Breaking the Mold

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Summary

Everyone knew Severus' future. Everyone knew he'd become a death eater, maybe get his mastery in potions and eventually die at his master's hand. But what if they didn't know Severus as well as they thought they did? Rather than conform to the role people expected him to play, Severus takes action. During 6th year he leaves Hogwarts, joining an apprenticeship overseas that guarantees not only a future but his own happiness.

Meanwhile the Marauders (minus Peter) are left regretting what can never be. They each had a secret, something none of them were willing to admit. Only now it's too late.

But what happens when Severus re-emerges during the war? Not a death eater, not a teacher even. But a strong, independent and most importantly a free man. How will the marauders react?

Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter or any of it's characters. I also don't earn any money off this.

Okay I know I have my other HP fic to update but I couldn’t help but write this.

Basically I was wondering what would happen if Severus left Hogwarts during the Marauder
era. How things would turn out if he just left abruptly, no one knew where he went and he managed to avoid most of the war. What kind of a person he’d become. Of course I couldn’t stop myself from making James, Sirius and Remus interested in him. Which then led me to wondering how they’d cope when he just left them. No explanation, no nothing so they were just left wondering. Then I got to thinking about how they’d react to seeing him later on, maybe during the height of war when he’s happy, developing new potions and spells to help aid in the war effort.

So I came up with this. Now this should only be another chapter or two. I’m not planning to make this as long as my other fic.

See the end of the work for more notes.
You know that feeling that you’re being watched, when you feel eyes following you around wherever you go? Well Severus was all too familiar with that feeling. To the point he was bloody well sick of it.

Merlin knows when it started. Severus had felt eyes watching him practically since starting Hogwarts. At first he tried ignoring it, believing he was just being paranoid. There were a few muggleborns in his year, so naturally they’d be curious about everything and everyone. But the feeling didn’t stop. Not throughout first year, nor throughout second, third and fourth year.

It was only in fifth year when the eyes seemed to stop. Right around the time of the Shrieking Shack incident strangely enough. Although in all honesty it was a relief. Things had been bad enough then, what with the attempted murder and all. Not to mention the headmaster’s blatant disinterest in keeping his student’s alive and well. Except of course for his Gryffindors. We mustn’t forget his pride and joy.

Any respite was soon forgotten though, because as soon as Severus returned for his sixth year the eyes returned. And this time it seemed it had some friends. Creepy didn’t even begin to cover it. It had gotten to a point where Severus was becoming paranoid. Where he felt it necessary to check behind every corner, cast every protection spell he could find, avoid everyone he could think of who might wish him harm. Despite all this, the eyes remained on him. He could feel them, just burning into him. It seemed the only place he ever felt free of that unrelenting gaze was within the bathroom and in his bedroom. The former because he was sure no one wanted to see him exposed like that, he had no problem admitting he wasn’t the most handsome to look at. He encouraged it in fact; it made it easier to keep people away, to keep him safe from false affection. He’d had enough of that in his life; his mother, his father, Lily. They’d all claimed to have some affection for him, at one time or another.

Of course no one was stupid enough to follow him to his bedroom either. Being in Slytherin did have its perks, getting his own room had definitely been one of the better ones. It meant Severus could do what he liked to it, namely warding it against anything and everything that he considered a threat. From the Marauders to Malfoy, it was protected against just about everyone and everything. It was the only place he could even consider feeling safe. Even his room back home didn’t hold such a sense of security. It was actually kind of depressing when he thought about it.

Most kids couldn’t wait to leave school, to return home for the holidays. But Severus? He was the opposite. He’d only just returned and already he was dreading having to go back home. Of course it didn’t help that his mum was gone. Now there was no one to keep his father from beating the shit out of him. But I digress.

Now Severus was well aware how terrible his life was. He had few friends, if any really. Truthfully he only tolerated them out of necessity. He wanted to make something of himself; he didn’t want to be what everyone thought he already was. A waste of space, a product of inferior blood, a mistake. He was all too aware that people hated him. He knew that was never going to change. But Severus had a plan. He was going to do something no one would expect.

Everyone believed they knew Severus. He was ugly, he was cruel and above all he was smart. A weirdo at best and a freak at worst, not someone people wanted to associate themselves with. Everyone also believed they knew how his live would play out. He’d lost Lily, his only love. He’d spend the rest of his life pining after her, while she’d spend it becoming the perfect wife of a
pureblood. James Potter was a catch and everyone knew he’d have her in his grasp soon enough. Now there was no one stopping him.

Then there was the matter of Severus’ career. At best he’d become a potions master, no one could deny that’s where his talent lied. But it would only be a cover; everyone knew he was destined to join the Dark Lord. In their eyes he was good as marked.

The thing about Severus Snape though, he rather liked pissing people off. Aside from potions it was the thing he was best at. Something no one could deny, particularly James and Sirius. Everyone knew what would happen to him, everyone was sure he’d succumb to the dark. It was set in stone or so they claimed. But as I said, Severus enjoyed pissing people off. It was one of the few pleasures left in his life. And while everyone claimed to know his fate, Severus was sure they knew nothing.

You see Severus had a plan, a plan he’d been working on for a long time now. Ever since his mother had died. Now as it turned out, there was a government scheme recruiting for the best and the brightest. For sharp minds and talented hands interested in making something of themselves. Not the British government mind you, those lot wouldn’t know talent if it bit them in the arse. No, Severus had a different destination in mind.

Severus was going to Japan. He was bloody making sure of it.

I know you might be thinking it strange. Why of all places would he choose Japan? Where people ate fish raw like savages and where they ate with sticks, instead of knives and forks like civilised folks. Not that Severus believed what those narrow minded idiots had to say about such a place. To him it was perfect, it was his escape. Escape from the marauders, escape from Lily and her false promises of friendship. His escape from the headmaster and his cronies, ready to take away points and give him as many detentions as they felt necessary, to make him lose all trust in the justice system. It was just perfect.

Severus had first come across the scheme several years back, keeping it secret even from Lily herself. Best decision he’d ever made if he was being honest with himself. She’d only have tried to stop him. The only thing stopping him was that he had to be sixteen to apply and apply he had. The moment he turned of age in fact. A week later he got a reply, asking him to attend an interview in London at the Japanese wizarding embassy. He went of course, it was during the summer and he’d managed to save up enough to make the trip there and back. Then a month later he heard back, he’d gotten in. It was without a doubt the happiest moment of his life. Not that it was saying much, before this he couldn’t even recall having a happy memory to begin with. But that didn’t matter; it was sorted, it was done. Severus would be leaving and no one could stop him.

Now you might be wondering two things; what was this scheme and why did he choose Japan of all places? To answer the latter, Severus needed an escape. He needed to leave as soon as possible, it didn’t matter how and where he went. He just knew he needed to leave. Before this war sucked him into the mess too. At one point Severus had been willing to stay in England, to stay with Lily. Then she abandoned him when he needed her the most, what with his dad killing his mum and all. Not that she bothered to ask about that. Japan was his best option. No one he knew would be there, he was sure no one would follow him. He’d be safe; he could even blend in a little. With his pale skin and dark hair he’d no longer stick out like a sore thumb.

As for what this scheme was, well to put it simply it was Severus’ dream. It was a work study programme, an apprenticeship of sorts, aimed at producing the best and brightest. Of course only the best and brightest were accepted in the first place and then tested so that only the best of the best remained. Severus was determined to be a part of that group.

Now as for what it entailed, it would be a combination of many skills and subjects. It was to be a mix
of potions and herbology, the two went hand in hand of course, as well as charms and the study of the dark arts. In a way they’d be like soldiers, only they’d hide away while the fools rushed in. They’d be creating spells and potions designed to destroy the dark and aid the light.

Severus knew war was coming, hell it had already arrived, despite the Ministry’s claims it hadn’t. He knew he couldn’t avoid it forever, no one could. But this way he’d avoid the worse of it. To him it was a win-win situation. He would learn from the best, prove his worth and create things that people would actually value. At the same time he’d be safely tucked away. There’d been no sign of Voldemort’s influence throughout Asia. Europe and the UK yes, Africa and even America too. But not Asia, not yet anyway. For Severus it was perfect, it was just what he wanted.

Of course Severus wasn’t stupid enough to tell anyone of his plans. Not even his professors who’d begun hounding him about his choice of career. Not Lily either, it was possibly the only good thing that had come of her abandoning him. Now he had nothing holding him back from his dream. In all honesty, Severus had never been more excited. Not that he showed it of course. In fact if it weren’t for those eyes he could feel watching him all the time, he’d be on top of the world right now. But he could cope with it. He only had to get through the term; he’d be gone by Christmas. Hell the marauders would probably throw a party in his honour if they ever found out. Not that he’d let that happen. He couldn’t risk it.

Still though, Severus found himself concerned for one thing. Not his professors’ reactions when they learned he was gone, no he was looking forward to that. Hell he’d pay to see Dumbledore’s reaction to his disappearance. No, what worried Severus was whoever had been watching him. Ever since he was a first year. It had to be someone in his year, it couldn’t be anyone else. The first five years hadn’t been there when he’d started and he felt those eyes even when he was in class. So that meant it wasn’t a sixth year. It wasn’t a professor either; the feeling followed him from class to class.

It hadn’t taken long for Severus to come to a conclusion. It had to be either a slytherin or a gryffindor; though he had a feeling it was the latter. Actually make that a group of gryffindors; he’d noticed the feeling had been getting stronger lately. It had to mean there were more watching him.

It could have been a slytherin of course. He felt the feeling wherever he went and he did spend a lot of time amongst his own kind. Whether it was willingly or not. Then again, the same could be said of the gryffindors. After all they shared classes; they fought in the halls and ate in the same room. The only place there were no gryffindors was within slytherin territory. In the common room and of course in his bedroom. But that’s where things got strange. Severus felt those eyes on him everywhere, even when no one else was around. Even in the common room, the empty common room I should add, he could still feel someone watching him. A group of them at that. Now common sense insisted it was a Slytherin, only they had access to the room after all. But Severus knew better.

Severus was being stalked by a group of gryffindors, that he was certain of. They followed him everywhere, they never left him alone and it was starting to drive him around the bend. No one else could see it, but he knew it to be true.

It took a good month for Severus to realise the truth. He could have kicked himself for it. He was being stalked by the marauders, no surprises there. What was surprising was how long it had taken him to come to that conclusion. But then he had been distracted as of late, securing his freedom had left him a little ignorant to his surroundings. Not by much mind you, but it was enough. Of course by the time Severus realised who’d been following him around everywhere, and wasn’t that a disturbing thought, it was already too late.

“He’s up to something” Sirius scowled, James nodding along beside him.
“He’s definitely up to something” James agreed, clenching his fist.

“Not this again” Remus sighed, scowling at the two of them. “Why don’t you just leave him alone? You’ve already taken Lily from him, you got what you wanted. Why do you keep harassing him If I didn’t know better I’d think you fancied him”, Remus chuckled lightly.

“As if Moony, like I’d want to shag that prick”. Sirius scoffed.

Remus frowned at that. Had he just been imagining it or had Sirius’ cheeks turned red? Weird. Remus shook his head to clear it.

“Yeah, like you said I have Lily now. Why would I want that loser?” James smirked, a cocky little smirk that didn’t quite seem to meet his eyes. While most wouldn’t have noticed, Remus certainly did.

“Speaking of Lily, have you two done it yet?” Peter interjected, leaning in with anticipation.

James froze at that, just for a second but it was enough to send alarm bells blaring in Remus’ mind. “Not yet. She’s one of those who wants to wait until everything’s perfect. Apparently two weeks isn’t long enough for me to get anywhere with her”. James claimed, dismissing Peter’s questions as the younger boy continued to hound him for every little detail.

“He’s gone”. Sirius suddenly interjected, his eyes focused on the empty spot where the slytherin had been sat.

“What? Where? Well I guess we’ll be going then”. James grabbed his bag and made his way out of the Great Hall, Sirius at his heels.

“Was it something I said?” Peter asked, blinking cluelessly.

“I’d better go after them, see you in class”. Remus sighed, bidding goodbye to the boy before following his friends.

‘What are they up to?’ Remus asked himself.

It was a valid concern. Lately his friends had been acting strangely, even for them. Leaving during the night and not returning until dawn. That in itself wouldn’t have been such a strange thing, they were teenagers in a castle full of hormonal students after all. But leaving together and returning together, without the smell of sex clouding the air; it just didn’t make any sense. At one point Remus had thought they were shagging. Hey he wasn’t judging, considering he was a werewolf he didn’t think it right to judge someone for liking their own gender. But Prongs and Padfoot never acted any differently towards each other. Surely if they were together, or at least hooking up, there’d be touching and stuff. But no. They acted as they always did in each other’s presence.

It got Remus thinking. At first he thought they might be sharing someone between them, Lily perhaps. That idea didn’t last long though. While those two were good at hiding things, there was no way Lily was that good an actress. She was too emotional, still pining for her friendship with Severus even when she’d been the one to cut the tether. And there was no one else Remus could think of who would capture both boys’ interest. Well except Severus of course. He was probably the only one in the school who could grab their undivided attention without even trying. Not that he did try of course. In fact lately it seemed he’d been going out of his way to avoid them. To avoid everyone in fact.

Remus sighed. ‘I hope he’s okay; he thought to himself. ‘They’d better not hurt him’.
It was a valid concern. James and Sirius rarely thought about their actions, particularly in regards to how they could affect other people. Except for Severus it seemed. When he was around they always seemed to work harder. Coming up with elaborate pranks designed to humiliate, torment and even at times injure the Slytherin. When Severus was involved, James and Sirius always planned their actions carefully. It was really the only time they ever did.

Remus, although he wasn’t ready to admit it, had another reason to be so concerned. You see he rather liked Severus. He found him quite good company when it was just the two of them, huddled together in the library and reading from whatever text interested them. Of course that all changed following the whole Shrieking Shack debacle. After that he was lucky if he could even get Severus to look his way. As a matter of fact, it seemed lately Severus stopped looking anyone’s way. It was all very strange.

Of course there’s different kinds of like. There’s the kind you share with friends, with those you share interests with. Then there’s the kind you share with family; brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. Then of course there’s the final kind of like, the one you share with those you love. In a non-familial way of course.

Now Remus wasn’t the type to just fall in love like that, and he didn’t. It took months of secret meetings, friendly conversation and coaxing shy smiles out of the other, before he finally identified what it was he’d been feeling. And wasn’t that a scary thought to be had. Who’d have thought Remus Lupin, a werewolf, would have fallen for Severus ‘Snivellus’ Snape? Yet that’s exactly what had happened.

On the plus side Remus had come to terms with how he felt. No longer did he feel ashamed for liking who he did. No longer did his stomach twist with disgust regarding his own desires. But on the down side, Severus wouldn’t even look at him. And wasn’t that a kick in the teeth. What was worse was that his friends were acting strangely, like they were hiding something. Remus had a pretty good idea what that something was and their behaviour in the Great Hall had only confirmed it. His two best friends wanted Severus, in that way.

Remus wasn’t sure if it was part of an elaborate prank, if they planned to push the boy over the edge that he’d been teetering on for so long now. In a way he hoped so. It would mean they weren’t serious. But Remus had a feeling this wasn’t the case. His next hope was that they only wanted to sample what Severus had to offer. Maybe a kiss or quick fuck and then they’d lose interest. The idea was enough to make his wolf howl with rage, but still Remus felt he could handle it. Given time that is. The final option was one he knew he couldn’t handle. The idea that his friends wanted what he did. That they wanted to kiss Severus, to hold him in their arms, to make him smile. Severus almost never smiled. The idea that they wanted to pin Severus down, to make him scream their names, to make him theirs. It was an idea Remus simply couldn’t bear. It was an idea he prayed was just that, an idea and nothing more.

-“Ssh! He’ll hear us!” Sirius hissed as James stumbled beside him.

James adjusted his glasses, “stupid Peeves” he scowled, muttering under his breath.

“Ssh!” Sirius glared, pressing himself against the wall as he eyed his target.

“He still there?” James whispered.

“Yeah. Come on, we don’t have much time before class starts”.
The two hurriedly made their way down the corridor, eyes tracking the Slytherin as he headed towards the owlery. “He’s going in, you got the cloak?” Sirius asked.

James nodded, pulling the material out of his bag and throwing it over the two of them. Why they hadn’t thought to use it from the beginning was anyone’s guess.

Severus meanwhile was unaware he was being followed. In what was possibly the first time in his life, he was too happy to notice the potential danger he was putting himself in. There he was alone, no one on hand to help him, being trailed by his two greatest foes. The one’s who’d made his life hell, the one’s he couldn’t wait to be rid of. If only he’d known their true intentions, perhaps he may have been tempted to stay.

Too late for that now of course. Things were already set in stone. He just had to get through the last few days; the holidays were almost upon them. Then he’d be free of it all. Severus couldn’t wait.

“What’s he doing?” James hissed, it seemed his glasses had fogged up in the cold.

“Shagging a bird, what do you think he’s doing?” Sirius hissed back, his voice dripping in sarcasm.

“Wait, d’you mean a girl or an actual bird?” James asked.

“What?” Sirius exclaimed, a bit too loudly.

“Who’s there?” Severus froze, wand at the ready as he turned towards the door.


“Me? You were the one going on about him shagging an actual bird. I mean what the fuck Prongs?” Sirius ripped the cloak off his head. Their cover was already blown; he saw no reason to keep up the charade.

Severus just stood there, frowning as the two argued between themselves. Something about birds and shagging, he really didn’t want to think about it any further. Instead he looked for an opening, making his way slowly to the door, wand gripped tightly in his hand.

“Hold on mate, we came to talk to you”. Severus was forced to stop as a hand grabbed at his robes, yanking him back.

“Why?” Severus glared, frowning as Sirius took a step back from him.

“Easy, we just came to talk. We won’t hurt you”. James said, he too was offered a fierce glare for his efforts.

“About what? What could you two possibly have to ask me?” Severus spat. While he still had his wand, they had the advantage of being two against one. And Severus was willing to bet it wouldn’t be long before he had his wand taken from him. It seemed words were the only defence he had, at least he could be sure those wouldn’t fail him.

“You’ve been up to something. We want to know what”. James said. Sirius nodded along beside him.

“Tough”. Severus made to move past them, only to be once again pulled back into place.

“Look we’re trying to be nice here. We don’t want to have to start a fight, not here anyway. Not when it’s like this”. James gestured to the ice covering the floor and the snow falling from the sky.
“It’s not exactly safe” he added.

Severus just stared at the two for a while. He ignored the way his body began to shiver from the cold. Unlike them, he didn’t have the luxury of wearing good quality robes, padded with heating charms. No, he had to make do with what he could get. Which wasn’t a lot.

“All the more reason for you two to let me leave, so move!” Severus gritted out, teeth clenched.

“Can’t do that mate. We want answers and you’re gonna give them to us”. Sirius said.

“Or what?” Severus asked, curious as to what punishment they’d inflict on him this time. He’d already been beaten, humiliated and almost killed by them in the past, he doubted what they were planning would be any worse.

James and Sirius shared a look. “We’ll tell Dumbledore you’re planning something. You and the rest of those wannabe death eaters. I reckon he might expel you if we did. You know he’d believe us”. Sirius said, sneering as he brought up the other Slytherins. One of which was his own brother. A tragedy in the making if he did say so himself.

Severus only smirked at that, letting out a harsh laugh. “You think you can scare me? You’re gonna cry to the headmaster, make up shit and get me expelled? Go ahead. What I’m planning, you can’t stop me. Neither can he, nor any of the professors here. It’s already set in stone. So enjoy this, enjoy having me here like this. Come next week I won’t be around anymore. I bet you’ll be ecstatic”. Severus sneered, finally managing to push them aside and make his way down the staircase.

“Wait, what do you mean? Where the hell are you going?” James called down, finally breaking out of his stupor.

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” It was the only response Severus bothered to give. It was a response that made James very nervous indeed.

“You think he’s gonna go off himself?” Sirius broke the silence that had befallen them.

“No, he wouldn’t. I mean it’s Snape. If he were gonna kill himself he’d have already done it wouldn’t he?” James asked.

“Y-yeah you’re right. He would have done it already”. Sirius agreed, noticeably distraught over the idea. “He…he won’t kill himself. Not now”. He sounded almost like he was trying to convince himself.

“Nah, he’s got to be planning something else”. James decided. “But what?”

“Maybe he’s leaving. Going someplace else”. Sirius offered, it was the only thing he could think of.

“Where though? If he was transferring, he’d need the headmaster’s permission wouldn’t he? He said Dumbledore doesn’t know about whatever it is he’s planning”. James was confused. Things just weren’t making sense.

“Maybe he’s dropping out. Going to live in the muggle world”. Sirius tried.

“Can’t be. Lily said they lived near each other, a muggle village. Said he hated it there”. James dismissed the idea.

James ignored the little twinge he felt at mentioning Lily’s name. He’d spent so much time chasing her, so many resources in getting her. Yet he couldn’t help but feel disappointed with just how easy
it’d been to get her in the end. All he had to do was humiliate her best friend. Cause him to say something he didn’t mean and Lily was all too eager to dump him. Now James could admit he wasn’t the nicest guy around, but even he thought that was harsh.

“Well he is a Slytherin”. Sirius said. It was all too easy to dismiss Severus’ weird behaviour as the actions of a Slytherin. Distrusting, sneaky and evil, Sirius had always been too eager to label Severus as such.

“I think it’s more than that. You know I hear his mum died. Maybe that has something to do with it”. James said as the two made their way to class.

“Yeah, maybe”. Sirius agreed.

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Severus stood there silently, his arms pulling his robes around him tightly. He just stood there, head tilted back until it hit the wall, waiting for his breathing to even out. As much as he loathed to admit it, the little interaction he’d had with Black and Potter had startled him. For a moment he feared they would have stopped him, kept him trapped up there with them. Where no one would be able to hear them. Where no one would come looking for him. Just thinking about what they could have done to him terrified him.

It was a valid concern. With what they’d done to him in the past, it was only natural for Severus to assume the worst. He was just relieved they hadn’t thought to do anything to him.

‘This time’ his mind supplied.
Can I just say I was amazed at the response I got for the first chapter! Seriously I can’t thank you guys enough! I mean 9 comments and 34 kudos for one chapter is just amazing!

Now when I started this I had a vague idea of where I was going with it. But after reading some of the feedback, I decided to incorporate what some people were saying in regards to Severus forgiving the Marauders. Now I personally hate bullies and can assure you Severus won’t simply forgive them after a certain amount of time, just like that. Having said that, this will eventually be a SeverusMarauders (minus Peter) fic. Just thought I should warn you.

On another note, although I really tried not to, I don’t think I’m gonna be able to wrap this up in 3 or 4 chapters like I first thought. I was a little annoyed since I already have another two long stories to keep updating, but the response to this was just beyond what I ever hoped for. So I hope you enjoy.

Oh and please review!

‘It’s now or never’ Remus thought to himself. Taking a deep breath he moved, alerting his target to his presence.

“What?” It almost hurt him just how cold that response was. But then, considering everything, he could hardly blame him.

“I just, they told me you were thinking of leaving”. Remus shifted nervously. “That true?” He really hoped it wasn’t.

“No”. For a moment Remus was happy, immensely so. “There’s no thinking about it, I am leaving”. And just like that, Remus felt everything stop.

“Y-you are?” Severus looked at up at that. Never before had someone sounded so emotional when talking to him. Well unless that emotion was anger. That he was used to.

“Yeah”.

Severus almost sounded uncertain. Not of his choice, no that was set in stone. But the way Remus looked was starting to worry him. Remus had grown pale and almost looked like he was trembling. And for once Severus didn’t think it was out of excitement.

“Oh”. It was strange how such a small word carried so much meaning. Just two letters and yet it summed up Remus’ emotions perfectly. Shock, anger, fear and despair, all combined in a neat little package.

Severus frowned. As much as he hated the other boy for what he was, his lack of response worried him. Out of all of them, Remus had been the nice one. The smart one. He preferred the company of his books, something to which Severus could relate. Had things been different, maybe they could
have been friends. Maybe even something more. Maybe.

Then again, maybe they wouldn’t. For while Remus was the nice one, which considering his friends wasn’t much, he was also the cowardly one. Even when he’d become a prefect, he never once dared to criticise his friends’ actions. The way they bullied and tormented those they perceived as evil. It was almost ironic in a sense. They claimed to be good, on the side of the light, yet they were willing and had even carried out such actions, that even those on the dark side wouldn’t dare to do. Not in a school. Not where so many innocent resided.

Despite this though, there was a part of Severus that felt he couldn’t blame the other boy. What had happened was unforgiveable yes, but it wasn’t like it was something Remus could control. Severus could blame Black for leading him there; he could blame Potter for rescuing him. But Remus? He wasn’t so sure he could blame him for something that he himself was a victim of. A victim of the curse, a victim of circumstance just like Severus. But right now that part of him was being overshadowed by everything else. His anger, his pride, his fear; combined they prevented Severus from thinking logically. But then that’s what being a teenager is all about.

“Do you…are you ever coming back?” Remus finally asked, fearing the worst.

“I don’t know”.

As much as he wanted to say no, something prevented Severus from doing so. Maybe it was the look Remus wore on his face; tired, distraught and resigned. They were only sixteen, forced to grow up too quickly as a result of what was happening around them. But still, Severus found himself reluctant to contribute to the pressure Remus surely faced. With being a werewolf and living in a country where his kind was persecuted at best, Remus certainly wouldn’t have an easy life ahead of him. And Severus? Well despite the rumours that were told, mostly by the marauders themselves, he’d never been the type to kick a man when he was down. He may have been a slimy snake, but at least he had some honour left in him.

“Would it be okay if I wrote to you? You know, maybe sometimes?” If Severus was surprised by the question, he managed not to show it. Only just mind you.

“I guess”. In all honesty he didn’t expect to receive more than a single letter. One that would no doubt be filled with apologies and such. It was Remus after all.

“Great” Remus finally smiled. He looked relieved.

“Why though?” Severus wasn’t willing to let the matter rest. Why would he care enough to want to contact him? Shouldn’t he be happy he was leaving? It didn’t make any sense.

“I just-” Remus paused to take a deep breath. “I know you hate me and I’m not surprised. The way we’ve acted, the way I acted, we’ve been positively horrific to you. I mean, I could have killed you and I wouldn’t even have been aware of it!” Remus exclaimed, becoming noticeably more upset as the thought really sunk in.

‘I could have killed him. Dear Merlin, he could be dead’. Remus thought to himself, unable to stop himself from trembling at the idea that he’d almost taken a life. An innocent life at that.

“You’re shaking” Severus observed.

Remus looked down at himself, surprised to see it was true. “I am, yes. S-sorry I just, it only just sort of sunk in you know?” Remus admitted, feeling his cheeks flush with humiliation.

“ Took you long enough”. Severus hadn’t meant to say it, he really hadn’t. But years of practice had
meant it was second nature to attack with words, whenever he was in the presence of a marauder. “Sorry” he added. He really hadn’t meant to attack him like that. Not when Remus looked to be on the edge of passing out. He was looking remarkably pale.

“No, no it’s…I should be the one apologising. And I am. I just, please believe me when I say I never wanted any of this to happen. I swear”. Remus pleaded, keeping his hands firmly at his sides as the need to touch Severus became too difficult to ignore.

“You know you’re the only one who thought to do that”. Severus murmured softly. Where it not for Remus’ condition, he wouldn’t even have heard him.

“Do what?” Remus asked, both wanting to know and yet fearing the answer at the same time.

“Apologise. Even Dumbledore didn’t ask it of them. He never even apologised himself. He knew there was a risk, it was because of him I was put in danger, yet he acted like I was at fault. Like I was the one to blame, I just…I can’t stay here. Not with him. This was supposed to be the place I felt safe, at home I never have felt that way. But now? I’m starting to realise I was never safe here as well”. Severus admitted, noticeably subdued. “If I don’t leave, I’m afraid of what I’ll become”.

Remus, try as he might, just couldn’t find a way in which to respond. “What do you think you’ll become?” Remus finally asked.

“If I stay here you mean? I’ll be made into a tool, something disposable for everyone to use as they see fit. My house…the people in Slytherin, they’ll have me marked before I even graduate. Whether I agree to it or not. At best I could become a spy, just another pawn in Dumbledore’s games. At worst, or maybe it’ll be best, I’ll end up dead”. Severus explained. It was rather unnerving just how calm he seemed, as though he knew without uncertainty, that this was what his future would contain.

“What about if you leave?” Remus asked.

What Severus described, as much as Remus wished otherwise, he knew it was a very real possibility. They were taught from first year to fear slytherins. They were sneaky, slimy and downright evil, or so their prefects claimed. Destined to join the Dark Lord, to join the wrong side of the war. And Remus had never bothered to question it. He, like many others, had been led to believe only slytherins could be evil. And that gryffindors could only ever be good. It was only now that his opinion had begun to change.

Severus was a slytherin, that was irrefutable, but he wasn’t evil. He was intelligent and powerful yes, but had he not been, he’d probably have died as a result of the stupid and childish pranks his friends loved to play on him. For they were indeed stupid and childish, but the pranks they played were also very dangerous. From tripping him down the stairs, where he could have suffered any number of injuries from scrapes to a broken neck. Or from hanging him upside down, where they could have dropped him on his head. It was only now, as Severus stood ready to leave forever and never return, that Remus finally begun to understand what they’d put him through. At the time he felt he could consider them pranks. Just harmless although admittedly very stupid pranks, which stemmed from jealousy and damaged pride. For that was the root of their rivalry.

James wanted Lily, or rather what she represented. She was beautiful and had more power than many of the other silly girls in their year. But he didn’t have her, Severus did. James was jealous that who he wanted was friends with someone as ugly and evil as Severus. That they’d known each other since childhood, that they were best friends and nothing more made no difference. All he saw was his beauty being taken away by the beast and as the prince it was his duty to rescue her from him.

As for Sirius, well. Here was a boy so like himself; raised in a broken home, abused by the ones who
should have loved him. Had things been different, had Severus been sorted elsewhere, they may very well have become friends. Or at the very least, they wouldn't have the urge to hex the other, if they were so much as walking down the same corridor. In Sirius’ eyes, Severus was what his parents would have wanted. You know minus the whole ugliness and low breeding thing he had going on. After all he was a slytherin; he was powerful and fiercely intelligent. Enough so that Malfoy of all people had taken an interest in him. No doubt to further his own standing in the Dark Lord’s rankings, when it was discovered he had found such a brilliant mind for them to use.

Now in Peter’s case, well, he really just went along with what James and Sirius thought. In all honesty, although he felt terrible for thinking it, Remus very much doubted Peter had ever had an original thought in his head.

“If I leave I’ll be happy. I’ll be free”.

For such a simple response, it carried a lot of meaning. For Severus, growing up in a home where he wasn’t wanted, yet where he was forced to remain, was torture. He was living with the man who killed the one person he’d ever claimed to love. His mother. Who admittedly was a coward herself, but it was better to think that she once loved him than to think that no one ever cared. It was at times the only thought that kept Severus going. For at least one point in time, someone cared that he had been born. The possibility that she hadn’t, that he was just a mistake that never should have been, it was a possibility Severus just couldn’t bring himself to think about. Sometimes denial really was the best option.

“Write me if you must. Just don’t tell your friends”. Severus added. He supposed it would be nice to see Remus’ apology written down for the world to see. It would be proof that for once, Severus was in the right and they were in the wrong. It was almost enough to make him smile. Almost.

“I will, thank you”. Remus replied. He sounded gracious, as if he knew this was a privilege Severus was granting him. Which in all honesty, it was.

Severus was not the type to suffer fools lightly. But in this case he was willing, if only because he was curious to see what would happen. He had nothing to fear after all, his plan was already cemented. There was no harm that he could see, in letting Remus write to him once. A letter that he was sure would be filled with grovelling apologies and empty promises, promising he’d prevent James and Sirius from ever doing something so stupid again. Severus expected they’d behave no longer than a week and even that was pushing it.

Remus just didn’t have the spine to stand up to them like that. He was just too afraid that they’d leave him, that he’d be left alone. Severus could almost understand. After all, Remus would quite literally have his best years in Hogwarts. For after Hogwarts, his chances for a career would be non-existent.

Severus almost felt sorry for him. Almost.

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“Check, check and check” Severus muttered to himself. He raked through his belongings, what little he had to his name, one final time. Then and only then, Severus allowed himself to smile.

The last few days had been almost magical for Severus. The Marauders, most likely believing he wasn’t serious minus Remus of course, hadn’t even approached him. His housemates, distracted by the upcoming quidditch match, had barely even seen him let alone speak to him. And Dumbledore? Well he remained oblivious to Severus’ plans, just as Severus had planned.

With one last parting glance, Severus grabbed his bag. Everything had been charmed to fit, not that
he had much to fit inside in the first place. Outwardly, he looked no different from any other student heading home. Inwardly however, well he was terrified. He’d come so far, he’d made it to the day. Now he was terrified it would all go wrong. Because for him it always went wrong. Anytime he tried to be happy, fate would steal it away. But not this time. No, this time Severus wasn’t giving up. They’d have to kill him if they wanted to stop him. Nothing else was going to work.

With a deep breath Severus grabbed his trunk. With one last glance around the room he nodded to himself, before exiting the room to follow the masses of students as they all headed home for Christmas. Severus couldn’t recall the last present he’d received, probably one from Lily if he bothered to make an effort. But this year, he was giving a present to himself. It would without a doubt be the best present he’d ever gotten, if he did say so himself.

“All aboard!” The station master called, snapping Severus out of his thoughts. With a smile he handed his trunk over. Had he bothered to notice, he’d have seen the look of shock on the man’s face.

Never before had he seen the lad smile. Oh he’d noticed him of course. It was hard to ignore such a young child with such a severe appearance. But when he smiled, it was as if all his problems had disappeared. As corny as that sounded. He was tempted to mention it to the lad, a bit of friendly advice as it were. But he was too quick, disappeared amongst the crowd just as he’d gotten his trunk secure.

‘Ah well, I’ll tell him next year’. The man made a mental note to do so. Too bad it was too late.

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“Severus?” Severus looked up from the book he’d been absorbed in. Nothing wrong with getting a bit of preparation done while he had the time.

So he was quite unprepared for the sight that stood before him.

“Lily” Severus acknowledged. But it was all he did. There was no smile, no hug, no nothing that would indicate how close they once were. For as she’d once screamed at him, they were no longer friends.

“I-”

Lily frowned, pursing her lips slightly as Severus returned his attention to his book. For once she did not have his full attention and it irked her. He was the one at fault; he’d called her that ugly name in the first place. Oh sure he apologised, begged her to listen even, but she’d refused. Her friends had been right. Severus didn’t deserve her kindness. Nor was she going to give it. After all she had everything she wanted now. She had friends; she even had a boyfriend who doted on her. She didn’t need him. And yet, as she watched him read, she couldn’t help the anger that bubbled inside her.

She didn’t need him, but now it seemed he no longer needed her. And that just really pissed her off.

“I just wanted to wish you and your mother merry Christmas”. Lily finally said, frowning as the boy failed to respond in turn.

“You can tell me all you like Miss Evans. But my mother is dead. She died at my father’s hand. So I don’t think your Christmas cheer will be of much use to her”. Severus finally spared her a glance. “Goodbye”. With that he turned back to his book.

Lily stood in disbelief, mouth agape and her mind blank of all thought. “S-s-she can’t be, you must be lying!” She exclaimed. It was only then that she realised what she said.
“I am not the liar here Miss Evans”. Severus was now looking at her, his voice colder than she’d ever heard. “Friends forever, isn’t that what you always told me? If anyone’s the liar here, it’s you”.

Lily failed to stop the sob that escaped her. “But your father? How can you return to him?”

She was desperate to know. For while the whole thing sounded ludicrous, like something from a story, Lily very much doubted that Severus was just pulling her leg. She’d seen the bruises; she’d heard the shouting coming from his house. Although she couldn’t accept it, Lily knew it to be true. His father had always been a violent drunk. It’s why she’d never been inside Severus’ house. He wasn’t above beating his own child when things didn’t go his way. It didn’t take much imagination to believe he’d kill his wife, if things ever got worse.

“I’m not” Severus admitted. “Now leave” he ordered. He refused to answer any more of her questions. He’d already revealed too much. It’s just…she was his first real friend. It wasn’t something he could just forget.

“No! I-Severus we must talk about this! We must-” Lily protested, wiping away her tears.

“I said…leave”. Severus hissed; his fury evident.

There was something in his tone of voice, something dangerous. It was all too easy for her to protest, to demand he answer her. But then, as he stopped to think about it, she could no longer make such demands. She was the one to sever their friendship, she was the one to deny his attempts to make things right. She’d given up her right to care the moment she disowned him. And only now did she realise the consequences for her actions. Only now could she admit she may have been wrong.

“Very well”. She felt her own anger bubbling to the surface. “Not now, but we will speak of this once we return”. With that she turned and left, her fists trembling with fury.

“No bloody likely” Severus muttered, reaching for his book once more. He could only hope there would be no more interruptions.

“- "We should go see him, confront him about this". Sirius turned to his friends, seeking their approval. James as always was all too willing; Peter as always hadn’t the brains to refuse. But Remus, well he just sat there.

“Moony? You coming?” Sirius finally asked, in all honesty he was a little worried about him.

“No”. It was all Remus would say, it was enough to make James and Sirius nervous.

“Why not?” Peter asked, oblivious as always.

“Because it’s not funny. It never has been and now it’s time to stop”. Remus stared at the two with unblinking eyes.

“Moony?” James asked worriedly.

“Is it the wolf?” Sirius asked. Remus had never acted like this before.

“No. It’s just me”. Remus said quietly. “I just, can’t you leave him alone? Just for today? For me?” Remus asked, looking them in the eye.

Remus honestly didn’t think they’d agree. He was their friend yes, but he had never believed himself
to be that important to them. Oh sure they’d become animagus so they could join him on the full moon, but that had always been more about getting to do something, that would get them in a lot of trouble if they were caught. It had never been about helping him at all.

“For you Moony? Anything”. Remus could only blink in disbelief. As opposed to their usual expressions of mirth, for once James and Sirius appeared deadly serious.

“Really?” It wasn’t that he didn’t trust them. He just…well he didn’t trust them to keep their word.

“But just for today yeah? We’ll get him when we get back from our hols” Sirius grinned. Looking cockier than ever.

“Yeah” Remus smiled. Unbeknownst to them, it was for another reason entirely. “When we get back, then you can get him” he agreed.

‘By then it’ll be too late. He’ll be long gone’ Remus smiled to himself.

He’d never be able to forgive himself for what he’d done to Severus. But Remus hoped that by allowing him his last train ride to be a peaceful one, then maybe Severus would someday accept his apology. Oh sure he hoped for forgiveness. But Remus was realistic. What he’d done, what they’d all done to him, sometimes there were things that were just unforgiveable. He only hoped Severus would be happy.

As much as Remus had wished for more, he knew he didn’t deserve it. It was because of his own cowardice that he’d lost his chance. His curse had only ensured his chance would never come again. Or so he believed.

That’s the thing about living in the magical world. Sometimes wishes just might come true. As long as you believe. Of course, Remus wasn’t the only one with a wish.
Okay first off i’d just like to say I was amazed at the response I got for the last chapter. I mean I think I got like 18 comments just for that chapter alone, which was just mind blowing! So thank you so much to everyone who commented. Secondly i’d like to thank everyone who gave kudos to this. I mean two chapters and over 100 kudos, that is just incredible to me!

Now I had hoped to get this posted last week. However I've realised that updating more than once a week just isn't possible for me right now. Especially as I have three stories to update. So just to let you know i'll be updating one story every week. So for this one i'll be updating in 3 weeks' time. I had actually hoped to update this a few days earlier, but this last week I've been ill so I just didn't have the energy to write anything. But still I hope you enjoy this chapter.

When he’d first heard Snivellus was leaving, Sirius didn’t quite know what to think. His first thought was denial, as it so often is when someone hears something they wished they hadn’t. His second thought was anger, which Sirius hadn’t expected to feel. Oh sure he felt a range of other emotions, from fear to even sadness, but it was the anger that surprised him.

Since he’d been a child Sirius had grown up in an angry household. His mother was always angry, his father was always angry and as time passed, Sirius too became angry. Of course much of that anger was directed towards his parents. Towards those that forced immense pressure onto him from a very early age. Pressure to find a wife, pressure to produce an heir, pressure to succeed in school and pressure to join the dark. The first three he could have handled in time, well okay he might have at least made more an effort in school. But the last? Well let’s just say Sirius had reached his breaking point.

It was actually a little ironic. What Sirius had come to fear more than anything, was to become just like his parents. To be used by the dark side like a tool, to carry on the Black line and ensure the dark would survive. After all, everyone knew the Black family was always in support of the dark.

Now in his early years Sirius had loved his family, as most children do. In fact it wasn’t really until just before he started Hogwarts, that his thoughts began to change. Oh sure he’d heard them speak of muggles as though they were filth, he’d even seen them harm others that were believed to be supporters of those mudbloods. While he knew it wasn’t exactly normal behaviour, at least not according to the stories his house elf once read to him as a child, he’d never thought to question it. But as he grew older, his thoughts began to change.

It wasn’t until he was in Hogwarts that he really began to see his family for what they were; monsters. Cruel bullies that took pleasure from torturing anyone they deemed beneath them. Whether it was due to a lack of money or lack of breeding, whatever the reason, the Blacks would humiliate their unfortunate victim as a form of entertainment. As though that’s what their purpose was, to entertain those of superior breeding and rank by whatever means. With their tears perhaps, as they felt the crucio surge through their bodies, or with their misery, as everything they worked for was
robbed from them. All Sirius knew for sure was that he wanted no part of it. It was actually rather funny, considering he spent his time humiliating and torturing a poor halfblood, who had few friends and even fewer allies. As I said before, it truly was ironic.

While at Hogwarts, Sirius became sure he was nothing like his parents. First and foremost, he was not a Slytherin. Oh sure the hat had mentioned it, but like hell was he about to let that happen. Slytherins were evil and Sirius was sure he was not so. It didn’t matter that Sirius could be cunning, nor did it matter that he could be sly, Sirius was adamant he was no Slytherin.

Now when Sirius was sorted into gryffindor, you could probably imagine his relief. Already he’d proven he was nothing like his parents. Already he’d shown he would not be joining the dark side. Of course he didn’t say as much outright, he didn’t want to be disowned quite so soon. For while he despised his family, with the possible exception of Regulus, the thought of losing his wealth and power was too much for him to bear. Sirius didn’t want to be like his parents no, but that didn’t mean he wanted to give up the fine life he had. He wasn’t that brave. Or stupid. Depends on how you look at it really.

Of course, despite his power and wealth, Sirius was still just a teenage boy. And like most teenage boys, he could be a right arse at the best of times and absolute scum at the worst. Of course Sirius rarely ever showed his darker side, the one his parents had encouraged to grow and develop. Indeed the only one he ever seemed to show it to was Severus. The poor halfblood with almost nothing to his name. Save for some admittedly impressive potions knowledge. Say what you wanted about Snape, you couldn’t deny he was a potions prodigy. Although in many eyes, it was the only good thing about him.

Now although Sirius claimed to despise bullies, especially those who bullied others for being lesser than themselves, it seemed whenever Severus was involved, Sirius changed his tune. All of a sudden it was okay to beat and humiliate the boy, it was okay to use his low breeding and ugly appearance as an excuse to torment him some more. After all it was the truth and it wasn’t like anyone really liked Snape anyway.

Well…that last part wasn’t strictly true. Not anymore.

If asked, Sirius couldn’t say when exactly his feelings had changed. But they had changed. Oh sure he still considered Snape an ugly Slytherin who was beneath him. Yet despite these obvious faults the boy had, Sirius found himself willing to overlook them. Snape was ugly yes, but he held a certain appeal when blinded by fury. His eyes would darken, his breathing would harshen and the look he gave Sirius when he took his teasing a bit too far, well Sirius had always liked his lovers to have a bit of fire in them. And no one could deny Severus was full of fire. It was part of the reason he enjoyed teasing the boy so. A cruel comment here and there, designed to further chip away at that already fragile self-esteem. It wasn’t meant to break Severus, had it done Sirius would have lost interest long ago, but rather it intended to draw out that fire that Snape always tried so hard to keep hidden.

Sirius guessed it was Lily’s doing, back when the two were still talking that is. The girl was always harping on about what she thought was right; that they shouldn’t bully Snape, that Snape needed to control his temper, that Snape needed to ignore his housemates in favour of listening to her. You know how girls are; they always have to be right. Of course in this case Lily was wrong. At least Sirius thought so. She wanted Snape to control himself, to keep his fire hidden from sight. She wanted to ruin Sirius’ plans, to prevent him from witnessing that sheer passion and hatred that Snape always managed to carry when in his presence. Oh sure Sirius had his share of lovers, far too many lads and lasses were willing to bed him just to improve their own image. But none of them held a candle to Snape.
Snape was no fool, he was smart and proud. So unlike the vapid and vain students that Sirius had sampled in the past. He was fiercely intelligent, a trait Sirius could at the very least respect, but above all he was strong. Despite all the shit Sirius put him through, with James willing to help at almost every opportunity, Severus never broke. Not once. Sirius could admit he was damn well impressed. With Lily the boy came close, too close in Sirius’ opinion, but it seemed something stopped him from giving in. A damn good thing too, otherwise Sirius would have had to look for another source of entertainment.

The funny thing was though, that Sirius never stopped to consider just what he was doing. He was bullying a physically weaker (because Snape was positively vicious with a wand in his hand), impoverished halfblood, whose only defence was his venomous tongue and sharp mind. For not wanting to end up like his parents, it was almost scary just how much they and Sirius shared. Had they found out about his behaviour, they surely would have been delighted. Indeed the boy’s only saving grace was that he was a Slytherin. Had Sirius realised this of course, he’d have been horrified. Not because he realised what he was doing to a (mostly) innocent student, but because he was turning into what he feared the most. Of course by the time Sirius realised what he’d become, it was already too late. Severus was already gone and according to Moony he wasn’t coming back.

When Severus left Sirius panicked. No longer could he see the boy who haunted his thoughts. No longer could he goad him into lashing out, he couldn’t see that angry flush fill his cheeks with colour. No longer would he see the boy as he fought to gain respect amongst his peers. Respect he would never gain. No longer could Sirius hope to have a future with him. A future where he had him beneath him, on his back and screaming his name in a mix of bliss and rage. Not out of rape you must understand. While Sirius’ morals were few in number, he could never force himself upon another. Even if it was Snape.

When Snape left Sirius felt he’d lost a part of himself. He went from interacting with the boy on a daily basis, through fights, teasing and so on, to absolutely nothing. It forced him for the first time to take a good long look at himself. Not literally of course, although there was that incident where he almost fell into the lake, thanks to Remus popping up out of nowhere. But once he did look at himself, for the first time in his life, Sirius was no longer proud of what he could see. For while he was still as sexy and charming as ever, Sirius was finally beginning to learn that those things weren’t as important as he’d once believed. Oh they were still in his top five, don’t get me wrong, but they were no longer his top one.

Of course it would be some time before Sirius would change enough for anyone to take notice. It would be longer still before he’d ever see Severus again. Sirius only hoped that if they ever did meet once more, that perhaps Snape wouldn’t simply hex him at first sight. Wishful thinking and all that. Of course as a starting point, Sirius vowed not to refer to him as Snivellus anymore. You know what they say about baby steps. Start with the easiest and work your way up. Only Sirius hadn’t counted on it being such a hard habit to break.

It took two months for him to stop saying it. It took longer still for him to stop thinking it during fits of anger. But in the end he managed it. One step down, countless more to go.

- Severus hadn’t lived a long life, although at times it certainly felt like it. After all he’d survived an attempted murder, countless beatings by his father and the marauders, a broken heart due to his mother’s passing and Lily’s disownment of him and countless other events that threatened to break him. But Severus was proud to say he’d never broken. He’d never given into the urge to give in, to let himself be swept away by the dark lord, to let everyone dictate how he should live his life. It was a damn good thing that he hadn’t.
As cheesy as it sounded, the very moment Severus had stepped off that train with his trunk in hand, his life forever changed. For the better I might add. Of course he hadn’t been so foolish as to ask the programme’s representative to meet him at the train. That would have only brought about staring and rumours. Something he was hoping to avoid until he was at least out of the country, when it would be too late to stop him. Instead he’d asked to meet them nearby, slipping into one of the station bathrooms in order to change into muggle clothing. It made it that much easier for him to slip through the crowds unseen. Well as unseen as a teenage boy dragging a heavy trunk behind him could be. The downside of not being able to use magic outside of school.

It was at a nearby café that Severus met the man who would change his life. Amongst the few elderly couples sipping tea and the single mother wrestling with her unruly child, sat a Japanese man dressed in a fine suit. Quite out of place indeed. But at least it was easy for Severus to recognise him. After a quick introduction; Sakomoto Takashi was the man’s name, although it took a moment before Severus realised the first name he said was in fact his last, the two were off. Sakomoto-san, as he insisted on being referred to, directed him down a nearby alleyway. And moments later Severus found himself reappearing in a place he’d only ever dreamed of.

The International Floo Network was perhaps not the obvious choice for a boy to dream bout, but for Severus it meant his dream was coming true. While to many it was just a building, to Severus it provided him with something he’d thought he’d lost long ago. Hope. The sheer possibilities of places he could go, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe was enough to make his head spin. The opportunities it provided him seemed endless. But alas, Severus had already chosen a path. A path he was sure would make him happy. Or at the very least content. He very much hoped so.

“Severus? It is time, come with me”.

Severus breathed once in an effort to calm his beating heart. It did little to calm him, but for once he couldn’t bring himself to care. For once he was experiencing excitement, not fear or disdain. It had been a long time since he’d felt such a thing and he was determined to enjoy every minute of it.

“Yes sir”.

Just minutes later, Severus found himself stepping through the floo with his shrunken trunk in his pocket. Soon afterwards he found himself landing rather painfully, although he did his best to hide it. As he stepped outside of the floo, Severus found himself gaping in awe at his surroundings.

‘I made it’ Severus thought to himself. ‘I really made it’. It was only then that he allowed himself to truly smile.

Sirius sighed as he scribbled out the last sentence he’d written. Homework had never been a priority of his, but for once he couldn’t be arsed to play quidditch or pull pranks. He wasn’t quite sure what was wrong with him, although it seemed that whatever he had, James had it too.

Rather than face his family, as most kids do when school is out, Sirius had chosen to stay with James. He was hoping it would prove to be a great holiday. Full of long lie-ins, plenty of quidditch and pranks and with any luck, they’d be able to crack the safe where James’ father stored their best liquor. Firewhisky was all well and good for when they wanted to get hammered, but Sirius had just been itching for a challenge and James was all too willing to try. However Sirius hadn’t planned on starting his holiday off with doing homework. Usually that was to be left until the train ride back, if not later.

‘Remus would be proud’ Sirius thought to himself.
It was true; the other boy had often berated them for how little effort they put into their studies. Quite frankly he’d be amazed they were actually doing the work. Without even being asked. But while Remus would have been amazed, he would have also been wary. For while the idea that they were doing their homework, getting it out of the way so to speak, was a pleasant one, he’d known them far too long to know there had to be a reason for it. As to what that reason was, well if he had known, Remus may not have been so pleased.

The truth was Sirius was moping and while he couldn’t speak for James as well, he was pretty sure he was doing the same. Only he hoped it wasn’t for the same reason. You see Sirius had been thinking about a certain Slytherin. How he said he was leaving. Now Sirius wasn’t sure he really believed him, students couldn’t just leave Hogwarts like that, especially not those without money or power like Severus. But the thought still made him wary.

Quite frankly Sirius liked his life the way it was. He had no great worries, not quite yet anyway; graduation was still a year off. He had friends, he was popular and he’d had a number of lovers to enjoy himself with. He was young, handsome and charming; he had pretty much everything going for him. So the idea that when he returned, back to Hogwarts where he reigned as king, that something would be changed beyond his control, well it worried him. Severus, as much as Sirius would deny it, was a big part of Sirius’ life. It had almost become a routine for him to seek out the smaller boy and pick on him. An insult here, a little spell there, just enough to remind the boy of his presence. To keep him in his place.

If Sirius was the king of Hogwarts, then Severus was the jester. The one everyone made fun of, the one everyone ridiculed and watched as they waited for their king to provide the entertainment. And what entertainment it was. From tripping him in the corridors, to flashing his bits as he hung upside down, Sirius was the master of making his jester look like a fool. But now it seemed his jester had had enough. And Sirius wasn’t quite sure how he should react. No longer would Snape be there to react in that beautiful little way of his. Where his cheeks reddened, his eyes glinted with fury and his mouth spewed pure filth. Instead Sirius would be left to find his own entertainment, a thought that didn’t sit well with him. Oh he could do it of course, if had absolutely had to. But he didn’t want to.

At first Sirius tried to deny it, but that soon proved fruitless. He just couldn’t stop thinking about him, try as he might. Eventually Sirius came to a conclusion. If Snape had left, really left them for good that is, then Sirius was going to do everything in his power to get him back. Sirius may have denied it long enough, but he was finally done with hiding his feelings. Screw everyone else, he wanted Snivellus. Or rather he wanted Snape. It probably wasn’t the best idea to call him Snivellus if he was trying to win him over. Now he just had to come up with a plan to get him.

If James wasn’t moping so much, Sirius would have asked him for help. He was after all his best mate. Of course had he known why his friend was so mopey, he’d have changed his mind. After all, he wanted to win Severus over. He wanted to be able to claim his prize. He couldn’t do that if someone else was trying to claim Snape for himself. Even if it was James. Especially if it was James.

They say it’s always bros before ho’s. Well sometimes there’s an exception. It really depends on the…well you know.

- Severus felt himself flush with embarrassment as he came to realise just what was expected of him. All around him young men, many several years older than him, stripped off as though it was nothing. While Severus was no stranger to bathing, despite what Black or Potter may have said, he’d always been rather ashamed of what he had to offer. He knew he was nothing special, he’d come to terms with that long ago. But as he glanced around the room, as the others undressed right down to the
bare, Severus couldn’t help but feel ashamed. While not all of them were muscular or as handsome as say Sirius Black, it was still pretty clear to him that he was still the odd one out. Even among like-minded individuals, he was doomed to be the outcast. With his pale skin, scrawny frame and beak of a nose, it was clear he was to be the ugly duckling in a room full of swans.

Of course in the end the ugly duckling becomes a swan. Too bad Severus had never been told the rest of the story. But not to worry, he’d soon be finding it out for himself.

Chapter End Notes

For those of you who aren't aware, in Japan they have public baths called onsen. Basically it means people shower first, go in completely naked and soak in a tub or hot springs for however long that they need with total strangers. And I just couldn't help myself, I had to put Severus in one. Although in this case it's more of a private facility for those on the programme. It's more of a welcome event for the new recruits. I thought it would be interesting to see how Severus would react in such a situation. Of course i'll be going into more detail about it next chapter.

Anyway I hope you liked it. Please let me know what you think!

KB
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

A huge thanks to the 18 reviews I got for the last chapter. Also a huge thanks to the 181 kudos I have. When I started this I never thought this story would become so popular, but I’m so happy to see so many people like it.

Just to warn you, the way I’ve portrayed James in this chapter probably isn’t the way J.K.Rowling did. But to be completely honest, I liked the idea of James originally being interested in Severus, then feeling betrayed when he became a snake. I happen to think Lily and Severus do share similar traits; intelligence, stubbornness etc and I came up with the idea that because they were so similar, this was what made James turn to Lily instead. So obviously James will most likely be a bit OOC in this, so sorry about that.

I’ll also be doing James’ POV about Severus’ disappearance next chapter. I had meant to in this chapter but as you can see I kind of got side-tracked. Still I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Severus had never been a particularly attractive lad. Though it seemed the reasons why this was so appeared to change, depending on the age of whoever was asked. If you asked an adult, they would say it was because he was so skinny. It certainly didn’t help matters. His ribs and cheekbones stuck out, his eyes almost seemed sunken and his skin remained pale from a lack of proper nutrition. Nothing but a bag of bones as they’d say. Well it was the truth.

Growing up his family had little and whatever they did have, his father usually took to spend on booze and smokes. Even at Hogwarts Severus put very little weight on. It took time you see for him to accustom himself to the meals they served. He couldn’t just stuff himself that very first day, not if he didn’t want to end up with his head down the toilet half the night. Then there was all that running around he did. Running from the Marauders, running from his peers, running from that werewolf friend of Potter’s, and let’s not forget, running from the headmaster himself. It was a wonder he even had time to eat, with how much time he spent trying to avoid whatever curses and insults everyone was keen to bestow on him.

Now if you asked one of his peers, their answer would have been different. Of course it depended on who you asked. If you asked a Gryffindor they’d likely blame his nose or greasy hair. If you asked a Slytherin, they’d claim it was his vicious (even by their standards) personality. As for the Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs, well they’d usually claim it was a mix of all three.

Now normally Severus didn’t let it bother him. The taunts he could deal with, by either creating a few of his own or with a quick flick of his wand. He knew that in the future, when he was making something of himself, his peers’ lives would be terribly boring. They’d all get married, have kids and most likely half of them would end up dead soon after graduating. But Severus, he would be different. He was determined to gain respect, for the very intelligence his peers often ridiculed him for. But still, there were times Severus couldn’t stop himself from hating how he looked. Not simply disliking a part of him, but truly hating his appearance.

The scars were the worst part. A mix of abuse from both his father and the Marauders, although a few of his classmates had contributed their fair share. Thankfully though many of them could be
hidden, as they mainly covered his shoulders and back. For those that weren’t, a small glamour was usually enough to conceal them. Nothing that required too much power, but it did get rather tiring for Severus if he ever had to hold it for an extended period of time.

Then of course were Severus’ eyes. The eyes he’d gotten from his father, the man he hated more than anything in the world. Even Potter and that was saying something. From a young age, Severus had seen his mother flinch away from him whenever he laid eyes on her. A reminder for her of what her life had become. Severus soon learned his father was not a nice man. He was a very bad man and as he grew older, he learned he was a very dangerous man as well. As a child he hadn’t realised the screaming and crying he heard during the night wasn’t normal. It wasn’t until he’d visited Lily in her home, that he learned such things weren’t considered normal.

Finally, there was everything else. His nose, his hair, his teeth and his skin; Severus came to hate them all. But then so did everyone. But what he really hated about himself was how little there was too him. Compared to his classmates he was pitifully weak, at least physically. He had very little muscle; no padding to speak of, there was nothing particularly manly about his body at all. Severus couldn’t help but envy his classmates. The few looks he’d managed to sneak showed they were all so much bigger and stronger than he was. Although young their muscles were defined, whereas his were practically non-existent. Oh sure he’d tried to do something about it, but with no one to help him and there being no chance he’d ever ask someone, it was a doomed plan from the very start. Eventually Severus just stopped trying. Instead he put what little energy he had into keeping everyone at bay. Into keeping his tongue sharp, his spellwork precise and into making sure he remained at the top of his year. It worked; people left him alone, choosing instead to ridicule him behind his back. But it eventually took its toll. Soon enough Severus came to realise just how lonely he was. So very alone.

When everyone around him had started stripping off right in front of him, Severus had rather hoped he was hallucinating. There were a few sights he was sure would be giving him nightmares for weeks to come. But sadly he was not so lucky. Instead he too was forced to strip, though he took care to do so quickly with his eyes averted. The last thing he needed was to have people staring at him and comparing their own bodies to his admittedly rather pitiful one.

At the first sight of the towel, Severus had never been quite so relieved in his life. It wasn’t much, just enough to cover his bits, but it did more to alleviate his anxiety than weeks of therapy or potions could ever hope to achieve. So after securing the towel firmly around his narrow hips, Severus found himself waiting anxiously for whatever came next. In his efforts to be quick, it hadn’t occurred to Severus that perhaps the others would want to take their time undressing. To size up the competition as it were. As a result, Severus found himself listening to everyone’s snide little comments about their peers. Well it wasn’t like there was anything else for him to do.

One of the younger lads, who looked to be possibly nineteen or twenty, was being particularly vocal in his judgement of the others.

‘What a fool’ Severus thought to himself. He had to suppress a snort as the man openly mocked his appearance, to a man stood next to him. Though Severus soon found himself stunned as the second man, rather than agreeing with the arrogant tosser (as Severus had already labelled him), instead delivered an insult about the man’s intelligence so scathingly, Severus almost felt privileged just to have witnessed it.

Severus was once again surprised to find the second man approaching him. And again when the man didn’t immediately start up a conversation with him. Considering his last friend had disowned him
leaving him friendless once more, Severus found himself at a loss as to what he should say or do. So rather than risking embarrassing himself, Severus chose to return his attention to the first young man. It seemed his earlier remarks hadn’t gone down too well with the rest of the young men. As such, the man quickly found himself on his own, scowling down at his clothes though thankfully making no further comments.

“I can’t stand people like him. Think they’re oh so important because daddy buys them everything they ever wanted. A spoiled brat that’s what he is, with more money than sense”. The other man finally spoke, Severus turned towards him. With his blond hair, tanned skin and rather muscular frame, Severus wondered what the man was doing there. With looks like that, he was good enough to be a model or something. People like him didn’t usually see a need to turn to academics like Severus did. They could do anything they wanted, just with a smile and a wink. It wasn’t exactly fair, but then when had life ever been fair?

“What money? I’d bet every galleon he claims to own belongs to his father. He’s the sort who hasn’t done a single day’s work in his life”. Severus scoffed. It was only then he realised he was supposed to be trying to make friends. Not doing as the other man had done and criticising his peers. It seemed the man didn’t care about any of that though, he only laughed. “You’ve got that right, makes you wonder if he really got on this programme honestly. Or if daddy had to buy his way in”. The man laughed once more, though Severus began to grow uncomfortable.

Why was it okay for this man to ridicule the first, when it wasn’t okay for the first to do so? Severus wasn’t sure, social niceties had never been a priority of his, but he didn’t want to mention it. Not when he had a chance to finally fit in with someone, even someone who looked a good five years older than he.

“My name’s Severus, from England” Severus said instead.

“Andrew, from America. Florida to be precise. You know the place with all the sun and beaches”. The man took his hand, shaking it firmly. “Nice to meet you” he grinned, his teeth shining in a manner that strongly resembled Malfoy’s own. “I’m twenty two, how ‘bout you?” Andrew asked.

“Sixteen” Severus made no attempt to lie. It would only cause complications further down the line.

“Fucking hell, you’re kidding me right?” Andrew asked, appearing to be a little in awe of him.

“No” Severus shook his head. Andrew only laughed once more, slapping him on the back.

“Merlin kid, you’re sure full of surprises. Imagine that, sixteen and on a programme like this. You must be some kind of prodigy or something. You know you’re the youngest one here right? Even Evan over there is eighteen and barely looks it. You know I’d have guessed you were a little older than him. You just have this look about you, so serious and mature. But fucking hell, sixteen? You know you’re gonna end up being babied for at least the next year or so, right? At least by these guys. Can’t say the same for the professors” Andrew grinned at him as Severus scowled. Though he remained oblivious as to the true reason behind that scowl.

While the thought of being babied was an unpleasant one, Severus’ reason for scowling was actually rather instinctive. For Andrew’s light-hearted slap had landed on a particularly sensitive scar of his. One that sent little tremors of pain all throughout Severus’ body, like aftershocks following an earthquake. But of course Severus made no mention of this. He didn’t dare.

“Gentlemen, please follow me to the hot springs. We hope you enjoy your stay”. A Japanese man in his mid-twenties entered the changing room. With a smile he beckoned them to follow him; he too
wore only a towel around his hips.

“Come on Sev”. Andrew nudged him playfully as they made to follow the rest of the group.

Severus only sighed at the nickname. Lily used to call him that, when she wasn’t mad that is. Though it was becoming rather difficult to remember a time when she had said it. She had been mad an awful lot before the whole incident with the Marauders occurred. And afterwards, well Severus just didn’t want to remember.

James smirked as Lily moaned against him. Her soft little whimpers as he thrust into her for the first time, only made him smile more. “That’s it, almost there” he whispered to her.

It was the perfect moment for him. He had the girl of his dreams beneath him, he was not only Head Boy but Quidditch Captain also and that slimy little snake was gone for good. Life was perfect.

“Mmm, Lily” James groaned. He dropped his head as he gave a particularly hard thrust, one that left her panting. That’s when he noticed the change.

Gone were her soft breasts and broad hips. No longer was her hair red like fire with eyes like emeralds. Instead he found himself drilling into someone much slighter. Someone much paler, with hair as black as night and with eyes to match.

“Severus!” James cried out, watching as the boy panted and writhed beneath him. Seconds later James’ back arched, a wave of pleasure crashing over him as the darkness claimed him.

“James?” A voice whispered in his ear.

“Mmm” James groaned once more. Beneath him the raven haired boy shifted. Still panting and glassy eyed, just how James liked him to be.

“James?” The voice called once more.

“Ssh!” James hissed, choosing instead to mouth at the boy’s neck without even bothering to pull out of him.

“JAMES!” James startled, snapping his eyes open as he panted harshly. His heart pounded as he looked around wildly, his eyes wide with panic. It wasn’t until he calmed down that he heard it. That odd mix of braying and cackling, a sound he knew could only belong to one person.

“PADFOOT! You…are…dead!” James gritted out, ripping off the covers and pouncing on his friend.

Needless to say, the combination of shouts, squeals and a rather constant thumping meant the boys remained undisturbed for most of the day. No one was willing to risk walking into whatever was going on. Not even James’ parents.

“Have a nice dream then?” Sirius mocked, gesturing at the rather obvious wet patch on James’ crotch, laughing once more as he noticed a similar patch on the bedsheets. “A very nice dream I see”.

Sirius’ laughter soon ended though. It seemed it was rather difficult to laugh when choking on a fine silk pillow. After a tense couple of minutes where Sirius found himself trying to hack up a feather, he finally managed to speak once more. Much to James’ dismay.
“So was it Lily?” Sirius smirked, giving a particularly vulgar gesture with his hands that had James seeing red. “Not Lily then. Hmm, was it Moony?” Sirius was pleased to see the grin return to James’ face. The idea was too ludicrous to even consider. “Not Moony then. Hmm, you know I can’t think of anyone else who’d be willing to put up with you mate”.

James only shook his head at his friends’ antics. For a few moments, he debated whether to tell him the truth or not. “It was Snape”. Apparently his mouth hadn’t gotten the message. Although Sirius’ reaction proved most interesting.

“S-Snape!?” Sirius let out a series of spluttering coughs.

While James had expected some level of theatrics, it was Sirius after all; even he thought Sirius’ behaviour was a bit much. The Black heir looked half deranged, with his hair sticking up and his hands clawing at the pillow in his grasp.

“Y-you can’t…you just…Snape!?” Sirius spluttered once more, wringing the pillow until its shape became unrecognisable.

“Sirius?” James asked cautiously. He’d known him and Snape were enemies, but even so his reaction was starting to worry him a bit.

“No! Fucking no! You and Snape, just no! You don’t get to have him; you already have Lily for fuck’s sake!” Sirius hissed, actually hissed at him.

“I know that! Don’t you think I know that? I know I have her, I just-” James fell silent. “I can’t help it. I just keep thinking about him” he finally admitted.

“Well stop” Sirius grit out, flinging the pillow aside and storming off.

James was left to stand there, mouth agape and certain areas of his body becoming uncomfortably itchy. “What the hell just happened?” James asked the room, the room gave him no reply. Though that was probably a good thing. Had it done, James would probably have had a lot more to worry about.

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James Potter was a twat. There was no question about it. He was rude, he was arrogant and he seemed to think everyone ought to love the very ground he walked on. Unfortunately, there were many who did just that. You see while James was indeed rude and downright cruel to those that caught his special attention, he was also infuriatingly charming. And when you combined that with his good looks, decent grades, quidditch ability and of course his family wealth, then it became clear as to why so many people loved him so. Well okay it was mostly the girls that loved him, each eager to become his wife and gain half his fortune for themselves. But even a few lads seemed to have taken a shine to him, judging by the offers he received suggesting they have a bit of fun.

No one ever really complained about James Potter. Not really anyway. He may have been scolded in class for not paying enough attention, or slapped by one of the girls for fooling around with their best friend and not them. But on the whole, everyone seemed to like him. Everyone that is except Severus. The Slytherins too, but that was more about house rivalry than anything else. But Severus, he really couldn’t stand Potter.

It was actually rather funny how it all started. How just one word could change someone’s opinion forever. For Lily it was mudblood, for Remus it was werewolf and for James it was Slytherin. You see, way back before they were even sorted, James had come across the loveliest little thing he ever
had seen. Oh sure the object of his affections had a fiery temper, and yes they loved to read, but to James they were everything he was looking for in a future wife. Or husband as it soon turned out.

Yes. From the moment he’d first lain eyes on him, James had fallen for Severus. His own little touch of darkness as he’d come to call him. In his mind obviously, he wasn’t stupid enough to reveal such a thing to anyone. As ludicrous as it sounded, it wasn’t quite so ridiculous if time was taken to properly consider it. Now Lily and Severus shared many qualities. They’d both come from muggle backgrounds, they both had fearsome tempers and they both loved to learn. Aside from their looks, the main difference between them was their personality. On the train heading to Hogwarts for the first time, Severus had been quiet and shy. Painfully aware of how he must have looked next to the always radiant Lily, who sat beside him gushing about anything and everything. It was during this time he and James met for the first time.

While the other three boys James had brought with him seemed enraptured by Lily, as they very well should be, Severus noticed James’ attentions seemed solely focused on him. It was enough to make his tummy squirm in the strangest of ways, making him feel giddy and queasy all at the same time. But Severus knew such feelings were bad. His dad had always told him what he’d do to him, if he ever turned out like that fairy boy they’d found dead in the creek. Although he didn’t really understand it, Severus knew he didn’t want to end up like that boy. So he tried to his best to focus on his book. James it seemed had other ideas.

“My name’s James, what’s yours?” It was the first time in years that Severus had been spoken to with such kindness. Except for his conversations with Lily of course.

“Severus” he had responded, letting his gaze drop shyly.

“I’m going to be in gryffindor you know. That’s the best house there is, my old man said so. What house are you gonna be in?” James had asked.

“I don’t know. I guess I’ll see when we get there”. Severus had replied. It was the truth, he really didn’t know. For a time he feared he wouldn’t be placed in any house. He’d just be made to sit there, until they told him they had no place for him.

“Don’t worry. I’m sure any house will be lucky to have you. You look really smart” James had grinned. That earned a small smile for his efforts. “Well except Slytherin of course. They’re all evil, everyone knows that” James had grinned once more. This time however Severus didn’t smile.

“My mum was in Slytherin” he admitted. Something he’d come to regret saying in later years.

“Your mum’s a snake? That must mean you’ll become a snake!” One of the other boys sneered. Severus wasn’t sure which one he was, but he knew instantly that he didn’t like him.

“Does not!” He’d tried protesting, but the boy continued to jeer anyway.

“Well it sort of does. My mum and dad were both in Gryffindor, that’s how I know I will be too”. James had said, edging away from the boy who’d so captured his attention.

“But my dad’s a muggle. So I might not be” Severus had blurted out. Though he felt like kicking himself afterwards.

“Really? Then maybe there’s still a chance?” James had exclaimed, instantly cheered in a way only children could be.

Of course, there was no such chance. The very moment the hat sorted him, Severus had looked for James at the Gryffindor table. The boy had watched him, waiting for him their eyes to meet before
sneering at him in distaste. And then he did something Severus couldn’t stand; he wrapped his arm around Lily’s waist and whispered something in her ear. Something that made her squeal.

Severus never found out what that something was, nor did he care to. For the moment he adorned the green and silver tie, he and Potter became enemies. One word was all it took to break their tentative friendship; one word was all it took for Potter to focus his attentions on someone he knew would hurt the little Slytherin boy. And years later, one word was all it took for Severus to leave.

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As utterly childish as it sounded, James had never forgiven Severus for joining the snakes. He’d never forgotten about his desire to take the boy home with him, to marry him when they were grown up and to live far away having all sorts of adventures. With Severus turning evil, James knew he couldn’t do any of that anymore. Everyone said so. Slytherins were evil and that was that. No exceptions.

For a time James hadn’t believed them, believing Severus would be just a miserable as he was. Then one day he saw him laughing. Laughing as one of his housemates waved his hands about, most likely telling some kind of joke. The anger had been growing inside James for some time, but it was only when he saw that, that he finally put it to good use.

So enraged by the thought that Severus was having fun without him, while he was there moping around, James began to plan. He’d found three others to help him pull the ultimate prank. A prank so ultimate it got them detention for a solid week, three weeks into term. But James hadn’t cared.

Because now at least, Severus was no longer laughing. In fact judging by that rather ugly bump on his nose, he wouldn’t be laughing again for a very long time.

James on the other hand, well James was laughing. And so were his friends. Soon enough, everyone joined in. They all took turns laughing at Severus, snickering as he was pushed and teased and pulled in all sorts of directions. And James was finally happy. If Severus wasn’t laughing, that meant he wasn’t having fun. So now they’d both be miserable. It suited James just fine. If he couldn’t have Severus, he was determined to make sure no one else would have him. And if he had to give him some bumps and bruises to make sure no one would want him, well that was just fine with him.

Eventually though, James came to forget what his initial reason was for bullying Severus like he did. So after some advice by Sirius, he assumed it was because no matter what he did, he and Lily remained good friends. Thus the quest to win Lily’s heart began. Not because he actually cared all that much about her, but because he knew just how badly it would hurt Snape, to watch the girl he loved taken away by the boy he despised. And although he didn’t quite understand why, James knew he wanted Snape to experience that level of heartbreak. He wanted to see him broken, distraught when he realised he’d never have a chance with her. Maybe then he’d know how it felt to have his heart played with. Maybe then he’d finally understand.

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“So what’s it like in England?” Andrew asked, drawing the attention of several other young men.

“Wet. It rains a lot of the time and at school it was always cold”. Severus answered.

When he’d been forced to remove his towel, Severus had been mortified. It hadn’t helped that he’d gotten a good eyeful of everyone else’s bodies. With their toned muscles and broad chests, it only served to make him feel even more puny and underdeveloped. Fortunately though, he’d been able to duck into the water to hide his embarrassment.
“That sounds awful. Where I’m from it’s always sunny, so we usually hang out on the beach. Sun, sea and sand, the three things you need for a perfect life”. Andrew grinned; Severus only rolled his eyes at that. “Oh and sex, can’t forget sex” Andrew added. He sent Severus a wink, watching with interest as the other boy turned his head, letting his hair hide his face.

‘I wonder…’ Andrew thought to himself. Judging by the tell-tale blush on Severus’ cheeks, he didn’t seem too comfortable talking about sex in front of a group of men. Which to be far, he kind of understood. They were all a bunch of strangers after all. But it made him wonder if there was another reason for Severus’ sudden shyness.

“Hey Sev-” Andrew started, only to frown as another young man butted in.

“So is it true you’re only sixteen?” Evan, whom Andrew had pointed out earlier, asked Severus.

“Yeah” Severus replied. He was growing noticeably more uncomfortable by the attention everyone was giving him. Usually being the focus of so many stares never worked out well for him.

“Damn, that is impressive. I thought I did a good job getting in at eighteen, but sixteen? You must be really smart. Hey if they haven’t assigned roommates, do you want to room together? You don’t want to get stuck with this old fogey”. Evan grinned teasingly as Andrew began to protest.

“Old fogey? I’m twenty fucking two you brat and don’t you forget it!” Although he sounded annoyed, not to mention loud, it was obvious Andrew found it more amusing than insulting.

“Twenty two? I thought you were twenty. That’s positively ancient! Never mind being an old fogey, you’re practically a fossil!” Evan yelped as Andrew suddenly yanked him under the water.

Severus merely sat where he was, too stunned to do much more than move out of the way of the flailing limbs, as the two men wrestled. It wasn’t until he felt an arm snake around his bony shoulders, that he prepared himself to start panicking.

“Thought you’d prefer not to get soaked by those two hooligans. Sit with us, I promise we won’t be trying to drown each other”. A man who looked to be in his mid-twenties, smiled at him.

“My name’s Derek. You’re Severus right?” He seemed nice enough, a little too nice in Severus’ opinion. Yet as soon as the thought entered his mind, Severus wished it would leave just as quickly. Even he thought it pathetic that when anyone showed him an ounce of kindness, he had to be suspicious of their motives. It just proved how miserable his life really had been.

“Yeah. Thanks for uh, you know back there”. Severus gestured to where Andrew had Evan in a headlock.

“No worries. I was afraid they’d start dragging you into it. You don’t seem like the type who likes roughhousing all that much. You’re more the intellectual type. Am I right?” Severus found himself growing uneasy as Derek’s eyes stared into his own. Reluctantly he nodded his head.

As if by magic the man’s expression changed in an instant. A warm, brilliant smile broke out on his face, replacing the mask Severus was sure he used in polite society. The kind of mask people put on to make others feel better.

“I knew it! I was afraid I’d be the only one. Those lot right there won’t shut up about quidditch, those other two keep going on about how many natives they’re gonna screw, those guys over there kept complaining about the water temperature and well you already know about those two”. Derek gestured to where Evan was now massaging his throat, pouting as Andrew gloated beside him. “Do you like wizard’s chess?”
Severus blinked, nodding once more. “I didn’t bring a set with me though”. He didn’t have one to begin with, but he wasn’t about to admit that.

“No worries, I have one in my trunk. When we have some free time, do you want to play? We can ask to have one of those tea ceremony things someone was telling me about”.

“Tea ceremony? What’s that?” Severus asked.

“I’m not sure. I thought it would be like an English tea. You know with tea in fancy little cups and saucers and those nice cakes and stuff they have. I mostly just want the cakes to be fair. But since we’re here it might be nice to try things their way. Make the most of it, you know?” Derek grinned. “Deal?” Derek held out his hand.

It was quite a strange sight. A sixteen year old and twenty five year old shaking hands, while sitting naked in a hot springs surrounded by young men of similar states. Although it was hardly the strangest sight of the evening.

“Deal”. Severus couldn’t help the smile he gave as he shook hands on it. His first day and he’d already made some friends. Already he’d achieved more in his first few hours of his new life, than he had in years of attending Hogwarts.

‘Best decision ever’ Severus thought to himself.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again for all your support. I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

Please review and let me know what you think!

KB
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

I decided to update this before my other HP fic. I had hoped to update earlier, but I just started an online course which included a weekend session. By the end of it I was absolutely knackered so I just didn’t have the energy to write.

Anyway I want to give a huge thanks to everyone for your lovely comments and kudos. I think this has already gotten over 250 kudos and over 70 comments which is just ridiculous. In a good way of course. I mean this is only chapter 5, I never imagined this could be so popular. Just to warn you there is some Lily bashing in this chapter; however I did try to redeem her a little.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

At first James had thought it was a joke. Snivellus couldn’t just leave, where would he go? Surely he needed Dumbledore’s permission to transfer schools. Didn’t he? It got James wondering. Truthfully, he wasn’t even sure Dumbledore would have let him. Everyone knew how Dumbledore favoured his gryffindors, the pride of Hogwarts. In more ways than one. Everyone also knew of his bias towards the snakes, which in all honesty James had been happy to take advantage of.

For the last six years, James had done everything he could to make the snakes’ lives miserable. Well aware that no matter what he’d done, Dumbledore would just sweep it under the rug for him. Those were the perks for belonging to the kind of family he did; loyal to the light, rich and powerful. Just the kind of family that Dumbledore needed to be supported by. And truth be told, James had loved every minute of it.

At Hogwarts, James was king. Everyone knew it and no one bothered to question it. Well except for the Slytherins, but no one really cared about what they had to say. James was given the power to do anything he wanted, with his best mates by his side. Thanks to Dumbledore, his punishments were virtually non-existent. Any detentions he got were usually cancelled the moment the victim was out of sight. Any points he’d lost his house were given back tenfold, although to keep things fair it wasn’t James who received them. But how was any of it really fair?

James never complained about it and why would he? He had the school at his mercy, the beautiful Lily on his arm and still another year to go before his kingdom was taken away from him. When he would graduate and enter the working world for the very first time. It would be a brand new adventure for him, one step closer towards achieving his dream. Only his dream was no longer what it had once been. Or rather, the one on his arm wasn’t the one he really wanted hanging on to him. She was merely the best substitute Hogwarts had to offer.

Like a fool, James had assumed everything would be fine once he returned to Hogwarts. He had faith that any problems would be resolved by Dumbledore, just as they always had been done. Only things didn’t turn out that way.
James should have realised it when he was on the train. He’d searched up and down, looking in every carriage he could find for the boy who’d plagued his thoughts. But no luck. Instead he’d found Lily crying with her friends fussing over her. He didn’t want to get involved, he had better things to do, but he knew he had no choice. He was the one who’d pursued her, she was now his responsibility. Talk about reading the fine print.

“Lily? What’s wrong?” He’d done his best to sound worried, although deep down he just didn’t have time to deal with her problems.

“H-h-he’s g-gone!” Lily sobbed, pressing her face into his chest and clinging to him with great force. “I-I went to his house and asked to see him b-but his dad said he hadn’t come back. He didn’t even c-care that he was missing, h-he called him all these horrible names. Oh it was just terrible! No one knows where he is and it’s all my fault!” Lily wailed. Around her, her friend crowded in to comfort her.

“What are you talking about?”

“S-Severus. Oh what have I done? When he told me what that man had done I didn’t believe him! And when I tried to talk to him he just told me to leave him alone. How could he say something like that to me? He was my best friend; we used to do everything together. And then he started hanging out with those snakes and then he called me that thing. This is all his fault! And now I’ll never see him again!” Lily shook in his arms, sobbing noisily.

“What do you mean he’s gone?” If Lily had been paying attention she’d have noticed the strange tone in his voice. But so caught up in her own emotions, she never even noticed.

“He’s gone, what are you stupid? He wasn’t at home and he’s not on the train, no one knows where he is. It’s…” Lily trailed off, scrubbing at her face with a tissue. “Wait…this is…this is all your fault!” They say during times of grief people go through five stages. For Lily, she was entering the angry stage, mixed in with just a touch of denial.

“My fault?” James had echoed. First Snape, now him? Who else was she going to try and blame?

“I can’t believe you would even try to act innocent after what you’ve put him through. I mean hanging him from a tree and stripping him so everyone would laugh at him, what is wrong with you!? This is all your fault James Potter! Just get out of here; I can’t even look at you right now!” If that wasn’t dramatic enough for their audience, the slap Lily gave him was certainly enough to send her friends into a gossiping frenzy. More so than they already were of course.

For a good long moment James just stood there, slowly bringing up his hand to massage his aching jaw. “Get over yourself Evans. Alright fine I was a prick to him but you weren’t all innocent yourself. Don’t go acting like you’re better than me because you’re not. You just remember that”. James glared at her before exiting the compartment.

As she watched him leave, Lily considered his words. Was it true? Was she really no better than him? No, it couldn’t be true. Everyone always told her how nice she was, how generous she was with allowing Severus to be her friend. Allowing; as though without her generosity, Severus wasn’t fit to be seen with her.

‘He wasn’t’. A traitorous little thought crept into her head. ‘If it wasn’t for me, who else would have had him? He would have been friendless, a complete loser. He should have been glad to have me as a friend’. Lily panted lightly, rubbing her fingers as she waited for the sting in her hand to subside. ‘But if it wasn’t for him…he showed this world to me. It’s because of him I am what I am today. Oh Severus, please be okay’. 
Around her, Lily’s friends whispered and squealed. Each pawing at her, in their attempts to help their friend.

“Does this mean you two have broken up?” One girl asked with wide eyes.

“Does this mean James is available now?” Another asked, clearly hoping for a yes.

“What is wrong with you? Lily’s right there. Lily are you okay? Is your hand okay?”

“I know she’s right there, but I’m not gonna let an opportunity like this get away from me. I’m not waiting for some other girl to try and steal my man away!”

“What makes you think he’d be your man?”

As the girls bickered amongst themselves, Lily found herself moving. As the girls argued and scowled, Lily slipped away into the corridor. Once outside of the compartment, she allowed herself to breathe deeply. Only there did she allow the tears to fall.

“Severus…please be okay. Please”. Lily whispered to herself, too afraid of letting anyone catch her in the state she was in. She just couldn’t bring herself to want to answer any of their questions. Not now. Not when she was like this.

Sniffling slightly, Lily hurriedly wiped her eyes once more with her handkerchief. With a deep breath she re-entered the carriage, none of her friends had even noticed she’d gone. It was then she allowed herself to sob, a quiet dainty sound that almost immediately attracted their attention.

“Oh Lily don’t cry!”

“Lily we’re sorry, please don’t be upset”.

“We’ve been absolutely terrible to you. I mean that fight you had with James and then you had to listen to us going at it. Oh you must think we’re positively horrid”. Lily smiled weakly at that.

Lily knew her friends cared about her, some more than others. But as she listened to them comfort her and took their hugs without complaint, she had time to wonder. If they were bad friends, then what did that make her? She’d know Severus was close to his breaking point and yet she’d dumped him anyway. She knew he needed her, but she hadn’t cared. With everything that had happened between them; the fights about the slytherins and the marauders, she just hadn’t been able to cope. And look where it had gotten her. No one had seen Severus, no one had heard from him. Who knew if he was even still alive? As much as Lily hoped otherwise, she feared the worst. Severus needed her, he always had. He wasn’t strong enough without her. He couldn’t live without her, Lily was sure of it.

Lily was sure that Severus couldn’t live without her. Without her he was weak. But in reality, it was the other way around. Severus was a survivor, he was too bloody stubborn not to be. As close as they had been, it was surprising that Lily hadn’t realised it herself. But then she always had liked feeling special. And Severus had always known how to make her feel special. He always claimed he needed her, when in reality he’d known she’d always needed him. He’d just never told her, he hadn’t wanted to hurt her. What a fat load of good that did him.

“Did you deserve it?” It was an odd question to ask after what he’d just seen. Yet it was the question Derek had chosen to ask.
“They seemed to think so”. It was an even odder answer, at least to those who did not know what was going on.

“Who are they?”

“Everyone”. Severus sighed as Derek looked at him expectantly. “The students, my professors, the headmaster, my…” Severus trailed off.

“Your parents?” As much as he hoped it wasn’t so, Derek knew that wasn’t the case. Severus’ nod only confirmed it.

“Did anyone-?”

“-try to help? Back in first year there was this intern in the hospital wing. She tried to tell the headmaster about it, but by then I was already sorted. I was a Slytherin. Everyone knows that if a Slytherin is marked, there must be a reason for it”. Severus fell silent as a young nurse entered the room.

“Strip”. It was interesting how one word could produce such a response, in one normally so quiet and sombre.

Reluctantly, Severus began to do just that. But not before demanding Derek leave. Not with words, but with his eyes. Something very few could claim to do. With his skin on full display, Severus could do nothing as the young woman tutted and hissed in sympathy. He could only flinch as her hands traced each scar, reddening in shame as he imagined what a pitiful sight he must have been.

“You poor thing”. Severus didn’t dare reply, too afraid his emotions might cause him to do or say something that would only humiliate him later. “I don’t suppose anyone ever told you this could be fixed, now did they?” It wasn’t really a question, but rather that she was thinking out loud.

“What?” Severus didn’t care what it was; only what it meant for him. “But they’re so old”. Severus clamped his mouth shut as he realised what he’d said.

“Old? But you are so young? Surely you can’t mean-?” An awkward silence settled around them. “Oh” was the only sign she understood.

Severus only stared down at his hands.

“Well…it doesn’t matter how old they are, they are many ways to remove scars like these permanently. You seem to be forgetting that we are wizards. Well I am a witch but you understand what I mean?” Severus nodded. “There are many potions and spells that claim to remove such scars. Of course many of them are useless. Targeted towards only the rich and ignorant; too rich to see sense and too ignorant to ask for their money back. But there are some that really do work. They’re frightfully expensive of course, but you needn’t worry about that just now”.

“Why not?” Severus watched as she grabbed a small vial, with a quick spell it almost sparkled in the light. “Is it going to make me sparkle like that?” If his tone of voice wasn’t enough, the face he made ensured she understood how distasteful he found the idea.

The woman laughed; a soft gentle sound that did wonders to lighten the room’s atmosphere.

“Only a little, young master. But not to worry, it washes off easily enough”. The woman smiled teasingly, giggling lightly at the look of utmost horror on his face.

“You mean I have to be seen in public like this? When I’m sparkling like a christmas tree?” He
couldn’t have sounded more horrified if he tried.

“Hey now there’s an idea”. A man’s voice filled the room, said man smiling brightly as he spotted Severus on the bed. Though that smile dimmed as he saw the state he was in.

“Evan!” Both Severus and his nurse exclaimed, one with surprise and the other with reproach.

“Don’t get mad”. As he wasn’t looking at them, Severus wasn’t sure who he was addressing. “I was worried when you didn’t show for breakfast, we all were actually but since we’re roommates, they elected me to find out where you were hiding. But I wasn’t expecting something like this”. He gestured to Severus’ upper body.

“I don’t think anyone would be” Severus said quietly, staring down at the blanket.

“So did you get into a fight or-?” Evan trailed off uncertainly.

“You could say that. You could say I got into a lot of fights back in England. I probably fought with just about everyone I’d ever met”. Severus smiled bitterly.

“Like who?” Evan asked. Although his tone remained light and positive, his face told another story entirely.

“My parents, the other students, the marauders-” Severus paused as he struggled to keep his temper in check. His stomach rolled as images flashed through his mind, each depicting some way he’d fallen victim to them. “-my professors, the headmaster, Lily…” Severus trailed off.

“Lily?”

“She was, we were friends. We knew each other before we even started Hogwarts. But when I was sorted into Slytherin, over time it just got too much for us both. She started believing what other people were telling her, that I was turning dark. We’d argue, she’d cry and one day I just…snapped. I said something unforgiveable and that was that”.

“And the marauders?” Evan had wanted to ask Severus more about Lily, but the look on Severus’ face convinced him it wasn’t a good idea.

“Since day one they’ve made my life a living hell. They did everything they could to make me suffer and they always seemed to get away with it. Did you know they almost killed me? I was stupid enough to follow them one day; they’d been hiding something you see. One of them was a werewolf; they’d been harbouring him all that time. Black was the one that led me there and Potter was the one that saved me. When I tried to confront the headmaster about it, you know what he said? It wasn’t Lupin’s fault. That it was just a silly mistake. Were they punished? Two months detention and nothing more. That’s all I was worth to him and who could blame him? The word of a poor, ugly halfblood, compared to the heirs of two of the noblest pureblood families in all of Britain. He knew no one would believe me. After all, how could a man charged with protecting his students, allow that thing to live among us?” Severus fell silent once more.

Without realising it Severus’ eyes had grown wet. Mystified by the strange sensation on his cheeks, he swiped his hand across his face. When it came back streaked with tears, Severus found himself almost confused. He hadn’t cried since he was a child. So why now?

“Severus…” Evan trailed off uncertainly. No longer bothering to try and sound happy.

“I just…I couldn’t stay there anymore. When I found out I got in here, you should have seen how happy I was. I couldn’t stay there, I couldn’t go home, and I had no other place I could go”. Severus
flinched as the nurse began to apply the solution to his back.

After a moment’s silence, Severus became convinced that Evan had left. So he just about jumped out of his skin when, as soon as the solution had been applied, he found himself crushed against a strong chest. Another’s fingers tangling themselves into his hair, keeping him there.

“What they did to you was unforgiveable. I give you my word that you won’t ever need to go back to that place. You’re one of us now, you belong with us. Understand?”

Severus raised his head in confusion; it wasn’t Evan holding him but Derek instead. A quick glance showed Evan was stood near the doorway, hovering uncertainly. Realising Derek was expecting an answer, Severus nodded.

- ‘It’s true’. The thought kept swimming throughout James’ mind. ‘He’s really gone’. No matter how many times he said it, it just wasn’t registering in James’ mind.

Lily’s hysterics had been the first sign that something was wrong. Although at the time James hadn’t really taken her seriously. When she was with those friends of hers, Lily often behaved differently. Almost like someone she though she should be, instead of who she was. But she’d been telling the truth. Severus Snape was gone and no one knew where he was.

The trouble had started during the feast, when Professor Slughorn had actually gotten up from his chair to enquire to one of his Slytherins as to the whereabouts of Snape. Only James had seemed to notice. Then something strange happened. James had expected the man to brush it off, like it didn’t really matter. But instead the man turned a strange colour. A sickly mix of puce and green that only made him look ghastly ill. But instead of saying anything, the man had only returned to the head table.

At that point James had noticed something odd. Professor Dumbledore had been doing the same as he had, watching Slughorn as he made his little trek across the room and back again. But rather than confront him, Dumbledore had only continued to stare at the empty seat at the Slytherin table. The seat where Snape had always sat, not that James would know that of course.

After the meal had ended, both men left at the same time and headed in the same direction. To most it would have seemed perfectly innocent, but the headmaster’s office was nowhere near the dungeons. James knew that for a fact. So what were they doing? Yet before James had a chance to follow them, he found himself dragged away by his friends. So all he could do was wonder, until he had a chance to make his escape of course. It didn’t quite work out that way though.

All day James had sought a chance to make his escape, until finally he knew when he could do so. He planned to leave as soon as dinner was finished, determined to unravel the mystery that had surrounded Snape’s disappearance. But then things changed, they seemed to be doing a lot of that.-

“Attention everyone! Quiet now!” Dumbledore’s voice echoed throughout the hall, a sea of children’s faces gazing at him expectantly.

“I’m afraid I have some rather bad news. News which I suppose may not affect the younger years, but I’m sure will have some impact on the older years”. Everyone seemed to lean in at that.

“Due to unforeseen circumstances that are entirely out of my control, it seems Severus Snape has chosen to leave Hogwarts. I’m sure we all wish him the best in his future endeavours. With that said, I ask you all to tuck in”.

As soon as Dumbledore was finished, everyone started talking. What started as a whisper soon escalated into a loud roar, as the news sent everyone into a frenzy.

“Snape’s gone? Is this a joke?”

Can’t be if the headmaster said it”.

“But wait, didn’t he say he’d chosen to leave Hogwarts? I didn’t think you could do that”. One of the younger gryffindor girls asked.

“Of course you can stupid, can’t you?” A boy in her year sneered, before a look of uncertainty crossed his face.

James sat frozen as he let the voices wash over him. He barely took anything in, too lost in his own mind to care what was being said.

“Is it true? Moony?” James finally turned to Remus, he too was acting strangely. While he was always quiet, he was never normally so silent.

“It’s true”. Although Remus spoke quietly, it seemed he’d gathered the attention of most of their table. “I spoke to him on the train going home; he said he wasn’t coming back. I don’t know where he was going though”. The latter seemed to be aimed at some of the nosier students, each eager to claim the most recent update for themselves.

Without warning Sirius stood up, James following only half a second later. Sirius glanced at James’ face, clearly surprised, but then he really looked. Whatever he’d found he apparently didn’t like. The same could be said for James. Seconds later the two stormed off, although the effect was somewhat lessened as they were forced to leave the hall together. One door and all that.

‘He can’t’ they both shared the thought. ‘He can’t like him. Not like I do’.

However Sirius had a little more to be furious about. ‘He has her, he can’t have him. Not if I have anything to say about it’. Sirius growled, actually growled as he stalked the corridors.

Then again, the same could be said for James. ‘He tried to kill him. How can he even think he deserves him?’ He stormed all the way back to the common rooms. Certain no one would be stupid enough to follow him.

Meanwhile Remus remained at the table. Not eating, not talking, not doing much of anything really. He just sat there.

“Remus?” The voice caught Remus’ attention. Usually it was Moony not Remus. Perhaps it showed just how much the news had affected their group.

“Yes Peter?” Remus plastered on a kind smile.

“What’s going on with you? With all of you? I mean you weren’t responding to anything, James and Sirius just stormed off; did something happen between you?” Peter asked, sounding hurt.

“I guess you could say that”. Remus slid his hand underneath the table, the trembling had become too hard to ignore.

It wasn’t enough that Severus was gone, but to learn his friends wanted to stake their claim on him as well, that really hurt. The marauders had always been pack; friends first, then family. But the more Remus thought about it, he had to wonder if that was still true.
“I have to go”. Remus stood, his hands clenched at his sides. “I’ll see you in the dorms, yeah?” He barely spared Peter a glance, the other boy’s brow furrowing in concern.

“Sure. You’re shaking, is it…well you know?” Peter asked carefully.

Remus only nodded, not trusting himself to speak.

Peter nodded in return, smiling encouragingly. “See you”.

As Remus left the Great Hall, Peter glanced over at the Slytherin table. While the younger students were whispering frantically, the older students acted as though they hadn’t even heard the news. But even from his position at the Gryffindor table, Peter was close enough to see they all shared the same expression. Their eyes were hardened, their lips were pursed and their movements were precise. There was something almost mechanical about their movements; they were all stiff and controlled. Almost robotic.

Lily had mentioned robots once. About machines that could replace a human in the factory, screwing bolts and the like. They were cheap labour, difficult to get used to at the start but over time they became popular. It made him wonder. Without the robots, a factory had to go back to the old ways. Doing everything by hand, taking up time and money. It made him think of Snape. Everyone knew Snape helped the other Slytherins with their homework; they’d have been fools not to use him for such a task. They’d have been greater fools not to take advantage of it. Making him do all the work and leaving them more time to socialise. With Severus gone, what would become of them? Would they be forced to return to the old ways?

It was an interesting idea, a very Gryffindor idea in fact. But as was often true of the lions, it was a foolish idea. While a tiny part of them was concerned with losing such a mind, they had far more pressing concerns to attend to.

Severus Snape had escaped Hogwarts. He had escaped Dumbledore and all of his professors. He had even escaped them. But the Dark Lord…he wanted him by his side. And no one wanted to be the one to tell him he was gone.

Chapter End Notes

Just to clarify, because I can already picture some of the comments I might get, Voldemort doesn’t want Severus in a romantic/sexual manner. It’s more like he wants his mind rather than his body.

I’ll try to update within the next 3 weeks, although I’ll at least be updating The Tale of Severus Prince before I update this one again.

KB
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

4700 words, it’s been a while since I’ve written a chapter this long. Anyway sorry for the delay but I had some serious writer’s block for this chapter.

Warning: This chapter will feature Severus getting a makeover of sorts. If you have a problem with it then please go elsewhere.

Anyway a huge thank you for everyone’s support. I really hope you all like this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Do we really need to do this?” As much as Severus would try to deny it, he was most definitely whining.

“Quit complaining, you need this. You know you do” Andrew cuffed him lightly. Not enough to hurt, just enough to point out his stupidity.

“Says who?” Severus scowled, flinching as he felt the cold metal press against his neck. He cursed himself for reacting in such a way, in his mind of course. He didn’t want them thinking he was nuts.

“Says all of us. I don’t know what kind of shit you went through before you got here, but quite frankly you need a new start. And besides we have that ceremony thing tonight. I get that you’re shy or whatever, but I’m not letting you leave this program without getting laid. So like it or not, we’re gonna fix what they broke”. Andrew smiled at him. “Just relax” he added, as though it would help.

“You’re holding a sharp piece of metal to my neck. I don’t see how you expect me to relax” Severus grumbled, although it did keep him from moving.

“Geeze, you’d think you’d never gotten a haircut before. Wait, have you?”

“Has he what?” Evan bounded into the room, a young Japanese woman by his side.

“Gotten a haircut before. I mean it would explain a few things” Andrew answered before Severus could think to interrupt.

“Does it matter? He’s getting one now, about time if you ask me”.

“Who’s this?” Severus interrupted, giving a slight bow to the woman who returned it.

“Will you quit moving, I’ve never done this before. I don’t want to hurt you”. Andrew griped.

At that Severus shot up, “we’re done here”. He would have been out the door if it weren’t for the two blocking it.

“No, no, just wait a minute. This is Yumi-chan. She’s here to help make you pretty”. Severus glared at Evan.

“I don’t want to be pretty” he grit out.
“Sumimasen. You don’t need to be pretty, you are a boy. You will be handsome instead, yes?” The girl interrupted with a nervous smile on her face.

Try as he might, Severus couldn’t bring himself to get angry with her. “You know I hate you right?” He looked pointedly at Evan, then Andrew.

“Oh we know, we’ve come to terms with it. Now shut up and let the lady do her magic. Uh, no pun intended”. Sadly Severus had nothing on hand to throw at Evan for that awful pun, and he was too distracted to think of using his wand.

“Just…hurry up”. Severus scowled, reluctantly sitting back down on the chair.

With a nervous look towards the two Americans, the girl Yumi stepped forward. “Do not worry, I know what I am doing”. Yumi offered him a smile, it wasn’t much but it did manage to make Severus feel better about the whole situation.

‘Probably because it’s the first real smile you got from a girl. Well except for Lily”. He could always count on his mind to ruin things for him. It was a strange thing to hate his mind; he had so many other things he could hate about himself. But his mind had always been the one redeeming feature he had. Or at least it had been.

“I-I trust you” Severus replied hesitatingly.

It wasn’t really the truth, Severus didn’t trust anyone. But he had to say something, anything to her. The poor girl looked ready to bolt at a moment’s notice. Secretly Severus hoped she would and with any luck, she’d take him with her.

You know the saying, you don’t really realise what you have until it’s gone. Well Hogwarts was finding that out the hard way. It was strange how removing just one person from the school, removing him from all of their lives, could have such an impact on both the students and faculty. Everyone coped with the initial revelation differently. The Gryffindors celebrated, with the exception of the Marauders and Lily, the Ravenclaws both mourned and cheered; Severus’ intelligence had earned their respect but also their jealousy, the Hufflepuffs contemplated; few agreed with the Gryffindors bullying tactics and then there were the Slytherins.

There was something to be said about Slytherin loyalty, which was somewhat ironic seeing as how it was the Gryffindors who were supposed to be brave and loyal. Despite what Dumbledore may have preached, anyone who was sorted into Slytherin was automatically ostracised by the rest of the school. They were unofficially declared as targets for whoever could get their hands on them, quite often via some truly horrendous means. As such, Slytherins developed a bit of a nasty reputation, often resorting to sinister spells and potions that would inflict maximum damage, as to deter anyone from daring to attack them once more. Of course once the headmaster got wind of their tactics, conveniently ignoring the fact they were provoked, the Slytherins found they were pretty much on their own. No one dared go against the headmaster and his petty band of thugs aka the marauders.

No one until Snape that is.

No one would have likely believed it, but believe it or not, Snape was one of the best Slytherin had to offer. Even Lucius Malfoy had agreed to it. Despite his rather unfortunate upbringing, breeding was everything after all; he’d managed to do what few could. He regularly stood up to four boys in his year, outnumbered and almost always on his own. Yet somehow he managed to win against them. Not every time of course, the Gryffindors rarely played fair, but when it mattered he usually
came out on top. Then of course there was his intelligence; tweaking spells and potions to his own liking before he even hit his teens. It was no wonder the Dark Lord had taken notice of him. Of course few had bothered to appreciate his talents. Those that did only sought to further themselves. For a coin or two his intelligence could be bought, Severus would write a paper or give advice on a potion. When he was feeling generous that is. Everyone knew he could use the money, so it had become something like a business.

When Severus left and no one knew where he was, that was when things began to fall apart. For once his fellow Slytherins were forced to do their own dirty work. There was no longer some poor halfblood to bribe or blackmail in his place. They no longer had the time to waste planning parties, scheming against one another and setting other students up to fail. Unless of course that student was a gryffindor, then they always found the time to make them suffer. Instead their leisure time was spent doing what every other student had done; studying and plotting their revenge against whichever poor sap had infuriated them last.

There was of course another reason as to why life in the Slytherin house had become almost intolerable. Sure the reduced number of parties and lack of scheming had dampened their morale somewhat, but such things could be fixed given time. But this was something that couldn’t simply be fixed. The Dark Lord, the one who promised them all freedom and power, had declared his intentions to invite Severus into his circle. Only Severus was no longer with them. What’s worse, no one had any idea about where he might have gone. Why would they? They certainly weren’t friends with him; at best they paid him for his knowledge. That was it.

Of course they could hardly say as much to the Dark Lord, he wasn’t exactly known for accepting no as an answer. Hence the dilemma. With no clues to go on and no one foolish enough to tell their master the truth, what could they do? They just didn’t know. All they knew for certain, all they could really agree on, was that Snape’s disappearance had made things very uncomfortable for them. As purebloods, it was not something they were familiar with, nor was it something they liked. Not one bit.

“I look ridiculous”. He earned a slap on his head for that one.

“No you sound ridiculous, there’s a difference. You look good, very good actually”. Was it Severus’ imagination or was Evan actually blushing. Perhaps he shouldn’t have stayed up late last night, he was clearly hallucinating.

“I look like that prat, Potter” Severus complained.

“Isn’t he that one who nabbed your girlfriend?”

“She wasn’t my girlfriend” Severus said, trying desperately to keep the bitterness out of his voice. ‘I had no chance’ he thought to himself. Strangely though, it didn’t hurt as much as he expected it to. It was very strange indeed.

“But you wanted her to be?” Evan asked, tilting his head in curiosity.

“She was my best friend”.

It was a testament to how far Severus had come, that he hadn’t stuttered on the ‘was’. Loosing Lily had been a blow, a very harsh blow indeed. It hadn’t broken him, although it had certainly tried, but it had most definitely left its mark.
“Was? You guys have a fight or something? Was it about Potter?” Andrew asked, reminding Severus of his presence.

“Yeah we had a fight. It wasn’t about Potter…not entirely” Severus paused. “We-I, I hung out with some guys from my house. Lily couldn’t stand them and I knew she couldn’t but I did it anyway. I mean they were right pricks at times, but I just needed to hang out with someone who wasn’t her. She was always popular, she had tons of friends. I didn’t. I don’t think she realised what she was asking me. I mean, I had to live with them. She didn’t. If I stopped hanging out with them, then what? It would have made her happy, but what would I have done? She had plenty of people to hang out with, I didn’t. I just had to take what I could get”.

“So what happened?”

“I just…I got mad. She just kept telling me I had to stop hanging out with them. Like I couldn’t make my own decisions. Like I was a child. So I got mad and said some things I didn’t mean. But that didn’t matter to her; all that mattered was that I’d said them. So that was that, we just stopped talking. Or rather she did. I tried apologising, Merlin knows I tried, but she wasn’t having any of it”. Severus fell quiet.

There were of course a few things he’d failed to mention. Being hung upside down for one, having his trousers removed and then…well. There were more things he could have said, could have confessed. But Severus didn’t want to. They were just too much for him to talk about; too humiliating, too devastating, too exhausting. They were just too much.

“What about those guys you hung out with, you still hung out with them yeah? You were friends weren’t you?”

“We were never friends. They just needed me to do stuff for them and I did it because it was just easier”. Severus admitted. He wasn’t used to actually talking about his feelings, he never really had before. “I was never really good at making friends. Didn’t really see the point”.

Severus feared he’d said too much. He hadn’t said anything about what had really happened; he’d really only glossed over it. But still, he was sure he’d said enough to drive them away. He’d spoken the truth; he’d never been good at making friends. He was even worse at keeping them. He only hoped he hadn’t scared them off already.

“Could have fooled me. You’re here five minutes and you already made three. Of course we are all older than you. Maybe that’s it; you needed someone who was on your level. Someone mature and smart like us”. Andrew gave him a slow smirk, clearly giving him a once over.

“Within five minutes you two were having a water fight in the hot springs. How is that mature?” Severus asked teasingly. It was funny, they always knew what to say to him. He never felt nearly as awkward around them, as he did back in England. Maybe they were right.

“You never said we weren’t smart, see I was right”. Derek teased back, ruffling his hair.

“You never said we weren’t smart, see I was right”. Derek teased back, ruffling his hair.

“Quit it! You made me do this and now you’re messing it up again” Severus complained. He wasn’t really complaining though. It was almost nice to be teased in such a way, the way friends did.

“It still looks good though, you look good now. Now that you got your face fixed and everything”. Evan interrupted, clearly eager to return to the earlier conversation.

It was true; he actually looked good for once. Although it was rather bizarre to think of himself like that. While he’d been against the haircut, he could admit he’d been wrong. It was still long, long
enough to tie back in any case. But it better framed his face now; it was no longer a stringy mess of grease. It also made it harder to hide behind; he wasn’t sure how he felt about that. But maybe that was the point, he’d done enough hiding. There was also the matter of his teeth and skin. Of course his teeth were easily fixed, the product of one too many punches. A couple of spells and they became all shiny and straight again. Not quite to the level of Lucius Malfoy, whose smile could burn out someone’s retinas. But it did serve to highlight something important; he had a nice smile, underneath all the sarcasm and pain. Only now he didn’t have to afraid to show it so much. As for his skin, all sallow and pale as it was, it was much improved. Not so much the paleness, that’s what served to make him more noticeable. It contrasted nicely with his dark hair and eyes, giving him a look of mystery. But the sallowness was gone; a good diet, uninterrupted sleep and a lot less stress did wonders for him. Spending more time in the gardens certainly helped speed things along as well.

Fixing his nose however, Severus still wasn’t sure how he felt about it. On the one hand he was relieved; it gave people one less thing to ridicule him for. It was no longer hawk-like, dominating his face. Instead it had been repaired, the bones reset and shaved down in an attempt to reverse the damage that his father and the marauders had done to him. But part of him also resented the change. He’d always secretly considered it a good thing. Oh sure it had caused him a lot of hassle and bother from absolute twats. But at the same time, it kept people away. Or rather, it kept the shallow people away. Anyone who wouldn’t talk to him because of what he looked like, well Severus didn’t want to associate with people like that. Better he found out who he could trust, whose friendship wasn’t reliant on his appearance. Even if in the end it left him with almost no one.

As for the rest of it; his scars, his ribs and his weight, that he was glad he’d changed. The ribs in particular, there’d been one too many breaks and bruises for his liking. It was a relief that he no longer had to worry about them. As for his weight, well he didn’t have a choice about that one. He had no way to hide it; he always had been a scrawny little thing. And compared to the others, he was the scrawniest of the lot. Naturally it had made everyone gang up on him, forcing him to eat more. But he wasn’t complaining. He did feel better for it; less tired and less stressed. And it wasn’t like he was getting fat, just healthy. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d felt so good. As for the scars, all he could say was that he was glad they were gone.

Some might have called him a coward, for wanting to remove the scars that showed everyone what he’d lived through. Some might claim they were badges of honour, or some other such rot. But they weren’t. They were symbols of abuse, that was it. There was nothing honourable about how he’d gotten them; there was no heroic story to tell. They were borne from anger, jealousy and hatred. He had a lot made from hatred. Severus was glad to see them gone. For while some might have claimed they showed how brave he was, in reality, they only reminded him of his weakness. He’d been too weak to fight his father, too weak to defend himself against a four person attack. He’d just been too weak to do anything. Severus had always hated being weak, so he was glad when they were gone. Very glad indeed.

With all the changes, Severus did look different. Very different in fact. But it almost made him sad. For had he not been beaten so much, tormented and humiliated quite so often, he could have looked like this from the start. Well perhaps not the nose, his dad had always had a big one himself. But the hair, the teeth, the skin and the body, all were fixed almost too easily. A good diet, some sun and a little bit of care were all that were needed to get him looking better than he ever had. It was almost enough to make him depressed. To think so many of his problems could have been avoided, that some of the abuse might have stopped; in that moment Severus had never hated his father more. It was all his fault, he was sure of it. Of course he wasn’t about to let the marauders off the hook that easily. They’d put him through a lot of shit too. But his dad, he’d done something far worse.

So much for family comes first.
“How is it no one has any idea where he’s gone?”

Albus Dumbledore was not having a good day, not even in the slightest.

“He never said anything to us headmaster. I’ve asked around and he never said anything to anyone. It’s like he’s vanished”. Professor Slughorn said, watching the man with a wary eye.

“Don’t be ridiculous. Students don’t just vanish from Hogwarts, that’s not how it’s done”. Albus sighed wearily. It was a great puzzle indeed, one that even he couldn’t figure out.

“Yet that’s what’s happened. I don’t know what you want us to do headmaster” Professor McGonagall interrupted.

“My dear, I understand what you’re saying. But it simply isn’t how things are done. He should have spoken with me about leaving. Understand? We can’t just have him running off thinking he can do what he likes. It’s dangerous to have someone like him running around with no one to control him” Had he been looking, Albus may have thought to take back his words. Not everyone took kindly to his patronising tone, especially not Minerva. However it seemed he’d forgotten that.

“Headmaster” Minerva paused to keep her temper in check. “If I may, do you really think he would have come to you about his decision. After what happened”. She gave him a pointed look; there was no doubt as to the incident to which she was referring. “You and I both know he doesn’t trust you, not after what you made him do. I can’t say I blame him for keeping this quiet. He more than anyone deserves a chance to start afresh”.

It was a strange sight to see the head of Gryffindor defending the actions of a lone Slytherin. Particularly a Slytherin who had been the frequent target of a campaign of abuse, made by four of her own lions. But then, maybe that’s why she felt so guilty. She’d done her part to try and convince both the headmaster and Professor Slughorn that things needed to change. That someone was bound to get hurt; they hadn’t listened. After the shrieking shack incident, she found it a wonder that the lad was still with them. She’d seen how he’d looked afterwards, leaning that he was hated enough that his peers wanted him dead. No matter how hard Dumbledore had tried to sugarcoat it, Minerva had seen the look in Mister Black’s eyes. What happened was no accident; even a fool could have predicted what would happen. And she’d never thought Mister Black was a fool. He was foolish most certainly, but he always knew what he was doing.

“What do you mean my dear? Surely you can’t be referring to the incident with Mister Black and his friends. We have discussed this in length; it was nothing more than a childish prank that got a little out of hand. I talked to Severus myself; I made him understand why his silence needed to be kept. It was for the good of the school, for the students, to keep them safe. That is my job here Minerva, I am here to keep these students safe” Dumbledore explained calmly.

‘But Mr Snape wasn’t safe now, was he’ Minerva thought to herself. While she didn’t say such a thing out loud, it didn’t matter. Dumbledore heard it all the same.

“Now, now I’m sure everything will turn out right. I mean Snape didn’t come from a wealthy background, so he couldn’t have gotten far now could he?” Slughorn interjected, sensing the tension within the room. “I’m sure we’ll find him” he added.

It was a sad state of affairs, when the head of Gryffindor knew more about one of Slughorn’s snakes than he did. But then, Severus wasn’t rich or from a powerful family. He may have been intelligent and powerful himself, but his father’s blood and poor background meant Slughorn frequently
overlooked him. Indeed the only exception was within potions class, no one could deny the boy had
talent.

“Perhaps instead we should consider his reasons for leaving in the first place. Clearly he wasn’t
happy here or he wouldn’t have run off. Perhaps this is an indication that things need to change, to
better support students like him”.

Minerva tried to calm herself, though it was difficult when she was trapped in a room with two of the
most infuriating men she’d ever come across. No matter how much she respected the headmaster, she
couldn’t deny that his actions towards Mr Snape were poor at best. She knew of the headmaster’s
favouritism towards her gryffindors, everyone did. But there were times that favouritism had serious
consequences. Unfortunately for Severus, he’d already suffered two. She hoped there wouldn’t be a
third, for his sake.

“Nonsense” Slughorn scoffed. “Hogwarts prides itself on tradition. Mark my words it’s Snape who
needs to change, not us”.

“I couldn’t have said it better Horace. Now Minerva I understand your concern. This has indeed
been a trying time for us all. But I hardly see the need to change what has worked for centuries,
because of one student who has responded rather badly to a bit of harmless fun”. Dumbledore smiled
and his eyes twinkled. So sure he was in the right, he’d blinded himself off to the truth.

“Harmless fun? Headmaster I-” Minerva started, eyes ablaze.

“Lemon drop?” He offered, cutting her off before she could get started. “Please I insist, have one”.

“Thank you but no headmaster. I see you are not in the mood to listen to reason tonight, perhaps I’ll
call back another time”. With a tight jaw and clenched hands, Minerva swiftly vacated the room.
“Men!” She hissed to herself.

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“Wait is it this way or that way? C’mon Sev help me out here!” Evan whined.

“Fine, come here”. Severus dropped his book on the bed, frowning in confusion at the sight before
him. “What have you been doing? You wear wizards’ robes don’t you? This is pretty much the
same, just an extra sash. It’s really not that hard”. Severus sighed.

Evan merely pouted at him, though once Severus’ back was turned, his pout turned into something
decidedly more mischievous. “I owe you one Sev”.

“You owe me plenty more than that and I told you already, stop calling me Sev. Now arms out”. Evan
complied, waiting for Severus to untangle the mess he’d made of his obi. “Did you even know
what you were doing? Where’s your netsuke?” Severus sighed in irritation.

“Uh, was that the thingy they gave us?” Evan asked, clearly confused.

“Yes it was the thingy they gave us. They gave you a fox, remember?”

“Oh yeah, they gave you a raven didn’t they. Or was it a crow? Well it was some kind of bird
anyway. Anyway it suits you, I mean you’re really graceful and stuff. Almost like you have wings”.
Evan trailed off as if lost in thought.

“Like I have wings? Are you drunk or just high?” Severus frowned at him. “Either way you’d better
not let anyone find out. I’m not covering for you”.
With classes due to start in a few days’ time, a celebration had been planned to honour their arrival. It required them all to dress in traditional kimono, something many of them had found highly amusing. Their hosts on the other hand, had found it more amusing to watch them try to dress themselves. Unused to Japanese culture, a number of them had annoyed their hosts with their loud, brutish behaviour. It wasn’t enough to have them removed, but their hosts sought their revenge in whatever way they could get it.

Severus had been one of the few to think to study Japanese culture. Even knowing the little things, like taking his shoes off indoors, bowing in greeting and not stabbing his food with the chopsticks, had earned their hosts respect. Being naturally quiet as he was, for once it worked in his favour. His hosts sought him out to speak with him, to ask him about his day and whatnot. His professors were actually pleased to meet him, although that took a bit of getting used to. As such, when he learned he’d be made to wear a kimono, a men’s kimono mind you not a flowery women’s one, he did what no one else had thought to do. He asked for help, approaching one of the male staff and asking for advice. He was the only one to do so, which he’d found very surprising indeed. But then you know what they say about men and asking for directions, he supposed this was very much the same.

“I’m not drunk or high. Do you really think so little of me? I’m just frustrated”. Evan was careful not to mention the reason for his frustration, that would have been a little too awkward.

“You’re frustrated? I’m the one who has to deal with you. If anyone should be frustrated it should be me. There!” Severus smiled in triumph, his earlier irritation gone as he stepped back.

“Thanks mate, I knew I could count on you. You know if you ever need any help with your frustrations, I’d be happy to help”. Evan grinned cheekily.

It took a moment for Severus to understand his meaning, but as soon as he did he felt his cheeks grow hot. “Oh fuck off” he swatted Evan’s arm, the older boy laughing at him in good humour. “Jerk” he added for good measure.

“Mmm I’ve got something you could jerk off” Evan smirked, pressing against his back.

“Oh?” Severus raised an eyebrow. He took a pointed look at Evan’s crotch, licking his lips before returning his gaze to Evan’s smirking face. “Not much to jerk off now is there?” Severus wisely stepped out of the way, snickering all the while.

“You little-” Evan gaped, although he was still smiling. While he wasn’t sure if the words were made in jest or not, he was happy to see Severus acting in such a way. He was calm and relaxed, joking even. He’d changed since arriving, in all the right ways. Not just with his appearance, although that was clearly a great improvement, but with his confidence too. It made Evan smile. Now if they could maybe fool around a little, then Evan would truly be happy. Once he’d gotten out of the damn kimono that is.

Chapter End Notes

Now I’m not going to set a timeline as to when I’ll next update. I’ll aim for three weeks but I can’t make any guarantees. Plus I have my other two fics to update.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

I kept changing my mind how to start this chapter. Hence why it’s later than I’d have liked. But I’m pretty happy with it now.

Thanks again for all your reviews and kudos, I really appreciate it!

Also for anyone interested I have a new original story I've started. It's a mix of omega verse and Cinderella set in the 18th century. And of course it's slash with a bit of mpreg thrown in.

“Hey Sev? Should I add the powdered urchin before or after the salamander?”

“That depends. How soon were you planning to die? I’d like to know so I can start picking a new roommate”. Severus gave him an unimpressed look, glancing up from his homework.

“That’s cold man, ice cold. Besides if I weren’t here, chances are you’d try and retreat back into that little world of yours. And we can’t let that happen now can we”. Evan grinned.

As much as Severus wanted to deny it, it was true. Had Evan and Andrew not been there to drag him out of his room, usually by force, there was a good chance he would have spent the entire program there. Old habits die hard and all that. But this wasn’t Hogwarts, for some strange reason people seemed to genuinely care about him. Beyond the usual making sure he didn’t bleed or starve to death that is, the former usually due to Evan’s spectacularly bad aim. Here people cared and Severus was having to adjust to that. It was really quite a novelty for him.

Throughout most of his life, Severus knew he was alone. His mother didn’t care much past his early years, his father certainly didn’t care. Lily might have cared once but then they had that fight and as for Hogwarts? Well they never cared. At least that’s how it looked to Severus.

“It’s after. If you add it before, chances are you’ll blow yourself up. That or poison half the room if you don’t prepare it properly. We all saw what you did with those scorpion tails”.

Evan had been prepared to argue his case, to showcase his brilliance. But he couldn’t. The thing with the scorpion tails, well let’s just say it wasn’t his finest moment. “Oh come on, I apologised like a million times. You know I didn’t do it on purpose. You believe me, right?” Evan moved behind Severus leaning over him slightly, his arms loosely wrapping around his waist.

Severus had been about to respond, he really had, but the sudden closeness and heat emanating from Evan made it difficult for him to regain his focus. It certainly didn’t help when Evan rested his chin on his shoulder, arms still wrapped around his waist. Severus prayed he wasn’t blushing. He never had been very good with physical comfort, all too often it turned into some form of abuse. He’d grown to avoid it whenever he could.

“Sure, I believe you”. He would have said anything to get Evan to pull away. Even though a part of him didn’t really want that. As much as he wanted to deny it, a part of him liked being where he was. It almost made him, dare he say it? It almost made him feel safe and he hadn’t felt safe in a long time.
A very long time indeed. “Let go will you, it’s time for dinner”. It was only then that Evan finally let him go. Severus ignored the brief sense of loss; convincing himself he only missed the heat.

“Fine, but you know you like me wrapped around you. I mean, you’re too damn skinny. Even with the heating charms I know you get cold all too easily”.

Severus desperately fought back a blush, only partially succeeding. At least for the first part. When Evan continued talking, Severus didn’t know how to respond. For a brief moment he felt happy, he hadn’t felt happy in a long time. But as he expected, his happiness was soon dampened by cold harsh reality. He was a fool for getting his hopes up. The buildings were always cold, at least in cooler months. It was just the way they were designed. And yes he was too skinny; everyone harped on at him about it. When you didn’t have enough fat, you felt the cold more easily, Severus knew this. So of course it made sense to share body heat. Evan didn’t like him like that, he couldn’t. He was just being Evan; he was just being a friend. That was all. He was a fool for thinking it could be anything else.

Evan on the other hand had gotten a little too distracted by the boy in his arms. As cheesy as it sounded, he rather liked having Severus there. He was small enough that Evan could just wrap himself around him. He was weak enough (although Evan certainly wouldn’t say so to his face) that Evan felt needed around him, in order to protect him. But of course he knew better that to even hint at that around Severus. He may have been weak physically, but with a wand at hand he could be positively lethal.

The truth was that Evan sort of had a little crush on the raven haired teen. Not that it came as much of a surprise to anyone. The two were closest in age, liked similar things and Evan had a tendency to drape himself over Severus whenever he could get close enough. Hell some of the other guys had started placing bets on when they’d finally confess. Well it was either that or paint lines in sand, or whatever the Japanese did for fun. Evan hadn’t exactly immersed himself in Japanese culture, although he was relieved that the whole eating live fish thing was just a rumour. But in the end it didn’t matter. He wasn’t going to say anything to Severus; he couldn’t risk their friendship like that. It wasn’t a matter of not wanting to, he really couldn’t. He couldn’t risk not having him in his life in some form or other. He just…well he needed him. As pathetic as that sounded, he really did.

If only he knew Severus’ feelings on the subject. Perhaps he’d have found happiness a lot sooner. They both would have. But then again, men aren’t exactly best known for talking about their feelings.

“Alright mother, anything else you want to nag me about?” Had Evan not gotten to know him so well, he might have taken Severus’ words at face value. Fortunately, he’d gotten to know him a little better than that. While he might have sounded annoyed, secretly he was rather pleased. For once someone seemed to care about him; it wasn’t a familiar feeling but it was a good feeling nonetheless.

“Well now that you mention it-”

Peter didn’t know what to do. It had been three days and none of his friends were speaking to each other. On the bright side he was finally getting a bit of attention for himself. But on the downside, they wouldn’t leave him alone. Hey he needed private time just like anyone else.

It started with Snape, or to be more accurate, when Snape left. That’s when Peter’s world was sent down the rabbit hole; hey he could like books too. First it was Sirius storming off, James following in turn. Only James didn’t go the same way Sirius left, he even appeared to be glaring at him. It was really quite bizarre. Even more so when Remus just disappeared. Seriously he hadn’t seen the prefect
since the whole mess started. Well except in class of course, Remus was never one to miss class willingly. But as soon as it was over, poof! He was gone again. Talk about frustrating.

What do you do when your best friends won’t even look at each other? If anyone had an answer for him, Peter would have gladly given them anything they wanted. As long as it worked, he just couldn’t take it anymore.

Now Peter wasn’t quite so foolish to believe that this was Snape’s fault. Well not directly at least, how could it be? He’d nicked off, no one knew where he was. That apparently was the problem. He wasn’t sure if it was out of guilt, that their pranks had finally driven him away, anger that Severus had escaped their wrath or something else that had made everyone start acting crazy. Well the guilt that would explain Remus’ weirdness and the anger would probably explain James’. Although with Snape gone he had Lily all to himself, didn’t he? But Sirius, well anger just didn’t seem right.

Truthfully Peter had almost believed Sirius held feelings other than disdain and hatred for the Slytherin. What with the way he stalked the boy, made him miserable and seemed all too eager to expose his bits to the rest of the school.

Poor simple Peter, he knew that’s what they called him. But maybe he wasn’t quite as simple as they thought. He saw things few others did. Sirius’ obsession was certainly strange; the boy had everything Snape didn’t. Friends, love, acceptance. So why the obsession? Well Peter had seen the looks, the ones he’d only ever seen Sirius direct at the pretty girls in their year. He’d noticed him sneaking out late at night, supposedly to shag some bird. Suspiciously absent of any hickeys, lipstick marks or the faint sweetness of perfume that seemed to follow him wherever he went. But he still came back looking the same way, like he’d gotten off. It was only when he had possession of the map that Peter began to piece it together. Sirius went looking for Snape on those nights, their dots were always together. But whether Snape knew he was there, lurking in the library or following him through the halls, Peter couldn’t be sure. But Sirius was definitely getting off. That he was sure of.

Of course Severus didn’t know this. While he’d noticed the eyes following him wherever he went, he hadn’t noticed the same boy trailing him in the dark. Watching him closely, always at a distance. Never close enough to be detected. Had he known, he would have been horrified by his lack of awareness. But he hadn’t. He remained oblivious. It was really just as well. It was bad enough he’d started thinking of Snivellus that way, Sirius could only imagine what people would think if they’d learned the truth. The idea that he liked the Slytherin in that way, well he couldn’t let it be known. By anyone. So if he had to toss one off in a nearby closet or in the toilets to get it out of his system, he would. There was a reason silencing charms existed after all.

Peter liked to think he was a good person. Maybe not the best, but it wasn’t like he was a Slytherin or something. But even he had limits to what he could tolerate. Sirius liking guys, that he had no problem with. Well as long as he didn’t start liking him. He was bad enough now; he could only imagine how much worse he could be for someone he actually liked. Not just messed around with, but actually liked. Sirius liking a Slytherin, well that was a problem. But he supposed in time he could eventually get used to it. But Sirius liking Snape? They say everyone has a breaking point and for Peter, he was pretty sure that was it.

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“Dear Severus I-” Remus sighed in irritation.

“What can I say to him? He’s not gonna write back, there’s just no way. Not after what we did, what I did. I just-” Remus sighed once more. Not in irritation, but out of anger and despair.

“Dear Severus. I’m sorry. Is that really all I have to say?” Remus asked himself, his quill held loosely between his fingers.
“After everything I’ve put him through, everything we’ve put him through, is it really enough? I’m sorry, I truly am but…it’s just not enough”. Remus dropped the quill on the parchment. “I just hope you’re finally happy. You never were here”.

It was true. Severus had never really been happy at Hogwarts. Since the moment James turned against him, all because he was sorted into another house. He probably should have taken it as a sign of things to come. Losing Lily, getting attacked by a werewolf, being humiliated publically on a daily basis, they’d all occurred at Hogwarts. How could such a place make him happy when it held nothing but bad memories for him?

“Severus” Remus began to write again.

Thank you for giving me the chance to send you this message. I know it’s more than I deserve. I know you don’t care much for social niceties so I’ll get straight to the point. I’m a monster, in more ways than one. Aside from my condition, I have treated you in a way that is truly despicable. I’ve helped hurt you, humiliate you and as I’m sure you remember, I almost killed you. It doesn’t matter that it was in control, I’m still the one who was responsible.

I know we’ll probably never be friends or anything more, how could we be? But I just wanted to tell you I’m sorry. Wherever you are now, I hope you’re far happier than you were here at Hogwarts. It’s about time you got what you deserved, I don’t mean it in a sarcastic way or anything. No matter what anyone says, you’re brilliant. In more ways than one. It’s about time more people learned that about you.

Remus

P.S. James and Sirius are going mad without you. I think they miss having someone actually stand up to them for once. I wish you could see them, I’m sure you’d love knowing what you’ve done to them.

‘You’re a coward’ Remus’ mind told him.

“I know” he answered back, his tone resigned. “But what am I supposed to say? I’ve been watching you for Merlin knows how long, I’ve had a crush on you for years now. I wanted to ask you out but I was too afraid of what my friends would say. He didn’t…he doesn’t deserve that. He deserves better. He deserves more than me, so much more”. Remus fell silent.

It may have been the truth, but as they so often say, the truth really does hurt. Remus knew that better than anyone.

For a brief moment Remus considered it, his quill hovered above the parchment. But before he could write the words, he stopped. Fear is said to be one of the most powerful emotions you can possess, which in this case was very true. For most of his life Remus had hoped to be brave. With the wolf constantly batting for control, it was all too easy for him to let fear overwhelm him. He only wished he could be stronger, braver in fact so he could better protect those he loved. But in this case, he found he couldn’t. It should have been easy; there was a chance the letter would never reach Severus. A chance he’d never read it, so what was the harm? But then again, there was a chance he would as well. It was a chance Remus wasn’t willing to take. But maybe he didn’t have to.

You see Hogwarts itself was a place filled with magic and wonder. Within it, it contained a piece from every single student, the good and the bad. That included Remus. But a little known fact, one very few ever experienced, was that when it felt the need, Hogwarts could harness this magic. Just enough to give people a little nudge in the right direction. Sometimes it was just a little push, giving the one with the crush a chance to talk to their crush. A little clichéd, but people usually fell for the
whole damsel in distress routine. But obviously such a thing wouldn’t work here. No, this needed a more direct approach.

_I just wanted to tell you the truth. I’ve liked you for a long time, but I didn’t think you’d believe me if I told you. I know it’s probably too late, but I just thought I should let you know. You’re just, you’re amazing Severus! Anyone who tells you any different is a idiot…I’m an idiot. I’m sorry._

Remus wasn’t actually aware he was writing it, Hogwarts had taken control. Harnessing that little piece of his magic that it possessed, it was enough to move his hand, the one holding the quill that is. It wasn’t until the last letter was finished, the quill rolled up and sealed in place, that Hogwarts relinquished that control. Of course the wolf was aware of its presence, how could he not be? But it remained quiet, dormant almost. His human was a coward, of that he was certain; maybe Hogwarts had the right idea about giving him a little push. Besides, he quite liked the Snivellus boy as everyone seemed to call him. He was…tasty. In more ways than one. If his human managed to get him for himself, managed to mate with him even, then maybe he’d be open to letting him have a little taste. Just a nibble.

As far as Remus knew, everything was normal. Unaware of what had been snuck in, he gave a sigh of relief. What he’d wrote, surely it would be accepted. After all, it was honest and straight from the heart. Surely Severus wouldn’t take offence to that.

Well what he didn’t know wouldn’t hurt him…yet.

- 

“James we need to talk”.

James almost turned back the way he came. He’d be late to class, more than he already was, but what did that matter? He just couldn’t face him, not yet. Unfortunately, it looked like he didn’t have a choice.

“Hey! Don’t walk away from me!” Sirius grabbed his arm, stumbling slightly as James ripped it from his grasp.

“Not here, in the bathroom”. James gestured to the door just up ahead, relieved when Sirius agreed without complaint.

It took a few minutes, both needing to make absolutely sure that no one was around. Nobody could witness this conversation. Nobody.

“What do you want?” James asked, crossing his arms.

“The truth. You want Snape, yes or no? Tell me”. Straight to the point, that was Sirius’ style.

Having known Sirius for six years, you’d think James would have expected such bluntness. Only he hadn’t, strangely it never crossed his mind. He’d had other more important things to worry about.

“I” James started. He froze as a dark look crossed Sirius’ face. “Why do you want to know? Why do you?” Classic Potter manoeuvre, distract the enemy with something else. Only Sirius shouldn’t have been his enemy…right?

“Yeah I do”.

Wait what? Was he serious?
“Y-you can’t!” Probably not the best thing he could have said.

“What d’you mean I can’t? I can like whoever the hell I like. Who do you think you are?” Sirius protested.

“But you can’t like Snape! He’s Snape! Y-you can’t just-” James struggled to come up with a response.

“So it’s true. You like him too. Oh how the mighty have fallen”. Sirius’ words broke through James’ panic. They were cold and blunt; so unlike how Sirius usually acted, always cheerful and happy. Usually at another’s expense.

“Huh? What do you mean?” James was confused.

“What do you think I mean? You have everything and you’re still not happy. I’m sorry to have to tell you this mate but you have no chance with Snape. I mean you tortured the guy for years, stole his girl and shoved it in his face. You bullied him every chance you got. What makes you think he could ever fall for someone like you?

It was bad enough hearing the truth thrown back in his face like that. It was worse knowing that the guy who was doing it was supposed to be his friend. His best friend even. So much for bros before hoes.

“At least I didn’t try to kill him”. Strangely enough Sirius seemed shocked by that. But why? He started it. He was the one to point out his mistakes; he was the one to bring up the past. So why couldn’t James do the same?

“I-it wasn’t like that. You know it wasn’t like that!” Sirius hissed, fists trembling at his sides. It seemed James had touched a nerve.

“Do I? Tell me Padfoot, did you even apologise to him?” Silence was his only response. “I thought not”.

As far as James was concerned, he’d won. He’d done a lot of shit to Snape, but at least he hadn’t tried to off him. Hell he was the one who saved him. Perhaps he’d bring it up with Snape when he found him. Everyone liked a hero, didn’t they? And if he was the hero, didn’t that make Sirius the villain? Whoever heard of the villain getting the girl? Or guy as the case may be.

He really should have anticipated the punch. It was Sirius after all, he always was predictable. But like a fool he’d let his guard down. A side effect from being best friends with the same boy he now considered his rival. All those years of friendship had lowered his defences, had made him soft. Now he was paying for it because once the punches started, neither of them could stop.

Maybe friendship wasn’t so important after all?
I know, I know, I haven’t updated for over 6 weeks. Sorry but I was busy with applications and stuff. On the plus side, I finished my application, finished my online course and for now I don’t have anything but work to distract me from writing. Actually that’s a lie, I usually think of new ideas while I’m at work so it’s all good.

Anyway a big thanks to everyone for your reviews and kudos. I still can’t believe how popular this story’s gotten. I’m already at over 500 kudos which is just incredible! Anyway I hope you all enjoy this chapter and I promise not to take so long with the next.

Enjoy!

It wasn’t very often Severus couldn’t think of anything to say. While there were times Severus just wouldn’t say anything, that didn’t mean he didn’t have anything to say. He simply didn’t want to waste words on those who didn’t have the mental capacity to even process them. But there were those rare times that Severus simply couldn’t form any kind of response. It was as though his mind just went blank.

‘I just wanted to tell you the truth. I’ve liked you for a long time’.

There had to be some kind of mistake. It just simply wasn’t possible.

‘I’ve liked you for a long time’.

No one had ever said anything like that to him. Ever. It just didn’t happen.

Severus had no illusions about his popularity, particularly regarding his popularity back at Hogwarts. In summary, he had none. None whatsoever. Everyone knew that. And yet Remus Lupin of all people had the nerve to write to him, claiming he’d liked him all along. As what? A chew toy? A victim? A study buddy? Had he gone mad?

‘It’s just like you always wanted. He apologised to you, he even confessed. What more do you need?’ There were times Severus relished his mind, but this was not one of them.

‘It’s not real; whatever this is it’s just not real. Fuck’s sake it’s probably Black’s idea of a lark! The prick’s back at Hogwarts but he’s still found a way to antagonise me’.

‘But how could he know where you are? Even Remus doesn’t know, only that owl of his does. If it was Black, don’t you think he would have had more to say? More questions he demanded answering? If you ask me, this doesn’t sound like him’.

‘I didn’t ask you!’ Great, he was arguing with himself. Surely that was the first sign of madness? Perhaps there was an epidemic.

‘You know I’m right. What if it’s true? What if he likes you? It’s your move’.
Severus wasn’t sure whether to feel relieved or concerned when his mind stopped arguing with him. But he was definitely relieved to know it had stopped winning said argument. But then again, sometimes silence really was the best answer.

“Something wrong?”

Severus blinked, his mind returning to the present. Unfortunately his mind returned a little too late, he wasn’t fast enough to keep Evan from plucking the letter from his hand.

“Wait!” But it was too late, Evan was already reading it.

“What’s this?” Evan frowned, out of curiosity more than anything, but that soon changed. The more he read, the deeper his frown became. “Why is this guy apologising to you? What happened? What did he do? What did you do for that matter?”

Severus scowled at that, it seemed once again, even here, people just had to assume he was the one at fault.

“Why should I tell you? Just give it here”. Severus reached out, only for Evan to pull it away again. “Why should you tell me? Well we’re friends aren’t we? At least I thought we were”.

That hurt, probably more than it should. Not that Severus would let Evan see it. Of course they were friends; at least Severus had dared to hope. But then, he didn’t exactly have the best track record with friends now did he.

“No! I mean we are friends. We are!” Severus insisted. “It’s just…do you remember when I first came here? What I was like? What I looked like even? Before I came here, where I was before, well it wasn’t good for me. I just-I wasn’t safe there, that’s why I left. No one even knew I was leaving”.

“What do you mean not safe? Is that why this Remus guy is apologising? Did something happen?”

“I can’t tell you”.

“But surely-” Evan tried, only for Severus to interrupt.

“It’s not that I don’t want to tell you, I do. But I can’t, I really can’t. I wish I could”. How he wished he could, but an oath was an oath. It wouldn’t allow him to do anything of the sort.

“Did he hurt you? Did he attack you?”

What had Severus said? He couldn’t tell him? Did that mean he wanted to tell him but something was stopping him? Why did things have to be so confusing around him? Severus was indeed a mystery, one of which Evan was desperate to solve.

“He-” The oath wouldn’t let him continue; when Dumbledore said binding he really meant binding. Severus could only nod instead. The oath decreed Severus couldn’t say anything, it never said he couldn’t do anything.

“Did, he didn’t…you know, force himself on you?” Evan wasn’t comforted by the way Severus seemed to suddenly turn violently ill. As Severus struggled between flushing in anger and paling in disgust, Evan grew more and more concerned.

“Hell no!”

It cheered Evan slightly. Severus was too busy spitting out curses to notice Evan had relaxed
significantly. At least until another thought crossed the young man’s mind. “Then what? It’s not like he tried to kill you, right?” Evan had never seen Severus pale so quickly. For a worrying moment he considered sending for a healer, the younger boy looked ready to faint.

Bound by that blasted oath, Severus could only stand there. He held his fists at his side, hands trembling in a mix of rage and fear he’d hoped would diminish with time. Only it hadn’t. It had been months since the incident and yet the memory remained as fresh as though it had happened just yesterday.

“W-wait, you mean he-and he wrote that-what the fuck does he think he’s playing at!?” It was the first time Severus had ever seen Evan angry; it was the first time he’d ever even seen him shout.

“Leave it”.

“Wha-Severus!?"

“You said you were my friend, so as my friend I’m asking you to leave it. This doesn’t concern you”.

It was pretty clear that Severus wasn’t used to dealing with friends, real friends anyway. Friends usually had each other’s backs, providing support and safety if needed. Severus, being new to the whole friend thing, didn’t seem to realise this. Well that was a bit of a lie, he had been friends with Lily all that time, but then that hadn’t exactly turned out well for him, now had it.

“No”.

“No? What do you mean no? Who said you-”

“I said no. I’m not discussing it. Someone tried to kill you, then he sends you a letter asking for forgiveness and confessing he likes you and you just expect me to avoid the subject? That’s not happening. Did the school make you take an oath? Did they try to cover this up? Nod or shake your head”. Evan demanded. He didn’t know whether to be relieved or horrified when Severus nodded once.

“Right. That’s…right come with me”. Evan grabbed Severus’ hand, pulling him out of their room and down the hall.

“Where are we going?” Severus was beginning to suspect Evan had gone mad. Who did he think he was? Demanding answers from him then refusing to say a word while he dragged him who knows where, was this what friends were supposed to do?

“Well-whoa sorry!” Evan barely missed crashing into one of their classmates. The young man glanced at them, smirking at their clasped hands before stepping aside to let them pass. Severus just wanted to die. “We need to figure out what to do about this letter you got. In case you hadn’t figured it out already, you’re not going back. And if this Remus guy really does like you then there’s a pretty good chance he’s gonna try and find you. And if by some miracle he finds you, he’s gonna try and take you away from me and we’re not gonna let that happen”.

“Away from you?” Severus blinked.

“Us, I meant us! Not just me! I mean well yeah he’d be taking you away from us and us includes me so technically-”. Neither was quite sure who was more embarrassed.

“Evan? Severus? Something wrong?” When Derek approached Severus could have kissed him. The man was like his guardian angel.
“Evan’s finally lost it” Severus said.

“Severus got a love letter from a guy who tried to kill him. His school covered the whole thing up!” Evan exclaimed.

“Like I said, he’s finally lost it” Severus repeated.

“Don’t even—they made him take some kind of oath. He can’t say anything about it”.

“If he can’t say anything, how do you know about any of this?” Derek asked dubiously.

“Duh, he can’t say anything. That doesn’t mean he can’t do anything”.

“Huh, that’s actually pretty clever”. Derek looked thoughtful.

“Thanks” Severus muttered, freezing after realising what he said.

Derek frowned. “So it’s true then”.

Severus refused to comment, looking around nervously. Whether it was for an exit or just a distraction, Derek didn’t know, but he put his hand on the boy’s shoulder just in case. He couldn’t have him running off before he’d had a chance to get to the bottom of things.

“Severus?” Derek asked. “Tell me what happened. If you are under some kind of oath then just tell me what you can”.

“I-” Severus sighed, clearly uncomfortable. “Not here” he said.

“Alright, come on. My roommate’s studying, but I know somewhere quiet we can go”.

Derek gently pushed Severus ahead of him, leading him to a secluded area of the grounds. Evan followed behind, frowning when Severus’ hand was forced from his own. He wasn’t about to say anything of course, but he quite liked having Severus in his grasp. In an innocent, non pervy way of course. Well mostly innocent…with a few naughty thoughts thrown in. But who could blame him?

“Okay, start talking”.

Severus shifted uncomfortably. “A boy from my old school sent me a letter to apologise for the shit he and his friends put me through, pretty much since first year. They had this, well I guess you’d call it a gang, all made up of Gryffindors. Uh, that’s one of the houses for Hogwarts. I was in Slytherin and well, we kind of had this huge rivalry. I think it’s been like that since founder’s times”.

“This boy, were you two ever friends or-”

“No”. Severus didn’t even wait for him to finish. “I hated him” he added, as though that would help.

“Why?” Derek took note of the past tense. Severus said he hated him, hated as in past. Did that mean things had changed?

Severus froze; he couldn’t tell him the truth. Even if he hadn’t been under that blasted oath. He just didn’t want to have to remember it; he didn’t want to have to relive it. But he didn’t really have a choice did he?

“Remus was a prefect. He had a chance, lots of chances actually, to turn in his friends for what they did to me. But he was too big of a coward to do anything. He just watched them torment me day after day; he even went along with it sometimes. You know we were actually quite similar; we were
both quiet, we liked to study. We might have actually been friends if we’d been in different houses. But of course we weren’t, so we couldn’t be friends. Not that I’d want to, knowing what he is”.

“You mean because he’s a coward?” Derek asked carefully. Severus was hiding something he was sure of it, but Derek doubted he’d be able to learn much more just yet. Not if he really was under an oath.

“Sure” Severus answered. Well it was true. It just, it wasn’t the real reason.

“So this Remus, he sent you a love letter?” Derek asked.

Severus coloured, his cheeks darkening. “He-” Severus tried, but he soon fell silent. “It doesn’t make sense” he finally admitted. He kept his gaze averted; he couldn’t bear to be making eye contact about a subject he was so poorly experienced with. It was just too embarrassing.

“What do you mean?” Derek asked. Unbeknownst to Severus, Evan leant forward eagerly.

“He can’t-he just, this has to be some stupid prank of his. Well maybe not him, but I just know Potter and Black are behind this. They have to be”.

Derek frowned in concern. This wasn’t the boy he’d come to know, he was always so controlled. But this Severus, there was none of that control. He just seemed so flustered and uncertain. All because of some silly letter he’d been so quick to dismiss as a prank. But why? Derek was sure Severus had mentioned that no one knew he’d come here. So how did he even receive this letter if that was the case? Perhaps Severus had told someone; perhaps he’d given them permission to write to him. But even if that was the case, what made him so sure it was a prank?

“Were they the ones who bullied you?” Evan asked, Severus nodded in response. “And they were friends with this Remus guy?”

“Best friends. There’s four of them, they call themselves the marauders”.

Evan snorted. “The marauders? What kind of a name is that?” Even Derek seemed amused.

It shouldn’t have come as a surprise. Severus knew life didn’t only revolve around Hogwarts and the marauders. Yet for many years it had. He’d spent years unable to escape either of them, years forced to follow the rules they both set upon him. Well okay that wasn’t to say he didn’t break them, especially those that the marauders set, but there were times he just needed to be left alone. And the way to do that was do as they asked; to stay out of their sight so they didn’t have to look at him. But it was hardly fair. For all the times they sneered and scoffed, denouncing his very presence, they spent an awful lot of time seeking him out. Eager to make his life just that little bit more miserable. As much as he hated to admit it, the marauders always had some sort of control over him. He hated the mere thought of it, but it was true.

Yet to hear Evan and Derek dismiss them so casually, it forced Severus to stop and think. For once it seemed the marauders had no influence here. It shouldn’t have come as any surprise, yet it did. Severus had grown so used to being forced to yield to them; to Hogwarts in general, he’d almost forgotten what it felt like to escape their influence.

“It’s a good name for them. All they do is create havoc and make life difficult for everyone around them” Severus argued, though he wasn’t sure why he felt the need to.

“Why do you do that?” Derek asked.

“Do what?”
“Defend them. Do you even realise you do it? After what they’ve put you through, why do you care what we say about them?”

“I don’t” Severus glared. It was the first real spark of life Derek had seen in him.

“Then prove it. You’re not with them anymore, you’re with us. I don’t know what kind of power they had over you-”

“Don’t be ridiculous!”

“-but that’s all in the past. They can’t control you anymore, now that’s our job” Derek teased. Severus looked ready to protest, only to complain as Derek messed up his hair.

Derek spared a glance towards Evan who looked decidedly unhappy. With a smile he pulled his arm away, giving Evan enough room to casually drape his arm around Severus’ shoulders. Derek just barely stifled a laugh.

“Just tell me. If this Remus was telling the truth, if he did claim to love you, would you go back to him?”

Severus didn’t answer. He just stood there, mouth agape like a common idiot.

“That’s-no! Of course not” Severus protested.

Evan let out a sigh of relief, startling as both Severus and Derek turned to look at him. “What? I just don’t want to have to find another roommate, that’s all”. It wasn’t the best excuse he could come up with; as a matter of fact it was probably the worst.

“In case you were wondering, that’s his way of saying he’d miss you terribly and he’s fancied you pretty much since you got here. So do me a favour and kiss him, screw him, whatever you have to do to stop his whining. If you’ll excuse me”. With that, Derek took his leave, leaving Evan to stand there gaping and stuttering like a fool. Well it wasn’t far off, Evan was a fool. A fool in love perhaps, but a fool all the same.

For a long moment Evan just stood there, his arm still wrapped around Severus’ shoulders. It gave time for Severus to process what he’d just heard. Surely he was mistaken? Evan didn’t—Evan couldn’t like him like that. Could he? Much to his embarrassment, Severus felt his cheeks grow warm at the thought.

“Did he-?” It seemed Evan had finally snapped out of it.

“I’m sure he was just joking” Severus offered lamely. He adamantly refused to act like his idiotic classmates, well ex-classmates now. They’d always gone on about who liked who and who’d shagged who in whatever alcove they could find. Severus had always told himself he was better than that. He’d convinced himself he was above such desires, conveniently forgetting the whole Lily debacle. That was something he just wasn’t ready to deal with just yet.

“Shit” Evan groaned. “Fuck it” he added for good measure.

Severus was about to ask what he meant, but froze the moment he felt the other boy’s lips press against his. “W-what did you-?” Evan did it again. “But I-” Evan did it a third time, this time lasting more than just a few fleeting seconds.

“This okay?” Evan finally asked, pulling back slightly to look Severus in the eyes.
Unable to respond, Severus did the only thing he could think of. He kissed Evan back.

Unbeknownst to the two, Derek peeked out from behind a nearby statue, Andrew at his back. “Told you, now pay up”. It was a poorly guarded secret that there’d been a bet involving the programme youngest students. In actuality, it had only been kept a secret from the two themselves. Even the professors had contributed a galleon or two. Derek saw no harm in getting involved, neither had Andrew. They both knew the two would end up together, what with all the time they spent together. Moping over the other when they weren’t there, it was almost sickening. Almost.

“We should get out of here before they see us” Andrew whispered.

“They’ve been pining after each other since they got here. I doubt they’d notice if an elephant came crashing through, they’re not going to see us”. Derek smirked. “But we should probably go collect our winnings” he acquiesced. “Let’s give them some privacy” he added as an afterthought.

“But they’re out in the open. How is that giving them privacy?” Andrew asked as they both snuck away.

Derek only laughed.

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It had been a week since he’d sent the letter and yet there’d been no reply. Remus supposed he shouldn’t have been surprised. If he was Severus, he doubted he’d have wanted to write to him. But still it hurt, even though he knew he had no right to feel that way. It was his own stupidity that caused this; his own cowardice and spinelessness. And yet even though he knew he was at fault, he still found himself wanting to pass on the blame.

Sirius was the one who’d led him up to the Shrieking Shack. James was the one who’d stolen Lily away. Even Peter always went along with whatever prank the two thought up next. Oh sure Remus had cocked it up royally, there was no denying that. But he was sick and tired of taking the responsibility. It was always him, never them. If it hadn’t been for them then maybe Snape would have stayed.

Remus sighed. What did it matter? Severus was gone and he had yet to reply. What good would it do to sit around moping?

“Moony, you better see this”. Wormtail ran in.

“What’s going on?”

“Pads and Prongs have lost it. They were fighting each other, full on fists and everything. McGonagall had to break them up, you should see the state they’re in. What’s weird is I think they were fighting over Snape”.

“How is that so weird?” Sure Severus had left, but it was hardly the first time Padfoot and Prongs had fought about the best way to show him up. But then with Snape gone, why would they need to do such a thing? Perhaps it was a little weird. “They always start fighting about Severus”.

“No you don’t understand. They weren’t fighting about him, they were fighting over him. They must have been charmed or something, they’ve both lost it. They’re both convinced they like Snape, love him even”. Peter found it odd that Remus had used Snape’s first name. They always called him Snape or Snivellus. But so caught up in the drama that was unfolding, he didn’t give it much thought.
“Wh-what?” Remus froze, the wolf growling in the back of his mind. “They-no they can’t. They just- they can’t!” With that, Remus ran from the room, leaving Peter standing there, blinking uselessly.

“They’ve all gone mad” Peter finally decided. “Every last one of them”.
Once again a massive thanks to everyone for your lovely comments. I know it’s been what 5 or 6 weeks since I last updated? Still I like to think the Christmas period is a good excuse for the delay. I’m not gonna make any promise for when my next update is, however I can promise that it will be within two months. Two months is like my absolute max.

Also, because I kind of have a feeling someone’s gonna ask me about this, this chapter is set a few weeks after the previous.

Enjoy!

Severus quite liked kissing; he liked it a lot actually. It wasn’t like when his mum would kiss him on the forehead when he was ill. Nor was it like when Lily would kiss his cheek when he gave her a birthday present. You know before he royally fucked it up with her. No this was exciting and nerve-wracking at the same time. The feeling of another man’s lips against his, the faint aroma of aftershave or whatever Evan used to smell so intoxicating. It was all so strange yet at the same time, Severus couldn’t get enough of it. And it seemed Evan was more than happy to give and give until their lips were numb and their dicks were spent. Well they could hardly be expected to limit themselves to just kissing now could they?

“Hey you haven’t seen my book have you?”

Speak of the devil.

“Which book? I’d like to think you have more than one to study from. At least I hope you have”.

The best part of it all though, at least for Severus, was that Evan already knew what he was like. He wasn’t sweet and caring in the way that most people were. He was too used to having to watch his own back, too used to being scorned and sneered at to let old habits go. Yet Evan managed to take his snide little remarks in stride. Always seeing the humour in them and not just taking them at face value. It was nice.

“Smartass, I meant the one I just had in my hand. The one about ancient curses, about the ancient Egyptians and stuff. Did you see where I left it?” Evan asked.

“Try the second drawer on your left” Severus offered. A series of grumbles and slammed drawers followed. “Your other let” Severus added, shaking his head with a smile.

“Right, got it! Thanks babe” Evan grinned.

“Don’t call me babe” Severus glared, tilting his head up to look at him.

Evan took it as an invitation for a kiss. “What do I call you then? You’ve already turned down sweetheart, love and darling; I’m kind of running out of options here you know”.

Severus sighed. It wasn’t a sigh of suffering, well not his usual level of suffering at least, but the kind
of sigh you gave when someone you were particularly fond of did something that made you barmy.

“Oh! What about sugar? Or honey? Or-” Evan ginned widely, clearly on a roll.

“What about something that you wouldn’t put in your tea? Can’t you just call me by my name?” Severus asked with a groan.

“No that’s way too boring. Wait I’ve got it!” Evan smiled, climbing onto the bed behind him and wrapping his arms around him. “I’ll call you mine, has a nice ring to it don’t you think?” Well he thought it was brilliant. This way everyone would know Severus was his.

“Have you been reading those godawful harlequin romance novels again? Honestly the ideas you come up with-” Severus stilled as Evan kissed him.

“Finally! A way to shut you up!” In hindsight, Evan really should have foreseen the pillow to the side of his head. But then he had been a bit distracted.

“Shut up, idiot” Severus smiled.

He wasn’t mad, not really. How could he be? He’d never imagined he’d ever get to have something like this. Not the whole boyfriend thing, although that had been a pretty big shock when Evan first kissed him, but just this playful interaction with another person. The kind of teasing that occurred between friends and family, Severus had never really had it before. It was nice.

“Mmm, well I can think of a few ways you could shut me up. Wanna make out?” Evan raised his eyebrows in invitation.

It hadn’t been a surprise for Severus to learn that Evan had been with his fair share of lovers. At eighteen it was pretty much the norm, or at least that’s what Severus assumed. But what he had been surprised by was how understanding Evan had been about his own lack of experience. Then again, Remus’ letter had helped in that regard.

After learning of what Hogwarts had actually been like for the ex-slytherin, Evan had seemed quite impressed that he hadn’t simply gone about murdering people in their sleep. Always one for dramatics he was. But then it wasn’t like Severus hadn’t experienced his own share of drama. With a murdered mother, lost love and an attempt on his life, his life might as well have been one of those harlequin novels Evan adamantly denied reading. And the whole handsome man coming to sweep him off his feet thing; well Evan was rather handsome, there was no denying that. But like hell would Severus play the part of the blushing maiden, he still had his pride.

“Do you think of anything else?” Severus asked. Then again, it wasn’t like he was opposed to the idea.

“Well yeah, I mean I like you but you’re not all I think about. I do have other stuff I think about you know. Like studying and stuff” Evan grinned, leaning forward expectedly.

“What kind of stuff?” Severus asked, his voice quieting the closer Evan got to him.

“I don’t know, like family, friends, what you look like naked…” Evan trailed off suggestively.

“That’s-” Severus swallowed nervously. “That’s thinking about me again”.

“Is it? I guess you’re right”. The boys were barely an inch apart, Evan’s gaze fixated on Severus’ own. “Can’t help it if you’re my biggest priority right now, can’t help it if you’re the thing I like thinking about”.

Surprising even himself, Severus boldly (at least for him) leaned forward and closed the gap between them. Evan’s surprised moan was quickly accompanied by a few of Severus’ own, much to the pair’s delight. The next few minutes went by as expected; both eagerly giving as good as they got, tongues brushing against one another and as they grew more bolder, said tongues were used elsewhere. Only instead of stopping things from getting out of hand, this time Severus said nothing. Evan pulled back briefly, an unspoken question in his eyes to which Severus gave a half-hearted shrug and hesitant smile.

“You wanna-?” Evan asked, not quite voicing the full question.

“Maybe we can fool around a bit” Severus admitted, clearly embarrassed.

“Huh, that’s-” Evan swallowed, “yeah we uh-yeah definitely. I just, uh, so you want to take off your clothes? Or do you want me to do it? Or uh-” Severus began laughing.

“I thought you said you’d done this before? You look how I feel. Terrified and nervous and-”

“-kind of like you wanna throw up? Yeah I know what you mean. I just, I mean I was with a few girls back home, guys too. But they didn’t really mean anything; it was mostly just me wanting to know what it was like. Getting some experience under my belt, notches on my bedpost, that sort of thing. But now, I mean it’s you. And don’t make fun of me for this otherwise I’ll kill you, but you’re different than them. You know? You’re like special and stuff. I just, I don’t want to screw this up. I mean I’m your first and I just don’t want to hurt you”. Evan rubbed his neck, smiling weakly.

For a long moment Severus didn’t speak. “Just so you know I’m burning those bloody books of yours”. And just like that the tension was broken.

“Wha-? Hey! What gives you the right to-” Severus kissed him.

“You were right, it is a good way to shut you up” Severus grinned, laughing as Evan tackled him. After a few minutes of roughhousing Severus eventually called for a halt. Panting slightly from the excursion, he’d never been particularly athletic; Severus pulled Evan to lie next to him on the bed.

“So, uh-” Evan began. Both boys had turned to face each other.

“This is all kind of new to me, I mean obviously. So I don’t really know what I’m doing. But what I do know is I’m still a guy. I’m won’t be won over with flowers or jewellery or any of that rot those stories say you should give me. I also have a dick and I’m a teenager and I’m well you know. It’s just, whenever I start thinking about stuff, worrying about what I’m supposed to do, well I usually screw it up. And I don’t really want to screw this up, I uh, I kind of like you”. Severus admitted quietly, his fingers intertwined with Evan’s own.

“I kind of like you too” Evan smiled. “Maybe a little more than like” he admitted with a sigh.

“We’re kind of hopeless at this aren’t we?” Severus asked.

“I think everyone is. They just leave out the awkward bits when they’re bragging to their friends”.

“True. So uh-”

“You wanna get off?” Evan asked.

Severus almost got off the bed, ready to apologise before he really got what he meant. “Yeah” he swallowed nervously.
“Well you know I could try going down on you. You could go down on me; we could even try doing it together”.

“So a sixty-nine?” Severus asked, Evan choked a little in surprise.

“I thought you said you hadn’t-?” Evan started.

“Why do you think I spend so much time in the library? That’s nothing to some of the things I’ve found in there”.

Evan only gaped at him, Severus flushed in embarrassment. “That’s, wow that’s uh-you mean in this library? Can we go see?”

“What right now?”

“No! Not now I mean obviously. But like later?” Evan asked, clearly eager.

“Sure I guess”.

“Good. So uh, you still haven’t said if you want me to undress you”. It was probably just as well Evan wasn’t a spy; subtlety clearly wasn’t his strong point.

“No, I mean I can do it. U-unless you wanted to?” Severus asked suddenly unsure.

“No it’s, I mean I don’t really care. I just kind of want to see you, well see more of you” Evan said.

Severus could feel his cheeks growing warmer, feeling a mix of embarrassed and terrified that still managed to excite him in the most curious of ways. “I think, maybe we should just get them off and get to the fun stuff. I mean if you want”.

“Well-” Severus began only to startle as something crashed into their door.

“Oh would you just get to the good stuff already!?!” A loud voice echoed throughout their room.

In an instant both boys were off the bed, hastily rearranging themselves before Evan stormed over to the door, with murderous intent in his eyes. Wrenching it open, both boys were mortified to see not only Andrew and Derek stood outside, but a handful of their peers. The younger ones at least. While most had the sense to run, Derek’s grip on Andrew’s robes made sure he couldn’t flee.

“I found them listening in on you two” Derek offered in greeting.

“You son of a-” Evan looked murderous.

“It’s not my fault I swear! It was those other guys that were listening. I just came along wanting to see you and they were all standing around, two of them had their heads to the door. I thought maybe something was wrong so I stopped to have a listen. Then Derek came along and you opened the door and I-” Andrew started babbling.

“It’s okay”. The three turned to the youngest of the group. Severus only frowned at them. “I believe him so it’s okay, it’s fine”.

“What? It’s not-”

“Evan. Just look at him, he’s shitting himself. I mean not literally but he looks like he’s about to have a heart attack. And he didn’t try to run when the door opened”.
“But he-”

“I know Derek had a hold of him. But before that, when the other ran he didn’t even try to run. He’s still our friend, maybe instead of blaming him you should start chasing down those other guys. They’re the ones that were spying on us”. Severus spoke calmly, unnerving the rest of them.

“How can you be so calm about this?” Derek had to ask.

“It’s hardly the first time I’ve dealt with their type before. If you can find out their names, I can make the rest of the year a living hell for them”. Severus might as well have been discussing the weather. Despite being listened in on, he didn’t seem angry or upset. If anything he seemed strangely calm, almost distant from it all. It was actually a little worrying.

“I’ll find out. Andrew can help. He probably got a better look at them than I did” Derek offered. Andrew quickly nodded, eager to get back into their good graces.

“But we-”

“-were in the middle of something. Right Evan?” Severus asked. It was a risky move for him to make and he knew it. But he hoped he’d made the right decision. “We can let them handle it and go back to what we were doing”.

Evan looked ready to protest until he properly looked at Severus. What had just happened, well it was mortifying for them both. But for Severus, well he could only imagine. To have his classmates listening in like that, knowing such personal details about him, it must have been mortifying. And Severus didn’t exactly have much confidence to begin with. So for him to act like it didn’t affect him, even though it obviously did, was a pretty big leap. Evan would have been foolish to ignore it and thankfully Evan was many things, but he wasn’t a fool.

“Yeah we were. We’ll just be getting back to what we were doing. If you guys could go find those creeps that’d be great”. Evan nodded at the other two before pulling Severus back in the room. The two wisely left the hall.

Andrew might have been lying when he said he’d only just arrived. But he’d gotten sick of just waiting. He’d only wanted to check on them to see how things were progressing. But then he’d found those creeps listening in with smirks on their faces and he just saw red. Stupidly he’d attacked, slamming one against the door just as Derek arrived. Obviously the noise had alerted the two inside and then it all went to hell. But whatever, Severus had vouched for him and Andrew couldn’t be happier. He knew there was a reason he liked him.

“So…what did you hear?” Derek asked after a long moment’s silence.

“Not much, but they stopped before things got hot and heavy. But those guys before me, I don’t know how long they were there for but I’m hoping it was just for the tail end of it. I mean Sev doesn’t deserve that”.

“He still lets you call him that?” Derek asked.

“Well he’s not here is he, as long as he doesn’t find out I can call him whatever I like. But enough about that, we’ve got some investigating to do”.

“Who do you think you are, Sherlock Holmes?”

“Who?” Andrew asked.
“He’s a detective from a muggle book series. He-you know what never mind” Derek sighed.

“I must say I am very disappointed in you boys. Never in all my years have I ever seen such disgraceful behaviour and from my own house no less. What on earth were you boys thinking? I was under the impression that you boys were friends, I think we all were”. Minerva was mystified as she looked down at the boys lying in the hospital beds.

“Well he started it!” Sirius was the first to lay blame.

“Oh fuck you Pads; you were the one who couldn’t keep your eyes to yourself. He’s mine!” James retorted, wincing as he flexed his jaw.

“He isn’t anyone’s” Remus’ quiet voice interrupted. “He isn’t even here anymore” he added, wincing as he touched his bruising eye.

“Who’s not here? Would someone kindly tell me what on earth is going on?”

The three boys fell silent; none were willing to admit what they all shared in common. Peter however was all too eager to share their secret. He only prayed Professor McGonagall could knock some sense into them all. Honestly, going all gooey eyed over Snape? It was absolutely bonkers. And James had even broken things off with Lily, that wasn’t the James he knew. The James he knew had been mad for the girl. Hell the only person he talked about more than her had been Snape and oh…

“They’re talking about Severus Snape Professor. They-” Peter shot a guilty look at the three, “they’ve all decided they fancy him only now he’s gone because of what we did to him”.

“What you did to him? And what exactly would that be?”

To say Minerva was pissed would be an understatement. If those boys had done something to the poor lad, although she had to wonder how much worse things could have been. What with Remus’ rather unfortunate problem and Sirius’ complete lack of sense, not to mention James’ blatant disregard for order and discipline. Why it was no wonder Mister Snape had left them and Albus had certainly been no help.

“I’m well aware Mister Black. But are there no other incidents you’d like to report? Nothing that would drive Mister Snape away for good? You didn’t say anything or do anything? Again?” Minerva watched as the three injured boys visibly winced with each question she asked.

“We don’t know” James finally admitted. “Just before the holidays me and Sirius ran into Snape in the owlery. We tried talking to him, he was acting kind of strange even for him, but he didn’t really say much. I mean I guess I can’t blame him after what we did”. James looked positively miserable, Minerva almost felt sorry for him. Almost.
“On the train home, he told me he was leaving. Said he wasn’t coming back. I wrote to him once, but he never replied” Remus added. The other two boys turned to him.

“You wrote to him?”

“You never told us that!” Sirius protested.

“I thought it was only fair. I thought if you two found out then you’d only try and make his life miserable again. I didn’t know you liked him though when I sent the letter. It doesn’t really matter anyway”.

Minerva had always liked Remus, although at times she found him to be a bit cowardly for her taste. Oh it sounded awful when she put it like that, but it was true. Even when he’d been made prefect he regularly allowed the other two to flaunt the rules. Always quick to tell off the other students, but when it came to his friends he struggled to defy them. And it seemed this was the result. It was a real shame. Had Severus not been a Slytherin, well those two might very well have been friends. Maybe even more. But of course life was never that simple.

“I see. So you’ve all decided you like Mister Snape now that he’s gone, is that it?”

The three of them nodded miserably. Peter just stood to the side looking vaguely ill. Well he was in the right place for it at least.

“I see” Minerva said. It was all she could think to say.

“Professor?”

“Yes Mister Potter?”

“Do you-do you think we could get him to come back?”

Minerva felt for the boys, she really did. But she couldn’t deny they had this coming. Not after what they’d put Severus through for all those years.

“I thought you were dating Miss Evans?” Minerva asked. Surely the lad wasn’t two-timing the girl.

“I dumped her” James answered rather bluntly. Clearly he didn’t want to talk about it. “It didn’t seem right now that I like Snape” he added. Minerva gaped at him.

“Y-you dumped her?” Minerva asked, stunned.

Everyone knew the story of James and Lily. Of the pureblood and muggleborn who were destined to be together. Many of Lily’s friends had likened it to a modern fairy tale where opposite ends of the social hierarchy joined together in union. With Lily as the princess to be, James as the prince and Severus as the horrid creature that stood in their way. But now James liked Severus. James had dumped Lily for a chance to be with him. Perhaps it had been a fairy tale all along, only Lily’s friends had gotten the roles a little mixed up. Well let’s see; poor boy from a broken home, ridiculed by his peers and abused at every turn. Tormented by the very boys who had now claimed to fall for him. Privately, Minerva felt it was a far more interesting tale than that of Lily and James’.

“Yeah” James replied, eyes downcast.

“She hit him for it” Sirius added.

‘I’m not surprised’ Minerva thought to herself. ‘I’d have hit the little sod too if he’d done that to me’.
Of course she didn’t say such things out loud. She could see where James was coming from and he had done the right thing. Although he’d perhaps gone about it the wrong way. Well maybe, she wouldn’t know. Maybe she could get one of the boys to tell her the details?

“I see. Well I can imagine she must have been rather upset. Did she-you didn’t tell her why did you?” Surely he wasn’t that daft. Although some of those ideas of his would suggest otherwise.

“No, we’d been fighting recently. It seemed like a good time to end it when we were having a bad one. That way people wouldn’t get so suspicious than if I’d just broken it off without warning”.

‘Good’ Minerva thought. “I see” was what she said. She really had to stop saying that. “Well I think that will be all for now. I’ll let Madame Pomfrey see to you and I hope you can work this out amongst yourselves without resorting to violence. Again”. She gave them all a rather pointed look before leaving.

Minerva paused as she was walking through the doorway. “Oh and boys?” They all turned to her. “Might I suggest you start by writing your own letters to Mister Snape? It might help you get your feelings sorted about this matter and I’m sure you’re aware you will need to let him know at some point about your intentions. It won’t do you any good to at the way you have in the past. If he’s gone and left, it’ll take a lot of effort on your parts to try and convince him to come back. Although I suspect he might not return to Hogwarts. It might be a case of you boys waiting until after graduation for him to return”. With that said, Minerva left.

“After graduation? Is she mad?” Peter piped up.

“She’s right” Sirius said gloomily. “Like he’s gonna want to come back to Hogwarts, hell he was bloody miserable here. We’d probably have a better chance of going for him after we’ve left. Prove to him we’ve grown up and stuff”.

“Yeah” James and Ramus agreed.

“Well fuck” Sirius added. Once again James and Remus agreed.

“You guys got any parchment I can have? I have to write a letter?” Sirius finally asked. This time the other two remained silent. “Guys? C’mon I’m serious. I’m completely out” Sirius whined.

They were a sorry sight indeed.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

As promised my next chapter within the two month deadline. Like before I should update within the next two months. I do have another four stories that still need updating.

Thanks again for all the reviews and kudos, I really do appreciate them.

Anyway enjoy!

“This is…” Severus trailed off uncertainly.

“Bullshit!” Evan cried, ripping the parchment from his hands.

“Evan!” Severus protested. “Give it back!” Severus tried to grab the parchment only for Evan to toss it to Derek.

“Read it” Evan ordered, catching Severus’ wrist and pinning him to his chest.

Derek did so.

Dear Severus,

Remus told us he sent you a letter and that you never replied. I guess you wouldn’t though, not after what we did. You’re probably going to burn this as soon as you see who it’s from, but on the off chance you actually read any of this, let me just say one thing. I’m a dick. Happy? I figured if I tried apologising for the pranks and stuff that you’d just think it was some kind of joke. But I’m not apologising, I know I should but I don’t think you’ll accept it even if I did. So instead, I’m agreeing with you. I’m a dick, you said it enough times over the years. I’m actually ashamed of how I’ve treated you (believe it or not but I am). I ridiculed you for everything, even the things you couldn’t control, like your family being poor. It’s not your fault you didn’t grow up the way I did. I’m actually ashamed of how I’ve treated you (believe it or not but I am). I ridiculed you for everything, even the things you couldn’t control, like your family being poor. It’s not your fault you didn’t grow up the way I did. I’m just lucky, not everyone has what I did.

As for the whole Shrieking Shack incident, well I don’t really know what to say. I was an idiot, wait no that’s not right. I wasn’t just an idiot; I mean I almost killed you. Fuck…if James hadn’t…look I understand if you never want to see me again. But I swear on my magic that I never actually wanted you dead. I’m serious! Heh, serious Sirius, get it? Shit, no! Now is not the time to be making jokes! But come on that was pretty funny. Wait what am I saying? Fuck, I’m crap at this.

Okay, well now that that’s out of the way, I have another reason to write to you. You’re gonna laugh when you hear this, or read this or whatever, but I solemnly swear that this is the truth. I don’t think you’re as hideous as I’ve led you to believe. I mean yeah your hair was greasy and you had a big nose. And you were really pale and your teeth were kind of yellow. But you did have a nice arse, that’s something! And if you ask me, there are a lot of potions out there that could fix those things. If you got rid of them all, well I think you wouldn’t be half bad to look at. I bet even I’d want to ask you out. Yeah yeah, laugh it up. I know you must be thinking I’m absolutely barking mad. But that’s kind of why I’m writing this.
I like you...a lot. I might even be in love with you. I don’t know why, I don’t know how, I just know I have these feelings and they won’t go away. Believe me I tried. But I know you’re never gonna like me back. Not after what we did, not after what I did. But I just figured, well I don’t know where you are or if you’ll ever read this, but I just had to tell you how I feel. I don’t expect you to like me back, I doubt you’ll even want to forgive me for all the shit I’ve put you through. I just...well I thought you might want to know just how far I’ve fallen. I figured you’d enjoy that much at least.

That’s all I had to say I guess. Just...nobody’s heard anything from you. Lily was freaking out about it, I guess we all were when Remus said you weren’t coming back. I just, look I’m crap at this mushy shite alright? But just...I hope you’re okay.

Sirius Black

P.S. I know I said I wouldn’t say this. But I’m sorry for everything.

“Is this a joke?” Derek asked them both.

Severus scowled, finally managing to take back the letter. “I don’t know. This is a bit much, even for them”.

“For them?”

“There’s another letter” Evan interrupted, holding it up for Derek to see.

“It’s from Potter” Severus admitted, averting his gaze as they both turned to him.

Derek held out his hand; Evan, ignoring Severus’ protests, handed it over.

“Dear Severus” Derek began reading aloud.

I know Remus wrote to you and I know Sirius was going to write to you. I don’t know if he sent his yet, but I hope you read mine first. Look, about everything that’s happened. Especially with you, me and Lily, I’m sorry alright? I acted like a right arse all because I was jealous. But the thing of it is, I was jealous. I mean obviously, I didn’t exactly make it a secret or anything. The thing is, I wasn’t jealous that you had Lily and I didn’t. It was actually...well it was kind of the other way around.

You remember back in first year before we were all sorted? How we all met on the train and were talking about what house we were gonna be in? Well I do. You’re not gonna believe this, in fact you’re probably gonna get a kick out of this, but I actually liked you back then. I think...I might have even had a crush on you. But then you went and got sorted into Slytherin and I just...I don’t know I guess I panicked. I mean I couldn’t like you, not when you were my enemy. It just, it wasn’t done! Look I know this sounds bloody ridiculous, but after you left I started to remember things. Things like when we first met. That’s when I realised something, I still like you.

What happened at the Shrieking Shack, that was never supposed to happen, I swear! Fuck, when Remus almost got you, do you even realise how fucking scared I was? He could have killed you! You could have...sorry. I guess it affected me more than I thought it would. But just...don’t ever do anything so stupid again! I mean it!

What the hell am I saying? Like I can give you orders. You hate me, you always have and I can’t blame you. I actually tried to make you miserable, what does that say about me? I enjoyed coming up with ways to embarrass you, to humiliate you even. Fuck I’m just, I can’t even...I’m sorry. I’m so fucking sorry for all the shite I put you through.

As for the whole me liking you thing, well I don’t think I like you anymore. I mean I don’t just like
you. Hopefully you’re reading this before you read Sirius’ letter, I really wanted to be the first to say it, but I think I have feelings for you. You know like love and stuff. Sorry, I really am terrible at this, I never was this bad when it was about Lily. Fuck why did I write that? Like you need to be reminded what happened between us.

Oh that’s right, you probably haven’t heard. I broke up with Lily. She’s fine, I mean she’s pissed with me but she’s physically fine. She did hit me though, I thought you might like to know that. She’s got one hell of a punch that girl. So uh, well I kind of did it for you. I couldn’t keep dating her, not when I realised how I felt. It just seemed like a really shitty thing to do. But I know this is a lot to take in. Look I know that you probably won’t want to see me for a long time, like until after we graduate. But I was hoping, you know in the future, that you’d be willing to meet me. Maybe we could get a drink? We’ll be of age, we can even order firewhisky if you like, my treat?

Let me know.

James

Derek frowned down at the letter. “So what are you planning to do about this?”

Severus shrugged. “I don’t know yet”.

“You’re not actually planning to meet them are you?” Evan asked.

Severus looked away. “Graduation is a long time away” he finally said. Both men looked at him stunned.

“You can’t be serious” Evan gaped. “After what they did to you, you’d just forgive them just like that?”

Severus flinched as though he’d been struck. It was a reflex he had hoped he grown out of, but apparently that wasn’t the case. “Fuck you” he spat. Without warning he pushed past them both and stormed down the hallway leaving both men agape.

For a good minute Evan and Derek just stood there. They’d never seen him act like that before, so they were understandably confused by the sight. But once the shock had worn off, panic quickly set in.

“Shit” Evan stated. It really was the best way to sum up the situation.

“You’d better go after him” Derek said. That was all Evan needed to hear before he was off.

Severus didn’t know what to think and as usual when he didn’t have an answer, he reacted badly. Only minutes after he’d swore at his boyfriend, he began to swear at himself. As usual he’d managed to ruin the one good thing he had in his life and once again Black and Potter were to blame. Even when he was thousands of miles away, they still managed to ruin his life. Had he not been so furious about the situation, he might have been impressed. But he was, furious that is.

How could he have been so foolish as to believe they’d never find him? How could he have been so foolish as to let Remus contact him in the first place? Severus had thought he’d left such foolishness behind, back in Hogwarts. This was supposed to be his chance to begin anew and he’d been doing it. He’d even been doing well at it. He had a boyfriend for crying out loud! That would have never happened back at Hogwarts…would it?
First Remus, then Sirius and then James; they all claimed to love him. It just didn’t make any sense. Had someone cast a spell or drugged them with a potion? Surely that was the only logical explanation. There was just no way they could actually like him, let alone love him like they claimed. Well maybe Remus…they did both like to read after all. Remus he could almost understand liking him, but just as a friend. But the other two, their claims that they bullied him because they wanted him, well that was just ridiculous. And Potter, claiming he’d wanted him before they were even sorted, did he really think he was that stupid? Like he’d believe such an obvious lie.

Severus sighed pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration. He was horrified to feel his eyes burning as tears began to form. Through sheer force of will he managed to suppress them, pretending he had something in his eye and hastily scrubbing away the evidence. No one, absolutely no one could know how close he’d came to letting them fall. The very idea was beyond mortifying, it made his gut clench just thinking about it.

Severus was confused. He was hurt, he was mentally exhausted and he wanted more than anything to hide until the problem went away. But he couldn’t. He was no longer a child, he couldn’t simply bury himself under his covers and ignore the world. But how he wished he could. Instead Severus was forced to face his problems head on, something he’d been doing since early childhood. For the most part at least.

Severus sighed once more, albeit rather shakily. A testament to his waning control over his emotions, something he had always prided himself on in the past. As more time passed he only felt worse and once again it was all Potter’s fault. Well Potter, Black and Lupin. Severus only prayed Pettigrew hadn’t caught whatever madness the other three had, he was pretty sure that would just push him over the edge. Even the mere thought of it had him on the verge of retching.

He couldn’t decide what hurt more, that the Marauders were once again playing some sick twisted game at his expense, or that Evan thought so little of him. The very idea he could forgive them so easily had his blood boiling, hence his little outburst. But what really hurt was how little Evan seemed to trust him, how he was treating him as though he was a child incapable of making his own decisions.

“Severus!”

Severus stilled but refused to turn around. This was it, the moment they broke up, he was sure of it.

“Look, I’m sorry alright?”

That was unexpected.

“It’s just, after what they did to you, for fuck’s sake Sev I don’t want you anywhere near them! I mean can you blame me? You told me they almost killed you, that they would have probably gotten away with it if they had. I can’t, I just can’t let you put yourself in that kind of danger. I don’t care what they wrote in those stupid letters, I don’t care if they actually are in love with you, you’re my boyfriend and I just—” Evan stopped talking. With a heavy sigh he wrapped his arms around Severus’ waist, pressing his chest against his back. “I don’t want to lose you”.

Severus breathed out shakily. “I don’t want to lose you” he admitted once he finally got himself under control. He finally let himself sink back into Evan’s arms. As embarrassing as it was to admit, it felt strangely right.

“Good because you’re not going to” Evan muttered in his ear.

“Oi lovebirds! Get a room!” The remark was followed by laughter as they were approached by a
couple of their fellow students.

“Get lost losers, can’t you see we were having a moment? You’ve just gone and ruined it” Evan complained.

“A moment? What do you need another one of them for? I don’t think I’ve seen you two apart more than three feet since you got together. All you’ve had up until now is moments together, what about the rest of us? We might want to pick your boy’s brain, get to know him a little better. But we can’t because you two might as well be attached at the hip”.

Evan knew better than to take offence. They were good guys, both in their early twenties and an aptitude for causing mischief. Although thankfully neither had been involved in that whole spying debacle. And he couldn’t deny that what they said was true. Between himself, Derek and Andrew, Severus hadn’t really been given much chance to socialise with the others. Apparently they’d grown tired of waiting.

“His hip? I’d say he was attached to his dick” the other guy snickered.

Severus could feel his cheeks grow warm at the insinuation. As hard as he tried not to let it affect him, well it sort of did. Despite dating for almost two months, Severus had yet to do anything more with Evan than the occasional handjob or if he was lucky a quick blowjob in the shower. Thankfully their room was equipped with an en suite, had it not been Severus doubted he’d have even gotten that far. The thing of it was, he really did want to take things further, he was just too embarrassed to admit it. It wasn’t just his insecurity about his appearance that held him back, but years of abuse that had left his self-esteem in tatters. From what he looked like when he smiled to how he acted around other people, over the years, people had criticised every little thing about him they could think of. And it hadn’t taken long to take effect.

Severus had never been particularly sociable, but years of ridicule had left him in a constant state of anxiety about every little move he made. Then there was the whole Lily debacle, well the less said about that the better. It certainly didn’t make things any easier. But since he’d left Hogwarts he had been getting better, although it probably helped he no longer had to fear being pelted with whatever spell or object the Marauders had at hand. For the first time in a long time Severus had a chance to relax around other people. He just wasn’t very good at it. Except with Evan. As usual Evan seemed to be the exception, not that Severus was complaining.

“Oh fuck off”. Despite his words, Evan was grinning. Although his smile dimmed somewhat after noticing how uncomfortable his boyfriend looked. “Alright you’ve had your fun; now can you get lost? We were in the middle of something”. When one of them looked ready to say something Evan added; “you can talk to him tomorrow. Scouts honour”. For effect he crossed his arm over his chest, the two just stared blankly.

“Fine, just go easy on him yeah? It’s not gonna be any fun to talk to him if he can’t even move”. The two laughed again, gave them both friendly albeit teasing smiles before leaving them alone once more.

“Hey what the hell is a scout?” Evan heard one of them ask the other. The other only shrugged, he clearly had no clue either. Evan smiled.

“Hey uh, you wanna go back to our room? I get that you probably don’t want to talk about this and we don’t have to. But we should probably move somewhere with more privacy, you know?”

Severus nodded, relieved at the suggestion. He wasn’t sure he wanted to talk about the letters again, it hadn’t exactly gone well the first time. But he doubted Evan would be willing to wait for very long
and he certainly didn’t want to carry on their conversation where everyone could see them.

“Let’s go” Severus finally said. Evan smiled encouragingly.

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Albus frowned at the parchment that sat on his desk. Although he wouldn’t admit it, Minerva’s
remarks about the Snape boy had caught his interest. So he’d done a bit of digging himself. Well that
was a blatant lie, he had people (or house elves) to do the menial work for him, but as he always said
it was the end result that mattered.

What Albus found had troubled him. Or rather, it was what he hadn’t found that troubled him so.
Albus had been aware that Severus hadn’t been happy at Hogwarts for some time. Well it was
understandable after the incident with Remus, it would have been an awful shock to stumble into
something like that. But Albus had been firm in the belief that Severus would get over it eventually.
Ignorance could be to blame, well that or naïve stupidity, but Albus had always been something of
an optimist. He had remained firm in his belief that with time Severus would come around. Sure he’d
been through a terrible ordeal, but what child hadn’t in this day and age. With the war raging outside
of Hogwarts’ hallowed halls, many a child had lost a loved one to the horrors of the war. It was just
how things went, it was inevitable. Sacrifices had to made for the greater good after all. But Albus
had never imagined Severus would leave them.

Hogwarts was a haven, one most children would never think of to leave willingly. For a child to
leave of their own accord was exceedingly rare. On occasion a family tragedy would require the
child’s removal from the school, particularly if that child had lost their financial backing. Hogwarts
prided itself on being the best and the best didn’t come cheap. It was always sad to hear when it
happened, but Albus could hardly be expected to be charitable to every single child who’d fallen
victim to the war, could he? He was an educator and a hero, not a charity. But as rare as it was, there
were perhaps a handful of instances whereby children fled Hogwarts’ hallowed halls of their own
free will.

It was something Albus had taken great lengths to sweep under the rug. It only happened every
twenty years or so, a single child would be a student one day and gone the next. On many occasions
they’d never be seen again. Though Albus has always hoped there was no sinister reason behind it.
But in Severus’ case, well he could not simply be swept under the rug so to speak. The boy was too
talented, too well recognised by his peers for them not to notice his absence. Although Albus had to
admit a large part of that was due to his little skirmishes with the Marauders. Harmless pranks of
course, well except for that one little upset involving Remus, they were just boys after all. But still,
Albus found he couldn’t shake off the feeling that this could have all been avoided.

Severus Snape was indeed quite the talented young man. His knowledge of potions had rivalled even
Horace’s himself and he was still only sixteen. Truly marvellous. But unfortunately that’s where his
talents seemed to end. Oh his grades were excellent, there was no denying that and he did seem to
have quite the aptitude for Defence Against the Dark Arts. But his social skills, well they certainly
left a lot to be desired. Every time Albus had spotted the lad he was always alone, whether it was
during meals or wandering the grounds. He’d been an easy target for pranks Albus had to admit, but
he certainly gave as good as he got. More often than not he could be found in the infirmary, with
whoever had been unfortunate enough to get on his bad side in the bed next to him.

Albus sighed, what else could he do? Despite his best efforts he still hadn’t found the lad. It was
almost as if the lad didn’t want to be found. Albus just didn’t know what to make of it all. He had to
admit he was very disappointed. The Order could have used a lad with Severus’ talents, he would
have been a great asset in the war. But it seemed it was not to be, it really was a great shame.
Oh well, there were many other students whose talents could be of use. There was no use fixating on a halfblood Slytherin, there was still a war to be won. But still, Albus had to wonder, just where had Severus Snape hidden himself?

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The students of Slytherin were facing a rather big problem. Namely the absence of one insignificant halfblood, who against all odds had captured the interest of their beloved Dark Lord. There were many who couldn’t fathom it; Snape was a halfblood, an ugly, poor halfblood at that. Alright yes he was quite talented at potions and defence against the dark arts, but so what? The same could be said for half of Slytherin, well for the latter part anyway. Those in the know however, those who had contact with Malfoy directly, knew better.

Severus wasn’t quite talented; he was a bloody genius. At sixteen he had already been inventing potions and spells for his own use. Who else did that? Certainly not any of his classmates, whose main concerns were who was dating who, what their hair looked like and who they thought would win in the upcoming quidditch match. Even his fellow Slytherins had failed to make much of an impact in the Dark Lord’s eyes. Each confident that their heritage would grant them a prime spot at his side, or at least in his inner circle. Such was the ignorance of youth; they gave nothing and expected everything. However, the cruel reality was that few of them would live long enough to reach such a rank. Not that any of them would be told such things. Not just yet.

The Dark Lord had received word of Snape’s disappearance a few days prior and suffice to say he wasn’t best pleased. The Dark Lord had been assured that his talents would certainly aid their cause. And unbeknownst to his subjects, the idea that a fellow halfblood from a poor abusive background could prove more capable than his smug pureblood classmates, well it was almost like history repeating itself. It had the potential to provide him with great entertainment, but alas such things would not come to plan.

When Voldemort had first heard the news he’d been furious. Such talent was rare, rarer still for it to come from someone who would have been so easy to manipulate. His background would have made him eager to please, eager to show off his skill. His unsociable nature would have kept him uninterested in all the silly goings on; politics and other such nonsense. Had he proved to have the talent Malfoy had claimed, he would have been given a position of power all of his own. He would have been an excellent candidate; he’d actually been looking forward to meeting him. And then of course he’d disappeared.

It was impressive just how easily the halfblood had escaped from not only his own clutches, but those of esteemed light wizard Albus Dumbledore. No one knew where he’d gone, it was as though he’d vanished without a trace. He’d even sent a few of his men to track the boy’s whereabouts but to no avail. At sixteen Severus Snape had outsmarted some of his finest Death Eaters, Voldemort had to admit he was very impressed. With the boy that is, not with his men. No they had been punished accordingly, he didn’t tolerate failure.

The real question was, what else could be done to bring the Snape boy over to his side. No one had seen him, no one had heard from him and there was nothing to suggest they’d do so anytime soon. It was a dilemma to be sure, a bloody infuriating dilemma he had to admit. Fortunately, he had his servants to work out the specifics. He only hoped they would prove more competent than the last.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

A massive thanks to everyone for all your kudos and comments.

Well he hadn’t planned on it, but Severus was officially no longer a virgin. How he’d gotten from arguing about those blasted letters to having what was undoubtedly the best experience of his life, Severus didn’t know. But he certainly wasn’t complaining.

Evan, as he’d expected, had definitely done it before. But much to his surprise, Evan had insisted Severus be the one to penetrate him. He wasn’t complaining, the idea of being the one to take it in that way still concerned him, but he’d expected to be in that position. Evan was older, he had more experience and although he’d never dare say it out loud, he was rather well equipped. Severus, well he wasn’t quite sure what he was to be honest. Oh sure he’d showered with some of his dorm mates on rare occasions, but he’d never been stupid enough to look. And no one had ever said anything, not like that poor sod in fifth year who’d gotten the piss taken out of him for his baby dick. He’d always assumed he was average, whatever that was.

It was kind of funny now that he thought about it. For years he’d been criticised for his ugliness, his sour disposition and outright hostility towards his fellow students. Yet look at him now; he had friends, a devoted boyfriend and a bright future ahead of him. If only the students of Hogwarts could see him now, they’d surely never believe it.

“You still up?”

Evan hid a yawn behind his hand. He winced as he pushed aside the sheets, gesturing him to climb back in. Severus couldn’t help but smile at that. He wouldn’t dare say it out loud, but there was a strange thrill to being the one responsible for Evan’s dishevelled state. With every wince the older man made, it brought up memories of sweat slicked skin, heated flesh and pleasure so intense he feared he’d collapse from the strain. Put simply, Severus had buggered his boyfriend to the point he’d be feeling it for days to come. Not such a loser now, was he?

“Couldn’t sleep”.

“After that? What are you an animal? I mean I know we’re young and supposed to be in our prime, but how can you not be shattered after that?” Severus let Evan pull him closer.

“I said I couldn’t sleep, not that I wasn’t completely shattered”.

“Too much thinking, that’s your problem”. Evan playfully poked him between the eyes. Severus batted his hand away with a soft snort.

“It’s not like I can stop it. I’ve had a lot of things to think about”. Why did he have to say that?

“Like how you’re no longer pure as freshly fallen snow?” Evan teased. Severus thumped him.

“I’m not a girl, asshole. You need to stop with those trashy romance novels. They’re rotting your brain, well what’s left of it”.

Evan snickered before stealing a kiss. “I’m trying to be serious here, you’re not making it easy. Seriously though, you’re not freaking out on me are you? You did fine, a hell of a lot better than me during my first time. So stop freaking out on me”. Evan poked him again, Severus returned the gesture. Evan snickered, then winced as he was reminded of what had just taken place.

“Laugh while you can. You know it’ll be you in my position soon enough”. Evan poked Severus as he’d begun to snicker, only to frown as Severus immediately stiffened at the reminder. “Hey, I was just kidding. We don’t have to; I mean you don’t have to. I won’t make you do something you’re not ready for. And this is kind of a big deal”.

“No, it’s…can we maybe talk about this later? It’s just…I think I want to. Just not right now. I-” Severus frowned. “I need more time, sorry” he mumbled the last bit.

“Hey, I said it’s okay didn’t I? I don’t mind waiting if you want to try it. Plus, well even if you decide you don’t want to it’s not like it’s a big deal or anything. I wasn’t complaining when we were doing it now was I?” Evan grinned.

“Doing it? I’d have thought you’d call it making love” Severus said without thinking.

Evan smirked at that. “Oh? Well I was about to, I mean we are in love aren’t we? But-” he paused for dramatic effect, “-you keep hitting me whenever you think I’ve gotten an idea from one of those romance novels. I thought you wouldn’t like it if I called it for what it was”.

Severus buried his head in the pillow, refusing to let Evan have the satisfaction of seeing him so embarrassed. “Shut up” he grumbled, his words muffled by the pillow.

“Hey, so about these letters. Think those admirers of yours would be pissed if they found out we were together? I was thinking you could write them back, one letter addressed to all three. You could tell about all the wonderful things that has happened to you since you got here. You know like leaving there, making friends, getting an incredibly attractive not to mention highly intelligent boyfriend with whom you have mind blowing sex every night. You know, stuff like that” Evan grinned.

Severus hit him with a pillow. “We only did it once” he grumbled.

“Oh? Is this your way of admitting the sex was fantastic and you want more?”

Severus gave him a flat look. Its effect was somewhat diminished by the bright blush Severus sported, although he desperately tried (and failed) to hide it. “Shut up” he muttered as he turned over. “Go to sleep” he added, stiffening as he felt an arm pull him closer.

“Fine, live in denial” Evan huffed. For a long moment no one said anything. “But seriously, was it good for you?”

Severus remained silent. Only after several minutes passed did he say “yes”.

Evan tightened his grip slightly. “Good, same here”.

“Yeah I figured that much” Severus retorted. Apparently even sex wasn’t enough to make him lose his snarky attitude. “Now go to sleep already”.

Evan smiled, not that Severus could see it. “Night” he said.

“Night” Severus replied.
As he waited for sleep to claim him, Severus’ mind refused to settle. The whole sex thing, as great as it was, wasn’t what concerned him. Not right now anyway. But what Evan had said about those letters, what the letters themselves had said about the marauders, maybe Evan was right. Maybe he should send them a letter. But then, if they knew what he had here, what he’d achieved, would they leave him be? Or would they try and ruin it, like all those times before. He couldn’t let that happen, not this time. Not when he’d finally done something right. No, he was happy here, he had friends here, hell he’d even managed to find a boyfriend here. Whatever game the marauders were playing; he wasn’t buying it. One of them liking him, highly unlikely, two of them liking him, damn near impossible, but three? Something didn’t add up here. He didn’t know what was going on, but there was one thing he was certain of. He was never returning to Hogwarts, no matter how many marauders claimed to be in love with him.

Finally, Severus allowed sleep to claim him, however one last thought plagued him. Did this mean Pettigrew liked him too? Merlin he hoped not.

This was all her fault. He was gone because of her, because she hadn’t done enough to make him stay. She’d let her pride take over, allowed herself to be swayed by the promise of popularity, friends and a handsome, rich boyfriend. She’d done exactly what anyone else would have done in her place, yet she couldn’t feel worse for it. She’d gone along with what everyone expected her to do, she chose James Potter and now what did she have to show for it?

Severus was gone, possibly forever. The one person who’d been with her throughout this whole Hogwarts experience had just disappeared. What if something had happened to him? What if he was hurt or injured? Oh god, what if he was dead? She couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t stop imagining everything that could have happened to him, each scenario more horrifying than the last.

What if he was happy?

Lily stopped in her tracks, was it true? Was he happy? Was he safe? She had no idea and what’s worse, she would probably never know. Oh sure she’d had a good reason, many good reasons in fact for severing their friendship. But that didn’t mean she’d stopped caring, not completely. How could she? He’d been her best friend, the only one who knew what it was like for this to all be new to her. But those days were over, now she was all alone and she had only herself to blame.

When James dumped her, truth be told Lily hadn’t been all that upset. Oh sure she’d cried a little, allowed her friends to comfort her while simultaneously badmouthing him, but that was mostly for show. She knew people expected her to act like that, when someone dumped you that’s how you were supposed to act. But she simply hadn’t cared. Truth be told she wasn’t sure she even wanted to be with James anymore. But he’d been so persistent, so unwaveringly loyal in his attempts to court her that she’d done what any girl might have done. She’d given in.

James had been a wonderful boyfriend, she had to admit. He was funny, charming and always quick to offer her a compliment. The kind of boyfriend any girl would be lucky to have. Yet she’d always felt as though something was amiss. She could never quite put her finger on it, but whenever they kissed or acted as couples should, it always seemed forced. The funny thing was, she couldn’t be sure if it was her or James forcing what should have been a natural progression of their relationship. It had almost felt as though they were just going through the motions. Like they were doing what was expected of them rather than what they actually wanted to do. But that was crazy, wasn’t it? Of course, none of that mattered now. What mattered now was finding her best friend, well her ex-best friend. That’s right, they were no longer friends. Lily swallowed a sob.

Roughly wiping away the tears that threatened to fall, Lily moved to sit at their spot. The place under
the tree where they’d always meet. A place just for her and Severus to be themselves. Once seated she
took out a piece of parchment and her quill. Unbeknownst to her, she was doing exactly what the
marauders had done before her. She was going to write a letter and pray that he got it.

- The letter came at dinner time, just as everyone were tucking into their meals. With the usual mass of
owls delivering post and parcels, a single owl flew to the boys seated in the middle of the table. This
particular owl was smarter than most. It knew the letter it carried was important, just as it knew those
boys had a crisp plate of bacon just within their reach. The letter for the bacon, it was a most
reasonable trade. Of course, humans were notoriously stupid when it came to understanding
creatures as intelligent as himself. Eventually though he left happily stuffed, his letter delivered and
his task done. He would rest at the owlery before he returned home, with any luck his master would
have bacon waiting for him there as well. His master was not like most humans; his master wasn’t
nearly so stupid.

“Is that-?”

“It’s from Snape!” Remus’ eyes widened as he snatched the letter before the other two could get to it.

“Oi!”

“Moony!”

Remus ignored them both, grabbing his bag and making his way back to the tower. Naturally the
other two followed, racing after him as they desperately tried to see the letter for themselves. That
letter had had all three of their names on it, it was addressed to all of them. Who was Remus to just
take it like that?

By the time they’d all reached the tower, the two had calmed considerably. Climbing all those stairs
would do that to a person. Of course it helped that Remus agreed to read it to them, supposedly that
was his plan all along, to get away from the crowds. Sirius wasn’t buying it.

“Read it” James ordered. The three had retired to their rooms, locking the door.

“Dear Black, Lupin and Potter. I got your letters. I won’t tell you where I am, however know that I
am safe and more importantly I’m happy here. I will not be returning to Hogwarts; I have no reason
to. Your letters didn’t change anything, you may all claim to have feelings for me but I honestly
don’t believe any of it. After everything you’ve put me through, you’d think I’d fall for such an
obvious trap? I won’t be made a fool of again. Don’t try and find me. Sincerely, Severus Snape”.

The room was silent. But really, what had they expected? He was right, they all knew it. Yet still
they’d fooled themselves into believing it would all work out. Wasn’t that how it always happened in
the stories? Didn’t the good guys always win?

“So that’s it?” Sirius asked. Without warning he slammed his fist into the bed.

“Yeah that’s-wait. There’s something else, is this another letter?” Remus frowned in confusion. “It’s
addressed to us, but the handwriting isn’t the same”.

“Well go on, read it” James urged. They both crowded around him once more.

“Dear Marauders, Severus does not know I am writing to you but I have things that must be said. He
has told us all about the horrors he had to face back in England. About the bullying, about the abuse
he has suffered at so many hands and of course about a certain problem one of you has whenever the
full moon appears. And then when he finally escapes and finds happiness, you dare contact him claiming to have been in love with him all this time? I have only one thing to say, fuck you! Fuck all of you!” As Remus scanned the next few lines his face paled and the letter fell from his grasp.

Sirius dove for it while James demanded Remus explain what was going on. Seeing as how Remus remained unresponsive, Sirius took over.

“Severus is happy here, he is safe and protected. More importantly he has friends, real friends that can and will support him. He is working to make something of himself, he has more than enough talent to do so. Only now he finally has the support he needs to become something great. To address your declarations of love, well there is something I want you to know. Severus will never be yours and you know why? Because he’s mine. We’ve been dating since soon after we met, what’s more is that we’re in love. And I’m sure you’re just dying to know, yes we have made love, many times in fact. It’s a shame you can’t see him like I can, it’s truly a sight to see. But then, why would I let you? As I said before he’s mine. So I suggest you leave him be. Sincerely, Evan”. Sirius dropped the parchment just as Remus had.

“We were too late” Remus finally spoke.

“Wha-how do we know this isn’t some trick?” James protested. “I mean this Evan guy never ever told us his last name! How can we be sure this is real? Snape, I mean Severus, he might be tricking us. Or one of his friends, this might just be a prank! Right?” James asked the other two rather desperately.

“Y-yeah! You’re right Prongs, that’s got to be it!” Sirius nodded.

“What if it’s the truth?” Remus asked sharply. The other two froze, staring at him with wide eyes. “Don’t pretend like it isn’t a possibility. He’s been gone for months; he was bound to find someone interested in him. We can’t keep living in denial like this. If it’s true then he’s happy, he’s found someone else. Are you really willing to ruin that for him? After everything we’ve already done? Well?” Remus asked them, his voice lacking any of its usual warmth and cheer.

Both James and Sirius silently shook their heads. It was true, they had been clinging to blind hope. Hope that Severus would forgive them, hope that he’d wait for them even. After all, they were supposed to be the good guys and the good guys always got the girl. Well boy in this case. Only, this was no fairy tale, this was real life. And real life was rarely ever kind to those with hope.

“No” was their shared response. There was really no other response they could give. Well not without sounding like complete dicks.

“So that’s it?” Sirius asked after a long silence. “We just give up, just like that? What if this guy’s lying, what if he’s hurting him? All we know is that this guy sent us a letter claiming they were both shagging. Who’s to say he ain’t lying? What if this is his plan all along, for us to just drop it? What if they’re not together and this is his way of buying time to put his own plan into action?” Sirius clearly didn’t know when to quit.

“He has a point” James said. “We don’t know anything but what that letter says. And if he kept it a secret from Snape, how can we be sure it’s even real? I’m not ready to let this drop. Are you?”

Remus sighed. “No, but what else can we do? We don’t know anything; we don’t even know where they are. If we send anymore letters, who’s to say he’ll even read them?”

“So what, we just keep waiting? Until we leave Hogwarts and maybe have a chance of running into him again? And what if we don’t? What then? I’m not about to sit on my arse and wait for this Evan
guy to take Snape away from me” Sirius protested. “Us, I meant us” he added, noticing the looks they gave him.

“He said he was happy, he even asked us not to contact him again. I don’t know about you guys, but I’m going to do what he said. I’m sure we’ll meet again in the future, and I’d rather he didn’t try and hex me at first sight” Remus admitted.

Sirius huffed, flopping onto his bed and staring up at the ceiling. “You think it’s true then, that they already shagged? I mean it’s Snape, right?” For once he wasn’t trying to be a dick, not purposely at least. But Snape had always been an ugly git, oh sure he fancied him but he wasn’t blind you know. But it wasn’t like he wanted Snape for his face, no. There were many reasons he wanted him, but his looks had never crossed his mind. Nor anyone else’s he would suspect.

“Maybe, he could have finally done something about his appearance. If he really wanted to start over, wouldn’t that be a good place to start?” James wondered aloud. It was of course wishful thinking. If they were to date, it would be so much easier if Snape didn’t remain the ugly old git he had been before he left. Truth be told it wouldn’t be too much of an effort to fix him; if he changed his hair, fixed his nose and didn’t spend so much time inside he could be rather attractive.

“Does it make a difference? If they already have, well what business is it of ours? It’s not like either of you haven’t done anything. Especially you Sirius” Remus said. An awkward silence stretched before Remus spoke once more. “I’m going to the library” he announced.

“I guess I’ll get started on that essay McGonagall assigned” Sirius sighed.

“But we only got the assignment today. It’s not due for two weeks, are you feeling okay?” James asked, clearly concerned.

“He’s right, this isn’t like you” Remus added, hovering in the doorway.

“Yeah well, maybe he’d like me more if I wasn’t like myself” Sirius muttered darkly. The other two frowned, clearly something had to be done about this.

“Padfoot” Remus started, only for Sirius to throw up a hand to stop him.

“Forget it, I’m going for a walk. Don’t follow me” Sirius said, pushing past them.

“Wha-Padfoot!” James called after him, Sirius never even looked back. “Shit” he muttered. Remus nodded in agreement.

“I didn’t think he liked him so much” James admitted.

“Neither did I” Remus replied.

“He’s still gonna choose me though” James added with a grin. All this serious talk wasn’t good for him; it wasn’t good for any of them.

“Whatever helps you sleep at night” Remus replied, though he struggled to suppress his smile.
It was Lily’s handwriting. Severus stared down at the letter in his hands. Lily had written him a letter, but why? She’d made it pretty clear she wanted nothing to do with him. It had been her choice to ignore him, her choice to abandon him like everyone else had. And now after all this time she had written him a letter. A letter he hadn’t even opened, how could he? And what about the timing? First the marauders and now her, was he supposed to believe it was some kind of coincidence? Did they really think he was that fucking stupid?

“You’ve gotta be fucking kidding me. What the hell are those dicks playing at?”

Severus startled as Evan snatched the letter out of his hand, his arm curling possessively around his waist. “Do you mind? It’s not from them, it’s from Lily”. Severus averted his gaze.

“Lily? Wait, isn’t she that friend of yours who left you for that Potter prick?”

“He dumped her, remember?”. Perhaps that wasn’t the best thing he could have said, reminding Evan that both were available and clearly interested in him. Well Potter apparently was, he wasn’t sure about Lily. He still couldn’t bring himself to look at the letter.

“Is this your way of trying to make me jealous?” Evan asked, moving behind him to rest his chin on his shoulder.

“Is it working?” Severus asked curiously. It wasn’t his intention obviously, but he kind of liked when Evan let his jealous tendencies show. It was nice to have someone who cared enough to be jealous for him. But still, he knew he’d have to be very careful, true jealousy only ever seemed to cause harm. He’d had more than enough experience with that.

“A little” Evan admitted. “But can you blame me? The thought of them seeing you like this, of seeing you when we’re in bed together, I don’t like it. Not after what they did to you. They don’t deserve you like we do; they never did”.

Severus could actually feel Evan grinning against his neck. Torn between wanting to thump him and kiss him for being a complete sap, he failed to notice the mischievous grin Evan sported, until it was too late. What started as a few soft caresses soon became more heated. And like most teenagers, when things got started they didn’t seem much need to stop. So it was some time before either of them felt ready to broach the subject of Lily’s letter once more. Although to be honest, Severus had been hoping Evan would forget about it. No such luck.

“So was it good for you?” Evan smirked lazily, tracing patterns on his skin.

Severus snorted, it was just about the only thing he had the energy to do. Not that Evan could take full credit for that. His earlier exam that morning had most certainly had its effect on him. But, not that he wanted to inflate Evan’s head any more than it already was, he could admit Evan had
definitely been the one to finish him off. In more ways than one.

“So about that letter-” Severus groaned, Evan ignored him, “-you know you need to open it. I mean I’d do it if you wanted me to, but you’re gonna have to read it at some point. I know you, you’re gonna go mad if you never read it. It’ll just sit there, taunting you”.

Severus hated it when he was right and he was so very right. Hell, he’d already begun to picture it. He couldn’t stand not knowing things like that, especially when it came from Lily. As much as he hated to admit it, she was still his Lily. Even if he wasn’t her Severus anymore. Apparently that would never change.

“Tell you what, we open it up together right now and since we have tomorrow off, we spend the whole day in bed fixing whatever that stupid piece of parchment ends up doing to you. Whatever she’s written, it won’t matter because I’m here to keep you from getting hurt again. Alright?”

A kiss was Severus’ answer, one Evan was more than happy to return. “Thanks”. Nothing more needed to be said.

“You gonna open it, or should I?”

Severus handed it over wordlessly. Why? He wasn’t sure. The whole thing with Lily, well it was just too exhausting to think about. He’d already given so much in terms of time and energy, that at this point he didn’t think he had anything left to give. Their earlier antics hadn’t exactly helped matters either.

“Right, here we go”. Evan opened the letter and began to read.

Dear Severus,

You were right. Potter was an absolute arse, just like you always said. I’m sure you’ll be glad to know we’re no longer together. You know he dumped me? I’m still not even sure why, but I can’t help feeling like there was someone else. But then he hasn’t looked at anyone else here at Hogwarts, so maybe it’s a girl he met over the summer. But that’s beside the point.

How are you? I can’t tell you how much I hope you’re safe. No one seems to know where you went, it’s as though you just disappeared. I hope you know just how much you scared me by doing that. I know, I know, I sound awful right now. But I can’t help feeling like there was someone else. But then he hasn’t looked at anyone else here at Hogwarts, so maybe it’s a girl he met over the summer. But that’s beside the point.

How are you? I can’t tell you how much I hope you’re safe. No one seems to know where you went, it’s as though you just disappeared. I hope you know just how much you scared me by doing that. I know, I know, I sound awful right now. But I can’t help it, since you’ve left it’s like I can’t talk to anyone. You were the one person who really understood me. And I know I didn’t treat you the way friends should. But then, neither did you if I’m being honest. I mean I told you time and time again about those Slytherin boys, but you just kept pushing me away and ignoring my concerns. And then you called me that word, so I did what I thought was best.

Evan paused, eyes wide in disbelief. “Wait, did she hook up with that Potter guy to get back at you?”

“Not right away” Severus admitted. “She’s not that kind of girl”.

But that wasn’t the reason I decided to write to you. I just…well I miss you. More than you could possibly know. I know on the train, the last time I saw you, you said you were leaving. And to be honest, I didn’t really believe you. But at the same time, I actually felt kind of relieved. I mean despite what many people say about you, you really are talented. I was actually a little jealous of you. You always seemed to know just what to do or say, while I always just seemed to follow your lead.

“What?” Severus frowned, since when had she ever followed his lead? Except perhaps during first year. Hell, he’d always been the one following her around, not the other way around.
Evan continued.

*I just, if you could write me back and tell me you're okay, it would really make me feel better. I can’t stand not knowing where you are, if you’re safe or not. I really hope you are safe, but with no news in all the time since you left, well I can’t help but worry.*

*Your friend,*

*Lily*

“Un-fucking-believable” Evan spat.

Severus merely sighed, couldn’t he at least wait until they’d read through the whole thing? All these interruptions were really getting on his nerves. “What is it now?”

“How attached are you to this girl? I mean I get that she was your friend, but she’s practically made this entire letter to you about herself. Is that usually what happens?”

He had a point.

“No it’s, I mean she…” Severus trailed off.

Of course it wasn’t, Lily wasn’t that kind of girl. She was just worried about him, friends were supposed to tell each other how they felt, right? Granted that his own experience with friends was somewhat limited to when he left Hogwarts. But still, he’d known Lily for years, she’d hardly ever changed in all that time. She’d just always been that way, always telling him how much she worried about him over the summer. She knew what went on in his house, or rather she knew the watered-down version. So what if she was a little heavy-handed with making him feel bad for worrying her? She couldn’t help it; she was just that caring. Or at least she was before everything went tits up.

‘Yes’. The thought echoed throughout his mind, just that one word managed to stop him in his tracks.

It was true. He could make as many excuses for her as he liked, but it would still be true. Friend or not, Lily had always managed to make him feel bad for worrying her. He was sure she didn’t mean to, she wasn’t spiteful like that, but she still managed it all the same. And living the life he had, he’d grown all too used to feeling like shit. But now that things were different, well maybe it was time for a change.

“Are you going to write her back?” Evan asked. He tightened his grip around him, almost by instinct.

“I…I don’t know”. He really didn’t.

This was Lily, his Lily. Only his Lily and this Lily seemed to be two separate people, despite being one and the same. His Lily had been there for him, had made him smile and feel good just by being around him. This Lily…didn’t. After what had happened between them and the months they spent apart, he’d come to realise he no longer knew her as he once had. In his own way he’d mourned the loss. But then he’d left, moved to Japan and ended up happier than he’d ever been. He’d even begun to forget her, just a little more each day.

“Let’s not talk about it now. If I remember correctly, I promised you we’d spend the day in bed together. So, you wanna shag?” Evan smiled gently before leering at his boyfriend.

Severus snorted. Distraught as he was over Lily’s letter, he could always count on his boyfriend to
snap him out of it. And let’s face it, like he was going to say no to sex.

“Do me a favour? Don’t ever say shag again, you sound ridiculous”.

Evan grinned. “Maybe, but when you say it it’s pretty fucking hot. Makes me think of the things we do when we’re alone, our naked bodies thrusting against each other—” Evan licked his lips, only for Severus to interrupt.

“What have I told you about those bloody books of yours? This isn’t some god awful harlequin romance novel you know”. Severus tried to keep scowling out of sheer stubbornness, but it was difficult to do so when Evan began touching him just the way he liked it.

“You know I’d bet you’d love them if you tried them. Sometimes I just imagine that it’s our story on the page. That I’m the devastatingly handsome young stable-hand and you’re the delicate little flower in need of saving from the dastardly villain”.

Severus gave him a flat look. “Delicate little flower?” He obviously wasn’t very pleased.

Evan winced. Perhaps that wasn’t the best line he could have come up with. But it was true, sorta. Severus was pretty delicate, just like a flower. He certainly wasn’t muscular, not like himself, not that it made any difference. What he lacked in strength he made up in intelligence, wit and sheer wrath. Truthfully, he was scary as fucking hell when he wanted to be.

“A very beautiful flower” Evan amended. “One I’m very lucky to have and who I love with all my heart and—” Evan made a break for the door. Luck however wasn’t on his side.

“How did you do that?” Evan demanded, the mood shifting from playful to serious in an instant. Not that the whole flower nonsense hadn’t soured Severus’ mood a little.

“How did you do that?” Of course he knew what Evan was going on about, but past experience had taught him that doing wandless magic usually ended up badly for him in the aftermath. Do magic with a stick and all is fine, throw the stick away and suddenly everyone thinks you’ve gone mad.

“You closed this door without saying a spell. Hell you didn’t even use your wand. You’re telling me after all this time, I only now find out you can do wandless magic?”

Severus shifted nervously. This was it, the moment everything good in his life fell apart. All because he’d acted without thinking, yet again. He really had to do something about that.

“Fucking hell, you’re just full of surprises, aren’t you?” Evan surged forward and kissed him.

Severus stared at him. Alright maybe he kissed back a little, or a lot, to be honest it had become something of a conditioned response at this point. But mostly he just stared. Where was the yelling? Where was the disgust? Where was the anger? The jealousy? When you found out someone could wield wandless magic, beyond the usual level of accidental magic most witches and wizards experience, your first reaction usually wasn’t to snog them senseless. At least he didn’t think so. Well it’s not like he had much experience in this area. His dad knew shit all about magic and his mum, well she’d come to fear even mentioning the word lest his dad overhear. Not that it mattered much now, his mum was long dead.

“What are you-?” Evan kissed him again. At the risk of sounding like a complete girl, he found himself quite literally breathless. “Have you gone mad?”

“Fancy that shag now?” Evan ignored his question, smirking down at him and doing things that left him gasping from both pleasure and embarrassment.
“But I thought...” Evan reached down, preventing Severus from finishing whatever thought he’d had. Instead he panted as Evan’s fingertips brushed against his entrance. It wasn’t so much the action that left him squirming and needy, but the way his mind brought forth so many memories. Memories of Evan spread out and whining, craving his touch. Memories of himself in Evan’s place, the way his heart raced at the feeling of another’s hand on him and another’s cock inside him.

“Are you sure?” Evan asked, letting his fingers still as Severus fought the urge not to grab his hand and keep it where it had been.

Was he sure? Was he seriously asking at a time like this? When he’d had his fingers there and they were...doing stuff. It was rather funny how the thought of sex seemed to affect him more than the act itself. How his every emotion seemed intensified by the mere thought of it.

“Just get on with it”. He had hoped to sound a little less desperate. Fortunately Evan didn’t seem to mind.

What followed next was their usual routine. A whispered spell, the rather odd feeling of being emptied and then filled with something that certainly wasn’t natural, followed by the insertion of something that was most assuredly natural. By the end of this process, with both bodies stilled and muscles taught, both boys would lie panting, looking into each other’s eyes with what they were sure was love. And then of course one would inevitably shift, the other would move and good times would be had by all. Leaving them both sticky, sated and in that somewhat blissful state where nothing seemed to matter but each other.

“Wow” Evan breathed. He chuckled breathlessly, Severus soon following. “So about that letter...” Evan yelped as Severus pushed him off the bed. “You didn’t even hear what was I was about to say!”

“Unless your next words were ‘I’m going to forget the stupid thing ever existed’, then I suggest you put your mouth to better use”. It was only after he’d finished speaking that he realised just how that sounded.

“Oh?” Apparently Evan had too. At least judging by the smirk he now sported. “So what’ll it be? Eat you out or suck you off?”

Severus had never been so embarrassed and that was saying a lot.

“Or do you want both?” Evan asked, cocking his head to the side as he climbed back on the bed. He watched Severus closely; the way his breath hitched, his dick swelled, all the little (or in some case big) things that clued him into just how much his boyfriend seemed to like that idea. Not that he expected him to just come out and say it. Severus never had been one for words. He communicated just fine without them.

In the end, both boys were left feeling extremely satisfied. Enough so that the letter that had started this whole mess lay forgotten on the floor. Of course it would hardly be the end of it all. Severus still wasn’t sure if he’d even reply. With the Marauders it had been easy. But this was Lily, Lily had never been easy. She’d been his everything for the longest time and even now he found it difficult to just discard her like that. Yes they had their differences, but perhaps it wouldn’t be so bad to just let her know he was safe. Safe and loved, the way he’d always imagined himself with her. Talk about irony.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Just to warn you, there are a few pov switches. As always I use - to separate them. Also, thanks a million for giving this fic over 1000 kudos. It’s the first time I’ve ever gotten 1000.

Dear Lily,

Two days and that’s as far as he’d gotten. But what was he supposed to say? Truth be told, he wasn’t even sure of his feelings for her. For the longest time he’d loved her and gotten royally fucked over. Then he left and all of a sudden he was getting bombarded with letters from his enemies, begging him to give them another chance. And Lily, his Lily, she said she missed him. It was, at least it should have been, exactly what he wanted. Minus the whole Marauders situation, because that was just too fucked up for words.

“You’re not seriously thinking of replying, are you?” Andrew asked, as he glanced up from his books.

“I don’t know. Evan doesn’t think I should”. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that. So what if Evan said he shouldn’t, it should have been his decision, right? But then, he was his boyfriend. And Evan was older, he could know more about this sort of stuff.

“I think he’s right. I mean I know you liked her and all, but from what you told us, she wasn’t exactly considerate of you. You remember when you first came here, how you were pretty much a mess? That place, that school or whatever, it wasn’t good for you. Neither were the people in it. You’re happy here, right?”

“Yeah”. He really was. He was happier than he’d ever been.

“Then fuck ‘em. Fuck the lot of them. They’re in the past and this, all of this, this is your future. Quit dwelling on shit that’s already happened. You know you’re allowed to be happy. So be happy. Forget about the letters, stop thinking about what if and just do what makes you happy”. Andrew stretched, letting out a sigh. “Think about it. You’re the youngest guy here, everyone respects you and as far as I know, everyone likes you too. Here you’ve got friends, a boyfriend and based on what I’ve heard, you’re guaranteed to get a job in research”.

“And how would you know that?”

“I overheard Ichijou-sensei talking about it. You know about the war, right? With that guy, Voldysnort is it? Well apparently people have been freaking out about it over in Europe and stuff. He hasn’t really reached over here yet, but I heard rumours of him making his presence known in Russia. So, you know, now’s the time to act. It’s kind of why we’re all here. They need wizards like us, intelligent and creative, so we can figure out a way to stop this before things really get fucked up. And honestly, they need guys like us doing this. We’re young, soon to be very well connected and most importantly, we’re all talented. We can think of things they haven’t even considered. Hell, we just might win this was if we keep at it!”
“Do we even get a choice?” Severus asked, frowning.

Andrew looked over at him, sighing deeply. “Yeah, course we will. They can’t force us to do anything. But still, it doesn’t feel right just sitting back and letting all those people die. I mean the guy’s a freak! Think about it, in a few years we’ll probably start thinking about starting a family and stuff. Well you might want to add on an extra five. I know I wouldn’t want to raise my kids in a world run by a complete psychopath. How about you, planning to have kids with Evan?”

Severus coughed once, then twice and pretty soon he found himself struggling to stop. Andrew’s attempt to help, by practically punching him in the back, strangely didn’t do much to help. If anything, it might have made it worse. But thankfully, before he really started to choke, he managed to gain control of his breathing.

“I’m not even thinking about that!” Severus croaked, his face ablaze and his eyes wide with fear. Or panic. And was that a little bit of resentment he could see there?

“Why not? I mean yeah you’re sixteen. But that doesn’t mean you can’t plan for the future. You guys even gonna stay together once this is over? You got plans to move in together? To find jobs near each other?” Andrew fell silent at Severus’ distraught look.

“No…we haven’t. We just…we haven’t talked about it” Severus mumbled. He stared down at his trousers, clutching the fabric tightly. His forehead creased as he frowned, his mood dramatically worsening. “We-” he fell silent. For once it seemed he had no words.

“Well you should. You deserve to know if he thinks you two have a future together. If not, well I can always pay him a visit. But you know, I’m pretty sure he wants to keep you. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but he’s kind of a complete sap when you’re around. It’s pretty sickening”. Andrew sighed, then stretched before finally standing up. “Well I’m beat. Just think about what I said, I’ll see you in the morning”. Andrew reached over to mess up his hair, chuckling at his grumbling, before grabbing his books and leaving.

Severus huffed, running a hand through his hair in an attempt to undo the damage. He glanced down at his own books, sighing in irritation as he too began to pack up. It really wasn’t that late, barely even nine thirty, but after their little conversation, Severus was finding it difficult to stay focused on his studies. Andrew was right, he hadn’t even thought about his future. Their future. Which made no sense, as he’d always been the type of person to plan ahead. Of course, with his lot in life, it had become something of a necessity. If he ever wanted to make something of himself that is.

“There he is! C’mon Severus, you’re coming with us whether you like it or not!” A familiar face grinned at him. Before he even had time to blink, he was suddenly pulled from his chair and forced out the door. But rather than scream, fight or even complain, he only sighed. Apparently this was what friends did.

“Where are we going?” He glanced at his classmates, searching for any clues. Sadly, he found nothing of use. Although he did have his suspicions, after two of them shared almost identical marks on their necks.

“The onsen, where else? What, you wanted to rake lines in the sand?” One of them pulled a face, “look at me, I’m all spiritual and shit. I’m drawing lines in the sand because I don’t have anything better to do”. The others laughed and Severus joined in. He didn’t agree with it, he’d actually tried it himself and found it quite relaxing. But he wasn’t stupid enough to admit it. These guys were his friends; they’d be taking the piss out of him for weeks if they knew.

“C’mon let’s go, before Evan finds us. I swear he’s got a tracking charm on you. We can barely get
you alone anymore”. Another complained, drawing snickers from the rest of them. “What? It’s true! He’s like a damn bloodhound. I mean the other day we were just talking, then all of a sudden Evan shows up out of nowhere and they start making out in front of me! I’m seriously scarred for life”.

“What the hell? We did not!” Severus protested, as the others began laughing at them. “We didn’t!” Severus insisted, glaring as it only made them laugh harder.

“Whatever man. Hey if you’re getting laid, that’s all that matters”.

“Are we going or what?” Severus scowled, crossing his arms in irritation.

“Ooh, look out. You made him mad!” That set them off again, leaving Severus to roll his eyes and storm off without them. “Hey wait! C’mon Severus, you know we’re only taking the piss. Oh come on, quit being such a girl!” The others chimed in with similar comments.

Why were they friends again? Severus kept asking himself that. Of course they weren’t nearly as bad as his fellow Slytherins had been. They were complete dicks at times, sure, but he could take them. And despite their mocking and teasing, they did apparently like him. He was still a little unsure about that, but they did constantly seek him out. And it wasn’t even just to study. No, it was for things that friends did together; drink smuggled booze, play cards, visit the onsen and such. At least he assumed that’s what friends did. He’d never done things like this with his fellow Slytherins and heaven forbid he try bathing naked in some hot springs with Lily. Hell he still found it embarrassing just going with the guys.

“Sev?”

Evan. His knight in shining armour. Quite literally in fact.

“What happened to you?” Severus frowned, unable to stop staring at the actual suit of armour Evan sported.

“No! No, just no! Evan we had a deal! We get Severus, you two share a room for fuck’s sake! It’s our time to have a bit of fun and we don’t need you shoving your tongue down his throat. We’re still friends, don’t get me wrong, but…what the fuck are you wearing?” A tall brunette began his rant, only to stop and gape as he finally processed what he was seeing.

“There was an…accident”. Severus frowned as Evan pointedly looked away. Heaving a great sigh, after everyone continued to just stare at him, Evan continued. “Two of the pages were stuck together so I managed to mix up a transfiguration spell with some kind of sticking charm. Basically, I’m stuck in this stupid thing until Ozawa-sensei finds the cure. There, happy?”

It took some time for anyone to respond. Most were too preoccupied with laughing their heads off to even pretend to be sympathetic. Severus included, though he had at least attempted to hide it. Most of the others though, weren’t nearly as considerate.

“Oh fuck off!” Evan glared, giving them the finger and storming away. Of course his actions only made the suit creak and clang, inciting more laughter.

Severus supposed, being his boyfriend, he ought to try and help him. The others however, had very different plans.

“Poor bastard. Okay let’s get moving. Severus you’re coming with us whether you like it or not. Besides, I’m no expert, but sex with that thing on just seems like a bad idea. Think of it as a public service; as your elders we’re protecting you from possibly fatal injuries. Just think of all those sharp metal edges that close to your junk. It’s just urgh”. The brunette from earlier swung his arm over his
shoulders. Effectively pinning him at his side.

“You mean pubic service”. Another brunette piped up, grinning proudly as the rest of them snorted in amusement and disgust.

“What the hell man? I don’t want to be thinking about that shit. I just ate!”

Severus rolled his eyes at their antics. He scowled slightly at the weight on his shoulders, he never had been one for all that touchy feely crap. Except with Evan of course. But that’s just what these guys did. That’s just what friends did. This whole friendship thing was weird as fuck sometimes. But, he had to admit, it wasn’t as bad as he’d feared. And he had a point about those sharp edges. Severus shuddered at the thought.

- 

Lily’s hands trembled as she re-read the letter that had arrived that morning. Severus, her Severus was safe. He was alive and that’s what mattered, right? At least, that’s how it should have been. She read the response once more, tears threatening to spill.

I’m safe.

Two words, was that really all he’d sent her? She’d worried herself sick over him! They’d been friends for how many years and that’s all he’d deemed to send her? What kind of a friend did that? Did he really not care about her feelings? God she felt so stupid! To think she’d spent all that time worrying about him. Wondering if he was even still alive. And all he sent her was two words.

Lily bit her lip, closing her eyes as the tears finally fell. She let the letter drop to the floor, crumpling in on herself as she cried. She wasn’t sure why, she was just too overwhelmed by everything. Things weren’t happening the way she’d thought they would. Ever since he’d just abandoned her, her life had become a shadow of what it had been. She no longer had James, not that she cared so much anymore. Her friends just didn’t understand her, not like Severus always had. She was struggling in class, unable to focus the way she used to.

It was strange to think about how Severus’ absence was affecting her. Even after their fight, she’d been fine. Well not totally fine, but she’d had her friends and then James. They supported her, comforted her in the way Severus used to. But then he left. And why it affected her so, she didn’t know. But before, well she always knew he was still around. She’d seen him with those Slytherins, laughing at their stupid jokes. She’d seen him in class, had even caught him looking her way. In a weird way, she’d felt comforted just knowing he was still there. Oh sure she wasn’t talking to him and who could blame her? But he was there, always there. Only, then he left and suddenly he was gone. And she…well she missed him. She really, really missed him. Of course, now it was too late.

So Lily cried, it was all she could do. She couldn’t really talk to anyone about this. Her friends would think she was crazy. James…well he’d dumped her. And her professors? No, just no. This was way too personal for her to talk about with any of them. So who did that leave? No one but herself. What was it her father used to say? Do a good deed and it will be returned. Do a bad deed and expect retribution. Was this perhaps her retribution? She’d hurt Severus, she knew she had. But then he’d hurt her, quite badly indeed. She was sure he’d been in the wrong, he’d just stopped listening to her long before the incident. But what if, somehow, she wasn’t entirely without blame?

Lily’s cries subsided, her eyes still moist as she reached for the letter once more. ‘I’m safe’ it still read. She’d hoped for more, she’d longed for more, but that’s all that was written there. She took a deep breath, then another and finally one more. ‘I’m safe’ she read again. ‘He’s safe’ she thought to herself. He’d done as she’d asked, he’d let her know he was safe. So she supposed that would have
to be enough for her. It wasn’t enough, it couldn’t possibly be enough, but she could pretend it was. At least for a little while.

Useless the lot of them. They all claimed to be searching for answers, for reasons why this brat had fled, or even where he’d gone. Yet even the threat of execution wasn’t enough to motivate them. Every day it was the same response; “we don’t know”. Had he known what imbeciles these boys would be, he never would had bothered with them. But then, what choice did he have? Their parents already served under him, these boys were the next generation, the ones being raised to serve. As stupid as they were, they were raised to be loyal and loyalty was what he needed. If had had any chance of eradicating the filth that polluted his streets, he needed only the best serving him. These boys were not the best, they wouldn’t be for many years. But that one brat, the one that had gotten away, now he’d been promising. Very promising indeed. Even with his rather unfortunate bloodline.

“Find him” he hissed. He stared down at the trembling sack of shit standing before him. “Bring him to me”.

Like the vermin he was, the young man fled. Leaving a trail of what was unmistakably urine, in his wake. Sneering in disgust, he snapped his fingers. In an instant his servants flocked to him, gazing at him with fear, awe and in one poor sod’s case, sheer loathing. Sadly, said poor sod was soon no more.

Hogwarts was supposed to be a sanctuary. That’s what she’d been led to believe. But the more she searched and the more she found, Minerva McGonagall began to question it all. Why? The disappearance of one boy; Severus Snape. One boy who despite all her searching and inquiries with every school she could think of, had simply vanished without a trace. But why was she so devoted to this? He hadn’t even been in her house. If anything, he’d been made the victim by those she was responsible for. So in a way, that made her responsible for his fate too. Didn’t it?

“Tea, Professor?” She glanced up from her letters, sighing as she caught sight of one of the school house elves.

“Please. Thank you Mipsy”.

The elf made quick work of the tray. Steeping the leaves and adding the lemon, just the way she liked it. Once done, she curtsied before disappearing with a loud crack.

Minerva let out a sigh, picking up her teacup and taking a cautious sip. Smiling just a little, she let herself relax. At least until the questions began forming once again.

It really was a mystery; one she was desperate to solve. How was it a sixteen-year-old boy had managed to outwit them all? They were supposed to be some of the greatest minds of their generation. Even Albus had been unable to locate the boy. Though she sometimes wondered if he’d even tried to look for him in the first place. After all Horace had barely even given it a second thought. The boy was gone, as far as he was concerned. And Albus, well he had always been a bit too lax when it came to the Snape boy. He never had taken her concerns about him too seriously. About the way her boys had treated him. It pained her to admit it, but young Severus Snape could quite well be Albus’ biggest mistake to date. He’d failed that boy; she was sure of it. But then, hadn’t she done the same?
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Thanks for everyone’s reviews for the last chapter. I hope you enjoy this chapter as well.

It had been a long time since Severus had known true fear. But if what he’d heard was true, he had a very good reason to be afraid. There had been a rumour spreading throughout the complex, regarding a certain missing student being hunted by a very powerful wizard. While the details were virtually non-existent, the similarities to his own situation were enough to put him on edge. If what little he’d heard was true, the Dark Lord himself was out hunting for him.

It sounded utterly ridiculous and at first, he’d actually laughed at the thought of it. Oh sure, he knew all about those little meetings the seventh years had been attending over the holidays. Hell, everyone did. And there had been talk of him joining them soon enough, it seemed his potions talents hadn’t gone unseen. But then he’d left, leaving behind that life to find his own happiness. And quite frankly, he’d yet to regret it. Who knows what might have happened to him if he’d stayed? He was almost certain it wouldn’t have ended up well for him. Nothing ever did back in England. But here, in Japan, things were different.

It had taken a lot to get Severus to where he was now. Whereas before he’d been an awkward teenager; distrustful and shy around others, he’d since become a confident, albeit rather quiet, young man. He’d even come to like being around others, although this was usually in small doses. But still, he willingly talked to people outside of lessons, he participated in card games and the like and as for his boyfriend, well you can probably imagine what they got up to. Before, Severus had to do everything the hard way. With no family to protect him and no friends to support him, he wouldn’t have had a choice. It had taking to moving to the other side of the world, for Severus to finally catch a break. And now, Severus was no longer forced to do things the hard way. With the way the others treated him, well he’d never had it easier.

This rumour though, it was troubling. While Severus was sure he was safe, no one knew where he was after all, it didn’t stop him worrying. They said the Dark Lord would stop at nothing to get what he wanted and if that were true, what chance did he have of escaping? But it wasn’t true, it couldn’t be true! The idea was just ridiculous. Sure he had some talent and yes it was likely the man had heard of said talent, but then so did hundreds of witches and wizards. The idea that Europe’s most wanted was searching for him and him alone, well it was laughable! He just wasn’t worth it. He wasn’t saying it to be modest, it was just another fact of life. Severus was replaceable, he always had been. There was nothing special about him, certainly nothing to warrant so much attention. But then, wait…what was he thinking? Of course it was a lie, it had to be! He could had laughed at himself for thinking such nonsense.

“What’s so funny?”

Severus startled as a familiar weight settled across his back. Though he just as quickly relaxed into his boyfriend’s hold. His boyfriend, even now the thought still had him smiling.

“Nothing. Just stupid rumours. How did it go?”
Evan kissed him, just a quick peck, before answering. “Well…I got it”. Evan ducked his head rather bashfully, though it was clear by the blinding smile on his face that he was happy.

“Y-you did?” Severus stared at him wide-eyed, before a matching grin spread across his own face. “Evan that’s-” Severus kissed him.

It was great news, fantastic news even! As part of the programme, they were all required to partake in an apprenticeship with a specially selected mentor. For Severus, as Andrew predicted, he’d been offered an amazing opportunity within a medical research facility. Having witnessed his talent with potions and surprising talent with healing spells, a side effect of having lived at Hogwarts for so long, Severus had been stunned when he’d been offered the chance to complete his apprenticeship there. For the next six months, he’d be learning everything he needed, to combat against hundreds of different ailments and diseases. From rare poisons to lethal spells, he’d gain valuable knowledge in how to not only defend but fight back against such things. In some cases, using only common household ingredients. It sounded ridiculous and more like something you’d find in some housewife magazine, but hell he’d seen it himself. The things one could do with a squirt of lemon juice, it was actually quite frightening.

Evan wouldn’t be joining him. At first it had been upsetting, but thinking rationally, he’d known it was coming. Based on what Evan had just told him, he was to begin training to become a Spell Inventor. Sure the name was pretty comy, but the job itself was both difficult and in high demand. With the war, the need for faster, stronger and more powerful spells had never been greater. And for Evan, well Severus knew it was perfect for him. As much as he liked to goof off at times, he really did have a brilliant mind. He had a few other things that were quite brilliant as well, but Severus wasn’t about to go into that. Well not right now anyway.

“Y-yeah?” Evan pulled away, breathing heavily. “So do I get my reward now?” His eyes narrowed, focusing on Severus’ lips and after a long moment just staring at them, his eyes began to trail downwards. He clearly wasn’t going for subtlety.

Severus smirked, tilting his head up just a little to get a better view. “Perhaps. Depends what kind of reward you had in mind”.

He soon found out.

It wasn’t until the feel of those last frenzied erratic thrusts, that Severus finally managed to focus again. He’d been too busy enjoying the feel of skin against skin, feeling Evan’s heartbeat rise then slowly fall. With his senses overwhelmed and his pulse racing, he couldn’t bring himself to do much more than enjoy it. But as things slowly calmed, the way Evan continued to stroke him certainly hadn’t made that easy, the easier it became to think about things.

“So about your birthday”. Severus groaned again. Only this time it wasn’t remotely pleasurable.

In hindsight, he probably should have mentioned his birthday had come and gone three months ago. Only he’d been too busy enjoying his life, to care about something he didn’t even celebrate anymore. In fact, for the last few years, Lily had been his only reason to celebrate it in the first place. She’d never forgotten, always giving him a gift in the morning before breakfast. Giving him time to enjoy it, then hide it before anyone found out. And after what happened, well he didn’t see any reason to celebrate. It wasn’t like anybody else would care about such things. Only, after mentioning it in passing, shortly after celebrating Andrew’s birthday, Severus found three people who cared. Who cared a lot, as it turned out. And after learning he’d turned seventeen without any of them knowing, well they hadn’t exactly been happy with him.

Seventeen was a very important age for witches and wizards. For Severus, it meant he could learn
apparition, a handy little trick to be sure. Still, it had taken Derek asking him about it for him to even
realise he could now legally pursue it. That and a whole host of other spells, one of which he was
particularly interested in. Oh sure, he knew what Potter and his lot had managed to do. And as much
as he’d hated to admit it, he was impressed they’d managed to become animagi while still in school.
Even if it was highly illegal and for damn good reason. Still, he wanted to learn it himself, if he
could. While he knew he’d be busy, with the apprenticeship and all, his pride practically demanded
he learn it. If only so he could reassure himself, that the Marauders would no longer have such an
advantage. And of course he’d be learning how to apperate. How could he not? With the danger he
was already in, it would be beyond stupid not to learn such a skill.

“It’s done, it’s over. Can’t we just forget about it?” Severus hissed as Evan resumed his stroking,
scowling at him even as his body shuddered once more. “D-don’t! Do-ah! Evan stop!” The stroking
stopped, allowing Severus time to catch his breath.

“You were saying?” Evan purred, smiling smugly even as Severus glared daggers at him.

Much to his embarrassment, Severus felt himself shudder once more, gasping as yet another jolt of
pure heat set his nerves ablaze. He groaned, a long low groan that really wasn’t helping his situation.
At least not judging by the effect it was having on Evan. He groaned again, this time out of a
combination of embarrassment, anger and annoyance.

“Sh-shut up!” Not his best comeback obviously, but thinking was a bit of a challenge for the
moment. “Fine, do whatever the hell you want about my stupid birthday. I don’t care”. Severus
rolled onto his side, hiding his head beneath his arm.

“Then I guess I’ll have to make you care. I can guess why you don’t celebrate it anymore. But as
your loving, incredibly handsome, supremely talented and—” Evan swore. Severus smiled smugly
even as he rubbed his elbow, wincing a little at the pain. Should he have elbowed his boyfriend?
Probably not, but it sure shut him up. “Fine! If that’s how you want to play it, we’re having a party.
We’re gonna celebrate your birthday, celebrate both of our apprenticeships and you’re gonna sit
there and like it. Got it?” Evan wrapped his arms around him, ensuring he couldn’t cause any more
harm.

Severus huffed, though he couldn’t deny the idea did make him a little happy. Just a little, a tiny
amount, the tiniest amount in fact. Parties sure weren’t his thing, always full of drunken idiots
making noise and doing their best to piss him off. And despite everyone else being older, he doubted
that would make the party go any smoother. If anything it would probably be even worse. Maybe he
could hide in his room until it was over? Still, maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. It’s not like they’d try to
hurt him. He had enough experience in that area to know these sorts of things. He even trusted them
a little. Not a lot; past experience had taught him that trusting people wasn’t a smart move on his part.
But he trusted them enough to let them through a party. It was just a party, right? Surely it wouldn’t
backfire too much. At least he hoped not.

“How does this mean I get presents?” Severus asked.

The thought hadn’t occurred to him until now, but he couldn’t help but feel a little excited by the
idea. The last time he really remembered getting a present from, well anyone, was back when Lily
didn’t hate him. Of course his mum had too, for christmas and his birthday, although with little
money to spare it had never been much. Still, Severus never complained. What would be the point?
It wasn’t like complaining would do anything.

“Well I don’t know about the others, but I already got you one. Of course, you only get to have it
when we have the party”. Evan smirked down at him, manoeuvring him so he was half pinned
beneath him.
Severus blinked, then scowled and finally sighed. He smiled just a little as Evan leaned down for a kiss. “Fine. But this means I get to make a rule”.

“Oh?” Evan cocked his head, pulling up to give him more room.

Severus shifted, pushing himself onto his forearms and pulling Evan back down. With their lips close to touching, he smiled. He glanced, almost uncertainly into Evan’s eyes, receiving a warm smile in return. Then, just as Evan looked ready to close the gap, he pulled away sharply.

“No kissing, no hugging, no sex of any kind until after the party’s over. Got it? No funny stuff. That’s my rule. Still want a party?” He raised an eyebrow, smirking at Evan’s dumbfound expression.

“Wh-what none? At all? What the fu-!? I mean uh, yeah…yeah, if that’s what it’ll take”. Evan recovered quickly, though he clearly wasn’t happy about it. “Wait…so like none at all? So like if there was some guy there, making a move on you, I wouldn’t be allowed to do anything? Nothing to show you’re my boyfriend? Seriously?”

Severus frowned, what was he on about? How big was this party he was planning? He’d thought it would just be some of the guys, people from his class. And they all knew he and Evan were a couple. Hell, it was common knowledge at this point. And who in their right mind would want to make a move on him? Fair enough he wasn’t the sorry, ugly little bastard he had been when he’d first got here. But it wasn’t like he’d changed that much, had he?

If only he knew.

“No”. With that said, Severus shuffled out from under Evan, before getting off the bed. “I’m going to the library, you coming?”

Evan huffed, flopping onto his back as he gave Severus a distinctly unimpressed look. “Apparently not. Not until after your party anyway”. Though he did smile a little as he enjoyed Severus’ blush.

Severus scowled, annoyed with himself and his body for acting the way it did. But more than that, he was annoyed with Evan for his remark. And with himself for not anticipating it. Really though, by now he should have known better. Evan had a talent for perverting just about anything.

Evan chuckled. “Actually I was thinking of taking a shower. I’d ask you to join me, but like you said, no funny stuff. I mean it’s too bad really”. Evan stretched out, smirking as Severus’ eyes fixated on his abs. “I was looking forward to having a little fun, if you know what I mean?” He chuckled once more, earning a glare from his boyfriend.

Severus grabbed his bag, his face red and his heart beating rapidly as he stormed out of the room. And if he walked a little too stiffly, some parts stiffer than others, well at least he had his robes to hide the worst of it.

Despite his best efforts, his men had once again failed to find the Snape boy. By now it was becoming rather tiresome. Tiresome and utterly mortifying. To think, a mere teenager could somehow outsmart his finest men? A halfblood had proven himself more worthy than those whose lineage could be dated back to Merlin himself? If the situation had been different, he would have laughed. This boy, this devious little creature, had done the impossible. He’d proven himself smarter than his pureblood counterparts. He’d proven himself more cunning and devious than the most devout of his Slytherins. He’d outsmarted grown men more than twice his age. As much as he
loathed to give compliments, the boy impressed him. More so than any of the other boys who’d been drafted into his service.

“My Lord? Forgive my impertinence, but may I ask why this boy is so important? He is only a halfblood after all. I know his classmates claimed he was talented, but how can we be sure he will be dedicated to our cause? If what they say is true, he abandoned his house for parts unknown. Are you sure someone like that can be trusted?” His follower asked, speaking quietly so as not to be overheard. To be favoured by the Dark Lord himself was no small feat. And there were many who were desperate to take his place, by any means necessary.

He smiled, even as his familiar hissed in agitation. “I have seen for myself what the boy can do. Talent like his is difficult to come by in one so young. When I find him, I intend to nurture such talent. In time, he will reward me with his creations. Have you forgotten? Loyalty can be easily bought. A few potions ingredients and a new robe or two, my sources tell me this will be enough to grab his interest. And once I have it, it will be all too easy to convince him to join my cause. I know how you think, but I have done my own research into this. And this boy, his situation reminds me of someone I once knew. I know what to expect, what I must do to ensure his loyalty to me. Once he is found, I know what must be done to win him over to our side. For this one, I would rather have him come willingly than by force. But should circumstances change, then I know who I can entrust him to in order to teach him our ways. I trust you have no objections?”

“No my Lord. I understand. I’ll see to it personally that the boy is found quickly”. The man bowed deep, gritting his teeth in preparation for what he was sure to come. It was only to be expected. He had after all, questioned his master. Where he of a lower ranking, such impudence may have gotten him killed. He was lucky indeed that his master was in a generous mood.

“Crucio”.

So very lucky.

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Things had been somewhat tense as of late, between the three of them. It was understandable of course. They all lusted after the same boy, a boy they’d tormented for years to the point where he’d apparently fled the country. A boy who apparently had gotten himself a boyfriend, which provided both a relief and a sense of dread to them all. Relief that, despite his close friendship with Lily, he did apparently go for blokes. And dread because, well none of them could stand to think about what he and his boyfriend might be up to.

Sirius had apparently been taking it the hardest. It was strange to see the self-proclaimed bad boy of Gryffindor apparently turn over a new leaf. His passion for pranks had dwindled to barely one a week. And even those were little more than tossing an extra ingredient into someone’s cauldron. For someone whose life revolved around having fun, making others laugh and charming everyone around him, he’d utterly failed at it these past few weeks. He was even starting to worry some people, Remus included.

The news about Severus hadn’t been welcome, but at least they’d gotten some news. Unlike Sirius, Remus had known beforehand that he’d never have a chance with Severus. Despite their similarities, the things he’d done and the monster that lurked inside him, pretty much ensured nothing could ever happen between them. Remus knew this, he understood this. But Sirius, it seemed he’d still held onto some hope that things would work out. Things usually did for the good guys, didn’t they?

As for James, he wasn’t much better. It seemed that without his favourite victim and without Sirius there to egg him on, he too had lost interest in his pranks. What was the point? Hell, the whole point
of them had been to see Severus at his finest. With his wide eyes, trembling body and look of sheer
wrath on his face, he’d never looked so sexy. Oh sure most people thought it was to eliminate the
competition. Everyone knew she and Severus had been close. But no, Lily had never been much of a
challenge for him. And what was the point if there was no challenge to be had? But Severus, he’d
been absolutely perfect. Even from the very start. So he’d pushed it. He’d kept focusing on him and
him alone. Oh sure he pranked countless Slytherins on the side, if he hadn’t people would have
stated asking questions. But for James, Severus had always been number one.

“Fuck!” Sirius hissed as he tripped over the wayward trunk. “Fucking hell! Who the fuck leaves their
shit in the middle of the floor!?” Sirius kicked it again, yelping as he injured the other foot.

“Smooth Padfoot, real smooth”. James snorted, barely glancing up from his textbook. “Break both
your feet, that’ll make things better”.

“Prongs”. Remus interjected quietly, sounding resigned. He sent James a pleading look, sighing as it
was ignored. “Please?” Remus tried again. James’ agitated sigh was his only response.

“Ugh, fine. Sorry mate, no hard feelings, yeah?” Sirius flipped him off. “You didn’t actually break
them, did you?” James asked, a little louder this time.

Sirius scowled, his fingers clenched tight around his feet. With a loud sigh, he tentatively put both
feet on the floor, gritting his teeth as he prepared to stand. He did so, let out a breath and promptly
topped over. A string of curses, quite inventive ones, followed him all the way down.

“Shit. Padfoot, can you stand? Here grab on”. Remus heaved him up, staggering a little under the
weight.

“Hang on, I’ve got his other side. Here, let’s get you on the bed mate”.

Sirius grumbled and bitched for as long as he could. Until finally, with his legs hoisted onto the bed,
he fell silent. “Well, shit” he glared, staring at his feet.

“You’re an idiot. How are you gonna get to class? Or play quidditch, or do anything with two
fucked up feet?” James swatted his head. “Look mate, I know this whole Snape thing is fucked up,
but you’ve gotta snap out of it. Look at us, we both feel like shit. Doesn’t mean we’re going around
and breaking bones for fun”.

Having expected Sirius to whine or curse, neither were prepared to see him break down, right before
their eyes. In fact, it took a couple of good sobs for either of them to even process what was
happening. Whether it was from the physical pain or the emotional, they’d weren’t sure of the
reason. But seeing Sirius cry, actually crying like that, well both could agree, it was pretty fucked up.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

I know this is late, so sorry everyone. But these last three weeks or so have been absolutely crazy for me. I’m hoping to update a couple of fics this week if I can to make up for it. And I have a couple of new ideas I really want to put as oneshots, purely because I know it’ll be ages to update if I make them multi-chaptered. 

For anyone interested, I’m partway through writing a JPSS fic in which Severus hits his head due to one of the Marauders’ pranks, and in the following confusion everyone believes he has amnesia. At which point James claims they’re dating and everyone Goes along with it. I thought it was a nice twist on the whole amnesia thing. I’m also planning a Severus soulmate(s) oneshot and an Omegaverse oneshot. Severus centric of course. Haven’t decided on the pairings yet so I’m open to hearing what pairings people would like me to write. Only slash mind you, though I’m willing to do background Het/femslash.

Anyway, thanks for all your reviews and I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Severus had never been a fan of parties, not that he’d ever been invited to that many in the first place. For those few and far between he was invited to, he usually found himself hiding away, wishing for it to be over. Part of it, a rather large part if he was being honest, was because of how many people there usually were. Not one for talking to people, for so many reasons, the idea of spending time surrounded by idiots, particularly drunken hormonal idiots who were as quick to stick their tongue down someone’s throat as they were to start a fight, didn’t hold much appeal.

You could probably understand his concern then, when the news of his birthday, or belated birthday rather, spread around. For such a mix of individuals, hailing from the UK, the USA, France, Italy, Russia and even China, well it seemed they all had something in common. Party ing. Whether this was a cultural thing, or just the fact that everyone seemed in need of having a bit of fun, Severus didn’t know. But he did know one thing, he was absolutely dreading it.

“Here kid, careful with that yeah? That shit can get pretty fucking intense”.

Throughout the day, the day that his friends had decided they’d throw him a party on, Sever us had found himself positively swamped with presents and well-wishers. Which okay, the presents bit he kind of liked. It was clear everyone had actually put a bit of thought into it, or more likely had asked Evan what to get him. The result was a pile of books; ones he’d never even heard of before, various potions ingredients he’d mentioned needing at one point or another, clothing of varying styles from around the world; whoever had given him that toga was certainly going to regret it, no matter how Evan had looked at him, and many more wonderful absurdities. Logically Severus knew this was their way of establishing ties with him. Despite them all being older and more experienced, it seemed everyone was keen to keep him close, even if only on a professional level. He understood this, he welcomed it even. Still, a part of him liked to think they weren’t just doing it for that. While the idea was likely a foolish one, part of him couldn’t help but hope it was because they considered him a friend. Despite everything that had changed, the idea was still something of a novelty to him. But one that had slowly become more and more likely, as time went on.
“Still moping I see? You’re not still pissed about this morning are you?” Andrew appeared from nowhere, giving his shoulder a friendly nudge.

Severus blanched, then blushed and finally settled on a scowl. Sadly, it’s effects were somewhat dampened by his embarrassment. Considering everyone knew about him and Evan, and what they got up to, no one had thought to think that perhaps on his ‘birthday’, he and Evan might be busy. Especially when they’d only just woke up. Well actually, if you wanted to be a bit more precise, Evan had woken him up. In a way he wouldn’t soon forget no less. Of course that was the moment Derek and Andrew seemed to think it was a good idea to barge in, for whatever reason. Severus hadn’t really been paying much attention, though he very much doubted it was worth the interruption.

It had been at least an hour before Severus had dared to leave their room. The humiliation too fresh, too similar to events from his past. It was only with Evan’s reassurances, one of which involved describing a very similar thing happening to him, only with parents walking in instead of friends, that Severus finally got moving. Considering what he’d been through to get to where he was today, he knew it would blow over soon enough. He’d probably not be able to look either of them in the eye for some time, but things like this, well he was pretty surprised they hadn’t happened sooner. There was no shame in admitting it; they were young and horny. They’d been dating for months now, having sex not long after and happy to explore each other’s bodies. Just…perhaps not while they were being gawped at by their friends.

“Piss off” Severus grumbled. Though it lacked any real heat. “You’re the ones that should have knocked”.

“True, we are sorry about that you know. Believe me, we weren’t exactly after a good look you know. No offence, I mean there’s nothing wrong with you, you’re just…you. You’re our little Severus, all grown up now”. Andrew ruffled his hair as if to prove his point.

Severus swatted at him, trying to scowl but trying not to laugh at the same time. It was an odd combination, one that didn’t exactly work, but he wasn’t the type to just sit back and take it. He never had been, not really.

“Don’t suppose you know what’ll happen tonight, do you?” Severus asked.

“Complete mayhem I imagine”. Andrew chuckled at the stricken look on Severus’ face. “If you really don’t like it, I’m sure we can smuggle you out for a bit. Maybe you and Evan can finish where you left off?” Andrew hastily stepped back, stumbling slightly as he barely avoided the hex Severus sent his way. Nothing serious, nothing he’d use on the Marauders, but it sure would sting.

“Miss me?” A peck to his cheek had Severus smiling before he knew it. Without warning a pair of arms tugged him back a little, before wrapping around him. Yet while at one point he’d have cursed and spat and given every hex he could think of, now he just relaxed, leaning back ever so slightly.

“I take it things have been smoothed over?” Derek approached them, smiling gently, as though he half expected one of them to hex him.

“More or less. Just remember to knock, yeah? What we get up to is our business. And why did you think it was a good idea to barge in on us like that? You should have known we’d be…busy. It’s supposed to be Sev’s birthday, yeah?” Evan winced a little as Severus elbowed him. More out of habit at this point. Severus had just about given up trying to stop that little nickname. It just wasn’t worth the effort.

“Fair enough, sorry though. Obviously we weren’t thinking properly”.
Derek, like Severus, was all too eager to forget the incident ever took place. While he’d had his fair share of lovers, the idea of someone walking in like that, it sent chills down his spine. And for Severus who was still so new to all this, he found himself cringing on his behalf.

“Enough of that, there’s a party on tonight! We’ve got things to get done, Severus we’ll come find you when it’s time. So go I don’t know, read or something. Do some research or go bathe or something. Actually scratch that, better not, Evan’s coming with us so you’d be all alone. You can’t be sure who might join you. People do stupid things on their birthdays you know, best to avoid any temptations” Andrew smiled.

It was odd, Severus decided, for Andrew to say something like that. The very idea that he’d be the one to stray, even if it did make him sound rather pathetic, was ludicrous. He was the lucky one for god’s sake. Shiny hair, white teeth and a fixed nose could hardly make up for his other shortcomings. Although, he had to admit, with no Marauders to antagonise him, they had lessened quite a bit. But still, Evan was attractive and young and smart. His list of shortcomings paled in comparison to Severus’ own. The idea that he’d be the one to stray, knowing full well how lucky he was to even have Evan, was laughable. And if he was being honest, rather hurtful. Still, a part of him was impressed. His fellow classmates often treated him differently, often likening him some sort of tragic figure who needed to be drowned in affection. Where they got their ideas from was anyone’s guess. For Andrew to take Evan’s side over his own, it was actually rather nice to know someone else was looking out for Evan, aside from himself. It was completely misguided of course, but it was still a nice thought.

“Alright” Severus replied, albeit a little hesitatingly. As the other three wandered off, with Evan protesting most of the way, Severus smiled. A little peace and quiet was hard to come by nowadays, and he was determined to enjoy what little time he had.

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In the wake of Sirius’ breakdown, things had slowly returned to normal. Or as normal as things could get, considering everything that had happened. That wasn’t to say things were easier, because they weren’t. The situation hadn’t changed, their feelings hadn’t changed and their schooling demanded even more of their time. They had their exams coming up, their NEWTs no less. They didn’t have time to be messing about, not if they ever wanted to make something of themselves. But the fact that they’d pretty much reconciled, that they no longer felt they had to slog through it all alone, well it was a big help. A very big help. What they were all going through, well who else would understand it? Who else but each other?

“Not long now, in a few months this’ll all be over” James murmured. You wouldn’t think someone who used to be so lively and full of life, would end up so melancholy. Yet there he was, just staring at nothing.

“Yeah. But at least we’ll all still be together, right? Can’t get rid of us that easily mate” Sirius replied.

James grinned. It wasn’t a grin or a mischievous grin, in fact it was rather weak, but still, at least he was making an effort. “Course we will, can’t break us up that easily. And it’s not like I can be rid of you. We’re both gonna be working together, right? Might even end up partners”.

“Partners? Hell we’ll be running the place before long”, Sirius swung his arm over James’ shoulder, leaning in a little closer than normal. But then again, they’d all been doing that these days. Sometimes they just needed each other that little bit extra, they were the only ones who understood after all.
“Well c’mon then, let’s go find Moony. Think he’ll help me write that Charms essay?”

“I hope so; I need him to help with mine as well. Can’t make heads or tails of it” James groaned.

For a while the two just chatted, about meaningless things they’d no doubt forget by the time they found Remus. But inevitably, as their thoughts always seemed to do nowadays, their thoughts turned to one Severus Snape.

“You don’t think he’s, you know, dead. Do you?” Sirius asked. There was no need to clarify who he was talking about, James already knew.

“Not a chance in hell. You know what he’s like, stubborn if nothing else. You know I bet we’ll see him again someday, when we least expect it. Everything will be going to hell around us and there he’ll be, right in the middle of it. Fixing our mistakes, I’ll bet. Just to get one over on us”. Sirius chuckled at that, relaxing just a little.

Despite his words, James couldn’t help but wonder. Sure Severus had held his own against them, something that continued to haunt him. The things they’d done, they weren’t much better than the Dark Lord himself. But it was a dark world out there. People were dying every day, people went missing never to be found and as Severus had left without anyone knowing where he was, well things certainly didn’t bode well for him.

Still, James hoped. It was all could do really. He hoped and hoped and wished and even prayed that someday they’d find him again. Perhaps one day he’d get his chance to apologise in person. Perhaps one day, things might even become more. Wasn’t that a nice thought?

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All things considered, the party wasn’t as bad as Severus had initially feared. But then, with quite a substantial amount of alcohol in his system, it wasn’t much of a surprise. While it wasn’t the first time Severus had drank, it was certainly a hell of a lot better than the utter swill his father used to drink. Even the stuff they snuck in for the Slytherin parties seemed to pale to what they were serving at his party.

Initially Severus had been surprised to be served, considering he’d seen a few of his professors milling about. But it wasn’t much of a secret that Japan and the UK had more than tea in common when it came to beverages. The drinking culture in Japan could rival England’s own. And besides, he’d technically come of age three months ago. If he was old enough to apparate, running the risk of ending up god knows where, then he was old enough to have a bit of fun. Something everyone around him clearly supported.

“D’ya like it? The party? D’ya have fun?” Evan asked him, slurring his words just a little.

Evan had hardly left his boyfriend’s side all night, spending the latter half whispering whatever dirty little thought popped into his mind. Not that Severus minded. Hell, the only thing that had stopped him from making a complete fool of himself, had been the fact that they were in public. Instead of going off and shagging themselves silly, they’d both had to settle with some heated kisses, indecent groping and the promise that as soon as it was over, they’d return to their room for a little celebration of their own.

“Mnh, yeah. Want you now though. You and me, all alone. Celebrating”.

Paying no mind to decency, Severus began trailing light kisses across Evan’s bared collarbone.
While he’d started the night dressed in a shirt, they both had, it now hung on by a single button. Baring more than enough skin that had Severus confused as where to start. He knew that by the end, he wanted every bit of it covered in marks, everyone needed to know Evan was his. But where to start? At the top? At the bottom? In the middle before trailing down? Trailing down to…Severus hissed as Evan pushed him onto the bed. For a second Severus wondered how they’d arrived so quickly, only to forget everything the moment Evan ground himself against him.

The next few minutes were filled with a strange kind of tension. Their movements were clumsy, they barely even remembered the spells they needed, and yet, in one quick thrust, they both found themselves content. With one last sloppy kiss, leaving them both panting and gasping for air, they began to move.

It hurt at first, no more than usual. Like stretching before a run, if you didn’t stretch, you’d sure regret it later. Severus let out a hiss as the head pushed in, grimacing just a little as the familiar burn left him wincing. But once it was in, well, things certainly become a lot more pleasurable. With each thrust, both of them would gasp. One would moan, the other would curse and inevitably, a hand would snake around to help him out a bit. Loathe as was to admit it, it was probably his favourite part of it all. Just the idea that Evan cared about his own pleasure, it meant a lot to him. He doubted there’d be many others who’d be so considerate.

For a time they just moved, their movements steadily growing smoother, though on occasion they found themselves swaying just a little. Soon enough Severus gave in, feeling heat and pleasure and a sense of right that sent little sparks all throughout his body. Another grunt and Evan soon followed, leaving them both sweaty and sated, but tired most of all. Neither of them tried to fight it. While Evan banished the mess, Severus grabbed the blankets and in no time at all, they were both fast asleep, together.

It was a happy birthday indeed.

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Lately, Lily hadn’t known what to do with herself. Not really. While her friends giggled and swooned around the boys, particularly the handsome boys from rich, powerful families, she just watched them. Had things been different she’d be right there with them, she’d always wanted a family of her own you see. And with James out of the picture, for a long time now, and Severus… well she wasn’t even sure if he was still alive, she was more alone than ever.

Severus. Every day she worried about him. More often than not she grew angry, angry at the thought that he’d leave without word. That he wouldn’t let her know he was safe. Sure she’d received his letter, but what about since then? That had been months ago! In the papers there were new death announcements every day! That madman calling himself the Dark Lord, he just went about killing and destroying everything he could. What if…what if he’d found her Sev? The very thought of it made her want to sob aloud. But she couldn’t. She mustn’t. Her friends would think she was mad! To care about someone who’d abandoned her, someone as ugly and unpleasant as Severus had been. Oh sure they didn’t fault her for it, their Lily was beautiful and kind even to those that didn’t deserve it. But there might be rumours, the kind of rumours she wanted to avoid at any cost.

For a muggleborn living in the midst of war, Lily knew her options were limited. For any job she chose to apply for, she’d have a hard time of it. She had no prestige to her name, only her grades and extra curriculars to rely on. Only, in the wizarding world at least, family name meant a hell of a lot more to some than what she had to offer. Particularly with the war going on. A war where muggles were being persecuted, where muggleborns were being slaughtered. There weren’t many who
wanted to hire someone that could bring about that kind of trouble. But if she could find a boy, one from a prestigious family as many of her friends sought to do, well that would be different. She’d have a chance to start a family, something of her very own to love. She’d gain connections she so desperately needed, maybe even have a chance of a career. One she really loved. She’d have money, she’d make friends and perhaps, she’d finally feel happy again.

The problem was, there was no boy for Lily. Not one she could see. No, the only boy she cared about now, was a boy she wasn’t sure she’d ever meet again. A boy who had at one point been her best friend. Until tempers had flared, things had been said and mistakes had been made. Still, Lily held onto some hope that they’d meet again. There were things she wanted to hear, things she wanted to say. Or rather just one thing she wished to tell him.

“I’m sorry” she whispered. No one paid her any mind.

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Their time together was coming to an end. Although neither of them wished to admit it, they knew it would soon be the case. In mere weeks they’d be leaving, for opposite corners of the globe. To do apprenticeships that promised them bright and fulfilling futures. It was everything they both wanted and yet, it was everything they’d feared as well.

“Do you…want to break up?” Severus asked.

He hadn’t meant to, he hadn’t wanted to even think it, but it had to be asked. Logically he knew the chances of them remaining together were minimal, there’d be no reason for them to. But since when was the heart reasonable? Even Severus, one for logic above all else, had fallen victim to his heart’s desires. It was bound to happen eventually.

Evan swallowed, well aware his next words could be the end of everything. The end of them, the end of their time together and the end of the wonderful memories they had to share. But things had changed, even he had changed since they’d first met. At the very beginning he knew what his answer would be, so certain of it in fact. But now, his answer had changed. It pained him to say it, he dreaded having to say the words. But eventually he turned to on his side, pulling Severus close and leaning towards his ear.

“No” he answered. “Never” he added, swallowing the lump in his throat as Severus gasped. “I love you. S-sorry I just…I don’t want you to leave me. P-please?”

Severus stayed silent, blinking back tears. Slowly, ever so slowly, he let out a long shaky sigh. Only then did he smile, a smile so wide and bright it looked almost out of place on his face. Without warning Severus turned, tearing himself out of Evan’s arms and hoisting a leg over, trapping him beneath.

“Never” he agreed. With that said, he leaned down for a kiss.

Neither of them said a word about the tears they were both shedding. Neither wanted to risk the moment ending too soon. No matter what happened in the future, they knew, they were certain in fact, that somehow they’d make it. They just had to.

Chapter End Notes
Hope you enjoyed it. And no this isn’t the end. But I really tried to accelerate the timeline a little. I’m hoping to have Severus meet the Marauders again in the next chapter. Something to look forward to.
Chapter Notes

Okay this is really late I know. But for those who’ve read my other fic, you’ll know that we had a death in the family, and so my motivation to write became pretty much non-existent for a while. What you won’t know is that recently we got a puppy, which has been both great and frustrating, because let’s face it, trying to write with a puppy in the room just doesn’t work.

Anyway, I’m sorry for the delay. I should also confess that Severus will be meeting the Marauders in the next chapter instead. I know I said I’d hoped to include it in this chapter, but I felt it was just too long to go without an update. As an added bonus, in the next chapter Severus will also be meeting Lily again.

Enjoy!

For the Marauders, life was as chaotic as ever. But this time, the consequences had become frightfully real. Having left Hogwarts with the grades needed to pursue their dreams of becoming Aurors, Sirius and James had been optimistic. In the time since Snape had left, they’d come to an agreement of sorts. They would no longer speak of him, they’d try not to think of him, but if he ever happened to reappear, the first one to see him had dibs on him. Whether they’d actually carry out such a ridiculous bet, remained to be seen. Still, you had to admire their commitment.

As for Remus, life hadn’t been quite so kind to him. Still, he’d managed to find employment in a small muggle bookstore, not far from the apartment he shared with Sirius. While it wasn’t quite his life’s ambition, it was a job that paid and reasonably well at that. Better still, he’d managed to pass off his condition as a rare illness. Although certainly not ideal, the owners, an elderly couple, were sympathetic to his plight. As such, they were willing to give him the few days he needed off to recover, whenever he had a little episode, as they liked to call it. It really was quite remarkable luck on his part.

As for Severus, Remus couldn’t deny he still carried a torch for him, well aware just how sad and pathetic that sounded. None of them had heard from the boy since the last letter they’d received. And while he’d been alive back then, there was nothing to suggest that was still true. It was very distressing for the young werewolf. Still, it wasn’t like he could do much about it. Even if he was alive, he had no claim over the other. None of them did.

Peter on the other hand, well none of the others were quite sure where he’d gone. He’d send them a letter from time to time of course, mentioning something about a job he’d gotten back home. But aside from that, their contact with him had dropped significantly. Interestingly, none of them had seemed particularly affected by this. During their last year Peter had been disappearing more and more frequently, so they’d just assumed he was preparing for his future. And with their lives changing quite dramatically after finishing school, well there wasn’t much time for them to spare him much of a thought.

Meanwhile, the war had steadily been growing worse, a fact that everyone seemed to be aware of. It was as though a strange tension had settled over England; even the muggles were on edge after a number of high profile deaths made the news, with authorities at a loss to explain them. Of course he
and James were only trainees, but that didn’t stop Sirius from hearing about the grisly details first hand, courtesy of a little firewhisky and a recently dumped secretary. It was all very unsettling.

Still, the lads toughed it out. Of course it was difficult at first, it seemed no one had a sense of humour these days, but gradually they fell into a steady routine of eat, sleep, work and get completely pissed. And if any of them spent their free time combing the obituaries for the mention of a certain someone, well they weren’t admitting to it.

It carried on this way for many months, with little change. Attacks were becoming increasingly common and as a result, the trainees were made to work harder and faster than those of the previous years. They’d already lost a number of prominent Aurors, and there was a need to fill the gaps they left behind. It may have sounded cold and uncaring, but this was war. They needed everyone they could get.

It wasn’t until almost a year later that things began to change. No one could be sure of what was happening, but while the attacks had only grown more dangerous, the loss of life had slowly been decreasing. Particularly for those afflicted with some of the more vicious curses and poisons. It was being hailed as a miracle potion. A potion which kept the user in a state of stasis, preventing any infection, curse or poison from doing further harm while a cure was found. In a sense, it was as if the victim was being suspended in time, a feat which should have been limited to the highly controversial time turners. And while there were similar potions and spells out there, this new potion had quickly been deemed the best of the lot. Most notably, the length of time it kept a victim in stasis for was nearly double that of its competition. Given that time was arguably the biggest killer of them all, it was able to provide people with some badly needed hope.

It wasn’t long after the potion’s release that rumours began spreading about its creator. Reports had claimed the inventor was a young prodigy from Japan. While the details were minimal at best, the company responsible for distributing the potion had been generous in their praise of the individual. As they should be. From a financial standpoint, they stood to earn a fortune. Though surprisingly this wasn’t their only motivation. More recently the war had been affecting parts of Asia, including Japan and China. While the incidences were significantly fewer than those across Europe, it was still cause for concern.

Of course the thought had crossed their minds about who this mystery inventor could be. And all three young men had reached the same conclusion. Though they knew all too well that it was merely a fantasy. After all, the chances it really was him, of it even being someone they knew, were practically zero. Then again, practically zero and zero were two very different things.

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While the mystery of what had happened to one Severus Snape still plagued on his mind, as of late, Albus Dumbledore had far more pressing concerns. With the war gaining momentum rapidly and with their side losing more and more valuable talents, he was becoming desperate in his attempts to recruit some talented young minds. So when he heard rumours of a certain young prodigy, he was eager to learn more. Unfortunately, it seemed not even he could learn of their identity. Still, it gave him some relief to learn that whoever this individual was, they appeared to be fighting for their side.

Their potion had already given several key witnesses the time they so desperately needed, preserving them in a coma-like state until a cure could be found. As such, they’d already learned a couple of vital pieces of information, saving the lives of dozens of Aurors out on patrol. It really was quite remarkable at just how much morale had changed because of it.
“Albus. I think you should see this” Minerva said, startling him from his thoughts. In her hand was a piece of parchment and judging by the expression on her face, it wasn’t good news.

“Oh?” he asked, accepting the parchment with unease. For a moment he remained silent as he read. Then, after a tense silence, he sighed. “Oh, I see”.

Four deaths; three witches and a wizard. Every one of them under the age of seventeen. In fact, the youngest witch had only just turned eleven. She’d have just received her letter by now. The other three were students at Hogwarts, or rather, they had been. It was that final thought that had him crumpling up the parchment and throwing it across the room. At his side, Minerva dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief.

Say what you wanted about the man. He was powerful, yes. He was manipulative, true. But he was still very much human. And no one, no one with any good in them at least, wanted to hear that innocent children were dying. All because of mad man intent on getting his way. It truly sickened him.

Interesting, wasn’t it, how a child actually dying by an adult’s hands was condemned. Yet allowing an entire quarter of the school to suffer prejudice, verbal and even physical abuse at the hands of their peers, was considered all in good fun. And for the boy who’d almost died at the hands of a monster, well, it wasn’t as if the lad didn’t have it coming. After all, there was a reason the building had been off limits.

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Meanwhile for Severus, as could only be expected, his life had become exceedingly busy as of late. Having finished his six-month apprenticeship, he’d been stunned to learn his mentor had requested he be taken on permanently. Then again, it was the whole point of the accelerated programme; to get the best and brightest into the fields of their choice. Though at the time Severus had been reluctant to accept.

It had been a difficult conversation to have with Evan. Although he was sure his younger self would have mocked and sneered at him, for even thinking of putting a person before his dreams, Severus no longer felt that way. They were a couple now, a real couple. They were no longer just boyfriends but lovers, the very idea of which left him feeling much more mature and sophisticated. Of course he didn’t admit as much, he’d never survive the teasing he was sure he’d get.

It had been a difficult year for them both. While they managed to remain faithful and still very much infatuated with one another, the strain that came with trying to manage a long distance relationship, was becoming increasingly difficult to handle. It was almost too much some days, Severus thought. And while he’d yet to actually say it, there were some days he found himself wondering if it was worth it.

Still, Evan had been surprisingly supportive of his decision to accept his mentor’s offer, even if it meant they wouldn’t be able to see much of each other. There were times Severus found himself wondering why that was, usually followed by a number of scenarios he couldn’t bear to think about. So he didn’t, or at least he tried to avoid thinking of them. He knew he was being paranoid, that much of it stemmed from old and some not so old insecurities, but such things weren’t so easy to let go of. Despite what people liked to try and claim.

All in all, Severus really couldn’t complain with how things were going. Especially given his recent, and by far his finest, success to date. During his apprenticeship, a large part of his duties had been to
look for ways to improve on existing potions and spells. With the war becoming more and more volatile, the need for stronger and faster effects, particularly within the healing field, had risen exponentially. The idea for the Stasis potion, or rather an improved version of a similar potion, was the result of one of such project. An idea his mentor had taken a great deal of interest in. Indeed, with everything going on around them, time was in short supply. The idea that it could be preserved or even extended, well it was certainly an interesting research topic. And everyone knew that those were usually the best ways of getting additional funding.

With the idea finalised, Severus had worked alongside his mentor and a small team to produce results. And with successful initial trials, whereby they had managed to save the majority of their patients, though two had perished due to a lack of available cure, their potion was put into production. Working in such a large facility had mean there were an abundance of talented potions masters on hand to mass produce the necessary healing potions. And given the increasing number of victims, the facility had correctly predicted that it would be in popular demand.

Given his age, it hadn’t taken long for people to learn that Severus was the one who had developed the potion. Of course, outside of the facility, none of them actually knew him by name, but by the moniker; the prodigy. An utterly ridiculous name to be sure, but still, it was rather flattering. If a little odd.

Severus was quite surprised just how secretive it had all become however. He’d even been made to sign a contract, though not without reading it thoroughly beforehand, about his need to keep things confidential. To his initial confusion, even Evan had agreed with the decision. Later explaining the risks he could be putting himself in, if anyone were to learn of his involvement. Not to mention the very real worry that he might be kidnapped and forced to change the potion once more. The potential for the potion to immobilise someone and preserve a state of torture was very real. Even though he had been very careful to ensure the victim remained unconscious throughout the experience.

It was a strange burden to bear, knowing he was doing some real good, yet unable to brag about any of it. Not that he would…much. It just would have been nice to be able to have proof that he’d amounted to something, despite the odds. After all, people could be surprisingly petty when they wanted to be. But then again, the chances of him running into anyone who knew him were slim at best. At least while he remained in Japan.

“Ah, Severus! Excellent news, I’m sure you’ll be very pleased to hear this. You’re English, aren’t you?” The man approaching him, Arthur Sniperley, was his team’s poisons expert. While he claimed it was a fascinating job, Severus had found himself a bit unnerved whenever the man offered him something to eat or drink. Not that he believed the man wished him harm, he just had a rather worrying habit of explaining just how easy it was to poison someone, with even common ingredients. Still, he was a friendly enough bloke and even a fellow Englishman. Something he’d found quite a comfort.

“Yes” he answered. Though judging by the look on the other man’s face, he perhaps shouldn’t have said anything.

“Excellent. Then you’ll be coming with me. I don’t know if you’ve been told about it, but the Potions Guild annual conference is coming up, and I’ve been requested to present our findings on the Stasis potion. Which I mean I could do, I’d have no problem doing it of course. But then I thought, well it wasn’t me who had the idea in the first place, now was it? And these conferences can become frightfully dull, not that I’d expect you to know that. Full of stuffy old farts thinking they know best, you know? So it got me thinking. What if I were to bring the brains behind the operation? A seventeen-year-old boy without connections or money, whose sheer intelligence and perseverance had him achieving in months, what could take others years. Can’t you just picture the look on their
faces? Oh, it’ll be a jolly old hoot, is what it’ll be. Now I’ve already asked, can’t just be nicking off with you, Merlin only knows what they’d do to me if you just up and left without a word. And they’ve agreed to it, after all this is a prestigious event”. Arthur smiled widely at him.

“But I-” Severus attempted to refuse, or even to say anything. His dislike of social situations, even ones as prestigious as this, had not lessened in recent years. But he had come to realise their necessity, if he ever wanted to start his career. Still, it was the idea of returning to that country that had his stomach plummeting. He just knew that by returning, he’d inevitably meet one of the people he’d so desperately been trying to avoid. Of course he would. How could he not? These things always seemed to happen to him.

“Excellent, glad to hear you’ll do it. Not sorry I can’t stay and chat, but I really must be going. Can’t be late you know. Oh, I almost forgot! Now it’ll only be two nights and we’ll leave early on the third morning, so don’t fret. Now I know how this might sound, but you’ll not be allowed to leave the hotel unaccompanied. Security measures and all that. If I were you I’d bring a good book or two. Or however many you’ll think you’ll get through. And of course you’ll need some good quality robes and a few changes of clothes and such. Not to worry I’ll send you a list. Now I must be off, thank you for doing this lad. I just know you’re going to liven things up a bit”. With one last smile, Arthur hurried away, leaving Severus to stand alone in the corridor once more.

“You’ve got to be kidding me” he sighed. “I can’t, I just…I can’t” he muttered. Wrapping his arms around himself, he let out a frustrated groan. Well there was no getting out of it now, was there? And truth be told, he wasn’t sure he wanted to. An opportunity like this didn’t come around often, if ever really. It was just…England? Really? What kind of game was this?

The only positive was that his shift had just finished. Which meant returning home to where his boyfriend would hopefully be waiting. As he had tomorrow off, it gave them both the entire day to relax and spend the day together. It was a day he’d been looking forward to for months, though now, he found himself dreading the conversation they’d surely have. With one last sigh, Severus left the building, plotting Arthur’s demise all the way.
To say he was nervous was a gross understatement. To see he was positively shitting himself was also a gross understatement, but for an entirely different reason. Despite his success and the confidence he’d gained since leaving England, Severus still found himself becoming almost overwhelmed with the memories and insecurities that had plagued him, as soon as he stepped foot on British soil. As much as he’d have liked to simply cast them all away, as though they were nothing, it just wasn’t possible. Any positive memories or experiences he had in England were few and far between. In Scotland they were even fewer, except of course for his memory of leaving everyone and everything behind. That was indeed a good memory.

One thing he had promised himself, and wasn’t doing a very good job of if he was being honest with himself, was that he wouldn’t spend his time thinking about them. Not now, not when things were going so well for him. With any luck, he could avoid them all. After all, there was no guarantee any of them were in London, and even if they were, London was a big place. Still, he just knew his chances of avoiding anyone and everyone were slim. These things had a nasty little habit of happening to him, where his strongest wish was ignored in favour of the universe shitting all over him.

Even now, he still questioned why he’d been brought along. Yes, he was heavily involved in creating and developing the potion, but so were many in his team. And what Arthur said about them both being English, well it seemed more like an excuse if you asked him. It was the sort of thing that put him on edge, as though a trap was being laid and he was falling into it. Yet at the same time, he found himself questioning if that were really the case. His upbringing had left him guarded against pretty much everything. He hardly trusted anyone and liked even fewer. Still, he could see the logic in him being here. He was a novelty. A halfblood with no real connections, who’d managed to impress some of the greatest masters around. He was the sort of thing those in high society just loved to gossip about. To marvel at and gawk whenever he would pass by. There was sure to be a lot of that, given his age and heritage. Furthermore, a novelty such as he would surely convince some particularly generous beneficiaries to offer funding, so badly needed to help with the upcoming war effort. Severus was no fool; he was intelligent, yes, and very talented too, but he would still be just a pawn in a rich man’s game. At least until he had the means to play the game himself. Which, based on his early success, wouldn’t be as impossible as anyone might have thought.
As for the conference itself, Severus wasn’t too surprised that it was being held, even with the Dark Lord’s increasing attacks. While he didn’t have much experience first-hand, he’d seen and heard enough to know that it would have taken much more than just the fear of another attack, for the guild to postpone the conference. A fortune was made each year through masters selling their ideas, ingredients and even the potions themselves to nobles, academics, healers and even ministry employees. All of which were desperately needed, to ensure their potions supplies were enough to see them through to the end. It wasn’t just Britain who would benefit from such a gathering; countries all over the world sent representatives each year to discover new and better cures, poisons and everything in between. As they say, knowledge must be shared to allow it to grow, something the Potions Guild took to heart. Still, that wasn’t to say he wasn’t worried. Of course he was! He’d be a fool not to be.

“I bet this brings back memories for you. How are you feeling lad?” Arthur smiled, patting his shoulder as he looked around the room.

“Like I shouldn’t be here” Severus replied. He hadn’t meant to be so obvious about it, but it was certainly the truth.

Arthur only chuckled at that. “You deserve to be here more than me, you know. You’ve done a lot of great things lad, even if you haven’t been with us for very long. Talent like that, well it needs rewarding. We wouldn’t want you running off because you didn’t think we valued you and your work, now would we?”

It was meant in jest, Severus was sure of it, but he still froze all the same. Arthur’s words were uncomfortably close to the truth.

“Anyway, I’d be preparing myself if I were you. These masters, well let’s just say there’s a reason this only comes around once a year. Not to speak ill of the craft of course, but potions making does tend to attract some of the more eccentric types. At least, that’s been my experience. I heard you were from Hogwarts originally, weren’t you? You must know Slughorn then. I expect he’ll be coming as well. I’ve never known him to pass up an opportunity to network with guests of this calibre” Arthur chuckled.

Severus only swallowed painfully. How could he be so stupid as to forget about Slughorn? Forget about the Marauders and Dumbledore and even Lily, none of whom he’d had much chance of running into. As Arthur said, Slughorn was bound to come. And then what? He’d surely inform Dumbledore of where he was! Not that they could do much to him…at least he hoped. No, No, he was an adult now. They couldn’t force him back, they had no right to do such a thing! Besides, he had a life now. He was happy. He had a job, he had friends, he even had Evan. Life was…it was good. Life was good. Yeah, it was good.

“That’s…that’s right. If you’ll excuse me, I could use a minute to process everything”. Whether it was the look on his face, or just that the other man knew him well enough, that kept him from saying anything more, Severus wasn’t sure. But he was grateful the man let him go.

“Of course. If you like, I’ll get our room keys and you can find a quiet corner. I know this must be a bit much for you. It being your first time and all”.

Severus valiantly squashed the memories that arose from those words, before frantically turning to other thoughts in a desperate attempt to stop anything else from rising. He was only partially successful, but luckily, his robes would hide the worst of it. Though he doubted he’d need them for long. Already his anxiety was growing in strength. The idea of meeting someone he knew, someone from before he changed his life around, was deeply concerning, and a very real possibility.
“Of course” Severus replied. “I won’t go far” he added. Not that it needed saying. He had no desire to stray too far from the other man. He had no doubt that the moment he did so, someone he once knew would find him. And it would be undoubtedly unpleasant, something he wished to avoid.

As Arthur left to obtain their keys, Severus moved to a nearby corner. He was lucky enough to find a small armchair, one of the few that hadn’t already been taken, partially hidden by a large potted plant. For the next moment or so, he simply amused himself in trying to guess it’s species by sight alone.

“Tacca integrifolia, otherwise known as the Bat Flower. Native to the Asian rainforests I believe. Though why they thought to bring it to London is beyond me. I can only imagine the amount of magic they must be using to keep that thing alive. Still, I suppose it has a certain charm to it. Wouldn’t you say?”

Severus almost cringed at the ridiculousness of it all. Of all the chairs and in all of the rooms, this handsome stranger just happened to choose his. It was like something out of a bad romance novel, not that that he ever indulged in such tripe. But with black hair, blue eyes and a smug little grin that told him he was used to getting what he wanted, there was no denying the man was indeed very handsome. And the bastard clearly knew it.

“It seems rather cruel to me. Forcing it to stay alive in an environment it’s clearly not suited for, and it’s not like it serves any purpose in potions” Severus replied. Rather reluctantly so.

“Oh? I must say, I thought of it rather differently. I see a dark, delicate and very attractive specimen who, as you say, is fighting to live in an environment outside of the one it is used to. And if you don’t mind me saying, the flower’s not half bad to look at either”.

One of these days Severus would get his blushing under control. But when faced with a compliment, something he still was getting used to receiving, it seemed to be an automatic response. One this stranger, whoever he was, clearly enjoyed seeing.

“Excuse me, I have somewhere I need to be”. Severus stood up, well aware of how he must look. Yet in that moment, he found he didn’t really care.

“Oh no, please stay. I’ve embarrassed you haven’t I? Forgive me. I know I can be a horrible flirt at times. You just looked so alone over here, all by yourself. I just wanted to keep you company”. The man smiled, looking the perfect mix of sheepish and charming that Severus was sure he must have practiced for hours, in front of the mirror.

Severus could think of more than one way in which the man could keep him company. The very thought of which horrified him. What was he doing? He had a boyfriend for heaven’s sake. No, not just a boyfriend, Evan was much more than that. And this man, whoever the hell he was, was so obviously used to getting his own way, it was almost laughable.

“Thank you, but I’m seeing someone. Now if you’ll excuse me”. Giving him no time to reply, Severus stepped around him, hurrying towards the direction he’d seen Arthur last.

“No I’m…I’m fine” Severus answered. When Arthur only looked at him expectantly, he reluctantly elaborated. “A man was flirting with me, so I…I ran” he admitted. At the sudden cough Arthur gave, Severus assumed the man was trying to hide his laughter. Strangely, the thought relieved him a little.
At least the man had the decency to try and hide it.

“I see. You’re still with that other lad aren’t you? Yes, I can see why you’d want to avoid such attention. Well I won’t lie to you my boy, there are a number of people here who will be looking for a bit of fun, if you catch my drift. I’m not planning it myself of course, so if you don’t mind dealing with an old man like myself, then I’ll be happy to serve as your bodyguard. Might be best if you avoid going places alone though. Some people, well they might not always hear the word no. Better to be safe than sorry, yes?” Arthur smiled, his humour replaced by something decidedly more uncomfortable looking.

“Of course” Severus agreed. In the back of his mind he thought of the spells he knew that could be used in such a situation. It was almost depressing to think of just how many he could recall. Clearly his past had prepared him well for such an event.

“Right then. Enough of that. What do you say we find our rooms? I could murder a cup of tea right now. Maybe see if they have any biscuits. That’s how you rate good customer service my boy. It’s all about the tea and biscuits. I wonder if they have any ginger nuts”.

Severus trailed behind Arthur, only half-listening to the man list his favourite treats. He’d known coming to London was a risk. But these feelings he was facing; desire, a horrendous amount of guilt, anxiety and fear, well he was beginning to wonder if any of it would be worth it.

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“This is bullshit!” As James stormed off, Sirius ran after him.

“C’mon Prongs, just calm down, alright? It’s total shite yeah, but it’s not like we can do anything about it. Come on, you should be telling me this. I thought you were the responsible one getting me out of trouble? Don’t go turning into me. You don’t want poor Moony to have to go through that, do you?” It was truly a bizarre position to be in; Sirius serving as the wise and responsible friend, while James vented his frustrations to anyone who’d listen.

Apparently Sirius’ words hit home, as James began huffing out a laugh. Not a full blown one, but still, at least he’d calmed down somewhat. “Yeah. Yeah you’re right. It’s just, we’re basically being made bodyguards for a bunch of Slughorn’s. Merlin, can you even imagine what it’ll be like? I bet you they’ll all be old, fat and greyer than the sky. It’ll be like being back in potions class all over again” James scowled.

“Grey as the sky? Look at you getting all poetic”. Sirius just barely avoided the cuff to his head. “Well you never know; the old farts have to die sooner or later. I hear some prodigy is gonna be there. I hear he’s young. And there’s bound to be a few apprentices there. Surely they’ll be younger than fifty. There’s still a chance we could pull”. As far as bright sides went, it was a pretty poor one, Sirius had to admit.

“We’re meant to be working Padfoot. Doubt they’ll let us slip away for a quick shag. Not that…not that I’d want to” James admitted.

As James fell silent, Sirius sighed. “You know, I’ve been thinking. This prodigy, what if it’s him? I mean he was always good at potions. And they say he’s young. Maybe they’re the same person. Maybe he’s come back”. Sirius looked down at his feet, feeling a rather strange urge to shuffle them as though he were a child.

“That’s a lot of maybe’s” James replied. “There’s a lot of people in the world. What are the chances it would be him? We don’t even know if he’s still alive. We haven’t heard anything since that letter.
He could be…” James swallowed, falling silent.

“He survived Moony. He survived the shit we put him through. He’s…he’s stronger than that” Sirius interrupted.

“Still doesn’t mean he could be ours. Him and that boyfriend of his”. The ugly sneer James gave was marred somewhat by the look in his eyes. A mix of desperation, longing and fear that could only be described as heart-breaking. How the mighty had fallen.

Sirius chuckled, sounding more broken than James looked. “He’s happy mate. At least I hope he is. Fuck knows he deserves as much. C’mon break’s over, we should get back”.

Nothing more was said between them, it didn’t need to be. Not for the first time, they both found themselves regretting everything. But they were adults now. And as adults, they were learning first-hand the most important rule in life; it was a bitch.

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For a time, Severus had truly believed it would be alright. He had spent the first hour or so trailing behind Arthur as he made introductions. It was intimidating sure, but as time wore on, Severus began to relax. The familiar talk of potions and research had calmed him somewhat. He’d never been a fan of meaningless conversation, but here, nothing that was said was meaningless. Not to mention he was meeting people he’d only ever read about in journals. It was the kind of exposure that really could catapult his career, provided of course he managed to impress them all. That was his biggest concern. It was one thing for a potion to become popular, but it was quite another for the Potion Masters to give their seal of approval, so to speak.

Arthur had offered to present their work first, giving him time to scan the crowds, locate the nearest exits and get a better understanding of the people he would be facing. Of course, that didn’t happen. He was too new, too much of a novelty for anyone to be content with waiting. Especially those so used to getting their own way. As such, as soon as it was their turn to present, the very first to do so in fact, it was he who they were waiting to hear speak.

The speech itself wasn’t so bad. He knew exactly what he needed to say, this was his very own creation after all. It was just all so unnerving. He was in the presence of some of the greatest minds in the world. Him. Severus Snape, the one everyone mocked and detested simply because he wouldn’t take any of their shit. Well, fuck them.

As any great master might tell you, the worst moment in your life comes the very second you have finished presenting your work, to a group of people so desperate to tear it down. Severus knew this, he’d been expecting it, and yet, the moment he finished speaking, they started clapping. They all did; everyone. It was…unexpected.

Of course, that’s when things took a turn for the worst.

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“Snape?” James stood, mouth agape, certain Sirius looked no better at his side.

“Told you” Sirius managed, sounding as dazed as James felt.

It was him. It was really him. He’d changed of course, they all had. Still, his changes had certainly improved some of the more obvious flaws in his character. Even back when he’d had the big nose, sallow skin and greasy hair, he’d still had enough to draw all three of them in. But now, well their time apart had certainly done wonders for the Slytherin. Some serious wonders at that.
That was the moment he noticed them.

In the background they could hear clapping. But for who or what, neither could even begin to guess. No, instead all of their attention was focused on him; Severus. The one who got away. Unable to look away for even a second, too afraid he might disappear yet again, they both continued to stare.

Severus looked away, turning instead to another man. Neither of them liked that. Still, it wasn’t like they could do much about it. With their superior mere feet away, scanning the perimeter for any potential threats, there was no opportunity for either of them to escape. This wasn’t Hogwarts, they couldn’t just go swanning off whenever they felt like it. They had a job to do. An important one at that. Even if it was rather dull.

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He knew something like this was going to happen. He just knew it. But it wasn’t just them; Potter and Black, even though he wished it was. No, mere moments before he’d spied Professor Slughorn amongst the crowd. The man had looked stunned to see him, standing up on stage like he was someone very important, which he supposed he was. He wasn’t sure how he felt about the man. Right now, he just felt so very weary of it all. Slughorn had been one of the few to recognise his talent and actually encourage it, even if he did show obvious favouritism to those students whose families were rich and powerful. Still, he had encouraged him in his pursuit of potions. If it weren’t for that initial encouragement, who knows where he’d end up? Dead most likely, perhaps even by choice. Such thoughts sent shivers through him.

When his chance came for him to make an escape, even if just out of Potter and Black’s viewpoint, Severus took it. It was how he found himself being approached by several men and women, each a good twenty years older than him at least. All either fascinated by his work or his age, or eager to make his acquaintance. It was only the presence of Arthur by his side that kept him from fleeing, he never had been great in crowds.

Networking was an important part of such events, as he’d been told countless times before, and though he wished to run and hide in an attempt to avoid his past, he knew such things were impossible. He was an adult, not a child. He had no time for such foolishness, no matter how many painful memories they may have brought back to the surface.

Approximately half an hour passed, during which time Severus finally began to relax. It was refreshing to speak with people genuinely interested in what he was doing. After some time, he even began to enjoy himself just a little. With so many people around, he began to feel comforted by the idea that it would be difficult for Potter and Black to find him. Not to mention impossible for either of them to get away with doing something to him. Of course, just as things began looking up, his past made yet another appearance.

“Severus! My boy, why I never imagined I would run into you here so soon. Of course I knew you’d make a name for yourself eventually, talent like yours should never go to waste. Still, you had us all worried. No one had the foggiest idea where you’d disappeared to. I’ll have to let them know you’re safe. But to think you’d be here, doing what you’ve done. I must say it’s mighty impressive. Where have you been hiding yourself?”

As Professor Slughorn slid up beside him, Severus stilled, becoming increasingly uncomfortable as more and more people surrounded him.

“He’s currently working as a valued member of our team. With all this unpleasantness, I’m sure you’re aware of the need for promising young talent to help produce stronger and more cost efficient potions. Severus here was part of a programme in which we worked to develop his talents. As you
can see, he’s done just that and more” Arthur interrupted. Severus shot him a grateful look.

“Of course, of course. We’re all very proud of him. Perhaps he hasn’t yet told you, but I taught him potions in school. He was one of the most gifted students I ever had, he always had such talent” Slughorn bragged, smiling widely at anyone who’d listen.

‘Just no connections, money or family influence’ Severus thought, trying to make just a little more room for himself.

It was obvious what Slughorn was trying to do, he always had favoured those with influence and talent. Now that Severus had both, with his newfound popularity getting many influential people interested, Slughorn clearly hoped to capitalise on his success.

“Indeed” Arthur replied. When nothing more was said, Slughorn visibly wilted a little.

“W-well, I do have people to meet, of course I do. Well my boy, I’m sure I’ll be seeing you again soon. It would be an honour if we could meet up sometime, I’m sure you’ll be working on some truly fascinating things in the future” Slughorn said. While he was obviously trying to save face after Arthur’s obvious dismissal, Severus couldn’t help but pity him all the same.

“That would be nice, thank you Professor” Severus replied. He had no real intention of meeting the man again, he just wanted to avoid a scene.

Visibly brightening, Professor Slughorn smiled, giving a sharp nod before turning on his heel and leaving them be. Releasing a quite sigh of relief, Severus shifted uncomfortably as a strange sense of foreboding came over him. Glancing around, though doing his best to hide such paranoid behaviour, he was startled to find the man from earlier watching him. The pretentious prick even had the balls to smirk at him, maintaining eye contact as he emptied his wine glass in one foul swoop. In the back of his mind, Severus found himself wondering if the man even had a gag reflex. But as quickly as the thought emerged, his pushed it back down with tremendous fury. He didn’t know what it was about that man, but the way he found himself responding to such a person, it truly sickened him.

“Are you alright?” Arthur asked, as the two made their way to the doors.

“It’s him, the man from before. He keeps staring at me” Severus replied. Unconsciously, he found himself moving just a little faster. Why? He wasn’t sure. But he was beginning to feel like prey.

“Man? Which man?” Arthur turned, obviously trying to locate whoever had spooked Severus so.

“Him” Severus muttered, eyes flickering over to where he’d last seen him. Yet much to his surprise, the man was gone. His sense of foreboding only worsened.

Without warning a hand grabbed him. Had its owner not spoken there and then, he’d have blasted them halfway across the room. “Severus? Can we talk?” Of course, when he realised who it was, he very nearly gave into the temptation anyway.

“No”. Without saying another word, Severus pushed past both men, ignoring the wounded expression on Black’s face. Without waiting to see if Arthur was still with him, he hurried out of the room as quickly as he could.

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“Follow him. I’ll stay here and cover you. Make sure nothing happens to him. I don’t trust that guy that was watching him” James said. Sirius looked at him questioningly, obviously confused as to why he’d be willing to stay behind, but made no further argument.
Moving quickly, Sirius followed the direction Severus had fled in. Alarmingly, his senses seemed to be growing stronger, until they practically screamed at him like warning bells. Something was about to happen. Something bad. He could only hope he got to Severus before it did.

A scream forced him to begin running. Another only pushed him to move faster, as he eventually came across a most unwelcome sight. There he was, clawing and fighting desperately against those arms that had him pinned up against the wall. Spouting a plethora of curses, some even he had never come across, Severus struggled to free himself.

“Quiet!” Flesh hit flesh and Severus dropped to the ground. The man from before, the same man who’d flirted with him only hours ago, sneered down at him. “I can see why he would want you. Such a pretty little thing. I’m sure he won’t mind if I have a little fun. It’s your mind he wants after all, he never said anything about your body”.

Sirius saw red. Without even realising, he had cast the first spell. While the first missed its target, the second did not. Things quickly descended into chaos after that, and while he couldn’t be sure, he could have sworn he heard someone crying. Little did he know; it was coming from him.

If you were to ask him what had happened, Sirius wasn’t sure he could give an answer. All he knew, all he could focus on, was that Severus hadn’t moved, not even an inch. Taking a few steps towards him, even as his fellow Aurors worked to contain the scene, Sirius froze as another figure caught his attention. Lying mere feet away, was the same man he’d seen Severus with earlier. Was he a friend? Or a colleague? He wasn’t entirely sure. What he was sure about however, was that the man was very much dead. Likely hadn’t even seen the attack coming. Sirius swallowed as he turned his attention back to Severus, dimly recognising James’ scent as he approached him.

“He was marked. That son of a bitch has the mark” James spat. Spying both men on the ground however, he froze. “Is he-?” James choked out. Had he been capable of speaking, Sirius was sure he’d sound the same.

“We need a healer over here. This one’s still alive” someone shouted.

Paralysed with fear, both men could only stare as Severus was swarmed by wizards and witches alike.

“H-he’s-” James stammered.

“-a-alive?” Sirius stuttered.

No one answered them.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Yes, I am alive. Yes, I have updated. As you’ve all guessed by now, I had a bit of a break from writing, I just didn’t have the time to spare. But I am back. Hope you enjoy!

So I’m going to warn you all in advance. While I’m hoping to update on a much more regular basis (or at least more than once every two years), I am about to become very busy once more. In just a few months I’ll be moving to Japan for my new job which I am so, so happy about. But that means I can’t make any guarantees about when I update.
I can promise that I won’t be abandoning this story. I’m stubborn like that.

Privately, James had hoped to be the first one to see Severus awake. While he had an agreement with Sirius and Remus, it didn’t stop the panic he felt whenever he thought about that moment. Seeing Severus lying there, so still and lifeless, was undoubtedly the worst moment of his life. It had been even worse to realise that while he’d been struggling to react, Sirius had taken action. As someone who had frequently been called brave and heroic, it was a bitter realisation to know that he hadn’t been either when it really mattered.

Sirius, like James, had also hoped to be the first to see Severus awaken. After all, he’d been the one to cast first. While he may have missed with his first spell, he hadn’t with the ones he’d cast in succession. Truthfully, the rage he’d felt at that moment had later terrified him. Considering who his family was, what dark secrets he’d been privy to, in that moment he feared he’d become someone his family would be proud of. Someone dark and ruthless. A true Black. The idea sickened him. But still, his attempts to rationalise his behaviour did make him feel a little more like himself. A little less like a Black. After all, he’d only acted that way to protect the one person he truly loved. He’d acted in a manner befitting a true Gryffindor. For now, that knowledge was enough.

As for Remus, of course they’d filled him in on what had happened. How could they not? While they may have been rivals in love, they were and would always be friends first. It may have sounded childish to some, to stick so close to those they’d gone to school with, but considering what had happened, they had to stick to those they trusted.

It only took two days for Severus to awaken, though if you asked anyone it would seem like a lifetime. Tensions had dramatically increased between the British and Japanese Ministries. Although he was a British national, Severus’ work had been developed and promoted by the Japanese wizarding community. Despite assurances that the Ministry of Magic would ensure Severus and Arthur’s safety, they had failed to do so quite spectacularly. With one dead and the other unconscious, it was possibly the worst outcome anyone could have imagined.

When Severus finally awoke, coherent and with his memory mostly intact, things only seemed to become more chaotic than they were before. It was unfortunate for Severus that the memory of Arthur’s death had not been one he’d forgotten. It was everything he’d feared and more. Returning to England had not only stirred up memories he’d so desperately wished to avoid, but now, he had even more to add. There were moments where he became almost catatonic, caught up in the memory of Arthur smiling, a bright flash and then an overwhelming feeling of agony. Following those
moments, he wanted nothing more than to leave once again. Only this time, he had no plans to ever return.

While he recovered, Severus heard little about what was being done to catch those responsible. Though the Death Eater who had attacked him had been captured alive, there was no telling how many others had been involved. And it seemed the British Ministry were reluctant to share anything with him. With aurors posted both inside and outside of his door, Severus was kept under constant surveillance. He was visited regularly by Aurors, Mediwitches and Ministry employees, each eager to know what he remembered, who he’d spoken to and what his contribution to the Stasis potion had been. It was the latter which concerned him the most. To know that even in the poor state he was in, these witches and wizards were so eager to take advantage of him being under their care. It spoke volumes about how little any of them really cared about him. In other words, things clearly hadn’t changed in his absence.

“Mr Snape? You have a visitor. It seems he is quite insistent on seeing you.” A mediwitch entered his room, flashing a piece of parchment at the aurors stationed at his door. Whatever it said, it was enough to get them to step outside his room, allowing a very familiar face to take their place.

Without words, Evan approached him. Offering a watery smile, Evan sat down on the edge of his bed. Shaking, Severus reached out to touch him, convinced this was a cruel mirage. It was only when his hand met solid flesh and Evan whispered a word in his ear, that Severus finally broke down. Months back, they’d agreed on a pair of words they’d use to identify the other. To be sure it was really them and not some imposter. For Severus, hearing that word meant the world to him. For he finally had someone on his side.

Severus pressed his face against Evan’s chest, as he tried desperately to contain his sobs. He couldn’t allow himself to break down now. Not here, not with so many others watching him. He just couldn’t let that happen. He couldn’t let them see him so broken. But then Evan kissed him. Just briefly, softly, clearly holding back. And just like that, Severus couldn’t keep it in anymore.

The two sobbed, clutching at each other desperately as they murmured apologies and declarations of love. It should have been sickening to watch, so sappy and heartfelt, but it wasn’t. Yet again Severus had cheated death, barely a man and yet he’d proved he was a survivor. It showed in the way his fingers trembled, the way his eyes darted about the room even as he clutched to Evan desperately. It was a little frightening for Severus to admit, but Evan had become more than a boyfriend to him. He was more than a lover. He was his supporter, his biggest in fact. And right now, he desperately needed Evan’s support to process everything that had happened.

With one last desperate kiss Evan pulled away. “You know, I thought you were dead. When I heard what had happened, I just…everything went numb. I’ve never been so fucking terrified in my life! And I know, I know I can’t be around all the time to protect you, not in the way I’d like to. But I’d still like to try. It’s just…I’m so fucking in love with you! I know you might not believe me, even though it’s true, but if you’ll let me, I want to prove it to you.”

Swallowing, Severus smiled shakily. “Evan, I love you. As shit as I am with all this romance stuff, you’re the only person whose been willing to put up with all the shit that happens to me. I don’t think there’s anything more you can do to prove you love me. I…I know you love me. I’m even starting to believe it. You don’t need to do anything to prove something that I already know.”

Evan shook his head. “But I do. Not just to you, but to the rest of those assholes who’ve tried to convince you that you deserve the shit they’ve put you through. They need to see just how badly they fucked up when they drove you away. I know it sounds selfish and arrogant and god knows what else, but I can’t keep doing this without making sure people know you have me fighting for
you. I think…I think I need to marry you.”

Severus froze. Suddenly, Evan reached forward and grabbed his hand. “You…you what?”

“You heard me. I know you did. I’m not…I’m not proposing right now. Not yet. I know you probably won’t agree, considering all of the other shit that’s been going on. But if we got married, you’d be protected.” At Severus’ flat look, Evan hastily continued. “I’m not saying you’re weak, if anything you’re the strongest person I know. But I know I have things that you don’t. Things I want to share with you.”

“Like what?” Severus asked softly, any thoughts of being watched were completely forgotten about.

“Money for one. I know you’re doing so well already and you’re set to make a fortune. But I know you, I know you’ll only spend money on things you think you need. Things for your potions and stuff, not on things you deserve.”

“What else?”

“Power. There are some of us who’ve been given prominent positions in MACUSA. And there are others who’ve made a name for themselves by starting their own businesses. We may not be at the level of some of those assholes I’ve seen mincing about around here like they own the place, but we’re more than capable of protecting one of our own. But it does mean we can get access to some things that few people ever get to see. I know how much you love learning. If you married me, you’d automatically be given the same access. It’s kind of a family perk.” Evan chuckled weakly. Although he obviously tried to lighten the mood, he clearly wasn’t in the right state of mind to do it successfully.

“That sounds nice” Severus admitted. “Really nice.”

“Also, now don’t hit me for saying this, it would mean you had a family again. A real one this time. One that wanted you.” Evan smiled, though he was a little wary of Severus’ reaction. Family had always been a touchy subject for him.

For a few minutes Severus didn’t say a thing. Then finally he let out a long shuddering breath, clearly trying to keep himself calm. “Evan I…I don’t know what to say.” He really didn’t.

“Hey, it’s okay. I get it. You don’t have to say anything right now. I shouldn’t have even brought it up, not when you’ve already gone through so much. I just…I wanted to show you that I’ve been thinking about the future. About our future. I don’t want to lose you like I almost did.” Evan kissed him again. Both ignoring the tears that neither of them could seem to hold back.

“Thank you” Severus whispered.

“Oh and just for the record, I’m never letting you come back to this hell hole ever again” Evan added.

Severus snorted in response, smiling tiredly as he leaned against Evan’s chest. “That makes two of us.”

As the two men fell silent and drew each other close, they remained ignorant that they were being watched. Not by those who’d been sent to guard Severus, but by two very familiar faces. Neither of which looked very happy.

As the two lovers embraced each other, Sirius stood there silently. In a rare stroke of fortune, they’d both been granted a chance to check on Severus themselves. But any joy they had felt quickly
evaporated as they took in the scene before them. Finally, after what seemed like an age had passed, Sirius turned to James.

“We should go.”

James fared no better, his face pale and his eyes tearful as he watched the man he’d become obsessed with embrace another. Unable to stand the sight anymore, he wrenched his gaze away and nodded sharply. Scrubbing at his eyes, he pretended to remove a speck that had gotten caught in his eye. In a true sign of friendship, Sirius didn’t call him out on his obvious lie. How could he when he was doing the same?

Heartbroken, the two left quickly. Although once eager to make their presence known, so that Severus could thank them in person, now they couldn’t wait to leave. It was one thing to read about someone in a letter, but to see this man in person, embracing the one they loved, it was just too much. And they still had to explain it all to Remus.

With a newfound determination, James threw his arm out to stop Sirius in his tracks. “Moony needs to know” he said. “Might be best to get it over with. You know it’s getting close to that time of the month” he added.

Sighing, Sirius nodded. “Yeah. Doesn’t mean I have to be sober for it though. Send him a message to meet us at the pub. I think we’re all gonna need a drink first.”

James managed a weak smile before doing just that. “I’m gonna need more than one mate. A lot more” he replied.

“Same here mate. Same here.” With that said, the two left the building, unaware of another’s gaze on them.

Clutching at her bag, Lily swallowed painfully. That had been Potter she’d seen, Black too. Almost certain she knew why they were there, she closed her eyes for just a moment. With so many thoughts swirling around her head, and the sheer panic she’d felt after reading of Severus’ return and attack, she needed a moment to collect herself. Black and Potter hadn’t looked well, much like she felt. And she feared the reason why. Surely if something had happened to Severus, beyond what she already knew, surely someone would have told her. Wouldn’t they?

Determined, Lily made her way to the desk. Giving her name she waited to receive Severus’ room number. She had so many things to tell him, so many apologies to make. She didn’t know where to start. But above all, she just hoped he would be okay. He had to be. She needed him to.

“I’m sorry Miss, but this patient has restricted access. Only those pre-approved by the Ministry may visit him. I’m afraid you’ll have to leave.” With a tense smile, the receptionist gestured towards the exit.


“I said you’re not on the list Miss. Only authorised visitors may visit him. As I’m sure you’re aware, the circumstances surrounding the attack are under investigation by the Ministry. Our first priority is to protect the patient. You’ll have to come back on those restrictions have been lifted.”

“Oh.” After a moment, Lily nodded, offering a tentative smile as she turned to leave. “Is…is it possible for someone to let him know I stopped by? My name is Lily. He is…I mean he was my best friend. I just wanted to make sure he was okay.”
“I’ll have someone pass on the message.” The receptionist offered the girl a smile, clearly sympathetic.

“Thank you” Lily replied. With a timid smile, she left the way she came.

Just outside of the building, Lily stood motionless. Only when she felt a raindrop on her hand did she snap out of her daze. Looking up at the sky, she frowned in confusion. There was not a cloud to be seen. It was then she realised it wasn’t a raindrop she’d felt, but a tear. Her tear. Trembling, Lily let her bag drop to the ground. She soon followed it, as she sat there weeping quietly.

What she and her classmates were quickly coming to realise, was that Hogwarts had prepared them poorly for real life. Being pretty and popular did little for them now, at least not like it did back in school. While looks and social status were undoubtedly important in the wizarding world, they were now learning that it was talent that was favoured most of all. While Severus had always possessed the latter in spades, he now had the former to help ease his way into wizarding society. Who would have imagined that it would take just one little word to get him everything? He’d be a fool to say no. And although he’d certainly had his moments, Severus was no fool. Not anymore.

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‘Marriage?’ Severus thought to himself. ‘Really?’

With a sigh, Severus pulled the bed covers. He was afraid to dwell upon such thoughts. Especially now of all times. With everything that had happened, the timing was just terrible. At that, Severus briefly smiled. He should have expected as much from Evan.

As he lay back, staring up at the ceiling, Severus closed his eyes. Exhausted, he only hoped sleep would come quickly. He no longer wanted to think, everything was just too much for him to process right now. But still, as he managed to drift off, Severus couldn’t ignore that one word that his mind kept clinging to.

Yes.

End Notes

Please review! I’d really like to know what you all think.

KB

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!