was standing at the foot of his bed.

"I apologize, Mr. Potter," Madam Pomfrey said as she waved her wand over Harry. A tingling sensation spread throughout Harry's chest, banishing the pain. "It seems the pain relieving potion has worn off sooner than expected. I'm afraid it will be at least an hour until you can have another dose. The majority of your injuries are completely healed. Your wrists are still a little tender and your ribs are obviously still mending. They will probably be sore for some time so I suggest that you take it easy."

"Yeah, she's always apologizing for causing pain and making us drink awful stuff but does she stop? Noooooooo. She just enjoys torturing us poor souls--"

“James, Madam Pomfrey isn’t the one causing pain, she is the one healing the pain and you get yourself into the position of needing to constantly drink awful potions,” Remus said tiredly.

“Humph,” James grunted scowling.

Harry watched through partially opened eyes as Madam Pomfrey returned to rubbing the cream-like substance on his chest. Thankfully, there was no pain this time allowing Harry to close his eyes and concentrate on the emotions everyone in the room were sending out. The waves were comforting, soothing. He didn’t know what it was but it was definitely something he wanted to hold on to. It was almost intoxicating which started to frighten Harry. This had never happened before. Why was it happening now?

“Your system has been clean of the Mind Linking Potion for the past twenty-four hours with no side affects,” Madam Pomfrey continued as she pulled the bedcovers over Harry’s chest. “You will still need to be monitored for a few more days but I truly believe there will be no lasting affects from the potion. Your magic has also stabilized over the past two days so there should be no more episodes.”

“In other words, you’re still recovering so you have to stay in bed until Poppy declares you healthy,” Sirius clarified from his place at Harry’s bedside.

Harry slowly opened his eyes again and stared up at the ceiling. He knew Sirius well enough to know there was a lot he wasn't saying. Resting wouldn't be the only thing he would be doing for the next few days and he didn't know how he felt about that. Yes, Sirius deserved an explanation and so much more but Harry really didn't have a decent explanation for his actions. In his grief over the loss of one guardian he had abandoned the other who was probably experiencing pain similar if not worse than his own. Harry may have loved Remus like a father but Sirius had lost a brother and best friend, his only remaining friend from his childhood.

Sirius glared at Lily, James and Remus with misty eyes. For good measure he glared at Mr. and Mrs. Potter since even if they didn't know how they had died they were sure they were dead in the future.

'Siri,' Remus started soothingly but Sirius cut him off crossing his arms.

"You all left me alone, alone!" he hissed. "Bunch of abandoners, that's what you are."

"We didn't do it on purpose," Lily said in a small voice.

"Don't care, you left me!"

James was about to say something but Mrs. Potter just shushed him.

"Let him be James," she said sadly.

That realization was too much. Closing his eyes, Harry couldn't stop the tears that started to fall. He had put his godfather through hell and he had no one to blame but himself. "I'm sorry," Harry said quietly. There was so much he had to apologize for he really didn't know where to begin.

"Ve vill just leave you two alone then," Viktor said from the foot of the bed. "If you need anything..."

"Thank you Viktor," Sirius said sincerely. "Poppy, I'll let you know if there are any complications." Viktor and Madam Pomfrey left the room without saying another word. Once the door closed, an uncomfortable silence filled the room. Both of them knew there was so much to say but couldn't find the words. "Please tell me what happened, Harry," Sirius said at last, his voice pleading. "All of it. How you left Hogwarts, where you've been, how we were unable to detect you...what happened when you were taken..."

Harry let out a sigh as he opened his eyes. *Might as well get it over with.* "When I saw Remus," he began softly, "I...I couldn't take it. It was like a part of me died. All I could think was that if it wasn't for me, it wouldn't have happened." Sirius grabbed Harry's hand but remained silent. "That was when I heard him confirming everything I had feared for so long. The only memory I have of my dad was when he was telling mum to take me and run from Voldemort but I'll never forget his voice. At first I

suspected it was Voldemort but he was so understanding and comforting. He told me it wasn't my fault and that Remus didn't blame me."

"Harry—"

"—I know it was stupid to believe a voice in my head," Harry continued in a shaky voice. "I...I know it was equally stupid to believe him when he told me that I had to protect you, that I had to leave. I didn't want to but he was so convincing." Harry slowly turned his head so his tear-filled eyes looked at Sirius' somewhat blurry face. Sirius gently brushed away the tears before resting his hand against Harry's cheek. "I couldn't lose you too so I asked for help."

"The voice?" Sirius asked in confusion.

Harry shook his head. "Hogwarts," he said softly. "I asked her for help. She called for Fawkes who took me to my dorm so I could pack a few things. Before we left Hogwarts, Fawkes did something strange. Hogwarts told me that he was using his magic to protect me and make me undetectable. After that, Fawkes took me to Gringott's so I could take out some money then transported me to a vacant hotel room. We managed to catch a few hours of sleep before we had to leave. Fawkes returned to Hogwarts and I stayed in Muggle London."

“So, let me get this straight,” Sirius said in amazement. “You managed to escape a place that Dumbledore had charmed like a fortress with the help of a castle and Dumbledore’s own pet?” At Harry’s tentative nod, Sirius let out a laugh. “Oh, this is unbelievable. We never suspected Fawkes was involved even though all the signs were there. He was conveniently out hunting when we discovered you were missing, he has been hanging around here an awful lot and he wasn’t too cooperative whenever we asked him to try to find you. Dumbledore just thought that he was being difficult.” Sirius shook his head in disbelief and squeezed Harry’s hand again. “Sorry, kiddo,” he said sincerely. “You were saying?”

“Yes, Sirius! Don’t interrupt Harry by laughing!”

“Well James, you have to understand. It must be frustrating,” Lily said.

Harry closed his eyes and let out a tired sigh. He was entering dangerous territory. Should he tell Sirius or not? Should he reveal everything or should he keep it to himself? “There’s really nothing much to say,” Harry answered softly. “I changed my name to Jonathan Orion Evans

Remus puffed his chest and smirked proudly, “Jonathan.” He mouthed to Sirius.

“Yeah, but everyone called him Orion,” Sirius smirked back and Remus pouted.

and got a job as an orderly in a hospital. I kept my head down and my ears open. I—
er—learned some things about myself that I’m still trying to work out.”

“Like what?” Sirius asked curiously.

Opening his eyes, Harry decided that keeping secrets from Sirius was only going to cause more problems in the long run. He needed to be completely honest or Sirius would never trust him again. Concentrating on the waves around him, Harry could pick up curiosity, nervousness and a subtle hint of fear. *Please don’t be afraid of me.*

“I’m empathic, Sirius,” he said at last. “I can feel other people’s emotions. That’s why I reacted like I did when my magic was restored. Everyone’s emotions were overpowering me.”

Sirius was silent for a long moment before he pulled Harry into his arms and held him tightly. “Oh Harry,” he said compassionately. “I—I can’t say that I’m not surprised. You’re outbursts have always seemed to be related to your emotions. I guess I just never thought it would surface so soon.” Carefully, Sirius loosened his hold and let Harry lie back down. He took hold of Harry’s hands and held them tightly. “Is it painful?”

James and Lily threw themselves at Sirius.

“Knew we could count on you Siri!” James said as he hugged Sirius. “Even though you laugh at inappropriate times.”

Harry shook his head. Sirius was certainly taking it better than Harry thought he would. “Most of the time it feels like a soft breeze,” he said truthfully. “If I’m paying attention, I’m aware of it but if I’m preoccupied with something else then it doesn’t bother me. If I’m around a lot of people then it’s hard to make out which person has a certain emotion but it’s really not so bad.” Harry looked at Sirius, his eyes pleading. “You’re okay with this, right? I know it’s not normal—”

“Of course I’m okay with this,” Sirius said firmly. “Having an ability doesn’t change who you are and what you mean to me. I’ll help you with this any way I can. Did you really think that I would turn my back on you, Harry?” Harry looked away shamefully giving Sirius his answer. Sirius reached over to the bedside table, picked up Harry’s glasses and slid them on Harry’s face. “Look at me, Harry.” Nervous green met determined blue. “I will *never* abandon you. You know that. We’ve told you this countless times.”

Tears filled his eyes as he looked away. Remus had told him something similar to that not too long ago. He was relieved that Sirius didn’t think he was a freak but he was still scared that something would happen to Sirius just like it had Remus. He was

afraid to be alone again, an orphan without a family. How could he go back to the way everything had been with Dursleys after having Sirius and Remus as guardians?

“Harry, what’s wrong?” Sirius asked worriedly. “What did I say?”

Harry couldn’t bring himself to speak. He tried to pull away but Sirius wouldn’t release his hold on Harry’s hands. Too weak and tired to fight any longer, Harry finally gave into his frustrations. “Remus said he’d never leave too!” he cried as he pulled away from a stunned Sirius. “He promised!”

“YEAH! You promised!” Sirius cried angrily. “Promise breaker!”

“Wasn’t my fault,” Remus said sadly picking at the covers.

Harry curled into a ball, ignoring the sparks of pain coming from his ribs. Everything that he had forced himself to bury was coming to the surface, especially everything about that night at the Ministry and finding Remus the way he did. “Why did he have to die?” he whispered. “Why?”

“WHY?” James cried and went to his mother’s side and hugged her not caring if the others would mock him.

At that moment, Harry didn’t care if he was being childish. Nothing made sense.

Remus was gone and Sirius was being sensible. Sirius was never sensible!

"Never," Lily mumbled sadly dapping at her eyes with a handkerchief Mr. Potter handed to her.

Sirius was unpredictable and headstrong! This wasn't right! None of this was right! Why wasn't anything the way it was supposed to be? What was next? Professor Snape waking through the door with a smile on his face and declaring his love for all Gryffindors?

"Oh Merlin," Sirius said in shock. "Oh Merlin! Of course! It all makes sense! I can't believe we were so stupid! What else were you supposed to think?" Sirius moved so he was sitting on the edge of Harry's bed and gently pulled the shaking teenager in his arms once again. "I'm so sorry, Harry," he said sincerely. "I never thought you would interpret it like that. I should have been there. Someone should have been there to explain everything."

Harry was trying to piece together what Sirius had said as he felt Sirius release him and move so they were sitting face to face. What did he mean 'interpret'?

"Yeah, what?" Remus asked. "Do you think so many shocks have addled with Padfoot's brain?" he asked the others and looked at the red-eyed Sirius. "Even more?"

What was there to explain? Harry was starting to wonder if he had been hit with a Confundus Charm or something because absolutely nothing was making sense.

People who are alive breathe. People who are alive are not as still as Remus had been.

“Harry, look at me,” Sirius said firmly and waited until Harry obeyed. “Harry, I understand this may come as a bit of a shock but Remus didn’t die that night.

“What?” Sirius asked.

He was severely injured and would have died if Poppy hadn’t put him in an Enchanted Sleep.

“She did?” James asked hopefully.

She basically had to put his body into a stasis to stop the poison from spreading. It was the only way.”

Harry stared at Sirius in utter shock. Tears rolled down his face as breathing became difficult. He couldn’t believe it. It took every ounce of strength for Harry to try to grasp the possibility that Remus was alive. Whatever Sirius was saying went in one ear and out the other while Harry heard Sirius’ words repeat over and over again in his mind. “*Remus didn’t die that night.*” How was it possible? “*Remus didn’t die that night.*” If it were true where was Remus now? “*Remus didn’t die that night.*” Was he okay?

“He’s alive?” Harry asked quietly. “Moony’s alive?”

“Yes, Harry,” Sirius said slowly. “Moony’s alive.

“YES!” They all cried together and Sirius and James jumped on Remus hugging him.

“Moony! You’re alive!”

Lily threw herself at the jumping trio and Mrs. Potter had tears of happiness in her eyes. When the teenagers let Remus go she hugged him fiercely.

He’s in his room right now, still in the Enchanted Sleep. We have to give him the antidote in small doses since he’s a werewolf. Their systems don’t tolerate some of the ingredients all too well. We’re slowly making progress. Poppy predicts that he will be able to wake up near the end of August if there are no complications. We’re doing all we can for him, Harry. I promise.”

“Of course we are,” Sirius said firmly and then he looked at Remus seriously and said firmly. “I’m never going to let you die on me Moony.”

Harry swallowed nervously. He couldn’t help but wonder if there wasn’t something he could do to help out. He had helped people at the hospital. Why couldn’t he help Remus? He knew he wouldn’t be able to heal Remus but if he could speed the recovery up a bit then wasn’t it worth a try? “Can I see him?” Harry asked hopefully.

“Harry James Potter, you are still recovering. Let Madam Pomfrey do her job. You’ve already jeopardized your safety more than enough for me.”

Sirius gave Harry a compassionate look. “When you’re feeling better, kiddo,” he said as he ruffled Harry’s messy hair. “I know that isn’t what you want to hear but as soon as you have recovered then we can take care of Moony together, all right?”

Harry nodded reluctantly. It would probably be better to be completely healthy. He knew he would have to tell Sirius about his other ability but he really didn’t want to get Sirius’ hopes up. What if he couldn’t help Remus? He couldn’t control the ability yet, it still controlled him. What if it wouldn’t let him heal Remus? *Not heal. It’s not actual healing. It’s only helping people recover. That’s all I’ve ever been able to do.*

“We can talk about the rest later,” Sirius said as he stood up, pulled off Harry’s glasses and set them down on the bedside table. “I’ve already kept you awake longer than I should have.”

Harry could hardly believe what he was hearing. How could he sleep after the bombshell Sirius had just dropped on him? Harry was tired but hearing about Remus’ recovery was more important than sleep. “But—”

“—Harry,” Sirius warned. “Do you really want Poppy mad at you?”

Harry shook his head as straightened himself out and pulled the bedcovers up to his neck to hide his bare, bruised chest. He really didn’t want to be stuck in bed any longer than necessary and knew that following Madam Pomfrey’s orders was the only way to prevent that. “I’m really sorry for causing so much trouble,” Harry said sincerely.

Sirius smiled softly as he picked up a vial from Harry’s bedside table. “I know, Pronglet,” he said gently as he removed the cork from the vial. “Just so you know, you are grounded and we will be having a few talks about your tendency to shield everyone from what you’re going through. I’m the guardian here, not the other way around. I’m supposed to be protecting you. *That* was what your father would have wanted, all right?”

“See, yeh of little faith. I can so ground him if I want to. Hah!”

“Yeah, yeah, we’ll believe it when we see it,” James snorted.

Harry nodded obediently. Logically, it made sense but in his heart, Harry wanted to protect his family. He didn’t know why he couldn’t just trust Sirius to handle everything. Why did he feel like he had to be the one to stand against the dark forces of the world? *Because everyone expects me to be their savior since I’m the-boy-who-lived.* It was as simple as that. The moment Harry had entered the wizarding world he had become what everyone wanted him to be. Even at the age of eleven, no one

had told him stopping Quirrel had been wrong. No one had scolded him for facing off against a Basilisk, a sixteen-year-old Tom Riddle and even Dementors. Harry was a protector and he didn't know if he could let that go so easily.

"Harry?" Sirius asked in a concerned tone. "What's wrong?"

Letting out a sigh, Harry just shrugged his shoulders. This was going to be difficult.

"I—I just don't know how to be both," he said softly as he sat up and stared at Sirius, begging him to understand. "Everyone wants me to be the-boy-who-lived and you want me to be a kid. I wish I knew what it was like to be normal. I only know that when Remus and you entered my life I was happy. I had a family who loved me for who I was and I couldn't bear losing it." Biting his lower lip, Harry let out a long breath in an attempt to keep his emotions under control. He really didn't want to break down anymore. "I—I just can't help it."

Sirius sat down at Harry's bedside and let out a long breath. "Harry, what do you want to be?" he asked gently. "You have to stop trying to satisfy everyone because that is impossible to accomplish. Trust me, I know. I realize that you will never be able to be a normal teenager and I blame your relatives and Dumbledore for that. Being thrown into the wizarding world like you were was a mistake. I honestly don't know what Dumbledore was thinking if he was at all. I understand this is hard but you have to stop thinking that everyone else is more important than you. Your

parents thought your life was worth enough to die for...and so do I. This is what I choose, Harry. I'm aware of the danger but I keep on fighting. That is *my* choice. If I didn't want this, I wouldn't be doing it."

"Sirius, how did you get so profound?" Mr. Potter asked.

"I learned from the best Mr. P," Sirius winked at him.

"Suck up," James muttered.

It was what Harry needed to hear even if he didn't want to believe it. He understood that Sirius and Remus had the right to make their own choices just like they had been for years. Harry couldn't take that away from them any more than they could take it away from him. It was a simple fact that was still so hard to accept. He had no control over other people's decisions. He had forgotten one of the first theories Sirius and Remus had taught him: 'focus on what you can control'. It was amazing how hard it was to accept the theory when ones you care about were involved.

Sirius rested a hand on Harry's shoulder and gently urged him to lie back down. "Just think about it, all right?" he asked softly. "Now, Poppy left a Calming Draught to help you relax. With your recent vision we don't want to give you any sleeping potions. It's easier to wake you if it's a natural sleep." Sirius raised the vial to Harry's lips.

"Just a sip, kiddo."

Harry obediently took a sip of the potion and could feel the affects instantly. His body relaxed and everything felt so hazy. He blinked tiredly as Sirius tucked him in and ran a hand through his hair. Leaning into the touch, Harry let out a content sigh and closed his eyes. The pull to dreamland was too strong to fight so Harry did the only thing he could. He succumbed to the darkness.

Whispering voices were what woke Harry hours later. He was lying partially on his side with his head turned away from the door. Surprisingly, there was significantly less pain from his ribs which made Harry wonder how long he had slept. His mind slowly cleared allowing him to pick up on hints of concern, eagerness and nervousness. Rolling completely on his back, Harry tried to concentrate on the voices but they were too soft for him to make out anything.

Someone was gently took hold of his hand, rubbing their thumb over the back of it in a soothing motion. Harry slowly turned his head towards the person who was holding his hand and partially opened his eyes. He was surprised to see Tonks' spiky, purple hair clearly visible even in the dimly lit room. His movement didn't go unnoticed as the whispers abruptly stopped. With her free hand, Tonks reached over to Harry's bedside table, grabbed his glasses and slid them on his face. Everything came into focus, allowing Harry to see that Tonks had been talking to Viktor Krum who was sitting on the foot of the bed.

“And she didn’t knock anything over in the process?”

“Don’t be mean Harold,” Mrs. Potter scolded.

Tonks rested her free hand on Harry’s forehead for a long moment before pulling it away. “How are you feeling?” she asked gently. “You’re still a little pale and a little warmer than normal but after everything that’s happened I guess we should be grateful.”

Harry slowly blinked at her. With the lighting he couldn’t see her completely but he could see enough to see the worried look on her injury-free face. He couldn’t help mentally cursing himself for not thinking about her state before now. She had been one of the people who had faced off against the Death Eaters because of him. “You weren’t hurt, were you?” Harry asked in a scratchy voice. “Did the shield work?”

Tonks lightly slapped Harry on the arm. “After all you’ve been through you’re worried about that?” she asked in disbelief. “We have to seriously work on your priorities, little one.” Harry scowled at Tonks’ nickname for him. He really wasn’t *little* anymore.

“Just like James,” Mr. Potter chuckled and pinched James’ cheek. He received a swat and a glare for that.

“We also need to have a serious talk about your disregard for authority. Kingsley and I are the trained Aurors, not you. Why did you feel the need to protect us from something we were trained to do?”

Harry let out a sigh as he closed his eyes. “I—I don’t know,” he said truthfully. “I just wanted to keep my family safe. I didn’t want anyone else to die because Voldemort is obsessed with me. Mum, Dad and Cedric were killed, Remus is now in an Enchanted Sleep, and that Muggle neighborhood was attacked all because of me.”

“Harry!” Tonks scolded. “You are not to blame for what You-Know-Who has done! You have done everything you could, do you hear me?” Harry turned his face away forcing Tonks to gently turn his face back. “Look at me, Harry,” she said firmly and waited until Harry obeyed. “Yes, You-Know-Who’s actions seem to form around you but you’re not to blame for his obsession. You have always done everything in your power to stop him. Sometimes it isn’t enough but at least you try. That is more than a lot of people in this world.”

But it still hurts when I fail. It still feels like I let everyone down.

Tonks let out an annoyed sigh and slammed her head into the mattress. “I don’t believe this!” she cried in frustration as she raised her head and looked at Viktor, “Help me out here! He obviously won’t listen to me!”

“Well, what did you expect?” Mrs. Potter said exasperated. “He is a Potter! Their heads are harder than steel!”

“Look who’s talking,” Mr. Potter muttered and when his wife glared at him he covered with a cough.

Viktor shrugged his shoulders helplessly. “How can you be surprised?” he countered. “I could have told you during the tournament that Harry was extremely protective of those he cares for. He made that very clear when I was interested in courting Her’min’one. It is obvious that nothing has changed since then. With what’s happened to Mr. Lupin, can you blame him for acting this way? I would too if my family was in danger.”

That clearly wasn’t what Tonks wanted to hear. “Viktor!” she scolded. “You’re supposed to be on my side here!”

Viktor shrugged again. “I’m not saying he’s right,” he said truthfully. “I’m just saying I understand where he’s coming from. Wouldn’t you do the same if he was in danger? Wouldn’t you risk everything to protect him? After what he’s seen, how can you just expect him to be a child like everyone else?”

Tonks enfolded her arms across her chest and sulked. "Stupid men always ganging up on me," she muttered irritably.

"Of course," Viktor said as he shot Harry a grin. "Ve men must stand together in times of need. Besides, I believe it is Mr. Black's place to scold Harry, not ours. How would you feel if everyone was constantly yelling at you for mistakes you've made? Ve're here to help Harry, not make him feel worse."

Too late for that. Harry was grateful for Viktor's support but he couldn't help feeling that he deserved whatever Tonks, Sirius, Professor Dumbledore and the rest of the Order threw at him. He had made so many mistakes lately that he had lost count. Sirius and Tonks were right. He did have a problem with allowing others to take on the fight that so many believed was his own. His talk with Sirius had pointed that out. Perhaps Sirius was right. Perhaps his years with the Dursleys had left scars that he had yet to acknowledge.

Closing his eyes, Harry pulled himself into a sitting position and waited as a slight wave of dizziness made him feel a little woozy. He felt a hand rub his arm gently as the wooziness slowly passed. Soft waves of concern washed over him, reminding Harry that there were two people in the room who were no longer bickering with each other. He let out a long sigh as he opened his eyes. "Please don't argue," Harry

pleaded. "I know I'm going to be yelled at for months to come and I deserve it. I endangered so many people because I can't bring myself to trust others to do what the entire wizarding world has claimed to be my responsibility. I—"

Harry was engulfed in a fierce embrace before he could continue. He had a feeling that he would also be in this position quite a lot in the near future. Out of all of the girls he knew, Tonks was the least likely to openly display emotions. She often took Sirius' route and hid behind humor to ease tense situations. Harry took this as a sign that Hermione, Ginny and especially Mrs. Weasley were going to be extremely emotional. He didn't know whether to be touched that there were people who cared about him or to dread their arrival. Ever since his abilities had surfaced he had refrained from physical contact as much as possible.

"Yeah, that will be a daunting experience," Remus grimaced.

"I'm sorry, Harry," Tonks said gently as she continued to hold him protectively. "I'm so sorry. Viktor's right. We should be helping—not hurting you. We'll work through this. We'll help you see that it's not you're not alone, no matter what it takes." Tonks pulled back and looked into Harry's eyes. "Do you hear me? *You are not alone!* We're all in this together. The wizarding world can go A.K. themselves for pushing their problems off on a teenager. Sooner or later they're gonna have to stand up for themselves and I prefer sooner."

"You know," Mr. Potter said. "I am not surprised at all that Nymphadora has no problems in saying what she thinks. She sure doesn't have any qualms now."

"Oh, Harold. She's four!" Mrs. Potter sighed.

Lily looked at the others confused.

"Tonks loves asking dad embarrassing questions when Andromeda comes to visit Padfoot," James chuckled.

"I'm sure Charlie vill love to hear all about this later," Viktor said in an amused tone then smiled at Harry. "He said you would act like his mother when Harry was found."

Tonks glared at Viktor. "And how do you know how Molly acts?" she asked defensively. "You've met her once!"

Viktor simply shrugged his shoulders and he rose to his feet. "Charlie and Bill told me all about her," he said casually. "Now, would you like to answer any questions Harry has or should I?"

Tonks rolled her eyes and shook her head. "I was getting to it!" she shot back.

"Would it be possible for you to let me talk to my nephew without you constantly interrupting? If I wanted your input I would ask for it."

"I feel sexual tension in the air."

"James, that's my baby cousin!"

Harry felt like he was in the middle of Chaser practice, watching the Quaffle as it was tossed from one team mate to another. To say he was confused was an understatement. When did Tonks and Viktor turn into Ron and Hermione? “Er—I hate to interrupt this but what is going on here?” Harry asked nervously. “I thought Charlie was in Romania and you, Viktor, should be in Bulgaria. Isn’t it in the middle of Quidditch season?”

Viktor and Tonks shared a look before they returned their attention to Harry. “Vell, I’m currently on personal leave,” Viktor explained. “Vhen my letter to you came back, I contacted Mr. Black. He told me your vere missing. I offered to help and I’ve been here ever since.” Harry moved to protest but Viktor raised his hand and silenced him. “Harry, you vere missing *and* captured by You-Know-Vho. Vhere else vould I be? My team vasn’t too happy but some things are more important than a game.”

Harry couldn’t help but smile. “Don’t let Ron here you say that,” he said in a joking manner. “To him nothing is more important than Quidditch.”

Tonks ran a hand through Harry’s hair. “Oh, I don’t think he’ll agree with that,” she said knowingly. “The entire Weasley family has been worried about you. They’re rather angry with Sirius for blocking the Floo and demanding that no one visit until you’re ready.” Tonks grinned at Harry’s relieved sigh. “Just so you know, Harry, we

found your wand. It was a little charred but Ollivander claims he can have it as good as new in a week. It would be sooner but there is the slight problem of no one but you being able to touch it.”

Harry let out another relieved sigh. He was particularly fond of his wand and didn’t want to replace it. Looking down at his bare right wrist, Harry bit his lower lip nervously. “Did you find anything else?” he asked softly.

Tonks and Viktor shared a glance before Tonks reached over to Harry’s bedside table and picked up a familiar looking watch. “Sirius mentioned that you would be looking for this,” she said as she put it on his wrist. “We also found your Gringott’s key which Sirius has vowed to keep hidden until you’re seventeenth birthday. Of course Sirius has also claimed that you are never leaving the house again. I think he may actually mean it this time.”

“Definitely do!” Sirius nodded and Remus considered calling a Psychiatrist for him.

Harry closed his eyes as he wrapped held his right wrist to his chest and leaned back against the pillows. He had always treasured every gift he had received from his guardians, not matter how small. He had left so much behind in his haste to leave that night but his watch from Remus had never left his wrist. Harry knew that Sirius had every right to take away privileges. It honestly didn’t bother him. For the first time, Harry wasn’t eager to return to Hogwarts. He wanted to spend as much time

with his guardians as he could. He wanted to help with Remus' recovery. He needed to work through his habit of rushing off into trouble.

"Sirius! Your madness is contagious!" Mrs. Potter cried.

Tonks gently ushered Harry to lie down completely before tucking him in. "Get some sleep, Harry," she said as she pulled off his glasses and set them on the bedside table. "Poppy will be here in a few hours for your next batch of potions and probably a list of food you are allowed to eat. You've been on nutrient potions for the past few days to help your body recover." Tonks picked up a vial from the bedside table, uncorked it and placed it at Harry's lips. "Just a sip, Harry."

Harry scowled but did as he was told. He really didn't want to sleep but figured that it was better to listen rather than protest. *They know best. I have to trust them.* His eyes slowly closed as his grip on his right wrist loosened. *I've already put them through so much.* He could feel fingers pressed against the side of his neck as he slowly drifted to unconsciousness. *No more pain. I won't...cause them...any more...pain.*

Darkness took him once again.

"I have to say, this was a relieving chapter," James said happily.

A/N: Sorry I took so long! Unfortunately next chapter will take even longer since it's twice as big.

Thanks for reading and reviewing!

Chapter 7

For the Love of a Father

"Yes Harry, I love you!"

"The title says for the love of a father James. It's not a question," Lily said slowly.

"And I am telling Harry he doesn't need to do anything for my love. He already has it."

The next time Harry awoke Sirius was at his bedside with breakfast. Of course it was only porridge but it was certainly better than nothing. Sirius wasn't pleased when Harry could only eat half of it but considering the past week, it wasn't a surprise that Harry couldn't eat much. Serving meals hadn't exactly been high on the Death Eaters' priority list in addition to the fact that Harry's appetite had been slim to none at best over the past month. He had been too worried about everything around him including Voldemort, Sirius, his abilities and his job.

As it turned out, Madam Pomfrey had stopped by when he had been sleeping and had given Sirius a handful of potions to help with the final stages of recovery. Swallowing them hadn't been easy though. After the third, Harry suddenly felt extremely ill and was forced to lie back down as Sirius placed a damp cloth over his forehead. His stomach slowly settled allowing him to quickly take the remaining two potions. Why no one could manage to make potions to taste something other than horrible was beyond Harry's comprehension. *More like it's something Snape would do just to annoy me.*

"No Harry, they all taste horribly," Mr. Potter said grimly.

"And even so I can't manage for you not to throw yourself in the line of fire," Mrs. Potter huffed.

After checking for any side affects, Sirius grabbed a change of clothes and helped Harry out of bed before ushering him to the bathroom. Harry ignored the subtle waves of dizziness in his head along with the waves of protectiveness around him as he cleaned up and changed. He had to sit down on the edge of the bath a few times when his vision swam but he managed on his own. Looking into the mirror, Harry noticed how pale he was and how thin his face had become in the last week. There was also a faint scar that started at the edge of the right side of Harry's jaw and traveled down his neck. Harry ran his fingers over the mark, trying to remember where it had come from. *Most likely the explosion.*

There was a soft knock on the door before it opened slowly. Sirius poked his head in before entering completely. The waves of protectiveness increased and were joined with waves of concern. Sirius gently pulled Harry's hand away from the scar. "Just be grateful that's all you have, Pronglet," he said gently. "Snape said you were a mess after the explosion. We tried to find you but Voldemort had so many wards around that place. No one could do any sort of magic without him knowing it. Please believe me Harry. I never would have left you there."

James glared at Sirius.

"What?"

"Is Harry's personality contagious?"

"Uh?"

"Do you really think we don't know you tried saving him?" Remus explained.

Harry stared at his godfather with tears in his eyes. How could he not believe that Sirius would do anything other than moving heaven and earth to find him? His doubts had never concerned Sirius' ability to protect him. They had rested solely on Harry's own fears and failures. Raising a shaky hand, Harry gently touched Sirius' face and was instantly overwhelmed by bursts of guilt and despair. He quickly pulled his hand away as he swayed only to be caught by Sirius.

Sirius was assaulted by pillows and huffs.

“Harry, what is it?” Sirius asked worriedly while trying to help Harry out of the bathroom.

Blinking the confusion away, Harry looked around to see that Sirius was helping him back to his room. The guilt and despair were now at the same level of Sirius’ other emotions. “Er—it was acting up again,” he said as he rubbed his forehead. “I couldn’t block it out. Although, it’s never happened by touch before.”

Sirius abruptly stopped in his tracks. “Is it still happening?” he asked worriedly. “Am I causing you pain?”

Harry carefully touched Sirius’ hand that was resting on his shoulder and let out a sigh of relief when nothing changed. “No,” he said with a smile. “Maybe it was just a one time thing.”

“Or maybe your magic is still fluctuating,” Sirius countered as he continued walking with Harry to Harry’s room. “Honestly, I’m really out of my league here. Being an actual empath without relying on spells is extremely rare. There are also different types of empaths. Some rely on touch, some rely on scent—similar to a werewolf and there are the rarest that can just sense emotions. Unfortunately there aren’t

many books on the topic in the Black family library. My ancestors seemed to be more interested in learning dark magic.”

“Though I bet that if they thought they could transform empathy into a Dark Art they would have had loads of information,” Sirius huffed.

Harry looked up at Sirius’ concerned face and bit his lower lip. He could still sense Sirius’ guilt and felt awful that he was making his godfather feel that way. “I know you did everything you could, Sirius,” Harry said as his gaze fell to the ground. “You have nothing to feel guilty for. It was my own fault. A Death Eater was scouting in the neighborhood I was staying. There were families there...children. I didn’t want them to be killed so I asked Fawkes to take me to Diagon Alley. I thought if I was spotted in some place other than Muggle London than the attacks would be called off.”

Sirius wrapped an arm around Harry’s shoulders and pulled him close. “I suppose being able to feel their emotions didn’t help either,” he said thoughtfully. “Tonks and Kingsley told the Order about your confrontation with them near the Leaky Cauldron. You do realize that Voldemort was expecting you to do something like that, right? There had been spies all throughout London waiting for you to appear. Several of the captured Death Eaters admitted it.”

Harry nodded regretfully. "It makes sense," he said softly. "They were extremely prepared." Staring straight ahead, Harry couldn't help thinking about the past month. So much had happened and the majority of it could have been avoided. "I can't believe I fell for it all. I should have known the moment I heard Dad's voice at the Ministry that something was really wrong."

"Well, er, you were a little preoccupied back then," James said. "We understand."

"Voldemort has fooled a lot of people, Harry," Sirius said truthfully. "He is a master of manipulation. I can't imagine what I would have done in your place. I probably would have listened to James too. Mistakes were made by a lot of people that night, not just you. People interfered who should have left us alone and people broke promises. What's important is that we don't make these mistakes again."

"Could you have been more vague?" Lily huffed at Sirius.

"Probably," he shrugged.

"I think that was a rhetorical question Paddy," Remus chuckled.

Harry desperately wanted to ask who Sirius was talking about but figured that Sirius was being vague for a reason. Something else had happened the night Harry left Hogwarts or shortly after it; something that still angered Sirius whenever he thought about it. *He'll tell me when he's ready. I know he will.*

Entering his room, Harry held back a groan as Sirius helped him back into bed. The next few weeks were certainly going to be a challenge. Sirius was going to be extremely overprotective and wouldn't stand for the independent Harry who had spent a month technically living on his own and having a full-time job. Harry knew Sirius had every right to act that way. He knew it was the way Sirius was. But if that was the case, then why did he feel the need to yell at Sirius to knock it off?

"He won't mind," Remus said. "We do it all the time," he finished ruffling Sirius hair.

"See if I will be a concerned friend anymore," Sirius huffed.

"Oh Padfoot," James laughed. "Who are you kidding? Of course you will. Next full moon you'll be back to pestering Remus a whole week before asking if he wants this if he needs that."

Probably because that was what I always said to Dr. Rolands when he tried to act overprotective. I have to remember that Sirius has a right to be overprotective. He has every right after what I've put him through.

"Harry?" Sirius asked, pulling Harry out of his thoughts. "What's wrong?"

Nothing. Everything. "Just thinking," Harry said with a shrug. *Change the topic, Harry.* "So, I guess you want to know the rest, right?" Not exactly the ideal change of

topic but certainly one that would keep everything away from the contradicting urges coursing through his head.

Sirius ran a hand through his hair as he sat down at Harry's bedside. "Only if you're up for it," he said. "I won't pressure you but eventually you will have to talk about it. The Ministry has been hounding Dumbledore for the past few days for a meeting to learn what happened after you had been taken. So far you've been the only one to actually be at Voldemort's hideout."

Harry couldn't help groaning as he buried his face in his hands. The last thing Harry wanted to do was to be involved with the Ministry. He didn't care who the Minister was. The only thing anyone from that place saw was the-boy-who-lived, not Harry. "But I don't know anything," Harry protested. "I wasn't exactly in the best of conditions when I arrived and when I left I was more concerned about running for my life than taking in my surroundings. The place was in the middle of nowhere. It took me hours just to find a road to call the Knight Bus."

"You took the Knight Bus dressed as a Death Eater?" Sirius asked in surprise.

"What did you expect! For him to stop at a store and buy clothes before calling for the Knight Bus?" Mr. Potter cried exasperated.

"Honey, Sirius is just trying to digest everything," Mrs. Potter tried to soothe him.

Harry shrugged helplessly. "I really didn't have much of a choice," he said matter-of-factly. "A Death Eater came into my cell to gloat about how they were so close to capturing you and I would have to watch you die! What was I supposed to do? I thought Remus was dead! I wasn't about to lose you too!" Turning his head away, Harry fought to calm himself down but it wasn't working. Why wasn't it working?

Sirius ran his hand over his face in frustration. "I'm sorry, kiddo," he said sincerely. "I didn't mean it to come out like it did. I guess I'm just surprised. With the current state of things I'm surprised they let you on the bus."

"I didn't give them much of a choice," Harry admitted softly. "Once I was on the bus I revealed who I was and they were eager to do just about anything."

Sirius snorted at the comment. "Of course they did," he muttered as he sat back in his chair. "You're 'The Chosen One'."

"Uh?" James asked.

Harry stared at Sirius in confusion. He suddenly had a feeling that he had missed more than he originally thought. What had been printed in the issues of the 'Daily

Prophet' that he missed? Was there a reason Fawkes brought the issues he did? "The what?" Harry asked uncomfortably.

Sirius silently cursed himself. "Nothing, Harry," he said quickly. "Just the wizarding world being its usual self-serving self. We can talk about it later...when you're stronger. It really isn't that important. I promise I'll explain everything but I think what you've been through takes precedence."

"Sirius Black," Lily said coming close to the bed and staring fiercely at Sirius. "What are you hiding?"

"Dunno," Sirius fidgeted uncomfortably.

Taking the hint, Harry inhaled deeply and told the rest of his story. He told Sirius about Dr. Rolands, his job at the hospital, and the people he met. He explained a few of his duties, including 'story time' in the children's ward. Harry couldn't help smiling at the memories of the children hanging on his every word. That part of the day had always been what he looked forward to. It was amazing how satisfying bringing joy to others was.

Snapping back to the present, Harry continued on, explaining how he realized his empathic ability and how he used his position at the hospital to test it. He was still hesitant to tell Sirius about his ability to help people to heal. *I'll tell him after I try to*

help Remus, I swear. Harry revealed his weekly meeting with Fawkes and how he learned about the attacks on Muggle neighborhoods. He then moved on to the difficult topic of his imprisonment at Voldemort's hideout. He told Sirius what he could remember and noticed the nervous look on Sirius' face when he revealed what McDaniels discovered although he didn't know whether he was nervous it was concerning what was learned or that Voldemort knew about it.

After three hours of talking, Harry was surprised when Sirius called for Dobby. The Hogwarts house elf quickly appeared and instantly started jumping up and down, telling Harry how happy he was that the 'Great Harry Potter' was safe and home with his 'wolf and dog'. Sirius quickly put an end to Dobby's proclamations that Harry was the greatest wizard of all time by asking for the elf to bring lunch. Dobby vanished with a *pop* only to reappear a moment later with two trays. Sirius was given a three course meal while Harry had a variety of bland dishes to choose from.

Harry and Sirius ate in silence, both deep in thought about what they had learned in the past few days. The need to see Remus was becoming unbearable. Did he look the same? Would he still appear to be dead? What would he be like when he woke? Would he still be the same Remus or had the poisoning been more than just physical? That was a frightening thought. Remus had always been so kind that it was easy to forget about the wolf.

"Well, you shouldn't," Remus huffed. Sirius launched himself at him and just said.

"We love you Moony."

Eating his soup, Harry didn't notice the occasional glances he was receiving from Sirius. He didn't suspect anything until his bowl of soup was half empty. Everything was starting to feel hazy and the simple action of holding a spoon was difficult. Blinking tiredly, Harry barely noticed Sirius gently pulling the spoon out of Harry's hand and setting the try aside. When his eyes started to droop, Harry realized that something strong had been put in his soup. *Cheater.*

"You drugged my son!" James said outraged.

Sirius smiled cheekily.

"Sir'us," Harry said sleepily as Sirius repositioned him so he was lying down completely.

"I know, kiddo," Sirius said, running a hand through Harry's damp hair. "I know you don't want to but you're still recovering. Poppy said sleep is the best thing for you. It's just for a few hours and then we can see Moony, all right?"

Unable to fight the call to sleep anymore, Harry closed his eyes and quickly drifted off. He was so out of it that he didn't notice the monitoring spells Sirius cast around his bed before leaving in a hurry.

Darkness surrounded him. In the darkness rested cold, hate and anger. To a normal person, the situation would be frightening but to him, it was home. It had been home for years. He was feared and well known but it wasn't enough to compete with a sixteen-year-old boy with a scar on his forehead in the shape of a lightening bolt. He had attacked towns and killed countless people yet Harry Potter still covered the front page of the 'Daily Prophet'. Because Harry Potter had escaped, the entire wizarding world was optimistic. Because Harry Potter had escaped, he had to abandon a perfectly hidden lair and *retire* several Death Eaters for their incompetence.

It was pitiful how much the wizarding world depended on a mere teenager. After the Charing Cross Road attack, all the 'Daily Prophet' could report about were possible locations of where 'The Chosen One' may be. Kill a town of people and you strike fear into the population. Abduct the-boy-who-lived and everything comes to a halt. He knew he should have killed the boy immediately but he had taken the boy's immobility for granted. He left the boy alone for far too long.

Harry Potter was certainly an enigma. For someone who had faced so much pain, Potter had a remarkable strength of will. He would have been an asset if he could have been turned. Now he would have to be killed. It was such a waste of talent but his fate had been sealed. Harry Potter proved he could outsmart the Death Eaters and had an annoying habit of surviving like and death situations. There was also the small fact that Harry Potter was the beacon of hope for the hypocritical wizarding world. Killing the mascot would be the first step to ensuring victory.

It was almost comical how daft people were. Ever since Potter's escape had been announced, the 'Daily Prophet' had kept a daily report of Potter's status, notifying everyone (including his enemies) just how fragile the boy was. Apparently, Potter's recovery has been progressing slower than expected. The Ministry had yet to hear from him and Dumbledore wasn't revealing anything. That would raise his suspicions if Severus Snape hadn't revealed that Black was preventing everyone from visiting the teenager. No one was allowed to enter the hidden home other than the blood traitor's cousin, Nymphadora Tonks, and the Hogwarts medi-witch.

That had been another oversight. He should have known the blood traitor would have only called who he trusted to help Harry Potter recover and Poppy Pomfrey was the only medi-witch who was aware that Potter was indeed unique. After all, she hadn't revealed any of her discoveries to anyone. Harry Potter's medical file was the most protected file at Hogwarts (according to Snape). No one was allowed to see the contents without Pomfrey *and* a guardian consenting to it, something that made it

impossible for Snape to discover Potter's secrets. Those secrets were the final piece of information he needed to properly plan Potter's defeat.

Once Potter reappears, his death will be slow and painful. He will beg for death in the end.

"You know what Voldie? You keep saying that and Harry keeps kicking your butt. So yeah, I'd rather you stop hurting him, but I wouldn't bet against him," James huffed crossing his arms.

A sadistic smile slowly appeared on his face at the possibilities. He knew the boy's ultimate weakness and had every intention of exploiting it.

"SIRIUS!"

Sitting up quickly, Harry looked around his dimly lit room only to find that he was alone. He was breathing heavily as if he had just run a kilometer as fast as he possibly could. His shirt was soaked with sweat and clinging to him like a second skin. Panic coursed through him as he quickly pushed the bedcovers away and jumped out of bed, grapping his glasses off the bedside table in the process.

Something was wrong. He knew it and it had something to do with Sirius. Ignoring the slight wave of dizziness, Harry hurried to the door and pulled it open. He had to find Sirius quickly. He didn't know why nor did he care. All he knew was that he wouldn't feel at ease until he saw that Sirius was safe.

"SIRIUS! WHAT'S WRONG?"

"I DON'T KNOW LILY!"

"BUT HE IS CALLING FOR YOU!"

"BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW!"

"Will you two stop shouting?" Remus scolded them rubbing his ears and Lily and Sirius blushed.

Harry grabbed the wall and waited for the dizziness to pass before he stepped out into the dimly lit hallway. The only sound was Harry's own anxious breathing. It was too quiet here. Harry didn't like quiet. The quiet reminded Harry of being in the cell. The quiet reminded Harry of the early mornings at the hospital where there was nothing to do but think of the past that haunted him. With silence, your imagination had a tendency to get the better of you.

The sound of someone hurrying up the stairs only increased Harry's panic. Logic had no place in his mind. At that point, it didn't matter how secure Black Manor was. All Harry could think about was that an intruder had done something to Sirius and was now coming for him.

Kick the intruder Harry!” Jamess yelled.

“Where’s your wand?” Mr. Potter asked. “Hex him!”

He wasn’t strong enough to face an attacker. He could barely stand without his head swimming. Reverting to survival mode, Harry backed into the shadows, praying that he wouldn’t be noticed. All of the fear quickly vanished at the sight of Sirius entering the hallway in a run. Relaxing slightly, Harry stepped out of the shadows and was instantly checked over by Sirius.

“Hex me huh?” Sirius asked with a raised eyebrow. “Kick me?”

“Well, er, we thought you were an intruder,” James said sheepishly.

“Harry, what’s wrong?” Sirius asked frantically. “Is your scar acting up? Your magic? Nightmare?”

Harry shakily shook his head. “Just a feeling,” he said softly. It sounded stupid now but it had felt so real. It had been nothing more than a knowledge that Sirius was in immediate danger. Someone wanted to harm Sirius but he didn’t know who. It was both embarrassing and nerve-wracking. He was nearly sixteen and he was acting like a child, acting out because of a dream or nightmare. Why was he such an emotional wreck?

Sirius let out a sigh of relief before wrapping an arm around Harry's shoulders. "It's all right, kiddo," he said with a reassuring smile. "We're safe here, okay? No one can enter without permission, not even Dumbledore. Tonks thought that we would need some time alone tonight and decided to drag Viktor off to some pub. Truthfully, I think they just wanted a different environment to fight in. Those two can't agree on anything."

Harry could only nod in agreement as Sirius ushered him back to his room. It still felt odd that Viktor and Tonks were so close considering that they had only met a few weeks ago. *Then again, it took me even less time to warm up to Tonks.* Harry's self-proclaimed aunt certainly had a way with people. She was like a female Sirius but clumsy.

"In other words a menace," Mr. Potter nodded. "I mean, with the havoc Sirius wrecks normally, imagine if he was clumsy?"

Sirius puffed his chest proudly and Mrs. Potter couldn't help it, she burst out laughing, "You're supposed to deny the claims Sirius, not be proud!"

"Are they dating?" Harry asked as he sat down on the edge of the bed.

Sirius looked at Harry for a moment before he burst out laughing. "Viktor and Tonks?" he asked as he sat down on the chair at Harry's bedside. "I think they would kill each other first. They get along as well as they do because they have to. Viktor believes Tonks is annoying and Tonks thinks Viktor is too serious all the time. Also,

they are both friends with Charlie Weasley so they have to put up with each other.”

Sirius ruffled Harry’s hair then sat back in his chair. “Thanks for the laugh, kiddo. I really needed that.” His smile slowly vanished as he stared at Harry. “Do you want to talk about it?”

Harry shrugged his shoulders as he rubbed the back of his neck nervously. “I just had a feeling that you were in danger and I panicked,” he said sheepishly. “It was so quiet and it sort of reminded me of...”

“When you were being held prisoner?” Sirius offered. Harry nodded, his gaze falling to the floor. “Harry, it’s understandable that you would be a little jumpy after what’s happened. I’m sorry I wasn’t here when you woke. Molly fire-called. Apparently, Ron, Hermione and Ginny are driving her mad. They want to see you, if you’re up for it.”

Harry bit his lower lip. Was he ready to face his friends? *Not really*. Was he ready to tell them what he had been through? *Certainly not*. Was he ready to reveal the secrets that he had been keeping for years? *I’ll never be ready for that*. “Er—maybe after I see Remus?” Harry asked hopefully.

“Yes! We want to see Moony!” James cried.

Lily looked at him weirdly.

"You do know you won't actually be *seeing* him right?"

"But Harry will heal him and everything will be all right again," James explained.

"I'd rather Harry just left me to Madam Pomfrey and not do anything dangerous."

"No one asked your opinion Moony. Sush!" Sirius admonished him.

"But-"

"Sush!" he said again closing Remus' lips with his thumb and forefinger.

Remus glared at him.

"We can do that," Sirius said as he rose to his feet and extended his hand to Harry.

"Are you up for a short journey?"

Harry nodded while taking Sirius' hand and was quickly pulled to a standing position.

His vision swam for a moment, forcing Harry to blink repeatedly and wait for the slight dizziness pass to pass. This was already becoming annoying and it had only happened a few times. Harry didn't know why it was taking him so long to recover from this. *Well, you've never had your magic suppressed before. This is probably normal.*

"Sorry about that," Sirius said sincerely. "I keep forgetting that occasional dizziness is a common side affect with the majority of the potions Poppy has been giving you.

Are you all right or do you need to sit back down?"

Harry shook his head, willing for everything to return to its rightful place. *I'm not going to lose my stomach. I'm not going to pass out when I'm so close to seeing Remus.* "I'm okay," Harry insisted. "How much longer do I have to take that stuff?"

Sirius loosely grabbed Harry underneath the right arm for support. "Poppy refused to give me an answer to that question when I asked her," he said as they slowly walked out of the room. "I guess the timeframe varies from person to person depending how magically strong you are. Poppy was also upset at your weight loss so she has been giving you nutrient potions twice a day."

"I didn't lose *that* much weight," Harry protested, walking towards Remus' closed door.

Sirius looked at Harry with a raised eyebrow. "Harry, you lost half a stone in a month!" he said in disbelief, stopping at Remus' door. "For someone who didn't really have any extra weight to lose, that is a cause for alarm! Did you even eat at all?"

Harry shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "I wasn't hungry," he said softly. With everything going on how could he worry about food?

Sirius shook his head as he turned the knob and pushed the door open. "Well Poppy's not too happy and neither am I," he said firmly. "Remember how much you loved Dumbledore and Poppy being on your case during the Tournament?"

Harry couldn't help groaning in annoyance. He had hated the ultimatum then and he was going to hate it now, especially if Madam Pomfrey was involved. The woman was so persistent that Harry always found himself doing what she wanted just so she would leave him alone. Thinking back, Harry realized that Madam Pomfrey's overprotective nature towards him actually started before his third year. That was really when everyone's attitude towards him had changed. It had been a shock to learn that the pampered savior of the wizarding world was nothing more than an abused child.

If Sirius hadn't rescued me I would have probably died in that house.

That night had been the turning point in Harry's life. Because Harry had formed a friendship with *Midnight*, he had sought the dog out at Hogwarts and demanded answers. Because *Midnight* helped a boy in need, Harry formed a father-son relationship with Remus Lupin. Harry didn't want to think what his life would have been like if he was still living with the Dursleys. That life seemed so long ago. He had been a completely different person then; independent and naïve. Harry still had the

independence in him but emotionally he was completely dependent on his family.

That was why he still couldn't believe that he had left it behind like he had, left Sirius behind.

Letting out a frustrated sigh, Harry followed Sirius into the room and instantly moved to the bed. He couldn't bring himself to blink as he stared at the figure that appeared to be frozen in time. The trademark light brown hair was still flecked with gray, showing how much stress the wolf had caused him. Kneeling down at the bedside, Harry tentatively ran his fingers over the extremely thin face that still bore signs of silver poisoning. The purple lines that had been so distinct before had faded to simply tinting the skin slightly. Remus still felt so cold. If Harry didn't know better, he would have believed his guardian was indeed dead.

"But he is not. Moony will never die!" Sirius said firmly.

"Er, Sirius, that's imposs--"

"You'll never die Moony!" Sirius said firmly through gritted teeth and Remus just thought wiser to stay quiet.

Sirius pulled up a chair and motioned for Harry to sit down. "I'll call Molly and tell her Ron, Hermione and Ginny can visit," he said as he rested a hand on Harry's shoulder. "I know it's hard seeing Moony like this. Just remember he'll be up in no time, yelling at us for doing something stupid." Sirius squeezed Harry's shoulder before moving towards the doorway to leave Harry and Remus alone.

Sirius and James glared at Remus.

"At least someone tries to stop them!" Mr. Potter sighed.

"That's when he isn't helping them," Lily said bluntly and Remus smiled sheepishly.

"Sirius," Harry said as he looked over his shoulder as his godfather stopped and looked at Harry curiously. "Thank you." *Thank you for understanding. Thank you for being Sirius.*

Sirius grinned and winked at Harry. "Don't mention it, kiddo," he said. "Take all the time you need."

Harry watched Sirius leave and close the door before turning back to Remus. Nervousness quickly crept in as Harry took hold of Remus' right hand with his own and placed his left on Remus' forehead. Closing his eyes, Harry concentrated on his memories of Remus. He remembered meeting him in the hospital wing and talking about 'being dark'. He remembered when Remus became his temporary guardian. Harry had put Remus through so much that year yet Remus never abandoned him. Remus had treated Harry like a son.

"Of course I did Harry! And you didn't put me through so much as you say," Remus said firmly. "Okay, so maybe the Dementors and the outbursts and Quidditch stressed me *a little*, but not you!"

"I got plenty stressed with the Dementors and the outbursts," James told Lily.

"And Quidditch James," Lily reminded him.

"The Firebolt," James said dreamily.

Memories of the summer following that hectic school year entered Harry's mind. The duo had become a trio and a unique family had been created. Remus finally had the friend he had needed the past twelve years and Harry had two parents. Harry remembered the World Cup and the numerous times he had simply watched his guardians act like the immature pranksters they used to be. Christmas and the snowball fight. The Yule Ball. The aftermath of the second task when Harry had broken down because he didn't feel like he could live up to everyone's expectations. Then there was the aftermath of the third task. Harry didn't know what he would have done if Sirius and Remus hadn't been there to help him every step of the way.

Last year at Hogwarts had been nothing short of a disaster. Harry knew he had put his guardians through so much with the attack on the train, Malfoy's attacks, Umbridge, his visions, the hearing at the Ministry, his outbursts, the D.A., studying for his O.W.L.s, and the battle in the Department of Mysteries. Harry couldn't prevent the tears from falling as he remembered the sight of Remus being attacked by Pettigrew. The pain Remus must have felt as the poison ran through his body...and to be completely helpless...

Harry gasped in surprise as intense warmth filled him and flowed towards his hands.

It was almost like the dam had finally been lowered and nothing would stop the energy from reaching its target. It was amazing and alarming. It wasn't like his outbursts that completely overwhelmed him. This was powerful magic that had a purpose and wouldn't stop until it was completed, regardless of the consequences.

Fighting to maintain his focus, Harry allowed the energy to flow through him and he concentrated on his love for his adoptive father. *Come back to us, Moony. We need you.* Sweat began to form on Harry's forehead. His muscles started to scream in pain. His breathing became labored. Harry could feel his body weakening but ignored it. Remus' hands were now warm in his own. It was working! Harry's head started to pound but it didn't matter. It was actually working!

Pain started to overpower the warming sensation the flowing magic was providing. Harry bit his lower lip to keep himself from crying out. He wanted to stop but this was Remus. *Just a little more. I can do this for Remus. I know I can.* Dizziness quickly crept in, forcing Harry to rest his head on Remus' chest. He tried to hold on but he was lost in a sea of confusion. His left arm fell to his side as the warmth that had flooded his body vanished, leaving pain and emptiness. Harry couldn't bring himself to move. He was so tired, too tired.

Sleep came quickly.

“Rest Harry,” Remus urged worried. “And then you and I will have a chat about hurting yourself because of me. You should have left Poppy heal me her way!” he scolded and wrote down a quick note in his little parchment that never left his pocket.

The door slowly creaked open far enough for a certain Animagus to poke his head in and smile at the sight of Harry resting his head on Remus’ chest. He had left Harry an hour ago and had figured that Harry would have fallen asleep by now. *Whatever Harry had said to Remus must have worn him out.* Not many actually knew how close Harry was to Remus Lupin since Remus was such a private person. Sirius was well aware of the long talks that Harry and Remus had concerning ‘serious’ matters. Remus was the ‘serious’ parent and Sirius was the fun parent. At the moment, Harry needed the ‘serious’ parent to help him through his problems. That was the main reason why Sirius had taken it upon himself to act a little more like Remus.

“And that is just plain weird,” James stated.

Opening the door open completely, Sirius quietly entered the room and knelt down beside his godson. He gently placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder only to pull it back quickly when he noticed that the shirt was completely soaked with sweat.

Cautiously, Sirius rested his hand on the back of Harry’s neck and nearly cried out in shock. The boy was burning up! When had this happened? Harry had been fine only an hour ago!

Sirius carefully gathered Harry into his arms and lowered the boy to the floor. It was then that Sirius actually noticed that a fever was the least of his worries. Harry's face was flushed, his breathing was uneven and his body convulsed periodically. Not knowing what to do, Sirius looked towards the doorway and saw three figures staring at him in shock. *Harry's never going to forgive me for this.*

Time certainly wasn't on his side as Sirius jumped to his feet. "You three stay here with him," he ordered. "I have to call Poppy. If anything happens, come and get me immediately."

Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley hurried to Harry's side, taking one of his hands into their own. Ronald Weasley remained in the doorway, his eyes wide at the sight of his best friend lying helpless on the floor. Knowing that at least Hermione and Ginny had heard him, Sirius ran out of the room as fast as he could. Not a word was said as the seconds slowly passed. Hermione ran her fingers through Harry's damp hair while Ginny gently ran her fingers down the side of Harry's face, both holding some hope that their actions would be enough to wake Harry.

Ron finally snapped out of his wits and managed to approach. He had been warned, just like Hermione and Ginny, that Harry was still recovering but he had allowed himself to believe that Sirius was just being overprotective again. He knew that Harry had been caught in an explosion only to be captured by Death Eaters for You-Know-

Who. It had been a long three days waiting while the majority of his family aided in the search. It had been a welcomed surprise when Charlie stepped out of the fireplace and announced that Harry had been found. Ron, Hermione and Ginny had immediately asked when they could see their friend only to learn that Sirius had forbidden visitors. Harry was recovering from injuries sustained during his capture, exhaustion and magical suppression. It was a lot to overcome but this was Harry. Harry always bounced back from his injuries before. He could do it again...right?

Sitting down on the edge of the bed, Ron watched as Hermione and Ginny stared worriedly at Harry while touching his face and hair. He was about to tell them to stop it when something brushed against his arm, causing him to cry out in alarm and jump to his feet. Turning around, Ron stared, wide eyed at the sight of Remus Lupin breathing heavily as he weakly reached out. The werewolf's eyes were still closed and he didn't appear to actually be aware of his surroundings. However, when Remus spoke there was no denying what was on his mind.

"Harry?" Remus pleaded weakly before falling back into a deep sleep.

Ron, Hermione and Ginny stared at Remus for a long moment before they subconsciously agreed on the same course of action. "SIRIUS!" they all screamed.

"You know, hearing three children yelling for Sirius as the source of all that is going to make the world right again is just plain weird," Mr. Potter mused and James and

Remus laughed. Sirius scowled and when the laughing didn't die he tried poking Remus who just laughed harder and ended up being smacked with a pillow.

Everything felt so warm and peaceful but strange at the same time. He was lying in a comfortable bed yet he couldn't move for some reason. Why couldn't he move? His mind was a clouded mess and pounding in pain. When did this happen? He didn't remember doing anything that would cause this much pain, physically or mentally. Groaning, Harry moved the only part of his body that would obey: his head and even that was painful. He didn't know what was going on and he didn't care. He just wanted the pain to stop.

Gentle fingers ran through his hair, distracting him as something pierced his arm. Harry tried to protest but the sudden dampening of pain put a quick stop to it. Everything slowly cleared, allowing Harry to remember what he had tried to do and how hard it had been. *That must be why I feel so awful now.* Slowly, Harry opened his eyes to see several somewhat blurry faces staring down at him. He instantly recognized Madam Pomfrey and Sirius. It was the third face he was having problems with. There was something familiar about the man but Harry couldn't put a finger on what it was.

Closing his eyes, Harry forced himself to relax and felt subtle waves of concern, nervousness and fear mixed with relief. He let out a sigh and opened his eyes again. This was certainly going to be difficult. "What happened?" Harry asked in a scratchy voice.

"That's what we would like to know, cub," a familiar voice said gently. "Padfoot's been beside himself with worry when he found you unconscious in here yesterday."

"THAT'S YOU MOONY!" Sirius cried.

"Yes, and now we know the reason why my hearing went impaired in the future," Remus stated dryly rubbing his ear.

"It did?" Sirius asked and Remus smacked his own forehead in desperation.

Harry gasped in surprise. It couldn't be, could it? "Moony?" he asked hopefully.

"That's right," Remus said as he rested his hand against the side of Harry's face.

"With both of us restricted to bed rest, Poppy felt that it was best to keep you in here. That way we can keep an eye on each other." He moved his hand up so it rested on Harry's forehead. "We also have a lot to talk about."

"Yes we do!" Remus said pointing to his list.

"Moony, future Remus can't see your list," James said calmly.

"That's what you think!" Remus said.

Harry couldn't take his eyes off of Remus as Madam Pomfrey started to check him over for any signs of lingering illness. "But you're okay, right?" he asked. "The poison—"

"—I'm still healing, Harry," Remus said truthfully as he ran fingers through Harry's hair, ignoring the whispers between Sirius and Madam Pomfrey. "I don't know what you did or how you did it. Poppy says my recovery has moved ahead an entire three months. I will still tire easily from time to time and I still need to take a potion twice a day but at least I don't have to stay in stasis anymore. You, on the other hand, are suffering from magical exhaustion...again. That's quite an accomplishment from someone who's still recovering from magical suppression."

Harry bit his lower lip nervously. "How much has Sirius told you?" he asked. He was torn. A part of him wanted Remus to know everything so Harry could avoid retelling it all while another part of him wished that Remus didn't know of all of the mistakes Harry had made by acting without thinking things through.

Remus smiled in understanding. "I've been given a brief overview," he revealed. "All I can say is that I'm sorry, cub. If I hadn't let my guard down, none of this would have

happened.” Harry moved to protest. “No, Harry. I think we all have to accept a part of the blame. We all made mistakes. What’s important is that we learn from them and don’t repeat them. That’s really all we can do.”

“Wasn’t your fault Remus,” James said icily. “It was the traitor’s.”

Madam Pomfrey cleared her throat. “Well, Mr. Potter,” she said sternly. “Would you care to explain what happened?”

Harry had to do some quickly thinking. Revealing his ability to Sirius and Remus was one thing but letting Madam Pomfrey know meant letting others know too. That was something he just wasn’t ready for. “I just wanted him to recover,” Harry said as he looked away. *It’s the truth...just missing some of the details.*

Sirius sat down on the edge of the bed as he picked up a pair of glasses on the bedside table and slid them on Harry’s face, making everything come into focus. Harry blinked a few times for his eyes to adjust as Sirius took Harry’s hand in his own. “Harry, Poppy knows,” Sirius said candidly. “I had to tell her. She was already suspicious when her tests kept revealing that your magic was more active than it should be.”

Harry closed his eyes as he let out a long breath. He couldn't believe that Sirius would do that. It was his secret to keep or tell! It was also something he wanted to keep to himself! He didn't want people treating him like a freak or a science experiment. Not everyone was simply going to accept him like Sirius had.

"Sirius didn't have a choice, Harry," Remus said gently. "We can understand that you don't want everyone knowing about this but Poppy is—to put it bluntly—your Healer. She has to know in order to help you to the best of her ability. Sirius told us that your ability has been acting up ever since your magic was returned to you. What if it were to act up again but was similar to when your magic had been restored? We would need medical help to restrain it. We would need Poppy's help."

"Perfectly sensible," Mrs. Potter nodded.

"Giving the *enemy* information is not sensible mum!" James said narrowing his eyes.

"Poppy isn't the enemy James, your broom and your pranks are," his mother said.

"Take that back! Take that back!" James cried appalled and Lily had to rub his back to calm him down.

"You also need to be monitored, Mr. Potter," Madam Pomfrey added. "You may be able to handle a small group of people but what about when you return to Hogwarts, hmm?"

“Harry’s not going to Hogwarts!” Sirius said firmly as he quickly rose to his feet and glared at Madam Pomfrey. “He’s staying here, where it’s safe. We can teach him what he needs to know. I don’t care what Dumbledore says. Last year was all the proof I needed to know that Harry isn’t safe at Hogwarts.”

“I so agree with myself,” Sirius said and Remus shook his head.

“So much for adult Sirius being reasonable,” Mr. Potter snorted.

“He may be an adult but he is still Sirius,” Lily shook her head.

“I happen to agree with Padfoot,” James said.

“Thank you James!”

Madam Pomfrey took a step towards Sirius as she pulled her self up to full height. Sirius was still taller but the medi-witch made it clear that she wasn’t afraid of him. “Sirius Black!” Pomfrey scolded. “You can’t possibly believe that denying Mr. Potter’s education is the right decision! Secluding Mr. Potter won’t help him adjust with his new ability! He needs to be around people to train himself or else he won’t be able to be in a crowd without going mad! Is that what you want for your godson?”

“Is that?” Lily asked with narrowed eyes and James said:

“We just won’t let him near crowds.”

Sirius nodded and Remus moaned.

Remus let out a sigh and lowered himself to lie next to Harry. "This is going to take a while," he said quietly. "We might as well get comfortable. Both of them are extremely stubborn."

"I think Harry's safety comes first," Sirius said frankly. "What's the point in learning if you're dead?"

Harry turned his head and took a good look at Remus who was closing his eyes and getting comfortable. The man looked exhausted but he wasn't anywhere near as pale as he was before. Hesitantly, he reached over and carefully touched Remus' face. It was still hard for him to believe that it had actually worked. Remus was actually awake and their family was whole again. It didn't matter that Harry was stuck in bed or that Sirius was forbidding him from returning to Hogwarts. From the subtle waves of happiness that were rolling off of Remus, Harry knew that his guardian felt the same way.

Remus wrapped his fingers around Harry's hand and held it loosely. "You still haven't told me how you did it, cub," he said tiredly. "How did you heal me?"

Harry glanced over at Sirius and Madam Pomfrey who were now watching them instead of arguing. Closing his eyes, Harry knew there was no escaping it. They

wouldn't stop asking until he told and a part of him was glad for it. *No more secrets.*

"Empathy isn't my only ability," Harry admitted reluctantly. He kept his eyes closed and didn't see Remus' eyes opening quickly at the revelation. "I can sort of help people heal by touch—" Madam Pomfrey gasped in shock. "—when it feels like working."

"So this has happened before?" Sirius asked in alarm. "Harry, why didn't you tell me?"

Harry slowly opened his eyes to see Sirius' panicked face. Slowly, Harry sat up and met Sirius' gaze, his eyes begging for his godfather to understand. "Because I didn't want to disappoint you if it didn't work," he said shakily. "I can't control it. It controls me. I just never held on for that long before." Harry bowed his head and stared at his hand that was still being held by Remus'. He never wanted to hold on for that long again. The pain he felt, the emptiness he felt afterwards made him shudder. It had almost felt like a Dementor had been nearby.

"How do you know its working?" Remus asked worriedly as he loosened his grip on Harry's hand.

Harry looked up at Remus and gave him a reassuring smile while tightening his own grip on Remus' hand. "I feel it before it starts," he said truthfully. "It feels like what my outbursts used to feel like but on a smaller scale. It really doesn't happen often."

Sirius ran his hand over his face as he turned to Madam Pomfrey. "What does this all mean?" he asked grimly.

Madam Pomfrey sat down at the foot of the bed and looked up at Sirius with a guarded look on her face. "I can't give you a definite answer without running some tests," she said truthfully. "In my opinion, Mr. Potter's outbursts have transformed into these abilities and I find that unsettling. Those outbursts had been powerful enough to nearly kill him at times. If his empathy were to reach that magnitude, it could drive him mad. It is essential that he learns to control these abilities sooner rather than later. The healing is another story. Mr. Potter can't afford to keep draining himself magically. His empathy is most likely fueling his healing but...I just don't know."

Remus squeezed Harry's hand reassuringly. "I think it would be best if you ran your tests, Poppy," he said tiredly. "The sooner we know more about this the sooner we can help Harry learn to control it. Now, if you don't mind, I think Harry and I could use some rest."

“What about Dumbledore?” Madam Pomfrey asked as she rose to her feet.

“We will tell Dumbledore about this when Harry’s ready,” Sirius answered for Remus then motioned for her to lead the way out of the room. Just as he reached the door, Sirius turned and winked at Remus and Harry. “No talking you two or I’ll have to separate you.”

Harry and Remus groaned in annoyance as Sirius closed the door. It was clear that Sirius was going to have a lot of fun with the situation now that Remus was in better health. “I swear your godfather has finally lost whatever remained of his sanity,” Remus said seriously.

“Like I had any to begin with,” Sirius snorted.

“Hum, Padfoot, that should be our line,” James said and Sirius shrugged.

“Is there anything else I should know about? It’s rather disconcerting to wake up and be told an entire month has passed.”

Harry shook his head as he took his glasses off and set them on the bedside table.

“It’s nothing, Moony,” he said as he slowly leaned backwards until his head hit the pillow. He didn’t know how much Sirius had revealed and wasn’t about to say

something that would keep Remus awake for hours. "It doesn't matter anymore. Just concentrate on getting better."

Remus looked at Harry skeptically for a long moment. "Why does it sound that you're trying to convince yourself more than me?" he asked.

Probably because I am. At the moment, it was easier to simply forget what the past month had been like than to retell the entire story...again. It wasn't that Harry wanted to hide anything from Remus. It was more of the fact that the more he thought about it, the more Harry realized how stupid his decisions had been. *All of the training...all of the talks about thinking logically and I just pushed it all away. How could I have been so thick?*

An arm burrowed underneath Harry's shoulder and pulled him to Remus' chest. "I know, cub," Remus said as he wrapped an arm around him. "I know. You've been through a lot and it's going to take time to work through it all. I won't force you to talk about it if you don't want to. I'm sure Dumbledore would even let us borrow his Pensieve if you would rather let us see your memories. Just know that ignoring the problem doesn't make it go away."

“I know,” Harry said softly as he closed his eyes and listened to Remus’ heartbeat, gently lulling him to sleep. A Pensieve wasn’t a bad idea. There were so many things that needed to be seen rather than explained. Seeing makes everything feel more real.

A house-elf popped in and said.

“Master Moody is on the Floo sir.”

Mr. Potter looked at the elf and then cursed.

“HAROLD!”

“I forgot about work. Wait here.” And he ran off. The remaining readers heard though the open door:

“Yes, Alastor. So sorry I didn’t call, but I am under the weather and won’t be going to work.”

“You don’t seem sick.”

“Well, I am! Are you calling me a liar?”

“No, humph. Fine, then send the Evans girl so I can take her hom-“

“No!”

“What do you mean no?”

“Er, she’s sick too. We all are. I decided to quarantine us. Yes, you don’t want the muggles getting sick do you?”

In a suspicious voice Moody asked, “And when, pray tell do you predict this sudden bout of illness will end?”

“Huh, wait a sec.”

Footsteps were heard and Mr. Potter snuck his head inside the room.

“How long does each book take?”

“About a day,” Sirius shrugged.

“And there should be only one more?”

“Unless they go in his adult life,” Lily answered.

Mr. Potter ran away.

“A couple of days, a week maybe.”

“How do I know you are really Harold Potter and not someone impersonating him and keeping him and his family hostage?” Moody growled.

“ALASTOR! I’ve known you since Hogwarts!”

“Prove yourself!”

“Do you really want me to?” Mr. Potter asked threateningly. “Oh, well, who else would know you passed out naked and completely drunk on the girls’ loo after serenading Minerva M-!”

“Fine!” Moody cut him. “You’re you and you’re sick! Any orders.”

“Oh, orders. Yes!” Mr. Potter said firmly. “Have Shacklebolt doing hostage recovery drills and learning by heart the Aurors’ duty and code of conduct. Especially where who is supposed to protect the victims is concerned.”

“What? Why?”

“Just do as I say. Oh and check out a blond woman named Audrey McDaniels, and a bloke named Truden.”

“Who?”

“Alastor! Who’s the boss here?”

“Okay, fine!”

After a small silence Mr. Potter reemerged in James room and sat on his chair. He looked at the boys and asked his wife.

“They look kind of sick. What happened?”

“Next time think of something that doesn’t involve one of their teachers,” she answered.



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A/N- I know this is just the middle of the chapter but I really had no time and am quite sleep deprived to be able to give you this but I thought you at least deserved to see Remus wake up. I'll explain better on the author's note in the next chapter.

Dear readers,

I am really sorry to announce this. I did my best not to have to do this but as you may have noticed from my last chapter. My new job takes all my time and the very little time that is left I usually spend sleeping. I am not kidding. I've been leaving work at midnight sometimes two o'clock in the morning and entering at nine at times. I don't complain because I love what I am doing and the more jobs we have the more money we make of course. But that means that I have no time to write or read. Sometimes I have fifteen minute to skim over one of my alerts on the reading list, and if you are one of the writers I do that to I apologize for my either lack or reviews or the decrease in quality.

I pondered very hard on what to do with this fic and I only came to one solution. I still have 42 chapters to go in this fic and if I can only update once a month maybe even

less that means at least 3 and a half years and I reaaaaaaallllly don't want to do that to my readers. That's awful. I hate when updates take months.

I also don't want to leave this unfinished, I also hate that and think that is a lack of respect with readers.

This was very hard for me and a very sad decision to make, but I decided to end this series earlier. Rest assured that I did not change any plans for the ending of this fic. From last chapter to the last chapter of "Rise of the Protector" what was going to happen was their comments and reactions to what was happening and maybe a few hints to my final plan. The "action" so to speak was always meant for the last chapter and has been written for over a year, since a few days after Ksomm814 posted her last chapter. I only changed the first paragraph to adapt to the situation.

I decided to do this so I could leave this series with an ending and not abandon this as I promised I wouldn't, even if the ending had to come sooner. I hope to one day have time to write the chapters in between but I don't want to promise anything. If I ever do I'll only post when I have them all written and as a stand alone: "The chapters that should have been" and let you know here.

I want to apologize to all my readers that have stuck with me for so long and to Ksomm814 who trusted me with her work and were disappointed. I am truly sorry but unfortunately real life takes precedence.

I also want to thank you all for the chance you gave me to express myself and all the encouragement.

Thanks.

PadyandMoony

Chapter 8- After all is read and said

After a lot of anguishing chapters. After rejoicing at Remus recovery and crying at Dumbledore's Death. After becoming outraged at the discovery of Severus Snape's role on James and Lily's death and finally deciding that he was one huge egotistical bastard who cared only for himself. After celebrating Voldemort's defeat. After crying at the realization of Remus' imminent death because of his lycanthropy and getting outraged at Sirius attitude towards Harry when he was about to leave for the United States and then scoffing at Sirius being so, *so Sirius* when he turned up on the plane, and of course, Remus glaring at him for being tricked. Lily finally finished the last sentence with a smile, "They're finally happy!" James and Remus nodded. Mrs. Potter dabbed at her eyes and Mr. Potter squeezed her shoulder. Sirius on the other hand was taking the papers from Lily's hands and looking for something.

"Where's Moony in this epilogue?"

"Sirius I-" Remus started.

"No you didn't!" Sirius yelled.

"Sirius it's fine. I've always known," Remus started again.

"IT'S NOT FINE!" he yelled.

Remus inhaled deeply.

“Sirius, it’s like my older self explained. Frankly I am quite happy that I managed to live that long.”

“Greyback was older and had been a werewolf for longer and he was fine and dandy,” Sirius growled.

“It varies and there is nothing you can do about that,” Remus said calmly.

Sirius fumed and turned to James, “So now what? We tell Dumbledore about Pettigrew?”

James bit his lips, exchanged glance with Lily and said, “About that. Lily and I talked and we decided not to change anything.”

“WHAT?” Sirius yelled.

“If we change something everything could come out worse,” Lily said.

“Worse than you all dead and me and Harry alone?”

“You are not alone,” Mrs. Potter said, “You are finally happy. Voldemort is gone.”

“If we change something we could all end up dead and Voldemort in power, do you want that?” Mr. Potter said and looked at his wife. “And how could we change anything about Helen and I, we don’t even know how we died.”

“No, but you can’t just stand there and do nothing! You can’t tell me James, you’ll just look in Pettigrew’s face knowing what he will do and make him Secret Keeper. You can’t expect me to go after him and let Harry to the Dursleys!” Sirius pleaded.

"We don't," James said, "That's why we are going to do a memory charm on all of us. Including Peter. Dad knows of a spell that will memory charm anyone that came in contact with this information in case Peter has already blabbed to anyone. The charm has a time period. We will set it to end after all is done. I think by the time of this epilogue is fine."

Lily nodded her agreement, "We'll write letters so you can give to Harry. So he can know how we feel about him and this," she said.

"I'll write one too," Remus said.

"Us too," Mr. Potter nodded to his wife.

"Letters? You mean we read all this for nothing?" Sirius cried.

"No, not for nothing. For me and Lily to be able to know how wonderful our son is, even though we'll have to suppress that memory. For mum and dad to know their grandson."

"You have to write the outer envelope Sirius. It will be addressed to you and once you open it the charm will break," Lily explained.

Sirius was shaking his head.

"We'll let you come to terms while we write," Remus said and motioned for the others to leave.

Sirius huffed and threw the book at the floor. He noticed a parchment falling of the book and went to read. His eyes gleamed.

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After a long time they came back with the envelopes and handed Sirius a quill.

Reluctantly he addressed it.

"I already put the counter charm in the envelope. Go to the owl post office and get a timed owl. When you come back I'll do the charm," Mr. Potter said.

Sirius nodded and left.

There was a soft tapping at the window and Sirius let an owl in. he retrieved the envelope and was surprised to see his own writing in an envelope addressed to himself. He opened it and was even more surprised to find five envelopes addressed to Harry in familiar handwriting. He almost missed the white glow coming from the envelope that suddenly filled the whole house. When the glow vanished he only managed an:

"Oh, Bugger."

"SIRIUS ORION BLACK!" came a cry and an enraged Remus Lupin thundered in the living room.

"Hi, Moony," he tried sheepishly.

"Hi, Moony. Hi, Moony. You, You. We agreed! What did you do?" he yelled.

"I kind of sent a timed owl to Harry that should have reached him right before he healed you from the silver poisoning telling him that the only way to heal you was if

he cured your lycanthropy and that one day I would explain but that right then I didn't know about the note. And I kind of put something personal that Peter wouldn't know so he knew this time there was no trick, and well, he did," He winced out.

"He almost died in the process! He was out for a whole week instead of just a day. We agreed not to change anything Sirius!"

"And I didn't! Everything else happened the same but that tiny detail. And Harry was never at risk because that was before he had control so I thought his magic would stop him if he wasn't able to. And I thought he'd have a chance there because once he started mastering his power he wasn't able to do the big stuff anymore."

"That tiny detail could have changed everything, Ugh, I don't know what to do with you" Remus pulled his hair and paced frustrated.

"Look, I know I took a big chance but I wasn't going to lose you, ok. The thought of losing both you and Prongs was just too much. I realize that Prongs and Lily couldn't be saved, but not you. And after all we've gone through. After actually living the maybe losing you and seeing what the thought of you being dead did to Harry I back my decision up. The godfather in me wants to kick me for risking Harry but the friend does not regret what I did, so you can just spend the rest of your very long magically enhanced life angry at me," Sirius said valiantly.

Remus came up to him and Sirius flinched thinking he was going to strike him but was engulfed in a hug instead.

"You are a moron and this is absolutely the stupidest thing you've ever done. Thank you." Sirius nodded his head as he buried it in Remus' shoulder and they stayed that way a long time until Sirius said in a horse voice.

"Er, Moony. There's something else."

Remus looked at him and Sirius bit his lip.

"Remember when we arrived here in the States, right after Harry's graduation at Hogwarts?" Remus nodded. "Well, you made a comment. You said that it was too bad that James and Lily would never get to know what a great son they had."

"Yes," Remus said suspiciously.

"Weeeeeeeeeeeeeelllllllll," Sirius said and fidgeted with the hem of his sleeves. "I kind of thought, and then researched and then, wrote and then sent the books to the past."

"Excuse me?"

"I didn't exactly write. I used a spell. On Harry. With his consent. Well I tricked him. I said I wanted to test a spell and promised that no one other than family would ever see the books. The spell kind of wrote what Harry lived through his perspective. Some of mine too. I tried. I guess that because of the connection between Harry and Voldemort we got kind of some of Voldemort too. Because Harry felt it at the time, don't really know why--"

"YOU'RE THE ONE THAT SENT THE BOOKS TO THE PAST?"

Sirius flinched and rubbed his ears, "Yeah, I even sent a note."

"I didn't see any note."

"Er, em. I kind of found it in the last book when you were all writing your letters and I was kind of distraught and when I read the note I had the idea for sending Harry his note so I kind of hid the note where I knew it would keep for decades."

"Where is the note?" Remus said through gritted teeth.

Sirius walked quickly out of the room and came back with "The Marauders code of Mayhem", sliced the back cover and took a piece of parchment from inside. He handed the note to Remus who read and laughed. Sirius scowled and read the note again.

Dear Marauders,

I've sent these so Prongs and Lily could get to know their son.

Padfoot

PS: I tried aiming for Prongs head. Hope I got you.

After composing himself, Remus shook his head. "What will we do with you Padfoot.

No qualms whatsoever with meddling with time."

"Well, I just thought-"

"The problem Padfoot is you didn't." Remus shook his head throwing an arm over Sirius' shoulders and pulling him close. "But thanks to your luck, everything ended well and James and Lily did get to know Harry, and even got a little closer after that reading. And we had thought that was because of the time we spent reading "Lord of the rings", Remus chuckled. "And Harry will know that they knew."

Sirius smiled and then scowled.

"I have horrid aim."

Remus burst out laughing and only stopped when sound of racing feet met them and soon a ruffled toddler ran in the room.

"Daddy, daddy!"

Sirius picked the toddler up and straightened him up.

"You had to name him after all of us," Remus snorted.

"Well, yeah!"

“Are you going to tell Harry you are trying for another one today?” Remus asked.

“Yeah, I hope he doesn’t laugh this time. Moony that wasn’t funny,” he glared at Remus who was laughing.

“Why Uncle Moony laugh?” the toddler asked.

“Because there is nothing else to do when your father is the topic,” Remus patiently explained.

“Kay.”

“No not ok. Moony! Stop poisoning my son!”

“Mummy say we go meet Hawwy and Anna and Evan.”

“Yes we are, are you two ready?” Came a voice from the door and Sirius’ wife came in.

“Almost, Sirius and I just have to ask Dobby a favor.”

“We do?” Sirius asked confused.

“Yes we do, for James and Lily.”

“Oh,”

“Then I’ll take him,” said Jocelyn picking R.J and leaving.

“Say Moony when are you and Kimberly tying the knot?” Sirius asked with a cheeky smile.

"I have no idea what you are talking about," Remus said blushing.

"Yes you do."

Remus smiled and said, "Yes, it's nice to know I can. And can have kids. But Harry will always be our eldest."

"That he is"

Sirius saw Remus taking an old parchment from his pocket and crossing something off it.

"Moony?" Sirius asked recognizing the parchment.

"Hum, well, see," Remus started fumbling, "I may have left something for myself to find before Harry's third year. But I didn't change anything!" he cried defensively. Sirius laughed.

In England a middle aged woman screamed when her friend pointed out her purple hair.

The End

A/N- So, yeah, I changed that. After all the reading I had to change something but I couldn't affect the story. Besides as Ksomm814 herself once said, we wouldn't be writing fanfiction if we agreed with everything.

Thank you all!