

One way or another

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One way or another

by [Madame Xela](#)

Summary

Harry removed her glasses and rubbed her temples. Barely two days into their fifth year and Sirius was already starting with his antics. Although she had to admit that this was new. Kids? With Sirius Black? That was a joke in and of itself! What was he playing at? “Black, if this is just another one of your stupid pranks, I swear to Merlin I’ll—” “It’s not a prank.”

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Fifth year

“Have my child.”

The Gryffindor girl glanced up from her homework to her brother’s best friend, Sirius Black, giving him an incredulous stare.

“Excuse me? Care to repeat that?” She asked.

“Have. My. Child.” Sirius repeated slowly, stressing each word as if he thought that it would help get the message through. Rude. She wasn’t stupid!

Great, so she hadn’t misheard him. Harry removed her glasses and rubbed her temples. Barely two days into their fifth year and Sirius was already starting with his antics. Although she had to admit that this was new. Kids? With Sirius Black? That was a joke in and of itself! What was he playing at?

“Black, if this is just another one of your stupid pranks, I swear to Merlin I’ll—“

“It’s not a prank.” There was a severity to his tone that Harry had heard only a handful of times before. Haunted, angry, scared...three things the other Gryffindor did not usually express (except to his close friends, and even then it was extremely rare). What had happened to him over the summer?

Harry gazed at him wearily. “Sirius—”

“—Listen! I know we’re young-(“*Young?! Sirius we’re-*”)-but I have money! I have a *lot* of money-Uncle Alphie’s been putting money in a separate vault for me for years! And I can get the goblins to transfer the money from my trust fund to that vault, so that won’t be an issue! Plus I turn sixteen in November so I can file for emancipation-that way I can get my hands on the rest of my money before my parents do and I’ll even set up a trust fund right away I promise!”

“Oh sweet Merlin Sirius!”

The boy apparently had not heard her. Or he chose to ignore her. That was more likely. He started pacing around the empty Common Room, sticking closely to the fireplace. The warm orange glow illuminated half of his body, while dark shadows formed on the other half. Sirius looked...excited? Passionate? Eager? Nervous? Harry couldn’t recall ever seeing him like this. This nervous energy that surrounded him was putting the bespectacled girl on edge. She fidgeted, wanting to get up and pace and yell at him all at once.

Sirius ran his hands through his long hair, messing it up further (another thing that had Harry on edge. Sirius was *very* particular about his hair, and when he had approached her he looked as if he had just gotten off a broom. How nervous was he!?). He stared at nothing, eyes unfocused and dreamy as he babbled on. “As for living arrangements...well I kind of hoped that we would live with your parents while we’re in school because I don’t know a damn thing about babies even though I’ve been reading a *ton* of books -(“*-Books?! You’ve been reading books about this?!*”)-yes! Aren’t you proud of me? Anyway, if you don’t want to live with your parents, that’s fine too. My uncle has a small cottage on the coast that he’d be more than happy to rent to us-it’s cute, you’d like it. There’s a garden and it’s near the beach and the kitchen is nice and cozy and there’s a huge fireplace and upstairs there’s a room that’s *perfect* for a nursery-(“*Sirius!*”)-sorry, off topic, we can discuss that later! While we’re in school I’m sure the headmaster would be happy to accommodate us and the baby! And I’m sure your mom won’t mind watching the baby while we’re in class-or we could get a

house-elf to do it! Of course our friends will be the aunts and uncles too, and I'm sure they wouldn't mind watching the baby for a few hours so we could get some time to ourselves. Can you imagine James in charge of a baby?" Harry *really* didn't want to.

"We could be a happy little family, the three of us-or more if you have multiples. They'll always be protected, loved, taken care of...you name it and it will be done! But, we will have to get married of course. Like, as soon as you're pregnant. Because having a child out of wedlock is one thing, but being a *teenager* and having a child out of wedlock? I won't give anyone the opportunity to possibly take our baby from us--"

Harry had heard enough. The dark haired girl grabbed at her messy bun and took deep breaths to try and assuage her hysteria. Was he being serious (any other time he would have sent her a cocky grin and stated that 'Yes, I am Sirius')?! Didn't he realize how stupid this was?! How desperate was he that he was thinking so far into this? Because really: a *trust fund*? For a child that they didn't have yet? Or *would* have? A house? *Marriage*?! And why *her*? Sure they were good friends (not as close as he was with her brother, but pretty damn close!) but that didn't mean that she was going to jump in the sack with him, get hitched, and pop out a kid at *fifteen*!

For the first time Harry was glad that Sirius had the foresight to make sure that the common room was empty when he confronted her. Merlin only knows what chaos would have ensued if they had had an audience. Oh god, what if James had been there?! She glared at him over the frames of her glasses.

"Do you even *hear* yourself Sirius?! Listen to the words that are coming out of your mouth right now!" She yelled.

He blinked back at her, clearly confused by her anger. "Is this about the age thing? Because I get that we're young--"

"-We aren't *just* young, Sirius. For Merlin's sake we're only *fifteen*!" She shot to her feet, standing nose-to-nose with her friend. "And don't give me that shit about turning sixteen in November. Age is just a number-it's the maturity and responsibility that counts and I know for a fact that neither of us are ready for the responsibility of raising a child! *Yes* you put a lot of thought into this-but you said so yourself: you don't know the first thing about babies! And *then* there's the whole marriage thing! Was this some sort of convoluted marriage proposal? Because if you really wanted to marry me, I would have appreciated-oh I don't know-*being in a relationship first*!" Angry green eyes bored into equally angry (and hurt) gray. And if looks could kill, both of them would be stone cold dead on the floor.

"You don't understand!" He growled.

"No, I d-" Harry's response was cut off by the portrait door swinging open by a giggling James, Remus and Peter.

"Oh man! Did you see the looks on their faces? Too bad Pads wasn't there! He-speak of the devil! Sirius, where have you..." James gave his friend and twin a once-over. He blinked. "Is everything okay?" The dark haired prankster suddenly found himself pinned to the spot by two furious glares. Whoa! What happened between the two of them!

"Yes." "No!" Sirius and Harry answered at the same time. They glared at each other again.

"What's going on?" Remus asked.

Sirius stomped away from the bespectacled girl. He marched passed his roommates and to the

portrait hole before he responded. "I asked your sister for help and she won't listen to me! I'm going to the pitch. I'll be back later."

Before he managed to exit, Harry hissed: "You didn't ask for help, Black! What you're suggesting is **madness!**"

The Black heir stilled for a fraction of a second, his hands halfway to the doorframe. He turned to Harry with the angriest expression she had seen directed to her (possibly one of the angriest expressions she had seen on him *ever*). "Don't worry, you won't have to worry about me and my *madness* anymore. I won't bother you again!" With that he slammed the portrait shut.

"Good!" Harry shouted, though he could not hear it. She snatched her charms textbook, shoving it into her bag that was on the floor. "Your friend is an idiot." She hissed at the remaining marauders. "I'll be in the library if you need me. But for your sakes: *don't*." And on that note, the Potter witch exited the common room in the same manner that Sirius had.

"What the hell just happened?!" James cried. The other two wizards shrugged.

*

Eleven days.

For eleven days they didn't speak to one another. And if for some reason they needed to speak (Transfiguration) they used some poor soul as their messenger.

For eleven days the Marauders were stuck in the middle of their dispute-and they didn't even know what it was about! Any attempts at asking were met with 'Ask *him*' or 'Ask *her*' or Remus's personal favorite: transfiguring a leaf into a stone bust of the other and blowing it up (Harry had quite the vicious side and Remus was glad that he wasn't on its receiving end).

For eleven days Remus was stuck going back and forth between his two friends; relaying snide and hurtful messages, dodging curses and hexes as a result of that, and delivering charmed items to the other (the strangest one had been from Sirius: a cute, blue teddy the had the words 'it's a boy!' on its belly. But once the item touched Harry it morphed into a demonic...*thing*, and the words 'it's a boy!' turned to fiery words reading: 'it's a bitch!'. What the fuck was that about?).

They were acting like children, and it was fucking annoying. The full moon being only nights away didn't help Remus's mood at all.

And so, fed up with the ridiculous antics of his friends, Remus Lupin began to plot.

*

"Are you coming tonight?" Remus asked Harry. They were seated in a quiet corner of the library, away from other students as they worked on their homework. Remus had snuck in a chocolate bar and started munching on it while waiting for a response.

The green eyed girl looked up from her book with a strained smile. "Sorry Moony. Probably not." In the four years that Harry had known about his 'furry little problem', she and Hedwig missed only a handful of full moons. And never had it been over something as petty as a fight.

Remus stared at her, amber eyes unblinking until she shifted uncomfortably in her seat. She hated when he did that. "Because of Sirius?" It was less of a question and more an accusation. It had the intended effect; Harry flinched away and nodded.

“I have no desire to be near that asshole right now.” She told him, going back to her homework.

“What happened, anyway? You still haven’t told us.”

“That’s because it isn’t your business. What happened between Sirius and I stays between Sirius and I.” The soft scratching of her quill became harsh, hurting the werewolf’s ears.

“That’s funny, because dragging us into the mess as your messengers and *attacking* us doesn’t seem like ‘keeping it between you two’.” The girl flinched again.

Harry looked at her friend from beneath her lashes. He made a good point, yes, but she couldn’t tell him the truth. Merlin only knows what would happen! “I’m sorry. You weren’t...I won’t ask you guys to give him messages anymore. You’re right, and that isn’t fair to you. But this is going to stay between Sirius and me.”

The werewolf made a soft noncommittal noise. “Moony will miss you.” There’s an underlying message to the statement. A remark that was intended to hurt and make her feel guilty. But it wasn’t a lie.

The full moon would be rough without the presence of his oldest pack-mate. Not because he was hopelessly in love with her or whatever it was that some people deluded themselves into believing. She was his Beta. His oldest and closet pack-mate. She had been by his side since first year where she fearlessly stood her ground against the werewolf. She was the one who carried him to the infirmary in the mornings. She was the one who brought a basket full of food for Moony. And she was the only one stupid enough to face the werewolf in her human form with only a snowy owl to protect her (and no matter what she said, it was stupidity; not bravery.). Sure they spent a few moons apart, and those were hell. Remus had no doubt that this one would be no different.

Sighing, Harry sent her friend a tired smile. “I’ll...maybe I’ll stop by for a little bit.”

*

She did.

She snuck down the path to the Shrieking Shack long after the moon had risen with her usual basket of food for the group and Hedwig perched sleepily on her shoulder. She even brought a little extra for Moony as an apology for being so late. Hopefully the werewolf would forgive her.

The damage had been done long before she arrived.

Harry heard the telltale sounds of claws against wood and Moony’s desperate wails long before she reached the door to the shack.

“Hang on Moony, I’m almost there!” She called out. The scratching became harsher, faster. His whines more desperate.

It wasn’t long before they were at the old door (honestly it was a miracle that it was still standing at this point). The moment her hand touched the knob, she ordered him to back up. Hey, *sometimes* he listened to her.

This was not one of those times.

She made it halfway inside the doorway before she was pinned to the wall by two clawed paws. Hedwig flew off to her favorite spot in the shack (a nest that she had made several years before on the canopy of the bed). Someone, probably James, was wise enough and nudged the door closed

while the werewolf was distracted.

Moony sniffed every inch of her, as if looking for an injury that kept her from them. His nose was cold and wet-which was partially a good sign, but she really didn't appreciate the blood that was getting on her clothes. She scratched behind his ears, trying to distract him, and he growled at her efforts.

“Hey, I'm sorry I'm late. But I'm not hurt, I promise. Now stop sniffing me you big mutt!” Moony growled again but backed off. He looked up and down her body, sniffing the air to see if something was wrong with her.

If Remus hadn't made her feel bad enough before, she felt terrible at the state that her werewolf friend was in. Moony had taken to tearing out clumps of his fur and leaving deep bites in his own flesh. Along his snout and neck were several nasty looking cuts and there were several places on his body that were still steadily bleeding. She gave the wolf an exasperated sigh.

“What have I told you about the biting, Moony? Sit down so I can bandage you up.” Of course the werewolf didn't listen. It wasn't until Harry snapped her fingers and pointed to the ground that he slowly sat on his haunches, glaring at her the whole time (later, Harry would say that he looked like a grumpy, bloodied puppy. Not that she'd *ever* tell Remus that.). “Good boy. I'll be quick, I promise.”

Quick wasn't easy when she couldn't use magic directly because of Moony's sensitivity, but she made due. Well practiced hands transfigured a small piece of lint into yards of gauze; a feather into a cloth; a stone into a large bowl. She cast a quick *Aguamenti* on the bowl, and a heating charm after. Soon she was dabbing the washcloth in the warm water and cleaning Moony's fur of blood and sanitizing his wounds as best as she could. When it came down to wrapping the gauze, a black furred head appeared in the corner of her eye and held the bandage with his nose so Harry could wrap it.

For the first time in several days, Harry didn't shout or curse the dog animagus. They were...civil.

“There Moony, all done! Thank you for being so well behaved.” The girl kissed his nose. She didn't verbally thank Sirius, opting instead to pat his head a few times, and giving a good scratch to the spot under his jaw that he liked. “Time to eat!”

*

When the sun was only just started taking over the sky and the moon faded for the day, Harry's alarm went off. She woke to her pack curled loosely around each other on the upstairs bed. Moony was to her side like he usually was, with James on the other side of him; Peter nestled snugly between the werewolf's shoulder blades; and Sirius's upper body draped over her abdomen so that his snout was nestled between her waist and Moony's side. Hedwig hooted softly in her perch.

Gently, she extracted herself from the dogpile (no pun intended). Sirius huffed at being woken so early, but she ignored him. The dog tiredly watched as she gently picked up Peter and placed him on her still sleeping brother, giving both a few gentle scratches to wake them.

Now all she had to do was wait for Moony to transform back.

It wasn't long. There were disgusting 'pops' and 'cracks' and other wet noises that were only heard during these moments. Soon the large werewolf was replaced with the gangly teen wrapped in loose, bloody bandages.

Moony stared at his Beta with sleepy gold eyes.

“Good morning.” Harry whispered. “Let's get you to the infirmary.” Carefully, she ushered him to

the edge of the bed, draped his arm around her shoulders, and hefted him to his feet.

*

There is a rule that the morning after a full moon is naptime for Remus. Partly because Harry and the Marauders are his best friends and they love him a lot and know that the rest is good for his health. But the main reason is that Remus is a god-damn *terror* in the mornings, and mornings after the full moon were *worse*.

So, if one of his kind-hearted friends were to visit him on one such morning, they would do well to leave him alone and let him sleep. And be **quiet**. Generally, the Marauders would visit in the mornings, or during breaks because of classes (and then Remus would be out of the Infirmary by dinner). But on days where there were no classes the group would stay by the werewolf's side; quietly eating food the House-Elves delivered, reading, doing homework, or playing chess. It was a refreshing break from their usual boisterous personalities (James and Sirius) and the entire group benefitted from these 'days off'.

Therefore, it was rather odd that on one such day—a Saturday in fact—Peter and James left the Infirmary with a stretch and a yawn.

“Where are you going?” Harry hissed at her brother, grabbing his elbow.

“Breakfast.” James replied in the same manner that one would say ‘Duh’. He made a dramatic show of prying his arm away as if she had hurt him. “I’m starving. Plus I need to get my homework.” Red flags should have been going off in Harry’s mind because James had never bothered with homework before noon on *any* day. However she was too sleepy and too worried about Moony to give it a second thought.

Sirius stood from his seat beside the bed. “I’ll come with you.” James waved him off. Sirius eyed him suspiciously.

“Nah, don’t. I need you here to watch my sister. Make sure she actually eats instead of fussing over Moony. Don’t worry, I’ll bring you your homework!” And with that, James and Peter ran out of the private room with matching smirks, practically slamming the door shut behind them.

“What the hell is his problem?” Harry asked, though she did not expect an answer. Sirius just muttered something about ‘the tosser...better not bring my homework...traitor’. Idiot.

It wouldn’t be more than half an hour before they noticed that something was off (more so than they originally thought). James and Peter had yet to return, and Sirius and Harry had eaten their breakfasts in awkward silence. When it was clear that both would be stubbornly silent, and therefore nothing interesting would happen, Sirius hopped up from his seat and made his way to the door.

“I need to piss.” He announced. Charming, that one. “I’ll be back.”

Harry ignored him. Honestly, she could care less if he came back or not.

She listened to Sirius’s footsteps, but instead of the soft clicks of the door opening and closing, there was jiggling and cursing. And then more jiggling. Then more cursing. Then a hard kick.

“Sirius, what in Merlin’s name are you doing?” Craning her head a bit, Harry watched as the Black Heir glared at the door and proceeded the process of jiggling the handle and cursing. Harry wanted to put her head in her hands. This was the boy who had come up to her almost a fortnight ago and asked her to bear his child. How had he made it to fifth year again? “Sirius, are you having some

issues?” She asked sardonically.

“It’s. Locked.” He hissed. “Fuck! Open up already!”

“Have you tried saying please?” As it was, Sirius was not in the mood for Harry’s sarcastic comments so early in the morning. What a grump. “Honestly-Sirius Black, are you or are you not a wizard?” There was silence, and then a quiet *Alohamora*. The door didn’t unlock. Sirius recast the spell once, then twice, then a third time-each time getting angrier and louder.

Finally fearing the Sirius would wake the sleeping werewolf, the Potter girl stood. She went to the angry teen and clamped a hand around Sirius’s wrist. “Enough, Sirius. You’re going to wake Moony.”

Sirius, shockingly, calmed...slightly. “But it’s *locked*.” He stressed.

“Yes, I can see that. But if you continue what you’re doing you’re only going to manage doing one of two things; Waking up Moony, or blowing the door to shreds and *then* waking him.” She chose to ignore his comment about the door being open then. “Let me try.” He gave her a mock bow and stepped out of the way.

She really didn’t expect much. If this was a prank by James (because Sirius’s reaction led her to believe that he was not involved) then her idiot (genius) of a brother would have found a way to ward the door against their spells. She certainly didn’t expect a folded piece of parchment to appear after her spell hit the door.

Sirius snatched the offending paper off the door and read it aloud:

“Messer Padfoot and Miss Lioness,

On behalf of the entire school populace (yes, even the Slytherins) you two are hereby sentenced to being locked in together until you talk out whatever issues you’re having at the moment. (Yeah! Get that thing that died out of your asses!)

To ensure that you don’t curse each other, we’ve locked you in with Messer Moony. You wouldn’t want to wake him now, would you?

The door will unlock once you’ve had your chat. (Or if one of you is strangled to death)

Sincerely,

Messers Moony, Wormtail, and Prongs.”

“I’m going to kill them.” Sirius hissed. “I’m going to find a way to unlock this door, and I’m going to kill them.” He pivoted in a sharp motion, heading for the bed their friend was on. “I bet this was all your idea!” He spat, pointing at the sleeping werewolf. “This has ‘Moony’ written all over it! I told you to leave it alone-but *no!* You had to go and stick your big nose in my business!”

Harry ran over to him and yanked his hand away from their sleeping friend. “Sirius! That’s enough!” She hissed through clenched teeth.

He spun to face her. “And *you!* Why aren’t you angrier about this situation?! Did you have something to do with this too?! Did you make them lock me in here with you so you could yell at me some more? Insult me? Well, go on then!”

“Oh grow up! If I wanted to do either of those things I would have picked a better place than our recovering friend’s bedside! Not everything is about you, Sirius Black! (“Me?! How is this about-!”) Lower. Your. Voice! Yes, you’re making this all about you! Just like you always do! ‘Oh woe is me, I’m Sirius Black! I’m locked in a room because I’m emotionally constipated and won’t talk about my feelings or tell anyone if something’s wrong! But it doesn’t matter that someone else is locked in with me-I’m the center of the universe and the only one who fucking matters!’” By the end of her rant, Harry was red-faced and panting. Angry green eyes locked with equally angry gray, daring him to say she was wrong.

“You think-”

“Yes, I think. You however do not! No, that’s a lie. You think only of yourself! And-hmpf!” Sirius clamped a hand over her mouth. Moony was shifting on his bed. The two froze and waited in silence for him to be still and his breathing to even. When they were sure that he was asleep, Sirius ushered (manhandled) her to the furthest corner of the room, trapping her there with his arms.

“Merlin, you’re going to get us killed!” He said. Harry glared at him, shoving his hand from her mouth.

“*Don’t* do that again, Black.”

They were silent, angrily staring at the other; waiting for the other to make the first move. Harry pinned in the corner of the room, and Sirius with his arms on either side of her head. (If anyone had come into the room at that moment they probably would have thought that he was trying to snog her or something!)

Finally, Harry caved. “Move.” She said. He didn’t budge. “*Move*, Sirius.”

“We’re supposed to be talking.”

“And since when have you *ever* done as you’re told?”

“Since apparently one of my best friends think’s I’m an ‘emotionally constipated and self-centered arse’.” He sounded tired, pained. Maybe that was why Harry’s anger dissipated. Maybe that was why she conjured two plush chairs so they could sit face-to-face and chat. (At least he let her out of the corner.)

For a long time they just sat there facing each other. Sirius’s elbows were resting on his knees and his hands under his chin. Harry sat curled on her chair. The only sounds in the room were their quiet breaths and the chirping of birds outside.

Sirius stared blankly at a spot by Harry’s feet, thinking. Finally he took a deep, shuddering breath.

“I don’t...” Sirius began. Harry stared at him with a raised brow. “I’m not...I’m not the best at expressing myself-how I’m feeling; what I’m thinking. You know this, you’ve known this since we first stepped on the Hogwarts Express. And yes, I am an arse who thinks about himself a lot-I’ll admit that.” Harry snorted. He gave her a tired smile. “When I talked to you that day...I really thought that you’d say yes-that you’d understand so I wouldn’t have to talk about everything. Hell, a part of me even thought you’d be *happy* and by now we’d be off to the Ministry, signing our marriage license...I guess...I guess that was really selfish of me. No. It was. It was selfish and unfair of me to spring all that on you without an explanation. And I’m sorry.”

Harry stared at her friend. Few and far between were apologies from Sirius Black. And even fewer were ones as serious as the one that he had just given her. She didn’t know what to say. She gaped

open-mouthed at him for several minutes, trying to think of the right words. He grew uncomfortable under her gaze, and shifted in his seat.

“Are you broken?” He asked, trying to defuse the awkward air with a bit of humor. Harry’s mouth snapped shut, a slight pink tinge to her cheeks.

Looking off to the side (because that speck on the wall was oh-so-interesting) Harry contemplated her next words. “Sirius...if...if you’d have just pulled me aside and talked to me...if you had just said that you needed to marry me so you could get away from your parents...I probably would have said yes.”

Sirius perked up a bit at her words. “Really?” She nodded.

“Yeah, of course. But coming up to me and telling me to have your child? What were you thinking?” They both chuckled. In hindsight, it was very silly and rather funny.

“To be honest, I was originally just going to ask you to marry me. But when I was thinking it through I realized that so many things could go wrong. That we’d be separated and I’d be forced to go back...and then one day at dinner my mother was talking about some distant relative who just had a baby and...I don’t know. I really liked that idea. I researched it-yes I did research, mark this day on a calendar!-and spent all summer planning, researching, dreaming...I’m...enamored with the idea. Us living on the coast with our kids and a couple of dogs. We’d fight a lot, yeah, but that’s what we do. That’s how we are. We’re very...passionate.”

“Passionate.” Harry deadpanned.

“Yep.” Sirius made an accentuated ‘pop’ on the p. The ham. It was good to hear some of his usual humor back in his voice. “And we’d have as many kids as you’d want to have, but like, four dogs. That’s not debatable. I’ll even walk them and feed them and clean their shit from the yard.”

“Wow Sirius,” Harry smirked. “You’re so Serious.”

“I’m always Sirius! Anyway...I was-*am*-really enamored with the idea. About having a family that I love with every fiber of my being, and who loved me the same. Honestly, it was what got me through most days this summer.” It was Sirius’s turn to look away now. Like he didn’t want her to see how much he thought about the idea over the summer-how much he *had* to think about it.

Harry reached across and placed her hand on his knee. “Sirius...how bad was it?”

“Bad.”

They sat in silence again, her hand on his knee while he avoided her gaze.

After what seemed like hours-or maybe it was only minutes-Harry pulled her hand back. “Why me?” She asked, staring at the place on his knee where her hand had been.

“What?” He turned to her.

“Why me, Sirius? You could have asked any other girl in the school and you would have gotten the answer you wanted...but instead you came to me. Why?”

Sirius shrugged. “If I have sex I make sure to use contraceptive charms. I don’t want *just* anyone. There’s no one else that I want-not for this.” Shocked, Harry snapped her eyes to the boy’s face. His gray eyes bore into her with an intensity that Harry wasn’t used to seeing. “They aren’t you. They fawn over me; you fight me and put me in my place. They don’t urge me to do my homework ahead

of time-even though I don't listen-or bring me my favorite sweets because they had just made a stop in the kitchen and were thinking about me. They don't give me a *heart attack* every fucking full moon because they fearlessly and **stupidly** face a werewolf in human form. They don't console homesick first years every year, or lie next to me and talk to me for hours when I have a nightmare. They aren't obnoxiously nice to everyone unless given a reason not to be-or find creatively cruel ways to wake us up when we sleep in. They aren't the best damn seeker to ever grace the halls of Hogwarts-you are, don't give me that look! Their hair isn't dark or curly, and doesn't frame their faces like yours. Their eyes aren't impossibly green. They aren't sarcastic and compassionate and stubborn and sweet and all other adjectives I could use to describe you. They don't...they aren't *you*. So why would I want anyone else?"

Harry gaped at the Gryffindor in front of her. She had basically gotten a confession of attraction-*perhaps love*-out of him. Had he even known what he was saying? Probably not. But the fact of the matter is that it was said. And he was looking at her with the biggest puppy eyes (pun intended) that she had ever seen.

And he was waiting for her to give a response.

What did he want her to say?

What did *she* want to say?

She chose not to say anything.

Reaching out, she tugged Sirius's hands and both fell to their knees on the cold floor. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders, burying her face in the side of his neck. He smelled of apples and sandalwood soap (which he 'stole' from Harry on the train ride to school, not knowing that it was a gift for him) and dust, with an earthy undertone.

"...Harry?"

"Shut up and hug me." And let it be written in all the history books that on that day Sirius Orion Black did as he was told.

*

Who knows how long they sat there on the ground; but by the time they pulled away from each other their knees ached and their legs and feet tingled from pins and needles and there were marks on their faces and arms from being pressed tightly against the wrinkles of the other's clothing.

"So..."

"So."

They smiled at each other. Harry scratched at the back of her head. "I guess...if you still want to... we could...I don't know. I'm not saying that I want to shag you and pop out a baby right now, because we're both not ready for that kind of responsibility-but...if you can convince me by the end of the year that you've matured more I'll *think* about going to the extremes to help you. Okay? But until then, why don't we work on another way to get you out of the house." She knew that it was immature of her to even *suggest* going through with his ridiculous plan (because really, having a child to get out of his parents' house was *not* the answer) but she hoped that by then end of the year they would have a new plan.

Her musings were cut short by Sirius's shout of joy and a pair of strong arms clamping around her torso. "Yes! Thankyouthankyouthankyou! You won't regret it Harry! Starting now, I'm a new man!"

Someone you'll be proud of!"

"We shall see. Now my Dear Padfoot, you and I need to go plotting, don't you think?"

"Why, my Lovely Lioness, I thought you'd never ask!"

As the two Gryffindors walked out of the now unlocked door, they failed to notice the barely breathing Remus on the bed.

*

That evening, when James and Peter found the two leaning against each other in the Common Room, they thought that all was well and good in the world. After all, the duo couldn't have gotten out of the Infirmary without having a heart-to-heart.

How very wrong they were.

They next morning, three out of the four male Marauders went to breakfast with Malfoy Blond hair. And when asked about it, they were only able to respond in shouts. In fact everything that came out of their mouth was a shout (except when in class, where they had to be brutally honest when speaking). This led to a very peaceful day once the boys realized what was going on. Harry looked back at it fondly as the day that James kept his big mouth shut for more than two minutes.

Remus hadn't spoken to them, or at all really. Although Harry *had* caught him staring at her and Sirius oddly a few times. Weird. He must have been trying to figure out how they managed to prank them.

*

On the first Hogsmeade weekend of the year, Sirius asked Harry to accompany him by gifting her a beautiful-if haphazardly put together- bouquet of flowers wrapped in a short ivy vine. Daisies and daffodils, one blooming red rose in the center, some blue violets, some orchids and primroses, and a few gardenias and forget-me-nots. Harry had no idea what they meant, though Alice had squealed in delight (which was a good thing, right?) and offered to find her a book on flower meanings-which she declined.

The flowers were beautiful, but obviously mismatched in the bouquet and she thought that that suited them both perfectly.

Casting a quick preservation charm on the bouquet, Harry turned to her male friend.

She accepted.

*

Time progressed and so did their relationship. While it was not romantic yet by any means (despite what people seemed to think about them-you give a girl flowers [more than] one time and suddenly you're fucking in a broom closet), they were far closer than they had ever been. Few and far were the times that one was found without the other. In the Common Room they would be draped over each other as they lounged or did their homework. They sat across from each other at meals (because Harry always sat next to Remus and Sirius always sat next to James) and filled the other's plate with food (or took from it in some cases). They walked to and from Quidditch together and went as each other's dates to parties...really, how could some people think that they were dating?

And Sirius matured (?) ...for the most part. He was still Sirius-she would *never* ask him to be

someone that he was not-but he took things more seriously. He did his homework on time, he didn't needlessly attack Slytherins, and when Harry had gotten sick from being outside too long in January he stayed by her bedside and 'nursed' her back to health (which she really could have lived without, Madame Pomfrey's potions had her right as rain in no time and Sirius had a tendency to be... overbearing when he played nurse; but it was sweet nonetheless). He still played pranks and flirted on occasion (Harry wasn't sure how she felt about the flirting, both with her and other students), and he still made stupid jokes and used his stupidly charming smile to get him out of trouble. He was the same...but he wasn't. He was...older almost. And Harry was proud that he lasted this long.

(And with no real plan to get him away from his parents this summer she'd have to consider going to the extremes. It wouldn't be so bad if he *really* had matured, right?)

However, with time came OWLs. And with OWLs comes stress and...well old habits die hard and whatnot.

*

Harry thought that the Defense Against the Dark Arts OWL was a joke. Really! How to identify a werewolf? That was such an ambiguous question. Did they mean during the full moon or no? Newly turned or a seasoned wolf? A born wolf or a turned one? There were so many factors to consider-and she told (ranted to) Alice and Lily as such.

"How do you know all this?" Alice asked in awe. Harry snorted at her friend.

"As if I'm going to entrust a halfwit who won't return next year with teaching me how to protect myself-no I went to the library and did the research myself. It was absolutely fascinating."

"Hey look! It's Severus!" Lily shouted, delighted. "Let's catch up with him!" The Potter girl wasn't on overly friendly terms with the Slytherin, but they had several pleasant conversations about potions on occasion. Honestly, she couldn't figure out why her friends and brother hated him so. Sure he wasn't the nicest guy out there, but he wasn't as terrible as the other Marauders made him out to be.

"Alright-"

"Uh-oh, Harry look! It's your brother and his friends." Alice said, pointing to James and his entourage.

"*Hey, Snivellus!*" Oh no. Not on her watch! Those idiots weren't going to pull this shit today. Everyone-Severus included-deserved some peace and relaxation after the exam.

The three girls hurried to the boys, but gathering students blocked whatever view they had of the scene. They didn't miss much though, for seconds after their view was blocked they saw Severus's legs flail as he was suspended in the air and-

"*Nice one James!*" Oh no. Oh *hell* no.

"Move out of my way!" Harry shouted at the group of students. No one moved, all too invested in the scene in front of them. Some were even *laughing*. Harry saw red. "I. Said. *MOVE!*!" In her anger, Harry sent out a strong burst of magic that pushed the students in front of her several feet away-many ran off. The remaining students stared at her. In terror or in awe? Probably both, but she didn't care. Even the Marauders were giving her such looks-though theirs leaned more towards terror. "James Charlus Potter! Put him down. This. Instant!" she screamed. Her face was red and her eyes narrowed to green slits behind her glasses.

James, for his part, did not look as terrified as some of the other students, but he was weary of his

sister. He had grown up with her, after all, and he knew her temper and what she was capable of. He sent her a shaky smile. “Hey sis! How was your test? Don’t mind Sniv-Snape. I’m just teaching him a lesson-he deserves it y’know.”

“He deserves...” She repeated incredulously. “Oh, I’ll teach you a lesson.” Her left hand shot forward and snatched her brother’s collar. Her other arm reared back, then launched at his face; connecting with the side of his face with a *very* satisfying sound.

(And seven hells did her fist hurt, but she would look at it later. Preferably when her mind was clearer and she wasn’t as likely to accidentally blow off her whole arm due to her anger.)

With his concentration broken, James’s spell was cancelled and Severus fell to the ground. A well placed cushioning charm from Alice saved him from any physical injuries. Lily rushed to his side.

Using the back of his hand James wiped blood from his face. “OW! What the fuc-!”

“You’re a son of a bitch, do you know that James?! I saw the whole thing-he did absolutely *nothing* to you! And you *attacked him!* And *then* you had the audacity to lie to my fucking face! Fuck you, you arrogant prat!” She punched him again. “And *you!*” She snapped up, glaring at the other three. “You three just stood there and *laughed!* This shit’s gone on long enough! And since none of the professors have done anything, I’m putting an end to it. *Now.* Pranks are one thing, but this is bullying-and that’s something I will *not* tolerate while I’m here. Especially from my *family!* You, Peter,” said boy flinched back. Perhaps he was afraid that she would punch him as well. That was a tempting thought at the moment. “Friend or not you shouldn’t encourage this behavior! You won’t be getting this warning again! And you,” She locked eyes with Remus. He met her gaze, but there was nervousness in his amber eyes. “Remus Lupin, you of all people should be against this senseless violence! Not only that-but you’re a fucking Prefect! You should be stopping this shit from happening, not pretending that it isn’t going on! What kind example are you setting?! And *You!*” she stepped into Sirius’s space so they were nose-to-nose (not unlike their argument earlier in the year). Her voice dropped to an angry whisper. “Sirius Orion Black. Is this what you call being a changed man? Being *mature?* A good role model? You can forget about me helping you-if this is what you call being mature then you can fuck right off.” She stepped back, not caring that Sirius’s face had lost any color it had previously had.

“I am fucking disgusted and disappointed in all four of you and I’m done with your shit. You’re either sixteen or you will be, and you need to grow the fuck up. If I have to ‘teach you this lesson’ again-as James so kindly put it-you can bet your asses that a couple of punches in the face would be a delight. I’m *The Lioness*, remember? And you four have brought me to my breaking point. Now get the fuck out of my sight and don’t talk to me for the rest of the week. Oh and James? I’m going to be talking to Mum and Dad bout this.” She sent her brother a vicious smirk before he and his friends stumbled off towards the school. Any remaining students fled as well.

She turned to Severus-who was still on the ground with Lily at his side. The redheaded witch tried to heal the scrapes on his hands (he must have gotten them at the beginning of the debacle), but Severus was having none of it. His face flushed in anger. “I don’t need help from a filthy mudblood or a blood traitor! I can fight my own battles!” Lily’s face flushed red as her hair. Before she could retort, Harry knelt next to her, ushering her to calm down. Her redheaded roommate stomped off instead. Great. There was no doubt that she’d have to find and console Lily after this mess was sorted. With a look to her brunette friend, Harry sent Alice after the upset witch. Rubbing her temples, she gave Severus a withering look.

“Shut the fuck up Snape. You have no right to be preaching about blood supremacy. And to be honest I’m sick of all this shit right now, I don’t need to deal with a ‘blood purity’ argument. But

remind me that you and I need to have a *long* chat on why blood purity is fucking stupid and those who hate muggleborns are doing more harm than good for the Wizarding Community. Now, give me your hand.”

“No!”

“Stop acting like a child and give me your hand, Severus!” Her tone lightened to something that one *could* call kind. “I’m not going to hurt you; I’m just trying to help. I’m sorry I didn’t do anything sooner.” She gazed at his face, mentally pleading that he would understand how sincere her apology was and trust her.

Severus huffed, his face flushing from her stare. “You Gryffindors and your stupidity.” But he held out his hands. Harry held them gently as she fixed the damage from the attack.

“Do you...do you think Lily will talk to me again?” Severus asked quietly.

“Honestly? Probably not. And if she does, it won’t be for a very long time. Lily has a temper, you know this. And you called her-your *friend* no less-the most derogatory term you could when she was only trying to help you. That breach of trust will probably never fully heal.” Severus sighed. It was a deep, troubled sound of one who had lost, well, everything. Did it make her a bad person for not feeling bad for him? He had, after all, called their friend a terrible slur.

“MISS POTTER! What is the meaning of this?!” Professor McGonagall stomped up to the small group of students that still remained.

She was pissed. Dark robes billowed behind her as she marched to the duo. She must have seen the whole thing. Normally, Harry would have been terrified at seeing her head of house in such a state. But not this time. She stood, steadily meeting the angry gaze of her professor.

“I was protecting a fellow student, Professor, since no one else seemed like they were going to.”

“Miss Potter, violence is never-”

“With all due respect, Professor, James deserved it. He’s a bully, and he’s done a lot worse-a few punches to the face just scratches the surface of what he deserves. He’s been getting away with this behavior for years, and no one’s bothered to stop him. And last I checked, this school is a safe haven for students. It certainly doesn’t feel like it. You’ve got James and his friends *attacking* other students simply because they’re in Slytherin. You’ve got students who derisively call muggleborns ‘Mudbloods’, when these idiots know *nothing* about how magic works-or how dangerous their ‘Pureblood’ ways are and then proceed to bully and or ostracize them on this irrelevant fact alone! Tell me, how is this safe?”

McGonagall’s face flushed scarlet. “They are *children* Miss Potter!”

Harry shrugged. “Some of them, yes. Some of them are only repeating what their parents drilled into their heads. But some of them *are* legally adults. And most of them should be able to think for themselves and recognize the difference between right and wrong. Do not allow ‘they are just children’ to be your excuse for not doing anything. ‘Children’ need guidance, which is what they are here for, right? To be guided and taught so they can be successful in life.” Harry sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose. “You try your best Professor, I know you do, but students are getting *hurt* and *humiliated* in a place that they should feel safe and welcome. I know you can’t be in a thousand places at once, but for the love of Merlin talk to the Headmaster to find a system that works. Because obviously this one *doesn’t*. And you better believe that I will protect *anyone* who is getting bullied. I’ve sat and been idle for long enough. I don’t give a damn about their age or house-unlike some I

was raised to not tolerate this foolishness. And you can give me detention for the rest of my school career, but that will *not* stop me.” She stared defiantly at her Head of House, daring her to object.

“You truly are a Gryffindor, Miss Potter.” McGonagall sighed. “And you certainly live up to your nickname ‘Lioness’. However, you physically assaulted a student; fifteen points shall be taken and you’ll serve detention with me tonight. Twenty-five points shall be awarded to you; for being the embodiment of a Gryffindor-having Nerve, Courage, Justice, and stubbornness (“Is that really a-”)-and doing the right thing by protecting a young wizard-from a different House no less-from your own kin. Another two points for going out of your way to heal the wizard; and another ten for pointing out how...flawed we teachers are when it comes to protecting students from other students. Perhaps in your detention tonight you and I can discuss any ideas you have to prevent such events from happening again.” The Head of Gryffindor gave the younger student a wink and a small, proud smile. Harry beamed back.

“I’d love to, Professor!”

*

“Holy shit my sister can punch! I think my jaw is broken!”

“Your jaw isn’t broken, James. Stop being dramatic.”

“It’s broken I tell you! I’ve never been more pissed off and proud in my life!”

“You deserved it. Don’t deny it.”

“I...yeah...I guess I did. Hey Pads, what did she say to you? You’re still white as a sheet!”

“Bet she threatened his family jewels!”

“Y-yeah. Something like that, Pete.”

“Do you think she’ll come to the Shack next week? She seemed really upset...”

“My sister is crazy! She’ll come because she’s mad at *us*, not Moony. She has a weird affinity for your furry side.”

*

Harry almost didn’t show. She sent a small basket of food to the shack (mostly for Moony) in case she didn’t go. But as she stared out of the window in her dormitory, listening to quiet noises from the other girls in the room, something compelled her to leave.

Silently, she slipped out of bed, put on her shoes and jacket, and cast a disillusionment charm on herself (And Sweet Merlin did she cringe at the sensation.). She went to the open window and held her arm out, snapping twice.

In moments a beautiful snowy owl landed on her wrist even though it was invisible. Hedwig was such an intelligent creature.

“Hey girl,” Harry whispered, mindful of her sleeping roommates. “Head over to the shack. I’ll meet you there.” The bird hooted, then launched herself into the air and flew in the direction their pack was.

*

The halls were empty and silent, making her tiptoe even though she had cast a silencing spell on herself. Filch had his ways after all.

Her heart raced. Why? She had been doing this for years! Why was she so on edge *now*?

Once she was several yards off from the Whomping Willow, she understood.

Almost blending into the ground, barely illuminated by the full moon, was a dark figure heading in the same direction that she was. Harry thanked the stars that she could not be seen or heard as she quickened her pace. Mentally, she sent out a thanks to whatever force had compelled her to leave.

She had to stop the figure.

The person ahead of her was a young man-no, it was a student. The closer she got the more details she could see. He was tall and thin. He had long black (?) hair. He had a large nose with a distinct hook shape to it...

Severus Snape.

Why Severus? Why on earth was he heading to the Shack?

“What the hell...?” She whispered, speaking too low to be heard by the boy.

Frantic footsteps raced from behind them. They got faster, louder as the new person approached. Turning, Harry saw her brother: panting and terrified. Out of everyone, Harry hadn't expected her *brother*. What was he doing out? He should have been with the others in the Shack!

“Sniv-Snape! Snape wait! Don't go in there!” Severus turned around, glaring at James.

“Potter. And why is that?”

“Because...because Sirius was just playing a prank on you! There's nothing down there for you to find-please, just trust me!” Oh god. He didn't...

“And why should I trust *you*?” The Slytherin sneered.

Harry cancelled her disillusionment charm. She appeared off to the side, but jumped in between the two. Both boys stared at her with wide eyes (and yes, no matter what Severus would say, he was shocked at her appearance). She held up her hands as a sign of peace.

“Trust me, then. Don't go down there, it's not worth it Severus.” She walked up to the Slytherin, placing her hand on his shoulder. He glanced at it, like he wasn't used to being touched (or he was disgusted that he was being touched by a Potter). He probably wasn't. Harry stared at his face, choosing her next words and speaking as earnestly as possible. “I'm sorry-truly sorry-for the trouble they've caused you. But you better believe that I am going to have *words* with Sirius.”

The Slytherin boy considered her for a moment, as if he didn't believe her. Wow, rude. Finally, he nodded. “Alright, I believe you're...capable enough to handle that idiot. Wipe that cocky smirk off his face for me.” He gives her a look that screams ‘use dark spells’. She wouldn't go *that* far but she was already thinking of ‘lighter’ spells to use.

“Consider it done, Severus.”

The dark haired boy nods. “Goodnight-uh-Harry.”

“Goodnight, Severus.”

Severus turned and walked back to the castle with only the slightest nod to James.

“Wow, you’re welcome for saving your life Snape.” James muttered.

Harry looked at her brother. Having been denied the use of any potions or balms by their parents to get rid of the bruise (and boy were they pissed at him), the lower left side of his face was a lovely mix of green and yellow. “Y’know...you did the right thing James. I’m proud of you.”

James shuffled, embarrassed. “Yeah, well...I couldn’t let him *die*. I may not like him, but that doesn’t mean that I’m going to condemn him to death.”

“That’s...shockingly mature of you. Now,” her eyes darkened. “I’m going to kill Sirius.”

*

When she and Prongs and Hedwig walked into the Shrieking Shack, they were met by an anxious and bloody Moony. She didn’t even bother fussing over his wounds this time. She bared her neck to let him sniff her, but once he was done, Harry backed away.

“Hey buddy! Did you miss me? Yeah, I can tell! Did you eat yet? No? Well, go on! I need to borrow Padfoot for a few minutes, okay?” Moony gave her a whine, but went to his basket of untouched meat.

Padfoot didn’t look like he was going to come with her any time soon. His tail was between his legs, and his furry head bowed and his ears pressed flat. He looked up at her with big eyes. “Yeah, look cute all you want, Mutt. It’s not going to save you. Outside, Sirius.” Padfoot whined. “*Sirius*, outside or I’ll have you neutered!” That was a threat that she’d *gladly* follow through with if he kept this behavior up.

The dog sensed this. He trudged to the doorway with his tail between his legs as if he was marching to his execution. It was his fault though. If he was going to pull that bullshit then he needed to be prepared to deal with the consequences.

Once they were both at the door, Harry opened it enough to let them both through, and then waited for the wars to lock it. They walked down the dark tunnel until they were far enough from the Shack that Moony wouldn’t hear them, and just barely on school grounds.

Harry shot the animagus reversal spell at the dog’s back.

“Ow! What the *fuck*!” Sirius yelled as he toppled to the ground.

“*Don’t*. You know what was for!”

Sirius stood and dusted the dirt from his clothing. “Is this about Snivellus? He deserved it!” Taking out his wand, Sirius casted a *Lumos* spell and proceeded to check if he had gotten all the dirt off his rear.

“He *deserved* it? And what in Merlin’s name did he do that warranted *this*?!” She gestured down the tunnel where they had just come from.

The Black heir’s attention snapped to her, eyes wild. “He bewitched you! Can’t you see?! He’s either put a spell on you or he’s poisoning you with potions! Why else would you defend him-you don’t even like him!”

Harry stared at the other Gryffindor in shock. Had he seriously tried to kill Severus because he was

jealous? “I don’t have to like him to protect him from assholes like you-and I *certainly* don’t have to like him to save his fucking life!”

“Save his life? What are you on about?!”

“How fucking daft are you?! Moony would have murdered him!” At the word murder, Sirius paled.

“What? N-no he wouldn’t have!” He stammered.

Harry looked at the boy like he was stupid. “Yes, he would have. A strange wizard coming into his territory where his *entire* pack is? Of course he’s going to attack-he’d want to protect us you idiot! And if he didn’t kill him he’d turn him! Do you fucking think at all Sirius?! You almost turned our best friend into the thing he’s afraid of most!”

“I-I didn’t-”

“Didn’t what? Didn’t think? You never do, and that’s the problem! And you wanted a kid! A *kid* Sirius! You almost executed a boy because of something as petty as *jealousy*-don’t fucking look at me like that! That’s exactly what it was!-and you think you’re capable of raising a child?! You’re pathetic! No...you’re just like your parents!”

Sirius staggered back as if he had been struck. “I am nothing like them!”

“You almost killed someone, Sirius! For no fucking reason! How is that *not* like your parents?! You’re doing a piss poor job being better than them Sirius!” She tugged at her dark curls. Somewhere in the deep recesses of her mind, she knew that she was lying. Sirius *was* better than his parents, but if he continued his hateful behavior he’d end up just like them! “I can’t deal with this bullshit right now. I’ll be back when Moony transforms.”

She left Sirius, hurt and gaping, in the tunnel.

*

She did return, though it was several hours later. Everyone was asleep in different spots of the room instead of the usual dog pile. Moony was bleeding and whining, so she sat next to the wolf and gently stroked his head.

“Shh, Moony. It’s alright. I’m here now, see? Just a few more minutes, love.”

She sat by the werewolf’s side as he transformed back into her friend. When he managed to open his still golden eyes, he glared at her accusingly.

“You weren’t here.” He whispered, betrayed.

Harry felt awful. It wasn’t Remus’s fault that the incident had happened, and yet he was the one who was punished for it. “I’m sorry. I’ll tell you why once you’ve gotten your rest. Come on.” She didn’t bother waking the others. There were no more classes, since OWLs were over, so there was no rush (plus she really didn’t want to see Sirius yet).

*

“He did *what*?!”

“I’m sorry Rem; but now you know why I wasn’t there. I was so mad-I wanted to attack him.”

“I don’t blame you...where is he now?”

“I don’t know.”

*

Her trunk was packed for the trip home the next day-all but the clothes she’d wear on the express.

And apparently the two-way mirror she shared with the boys.

“*Harry? Harry! Are you there?!*” Her brother yelled, breaking the wonderful silence of the dorm. Hopefully none of the other girls were woken by him.

God why was he so loud so late at night? All she wanted to do was go to bed! She snatched the hand-held mirror from her bed-side table with a groan. “Yes, Jamie. What do you want?”

“*It’s Sirius, he-*”

“Honestly, I don’t care, James. He’s being overdramatic as usual.”

“*No! There’s something wrong with him! He’s having another one of his attacks!*” Despite her anger, Harry froze.

Sirius, on occasion, had these...episodes where he couldn’t breathe and started hyperventilating, or he got sick and shaky...Harry and the others knew that they had something to do with his parents. They were sporadic, but the worst ones generally happened around the holidays. The Marauders came up with a treatment of sorts...a breathing exercise followed by a mug of hot chocolate with a few drops of calming draught. It worked, for the most part.

“You know how to deal with it, James. Why are you calling me?” She mumbled.

“*This time is different! I’ve never seen him this bad!*”

“James...”

“*No really! He’s shaking like a leaf, and he keeps muttering something-but when we try to talk to him it’s like he can’t hear us! Look!*” James turned his mirror so that it was pointing to Sirius’s bed. The curtains were drawn, showing the curled figure on the bed. James was right, Sirius was trembling with his fingers threaded through his hair. He was staring unblinkingly at something at the foot of his bed. His lips were moving, though Harry couldn’t hear what he was saying. Remus and Peter were at his side, gently speaking to him. “*See? He’s never been this bad. Harry, please! I know you’re mad at him but I’m scared for him.*”

“James, shut up and go get the hot chocolate. I’ll be over in a second.” She didn’t give her brother time to respond. She ended their chat and threw the mirror onto her bed.

She raced out the hall and down the staircase and to the Boy’s Dormitory. She didn’t bother with knocking, though Remus was at the door already. He looked tired, whether from Sirius’s condition or being released from the hospital wing a few hours prior Harry wasn’t sure. He gave her a half attempted smile.

“How is he?”

“Not good.” He responded.

Peter and James were gone, she noted. She ran to Sirius’s bed, crawling onto it so she was in front of his knees.

“Peter went with James. Said that he was going to get us all some snacks as well as the hot chocolate. Honestly, I think he couldn’t bear looking at Sirius like this.” Remus sat next to her.

Harry made a noncommittal noise. Carefully, she extracted Sirius’s hands from his hair, keeping them gently cradled between her own. “Sirius? Sirius can you hear me?” She asked quietly. He didn’t look at her, nor did he make any acknowledgement at her presence. He trembled violently. His eyes trained on that spot at the end of his bed. His lips were dry and cracked and repeating the same near-silent words over and over. “Sirius!”

Somewhere in one of the many books in the library, she had read that a person could channel their magic and send them out in waves to calm someone-ease their pain-or cheer them (there were ways to make them negative results, but Harry hadn’t dwelled on that). But it took a lot of power and concentration-especially for someone as young and untrained as she.

“Remus, I need you to be quiet, okay? And if anything...*bad* happens get Madam Pomfrey.”

“What?”

“Remus!”

“Okay! What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to help Sirius...I hope.”

Remus didn’t respond, and she took that as her cue to begin. She took a deep breath, and then another. She needed to be calm. To concentrate. She inhaled, counting to four, and exhaled doing the same. She repeated this several times until she was calm and her mind was clear. Then she focused all of her energy into her hands. If her eyes had been open she would have noticed a pale blue glow around their hands.

Now came the hard part. Without an emotional conduit like anger to focus her energy it would be a *lot* harder for her to send out her magic in a wave. She just needed to give it a little *push*.

She opened her eyes.

Nope, Sirius was still staring at nothing.

She tried again. Still nothing.

She tried four more times and each time there was nothing.

Sweat ran down the sides of her face and down her neck. This was ridiculous! “Come *on!*” She gave one last push, mentally screaming a plea for her magic to just *fucking work with her* so she could help her friend!

Finally-*finally*-her magic cooperated with her. Harry felt a small wave of the calming magic throughout the room (it wasn’t much, but it was pretty impressive for a first try. She’d have to remember to practice over the summer). From somewhere behind her, she heard Remus let out a quiet sigh. In front of her, Sirius blinked. His muttering stopped.

Bleary gray eyes looked around the room until they found her exhausted form.

“H-Harry?” He asked. Another tremor shook his body.

“Yeah, I’m right here Siri. Jamie and Pete went to go get hot chocolate, but for now you and I are

going to do some breathing exercises, okay?"

"Okay."

She smiled. "Remus, can you help me move him? I want him lying down." The werewolf nodded. Together they maneuvered Sirius so that he was on his stomach, half lying on Harry's front with his nose pressed against her collarbone. One of Harry's hands was on the crown of his head; the other was resting on his spine. "There we are. Okay, in for four, out for four. Alright?"

Sirius hummed.

Slowly, Harry moved the hand that was on his back in a circle. With each rotation she counted: In, two, three, four; Out, two, three, four. She breathed with him; filling her lungs on the first count of four and exhaling all of it on the second count. They repeated this several times until the tremors lessened.

"Good. You're doing very well, Sirius. Now: in for four, out for eight. Ready? In, two, three, four. Out, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight." They repeated this and once Harry thought they were ready they moved from eight to twelve. Then from twelve to sixteen.

Then they stopped.

Sirius's breathing was normal-thank Merlin-and the tremors had slowed into a very light shudder. His eyes were squeezed shut, his face pressed tightly against her collar bone. Harry stroked his hair. Remus sat next to them, rubbing Sirius's shoulder. The two shared worried looks over Sirius's head.

That was how Peter and James found them.

"Is he...better?" Peter asked hesitantly. He handed Remus and Harry their hot chocolate.

"Thanks." Harry said. "And he is...a bit. He'll be better once he rests." It was hard to get into a proper sitting position with Sirius draped over her, but somehow she managed. "Sirius, James has hot chocolate for you. Come on, sit up."

Groaning, Sirius pushed himself up. It took more effort than he was ever willing to admit to turn around, and when he stayed leaning against Harry's side...well the others wisely didn't comment. He accepted his drink with a quiet 'thanks'. The spoon clinked softly against the mug with his tremors-something that annoyed and frustrated him.

One warm, delightfully chocolatey, drugged sip and he could feel his body calming. Another sip and he stopped shaking.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Harry asked once he finished half the mug.

"What's there to talk about? I had an episode, thanks for the help, I'm better. You can go back to your room now." He replied in a calm-though hollow-voice. He barely even glanced at her as he spoke; gesturing to the door with his mug as if he was saying 'run along now'.

"Go back to my room-? Sirius I'm *worried* about you!"

"Mate, she's right. We're all worried. This was the worst one yet, what the hell triggered it?" James asked.

Sirius was silent for a while, just staring at the cooling liquid in his cup. "Snape." He said after a while. James's face purpled so fast that Harry worried that her brother would pop a blood vessel.

“No, he didn’t do anything, or say anything James. It’s about what happened last night. He almost got to the Shack-almost found out Rem’s secret. He could have been hurt...or worse. And Rem would have been to blame. I see now that not only could I have killed Snape, but who knows what would have happened to Remus if it had happened. I really am no better than my parents...”He broke off with a sigh, placing his head in his hand.

Harry could only hear the hateful words she had spat the night before. She had wanted her words to hurt him so he could see how wrong he was. She didn’t want or expect *this!*

Reaching out, she wrapped her thin arms around his torso, nuzzling her face into his back. “You aren’t like your parents.” She whispered into his hair. “You *are* better than them. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry you had to go through this. I didn’t mean for this...I just wanted you to realize how wrong-how *dangerous* that was.” Sirius laughed bitterly.

“You were right though. I’m an idiot who’s just going to end up hurting someone.”

“Stop that!” James yelled, making the others jump. “So yeah, you fucked up. You fucked up *big*. You know what happens now? You *learn* from it! Learn from your mistakes to help better yourself. You are *not* Orion Black or Walburga Black. You are Sirius Orion Black. You’re my best mate. And I *know* you are nothing like your parents!”

Sirius blinked at him. He wanted to cry but that stupid potion was keeping him eerily calm! “How can you...how can you still be so nice to me? I’m a monster.”

“Nah, You-Know-Who is a monster. You? You just made a mistake, and we’ll be right here to knock some sense in you if it happens again.” Sirius nodded, and then turned to Remus.

“Do you...can you forgive me Moony?”

Remus sighed. “I’m pissed, yeah. But I’ll get over it. I know you didn’t mean for anyone to get hurt. If you pull a stunt like this again though...?”

“...Right.” He reached up, covering Harry’s smaller hands with his. “I’m lucky then, to have such awesome friends.”

“Always!”

The conversation ended after that. The dishes were banished to the kitchen and the quintet munched on the sweets that Peter had snuck up.

James and Peter went back to packing their trunks. Remus had packed not long after getting out of the Hospital Wing that day, so he went back to his bed to change into his pajamas (behind the bed-curtains, of course) and then proceeded to read a book. Sirius and Harry lounged on the bed, Harry’s arm draped over Sirius’s shoulders, as they watched the other two.

“Ew, I think it’s alive!” Peter said as he pulled an old sock (?) out from under his bed. James laughed, telling him that it could be their dorm pet.

“You boys are disgusting.” Harry told them.

The two Marauders smirked at each other. “Why Harry, I think it likes you!” with a flick of his wrist, James sent the sock (?) flying at Sirius’s bed. It landed on the duvet with a disgustingly wet sound.

“Aw man, my bed!”

“Oh-That’s repulsive! Peter I don’t even think this is salvageable anymore. I think you should just burn it!”

“Then who would be our pet?”

Harry gave the blond a flat look. “I’m sure you’d find something.” Flicking her own wand, she sent the maybe-a-sock-creature flying at her brother’s backside. She cackled at his cry of outrage. Even Sirius let out a tired laugh. “Do you want to go to bed?” She asked him softly.

“Yeah, I guess.” He replied with a yawn.

“Did you pack your trunk yet?”

“No. I’ll do it in the morning.”

She rolled her eyes. *That* was the Sirius they all knew and loved. “I’m not helping you this time.” He snorted. “I’m serious!”

“No, I am.”

“Oh sweet Merlin, someone help me.” She muttered. But it was all in good fun. He was telling his stupid jokes again so he must have been feeling a little better, and that’s what mattered. “Do you want me to stay here tonight?”

“...Yes.”

“Kay, get under the covers.” She sat up and started pulling the curtains closed. “Sirius and I are going to bed,” she told the other three. “So goodnight, sleep tight, and all that jazz. And if you aren’t up bright and early in the morning, I’ll drag you all down to breakfast by your ears.” She finished with a smile. The others, though weary of the threat, bid her and Sirius goodnight. She pulled the last curtain closed.

Sirius, in one of his more brilliant moments, had charmed the curtains to block noise from the outside once they were closed. Mostly because the combination of Peter and James snoring was enough to drive a person mad. The silence was near deafening as she pulled the last curtain into place.

“How’d you ever get used to this?” She asked quietly, not wanting to disrupt the silence. She crawled back up next to Sirius and under the covers. An arm slung over her waist.

“It’s either the silence or listening to James and Peter out-snore each other. Personally, I prefer the silence.”

Harry made a soft noise of agreement. She shifted, trying to get comfortable on the small bed (which was really not made for more than one person, go figure). She ended up resting her head on her left arm, while her right hand played with stray strands of Sirius’s hair. His warm breath gently hit her face, giving her goosebumps.

‘...or lie next to me and talk to me for hours when I have a nightmare...’

She gulped. (Part of her, deep-*deep* down wished that she had agreed to his plot at the beginning of the year so he wouldn’t have to return to his terrible parents.) This would probably be one of the last times Sirius would be getting comfort or affection for the rest of the summer. She was glad to be able to give it to him. “Sirius?”

“Hmm?”

“This summer...if anything happens...anything at all, I want you to come and find me. Find me or James. You will *always* be welcome at our home.”

Sirius didn't respond, but the arm around her waist tightened.

*

The next morning, Harry's alarm woke the duo up at six thirty (an unholy time, according to Sirius ["It should be illegal to wake up this early!"]). After some well-placed threats and a few choice spells the four boys were awake and dressing to go to breakfast. No dragging by the ears involved.

The 'Last Meal'-as they liked to call it-was always a bit depressing. While some students were more than ready to go home for the holiday and see their family the Marauders were not. They were somber as they picked at their food. For Remus, the next few moons would be hell. For Peter, he would be getting picked on by his two older siblings all summer and he would get very few opportunities to see his friends. For James and Harry, they would stay up all night during the full moons-wishing they could help their friend, they would try to console Peter through letters, and they would have to communicate with Sirius in secret and constantly worry for him. For Sirius, he was going 'home'.

Sirius, James, and Peter rushed back to the dorms after eating to finish packing (which, in Sirius's case was just shrinking his mess and putting it in his trunk, disgusting). Harry and Remus followed behind at a more leisurely pace.

“I'm going to miss you Remus.” Harry said to him as they started ascending the stairs.

“We haven't even left yet.”

“I know.” She shrugged. “But that doesn't make it any less true.”

They climbed the rest of the first staircase in silence. When they reached the second, however, Remus reached out and grasped Harry's arm, stopping her.

“Remus? Is something wrong?”

Remus shook his head. “Not wrong, per se, but...I don't know. Maybe it is wrong. But I needed to tell you because it's been a weight on my mind all year and-”

“-Remus, what in Merlin's name are you going on about?”

The werewolf sighed. “Do you remember the big fight you and Sirius had at the beginning of the year?” Of course she did, what kind of question was that? She nodded, slowly saying that ‘Yes, she did’. “Right. Of course. Well...Do you remember how we locked you in my ‘room’ to make you guys talk?”

Harry's green eyes widened. She *really* hoped that he wasn't going to say what she thought he was. “Y-e-s...”

“I...uh...wasn't exactly as asleep as you thought I was.” Of course the idiot had to say it. Great. Now Remus knew their secret. She was doomed! He'd tell James and then James would go into ‘over protective big brother’ mode and would be out for blood. Oh god. Sirius was going to die!

“You aren't going to tell James, are you?” She asked, panicked.

“No...it's not my place.”

'*Oh thank Merlin!*' She let out a shaky breath. "Then why are you telling me this?"

Blushing, Remus rubbed the back of his head. "I...when you guys were fighting we had thought that it was over something stupid and that's why we intervened. And...I don't know...I want to apologize for kind-of spying. That was a very personal topic and I had no place being there for that conversation." He trailed off, looking at one of the moving portraits.

Harry stared at him, stunned. She expected him to reprimand her about how she handled the situation, or telling her that he agreed with her or *something else*. But an *apology* was not what she was expecting. She wanted to be mad at him-well, madder than she was-but if she was being honest had he and the others not intervened she would probably *still* be fighting with Sirius.

The dark haired girl took a step towards Remus who was watching her wearily. "I'm very angry at you for spying because you're right: It *wasn't* your place. *However*. I have to thank you as well."

"Thank me?"

"Yes. If it wasn't for your...stunt...Sirius and I would probably be going at it still, and our friendship would probably be ruined. So thank you."

"Er...you're welcome?"

She smiled at him. Not a warm smile, but one that promised pain and suffering. "If you mention this to James though, I will find you Remus Lupin and it will not be pretty." With a gulp and a nod the werewolf agreed that James would never ever find out from him. Harry's cold smile turned into a genuine one. "Awesome! Now let's go make sure they haven't destroyed anything."

"So Harry," Remus asked not long before they reached the portrait of the Fat Lady. "Does this mean that you and Sirius are dating now? Is that why you guys started hanging out more?"

She sent a curse his way.

*

Train rides were always eventful when travelling with the Marauders. Generally there was prank brainstorming and long chats and a food fight or two. On the train ride home there was still all of that, but the normal cheer that was there was faked and forced to the point where the group would fall into several awkward silences.

Harry spent the ride leaning against Remus with Sirius's head on her lap as she read a book while idly running her fingers through Sirius's hair. Remus was staring at nothing out the window. Sirius was having a silent crisis. Peter napped, mostly. James was constantly moving: cleaning his glasses, pacing, leaving to use the loo, leaving to find Lily, and repeat.

It wasn't an overly fun ride.

When the locomotive pulled into Kings Cross Station, they gave one another tearful hugs and the usual 'don't forget to write'. Harry reminded Remus that if the first full moon of the summer was too much for him to handle, she be there for the next one despite what Remus's parents would say. "I'll stun them if I have to!"

Remus nodded as if he agreed but, like every year, he would not contact her.

Then she moved to Peter, pulling him into a tight hug and inviting him over so he could get away from his siblings for a while.

And then she got to Sirius. She stared into his gray eyes, which had already started looking dead, and pulled him into a bone-crushing hug. “Remember what I said to you last night,” She whispered. She pulled back enough to look him in the eyes again. “If anything happens you come straight to me or James. I don’t care what time of day it is. We will never turn you away, Sirius. We love you.” Surprisingly, he pulled her back into another crushing hug.

“Thank you.”

James managed to pry them away so he could say his own goodbye-which was no less emotional than his sister’s had been. He too extended invitations to the other three (Sirius especially) for the summer. And then he handed every Marauder a small, pocket sized mirror.

“For communicating.” He said with a shrug. “Harry’s was the prototype, remember? I finished these a little after Easter. They’re smaller, quieter, and will actually give notice when someone tries to call instead of just connecting. I still haven’t figured out how to connect more than one at a time though...” He said it as if the item meant nothing, but to the others, it was priceless. The four others wrapped James in a group hug, chanting their thanks to him. “Uh, no problem. Just make sure you use them!”

Finally, after prolonging the inevitable for as long as possible, the group went their separate ways.

Remus went with his mother who greeted him with a kiss to the top of his head.

Peter went off with his parents.

James and Harry went with their parents.

Sirius was picked up by Kreacher, because his parents had already arrived home with Regulus.

*

Two nights later, at one in the morning, there was a knock on the main doors of Potter Manor.

Sixth Year

Chapter Summary

“To be frank, Miss Potter, you’re pregnant.”
Harry blinked.
And blinked.
“I’m sorry. Can you repeat that?” She asked.
“You’re pregnant, Miss Potter.”
“That’s what I thought you said.”

Chapter Notes

LET ME TELL YOU A STORY

Once upon a time I had 22k words of the damn chapter written. Then one day I logged onto my laptop to find that Windows had updated while I wasn't using it and autosave is a fucking joke. I lost 5 thousand words and the will to write this for about a month.

But I hope this monster of chapter makes up for the wait. Thank you all so much for your patience and kind comments!

Warnings for this chapter: sex, child birth and child abuse. Not in that order.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Harry had went to bed that night she had had a long conversation with Remus about some delicious chocolate monstrosity that he just *had* to try when he came over. The werewolf had laughed, telling her that he couldn’t wait. Their conversation ended soon after at around half eleven, both too tired to stay up any longer.

As she curled under her blankets, Harry couldn’t shake the feeling that something was very-very wrong.

*

It seemed like just moments ago she had closed her eyes before being (rudely) awakened by her House-Elf, Rosie.

“Rosie is sorry to be waking you, Mistress! But Mistress has a guest!”

“A guest?” Harry asked tiredly. She sat up, rubbing her eyes with the heels of her palms. “Rosie, what time is it?”

“Late! Late-late-late! But Mistress-”

“Rosie...did you let them in the house?”

“Yes! Rosie knows that she shouldn’t let guests into the house so late-Rosie is a bad elf!-but

Mistress's guest is hurt he is!" The Elf yelped, tugging at her large floppy ears.

Harry's heart stopped beating. She zeroed in on the shaking Elf. Hurt? Who would come to their house in the middle of the night if they were hurt? Oh god...could it be...? "Rosie, who is it?"

"He is not speaking! Too hurt-too hurt! All he is saying is Mistress's name! But Rosie knows-Rosie knows! Mistress's guest is Mistress's friend Mister Sirius Black!" Harry launched herself out of her bed, yelling at her elf to go wake her brother.

She ran out of her room, stumbling into walls in the darkness. She ran down the darkened halls, making the wall sconces light up in her wake, and nearly toppled down the stairs; all the while calling Sirius's name.

Getting to the bottom post, Harry grasped it, using it to swing her body towards the sitting room.

"Sirius!" There was a soft glow coming from the sitting room. She ran to the doorway, grabbing onto the frame to stop herself. Several loose strands of hair fell into her eyes from the abrupt stop.

"Sirius..." She could see him in the dim lighting. He was sitting on a sofa with his trunk and owl at his feet. Harry brushed her hair back.

He was looking down, black strands of hair blocking his face from view.

Harry stepped further into the room. "Sirius?" He didn't look up. The witch ran the rest of the way to her friend, falling to her knees before him. "Sirius?" She tried again.

She didn't know what to expect when he finally looked up. Tears? Anger? Bruising? Nothing? She did not expect to be greeted with a bleeding cut on his forehead, followed shortly by dead gray eyes.

"Oh, Sirius..." Gently, she cupped his jaw in her hands; lifting it upwards so she could look at the bottom half of his face.

There were few words that could properly describe the disgust she felt. His nose was bleeding and there were dark bruises on his face and neck (the one on his neck looked suspiciously like a hand). On both sides of his face, from the cheekbone to the jaw, were thin, bright red lines as if someone had dragged their nails down the skin to make him bleed. And at the corner of his mouth were enormous, blistering welts. A spell?

"Oh my god...Sirius..." Those gray eyes, dead and barely focused, found her face. They took in every inch of her; her nose, her cheeks, her hair, lips, eyes... "Sirius, you're safe now. I promise. They can't hurt you anymore. I won't let them." She promised.

And those gray eyes filled with tears. They filled until the tears spilled down his cheeks, no doubt irritating the blisters by his mouth. He reached out with shaky hands, grasping her shoulders and then wrapping his arms around her, burying his face in her shoulder.

He made no sounds as he wept, but Harry could feel the shakes and the wetness accumulating on her tee shirt. She ran her hands up and down his back in a slow motion. She didn't shush him or say anything really. She held onto him tightly-though not too tight in case he had other injuries-leaning her head atop his, silently offering the security and support she knew he needed.

James stumbled into the room seconds later.

"Is he...? Should I get Mum and Dad?"

Harry shook her head. "I don't think that would be best for him right now. Let's have Tempy heal

him, and then we'll take him upstairs." Hearing his name, an elderly House-Elf in a cream colored pillowcase appeared by their sides.

"Mistress is calling Tempy?" He asked in a high-pitched voice. Harry nodded, looking into the elf's jaundiced eyes. Tempy was the best healer out of all their House-Elves (better than many trained Med-Wizards too), he could have Sirius's physical injuries healed in no time and there would be no need to wake their parents.

"Yes. Tempy, I need you to do a diagnostic scan on Sirius. Tell me everything you find." The head on her shoulder snapped up. Bloodshot, gray eyes were wide in horror.

"N-n-no!"

"Shh, Sirius. The only ones who will know of this are us. We won't tell unless you want us to-but I *need* to know what's wrong with you. You can't keep this one a secret-not this time." Thin fingers reach out and brush away the boy's dark tresses. They were sticky with blood. She leans forward, pressing their foreheads together, uncaring that she'd be getting his blood on her. "Please Sirius...I just want to help you." And that was it; her self-control, her façade of unwavering strength that she fought so hard to keep up, shattered. Tears pooled in her eyes, rolling down her cheeks. "Not again Sirius. *Never* again. I'll protect you-I swear. No one will ever hurt you again, but I *need* to know what they did."

James knelt beside them, placing his hands protectively on their backs. "Mate, she's right. We won't let anything happen to you."

After several moments of silent deliberation, Sirius nodded. "O-okay."

The House-Elf stepped towards Sirius and waved his hand. Tempy frowned. "Mister Sirius Black is bruised. Lots of bruises. Lots of scratches. He took a tumble."

"Stairs." Sirius offered, weakly.

"Not many boils. Good. Nasty spell. And..." Tempy trailed off, his eyes widening in horror.

"Tempy, what is it?" Harry asked. She wasn't sure if she wanted to know the answer.

"The Cruciatus...Mistress, he is being under that evil curse many times."

Never before had Harry felt such red hot anger. *Nothing* compared to how angry she felt at that moment. "I'm going to kill them." She says in a deathly quiet voice. It's one of two times in her life where she truly means such a statement (the other time being when Remus told her how he was turned into a werewolf). If she ever saw Orion or Walburga Black...hopefully they had enough of their Slytherin self-preservation to run in the opposite direction. "How *dare* they-Tempy! Is this all you found?"

"Yes Mistress."

"Good. Heal him. I want a full account of his injuries document but charmed so that the only ones who can see it is us, until I tell you otherwise." Despite her anger and bloodlust, Sirius was far more important at the moment.

Tempy nodded. With a snap of his fingers, the blood disappeared. He trailed his fingertips along the open cut and Harry watched in morbid fascination as the skin knit back together. One by one Tempy pressed his fingers against the welts and claw marks as if he was trying to push them back into Sirius's face-he did. The last thing he did before popping away was run his open palm over Sirius's

bruised skin. The twins were glad to see them fade to nothingness.

The old elf popped away long enough to grab a small bottle and a sheet of parchment. When he returned he placed them both in Harry's hands. "Tempy can't be healing the Cruciatius, Mistress. But this potion should help. Master Sirius needs to be drinking it all up and then sleep. This is the list Mistress requested. Would Mistress like it to be placed in her vault?"

Harry scanned it briefly before nodding and handing the paper back to him. "Yes, thank you Tempy. You've done a wonderful job. Once you've finished with that go get some rest, you deserve it."

Tempy bowed low. "Mistress is too kind to Tempy. Tempy is only being a good House-Elf." But before Harry could tell him that she was just treating him with the decency that all living beings deserved, he popped away for the night.

Their friend looked infinitely better than when he arrived. Physically, at least. His eyes, though, were shadowed in a way that made something inside Harry clench.

"I think it's time we went to bed." She said as she hefted Sirius to his feet, wrapping his arm around her shoulder (she wasn't sure if he actually needed the support or not, but Harry was in no mood to find out). "We'll all stay in my room tonight, okay? James, can you get his things?"

The trio made their way through the dark halls in silence, mindful of their sleeping parents. Even when the door to Harry's room was closed behind them and Sirius's things were placed by the door there were no sounds.

Harry maneuvered Sirius so that he was sitting on the edge of her bed. She stripped off his clothing until he was in naught but his boxers and redressed him in the shirt and sleep pants James handed her. He was silent the entire time, staring down at the floor.

Sirius was hardly paying attention at this point. He barely registered the vial being pressed against his lips, and he didn't hear Harry's pleas for him to drink it or her apologies about the lack of hot chocolate. He didn't feel his body being moved until he was laying down and tucked under the sweet smelling blankets. What he did notice was the warmth of his friend's bodies as they laid on either side of him, curling their arms around him.

He was not awake much longer than a few moments, and was therefore oblivious to the conversation going on above his head.

"He is not going back there. Ever." Harry whispered.

"No." James agreed. "The safest place for him is here."

"What are we going to tell Mum and Dad?"

"Leave them to me."

*

The next morning, the three stumbled into the kitchen for breakfast and James told their parents that Sirius was living with them now. 'He ran away' he told them-true though it was, Harry still felt bad for not telling her parents the whole truth.

'Leave them to me indeed.' She thought.

But their parents had taken it in stride, opening their home to their friend with open arms and warm

smiles. They gave him his own room not far from the twins and told him it was his for as long as he wished.

(Harry didn't think she'd ever seen Sirius cry in front of adults before that moment.)

Sirius, understandably, did not mentally heal overnight. Oh sure, during the days he was his usual boisterous self: he had prank wars and pillow fights and practiced quidditch with his friends; but at night he was...not. He was more...reclusive. Some nights were better than others; Sirius would stay in his room all night by himself. Many nights (especially in the first few weeks) Sirius would make his way into his friend's rooms after a nightmare. Neither Potter twin turned him away (sometimes the other managed to weasel their way into the room as well, a 'twin thing' they called it).

*

"How is he?"

With a sigh, Harry shrugged. She looked down at her hip where a sharp nose was pressed, barely visible under Sirius's hair. "He's...I don't know." She answered honestly. She truly didn't know what was going on in his mind. She *thought* he was doing better, but that didn't mean that he *was*.

She brushed his hair away. In the dim light from her hand mirror he is visible. Sleep does wonders to Sirius. It takes the stress and melts his mask. He looks peaceful, even if it may be a lie.

"I want to think that he's doing better, but he's *Sirius*. Who knows what's going on in that head of his..." She sighs. "Anyway, what about you Remus? You look terrible."

He did. Though the moon was less than a week away Remus already looked haggard. There were dark circles under his eyes and a waxy look to his skin. This would not be an easy moon for him.

"Moony knows something's up. He knows that there's something wrong within the pack and he's getting anxious."

That...didn't sound good. If Moony was getting anxious days before the moon then who knows what would happen after the transformation and he was alone. "Do you want me to come over?"

"No." Remus shook his head. "It's too dangerous. Besides, I can handle it." Right. Of course he could.

*

Harry tumbled out of the floo with a vicious look on her face. Mr. and Mrs. Lupin regarded her with matching nervous expressions.

"Harry, dear," Mrs. Lupin greeted her nervously. "It's wonderful to see you-as always-but I'm afraid Remus is ill. Why don't you come back tomorrow?"

"-I'm going nowhere but to Remus's side, Mrs. Lupin." She told them, green eyes ablaze.

"Harry, Remus is *ill*. We can't allow you to see him-"

"-I wasn't asking permission. I was doing you a courtesy by telling you-I know he isn't sick. I *know*." The Lupins paled.

"Then you know why we can't allow you near him. He's a monster!"

"He's your *son*! You can't just decide once or twice a month that he isn't because his furry side

comes out to play.”

“It isn’t that simple-”

“-No, it really is.” She pinched the bridge of her nose. “Look, I know you care for Remus but he *is* a werewolf and you need to accept that. I just-ugh, I’ve already had one friend who has suffered enough this summer, I won’t let Remus be the second.” Truthfully, she felt terrible that he had to suffer every summer anyway. “So you can kindly escort me to him-or you can stay here while I go off to find him myself.”

“Harry...we can’t.”

The bespectacled girl sighed, pivoting on her heel to go and search for her friend. Remus had told her once (using annoyingly vague words) that his parents had a bunker for him to go to, so perhaps she should start outside?

“Harry?! Harry, where are you going?!”

“Mr. Lupin, I already told you what I intend to do.”

“Harry-!”

“Ugh! I don’t have time for this! If you want to whinge and moan about his lycanthropy, fine! However my best friend is somewhere alone and suffering-I bet you didn’t even feed him! Rosie!” When her House-Elf appeared, Harry demanded a basket of meats. Uncooked and bloody. Her Elf didn’t quite understand *why* her Mistress made such an odd request, but Rosie was a good House-Elf and did as she was told. She gave her Mistress a large basket of meats and popped away without question. She would have to mention this to Master James though...

Harry tucked the basket into the crook of her arm and continued through the house. Remus’s parents followed her, begging her to just leave.

It never occurred to her that the jokes about kennels had some truth to them. His ‘kennel’ was a repurposed WW2 bomb shelter. It was built into the ground with a mossy roof due to its age (and those specs of purple better not have been wolfsbane...how badly would she be punished for attacking these would-be murderers?) and half a dozen padlocks on the door. Harry took no small amount of pleasure in using her magic to disintegrate them (and the wards; oops).

Inside was old, musty, and cold. The dusty, bloody smell was similar to the Shrieking Shack, but horrifically different at the same time. There was too much blood here, iron clogging her nose.

From this alone, Harry could easily say that this could be a cell in Azkaban. And then she looked further to the back...

His cell-for there was nothing else it *could* be- took up the furthest third of the shelter and was half the height. Poor Moony couldn’t even stand up! But that wasn’t what pissed Harry off.

No. It was all of the fucking *silver*. Silver top, silver bars, silver lock. It was no fucking wonder had all of those fucking scars! Between the discomfort from the silver, the isolation, and the wolfsbane (because after seeing the silver cage, Harry had little doubt that his parents planted that evil plant) it was a miracle that Remus was still sane!

Moony saw her the moment she opened the door and whined, pressing his nose against the bars only to yelp and jump back. He had burned his nose.

Harry saw red. “Stand back Moony.” She ordered. She really hoped that he would come out unscathed from what she planned to do next. She didn’t bother warning the older Lupins. They’d probably do something stupid like try and stop her.

Letting out an anger fueled burst of magic, Harry braced herself for the impact against the bars.

It was...stronger than she anticipated. The force of the explosion knocked the older Lupins to the floor. Harry stumbled, hyper aware of the shrapnel that nicked her shoulder.

Yet despite the shards of silver surrounding him, Moony was (thankfully) unharmed. The wolf leapt over the pile of metal and to her side where he buried his into her stomach, whimpering.

“Shh, it’s alright now. I’m here. Move back a little so I can make sure you’re not injured. That’s it, love.” The silver burn from before was well on its way to healing-though it would probably take the rest of the night. That would have been a relief, if there wasn’t an obvious claw mark next to it. That one would scar.

She scratched his snout, mindful of the new cut. “It’s just me and you tonight, okay? Come on, I have some meat for you.” Setting the basket down was a bad idea. The movement caused his gaze to fall on Mr. and Mrs. Lupin and he growled.

“Harry, I think you should leave.” Mrs. Lupin said, clearly scared out of her wits.

“It’s not me he’s growling at, Mrs. Lupin.” Harry replied coldly. “I think it’s best if you both leave. I can only hold him off for so long after all.” It was a thinly veiled threat, and to be honest Harry was delighted to see the fear in their eyes. Good. It served them right for how they treated Moony.

(And besides, Harry wouldn’t let any harm come to them...via Moony, that is. But they didn’t know that.)

Mr. Lupin fingered his wand. “Harry, I have to insist that you come with us. He’s dangerous, a monster.”

Harry’s eyes narrowed to slits behind her glasses. “I believe that we’ve already had this conversation. And while Moony can be dangerous-certainly *not* a monster-I am undoubtedly in more danger with the ones who imprisoned him present and threatening him with their weapons.”

When the Lupins didn’t move, Harry sighed. She had hoped that they would understand that she knew what she was fucking doing and would leave but *no*. So of *course* it would come to this.

In hindsight it was rather pathetic how easy it was for the teenager to banish the *two trained adults* and lock the doors. It was a wonder Moony hadn’t killed them...or bitten them (and Remus would never, *ever* hear that from her).

“There now. It’s just you and me Moony-the sensible folk.” She grinned at her wolf, taking a seat as far from the wreckage as possible. Moony followed like a shadow, curling around her and growling at the door. “It’s fine Moony. They won’t be getting in until morning.” His growls didn’t lessen. She sighed. “Will you eat?” He didn’t.

What followed was easily the most stressful night of Harry’s young life. Moony didn’t eat, didn’t sleep, and refused to be more than a foot away from Harry. The only sleep he got was when his exhausted body collapsed after his morning transformation.

Harry grimaced as she dragged her naked friend out of the shelter and into the house. Mr. Lupin met them in the kitchen and helped carry him up the stairs. Yet even in his sleep Moony sensed the

unwanted presence and growled.

That night would be the last night Moony spent the full moon at his 'home'.

*

Harry sat on the edge of Remus's bed, brushing the sandy hair away from his face. There was a new cut on his cheek, right under his right eye. She had no doubt that it would scar, and Harry would never forgive herself for arriving as late as she did. (Years too late)

Remus's parents stood like sentinels by the doorway, far away from their recovering son.

"You know," Harry started quietly. "I've known about his condition since first year. I saw Professor McGonagall leading him somewhere and I got curious. I followed them with only my owl to protect me and...Moony didn't take too well to my appearance. He tried to bite me." One of the adults sucked in a breath. "Obviously he didn't-my magic reacted and protected me. I wasn't mad at him, and while I was a bit scared I knew he was scared and I was at fault for sneaking up on him. I wanted to show him I was sorry, so I left and snuck into the kitchens to get him some meat.

"He took it as well as you'd expect. He wouldn't eat anything, and he constantly growled at me. But I took it in stride. I waited patiently for him to change back, and when he did I took him to the infirmary." She smiled sadly. "I can count the times that Remus and I have fought over something serious on one hand. That was the first and most intense fight we've had. He screamed at me while calling himself so many derogatory names...he was eleven years old and he thought he was the scum of the earth. I remember smacking his arm and yelling at him back that he wasn't a monster 'because what monster folds their socks?' and he...he just broke down.

"I spent the next month attached to his hip, trying to make him understand that he wasn't evil; that he was just a normal little boy. I didn't treat him any differently than anyone else, even though I knew his secret. I think that was what he needed, a friend.

"The next full moon I went back to his secret place and brought food with me. He looked at me like I was going to jump up and attack him, but he didn't growl. He even ate the food I brought! And then do you know what he did? He picked up a cooked steak and placed it in my lap. Granted, he walked back to his little nest of blankets and refused to look at me after that-but it was progress." Harry grinned. "When I woke up the next morning-right before he transformed-he had moved his *entire* bed around me and he had curled around me to keep us both warm. Tell me, does that sound like a monster to you?" She glanced at his parents, demanding an answer. They didn't give one. "How is it that I, and eleven year old *stranger*, felt more compassion and fearlessness to him after only knowing him for a few weeks than his own *parents*?"

"He's a werewolf." His mother said meekly, as if it explained everything.

"He's your *son*!" Harry hissed. She was trying to keep her voice down, she really was. Remus needed his sleep. But his parents were being so difficult! "Before, after, and during the full moon he is your son! There is no changing that! Whether you like it or not, they *are* one in the same, as is their pain. Look at him! Do you see these scars? *Moony's* scars!" Her voice was reaching dangerously high levels. She paused and took a deep breath. The last thing she needed was an overtired Remus grouching at her for trying to educate his parents. "Do you know *what* Remus is? He is kind, intelligent, so fucking sarcastic-oh don't get me started about him in the mornings-, a bookworm, and a chocoholic...but he's also terrified of hurting himself, self-deprecating, and so low on self-worth on some days that my friends and I will spend hours proving him wrong.

"...Do you know what a *monster* is? It is someone who makes their *own child* feel this way for

something out of their control; someone who locks their child in a cage of metal that burns his skin; someone who is trying to kill him with wolfsbane-don't you dare give me that look. Wolfsbane may be harmless to him in potions, but as a whole plant in its natural habit it's poison!" Her eyes burned with tears. "Remus didn't ask to be bitten, so why are you punishing *him* for it?" Why were they trying to kill him?

"From now on he's coming to my house for the full moon. At least then he'll know he's safe and cared for." His parents had nothing to say to that.

*

Soot filled her mouth and nose as she stumbled gracelessly out of the floo. Two pairs of hands clamped around her upper arms, dragging her to her feet and to another room. She blinked at her brother who was cutting off the circulation in her right arm. He looked pissed.

Sirius, on her other side, kept his face as schooled as possible, not letting any emotions show on his face.

Well...this wouldn't end well.

James slammed his door shut with his foot when the trio entered his bedroom. They walked to James's desk and her brother yanked the chair out, forcing her to sit in it.

"What the fuck were you *thinking*?!" James yelled. In her face no less, how rude. Harry narrowed her eyes at him.

"I was helping Remus-!"

"He told you not to-!"

"-He *always* tells me not to-!"

"-And you listen! Why didn't you listen this time?!"

"Don't you think he's suffered enough?! Why is it so bad that I wanted to help him?!"

"BECAUSE IT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME! YOU COULDN'T PROTECT YOURSELF WITH MAGIC THIS TIME!" Sirius shouted. He looked angry and scared and like he wanted to curse her for her stupidity. He probably would if he had his wand on him. "YOU HAD NO WAND, YOU DIDN'T BRING HEDWIG, YOU HAD *NOTHING* TO PROTECT YOURSELF WITH! YOU SCARED US YOU IDIOT! WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?!" Sirius punctuated his statement with wild hand gestures in her direction.

The twins stared at him, dumfounded. Neither had expected such a...violent reaction from the teen.

"...Do you know why Remus has so many scars?" Harry asked once her shock at his outburst waned.

Sirius blinked, looking at her in shock and confusion. Because really, how the hell could she go from one topic of discussion to another like *that*? "Yeah, he's all teeth and no tongue." Normally, such an innuendo would lead to childish giggles between the friends. Not this time. Harry sent him a 'look', one of the looks that screamed 'Now is *so* not the time'.

"Yes and no. He...they keep him in a cage. A solid silver cage that he could barely stand up in. And then there was the wolfsbane..." The boys stiffened, both choking out a 'What?'. The witch sent

them both dark looks. “Still think my interference wasn’t necessary?” She didn’t give them time to respond. “He was so anxious-in so much *pain* that he was scratching himself to the point where it wasn’t going to heal right. They lock their own son up in a *cage* because of something out of his control-” She broke off, putting her head in her hands and letting out a frustrated sob. “He was so scared...when I blew up the cage (“-Hold on, you blew it up?!”) yes! Did you honestly think I would allow him to sit in there and suffer?! When I blew it up he came running to me and hid his face in my shirt like he was afraid I was going to leave...

“I listened to him cry for *hours*. He didn’t eat anything, didn’t sleep, Merlin I was *glad* when he passed out after transforming! And then his parents-” A frustrated noise escaped her. “I get they’re scared, I really do. But he’s their *son*! They can’t be scared of him! It’s like they don’t even know him at all-the day Moony is as dangerous and terrifying as they think he is is the day that You-Know-Who and Dumbledore have tea and go flower picking together.” Not even a chuckle at her joke. It was a terrible joke though.

Someone was running their hands through her hair (James) while the other was slathering a minty-smelling paste onto her cuts (Sirius). “Did you at least give the Lupins hell? Hex them a little?” Sirius asked without looking up from her arm. Was it going to do tricks? It was just a few shallow cuts from the shrapnel, not like her whole arm was blown off.

“There was a lot of yelling on my part...and threats...and I may have used a lot of magic to throw them around a little...” Her brother and Sirius chuckled. Good, this was good. Now if only they’d let her leave so she could finally get some damn sleep.

“And I take it you’re stealing away Moony for the next full moon?” James asked.

“And every full moon after.”

James laughed. “You know, at this rate we might as well set up permanent rooms for Remus and Peter. You’re going to have them liberated by the end of the month!” The other two Marauders grinned at him.

That didn’t sound like a terrible idea.

(To them at least; everyone else would not find the arrangement as enjoyable.)

*

Peter was very confused when Harry mirror-called him-not to say that he wasn’t glad, but when one’s friend starts a conversation with ‘Hey Pete, have you experienced any sever trauma this summer? No? Good, then that makes one of us...can you hold up for a few days? James and I are coming to spring you away for a while’ with no other explanation and then followed by an equally abrupt and vague end to the call, it isn’t surprising that he stared at his little mirror for a solid five minutes trying to figure out what just happened.

*

“I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU.”

“REMUS DON’T YOU DARE START-!”

“I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME! I COULD HANDLE IT!”

“YOU DAMN WELL COULD *NOT*, AND YOU KNOW IT!”

“IT WAS DANGEROUS-”

“-IT’S ALWAYS DANGEROUS, YOU TWAT!”

“HARRY YOU ATTACKED MY PARENTS!”

“THEY WERE TRYING TO KILL YOU! WHAT THE FUCK WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO? LET YOU SUFFER IN YOUR PRETTY SILVER CAGE WHILE THE WOLFSBANE POISONED YOU?”

“Harry-”

“NO! WHY DID YOU NEVER TELL ME ABOUT THIS?! I WOULD HAVE HELPED YOU SOONER!”

“...I deserve it though...I keep telling you I’m a monster-ow! Why did you hit me?!”

“And I keep telling *you* that you are no such thing! Remus you cried when you accidentally squashed a slug!”

“I was *eleven!*”

“And you thought you were a monster then, too! But you are not! Remus Lupin I don’t care how long it takes but I *will* get it through your thick skull eventually: you are *not* a monster!”

“...Maybe one day I’ll believe it like you do.”

*

That weekend was fondly dubbed ‘Mr. and Mrs. Potter’s weekend from hell’. Five teenagers-five *pranksters*-running amok in the manor while consuming copious amounts of sugar was a recipe for disaster. But at least the teenagers had fun...

...Even if they lost a few statues in the process.

*

Sirius Black cared very little for angels. Sure, he knew *of* them, but did he believe in their existence? Not really. Not when he spent his entire childhood praying for someone to help him-to get him away from the hateful words and actions of his parents-only to be ignored. He had spent many a night wondering why they let his torment continue. Angels were supposed to be kind and just right? What had he done that warranted that treatment?

And then he stepped onto the Hogwarts Express for the first time and met the faerie like girl with wild ebony curls and glasses just slightly too big for her face. He hadn’t believed in angels until that girl graced him with one of her smiles, brighter than any *Patronus Charm*, and proclaimed them friends.

Then that same girl found him in the Common Room one night during one of his episodes (a special thanks to his mother and her Howler) and had stayed with him. Not to tease him or humiliate him, but because she honestly cared and was *scared* for him. At the tender age of eleven, Sirius had fallen, and he had fallen hard.

There was no doubt in his mind that after years and years of wishing and praying that he was being saved by his own angel.

*

“I’m going to lunch with Alice and Lily today.” Sirius’s breath caught in his throat as he looked at Harry. She walked into James’s room as she finished tying her hair into two low pig-tails. She wore a blue sundress with a white layer atop it of lacy flowers (daisies?). On her feet were a pair of white flat shoes, and nestled atop her head was a wide-rimmed white sunhat, decorated with a blue ribbon and a small bouquet of white and yellow daisies.

Purity. Yes those flowers suited her well.

“Oh great! Can you ask Evans if she’ll go to dinner with me next weekend?”

Harry snorted. “No. If you want to go on a date with her ask her yourself.”

“But she won’t listen to *me!*”

One freckled, sun burnt shoulder shrugged. “Not my problem.”

“Come on! Just put in a good word for me?”

“That implies that there’s something good to be said about you.”

“Merlin! You’re so cruel to your favorite twin! (“You idiot, I’m your only-”) Sirius, I need moral support! Tell her she’s being mean to me and that I’m awesome! Sirius!”

Quickly, Sirius tore his eyes away from his female friend. Oh god, had he been staring at her that whole time?! He hoped his face wasn’t as red as it felt-though one look at James’s expectant face made him breathe a sigh of relief. So...what had James been talking about? Something about Evans? “...Just ask her out Prongs.”

Harry sent her twin a very smug look that screamed ‘I told you so’. Oh good. Sirius hadn’t fucked up this time.

*

The trio of teenagers sat at the kitchen table one warm July morning as they waited for breakfast. James and Sirius took to amusing themselves by trying to balance spoons on their noses without magic. Honestly, they looked ridiculous. For some reason they thought that puckering their lips would help (not that it did, the spoons clattered onto the tabletop several times but the boys would just pick them up and repeat), tilting their heads was a good idea though (totally *not* cheating).

Harry wished she had a camera. Not only to send a copy of the photo to Remus and Peter (which would no doubt result in them attempting the trick), but so she could keep it to look at later. Her boys were idiots, yes; but after all the bad times they had been through, it was nice to see them acting so silly.

James was her twin, her best friend and partner in crime since they left their mother’s womb. Despite being an arrogant prat (which he *had* been working on, and wasn’t as obnoxious as he had been a year earlier, thank Merlin) she liked it better when her brother was a ‘happy little shit’ (in the loving words of their father after James pulled a prank that involved far too much glitter). And as for Sirius...

It was there, sitting at the table as she watched James and Sirius try (and fail) to balance the metal on the tips of their noses, Harry had an epiphany. If she was alone she would have smacked her forehead for how stupid she was for taking so long to figure it out.

She loved Sirius Black. Honestly and truly *loved* him. And truthfully, she wasn't as surprised by the revelation as she probably should have been.

“What are you looking at Harry? Are you awed by my dazzling good looks?”

“More amused by your dorkiness than anything-careful, your spoon is going to fall again.”

And true to her word, the spoon landed on the table with a sharp clink. Sirius cursed.

‘*Merlin,*’ Harry thought. ‘*This is the idiot I’m in love with. I’m doomed.*’

*

“I’m in love with Sirius.” She told Remus. They were sitting in the shade of the willow tree of the garden, too far away from Sirius and James to be heard. Harry had waited until Remus was in the middle of sipping his lemonade before springing her grand revelation on him.

Unfortunately, there was no lemonade spewing from the werewolf’s mouth as he choked on his drink, nor was the drink coming out of his nose because he was laughing too hard. Remus merely snorted, giving his friend a look over the brim of his cup that screamed ‘your plot failed’. The asshole took his time with his drink, savoring the sip and letting out a satisfied (and overly exaggerated) noise once he swallowed.

“It took you long enough to realize it.” He said. Harry sent him a sharp look.

“And what’s *that* supposed to mean?”

“Anything with a brain can see it. Except maybe James. You two aren’t exactly subtle, you know. The constant hanging off each other, *sleeping* together, the way you two are always looking at each other (“we do not-!”), or the flirting? Or how about the bickering like an old married couple-”

“-Okay, I get it Remus!” Something about what he had said struck her. He had used plurals, talking about *both* of them. But that couldn’t be right, could it? She knew that Sirius harbored some feelings for her last year, but *love*? And for this long? “I really don’t think Sirius-”

“-I know you aren’t stupid. Oblivious? Maybe a little, but stupid you are not. You know him; you know how strong his emotions are...he’s cared about you for a long time-longer than James has had a crush on Lily.”

That threw her for a loop. Sirius liked her longer than James liked Lily?! “But...but James has liked Lily since *third year*.”

Remus leveled her with another ‘look’. “I know.” His gaze softened. “Are you planning on telling him?”

“Telling who what now?” James asked as he plopped down next to his twin, stealing her lemonade.

“Telling you that your breath reeks like troll.” Harry replied easily, taking her drink back.

“It does not!”

“*You* don’t have to smell it.”

James none-too-subtly checked his breath (which was pretty bad after competing with Sirius to see who could finish a box of Bertie Bott’s Beans first). He scowled at his sister and friend, calling a House-Elf to bring him a mint.

Sirius stared suspiciously at the other two.

*

Like many other nights, there was a soft knock at her door.

“Come in Sirius.” She was sitting on her bed, reading a book about wordless wandless magic, and didn’t bother looking up when Sirius walked in. She moved over to give him more space on the bed. “Bad dream?”

“No, couldn’t fall asleep.” He crawled next to her, slipping under blankets and curling up with ‘his’ pillow. Harry snorted.

“By all means, make yourself comfortable.”

“Don’t mind if I do.”

Silence settled between the duo. It was pleasant; her reading her book while Sirius slept...or so she thought.

“What’s this?” Sirius asked. Harry managed to pry her eyes away from her text to see what it was he was looking at. A book? No...a scrapbook? No...

Oh sweet Merlin *no*...

Face flushing redder than her Gryffindor colors, Harry snapped her textbook closed, launching across the bed to smack the offending book onto the floor. Sirius got a mischievous (dangerous) look in his eyes and dove for the book as well. They wrestled, using dirty tactics like pulling on the other’s hair or digging their knees in *very* uncomfortable places (*Harry*).

In the end, it was Sirius’s hand that curled around the faux-leather spine first.

Why had she been dumb enough to leave that stupid thing lying around where Sirius could easily find it?!

It was all Remus’s fault! If he hadn’t given her those confusing words about Sirius’s (non-existent) feelings then she wouldn’t have turned to that book, searching for answers in the thick pages.

“Now, what’s all the fuss about?”

“Sirius...” She warned him, though there was a nervous edge to her voice.

He ignored her, as usual. His fingers opened the cover to reveal empty pages. In fact, there were few words written in the book at all and the few that were written in it were written by her and a very excited and amused Alice.

Sirius flipped through the empty pages until they weren’t. The beginning of the most embarrassing thing that Sirius could ever find was a long vine of ivy, expertly twisted to fit on the entire page and pressed flat with elegant cursive letters with the plant’s name in the center. The next page was a pressed red rose; after that were daisies. To Harry’s mortification, Sirius went through each page, looking at them with an unreadable expression.

“...You pressed the first bouquet I gave you?”

Harry scratched the back of her neck. “I...yeah.”

“Why?” He asked.

The witch shrugged. “I don’t really know. Maybe it’s because I’m a sentimental sap and I loved the flowers?”

Sirius made a noncommittal sound, turning back to the page with the ivy. “Did you know that flowers all mean something?” He asked. Harry nodded.

“Yeah, Alice told me. But I don’t know any of them.”

“Hmm...”

“Would you...would you tell me their meanings?” She asked, giving him the choice to back out if he wanted. This was a very important moment; if he said yes and the flowers didn’t mean what she thought they did, then she wouldn’t reveal her feelings to him. If he told her and they *did*...well... she didn’t know what she was going to do.

“I...yeah...” Very few times through their friendship did Harry hear the Black Heir’s voice crack (excluding puberty, of course. And what a time *that* had been). He tried to brush it off by clearing his throat, and Harry wasn’t going to call him out on it. “Yeah. I can do that.” His fingers traced the ivy leaves, trailing along the vine almost reverently. “Ivy means fidelity, friendship, and affection.” He turned the page. “This one rose means...” His voice cracked again. He took a deep breath. “It means ‘I Love You’.” Not giving her any time to respond, he turned to the next page. That was how the remainder of their one-sided conversation went. “Daisies: Loyal Love, purity; Blue Violets: Faithfulness, ‘I’ll Always be True’; Orchids: Love, refinement, beauty/beautiful lady; Forget-Me-Nots: True love and memories; Primrose: ‘I Can’t Live Without You’; Gardenias: Secret Love, ‘You’re Lovely’; and Daffodils: ‘You’re the Only One’, ‘The Sun is Always Shining When I’m with You’, and Unrequited Love-mphf!”

Harry may have done a bad thing.

Or it may not have been a bad thing since Sirius wasn’t complaining.

She kissed him.

It may not have been the most romantic kiss-because really, she was leaning over the open book and their noses were awkwardly pressed against each other so how romantic could that be?-but it was a kiss nonetheless. Their first kiss.

She had to wonder if it would be the first of many.

Sirius was the one who broke the kiss (shockingly) by gently pressing against Harry’s shoulders until she moved back to her previous seat. “Wh-what?”

“Your-uh-feelings might not be as unrequited as you think.”

He stared at her, dumbfounded, as he tried to process what she had just told him. “You...you...”

“Yeah...”

“But...how long?”

Harry shrugged, looking thoughtfully at the book in Sirius’s lap. “I only realized it a few days ago-when you and James were doing the spoon thing, but I think I’ve...y’know...for a lot longer.”

Silence descended upon them again. Minutes (hours?) passed with neither saying a word. “So...what do we do now?” Sirius asked.

“What do you want us to do?”

Without words, Sirius reached forward, cupping Harry’s face in his hands and kissed her.

*

Waking up the next morning was like any other that summer. Sirius was spread eagle on the bed while Harry managed to take most of the blankets. Sirius’s arm was slung over her hips.

Harry smiled as she looked over at her bed-mate. They hadn’t shagged, but there had been many long, sweet kisses that made Harry’s toes curl and her breath catch.

Sleepy grey eyes blinked open, looking around until they found hers. “G’ mornin.”

She smiled at him. “Good morning dog breath.”

“Hey, I resemble that remark!” He responded; letting out a large yawn a second after he finished. Harry laughed at him and scooted closer to kiss him. “Oh...” He said breathlessly when they pulled apart.

“Is that a good ‘oh’?”

“Definitely.”

“Good.” She kissed him again, nipping gently at his lower-lip. He lets out a *very* interesting noise that Harry promises to look into later.

Step by step they go through the ageless dance. Caressing hands, sweeping tongues, rocking hips... they needed to stop before it went any further-it wouldn’t do for someone to walk in on them after all.

With no small amount of reluctance, Harry pulled away (and boy was she satisfied with the whine she got).

“Why’d you stop?” Sirius moaned, breathless.

“If I didn’t stop then we would have kept going (“That’s kind of the point-”) and I for one don’t want to see James’s face if he catches us in a compromising position.” She said, looking down into his lidded eyes (when had she straddled his hips?). “So we stop for now and then we can do whatever you want later tonight.”

Sirius gave her a roughish grin. “*Whatever* I want? What a delightful promise.” She snorted.

“Don’t make me regret that, Black.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it, Potter.”

Regret was the furthest thing in her mind that night.

*

The morning of their sixteenth birthday starts with a bang...literally. Really, who thought it was a good idea to let Sirius and James run amuck at *five o’clock* in the bloody morning?!

From the hallway, Harry heard the pair giggle, then there was running, and then another explosion. She had had enough-why couldn't the two leave the arson until later? When everyone was awake and coherent?

She fixed her tee shirt (one of Sirius's muggle band ones that she had 'permanently borrowed') and crossed her room to pull the door open.

"What are you two idiots doing?" She hissed. The boys froze mid...whatever they were doing.

"My sweet baby sister! Happy Birthday! How are you on this lovely morning?"

Harry's green eyes narrowed to slits. "Firstly, twelve minutes does not make me your baby sister ('Of course it does!'); Second, thanks. Same to you; Third, fuck off. It's way too early for this shit. If you want to blow shit up, do it outside and as far away from me as possible!"

"You're so charming in the morning."

"About as charming as a troll."

"I was thinking more along the lines of a dragon."

"Me thinks she's been spending too much time around Moony."

Harry rolled her eyes, sending the boys a very rude gesture that she would never ever do in front of her parents. "I hate you two."

"Aww, we love you too!" The witch scowled at them. In a very *creative* manner, she told the boys to take the explosions outside or she would start messing with hair-care products and broomsticks, and then slammed her door shut to go and get some more rest.

She managed to get almost three hours of sleep before the door to her room opened and closed and she felt a dip in the bed. Rolling over, eyes squinted, she saw the blurry silhouette of Sirius. She reached over to her nightstand and grabbed her glasses, perching them on their usual spot on her nose.

Her maybe-kind-of boyfriend sent her a nervous smile. "Hey, you aren't going to hex me...right?" He asked.

The girl yawned. "That depends. Is anything going to explode?"

"Not until after breakfast. Which is soon, by the way. Your mum sent me to go get you."

"I'm surprised James isn't here with you."

"Oh, he wanted to come, but I told him that if we both showed up after this morning you'd probably curse us." Well, he wasn't wrong. "Besides, I wanted to give you my present first." He rolled over, digging through the top drawer of his nightstand (when had it become his?) until he pulled out a small rectangular package wrapped in blue and silver. He handed it to her, softly kissing her lips. "Happy Birthday."

Harry cradled the box in her hands. "You didn't have to get me anything-"

"-I get you something every year. And I *definitely* needed to get you one now that we're...a thing." He gestured between the two of them as if he was trying to show what they were, rather than say it. It warmed Harry's heart to hear the confirmation that they were an item (not in so many words, but

you get the point) come from him.

She reached over to press a kiss to his cheek. "Thank you."

For only a second, Sirius's face was flushed. And then as quickly as it came, it vanished and he was bouncing on the bed like an excited puppy. "Well, go on then! Open it!"

With a laugh, Harry untied the silver ribbon and pulled apart the wrapping paper with careful precision (she was taking no small amount of glee from watching Sirius get antsy and fidgety due to her slow speed; hey, she still hadn't forgotten about that morning!). Under the wrapping paper was a thin, black box. A jewelry box. A piece of parchment was wrapped around it. Harry pulled it off, silently reading its contents.

Harry,

My Lionheart, I thought long and hard about what I was going to tell you today; but as I tried to put the words to paper I found my mind going blank. So I'm going to try to write this in one shot (as I'm writing this you're sleeping next to me-is that weird? That's weird isn't it?) so if this seems like the jumbled ramblings of a madman...well you shouldn't be surprised.

*I'm not good with words (something that you've so graciously pointed out to me on several occasions), less so when it involves you. You have the ability to make my breath catch, and my brain stop just by looking at me. I will thank the stars for the rest of my days that you saw something in me that made you (crazily) agree to try a relationship. These past weeks have been...
amazing.*

I Love you.

Sorry for springing that on you so suddenly...and so soon. You don't have to say it back right now-or ever. I just wanted you to know; needed, really. I've loved you since first year, since the first time you helped me through an episode. You've been my light in the darkness, my constant beacon of hope and happiness for as long as we've been friends.

I've watched you grow from the tiny first year with a giant heart to the amazing, strong, talented, beautiful woman you are today. I'm so proud of you, and I know you'll continue to make me proud and amaze me because that's who you are.

Happy Birthday my light, my love. I hope your day is as amazing as you are.

-Sirius

(Wow, that wasn't too hard. Although it is three in the morning...that doesn't make any of this any less true! I think from now on I'll be writing my thoughts instead of voicing them! Much easier this way!)

(Oh! I almost forgot! Since you like to throw yourself into the middle of stupidly dangerous situations, I took the liberty of having your present charmed with like, a million protective spells. So for the sake of my heart and hair (you're going to make me go prematurely gray, I swear!) never take it off!)

By the time Harry read the last word on the page, tears were rolling down her cheeks. She placed the letter beside her on the bed and opened the little box. Nestled on a bed of velvet was a silvery

(though not real silver, never real silver) lioness with emerald for eyes. The metal feline was laying on her belly with her tail curled around her, her head on top of her paws. She looked very relaxed. She was beautiful. More tears slid down Harry's cheeks as her fingertips traced the edges of the lioness, following the spine as the feline arched at her touch.

Poor Sirius had thought that he had done something wrong until she had grabbed the collar of his shirt and tugged him into a harsh kiss.

“So I did good then?”

“Very good. Put it on me?” She bunched her dark curls into one hand and pulled them over her shoulder, revealing her pale neck.

Shaky fingers took the necklace out of the box, wrapped the chain around her neck, and clasped it together. Harry's hair sprang free and fell back into its natural position.

“Well, turn around so I can see it!”

The necklace rested in the center of her collarbone like he had hoped it would. The jewel eyes glowed brightly as the feline stared up at her new owner.

“Beautiful.” Sirius breathed. Harry beamed at him. “She won't move much, and she won't make noise, but I thought you'd like her.”

“I love her!”

*

“Yeah! Eleven forty-seven! I am officially sixteen!”

“Happy Birthday!”

“Oh Merlin, he's going to be insufferable for the next twelve minutes!”

“You know baby sister (“-for the last time! Twelve minutes doesn't make me your baby sister you prat! And get your arm off of me!”) I remember when I was your age. I was sitting over there, eating cake and drinking butterbeer while I planned a big fireworks extravaganza with Moony and Padfoot-that you so rudely put an end to.”

“...I hate you so much.”

*

The most interesting event to happen over the summer was the Marauders' day out. Yes it was as amusing as it sounds, particularly because James and Sirius all but demanded that they go to a muggle 'Amusement Park'.

Why do muggles need entire Parks to amuse themselves? When she asked Peter he had just grinned and told her that she'd find out when they got there.

She certainly did.

Their parents (the Potters) dropped them off at a huge park on the continent (Harry couldn't remember the name of the park, nor where it was located for the life of her) with purses full of muggle money. They cast a few translation spells on the teens and then promised to return at the end of the day.

Basically, they left five teenagers to their own devices in a foreign land with a ton of money for an entire day. It was their fault, really.

The first thing that happened was finding out James's crippling fear of 'Roll-y Coasters'. They made it down the first drop and by then James was a screaming mess.

"But you love flying." Harry pointed out once her brother had calmed enough.

She got a rather impressive glare for that. "I can control a broom. That *thing*," he pointed to the coaster they had just gotten off of. "I can't. It's evil-a deathtrap!" Harry rolled her eyes at him, but didn't make him go on another coaster.

The next thing that happened was buying their weight in sweets and devouring them before brilliantly deciding to go on a ride that spun incredibly fast. Remus (the bastard) was the only one to walk off the ride with nothing more than a rolling stomach. The other four fought each other for the closest dustbin.

Lunch was overpriced, greasy fare that had James and Sirius moaning at how delightfully muggle it was. Harry's chips (the only thing she could stomach after the disastrous event from before) were in constant danger from thieving fingers. On more than one occasion, she smacked the boys' hands when they got too close to her food.

"But Harry" Sirius, giving her his best and biggest puppy eyes, said. "All my chips are gone. Your mean brother ate them all while I wasn't looking ("Oi! Don't start telling lies about me Padfoot!"). Don't you love me enough to share just one?"

She gave him an unimpressed look. "You should have defended your chips better, mate." And she proceeded to pick up two chips to eat...that Sirius practically inhaled while she was holding them.

"You should have defended them better."

After lunch the group split up. James and Peter and Remus left to go do...whatever boys do when they're alone at an amusement park while Harry and Sirius went to ride the final 'Roll-y Coaster' of the park with the promise to meet up in an hour.

The queue went faster than expected (however, thirty minutes was still a long time to keep Sirius from running to the front of the queue. It was a good thing her brother wasn't around so she could distract him with kisses and other 'underhand tactics' [his words]) and by the time the ride was over they had almost a half hour to kill.

Logically, this meant going to every stall to shop for overpriced and useless trinkets, or play deceptively hard games to win ridiculous looking stuffed animals.

"I'm going to win this time." Sirius said, handing the attendant more money.

"That's what you've said the last twelve times."

"Have *some* faith in your boyfriend!"

Harry raised her hands in a peaceful gesture. "Fine fine, I have faith in my ridiculous boyfriend. Prove me wrong, oh wise one." He didn't win.

The other three showed up not long after and soon their day was over.

That night while she lounged in bed after her shower, listening to one of Sirius's new records while

he bathed, she thought over the day. It was nice hanging out with her friends (even if they did get sick at one point), and it was even better to get to act like an actual couple with Sirius (They really should tell her brother and their friends soon. But it was all so new still. Harry wanted to be selfish for just a while longer). Yes, she decided that today was a good day indeed.

Until something soft was dropped onto her stomach.

Opening her eyes, Harry was greeted by the beady (soulless) eyes of a red dragon (?).

“I told you I’d win something!” He said from somewhere above her. She grinned at the toy.

“That you did. Who helped you?” She teased. He scoffed, telling her that he had won it all on his own and he didn’t need help from anyone. Right. So Moony helped him (not that she’d say that out loud). “Well I’m very proud that you managed to defeat the evil muggle games and win a prize. What did you name him?”

Sirius shrugged, jumping into his spot on the bed. “I didn’t. He’s for you so you name him.” That was...incredibly sweet. She turned and kissed his cheek. “Thank you. I think I’ll name him Godric.”

“Godric.” Sirius repeated slowly.

“Yep, because he’s red, and it’s late so my brain isn’t functioning properly.” Sirius merely laughed, kissing the top of her head fondly.

*

Soon the full moon arrives. True to her word, Harry made Remus stay the night with them (poor Peter had to go home because it was his brother’s birthday the next day). And what an ordeal *that* had been trying to get their parents out of the house for the night.

When Remus transformed into Moony, they were all in the basement surrounded by food and water and toys and various articles of their clothing to help ease Moony’s nerves. For the first time in a very long time, Moony yipped in excitement once the transformation was finished.

He came to her first, as he always did, and sniffed the side of her neck. He repeated that with Hedwig (as best as he could with the small owl) and Sirius and James. He whined when he didn’t find Peter. “He’s with his family right now. He’ll be with us next month.” Harry told him. The answer was enough to calm the wolf.

Then he sniffed the food before taking a large fillet of uncooked meat for himself, nudging a cooked one in Harry’s direction. This led to the rest of the group eating their portions.

After eating came play-time. Normally at the shack, play-time consisted of wrestling and running in circles. This time Harry had heavy-duty rope, hard plastic balls, and squeaking rubber chicken that Sirius had bought at a muggle store (why? Who knows). They had the space in the basement for him to run and play, and Harry wasn’t going to waste it.

“Hey Moony! Moony what’s this?” She lifted a blue ball. The wolf was fascinated as she tossed it up in the air with one hand. “It looks fun, doesn’t it? Well...go get it!” She threw the ball across the basement, fully expecting the wolf to chase after it.

He did not. Much like his human counterpart, Moony gave her a look that screamed ‘I’m not falling for it you silly girl’. She was pretty sure that Prongs and Padfoot were laughing at her. “Why are you so stubborn? Look, Moony go get it...ugh. Padfoot show him how it’s done. Padfoot? Are you serious right now?!” Padfoot sat next to Moony, tail wagging as he looked up at her. “I don’t like

you.”

*

Their Hogwarts letters came and with it came a rather uneventful trip to Diagon Alley.

Soon, far sooner than they thought possible, they were at King’s Cross, boarding the Hogwarts Express.

*

Their compartment could be described in one word: Chaos. Food wrappers and books and unfinished homework littered the seats. Papers filled with prank ideas were scattered on the floor. For some unknown reason, James had decided that shoes were banned (although, when he tried banishing Harry’s shoes he got a well-aimed shoe to the nose), so the boys were shoeless. There were jokes and laughter and storytelling (because they needed to know every little detail about the summer, even though they had only been apart for a few days). It was amazing to back with her boys.

However, they were her *boys*. After two hours of being sandwiched between Remus and the window, smelling various sweets and sweaty feet, Harry had had enough. She stood, stretched, and told the boys that she’d be back.

“Where are you going?” James asked.

“I don’t know. I’ll probably go and find Alice and Lily and catch up with them.”

“Ask Evans if she’ll go out with me.”

“Ask Lily ‘if she’ll go out with me’, got it.”

“Yes-wait...NO. *Haaarry* why do you hate me?!”

She just smiled at her brother as she closed the door.

It wasn’t Lily and Alice that she found first. It was a Slytherin fourth year (why was he wearing his robes so soon?) staring out the window. He nodded when he saw her.

Regulus looked so much like his brother, and yet looked so different. They both had dark hair and sharp noses and thin faces. It was the eyes that were different. Where Sirius’s were a warm grey, Regulus’s were bluer, sharper, guarded.

“Potter.”

“Black.” They nodded at each other, both staring out the window at the passing scenery.

“Is he safe?” The fourth year asked.

“...Yes.”

“Is he happy?”

“Yes.” They both fall silent. Harry looks at his out of the corner of her eye. He held up a very good mask of indifference, but Harry could see through it. His lips tilted too much, his brows too creased. “He misses you, you know.” She tells him. The boy’s eyes widen and one dark eyebrow rises in question. “He hasn’t come outright and said anything, but I know Sirius. I see the way he looks and

me and James. I know he misses you.” She sighs. “Just...write him a letter or something. I know he’ll appreciate it.”

Their conversation ends soon after. Regulus didn’t promise to write to his brother, but he didn’t say that he wouldn’t either. That was a good thing, right?

She did manage to find Lily and Alice after that. For almost an hour they talked about everything and nothing. ‘How was your summer?’ ‘Lily I adore that dress, where did you get it?’ ‘The last of my vegetables came in-here Harry try some tomatoes!’ Gods were they good. Alice had a magic touch when it came to vegetables (just vegetables though). She left them with the promise to stay up late and tell them all of the juicy details of her holiday.

The compartment was worse than when she had left it. Food and clothes were added to the mess, and Harry *really* didn’t want to know what that purple smudge on the window was.

Peter squeaked when she walked in, his face burning red. He was stripped down to his underpants and socks. Sirius and James were also in various states of undress. James had no trousers and socks while Sirius was only missing his tee shirt. Cards were on the ground between them, some of them singed. She looked at Remus who was (thankfully) fully clothed in his corner, reading a book.

“Do I want to know?” She asked.

“They’re playing Strip Exploding Snap.” Yes, that much was obvious. The question was *why*?

“Care to join us Harry?” Sirius asked with a ridiculous eyebrow waggle.

“No thanks, I’d rather watch you three embarrass yourselves.”

*

“Reg sent me a letter.”

“Oh really? That’s wonderful!”

“Yeah, it was all basic stuff-‘I miss you’, ‘how was your summer’, ‘are you okay’...all in his own Regulus-y way that is.”

“That’s sweet, are you going to reply?”

“Of course! I wonder why he sent me a letter now.”

“I have no idea...”

*

Classes were boring. With no big exams like OWLs or NEWTs teachers were giving them an easier workload (whether or not it was *actually* easier remained to be seen. Sirius had a sinking suspicion that it was mostly because of Harry’s influence last year) meaning that Sirius was done with his homework much earlier.

Naturally that meant that he would have a lot of free time. And what does a bored Sirius Black do with a lot of free time? Explore of course! He needed to know prime pranking places after all!

(No, it had nothing to with the fact that his girlfriend kicked him out of the Common Room because he kept bothering her while she was doing her homework. Nope. It was definitely because he was bored.)

Which is how he ended up on the seventh floor by a tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy teaching trolls ballet. He paced by it once, muttering to himself about evil girlfriends. He turned on his heel.

Really! What was so bad about wanting to spend time with her? If they weren't in classes it was mealtime, if it wasn't mealtime then they were hanging out with their friends. If they weren't hanging out with their friends it was homework! He understood Harry's desire to keep their relationship secret for a little while longer but the only time they were able to get any private time to be a couple was bedtime! And even then they weren't able to share the same bed like they had in the summer. He turned again.

He just wanted a place where he and Harry could get away for a little while and do couple-y things.

On the wall across from the tapestry a door appeared. It wasn't too special, just a small wooden thing that probably opened up to a broom cupboard, but it *definitely* wasn't there before and that piqued his curiosity.

He opened the door and grinned.

This was perfect.

*

"Come with me."

Harry looked up at him, clearly suspicious.

"Why?"

"*Why*-are you serious? Just trust me; I have something to show you."

He didn't look like he was up to something-scratch that. He didn't look like he was up to something *bad*. She would have been able to tell if he was. But at the moment, he was bouncing on his heels in the way that he did when he was really excited about something that wasn't prank related.

"Fine." She tossed her bag at a snickering Remus. "Be a dear and bring this back to your room, would you Remy? I'll pick it up later."

*

"You brought me up here to show me this tapestry?"

"What? No! There was a door here I swear!" Hands fisted in dark hair, tugging in frustration. "It was right *here*!" He waved wildly at the spot the door had been before and almost hit his girlfriend in the process.

She took his hands in hers, rubbing soothing circles with her thumbs. "I believe you but please try to calm down. I'd rather not turn this into a trip to the Hospital Wing." He took a shaky breath before giving her a bashful look.

"Sorry."

"It's alright. Now, try and remember what it was you were doing before?"

"I-Oh!" He tore his hands from his girlfriend's and began pacing again.

"You were...pacing?"

“Don’t look so uncertain, this was what I was doing! Why isn’t it working?!”

“Were you doing anything else?”

“...Oh yeah!” He paced again but this time with an intense, thoughtful look on his face.

And just when she was going to ask what the hell he was doing a door materialized right where Sirius had been pointing earlier. “Whoa!”

“See, I told you!”

Harry could only nod dumbly as she was led to the mysterious door. “What’s inside?” Sirius gestured to the handle as if he was telling her to find out for herself.

The door wasn’t nearly as heavy as it looked. And inside...*oh* it was lovely! Everything was bathed in warm light despite the storm raging on outside. Beautiful, happy music came from nowhere yet it filled the room. There was a large, empty area-for dancing perhaps?;- a plush sofa in front of a giant fireplace; and a small table with an empty tea set.

“Oh Sirius...how...?”

The boy shrugged. “I don’t know the exact magic behind it but I wished for a place where you and I could come for a little while and just be boyfriend and girlfriend for a little while without worrying about everyone else. Private time, y’know?”

He found this place because he wanted to spend time with her? That was so sweet! Reaching out, Harry curled her fingers with Sirius’s. “You know, sometimes you are utterly adorable.”

“Only sometimes?”

“Shut up and dance with me.”

*

Who knows how many times they sneak off to the Come and Go Room. Sometimes they just go for a short tea break (that they had to call the House-Elves for. Food was the only thing that the Come and Go Room could conjure, go figure), and sometimes it was for garden strolls or cuddling in front of the fire, and on a few occasions the room even managed to create a magical Roll-y Coaster!

But one day the room gave them something that one of them hadn’t been prepared for...

*

“Oh shit-Harry I swear I didn’t do this-at least not on purpose!” ‘This’ was an enormous four poster bed that made Sirius’s imagination come up with some *interesting* images.

Okay, not helping. Not at all.

“I know you didn’t. I did.” Wait...*what?*

“*You* did? But...but...”

Harry bit her bottom lip, cheeks redder than her Gryffindor robes. “Yeah...I mean I know we haven’t had a moment to talk about it but...well I just thought...you know what, never mind it was a stupid idea. Forget this happened. I’ll order us some cocoa or something-”

“Hey I didn’t say-Harry look at me.” She looked up at him through her thick lashes. Gods she wasn’t making this easy on him. “There’s nothing I’d like more than to be locked in here with you for the rest of the weekend and not leave the bed-but I won’t do anything you don’t want to.”

“Sirius, I wouldn’t have requested the bed if I didn’t want it.”

*

It would be a lie to say that either one was a virgin (Harry had a very awkward experience at the end of fourth year that she would very much like to keep in the recesses of her mind, thank you very much; and Sirius was...Sirius) and yet as they were entwined together, divested of all clothing, it seemed all previous experiences were wiped from their memories.

Whereas before, Sirius would skip most of the foreplay with nary a second thought-preferring to get the ordeal over with quickly to get the no-named girl out of his bed as quick as possible so he would feel less guilty about picturing another’s face underneath him-, now he took his time. With lingering touches and gentle massages to thighs; with loving nips and kisses in easy to hide places; with his face nose deep between her legs until she peaked.

Once, Harry would have been on the quiet side and keeping her hands in ‘safe places’. Now she trailed her fingernails over every inch of skin visible to her, laughing when she managed to find his ticklish spot (just under his ribs); her hands twined in his dark hair and tugged to bring their faces close to kiss; She hissed his name when he left a large mark on her hip; she guided him inside her with no small amount of impatience that he teased her for.

Sirius lost his balance once and bumped his nose against her shoulder. Sirius’s hair got caught in Harry’s necklace and the lioness thought it was a game and tugged harshly at his hair. Harry’s glasses fogged, became askew, and poked her in the eye-so naturally she threw them...and then ended up kicking them and breaking the lenses...

There were awkward moments. There were silly moments. There mind-numbingly blissful moments.

It was perfect.

*

They made several...trips to the Come and Go Room after that.

When asked where they kept disappearing to (because apparently the Come and Go Room couldn’t be plotted on the Map) they made up so many excuses that it was a wonder that no one had found out their secret yet.

Except Remus; but that prat knew everything so he didn’t count (and if he could stop wagging his eyebrows at them and wrinkling his nose at them when they came back that would be great).

*

The full moon was a surprisingly calm affair. Moony’s transformation was relatively pain free (or so Harry assumed), and they ate and played like the happy young lads they were.

The only strange thing to happen Moony nuzzling her stomach, and then forcing her to lay down after she had been playing for too long and resting his head atop her belly. Weird. But cute, so the witch paid it no mind.

*

Flying came almost as naturally as breathing. Once she was up in the air she was in her own world (James had once joked that if she had gone through with the animagus transformation like the rest of them, she would have been a bird).

Quidditch season had just started with tryouts ending the day before. Harry of course was the Seeker, as she had been for the past few years, with James and Sirius as Chasers.

Her brother had been moaning and groaning all day about having to train the 'new blood' and had even tried to pass his captain duties onto her ("You have seniority, after all! It's yours by right!"). Harry politely told him to 'suck it up' as she mounted her broom and chased after the training snitch.

Really, if James couldn't handle training their two new Beaters and backup Keeper then he shouldn't have accepted the position in the first place!

A streak of gold caught Harry's attention at the southern end of the pitch. Grinning, she shot in the direction of the Snitch. She weaved under the new recruits, did a loop around her brother's floating form (for no other reason than showing off), and gave Sirius a high five as she passed him.

Just as she was in arms reach of the golden ball, it shot up in the air. Harry chased after it.

"Oh no you don't!" She laughed when the little ball flew faster in response.

She pressed her body against the broomstick, making it speed up. The Snitch was getting closer.

Twenty feet

Ten feet

Five

Two

One

Her fingers curled around the ball and her broom slowed to a halt. The delicate wings of the Snitch fluttered a few more times before curling in on itself.

"Best two out of three?" She offered, though she knew she would not get a reply.

However, before she could release the ball, James was yelling at her.

"HARRY LOOK OUT!" Was the only warning she got before a rogue bludger collided with her stomach, sending her flying off of her broom.

In hindsight, she probably shouldn't have left her wand in her locker. But, in her defense, it was quidditch! Practice no less! The only one who would have a wand would be James and he was too far off to do anything!

Harry silently thanked herself for diligently studying wandless magic over the Summer. She shouted the incantation for a cushioning charm.

Nothing.

She tried it again, louder.

Nothing

Arresto Momentum.

Her body kept falling.

Wingardium Leviosa

Nothing

She tried every spell she knew that would help, getting louder and more desperate with each spell. Nothing stopped her fall.

Her body plummeted closer and closer to the ground until she snapped to a stop by a spell from her brother.

The last thing she remembers before darkness claims her is freaking out about her magic being gone.

Though, had she not been wearing her quidditch robes she would have been able to see the faint golden glow coming from her stomach.

*

One seems to know when they're in the Infirmary before they even open their eyes. For one thing there are the beds. Beds in the dorms were narrower and softer while in the Infirmary they were wider in case a student's ailment required more space (like octo-limb Peter in second year) and firmer because it's 'good for the back' or something like that.

Then there were the sounds. The Infirmary was usually a quieter place, like the library. When students visited they often spoke quietly to each other to keep their conversations private, and in the distant background would be Madame Pomfrey muttering softly to herself or clinking vials together as she looked for one in particular.

And of course there was the smell. Compared to the rest of the castle the Infirmary had an incredibly clean, sterile smell. Not that the rest of the castle smelled foul, but there was a slight musty scent in the air-particularly in lesser used corridors or in the dungeons on more humid days.

So yes, Harry knew she was in the Infirmary long before she opened her eyes. Once she did, she was met by the perturbed face of the Hospital Wing's Matron.

"Miss Potter, you're finally awake."

"How long was I-?" Harry struggled to sit up, causing the Matron to tut and help her into a more comfortable position.

"Less than an hour, but it's been long enough to drive your brother and your friends mad. Of course, it doesn't help that they've been banished from here for almost the entire time you've been asleep."

What? But why would they be banished? Something must have shown on her face (or maybe she had voiced her thoughts) because Madame Pomfrey gave her a strange look before she sighed and sat on the edge of the bed.

"Miss Potter," She said. "Have you been having sexual intercourse?" Oh *Merlin*. Why were they talking about *that*?! Harry felt her face heat. Unable to properly speak, she offered a nod. "And have you been using the proper spells?" She was about to nod her head again but she paused. *She* hadn't used any spells in the few times she had sex with Sirius. She had left that to him because he had used them before so he would be more familiar with the wand movements and the incantations. But as she

though back on it, she couldn't remember him once using his wand. Well...the magical one at least (she filed that joke away for later. Sirius would find it amusing once she wasn't locked in the Infirmary anymore).

"I-uh-don't know." She replied. Madame Pomfrey gave her another look that had her squirming in her bed. "But what does this have to do with my friends?"

"To be frank, Miss Potter, you're pregnant."

Harry blinked.

And blinked.

"I'm sorry. Can you repeat that?" She asked.

"You're pregnant, Miss Potter."

"That's what I thought you said." A high pitched, hysterical giggle escaped her lips. A baby. She had a baby growing inside her. Oh god, what was she going to do? What were her parents going to say? What would *Sirius* say?

(Well, the fool would probably be ecstatic.)

Things were going to change. That much was certain. Once James found out she'd be off the quidditch team-not that she wouldn't quit beforehand. Quidditch was dangerous after all-

FUCK

FUCKFUCKFUCKFUCKFUCKFUCKFUCKFUCK

"Madame Pomfrey! T-the baby-bludger-falling-"

"The baby is fine Miss Potter."

"B-but the Bludger-"

"Hit your stomach with enough force to separate the baby from the uterus, yes. However your magic immediately went to save it. Your entire magical reserve diverted to prevent a miscarriage."

"So that's why when I was falling..."

The older witch nodded. "You took a serious hit; your magic is still trying to right everything. Lift your shirt and see." She did, and lo and behold her stomach was covered in a soft golden glow. Huh. She didn't *look* pregnant. Her belly was flat and taut (if a little bruised) from quidditch, there wasn't an ounce of fat or a bump that indicated a new life growing beneath the skin. She had felt off the past few days; a headache one day, nausea once- maybe twice that week, and tender breasts (god, that had *not* been a fun day); but she had chalked that all up to her approaching period. Oh how she was wrong...

"Of course dear, there is a potion that can help if you don't want the child. It will temporarily suppress your magic so your body can...well..."

Harry's eyes widened in horror. She may have been having a freak out, but that didn't mean that she was just going to get rid of the baby! "NO! I can't! I just...I need a moment, but I can't..."

Because people would have nasty things to say about her, but people always have something to say

about someone else's business. She could deal with them.

If her Parents had nothing good to say (or heavens forbid disown her), she would deal with it. She had enough money in her trust fund to support herself and the baby until she got a proper job.

If her friends and brother didn't support her decision...she would deal with it.

If...If Sirius changed his mind about children...

...She would deal with it. It would hurt, but she would grin and bear it for her child.

Because she would never and could never do what Madame Pomfrey suggested. She knew it was a common enough practice-particularly among purebloods-, and she wouldn't say anything against the decisions of others, but Harry simply *couldn't*.

Unbeknownst to her, Madame Pomfrey offered a small smile. "Then it would be best to get the sire. The baby will anchor itself faster if it uses the magic of both parents."

Nodding, Harry asked for the Matron to send in Sirius. Madame Pomfrey walked to the doors muttering that it was too soon for the spawn of Sirius Black to be running amuck. Her heart poor couldn't take it!

There was shouting and cursing and more shouting (thank you James) and then the sounds of hurried feet running through the room.

The impact of Sirius's body crashing into hers nearly sent them toppling to the floor.

"Sirius! Be gentle damn it!"

"Gentle? *Gentle*?! You were hit by a fucking Bludger and you fell off your broom *and* you couldn't use magic and then we were kicked out of the Infirmary and no one would tell us *anything* and the only thing you have to say to me is *be gentle*!?"

"Yes you twit! Can't you see that I'm in the Hospital Wing? I'm being hospitalized for a *reason*; I'm not here to have a nap!" Okay, so yelling wasn't part of her plan. She sucked in a breath to try and calm herself. "Be gentle so I'm not stuck here any longer than I have to be!"

He seemed to deflate at her words. "I'm sorry." He said. "I'm just...I was really worried. Why couldn't you stop yourself?"

For several long moments Harry stared at him, thinking over her words. How did she tell him that she was pregnant-that he was going to be a father like he had wanted last year? How could she tell him that they had almost lost their baby? In the end she reached for his hand. "I didn't know...I'm sorry. I wouldn't have...I didn't know." She guides his hand to lay flat against her glowing stomach. He sucked in a breath once their skin touched, no doubt feeling his magic getting sucked out and into the baby, but he didn't remove his hand.

The glow turned from golden to pure white.

"What-"

"I'm sorry-I'm so sorry, I didn't know." This mantra is repeated less than a dozen times before Sirius's eyes widened. He wasn't stupid, quite the opposite really, despite what some people thought. But it didn't take a genius to figure out what she was saying.

“Are you...?”

“Yes. I’m sorry-I didn’t know!”

“Why is it glowing?” He asked in a way that sounded like he already knew the answer.

This was good. His hand was still on her belly; in fact he was stroking it with his thumb! So perhaps only some of Harry’s fears had been misplaced. “The Bludger hit with enough force to make the baby start miscarrying...so my magic is doing everything it can to prevent it. Your magic is too. It knows that the baby is in danger and is trying to save it.”

“And...how long until the baby is stabilized?”

Harry shrugged. “I’m not sure. Madame Pomfrey didn’t say. All she said was that it would happen faster with the help of the father’s magic.” Harry assumed that once the glow disappeared that meant that the baby was safe. But she would wait until Madame Pomfrey looked her over again.

“Right then, move your butt over.”

“What?”

“I’m going to get real uncomfortable real fast if I stay sitting like this. Now move over before I make you.”

Harry laughed but shifted to give Sirius enough room to rest with her. “Is that any way to talk to the mother of your child?”

“Please, this is no different than normal, and I’m still too freaked out to be nice.” Freaked out was a very generous term. Harry could see the look in his eyes. He was probably going absolutely mad on the inside. And judging by the arm that wrapped none too gently around her shoulders, he was very close to exploding. The hand on her belly moved in slow circles stopping occasionally to caress it in a ridiculously loving way. His face pressed into her hair. “You know, this means we can’t keep our secret anymore.”

“I know.” She sighed. Her hand ran through her curls, untangling the knots on the side that Sirius wasn’t trying to suffocate himself in. “This wasn’t how I wanted to tell them.” Sirius snorted. “Oh shut up, I’m being serious-don’t you say it!”

“I didn’t say anything, dear.” Was the cheeky reply. “Are you ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.”

A few shouted words to Madame Pomfrey had her opening the doors, and in seconds her bed was surrounded by her brother, Remus, Peter, Alice, Frank, and Lily.

“Are you okay?”

“What did Madame Pomfrey say?”

“Did you hurt anything?”

“How long are you going to be in here?”

“Why didn’t you use magic?”

“Oh for the love of Merlin, shut up so she can answer you!” Sirius, bless him, shouted.

At least her friends managed to look a little apologetic, but each and every one of them were giving her looks that demanded answers. Right. She could do this.

“James.” She said. “I need to quit the quidditch team.”

So...that may have not been the best thing to say.

“*What?! What did that Bludger do to you?! Oh I’m going to kill him! I’m going to kick him off the team and then I’m going to kill him!*”

“James! This isn’t about me being hurt! Well, I mean it kind of is, but not exactly...”

“Are you scared then? Because I swear that this will never happen again-!”

“-James-”

“-I’ll put protective spells on your brooms during practice-”

“-*James*-”

“-but I can’t do that for actual games. But I’ll stay by your side the entire time and take any rogue Bludgers or Quaffles that might hit you-”

“-Oh now you’re just being ridiculous! I’m *pregnant!*”

The silence that followed that statement was so thick one could hear a pin drop on the other side of the room. Her four friends let out confused noises. Questions like ‘Pardon’ and ‘Are you serious?’ and ‘Care to repeat that?’ were asked in rapid succession. James, however, laughed.

“Good one baby sister! Now what did good ol’ Poppy really say?”

“That I’m pregnant.”

The laughter disappeared. “A word of advice Harry, a joke is only funny when you tell it once.”

“Well then it’s a good thing I’m not joking.”

“What? But...no! You can’t be pregnant!”

“I can assure you that I am. Do I need to explain to you *how* this happened in the first place?”

“No! You just...you *can’t* be pregnant! You’re *sixteen!*”

“Oh for the love of-James! I. Am. *Pregnant!* There’s a bun in the oven! I’m expecting! I’m with child! Knocked up! How many other ways do I need to say it before you get it through your thick head?!”

“B-but that means...”

“Yes, I had *sex!*” Harry pointedly ignored the flushes and cries of outrage from her friends (Sirius was having a grand old time giggling like fool into her curls). “I’m not a child, and I certainly don’t need you budding into my love-life like a prudish old grandfather! I’ve had sex, and I will continue to have sex regardless of whatever foolish notions are running through your head! Besides, I didn’t once hear Sirius complain.” The giggling stopped. Her brother seemed to stop breathing.

“You and Sirius...”

“Yes.”

“Is he...”

“Yes.”

The next few moments could best be described as chaotic. James tried to launch himself at the bed, only to be stopped by Remus and Peter *and* Frank. When her brother tried to hex Sirius, Lily shot an *Expelliarmus* at him and Alice hid his wand in her pocket.

“You prat!” James spat. “That’s my *sister*! You knocked up my sister! I’ll kill you!”

“Oh do shut up Potter.” Lily said as she cast a silencing spell at the older Potter. She smirked at his enraged face.

A few more spells and James was bound to a chair. He thrashed, silently shouting what were no doubt vicious curses at everyone in the room.

“Now we can have a civil conversation.”

Alice sat on Harry’s unoccupied side. “Why is it glowing?”

Harry (once again) explained how the Bludger had caused her body to start expelling the baby, and their magic was trying to save it. Alice let out a horrified noise. All of her friends (yes, even James) looked a little green (though Remus and James looked more murderous).

“We’ll help you, of course. I’ve babysat a few times so I can teach you how to properly fasten a nappy if you want.” Lily said, smiling.

Harry and Sirius beamed at her. “We’d love that.” Sirius responded.

Remus turned to the bound Gryffindor. “Can we trust you not to make more of an ass of yourself?” He asked. His tone was polite enough, but there was a sharp look in his eyes that promised pain if James did something too stupid.

Thankfully James nodded. All the spells were cancelled and James slowly made his way to the bedside.

“So...I’m going to be an uncle.”

“That’s what it looks like.”

James ‘hmed’ and gently poked his sister’s side like he was expecting it to blow up. “You don’t look pregnant, but I guess you wouldn’t so early on.” Suddenly, he grinned. “You do realize that’s a future Marauder in there, don’t you? The child of two of the most stubborn and barking mad people in the world...you aren’t going to get a moment’s peace for the rest of your life!”

Harry smiled at her twin. “So long as the baby ends up fine I don’t really care.”

“You say that now...how long have you two been...more than friends?”

“Since before our birthday”

“...Can I be there when you tell Mum and Dad?”

*

Once their friends had dispersed (James running off to write a letter to their parents, and the others going to the Common Room) Harry and Sirius were left to anxiously wait for the glow to disappear.

Finally, three long hours after she had woken up in the Infirmary, the glow faded to nothing.

Harry let out a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding. Sirius too seemed to deflate in relief.

"Does this mean you're staying?" Harry asked, quietly.

Sirius jumped and glared at her. "What? Of course I-how could you even think otherwise?"

Harry shrugged. "I just want to make sure. If you think...if there's the possibility of you leaving us later on...then I want you to leave now because I can't..." Oh great, her eyes were watering. Fantastic. Maybe she could pass it off as pregnancy hormones?

Calloused fingers captured her chin, forcing her to look up. Sirius looked fierce, every bit like the loyal Gryffindor he was. "*Never.*" He vowed. "You're stuck with me, now and forever."

She could deal with that.

*

Telling her parents about the baby and their relationship had been...very vocal. Explosive really. Her mother cried, begging to know where she had gone wrong raising her (honestly, she did a damn good job, so why was she complaining. Harry was pregnant, not addicted to certain potions or fucking the Dark Lord). Her father had glared at Sirius, but didn't say anything.

And then came the talk of using potions to get rid of the baby-because Harry still had an image to uphold and she was only sixteen!

By that point Harry had had enough. She glanced at Sirius, at his white-knuckled fists resting in his lap, and snapped. She stood, releasing a (relatively weak) burst of magic that caused several of the headmaster's baubles to explode, her wand pointed at her parents.

They were stunned silent. Harry had argued with them before, but *never* had she threatened them with magic.

"You *dare* threaten my child? My Little Star?" Harry felt no small amount of pleasure watching her parents fidget in their seats as if *they* were naughty school children (although, a good portion of that pleasure could have come from the bright grin Sirius was giving her). "You may be my parents, but I will not hesitate to protect my baby from you."

Mrs. Potter flinched back as if she had been slapped. "Darling no! We only want what's best for you-"

"-And you think killing my baby is best?!"

"It isn't a baby yet." Her mother said in pacifying tone. "It's still developing, dear it doesn't even have a heartbeat yet."

Harry hissed, shooting a spell (jelly-legs jinx) that brushed the top of her mother's shoulder. "Next time I won't miss. I don't want to hear another word about getting rid of the baby, I'm keeping my Little Star and that's *final*. Anymore talk of this and I will disown *myself!*"

It was her father who spoke next. He too stood, staring down his nose at her with the angriest

expression she had ever seen. “And what of your image? People are going to talk Harry!”

“People always talk! I don’t care what they have to say!”

“THEN THINK OF THE FAMILY. ONCE THIS IS MADE PUBLIC YOU’LL BE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE FAMILY! OUR NAME WILL BE RUINED!”

Harry stepped away from her father. Her wand lowered by a fraction of an inch. “If that’s what you really think,” She said quietly. “Then you don’t love me as much as I thought you did.” Her father reared back like she had actually hexed him.

“Harry-”

She shook her head. She wouldn’t cry, not again. “My father...my *parents* raised me to believe that family is the most important thing in life. They would never care about something as frivolous as their ‘Public Image’, not if it meant that we were happy. I am happy, *so* happy, but I’m terrified as well! I’m terrified because I don’t know how I’m going to do this, but I *am* going to do this, and you are either going to support my decision or not. But if you don’t...then I will not be a Potter when I walk out of this office.” She finished softly, taking the hand that Sirius offered her.

“Harry!” Her mother cried. “You don’t understand what this means-”

“I understand well enough. But you need to understand that this is my decision, Mum, and I am standing by it.”

“She gets this from you.” Mrs. Potter said accusingly, pointing at her husband. “She’s just as stubborn as you are!”

Mr. Potter sighed, offering a small, tired smile. “I’d say she gets her stubbornness from her mother. Her temper is all me.” Reaching out, he gently pushed Harry’s wand hand down until it was pointed at the floor. “This isn’t going to be easy, for anyone. But if you are so set on this then I would rather be there to help you in whatever way I can than push you away. You do realize that your entire school year is going to change, right? This means no more quidditch-”

“Yes Dad, I know. No quidditch, no Potions, extra care in Herbology, extra-extra care in Defense, no dueling, regular check-ups, I can’t take regular potions until the baby is born at *least*, and I’m going to need special robes...yes Dad, I got it.”

Her Dad grinned at her (boy did he look eerily like James). “You aren’t a child anymore...when did this happen?”

“When I came to Hogwarts.” When she met her rag-tag group of friends and faced a werewolf during the full moon. Not that she would tell her parents that.

Her parents didn’t find her statement as endearing as she did. They frowned at her. Thankfully the headmaster stopped the new line of questions by talking about the new housing arrangements.

“It’s been many years since Hogwarts has housed an infant. I have no doubt she will offer you the best rooms possible.”

*

Hogwarts’s best rooms were truly magnificent. It had two entrances, one in the Gryffindor Common Room and the other one staircase higher than the Fat Lady portrait in the hallway. The walls were stone with large windows to look out upon the lake and forest and decorated with tasteful tapestries

depicting ancient events. The wooden floor was covered in a large, plush rug that Harry would happily let her child crawl around on (there had been a bearskin when they had first seen the room, but Harry had banished it without a second thought because there was no way she was having that freaky thing in her home, Sirius, despite how ‘cool’ it was).

In total there were five rooms. There was the common room, easily larger than the one in Gryffindor Tower, with a couch and two armchairs, a small coffee table, a huge fireplace, a bookshelf, a dining table with a few chairs, a hutch with dishes, and a small kitchenette that consisted of a copper sink and a couple of cool-cupboards connected to Hogwarts’ Kitchen (because a baby was sure to be hungry at night and it would take too long to go to the kitchen). Then there was the second bath, standard with a large tub, toilet, and a shower and sink. The nursery: a large, airy room with sconces on the wall that held crystal flames that would only dim, not burn out, and produced heat for the room; with animal shaped stones that ran around the walls; a cradle made of stone and feather bedding that seemed to come out of the wall; fluffy carpets; and a large ‘mobile’ on the ceiling made of crystal and wooden figures of dragons and unicorns and centaurs and other creatures that danced across the ceiling in no particular fashion. There was the master bath that resembled the Prefect’s bathroom with its ridiculously large tub. And then there was the Master Bedroom; it was large with only one wardrobe (not that they would be needing more than one anyway), a fireplace with ever-burning wood, and a massive bed hidden under red velvet curtains that, like the cradle in the Nursery, was built from the wall itself and donned with feather cushions and thick blankets.

There was another door, perhaps leading to a study, but it remained locked as if it was a mere decoration.

Sirius had said that he had never seen a grander set of rooms in his life. Surely only the Founders themselves lived in such opulence in the castle! Harry had to agree with him.

Their friends thought the rooms were the greatest thing since wizard-chess. Lily and Remus liked the quiet of their common room, and dubbed it their new place to study. Peter was delighted that he wouldn’t need to run all the way to the kitchen anymore to get snacks and always seemed to lounge in the same spot in front of the fire. James commandeered one of the armchairs (and their bathroom on more than one occasion) as if he owned the place. Alice adored their view; the windows in the tower were stained and too thin to offer a decent view. And Frank, whenever he managed to visit, was utterly charmed by the Nursery and planned to replicate the spells for any children he had in the future.

The first night in the new rooms had been tough. Though the bed was soft and the room was warm it was too foreign for the two to get comfortable, and so they spent most of the night bent over her stomach, talking and singing quietly (or pressing feather-light kisses against it in Sirius’s case), and sharing loving kisses until sleep was merciful enough to take them.

The next night found Sirius laying spread-eagle on the bed as Harry changed for the night. Even fanned out as he was there was still plenty of room for Harry, but she couldn’t help but smile teasingly at him.

“If you don’t move over I might have to sleep on you.”

“Isn’t that how we got into this predicament in the first place?” She balled up her robes and threw them at him.

*

Remus Lupin loved his friends very much. He had to with the amount of stress they put him through. He put up with their dangerous pranks, the fighting, the experiments, he listened to the stupidest and

most over-the-top plans he had ever heard, to one friend venting about another, to the secrets. He meddled, he taught, he played matchmaker, he played the mediator, he lectured, and he protected when it came to his rag-tag pack. There was very little that they could do that could surprise him.

This, however, was incredibly new and so fucking *traumatizing* that it left the werewolf standing stock-still in the Common Room.

This was Harry and Sirius draped over each other in front of the fire, gazing into the other's eyes with the most disgustingly dopey expressions Remus had ever seen. That in and of itself would have been fine, Remus could handle that.

It was the fucking *names* they were calling each other that were making him cringe.

"I love you snufflekins."

"Aw, I love you too, honeybun."

"Pudding pants"

"Snookums"

"Baby cakes"

"Boo-boo Bear"

Remus had had enough. "What the fuck are you two *doing*!?" And just like that, as if he had flipped a switch, the dopey expressions morphed into irritated ones. Harry dropped her head onto Sirius's chest with a groan.

"*Fuuuck*."

"Damn it Remus, we thought you were James." Sirius said, draping his arm over his eyes.

"And what does James have to do with your sickening displays of affection in the Common Room?"

"Because I had to sit through yet another sonnet about Evans's hair! Her *hair* Remus!" Ouch. Remus could sympathize with him, having sat through several sonnets and ballads and whatever else James can come up with about Lily Evans.

Harry's head pops up long enough to tell him that they were giving James a taste of his own medicine before dropping down again.

Right. Revenge. This he could deal with. Preferably in a room as far away from those two as possible.

"Shit, Harry. Someone's coming." And then the two were back to lovingly gazing at each other. Remus rolled his eyes, rushing to the portrait hole so he wouldn't have to hear the stupid names again.

The last thing he heard before the portrait closed was James moaning about the assault on his poor, innocent ears.

It was official. He friends are idiots.

*

The Winter Holiday approaches faster than they thought possible. Before they know it they're boarding the train and saying good-byes at Kings Cross (Sirius had been invited to stay under the stipulation that there would be no 'funny business').

Sirius dragged their trunks up to their room (honestly, you would think that she was an invalid, not pregnant!) and collapsed onto the bed with a huff.

"If you need me, I'll be asleep for the next three days."

"Oh no you aren't. We have to go to the Christmas party at Frank's tomorrow, remember?"

"We're on holiday! Shouldn't we be deciding whether or not we go to a party or not?"

"Merlin, you'd think I was taking you to St. Mungo's, not a Christmas party."

"Isn't it the same thing? There's awkward small talk and older people asking too many intrusive questions and you spend the entire time wishing you were somewhere else!"

"You're ridiculous."

*

Augusta Longbottom, while a truly terrifying individual, certainly knew how to throw a party. The ballroom was decked in golden tinsel and silver baubles and long lines of evergreen garland with faerie lights woven through it. Much like Hogwarts, several candles floated in various places between the floor and ceiling, though most of the light came from the crystal chandelier hanging above them.

Several trays of champagne floated about the room (which Harry had to regretfully decline every time), followed by trays of h'ordeuvres that Harry couldn't be bothered to remember the names of. They were good though. Maybe she could convince Sirius to make her some...

Frank met them with a grin (a grimace according to Sirius), giving them the traditional 'Thanks for coming, you look lovely; enjoy the party.' and then left to greet another guest. House-elves took their coats for them.

Sirius gasped when she took off her coat. He had gotten ready with James and thus hadn't seen her until they were already in their coats.

Her dress was floor length, made of silky material and a deep shade of green with matching gloves reaching three quarters of the way up her arms. The material was skin tight, accentuating her slightly expanded belly and hips, until mid-thigh where the skirt flared out under a layer of shimmering green chiffon. The neck line was a v-neck, reaching her shoulders in thick straps and then plunging half way down her back.

Her beloved lioness necklace sat in its usual spot on her clavicle, because there was no way she was ever taking that off, while above it she wore a diamond choker (her grandmother's). Her hair was pinned up, hanging from the right side of her face in large curls with a bright red poinsettia pinned above the curls. She wore little makeup (mostly around her eyes, and dark red lipstick) and white-gold earrings holding diamond embedded snowflakes. The only things that looked out of place were her glasses (but she kind of needed them to see, so if anyone had a problem with them they could go fuck off).

"Merlin," Sirius breathed. "You look amazing."

Harry smiled shyly. "Thank you, so do you." And he did. His long hair was pulled into a low pony, tied with a silver ribbon (that was most definitely supposed to go on a present and *not* in her boyfriend's hair) and he even managed to shave his stubble (shocking). His dress robes were form fitting at the torso, and fashionably loose at the arms and legs. The robes were dark red-almost a wine color, thick, and trimmed with silvery snowflake-esque designs that vaguely matched Harry's earrings.

He looked like a younger, clean shaven, Saint Nick.

(And boy had he gone out of his way to do so. Once he had found out the color of Harry's dress he had made it his mission to make them the 'Christmas Personified' couple. It was his idea to put the flower in Harry's hair.)

"Eugh you two, get a room." James gagged.

Sirius let out an over dramatized sigh. "If only...I guess I'll just have to settle for being the date of the most gorgeous woman at this party." He said, offering Harry his arm.

Harry took it. "My devilishly handsome, Christmas obsessed date." She pointed out. They share a grin.

"Naturally!" James gagged again. Perhaps they took too much pleasure in traumatizing her brother.

'No' Harry decided as she dragged Sirius out of the way and under some mistletoe. *'I can find much more pleasure in this.'*

Her brother cried for his 'poor eyes'.

*

Socialization was easy enough. Socializing with people who had a perpetual stick up their asses? Not so much. Merlin these people were fucking ridiculous! If they weren't ridiculously stuck up assholes, then they were creeps who had nothing better to do than 'flirt' with teenagers (Sirius at one point was growling at the offenders; If they weren't in Frank's house Harry would have let him go berserk on the man). To be fair though, they had a few lovely conversations with some rather kind folk-few though they were.

What annoyed Harry the most was the group of women in a rainbow of ugly dresses gossiping and pointing at *her*.

And then one of them had the audacity to approach the 'Christmas Couple'.

She (snobbishly) introduced herself as Lady Blackwater of some tiny town in France –a very distant relation of the Longbottoms, nineteenth cousin seven times removed on the grandmother's side or some bullshit like that. Harry and Sirius were polite enough with their greetings.

And then the woman opened her mouth...

"Dear, don't you think that dress is a little...*inappropriate* for your body type?" The woman with the eyesore dress (canary yellow, really? And could those sleeves be puffed any higher?) asked, eyeing Harry as if she had sniffed something particularly foul.

Harry looked down, trying to see what was wrong with her dress. She loved it, Sirius loved it, her parents and brother liked it well enough, and she had received several complements about it! She felt beautiful in it; sexy and elegant. Honestly! What was wrong with her body? "I'm...short?" She

asked, clearly confused.

Beside her, Sirius nearly choked repressing a laugh. Asshole.

The woman gave her a withering look. “No. I meant your...extra padding around your middle.” Oh. Oh. Oh *hell* no. This woman was calling her *fat*? Did she know that Harry was pregnant (well, no) and that that what happens while the baby develops?!

Harry narrowed her eyes at the older witch. Sirius muttered ‘Now you’ve done it’ as the green eyed witch took a few steps towards the woman. “*Excuse you*. There is nothing wrong with my dress *or* my body. Yes, I have a little extra weight in some places-which isn’t even a lot, but I still look fantastic in my dress! Do you know why? It’s because I have this thing called self-confidence, something you must have in spades if you have the audacity to criticize my dress whilst wearing *that*.” Sirius was shaking in the background, nearly suffocating from suppressed laughter.

Lady Something of Nowhere-in-Particular flushed in rage...or embarrassment. Probably both.

(Later, Harry would liken the image to a human pencil: yellow body, red top. Her friends would find that hilarious.)

“How dare you! Such *insolence*-”

Sirius (thankfully) decided to intervene. “I’m terribly sorry Miss Blackwater. My lovely intended did not mean to offend-she has a wicked temper and doesn’t take kindly to *anyone* dictating her body. Though I fear there is some truth to her words; Harry is utterly perfect and beautiful. Only someone who is blind or daft couldn’t see that.” At the word ‘blind’, Sirius none too subtly eyed the woman’s dress. “But I’m afraid we must be leaving now. We need to find Frank and give him our gifts before we head home.”

The pencil woman was too mortified to speak properly. Harry thanked the stars for that. She didn’t know what she would do if another word came from that woman’s mouth!

They made their escape quickly, and once they were a safe enough distance away, Sirius let out a bark-like laugh. “That was great! Wait until I tell Prongs! You deserve a medal for that, Harry. It was spectacular!”

Harry didn’t find it so funny. Her arms were crossed at her chest, face contorted into a scowl. “I’m not fat.” She growled.

“No,” Sirius agreed, wrapping an arm around her shoulder to pull her close so he could kiss her hair. “You’re pregnant.” He said quietly. It wouldn’t do for someone to hear them and feed the hungry hoard of gossipers. “It’s natural; and to be honest, I think you look *ravishing*.”

Harry snorted. “Why don’t you start thinking with your upstairs brain, Black.”

“You wound me! I shower you with compliments and I get insults in return!”

“That’s because you don’t need me to feed your incredibly large ego. Who knows what will happen if it gets any larger!” The pair laugh. They share a kiss or three under the ‘mistletoe’ (which totally wasn’t there, despite what Sirius said) before deciding that yes, they had had enough of the party and would very much like to go home. Maybe they could curl up by the fire for a bit with some biscuits and hot chocolate while they listened to Sirius’s muggle records.

It wouldn’t be until after they gave Frank his gifts and said goodbye to her parents and brother and were on their way home that Harry recalled a part from their earlier conversation.

'My Lovely Intended'

*

“Is this a joke?” Harry asked, shoving the offending item in her boyfriend’s face.

It was a day later, Christmas Eve, and Sirius had thrown a folded piece of parchment at her *head* while she had been enjoying a nice snack and a book. She had yelled at him of course. That parchment was *way* too heavy! Why did he think it was a good idea to throw it at her? She had almost thrown it back, too. But there was something...odd about how it felt.

Curiosity killed the cat and all.

Uncrinkling the paper, Harry dropped the hidden weight into her lap. She picked it up.

A ring.

Thin banded, white-gold, with a single diamond resting on top. Simple and beautiful.

A quick glance back at the parchment found two words: *Say yes?*

So yes, to say that Harry was apprehensive would be an understatement. This was *Sirius* (pun intended), prankster through and through. And while she knew he loved her very much and the rational part of her brain was telling her that Sirius wasn’t that cruel and tasteless; there was still a niggling doubt in the back of her mind that this *was* just a joke.

Or what if he just wanted to marry her for the baby?

Something flashed in Sirius’s eyes. “I would *never* joke about something like this.” He said in such a way that had Harry breathing a sigh of relief.

“Okay, I was just making sure.” Green eyes stared at the ring as it was flipped and turned every which way.

“So...is that a no?” What? “Do you hate it? I mean I know you hate gold jewelry and while silver is pretty it’s a big *no* –”

“-Sirius-”

“-because I know you’d actually want to touch Moony without burning him. Is this about what I said last year? About running off to the Ministry once you were pregnant? Because that’s not it. I fucking love you, baby or no baby. I’ve had this ring waiting in my vaults since the beginning of our relationship. I know it’s weird-stop looking at me like that!”

“*Sirius*-”

“We don’t have to get married right away. Next week, six months, twenty years-I don’t care! Or we could not get married ever! I’d be happy as long as you’re with me-”

“*Yes, Sirius.*”

The boy blinked. “Come again?” He asked, making Harry roll her eyes.

“Oh for Merlin’s sake! *Yes, Sirius! I’m saying yes!*” It took an embarrassingly long amount of time for the words to sink in. But once they did a bright smile spread across his face.

“So you’ll...?”

“Sirius Black, if I have to say yes one more time I’m changing my answer!” She wouldn’t.

He knew this too, as his grin only spread wider. “I just wanted to hear you say it again.” Harry rolled her eyes again. Merlin. This was going to be her life from now on. Though, she wasn’t too upset about it. (She just prayed that their child, and any more they might have, wouldn’t be as infuriating as their father. One Sirius was more than enough, thank you very much!)

“Well Romeo, aren’t you supposed to put this on my finger?” That was all Sirius needed to hear to shoot to her side, taking the ring from her hands and placing it on her waiting finger. The ring resized itself to fit.

Harry held her hand out at arm’s length to inspect the ring. She could get used to the metal band on her finger.

“Does it meet your standards, Princess?”

“It’s acceptable.” She said in mock-seriousness. She tugged his jumper, bringing him close to kiss him. “How about an April wedding? When we’re on holiday?” She asked once she pulled away.

“Sounds perfect.” Sirius agreed, pressing their foreheads together.

“Brilliant. But you get to tell James this time.”

*

James, while not too thrilled that his ‘baby sister’ was getting married so soon, was happy for them. Of course, it helped that he was going to be the Best Man. The Potter Heir was very excited at the prospect of being in charge of Sirius’s Stag Party (“I am an expert in *Stag* after all.” Harry had been forced to endure her brother’s stupid puns for the rest of the winter holiday).

Her parents, like James, were not overly excited for the short engagement. Mostly because they only had four months to prepare (the couple couldn’t understand why four months was such a nightmare. They were having a small ceremony and reception at Potter Manor, not a grand gala).

The highlight of that conversation had been her Father taking Sirius into a one armed hug as he offered his congratulations.

Christmas was fairly calm and quiet-or as calm and quiet as it can get with three Marauders under the same roof (taking sugar out of the equation). Harry’s favorite present was a set of ornaments that James made. It was three stars floating over a ribbon with three words on it: Sirius, Harry, and Baby. She had given her brother a teary hug after seeing it.

*

School came and went faster than they thought. Owls from her parents flooded in every day. ‘Which of these seventeen identical napkins do you want?’ ‘What about this tableware?’ ‘No, Sirius, we are not playing your muggle music as Harry walks down the aisle’ ‘Yes, you have to wear dress robes’ ‘Harry that bouquet you chose is a disaster.’ The duo had sent Harry’s parents a very detailed letter stating that while they were grateful for the help, it was *their* wedding. If Harry wanted to walk down the aisle to ‘Can’t get enough of your Love Baby’ or ‘I’ll be there’ or ‘Maybe I’m Amazed’ or ‘The First Time Ever I saw Your Face’ then she damn well would. If Sirius wanted to wear Chuck Taylors instead of leather boots, he would. Who cares what color the napkins were? Harry’s bouquet had sentimental meaning to them both; it was not up for debate. And the silverware was to be gold,

with gold rimmed dishes and crystal goblets. Thank you very much Mum and Dad now stop sending thousands of letters a day, people were beginning to notice and ask questions.

January passed quickly after and soon the parents-to-be found themselves in the Hospital Wing for a very special appointment...

*

Harry was laying on the bed, holding a rectangular mirror, with her shirt lifted to reveal her bump. Sirius sat next to her, practically buzzing in excitement.

“Well Miss Potter, Mister Black, are you ready to find out the sex of the baby?” Madame Pomfrey asked. They both nodded; Sirius so enthusiastic that Harry was afraid he’d damage something. “Alright. Miss Potter, just relax.” The matron waved her wand in a complicated pattern, causing the tip of her wand and Harry’s abdomen to glow pale yellow. The older witch took the mirror and tapped her wand to its surface. The mirror glowed the same color as the spell for just a moment, before going black. “Now comes the exciting part.” She pressed the tip of her wand to Harry’s glowing belly. Instantly, the mirror changed to reveal a blurry, black and white circular shape. “That’s the head! Okay, let’s look around...” As she dragged her wand along Harry’s belly, the image on the mirror traveled with it. Neck, shoulder, arm, leg, foot... “Here it is-oh my!”

Sirius let out a bark-like laugh. Harry put her head in her hands, making a noise that was somewhere between a laugh and a groan.

“He’s *so* your son.”

“Yep! That’s my boy!”

Their son had his legs spread eagle (as far as he could in his mother’s womb), flashing the three a good view of his genitals.

“Oh man, I can’t wait to tell Prongs! He’s going to be so proud!”

*

Proud was an understatement. James had cackled and gave her belly an affectionate pat. Peter grinned, face scarlet, telling them that he was a true Marauder in the making. Remus was the only one who felt any sympathy-or so she thought. He had given her a pat on the back, but the look on his face showed that he found her son’s antics hilarious, giving her a ‘better you than me’ look (traitor).

She couldn’t wait for Remus to have children one day. She was going to give him hell.

*

“These robes are amazing! I can’t see the bump at all!”

“I like the bump.”

“I do too, but I also like not having to worry about my robes being too tight or not.”

“How many of these did you get?”

“Enough.”

*

“Are you up to going to Hogmeade today?” Sirius asked one chilly Saturday morning (the one before Valentine’s Day).

Harry, who had woken up only a few hours before with a splitting headache, nodded. “I think so. The potion’s made me feel better...if we take our time I should be good.”

Hogsmeade was a flurry of students running about going to Honeydukes to buy copious amounts of candies for their sweethearts, or to the Three Broomsticks for a butterbeer, or to Madame Puddifoot’s (decked in a disgusting amount of pink and red and white hearts) to enjoy a romantic cup of tea. How was tea romantic?

“We aren’t going there.” Sirius shuddered.

Harry agreed. You couldn’t pay her to go into the tea shop this time of year. Or ever, really. Too pink. Pink *was* a lovely color, but there was entirely too much pink in that tea shop.

What little shopping they needed to do was done in less than an hour (shockingly) with only a few well-placed elbows needed. Students were too busy making kissy faces at one another to actually shop. So they were left walking down the streets of Hogsmeade weaving between couples and overcrowded ‘hot spots’.

Harry made an offhand comment about taking a moment to grab a snack and a drink (the baby needed food damn it!) while staring at a display of some delightful looking cider.

“If you want tea or some junk you’re going to have to go get it yourself. You can’t pay me enough to go in there.” Harry snorted.

“How romantic.” She deadpanned.

“Hey I can be ro-” Whatever he had planned to say was cut off by screams of students down the street. They were not the screams of friends having a good time; they were terrified screams. The students fled down the cobblestone road, shoving people, screaming, and throwing things in the way of whatever was behind them.

At the end of the street was a group of masked figures firing off spells at anyone they could see.

“Shit! Someone call the Aurors!” Sirius yelled. He shoved Harry into the nearest alley, manhandling her until she was hidden behind stacked boxes. “Stay here and stay hidden.” He ordered.

Harry’s eyes flashed. “No way! I want to help!”

“Absolutely not! It’s too dangerous!”

“But not too dangerous for *you*?!”

“I can’t believe were even having this argument-that’s not what I meant and you know it!”

“Sirius they’re attacking *children*!”

“Then think of **our** child!” Harry’s mouth snapped shut. Sirius sighed, scrubbing his face with one hand. “...I don’t want anything to happen to either of you so please just stay here and stay hidden!”

Well, he didn’t need to make it sound like she was going to go running off to the front lines-not that she had even *planned* to-why was it so bad for her to want to protect her fellow students? But despite everything in her that was screaming at her to help, she agreed to remain hidden. But Before Sirius

had run off to join the students and adults in the fight, Harry pulled him in for a bruising kiss, telling him to not be a hero.

“Yeah, you too.”

She could hear spells being shouted left and right, screaming, explosions...Merlin she felt useless.

(Un)Fortunately she wouldn't be so for long. From the other end of the alleyway Harry heard the screams of a handful of younger students. When their screams continued the Gryffindor girl made her decision. She shot from her hiding place and withdrew her wand.

The stone wall was cold against her back as she pressed against it to get a look at what was going on. There were five figures under the lamppost across the street. Two were standing, taller, broader, and cloaked-probably men and no doubt a part of the terrorist group from the other side of the alley; three were smaller, one being very small and curled on the snowy ground with their house scarves (one Ravenclaw and two Slytherins) discarded in a pile of slush. Right. Two adults against a pregnant teenager. She could deal with those odds.

Distract the adults, get the students to safety, and do. not. engage. Simple really.

She cast a few wordless, wandless spells on herself (Silencing Spell on her feet, Notice-Me-Not Charm on her body-though there was no telling how long the second would last for) and leapt into action.

Though she loved her unborn son, Harry would readily admit that she hated the limitations on her physical activity. It was nice to be active for this one moment, even though the situation was shit and her lungs burned. She made it to the other side of the street unseen; the masked men were too busy laughing and tormenting the students on the ground to notice her.

“Come now you blood traitor, it's far too quiet. *Crucio!*” The man nearest to her (for there was little doubt that he was a man with that deep voice) shot the unforgivable at the tiniest student on the ground. A girl. No older than a second year (She wasn't even going to question how the child made it to Hogsmeade).The little blonde girl screamed as her body was contorted, convulsed, *tortured*.

Harry saw red.

With nary a second thought, Harry launched herself at the lamppost, grabbing it with both hands, and used the momentum to swing her body so she could kick the nearest asshole.

...

She had been aiming for the face. Although it was very satisfying to watch her feet connect with his ribs, causing him to crash into the man next to him, cancelling the spell and knocking their wands to the floor.

Harry wasted no time in retrieving those. As her feet touched the ground she stumbled a bit, but that didn't stop her from reaching down and grabbing those two wrong-*disgusting*-wands.

It was very sad how quickly she took the men down. (So much for do not engage.)

There was a little bit of irony, using the wands that had tortured her fellow students to save them. She cast a handful of spells on the older men (which they couldn't dodge or anything; pathetic) to bind them, silence them, burn off their masks. She didn't recognize them.

Before she did anything else, she sent the students a few spells-healing and soothing but nothing too

strong in case there was something seriously wrong. They shuddered, slipping into exhaustion induced sleeps.

With the students taken care of, Harry turned her attention back to the men. The man who was torturing the little girl got a nice kick to his charred face. What a disgusting crunch his nose made and-oh no! Harry got blood on her nice boots; what a shame.

Twisting the wand in her fingers, Harry sent the two men a dark look. “Good Gracious, do these belong to you? I’m afraid they’ve been damaged in our little skirmish. See here?” She pointed to the center of their wands. “I’m afraid they’ve *snapped*,” At the word her thumbs pressed the middle of the wands until they bent and gave way beneath her fingers. The men screamed in silent rage. “Beyond repair.... You are disgraces to wizards everywhere. *Torturing children*-I’ll walk you to the fucking dementors myself!”

Her boot connected with the ribs of the other man. “Did you truly think that these children weren’t protected? Well I have news for you-they are under *my* protection! And I will fight anyone foolish enough my fellow students *myself*!” She landed a few more kicks (more than were strictly necessary) before throwing the broken wands to the ground. “You two are pathetic.” With those words she turned her back to the men, turning her attention back to the students.

The three were all blonde with similar faces-siblings perhaps. Two girls and a boy. They were cut up and passed out, but they were alive. Now to see the extent of their injuries (though in hindsight, perhaps testing her ability to cast a complex healing spell she had only just learned on these students wasn’t the brightest idea).

Perhaps she should have paid attention to the alley she had come from...

“What. Did. You. *Do*?!”

In the entrance to the alley stood three Aurors, all staring in shock at the fallen wizards on the ground. Leading them was a blank faced James and a very, *very* pissed off Sirius.

Well...fuck.

*

“WHAT HAPPENED TO ‘STAY PUT’?!”

“THEY NEEDED HELP! DID YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO STAY IDLE WHEN I COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING?!”

“YOU COULD HAVE GOTTEN HELP, WE COULD HAVE SPARED SOMEONE-”

“-THERE WAS NO TIME FOR THAT THEY-”

“-OF COURSE THERE WAS TIME, BUT INSTEAD YOU CHOSE TO ENDANGER OUR SON-”

“-HOW *DARE* YOU-”

“-DON’T YOU REALIZE HOW FUCKING IRRESPONSIBLE THAT WAS-”

“-THEY WERE BEING *CRUCIO-ED* SIRIUS, WHAT THE FUCK WAS SUPPOSED TO DO?! HUH?! I THOUGH YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD UNDERSTAND!”

“.....”

“...Oh...Sirius, I'm sorry I didn't mean to bring that-Sirius wait!”

*

Silence permeated their chambers for weeks. They didn't speak to each other-didn't even *acknowledge* the other person. They did everything in silence-homework, eating, going to bed; their friends had even stopped coming by because they couldn't deal with the silence.

Outside their rooms they were...quiet. Oh sure, they spoke to their friends but they lacked their usual exuberance and continued to ignore each other.

Anyone who suggested an apology should be made was met with a wand to the face for Harry still believed that she was in the right (besides bringing up the incident from the beginning of the summer), and Sirius thought Harry was a reckless idiot (and the bastard had gotten James into thinking the same).

On one chilly morning, just over the second week of silence, Harry sat sandwiched between Lily and Remus, chatting about their homework when Harry felt a gentle tap on her shoulder. The students around them silenced while James and Sirius stared at the person behind her with narrowed eyes.

Harry turned around. What she didn't expect was the tiny Slytherin first year she had saved standing behind her with her siblings, beaming at her (and what pretty blue-green eyes she had!). The three had been taken to St. Mungos right after the attack and Harry hadn't seen them since. She had been worried!

Before she could even say hello, however, the girl launched forward and wrapped Harry in a tight hug.

“ThankyouThankyouThankyou!”

“Rhea!” The older girl admonished. But there was a smile on her face as she told her sister to introduce herself before attacking others. The younger girl-Rhea-grinned, stepping away from Harry.

“Sorry! I'm just excited! I've wanted to thank you since they told us-oh sorry I still haven't introduced myself. I'm Rhea Rowle! This is my brother, Thorfinn-he's a third year, and my sister Pandora-she's in her fifth year! Thank you for saving us!” Oh, did Harry's heart melt at the smile Rhea gave her.

The Gryffindor girl turned on the bench with some difficulty (which did not go unnoticed by Rhea's siblings) to properly face the first year. She smiled. “You are very welcome, I'm glad you're back at school.”

“We almost weren't going to come back...” Thorfinn growled.

Harry's brows knit together, but it was Remus who voiced the question racing through her mind. “Why not?”

Pandora sighed, combing her fingers through her sister's hair. “Our parents...they were terrified.”

“Because of the attack?”

The Ravenclaw nodded. “That and...” Her voice dropped to a whisper. “Rhea...she...she almost didn't make it.”

“What?” Harry’s breath caught in her throat. She reached out, grasping Rhea’s smaller hands to reassure herself that she was still here and okay. Had this child really been at death’s door?

It was Thorfinn who answered her next. “Those *bastards*-ow! (“-Mum told you not to swear!-“) Fine Rhea, those *jerks* put Rhea under the unspeakable for so long that her mind started to crack. And because she’s so young her magic reacted violently. If you hadn’t stopped them when you did Rhea’s magic would have killed her.” He hissed. The Marauders sucked in a breath. Thorfinn kept muttering very creative things he would do to the Death Eaters if he ever saw them again, and a few murmurs of agreement (some from her) and even a suggestion or two!

Pandora looked at her brother sternly. “Rhea’s better now, though. She still has another week of taking potions and then she’ll be right as rain.”

“And what about you two? Are you two alright?” Harry asked, much to the shock of the older Rowles. They blinked at her, then Pandora smiled.

“We are fine, we escaped with minor injuries compared to Rhea.”

“That’s good.”

Thorfinn nodded. “But we’ve gone way off track. We didn’t come over for story time. We had something to discuss with you.”

“We owe you a life debt!” Little Rhea chirped. The three Rowles gave her serious looks (which looked incredibly out of place on Rhea’s bubbly face), bowing their heads to her for a moment.

Harry’s mind reeled. She hadn’t saved the three just for them to turn around and owe her a Life Debt! But she couldn’t just ignore it either, magic wouldn’t let her.

Of course...she could use it right away and be done with it...

“I have no need for a life debt, let alone three.” She told them. When they looked ready to object she smiled. “*But* I would be more than happy to have a few more friends instead.” Rhea’s eyes teared up and she launched herself into Harry’s arms again. Thorfinn looked perplexed, but not angry-so that was a good thing, right?

Pandora smiled. “You truly are a wonder Potter.” She too joined the hug, and dragged her brother into it as well. “Thank you.” She whispered.

*

Later that evening, after dinner was eaten and homework completed, Harry sat on the sofa and wrote a list of things that they still needed to get for the baby.

A Sling

More Clothes-You could never have enough clothes.

Bottles

Pacifiers

Toys

A Crib for the Manor

A Highchair

A Pram

Blankets

Soaps and Lotions

Nappies- Sweet Merlin did they need as many nappies as they could get their hands on!

The list continued on with various little bits and bobs that kept popping into her head. After several feet of parchment was sacrificed to her list, a familiar body slipped onto the couch and draped himself over her.

“You’re amazing, have I ever told you that?” Sirius slurred, nuzzling his nose into her shoulder.

“Yes, and you’re drunk.”

“No ‘m not. ‘M *Sirius*.”

“Oh dear god...Sirius, go to bed.”

“Noo! Not ‘nless you come with me.”

Harry raised an eyebrow at her boyfriend. “Oh? I thought you were furious with me?” She asked, causing Sirius to shake his head.

“Don’ wanna fight ‘nymore. Miss you.” Is his muffled reply. She’s missed him too; daily life is boring (and oh-so quiet) when they’re giving each other the cold shoulder. Her lips press against his hair (which is disturbingly oily, but at least he doesn’t smell like liquor).

“I don’t either. Come on, let’s get you in bed.”

Maneuvering an inebriated Sirius was not an easy task, pregnant or not. He was very clingy and limp at the same time. Yet somehow she managed to get him into their bed and stripped to his boxers. He giggled (yes, *giggled*) as she stripped him.

“Are you goin’ t’ have y’r wick’d way with me?”

Harry shook her head. “Not when you’re drunk. You and I are going to sleep.” Was her reply as she changed into one of Sirius’s T-shirts. She slipped into the bed, not at all surprised when Sirius wrapped himself around her like a dragon with its hoard. “Good grief, let me breathe!”

The dog animagus loosened his grip, but didn’t release her.

Soon, sleep was merciful enough to claim Harry for the first restful night she’d had in weeks.

Had she been awake, she would have seen the charms wear off and Sirius’s gaze become clearer.

*

The next morning Remus thanked to whatever deity was listening for his two friends finally swallowed their pride and were talking again.

*

It wasn't long into their new friendship that Harry found out a crucial fact about Pandora.

She was a Seer.

Not the kind from Knockturn Alley who would give palm readings and bullshit fortunes for a quick sickle; but an honest to goodness Seer.

This revelation came one evening after dinner as the Marauders and the Rowles were lounging in 'The Den'. Pandora had been laughing one moment and the next she was staring ahead of her, violet eyes unfocused. The Gryffindors had tried asking what was wrong they were shushed and told to wait it out.

Finally, after hours of waiting (that was really less than five minutes; don't listen to Sirius, he's a bit overdramatic) Pandora blinked, offered a small smile, and turned to Harry.

"Oh Harry, he's beautiful!"

"Who?"

"Your son, of course."

Now that seemed to capture the attention of the Marauders. For even though the Rowles were now counted as Harry's friends, they had yet to be informed of Harry's...current predicament. Remus and Sirius tensed, Lily and Peter looked green, and James looked ready to fight.

"How do you know about the baby?" The male Potter asked.

This started a flurry of questions and accusations about how she got the information-which of course led to an argument with the younger Rowles because their sister was most certainly NOT a spy or whatever bullshit accusations they were claiming.

It was ten minutes of this back and forth arguing, and Pandora shrinking further and further into herself before Harry stood up, silencing them all. She was the only one who remained silent through the ordeal, but instead of looking at Pandora with suspicion her gaze was filled with wonder. She knelt in front of her blonde friend as quickly as her body allowed, and took her hands in hers.

"Pandora, you've *seen* him?" The Ravenclaw nodded. "Tell me, what will he look like?"

Still unsure of everything, Pandora spoke softly. "He's beautiful, the perfect blend of you two; he has your hair. And he's so very happy. I didn't see much, but he wore a giant smile the entire time..."

Harry grinned. To hear that her boy would be happy eased some fears that she hadn't voiced aloud. She'd been having doubts at night, long after Sirius was asleep and therefore could not reassure her, that kept her up. She doubted her abilities to care for their son, to keep him happy and healthy and let him know without a doubt that he was loved.

To hear that he was a happy baby...was definitely something that Harry needed to hear. She reached forwards and wrapped her arms around her friend's shoulder. "Thank you." She whispered. When she pulled back, she grinned. "So, a Seer huh?" Pandora nodded. "Did you see anything else?"

"I heard your voice...and a name."

Any doubts of her claim were squashed when the Ravenclaw whispered the name that only Sirius and Harry knew.

*

Weeks passed quickly after that in their usual, boring routines. Eat, class, eat, class, eat, homework, sleep, repeat. Then one April morning found them on the Hogwarts Express, heading home for the holiday.

*

“No.”

“Harry honey, it’s tradition!” Her mother said, placidly.

“I don’t care. I’ll blindfold him if I have to, but he’s staying with me.” The issue in question was the very stupid tradition that the bride and groom couldn’t see each other before the wedding (superstition and all that—a load of bullshit really). Not going to happen. Not when Sirius was getting less and less sleep because his brother wasn’t going to be a part of the wedding. *‘I can’t.’* Regulus had said. *‘Mum and Dad would have a fit if they knew.’* Ever one to please his parents, Regulus had merely offered his congratulations on their nuptials and promised not to mention anything to Walburga and Orion, but would have no further involvement.

Sirius was devastated. He had planned to tell Regulus at the wedding that he was going to be an Uncle, hell, he wanted him in the ceremony because he was his baby brother! All because Regulus didn’t want to disappoint their terrible parents.

(If Harry got her hands on him she’d punch his stupid, pointy nose.)

“Harry, tradition—”

“—Screw the damn tradition! We don’t *want* traditional! That’s not who we are! Why is that so hard to understand?!”

Her mother looked crushed. “I just want you to have the perfect wedding…”

Harry pinched the skin at her nose. “It won’t be if you keep controlling every little thing.” It was a low blow, and her mother looked devastated, but Harry really couldn’t find the energy to care. Really, her mother fought her on the bouquet (still was), on Harry’s dress (a fight which Harry won after nearly purchasing the thing herself), on the time of day to be married, on the food, on Sirius’s *shoes*...Harry was sick of it at that point! “This is *mine* and *Sirius’s* wedding, Mum. Let us do things *our way*.”

She gave her mother no time to respond, instead turning on her heels to find her husband-to-be.

*

“Did you know that there’s a tradition where the groom can’t see the bride before the wedding?”

“Yes, and it’s fucking stupid. Why did you ask? Are you trying to get rid of me?”

“No, but I have a blindfold if you want to do a...creative version of it.”

“...Will you do wicked things to me?”

“...Only if you beg.”

*

Sirius was dragged out of bed at the ass-crack of dawn by his 'friends'.

(James's scream after getting an eyeful of Sirius's naked ass was a sound that no one was likely to forget anytime soon.)

They dragged him to James's room where they made him bathe and fed him and somehow between James and Peter and Remus and Frank he was dressed in his robes and looked...fucking hot in his personal opinion (totally not biased).

The robes were red-passion, love-with a red rose pinned to his chest and a crown of Ivy and white carnations, with a few bits of Holly and Mistletoe and Myrtle strewn about (he'd insisted on the crows, picked them out himself-Harry had the matching one; He had a plan for them). The robes were almost uncomfortably tight, not that it mattered; once the reception started he was taking the outer layer off. His hair fell free past his shoulders and his facial hair shaved.

Frank got a little creative with his spellwork and managed to hide the dark circles under his eyes, and the love bites on his neck and collarbone. And peeking out from the hem of his robes were two, bright red Chuck Taylors (just to piss off the in-laws).

Now that all was said and done he had nothing to do but wait...and when he had had time to wait, he had time to think...

*

Harry would never understand how it took a veritable *army* of people to get her ready for the wedding. Yeah, she needed some help fastening the back of her dress and fixing her hair, but she most certainly did not need help bathing or eating or brushing her teeth (Mother!).

She had finished her eyeliner and Lily and Alice pinned her flower crown and veil atop her curls when she finally got a moment to step back and actually look at herself.

Her dress reached the floor in silky waves, her rounded belly framed by a few layers of chiffon. There was a thick belt of white-gold and diamonds between her breasts and her belly. The top was mostly white chiffon, with poufy sleeves that hung low off her shoulders and ended with cuffs similar to her belt. Her hair was pinned in a bun (even though some wayward curls escaped and framed her face) hidden under a thin veil and her crown of flowers. In her ears were pearl earrings that once belonged to her something-great grandmother with a matching necklace that (naturally) hung over her lioness necklace. She wore enough makeup to accentuate her eyes and lips but little more. And shining on her left hand was her ring.

(Her mother wanted her to wear fancy shoes, while Harry wanted something soft. They compromised by transfiguring the outside of a pair of slippers.)

She looked...well...*gorgeous*...and, dare she say angelic?

"One last touch!" Alice said. She reached forward and pinned a white rose to the side of Harry's belly. She wrapped a baby blue ribbon around it, and tied a pair of false rings to the ribbon. "Now the baby can be part of the ceremony too!"

Harry pulled her friend into a tight, watery hug.

(Which she got yelled at for-because what if you mess up your makeup Harry?! Apparently Alice had never heard of this amazing thing called *magic*.)

Alice pulled away first, looking over her with a grin. "Oh Harry, you look beautiful!" Lily, Pandora

and Rhea all voiced their agreements.

“Thank you.” She replied.

They all cooed over her-her mother even burst into tears-and chatted until there was a knock at the door.

“Harry-whoa you look amazing!” James ran into the room looking at her with misty eyes. “How are you doing baby sister?”

Harry rolled her eyes. “Twelve minutes, James. Twelve.”

“That’s twelve minutes longer I’ve been alive.”

“That just makes you an old man.”

James pressed a hand to his chest as if he had been wounded. “How rude! This is your wedding day, shouldn’t you be deliriously happy and oblivious so I can make fun of you and get future blackmail material?”

The look James received was not subtle in the least about Harry’s feelings. “The fact that you even assumed *you* would be able to get blackmail on *me* is hilarious and proves you are not as smart as you think you are.”

“What-Mum! Harry’s being mean to me!”

“Oh my god-Mum he started it!”

“Did not!”

“Did too!”

“Did *not*!”

“Did *too*!”

“I hope you two realize that you’ve given me *plenty* of blackmail material in the span of fifteen seconds.” Their mother said with a quirk of her lips.

“*Mum!*”

“Umm, sorry to interrupt...” Frank said from the doorway. He shuffled a bit under everyone’s gaze. “But Sirius is having a slight breakdown. Remus said that talking to you, Harry, might make him better.”

He really didn’t need to say more. Harry was walking to the door the moment the word ‘breakdown’ left his mouth. “Thank you Frank, I’ll go talk to him.”

“But Harry! Tradition!”

“*Mother!* I’m pretty sure Sirius’s wellbeing is more important than a stupid tradition!”

“I’m sure Sirius is just fine dear!”

*

Sirius was, in fact, not fine.

He was curled in on himself on a chaise, his head cradled in his hands. His breathing was erratic, eyes unfocused.

Harry sighed. The day was going by so well too.

Remus and Peter smiled at her when she walked into the room. She smiled back, though hers was decidedly more strained.

“Can I talk to him?” They nodded, promising to be within calling distance if she needed them. Once they were gone, Harry knelt in front of her boyfriend, taking his hands away from his head (oh dear, some of his hair was tangled into his crown. That was going to be fun to fix). “Hey Siri, look at me. Please?” Thankfully Sirius wasn’t too deep into his episode that he couldn’t hear her. His gray eyes focused enough to lock with hers. “Let’s do some breathing, okay? One...two...three...four...”

The exercise took longer than anticipated, but soon enough Sirius was breathing normally and blinking at her. “You look...wow.”

She smiled at him. “Thank you; you’re quite the handsome devil yourself. Now, do you mind telling me what’s on your mind?”

He shrugged, more intent on playing with the stray curls by her face rather than talking. Harry sighed.

“Sirius, we’ve talked about this. Don’t shut yourself away, not from me. What’s wrong?”

“...Reggie isn’t here.” He spoke softly. “I really wanted him to-I thought he would...why can’t he just do what *he* wants to do? Not what he thinks our parents want?”

“I don’t know Siri.”

Something else was bothering him too, she could see it. It was the way he kept glancing at her and then looking away as quick as possible.

“What else is wrong?”

“...What if you change your mind?”

“Huh?”

“Maybe it won’t be today, it probably won’t be for a while, but what if you realize that I’m too much of a fuck-up and I have too much baggage and you get tired of me? What if-”

She had heard enough. “-Sirius Orion Black you stop that this instant! *I love you*, you twit. That’s not going to change now, it’s not going to change in ten years, it’s not going to change *ever*. Do you understand me? I’m not changing my mind, ever. You’re stuck with me, do you understand?”

The grin she received was almost as blinding as the sun. “Yes ma’am!” He shouted, pressing a smacking kiss to her cheek.

“Good.” Harry sniffed with false pretentiousness (Merlin, she seemed too much like a Malfoy when she did that). “Now, let’s get you fixed up, and we’ll get you some potions while we’re at it. And then I think you and I should do something for your brother.”

*

The thing ended up being a picture. One of many they would send to Regulus so he wouldn't miss too much of the wedding.

Harry and Sirius were wrapped in each other's arms, holding a sign that read 'We wish you were here' only for them to lift it to show Harry's belly behind a smaller sign that read 'Uncle Reggie'. It was too bad they wouldn't be able to see his reaction...

*

"Are you ready?"

Everyone was in their places, except for Remus and Harry. Harry was in front of her mirror, nervously readjusting the already perfect crown and veil.

This was it.

She was getting married.

To Sirius.

"As I'll ever be."

As the bride made her way to the door, she was stopped by her best friend. He looked her over from head to toe (and though he'd probably never admit it, there was a glassy look to his eyes) and smiled. "Look at you, you look like a proper lady! What have you done with my best friend?"

Harry laughed at him. "Shut the fuck up Remus."

"Oh, there she is."

"Remus!" Really, he deserved the swat to his arm. They were both grinning as they made their way to the garden.

"In all honesty though, you look wonderful."

"Thank you Remus, that means a lot coming from you." She replied honestly.

He grinned, offering her his arm. "May I escort you to the gardens, my lady?"

"It would be my pleasure, good sir."

*

The garden was an abundance of faerie lights and ribbons and bows and flowers all in varying pastel colors (the original plan was white and gold, but as it was close to Easter they wanted more colors). Their friends and family sat in a small cluster of chairs, with only James (Sirius's witness) and Sirius and a ministry official standing by a flower-covered arch.

"And it's here I must leave you." Remus said, pulling his arm away only to replace it with her hodgepodge of a bouquet. He walked up to the altar with a grin on his face.

Once he was in place, the music started. Everyone stood and Harry took a deep breath.

'One foot at a time.' She thought.

Another argument between her and her parents was that Harry refused to be given away ("I'm not

property!"), and while she knew that her Dad was a bit disappointed he looked very proud and adoring as she passed the group.

Honestly though, she really only had eyes for Sirius.

He cleaned up rather well after his episode. His hair was detangled and straightened; his eyes no longer red and glassy. He looked good. *Really* good.

Apparently his thoughts were running the same route.

"Wow...when did you add glitter?" Of course he would notice the fine glitter Lily dusted onto her skin and hair.

"About twenty minutes ago. Aren't you supposed to lift my veil?"

"So bossy." He commented as he did just that. Oh Merlin, his eyes were glassy again!

"You love me."

"I do. Look at my little man-so dashing, just like his parents."

Harry laughed. "And so well behaved...for the moment."

"Shall we begin?" The nondescript official asked. He was smiling softly, and at their nods he ushered them under the arch. "Friends and family, my Lord and Lady, we are gathered here on this joyous day to celebrate the union of Sirius Orion Black and Harlynn Dorea Potter..."

*

Their vows were said, and their license signed and shipped off to the ministry for processing. The garden transformed into a spacious dining area under a floating cover with a large dance floor. There were tables of food, torches to provide heat and light, flowers, streamers, balloons, and toy snitches flying about.

One landed delicately onto Harry's palm.

"I know how much you miss quidditch," James said with a shrug. "So I talked to Dad and we got these." Harry had never given her twin a tighter hug in their lives.

"Well Mrs. Black, care to have the first dance with your husband?" Sirius asked. The twins broke away and James practically shoved his sister at his new brother-in-law.

"Well go on then! I could use a good laugh!"

Harry shot him a very rude hand gesture. "It would be my honor Mr. Black."

They danced to one of Sirius's muggle love-songs, completely oblivious to the people around them.

"We're married now." Sirius stated.

"Really? Is that what happened? I wasn't paying attention."

"Too busy staring at my gorgeous face; I understand."

"More like I was distracted by that bit of mistletoe above your forehead. Didn't want to mess up the ceremony by kissing you too soon." That caused Sirius to let out a bark-like laugh.

“Well the ceremony is over now, so you can kiss me all you want.” Harry did just that. Twice.

“You know what this means though, right?”

“Hm?”

“We need to get our four dogs.”

Sirius laughed again.

*

The reception lasted long into the night. Harry danced with everyone at least twice, until her feet really started to hurt and she was forced to sit down for the remainder of the party. Sirius and James had a dance off-which neither of them won because they’re both idiots.

The cake was a chocolatey, raspberry delight that the couple smashed into each other’s faces. (Poor Sirius got some up his nose-oh well.)

The highlight of the reception though, was Alice tugging Frank down to snog the daylights out of him. *That* was certainly an interesting development.

*

Their honeymoon was a three day trip to a family chalet in the Swiss mountains. Three days of fireside cuddles, sex, and hot chocolate as they looked over the snowcapped scenery. It was *wonderful*.

(And Harry learned a very important lesson: Sirius either needed cooking lessons or he wasn’t allowed to get creative in the kitchen ever again.)

*

“The little bugger kicked my nose! My *nose*, Harry!”

“Oh you poor thing. Would you like me to kiss it better?”

“I don’t like your tone-stop laughing! Our son is trying to sabotage one of my best features!”

“At least it was just your nose he kicked and not an organ.”

“...Do you want me to kiss it better?”

“...Ew. Please don’t.”

*

They didn’t want a baby shower. With all of the drama that happened with the wedding and it’s preparations Harry and Sirius mutually agreed that a baby shower would be bad for their mental health.

So, naturally, they got a baby shower.

James had kicked them out of their rooms that morning and told them to go do ‘couple-y things’ and to not come back before noon. They shouted and cursed-because that was *their* rooms James! You can’t just kick them out!-but the door remained firmly shut.

“Sooo...” Sirius started when it became apparent that his best friend wasn’t going to be letting them back in anytime soon. “Do you want to go up to the Come and Go Room and I’ll go get us some breakfast?”

“Sure, can you get me some strawberries?”

Breakfast was uneventful (though sickeningly romantic if one were to ask anyone else). Sirius brought up fruits and pancakes and bacon and sausages and once it had all been eaten they spent their remaining banishment having an impromptu snowball fight-and it was completely disorienting using snow that was warm and didn’t melt-and making an army of Snow Creatures (because Snowmen are just too boring).

When the clock struck noon they returned to their rooms with no small amount of trepidation. Gods only know what James had done to their quarters!

They knocked twice, and Sirius asked-rather sardonically- if they were allowed to come back in yet. James opened the portrait with a grin.

“Merlin, what took you guys so long? We’ve been waiting for *ages*! Don’t you know how rude it is to be showing up late to your own party?”

“*Late?*”

“*Party?*”

Her brother’s grin turned positively shit-eating. He stepped out of the room and gave them a gentle nudge inside.

The first thing they noticed was the floating banners. Pale blues and greens and yellows decorated the signs that read ‘It’s a Marauder!’ and ‘It’s a Boy!’. Those same colors were decorated throughout the room in the forms of balloons and streamers and faerie lights and table settings. Their small table had been transfigured into a larger one-one practically *bending* under the weight of food and drink-and next to the fireplace stood a massive pile of presents.

Their friends (the marauders, the Rowles, Frank, Alice, and Lily) were all draped across their furniture, in the middle of some baby-themed game, but they were watching the couple closely for their reactions.

It was simple. It was adorable. It was so sweet and so damn *perfect*...

Harry wouldn’t even pretend that her tears were caused by hormones.

“James...what...?”

The boy in question shrugged. “I know you said you didn’t want a shower because of what happened with Mum and Dad, but we all wanted to do this for you. We’ve been planning this for... Moony how long have we been planning this?”

“Since February.”

James nodded. “That’s right, I remember. We decided to keep it hush-hush so Mum and Dad wouldn’t try and take over...actually they tried at one point-you should have seen Lily going off on them! What a magnificent sight! I might have to get a penseive and rewatch the memory-” Sirius cut off his Lily-babble with a bone crushing hug.

“Thank you.”

James hugged back just as tight-though only for a moment (and boy did Harry wish she had a camera to capture the moment!). “Yeah yeah, we can hug and stuff later. I didn’t kick you out so I could get hugged-sit your butts down so we can start the party!”

Sirius laughed, but let go nonetheless and dragged Harry to the open space on their sofa. Blue bonnets were placed on their head with the words ‘Mommy’ and ‘Daddy’ stitched onto them, and over-filled plates of food were placed in their hands. They laughed and joked as they ate; the plates of food being replaced with giant slices of a floating cake in the shape of a baby’s rattle.

Then James stood and declared it was present time. He and Remus handed present after present until the pile was gone.

From Lily, practical things like nappies and adorable glass bottles and even cuter clothing.

From Alice, some stuffed toys, more clothes and more nappies.

From Peter, teething toys, a blanket, spit up rags, and some nappies (they were sensing a theme at this point).

From Frank, a beautiful wooden music box, some more nappies, and a set of pacifiers.

From the Rowles, a massive pile of clothing for the later months, some more toys, shampoos and baby lotions, and (of course) nappies.

From Remus, a handmade sling with black dogs and lionesses stitched onto it (Harry definitely cried at that one; Remus didn’t like sewing or needlework even though he was very good at it, and would only do them if he absolutely had too), nappies, a *camera*, and a handmade quilt with the animal version of the Marauders stitched onto it.

From James, a toy broom that the baby wouldn’t be using anytime soon, nappies, a few outfits (one being a onesie that said ‘I have the best uncle’ and another that was a tiny lion cub costume), a copy of Beedle the Bard, and a beautiful black pram with a yellow baby bag inside that was filled with smaller (but important) items.

Their parents sent more clothes and nappies, but their biggest present was a photograph of the nursery at the manor. There was a refurbished crib (a giant, circular monstrosity that had been used when the twins were babies), a changing station, a rocking chair, and a bureau all decorated in blues and whites and yellows with soft looking carpets and plush blankets.

All in all, it was a very successful party and both parents were teary eyed by the end.

There were lots of hugs after that.

*

“Sirius.”

“Hrng.”

“Sirius.”

“Hmm?”

“Sirius!”

“What?”

“Your son wants food.”

“So go get some.”

“But you can move so much faster than me! Please?”

“Harry it’s...one twenty seven in the morning. I want to *sleep*. Go get something out of the cool cupboard if you’re hungry.”

“I can’t believe you! You wanted a baby so bad and now that we have one on the way-one I have to carry night and day-you won’t do this simple thing-!”

“Oh for the love of-*alright!* I’ll go and get you something just please stop crying.”

“Something spicy please.”

“...I knew you were faking it.”

*

There is a point where Harry is told that she cannot go to classes anymore. She understands. She couldn’t walk long distances anymore and her robes were only charmed to hide so much...

Yet between her friends and husband she had plenty of copies of notes and someone to bring her her homework.

She might go mad with all of the free time though...

*

The bad thing about being nine months pregnant and being friends with the most overprotective lot in the school was that she never got a moment of peace. Someone was always around to lecture her about something or another or to ‘help’ her with mundane tasks that she was still capable of doing (she really couldn’t be held responsible for the multitude of hexes she fired off, especially when James tried spoon feeding her a vitamin rich-pregnancy friendly meal ‘Mum had sent’. Nope, she was clearly not at fault).

If she ever needed a babysitter (and wasn’t that a cringe worthy thought) she almost always chose Peter. While Lily and Alice were more sympathetic, they were almost as bad as the others. And Remus would follow her everywhere like a shadow. But Peter let her do almost anything, stepping in when absolutely necessary (apparently a cousin of his was pregnant recently and went completely berserk when someone tried telling her what to do). This was why Harry almost always ended up baking him some treats-much to his delight.

As she removed the fifth pan of cookies from their small oven Harry grinned at her animagus friend. He was ‘taking one for the team’ as the muggles say and was eating her share of cookie dough for her. What a brave lad.

She had just set the new batch to cool when another contraction hit. It wasn’t painful, just annoying really. Her palm pressed against her stretched belly and she frowned. It had been a little under ten minutes since the last one, but it wasn’t as painful as the last one had been. The only reason she hadn’t made her way to the Hospital Wing yet was because she had been having lighter contractions for a day and a half. And besides, her water hadn’t broken yet! So she really had no reason to worry.

Putting the last batch of cookies into the oven, and swiping a cooled one from the tray, Harry collapsed into the chair next to Peter.

“You know...as much as I *love* being pregnant, I can’t wait for this kid to get out of me.” Her darling son chose that moment to stretch and press painfully into her ribs. Rude. Just like his father.

“Had enough of the swollen ankles already? Damn, I bet you would last another week.” Is Peter’s cheeky reply. Harry laughs though, poking his thigh none too gently with one of her swollen feet.

“Oh...so that’s what my foot looks like! I hadn’t seen it for so long I had nearly forgotten!” Peter chokes on some cookie dough as he laughs. Oops, she *definitely* didn’t mean to do that (except she totally did).

“You’re a menace.”

“I know-*ow!* For fuck’s s-” Another, stronger contraction hit. This one had been the longest and most intense contraction yet. Perhaps she should start making her way to the Hospital Wing...

The timer dinged (a god awful muggle contraption that Sirius had to have because it was a horrifying cat (?)) and Harry –regretfully–hauled herself up to her feet to remove the cookies from the oven.

“Uh Harry?”

“Hmm?”

“Are you...did you...are you *peeing?*”

Pink flooded the girl’s cheeks. “What? *No!* Why would you think that?”

“Your dress has a wet spot-”

Harry conjured a mirror (because there was no way in hell she’d be able to twist her body) and looked at her butt. Indeed there was a wet spot where she had been sitting before. A big one. But she most certainly hadn’t been peeing! Did that mean...?

And just to give her further proof-or annoy her-there was an agonizingly slow trickle down her legs that she wouldn’t be able to see properly until it was farther down. She waited until she felt the wetness at her ankles and then, with very careful maneuvering, she angled the mirror to show her foot. The liquid was clear, almost like water.

...

Well fuck.

Of course her water would break when Sirius wasn’t around. Nothing was ever easy, after all. She needed to get down to the Hospital Wing; needed to get Sirius. What if Sirius couldn’t get to her in time? What if-no she needed to stop these thoughts and get moving!

Holy shit, this was really happening. She was going into labor-for real.

She inhaled, long and steady despite the turmoil going on in her mind. “Pete, I need you to go to the bedroom and get the yellow bag by the door.”

Despite what people thought, Peter wasn’t stupid. “Are you going to be okay going down all the stairs?”

“I think so. As long as I go slowly.”

*

Stairs didn't agree with her body anymore-hadn't for weeks. Half of the time she needed to be levitated (which wasn't fun, pregnant or not). But she had been advised by Madame Pomfrey to use as little magic as possible during labor, and be under as few spells as possible, because her body and the baby would be extra sensitive. Well she'd already fucked that up by casually using magic for the past day and a half so she had forced herself to walk.

One never really considers how many stairs there really are until they're forced to walk down them with a belly the size of a watermelon and a contracting uterus that caused her to stop every so many steps.

Needless to say it was not a fun trip and she could have kissed the ground once they were off the last step. At least Hogwarts understood that her son was getting ready for his big entrance and kept the staircases that they were on from moving.

Finally, after longer than Harry would care to admit, they were walking into the familiar doors of the Infirmary.

“Harry my dear, is something wrong?” The Matron asked.

“That depends on how you look at things....the baby's coming.”

She was rushed to a private one-similar to the one that Remus had-and settled into the bed.

“Do you want me to go get Sirius?” Peter asked.

No. She wanted to say. She didn't want to be alone. But she couldn't cast the *Patronus Charm*, nor was she certain how strong Madame Pomfrey's was-or if she could even cast it; and Peter was a fast little bastard in his animagus form. “Please.” She nodded. He gave her a hug and a promise to be quick before he transformed and scuttled off.

*

Sirius loved his wife (he still felt warm and giddy every time he called her that), he really did; and of course he loved his unborn son. But he would be lying if he said that he didn't enjoy flying with just James and Remus (even though the chicken didn't even get on a broom). It was nice to get out of his rooms for once and just hang out with his friends like they used to.

He and James were in the middle of a race when Remus shouted at them. They stopped.

Peter was standing next to Remus. Sirius would have been livid if his smaller friend didn't look so anxious.

“What happened?” He asked as his feet touched the stands.

“N-nothing. Well nothing bad-I just took Harry to the Hospital Wing-(-HOW IS THAT NOT BAD PETER-?!”) *because* she's started going into labor.”

Hospital Wing.

Harry.

Labor.

It took a minute for the words to truly sink in. And Sirius thanked the stars that there was a seat nearby because his legs gave out.

Who knows how long he sat there (Remus said it was only two minutes, but it felt like it was much, *much* longer) cradling his head as he processed what was happening. Finally-thankfully-James slapped his shoulder.

“Well Lover-boy, are you ready to go see you wife and become a parent?” He was terrified. What if he fucked up like his own parents? No, he had Harry. Together they would raise their son right. He nodded, pushing himself out of the seat.

He was ready as he would ever be.

*

Madame Pomfrey had helped Harry change into a large nightdress once Peter had left and then tucked her into bed with a book from her bag and some spicy hot chocolate. It would have been comfortable if her uterus wasn't contracting every few minutes.

And then her peace was shattered by her friends barreling through the door.

“Are you okay?!”

“Do you need to start pushing yet?”

“Breathe Harry! Hee-hee whooo, remember?”

“Do you need anything?”

“Should you be drinking that right now?”

“Oh sweet Merlin.” Harry hissed, lifting her glasses to rub her temples. “If you lot don't shut up I'm going to kick you all out now.”

The Marauders shut up (shockingly!). They each took a seat around her bed-or on it in Sirius's case-and calmly asked how she was doing-did they really need to look like kicked puppies though?

“At the moment? Fine, I guess. I'm not dilated enough for anything to progress. So it's really just a waiting game right now. A waiting game with obnoxiously painful contractions every so often.”

“...What do you mean *dilated*?” Harry had to question why Hogwarts didn't have any kind of sexual education or health related classes as a required course. Explaining childbirth to a group of boys (while in labor no less!) was incredibly awkward and not something that she wanted to repeat anytime soon, thank you very much!

*

“Harry dear, you need to push.”

“I *can* 't! I'm too tired-it's too much!”

“Just a few more dear, I can see the head.”

“Come on Harry, you can do it! Do you want my other hand?”

“Do you want me to break that one too?”

“That’s what potions are for.”

“Ready dear? One, two, three, *push!*”

*

Words couldn’t describe the feeling of holding her son for the first time. She was exhausted and sweaty and her son was slimy with blood, but *Merlin* when that tiny body was placed on her stomach she just felt so wonderful-elated. Madame Pomfrey cleaned him off while he lay on her, screaming his little heart out. Suddenly the bloody baby was replaced with a pink and wrinkly one. A blanket draped over him and a little gray cap appeared on his head.

Poppy took him long enough to cut his umbilical cord (Sirius would have, but his hands were shaking too much) and finish cleaning him before she placed him back on Harry’s belly to perform a few short tests to make sure everything was functioning properly.

While she was away with the baby Sirius banished the bloody mess on her belly and brushed her sweaty hair back, kissing her forehead.

“You did good Harry.” He pressed their lips together for a long moment, only separating when the baby was back with his mother and kissed his son’s wrinkled brow (His *son!*). “Welcome to the world, Pup.” He whispered.

Deeming the boy in ‘tip-top’ shape, Poppy showed them how to nurse both with and without a bottle (not only so Sirius could nurse him to, but Harry’s milk had not come in yet and the poor thing needed to eat something!) the baby before leaving to get the paperwork in her office.

“When he’s done nursing do you want to hold him?” Harry asked, though she already knew the answer.

“Yes! But shouldn’t we swaddle him first?”

“Look at him, he’s like his Daddy. He likes being spread out. You can try if you want, but I have a feeling that he won’t like it.”

He didn’t. That little boy spit up on Sirius (the first of many times) and wailed until the blanket was adjusted to be only loosely wrapped around him.

“He’s loud, just like his mother.”

“Clearly you’ve forgotten every incident involving your hair ever.”

“At least we know his lungs work.” Sirius joked. His legs weren’t working right and he was thankful that Poppy had enough foresight to bring him a chair. There was no doubt in his mind that he would have collapsed when he gazed upon his son (properly) for the first time.

His little face was scrunched up, making him look far too grumpy for the child of two Marauders. He definitely had Sirius’s nose, there was no mistaking that pointed appendage. Peeking under the gray cap found dark curls (Harry’s, poor thing). His fingers-thin and wrinkly-clenched and unclenched; grabbing onto his blanket several times before settling on trapping Sirius’s index finger in his own. And if Sirius hadn’t been utterly besotted before, the baby let out a large yawn and settled his grumpy gaze on his father.

Apparently the ceiling in the Infirmary had a leak-oh wait, Sirius was crying. Yes, he was definitely crying. But really, he couldn’t help it! He was holding his *son!*

“Hello my Little Star.” Gods even his voice was cracking!

Harry let out a tired snort on the bed. “He’s going to hate us for his name, I hope you realize that.”

“Do you hear that Pup? Mummy’s jealous because you’re named after me and not her!”

“Oh yes. That’s it. However were you able to figure out my secret?”

“I *might* have escaped your notice, but I’m a Dad now. These intuitions come naturally to us.”

“Yes, how silly of me to forget your newest crowning achievement; however did you manage such a feat dearest?”

“I could tell you, but there are innocent ears present.” As if to emphasize his point, Sirius covered one of the baby’s ears with his hand (which was more like him cupping the baby’s entire head) and kissed his forehead.

Poppy returned with a birth certificate and some identification forms, handing the certificate to Harry. “And what is the name of the new addition.”

“Altair. Altair Sirius Black.”

Chapter End Notes

I might go back and edit this one more time, but I figured you guys have waited long enough!

NOT A CHAPTER, SORRY GUYS IT'S JUST NEWS

Don't Worry! I'm not abandoning my story! I just wanted to explain why it hasn't been updated yet!

1) So I started a new job last april and they had me working 50+ hours a week, every week. I was bone tired at the end of the day and over the last four months I've been very depressed. I'm doing a lot better now guys, I quit that job and I'm actually taking care of myself. :) I've spent the last few days writing and I cried because I haven't had the energy to-let alone enjoy it-for the longest time.

2) The next chapter is going to be a freaking BEAST. It's already almost as long as the last one and I'm only like halfway done with it. I think, for everyone's sake, I'm going to upload it in two parts. Is that okay with you guys?

End Notes

I just wanted so say that the breathing exercise is one that I use for myself when I have an anxiety attack. It's better for the milder ones, though.

And trying to find the meaning of flowers is ridiculously hard! All of the site I visited said different things! If you'd like to read the meanings from the site I got them from here it is:
<http://thelanguageofflowers.com/>

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!

[Outro] One way or another I'm gonna get ya I'll get ya, I'll get ya, get ya, get ya, get ya (Where I can see it all, find out who you call)
One way or another I'm gonna get ya I'll get ya, I'll get ya, get ya, get ya, get ya (Where I can see it. all, find out who you call) One way
or another I'm gonna get ya I'll get ya, I'll get ya, get ya, get ya, get ya (Where I can see it all, find out who you call). More on Genius.
About "One Way or Another". The true life Debbie Harry story of a stalker had a moderate immediate chart success in 1979, but rema
One way or another I'm gonna find ya I'm gonna getcha getcha getcha getcha One way or another I'm gonna win ya I'm gonna
getcha getcha getcha getcha One way or another I'm gonna see ya I'm gonna meetcha meetcha meetcha meetcha One day, maybe
next week I'm gonna meetcha, I'm gonna meetcha, I'll. meetcha I will drive past your house And if the lights are all down I'll see who's
around One way or another I'm gonna find ya I'm gonna getcha getcha getcha getcha One way or another I'm gonna win ya I'll getcha,
I'll getch "One Way or Another" is a song by American new wave band Blondie from the album Parallel Lines. The song was released as
the fourth single in the US and Canada as the follow-up to the no. 1 hit "Heart of Glass". "One Way or Another" reached No. 24 on the
Billboard Hot 100 and No. 7 on the RPM 100 Singles. Written by Debbie Harry and Nigel Harrison for the band's third studio album,
Parallel Lines (1978), the song was inspired by one of Harry's ex-boyfriends who stalked her after their breakup. Harry