Outcast

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by 3hrys

Summary

June of 1975, Hogwarts ends as usual. But September 1st, 1975 the Marauders are hit with a shocking difference.
After experiencing many atrocities, Severus Snape has not returned to Hogwarts for his 5th year. This story isn't about that, it's about the outcome of that simple choice.

Story is cross-posted on AO3. Alternate chapter titles than on Ao3 since I can't remember what I called them lol.
extremely AU, and canon divergent. You have been warned.

Each chapter has an associated song :)

Notes

Chapter song - Waiting Room - Pheobe Bridgers

Chapter 1: Run in and Run away

The resounding slam to the Three Broomsticks entrance, drew the attention of all its occupants. Severus Snape glanced around looking for someone, unaware of ogling eyes. To all who remembered him, he was as he'd always been; pale and slender but different, less sallow and gaunt. In forest green robes and long willowy legs, he was a fine looker.

His eyes stopped on a table of children and what seemed to be their parents. A smile graced his face as he strode towards them, recognizing someone.

"Draco, my boy. You've worried your parents to death." His voice was smoother than in his youth.

"Oh, my! Draco darling, who are your friends" Regardless of his scanning eyes, he finally looked at the people before him, and only just realizing his company, he became confused. The young blond turned to his friends to introduce them.

"This is Hermione, Ron and Harry, We're in Slyther-"

"Pleasure to meet you" He interrupted, sweeping his eyes over the children before smiling at the adults seated.

"And these must be the fathers?"

"Well, only ones of us, my nam-"

"Oh no, I don't care. As I was saying Draco, your parents are worried" He interrupted again, and turned on his heels to stride away. The young blond boy winced as he looked up to the men surrounding.

"Sorry, Mr. Potter, Mr. Lupin and Cousin Sirius. He's flighty with natural human communication," The three men laughed glumly.

"Things don't change" Sirius smiled wanly and looked between his two friends.

" Could be the company you're keeping, though, kid."

"I'm sorry, do you know him?"

"Yeah well, we went to Hogwarts with him. First right through to the fourth,"

"What do you mean? Only fourth year?" Confusion clouded Draco as he turned to them.

"Well, at the end of fourth year, he disappeared," Remus looked down at his coffee.

"Somehow, we might be to blame. We were rather horrible to him." Sirius said calmly, Only his face betrayed his shame.

"We were childish to him" Unwelcome memories flashed through James' eyes. Harry looked up at his father for the first time wordlessly and Hermione, familiar to bullies herself, pursed her lips and turned away.

"Don't be like that," Uttered Ron with a huff, accustomed to her over-reactions.

"So many years since then. They were children who did silly things. We all make mistakes and I'm sure that godfather could forgive you. Your adults now. Right Mr. Potter?" Draco smiled at his friends and their family. Sirius turned a feeble smile on the blond boy as

"I'm sure he would,"Remus replied, doubt coating his voice.

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"This is all your fault Potter, You stupid dickhead!" James turned to Lily Evans, smiling.

"Oh, and just what have I done now? hmm, Lilypad?" Her eyes were cold and calculating, red rimmed and tear stained.

“Don’t act innocent with me you wanker!” Her shrill voice much to be desired, if you asked Sirius

“Oi, woman. I bloody haven't done anything yet. I haven’t seen him all day” James replied obnoxiously

“It’s got nothing to do with today, whatever you did last years’ finally fucking done it!” She hissed with utter hatred

“Well, I didn’t mean to. I’ll fix it and everything can go back to how it was,” He replied with a smirk

"THEN. BRING. SEVERUS. BACK." She snarled slowly. Every one in the Gryffindor common room stilled and ogled the unfurling scene. Sirius turned and glared, but no one seemed to care.

"Uh oh, Potter, what did you do now?" One of the seventh years crooned, his excitement palpitating.

"I have done nothing" He paused for a moment to think.

"At least I don't remember doing anything. Lily, What do you mean?" Remus, who was reading, put his book down and moved closer.

"I'm sure he'll be around somewhere, the new school year just started. He very well won't tarnish his perfect grades or attendance."

"He's right, the greasy git won-"

"Shut up. Black" She hissed, her face red and fiery like flowing locks. Realizing the audience, she turned left for the hallway, hoping the boys would follow. When she turned, the 'marauders' were waiting for her to speak. For the life of her, she couldn't utter a single word. Anguish and regret painted her heart as she finally looked up at them. She knew they weren't wholly to blame, but it hurt too much to consider her own part in it. She couldn't help being mad at him, he'd called her a bloody mudblood, for goodness sakes, Even if she was close to forgiving him. It didn't matter now, he was gone.

"He won't be showing up. Bad grades or otherwise." Her voice was crackling, even to her own ears. Before anyone could ask, she pulled a folded parchment from her pocket and threw it at them.

"He isn't coming back. It's all your fault." Remus took the paper as Lily turned and ran off, trying to contain her tears.

"Alright then Moony, don't just stand there. What does it say?"

"Not in the corridor, too many prying eyes and ears." He glared at the nosy portraits, the Fat Lady not one of them. Once safely inside, he opened the parchment and began to read aloud.

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Sirius inhaled deeply through his nose; Whether he wanted forgiveness, regardless if he gave them forgiveness, He knew they wouldn't deserve it. They all knew it and that was why Peter had changed. Why they all had, it was something they could not forget.

Chapter 2: Come as you go

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Nothing else I could do - Ella Jane

Severus stood outside of the Three Broomsticks, his heart beating excessively. He couldn't believe his eyes. Regardless of the years, time had done 'the marauders' well. They had always been cute. Now, they were handsome, sexy, gorgeous, whatever could come to mind.

James' hair, though still messy, fell perfectly to frame his now olive complexion. His eyes were sleepy, warm and brown, like coming home to mugs of chocolate milk. Obvious hard work lingered in his frame, even as he sat carelessly, comfy.

The next man was almost unrecognizable. Long and lean, Remus' green eyes trained directly on Severus which would have been unnerving if not for his easy smile and calm demeanor. Even the mauve scarring, tracing his flesh became appealing.

Sirius had pretty much not changed. Everything about him, dangerous and tantalizing; From his flashing smirk and icy blue eyes to his wild oak curls. His bad boy charm lingered long into his maturity. Naturally, Severus would never admit his thoughts aloud, but there they were.

He realized that Peter wasn't with them and wondered when, how and what had happened to him. They always spouted on and on about 'brothers in all but blood' and other what not, so why wasn't he around? He wanted to know, but couldn't find it in himself to back and ask.There was so much hatred and so many years between them, they probably didn't even recognize him. He'd do something to grant him the answer without being seen as a total twat. He knew he could get what he wanted and it was all thanks to Draco.

Without thinking, his legs carried him to his waiting friends. To anyone else, Lady and Lord Malfoy looked aloof and distant, but any close friend knew how to read them correctly. Mischievous, twinkling in their eyes broke through the cold surface and greeted him. The

cause remained a secret to him for a second, recognition dawning on him. Pursed lips and deepening brows, he glared at his friends, their demeanor never changing.

"Well?" Narcissa smiled

"Well, what?"

"Was Draco in there or not?" Lucius chuckled, pulling his wife closer. Severus exhaled and blew at a stray hair as frustration curled through him. The three stood in silence, Severus could feel their eyes on him and he caved.

"All right, why?"

"Why what?"

"Why did you send me in there?" he asked resignedly,

"We asked you to get Draco, we worried for him,"

"Don't pull that crap. Malfoy. You asked me to check the Three Broomsticks. You could have gone in there yourself." A silence spread between them, Narcissa and Lucius glancing between each other.

"Did you want me to see them?" Severus took pity and asked.

"Well, no. But it seemed dramatic, and I thought it would be funny. You've always been dramatic."

"You left so abruptly, back then. We thought you'd appreciate a similar welcome." He sighed deeply. It wasn't that strange or unusual. So he ran into men he'd known as boys. No big deal even if he was attracted to them.

"Ok, No. I didn't appreciate walking in there blindly. Thanks for the consideration of my re-entrance to wizarding Britain," His nose flared as he took calming breaths.

"But also. Fuck. You." Lucius couldn't help himself and let a howling laugh. Luckily for his lordship, no-one stood close enough to catch his lapse in decorum. His wife laughed along with him.

"Well, what did they say when they saw you?"

"Nothing, they didn't say anything. I didn't give them a chance either." Severus sighed dramatically.

"Not even for pleasantries?" Narcissa pouted.

"I wasn't prepared!" The Malfoys grimaced at their friend's despondent face.

"I wasn't prepared, when I saw her eyes watching me from Potter's face." He turned accusing eyes on his friends.

"You should have warned me. I wasn't ready for a blow like that." The heat in his voice cooled as he sighed deeply.

"I'm gay. You know that, but I love Lily. That hasn't changed and I doubt that ever will."

"Dracos birthday passed last month. As he spent it at school, we've decided to throw him a party at the manor this month."

"His friends Harry and Neville are also celebrating their birthdays this month. While their birthdates are at the end of the month, ourselves, Mr. Potter and The Longbottoms want them to share the party. It seemed fun and exciting." Severus scowled. Frank and Alice Longbottom, both friends of James and Lily.

"What does this have to do with me?"

"We were hoping the ever allusive god-father could appear,"

"If that's what Draco wants, then I will be there." Put out, Severus replies.

"Good! We've invited his Uncles. So expect to see Regulus." Severus allowed a smile to his face.

"That's one Black I can't wait to see. God I missed him" Severus' grinned as his waist was tackled by an exuberant blond.

"And here I thought I was your favorite Black!" Draco pouted at his god-father. Severus laughed brightly, the only person he seemed to genuinely adore.

"Nope! you are my favorite Malfoy," He winked at the child with a conspiratorial smirk.

"Hey" Two chortling voices responded. Thinking back to the approaching event, Severus couldn't help but smirk. I'll find out about Pettigrew sooner, rather than later.

Chapter 3: Letters best unsent

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Smoke Signals - Phoebe Bridgers

Remus opened the parchment and began to read aloud.

"Dear Lily, I write this in consideration of the many years we were friends.I regret to inform you, though you must already know, I have been in love with you for as long as I've known you. I won't lie, what I said, what I've called you was wrong. However truthfully, I'm shocked that you would cast me aside after one mistake. I have always given you so much and expected nothing but your friendship in return. As selfish as this seems, being ignored by you is something I cannot bear. I have decided instead not to be graced by your presence. No Lily!, I will not return. To England or Hogwarts. My decision is final!" Sirius curled his upper lip in detest.

"It sounds like it's Evans' fault, not ours." Remus looked up, eyebrow cocked.

"That's not all, there is still more"Peter smiled apologetically for their friends.

"what a long winded twerp, what more is there to say." James frowned at the parchment.

"Honestly, so Evans wasn't interested in him. BOOHOO. Someone uglier will fall for the greasy git. Who is he bloody kidding, Evans is way too bloody good for him" Peter turned to Sirius with a glare.

"Shut UP Padfoot. Don't be such a dick, now isn't the damn time"

"Gee alright then Wormy. I was only joking. What's got your knickers in a twist?"

"Nothing" Peter flushed and turned away

"It would kinda suck, I mean who else would we prank?" He hoped no one would catch his lie. Luckily, Sirius took his words at face value and clapped him hard on the back.

"Of course, Of course."

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James and Remus were ready to move forward and Sirius couldn't fault them for that. Did that mean he was ready? 'not bloody likely' He might have aged, he might have 'matured' but he wasn't one to let go of past actions. Yes. He was partly at fault for the outcome, but that didn't matter. Snape ran away. His own doing and that made him a coward!

At some point in their lives they might have been friends, but Sirius would never like snakes. Typically his hatred for all Slytherin reduced, given his god-son and younger brother. But Snape was Snape, and that was that.

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Albus Dumbledore stood in the rundown kitchen in Sirius flat in ethereal glory. There was no reason for his visit, to Sirius's knowledge and then he began to talk.

"I hope I'm not interrupting anything but there are important things for us to discuss."

"This couldn't wait till the next meeting? I'm busy tonight." With James occupied with a newborn and Peter caring for his mother, Moony and Remus both needed him tonight.

"Alas my boy, this pertains to a personal issue and I'm sure you would like such matters handled privately." Sirius' eyes narrowed. Disregarding the Marauders, he only had one other family member.

"To my knowledge Regulus is fine, he owled me Friday. He's passing all his classes, he's not in trouble with any of his teachers so I can't imagine any reason for you to bother me in my home" Dumbledore shook his head sadly.

"I have reason to believe that he is in touch with a dark wizard." Sirius waited still, as Dumbledore stalled. This wasn't new information, Regulus was a slytherin and therefore connected to many 'dark wizards'.

"Many years ago, there was a student who studied at Hogwarts. He was a very dark student, not the darkest but he was up there among the ranks. He was a good friend of your brothers and I truly believe that through this connection he is infiltrating my students and compromising them." Dumbledore was always an ambiguous, enigmatic man, but this was too much.

"YOUR school is being infiltrated by the children of death eaters, DO NOT blame my brother for your failure to dis-acknowledge owl post from certain families"

“My boy, you misunderstand me. The person in question is Severus Snape. He's connecting certain members of the student body to the criminal known as 'Lord Voldemort' As you know, Snape disappeared a few years ago.” Severus Snape. The name elicited a deep and unsettling in Sirius. He only thought about on occasion, wondering what he’d been up to all these years.

“And what, you think Snape went running to some big bad dark wizard? He was a wimp and a great big lug but he would never cower behind someone. He was always too ambitious for something like that” Sirius' words startled Both Dumbledore and himself. In a way, it was probably the nicest he’d ever been to or about Severus.

"'Ambition is a lust that is never quenched, but grows more inflamed and madder by enjoyment - Thomas Otway', a wonderful wizard. While I agree with you, there are still circumstances that make this different" Sirius snorted as if there was anything that could make Snape break the mold.

"Desperate men will do things they would never have considered. It's in the make up of the weak" Albus looked reproachful as Sirius sneered at him,

"Desperate! Severus was always desperate. Desperate when we ridiculed him, desperate when I nearly got him killed. Do you think after all the years James, Remus and I spent trying to break him he'd submit?" Fire lit Sirius's eyes as he continued on.

"Not once In the years we spent 'Breaking him in' did he ever ask or beg someone else to fight his fight. There is nothing in this world that could make him submit. I should know." Sirius' heated words left acid in Dumbledore's stomach.

"I know this may be hard for my boy, you were such good friends" Sirius looked at him dumbly, as if Severus was ever his friend. A thought came to his mind as he turned to join Moony. Sirius growled over his shoulder.

"Stop reading my brothers mail and keep your nose out my family business"

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Sirius never Liked Snape, and for Dumbledore to bring him up six years after his disappearance was almost too peculiar. Why then? It could have been anyone, from Lucius to Mulciber. So why Severus?
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Since that night, August 15th, only two weeks after Harry's birth, Sirius never quite trusted Dumbledore again. And so, with that in mind, they'd only go to Godrics Hollow from time to time to maintain the wards. No matter what that old man said, Sirius thought it was smarter to leave James in his parents home with the ancestral wards in place.

Chapter 4: The Rat

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Anchor - Novo Amor

“Don't take too bloody long, we don't have all day” Remus took a deep breath before he continued reading

“Don't be confused, I'm not blaming you. There are so many things that contributed to my decision. My father for one, You know exactly what he was like to me. After so many years, I finally understand the things he did to me were wrong” Remus felt a sense of dread wash over him. What kind of things did the Snape patriarch do to his only son?

“What things?”

“I don't know Pete, It doesn't say.”

“Hurry up Moony” Remus rolled his eyes at Sirius' words.

“Don't be impatient, Padfoot.” James said with exasperation, Remus ignored both boys as he continued to read

“Today as I pack my bags, I am never willing to forgive him. I will never forget, In saying that, I will not forgive Albus Dumbledore or those shitty golden Gryffindors” James let out a huff

“After all the things they put me through, after all the times I almost died, there will never be forgiveness in my heart. Not for them”

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Harry, Neville and Draco's birthday turned out well. Lucius and Narcissa hosted at Malfoy manor and all the children were playing quaint little muggle games. Severus spent the majority of his time hiding between Bellatrix, Narcissa and Regulus.

Catching up with Regulus was fun, a letter every other month was ok, but it was nothing like seeing him in the flesh. He'd not changed much, still rather stoic but with less of the moody hormones or stress of his family situation hanging over his shoulder.

"They've been watching you like hawks," Regulus whispered discreetly. He could feel eyes boring into him, he knew who it was. He knew what it meant, what it felt like but he ignored it. The hardened stare, accusing him of criminality, blaming him for something done.

"Cool. I would say I don't care but honestly, It's leaving me a little on edge," Severus whispered back,

"Like I'm some kind of new, undiscovered species. What's up with that, anyway?" He asked Regulus who pursed his lips.

"Well, you're not really the same as you were y'know. I mean, I've seen you sporadically over the years but to them, you're like this rare and protected artifact. Seen in passing." His words left Severus confused, and uncomfortable

Across the room, James and Remus watched as Severus dodged them, dancing around the room, eluding them. 1 hour, 2 hours and finally Severus made his way over. Remus watched curiously as Severus slowly took a seat beside them.

"Erm, Hi." Remus smiled at Severus
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“Hello Severus, it's good to see you again” He said softly.

“Well, I wish I could say the same but I still don't like either of you.” Severus looked at James and Remus. James frowned.

“If you don't like us, why are you bothered to talk to us?” Severus let out a long suffered sigh dramatically.

“I'm being forced against my will to suffer your horrid company for 'the children's sake' united fronts and all that crock of shit. Anyway, four eyes, introduce me to Lily's son while I'm here” He said expectantly. James called a rumpled and pink harry from his game of wizards chess.

“Harry this man is Severus Snape, you met a few days ago” Harry nodded and smiled up at Severus. For a moment the man's breath stuttered as he looked down into those familiar eyes.

“Hello sir, it's nice to meet you.” He was a shy little thing and so cute. His pale cherub face, cherry red lips and peach cheeks. Severus kneeled down and pulled an old leather bound book from his satchel and held it out to the child.

“This was a written work of progressive potions your mother and I worked on together in our teens. There are a lot of un-finished pieces inside but I think in time you can finish them.” Harry looked sheepish as James looked on them in astonishment.

“I'm sorry sir but I'm not very good at potions. My concentration isn't very good” Harry said sadly. The look drew a soft smile from Severus, it reminded him so much of Lily.

“Well, it's something for you to work on then. Now why don't you run along, us adults have something to talk about.”

“Um, thank you sir. I'll be off then” Harry ran off and Severus turned to see both Remus and James looking at him in question.

“What?” Severus asked

“Nothing,” Severus rolled his eyes at them.

“Well, why didn’t you put it in the pile with all the other presents?” James asked.

“I didn’t bring a present for the young Mr Longbottom. And I’m sure Lily would want Harry to have it anyway” Severus said.

“That doesn't matter right now. More importantly... Where are Black and Pettigrew?” James and Remus looked between themselves awkwardly.

“Um, Sirius will be a bit late but ah,” James trailed off awkwardly,

“This is a little awkward for us to explain, I'm not even sure I believe it.” Severus tilted his head to the side

“I'm waiting Lupin” Remus frowned at him.

“He's in Azkaban. He joined Voldemort after your departure. We presume in 1975 or 1976 sometime” Shock and disbelief plagued Severus' face as his brows shot up.

“Why in the good name of Merlin would he do that? And so young too,” James smiled abashed at Severus' words.

“Well, he blamed us for it.” He said.

“what exactly did you do, what could you have possibly done to make him do something stupid like that?” Wide eyed and flushed, Severus shook his head.

“He spied on us for years, back in our Hogwarts years. When I asked him why he joined them, he said he might see you again.” Severus looked confused and grossed out.

“Why would he see me again, why would he want to.” Both men flushed in embarrassment.

“If you had joined the dark side then he could be with you and for why. Well, he was kinda in love with you I guess” Severus inhaled deeply and growled.

“Ok first. How fucking rude. I'm not and never have been a death eater. Secondly if you loved someone you wouldn't automatically assume the worst of them” He hissed at them. Before their conversation could continue, Draco stomped over pouting petulantly at him.

"Severus, do you love me?" The man smiled down at his godson, masking his initial affront.

"Of course I do. Why?"

"How come Harry got a present before me?" Draco whined and Severus smiled at him.

“I gave him his first because I didn’t bring a gift for your other friend, Mr Longbottom. And it’s not really a gift, I’m more or less returning something that partly belonged to his mum” Severus said as he pulled a wrapped package out. Draco tore into it revealing an emerald and navy cloak and glove set encrusted in diamonds.

"Oh, thank you sooo much! I love it." Draco never left his side for the rest of the night, no matter how hard Severus tried to shoe him away. By the time night ended, he had a lot to ponder.

Chapter 5: Moving houses

Chapter Summary

A Filler chapter, also I wrote chapters 1-4 in 2017 and every other chapter in 2026. Don't be overly surprised if there are inconsistency's confusion.

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Northern Altitude - Noah Kahan and Hozier

Severus paced in the living room of Spinners End. With plans to remodel looking a bit iffy, he'd been considering just starting fresh and smashing the whole thing down. Lucius and Regulus sat in the two arm chairs facing the cold fireplace.

"I have to book a bloody hotel, how the hell do I convert galleons again?" He said exhaustedly to Regulus' annoyance.

"Just stay with me," The younger man said but Severus shook his head.

"No, and risk running into your brother? I don't think so. No offence but I don't wanna risk it." Severus said.

"You know Sirius lives alone, right? He doesn't come around often so it should be fine," Regulus said with a frown,

"Right, he doesn't come around 'often,' which means he still visits from time to time. So no thanks," Severus said with a dramatic flourish of his hair. Regulus frowned and shifted in his chair.

“Well, you could stay with me? I mean, I’ll have to ask Narcissa but I'm sure she would say yes either way.” Severus halted his pacing at Lucius' words.

“I’m not opposed to that but, you know I’m not dead broke or anything? It’s only until I can get my home redone.” Severus says to Lucius, as Regulus stood and left the room to wander about the house.

“It will be a while, from removing old furniture to knocking it down and then rebuilding it. That’s not even with all the forms and files I have to sign and send to the bloody council. Which by the way, the paper work alone could take months on their own,” Lucius' face contorted into the very picture of confusion.

“Council? What on earth are you talking about? Just have it done the wizarding way,” Regulus says as he re-enters the room.

“I can't do that, this is a muggle dwelling in a muggle area. I’m sure the muggles would notice if a new home was erected where an old one stood in over a week,” Understanding dawned On Regulus face but Lucius remained mystified.

“Anyway, it doesn’t really change anything. If you stay with us for a year or a million years, our home is open, probably.” Lucius says, ignoring the words he didn’t understand.

“Fine, but I will ask Narcissa. I won’t have you do it for me.” With a roll of his eyes, Severus shuffles his feet.

“Yeah, Alright.” With that, the three men left the house for Lucius' home.

When they arrived, Narcissa was in the garden watching Draco flying about on the field. The wind flapped wildly around him as he zoomed from left to right in a zigzag pattern. Each turn, punctuated by his boisterous laughter.

The day was unusually sunny, and so Narcissa wore an A-line dress to her knees. The lovely wisteria colour contrasted her darker hairs as she turned to smile and wave at them. Her beaming smile reminded Severus of all the times they'd laughed and cried together.

"If it isn't my three favourite men," Lucius smiled brightly at her words,

"I'm your favourite person though, right?" He asked, her answering laughter seemed to make him pout.

"That's not nice, Cissy." Regulus stated

"He should be your favourite, he did give you Draco." She sighed with a smile

"Lucius would be my favourite, but unfortunately for him it's Draco. Anyway, what brings you here, Regulus, Severus?" She asked, finally placing down her cup.

"My house is uninhabitable, and I'm gonna knock it down and start again. I'll need to rebuild the muggle way which could take a while and I would stay at a hotel for the time being but I don't feel confident exchanging galleons for cash. Lucius said it was okay for me to stay here if you said it was ok." Severus said unsurely, but her radiant smile was almost enough to answer.

"Absolutely, Draco will be so pleased with the news."

"He could stay at the three broomsticks" Regulus added, Narcissas' answering frown was fierce. Reminiscent of his mother, Walburga's, which Regulus remembered from countless times he and Sirius were scolded.

"No, that's not enough. I assume the process could take quite a while and I don't believe the Three Broomsticks would be hospitable enough for a long-term stay." She stood and called her son down. Draco flew down at break neck speed when he saw the visitors.

“Uncle Regulus, Godfather! What are you guys doing here?” He exclaimed, With a sunny grin,

“I came along for the hell of it,” Regulus said as he turned to Severus.

“I’m gonna stay with you for a while Draco, you’ll be seeing me more often now.” Severus smiled as Draco began to jump about excitedly.

“Yaaaaaay! Oh I’m so excited! I know the birthday party has already passed but it’s only July 23rd.” Draco says to Severus confusion,

“Okay?”

“Harry and Neville have their birthdays on the 30th and 31st so I’m gonna go to Harry's house for a sleepover. I can’t wait to tell him you live with us now!” The grin on his face broke out into a full face smile.

“Wow, are your other friends going to be there?” Severus asked, keeping the conversation alive.

“Yeah, Hermione, Ron, Blaise and Daphne are going but Pansy and Theo can’t go. But only because Pansy and Hermione don’t like each other and Theo can't go because his stepmum doesn’t like Mr Potter.” Severus becomes intrigued by Dracos’ statement.

“Why not Draco?” He asks while looking at the other three adults, Narcissa purses her lips.

“Because Mr Nott was a death eater and now he’s in Azkaban because Harry' s mum died and Voldemort is dead.” The statement brought understanding to Severus.

In 1981, a year and three months after Harry had been born, Lily was at a cottage in Godric’s Hollow alone when Voldemort appeared and struck her with the killing curse. Unfortunately for him, whatever protection she had rebounded the spell, killing him too.

“I see, well it’s unfortunate your friends don't all get along. Don’t worry too much though Draco, they might change their minds later on, okay?” Draco frowned at Severus for a second before reiterating,

“No, no. Theo doesn’t mind Harry or the others. Only Pansy and Hermione don’t like each other. ” Severus filled with understanding,

“Ah, ok. Sorry Draco” he says to his godson who perked up and chirps his agreement when Narcissa shepherds us all inside for dinner.

Dinner that night was a lovely affair, from roasted duck to stargazy pie and many other traditional English foods. When all was said and done, Severus returned home for the night.

Chapter 6: A godfather and a Father

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Haunt Me - Yana

Hours passed by, turning into days as Severus had movers in and out of his home. Packing and unpacking his parents belongings into storage units seemed to consume his time. Once everything was done, with a suitcase of his own clothes, Severus finally moved into Malfoy manor on July 29th.

Setting himself up in the guest wing of Malfoy manor was for the better part, exhausting. With little Draco running about and exasperating him from question after question, but Severus didn't mind his exuberance. Unlike most Black or Malfoys, Severus was pleased to see the childlike wonder in him. Draco and other children of his generation would never have to experience the stress and misfortune of war.

On the morning of the 30th, Draco came bounding into Severus' room with a peal of laughter. The darkening of the little boys under eye gave Severus a deep understanding of the situation.

“Draco, did you sleep last night?" He asked with a tilt of his head, Draco stopped what he was doing and adorned a sheepish look.

“Please don't tell on me,” Draco said with a pout to Severus' consternation. Contemplating his next words, Severus pursed his lips.

“Hmm, I won't tell on you. But Draco, you won't be able to keep it a secret. Your eyes are almost purple,” Severus says

“You could give me a pepper up potion?” The child says conspirationally, Severus only shakes his head.

“Sorry bud, no can do. If your mum finds out, we’ll both be in trouble and I just won’t be a part of that. Your mum can be terrifying when she wants to be. Go and get dressed and I’ll meet you down stairs for breakfast.” Draco frowned viciously with a fierce pout as he hung his head and shuffled from the room.

Once Severus himself was dressed, he made his way into the dining room. The sound of Narcissa scolding Draco and his poor sleep seemed to be the soundtrack of the morning. Draco’s accusing eyes found him from across the room.

“You knew you’d be off today, Draco. I can’t send you like that. Imagine you're too tired to floo properly, you could hurt yourself or mispronounce the address and end up somewhere completely different!” she harped on, her usually tidy hair seemed to become dishevelled as she shook her head.

“But mum, I was too excited to sleep! I can just have a pepper up potion and then I’ll be right as rain,” He interrupted, to her consternation.

“No, I should just send you back up to bed. Pepper up potion, I don’t think so. You can go as you are, and if you fall asleep before everyone else, well you only have yourself to blame,” She huffed in annoyance,

“Go up stairs and grab your things, Draco. You’ll be off in a moment.” Narcissa said as Severus filled his plate with eggs and toast. Narcissa turned to Severus and Lucius with distress.

“What are we going to do?” She asked, Lucius put down his paper and smiled at his frustrated wife,

“I could go with him? He won’t get lost or hurt Cissy, He’ll be fine.” She frowned at her husband with her hands on her hips,

“You can’t, you’ll be late to work at this rate. Finish up and head off. Severus, could you take him? I would but I’m late for my appointment at Twilfitt and Tattings” Dread filled him as he looked up from his full plate, not a bite had touched his starving mouth. Of course she had to ask him, and right as he was about to have breakfast. But Severus couldn’t deny her, she *had* opened her home to him at a time of need.

“Ok Cissy, I’ll go wait at the floo for him.” Severus said, covering the trepidation.

Minutes seemed to tick by like seconds as Draco rushed into the floo room, bag in hand. He stopped short, as soon as he saw Severus. A pout found its way back onto his face as the earlier betrayal made itself known.

“Uncle Sev,” He said,

“Draco,” Severus replied, trying to mask his endearment. With a conspiratorial look, Severus pulled a potion from his pocket and handed it discreetly to his godson who perked up immediately.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you,” Draco jumped up and down as he whispered his thanks,

“Don’t tell your mum or your dad, and make sure not to tell your friends ok?” Severus told his godson. Narcissa wouldn’t know, anyway. It’s not like she’ll notice if Severus gave Draco a pepper up potion, he’d be staying with a friend and by the time he came back, the evidence would be all gone.

“Why come you’re here? Is it just for the potion?” Draco asks after drinking the potion,

“No, I have to take you over because you’re too tired to floo alone. You heard your mum, anything can go wrong in that state,” Understanding dawns on his little face,

“Oh, ok.” He said, grabbing onto Severus' arm as they stepped into the floo.

“Draco, I need the address. Otherwise I don’t know where we’re going,” He said slowly

“Right, ok. Um it’s Potter Manor, Morham.”

“In Scotland? Morham, Scotland? Is that the right address?” Severus asked, to Draco’s nod, Severus grabbed a handful of floo powder and spoke clearly.

“Potter Manor, Morham, Scotland.” As the flames around them grew, a whirling feeling filled his empty stomach.

Only moments later, Severus and Draco were standing in the foyer of Potter Manor. James Potter stood tiredly, sipping coffee as his son bounced where he stood, beaming at the floo. James straightened where he stood, shock dressing his face.

“Snape?”

“Hello Potter,” Severus said as Harry and Draco rushed off after a quick goodbye to both men.

“Sorry, Draco hasn’t had any sleep and Narcissa was worried he’d mis-floo to the wrong location. I brought him so that wouldn’t happen,” Severus explained to the other man.

“Oh no, that’s fine. The other children have just sat down for breakfast, would you be able to go over any allergies or dietary requirements with me?” Just as Severus was about to decline, his stomach grumbled ferociously.

“You could join us for breakfast?” He said with a small smile on his lips as Severus flushed at his moronic body.

“Sure, something to eat sounds good about now.” Severus said.

With trepidation, Severus followed James into the Potter family's dining hall.

Chapter 7: Awkward encounters pt1

Chapter Notes

Chapter Song - Stalkers Tango - Autoheart

The sight of Severus standing in James' home sent a thrill of shock up his spine. Since seeing him at Harry, Neville and Draco's joint birthday on July 15th, James could not get the other man out of his mind.

From the day they'd first met on the train to the last day of fourth year in 1975. James, Sirius, Remus and *Peter,* had been nothing but cruel to him. Snape gave as good as he got, sure. But for the most part, he and his three friends had started almost every encounter.

"....And he can't have chocolate unless you're willing to put up with him bouncing off your walls. Potter? Are you listening?" Severus snapped his fingers in James face as he jolted from the action.

"Sorry Snape, I'm a little tired. What was that?" James asked, the exhaustion coating his voice. Severus only nodded and continued to cut his pancake.

"I said, Draco is allergic to seafood. At least most seafood. And he can't have chocolate if you don't want him pinging off the walls." James nodded his head as he watched Severus chew the pancake.

"Ok, which seafood can't he have?" James asked,

"He's good with crab or lobster. But no other shellfish." Severus spoke as he cut another piece of pancake, when he was done, he took a sip of his coffee. Which James noted, he took with a bit of milk and no sugar.

“Well, with that, I believe we’re done here. Thank you for breakfast,” Severus stood to leave but James grabbed his arm and pulled him back down to his seat.

“Wait, ah actually why don’t you stay for a bit. We can catch up,” James' words gave Severus a prickle of uncertainty.

“About what? We don’t really have anything in common.”

“We both loved Lily?” Severus eyebrows shot up, James flushed at his own carelessness.

“You do know I'm gay, yes?” It was James turn for his brows to shoot up,

“Ah, I *did* love Lily. But that was a once off. It ended poorly, and I admit, perhaps I went a little too far but it’s too late now.” Severus continued, to James' confusion.

“Oh, I didn’t know that.” James said,

“And how could you? For the most part, when it didn’t involve Lily, I could be circumspect.” Severus said, the room became awkward and silent except for the sound of children laughing in the other room.

“Are you seeing anyone? I could introduce you to someone,” James asked, trying to move past the discomfort. Severus only exhaled.

“What do you really want, Potter?” Severus' words seemed to hold a sense of pity.

“I’m curious about you, I think we all are really,” The words that left James mouth filled Severus with confusion,

“Why? I don’t really understand.”

“Why not? You up and left, like there was nothing worth staying for. Not Lily, or Regulus or anything else.” James wasn’t accusatory, only calm and curious.

“Why would I stay? What was there for me, worth staying for?” The words seemed to fill James with regret and guilt.

“James, from day one you and your hodgepodge of friends thought I was nothing but evil. Lily, my only non-slytherin friend, came to hate me. That was my own fault, sure but teachers did nothing about all the kerfuffle you four got into, you were almost like gods amongst children. Look what you did to Bertram Aubrey. You could have killed him, but the worst you ever got from the staff at Hogwarts was a detention or no Hogsmeade.” James contemplated Severus' words, the truth of them hitting like a brick to the face.

“We changed after you left, after your letter,” The mention of a letter stopped Severus in his tracks as he slowly widened his eyes in fear.

“What letter?” The ghostly sound of his voice drew James attention like a hawk,

“The one you wrote to Lily, after fourth year. She brought it to school in fifth year, she blamed us you know.” Severus exhaled deeply at James' words, a haunted look filling his eyes.

“That bloody letter, god that’s so embarrassing," Severus' lip curled in disgust.

“You blamed everyone, we were the reason you ran away and I get that I played a part in all of it Snape, I just want to bridge that gap and,” James says before he is rudely interrupted,

“Stop, just stop please. Potter, whatever you remember about that letter, please just forget about it ok.” The look of pure mortification on Severus' face is almost comical, had James not been filled with confusion.

“I didn’t run away.” Severus uttered, red face and shameful.

“Yeah you did, you didn’t return to Hogwarts.” James said incredulously.

“No, my father died and my mothers relatives took me in. They lived in France, it didn’t make sense to keep going to Hogwarts. I transferred to Beauxbatons.” Rubbing a hand down his face, Severus continued to explain.

“I sent that letter to Lily, yes. But I was just being a drama queen, to be honest, I didn’t think she’d read it. Let alone take it to school for show and tell. I am absolutely ashamed that I did that, it’s a deeply unsettling memory that I hope we can put behind us.” Severus continued. James burst out into laughter, the very sound highlighting Severus mortification.

“Ok, so yeah. That makes so much more sense. You moved away.” James said with shining, mirthful eyes,

“Why didn’t you just stay with your mum? Couldn’t you have stayed at Hogwarts?” James asked,

“My mother died on August 10th, 1973. During the holidays between second and third year.” Understanding dawned on James face.

“Ok, that makes much, *much* more sense. So you moved to France with your mothers family and wrote that letter.” James Said in understanding,

“Yep, like a revenge thing. I regretted it as soon as the owl left my window. I spent all this time hoping Lily never opened it, but I guess I was wrong, huh?” The flush in his face seemed to cool down as he looked at his watch.

“Potter, as embarrassing and enlightening as this was, I need to go. I have some appointments to get to.” Severus said, standing and this time James stood with him.

“It was good to catch up with you Snape, we should get together and do this again some time.” James said with a smile, guiding him back to the floo.

“Sure, let’s just hope it’s a little less awkward next time.” Severus smiled slightly, as he flooed away.

Awkward as it was, James was happy with the outcome and he couldn’t wait to tell Sirius and Remus.

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The crawling feeling climbed up Severus' spine as he looked over his shoulder. For weeks now, someone had been watching him. At first, Severus couldn’t be sure. Ever since he boarded the train for Hogwarts on September 1st, 1973, He’d had the sick feeling someone was following him.

He’d thought it was the marauders, but they always made themselves apparent. What need had they to hide, when everyone treated them and their very existence like a blessing. Severus ignored the terrifying chill that seemed to follow him, believing whoever it was would grow bored.

Until October 3rd, when he woke to find a piece of his hair had been cut. Someone had come into the Slytherin dorm and cut his hair. For weeks, he thought his dorm mates had played a cruel trick on him, but nope. No one looked at him funnier than usual, or snickered more than usual.

As each day passed, more and more alarming things happened to him. The sound of footsteps following along when he knew he was alone. Each time he turned, no one was there. And then it got worse, his underwear disappearing from the bathroom as he showered to notes lovingly crafted and deposited in his bed.
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Severus did the only thing he knew of and went to Narcissa at Regulus' behest. For a time, it seemed to stop. Little did Severus know, things would only get worse in the coming year.

Chapter 8: Wind-downs

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Don't You See Me Trying - Erin LeCount

Sirius was the first to arrive, and the children piled around the exhausted auror who smiled and laughed with them. Telling them stories and playing games with them seemed to tire them out. James set them up in the guest wing, sharing the largest between seven children.

Cake and popcorn were sent up for them as snacks while they played whatever board games or card games via house-elf, Snappy. Soon after, Remus joined them as they made their way to the lounge room to relax.

Sirius slumped down into the couch between Remus and James, letting out a bone tired sigh. Remus smirked and ruffled his hair but James' mind was far-away, lingering on Severus.

"How was work, buddy?" Remus asked Sirius, who shifted so that his head was on Remus lap and legs on James lap.

"Well, good and not good," Sirius said with an air of exasperation. His lips pursed as he contemplated his own words,

"Actually, it's fucking shite." James looked at him and Remus with knitted brows.

"Can't be Deatheaters. For the most part, they're all dead and gone." James said, matching Sirius' exhaustion as any man who'd spent a day wrangling twelve and eleven year olds.

"Nah man, worse." Sirius let out another sigh as Remus stroked his hair.

“I can’t tell you, either way, but you’ll hear about it tomorrow. Anyway, how was your day, Remus? James?” Sirius asked,

“Mine was normal. Work was alright, we had more clients than usual today and Lady Malfoy stopped by the café. Did you know Snape moved in with them?” Remus asked the room and Sirius sat up, knocking Remus in the chin.

“What? No way,” Sirius said,

“Yeah, that makes sense. Snape dropped Draco off this morning. I figured something like that must’ve happened.” James answered

“Wait, James we’ll get back to that anyway, what else did she say, Moony?” Remus shot James a questioning look as he carried on,

“Snapes home is being modified and it’s uninhabitable so he’s staying there for a few months while they work on it.” Sirius frowned at him as he righted himself in the seat.

“Shouldn’t take that long, just a flick of the wrist and it’ll be right as rain in days.” Remus smirked at Sirius' general disconnected understanding of muggle society.

“No, muggle dwellings have a lot more bureaucracy surrounding ‘em.” Remus explained before turning back to James.

“So Snape was over this morning, anything interesting happen?” Remus asked as Sirius turned to face James too. James let a slow grin fill his face as he recalled the events of the morning.

“Yeah actually. It was bloody awkward but I guess you could say we cleared the air a bit.” Sirius leant forward motioning his hands for James to continue as Remus stood to pour

himself a drink.

“Turns out, we didn’t influence Snape's decision to leave.” James said,

“Fuck off, the letter,” Sirius said when James interrupted him.

“Means shit all. Snape told me this morning he had to move anyway. After his dad died, he had no more living relatives in the UK. So he moved to France with his mum’s side of the family,” James laughed as Remus brought back a glass of firewhiskey for the other two men and himself.

“Yeah, so he moved to France and transferred schools. The *letter* was apparently a last ditch effort to get back at Lily.” James chuckled at the looks on their faces,

“That, but. All this time, all this, this guilt I’ve been carrying. What for?” Sirius said as James shrugged. Remus sat down again.

“We should have seen it coming, I’m sure Headmaster Dumbledore would’ve made an announcement if something did go seriously wrong,” At those words, Sirius face became bitter,

“Would he?” James asked,

“He didn’t do anything when we inflated Bertrams’ head that one time.” Sirius only nodded at James' words and Remus frowned.

“Well, he announced every time a student lost family during the disappearances. You know, like Marlene.” Remus said,

“Right, but that was after Snape left. Anyway, I asked if he wanted to hang out sometime and catch up, proper. He said it’d be fine sometime.” James said,

“Are we included? Do you think he would mind seeing us?” Sirius asked

“I didn’t ask, sorry Padfoot. I’ll ask next time.” Remus smirked,

“Well, now what? I don’t really know what to feel anymore. All this remorse I’ve built up over the years has nowhere left to go, do I still apologise to him or do I just move on?” Sirius asked no one in particular,

“We should still apologise, even if he *hasn’t* been carrying a torch of revenge all these years. It won't hurt to say it anyway. Who knows, maybe he won’t forgive us,” Remus stated morbidly,

“Shit, I don’t remember if I said sorry or not.” James said with wide eyes. His posture was rigid with tension.

“Set a date, get in touch and ask him to dinner. We can all go.” Remus said, James and Sirius both perked up, twin grins painting their faces.

“Damn, that makes my job harder then,” Sirius said, rolling his neck and shoulders.

“Why?” James asked, suspiciously.

“What *can* you tell us about that?” Remus asked.

“All I can tell you is that it involves Peter.” Both James and Remus stiffen at the mere mention of his name. The *traitor,* Peter Pettigrew.

Peter wasn’t an outsider, like most believed. The duffer, the hanger-on or even the suck-up. Peter was for all intents and purposes, their friend. Who laughed and joked, who spent full

moons with them. He knew all there was to know about James, Sirius and Remus.

He stood by James' side and cried in sync at Fleamont and Euphemia’s funeral. An anchor just like the other two men. So when Lily died that fateful night, on October 31st, 1981, James couldn’t believe Peter would do that. The reality of it was abominable. And yet, that was the truth. With resignation, James stood.

“I can’t deal with this tonight, sorry guys. I’m off to bed.” With that, James left the room and headed off to bed. Whatever it was, he'd know in the morning.

Chapter 9: The Rat pt2

Chapter Summary

Chapter song - Silhouette on The Hill - Paris Paloma

Morning dawned on July 31st, Potter Manor in calm serenity. Not a speck out of place as each child ate with gusto. Sirius and Remus, who'd stayed the night, were waiting with bated breath for James to descend. Harry vibrated in his seat, stealing glances at Neville, who had turned twelve the day before.

Today was day two of their shared sleepover, after the previous day which had started with the arrival of their friends and cake that went long into the night with games, a clear standard had been set. A standard, James seemed to be adhering to as he came into the room singing the birthday song again.

Once the cake had been eaten, Hermione cajoled the boys into another room to open Harry's presents. Yesterday, Neville had opened five that his mother and father had reserved for this. Today, Harry would open an equal amount. Draco, Ron, Blaise, Daphne, Neville and Hermione ooh'ed and aah'ed at every item Harry opened, James' heart filled with compassion. Despite the oncoming trouble in the air, at least the children would be entertained for the day.

"All right kids, I'm going downstairs. You have fun, but make sure not to hurt yourselves and let me know when you want to go outside." Each child looked up at James, and nodded their assent. James wasn't foolish enough to leave them alone, so he set Vera the elf to watch them in secret.

James made his way into the parlour where Sirius and Remus waited. Without preamble, Sirius handed James the Daily Prophet. Dread turned to rage as he read the front page article.

'PETER PETTIGREW: ESCAPED CONVICT'

An image of Peter stared back, brooding and wild eyed. A wicked grin plastered unabashedly on his face.

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December 5th was shaping up to be the best day of Severus' young life. Evan Rosier was a fourth year student, he spent the morning listening to Severus ramble on and on about potions. He always did, though.

Severus had gone about his day as usual, going to class and having lunch in between. During the second break of the day, Severus had spent it at the lake with Evan. Regulus usually joined them but that day he was at the Library, studying.

Evan sat beside Severus and watched and listened like usual. But today felt different, as the butterflies coiled in his stomach, Severus was shocked by Evan.

“Sev?” Severus looked at Evan with apprehension as confusion coiled in his belly. Evan only took his hand with a soft smile.

“I uh, haha. I was wondering if you’d go to the next Hogsmeade weekend with me? Like, like on a date?” Evan flushed as he looked down at his hands. Severus' apprehension turned to joy as a smile lit his face.

“Evan, I would love to. I will” Evan looked into Severus' eyes as they shared a smile.

The rest of the week passed by in a blur and Severus was never alone. From Regulus, Narcissa and Barty Jr, since the stalker situation had begun. Saturday morning came with the rustling sound of his dorm mates readying themselves for the day in Hogsmeade. The simple idea of it brought a smile to his face.

A day in Hogsmeade with Evan Rosier, Severus dressed and headed out to the carriages. He’d meet Evan at the Three Broomsticks, Regulus and Barty were still second years so they couldn’t go. Instead Severus rode with Narcissa and her friends, Severus sat quietly, not interrupting their conversation.
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Once they arrived, Narcissa and her group of friends walked him to the Three Broomsticks. Severus ordered himself a butterbeer as he waited. The first hour passed by quietly, much like the carriage. The second hour passed much the same and trepidation rose in him as the third began to pass. Once the fourth hour came, Severus finished off his fifth butterbeer.

James, Sirius, Remus and Peter entered, laughing like there was no care in the world when Peter spotted him. Dragging his friends along, he traipsed up to Severus with a wicked grin. Each stride forward seemed to match the beat of Severus' crumbling heart.

“Oi, oi Sniv. What’s happenin?” Peter crooned, his screw cut, golden hair bouncing as he laughed. Severus didn’t say a word as he stared blankly at them

“He asked you a question, Snivellous, answer him” Sirius demanded. Remus seemed to grimace which quickly turned into a grin.

“I’m having something to drink, before I go to Honeydukes and grab the second year's sweet supply” Severus said, hoping his answer would be enough to send them on their way. Luckily for him it was.

“Boooorrriiinngg,” Peter hollered as he and his friends turned and left.

Severus did exactly as he said he would, getting sweets for Regulus and Barty. When he was done, he made the slow trek back to the castle. Since he left Hogsmeade early, there was no carriage to carry him back.

As he walked, a note fluttered down from above landing at his feet. Severus picked it up and read the most terrifying words he’d ever received. ‘Evan Rosier? You could do better than that. You could have me. But if I can’t have you, no one can’ Severus' heart leapt into his throat as his legs gave out into a mad dash towards Hogwarts.

Severus searched high and low for Evan, he wasn’t in the dorms or the library. Just as he was about to give up, Regulus and Barty found him wandering the halls.

“Sev!” Barty called breathlessly

“Merlin, you gotta come to the med bay.” That earlier dread became reality as he looked at their flushed faces.

“What? What happened?” His voice sounded muffled in his ears as he spoke.

“Mr Filch found Evan on the quidditch pitch. His arm and leg are broken.” Regulus answered

“Yeah, Evan said someone hexed his broom this morning after practice. He didn’t see who it was though” Barty said. The three Slytherin students made their way to the med bay where they were greeted by Madam Pomfrey.

“Hello boys, are you not feeling well?” She asked kindly,

“No Madam Pomfrey, we’re here to visit Evan. Is he well enough to see friends?” Her lips pursed as she glanced them over.

“Hmm, yes. He’s well enough. But you have ten minutes and then I want you boys out and back to your studies.” She said, with mirroring nods of assent, they agreed.

Severus and the other boys made their way behind Evan’s curtains. He lay looking up at the ceiling of the cold white room and only turned his eyes when he realised Severus was there.

“Hey Sev,” He said, smiling through a wince.

“Hey Evan,” Severus replied.

“I’m sorry I stood you up, I didn’t mean to.” His lips quivered as he spoke.

“It’s okay, I know you didn’t.” Severus told him with a sigh.

“We were gonna have such a nice date, too,” Evan said with frustration, tears gathering in his eyes. Severus gulped down the tension in his throat as he began to stroke Evans' hair.

“Don’t dwell, It’ll only make it worse,” Regulus said, breaking the moment.

“Well- well, we can have other dates. Right Sev?” Evan asked. Severus didn’t know how to answer him. Not with the threat of his stalker becoming physical to someone other than himself.

Chapter 10: The Rat that leaves his cage

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Jaws - Sleep Token

“Man, the look on his face. Am I right?” James laughed, sitting down with his newly poured drink.

“I know right? What a fucking wimp. It’s not like we actually did anything to him yet,” Sirius answered. Snapes’ face had been impassive with watering eyes as he sat there completely still. Remus grimaced at the memory of it, shifting uncomfortably in his seat.

“Oh come on, Moony. Don’t make that face, we were just kidding,” Peter said, rolling his eyes. Remus inhaled and shook his head in exasperation.

“I didn't say anything,” He answered with pursed lips.

“You didn’t have to. I can see it in your face.” Peter said drily, James and Sirius laughed awkwardly to ease the tension.

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James ran a hand down his face, schooling his emotions. Putting the paper face down on the table, he stood. He began to pace, Remus exhaled deeply to Sirius's consternation. James couldn’t think, the world around him seemed to still and despite his poor eyesight, he could see every particle of dust as it fell around him.

“Is this what you were talking about last night?" Remus asked Sirius.
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“Yeah, it is.” He explained with a weary sigh.

“You tried to warn us…” James couldn’t make out the words they were saying, fogged like water in his ears. Harry, god his little boy. Would Peter come after them? Would James’ family fall apart? Neville and his family, were they in danger?

“When? Why? How?” James' frantic words cut off the conversation between Remus and Sirius.

“How did he get out? I thought there were wards to prevent it?” James' questions hung in the air for what seemed like hours.

“Apparently the wards deteriorated. Supposedly, they were updated bi-yearly but it seems as though while the hours were logged, no one was actually showing up. That’s one presumption.” Sirius answered solemnly.

“And the other?” Remus asked

“The other presumption is that he had help.” Sirius' expression was bitter as he answered. Remus shook his head at the words.

“So, the wards specifically put in place to keep an animagus locked up,” James scoffed, vibrating with rage as his face curled into a sneer,

“Were neglected due to a dereliction of duty?” The sheer ferocity of his anger was palpable. Sirius stood and made his way to James' side.

“For the most part James, It won’t affect you or Remus.” Confusion took over the rage as he looked at Sirius.

“What? How could this not affect us?” James asked

“It won’t be a problem because I saw his cell. And when I tell you that Peter has thought of nothing but Snape all this time, I mean it.” The gravity in his voice belied the significance.

“What did you see?” Remus asked,

“Every flat surface had ‘Severus’ etched into it. Like a curse or a mantra encompassing the space,” Sirius voice was dead and yet full of fear.

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“Where the hell do you keep sneaking off to Wormy?” Remus' voice was light as he spied Peter grabbing James invisibility cloak yet again. Peter jolted where he stood as he turned to the werewolf.

“It’s just a late night walk, need to clear my head a bit.” Peter sheepishly ran his hands through his hair, looking up through his eyelashes with a smile.

“What’s on your mind? Can I help?” Remus, ever kind and present asked.

“I guess I just feel a little bad about yesterday, maybe I was a little harsh with Snape” Peter’s eyes darted between Remus' face and the dorm wall behind him as his face flushed. Remus exhaled and patted Peter’s back with a nod.

“Maybe, he seemed kind of sad already,” Remus said

“Yeah, but he always does though, so….” Peter responded. Remus didn’t respond, only staring at him.

“Well, I’m off then. Bye.” Peter said and left the dorm.
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Walking through the halls of Hogwarts seemed to be the only time Peter felt at ease. From the large, opulent carved walls to the stone floor and every stained glass window, every part of her beauty fed into that romance of magic.

When Peter first entered her halls, in 1971, he'd felt like the chosen one. A son of god on a path to glory. But then he'd seen Severus. They hadn't known each other, but Peter remembered him from Cokeworth. They rode the same bus to school for about two months before Peter's father had been promoted. Then the Pettigrews moved to Weyland Rd, Oxford.

Severus was quiet, but then he always had been. Claiming James, Sirius and Remus only heightened Peter's elevation in life. Peter always had a knack for picking out the biggest and best, Hogwarts wasn't anything new and nor were the people.

It wasn't his fault Snape caught James and Sirius' eyes, but Peter ***would*** *benefit from it. Until yesterday. Sitting alone, tearfully at the Three Broomsticks, Severus was very reminiscent of those bus rides. The guilt was encompassing.*

The sound of shuffling caught Peter's attention and looking up, he saw Evan Rosier. Which seemed strange. You'd think a guy who had suffered broken bones wouldn't be out and about, especially when the culprit hadn't been found.

It was all anyone could talk about. Poor, precious Evan. Attacked while his back was turned, he fell 13 feet. With nothing better to do, Peter followed him.

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Friday morning had gone incredibly well for Severus. A quiet and peaceful breakfast with Narcissa and Lucius as Lucius read the paper. The headline was quite alarming, to think Peter Pettigrew, notorious Death Eater had escaped Azkaban was alarming.

It didn't have anything to do with him, though. So all in all, his morning was great. The same could not be said for the rest of the day. Bent over a desk signing paper after paper, form after
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form was exhausting Severus. If he had known it hurt this much to get his house knocked down he would have sold the bloody thing.

Much less stress, and less effort to deal with. It also stole optimal brewing time from him which was another annoyance. And Severus still had to rent a space to open his own potions shop. Each hour ticked by, feeling the wasted sun come and go sent a sense of regret into his skin. As the sun dipped lower, painting beautiful hues of purple and pink across the sky, Severus had no idea that Peter was out there somewhere.

Looking for him.

Chapter 11: The Rat pt3

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Only with You - Cyn

Things were not going well for Peter. Wormtail. Frail and thin, a reedy man who'd gone more than days at a time without food. Peter couldn't say he didn't deserve it. No, he certainly did. And no, he *didn't* feel remorse for Lily *or* her death.

Severus had named her *first* in his letter. Then his *father*. The thought of him made Peter's lip curl with disgust. It was too late by then, Tobias Mathias Snape was long dead by the next school holidays. There was no need to go after him. Peter knew, he'd checked.

It wasn't always like this, curiosity at first. Curiosity until *Evan.* Severus' boyfriend, the first of them. But certainly not the last. Severus had a type, Avery, Mulciber, *Evan.* Each one, worse than the last. Older too.

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Peter followed Rosier along the halls and out into the inner courtyard. There under the light of the stars, Rosier was wrapped up in the arms of some nameless girl. He'd heard the rumours. On the 5th of December, Evan had asked Snape out. Well, that's what he'd heard through the grapevine.

It didn't make sense. Snape wasn't hideous, just a bit unfortunate looking. Greasy, lanky, under-fed and ghostly pale. Yesterday, on Saturday, Snape sat alone in the Three Broomsticks with tears in his eyes. So? Was Rosier pulling a prank?

Despite what Peter thought, Evan Rosier and Severus would date approximately four weeks. The break up was loud and violent. Peter didn't get it.But Severus would go on to date two more Slytherins after that. Each break up, very, very different.
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It took some time, 1 year to be exact. Tracking Severus down wasn't easy. At the end of fourth year, after the letter, Peter had made a stop by Cokeworth which was rather far out from his home. That's when he'd discovered Tobias was already dead, almost a year at that point. That summer, Peter had ransacked Severus' run down, childhood home. Save for the furniture and broken beer bottles, there was almost nothing there.

But Peter found a floorboard in the master bedroom, creaky and old. Peter once loved detective movies, so without a care in the world he pulled it up and what do you know. A journal belonging to Eileen Prince was stuffed inside. The journal was old, when he flipped through the pages detailing her life, the final entry was August 9th, 1973.

That was his saving grace. A clue. Peter didn't need to look far, Professor Slughorn was like putty in your hands if you played your cards right. Peter had the best cards. Slughorn adored James and Sirius, well he adored their pristine families.

'Eileen was such a brilliant girl, yes. Such a shame she threw it all away for a man,' He'd said. 'A muggle too, so sad.' Peter put it all together quickly. Snape was a halfblood and in his home, discarded by time, Eileen's journal yellowed and dried. So she was Snapes' mum then. If only Professor Slughorn knew. He would have paid Severus much more attention.

So yes, it took Peter until the end of fifth year to find Snape. France, with his mother's relatives. Oh how they kindly took in their bastard grandson. He was safe there, away from Lily, James, Sirius, Remus and himself. Dumbledore couldn't touch him either. Snape was safe.

But Peter had it on *great* authority that Severus had returned. Severus wasn't safe here. He needed to go back to France or anywhere else. Peter would have to do something about it, *only* Peter could do something. No one else knew what Peter did. Not even Severus.

Which was why Peter had found himself back in Spinners End. It wasn't great but he had nowhere else to go. With his parents dead and his assets frozen, Severus' run down childhood
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home was the best he could think of. It wasn’t ideal, no furniture or food, an empty shell of what Peter could remember through Azkaban tarnished memories.

It would be fine, of course. Peter could get food anywhere, rats were common, right? Furniture didn’t really matter, he’d slept in a cold and wet cell and now Peter had the comfort of four walls and insulation. No more ratty stone walls, glass-less windows or rain flooded floors. The only thing he needed to do now was find Severus Snape.

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Lucius scrubbed a hand down his face, checking his calendar, he sighed. Sunday, 2nd of August. Draco had been home for three hours and he had already caused a ruckus. Draco had smashed Narcissa's favourite vase twice in that short time, scared the peacocks to within an inch of their lives and babbled poor Severus half to death.

Draco was currently in his room on time out. Lucius loved Draco, he did. But there was time and place for over-exuberance, it wasn’t his son's fault of course, it was that damn James Potter. What kind of animal feeds cake and chocolate to a twelve year old for breakfast.

Lucius understood that the children were excited from Neville and Harry’s sleepover but goodness gracious. Sometimes, it was ok to tell children, no. So yes, while normally too old for time out, Draco was unfortunately being punished.

Lucius' thoughts were interrupted by the sound of his name being called from the flickering flames of his floo. Rufus Scrimegour’s visage appeared, his brows furrowed and his mouth pulled in a downturned frown. Lucius straightened in his seat at his appearance.

“Head Auror Scrimegour, to what do I owe the pleasure on this fine day?” Lucius asked as he kneeled in his fireplace, his voice perfectly cordial.

“Aah, yes. Lord Malfoy. Fine day to you sir, I was calling about a wizard residing in your home?” Rufus spoke succinctly and clear.

“I believe I know of whom you speak, is there trouble in regards to that?” Lucius didn’t want to say anything about Severus on the off chance there was trouble, Rufus was a good man, but was known to jump for a fight at the drop of a hat if there was a chance.

“I am not at liberty to say as of yet, however it is most decidedly urgent. We require Mr Severus Snape’s presence at the Auror’s Department, post haste.” Lucius did *not* visibly react.

“I see, I will alert him, Head Auror. I’m sure he will join you shortly.” Lucius answered, but Rufus only shook his head.

“I apologise, Lord Malfoy, we will need to send an Auror or two to accompany him,” Rufus said and Lucius quirked a single brow at him.

“We believe he may be facing some danger in the future, we do sincerely apologise.” Rufus spoke calmly, Lucius knew from that alone that Rufus Scrimegour was not planning anything untoward.

“Give me a short moment, I shall retrieve him. I will allow entry through my family's public floo room.” Head Auror Scrimegour nodded his assent and disconnected from Lucius' private floo. Throwing his head back and heaving a deep sigh, Lucius stood.

Too lazy to walk from the family wing to the guest wing, Lucius floo’d over. Lucius made his way through the guest wing, checking every room for his friend. Severus was brewing in the guest (read: Severus personal) potions room.

Despite having been sent to his room, Draco sat atop a stool, watching his godfather work in silence. Severus was **far** too lenient on the boy. Lucius cleared his throat, Draco stiffened upon seeing his father and flushed. Severus only smirked easily, shamelessly.

“Draco, return to your room as you had been instructed.” Lucius said firmly, Draco began to sputter.

“B-but da-ad!” Draco whined and turned wide eyes on his godfather,

“Now, young man. We will be discussing this later.” Lucius took no joy in being firm with Draco, especially not as he pouted looking so much like his lovely mother.

Draco hopped down from his seat and shuffled shamefully from the room. Severus turned off the heating and set the cauldron aside for cooling before turning to Lucius. With a tilt of his head, his brows shot up in question.

“What’s up, Lucius?” Severus asked,

“Can’t I just swing by to see a friend?” Lucius asked back with a smile on his lips.

“You could, but you didn’t have to send Draco away for that. So what’s really up, Luc?” Severus asked again. Lucius could never keep things from Severus.

“Head Auror Scrimegour needs you at the Auror Department.” Severus began to stand at Lucius words, but the blonde man put a hand on his shoulder,

“They’ll be sending an escort for you,” Severus frowned but nodded anyway.

“Ok? I don’t believe I’ve done anything escort worthy, I swear.” Severus said in confusion, to which Lucius smirked.

“I know, I just wanted to tease you a little. Think of it as *_your_* punishment for letting Draco out of jail early,” He said with a laugh

“No, no. It’s for protection, they said.” Confusion only seemed to deepen on Severus' face. Severus stood and pulled on his robes.

“Ok, I’ll go wait by the floo then.” With that, Lucius walked him to the public floo room.

He might have been too lazy to walk from his office to Severus, but now that he was here, he decided it would be wise to escort Severus there. Head Auror Scrimegour was many things, but paranoid was not one of them. Lucius also remembered the stalking fiasco of late 1973 to early 1974.

It would be an absolute headache if that unnamed assailant had returned.

Chapter 12: Awkward encounters pt2

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Brutus - Em Beihold

Severus walked quietly beside Auror Black and Auror Shacklebolt. Severus hadn’t spoken properly to Sirius since their school days. During the birthday party at Malfoy Manor in late June, Severus had done a fine job of avoiding him. It was part of the reason he hadn’t moved in with Regulus.

Sirius looked good, his long plaited braid trailing down his well toned back only made Severus feel gawky and strange. Some things never changed, it seems. Disregarding the widening of Sirius' silver eyes, the other man had not said a thing to Severus.

Severus only followed along and watched him, ignoring the Auror behind him. Sirius was taller than he remembered, a staggering 6’1. It wasn’t much taller than Severus, only 4 inches. The length of his muscled legs, striding forward, tensing with each step.

The maroon of his uniform seemed to contrast with the bright red carpets, a fact that brought a chuckle to Severus' lips. Mania heightened by the absurdity of the situation at hand, Sirius jerked and looked back disbelievingly, confusion knit into his well groomed brows. The taller man slowed his steps and fell in line with Severus, an ache of uncertainty filled the shorter man.

“Is something… wrong?” The sound of Sirius's voice was soft, like a whisper.

“Not really.” A smirk played on Severus' face that he tried to hide behind a turned head.

“This is weird, right?” Turning to face the taller man, Severus searched Sirius' eyes for an answer.

“What?” Severus sighed audibly at Sirius's obtuseness.

“Walking near each other, without the threat of hexes and curses being thrown about,” The bitterness in Severus' voice shocked them both, Severus flushed in embarrassment.

“We’re not kids anymore, besides. It wouldn’t be as fun as it was before.” Sirius stared down at him from the corner of his eye. Severus pursed his lips as his head whipped around to contemplate Sirius.

“Was it?” The hoarseness in his voice was raw.

“Were we *just having fun?*” Severus' nose scrunched up, taking a deep breath he faced forward again.

“Wish I’d known that.” He stated tersely. Sirius flushed at Severus' words.

“I guess not, look. When you’re done here, can we grab a coffee?” Sirius asked.

“If you pay, I’ll go.” Shamelessly, Severus grinned with spite and Sirius nodded in agreement.

“Also I want to go to The Ritz. We can go to the wizarding side.” Severus said with finality, Sirius sputtered and Auror Shacklebolt, who was still behind them, laughed softly.

Sirius flushed a lovely pink as he sent a glare at his coworker. Ignoring Kingsley Shacklebolt, Sirius sighed in frustration while taking in Severus' appearance. Despite being only a few inches shorter, Severus felt rather small in comparison. Delicate, almost. Which was clearly not true, he was a hell cat with a wand.

“Sure, I hope you don’t mind. Maybe Remus and James could join us? If it’s not a problem for you?” Severus contemplated, pursing his lips in thought.

“I don’t really mind. I mean, I’m not exactly comfortable with the idea but after James and I had a conversation recently, it’s come to my understanding that the fo- three of you heard about the letter. I guess I need to clear the air with you lot?” Severus looked up at the ceiling as they continued to walk, a sense of awkwardness surrounding him. Sirius nodded his head.

“I mean, James kinda gave us the rundown already. So that’s not really important. I don’t want to give it away but I feel like there are a lot of apologies that need to go around. It’s a bit awkward right now but I think if we just all sat down together and had it out, maybe life could run a little smoother,” Sirius was kind enough to ignore Severus slip up of almost mention Peter, which Severus was kind of glad for.

“To be quite honest, I don’t want to be mature. I don’t want to hash it out or talk or go over it all. What’s the point? The one person I really want to apologise to is Lily, she’s also the only one I want an apology from. But she’s dead. I’m not trying to make it all about me, I know she’s left a widow and a son who won’t ever know what it’s like to hear her laugh. But that’s just the plain truth,” Bitterness coated Severus' voice as he spoke.

“At the end of the day, the only person I feel truly awful for is Harry and a little bit myself. Wouldn’t it be best if we just all acted mature for the children and completely ignore each other in every *other* aspect of life?” The words that left Severus' mouth sent a sting of rejection through Sirius.

“Heh, that’s gonna be a bit hard to do, Snape. I can’t exactly tell you why right now but you’ll understand once your meeting with Scrimegour is done.” Severus faltered at the spitefulness of the taller man's words. Severus gaped at Sirius.

“That doesn’t sound ominous at all.”

“It’s supposed to,” Sirius' face was blank, giving nothing away about his state of mind. Silence crooned around them and an edge seemed to slither up Severus' spine. A terrible, dreadful feeling he hadn’t felt since the train ride home from school in 1975. It was like his stalker had made a recurrence.

“Ah, Mr Snape. Here we are. Head Auror Scrimegour is just inside.” Auror Shacklebolt's words frightened Severus from his thoughts as he jumped into the air. Both Aurors chuckled at his reaction, Sirius laughing a little too loud.

“My apologies, sir. I meant no harm.” The black man snickered as he spoke and a flash of heat painted his cheeks red in embarrassment.

“It’s no trouble Auror Shacklebolt,” The brunette man said with a quick glare sent Sirius way.

“You’r more careless than I remember,” Sirius explained with a grin. Still as handsome as always, Severus thought to himself.

Without knocking, Severus turned the knob of the door and entered Scrimegour's office. Like everywhere else in the ministry, the carpets were a deep red. The walls oppressively brick, lined with oak libraries and curio cabinets. Each surface, cluttered with knick-knacks and loose files. Scrimegeour himself drowned in the leather seat, which was high backed. He looked up, with a grimace.

“Ah, Mr Snape. Welcome, welcome. Please sit.”

“Master Snape,” Severus corrected. He didn’t achieve his mastery, first class for nothing and Scrimegour wasn’t a friend who could so easily speak freely to him. Scrimegour flushed at the correction while narrowing his eyes.

“Of course *Master Snape*,” The older man purred.

“I’m sure you must be confused about your summons, and escort to boot?”

“I am, but I'm sure you will enlighten me?”

“Yes. I’m sure you’ve read by now that Pettigrew has escaped Azkaban?” Severus nodded absently, still unsure as to why that mattered.

“Yes, it’s been all over the Prophet for days now. Your point being?”

“It appears as though the madman has designs on you,” Every pretense in Severus dropped. His dread came back tenfold.

“W-what… do you… mean?” Scrimegour rifled through the paperwork, opening and closing files as he searched and before long, he pulled out a single image.

A mould infested cell, with a withered mattress and rusted bed frame was shown to him. The worst part, however, was the scrawling chicken marks of his name. Severus, Severus, Severus carved into every surface sent a chill up his spine. Fear and confusion warred in his heart at the site.

“I… I don’t know what to say. I mean, after leaving Hogwarts in 1975, I had no connection to Peter Pettigrew.” Severus uttered quietly, Scrimegour only nodded.

“I know Master Snape. I hope you don’t feel too uncomfortable, but I did a background check just in case.” Scrimegour searched his face as he spoke.

“For now, it’s believed that you are directly under threat and as such will need an escort at all times.”

“An escort? I’m bumming it in Malfoy Manor right now. I can’t just have Aurors following me around the grounds with a 12 year old. I highly doubt Lucius *_or_* Narcissa would let strangers around their son!” Severus hissed at the man,

“Oh, I know. I’ve already made arrangements with Regulus Black. He’s prepared space for you in his home and as *he* has no children it should be fine. Auror Black would also be

joining you in residence and Auror trainee Tonks.” Severus blanched at the sheer audacity of the man to make arrangements on his behalf.

Fuck! Severus cursed internally, the whole reason he’d moved in with Lucius was specifically to avoid Sirius and his friends. Now he was being forced into their proximity. Regulus was probably laughing at him right now. Sirius too, the absolute *cunt*.

“I see,” Severus spoke calmly, the complete opposite as he felt.

“Not to worry, though, Master Snape. You have about three hours to pack and move into Grimmauld Place.” Scrimegour said with a grin, cursed old bastard. Severus stood to leave with a grimace.

“Very well, it seems I must take my leave, Head Auror Scrimegour. Adieu.” Severus didn’t wait for a reply and left the office with finality to find Sirius grinning at him. A woman of 5’6 standing at his side. Trainee Auror Tonks, perhaps who wore an apologetic smile as she waved. Her hair colour flashed between pink, purple and yellow.

Severus only glared and stomped past the two Aurors.

Chapter 13: Tough Calls

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Washing Machine Heart - Mitski

“Must you leave, Uncle Sev?” Draco pouted from his mothers side, who only rubbed her son's shoulder. Lucius smiled at his son from Narcissa’s other side.

“Unfortunately so, Draco,” Sirius said apologetically. Draco pouted fiercely and poked a tongue at Sirius. Nymphadora stood awkwardly to the side, not interacting with her aunt or cousin.

They were vaguely close, though Narcissa and Andromeda were not. Narcissa always believed that Andromeda had abandoned her sisters for a man. She still loved her older sister, especially since Andromeda was the only one she had left. Bellatrix died on the night after her master after all, to a furious Frank Longbottom no less. She loved her niece too, but Nymphadora was living proof that Andromeda chose herself.

“Nymphadora, dear,” Narcissa spoke quietly as she made her way to her niece.

“Yes, aunty?”

“Severus has a habit of foregoing food from time to time, so make sure to interrupt when need be. I would ask Regulus or Sirius but I'm sure Severus would hex them silly if they tried.” She said to her niece. Severus became affronted at her words, and though not physically possible, she imagined his hackles being raised.

“I’m not a bloody cat, woman. I can take care of myself for goodness sake.” He hissed to everyone's chagrin,

“Or so he says, dear. But do just be mindful." Sirius snickered and Severus flushed despite himself. Draco on the other hand chortled loudly and gleefully.

“That’s enough, we best be off now.” Severus said, making rounds and hugging each Malfoy one by one. Draco is the last person he hugs, who grips him tightly with his pout resurfacing.

“Don’t forget to floo call me from time to time Uncle. I already don’t see Uncle Regulus enough.” Tears well in his young eyes and Severus is reminded of how young the child truly is.

“It’s not forever, kiddo,” Severus said, pulling back to ruffle the kids’ hair. Draco squawked like a bird with comically exaggerated reactions as he tried to smooth down his hair. Severus smiled at the boy as he stood.

With a final wave good bye, he stepped into the floo.

When Severus and the Aurors arrived at 12 Grimmauld Place, Regulus was waiting for them. Severus glared at him fiercely. Bag in hands, he tries to stomp past but Regulus grabs his arm, stopping him.

“Severus, I’ll show you to your room. Leave the bags, Kreacher will deal with them.” Regulus smiled warmly despite the acidic glower.

“We’ll all be in the family wing, My room, your room, Sirius room and then Nyms room. I would’ve put you between the two Aurors but Sirius and I have designated rooms so, this seemed like the better option. I hope you don’t mind?” Though it was a question, Severus felt as if he was being told, not asked.

“Yeah ok,” Severus sighed, Sirius and Nymphadora walked past and headed into their respective rooms.

“Don’t feel too bad, Sev. I know this directly goes against what you wanted, but it’s better than putting Draco or Cissy at direct risk, you know?” Considering the words and weighing them in his conscience, Severus was obligated to agree.

“Yeah, I guess. It just would have been nice if I was asked. It feels like some asshole is moving me about just for the heck of it.” Regulus smiled knowingly,

“I’m not trying to do that Sev, I’m not your grandparents. And I‘m sorry about all this too. But nevermind that, This Pettigrew nonsense aye? Do you think he was the stalker, from back in school?” Regulus' tone shifted to curiosity at the change in subject. Severus thought about it for a while as he began unpacking his clothes into their respective new homes.

“I don’t know, I mean if you had asked me back in school I would have said hell no. Now, I guess it makes sense doesn’t it? Joining You-Know-Who, thinking I’m gonna be there, where would he even get an idea like that?” Regulus shook his head,

“Who knows? If Pettigrew **is** the stalker, it brings a layer of understanding to all the awful things you had to suffer back in school and–”

“What?” Sirius stepped through the door as he interrupted his brother,

“What do you mean, back in school?” Fury tinted Sirius' handsome face, Severus turned away from them and fiddled with his socks, rolling and unrolling them.

“Sirius, we were having a private conversation. It’s rude to interrupt, you know.” Regulus scolded his older brother who ignored the younger man completely. Stepping around him, he came to Severus' side directly.

“Snape, I need an answer. My trainee and I need to know these types of things if we have to keep you safe.” Severus could understand the logic, but shame creeped up his spine as he remembered all the terrible things he’d suffered in school.

“I… I don’t know, it was all so long ago for me,” Severus scrubbed a hand down his face as he looked up at the man glaring down at him.

“Start literally anywhere. When it began, how you or any authority dealt with it.” Sirius barked.

“Ok, aah. The beginning of Fourth year, on the train to school. It felt like someone was watching me. I thought you and your shithead friends were plotting against me. Again.” Severus' words were like knives to Sirius' ears.

“It didn’t always make sense, you guys were in detention at *_some_* of the times it happened though, that’s why I thought it probably wasn’t you or your friends. It wasn’t until I woke to find bald patches on my head,” When Severus looked back up at Sirius, he was visibly horrified.

“I thought that would be the end of it. It got worse, so much worse. Notes in my belongings, my underwear going missing. I could never keep a relationship, they were always targeted. Anytime I had a boyfriend.” Severus' tongue felt like lead, in the background, he could hear Regulus order chamomile tea.

“You know, when Evan Rosier fell from his broom that year, we were meant to be on a date that day. Actually, The Three Broomsticks. You assholes bothered me that day and I thought Evan stood me up. When I ran back to school, a note fell from the sky right in front of me.” Regulus handed Severus tea, and sat at his side rubbing small circles into his back.

“Mmm, I remember that. Barty and I were the ones who came to get you.” Sirius shook his head disbelievingly,

“I don’t remember that,”

“Why would you? It was just another day to *_you_*.” Severus' accusing eyes pinned the taller man in place as he flushed in shame at his own actions. He simply nodded.

“What else?”

“I… It was one year, and by the next school year, I had transferred away. It was so long ago.”

“Not good enough, Snape. A lot can happen in a year.”

“It’s. Not. Your. Fucking. Business," Severus replied through gritted teeth.

“I get that you have a job to do, *_Black_*, but rehashing shit that happened years ago isn’t gonna help me now. Going over all the crappy things Pettigrew may or may not have done won’t find him any quicker!” Severus hissed, eyes flashing viciously. Sirius took a step back to scrutinise Severus and Regulus both.

“Fine, I just thought maybe if we got a better idea of what he was capable of, we could peek into his thought process. Find out where he could be and put him *_back_* behind bars.” Sirius said with exhaustion in his voice.

“We’re clearly not gonna make it to dinner or lunch at the Ritz today. So I’ll sort it out tomorrow or later.” Sirius stood and left the room, Severus watched him go.

Chapter 14: Real Comfort

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Coffee - Beababdoobee

Severus had long since gone to bed, Sirius on the other hand was plonked down in the settee at the end of his bed downing a glass of firewhiskey. A half moon shone down through the window, illuminating his room. Sirius never thought things would come to this.

Despite being a cold night, sweat trickled down from his hairline. Owls hooted off in the distance, crickets chirped and winds rustled but Sirius was bogged down by the weight of reality. It was bad enough carrying the guilt of all the trauma he and his friends had inflicted on Severus, but now knowing that at that same time, Severus faced a mightier foe on top of that seemed to cut deeper into his soul.

He'd spoken with Remus and James earlier in the night about lunch at the Ritz. Remus, James, Severus and himself. Things with Severus earlier didn't end quite how he expected, a little tense. He'd never intended to eavesdrop on their conversation but hearing what he did, *a stalker of all things,* well how else was he supposed to react?

Knowing he wasn't going to get much sleep that night, he headed downstairs to the kitchen. As he made his way down, he heard soft footfalls through one of the doors. Peeking through, he saw his brother in law, Bartemius Crouch Junior. Barty was pacing in front of the fire in the receiving room, shuffling parchment in his hands as he muttered to himself.

"Knock, knock," Sirius said and Barty jolted in shock at the interruption. He frowned over the parchment as he placed them down on the end table.

"Heya, Siri. I thought everyone was asleep." Barty stated

“No, sorry. I was just on my way to make tea. Care to join?” With a sigh, Barty nodded and followed him out into the hall.

“You know, you could have asked Kreacher to make it? He would’ve brought it up to you.” Barty told Sirius calmly, Sirius rubbed the back of his neck as his eyes shifted downcast.

“I… I’m not entirely comfortable with Kreacher. What with all the history,” Sirius replied,

“I know he’s trying, less acerbic. But there’s a part of me that just wants to rip into him, verbally of course.” Sirius explained, Barty nodded with a small smile.

“Fair enough. What’s kept you up so late anyway?” At Bartys’ question, acid rose in Sirius's stomach. They finally entered the kitchen and Barty set about making tea as Sirius sat down at the table.

“It’s about Snape, actually.” Barty looked back over his shoulder at Sirius with a questioning expression on his face.

“Hmm, what about him?” The tone of Bartys’ voice made Sirius feel like a child about to be scolded. Sirius raised his hands in defence and Barty rounded with two cups of black tea, from the scent of it.

“I’m just curious about this stalker business. He and Reggie were talking about it and I overheard them. I may have pried a little and he shut down after telling me some of it.” Barty placed down the cups with narrowed eyes and pursed lips.

“Why? What on Salazar's green earth made you do that? The last thing Severus needs right now is you or anyone else bringing that up. He’ll be jumping at shadows, you moron.” Barty scolded Sirius. With a shake of his head he sat down across from the older man. Sirius, in good nature, shrugged.

“I don’t know what came over me, but when I heard he’d had a stalker in school on top of the things we’d done to him back then, the guilt just ate at me. I mean, so many things ran through my head,” Sirius paused to take a sip of his tea and with the other hand, he traced knicks on the table top. Barty ran a hand down his tired face, Sirius eyes became trained on the fading dark mark on Bartys’ forearm as he gestured for Sirius to continue..

“How often Peter disappeared, when it started. Why? Was there anything I could have done to stop it? Would I have stopped it? I just don’t know.” Sirius's voice sounded raw to his own ears.

“That’s part of the problem, isn’t it?” Barty said after a deep sigh, his eyes were trained on his tea and the single candle light flickered, illuminating his sombre face.

“What?” Sirius asked,

“Sirius, almost every sentence you spoke started with I. I this, I that. At any point, did it occur to you that maybe it’s not about you? That maybe, just maybe, it’s about someone else? Did you consider that?” Barty asked seriously, his eyes fluttered to Sirius's gobsmacked face.

“I… I wasn’t trying to make it about me! How else am I supposed to think about it?” Sirius asked desperately, his annoyance faded into soft frustration with both himself and Barty. The bitter taste of his tea accentuated his emotions as he sipped it.

“But I’m not just talking about *this* situation. Even with your family, you left. *You* hated it here, *you* found safety elsewhere. It never occurred to you that Regulus hated it here either. Do you even know how he felt about it? Did you ever ask? At that point, Regulus didn’t matter to you. Only you did.” At Bartys’ words, Sirius shot up from his seat, jostling the table and tea cups.

“That’s not true!” He hissed as quietly as he could, looking around himself frantically as if checking for something.

“But that’s how it appeared to everyone else.” Barty stated solemnly.

“When Regulus and I were initiated as Death Eaters, we were barely adults. I’m not going to lie and say we were forced, because we weren’t, that’s just the truth. What I’m saying is that if you had just extended your hand to him, who knows? He might have taken it and gone with you,” Barty took a long sip of his tea before he continued speaking,

“We don’t know that, Barty.” Sirius stated as he sat back down and drank his own tea.

“Yup, we don’t know because it never happened. Because the question was never posed.” Bartys’ loud slurp of his tea seemed to be a punctuating finality of the conversation, Sirius wouldn’t let him have it.

“Why did you do it? Join Voldemort, I mean.” Sirius asked after polishing off his tea and getting up to make another, the curiosity in his voice completely un-masked. Barty Handed over his cup for a second as well.

“I guess you could say I was a bit like you, Sirius. My father was blinded by his ambition, so blinded, nothing I did was enough for even a simple glimpse of him. Voldemort saw me, knew me. I thought he did, at least.” Barty said as the kettle began to squeal.

“I know now that it was all just a form of manipulation, that I was a foolish boy taken in by niceties and attention. But at that time, I felt special. Wanted.” Barty leaned back in his chair, and watched Sirius make up their teas.

“I don’t– Why did you go to Dumbledore? Why become a spy?” Sirius set down Bartys’ tea and sat back down as he spoke.

“Well, there was this boy. Crazy, brilliant and beautiful. He heard something he shouldn’t have in Dumbledore's pub. He didn’t know what it meant, but he went to Voldemort with the information and realised too late that it would affect his brother.” Barty stated and Sirius's eyes widened comically.

“The prophecy… but wait, that wasn’t about me. It was about a child, Harry or Neville.”

“Harry or Neville,” Barty agreed with a nod of his head,

“Harry, your godson who you spend much of your time with or Neville. Whose mother was Harry's godmother and people you spent all of your time with. That man, the one I love, thought his idiot brother might get caught in the crossfire of it all. So we went to Dumbledore, together,” Barty stated simply, sipping from his tea and shifting in his seat.

“For me…” Sirius uttered in wonderment.

“I– do you regret it? The things you did until you both became spies?” Sirius asked

“Hmm, I do and I don’t. I don’t regret feeling like I mattered, the other parts though. Yeah absolutely.” Barty and Sirius continued to talk for hours, and midnight from dusk to dawn as the birds began chirping around them. Catching up about life in general and many, many other things.

Once the sun was up, tired and messy, Regulus traipsed into the room to see his older brother and husband laughing quietly between themselves. A small smile curled at his lips as he took in the scene. Sun filtered in through lace curtains creating a halo glow around both men.

“Morning my darlings, what brought all this cheer to the room?” Regulus said as he tried to hide a snicker at their shock. Barty grinned up from where he was sitting.

“Sirius was just talking about that book card, the one from school after Sev left.” Barty explained which Regulus had to think about.

“Which one?”

“The one where I called Lily Potter a twat.” Regulus laughed as he recalled it almost clearly in his head.

“Ah, the one where you wrote for Sev to ‘fly high’ and I wrote back that you were an idiot. That one?” Barty grinned and nodded his agreement at Regulus' words.

Severus and Nymphadora stumbled into the kitchen, twin looks of morning disgruntlement. Nymphadora wore a flannel pyjama set with fluffy blue bunny slippers. She was very reminiscent of her toddler years, Sirius thought.

Severus on the other hand was dressed head to toe in silk. The red fabric seemed to cling in places while loose in others. The inner corner of his eyes were crusted with sleep which he wiped away as he yawned. His black hair, haphazard and messy, framed his face like a dark crown. In unison, the two late comers plopped down into the nearest seats.

“Morn’n,” Nym yawned to which Severus frowned and leaned away in disgust.

“Fucks sake, your breath stinks!” He noted but Nymphadora only grinned back tiredly before blowing air his way. With a shake of his head, Regulus smiled and set about making a pot of coffee.

“Shit head,” Severus grinned back. Regulus cleared his throat.

“Sev, have you met Nymphadora properly?” He asked.

“Mm, nah. Coffee.” Was Severus reply,

“It’s being made now, I need full sentences please.” Regulus said patiently,

“Full later, coffee now.” Severus spoke disjointedly just to be an ass. Barty rolled his eyes while watching the scene play out.

“Ok, Coffee first then. But once that’s done, I would like you and Nymphadora to become more acquainted,” Regulus said to both Severus and Nymphador who gave a thumbs up.

“Don’t spoil him, Regulus. Severus, use your words or so help me…” Barty snarked, annoyed and happy at the situation at hand. Mornings hadn’t been this lively since Hogwarts. Severus looked up at Bartys’ voice and a slow smile curled around his lips.

“Hey Barty, Haven’t seen you in a while mate. What time did you get in?” He asked, his voice was still heady with sleep. Sirius felt like an outsider as he watched the three men interact.

“About 3:42 this morning. Sirius and I have been in the kitchen since 4 am.” Severus finally took the time to acknowledge Sirius who, like everyone else, was wearing pyjama bottoms and a white singlet.

“Black,” Severus said as a morning greeting. Regulus came around with a cup of coffee for Severus and tea for Nymphadora. From absolutely nowhere, he pulled a brush and began detangling Severus' hair to Sirius mirth. Severus tried batting Regulus away but the younger man slapped his hands. Nymphadora began cackling, and when she laughed, it was like seeing Andromeda in the room with them.

“Don’t laugh, Nym. You’re next.” Barty scolded the young woman who ceased laughing to frown.

“I’ll do my own hair, anyway. What’s the agenda for the day?” Nym asked Sirius, her superior during their protection detail.

“We’ll be tailing Snape for the foreseeable future, so whatever he’s up to. Although, if he’s amenable, Snape and I will catch up with Remus and James for lunch. You won’t be needed at that time.” Sirius answered her,

“Remember, you’re paying. I’m only going if you pay,” Severus said sternly, which didn’t quite land as serious as he wanted with Regulus pulling his hair into a ponytail.

“Ooh, that sounds fun. Where are you guys going?” Regulus asked as he finished up with Severus and moved on to Nymphadora who tried more valiantly to fight him off.

“The Ritz,” Severus said around a smirk at his younger friend, Bartys’ brows shot up at the name of the restaurant.

“Whew, that’s a pretty expensive lunch.” Barty said,

“It’s the only reason he agreed,” Sirius deadpanned at his brother-in-law. Barty and Regulus both snorted in amusement.

“Our Sev has expensive taste, our fault really,” Regulus said

“Yours and Lucius, you mean. Bloody spoilt, I tell ya’” Barty interrupted, Severus waggled his brows at Barty with a grin,

“Lucky me,” Severus chuckled. To his left, Nymphadora sat cross-armed with a fierce glower on her face as Regulus made work of her hair.

Chapter 15: The Ritz Pt1

Chapter Notes

Chapter song - Dear Fellow Traveler - Sea Wolf

Remus watched a bead of perspiration race down the fogged windows as he sat waiting for James, Sirius and Snape. He didn't wait long as a disgruntled Sirius was led through to the table with a cackling Severus. The attendant paid neither man attention. Sirius waved off the waiter and dropped down into a seat as Severus sat himself gracefully.

"Hello, Snape. Padfoot, how's the morning been?" Remus asked and Severus eyed both him and Sirius.

"Early start for me, Dora and I have been tailing Snape all day which has been an absolute mind numbing experience," Sirius said which was met with a roll of Severus eyes,

"Oh no, please excuse me Auror Black. I so deeply apologise that my work schedule bores thee, my lord" Severus snarked sarcastically as he turned to fully face Remus who tried to hide a smirk.

"And you Lupin, how has your morning progressed so far?" Severus asked Remus,

"Yeah so it's not bad. Work has been pretty lax lately so I called off early today." Remus answered, Remus felt Severus' eyes trail from his exposed wrist, up his arms and shoulders before resting on his face. Remus flushed but didn't acknowledge it.

"What do you do, If you don't mind my asking?" Before Remus can answer Severus, Sirius shoves back from the table casually.

“Sorry lads, gotta take a leak. Be back in a giffy,” Sirius says as he heads off, Severus watches him go with an unreadable expression.

“So I co-own a restaurant with Alice,” Remus says, drawing back Severus undivided attention. Surprise colours Severus face as he recognises the name.

“Alice Longbottom? I thought she was an Auror?” Severus asked politely

“She was yes, but after Neville was born she took time off to focus on family. Well, this and that happened and we somehow became co-owners of Daily Crumb. Alice is back to working full time now so I manage things on the restaurant front,” Remus said. Severus listened avidly as curiosity claimed his face.

“Shouldn’t you be there now, then? Wait, why didn’t we just have lunch there then?” Severus asked sceptically,

“Sirius said you wouldn’t come unless it was *The Ritz.* Besides, the Daily Crumb is a more casual place. Loud and relaxed. Not so high class.” A sly grin crept onto Severus' face which he tried to cover with a hand.

“I did, I’m gonna eat him out of house and home the fucker.” Remus chuckled, Severus seemed to be a bit more playful than he remembered.

“As for why I'm taking the day… To be honest I’m not really comfortable talking about it but it’s common knowledge at this point so… here goes nothing…” Remus felt the sweat beading in his hairline and on his upper lip. His heart beat without rhythm as he looked anywhere but at Severus.

“Go on,” Severus said with a tilt of his head

“I uh… I take a day off before the uh… the full moon because uh… because of my lycanthropy…” Remus' voice was lowered into a shameful whisper which seemed to be wise

as Severus jolted back, a look of shock and horror on his face as he gripped Remus' wrist. Remus winced at his expression. Severus didn’t say anything as his eyes shifted erratically from side to side.

“Snape? Are you… ok?” Severus made a shooing motion with his free hand. Finally, he looked up at Remus and with the most nonsensical expression, he let go of Remus and guffawed into his hand. The dread seemed to wash away at the sight of Severus pinkened cheeks and tearfully mirthful eyes.

“I… Are you laughing at me? Really?”

“No…it's, your name is Remus Lupin. And you’re a lycanthrope.” Remus sighed wearily and shook his head,

“So?”

“So Remus and Romulus were twin brothers who were abandoned as infants and raised by the she-wolf, Lupa. Lupin literally means ‘the wolf’. It was derived from the latin word lupinus or lupus.” Severus paused and waited for Remus to react but the other man remained blank faced.

“My father believed that a name could dictate a child's personality or future. I was named for Septimius Severus, the Roman emperor who some historians view as pragmatic. Your first and last name are tied to wolves, it’s like a self fulfilling prophecy. Your parents were setting you up for failure.” Severus said very seriously.

“I— uh, that’s it?” Remus asked incredulously, his voice strained as if holding back hysteria. Severus’ brows knit as his lip curled in annoyance.

“Wha?”

“You– you’re not… disgusted… afraid… hateful of me?” Severus barked a laugh at Remus, there was no humour in it as he slapped the tabletop.

“Oh no, I absolutely hate you, but I hate you for various *other* things. The years of torment you and your insidious friends put me in, the times when you didn’t participate but also never stopped them. I hate that everyone of you mocked me for being piss poor when you, Remus, were just as obviously broke as I was.” Severus spoke clearly and a red tinted Remus face.

“Yeah, you were dead broke too, coming to school in cheap offcasts just like I did. The only difference was that I didn’t have the luxury of being the sugar baby of two spoiled rich kids.” Severus continued. Remus had the gall to look down at his hands in shame.

“See this is exactly what I mean! You act like a bystander in it all but you weren’t, I know you played a part in at least half of the pranks.” Severus exclaimed and Remus took a clarifying breath.

“Ok, yes that’s true. But to be fair, you gave as good as you got. You weren’t some tragic victim Severus. You hit back.” Remus said as Severus straightened in his seat.

“See how you didn’t say I ‘pranked’ back. See how you said ‘hit’ back? Also, did you forget that it was four against one?” Severus asked.

“Ok, but what about your friends? You had Regulus and Avery and others, right? Why didn’t you just team up with them, why didn’t you just… just have them help you and prank us back?” Remus asked with tension in his voice. Severus stared dumbfounded at Remus for half a minute.

“I– You’re kidding me, right? You think I should’ve had Regulus Black help me ‘prank’ his older brother whom he idolised at the time. Lets not forget by the way that he started Hogwarts a year after us and Regulus and I didn’t even become friends until I was a third year,” Severus lectured while frowning,

“What about Lily? She would’ve helped you!” Remus said desperately. Severus scoffed as he shook his head.

“No she wouldn’t have, as always she would have just told me to ignore it and be ‘the bigger person’. Besides, I didn’t need to hide behind the guise of harmlessness like you did every time you acted like an onlooker.” Severus hissed in agitation

“I had to protect myself, protect my… my sickness.” Remus said defeatedly.

“I wasn’t an onlooker or bystander and I did participate but I honestly never thought we were that harmful and that it was a spot of guiltless fun.” Remus said as he stared deep into Severus accusing eyes.

“See. This is why I hate you. Not because you’re a werewolf, that doesn’t have anything to do with me. But this right here, guiltless fun huh? In that case, Voldemort targeting the Potters was just ‘boys being boys’. Men being men and starting pointless dumbass wars as they always have done and will continue to do.” Severus said defeatedly. Remus watched the tension fade from Severus' weary brows, the furious light left his dark eyes making Severus look vacant.

Guilt ate away at Remus. Shame, anger, resentment, frustration and disgust. Both at himself and Severus. They were both rotten little bastards, rotten and sad and pathetic. But Remus couldn’t help but feel he was the most pathetic of them both.

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“I didn’t peg you for a chef ” Severus said, cutting into the silence and Remus' self-retribution.

“Is that it? Are we done with the previous conversation?” Remus asked indignantly, Severus screwed up his face in annoyance as if he was looking at a bug.

“Lupin, neither of us owe each other anything. We argued, we finished it and now we move on. Good timing too, I see Potter,” Severus gestured over Remus' head at a less haggard James who followed the server towards them. Remus smiled at James wearily. James slowed his steps at Remus' expression.

“Did I interrupt?” James asks hesitantly as he sits himself on Remus left and directly across from Severus.

“Apparantly not. Turns out no matter how deep and serious a conversation gets, it doesn’t really mean anything,” Remus answers James bitterly and Severus just rolled his eyes.

“You’re only here because you want absolution from your guilt. I’m here for free lunch.” Severus said matter of factly.

“Wouldn’t putting past hurts make things between us less awkward?” James asked with a raised brow as Remus nodded.

“No. I already told you Potter, I don’t want an apology from you nor do I want to give you one. I was and am a shit cunt, so were you. Maybe you’ve changed, I don’t care. Again, I’m here for free lunch and protection from a stalker. Which is what Black amounts to by the way. A bodyguard and a walking wallet. Again. I’m still a shit cunt.” Severus said shamelessly as he looked through the menu.

“You don’t have to be Snape, we could literally put it all behind us and move on.” James tried again,

“This is how I move on. We can just pretend like nothing is wrong and just ignore it out loud and let petty little wins get us through the days.” Severus said in annoyance.

“You’re just making it harder on us!” Remus hissed in annoyance to Severus' chagrin, James stared wide eyed at Remus outburst.

“I’m not trying too! I just want us to be curt strangers at worst and polite acquaintances at best. Why do we need more than that?” Severus hissed back in frustration,

“You don’t get it, Severus,” Remus voice had a pleading quality as he spoke,

“You’re one of the only things we thought of throughout all these years. Me, Lily, Remus, Sirius and apparently, Peter too. Whether you were dead or alive. Whether our tumultuous relationship sent you on the brink of existence,” James explained as he patted Remus shoulder calmingly

“We know now that the letter was a meaningless attempt at spite, but you have to understand that we held that guilt for all these years. You telling me that it meant nothing and me reiterating it to the guys doesn’t automatically make that well of emotion go away. What else are we supposed to do with it but direct it towards you?” James said seriously. Sirius returned at that time and sat beside them, noting the awkward and charged air.

“Did you start without me?” Sirius asked.

“Told Snape about my furry little problem,” Remus answered him through deep breaths. James winced and turned curious eyes on Severus while Sirius nodded his head understandingly.

“And how did we take it?” Sirius asked curiously

“I don't care, not my problem. We’ve moved on now, about how a letter I wrote years ago made you all feel guilty and how Lupin and Potter think I should help you all find a way to I don’t know,” Severus scrunched his face up and shrugged his shoulders as he continued speaking,

“Help you dick heads get over it. Like I'm responsible for your emotions. I said we should just pretend like nothing's wrong, but they’re not having that.” Severus said cantankerous,

“Snape called you a walking wallet by the way,” Remus interjected, James' eyes widened and Severus smirked in response.

“Yup, I did.” Severus said shamelessly with a beatific grin.

“You were gone a long time, did you have a big crap?” Severus asked loudly, intentionally drawing attention to their table and conversation. Sirius flushed in embarrassment as James tried to suppress a smile.

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