It starts with Harry's eyes
by blurredink

Summary

Another of those time travel stories to save Sirius (in more than one way) and for Harry to have some more emotional chaos. Some creature stuff thrown in. Love the clichés and maybe create some new.

Or the one in which a mysterious artefact kicks Harry back to a time where he collides with the Marauders and has to deal with completely unexpected emotions AND an upcoming creature inheritance - with consequences that are really going to freak him out. Maybe. Marauders' Era starts with chapter 7.

Notes

My first attempt at a fanfiction in English. Have mercy. Also no beta. You're very welcome to point out any mistakes - grammatical or logical or whatever. Story starts out with very short chapters that become progressively longer. You will find warnings for possible triggers (that are NOT mentioned in the tags!) above the respective chapter.

Cupcakes for everyone!
See the end of the work for more notes.
In which Harry knows and Remus is unprepared

His eyes were huge.

Or maybe it was just the fact that he was so much thinner than what could be considered healthy that made them look so big. They seemed to consume nearly half of the pale face beneath the inky black fringe, a drastic contrast in colour. The sunlight filtering in through the incredibly boring curtains made those eyes glow in an eerie show of life in a face that looked both much younger than its nearly sixteen years and older in a way no child’s face should look like. There was knowledge there one only sees in those that know about the wrongs in the world, those who know monsters are real. And that ‘monster’ can very well mean another human being.

Harry Potter knew.

For the first time since Remus Lupin knew his dead friend’s son did he not see a younger version of James when he studied the boy currently standing near the far wall of the Dursley’s living room. For the first time he looked past the mop of black unruly hair and round glasses and saw just Harry. He didn’t see Lily in those emerald eyes either. Harry maybe had some of his parents’ features but he was his own person. And if Remus was honest with himself, he could clearly see that Harry was nothing like James or Lily. Yes, he was brave and yes, his soul was gentle. He was clever. But he had none of the well-cared-for aura both his friends had sported, he wasn’t self-confident and definitely not as spoiled as James had been or as bossy as Lily sometimes got.

“Harry…” Remus voice caught when he saw the boy flinch.

That wasn’t the determined Harry he had taught the Patronus charm in his third year or even the desperate boy he had tried to stop from following Bellatrix that day in the Department of Mysteries. This Harry eyed him warily with his back pressed against the wall as if trying to figure out the direction of the attack he was obviously expecting.

“Harry, what…” he cleared his throat when his voice came out somewhat raspy. “Are you alright?”

He finally asked.

Obviously he wasn’t, but Remus didn’t know what else to say. This was so far from what he had expected upon coming here. Granted, he had never been at the Dursley’s before and yes, he knew that Harry wasn’t too fond of his relatives, but no one could have prepared him for this.

The first thing Remus had noticed when he entered the house was the definite lack of anything homely. Everything looked abnormally clean and spotless, the furniture a show of the supposed perfect middle-class living standards trying and failing to appear somewhat sophisticated. Whoever chose the tapestries and such definitely wasn’t a fan of colours. It looked utterly boring and uncomfortably sterile.

There had been the smell of roast beef wafting from what Remus thought was probably the kitchen so he had made his way over to the door to his right. He hadn’t expected anyone but Harry to be home, but if his uncle or aunt were there he would have to greet them and apologise for intruding in their home.

But the kitchen had been empty, the meal cooking expertly on a low flame.

Remus had attempted to call out then to announce his presence to whoever was in the house, but his
enhanced werewolf senses had caught the shuffling of tired feet from the room next to the kitchen. On instinct he had tried to scent the air before checking who it was. It had proven to be impossible to tell a single human’s scent apart from the smells of food and polish. The persistent stench of bleach lingering in the kitchen had nearly made him sneeze.

It was then that he had heard the somewhat painful wheeze coming from the person in the next room and Remus had no longer cared for manners and had just barged through the connecting door.

That was how he had come across a sweaty Harry clutching his side and scrunching up his face as if in pain. It looked like he was having difficulties breathing. Remus had immediately rushed forward to see what was wrong and if he could help, but Harry’s reaction had put a stop to his every action. Gasping in shock at the unexpected movement in the room Harry had flung himself away, stumbling over a low stool in front of one of the armchairs. But he hadn’t stopped his retreat even after getting a good look at Remus. He had just scrambled away from his former teacher until he reached the far wall. When Remus tried to draw closer, his hands slightly raised in a peaceful gesture, Harry’s wheezing breath had hitched. His eyes had darted around the room looking for an escape route like some cornered animal and Remus stopped short.

This was how they had come to the current situation, both of them staring at each other across the silent room and a wisp of wild magic rising in the air.

No, nothing could have prepared Remus for this.
In which everyone blames Harry

Harry Potter had never been an overly fearful person.

So despite the fact that he had been targeted by his cousin and his bullying friends ever since he could walk, despite his aunt’s neglectful attitude towards him and his uncle’s obvious contempt, he became the brave little Gryffindor everyone was expecting him to be by the time he enrolled in Hogwarts. There had been trials each and every year ever since and no real chance for recuperation during his summers at the Dursley’s.

But Harry never complained. And he never dared to stop and think if this was because of how he had been shaped by Dumbledore and the Wizarding World’s expectations and hopes or if it was because of his low self-esteem. His relatives had made sure to ingrain the feeling of worthlessness, of being undeserving of anyone’s love, of having to be grateful to be allowed into this world at all.

And even if he would never voice these kind of thoughts or at least acknowledge them, a small part of Harry honestly believed that all his ‘adventures’ and nasty living conditions were the price he needed to pay. If it meant he could be with his friends and was allowed to learn about magic Harry was willing to pay this price.

That was until Cedric died.

That was until Voldemort resurrected himself through Harry’s blood and made him the sole reason so many innocent people died. Deaths he was forced to witness in nightmares, his visions of Voldemort.

That was until Sirius died.

Because of him. Again. They always died because of him.

Fifth year under Umbridge’s rule (and subsequent torture) had been horrible enough but at least he hadn’t been alone. In fact, he gained more friends than in the four years prior combined and became close to them on a level only fighting together, having each other’s back in dangerous situations could create. And fought they had. Dumbledore’s Army became a united front against the threat that hung over Hogwarts and yes, somehow he had been its leader. He had been the person everyone else had looked to for advice and for decisions.

They had relied on him and in the end he had let them down.

How could he not have seen it? How could he fall for such an obvious trap? And worse, how could he lead his friends, children really, into a fight for their very lives?

And again someone had died for him. Because of him. Because he had been too dumb to realise when he was being set up and manipulated.

When Sirius fell through the veil in the Department of Mysteries Harry’s world just stopped. A second before his godfather had sneered at Bellatrix, laughing at her attempts to kill him and then he had praised Harry. Oh Merlin, why had Sirius chanced this one glance, this fraction of a second to look at him? It was the only reason he hadn’t been able to stop Bellatrix’ next curse. He had looked at Harry when the green flash of light hit him. At least he hadn’t really seen Harry in that moment. His last words weren’t really addressed at his godson but at his long dead best friend.

“Nice one, James...”
Remus Lupin had not been able to look at Harry after the reality of Sirius’ death had sunk in. The knowledge that the last of his true friends, the last of the Marauders (no one counts Peter) was gone left him more than devastated. It left him hollow and empty and numb. It left him alone in a way he had never felt before – not even when he believed Sirius guilty for betraying the Potters and killing Peter.

He couldn’t explain why it was different. Maybe because with Sirius confirmed innocent and getting better by the day he had actually started to feel alive again. He had started to hope again. And then this new traitorous hope was squashed and snubbed out right in front of his eyes. Sirius died.

And it had happened because they had to rush into a fight that could have easily been avoided if Harry had just waited for them. If Harry had not been tricked. So yes, he had not been able to look at his former student. He had been glad that Harry had been sent back to his relatives, he had been glad that he would not have to see him any time soon. That had been the only feeling registering after the reality of the fight in the Department of Mysteries sunk in. And then there had been nothing.

The following weeks found Remus in one of his hide-outs mindlessly staring at old photographs. Staring at the smiling faces of his dead friends, he realised his life had ended all those years back on that Halloween’s night. Nothing had ever felt right again after Voldemort killed James and Lily, after Sirius’ seemingly betrayal. He remembered asking Dumbledore for custody over Harry. But like all those times before Greyback’s curse had intervened with his life or with what was left of it. No werewolf would be allowed to raise the supposed saviour of the Wizarding World or any child for that matter. And with Harry hidden away and unreachable there had been nothing left.

Harry. It always came back to Harry. Everything did, really.

And with this thought Remus realised that yes, he had once again lost his friend and his hope, but this time Harry was not out of his reach. It was like some kind of epiphany in the dank and dark room of his self-inflicted prison. It all came back to Harry and even if Harry was the so called Chosen One – powerful and able to defeat Voldemort – he was still a child. No child should face this kind of responsibility and no child should be left alone after events like those revolving around Sirius’ death.

Merlin knew how much those two loved each other. It was evident in Harry’s rushed and immediate reaction to the trap Voldemort had lured him into. The dark wizard had ruthlessly used Harry’s feelings for his godfather to let him forego any precautions. How could Remus blame the boy for wanting to save someone he loved? If he was honest with himself, he knew that Sirius would have acted much the same. He would have acted without thinking; he would have thrown himself between the danger and Harry.

Sirius would have done everything for his godson.

Remus stared at the boy in front of him. He could feel Harry’s wild magic rising, uncontrolled, completely defensive. It would lash out any moment now.
In which there are even more memories and some drama(tical revelations)

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: If you suffer from any kind of eating disorder, some mentions in this chapter could be triggering.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

No letters. Not one.

Harry didn’t feel like he deserved them, but he had hoped nonetheless. He had hoped his friends would remember how much of a personal hell Harry’s summers were for him and would write to ease the oppressive presence of his relatives. Like they always did before. Before he had led them to fight Death Eaters to save someone most of them still thought a murderer, someone who hadn’t even been there when they arrived. How Harry wished this someone had never shown up there at all…

Meals through a cat flap when he didn’t finish his chores in time. Sometimes he was locked up in his room for days with one meal every twelve hours and a trip to the bathroom in the morning and one when his relatives retired to bed. He knew that he probably didn’t get enough food but he seldom felt hungry. Some days he ignored the food completely, on others he forced himself to eat. He needed the energy if he wanted a chance to finish his chores next time they would let him out. But it was hard to bring yourself to eat if you felt like you didn’t deserve the luxury of food. And that was exactly what Harry felt like.

His nights were short and not refreshing at all. Nightmares of Cedric, the graveyard, the fight in the Ministry and Sirius, always Sirius, haunted his sleep. They seemed to combine themselves with visions and memories of people Voldemort killed or had killed in the past. He knew that some of those dreams meant the dark wizard was torturing and killing these people in the exact moment Harry dreamed about it and at first he had tried to contact the Order to try and get these people help. There had been no answers and Harry tried again – this time he wrote to Dumbledore himself. He didn’t dare to write his friends.

But nothing changed. No one contacted him.

His summer continued on as a series of chores under the hot summer sun, nightmares, visions, meals through a cat flap, Dudley’s taunting words, his aunt’s sneers and then his uncle’s increasingly aggressive behaviour. As if he could sense Harry’s growing weakness like some sort of predator. And still all Harry could feel was that he deserved this treatment.

It was true. Remus had ignored the letters Harry had been sending him. He couldn’t even bring himself to open them though this did not only apply to Harry’s letters. Remus had ignored each and every mail he got – which was admittedly not much. He had been hiding for a reason but now he thought that this may had been a selfish thing to do.

Harry looked exhausted. He was thin and sickly pale and his hair had lost its shine. His whole appearance looked dulled like something – or someone, Remus realised with a start – had sucked the very life out of the boy. If it weren’t for his glowing eyes and his familiar scent the werewolf may
have thought him a completely different person. Even his magic felt different though this was not a
surprise. In fact, it was the main reason why Remus had convinced himself that he needed to get to
Harry – preferably before his sixteenth birthday.

“Harry”, he tried again, forcing himself back to the present. Now was not the time for remorse or to
regret what he should have been doing but had failed to do. “I know you didn’t expect me and you
probably don’t want to see me at all, but…” The magic in the air felt heavier by the minute and
Remus’ skin started to itch in reaction. He needed to get Harry to calm down.

“Talk to me, Harry,” he spoke in a soothing tone but didn’t try to draw closer again. “What’s
wrong?”

Still there was no visible reaction but the continued rise of wild magic around them. It rose in leaps
and bounds and Remus was sure he would soon be able to actually see it if this kept on.

One of the photographs he had been staring at had reminded him of an incident during their fifth
year. The photo showed the Marauders in all their glory – with one exception. James had acted rather
strange in the time shortly before his sixteenth birthday and this special picture was evidence to it for
it showed him tired and grumpy looking, something which was unheard of for the proud Animagus.
In the days leading to his birthday James was more short-tempered and aggressive than he had ever
been. And on top of that he was sometimes unusually unsure of himself – even kind of whiny - only
to have his magic lash out in a fit of accidental magic the next moment. Which hadn’t happened to
him ever since he started attending Hogwarts.

This was how the friends learned about the creature blood in the Potter family.

The regular witch or wizard reached maturity with seventeen and their magical core would
subsequently gain its full expanse. But someone with creature blood sometimes reached this state
early – the time differed from creature to creature. There wasn’t much known about the creature
blood within the Potter family and no one could be sure that there wasn’t any on Lily’s side since she
was a Muggleborn. Who knew if her ancestors weren’t descendants of a squib line or something?
There could easily be some creature gene that had been dormant this whole time. Though Lily never
showed any signs and the creature had never completely manifested within James – which wasn’t a
surprise since it was said one needed an exceptionally strong magical core for this to happen.

James was a talented wizard and his magic was strong like his will but it wasn’t enough. There
hadn’t been a witch or wizard with enough magic for the manifestation in decades or so. At least this
was what Remus remembered from when James had finally confided into them. So no one had
expected James to change after his magic reached its maturity early on his sixteenth birthday and he
hadn’t. He received a slightly stronger magical boost than average but the creature gene went back to
being dormant.

But Harry as much as he looked like his father was an exception by nature. If there was something to
be said impossible he would probably accomplish it – he always did. And wasn’t he famous for his
bouts of accidental magic that still happened?

“Harry, please. Look at me.” As if he didn’t already. Harry’s vibrant eyes had long stopped to look
for an escape and had fixed themselves on Remus’ form. “You know me and you know I would
never hurt you.” He did know this, right? Why did Harry look like he expected to be attacked? And
why wouldn’t he talk?
It had been such a long and trying day. It was the hottest day of the summer so far which was – he was sure of it – the only reason his uncle had made him work in the backyard. There had been more than one horrible vision last night and afterwards, when he fell into an exhausted sleep, the nightmares had haunted him again. On top of that he had woken to the distinct feeling of illness. Like he had caught the flu and was slowly developing the accompanying symptoms. His body ached something fierce, his head pounded with every thud of his heart and his chest hurt. The unforgiving summer sun had not made it any better. Really, he felt like every breath he drew burnt something inside and he longed to lie down.

He wanted to close his eyes and go numb. But regardless of the still waiting chores inside and the less than favourable reaction his relatives would have to him slacking – there was no way he could do this. The moment he closed his eyes there would be him again. And with his face there would be the guilt.

It was eating him up from the inside.

So when he caught the unexpected movement in the corner of his eye – his aunt and uncle shouldn’t be here today and Dudley had gone visiting a friend or something – he just couldn’t help but think of his visions. Death Eaters and Voldemort torturing and killing. His instinct demanded a fight or flight reaction and since he was in no condition for a fight, he found himself fleeing. Only to stumble in a fit of blurred vision and then scramble away from the source of possible danger.

Remus. Not a Death Eater or even his relatives. No, it was the one person he was somehow even more afraid to see even if it was for a completely different reason.

“…never hurt you.”

Harry only now registered that Remus was talking to him. His vision was still hazy – had he lost his glasses? – and it became increasingly difficult to concentrate. Everything just hurt and he felt himself panicking when he saw his former teacher approach.

Remus who had every reason to hate him.

Remus who definitely hated him for killing his best friend.

For killing Sirius.

The air was suddenly overcharged. There was a crackling sound and if it wasn’t for his wolf Remus would not have been able to throw up the shield in time. As it was he was shoved back half through the door by a violent outburst of magic. It smelled like lightning and he had to close his eyes against the brightness. It only lasted a few seconds though and when Remus opened his eyes again the scene in front of him had changed dramatically.

Chapter End Notes

Wanted to end the chapter after Remus wonders why Harry wouldn’t talk, but then I thought ‘Screw it! I want some goddamn action now!’. It was about time.

Who wants to guess the creature?
There was blood dripping from Harry’s nose.

His wide eyes were focused on nothing in particular, they just seemed to stare into nothingness. Though, this could have been because there wasn’t really much left to look at. Nothing was left of the former living room, not even the obnoxiously big TV that had resided in front of the not exactly cosy looking couch. The window panes had not only been shattered – the whole window including chunks of the surrounding wall had been blasted away. The smell of ozone still tinged the air mixed with some summer scents lazily wafting in through the hole in the wall.

Harry’s gaze flickered to Remus still crouching in the doorway. He took a long moment to actually focus on the man and when he finally did –

“HARRY!”

His breath left him in a shuddering gasp and the world turned upside down before everything went dark.

Remus watched horrified when the little colour there was drained from Harry’s face and he abruptly fell unconscious. There was no way he could have reached him in time, but still… The floor around where Harry lay was burnt and there was no evidence of the furniture left. It was an impressive show of raw magic but it had demanded a whole lot of energy. Energy Harry didn’t possess at the moment.

It wasn’t really a surprise though Remus hadn’t expected the outburst to be this strong. It must have been the interaction of agitated and unstable magic combined with his emotional turmoil and fragile mental state. But the blood was what honestly frightened Remus. It just shouldn’t be there if Harry was healthy. Remus had thought him exhausted, but this indicated a weakness to his body that made him wonder just what Harry’s summer had been like so far. He had waited too long with his visit. He should have been there for Harry right after Sirius’ death, but instead he had left a fifteen year old child alone with their grief and probably guilt. Sighing, Remus gently touched Harry’s cheek and rightened his glasses. His skin felt damp and he could smell cold sweat within the lingering scents of ozone, summer and the faint fragrance of windswept forest that he identified as Harry’s natural scent.

“I’m sorry I made you wait so long.”

His whispered words carried through the again still house and he briefly wondered why there weren’t any neighbours coming to look for possible injured victims of the explosion. If it wasn’t for the steady heartbeat his sensitive ears caught from Harry, he would have been much more worried. As it was Remus summoned Harry’s trunk without much thought on the matter. The child had his wand on him, tucked in the back pocket of his baggy shorts in a way that reminded Remus of Tonks. Everything else he might need they could get later. For now Remus apparated away with the last remaining of what he could possibly consider family in his arms.

They were at Remus’ rundown apartment. He hadn’t really thought this through, he realised when he carefully lied Harry down on his own bed. There was no spare room the boy could use. His apartment was composed of a middle sized living room with a kitchenette, a miniature bathroom, and his bedroom that was half the size of the living room. Remus was not prepared for guests, not that he
ever had any before. But now Harry was here and he would hopefully decide to stay once he woke up.

Remus gathered a wet washcloth and sat beside Harry on the bed to softly clean up the blood and some of the sweat. He should probably call Poppy to check on the boy, but then it would only be a matter of minutes until Dumbledore would know. And Dumbledore would not let Harry stay. He would want him to go back to his relatives into the safety of the blood wards.

Remus thought that utter bullshit though he wouldn’t tell Harry this if he could avoid to.

No one knew where Harry was or with who he was since Remus hadn’t told anyone of his plans. It could probably be considered abduction, but if only one more person knew then it would be exactly as dangerous as Dumbledore thought it to be.

Harry could send a message that he was alright without exactly telling his whereabouts, Remus decided with a nod to himself. As it was no one knew and so no one would come looking for him here, Remus himself always kept his head down as well. Besides they could always leave and find another place to stay although he hoped it wouldn’t come to this. With his condition, even with the Wolfsbane potion Severus still provided him with, it was nearly impossible to hold a regular job for more than a few months. If he even got a job at all. Severus may still brew the potion for him, but he had made sure that Remus’ status as a werewolf was well known throughout the Wizarding World during Harry’s third year. So finding a new apartment could prove difficult and he wasn’t about to go to Grimmauld Place. Even if it weren’t for the traversing Order members that would definitely catch on to the fact that the Boy-Who-Lived resided under the old roof – he couldn’t bring himself to set foot into the house that had held Sirius prisoner nor would he force Harry to do so.

Harry who looked so young in his sleep.

Harry who had deep dark smudges under his closed eyes as if he hadn’t been able to rest for a long time.

Harry who even unconscious still looked a bit tense as if his worries followed him even into the darkness of magic drained exhaustion.

Harry who would need him to sort through this mess with his possible – and more than likely – creature inheritance.

Remus somehow doubted that Dumbledore knew or if he did that he had actually thought to inform Harry about the possibility. There was just so much going on. For now he would let Harry sleep and regain his energy. And when he woke up Remus would make sure he ate something nutritious.

Honestly, the boy had been much too light in his arms. What were those relatives of his thinking?

The thought of Harry’s relatives reminded Remus of the damage Harry’s magic had done to their house and how it would probably look like to them. He definitely should contact them and reassure them that their nephew was alright. He wouldn’t be able to help rebuilding the wall via magic since there would be no logical explanation for their muggle neighbours. But he could offer his services for the reconstructions in the living room. But no, if he contacted them, they would know who Harry was with and that he couldn’t risk. His apartment was not under the Fidelius charm so really – no one could know who ‘abducted’ Harry. He would just have the boy call them; there was a phone booth down the alley.

“…Sirius…” Remus was startled from his thoughts when Harry suddenly spoke in his sleep, his voice a pained whisper. “I’m sorry…”
Did you ever notice how everyone always screams Harry's name for the dramatical effect?
He saw three more people die before he woke up.

Harry staggered out of the room and started when he saw Remus at a small stove moving some pans. Remus. So it hadn’t been a dream after all and he hadn’t been kidnapped either.

“Um hey,” he stated softly and pocketed his wand.

Remus looked up at him and smiled around the always present worry lines on his face. He looked older than Harry remembered, but then again… no one would look too great after losing their friend in such a violent way. Harry shuddered at the thought.

“Hey, Harry. Come sit and eat,” the werewolf smiled, but frowned when he saw the boy shudder. Harry was leaning heavily against the door frame and it seemed to take him a long time to gather the energy needed to walk the few metres to the table.

“What happened?” Harry asked after sitting down. His head and chest still hurt, but breathing was easier now. “And where are we?”

Remus put a full plate in front of the boy and sat down across from him. He couldn’t help the slightly sheepish expression that stole across his face.

“We are at my apartment,” he began. “I thought you would appreciate some time away from home after what happened in your relatives’ living-room. Especially since it is probably going to happen again.” Well, there was more to it, but… Harry frowned and chewed carefully on a piece of stewed vegetable before answering.

“I’m actually not too sure what happened back there,” he admitted and Remus noticed the way he was avoiding eye contact. “I remember you suddenly being there and me feeling kinda sick, but…,” he trailed off and started cutting his meat.

“Your magic lashed out rather badly,” Remus tried for a light tone, but knew he failed when Harry tensed up at once. “It wasn’t your fault, Harry. I startled you and right now your magic is unstable so you probably couldn’t stop it from reacting.”

Harry’s mind raced with thoughts about underage magic outside of school and how the Ministry had immediately sent him a reprimanding letter including a warning last time. He could barely contain the worried look around as if expecting an owl with his expulsion letter.

“Wait, what?” Remus’ words finally registered and he looked up to meet the werewolf’s eyes for the first time. “Why’s my magic unstable?”

Remus sighed. That was going to be some talk.

“Harry, has anyone ever told you about your father’s heritage?” Better not focus on Dumbledore – there would be enough about the secretive old wizard later.
Was it possible that Harry was too strong for his own body? He considered the fragile looking limbs and nearly gaunt face. Magic sustains itself like the body does: food or rather the energy obtained from it. So if Harry was denied essentials while going through a phase of magical development…

“When was the last time you actually ate a whole meal, Harry?” They had been talking about half an hour and Remus had tried to answer all of Harry’s questions with what little he himself knew.

Now the boy was mulling over what had been said while staring glassy eyed at his still mostly filled plate. But Remus had noticed the continued trembling of his hands, the way every little movement seemed to cost Harry and how he struggled to sit upright. The question brought some much needed colour to the boy’s face and he looked away.

“Why, breakfast of course.” His voice was soft and unsure again and Remus felt his heart sink at the slightly hitching breath at the end of Harry’s sentence.

“Even if I wasn’t able to hear your accelerated heartbeat… You’re a terrible liar, Harry,” he gently admonished. So it had not only been his relatives neglecting him, but also some sort of self-punishment? Or was he feeling ashamed for some reason?

And again Remus wished he had come to terms with his grief and grim thoughts towards Harry sooner. He was just a kid forced to shoulder responsibilities a much older and wiser person would struggle with – while at the same time he was denied the insight he would need to have a chance in this insane war. It was like wanting him to be an adult and act like a hero when it was convenient and then ground him like the teenager he really was for attempting to live up to the expectations. It wasn’t fair. It wasn’t right. And now there was this mess with his upcoming inheritance.

“Eat,” he encouraged again. “There’s chocolate for dessert.”

Harry’s assumed self-destructive behaviour in combination with the probable mistreatment he received through his relatives had weakened his body while his increasing magic requested its own tribute. As a result the boy’s body was no longer strong enough for the amount of magic it held, Remus surmised to himself. Well, that would explain the blood. He would need to get stronger as soon as possible but at the same time his very own magic would eat away what progress his body might do. It was like a race between his health and his ever growing magic. And then… would he even survive the manifestation of the creature in this state?

Remus was at a loss. He needed help but he couldn’t let Harry be sent back to those relatives of his, not anymore.

“You know… you could just talk to me about it,” Harry stated in a low voice, but didn’t look up from where he poked at his food. “Don’t be like them, please.”

“Like who, cub?” The endearment just slipped past his lips and Remus felt himself blush slightly. That was knew and unexpected, but it also felt right. If Harry noticed though, he didn’t let on.

“Dumbledore, the Order… basically everyone. They don’t talk to me, they just expect me to go along with whatever they demand and… and… I know I messed up!” The teacup next to Remus started vibrating and he heard the glass in the cupboards clinking when Harry continued his rant. “I let Voldemort in my head, I let my panic take over and… it’s my fault, I know it is, I could have stopped it all!”

With Harry’s raised voice Remus felt his skin itch again, but he didn’t know how to calm his new ward down. If this went any further, his shabby apartment would be his least problem. To anyone looking for Harry a display such as the one back at the muggles would act like a beacon.
“Harry, no. You couldn’t know it wasn’t real…”

“I just had to ask, Remus!” Harry’s eyes were blazing by now and Remus briefly wondered if it was the creature already showing. “I just had to ask. I had the mirror; I could’ve just called him…”

He didn’t spoke the name but it wasn’t necessary.

“The two-way mirror?” Remus asked astonished. “I didn’t know those still existed.”

Harry exhaled harshly and let his head fall down on the table. He felt exhausted. He wanted to sleep but he was afraid of his dreams.

Remus came up at Harry’s side when a violent tremor shook the boy’s body. Distraction had worked best with James so it was worth a try and if Harry wouldn’t eat he could make him some hot cocoa for now. Remus placed a gentle hand on the frail shoulder and ignored the subsequent flinch.

“Come on, want to watch some TV? It actually works here.”

Chapter End Notes

As an overview: Remus picked Harry up in the morning. The meal cooking in the kitchen was the supposed lunch for the Dursleys. Harry woke up in time for dinner. And of course it’s always chocolate with Remus. ;)

He stayed.

Harry sent Hedwig to Dumbledore to let him know he was alright, but kept his location and company to himself. He still couldn’t bring himself to write his friends, not that he would tell Remus. He also refused to call his relatives, but his former teacher didn’t question him. They found an easy rhythm over the following next days. Harry, used to get up early to start with his chores, was pleasantly surprised to find Remus to be an equally early riser. They would meet up in the kitchen and prepare breakfast together. After that they would take turns in the small bathroom before they started on Harry’s neglected homework. It was fun, Harry thought, having Remus help him write his essays and having him explain what went over Harry’s head. Remus had a way of teaching that he had always liked and which he had sorely missed after his third year.

In the afternoon Remus would leave for his work in Muggle London and Harry would take a nap, watch TV, or read one of the many books that resided in the small apartment. He wasn’t too disappointed that he couldn’t go outside. After all, he had already spent a lot of time under the hot summer sun and he actually enjoyed being able to stay inside and do nothing at all. Well, nothing too productive anyway. He took a liking to the Animagus related books and found them perfect for distraction – and distracting himself he did.

The thought that there was something inside of him just waiting to be released was too unsettling to really think about. He knew he should just suck it up and accept the fact that he would soon be more than a plain wizard. Of course, he couldn’t stay normal, he had to become even more of a freak than he already was. No, Harry really didn’t want to think about his upcoming birthday and his subsequent creature inheritance. But it wasn’t an easy feat to do so.

His emotions seemed to run on an all time high and he sometimes wondered if this was what girls felt like during their... er.. time of the month. Then he would shudder and hastily redirect his thoughts. As if having a link to freaking Voldemort wasn’t enough, now he was turning into a ball of emotions that only needed a small nudge to explode. And the back lash was always a magical one that would render his body to a hurting mess. Come to think of it, his visions continued on as if the bastard was trying to lure him out again by showing him all the deaths he was responsible for. No wonder Harry wasn’t able to sleep in and that his appetite increased only ever so slightly.

He was weak.

It was a relief to have escaped his relatives’ scorn, but he was still left with the guilt, the cold and empty feeling that haunted his every breath. Now that there were no chores he had to accomplish and there was no one to belittle him, the need to somehow punish himself was growing. And the fact that Remus didn’t seem to hate him for what he had caused made it actually worse. It felt wrong to enjoy the study times with Remus or the quiet afternoons alone. It felt wrong to have things Sirius and all those that died through Voldemort’s wand could no longer enjoy.

Remus Lupin wasn’t too fond of his apartment. It had never been a real home to him. If he thought about it, he hadn’t felt at home for a very long time. Now coming there and have someone waiting for him – someone who cooked dinner no matter how often he told him that it wasn’t necessary –
resulted in a whole new barrage of emotions. Yes, Harry was sometimes withdrawn and he tended to blow something up at least two times a day, but he was there. And he wanted to be there.

It was simple and nothing big. But it meant more to Remus than he had thought possible. So he didn’t care if he came home to a blown up stove or broken windows – that was what magic was for, wasn’t it? He didn’t care if it meant waking up to Harry’s pained voice or sleeping on the couch for that matter. He would get up and wake the boy, his cub, make them some tea and talk. Just talk. Sometimes it was about the dreams and those horrible visions, sometimes it was about James and Lily. They both avoided anything that had to do with Sirius, the Order or Dumbledore.

It was a dreamy little bubble they had built for themselves and he would enjoy every second of it. He ignored the steady voice in the back of his head that relentlessly told him how reckless they were, how dangerous it was for Harry to be with him and not inside those damned blood wards. It made him probably a horrible person that he continued to ignore this voice, that he continued to risk Harry’s very life just to have the boy with him. Well, it wasn’t only for himself, he argued. It was also for Harry’s sake – at least for his mental well-being.

Were the blood wards even still intact after Voldemort took Harry’s blood to resurrect himself? After all he was able to touch him now, right? Maybe Harry hadn’t been safe in that house ever since his fourth year and it was due to sheer luck that no one had found out his whereabouts. But Dumbledore would knew if that was the case, wouldn’t he?

Wouldn’t he?

No, Remus wasn’t fond of his apartment, but he grew fonder of its second inhabitant with each day that passed. He should have known that dreamy little bubbles aren’t meant to last.

No one saw the artefact appear. In fact, no one would ever know who sent it – although there would be some educated guesses.

When Harry noticed the small token his mind was still occupied with thoughts of the Marauders. He had been watching TV and the news mentioned the date which in turn reminded him that he would have to return to Hogwarts in a few weeks. July was nearing its end; his birthday would be in just a few days. And then it wouldn’t be long before he would have to return to the school and his wayward friends.

Hogwarts, his friends, his foes, reality. Had school always been such a dreaded place to be?

Far from it. Hogwarts had always been what felt like home to him; a place where he was accepted and wanted – only that now he wasn’t so sure about that anymore. What had Hogwarts been like for his parents? All the stories Remus told him featured the Marauders on one of their prank-adventures or on one of those ridiculous deeds James had sent them on to win Lily’s heart.

Pranks and crushes. Harry had never the time for either nor did he really feel like it. Yes, there had been his crush on Cho in fourth year and later on Ginny, but Cho had just been a horribly embarrassing experience and the latter hadn’t talked to him ever since the Ministry incident.

Life at Hogwarts in Remus’ stories sounded so different from what Harry knew. It sounded like fun time with friends far away from any dark lords that were trying to kill you and far away from any intrigues to use you for a cause or another. And Harry wanted that. He wanted this completely normal life of a teenage wizard – no Voldemorts, no intrigues, no one meddling with his life and the only real threat would be the exams.
That was when his gaze fell on the artefact placed directly on the dining table.

It looked suspiciously innocent and Harry couldn’t remember seeing it there before. Now, Harry knew better than to just pick up an obviously magical artefact, but there was something about the item that drew him in. It seemed to tug on his – lately always agitated – magic and well, this was Remus’ apartment; there was no reason to believe there would be anything dangerous here, right?

The light was bright, even brighter than the one Harry had caused in his relatives’ living room. Remus could see it from the far end of the street and he could feel it. It felt like Harry’s wonky magic, only stronger and interlaced with something he couldn’t place, but it had him running. It was too early for the creature to manifest and that could only mean something had set Harry off; something must have upset him enough for his magic to react dangerously strong. Remus just hoped it wouldn’t kill him.

Harry’s scent still lingered in his apartment, but something was different now, Remus realised. Where before the fragrance of windswept forest was just a familiar scent he had always known as Harry’s, there now was more to it. It seemed to tug at something in his memory he couldn’t really grasp.

...

Chapter End Notes

FINALLY!
In which time and fate make a pact

Chapter Notes

We're in the past now, guys! There are some explanatory notes at the end for those who want some 'insight'. :3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There was a shuffling sound. Like big feet on leaves… no, not feet. Paws.

Something large was panting in his direct proximity and he could not move. His body felt heavy and numb, there was no feeling in his finger tips. Did he have finger tips? The big panting thing was even closer now. Harry wanted to panic, but somehow he lacked the energy to do even that. A whine close to his head and then a rather moist nose nudging him. It didn’t feel like a threat, but still…

A barking sound in the distance that grew louder. And then something that sounded like …hooves? The moist nose was now sniffing at his throat and if he had been a little more awake Harry would have definitely panicked. Then suddenly the barking was right there and something slammed into the big panting, sniffing, whining thing next to him. He could hear a struggle… it sounded like… dogs? Yeah, that made sense, didn’t it?

Harry couldn’t find the energy to question his own thoughts any longer or to even try and open his eyes. The snarling and growling seemed to grow distant, a buzzing sound taking over, and he succumbed once again to the darkness.

Sirius Black stared intently at the ceiling. Instead of peacefully sleeping through a Saturday after the full moon and the customary adventures in the Forbidden Forest his mind was busy wondering over a certain boy.

The boy the Marauders found in the woods last night.

The boy that somehow was lucky enough to not get bitten by a ferocious Moony.

The boy that looked a fat lot like James – but not exactly.

Sirius gave a long suffering sigh and frowned. He really wanted to know what happened to the bloke. You know, why he decided to take a nap in the Forbidden Forest. On a full moon!

“You know, Pads, I could use some help here,” drawled James who was sitting next to him at a table in the common room. “These potions projects tend to want some attention. I know it may have slipped your pretty little doggy head, but we are actually a team on this one.”

“Mh.”

“You sure we should try a combination of Amortentia and Bundimun Pomade? It rather sounds like something Malfoy would use, if you ask me and the recipe-” (*)

“D’you reckon Moony’ll be able to talk to him? They’re both in the infirmary and… yeah but Rem
probably doesn’t remember finding him so a no there…”

“Padfoot!” James shoved his friend hard enough to nearly make him lose his balance. “Fancy helping your best mate with our potions project?”

Sirius gave a delicate snort while regaining his composure – and slouching back into his seat.

“You sound like Rem when you try acting all studious to impress Evans,” he chuckled. “But that was the intention, wasn’t it? He’s the only studious bloke you know apart from Snivellus.”

“Yes, well,” James casually abandoned the exasperated act and hiked his legs up on the table. “Those two did get along quite well back then, didn’t they?”

There was a longing in his voice and Sirius sighed again. Smitten James was normally fun to watch, but after a night running around with a werewolf and finding a knocked out stranger in the woods – and lying to the headmaster about the exact location of said find – it was a rather tiresome task. Maybe he should go and visit Moony, after all he wouldn’t get released from the infirmary until tomorrow. But well, Rem usually slept through half of the following day after the full moon and wasn’t any fun to talk to either. It would just be a really lame excuse to sneak a glance at the strange bloke they found in the forest and that would annoy Rem to no end. And Sirius Black was not one for lame excuses - and definitely not for some random guy! Maybe for a cute girl and a good snog. Maybe.

“So what about that love pomade stuff?”

When Harry opened his eyes his first thought was a resigned ‘not again’.

He would recognize the high ceiling with the uncomfortably bright light combined with the smell of sterile sheets in every condition, probably even if he would wake up there somehow blinded. He had spent so much time in Hogwarts’ hospital wing over the years that- Wait, Hogwarts? What happened to Remus’ apartment?

“Mr. Lupin, here is the pain reliever you asked for. Now, get some more sleep, dear.” Madam Pomfrey’s voice wafted through the light curtains surrounding his bed and Harry couldn’t contain the shocked gasp.

What had happened? Why was Remus with him in Hogwarts’ hospital wing? He remembered a strong light engulfing him and the painful snapping and rushing of his magic – oh Gods had Remus gotten caught in his lashing magic? The rustling of the curtains beside his bed drew Harry’s attention and he felt like a bludger just hit him straight in the face at the sight of Madam Pomfrey. What the hell was going on here?

“Hello, my dear. I see you are finally awake.” The old matron’s voice was gentle as if she was speaking to a much younger child than a (nearly) sixteen-year-old and to Harry’s shock she wasn’t as old… err… seasoned… you know, as she had been the last time he saw her. There wasn’t a single grey hair on her head and the former motherly wrinkly face was… well, a lot less wrinkly. “Let me just cast a few more diagnostic spells.”

Now, Harry wasn’t a pro for magical beauty products or any beauty products for that matter, but even he knew that there was no way to look easily fifteen years younger - at least no ‘light’ way. Other than maybe a glamour but why would she suddenly use one? Wizards and witches may age more slowly, but they definitely didn’t just rejuvenate for no apparent reason. Was that even possible? Well, maybe… (*)
“There.” Madam Pomfrey finished her wand waving and looked at Harry again. “Now I don’t know your story, young man, but you are definitely underweight. And I’m not going to ask about the scars or those bruises on your shoulder and neck.” She smiled apologetically when he winced. “But for now I need you to take these potions and then eat some late breakfast, alright?”

It was strange, Harry thought. The matron looked at him kindly but without any recognition when she handed him the vials. He identified a nutrition potion and a pepper up potion – well, he could probably use those.

“Madam Pomfrey,” he asked urgently after downing the vials’ contents to satisfy the matron’s stern stare. He couldn’t keep the worried glance to where he suspected Remus to be. “What happened? Is he alright?”

Madam Pomfrey frowned down at him in surprise.

“Yes, Mr. Lupin will be alright.” Her voice took on a suspicious undertone. “But say, dear, do I know you? You seem to be quite acquainted with your surroundings yet I don’t recognize you as a student.”

Harry sighed in relief. Remus was alright or would be at least. Whatever happened he was just glad his former professor wasn’t hurt too badly.

Wait. She did not… what?

Chapter End Notes

(*) I think Lucius Malfoy attended Hogwarts from 1965-1972, which means the Marauders were in their second year when he left the school. Since both Sirius and James are Purebloods it makes sense that they would know him even if he had left Hogwarts before they enrolled.

(*) Bundimun Pomade: A potion that is presumably hair pomade containing Bundimun secretion. (Bundimun secretion is used in some magical cleaning products)

Amortentia: The world's strongest Love Potion; does not create real love, just powerful obsession.

Therefore James and Sirius attempt to create hair pomade that has some of the alluring effects of Amortentia plus some of the possible cleaning effects of the Bundimun secretion.

(*) Glamour Charm: As far as I know that's a fanmade charm, not mentioned in canon, and meant to hide small blemishes of the skin like for example eye bags. It is often alluded to that constantly keeping up a Glamour uses up a lot of magic.
Remus Lupin, resident werewolf of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was currently resting in the hospital wing after yet another dreadful full moon. Though ‘resting’ was definitely a matter of interpretation since his whole body tended to hurt after the transformation which made it rather difficult to find any agreeable position to lie or sit in. He was just receiving a pain relieving potion from Madam Pomfrey – bless that woman – when he heard the somewhat shocked gasp from the bed opposite of his. Remus seldom remembered what happened during his time as fully transformed werewolf, but something told him that the gasping occupant in the other bed was more than just your regular student with a hex-gone-wrong-injury.

He couldn’t see them since Madam Pomfrey always ensured her patients’ privacy as good as possibly manageable through those thin curtains. But when the matron left to check on said patient he caught a glimpse of wild dark hair that sent an icy trickle down his spine. Was that James over there? The only logical reason why James would be here after last night – as a patient and not a visitor – was that he got injured during their run through the Forbidden Forest. Injured by Moony.

Remus was just about to panic when he heard Madam Pomfrey’s voice. It wasn’t only what she was saying that helped to calm him down and at the same time made his stomach churn, it was also the tone she used. He was absolutely sure that James would never receive this motherly voice from the matron since he tended to be a cheeky and somewhat rebellious patient whenever he came here. So Remus opened up his still heightened senses to check if he would recognize the scent of his fellow patient.

He did not. The scent of windswept forest was a pleasant one, but he couldn’t place it. Normally he would remember every scent he came across, though he could rarely identify them as the scent of one specific person. That required an emotional connection to the person and Remus tended to avoid those. But this scent… he was sure that he had never met the occupant of the bed across from him at Hogwarts before. So not a student or a teacher. But who else would stay at Hogwarts’ infirmary?

From what he could gather it was a child and a male since Madam Pomfrey said something along the lines. He could also hear the definite worry in the matron’s voice when she talked about the boy’s weight. The way she said it made the hairs on Remus’ neck prickle. His eyes went wide when he heard a somewhat raspy voice ask about his well-being. Did the guy – he definitely didn’t sound like a child regardless of the way Madam Pomfrey talked to him – know who he was? What he was?

The conversation across the room stopped then and Remus strained his ears to piece together what was happening. He heard a bit of rustling, presumably the sheets, and then Madam Pomfrey’s hushed voice – was she cursing under her breath? A moment later the matron’s head appeared around his own curtains.

“Dear, I’m going to talk to the headmaster for a bit. Stay put and try to rest.” She was gone before Remus had a chance to answer or even blink. The headmaster?

Harry was brooding over what he had observed so far. He was at Hogwarts and Madam Pomfrey who looked somehow different but still like herself said she didn’t know him. Huh. His body was yet again a hurting mess and he felt nearly completely drained of magic. And now the matron was gone.
to fetch the headmaster because apparently something about Harry’s appearance at the school was not at all normal.

Well, yes, it was far too early in the year for him to be here, but bringing him to Hogwarts was just the thing the Order would do if he really needed medical care. They would never deem St. Mungo’s as safe enough for the supposed Chosen One, so who cares if he didn’t get the best treatment possible? Right. A bit bitter there, wasn’t he? But what by Merlin’s hairy balls was it that brought him here in the first place?

OH! Right, Remus was right there, he could just- The curtains around his bed moved and a boy peeked through the fabric. Tired but curious amber eyes scrutinized him for a moment and Harry found himself frowning.

“What?”

He never liked the stares. Why people thought it was alright to stare at him or follow him around he would never understand. So what if he was Harry bloody Potter? He was just a boy like any other, just like the one currently peeking around the curtains of his bed. And if that wasn’t a creepy thing to do.

Remus couldn’t rein in his curiosity any longer and he would deny this moment as long as he breathed – or as long as Sirius was likely to announce his glee about it so he would probably deny this shame for the rest of his life. He managed to get off the bed and over to the closed curtains with some effort, ignoring his aching bones. He hoped the other boy was asleep so he wouldn’t feel like his privacy was invaded but no such luck. When Remus tugged the curtains aside, he was met with huge deep green eyes – just like the forest he could smell. And apparently the other boy did feel like his privacy was invaded.

“Good morning.” He decided to go with the prefect act. “I’m Remus Lupin, sixth year prefect at Hogwarts.”

The reaction he got was not exactly what he had expected. For some reason the other boy, who already had a rather pale complexion, blanched at his words at an alarming speed and made a sound somewhere between a choked cough and a hysterical laugh.

“Er well… I thought, I should come over since I heard you asking about me.” The wide eyes seemed to grow even wider, but still he got no answer. “So yeah, I’m alright like Madam Pomfrey said. What about you?”

Who are you? What happened to you? Why do you know me and if you actually know me why do you look like you’re about to pass out from the shock of seeing me?

Whatever Harry had expected this was not it.

Gods, why did these things always happen to him? Was his life maybe some wretched joke that Fate loved to pull? Or was there any logical explanation for his former professor, the man he had lived with for the past week or so, to be a teenager again and a prefect no less? Harry wanted to cry and shout out his frustration and laugh in a not too sane way all at the same time when the realisation hit him – because *time* was exactly what was essential here. As far as he was concerned time and fate laughed their asses off at his expense. The only somewhat logical explanation for all this was one
that made his brain stutter: Time travel.

Now he should probably say something, because teenage Remus was looking at him expectantly and seemed to lose faith in his mental health by the minute. Oh well.

“Y-Yeah. I’m fine... I guess,” Harry answered belatedly and quite lamely. He wasn’t exactly fine – at all. His body felt like a herd of hippogriffs had trampled him down, followed by some centaurs dancing tap and oh right: He was IN THE BLOODY PAST. He was brought back from his progressively hysterical musings when he heard Remus chuckle.

“No offense, but you do not look so fine to me. What happened to you, if I may ask?”

That was the question, wasn’t it? And what the hell was Harry supposed to answer anyway? He couldn’t very well tell his sometime-to-be-teacher that he just somehow fell through time and… Merlin, his parents were here, right? There was no way Harry could tell anyone his name, the timeline would go completely wonky. Awful things happen to wizards who meddle with time, right? Right! (*)

Before Harry had the chance to find a somewhat respectable answer, the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Albus Dumbledore with a slightly miffed looking Madam Pomfrey in tow.

Chapter End Notes

Did I manage to write a somewhat realistic reaction on Harry’s part? Some love for his inward sarcasm.
Btw if you want to read a specific scene in later chapters, feel free to mention it. If it fits the plot (yes, there is actually a plot somewhere) I’ll see if I can include it.

(*) “Awful things happen to wizards who’ve meddled with time.” (Hermione in Prisoner of Azkaban)
In which a boy gets rid of annoying titles

Remus scowled at the privacy bubble across the room. There was definitely something strange about
the other boy and apparently Dumbledore didn’t want anyone to find out what exactly that was. As
soon as he and Madam Pomfrey had entered the infirmary, the matron had ushered Remus back to
his bed – complete with a lecture about how he should act as a role model and blah blah blah that
efficiently prevented him from hearing any of the starting conversation between the headmaster and
the other boy. Then Dumbledore had put up the damned privacy bubble and Remus was left to stare
at the mute scene unfolding in front of him. That was until Madam Pomfrey came back with some
tea for him and declared he needed more rest. And of course she closed the curtains before she left.

Remus’ inner Marauder had contemplated for exactly three seconds before he tried to sneak out of
his bed again to at least get a look. But, well, shit. Madam Pomfrey seemed to have a sixth sense for
wayward patients and appeared seemingly out of nothingness as soon as he peeked through the
curtains. She was actually tapping her foot and staring him down until he retreated to his bed and
drank his tea which appeared to be laced with a Sleeping Draught.

Remus was left yet again staring at the privacy spell that he could see shimmering through the fabric
while the potion took effect. Maybe it was for the best, his underdeveloped prefect’s sense tried to
convince him. Whoever the boy was he had a right to sort things out in privacy, but it annoyed
Remus to no end to be stuck with tiny bits and pieces of information that were bound to make him
curious.

Harry watched as the matron made teenage Remus leave and then shifted his gaze to Dumbledore.
What was he supposed to do?

On the one hand he knew that Dumbledore was likely the only person that would be able to send
him back where he belonged. On the other hand his instinct demanded he keep his mouth shut to try
and not change the timeline. It could make things infinitely worse if he confided in the headmaster,
though he assumed it could probably change things for the better, too. He needed more time to think
this all through!

“We tend to think all the worries of the world are thrown upon our shoulders,” Dumbledore’s voice
interrupted his thoughts and he lifted his wary gaze to the twinkling blue eyes of the other man. “But
believe me, my boy, we are not alone in this whirlwind of events that we call life.”

Harry frowned. His head felt way too mushy to work through the headmaster’s customary speech of
seemingly disjointed thoughts to work out what the old man was really talking about. For now, he
decided when he hastily averted his eyes from the searching blue ones, he would go with a
pseudonym and sort things out later when there was no one trying to invade his mind.

“Headmaster…” He tried to sound innocent and confused while his mind raced to find an identity he
could impersonate that wouldn’t clash with the happenings of the past. Or present, whatever. But since he didn’t really know anything about this time – yet – he was left with inventing a name and all that rot. “I’m not sure what happened to me.”

It was dumb to think he would be able to outsmart Dumbledore of all people, he thought. But he tried nonetheless; maybe the old man would actually tell him what he knew.

“I am not too sure either, my boy. But I believe we both know that you are not where you belong.”

Harry couldn’t stop himself from looking up at that. It was such a meaningless thing to say, one could interpret this sentence in a lot of ways. He decided that Dumbledore knew more than he possibly could, just like always, and sighed dejectedly.

“What am I supposed to do?” He asked softly and wished that for once he would be allowed to decide for himself even if he was at a total loss at the moment.

Dumbledore swiftly conjured an upholstered armchair and seated himself before he smiled his benign smile at Harry. He surveyed the boy for a moment and then leaned back, making himself comfortable.

“You are going to need an identity and some time, I believe. Things are changing, the world appears to be a mere step away from great events that are going to-” For a second he took on a faraway look before his penetrating gaze fixed on Harry again. “But I am quite certain you know more about that than I do.”

Well. Fuck.

“I wouldn’t be too sure about that, sir.” Harry’s answer sounded much cheekier than he felt, but he continued on nevertheless. “For example there’s one thing you definitely know more about than I currently do.” Probably a whole lot of things.

“And what would that be?” Dumbledore seemed actually amused by Harry’s attitude while his eyes twinkled with a thoughtful and assessing gleam.

“The year,” Harry stated curtly. He had to be sure. Damn any consequences – it wasn’t like he exactly admitted to time travelling though his answer was obvious enough. Dumbledore smiled again, this time in a satisfied way.

“The year is 1976 which I assume you already suspected.”

He nodded mutely. So it was really true; no more convincing himself otherwise. He was officially a time traveller and he had travelled back to his parents’ schooling at Hogwarts of all times. His parents and Remus and…

“Have you decided on a name yet?” Dumbledore interrupted the teen’s thoughts gently. The boy seemed to be quite confused and he had an air of quiet sorrow around him that made the headmaster just a bit more cautious.

Harry had indeed contemplated about that specific bit of information. Or at least some part of his overwhelmed mind seemed to have done that since he found himself asking a not too dumb question.

“Are there any Moores in Hogwarts at the time?” Moore, he remembered Hermione telling them once when she was prattling on about names and their magical meanings, was one of the most common last names in Britain. It wouldn’t be strange to change ‘Potter’ into ‘Moore’ and Harry somehow thought it sounded rather cool - which of course wasn’t the reason he chose it.
“If I remember correctly the last Moore here was a Muggleborn who passed his N.E.W.T.s a few years ago. A wise choice, if I may add.” It wasn’t a name that was common in the Wizarding World or at least it wasn’t the name of a well known pureblood family. He could go with the truth about being Halfblood, but would reverse his parents’ roles: He would make his father the Muggleborn and his mother the Pureblood. That way it would be completely logical that he would bear a common name like Moore.

“Then… I’m going to go with the name Hadrian Moore,” Harry stated a bit unsure. “Nice to meet you, sir,” he added with a small smile.

‘Hadrian’ sounded enough like his given name to not confuse him without being too obvious, though he doubted his parents were already thinking about their first born’s name. He wasn’t even sure if they were an item yet.

“Pleasure meeting you too, Mr. Moore,” Dumbledore responded before he dived right in again. “I take it you are familiar with Hogwarts and probably a student yourself… at home. I will see to back whatever story you may choose, though I do not think it will be necessary. May I ask your age though? It would not do to place you in the wrong year.”

Harry blinked. He had suspected something like that, because really – where should he go? But it was something else to have the headmaster actually telling him that he would attend Hogwarts in 1976.

“Um. I’m 15, sir. Or… 16 next week,” he corrected himself and felt his stomach lurch at the reminder of his upcoming birthday. “I was about to start my sixth year at Hogwarts.”

That’s right, he had been about to start the new term in a bit over one month. But apparently the term had already started here since he doubted Remus would be at Hogwarts otherwise.

“Indeed.” Harry scowled at the slightly surprised sounding answer. What was it with people here seemingly thinking him younger than he was? “Then there is the question of your wardrobe and school supplies, but I think the fund for scholarships will be sufficiently taking care of those needs. Do you have your wand with you, Hadrian?”

It felt weird to be called that and at the same time it was rather nice. Ever since he re-entered the Wizarding World when he turned eleven he had been Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived-To-Be-Given-Annoying-Titles. But here no one knew him, he could be just… Hadrian. The question of his wand was answered with a quick glance at the bedside cabinet and the releasing of a breath he hadn’t known he was holding. But the look around revealed something else; something that made Harry blush with embarrassment: He was dressed in a hospital gown and his own clothes were no where in sight.

“Ah yes, your clothes.” Dumbledore winked at him in a conspiratorial way as if Harry had shown up naked on purpose. “Madam Pomfrey informed me that there was only a shred of fabric left on you after your… journey. I will see to have you send an appropriate outfit before you move to your common room. Which would be…?”

“Gryffindor,” Harry found himself answering to the incomplete question without a second thought. It would probably be better to change houses if he wanted to avoid influencing the timeline, but he couldn’t bring himself to pass the chance of meeting his parents. Meeting his parents. No, there was really no way Harry could pass that opportunity.

“Welcome to Hogwarts, Hadrian Moore. You will start your classes in two days – which is to say it is Saturday the 11th. And here comes your breakfast.”
With that Albus Dumbledore stood up and left Harry to Madam Pomfrey’s tender care.

Chapter End Notes

Whenever I call Harry ‘Hadrian’ it’s another person’s P.O.V. for now. 
*Hadrian Moore, 11th of September 1976, Saturday after the full moon* 
(the full moon in September of 1976 was actually on the 8th but… nah.)

**ALSO!**
Harry's middle name for his alias in this fic is yet to be decided. Suggestions, please?
Remus woke up to the rising sun on Sunday morning. There was still a lingering ache to his muscles, but he knew it would get better when he actually started moving. He blinked a few times and tried to remember any of his dreams. He had been sleeping surprisingly deep, but trying he might, all he could remember of last night’s dreams was a scent that seemed vaguely familiar. It smelled of leaves being whirled around by a strong wind, trees and greenery—green like a pair of eyes… That’s right, the scent belonged to the other bloke in the infirmary!

Remus sat up hastily and then stopped himself to listen closely, but Madam Pomfrey didn’t seem to be around. He slipped the shoes on he always kept in the hospital wing and made his way over to the bed across the room.

The strange boy with the forest scent was already awake and sitting up. He didn’t seem to notice Remus until he stood right next to him. Suddenly the werewolf found himself at wand point, but before he could do more than gasp in surprise the tense shoulders in front of him relaxed.

“Oh, it’s you.” The wand vanished and Remus watched the boy warily for a moment longer before he nodded and after another moment of silent staring extended his hand.

“It’s Remus. I didn’t catch your name yesterday.” A somewhat amused smile was sent his way and then a slender hand grasped onto his with a surprisingly strong grip.

“Hadrian Moore.” His voice no longer sounded raspy and he looked distinctly better than the day before, but Remus thought something was still amiss about this boy. “Pleasure meeting you again.” There was the amused smile again, as if Hadrian had just insinuated a private joke or something. Inwardly he went through every name he had ever heard or read, but no Hadrian Moore popped up.

“Right. So what brings you here on this lovely Sunday morning?” Remus seated himself on the chair next to the bed without asking.

“I think, we actually arrived at the same time though I was unconscious,” Hadrian answered, making Remus frown. He was avoiding his question and not in a subtle way.

“I think, we actually arrived at the same time though I was unconscious,” Hadrian answered, making Remus frown. He was avoiding his question and not in a subtle way.

“Really? Want to tell me what happened?” It was probably rather intrusive to ask so bluntly and the Marauder knew that Sirius would laugh his arse off at this clumsy approach.

“No.” Remus blinked. The answer was delivered quite directly but without malice. “I’m sorry, I just don’t wanna talk about it.” Oh. So ‘subtle’ really wasn’t Hadrian’s thing.

“It’s alright,” he smiled and looked around to divert the tension. “Have you seen Madam Pomfrey yet?”

Harry thought teenage Remus was a lot like the Remus he knew and at the same time completely different. The difference seemed to lie just underneath, maybe behind the amber eyes that he had always found to radiate warmth. This young version of his teacher had the same warmth and sureness to his words, but there was also a hint of mischievousness that seemed to spark between every intellectual sounding sentence.
Or maybe Harry was imagining things, he thought a second later when teenage Remus tripped over his own words in an attempt to explain the N.E.W.T. system and their importance for future education. It was strangely comforting to listen to the other boy. It helped him calm down from the latest nightmares and the thoughts about his current situation that seemed to chase each other around in his head. For a moment he actually forgot his uneasiness with his approaching inheritance.

Remus had slept through Saturday and the following night. Harry had briefly wondered if teenage Remus suffered even stronger from the full moon than adult Remus, but something about the stillness of the other boy told him that it was a potion induced sleep. Harry himself had succumbed to the exhaustion once again, Madam Pomfrey said his magical core had suffered a near complete depletion that would need time to rebuild itself, but his running thoughts never left him.

He had been thrown out of his time – or something like that – which meant he was still 15 in his time but should be 16 in this. It was September in this time, about two weeks into the term. But his body still thought it July, because he couldn’t detect any creaturesque changes in himself. His brain scrambled for a few seconds to work out how many days he had left until everything would go to hell. It had been three or so days to his birthday when he had watched the news in Remus’ apartment. He had been… sucked into whatever brought him here and had been unconscious – for how long? He couldn’t be sure and who knew if the time travel did affect the whole inheritance situation?

Well. It wouldn’t do to panic about something he couldn’t prevent from happening. He would just assume that he had about a week to go, no matter if that made sense or not. For some reason it just felt like it… and yeah, Harry thought that really made as much sense as the first speech he remembered Dumbledore giving in his first year. Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak! indeed.

A loud and cheery “Rem!” interrupted Harry’s thoughts and Remus’ babbling when a tall and handsome boy appeared around the curtain. “Knew it was you. That lecturing attitude is a sure signpost to find you everywhere.”

Remus arched an eyebrow at his arriving friend. He knew all too well why Sirius had decided to pick him up from the infirmary and the reason was sitting pale faced and wide eyed on the bed next to him. The werewolf frowned at Hadrian’s silent but obviously frightened reaction. Maybe the bloke wasn’t good with loud and boisterous persons?

“You need to stop him before he has a chance to really get going,” Sirius nodded comradely at Harry. “If he manages to get into professor-mode there’s no stopping him. I’m Sirius Black, by the way.” Sirius flopped down gracefully on the bed next to Harry’s feet completely ignoring the subsequent flinch.

“Sirius!” Remus hissed at him warningly.

Harry’s breath caught when a young and healthy version of his godfather rounded the curtains surrounding his bed. Sirius. Smirking, making fun of Remus and alive. He couldn’t help but stare. The last time he had seen his godfather the man had been drawn from his years in Azkaban, the handsome features warped into a hardened, sharp-angled mask. Although he had been smiling in that last moment before the veil, he hadn’t looked as alive as he did now, the haunted look never really leaving his eyes. There was nothing haunted about this Sirius.

No, Harry thought, this was a completely different person.

It wasn’t like Sirius hadn’t noticed the strange boy’s reaction to him. He had noticed every little detail
from the sudden paleness and the wide eyes to the little tremble and gasp. And the flinch. He didn’t like it. It set off a warning bell in his head that was only amplified with the boy’s similarity to James. He hadn’t really had a chance to look at the boy during the full moon. He was too occupied with Moony, with the task to lead the werewolf away from the prone figure of a naked boy that looked like his best mate.

Well, not so much now, he thought while he waited for the boy’s response. The hair was the same wild black, yes, and there were certainly some resemblances in the facial structure. And the glasses. But there the odd similarity ended.

“This is Hadrian Moore. He’s a new student who has been home schooled until now,” Remus interrupted the weird staring contest between his fellow Marauder and Hadrian. “That’s right. Hadrian, are you sorted yet?”

Hadrian’s eyes were probably his most striking feature. The dark green was a colour Sirius instantly connected with the wilderness of the Forbidden Forest and he would have liked to just ask outright what the hell he had been doing there. Then there was his skin. It was paler than James’ and looked more like a girl’s with its creamy texture. Inwardly he shook his head. Nope, Sirius Black was not fawning over some random bloke in a ghastly hospital gown. And Hadrian looked also shorter than his friend. If he had to guess he would think him around 5’3 or something like that. But since he was sitting it was a pure guess.

“Oh. Sorry.” Harry blinked and focused on Remus instead of the still staring Sirius. “Yeah, I’ve been sorted into Gryffindor. Guess we’re going to be room mates now.” That brought Sirius out of his reverie.

“You’re a sixth year?” He couldn’t help the slightly incredulous tone to his question. This Hadrian guy couldn’t be older than fourteen! Though, he had to admit that his voice was one of an adult already. It was a nice warm timbre with a light roughness to it that would probably sound quite intriguing when Hadrian was laughing... Alright, enough of those misguided thoughts. The new guy was frowning at him.

“Yes, I am.” He sounded a bit miffed and regarded Sirius with a kind of restraint that had nothing to do with the question. He looked at Sirius as if he wouldn’t be the least bit surprised if he suddenly vanished into thin air.

Everything else he might was about to say was put to a halt when Madam Pomfrey entered the infirmary through her office door.

Chapter End Notes

Harry's middle name for his alias in this fic is yet to be decided. Suggestions, please? I'm going to collect the suggestions and write them out in a few chapters for you to vote.
In which Harry has no chance to put on some underwear

“Good, you’re already awake, boys.” Madam Pomfrey came over holding a stack of clothes. “Mr. Black, what are you doing here?” She regarded Sirius with raised eyebrows and her tone of voice made it obvious that he normally didn’t come to the hospital wing to pick Remus up.

Sirius just smirked confidently back at her and made it somehow possible to look nonchalant and very serious indeed (pun intended) at the same time.

“Well, I came to see our lovely matron of course,” he purred and got up from Harry’s bed in one smooth move. “Poppy,” he added with an ever so slightly over-exaggerated polite gesture that could have been the tipping of an invisible hat.

Harry scoffed. He couldn’t remember his Sirius ever doing anything like that. He observed the light blush that crept into Madam Pomfrey’s round face when she scolded the boy in an easy-going manner. This Sirius would be his Sirius in a few years. He would lose his friends and get locked away for something he hadn’t done. He would become a haunted shadow of the man he had been.

Remus watched the play of emotions on Hadrian’s face when he looked at Sirius. It was strange how the boy reacted to his friend and something ached in his chest when he saw Hadrian’s eyes go suddenly dark. He radiated grief and something that could have been guilty, but Remus couldn’t explain any of it. It seemed to be directed at Sirius, though, he would ask him later about it. Maybe he was imagining things.

“Here you go, dear.” Madam Pomfrey finally handed the clothes to Hadrian with a gentle smile and made shooing motions in the direction of the Marauders. “Give the boy some privacy, would you?” Before she closed the curtains she turned to Remus and added: “You are free to go as of yet, though I insist on a hearty breakfast. And would you look after Mr. Moore, please?”

It was a demand masked as a friendly question and Remus wouldn’t dare to object to the stern matron. Besides, he could practically feel Sirius’ excitement and curiosity regarding the new student.

“Of course, Madam Pomfrey,” he nodded and watched her leave, before he quirked an eyebrow at his nearly bouncing companion. The haughty look he got in return made any spoken words unnecessary. Sirius Black does not bounce.

Harry felt himself sag with relief when the curtains closed around him. It was all just so overwhelming. He went through the familiar motions of putting clothes on barely registering the simple jeans and t-shirt. There were no socks and shoes though and he felt himself blush a little when he realised he would have to walk barefooted to Gryffindor Tower. He shoved the curtains out of the way before he had time to ponder too much about it and was met with the sight of his again staring godfather and a slightly amused looking Remus. No, not his godfather. He had to stop thinking like this. This Sirius was not his Sirius – not yet anyway. He wouldn’t be for more than a decade.

“Well, well, well. Looking quite dashing there, Moore.” Remus rolled his eyes at Sirius’ antics and smiled at Hadrian.
“They forgot the shoes? Then let’s head to the common room first. The castle floors are always cold regardless the season and you really don’t need to catch a cold on your first day.”

Together they made their way up to Gryffindor Tower. Harry found himself somehow between the two friends who took turns in explaining things about the castle that they thought exciting enough. He still wasn’t too comfortable with looking at either of them so he feigned interest in what they showed him. The students they passed looked curiously at him and especially his bare feet, but it was nothing like the stares he was used to so Harry just ignored them. Then Remus started citing *Hogwarts, A History* and his chuckle slipped free before he could contain or disguise it. While Remus looked slightly affronted, Sirius mouthed ‘professor’ and waggled his eyebrows in a ridiculous way that made Harry laugh even more. If there was a hysterical edge to it, no one commented on it.

“That’s the portrait of the Fat Lady. She guards the entrance to the Gryffindor common room and you will need a password to get in,” Remus explained in full prefect-mode and Harry made sure to nod seriously. “Ginger Newts.”

Harry briefly wondered if the Marauders knew that ginger newts were Professor McGonagall’s favourite sweets before he stopped dead in his tracks. They had clambered through the portrait hole and there in his direct line of sight stood a small gaggle of girls. But it was only one girl that had caught his eye, her fiery dark red hair standing out from the boring browns and dirty blonds surrounding it. Harry stared at Lily and didn’t even notice the glance Remus and Sirius were exchanging above his head. After a silent moment of wide-eyed staring and raised eyebrows Remus cleared his throat pointedly.

“Right.” He lightly tapped Hadrian on the shoulder and wasn’t surprised to see the other boy flinch. “The boys’ dorms are up there at the right. Don’t try to er… visit the girls’ dorms, though. There’s a charm on the stairs that prevents any male from getting up there.”

He frowned at Hadrian’s confused and incredulous look. Well, he had been staring at the girls, had he not? Sirius just grinned and led the way up to the sixth year dorm. Harry’s thoughts were still consumed with the short glimpse of his sixteen year old mother. He had recognized her at first sight; there really was no mistaking the hair and flashing green eyes. The urge to speak to her, to listen to her voice and make her smile at him had been nearly overwhelming. Yes, he had seen pictures and there were the nights in front of the Mirror of Erised, but to see her in flesh and blood, talking and so obviously alive… It was a feeling he had no words for. It was different from seeing the younger version of his godfather. It felt even more like a dream of sorts.

There were five beds in the dorm, each with a huge trunk at the foot. They were arranged in a semicircle with the familiar floor to ceiling windows in the gaps between them. Sirius frowned at the new arrangement for a moment and then shrugged.

“They have separated Remus’ and my bed to squeeze yours in-between, Moore.” He flashed a grin at Harry. “It’s okay though. Rem snores.”

“Oy!” The werewolf cried from the second to left bed where he was rummaging in his trunk. “I heard that, Black!”

“Won’t stop you from doing it again though,” Sirius countered and strolled over to the bed on the far right that seemed to be occupied at the moment. “Get your lazy buttocks up, Prongs. I’m hungry.” He proceeded to poke his head between the closed curtains to nag the sleeping resident.

Harry gulped. Prongs. That was his dad; James Potter was just over there, grumbling at Sirius’ attempts to wake him.
“Hadrian?” Remus’ voice brought him out of his thoughts and he looked over to the other boy. “This is your bed.” He pointed to the one right in the middle. “Your stuff should be in your trunk.” The amber eyes held a look of concern and Harry hurried to get across the room. He really didn’t need to raise any more suspicion.

The trunk he had been given looked new and completely unblemished. And impersonal. It wasn’t locked and Harry took a few minutes to survey the contents. There were two complete sets of the school uniform each consisting of a white buttoned shirt, the house tie, a grey v-neck jumper and trousers. He even spotted a pair of breeches. He also found two plain black work robes, a light summer’s coat and a heavy woollen winter coat plus a Gryffindor scarf at the bottom. He would have to be careful not to get his clothes stained since he wouldn’t be able to change them more than once. Fortunately he knew that the Hogwarts’ house-elves were fast with their work and took dutifully care of the students’ wardrobes. The stack of briefs next to a stack of socks and a simple pair of black shoes made him blush. It wasn’t like he didn’t appreciate it – he did, really – but the thought that someone had chosen underwear for him was somewhat embarrassing. It also reminded him of the fact that he wasn’t wearing any at the moment. Since Madam Pomfrey had only given him a shirt and jeans and he hadn’t been about to ask her for underwear, he had just gone commando.

“Goodness, Pads, shut the fuck up.” James Potter emerged from his bed, trotted across the room, and entered the en suite. He didn’t take any notice of Harry’s frozen form or the again wide-eyed stare that followed his sleep-rumpled form.

“Hurry it up in there!” Sirius wasn’t the least bit fazed by his friend’s attitude. “I saw Evans in the common room before we came up here.” There was some sudden clattering and shuffling in the bathroom that suggested hasty and clumsy movements. Sirius grinned satisfied and then proceeded to look Harry over.

“Still bare down there, Moore?” The suggestive tone to his voice made Harry’s blush deepen and he jumped to put some socks and shoes on, though he had the distinct feeling that Sirius wasn’t talking about his feet.

Chapter End Notes

Harry’s middle name for his alias in this fic is yet to be decided. Suggestions, please? I’m going to collect them and write them out in a few chapters for you to vote.

**Suggestions up until now:**
- Icarus
- Aloysius
- James (staying with the original)
The four of them were on their way down to the Great Hall before James finally noticed that something was different.

“Who are you?” His eyes widened when he took in Harry’s appearance. He blinked and then took off his glasses to clean them somewhat violently before he took another look. Remus chuckled lowly from Harry’s other side, but waited for the scene to unfold. Maybe the new bloke would give away some information now.


His voice tilted slightly up at the end of his sentence, making it sound more like a question. James had stopped in the middle of the hallway and started to circle around him. He had been the one to carry the bloke the whole way from the Forbidden Forest to the hospital wing, but honestly, he hadn’t really looked at him. He had actually made a conscious effort not to look since the guy had been starkers, for Merlin’s sake! So, yes, the appearance of this Hadrian guy in the light of day was a bit unexpected for James.

“You look an awful lot like a Potter, you know that?” He frowned and stopped in front of the other boy to look him straight in the face. “The hair is supposed to be something like a dead giveaway, but I don’t remember any Moores from the family tree.”

Harry just shrugged. Really, what was he supposed to say? He had never seen a Potter family tree and even if he had there was no way he would be on it at this time. He wasn’t supposed to be related to James anyway.

“Alright, I’m ravenous,” Remus intercepted them when it looked like Hadrian wasn’t coming up with an answer. “Let’s get going, yeah?”

The Great Hall was still mostly empty due to the early hour and Remus fell back into what Sirius had called ‘professor-mode’.

“These are the four house-tables. You’re only expected to sit with your house on holidays or during special occasions. At any other time you can sit with friends from other houses, though that happens only rarely.” He paused to take a breath. “The ceiling is enchanted to show the sky outside…”

The moment they got closer to the Gryffindor table, James’ hand reached for his hair and he started to strut like a Malfoy. Harry blinked at the change and followed the badly hidden glances to see Lily with two of her friends at the other end of the table. Sirius snickered next to him and leaned in to stage-whisper into Harry’s ear. No one seemed to notice the soft little gasp at the action.

“You just witnessed what the noteworthy population of Hogwarts calls James’ peacocking morning ritual.” James glared at his friend and hid behind his goblet. Harry just smiled. It was somehow nice to see that his father was as useless a flirt as he was.

Caught in his thoughts he hadn’t noticed the short chubby boy that sat next to James across the table. He seemed to have been there for a while already if the crumps on his face and the half chewed
leftovers all around his place were anything to go by. Harry nearly choked on his mouthful of scrambled eggs when the head of mouse brown hair lifted to send him a curious and suspicious look.

Wormtail. Peter fucking Pettigrew sat across from him at the Gryffindor table and was stuffing his face with breakfast. He sat right next to James and Harry felt the blood in his ears rushing at the notion.

“Oh that’s right!” Remus took charge again when he noticed Hadrian focusing on Peter. “Hadrian, that’s Peter. He is the last of your new room mates.” He unsuccessfully tried to catch Hadrian’s gaze and instead made a polite gesture towards the last Marauder. “Peter, this is Hadrian Moore. He’s a new student and stays in our dorm,” he smiled fleetingly at Peter and then hastily avoided to look closer. Peter’s eating habits always tended to curb his appetite.

“Nice to meet you,” Peter smiled at the new guy that he recognized as the one they had found in the forest during the full moon and looked him over calculatingly. He looked a lot like James and the others seemed to like him since they brought him with them. He would go with polite friendliness until he knew if he actually was related to the Potters or whatever the reason he was included in their group.

Harry ground his teeth and made a conscious effort to loosen his clenched fists. He couldn’t do anything. As much as he wanted to draw his wand at this pathetic excuse for a human being – it wouldn’t be right. At the moment this boy was exactly that: a boy. He was innocent. He nearly snorted at that thought. Regardless of the fact that he would become a disgusting traitor that would grovel at his master’s feet in a sickening way… no. Harry let out a harsh breath and fixed his glare on his food, completely dismissing Wormtail’s presence.

Next to him Sirius stared at the change in Hadrian Moore’s face when Remus introduced him to Peter. Well, fuck me. That was some scary reaction there. After a few long tense minutes in which Wormy squirmed in his seat and sneaked pleading looks at the other Marauders Hadrian’s intense glare dropped to his plate. He hadn’t said a single word and Peter looked affronted, but Sirius was definitely not about to question what just happened.

Sweet Merlin, the guy could be terrifying! For a second he had actually thought he saw the boy’s magic around him. He really hadn’t thought Moore had it in him. Sirius mouthed a silent ‘Wow’ at Prongs across the table and got an equally impressed look back. They so would talk about the mystery called Hadrian Moore later.

After they had finished breakfast Harry asked Remus about the library. It wasn’t his most clever idea for an excuse to get some time and space to himself – he should have known that Remus would accompany him.

That was how the two of them found their way through the corridors with Remus trying to engage Harry into conversation about various topics and Harry sticking to short absent-minded answers. This was all so much to take in. He had thought about the whole mess throughout Saturday while Remus slept and then again on Sunday morning when his nightmares woke him up way too early. But meeting fucking Wormtail had somehow changed his whole perspective of things and he had a hard time stopping his magic from lashing out.

Remus was sneaking glances at Hadrian while they walked to the library. He didn’t think the bloke was actually listening to what he was saying. He hadn’t ever since the incident with Peter. What had that been about? He was sure there would be a Marauders meeting later to discuss their new room mate and since he was the one who had spent the most time with Hadrian as of yet the others would
expect some input from him. He was quite sure he would be able to add some valid observations, though they were just that: observations. He had no real proof.

They entered the library silently, Remus had given up on small talk a while ago, and he was pretty sure Hadrian hadn’t even noticed. He cleared his throat and then gently tugged on the other boy’s sleeve when he still got no reaction. That worked – it always did, he realised with a slightly nauseating feeling in his gut. Hadrian didn’t react well to touch. It always managed to draw him out of his head because he seemed to shy away from it.

“Well, that’s the Hogwarts library.” Remus made an elaborate sweeping gesture. “The librarian is Madam Pince,” he said and nodded vaguely at the terse woman who always managed to look as dusty as the books she guarded so viciously. “Try not to get on her bad side, okay?” He tried to ignore how Hadrian had taken a step back from him when he tugged on his sleeve, he didn’t think it was a conscious action.

“Yeah, thanks.” Harry let his eyes roam around the big room and over the various shelves that looked exactly how he remembered them. “I er… have no idea what you’re up to this term in classes and wanted to take a look at some things. I should have gotten my schoolbooks from the tower though.” He rubbed at the back of his left hand in another unconscious gesture. “Sorry, didn’t think about that earlier.”

Remus smiled broadly at him. That was something he could definitely help with.

“No problem, you’re in the company of the most studious of your room mates.” It seemed somehow completely okay to say something like that in front of Hadrian. “I can show you the important sections even without your books. Do you know which subjects you’re taking though?” If not, they would stick with the most common ones like Potions, Charms and Transfiguration.

Chapter End Notes

Harry's middle name for his alias in this fic is yet to be decided. Suggestions, please? I'm going to collect them and write them out in a few chapters for you to vote.

Suggestions up until now:
Icarus - 1
Aloysius - 1
Neville - 1
James (staying with the original) - 2
Jack/Jamie/Jayden (etc something similar to James) - 1

Feel free to suggest names or vote for those you like!
“So you really don’t remember the night, Rem?” It had given Sirius a right heart attack to see his friend as a werewolf hovering over the prone form of someone. He knew it would have destroyed Remus if he actually had bitten the other boy.

Remus shook his head no. After an hour of going through some of the topics they were currently working at in classes, Remus had left Hadrian to his studies using his prefect duties as an excuse. He knew there would be a Marauders meeting and had made his way to the common room. But he hadn’t expected the information that awaited him.

“It was Moony who found him there then?” His voice was soft and even if none of the others said it out loud they were all very aware of what it meant. Remus took a long shivering breath. “Thank you,” he nearly whispered the words.

James briefly hugged his friend sideways while Peter looked around rather frantically. It wasn’t like they could be overheard though. They were sitting close together in a far corner of the common room and had cast a privacy spell around them.

“None of that, Rem.” Sirius kicked his feet up over the armrest of his chair and grinned mischievously at the other Marauders. “Nothing happened, you’re safe, he’s safe, and he has secrets!” He emphasized the first E in ‘secrets’ dramatically.

“Pads’ right, guys. There’s something strange about Moore, though I have to stress that he’s an awfully good-looking bloke,” James proclaimed and leaned back in his seat with a smug smile.

Remus snorted at his friend’s narcissistic declaration. Of course James would think Hadrian good-looking, the boy really did look a lot like a Potter. He sighed and anxiously repressed any more thoughts of what could have happened without the Marauders there on the last full moon.

“Alright, what do we know about him so far?” Sirius was eager to get his thoughts about the boy into order so he would be able to figure him out soon. “He took a nap in the Forbidden Forest – naked, the little lout – spent nearly two days in the infirmary, doesn’t speak about himself much and seems to not really like Wormy here.” He didn’t mention Hadrian’s reaction to his own person. He wasn’t sure if Rem had noticed and it felt somehow wrong to share this little bit of information.

“He looks like a Potter, but I don’t know of any Moores,” James threw in. “Remus? What did you gather?”

Remus bit his lower lip thoughtfully and mimicked Peter’s look around for a second. This was some really personal information and it wouldn’t do to blab about stuff like that when someone could overhear them. Sirius’ eyebrows went up in a mixture of curiosity and understanding when he noticed the werewolf’s hesitation. He had pieced together enough to get why Remus wanted to make
“When he woke up I heard Madam Pomfrey say some things about his condition,” he started rather vaguely and then sighed. “Apparently he’s underweight and she said something about scars and bruises.” James frowned and Sirius shifted to a more upright position. “And well… when I asked him later why he was there – in the infirmary, I didn’t remember the forest – he was quite adamant about it.” When Peter made a questioning noise, Remus simply added: “He didn’t want to talk about it.”

There was a short silence in which all four of them pondered over what they knew so far about Hadrian Moore.

“So he has scars and bruises, is underweight, appears unannounced and under mysterious circumstances at the school and doesn’t want to talk about his past,” James summed up in a quiet voice. “You said he was home-schooled, right?”

Remus nodded and James exchanged a long knowing look with Sirius. There weren’t too many possibilities that would explain all this and the most obvious was one that Sirius was more acquainted with than he liked.

Harry ran his hand through his hair yet again and shifted in his window seat. He had left the library shortly after Remus and had sneaked up to the Astronomy tower. There were no classes here at this time of day especially since it was a Sunday and he loved the wide look-out the high position granted him. It was normally a peaceful place to sort one’s thoughts but today he couldn’t really get into the right ‘sorting through that shit’ mood. Maybe he was just trying too hard or maybe he had already thought too much on the whole time travel stuff. If he was honest with himself – and he attempted to be since that would be the only way to clear a bit of the mess in his mind away – he wasn’t really as fazed by the whole thing as he probably should be.

What really bothered him was his inheritance. He didn’t like the fact that he would become a creature of sorts. Not that he had anything against creatures what with Remus and Fleur being prime examples of them being completely fine. He maybe even liked them better than your average human since they had a reason to be less narrow-minded.

But he was scared. Scared enough to shit his pants if he thought about it too much.

Just a few days ago his biggest concern about the inheritance had been that it would make him even more different than he already was. But then he had Remus there with him – an adult Remus who had already seen this happening with his dad and who would be there to guide him. Now he was alone and he could feel his agitated magic swirling untamed around him again. It had taken a while to regain this stage after the draining travel, but now it was back full force and his emotions were running rampage right alongside.

He chewed on his lower lip nervously. He needed to find a way to get help without alerting anyone of his state. If the creature blood in the Potter line was as rare as Remus had said it was, it would be more than suspicious if anyone who knew about James would find out about him. That meant he couldn’t even consider asking Remus in this time again – or his dad who would be the perfect source for information and probably help.

Harry tugged at his hair again in an attempt to change his train of thoughts. Ugh. Thinking of the shit situation he was in made his magic even pricklier and he felt the urge to lash out at something. Or someone even.
Alright, another focus, he thought and stared at the Black Lake for a whole minute. The lake looked as dark as his name suggested from up here. It reminded him of the darkness of his small room at Privet Drive and with this reminder came everything he had seen in his dreams and visions. Those nights had nearly driven him crazy, he thought in hindsight. Sometimes it got so bad that he would even entertain the thought of finding a way back into the Department of Mysteries to go into the room with the archway again, to go through the veil himself to join his family behind the misty fabric.

Suddenly he remembered the words of a friend, telling him that those who died were just lurking out of sight, that they would see them again sometime. A dreamy voice sounded in his head and Harry half smiled as he heard Luna’s words in his memory.

“My mum always said things we lose have a way of coming back to us in the end. If not always in the way we expect.”

He honestly hoped that his time travel wasn’t meant to be his end, but maybe it really was the end of the life he had lived so far. Maybe it meant Sirius had come back to him in a way he really could not have expected. Sirius and his parents - even if they were no parental figures in this time. Yes, he would like to believe in Luna’s mother’s words. Now that he thought about it, Luna had been the only one whose behaviour hadn’t changed after what happened in the Ministry. She had been his odd friend before and she had been his odd friend after.

“I miss you, Luna,” he sighed and closed his eyes against the reflection of the sun that glittered on the surface of the Black Lake.

Chapter End Notes

Harry's middle name for his alias in this fic is yet to be decided. Suggestions, please?
I'm going to collect them and write them out in a few chapters for you to vote.

Icarus - 1
Aloysius - 2
Neville - 2
James (staying with the original) - 4
Jayden (Jack/Jamie etc. something similar to James) - 3
Ignotus, Antioch or Cadmus (Peverell brothers) - 1

BTW! You are all SO amazing! Just wanted to tell you that.
Harry woke up to the knowledge that he no longer possessed a link to Voldemort. Why hadn’t he noticed this earlier? Obviously Voldemort’s soul was still intact in this time which rendered the piece in Harry’s head useless. Or maybe it was because the Horcrux that he was hadn’t been created yet. He shivered lightly at the implications of that thought.

The movement drew his attention to the fact that the shirt he had been sleeping in – the one Madam Pomfrey had given him since there were no pyjamas in his new trunk – was drenched in sweat. He sighed and got up as silently as he could manage. The nightmares always got to him, but normally he wouldn’t wake up that soaked. It was kind of disgusting, he thought, when he tiptoed over the freezing floor to the en suite. The room was still mostly dark and he could hear the light snoring from Remus’ bed before he closed the door behind him. He shed his shirt and got in the shower. Gods, how he loved to be able to take long showers without having to think of the Dursleys breathing down his neck. He washed himself thoroughly and then just enjoyed the pounding water on his stiff shoulders.

Having no longer a link to the noseless bastard meant no visions, he realised with a small smile. Maybe he would be able to get some more sleep from now on. Merlin knew, he could use it.

Sirius watched the other boy emerge from behind the curtains around his bed and sneak into the bathroom. If Hadrian knew that he was talking in his sleep? Probably not or he would cast a silencing spell or something. Not like Sirius had been able to catch much, though it was enough to underline, if not confirm, the conclusion the Marauders had come to yesterday.

He had woken up just a few minutes before Hadrian to the boy’s frantic whispering and the noise of someone moving restlessly in their sleep. It had taken him a few long seconds to realise that Hadrian was probably having a nightmare and a really bad one if the sounds were any indication. There were a lot of ‘Nonono’s and some choked words that could have been names. But what made him sit up and get ready to wake the boy was the clear ‘I’m sorry’ in this pained voice just before Hadrian woke up with a sudden gasp.

Sirius had barely managed to hide the fact that he was awake. There was no reason to embarrass his new room mate with the knowledge that he had been heard.

By the time Harry finally surfaced from the shower the others were up and grumbling at him for occupying the en suite so long. No one even considered using the group showers down the hall, being a sixth year had its perks and they wouldn’t miss out on any of those. Harry used the time to
sort through the stack of school books that had waited for him on his bed yesterday morning. There was enough parchment and quills for him to get along for awhile, too, but he wondered how he was supposed to get any of his supplies to the different classes?

“Forget a bag?” Harry nearly jumped across his bed at the voice speaking from directly behind him and only managed to stop himself from seeking cover when he heard Sirius laughing at him. “Sorry, mate, didn’t realise you were doing your drifting thing again.”

“My ‘drifting thing’?” Harry repeated the words with raised eyebrows and decided to just sit down on his bed rather heavily. Godric’s need to compensate stuff through overly ornate swords, but his heartbeat felt much faster than a simple scare should cause.

“Yeah, the whole faraway thoughts and glazed eyes and drool all over the place thing,” Sirius smirked down at him and made a show of looking at his face pointedly. Harry just stared back blankly and ignored the urge to wipe his mouth. “You can use one of my bags, if you want,” he added, finally deciding that Hadrian wouldn’t budge and tried the suggestive tone again. It had worked wonderfully on the boy yesterday. “You can even drool over it, if you feel like it…?” He smirked again, waggling his eyebrows for good measure when Hadrian’s pale complexion betrayed his thoughts. It was way too easy to make him blush.

“Stop harassing Hadrian, Sirius. Just hand over the satchel I know you’re talking about and give our minds a rest from your ‘English tea bags’ jokes,” Remus’ voice cut through their rather one-sided conversation in a half amused half exasperated tone.

“Didn’t know you were so into thinking about my ‘tea bags’, Rem,” he shot back, but winked at Hadrian and went to get the satchel.

Harry gulped and tried really hard not to think about what his godfather had just suggested. It had been a joke, of course, and if it had been any other bloke – alright, except for probably his dad – he wouldn’t even bat an eye at the insinuation. But wow, this felt strange. He thanked Sirius a moment later when he handed him an obviously muggle-made satchel and concentrated on packing his things. He really, REALLY should stop thinking of the other boy as his godfather or he would sooner or later die from embarrassment. Probably sooner rather than later.

Since Sirius was so determined to discover what Hadrian was hiding, he had started to watch the boy from the moment they had officially met in the infirmary. Apparently Hadrian didn’t know who found him in the woods or maybe he just didn’t care, but he hadn’t asked them about it. So Sirius was watching him true to his status as a Marauder who wouldn’t let any secrets stay undiscovered.

What he saw wasn’t much so far but they had yet to start classes. He had noticed that Hadrian had not shown up for lunch yesterday and how little he ate for dinner. It couldn’t be healthy especially if one considered that he already was too thin. Sirius added scrambled eggs to his toast and scooped another spoonful on Hadrian’s plate without comment. He ignored the raised eyebrow at the action and proceeded to munch on his toast. He would add some fruit on the bloke’s plate as soon as he was distracted. Not that Sirius actually cared if the boy noticed – he was bound to notice the appearance of extras on is own plate, wasn’t he? – but it was much more satisfying if he could play sneaky.

“Mr. Moore,” Professor McGonagall’s authoritative voice interrupted his thoughts and he looked up to see his head of house walk down the aisle. “I am Minerva McGonagall, head of Gryffindor House,” she stated as soon as she had Hadrian’s attention and launched into her speech a second later. “You have not yet informed me which classes you intend to participate in. The sixth year at
Hogwarts is one of the most important for your future and the subjects you decide on will be crucial for your career choices.” She regarded Hadrian over the rim of her glasses patiently and Sirius followed her gaze to see a thoughtful look on the bloke’s face. He looked rather indecisive and apparently McGonagall came to the same conclusion. “Normally you would have made these decisions in your fifth year through achieving your O.W.L.s but the headmaster informed me that you are free to choose from the range of subjects Hogwarts has to offer,” she added and looked on expectantly.

That was an interesting revelation. Free to choose whichever classes he wanted to attend? Hadrian Moore was either impressively intelligent or someone wanted to make sure he was as comfortable as possible. From the surprised look on his face it was the latter and Sirius chanced a glance at his friends. On their meeting the Marauders had decided to look after Hadrian for a while. It had been partially curiosity and partially concern about the boy who probably was running away from some dark past. For the most part they agreed that it had to do with his home life and that hit home (literally) for Sirius much more than he liked. He couldn’t just stand by and watch.

Harry for his part was weighing his options. In the hour spent with Remus in the library he had realised that his former choice of subjects had been completely dedicated to a fate that maybe wasn’t even his anymore. Becoming an auror had seemed to be the logical decision since it would provide him with the training he would need to fight No-nose. He had no clue what else he would want to do. For all he knew he wasn’t supposed to live past seventeen or whenever Voldemort got the better of him. It wasn’t like he had really planned anything for his future. And he had never entertained any real dreams either. But now there was no Dark Lord out for his blood any longer. He had no idea when or if he would go ‘back to the future’ and that meant he was free to decide whatever he felt like doing. Yet, he had no real idea of the curriculum to his shame.

“I would like to go with Defense, Charms, Transfiguration, Herbology and Potions, if this is alright, Professor,” he stated finally and smiled at the mention of Potions. He had been pants at the subject under Snape’s supervision, but he would like to try his hand without that pressure for once. Not to mention he would have never made it into the N.E.W.T.s class with Snape as a professor.

“I see,” Professor McGonagall regarded him for a moment longer before she added his choices to a time table and handed it over. “Then I am going to see you in my Transfiguration class right after breakfast. Be sure to be on time, I do not tolerate tardiness.” She surprised everyone – including herself – with a gentle smile towards Harry then. “I am sure you will be fine,” she added and walked away in a brisk manner. Remus looked over Hadrian’s shoulder.

“These are all core classes. You sure you don’t want any electives?” Taking on five core classes on N.E.W.T. level could become quite challenging and he had thought Hadrian more to be someone who would go with Astronomy rather than the aggressive Defense Against the Dark Arts, but it really wasn’t his business. Harry shrugged but made a thoughtful face.

“I don’t know much about the elective classes. Are they any good?” He wasn’t too sure what made him take the exact same classes he had decided on during his career consultation back in his fifth year. Yes, there was no longer a need for him to take these classes in order to become an auror, but at the same time they were the subjects he knew and with the exception of Potions had likely gotten his best grades in if he had stayed long enough to see the results of his OWLs anyway. Maybe five was a bit much, though?

“Well,” James chimed in from across the table. “There’s Alchemy. Quite the interesting subject if you’re into elemental magic and stuff. You know, like the legendary Philosopher’s Stone.” Harry couldn’t contain the cringe at that. Nope. No Alchemy for him.
“I would suggest Ancient Runes,” Remus said. “Though, you would need at least O.W.L. level for this class. It’s fairly advanced.” Sirius gave a delicate snort from Harry’s other side at that.

“I’d say you should forego any of those and instead decide on a pretty little extra-curricular. There are some really cool ones, you know, like Muggle Music.” He sounded excited at the mention of the mystery of anything muggle and Harry found himself smiling at that.

“I didn’t know about these. Is there… um…,” he stopped and tugged nervously at the hem of his shirtsleeve. There was actually one class he had always wanted to attend back in his muggle school, but since it would have been an extra class in the afternoon that would keep him from his chores, the Dursleys hadn’t allowed him to go. Not to mention the additional costs for supplies.

“Yeah?” The others looked at him expectantly and he felt a bit stupid for asking but if there actually was a class about Muggle Music…

“Art,” he mumbled embarrassed. “Is there an arts class?”

Chapter End Notes

I'm going to upload another chapter on the 25th or 26th as a little Christmas something for all of you. Thank you for the continued support! <3
There were two classes for art: Magical Art and Muggle Art.

On their way to Transfiguration – without Wormtail, Harry noticed with a sigh of relief – Remus explained the difference since he was the only Halfblood of the group apart from Harry himself and therefore the only one who could provide some inside on muggle arts.

Although no one had asked for his blood status so far Harry made sure to remember his made up agenda. He had known about Remus’ mother being a muggle and of course about James and Sirius being wealthy Purebloods. He wasn’t sure about Pettigrew, though, and he really didn’t want to waste any more thoughts on the rat.

Sirius was listening attentively to what Remus was explaining. His fascination with anything muggle seemed to be more than just a way to annoy his parents, Harry thought. Why else would he ask questions about a class that he was not attending and even question the different techniques used for muggle arts? Or maybe he was just really dedicated to his mission of annoying his parents with their pureblood supremacy belief.

They found seats in the back of the classroom, Harry again seated between Remus and Sirius. James sat down on Sirius’ other side and was soon enraptured in staring at the front row where Lily was sitting.

“I saw a muggle photography in Muggle Studies once. Thought the professor was having us on when he told us they do not move,” Sirius admitted enthusiastically when Remus explained that one of the main themes in Magical Art class was the making of moving photographs. He himself wasn’t attending any arts class, but he had heard about it from Lily who loved magical photography.

“Yeah, I’m not surprised,” Remus agreed. “I doubt the Blacks would indulge their children in muggle technology.”

“Damn right,” Sirius answered with a slightly bitter edge to his voice that brightened the moment he turned to Harry. “So have you decided if you’re taking an extra yet?”

Harry nodded and lowered his voice when Professor McGonagall entered the room.

“Yes. I think I’m going to attend Muggle Art.” And if he wasn’t any good he could just leave like Hermione did with Divination. It wasn’t like he cared about grades in this class anyway. He just wanted to try something he never had a chance to try before.
There were fewer students in the Transfiguration class than Harry remembered from his time. The five Gryffindors who had managed at least an E (Exceeds Expectations) in their O.W.L. for Transfiguration – meaning the three Marauders, Harry and Lily - were taught together with eight Ravenclaws who were apparently all the sixth year Ravenclaws. Harry’s eyebrows rose at that mention, 1971 had obviously been a weak year for Ravenclaw if there only were eight of them.

“How many sixth year Gryffindors are there?” He whisper-asked Remus and then realised that he had already met all male sixth years.

“With you we are now twelve. Five boys and seven girls,” Remus whispered back. “Lily was the only girl that was interested in taking her N.E.W.T.s in Transfiguration, though.”

Harry smiled at that. He remembered adult Remus telling him that Lily always had to work extra for Transfiguration and that he suspected more than her stubbornness and conviction to pass the most complicated N.E.W.T.s to be the reason. Harry glanced at James who was absentmindedly twirling his wand while still watching Lily.

“One could say we are quite lucky with that many birds around,” Sirius added and reclined in his seat.

“I’d say the Ravenclaws would happily disagree with that,” Remus grinned and nodded to the two lonely boys amongst the flock of girls. Lily was sitting with them and Harry noticed that there was no actual separation of houses in this class.

Who would have thought that two weeks could make such a difference? He was behind in class and he would definitely need to study before the next Transfiguration class came around. Though Professor McGonagall had refrained from calling him up today, he was pretty sure that this ‘puppy protection’ would diminish soon. Harry sighed when he sat down in Potions. This class would probably be as difficult as the previous one if his record in Potions was anything to go by.

“May I sit here?”

The polite question made him look up. His eyes grew big and he felt himself flush at the sight of Lily. He hadn’t realised that Sirius and James weren’t sitting with Remus and him at the moment, though he remembered James saying something about picking up Peter and Sirius sighing dramatically at that. Lily looked at him with raised eyebrows and gesticulated to the empty seat next to him. The other side was occupied with Remus who smiled and nodded at Lily. Harry fought a moment until he found his voice. This was his mother, yes, but not yet. Right now this was a girl that would think him weird if he continued to stare mutely at her.

“Um yes,” he finally rasped out and flushed again at the sound. “Of course.” Merlin, he felt dumb. And Gods he needed to stop the staring or Lily would interpret his attention in an absolute wrong way. But this was his mother! The mother he had never consciously met and he wanted, no needed to get to know every little detail about her that he could.

“Thanks.” Her smile was still polite but with an amused hint at the edges. “I’m Lily Evans.” I know, he thought desperately and cleared his throat to get the control over his voice back yet again. “If you have any problems in this class it’s alright to ask me. The material can be quite overwhelming and you missed the first two weeks, right?”

He should answer, he knew he should. But still he found himself staring at her face, listening to her voice intently without really getting the words. He flinched violently when Remus tapped his
shoulder and then blinked sheepishly at the two other students.

“Right. Yeah. Thanks.” Harry coughed lightly, painfully aware of the fact that both Remus and Lily were watching him closely now. “I’m Har- …Hadrian.” He closed his eyes briefly at his almost slip. When he opened them again he saw Lily looking back at him from exchanging looks with Remus and then she smiled again, but this time it was different. Harry blinked and stamped down the urge to reach out to her.

“Hi, Hadrian. Nice to meet you.”

Her smile was so gentle it made his heart ache. It felt like she was enveloping him in a warm hug with just the way she looked at him. He found himself smiling back at her like she was the sun after a long night full of suffering from nightmares. He didn’t see Sirius and James stopping dead in their tracks at the door staring at the two of them.

Sirius felt a strong urge to rush over and hug Hadrian for the smile he saw him exchanging with Evans made something in his chest twist painfully. It looked so damned lonely and serene and was at the same time the most beautiful thing he had ever seen - oh what the hell?

James for his part was miffed to see another boy looking at Lily like that. Normally no guy would dare to make a move at the girl everyone knew was his. Or would be his. Anyway, this Hadrian bloke was smiling at her in a way that was definitely more than polite or friendly. He couldn’t see Lily’s face from where he stood, but since the moment between those two seemed to go on endlessly he assumed that she was smiling back at the bloke. But when he looked closer the slightly vicious thoughts towards Moore vanished like a gust of wind had just swept them away. There was just something in his face that made it impossible for James’ jealousy to take over. He looked like… like he was soaking up the positive vibes he got from Lily as if it was oxygen and he had been suffocating for a long time.

Chapter End Notes

I was wondering… should I add James and Lily to the relationship tags?

Icarus - 1  
Aloysius - 3  
Neville - 2  
James (staying with the original) - 8  
Jayden (Jack/Jamie etc. something similar to James) - 3  
Ignotus, Antioch or Cadmus (Peverell brothers) - 1

Looks like James is winning! So for all of you who want another name: time to put in a suggestion or vote for one! ;)
In which Severus is perfect and Harry jumps in front of danger

Alright, welcome in the new year everyone! It's time for some Potions cliché! <3

They were brewing a Shrinking Solution or at least the others were. Harry for his part was fairly sure his potion lacked something significant, but he wasn’t sure where he had made the mistake. He glanced at Remus who was busy going over his left over ingredients and checking if he had weighed the right portions for the next step. Lily to his right was just finishing said next step with a slight flourish of her stirring rod. Her potion looked absolutely perfect and Harry sighed. Her knack for this subject was obviously something he had not inherited.

Professor Slughorn, a rather corpulent man with bright red cheeks, was just making his round through the classroom. He peeked in Pettigrew’s cauldron and commented on the contents in a friendly voice. Apparently even Wormtail was better at Potions than Harry. Slughorn then went across the room and started to fawn over the cauldron of a Slytherin. Although he didn’t seem to favour the students of his house – what was it with Potions Masters always being Slytherin? - he seemed to have a particular liking for this one.

“Ah!” The professor exclaimed loudly. “Another perfect batch from you, Severus. But of course I never expected otherwise,” he winked at the black haired teen and Harry found himself staring at the sixteen year old version of his former Potions Professor. Really now, Snape looked just so… human. He obviously hadn’t perfected his Slytherin mask that would benefit him so much in his later years as a spy yet, because Harry could clearly see the pride on his face at the praise of his professor.

“Hadrian.” Lily’s voice drew him out of his shock (and it was a shock – Severus Snape was the kind of person one just didn’t imagine as a teen). “You forgot your sliced caterpillars. If you hurry I’m sure you can still get a fairly good mark.”

He blinked. Caterpillars? His gaze travelled over the cut up ingredients next to his own cauldron. She was right. Damn.

“Don’t worry, I get it for you,” she added. “My Potion is mostly finished so just keep stirring like this, alright?” He smiled gratefully at Lily when she hurried off to the cabinet that held the ingredients for student usage.

He was so concentrated on doing the stirring exactly like Lily had shown him that he didn’t really see it happen. Someone must have tripped her. Lily suddenly barrelled into his side with a surprised warning on her lips. The ingredients she was holding crashed to the floor and something probably slipped into Harry’s cauldron, because the next he knew there was a deadly little fizzle coming from its contents. A fizzle that reminded him vividly of Seamus Finnegan’s attempts at potions. Running on instinct, Harry grabbed Lily and turned with her so she was shielded from the cauldron at his back.

The cauldron exploded.

He felt hot liquid hitting his shoulders and hissed in pain. Hugging Lily closer to him, he slightly hunched over to protect her from possible flying drops. The next second there was shouting all over
the classroom. Remus who had fallen to the floor through the impact of the explosion got up with a slightly disoriented look on his face. Pettigrew was on his knees beneath his table. Sirius and James had their wands drawn and were busy hexing the Slytherins while Professor Slughorn was momentarily stunned.

Lily blinked a few times and looked around. She hadn’t really seen who tripped her, but judging from the chaos around them it must have been a Slytherin – not that any of her fellow Gryffindors would have a reason to trip her, but she wasn’t one to condemn someone based on house rivalries. A pained little moan drew her attention back to the person hugging her close. She blushed lightly when she recognised a male chest right in front of her eyes, but her embarrassment flew out the nonexistent window when she realized Hadrian was hurt.

“Hadrian?” She asked cautiously and tried to wiggle out of his tensed embrace. “What happened? Are you- oh my god!” Her shocked exclamation got the attention of nearly everyone in the room.

James spun around to her, Professor Slughorn finally shook off his stupor and started barking orders. Hadrian was breathing through clenched teeth and his eyes were screwed shut. She could see burnt skin where the contents of his cauldron had spilled over his back and shoulders. The fabric of his robes was partially disintegrated and it smelled like…

“We need to get him to the infirmary!” Remus came up next to them, his eyes alight with concern. “Did you get hit by the potion, too?”

James was suddenly there, worry etched on his face and he looked like he was using every ounce of restraint to stop himself from touching her. It warmed her insides in a pleasantly tingly way, but right now Hadrian was more important than the swarm of butterflies in her tummy.

“No. He shielded me with his body.” Remus nodded and reached a tentative hand out to help loosen Hadrian’s grip on Lily. He seemed too absorbed in his pain to realise that there was no longer any need to hold her close.

“Hadrian?” There was no flinch this time when he touched the other boy. “You can let go of her now. It’s alright.” Remus’ fingers started itching suddenly and he was confused as to why until he heard Lily gasp softly.

“I think his magic is reacting!” James and Sirius looked alarmed at her shout and made to move forward when Professor Slughorn intercepted them.

“If that is the case then you should all leave the room – or better bring him out into the hall. We don’t know what a magical backlash would do to a room full of potions.” Slughorn took a hold of Harry and helped Remus to pry the boy’s arms from around Lily. “Alright, Mr. Moose. Come this way, please.” (*)

They saw Hadrian nod faintly and he determinedly took a step towards the door when one of Professor Slughorn’s hands brushed a part of his burnt skin. He sucked in a harsh breath and nearly toppled over, going deathly pale.

“Oh for Merlin’s sake, can’t we just levitate him? It’s obvious the movement hurts him even more,” Lily called out anxiously, but Sirius shook his head.

“Using magic on someone whose magic is already running wild would make it even worse. He’s fighting to keep control right now, don’t you feel it?” Remus next to Hadrian nodded approvingly and tried to coax the boy into moving to the door again.
They made it in time and Lily closed the door into their classmates’ faces. James and Sirius shooed any student who happened to be in the hall away while Slughorn and Remus settled Hadrian against the wall.

“Now, we should all hurry.” Slughorn motioned for them to retreat to the far end of the hallway while casting a hasty shield charm on the door to the classroom.

“But we can’t just leave him on his own,” Lily retorted but let herself be tugged away by Remus. She huffed worriedly. “I'm going to get Madam Pomfrey.”

Harry was vaguely aware of the voices around him and hands trying to move him. The pain on his back felt like something had burnt away his very skin and with every movement the searing flames seemed to spread out even more. He bit down on his lip and tried not to cry out. His magic was agitated. He could feel it swirling and rising and nipping at everything and everyone around him. But he was in a room full of students! Lily was here and the Marauders and- no, he could not let this happen.

Harry sucked in a breath and focused his whole concentration on the feeling of his magic. He could still feel the hands on him and let himself be manhandled. He couldn’t care about his body while trying to reign in his angry magic.

Hadrian’s magic was impressive. And terrifying. They could feel it rising and getting stronger by the second from where they stood watching at the end of the hall. Sirius didn’t like it. He didn’t like to stand here safely hidden behind a shield charm while the other boy was not only severely injured but also losing a battle against his own magic. Hadrian was laying in the middle of the hallway near the wall a few metres away from the classroom door. He hadn’t been able to sit against the wall with the wounds on his back and didn’t seem to be aware enough of his surroundings to find any other position. Or maybe he couldn’t even sit anymore.

They watched him pant, his breath hectic and wheezing. Sirius didn’t like it. At all. He wanted to do something. It was wrong to stand here and watch Hadrian suffer. He shouldn’t be left alone with this. It wasn’t even his fault!

Chapter End Notes

Lol sorry, but I just needed to mention Sev.

(*) Slughorn only ever gets the names of ‘important’ students right.

Icarus - 1
Aloysius - 3
Neville - 2
James (staying with the original) - 8
Jayden (Jack/Jamie etc. something similar to James) - 3
Ignatus, Antioch or Cadmus (Peverell brothers) – 1

Looks like James is winning! So for all of you who want another middle name for Harry’s alias: time to put in a suggestion or vote for one! ;)

Chapter End Notes
“Move, move, please!” Madam Pomfrey’s voice sounded through the hall and a second later they were shoved unceremoniously aside to make room for the stout matron. Somewhere along the way Professor McGonagall had joined her and was following closely just to stop in her tracks at the sight of the shuddering Hadrian. There were tremors wrecking his frame and sweat made his untameable hair stand up in even wilder angles.

“What on earth- don’t go near him, Poppy!” The matron didn’t seem too inclined to listen, but looked at McGonagall nonetheless. The magic in the air was nearly tangible by now. “What has happened?” The question was directed at Professor Slughorn, but it was Lily who spoke up.

“An accident in Potions, Professor.” Her eyes were locked on Hadrian’s form and her hands clenched in her skirt. “I stumbled and knocked into Hadrian. Some of the ingredients I was carrying probably slipped into his cauldron and then…” She bit her lip when a small sound of distress sounded from down the hall. “He… he…”

“I saw him shielding Evans from the explosion,” James resumed, his eyes on Lily. “He got injured pretty badly and then his magic started reacting. That’s why we’re all here instead of-,” he broke off, making an encompassing gesture towards the boy on the floor.

Neither of them found the words for their unhelpful behaviour while someone was suffering nearby. McGonagall frowned for a moment and then seemed to come to a conclusion. She drew her wand and swiftly moved towards the student that had just this morning become one of her lions. Though, even if he had not she wouldn’t stand by and wait for the boy to lose the grip on his obviously agitated magic.

“You made the right decision to wait for someone more experienced,” she declared and ignored Slughorn’s slightly indignant spluttering. “Stay back, please.”

She moved her wand in an intricate pattern that seemed to go on longer than every spell the students had ever witnessed. Finally a wispy barrier emerged from the tip of her wand and weaved its way through the air and around Hadrian’s body without actually touching him.

“Do you hear me, Mr. Moore?” She asked in an unexpectedly soothing voice. “I cast a containing spell which is much stronger than a regular shield. It is alright now, you can let go of your magic.”

They couldn’t hear his voice, but it looked like Hadrian was refusing to do what McGonagall asked of him. Sirius found himself moving forward and only really registered what he was doing when he was stopped by James’ hand on his shoulder.

“You won’t hurt anyone, Mr. Moore,” McGonagall continued to urge the boy. “Your magic won’t be able to break through the spell.”
It happened rather abruptly. Nothing warned them before a sudden shift in the air accompanied a violent surge of magic. Lily gasped and James’ hand on Sirius’ shoulder clenched when they watched the bright light engulfing Hadrian. It looked like some kind of energy trying to break free, writhing, but when it hit the surrounding containing spell and wasn’t able to break through, it turned on its source instead. And Hadrian screamed.

*Some say that pain is like a blinding light. To Harry who had already encountered so many different versions of light promising pain - green, red, or just the general flash of a spell - the ultimate pain was nothing like that. There was no light or anything to see at all actually. To him pain was a noise.*

His mother’s voice begging for the life of her child.

Her scream.

*His laugh.*

And then the silence.

*Pain was an all encompassing noise, continuing on and on and on. And pain was the deafening silence that followed the death of loved ones. Pain was the guilt that gnawed at his heart and screamed in muteness at him.*

When his magic turned against him Harry wondered if that was what he wanted. His magic never did something he wouldn’t want. Even his accidental magic did things that matched his mood in the situation. It always seemed to work in his favour to its best capability. It was a part of him that was strongly connected to his feelings rather than his mind. So maybe yes. Maybe he really wanted it to hurt him, to punish him for his failure. For not being able to protect. For leading those who trusted him into danger…

“That was horrible,” Lily’s voice sounded muffled behind her hands. “Is… is he alright?” He didn’t look alright, actually he looked to be in a dead faint, and Lily felt her anger rising at her professor. Had there been no other way to do this?

McGonagall lifted the containing spell and Madam Pomfrey rushed forward. She didn’t waste another second before she started her own wand waving.

“What potion were you brewing?”

Slughorn finally moved towards the other adults and started explaining the Shrinking Solution and its contents. He looked at Hadrian in a way that could only be called intrigued and for once Remus felt a bout of disgust towards a teacher. Hadrian had just suffered a gruesome injury and a violent and obviously painful outburst of his magic and this very fact made him suddenly interesting enough for Slughorn to really take notice of him. Although he shouldn’t be too surprised, Remus thought. After all, Slughorn was known to ‘collect’ students with special talents, abilities, or connections that would grant them a successful future. Someone with magic strong enough to be visible outside a spell was bound to become grand some day.

Pomfrey’s sudden shout of surprise had them all looking back to Hadrian – all except for Sirius who hadn’t stopped staring at the other boy for a second or rather at the blood dripping from Hadrian’s nose. They all saw the little sparks going off of Hadrian’s body and heard the ominous crackle.
“His magic is still reacting and attempting to protect him. I will have to tend to him manually,” the matron concluded and then looked the assembled students over with an assessing eye. “Someone needs to carry him to the hospital wing. He can’t be levitated in this state.”

Somehow the Marauders all looked to James who arched his eyebrows questioningly before he caught on and raised his hands in a defensive manner.

“Oh no, you don’t. I already played the knight in shining armor once.” He winked at Sirius knowingly. “It’s your turn to carry sleeping beauty and get your back cramped up, Pads.”

If he was honest he was rather concerned about his new room mate, but he couldn’t bring himself to leave Lily’s side right now. Considering the way his best mate was looking at the boy, though, James didn’t really feel guilty for refusing. It said a lot that there was no snippy remark from Sirius’ side. He just went down on his knees and lifted Hadrian carefully over his shoulder. It was the only way he would be able to carry the other boy while he was unconscious. There was no way he would risk putting any pressure on Hadrian’s back at the moment. It wasn’t easy getting up with the extra weight but he somehow managed. And noticed just how light Hadrian was. He would definitely increase his attempts at sneaking him food.

He had thought the contrast unique before, but now it just didn’t look right. Hadrian was so pale against the dark strands of his untamed hair, he looked like there wasn’t a single drop of blood beneath his skin. And then those fragile looking limbs. Without a shirt to cover it up it was painfully obvious why Pomfrey had called him underweight. It could probably be worse, but… he looked so damn vulnerable.

“Mr. Black, you should go back to classes,” Madam Pomfrey spoke up from beside Hadrian’s bed where she was finishing her treatment of the boy’s back. “He is probably not going to wake for the next few hours.” Without magic to aid her, she had had to treat his injuries manually, not even able to spell potions into his system.

Sirius forced himself to look away from the too pale face and the expanse of now salve stained skin. He had gotten a glimpse of the damage done to Hadrian’s back and was just grateful the boy was unconscious. Fucking potion had destroyed the fabric of his robe and shirt and then attacked the skin beneath… The matron had called it ‘acid burns’ and Sirius had felt more than a little nauseous when he caught sight of a few patches of fabric burnt right into the skin. Pomfrey sighed next to him.

“What a way to start school…,” she muttered more to herself. “After all he’s already been through now this…”

She didn’t notice the curious gleam in Sirius’ eyes collecting her utensils as she was, and when she finally looked up he had already smoothed out his expression, leaving nothing but a slight concern for her to see.

Chapter End Notes

Icarus - 1
Aloysius - 4
Neville - 2
James (staying with the original) - 9
Jayden (Jack/Jamie etc. something similar to James) - 3
Ignotus, Antioch or Cadmus (Peverell brothers) – 1
Cygnus, Marius or Pollux (something off the Black family tree)

Still looks like James is winning! So for all of you who want another middle name for Harry’s alias: time to put in a suggestion or vote for one. I’m probably going to stop the voting after the next chapter since we will be learning more about Harry’s creature in chapter 19 (or something...).
He knew where he was. He didn’t want to open his eyes. Really, he had been in this time what? Three or four days? And how many of those days had he already spent in the hospital wing? It was just so like him to have trouble finding him on his first day back to normal school life, it wasn’t even funny anymore.

Harry didn’t move upon waking. It was an ingrained habit to stay as still as possible and listen for any threat when waking up somewhere unexpected – that was if he wasn’t left trembling from his nightmares. And Merlin knew he had a knack for waking up at strange places. He could hear the faint sounds of the school, students running around and clearing the halls… probably on their way to the Great Hall so it was time for a meal. Only which one was the question. Then there was the rustling of a curtain across the room. But it didn’t sound like it was being moved by someone, more like being rustled by a light wind. And yes, there was a soft fresh breeze brushing against his exposed skin.

Wait. Exposed skin?

He felt himself frown and spent a second to chastise himself for showing a sign of awareness when he couldn’t be sure there really was no one around. Then he focused on an inner check-up of his body. Subtle little movements, so minimal and deliberately uncoordinated like he was just moving in his sleep told him that he would probably be able to move around if necessary. Though, there was something wrong with his back. His very naked back that should feel cool being exposed like that but was instead feeling rather hot. Too hot.

His frown deepened and he decided that it would be best to have a look at it as much as that was possible. Harry made to sit up, but a hand on his lower back stopped him. He gasped at the unexpected touch and his eyes flew open. He needed to get away! He was vulnerable and too open in this position – he hadn’t even his wand!

“Hey now,” an amused voice drawled next to him. “You make me feel kinda perverted when you react like that to me touching you.”

Harry’s eyes found Sirius standing there right next to him and although his voice sounded mocking, his face betrayed his real feelings. There was concern there and a warmth that made Harry halt in his movements. It didn’t look like the kind of shallow concern one might expect from a near stranger. Because that was what they were here, right? Harry licked his lips and wondered why the hell he felt so nervous all of a sudden. If anything he should be confused or maybe frightened when waking up in the hospital wing with what felt like an injured back. But no, Harry bloody Potter chose to feel nervous and strangely …fluttery in regards to his teenaged godfather instead. Gods, his head was a mess.

“Honestly, don’t move yet,” Sirius continued when it became apparent that the boy on the bed wouldn’t answer any time soon. “A potion hit your back and your magic went a bit berserk on you.”

He unconsciously rubbed his hand in soothing circles on the small of Hadrian’s back. At least the potion hadn’t reached that far down. ‘A bit berserk’ was also a big fat understatement, but Sirius didn’t feel like Hadrian needed to know that just yet. And the fact that his magic had actually turned against himself… well, there were a lot of strange things happening around Moore.
Harry’s mouth was dry. He could feel Sirius’ large warm hand just above his arse and really if that wasn’t a strange thought to have right now. But he really couldn’t help himself, the hand was warm and slightly calloused and it felt rather nice how it continued to rub small circles over his vertebrae. He felt like purring and all the nervousness flew out of the window.

Sirius for his part was wondering if Hadrian was really awake or maybe kind of sleepwalking what with his glazed eyes and lack of verbal reaction. Maybe he was in shock? He frowned when those dark green eyes started to droop again and used his hand on the boy’s back to give him a (more or less) gentle shake. Hadrian needed to be awake so Pomfrey could finally heal his wounds without his magic interfering. That was when he realised he had been touching said back the whole time in a very intimate manner that nearly made him blush. Nearly, because Sirius Black does not blush.

“Right,” he cleared his throat and hid his surprise over his own actions behind a haughty smirk. “Try staying awake, I go get Pomfrey.”

Harry watched Sirius leave towards the matron’s office and shook his head to clear the slight dazedness that had come with the other’s touch. He thought that maybe he should feel embarrassed, but couldn’t find it in himself to do so. It had just felt… good. It had been a long time since anyone had touched Harry in such a loving way. And wasn’t that peculiar. What reason could this Sirius, who wasn’t his Sirius, have to touch him like that? Like he wanted to soothe him, like he really cared. Harry wasn’t nearly awake enough to follow that train of thought enough to take any more possibilities into account. There was a heavy drowsiness surrounding his mind and he couldn’t remember if it had been there before Sirius had started to pet him.

The soft breeze grazed his skin again and he was suddenly reminded of the too hot feeling on his back. He didn’t feel like he would be able to sit up again, his limbs felt incredibly tired and heavy and his head… no, he needed to know what was wrong with his back. Harry forced himself to concentrate. Maybe he didn’t need to completely sit up. He could touch his back, right? Yes, he could. Definitely. He twisted an arm around until he could reach behind him. His fingertips were met with a stickiness that somehow felt cool although his back felt like it was burning by now. It burnt too much!

A shout from across the room made Harry freeze in his ridiculous pose, his arm still twisted around and his hand reaching for his shoulder blade. Madam Pomfrey rushed towards him to quickly butt his hand away and forced him none too gently on is stomach.

“Mr. Moore, I insist that you stay still and not try to touch your back,” she scolded him, but Harry thought she sounded more concerned than angry. “I couldn’t heal the skin while you were unconscious and your magic running wild. So please refrain from moving while I tend to your back.”

He could feel her own magic wash over him and tried to get a look at what she was doing. It didn’t sit right with him at all to have someone do something behind his back. It went against every instinct of his Boy-Who-Lived-To-Be-Paranoid persona. But Madam Pomfrey wasn’t in the mood for his antics and simply shoved his head face first back down on the cushion. His indignant squeak was followed by a somewhat husky chuckle from beside him and Harry turned his head to see who was laughing at him.

“Don’t scowl at me like that, Moore.” Of course it was Sirius again. “That dark face doesn’t work with your puppy looks.” He grinned when Hadrian’s scowl darkened at his words.

In actuality Sirius thought the other boy had a distinct kittenish look about him - an angry kitten at the moment to be precise - especially when he had made that little noise and started to wiggle his backside to get more of Sirius’ touch… Bloody hell. Not the right moment for this kind of thoughts.
“Ever seen a puppy throw a stinging hex?” Harry’s voice was a bit raspy again due to his dry mouth and whatnot. But that only worked in his advantage right now since it made his threat sound just a tad bit more dangerous.

Or not. Sirius raised his hands in a mockery of surrender and backed up a step for the dramatical effect. Before any more threats could be thrown around (or Sirius could lose himself in the way Hadrian’s eyes gleamed in a mixture of maliciousness and mischief) Madam Pomfrey finished her treatment.

“All right, dear, you can sit up now.” She patted Harry’s shoulder gently. “Your skin is as good as new, though it will remain a bit tender for a few days.”

He nodded and carefully sat up, mindful of the sheet covering his lower body. He had no chance yet to check how much of his clothing had been affected by the Potions accident, but it seemed like they had refrained from undressing him completely.

“Thank you, ma’am.” Harry sent her a grateful smile and tried not to think too much about the fact that he was half naked. “Can you tell me what happened after the explosion? Everything’s somewhat fuzzy.” He looked thoughtfully at Sirius for a moment before he shrugged with one shoulder – and grimaced when the movement stretched the newly healed skin on his back in an uncomfortable way. He couldn’t really recall what happened after his cauldron decided it was time for a surprise party, but he had a feeling Sirius had played a starring role in the events afterwards. He just hoped no one had gotten injured by his wayward magic.

“Well,” Sirius mimicked his shrug in a much more graceful manner. “Like I said, your magic went a bit overboard after you were hit, but McGonagall managed to contain it and… that’s that.” He ignored Madam Pomfrey’s incredulous look and grinned conspiratorially at Hadrian. “You definitely made some great entrance to your Hogwarts life. That explosion is rumour material of the finest.”

He had meant it as a cheeky kind of compliment, because who would not enjoy that much attention? In Sirius’ books it was the almost perfect start for a troublemaker reputation with just a touch of chivalry mixed in what with protecting Evans and all. But Hadrian just looked annoyed and heaved a long suffering sigh. Well, either he just didn’t like attention or he had no intention of becoming one of Hogwarts’ great troublemakers which would be no fun at all. Sirius already imagined the new boy as some kind of honorary Marauder, though of course he would have to prove himself some more before that thought would ever leave Sirius’ mouth.

Harry shifted his legs off the bed. He had every intention of leaving now, he could even go for something to eat as long as he could leave the hospital wing behind. Madam Pomfrey, though, stopped him and was already pushing him back down onto the mattress before he even had a chance to protest.

“Your skin may be healed, but you suffered from a violent outburst of accidental magic nonetheless. Again.” She looked scandalized by this. “You are on bed rest until tomorrow and no, Mr. Moore, there is no point in arguing. I told you this once and I’m going to tell you this now again: Your body is already weakened and you are risking your health with every strain and overexertion you seem so fond of.” She tsked at him and conjured some pyjamas right into his face. “You’re on nutrition potions from now on. You will take one a day and I am going to do a check-up at the end of the week so don’t even think of ‘forgetting’ them.”

With that she huffed and left a stunned Harry and a snickering Sirius behind. Harry glared at him as if it was his fault that he would have to spend another night in the infirmary.

“What’s that, Moore?” Sirius smirked down at him. “Are you trying to puppy dog eye me into
submission?”

Chapter End Notes

Icarus - 1
Aloysius - 6
Neville - 2
James (staying with the original) – 9
Jameson (variation of the original) - 1
Jayden (Jack/Jamie etc. something similar to James) - 3
Ignatius, Antioch or Cadmus (Peverell brothers) – 1
Cygnus, Marius or Pollux (something off the Black family tree) - 1

James for the win! I’m going to stop the voting with the next chapter so YOU CAN STILL VOTE for your favourite name until next week around the 22nd.

On another note: Next chapter we will finally learn some minor stuff about Harry’s creature!
In which Harry is starkers again

Chapter Notes

I dedicate this chapter to **LadySmaug** who suggested Ignatus as Harry’s middle name. Even though the voting’s outcome wasn’t in her favour, LadySmaug’s suggestion sparked the idea of using the Peverells (and maybe later on the story of the three brothers) for something else important to this fanfiction. So thank you! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Elf Owl kind (*Micrathene whitneyi*) is a supposed extinct humanoid creature whose last occurrence happened as manifestations in the Peverell line (which is why this author only sees fit to pose possibilities regarding this species). According to family records the first Elf Owl known to marry into the family was the wife of Ignatus Peverell. From then on Elf Owls happened to breed into the Peverell line (and subsequently into other wizarding families) from time to time, though it was always considered a rare honour for a mundane witch or wizard to find one’s partner in an Elf Owl or Elf Owl descendant. Therefore, when talking about Elf Owls, one has to distinguish between born Elf Owls and inherited Elf Owls, in which the latter is to be understood as a mixed breed of wizard and creature to unspecified degrees.

The aforementioned cross breeding stopped when the Elf Owl kind was considered extinct in the late 18th century. After that the only known creatures of this kind were the descendants, mixed breeds, in the different wizarding lines, though the creature blood became thinner from generation to generation and manifestations became a seldom appearance. It is widely believed that due to the diluted creature blood one would require an exceptionally strong magical core to actually activate the creature gene.

The last recorded manifestations were those in the Peverell line whose descendants lost more and more attributes of the creature. The final recorded manifestation of this line happened in the early 20th century and its recipient only manifested ‘the Eyes’.

(For further information on the Peverell family see *Nature’s Nobility: A Wizarding Genealogy*) (*)

“Watcha doing, Prongs?” Sirius leaned over his best mate’s shoulder and looked at the parchment he had spread out on the table. He had just left Hadrian in the infirmary and went to look for his friends up in the tower when he couldn’t find them at dinner in the Great Hall.

“Writing home,” James responded distractedly. “I’m asking my parents about any Moores in the family. After what happened today I so wanna know if that guy is my cousin four times removed or something.”

Sirius nodded along and plopped down in front of the large fireplace. Looks like Hadrian Moore wasn’t only affecting him, though he seriously (pun intended – yeah shut up) doubted he was affecting James for the same reasons. This was insane. They had known this bloke for less than a
He, James and Wormtail had even spent less than two whole days with him! As if on cue Remus looked up from the book he had been absorbed in.

“Could you ask for the inheritance book you had last year?” He asked James and earned himself three perplexed stares from his friends. “Well, I never got the chance to really read it before holidays started and you wouldn’t allow me to take it with me,” he argued and acted suspiciously nonchalant. Sirius raised an eyebrow at him but Rem ignored him.

“It’s a family heirloom, Moony. You know how dad can get with those,” James said and looked up from his letter. He was met with big imploring amber eyes. “Geez, don’t do that! I’ll just say I need it for an essay or something.” He added Remus’ request and ended the letter with a flourish.

Harry squeezed his eyes shut and leaned against the wall. Maybe he should have eaten breakfast in the infirmary before he started his track up to Gryffindor Tower, but he honestly couldn’t stand the hospital wing any longer. His nightmares had been especially gruesome last night and he wondered idly if this was because he had been alone again. As it was he was in dire need of a shower and he would be damned if he used the one in the infirmary. He remembered that thing from his time and there was no way he would voluntarily use it again. He could stand the always cold water; he was used to cold showers after all. But the shower in the hospital wing was extraordinarily small and always made him feel as if the walls were closing in on him. It reminded him too much of small dark places he could happily live without ever seeing again.

And of course the shower in the hospital wing of Hogwarts was anything but private. He would never forget that one time during his second year when Hermione walked in on him after that fatal night with the effects of Skele-Gro.

Harry sighed and blinked his eyes open again. His vision wasn’t as blurry anymore and the slightly nauseating feeling was nearly gone. These after-effects of his magical outbursts didn’t sit right with him at all. Remus hadn’t said anything about his dad feeling this weak afterwards. But Madam Pomfrey had told him that his body wasn’t really top of the notch at the moment and it wasn’t only his weight she had referred to. Harry scoffed. Well, that’s what you get from constant malnutrition and letting yourself getting bitten by giant snakes and falling off of brooms and encountering one too many Dementor and oh right getting burnt by an irate dragon and nearly drowning while trying to save someone that didn’t need any saving in the first place.

Ha. That was something he was really good at, wasn’t it? Running into trouble while trying to save someone who doesn’t even need saving. Harry felt a wave of some dark cold feeling threaten to crash over him. It felt suspiciously like worthlessness and he hastily started walking again. He needed a shower. Right. Concentrate on the shower and how much better you’re going to feel afterwards.

Sirius dreamt of pale skin marred with horrible scars. He couldn’t really make out who the body belonged to or even if it was male or female, but he woke with a deep rooted anger in his gut. Anger that wasn’t exactly directed at anything or anyone in particular – he was just angry. He huffed, annoyed at himself, and got out of bed. There was no way he would be able to go back to sleep like that so why not put the early hour to use? At least he wouldn’t have to wait for anyone to vacate the en suite.

Only that he obviously had to.

He heard the shower running and stared at the closed door incredulously for a few minutes. What the hell? It wasn’t even breakfast time yet! A quick look around showed the only empty bed apart from
his own was Hadrian’s. Why was the bloke up here at this time in the morning? More importantly: Why was he up at all?

Sirius looked at the door a moment longer. Well. He had no intention of waiting (after all he knew how long that guy could shower!) and he didn’t want to risk waking the others if he knocked or shouted through the door. James was in no way a morning person and he knew Remus had stayed up long reading. And Peter was just… Peter. He wasn’t in the mood for anything concerning Wormtail right now. Alright. Why was he even hesitating? They were room mates, for Merlin’s pink knickers! These things were bound to happen, right? How many times had he seen Prongs prancing around butt naked?

This was how Sirius entered the en suite silently and without any warning.

Harry was only half aware of his surroundings when he tilted his head back to let the water run down his face and over his closed eyes. His mind was occupied with thoughts of what had happened yesterday. His magic had just gone ‘berserk’ like Sirius had called it, but unlike the other times this had happened he had been able to stop it from lashing out for a while. At least long enough for McGonagall to secure everyone else.

He leaned back against the tiles and ignored the slight twinge of his newly healed skin. Moments like these when he was alone and didn’t have to worry about anyone else getting hurt were a relief for his strung up magic. He could let it go, let it flow around him easily with no concern. He wondered how much longer it would feel like there was just too much magic, constantly writhing beneath his skin, and pushing to be let out. Would his body adjust soon? Or would he have to wait until after the actual inheritance? Even if he was scared he hoped it would happen soon because frankly: This was annoying. He felt like he had to be on guard 24/7 for a completely unfamiliar reason.

“With all the sighing you’re doing one could assume you’re suffering a severe case of heart break,” a voice suddenly interrupted his thoughts. “Tell me, Moore, which bird got you up at this not-so-lovely early hour?”

Harry’s eyes snapped open and he stared for a second gobsmacked at Sirius who was standing there just beside the shower taking a piss. How the fuck did he always do that? Normally no one was able to sneak up at Harry like that! His paranoid battle instincts wouldn’t allow that! Over the years of CONSTANT VIGILANCE! he had become rather sensitive to the magic around him and would normally sense any source above a certain strength – like the average magical core. But Sirius had managed to sneak up on him for the second time now. Not to mention that he was standing there pissing and grinning and pissing and staring and pissing. Staring at Harry taking a shower.

Belatedly he gasped and turned around, showing off his buttocks, and searched frantically for something to say. It wasn’t like Harry was exactly shy or anything. Well, yes, he was, but not to any extreme. He had accepted his accumulating scars a while ago and yes, he had lived in a dorm full of boys for a few years. It was just… this Sirius didn’t know him, didn’t know what he had been through and therefore was prone to ask questions. Questions that Harry could not answer.

Hadrian’s skin was not marred with the gruesome scars a part of Sirius had anticipated after his vivid dream. He wasn’t sure he had actually dreamed of the boy, but it would be logical. Yesterday he had seen a glimpse of Hadrian’s upper body and he was quite sure there had been scars, but to be honest: The whole nakedness had been rather distracting especially after the ill-coloured salve had come off. And maybe, just perhaps, Sirius had been a tiny little bit in shock as well. He had even touched that
skin and yet hadn’t registered the scars consciously.

Still, he remembered the soft feeling beneath his fingertips and the sight in front of him now was even more enticing. Hadrian really had a girl’s skin texture, just like Sirius had thought that first day in the infirmary. It looked flawless and silky and- there were scars. They stood out against the otherwise pale skin. One long angry looking scar ran over the inside of his right arm from just above the wrist up over the elbow. It looked jagged and like it was still inflamed to some degree. Hadn’t it been treated magically? But what really made Sirius’ thoughts halt was the burn scar on Hadrian’s side. It ran over the left side of his ribcage to the front and ended at his hipbone. A burn scar? How could he have NOT seen this yesterday? But before he could get a better look, Hadrian turned around and Sirius noticed the blush creeping up his neck.

Right. He shouldn’t be staring like that lest he wanted the boy to get the wrong impression. Sirius was all for flirting and really, he kind of loved making other boys all flustered and embarrassed. But staring at the naked bloke without giving so much as an indication that it was all in good fun… Hadrian’s voice broke through his – absolutely unintentional – inspection of a nicely shaped backside.

“Still looking for a stinging hex?” He sounded a bit strained and definitely flustered. It made Sirius grin and shooed away his troublesome thoughts.

“Right now I’m actually looking at your pretty little arse,” he quipped without another thought. “You’re a Quidditch player, aren’t ya?”

He could have sworn that Hadrian flinched when he said Quidditch. He watched as Hadrian’s skinny arms lifted and he hugged himself. There was obvious tension in his shoulders and Sirius frowned when he remembered the damage done to the skin there. Madam Pomfrey had worked efficiently as always, so there were no scars there, only lightly flushed skin over tense shoulders and the water still running down his back...

“No.” The answer was slightly delayed, but Sirius was too occupied with staring to notice. “Don’t know what you’re talking about. Could you give me a towel?”

Sirius watched Hadrian leave in a haste and only dressed in a towel. He didn’t make eye contact and for the first time ever Sirius did something absolutely unlike him: He worried if he had actually overstepped a personal boundary and if Hadrian would hold it against him. The room was still drenched in the boy’s impressive magic and Sirius couldn’t help but wonder just who the fuck Hadrian Moore was.

Chapter End Notes

(*) The Elf Owl (Micrathene whitneyi) is a real animal and a member of the owl family Strigidae whose name I nicked for Harry's creature heritage. Some of you hoped for a feline inheritance so hopefully you're not too disappointed now. I wanted something that hasn’t been there before, but would cover some clichés too (and really… Harry has some kind of affinity with owls in my opinion). Shame on me… maybe?
We’re going to learn more about Elf Owls in each chapter from now on.

AND THE WINNER IS...
We have a draw with the voting for Harry's middle name! Both 'Aloysius' and 'James' garnered 10 votes each. So I'm going to limit the options to these two names. If you haven't voted yet (or voted for another name), please do. I only take one vote each person though. :) 

James - 10
Aloysius - 10

Which do you prefer?
In which Harry plays show-off

Chapter Notes

James – 17
Aloysius – 19

Still taking votes until the next chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Born Elf Owls were always of a light built, a feature that got lost early on through the wizard-creature breeding. Typical attributes of a fully fledged Elf Owl (past puberty) were the Wings, the Allure and the Eyes. If a wizard or witch inherited the Elf Owl gene through interbreeding, not all attributes would necessarily be developed.

The Wings could reach a wingspan twice the actual body height, the primary projection (flight feather) extended nearly past the feet. The wings were the first attribute that got lost over time and through cross breeding with humans. Some of the later descendants, inherited Elf Owls, developed feathers interlaced with their hair, though this seems to be a family specific development of the Peverell line.

(For further information on the Peverell family see Nature’s Nobility: A Wizarding Genealogy)

Sirius’ hair was tied up in a bun on top of his head. It bobbed around every time he would look down on his notes or lean to the side to whisper something to James. Harry found himself staring at that hair bun from where he sat a few seats further in the back but still in direct line of sight with Sirius. It was such a strange thing to see and then again nothing special at all. He just had to remind himself again that this was not his godfather but a teenager just like him. He sighed. Or just like he would have been if he was a normal teenager, that is.

“You okay?” Remus soft voice broke through his increasingly depressing thoughts. He blinked and then nodded and shrugged.

“Yeah… it’s just this theory stuff isn’t what I was expecting Defense Against the Dark Arts to be like.” And it was true, too. Well, mostly. Defense in his time had always been the most flimsy subject due to the lack of reliable teachers, of course except for Remus in his third year. Remus who was sitting just beside him…

“Ah,” the werewolf nodded and fixed his gaze back on the extensive notes he was taking. “Yes, this year is a new experience, kind of. We never had a professor in this subject for longer than a year…,” he trailed off and looked at Harry as if he was waiting for something. When Harry only blinked he frowned but continued nonetheless. “So… you can imagine our education on the subject is sporadic at best. That’s why this year’s professor decided to split the lessons into theory and practice.”

Harry nodded and looked at the teacher again. He could see the logic behind the concept and this professor – someone by the name Lucian Bole (*) – wasn’t nearly as useless as the ones Harry had to endure in his time. He lacked a bit in enthusiasm and the ability to make the theory of a subject as
The thought of the DA and all his friends made him flinch slightly. He had avoided as good as possible to think about them, especially Ron and Hermione, but the memories of his friends always found a way to invade his mind. He couldn’t help but ask himself what they would say or do in the situations he had already found himself in here. He could easily see Hermione freaking out over the whole time travel stuff and how he obviously would change the timeline and probably destroy Hogwarts in the future, because he had squished a spider in the hospital wing that would have lived if he hadn’t been there.

“The new student there, Mr. Moore was it?” Someone stomped rather harshly on his foot and Harry yelped softly which gained him a few snickers from around the classroom. “Mr. Moore?” The professor’s voice sounded suspiciously gleeful as if he was anticipating telling Harry off for his lack of attention.

“Yes, Professor?” Harry looked up distractedly. There were a few more snickers and Professor Bole frowned at him.

“I was asking if you could explain this diagram and how it connects to the topic we are discussing,” he said in a tone that made it clear he was repeating himself and maybe not for the first time.

Harry returned his stare unimpressed – he had survived Snape’s teaching for five years after all - and then looked at the board. He had no idea what they had been talking about, but he hadn’t been the DA’s leader for nothing. So Harry studied the diagram and then relayed what he recognized, but then he stopped mid sentence and frowned, his gaze never leaving the board.

“Mr. Moore?” The professor’s voice had taken on a slightly annoyed tone since he couldn’t reprimand Harry for not paying attention. Harry tilted his head to the side and finally looked back at Bole.

“Oh sorry,” he blinked wide green eyes at the teacher. “I was just thinking that the practical implementation of this would probably work out better when section A would switch places with section F3, don’t you think? It would strengthen the resulting force and maybe weaken the backlash to section C.”

He hadn’t exactly meant to embarrass the professor, though he couldn’t really resist smirking smugly when said professor looked at him oddly, then turned to the board to study it himself, and then turned again to stare at Harry in unconcealed surprise.

“Well… I think 10 points to Gryffindor would be appropriate,” Bole finally said before continuing his lesson by explaining Harry’s suggestion to the class.

Harry himself leaned back and allowed himself to let go of a breath he wasn’t really aware he had been holding. He missed the equally surprised and impressed look Sirius gave him as well as the calculating sideways glance from Remus.

Harry cursed under his breath while attempting to act out the theory they had been discussing in the lesson before. Having made the professor aware of his knowledge on the material he now was under constant surveillance of Bole and probably some of the other students. Harry thought they maybe wanted to see the new student fail or maybe it was because of the damned rumours that made their rounds through the school ever since his nasty Potions accident. Whatever the reason, Harry couldn’t shake the feeling that someone was constantly watching him and it didn’t seem to be only the
Sirius tore his eyes away from Hadrian’s form and shared a glance with Remus. His friend nodded minutely. So he wasn’t alone with his observations, though it would probably be rather impossible to not notice how gifted Hadrian seemed to be in Defense. A part of him sincerely hoped it was due to interest and had nothing to do with his suspected home situation. The rest was occupied with pushing away the strange sensations watching Hadrian evoked.

Sirius lazily waved his wand and didn’t even watch to see if he actually translated the theory into action. His eyes wandered back to Hadrian and he stared intrigued when the boy moved swiftly and efficiently through the movements of the advanced stances of the diagram while casting a variety of defensive spells. It was a show of trained routine one wouldn’t normally see in a sixth year student. Really now, the only drawback in Hadrian’s implementation was the lack of nonverbal spell use.

Harry felt stressed out. Normally he would be totally in his element when practising defensive spells and the like. But right now it felt like a dangerously unbalanced act and he was in constant danger of overcharging his spells. His magic seemed torn back and forth between singing with joy for finally being used again and chewing on his body’s resources to sustain itself. The exuberant feeling that swept through him with each spell, begging him to use more of his power, was followed by a tightening in his gut or a lack of air in his lungs and he definitely felt a headache forming the longer the exercise continued.

Finally, after what felt like four hours of detention with Snape, the professor ended the lesson and advised everyone to take it easy until dinner. Harry felt the sweat that had formed on his brow and was tempted to wipe it away, but he was all too aware that he shouldn’t be this exhausted. His muscles felt weak and he dreaded the long way up the stairs to Gryffindor Tower and his bed while at the same moment his magic still seemed to overflow.

“Mr. Moore,” Professor Bole’s voice cut through his tired thoughts and Harry looked up to notice that apart from him and Bole there was no one left in the classroom. He could see the Marauders lingering just in front of the room in the hall and had a sudden feeling of gratefulness towards them. For some reason they were favouring him with their attention and made him feel less lost in this time that wasn’t his. He blinked when he felt someone approaching and found the professor coming his way.

“Mr. Moore, I have to admit I’m pleasantly surprised,” Bole said and Harry was confused for a moment until it clicked that the average student wouldn’t be as trained as he was in Defense. Well, he considered it one of the better side-effects of being who he was. “And I want you to know that I am not one of those teachers that favour their former house. So rest assured that there will be plenty of possibilities to gain points for Gryffindor in my class.”

Ah. So Bole was another Slytherin teacher. Great.

“Thanks, sir, but I’m really not looking for any praise or something like that,” Harry replied and was already thinking of his bed again. “If you don’t mind-”

“Actually I wanted to ask if you were interested in some extra project. You are obviously already familiar with most of this year’s contents and it is always good to gain extra points, wouldn’t you agree?”

No, Harry wouldn’t. Right now the only thing he would agree to was his growing need to lie down a moment and close his eyes. Again his vision had started to grow fuzzy at the edges and his headache was killing him.
“Professor, I’m… really I…,” he trailed off when he was hit with a sudden dizzy spell. Buggering hell, not now! He blinked rapidly and tried to focus on Bole again, but the professor’s form seemed to blur and suddenly he wasn’t sure there weren’t actually two of the man.

“Mr. Moore?”

The tone in Professor Bole’s voice alerted the waiting Marauders that something was not quite right in the classroom and Remus turned just in time to see Hadrian collapse against said professor. What was wrong? Just a few minutes ago Hadrian had whipped all their asses with his performance.

“Not again…,” he heard Sirius mutter next to him and watched as his friend hurried over to the pair. Professor Bole had caught Hadrian but looked at a loss as to what to do with the student heavily leaning against him.

“Mr. Black, has this to do with the rumoured Potions accident?” Bole seemed rather reluctant to hand the swaying Hadrian over, but Sirius made a show of tugging the boy to him as if it was a daily occurrence. Though, one could probably argue that it was on its best way to become one. He even sighed exasperatedly. “He should not be this exhausted by today’s lesson even if he had to perform more than once as an example for the rest of the class.”

To Remus it sounded more like Professor Bole was afraid he would get into trouble for tiring out a student beyond his limits than as if he was actually concerned for Hadrian. He frowned and noted absentely that Hadrian hadn’t flinched when Sirius touched him. He was probably too out of it but Remus had thought it an unconscious reaction…

“Moore’s a bit of a drama queen it seems,” Peter commented from where he was watching the scene next to the werewolf. “He has a thing for those attention seeking actions only this time he missed the moment when he would have had the most spectators.”

Remus doubted Hadrian’s tendency to collapse in a public setting was anything near intentional, but he didn’t comment on it. He couldn’t know for sure, even if he disliked Peter’s rash assumption. Though, even someone like James or Sirius would not go to such lengths as to get themselves injured as badly as Hadrian had only for some attention. No, it really was a too extreme thing to do.

“Intention or not, I know one person whose attention he definitely got,” James added while surveying how his best mate supported the new guy. He sounded amused and not the least bit troubled by his observation.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Lucian Bole was actually a Slytherin student who attended Hogwarts from 1988 to 1995. He was a Beater on the Slytherin Quidditch team. Since I couldn’t find any information on Bole’s family, I decided to make his father this OC teacher. So the Beater would have been Bole Junior and this professor is Bole Senior.

BTW! What do you think Harry would draw or paint if he could choose without any restrictions concerning topics or material?
In which Hogwarts is sentient

Chapter Notes

I just wanted to thank you for all those wonderful ideas for Harry’s future art (class).
You gave me a lot to work with!
Though I’m really surprised that no one commented on the strange stuff I made Harry talk about in the last chapter XD

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Allure is considered the next lost attribute even though it is no actual visible change in appearance. During the early stages of the manifestation, concerning born Elf Owls as well as inherited ones, the awakening creature would start to force strong emotions and subsequent reactions from those around it. Of course a born Elf Owl would learn to control the allure from puberty on, but manifestations through creature inheritances were known to be more complicated regarding this control. The only unaffected by the allure were other born Elf Owls or descendants of the like.

(For further information on the effect of the allure see Stages of Manifestation)

The Eyes are considered the last remaining attribute up until the last manifestation in the 20th century. Though they didn’t change their appearance constantly, they were the most obvious just after dusk or at sunset for their colour would become more apparent and the pupil would dilate drastically. Thus a wide range of ‘binocular’ vision (seeing an object with both eyes at the same time) and the capability of night vision can be assumed as a possible side-effect.

“…I DON’T KNOW!” Hadrian’s voice echoed through the hall and James winced. The guy really had a fine pair of lungs to him. Up until now Sirius hadn’t so much as raised his own voice although James was pretty sure he had been hard pressed. After all, his best mate wasn’t exactly known for his patience.

“Well, but you should! What is it with you? Fainting like some princess all the time?” Remus next to him groaned pitifully. Sirius had finally lost it and was throwing random insults around that would only make Hadrian angrier and maybe even really hurt him.

“I HAVEN’T ASKED FOR IT!” And there it was. Hadrian’s voice had developed from the defensive to something more desperate. The two Marauders shared a concerned look. “I HAVEN’T ASKED FOR ANY OF IT!”

James jumped slightly when Hadrian suddenly rushed out of the alcove and hurried down the corridor and away from them. He waited a moment, but when Sirius didn’t emerge too, he sighed and looked around the corner.

“Mate?”

Sirius looked flushed and his chest was heaving with anger. After a moment he pushed a hand through his hair and loosened the bun on top of his head. The dark silky strands fell down to his
shoulders as if styled that way – James ignored the little peak of annoyance at that with an inner eye roll.

“Damn…,” Sirius muttered. “What’s his problem?”

“Well, I think that’s what you were trying to find out before you started to insult him,” Remus pointed out and raised his eyebrows at his friend’s glare. “Only stating facts,” he said in a placating manner.

And it was true, Sirius thought frustrated. He had insulted Hadrian but only because he had been so damn worried about the boy! Why did he have to push himself so much? It had obviously been too much too early. No attention or praise was worth a lasting health issue and that was exactly what Pomfrey had warned him about, hadn’t she? And then, why was he so worried about the bloke anyway? He didn’t know him. They weren’t friends! He was just some guy that had turned up unexpectedly and was now his room mate. It shouldn’t matter that they had found him injured in the forest, that he was too thin, that he obviously hid some ugly past and… that he was scared… shit.

“Maybe you should go after him? We can look for him on the map,” Remus suggested at the sight of the increasingly self-loathing look on his friend’s face. James winced again. He could have told Remus that that was the wrong thing to say. Sirius Black does not run after anyone. It had to be the other way ‘round.

“As if!” Sirius shot them another glare before he slumped slightly. “Going to take a run,” he muttered and left in the vague direction of the entrance hall. He would be gone for a while, running around the darkening grounds as Padfoot to calm himself down.

Harry was tired. This was all so stupid and annoying and …embarrassing. He hadn’t forgotten what had happened that morning in the en suite and the mere thought still made him flustered all over again. And then, when it finally had looked like he found some semblance of control in this whirlwind of time and space and faces, he had to nearly faint – faint! For Merlin’s hairy balls! – and then play the drama queen of all things just because he was so damn embarrassed and frustrated and just couldn’t, really couldn’t answer Sirius’ questions- …

He stumbled slightly over a crack in the flagstone and stopped. Staring down at the ground he still couldn’t believe what his own eyes told him had clearly just happened. Because he knew there was no fucking crack in Hogwarts’ floors like this. There were steeping steps, mischievous stairs, and vanishing doors, yes, but no three feet crack in the stone tiles of the floors. He had damaged Hogwarts. Or rather, his agitated magic had damaged Hogwarts. Fuck.

And then Harry suddenly started giggling. He remembered his own thoughts about what Hermione would think he would be doing in the past, squishing spiders important for the flow of time. The giggling devolved into outright hysterical laughter. Here he was destroying Hogwarts. In the past. Because he couldn’t control his magic. Because he was an emotional wreck. Because he had just a shouting match with his godfather who wasn’t his godfather…

He laughed and laughed until he cried and felt ridiculous, but he couldn’t stop. He leaned against the nearest wall for support and let himself slide down the always cool stone. It took a while, but bit by bit the familiar ancient magic of the castle soothed him down and he started to look around.

He was at the seventh floor – there was no missing the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy and the trolls in tutus – and he was actually sat at the wall that could produce the door to the Room of Requirement. And he smelled sweaty. Ugh.
As if it had waited for him to register his surroundings the door to the room emerged from the wall and Harry blinked at it stupidly. He hadn’t exactly asked the room for anything like he had the year prior when the DA used it for its meetings. Wasn’t he supposed to walk three times back and forth? Wiping at his face furiously, Harry got up and touched the door hesitantly. It was like Hogwarts wanted to give him something to occupy his mind, to distract him from the thoughts about the git that wasn’t his godfather.

“You know,” he whispered to the door, “now I feel like crap for hurting you,” he told the castle and then smiled faintly to himself. He had never told anyone, but sometimes Hogwarts was the perfect listener. And not because it – no, she – didn’t argue, but because the castle had always felt sentient to him. A sentient home.

The room was unexpectedly bright. There were large wide windows over the whole wall to his right allowing a wonderful view over Hogwarts’ grounds. He was high enough up that he could look over the Forbidden Forest, but its edges were cast in fog. The sun would start its descend soon, Harry thought, but for now the light was marvellous. There was a great fireplace opposite the door with happily crackling flames and a cosy looking sitting area arranged around it. The other two walls were completely lined with bookshelves heavily laden with tomes and a thick layer of dust. But despite that the air in the room was fresh and Harry marvelled once again at magic.

Well, this was surely a nice place to hide and sort feelings, but he would prefer something else than books to distract him since he really didn’t want to think about his feelings right now. On cue a pretty easel appeared in front of the windows along with an assortment of paint, brushes, and charcoal. Harry blinked.

“You know me better than I do myself, huh?” He muttered and then smiled.

He would not think about how Hogwarts could know him already this good when given the whole time travel mess he had only been here for a few days. Maybe Hogwarts with all her ancient magic resided somehow in all times she existed in… No, he would not think about this yet. Harry approached the easel somewhat hesitantly. He couldn’t remember the last time he had worked with paint. Had he actually painted anything ever apart from the dreadful fence at Privet Drive? There had probably been some painting in primary school, but his memories of that time were not much more than a blur dominated by the Dursleys’ overbearing presence and his loneliness.

Now, though… now he could try. And since no one was here no one would judge his work or belittle him if he was pants at it. Harry reverently touched the canvas and wondered for a long moment what he was supposed to paint before he realised that it really didn’t matter. He wasn’t supposed to do anything. If he wanted to splash the colours all over the canvas that would be completely fine. Maybe it would even be alright if he poured the paint everywhere and across the window panes… he chuckled lightly.

“Don’t worry. I’m far too grateful to you to act out any more vandalizing thoughts on your grounds.” And he wouldn’t want the house-elves to have to clean his mess up afterwards.

Padfoot was running. Normally he would avoid changing into his Animagus form during daylight, but right now he just wanted to block the human emotions that were nagging at him. Using the secret passage to the Shrieking Shack outside of the full moon would have felt too strange and he rather wanted some fresh air. Being alone in the Forbidden Forest was strange too but exactly what he needed right now.
Being Padfoot always made it easier to cope with emotional stress, something he greatly valued ever since this summer. Summer. Shortly after the beginning of the summer break he had finally escaped his prison. He had left his family home during a proverbial night and fog action. It really had been a foggy night and considering the hurting vortex his feelings had become when he had shown up on the Potters’ threshold, it had been dark in many ways too. The thought that he would never be able to return to his blood family still made his heart ache, but at the same time he felt it had been the right decision.

He couldn’t stay there any longer.

But thinking of his rotten family hadn’t been what he had intended to do right now, he thought wryly as he jumped above a fallen tree and into more greenery. No, he had wanted to escape his emotions concerning a certain bloke that shouldn’t have this kind of effect on him at all. What the hell was wrong with him? Why was he this affected by Hadrian Moore? Yes, there had been the initial fascination of finding someone unexpected and mysteriously injured in the woods. And then later on the conclusion of his probably not-too-admirable home life that had sparked some kind of connection between the bloke and Sirius. And the scars… Merlin, those scars.

But. This kind of concern for someone he had just met… that couldn’t be normal, right? There had to be something else involved, something that would explain why Sirius acted so out of character. It just wasn’t like him to care so much for someone who wasn’t a Marauder or maybe his little brother even if the latter was a total prat. And Merlin, he had been scared when Hadrian had lain there outside the Potions classroom yesterday or later in the infirmary when he had been unconscious. He had thought him all fixed this morning! But no, then Moore had to go and overexert himself and- damn. He had looked so pale and small when he leaned against Sirius for support…

But this was all wrong. How had it even come to their row? He had probably underestimated how embarrassed the boy would be after what had happened, but really now, he wasn’t the only one that had reacted like some daft third year!

Chapter End Notes

James – 17
Aloysius – 20

So it’s gonna be Hadrian Aloysius Moore – yes, H.A.M. – let’s have a blast with porker references! (Though, I actually have no idea how to pronounce this name in English)
In which the Marauders are on the move

Chapter Notes

Okay, guys, I'm kinda proud of this one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Stages of Manifestation (through creature inheritance)

In the month leading up to the manifestation – which used to happen on the sixteenth birthday of the individual – the recipient’s magic would start to grow in surges. Subsequently it would become increasingly agitated, unstable, and hard to control. Accidental magic was bound to happen, its strength depending on the expanse of the magical core present.

During this time the allure, if it were to be developed as an attribute, would start to make appearances, though a trigger mechanism could not be determined through the recorded manifestations. Theories to this particular stage of the attribute vary from an emotional trigger mechanism to completely volatile occurrences.

Harry let go of the brush and took a step back. The candles around the room had sprung to life a while ago when the sun had descended past the horizon. Now there was only the soft flickering light of the flames that created moving shadows along the walls and on the floor. Harry smiled and wiped the back of his hand across his brow, unknowingly smearing more paint over the skin in addition to the smudge of bright blue on his nose.

He took a deep breath and blinked. There was the smell of stale sweat underneath that of the paint and he remembered how he had felt after DADA. As if on cue the sitting area around the large fireplace moved to accommodate a pool embedded in the floor. It resembled that in the Prefects’ Bathroom although it was a lot smaller. This one would be just big enough for Harry and maybe another person if he wanted to share a bath. The thought made him blush.

He glanced at the door and worried his lip for a moment. The room would let no one in if he didn’t want it to, so why not take it up on the offer? He looked down at his clothes and grinned at the colourful spatters across the fabric. But then he frowned. This was his last shirt after he had lost the other one and one of his work robes to the potion yesterday. Shit. Unfortunately he didn’t know any house-elves of this time by name so he couldn’t ask them to save his shirt or maybe find him another. Maybe he could try a Scourgify.? (*)

And again the room shifted and in between two of the bookshelves an old cabinet appeared. He had a feeling he would find something to help him out with his clothing issue in there. Maybe some cast-offs or out of date robes. Harry shrugged. Whatever, he would take a bath and then worry about the rest. He left his clothes in a heap next to the pool and carefully tested the water with his foot. It had the perfect temperature and Harry sighed as he let himself sink into the scented depths. Though, the pool wasn’t really that deep, he could easily stand without feeling threatened by the water. There was also a small bench underneath the surface that he gratefully took to use.

The scent wafting around him had a soothing quality and he spent some minutes to figure out where
to place it. It was the smell of a rain drenched forest, he finally decided, just a bit softer and less
spicy. And somehow it smelt like night, though he had no idea how ‘night’ was supposed to smell.
Harry sighed again and closed his eyes. This was nice. But buggering hell it left his mind free to
wander. He had hated how defenceless he had felt when his vision blurred and he sagged against
Professor Bole. How utterly weak he felt when he realised he couldn’t walk without Sirius’ support.
Sirius. The git. Why did he have to be so… so…! Ugh. Harry didn’t even know a word to describe
how his not-godfather had acted.

He took a deep breath and dipped under the water for a moment. No, he could admit to himself that
Sirius hadn’t actually done anything wrong until he snapped and called him names that poked at
Harry’s wounded pride. But that was after Harry himself had shouted at Sirius for no real reason. He
frowned when he surfaced again. Why had he overreacted like that? Sirius had even done the
sensible thing and helped him to a hidden-away alcove near the DADA classroom so Harry could
recover without a gawking crowd.

Well, Harry knew he sometimes had a temper, but normally this would only show for a real reason.
Like when he lost it over all the horrible things he was forced to see every night and would feel
misunderstood by his friends who really couldn’t comprehend what that was like and… no, he
would not think about this.

With another sigh Harry emerged from the pool and walked over to the cabinet leaving a trail of wet
footprints across the floor. He didn’t know what he had expected but surely not the clean and
carefully pressed shirts and trousers sitting in neat stacks inside. They were not new, he could
definitely see signs of usage, but the fabric was equally well cared for. So, probably cast-offs,
cleaned and cared for by house-elves. That was much better than the out of date robes of some
ancient wizard that had walked the halls of Hogwarts centuries ago. He rummaged through the
stacks for a few minutes until he decided on a shirt that was nearest his own size. It would do, Harry
wasn’t a vain person.

He snorted. Would be quite inconvenient to be vain considering his living conditions with the
Dursleys. He halted in his movements and frowned. Well, he hadn’t been living with his relatives for
a while now, but he had never really thought of his accommodations with Remus as something
permanent. If he was honest, he had avoided thinking about it since it would have been just too good
to be true if he could stay with his former professor and never would have to return to the Dursley’s.
He hadn’t believed this would actually happen. It had been just a question of time until Dumbledore
would have tracked them down and then Harry would be returned to Privet Drive.

Only that he wasn’t there, in this time, anymore. What had Remus done – or would be doing? – after
Harry had vanished? He swallowed heavily around a lump forming in his throat. He had no idea
how he could return there and part of him wasn’t even sure that he wanted to return. But he couldn’t
leave them on their own, could he? They needed him to defeat Voldemort.

Yes, and that was all they truly needed him for.

Harry sighed and continued to button up his shirt. It was a bit big but he liked his sleeves longer or
rolled up anyway. He could hide the slight baggyness underneath the jumper. At least he had still his
own fitting trousers and own work robe. Right, he should get dressed and… and return to Gryffindor
Tower where he would be forced to socialise with the Marauders. He didn’t want to and frankly, it
was probably already after curfew. What a wonderful excuse not to return there for today. He could
surely sleep on one of the couches here and would only have to sneak up tomorrow for his books. It
was tempting.

“Messrs Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs
Sirius didn’t wait until the elegant scroll had finished its writing and was already opening the map much to Remus’ amusement. So much for Sirius Black does not run after anyone. He scanned the map from ground floor up to the Astronomy tower and then even looked at the kitchens.

“I can’t find him,” he muttered annoyed, though he was worrying the inside of his cheek in concern. Where was Hadrian? It was well after curfew already and Sirius himself had taken his time before he sneaked into Gryffindor Tower again. But waiting there for him had only been his three friends and no Hadrian.

“Let me have a look,” Remus plucked the map from under his nose and started scrutinising it carefully. “You probably just overlooked his name…”

Though, it was unlikely. Apart from a few prefects and the odd teacher all students were already in their common rooms or dorms. Remus frowned and paid special attention to the different offices and even private quarters of the professors. He couldn’t find Hadrian’s name either, but one glance at Sirius had him looking again. His friend had been a bit worried for the new guy when he came back before him, but now he looked actually afraid. If Hadrian wasn’t on the map he wasn’t at Hogwarts anymore. Or maybe he was in the Forbidden Forest and that was probably even worse especially with the boy’s record of getting himself into trouble.

“Maybe he got lucky,” James chimed in from where he was stretched out on his bed and lazily playing with an old snitch. “And now spends the night in some girl’s bed.” He grinned at Padfoot’s unimpressed stare and Remus’ exasperated huff. He looked over to Peter when the expected laughter failed to make an appearance. The rat Marauder was snoring happily on his own bed.

“Well…,” Remus conceded, “if he actually is in some dorm, it’s no wonder we’re unable to localise him.” He gestured at the thick clusters of names around the different Houses.

“Nonsense,” Sirius growled in a way that sounded remarkably like is alter ego. “One of us was always with him most of the time he spent at Hogwarts. Did he even speak to one girl?”

Lily, Remus thought. But they had seen her earlier that evening and she had definitely gone to bed without any male company. Not that Lily had ever done anything like that as far as they knew. But what do we really know about girls, he added to himself.

“I don’t think it’s the birds you need to worry about with Moore,” James said deliberately nonchalant, though he watched Sirius out of the corner of his eye with intent.

“He didn’t speak to many boys either,” Remus spoke over Sirius’ annoyed ‘Who’s worrying?!’ and sent a glare at the chuckling James. “He rather kept to himself or more to us and I don’t see you hiding him in your bed, James,” he said and raised his eyebrows when said boy missed his snitch and the little ball flew over to Peter’s bed in a flurry of golden wings. “Seriously though – and no, Sirius, that was no invitation – we should probably inform Professor McGonagall. Hadrian could be in danger.”

“That feels rather like grassing on him,” Sirius said, though he was actually considering it. And that right there was another of those strange effects Hadrian Moore had on him. Why the hell would Sirius Black ever tell on anyone (except for maybe Snape)? Okay, it would be out of genuine concern for the boy but nonetheless it would be lowly denouncing someone to a professor. “No, I think we should go looking for him ourselves,” he finally determined and looked at his fellow
Marauders for support.

James raised his eyebrows but shrugged and sat up.

“Fine with me, though I doubt you’ll get Wormtail to leave his bed now,” he said gesturing to their friend still snoring peacefully.

“Then let him sleep,” Remus agreed. “It’s not exactly an emergency right now so it’ll be alright.” He made a thoughtful face and considered the map again. “Someone should check the forest, preferably you, Sirius. You can run around the edges as Padfoot and check if you find traces of his scent. I’m going to ask the elves if they can help and James… James could check in with the other houses.”

Sirius nodded enthusiastically along smirking at the fact that Rem already had a plan and was distributing roles. He had a suspicion Rem was also rather affected by whatever it was that was strange about Hadrian Moore. James probably just saw the opportunity for some action and he was obviously helping out his friends. Sirius didn’t acknowledge the small voice in the back of his head that pointed out that they wouldn’t be discussing finding Moore if it wasn’t for him and his worry.

“Alright, but I gracefully refuse to initiate any contact with the Slytherins,” James interjected pompously. “It’s unlikely Moore’s with one of the snakes anyway.”

“Perish the thought,” Sirius immediately agreed. “We should stay in contact via the mirrors. Probably establish set times for calls. What time’s it anyway?” He looked at Remus who was already twirling his wand in a *Tempus* that showed them it was nearly half past midnight.

“Check-ins every half hour,” James said and slipped on his shoes. “Moony, since you have no mirror we can check the houses together starting with Hufflepuff. It’s on the way to the kitchens anyway.”

They looked at each other for a moment and then shared a mischievous grin. The Marauders were out to find Hadrian Moore.

Chapter End Notes

(*) **Scourgify**, The Scouring Charm: Primarily a household charm, possibly a cleaning spell, used to clean an object, similar to *Tergeo*. It can also be used on humans.

Which theory do you support? The Room of Requirement does not appear on the map...

A: ...because the Marauders never knew about it.
B: ...because it’s unplottable.
In which the allure rears its ugly head

Chapter Notes

Hope you won’t mind the use of the term ‘crossroad’ when instead ‘junction’ or ‘intersection’ would probably have been the better choice, but I was thinking Supernatural.

Btw ‘cookies’ and ‘biscuits’. Trying to be British here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Since Elf Owls, neither born nor inherited ones, did not have destined mates there is no proofed connection of the allure to any mating behaviour. The allure was furthermore not limited to romantic reactions, the provoked emotions depending on the influenced individual’s personality and inclination. The effect would be an amplification of certain traits that were inherent to a person’s nature. It is not recorded whether the allure could be controlled after the actual inheritance took place or if it stayed an unconscious action.

James and Remus met just outside the kitchens. James was shaking his head before Remus could even attempt to ask. He had checked in with the house-elves while James went to sneak into the Hufflepuff common room and meet with an acquaintance of his. It was really convenient to be as popular as their fearless leader when it came to information gathering. But the Hufflepuffs had no knowledge of the new student’s whereabouts.

“Care to share those biscuits?” James waggled his eyebrows and was already peeking into the little biscuit bag the house-elves had forced onto Remus.

Whenever the werewolf would visit the kitchens he would find himself laden with sweets or other snacks since the elves obviously thought he needed cheering up. Or maybe they sensed his own creature and felt some kind of familiarity with him. Remus shuddered briefly at the thought. No, his wolf was far from similar to the gentle and caring elves of Hogwarts.

“Help yourself,” he muttered and left the biscuits with James while checking the map again. “I still can’t find him…”

But there was movement near their corridor. He swiftly folded the map up and tugged his friend into a near alcove. James caught on immediately – it wasn’t their first trip after curfew after all – and threw his invisibility cloak over them in one smooth motion. They watched as the little point labelled as Bartemius Crouch, a lanky third year Slytherin, approached the kitchens and held their breath when they heard his footsteps just outside their hiding place. The snake didn’t take long to tickle the pear and get inside, something that had James frowning. He liked to believe the knowledge of the entrance was something special, something Marauderesque.

“What’s little Barty doing here?” He questioned in a low voice when the portrait guarding the entry to the kitchens slid into place again. Remus snorted. Bartemius Crouch was anything but little. He had a long and lanky figure but with definite muscles of a wiry kind in his arms and shoulders.

“Probably sent out to get some snacks for his ‘little’ friends,” he whispered back dryly and then
shushed James when the portrait opened up again. They could hear Barty say something condescending to the elves before he left with a surety in his step that either spoke of a confidence not to get caught or of a stupidity that the Marauders couldn’t care less about.

“So… next is Ravenclaw,” James stated as soon as Barty’s steps had trailed off. “And probably last ‘cause if little Crouch and masters are still up there’s really no way we could ask one of the few descent Slytherins about Moore.”

It would have been near to impossible before, but Barty’s ‘masters’ were a well-known cluster of soon-to-be dark wizards, as in Black dark, including Severus Snape. There was no way they would assist the Marauders with anything. It was more likely they would use the situation to their advantage and maybe even track Hadrian down themselves and it never went down the right way when a group of Slytherins cornered a lonely Gryffindor. Nor was it better the other way round, Remus admitted to himself silently.

There was a dark presence lurking at the edges of his dream. Yes, Harry was very aware that he was dreaming, though it didn’t make it any less frightening. It had to be a dream, he reminded himself frantically as he ran through the all too familiar corridors of the Department of Mysteries. He wasn’t really here, he was at Hogwarts. And it couldn’t be another vision, he told himself over and over again, because he was in the past. A past where there were no Horcruxes yet and Voldemort had no reason to invade his mind.

Right?

He wanted to stop, just bloody stop walking, but his feet kept running and he opened door after door and then he was there. This was not real, this hall had been destroyed during his first and last stay. There was just no way that all those prophecies could still be here and intact. But nonetheless was he walking down the aisles between the high stacked shelves with their dusty contents. Hundreds, no thousands of gleaming little globes blinking down at him and still the feeling of being watched followed his every step.

“…born as the seventh month dies…”

He shivered at the whispered words. He wanted to look around to see who was talking, but he couldn’t. His gaze remained fixed at the crossroad just down the last aisle.

“…mark him as his equal…”

His scar started itching at the words. Fucking prophecy. He wanted to wake up and go back to his state of avoiding thinking of any of the things that weighed on his shoulders. But guilt was his constant companion now and the words of the prophecy only added to the weight of his pain. His fault, it was all his fault…

He reached the crossroad between the aisles. He knew this was where the prophecy of Tom Riddle and him had been stored before he had come here last year to save his godfather. To save, or to get him killed? No, don’t think of Sirius now… too late. The hall around him started to change and he heard the faint sounds of spell casting and shouts and… there was the archway… the silently whispering veil and he was there.

“…but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...,” the image of his godfather said standing there in midst the fighting Death Eaters and Order members. He was standing completely still next to the archway and its veil was fluttering against his side. Harry’s eyes went wide.
“Move away from the veil! Hurry, move! Please!” His voice didn’t carry even though he was shouting his lungs out. Sirius stood there staring straight at him and then he whispered again.

“… and either must die at the hand of the other…” He reached with his own hand and Harry wanted to grasp it, he wanted to run over there and take hold of his godfather’s hand, but he couldn’t move. Now, when he actually wanted to run, his legs just would not listen.

He felt the tears in his eyes and blinked furiously. He didn’t want anything to disturb his view of his godfather, wanted to commit every little detail to memory, but then suddenly it wasn’t his godfather standing there any longer. Harry couldn’t tell when exactly it happened, but from one moment to the next the Sirius standing next to the veil was the young teenager he had had a shouting match with earlier. And this Sirius smiled at him.

“…for neither can live while the other survives,” he said, “Remember, Harry. A power he knows not.” And Harry woke up.

Padfoot couldn’t find Hadrian. There was not the slightest hint of what the Animagus considered as the boy’s scent on Hogwarts’ grounds. But then again, how good did he know Hadrian’s smell? He had never been near him as Padfoot. Even the night when they found him lying battered in the Forbidden Forest, he had not been the one finding him or the one carrying him into the castle. Really, Moony would have been the better choice to track the elusive new student down. Rem should have just come down here with Prongs’ cloak and wield some of his super-werewolf senses. The grim turned and ran back up to the castle. Maybe he could get a whiff of Hadrian inside starting from the alcove near the DADA classroom.

Suddenly the room felt suffocating. He needed out! Harry haphazardly threw the rest of his clothing on and left the Room of Requirement without caring of the late hour. He needed fresh air. Now.

He didn’t notice the lanky figure of Bartemius Crouch hiding near the stairs when he hurried up the steps towards the owlery. All he could think of was the cool and fresh air that the open windows in the tower would provide and the comforting presence of the owls. He missed Hedwig. She had been his only companion during the first weeks of the summer after the Ministry incident. She had always been by his side. Was she alright there in the future without him? Yes, of course, he thought with a faint ache in his chest. His beautiful owl would be better off without him – although… there had been no longer really dangerous tours for her to fly ever since Sirius had died. Harry gulped against the heavy lump in his throat. There had been no real tours for her to fly at all.

He reached the top of the stairs and looked around. The owlery in 1976 looked just the same as in 1996. It was the same circular stone room, cold and drafty, although there were only a few welcomingly hooting owls at this hour. The floor was entirely covered in straw, owl droppings, and the regurgitated skeletons of mice that he had expected. Harry moved over to one of the perches where most of the owls that had stayed behind were huddled together.

“Hey there,” he whispered with a smile and stroked the soft feathers of a pretty black owl. “I’m sorry, but I’ve got no one to write to so no work for you.”

Hedwig would have sensed his distress, he mused. She would have hopped on his shoulder and probably would have started grooming his wayward hair to make it an even bigger mess. He loved her little caring gestures… had loved. The black owl lifted her wings, hooted and flew out of one of the windows making Harry look up.
There was a magical presence nearing his position. Even in his withdrawn state of mind Harry noticed the faint rippling in the constant ancient magic of the castle around him, something he wouldn’t notice if others were around. He cocked his head to the side. Yes, there were the steps of someone coming up the stairs, someone who didn’t care if he was heard or not, Harry realised. And since the stairs were the only entrance to the owlery apart from the windows – which were probably heavily warded – there was no escape route for him even if he knew someone was coming. Oh well. Harry sighed. Caught after curfew not even a week in this time. At least Snape wasn’t a professor yet. But then again… it wasn’t necessarily a professor doing their rounds, though the surety of the steps at this late hour suggested as much. Either way, he could go nowhere and since his invisibility cloak wasn’t his in this time yet he would just have to man up and face whoever was coming up to the owlery. Harry sighed again and positioned himself in the dark corner farthest from the entrance with his back to the wall.

It was a student. Harry was about to release a relieved breath when he caught sight of the Slytherin tie and felt himself tense up automatically. The Slytherins of this time had no reason to hate or even attack him, he reminded himself. But then again, he was a Gryffindor, it was late at night and he was alone with a Slytherin he didn’t know. Harry had had too many bad experiences with students of the house of snakes to just shrug it off.

The student – a rather tall boy – was looking around the owlery and didn’t seem the least bit surprised when his eyes finally landed on Harry. So he had been following him and if that wasn’t suspicious enough to be wary. Since he had been noticed, Harry decided it was best to reveal himself completely and stepped out of the shadows and into the beam of faint moonlight that streamed in through the open windows.

They didn’t say a word. Both of them regarding the other and seemingly waiting for a reaction. Harry was about to just leave and ignore the fact that he had been followed by someone he didn’t even know when the other student suddenly started to walk towards him.

“You’re the new Gryffindork,” the boy finally stated and Harry shivered as something tugged at his memory. “The pet of Potter and his cronies.”

Harry bristled at the words, but didn’t move from his position near the window. He couldn’t place the boy anywhere in his future (or would it be his past?) but his instinct told him to be on guard. He wouldn’t let this Slytherin out of sight.

“And you are…?” He tried for casual but his mind was racing. He was confident in his ability to defend himself magically, but something about this guy was raising the hairs on his neck. And it really wasn’t helping that he continued to step even closer.

“Captivated,” the bloke nearly whispered in response and Harry blinked perplexed. This wasn’t what he had been expecting. “Your eyes…” He lifted his hand and Harry instinctively took a step back and raised his wand. That seemed to vex the boy if the dark look crossing his face was any indication.

“Stay back,” Harry said with all the authority he could gather. “I won’t hesitate to stun you.” Which was a lie. Because yes, Harry was fully capable to stun or disarm, but this was just another student, not a Death Eater. It didn’t feel right to threaten him and Harry knew he would hesitate, but damn this guy was creepy.

The Slytherin cocked his head. His gaze roamed over Harry and lingered on the untucked shirt and then on the wand in his hand… or was it his arm? He started to smile lazily and then shrugged. He made to leave and Harry knew he shouldn’t let his guard down just yet, but he couldn’t have foreseen the sudden movement. He had been concentrated on the boy’s wand which admittedly was
still not drawn. He hadn’t expected to be actually physically attacked.

There was a blur of movements and then his back collided with something solid, knocking the air out of him.

“Ouch…”

What had just happened? Harry blinked rapidly and started to move against the pressure on his body before he even realised the position he was in. “What the- let go!”

The strange Slytherin had kicked his legs out under him and grabbed his wand arm – leaving Harry out of balance with his back against the icy wall. The boy loomed over him, pinning Harry with the full weight of his body against the stone, and exerting a bruising grip on the hand holding his holly wand. Though, if he thought that would get Harry to let go of his wand, he had another thing coming.

“I don’t think so,” the bloke whispered and leaned in until Harry could feel his breath against the skin of his cheek. “You’re making it way too easy, little Gryff.” And Harry hated his short stature even as he tried to regain his balance and dislodge the other’s grip.

“What do you want?” he asked forcefully and pushed against the hold with all his strength. It didn’t seem to make any difference.

No, no, no, he wasn’t vulnerable, he told himself, holding tightly to his stirring magic. This was just some idiotic student feeling bored, not a real threat. But his heart beat frantically in his chest. Why did the guy need to be this close? Why did he need to bloody sniff him?!

There was a pause and Harry frowned. His opponent seemed suddenly confused as if he had no idea why exactly he was acting the way he did. But that was nonsense, wasn’t it? The breath on his skin suddenly sped up and Harry leaned away from it. This felt so wrong. He tried again to get away, but as if he had just waited for some signal the Slytherin’s grip tightened again, making Harry grunt. He hated feeling this weak. It was happening way too often lately.

Chapter End Notes

So… this chapter… gives us a lot to discuss. Probably.
In which a cold is prevented

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The allure of an Elf Owl is known to force strong emotions and subsequent reactions from individuals and in some rare cases to trigger even mass reactions. There are descriptions from the 18th century which portray crowds influenced through Elf Owl allure during the French revolution. However, such an extreme effect of the allure would only occur if the influenced crowd would have already been in an overly emotional state.

Padfoot gave an annoyed huff. The faint trace of Hadrian’s scent that had lingered in the alcove near the DADA classroom dispersed just a few steps into the corridor, mingling with the hundreds of different smells inside the school. He had checked in with Prongs and Rem just a few minutes ago and was now on his way to their meeting point. His friends had been as successful as he had been meaning no one had seen one Hadrian Moore. Where the hell was that boy? This was making no sense at all. If he had left Hogwarts for some reason, then why was all of his stuff still in the dorm? No, this whole situation felt wrong.

The screech of a clearly agitated owl made the big grim halt near the stairs towards the owlery. He hadn’t intended to go up there, but obviously something was not quite right in the tower – his inner Marauder urged him to investigate. He hesitated only a second. If Prongs and Rem wondered what was taking him so long, they would check the map and find him up there. Right. Padfoot jumped slightly as another owl hooted angrily and the next moment he was on his way.

Magic in the air, hands underneath an untucked shirt, heavy breathing and-

“What the fuck! Take your hands off me!”

Sirius shifted into his human self before he even formed the thought to do so. Hadrian’s voice was loud and angry, but he had heard the definite edge of confused fear underneath it all. This was the kind of situation that he had come across a few times on the occasion of some celebrations or the like, occurring in darkened corners between tipsy party-goers, but if he was honest he had never witnessed an assault between two boys. And it didn’t matter anyway, a small voice in the back of his head scolded, because whether boy or girl, No means No, and this right there was a definite No.

“You heard him,” Sirius said, voice deceptively calm and just loud enough to be heard over the scuffle of the two boys in the owlery. There was a roaring sound in his ears, nearly drowning his own voice out.

He squinted into the semi lit area and felt his thoughts halt for a second as he recognized Barty Crouch Junior, son of the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Well, that was an interestingly ironic turn in events, wasn’t it? The Crouch were an influential pureblood family, but this right there was perfect blackmail material. Though, when Sirius’ gaze landed on Barty’s large hands still attached to Hadrian his inner Slytherin gave way to his inner grim and an anger he hadn’t known before took over.

That was when a loud BANG and a short red streak of light emerged from Hadrian’s wand and Barty was thrown across the entire expanse of the owlery. He landed with a dull thud against the wall and didn’t move any further. Sirius blinked. Oh well, so much for the grim to the rescue stuff, he thought a bit numbly. Still, he cast a dark look into the Slytherin’s direction even as he strode
forward to check Hadrian over.

Hadrian was breathing hard and his eyes were fixed on the prone form of the guy he had just stunned. He didn’t react right away to Sirius’ proximity, but when the Marauder touched his shoulder he flinched violently and shied away. It took him another minute and Sirius standing absolutely still to finally get his bearings. Sirius expertly ignored the flailing magic around them and concentrated on the boy in front of him.

“Sorry, I just…” Hadrian made some vague movements with his hands. There was no missing the faint tremor of those hands and the inner grim’s anger surged again.

“I don’t think YOU should be the one apologizing,” Sirius couldn’t contain the disgust in his voice and he sneered at Crouch. “Did he just really… I mean did he REALLY try to…?!” He found himself stumbling over his own words and ground his teeth to get a hold of himself. Hadrian was still looking shaken so right now there was no time for his rage.

“I don’t know what he was up to,” the boy said and then shook himself as though to shake off what had just happened. “I mean, I think he followed me here and then he suddenly said something about my eyes and then…,” he trailed off clearly confused.

Could Hadrian really be this naive? Or was it some kind of defence mechanism? Or maybe shock? Whatever Sirius had been about to say was drowned out by the sound of feet running up the stairs and a second later James and Remus rushed into the owlery.

“Guys, what the hell? We heard you all the way down to sixth floor and if we heard you,” James made some overactive gestures and was about to usher them out when his eyes landed on Crouch. “Who put little Barty out?” He asked surprised with just a hint of nonchalance like finding knocked out students lying about in owl droppings was nothing much out of the ordinary.

Sirius threw a glance in Hadrian’s direction and decided to take matters in his own hands. Whether the boy understood what had just happened or not, it wasn’t necessary that more people learned about it. Though, if he had spared a closer look at Remus he might have realised there was more to the whole mess than it seemed.

“Crouch thought he could corner a lonely Gryffindor,” he said and the hard edge to his voice sent James’ eyebrows up his forehead. “Didn’t expect Moore to have the upper hand, it seems.” He wanted to reach out to Hadrian and comfort him somehow, but after the reaction he got for his first attempt he thought it better to give the boy some space. Hadrian himself didn’t comment on his report, but he flicked his wand in Barty’s direction before he turned and walked down the stairs.

“Did he just…?” James started to ask and then frowned as though puzzled when Remus nodded an affirmative.

Hadrian had thrown a warming charm at the stunned Slytherin before he left. He had ensured the guy who had just attacked him didn’t catch a cold in the drafty owlery. It made Sirius angry all over again – though, admittedly, he hadn’t really stopped to feel this all consuming wrath at all – and at the same time he felt a spark of pride for Hadrian’s action. Not like he would have done something like that. Nope, if it had been him, Barty would have found himself hexed into oblivion with probably some new appendage or two.

“We should leave too,” Remus interrupted their musings. “McGonagall’s on her way here,” he said looking up from the map. There was something else glinting in his eyes, but right now they needed to hide.
They caught up to Harry just in time to pull him into a secret passageway and partly underneath the invisibility cloak. There was no way the four of them could hide beneath it even if they crouched low so they hid in the darkest corner and hoped McGonagall wouldn’t check the passageway.

Harry bit down on his lower lip to stifle his still too heavy breathing and to hide the shivering that came with so much bodily contact around him. He couldn’t remember a time when close proximity like this hadn’t bothered him, though it was easier to handle if he was prepared for it. Like when he, Ron and Hermione had done similar stunts back when the cloak had been (would be?) his. This right now had been unexpected and in direct following of… he had no real name for what had happened in the owlery.

He really couldn’t place the Slytherin’s actions, it just made no sense to him. Why the hell would the bloke force himself upon Harry? Had he missed some clue? Maybe this kind of situation was completely normal and he as the ridiculously famous Boy-Who-Lived-To-Be- Observed- Constantly had just been safely cocooned away from it all? He didn’t want to believe that that was the case, but then again… the few that had shown this kind of interest in him had been girls and their actions were always more on the expectant side and therefore confusing in their own way. He didn’t care that it was a bloke (though maybe he would later when his brain caught up with the whole situation). It was the whole forcing him, taking the decision away from him that bothered Harry. Not to mention that he didn’t even know this guy! The whole thing had been like something out of a fanfiction – not that Harry knew much about those, really, he had just heard Hermione and Ginny talk about all those unlikely scenes in which fictional characters would get saved by other fictional characters and of course romance would arise. Well, if it hadn’t been for Sirius and his sudden appearance that gave Harry just that bit of advantage he had missed before…

Sirius felt Hadrian’s body pressed up against his own and took a deep calming breath before he threw James a dirty look. His best mate had obviously moved Hadrian purposefully in between them to make sure the boy was close to Sirius. James countered his look with a waggle to his eyebrows as they listened to the professor’s steps down the hall. He found Sirius’ reactions to Moore just way too amusing to ignore the potential. He couldn’t remember his friend ever being so obvious about anyone and really, Sirius had never been shy about his amorous adventures.

Remus was watching the silent conversation his friends were having over Hadrian’s head with slight trepidation. He could clearly see how much they already thought of the new student as part of their group even if they weren’t acknowledging it yet and he couldn’t deny that he felt just the same. He really liked Hadrian and there was something that just pulled him towards the boy. He couldn’t place the feeling; it was just like some friendly warmth and the need to protect. He had briefly considered that it was a reaction of his wolf to the boy’s strange forest scent, but tonight had changed his train of thought.

Because, as much as he liked Hadrian Moore, he couldn’t help but wonder who Harry Potter was. The map wouldn’t lie about a name.

Chapter End Notes

Dundundundun…
Don’t worry. There’s a reason I made you vote for a middle name for Harry’s alias. :)
Is anyone interested in writing **single sentences** for a dispute between Slytherins, Harry and the Marauders? I’m looking for idioms, innuendos, snarky and witty remarks that I can use in later chapters. **No actual scenes**, just a sentence you would like to see.
(e.g. for chapter 26 I’m going to need some nasty stuff regarding Harry’s unconscious allure and general appearance)
In which Remus has a lot of thoughts

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In the case of an inherited Elf Owl the creature would manifest on the recipient’s sixteenth birthday as soon as the magical core reached its full capacity. With the calming of the magic the attributes that were going to manifest determined the further bodily reactions.

If the recipient were to develop ‘the Eyes’ he or she would lose eyesight for about 24 hours. It is not recorded whether this changing period was connected to any pain. After the mentioned time the recipient would have perfect eyesight, previous limitations notwithstanding, and in some cases additional night vision.

There are no reliable sources of the likely events if the recipient were to develop ‘the Wings’ since they were the first attribute that got lost over the generations. This author assumes a possibly painful change during the blinded 24 hours similar to a Veela inheritance.

Remus was stirring his oatmeal absentmindedly. He had a book open next to the bowl as an excuse for not talking much in particular and made sure to turn the pages every now and then. But his concentration was far from the contents of said book and his eyes would glance up and across the table whenever he thought the action safe.

Hadrian was sitting there and looking for all the world as if last night had been nothing special at all. And for him maybe it hadn’t been, Remus mused. After all, they still had no idea what the boy had been doing that had him vanish from the map, since they couldn't really ask him without revealing their little piece of genius. Though, this was actually part of the reason why Remus was watching him now. They had been looking for Hadrian Moore on the map, but clearly that was not his true name, so it wasn’t too strange that they hadn’t found him then.

That thought made Remus glance to his left where James was yawning over his toast.

When they went looking for Sirius last night they had found the point that was labelled with his name in the owlery – in company of Bartemius Crouch and another point labelled as Harry Potter. Though, only Remus had seen this last name since he had been the one looking at the map in the first place.

He hadn’t said a thing to his friend then and hadn’t done so later when he realised that the point labelled as Harry Potter was their new room mate Hadrian Moore. He had no real idea why he had kept quiet. Normally he wouldn’t keep something like this from his fellow Marauders or anything really. They already knew his darkest secret so he didn’t see the need to keep much else from them and shouldn’t he inform them that the new boy in their dormitory wasn’t who he said he was? But something had stopped him from telling them about Hadrian’s real identity.

But who was this Harry Potter? He obviously was related to James just like he had already suspected. He was a Potter by name and he looked like one. But James didn’t know him and for some reason Harry had decided to hide his true identity. But why? aHadHH

The sound of a hundred wings interrupted Remus’ thoughts and he looked up in time to see the owl post arrive. A copy of the Prophet was dropped in front of him and one on top of Sirius’ head. But it
was the packet for James that caught his attention.

“Is it…?” James rolled his eyes at Remus’ eager question. What? So he really wanted to read that book.

“Yes, Moony, it’s the wonderfully, pictorial, really really not so ancient family heirloom you asked for,” James said and shoved the half-opened packet into Remus’ hands. He snorted a laugh when Remus instantly flipped it open and started devouring the pages.

Hadrian’s behaviour reminded him increasingly of James’ during fifth year. The whole creature gene instance was still fresh in their minds and the Marauders loved to joke about it much to James’ dismay. Sirius called it his ‘tide’ just like he called the wolf Remus’ furry little problem. Whenever James would lament over something or another Lily Evans had done (or rather had not done since it mostly referred to her lack of public affection towards James) Sirius would ask him if it was this time of the month again.

It probably shouldn’t be that funny. After all, it was at that time that James’ overly emotional behaviour in the wake of his sixteenth birthday had led to him being uncharacteristically cruel in his bullying of Snape. It was then that the awful instance with Snape and Lily occurred that ultimately led to her dissolving her friendship with the Slytherin. Remus still felt ashamed when he thought of it – as did James, though he would probably never admit it.

Hadrian definitely showed some of the symptoms they had observed with James back then. Not that he was cruel, far from it actually and Remus couldn’t for the life of him imagine Hadrian bullying someone. The guy was rather sensitive himself. But he was definitely increasingly irritable, his emotions seemed to be constantly raised and that tended to end in rather impressive fits of accidental magic. Just this morning there had been a sudden explosion of the pipes in the en suite when Hadrian had been in there. Nothing that couldn’t be fixed with a wave of the wand and then get explained away with Hogwarts being an ancient castle, but still suspicious considering the latest events.

Though it could still be that Hadrian just had a temper and some really poor grip on his magic, Remus’ highly sensitive senses had picked up very soon on the unstable amount of magic that surrounded the other boy – a whole lot of unstable magic. It wasn’t something one felt every day after all and it felt eerily similar to what he had picked up from James last year.

Now, Remus was no magic sensitive or even trained to recognise another’s magical signature, but somehow he had found himself wondering if there actually really were family ties between James and Hadrian even before last night. It was just a feeling the magic was giving him, he supposed. And then the map had confirmed his suspicion. The infamous Potter hair of course suggested as much too, so maybe Hadrian was some distant relative, a descendant of a detached and probably forgotten branch of the family. He could be descendant to a female line or something which would have explained the different name if it hadn’t been for the map.

Remus scoffed. Those pureblood families were all tied together in some way and severing a ‘dirtied’ part from the main tree would be just the thing a pureblood head of family would do. He knew the current head of the House of Potter, James’ father, wouldn’t do something like this, but who was to say this hadn’t happened generations ago? But did it explain why Hadrian – no, Harry – felt the need to hide his real name?

He would have to ask him, Remus thought, and looked up again. Hadrian was just getting up from the table chatting wide-eyed with James and completely ignoring Peter like he always did. Though Peter hadn’t exactly tried to initiate any contact after that rather disconcerting first meeting, it was still strange that Hadrian dismissed him this thoroughly without any obvious reason. It seemed thoroughly out of character from what Remus could tell.
But he was losing track of his thoughts. Remus shoved his excuse-me-I’m-reading book in his bag and picked James’ inheritance book up with a lot more care. The similarities of Hadrian’s behaviour and James’ in fifth year had stood at the beginning of all this.

Remus was not the only one watching Hadrian. Oh he thought he was being sneaky what with his books and the casual glances, but Peter knew better. He was a master at being sneaky after all. And he had realised the instant he woke up this morning that something had changed.

Not only were his friends all terribly tired – more so than they always were – but they all also seemed to watch the new bloke. Even James, who normally was unable to see anyone but Evans so early in the morning, was keeping up a conversation with Moore and was watching the bloke’s reactions very closely.

Sirius was another calibre. He was watching the bloke like a hawk ever since the moment he had opened his eyes – he was actually downright staring at Moore - and there was just something there… Peter couldn’t place it, but it made him envious. Why was that bloke getting all this attention? What had happened when he had been asleep?

He watched as Sirius cut up an apple and put the slices on Moore’s plate with a pointed look. Moore was blushing like some bird and scowling at the action, but he did eat the apple. Probably something about his condition again, though it really was strange that Sirius was giving him the time of day. It annoyed Peter that Moore was so efficiently using is health issues to garner attention. James was smirking and Peter realised that their leader had kept the conversation up to distract Moore from the steadily appearing extras on his plate. So now they were working together to nurture the skinny streak of piss back to health?

Harry was feeling strange. Not strange as in something’s wrong, more like strange as in something had settled inside of him. He felt like he had finally found one steadfast hold in all of this.

It had been too much. These last days things had just become more and more unbearable until it finally amounted in his breakdown of last night. But then Hogwarts had given him a place where time seemed to stand still, a place where it didn’t matter what time he was in actually. Harry felt like he had had a vacation of sorts even though there had been another nightmare – one that was still occupying part of his thoughts – and then that …situation with the Slytherin.

Crouch. The name hadn’t registered with him yesterday with the shock of the current events still clinging to him. So this was Bartemius Crouch Junior? The guy that had impersonated Mad Eye in Harry’s fourth year? The person that was responsible for him getting portkeyed to the graveyard, tortured and then becoming part of that horrible potion. Not necessarily in that order. Harry shuddered at the memories and then blinked at Sirius who was brushing his arm against Harry’s as they walked.

“You’re cold?” He asked and seemed to drift even closer to Harry without really touching him.

“Not really,” Harry smiled back a bit awkwardly. “Just a shiver.”

If he thought about it, Harry was pretty sure that he shouldn’t feel better than before. Actually, after all that had happened he should probably freak out some more, but he wasn’t going to look a gift horse in the mouth. If his psyche had decided to just go with it, he wouldn’t complain about it. Beggars can’t be choosers or what they say. Alright, enough with the proverbs.
Sirius couldn’t help it. He just had to watch out for Hadrian. A part of him was still puzzling over his thoughts from last night – really, there was no good explanation why he would care so much about a boy he had just met. But a much larger part, the part that had been immersed with the all consuming rage at seeing someone touching Hadrian against his will, was urging him to look out for and take care of his new room mate.

He had found himself listening to Hadrian’s breathing until he was sure there was no nightmare plaguing the boy. He had made sure no one touched Hadrian ever since that reaction last night, but at the same time he always stayed close to him. He made him eat a whole (and rather healthy) breakfast and now he found himself ridiculously wondering if the boy was dressed warm enough. This was absurd. Sirius was in no way a mother hen or he hadn’t been until now.

And Prongs the smirking bastard knew. He so knew how much Hadrian got under Sirius’ skin and he was determined to have his fun with it. Well, at least that meant Sirius could claim most of his behaviour was thanks to his best mate’s insistence that he should be near Hadrian whenever possible.

Chapter End Notes

bah Wormtail... just.. ugh!
In which there is a crosshair

Chapter Notes

I have a hard time writing snarky remarks… they really aren’t the epitome of wittiness in this chapter, but they’ll do. Some are supposed to sound dumb so that’s okay, I guess. Anyway, I want a snarky Harry in later chapters! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Magical capability**

*The changes of the Elf Owl inheritance that directly influenced the body included a magical boost similar to the normal wizarding boost upon maturity, but were often recorded as more powerful.*

*Due to the belief that one requires an exceptionally strong magical core to actually activate the creature gene nowadays the Elf Owl kind has gained the reputation of great magical power. Not much is known about the powers of the original species of Elf Owls, but the records state those who received the inheritance to always be above average powerful wizards or witches.*

*Some recipients grew increasingly magic sensitive after the actual inheritance…*

They were watching him. Harry could feel it, all those lingering gazes and dare he say… dirty thoughts aimed his way. He had no idea where that came from, but he was infinitely thankful for the Marauders’ faithful presence around him. In fact, the three of them (he would NOT count Pettigrew) had somehow started to form a kind of protective wall around him at all times – and at that thought some long forgotten muggle history lesson swam back into his memory and made a lame joke about a ‘Hadrian’s Wall’.

From breakfast over Charms, then lunch and Herbology they never left his sight. Although James and Sirius had left during Herbology to attend Alchemy, they had already waited for the rest of them when lessons came to an end. Now they were escorting them back to the castle and Harry found himself again at the centre of their group. He was listening to Remus lecturing a slack-jawed Pettigrew on Venomous Tentacula when he caught sight of a few Slytherins apparently on their way to the greenhouses. (*)

The change was nearly imperceptible, but as soon as Sirius looked up from his cajoling with James something was different. Harry frowned at the dark look crossing his face and followed his gaze – only to be met with the burning glare of Barty Crouch.

Again. Why the hell was he looking at him like that? Yes, he was probably angry at Harry for stunning him, but then again he really had it coming. And this glare… that was no anger. Harry couldn’t completely suppress the slight intake of breath that gave away his nervous thoughts. He was used to stares even if he disliked them more than he could express, but this kind of staring… let’s just say Harry Potter wasn’t exactly used to being undressed with looks by complete strangers. Or anyone really.

Sirius narrowed his eyes at the group of snakes heading their direction. He easily found his younger...
brother in the group, but let his gaze slide over Regulus dismissively. He also spotted Snape and could feel Prongs’ slight tensing next to him. But it was the lanky figure of Crouch that really caught his eye. And apparently not only his. Behind him he heard the little gasp Hadrian made at recognizing the Slytherin and he subtly drifted more directly in front of the boy. The look Crouch was giving Hadrian made the move even more justified – the Slytherin was positively leering at him.

“I heard he was caught by McGonagall after curfew last night. Crouch, I mean,” Peter piped up in a loud whisper from the back of their group. “Rumour has it he had been stunned, but wouldn’t say who did it.”

Hadrian was ducking his head at this and his wayward bangs shielded his eyes from view, but Sirius caught the hint of surprise there. He had obviously expected to be denigrated for his actions even if they were done in pure self-defence. Prongs looked equally surprised, but Rem had this thoughtful look on his face that told everyone who knew him that he was working out some complicated theory that would soon lead to some great answer to who knows what. Sirius only hoped there was no evidence he had overlooked that would give away the nature of the situation Hadrian had been engaged in last night. He doubted Crouch would risk bringing attention to it, no matter that he had probably earned himself detention with McGonagall. Detention was nothing compared to what would happen if his true actions were to become known, after all, but Sirius didn’t want the information out there for Hadrian’s sake.

Well, there were those looks sent the boy’s way all day, though Sirius didn’t actually think they had anything to do with the owlery incident. He had noticed them as soon as they got down for breakfast, but he didn’t think much of it until Charms. Apparently he was not the only one who had noticed how cute Hadrian was – er… how charming… no, how interesting – oh whatever. Something had shifted and now a lot of people were paying way more attention to the boy than Sirius liked. It wasn’t always the kind of attention that Crouch was currently indulging in, and fuck did Sirius want to punch that gob right then and there, but there were a lot of lingering gazes and smiles that would sometimes change to confused expressions. And Sirius did not like it. Prongs and Rem seemed to have caught on to his unease pretty soon and had started to follow his example of shielding Hadrian. Just like they were doing now.

When Sirius moved to stand in front of Hadrian, James took a small unobtrusive step back and to the side that could easily be interpreted as him leaning in to Sirius to say something or another. But it manoeuvred him to Hadrian’s unguarded side. Remus drifted forward from his position next to Peter and came to a halt on Hadrian’s other side in a way that suggested he had just reacted too slow to the abrupt stop the group was making.

“Well, what do we have here? Five little kitties ready to get drowned in the lake,” a Slytherin crowed.

The snakes came to a halt in front of them and Sirius let his gaze move over each student, assessing the possible danger. Snape was regarding them with an indifferent expression, but his dark eyes were glittering with an unspoken emotion. Sirius had no idea what that was and he would leave the likes of Snape to Prongs. He had backed away from that specific front ever since that incident during a full moon… His brother was standing slightly in the back near to Snape and his expression betrayed none of his emotions. Regulus was the perfect little Slytherin as always, never at the front in the face of danger, but still in proximity to what he assumed to be the safest option and of course never letting his emotions show.

There were a few more Sirius couldn’t name including some girl that was clearly fawning over Rabastan Lestrange, who Sirius knew to be the true leader of this group even if he let the burly guy right in front of Sirius do the talking. (“Still feeling the need to travel in groups?”) It was what made
him as dangerous as he was. His piercing blue eyes were gleaming with intelligence and a detached kind of indifference that was far creepier than Snape’s.

Anyway, Sirius’ attention was divided between the burly speaker snake at the front, Crouch, and his brother, though he made sure to never look directly at the latter. His brother had chosen his side and Sirius would not change his mind either, but that didn’t mean he wanted any fights between them. The annoying guy at the front only held his attention because he was the nearest threat. Crouch though had a clear crosshair on him in Sirius’ books. There was some serious pranking going to take place and yes, that pun was so intended.

James dismissed the Slytherin at the front with a bored look and shifted his gaze to Snape. He was about to say something or another probably about Snivellus’ hair when a cold voice forestalled any such thing. No one saw the flash of relief on Harry’s face.

“Black,” Rabastan sneered. “Still no respect for your heritage, I see.” Sirius raised an unimpressed eyebrow though he felt more like flinching when he caught sight of Regulus’ expression in the background. His brother looked ashamed.

“Lestrange,” Sirius’ smile was a mockery of innocence. “Still no respect for your mirror, I see.”

James snorted, Peter was laughing from his safe place behind them, and even Remus couldn’t completely suppress a little smirk. Harry, though, was looking at the Slytherins surrounding Rabastan Lestrange. His gaze focussed on the fear he could see on their faces at Sirius’ remark and he instinctively took hold of his wand. Rabastan Lestrange. Brother to Rodolphus Lestrange who was Bellatrix’ husband, wasn’t he? Or would be, whatever. Those three were the ones that would torture Neville’s parents into losing their minds. Harry shivered at the thought of Neville’s parents and the horrors they would have to endure. Wait. Maybe they were here at Hogwarts right now? Maybe he could-

“So I heard you found yourself another boy toy?”

Rabastan Lestrange was dangerous. Not Malfoy-dangerous, Harry thought, but the cold-blooded and calculating kind of dangerous that Harry only had ever witnessed in the memories that showed a younger Tom Riddle. Voldemort, before he completely succumbed to the insanity evoked through splitting his soul one time too often, had been far more ominous than his resurrected form. Not like splitting one’s soul once wasn’t already one time too often. That thought brought with it another revelation, but there was no time to follow this train of thought at the moment. Anyway, Harry had never met Rabastan since he had been imprisoned in his time, and he couldn’t remember if the Death Eater had been at the cemetery in his fourth year. But he only needed to look into those icy eyes to know that the fear of the Slytherins wasn’t unfounded.

“Oh,” Lestrange did a parody of a shocked little gasp. “Or is he not only yours, Black? Does Potter enjoy his look-alike sucking on his-” He was interrupted when – surprisingly – Remus fired a stinging hex directly followed by a body binding curse.

Of course, calculating as he was, Rabastan had already expected an attack, though he obviously hadn’t foreseen Remus to be the one in charge. He deflected the stinging hex only to get nearly caught by the body binding spell – he sacrificed the burly speaker in pushing him in direct line of the curse. The Marauders acted as one after that. Wands were raised in unison and Harry found himself shielded from view even more.

That was a completely new kind of experience for the boy who had always been the one to fight in the frontlines and at the same time it was a cruel reminder of all those who had died for standing between him and danger. He couldn’t listen as insults were thrown back and forth. Everything just
started to blur, the words becoming a constant buzzing sound and Harry just wanted it to stop. They shouldn’t fight because of him. They shouldn’t fight for him! It would just lead to more pain and more death and-

Harry didn’t notice when he grabbed onto the back of Sirius’ robe. He just wanted them to stop, wanted them to stand down and let him fight those battles so they wouldn’t stand in the line of fire. He didn’t realise that this was just a petty little schoolyard scuffle. There was no actual death threat even though the students involved were partly future Death Eaters.

So when his magic started to lash out he was as much caught by surprise as the others.

Sirius had to admit he was pleasantly surprised by Rems’ reaction to Lestrange’s babbling. He had been too shocked himself to act as fast as his friend had. It wasn’t that he had kept his inclinations for both sides of the fence a secret, but he hadn’t known that his little escapade with one of his team mates in the Quidditch locker rooms had made it to the Slytherins. After all it hadn’t been the first team member that got to snog Sirius – it had only been the first male. But what really got to him was the bloke’s comment about Hadrian being some kind of fuck toy for the Marauders. Wherever had that kind of sick idea come from?

When he finally raised his wand with the rest of the Marauders, his vision was feeling increasingly clouded by the same kind of anger that had surged through him just yesterday. He could have sworn there was a red tinge to everything and he barely stopped himself from using the kind of curses he had inevitably learnt as the heir of a rather dark pureblood house.

He was equally surprised – but in a rather different way – when he felt a hand grab the back of his school robes in what felt like a desperate gesture. Since he could see James and Remus to his left and right and something just told him Wormy wouldn’t grab onto him like this, there was only one conclusion: Hadrian was holding onto him and if that didn’t send a nice warm feeling into his errr….

You know, just somewhere he better didn’t think about in that moment.

He couldn’t turn around though. Right now it would be quite the dumb move to turn his back on the Slytherins so he settled for moving the tiniest bit into that touch. It was only a matter of time before a professor would end this whole stand-off anyway and so far there luckily had been only minor hexes. Right when Sirius decided that it would be alright to risk a glance at Hadrian, he felt it.

Volatile magic. Volatile and familiar magic. All of them had felt this particular magic on Monday during Potions and he specifically had felt it last night in the owlery. Hadrian was reacting in a bad way to the situation and now there was no way he could not turn around. Just when he sent James a look and got a minute nod in return that told him his friend would watch his back, Hadrian’s magic lashed out.

But it was different from the first time. This time his magic completely forewent those closest to Hadrian – the Marauders – and went for the Slytherins. They could only stare in shock as wispy strands of confusingly coloured magic attacked the snakes. The feeling Sirius got from this magic was a dark turmoil of pain, guilt and something else he couldn’t determine - but it left him feeling distinctly miserable.

Chapter End Notes
(* Venomous Tentacula: A green and spiky plant with mobile vines that try to grab living prey. Venomous Tentacula expels venom from its shoots, and its spikes are deadly. Its bite is highly venomous and can prove fatal.
(see Harry Potter Wikia)
The colours of Hadrian’s wild magic made it impossible to determine the kind of spells that were being used. That is, if there even were actual spells, Sirius wasn’t too sure. What he was sure of was that it was equally impossible to block the attack unless one were some magical genius with the ability to cast a shield able to block all possible manners of spells at the same time. It was like watching a storm raging, yet apart from the yelps and shouts of the victims there was no sound. The Marauders stood staring as wispy strands of magic incapacitated the Slytherins and for a second Sirius felt his heart stop as his brother was hit.

It took them long moments to realise that the snakes had only been stunned. Though, it looked like they had been hit with blotches of paint all over before the actual stunning. And if some of them now sported a few bruises and bumps it was totally due to them falling a bit disadvantageously. Totally.

The silence that followed was disrupted by sudden hacking coughs from behind Sirius. Spinning around he was met with the sight of Hadrian gasping for air while caught in a raspy sounding coughing fit. Sirius’ hands hovered for a second, unsure if his touch would be welcomed. He saw the others approaching from the corner of his eye and knew if he didn’t one of them definitely would touch Hadrian.

“Screw it,” Sirius muttered and grasped onto the boy’s shoulders.

Hadrian didn’t flinch away. Probably too concentrated on forcing oxygen into his lungs, Sirius thought, and supported Hadrian when the boy doubled over. He allowed himself a second to revel in the feeling of holding him close before James’ voice brought him back to matters (literally) at hand.

“Woah,” his best mate sounded rather concerned, “that really sounds like another trip to the hospital wing.” He eyed Hadrian nervously, but Remus pushed him aside to take in Hadrian’s slouched form.

“Sirius.” His voice was calm, but aforementioned student saw the worry in the amber eyes. “You need to help him breathe.” Sirius frowned. The slight body in his arms was still being wracked by coughs, but he hadn’t thought it all that dangerous until now. “Whatever’s hampering with his breathing, he needs to calm down.”

That was when Sirius noticed that the coughing wasn’t getting any better.

His magic was lashing about, striking down students and Harry felt each and every one of them. He couldn’t stop. His grip on his magic felt off, his magic felt off. It was fuelled by his emotions, but he wasn’t in control. It felt like accidental magic, yet not. Did he have a panic attack?

Some detached part of his brain started listing the symptoms. His heart was racing. He couldn’t feel the tips of his fingers. What was he even doing with his hands? And what was that rushing sound that got louder by the second? There was the overwhelming feeling of dread. He wasn’t seeing the Marauders any longer but Hermoine and Ron fighting for their lives, Cedric and his godfather. Sirius falling through the veil, Sirius standing by the veil and saying something about the prophecy… not his godfather, but-

He couldn’t breathe.
He wasn’t sure he wanted to breathe.

No, wait, he needed to breathe!

“…-rian. Hadrian!” Sirius was crouching in front of the boy, his hands holding him upright. “Damn! Come on, listen to me!”

He gave Hadrian a small shake for good measure and got a glare from Remus for the action. But Hadrian was turning increasingly blue around his mouth – like he was either suffering from hypothermia or starting to suffocate by his own coughing. Why was there no teacher around when they needed one? The bloody housepoint takers wouldn’t normally ignore such a situation what with all the ruckus their fight with the snakes had caused. Sure, they were rather far out on the grounds, but there had been enough students around to grass on them!

“Try to get him to focus on your voice, talk to him,” Remus instructed next to him and for an irritated second Sirius wondered why he wasn’t doing it himself. “Make him breathe with you.”

Easier said than done, wasn’t it? Hadrian didn’t seem to register much of his surroundings though he was leaning heavily into Sirius’ touch. He felt his inner grim growl impatiently at him and frowned – what was it with his Animagus form lately? It had never acted this sentient before. Sirius took a deep breath and focused solely on the wheezing boy in his arms.

“Oh, Hadrian. Listen to me,” he said again, this time in as calm a voice he could manage. “I know, you’re kind of occupied right now, but you really need some oxygen in that system of yours.” He heard James snort at that, but proceeded to ignore his friends. “So here’s what we’re gonna do: You listen to my voice and try to breathe whenever I tell you to. Got that?”

He wasn’t sure if he had gotten through to Hadrian, but trying was better than doing nothing and watching the boy suffocate slowly. Grasping one slender birdbone hand and holding it firmly to his chest, he started telling him to breathe with him, in and out and in and one two three out. He was so focused on Hadrian he didn’t even notice James sending Wormtail off to get a professor.

Breathing hurt, but Harry tried. Listening to what he recognized as Sirius’ voice hurt in a completely different way, especially with the haunting images of his past still so vivid in his mind. But the detached part of his mind that was telling him he was having a panic attack also told him to latch onto the only calm and constant thing he could find in that moment. And that was Sirius’ voice, even if it was overlapping with memories of his godfather. It sounded right and wrong at the same time. Right, because he knew it was the younger version of Sirius talking to him, and that matched the voice he heard. Wrong, because it seemed to edge into the slightly rougher and darker tone of the older Sirius, his godfather, and that was somehow conjuring images he did not want to see. But that was his memory playing tricks on his mind, wasn’t it?

For a brief moment Harry actually hoped he would see his godfather when he opened his eyes and not the young and healthy version he had come to like these past days. But when he finally met those grey eyes and saw the light there, a light he had only ever seen in his godfather’s eyes in photos of past days, he instantly felt ashamed for that hope.

He wanted to say something, but noticed that Sirius was still talking to him. He was looking straight into his eyes with a determined air around him and his hands were holding tightly onto Harry. He more felt than saw the large hand covering his on a broad chest and Harry felt the warmth there seep
into his very bones. He found he was listening to that voice and obviously doing what it asked of him without really registering what was being said.

Breathe. In and out. Oh. Yeah, that made sense. Sirius was helping him through the fog of his panic attack. He smiled at that. Of course. Sirius would always help him.

When the coughing finally ceased and Hadrian raised his head, Sirius’ heart gave a curious little clench. Upon gazing back into Sirius’ eyes Hadrian gave the kind of smile that was just made to stop time for a moment.

And did he really just think that cheesy stuff? Anyway, Hadrian’s smile was similar to the one he had given Evans on that fatal first day. Serene, disturbingly grateful and radiating joy and grief equally. It was such a beautiful sight that it just felt wrong to look at it. Damn, he really sounded like he had some mushy stroke of lovesickness.

“Ha- …Moore, you okay now?” He had no idea why he had slipped into calling the boy by his first name. So not cool. (*) But that bloke really had an uncanny ability to give him the fright. There was no immediate answer, but Hadrian was obviously better even though his breathing still sounded strained and his hair was sticking to his sweaty forehead and those pale cheeks in a way that should not look so adorable.

“Hadrian?” Remus’ soft voice came from beside him and Sirius finally looked up.

He envied his fellow Marauder for being so unconcerned about the way he addressed the other boy. Sirius wouldn’t normally address anyone by their given name that he wasn’t absolutely sure to trust. It was like a badge of trust when Sirius Black called you by your first name. And he really didn’t know Hadrian enough to do that regardless of how much he wanted to know him better and preferably more intimately. What.

Sirius shook his head in time to gather his wits enough to help Hadrian stand up. He was shaky on his feet once again and Sirius couldn’t see him making it far alone. So what if he enjoyed the reason to hold onto the boy a bit longer. McGonagall was heading their way when they turned towards the castle, a red faced Slughorn in tow. Sirius didn’t waste time and started walking Hadrian in their direction. They could do their oh so disappointed scolding after he had deposited the boy in the hospital wing. He only stopped to get a sharp look from McGonagall and the clear instruction to report to her office directly after his visit to the infirmary.

James glanced down at the dark red that looked like a bucket full of actual blood had been spilled over the younger Black’s head. The similarity of the two brothers sent a chill down James’ spine as he took in the still form in its stunned state.

“You know,” he said silently to Remus just before the professors arrived, “For a moment there I thought he was actually going to kill them.”

They had detention. The most boring kind of detention and they couldn’t even spent their time with annoying the Slytherins since the students had been split according to their houses. McGonagall was sitting at the front of the classroom, marking papers and sending sharp glares to each one of them from time to time. They weren’t allowed to talk, read or generally do anything halfway interesting, leaving them staring at the sinking sun and drooling on their tables. Any other teacher and James and Sirius would just use their communication mirrors for some game they had invented especially for silent detentions. It didn’t require you to speak and the mirror could easily be hidden behind an
inkpot. But with their head of house in charge it would be just completely barmy to chance something like this.

While Prongs, Rem and Peter were more or less entranced in the sunset, Sirius himself was staring more at the way the sinking sun was glowing on Hadrian’s features. Yes, he was ogling him, he could admit that to himself. From his place kind of diagonally behind the boy he had a rather good view without being too obvious. Or so he thought. So he found himself staring at those features and the way the last sunlight sent a dark red glow upon that pale skin. His gaze lingered for a moment longer on a still too pale neck, but with the sun dropping past the horizon his attention was drawn to the rest of Hadrian’s figure. He frowned at the plain school robe.

Hadrian’s clothes were all either black, white or grey. Even his boxer briefs were coloured in a dark grey with a black waistband. Sirius had checked himself when he had caught the bloke changing. And of course that had been the only reason he had been looking. Come to think of it, he seemed to mostly wear his school uniform – even after class. The lonely t-shirt he sometimes wore seemed to be the same he used as pyjamas. Really, the only blob of colour was his Gryffindor tie.

Sirius idly wondered what the other boy would look like in for example dark green or maybe midnight blue. Both colours would work great with Hadrian’s eyes and complexion. Or if he so insisted on wearing non-colours, what about a black silk shirt? Yes, that would make those eyes of his glow even more than they already did and in combination with the dark hair it would give him an aura of mystery and aloofness. Like a real Marauder.

Harry was annoyed. Like really annoyed. Those bloody backlashes his accidental magic gave him were wearing him down more and more. He felt like he could just drop his head on the table and go to sleep in ten seconds. His limbs hurt and there was a nagging headache behind his eyes. Madam Pomfrey had scolded him for ten minutes straight after she had healed the damage his violent coughing fit had given his lungs and throat. He was sure that he wouldn’t have been able to walk to McGonagall’s office and receive the next harsh tongue-lashing if she hadn’t given him a high concentrated Pepper Up potion.

But his thoughts were also occupied by the revelation he had come upon during the scene with the Slytherins – and no, he would not go down that specific snake infested road right now. The whole incident had been too embarrassing.

So he focused on the idea he had had when he thought about Voldemort’s soul-splitting tendencies. He had told himself that there could be no horcruxes in this time. And that had been just dumb. No horcruxes yet? Bullshit. At least the diary had to exist right now since it had been made during Tom’s school years at Hogwarts – which had been long before his parents got here. And then… had not the First Wizarding War started in 1970? Wouldn’t that mean Voldemort was already at large and more than just some power gaining mystery somewhere out there? Harry hadn’t paid much attention to this kind of thing until now, but maybe it was time. He should take a look at the morning Prophet at least.

How many more horcruxes were there? Dumbledore had told him that he was assuming seven, but he hadn’t told him what they were. So he knew the diary wasn’t at Hogwarts, but with the Malfoys. Lucius would slip it into Ginny’s cauldron in more than twenty years from now. Or wait… maybe it was still with Voldemort himself? Why would he have given something like that to someone else for safekeeping anyway? Harry sighed annoyed. He had no idea what else Riddle had used for his disgusting soul anchors. That would have been part of the ‘lessons’ Dumbledore had wanted him to take during his sixth year, but well… some little time warp incident had ruined that plan.
And was it even his responsibility any longer? Though, he couldn’t quite quell the question of what had happened to the soul piece in his scar during said skip through time. As much as he avoided even thinking about it, it did feel different to before. No, Harry really wasn’t sure if he wanted to do the time warp again…

Chapter End Notes

(*) In case you were wondering: I tried to give each character a personalized speaking pattern. One example for this is the way they address each other. Like it says in this chapter Sirius only calls persons he completely trusts by their first names. In case of the Marauders he’s mostly referring to them as Prongs, Rem and Wormtail/Wormy indicating the extent of their familiarity. He tends to think of Wormtail more as Peter. James calls the Marauders mostly by their codenames, meaning Moony, Padfoot and Wormtail. He’s not as specific as Sirius with the use of given names, but he mostly calls people by their last names. Even Lily – unless he actually gets a minute with her alone. Remus’ speaking patterns are the most ‘sophisticated’ sounding and he normally only addresses people he likes by their first names. Peter is relishing in the feeling of membership he gets from using the codenames which is why he loves to use them. Since he’s seeking James’ and Sirius’ attention foremost he sometimes calls Remus just that: Remus. So that’s why Sirius is kind of struggling with his way to address Harry (he always THINKS of him as Hadrian) while Remus just goes with his feeling and calls him Hadrian. James and Peter just stick to the last name – at least until they know him better.
Harry was painting. He was losing himself in the feel of the brush through the wet paint on the canvas and the silence of the Muggle Arts classroom long after class. It was Friday, early evening, and soon time for dinner, but Harry was lost in his thoughts. He didn’t notice how his magic was flowing around him in gentle waves that mixed with the colours and left a distinct imprint in his painting.

He was remembering the last two days…

Thursday had actually been the first time he didn’t get up before everyone else. Harry, being utterly exhausted from his last bout of wild magic and the tedious detention afterwards, had slept much longer than was normal for him. And it hadn’t been a nightmare that woke him up, but the return of James and Sirius from early Quidditch training. That was when Harry realised he had not only slept through breakfast and the morning classes – though he had no lessons scheduled for Thursday morning – but he had also been alone in the same room with Pettigrew the whole time. Remus was still off for his Runes lessons.

Sleeping in the same room as Wormtail still gave Harry the creeps. Apart from the knowledge of who that boy would be in the future, the whole thing reminded him uncomfortably of those early Hogwarts years when there had been a pet rat sleeping in the dorm, and subsequently one of their beds, all the time. He couldn’t help but mistrust the short chubby boy with the small beady eyes that tended to flit around as if assessing each person in the vicinity – and not in the kind of way that Harry himself tended to assess people. Wormtail wasn’t particularly looking for danger the way Harry in his paranoid ways was, but the rat Animagus seemed to always look for the advantage he could gain from someone.

Upon arriving it had taken Sirius only a few moments to realise that Harry had not been down to breakfast. That had been the start of him lecturing Harry on his eating habits and threatening to rat him out to Pomfrey should he dare to do it again and was followed by James making fun of Sirius for the fact that he was actually lecturing someone. Wormtail had been staring at Harry in a way that could only be described as hostile and Harry, seeing as Sirius and James were busy with their bickering, had raised a challenging eyebrow at him. Clearly Pettigrew was not happy with him being there and Harry nearly expected him to attack, and oh he would have liked to show the little traitor just why that would be a totally great idea – for Harry. But then Pettigrew had scowled in a way that made him look exactly his sixteen years and Harry was harshly reminded of the fact that this boy hadn’t done anything yet.
After hurrying through a shower – Sirius and James had occupied the en suite long enough that Harry swore they were doing it on purpose – they had gone down for lunch or breakfast in Harry’s case. They had met up with Remus and settled in their now somewhat normal sitting arrangement with Harry seated between Sirius and Remus or sometimes James. He always made sure to never sit near Wormtail and somehow the other three Marauders had gotten it in their heads to shield Harry whenever possible. Not that he was complaining. There were still a lot of stares and lingering looks and Harry more than once met the eyes of another student confused, because he had felt the stare, but had no idea what it was for. Though, he made it a point to never look at the Slytherin table.

After lunch Harry had managed to sneak away and retrieve his paint stained shirt from the Room of Requirement. He had thought about throwing it into the hamper with his other clothes and hope for the best while wandering the halls of Hogwarts. Really, by now he could do with every halfway decent shirt he could get his hands on. Unfortunately the rest of the cast-offs in the cabinet of the Room of Requirement were all much too big or way too small – as in first year small - for him, so he was left with the one slightly big shirt from his first visit and that would not do. Even magic could only do so much and he would not risk transfiguring something into a shirt only to have the transfiguration fail in the most inconvenient moment.

The paint on his last shirt had made him think of what his magic had done the day before. It was a well known fact throughout Hogwarts by then that the Marauders plus Harry had been in a fight with a group of the most feared Slytherins. And it was also a known fact that the Slytherins had left said encounter with a myriad of colourful stains all over them. The colours put on them by Harry’s wild magic had proved to be persistent even against Madam Pomfrey.

The only unknown fact about it all was that it had been Harry who knocked out and left his rainbow marks on everyone. It was just assumed it had been one of the more elaborate pranks of the Marauders. And Harry was glad it was that way because he honestly could do without any more attention. He felt a bit bad for the Marauders though. They were now even more in the line of fire for sneaky revenge hexes in the hallways than before even though James kept insisting that it had always been that way because “Hey, we’re just that great”.

Harry had stopped short and shaken his head, smiling to himself. He was actually thinking of James as James and not his father. Maybe it was because he had never known his dad as an adult. It was easier with him because he had no comparison like he did with the other Marauders – even Wormtail.

Well and that was when he had found himself suddenly cornered by a somewhat dangerously smiling Lily Evans.

Harry had been whisked away to the library by his own mother and her Ravenclaw friend who went by the name Alice Fortescue. It would take Harry the whole time until after lunch classes to realise he had been sitting with not only his mother but the future Mrs. Longbottom, Neville’s mother, too. His mother, who insisted that he called her Lily, had made him sit down to work together on their homework and Harry, overwhelmed and quite a bit intimidated by that fiery redhead, had yielded. He had still been flustered and trying not to stare at her too much when the questioning had started.

“So,” Lily flicked her quill casually in her hand in a much practised move, “You’re quite the troublemaker it seems.” She met Harry’s forest green eyes with her own straight on as if challenging him to contradict her. Not that Harry would.

Not only would it be pretty hypocritical to say he was not indeed a troublemaker (Even if it was the trouble that found him and not him who went looking for it. Well, mostly.), but there was also a side of him that wanted to please his mother. He never had the chance to do so before, never had her
telling him that she was proud of him like he had heard Aunt Petunia constantly tell Dudley. He wanted to make her proud regardless if it would mean anything to the girl she was right now. So he would of course not contradict her, though he very much would like to change her perception of him to something a bit more respectable.

Harry only blinked at Lily waiting for her to continue.

“You get dangerously hurt on your first day, get involved in fights with other students and I’m pretty sure you already spent a large amount of time in the hospital wing before all of that.” She was ticking the events off on her fingers while never breaking eye contact.

For a moment Harry felt disappointment crawl in his chest at that. So his mother had been just as nosy as all the girls he knew back in his time. Well, maybe with the exception of Hermione and Luna. He sighed and prepared himself to give some shallow answers that would tell her as much as if he had outright refused to say anything. But then he caught sight of the look in those eyes that were so much like his.

Concern.

Was she worried for him or was she worried because he was causing trouble for her house? Harry desperately wanted to believe that his mother, Lily, would honestly be worried for him. Not that he wanted to worry her, but he wanted to mean something to her, something that went further than just a fellow housemate. But why would she worry about someone she had just briefly met, someone she had no reason to even think about? It really could only be his being part of Gryffindor now.

“You’re right,” he said, trying for casual and adopting a pose he had seen his dad use, “That sounds awfully troubling.” He was fighting for a straight face. He couldn’t let her see how much it meant to him that she was even speaking with him. Though, looking across the table into those wide green eyes he should have known that those eyes weren’t made to hide emotions.

“You’re friends with Potter, aren’t you?” Alice chimed in from next to Lily who promptly flushed and glared at her friend. Alice only grinned and raised her eyebrows questioningly at Harry. Huh. It was a bit strange to be asked something like this when for all his school life he had been ‘Potter’.

“Um,” he stalled. Was he friends with James? “We’re dorm mates, yeah.” He shifted in his seat. That was as far as he would go in regards to his relationship with any of the Marauders in this time. Although they seemed awfully interested in him, he couldn’t help but wait for the other shoe to drop.

“But you’re constantly with them,” Alice insisted.

“And here I thought I was sitting in the library with two girls.”

Harry waggled his eyebrows, but even if he tried, he would never be able to pull such a statement off like Sirius would. Not to mention that Sirius would have definitely added a cheeky compliment or two. But he couldn’t do that with his mother sitting there and looking at him in such a calculating way. Alice though allowed the deflection of her question and they went back to their homework. Harry really tried to concentrate on *A Guide to Advanced Transfiguration* by Aloysius Changeling what with his problems in silent spell casting, but he felt Lily’s presence through it all. (*)

It turned out that Alice was tutoring Lily in Transfiguration. Harry hid a smile at that. So his mother really wasn’t all that great in this specific class, but insisted on taking her N.E.W.T.s nonetheless. He promised to himself that he would let James know someday; his dad really needed some acknowledgment of his insistent wooing of Lily.
Lily’s eyes tracked the movements of Hadrian’s hands, the slightly clumsy way he was writing with a quill that indicated he had learned writing with other means, probably muggle pencils, and the scarring on his left hand that was catching the light every time he turned a page in his book. She couldn’t see it clearly, but it had an odd form. And the bruise.

Hadrian didn’t seem to be aware of the bruising around his wand arm or he would probably hide it. This kind of bruise, circular, around the wrist, looked an awful lot as if someone had restrained him. Lily shivered at the thought. No, don’t jump to conclusions, Evans, she told herself. Maybe it was just some roughhousing with the other boys. Hadrian certainly had the kind of skin that would easily bruise, just like her. She knew all too well how easy her own skin tended to acquire marks.

Anyway, something about this boy made her want to protect him. As soon as he had smiled at her on Monday in Potions she was lost. He seemed to trigger her motherly side that had the other girls often tease her. She was a caring nature and maybe she sometimes went overboard with her doting, but never let it be said Lily Evans couldn’t be vicious either. James Potter and his little band of misfits had learned that early on.

But Hadrian… there was just something about him. She couldn’t put it into words. Was it his aura of grief? The lost look in his eyes? Or something simpler, like the fact that he was definitely underweight even though his pallor had changed for the better ever since he had started attending Hogwarts? And now there were the scarring and the bruise and his nervous twitching. It didn’t look like the kind of nervous shuffling she would maybe expect because he was alone with two girls. He was a shy one, yes, and he failed hilariously at acting nonchalant, but it was another kind of nervousness. She just couldn’t name it.

Some of the other girls in her dorm had cooed at the fact that Hadrian had protected her from the potion, but to Lily the incident had nothing to do with chivalry. It was certainly brave, yes, but it also spoke volumes about his self-preservation instinct or more like the lack of it. It also told her that he deemed himself less important than those around him. There had been no hesitation. His first reaction – and boy, that really had been some fast reflexes – had been to shield someone else instead of himself.

No, Lily resumed, this time she would not let her embarrassment over her motherly tendencies get the better of her. She would keep an eye on Hadrian, regardless of what others said.

During Transfiguration that afternoon Harry could honestly say studying with Lily and Alice just before classes had helped him a lot. It was also helpful to have Alice come over during practise to correct his wand movements without any fuss, then smile reassuringly at him and go back to Lily. Harry had the nagging suspicion that it had been Lily who sent her friend in the first place since she probably felt that she couldn’t interact like this with Harry in front of the Marauders. And Harry could understand that after the reaction they had caused upon arriving to McGonagall’s class together.

He really hadn’t thought anything about it when the girls walked with him from the library nor had he interpreted anything into the fact that he had a girl on either side of him. But apparently sneaking away from the Marauders and reappearing with two popular girls that were giving him their undivided attention caused more uproar than he had ever expected. James had stared at them for a whole minute with obvious conflicted emotions on his face before firming his stance and turning slightly away. Remus had raised his eyebrows, but then shrugged and smiled in greeting. Pettigrew had actually done a very accurate imitation of a fish – though Harry felt like apologising to any
underwater creature for that comparison. Sirius had looked for a second as if he had just taken a good whiff from Quirrell’s turban before he relaxed his features. He had proceeded to make good-natured comments over the apparent fact that Harry had taken hold of the Potter charm, which in turn made James jump into an elaborate argument why that could never be the case as long as he was around and made the girls move away.

Harry changed the brush he was using to add some details.

Today, Friday, had started off with another Potions class, this time without any embarrassing incident or at least without an exploding cauldron. The Slytherins had made some snarky remarks in regards of Harry, and Snape had stared at him in an undecipherable way, but really, it stood in no comparison to what he was used to as the so-called Gryffindor Golden Boy. Harry was rather unimpressed. Which actually earned him surprised glances from most of the Gryffindors – after all, lions weren’t exactly known for being even-tempered.

He had been quite a bit confused when he had found himself at the receiving end of many batted eyelashes during Charms. Apparently Hufflepuffs liked mysterious boys who didn’t jump into a fight just for being teased a bit and obviously, making eyes at said boys for hours on end (and bestowing biscuits on them) was their way to approve. Well, Harry was just confused and felt a lot like he had after the Daily Prophet had proclaimed him as the ‘Chosen One’. (*) A lot of girls were giggling behind his back now and Harry had no idea what that was all about. Had he done something especially impressive without realising? Anyway, the strange behaviour seemed to at least make James’ day, or so Harry thought. He couldn’t know it was more Sirius’ sour expression to all the flirty attention Harry was getting that gave James more than one bout of hilarity.

Today had also been the first time he had actually been able to attend Muggle Arts. The teacher had seemed overly exited about Harry joining, but then again it was a rather small class. That was how he had ended where he was now, entranced in his own painting and smiling at the thought that as a student of Muggle Arts he was allowed to use the school supplies and the classroom whenever he felt like it.

Harry sighed and looked at his painting. It showed the inside of the Room of Requirement as it had looked for the DA. There were figures moving, not literally moving since this was Muggle Art, but painted in a blur to indicate their movements. Spellcasting. He had made sure not to paint any faces, but the Weasley red was hard to miss as was the bushy hazelnut brown of one of the shorter figures’ hair.

Shouldn’t he be looking for a way home? But he had no idea where to even start looking. There were so many questions he just couldn’t answer on his own and the Hogwarts library hadn’t helped him with this particular problem either. Time travel seemed to be a vastly unexplored subject and he wasn’t sure if he could risk enlisting help with his search. So many unanswered questions. Why reappearing at Hogwarts when his travel through time had started in Remus’ apartment? Harry remembered his previous experience with time meddling in his third year while rescuing Sirius – his godfather Sirius. There had been no change of place. Hermione and he had travelled through time, yes, but they had reappeared exactly where they had started their short journey. Maybe it had something to do with the length of the travel? Was it important how far back in time one travelled? Harry desperately had tried to remember his friend’s ramblings about the possibilities of time travel. He wasn’t too sure, but he seemed to vaguely recall Hermione telling him that only a few hours back in time were possible as of yet. Or then. Whatever.

But with him not only travelling back years, but also changing places the whole thing became even
more suspicious. As if someone had sent him here – to this time - on purpose and intentionally placing him in Hogwarts. The only persons Harry could imagine doing something like this were of course Voldemort – or Dumbledore. They would have different reasoning, but Harry believed both of them capable of such a feat.

“Nice brush,” a rough voice said from behind him and Harry jumped slightly.

Sirius had just wanted to retrieve Hadrian for dinner so the boy wouldn’t be able to skip food again. Of course, it had nothing to do with him feeling somewhat threatened by all the attention the boy now was getting everywhere he went. Of course not. It wasn’t exactly the flirtations that caused Sirius to feel somewhat queasy even though he definitely would prefer if Hadrian didn’t get that kind of attention at all. No, it was more the complete naivety the bloke went about with. He didn’t seem to recognise the type of attention he was getting. Though to be fair, even Sirius was sometimes confused by the kind of approaches Hadrian seemed to trigger these days.

He stopped in the doorway to the Muggle Arts classroom and stared. He couldn’t help himself.

Hadrian was wearing his shirt with the paint spatters on it. It somehow seemed to be the only one that fitted him perfectly which was kind of distracting with the paint drawing attention to the way the material hugged Hadrian’s form. The shirt had suddenly appeared on Thursday evening, pressed and folded like all their clothing in typical house-elf fashion, and attached to it had been a little note with a frantic scrawl apologizing for not being able to clean it appropriately. Sirius didn’t so much wonder over the note as it was typical house-elf behaviour to apologise for ridiculous things and more about the paint itself. How had it ended up on Hadrian’s shirt in the first place? He hadn’t been able to attend Muggle Arts on Monday and Sirius knew for a fact that Hadrian hadn’t been near anything else that could have caused so many different splatters.

Well. With the exception of his own magic. He had after all painted the Slytherins rather colourfully, the Marauders still got a good laugh here and there when they spotted one of them. It seemed like not even a Glamour was able to cover Hadrian’s magical paint.

Again. Sirius had again managed to sneak up on Harry. What the bloody hell had happened to CONSTANT VIGILANCE? How was it possible that Sirius seemed to be the only one (he didn’t count Dumbledore or future Snape who had just abilities that could creep everyone out) that managed to surprise him like that?

“Sirius,” he loathed how breathless he sounded and threw a dirty look at the other boy who was leaning way too casually for his own good in the doorway. “How the bloody hell d’you always do that?” He couldn’t help but asking. He really wanted to know, it was unnerving after all.

“Do what?” Sirius raised an eyebrow and made his way over to Hadrian.

He wasn’t surprised the boy hadn’t noticed him earlier what with his entranced state and all. Really, Hadrian’s magic was a right sight to look at – as was Hadrian himself. Sirius leaned around him to get a look at the aisle the boy had been working on, but had to tear his eyes away from those green eyes and towards the canvas. He felt his eyebrows rise even more.

“Sneak up on me like that!” Harry ignored his light flush at Sirius’ proximity and resisted the urge to step aside. He would not make it easier for him to look at his painting. Harry also thought since he had started this he would just go through with it and get his answer. “It’s not something just anyone
can do.” But bugger, he really could have phrased that better because now Sirius was bound to ask why it was supposedly so hard to sneak up on Harry.

But Sirius didn’t ask.

“I’m a Black,” he stated as if that would explain everything. But when Hadrian just blinked owlishly at him, he sighed and made the minute decision to indulge the boy. Just this once. “Growing up as the black sheep of the Black family,” he grinned somewhat wistfully at his own metaphor, “Let’s just say it’s quite beneficial to be able to move around with your magical signature masked.” He shrugged as if it didn’t concern him, but it was hard not to notice the sudden shadows on Hadrian’s face. What was that about?

Harry pondered Sirius’ words for a moment. He had known that Sirius wasn’t too happy with his family, or rather, he had known that his godfather had loathed everything concerning his Black heritage. But having teenage Sirius tell him that he had learned to hide his magical signature from his own family because it was safer… So it was a lot safer to be able to move around completely unnoticed, yes, he could understand that of course… But even in his own home? Or maybe especially in his own home?

Staring at the somewhat dark look on Hadrian’s face, Sirius noticed a streak of cornflower blue on his nose. He blinked. Hadrian had a smudge of paint on his face and didn’t seem to notice it. The bright blue ran in a diagonal over the bridge of his nose and Sirius was so tempted to let it stay there. And if Hadrian had been anyone else that would have been exactly his course of action.

“Hey, Moore?” He grinned when those hauntingly green eyes focused back on him. “Hold still for a moment, alright?”

He procured a handkerchief, courtesy of Mrs. Potter, and whispered a quick spell to moisten the fabric. Hadrian was watching his actions closely and Sirius couldn’t help but make an exaggerated movement to shake the handkerchief out like some flimsy muggle show wizard. Yes, Sirius actually knew about those.

“What are you-” He interrupted Hadrian with just a look. It was the kind of look that he normally wouldn’t show anyone except for Prongs and even his best mate had only been subjected to it some rare few times. Why? Well, let’s just say it was the kind of look that is way too honest about yourself. It’s unguarded and as a Black Sirius had learned early on that you should always be on guard especially when it comes to your true self. What was it about this boy that made looking at him like that feel so natural?

Sirius let his smirk soften just enough to show he really meant no harm. He had a feeling Hadrian had been raised similarly even though his eyes showed quite obviously everything and yet not enough. For a second Sirius wondered where he had seen this kind of eyes before.

“Hold still,” he said again somewhat hushed, “There’s just something on your face.”

Yeah, there was a bright blue smear of paint on his nose and damn if it didn’t look adorable. Sirius internally rolled his eyes at himself before he gently raised the handkerchief to Hadrian’s face. He noticed how Hadrian narrowed his eyes and tried to focus on his hand and the rest of Sirius at the same time. It was quite a bit sobering, but really – why should the boy trust him? As he dabbed at the paint, Hadrian wrinkled his nose, blinked and squinted to keep looking at the hand and Sirius knew.

Looking at the cross-eyed boy with the tousled hair and girly eyes behind hideous glasses he knew he was done for.
(*) So we’ve got the first mention of ‘Aloysius’. Just so Harry has a reason to use the name later on. ;)

(*) I know, the stuff with the Chosen One or rather its effects occurred during Harry’s sixth year, but well… so what. Technically it is his sixth year.
Sirius woke to muffled moans and whispering and for a moment his sleep hazed mind wanted both to congratulate whoever of his room mates got lucky and hex them for not using any silencing spells. Then there was a choked sob and Sirius was abruptly woken up fully. He turned and poked his head out through the curtains surrounding his bed, already a sinking feeling in his gut. He knew where those noises were coming from and ‘getting lucky’ was suddenly the last thing on his mind.

The curtains around Hadrian’s bed were slightly parted and ripped down as if someone – and he was pretty sure he knew this someone – had gripped onto them for support. He caught sight of the boy tossing and turning between the tangled sheets, hair sticking to sweat slicked skin and tears on a flushed face. He was gasping between frantic whispers and if it hadn’t been for the haunted look that contorted his features, Sirius’ mind would have jumped right back into the gutter. As it was there was no way he could ignore the sheer desperation that reeked from the other boy caught in his nightmare and he got up to wake him. He was just contemplating casting a silencing spell to spare Hadrian the humiliation of the others noticing when Rem’s low voice interrupted his thoughts.

“Again?” He asked quietly from the other side of the bed, his concerned and somehow slightly angry gaze locked on Hadrian’s restless form.

Sirius blinked. He could have sworn that his inner grim just recognized Rem in some weird animalistic way. It felt instinctual and watching the way his friend was looking at Hadrian he realised it was the protectiveness in that amber gaze that had caught his attention. Rem might have looked angry but he wasn’t angry at Hadrian but on his behalf. Sirius gave an agreeing grunt and they both reached out to gently shake a slim shoulder. It felt too frail beneath their touch and if the situation had been any different, Sirius would have thought their twin frowns amusing. Hadrian gasped loudly and nearly jumped out of his bed at the touch. He looked disoriented and Sirius just wanted to hug him.

“Hey there, sleepy head,” he instead announced his presence in a tone somewhere between teasing and calming. Something told him Hadrian would appreciate the lack of drama or attention to his situation. “Get up and treat your pretty little backside to a shower. I know a village that wants to be conquered today!”

Remus looked at him oddly for a moment, but went with it. He smiled reassuringly at Hadrian, wished him a good morning, and busied himself with some books on the floor between their beds. “Yeah, looks like you just secured yourself a date.”

“I… what?” Poor Hadrian was still looking confused, but the haunted look had left his features. At least, that’s what Sirius told himself, steadfastly ignoring the shadows still lurking in the misty forest eyes.

“You think he actually has a Hogsmeade permission form?” Rem’s voice was still quiet though there really was no need for it any longer. Prongs was lying awake on his bed, a frown on his face and Wormy never woke up from mere talking in his proximity.

Sirius looked at the closed door of the en suite and heaved a slightly weary sigh. Well, shit. He hadn’t thought about that. Considering the circumstances of Hadrian’s arrival at Hogwarts it really
should have been obvious though.

“Well, if he doesn’t he just has to use one of the passages,” he decided and sent a challenging glance at Prongs, but his best mate just grinned cheekily and conquered with an all too knowing look. Ugh. When had he become this transparent?

“I was thinking if he doesn’t, we should take him to Gringott’s during Christmas holidays,” James suddenly interrupted his thoughts. “Remember that letter? Dad said there are no Moores in the family, but come on, look at him!” He sat up abruptly and gestured to his own untameable hair to prove his point. “He is so definitely a Potter somewhere in there and even if it’s as much removed as Hogwarts has gossiping portraits, it’s still Potter blood.”

“Your point?”

“Well, let’s just assume for a moment that he really is a runaway. And considering the state he was in when he arrived here it’s more than likely that he is also disinherited or at least it means his guardians aren’t the most interested people regarding his well-being.” Prongs leaned back against the head board of his bed, a smug smirk making itself known. “If we prove there’s Potter blood somewhere in his lineage and no one claims guardianship, then he would automatically fall under the jurisdiction of the Head of Potter House.”

He didn’t say it out loud, but if Hadrian had some Potter blood and it was confirmed that his living conditions weren’t what they should be, then the Head of Potter House, namely James’ father, could assume custody. And that would give Lord Fleamont Potter the right to make any decisions concerning a guardian and living arrangements until Hadrian’s seventeenth birthday. Sirius couldn’t believe he hadn’t thought of that himself. He hadn’t even asked James about the letter he had written in regards to Hadrian after that awful Potions accident. Well, that’s what you get for becoming a drooling hormonal mess.

Remus shifted uncomfortably in his place. He probably really should say something now. He would be able to save them a lot of juristic stress with the knowledge the map had provided him with. But something – and he really wished he could trace it back to something tangible – had him hesitating again. He wanted to protect Harry and couldn’t even explain why. Or why he thought it wouldn’t be in Harry’s best interest to share the knowledge of his real identity with the rest of the Marauders just yet. Clearly they wanted to help him, too.

But just as clearly Harry wanted to hide his identity which meant there had to be a reason for this farce. Frowning over the enigma that was Harry Potter, Remus suddenly was reminded of the day he had woken up in the infirmary after the last full moon. He thought of the way Madam Pomfrey and Dumbledore had acted around the boy, how they had quite obviously tried to keep something secret. At the time Remus had thought it was about Harry’s health or maybe about his home situation and he could accept the need for privacy. Now though there was not only the fact of a hidden identity, but also the fact that said identity linked him to one of Remus’ best friends.

Peter couldn’t believe what he was hearing. Was James really suggesting what he thought he was? If they went through with that, it would practically make Moore James’ brother or at least a cousin and maybe he would even live at the Potter estate.

That Sirius was all for having the new bloke in his reach wasn’t surprising. Peter had seen the signs long before everyone else and knew how much his friend wanted that guy. Easy lays had always been Sirius’ weak spot, though he had to give Moore credit for using the situation to his advantage. He was quite effectively harbouring most of Sirius’ attention and was enjoying all the merits there
were in being Sirius Black’s fancy. And as far as Peter could tell, all without actually acting on said
dandy.

But back to James’ suggestion. He listened a bit longer to his friends discussing the matter of
Moore’s possible heritage and noted how uncharacteristically close mouthed Moony was. That was
another suspicious matter Peter had no explanation for yet. Sirius he could understand on some level.
He was hormone driven and would probably lose interest as soon as he got what he wanted. James
was fascinated by the bloke’s possible relation to his family and who could resent that given the
obvious magical power Moore possessed and the shrivelling number of actual Potters. But Remus’
intentions didn’t add up for Peter.

Yes, of course, the werewolf was notoriously polite and in some rare cases even friendly, but his
interest in Moore seemed far above his usual demeanour. And he was relatively sure that it couldn’t
be another case of hormonal takeover since he knew Remus only tended to be flirtatious nearing
each full moon. Though it was under the influence of Moony, Peter was sure his friend’s preference
lay with the birds.

Turns out they could have ignored the matter of Hadrian’s lack of a Hogsmeade permission form.
Apparently that matter got taken care of in the same way as Hadrian’s permission to attend whatever
classes he chose.

Now, waiting on Rem who had wanted to change into some warmer clothes, they were all seated
somehow in the Gryffindor common room. The room was rather crowded, but Sirius was happily
ignoring all attempts to engage him into conversation that was supposed to lead him into inviting
some girl to Hogsmeade. Lazily ensconced in one of the stuffy chairs, he had been watching Prongs’
latest attempt to do just that with Evans, but his eyes were drawn back to another black haired figure.

Hadrian was short, shorter than most male students around him, and still too thin. But there was no
denying that he was well-built. Not like the good-looking James who was tall and all that manly
stuff, though there were the odd similarities again. Where James was all long and lanky legs
combined with broad shoulders, Hadrian’s physique looked lithe, the bones somewhat delicate and
he lacked the broad shoulders. He looked more like Evans who was just escaping from Prongs’
wooing to his side of the room - though Hadrian of course had nothing like her formidable bust or
racy hips. With those two it seemed to be something in the bone structure and body language that
resembled each other. Odd.

When Sirius actually found himself wondering whether Hadrian had as nice a bum as Lily too (he
would love to compare his memory of Hadrian’s backside in the shower with a lot of other nice butts
around), he shook himself perplexed. Well, yes, he could admire good looks on both genders and
there were the experimental gropes during his fourth year - Quidditch practice provided the perfect
opportunities not to mention the changing rooms and shared showers. He had even gone so far as to
snog one of his team mates when the bloke actually had the balls to ask him out. He thought it was a
good way to acknowledge the courage one needed to ask Sirius Black on a date. The date never took
place after the snogging session and Sirius abandoned the idea of shagging a bloke after that. It
wasn’t that it had been a particularly bad snog and he still admired the well-shaped forms of his team
mates, but it hadn’t really done much for him either. It was easier with girls or maybe it just felt less
serious with them since he was known for being a flirt and for never sticking long with the same
bird.

Why did it feel like more of an obligation when he thought about doing anything with a bloke? And
why did this feeling of obligation did not stop him from thinking about Hadrian in the same context?
They were walking down the High Street of Hogsmeade, Prongs sulking over the next suffered rebuff from Evans, Wormy bouncing animatedly about and already listing aloud what he wanted to buy at Honeydukes and Remus answering Hadrian’s questions to Hogsmeade’s range of reasonable book shops. Sirius was listening only half-heartedly as he was casting his thoughts about for a reason to get Hadrian alone.

Now that he had admitted to himself that he was attracted to the boy in addition to that strange need to protect him, he thought it only logical to get to know him better. Yes, he still wanted to enlighten the secrets that surrounded Hadrian Moore, but somehow his curiosity had shifted its focus. He wanted to know what kind of person Hadrian was, what he liked and disliked, what he thought about a variety of topics and maybe, just maybe, find a way to help him with those nightmares of his. And if that wasn’t a scary development. But listening to the boy’s inquiries, he realised that Hadrian seemed to plan on spending the whole day at Tomes and Scrolls and that would not do.

Harry was nervous.

No, he was gut churning, constant tremor to his body, and sweaty palms afraid. The week had gone by way too quick and he knew his time was running out. He had focused so much on the people surrounding him in this time that he had let his determination to find any information concerning his creature inheritance slip. And his time was fucking running out! It could happen any time now, maybe today, maybe tomorrow, but surely in the next 48 hours. And here he was standing in a shop at Hogsmeade that was selling any kind of clothing.

“Well?” Sirius’ impatient voice drew him out of his head and he looked up to find the other student standing in front of him and holding up different kinds of shirts for him to inspect. “What d’you think? They had no real emerald, but I kinda like this one here.”

Harry focused on the dress shirt Sirius was waving in his face and had to admit that it did look great. On first glance it looked to be black, but when the light caught in the fabric, he realised, it was a really dark green. Like a shade shy of black green.

“Erm,” he looked up from the material – was that bloody silk? – and into Sirius’ eyes. “Told you, I don’t have the money to buy any of this.” In fact, he had no money at all. Which was another reason why he had wanted to spend the day rooting through book shops.

“And I told you to shut up,” Sirius quipped and deposited the shirt in Harry’s arms alongside what looked to be a slim fitted hoodie and a pyjama of all things. “Now be a good little lion and try these on while I check out those sexy jeans over there.”

And just like that did Harry find himself in the changing room. Were those winking cupcakes on the pyjama bottoms?

Chapter End Notes

So I'm looking for a small paragraph, a quotation from the story, to use as a new summary. Any suggestions?
They left the shop with huge shopping bags containing a new set of work robes and a few simple white shirts to fill the gap in Harry’s school wardrobe. In addition to the admittedly needed pieces and to Harry’s horror, Sirius had bought piles of other stuff Harry hadn’t gotten a chance to really look at. But he could have sworn the freaking winking cupcake pyjamas had found their way into the shopping bags and he rather doubted Sirius had bought them to wear himself. He had even added the threat of a more elaborate shopping tour once they had the chance to leave the confinements of Hogsmeade. He happily chatted about all the muggle shopping malls he would take Harry to, to round off his wardrobe with at least ten different t-shirts with “all those cool muggle designs”.

Harry had no idea how things managed to develop in this way and was utterly overwhelmed with the enthusiastic whirlwind that was Sirius on a shopping spree. But if he had thought they were finished now, he was in for a surprise.

They met the others in front of Honeydukes and Harry couldn’t help but inhale those sweet scents wafting through the crisp autumn air deeply and rather gratefully for it promised a little respite from being tugged through each and every shop that sold any kind of clothing. He smiled when he caught sight of Remus snacking on one of those big chocolate bars he had favoured in his time, too, and ignored the faint twinge in his chest at the thought of his time. Right now he really should be thinking about other things. Right. His next stop should definitely be Tomes and Scrolls and then maybe that smaller shop Remus had mentioned on their way down High Street. The group was drifting to Hogsmeade’s number one for Quidditch supplies and Harry was just about to excuse himself when an arm landed around his shoulders.

He jumped.

Sirius backed away immediately, an unreadable expression on his face, and Harry felt like he had just kicked the literal puppy. He wasn’t always conscious of his reactions to touch, but he remembered the way his godfather had looked at him when he first noticed it. Ever since then Harry had made sure to never flinch when his godfather hugged him. He cherished those touches and couldn’t bear the thought that Sirius thought otherwise. He wasn’t sure, but to this day he wondered if his godfather had assumed Harry’s reaction was about him being an Azkaban escapee. The thought hurt. He didn’t want this younger and still so… alive… version of Sirius believe the same thing. It wasn’t about Sirius, it was him, it was Harry. But how was he supposed to explain this without giving away all those things he wasn’t allowed to talk about?

The sudden silence around them made Harry realise that their little interlude hadn’t gone unnoticed and his cheeks heated up. He couldn’t meet their eyes.

“Actually, Padfoot,” James spoke up after a few uncomfortable seconds in which Hadrian avoided looking at any of them, Sirius stared at the boy with the kind of frown that told his friend he was
trying to hide something, Peter looking on expectantly and Moony looking torn. “Didn’t you say you wanted to check out Maestro’s? We can meet up for lunch in the Three Broomsticks after that.”

He caught his best mate’s eye and nodded at Hadrian with just the hint of a smirk. The slight widening of Sirius’ eyes might have been barely noticeable, but James knew what it stood for. Oh he loved this new, easily flustered side of his friend.

“Er yeah,” Sirius agreed nonetheless, “Heard there are new records. Let’s go, alright?”

He nudged Hadrian’s shoulder slightly, trying to conceal how painfully careful he tried to be. Seeing the boy shy away from his touch had felt like he had been slapped. Really, there was no reason for him to think Hadrian would react differently to his touch than to anyone else’s, but still… Maybe he had just fooled himself into believing it was alright for him to touch Hadrian since he had done so before without a negative reaction. But then again… Hadrian had always been either aware that he was about to be touched or he hadn’t been aware of much of anything. Unbidden, the memory of Hadrian in the owlery forced its way to the forefront of his mind, bringing with it that hazy cloud of rage. Though, it abruptly abated when Hadrian agreed to accompany him without much fuss.

They entered Dominic Maestro’s shop and Sirius shoved his insecurities down. Insecurities, his ass. This was so not his thing. He would not let those bloody hurt feelings ruin his day – or his time with Hadrian for that matter. That was another development that even if not surprising still amazed him. Spending time with Hadrian was nothing like spending time with one of the countless girls he had gone out with. Nor was it like spending time with the Marauders even though there were similarities there – like the banter, or friendly discussions. It was easygoing but difficult at the same time, actually rather like Hadrian himself. Like doing something you know you aren’t allowed to but still really, really want to do and enjoying it even more for the fact that it’s forbidden. And oh so exhilarating. Sirius snorted at himself as thoughts of the ‘forbidden fruit’ managed to make themselves known.

Oh he was so done for.

They perused the shelves of the only magical music shop Sirius knew that had nothing to do with instruments as such. Maestro’s was a shop completely dedicated to the muggle invention of vinyl records since those were the only music devices that worked in proximity to magic. Out of the corner of his eye Sirius watched the look of confusion on Hadrian’s face morph into something akin to fascination. Probably never had the chance to listen to anything else than wizarding wireless, Sirius thought and smirked at the prospect of introducing the boy to the wonders of muggle music. Ironic as it was that he, heir to one of the Most Ancient and Noble Houses, Pureblood supreme, seemed to know more about something like this than-

And that was when Sirius realised just how little he knew about Hadrian’s life before Hogwarts.

Of course, they had speculated about a possibly bad home situation emphasized by the simple facts of Hadrian’s appearance at the castle and the lack of any owl post, not to mention the nightmares and general aura of neglect. But that was also why they hadn’t really asked him much of anything that didn’t concern school or vague general stuff.

How had Hadrian been raised? His amazement over vinyl records hinted at a more magical oriented upbringing, but then again it could just be that he liked music and hadn’t known about such a shop at Hogsmeade. He didn’t even know if Hadrian’s parents were still alive – even though he wasn’t sure if he wanted them to be, neglectful as they obviously had been – or if he had siblings. And he wanted to know. He wanted to know every little detail about the short boy with the messy bed hair that was just examining a record of Queen’s newest album.
“I remember that band…,” Hadrian muttered and then seemed to become aware of Sirius standing right next to him. “I mean, I listened to them before. But this cover here,” he waved the colourful but unmoving front cover of *A Day At the Races* slightly, “Looks just a bit like the Hogwarts emblems, doesn’t it?”

Sirius couldn’t resist but smile back at Hadrian’s simple joy over his discovery. So he knew Queen which would be rather unavoidable as a Muggleborn or even Halfblood. That band was all over the muggle news, after all.

“I always thought Freddy Mercury’s voice is kinda like magic,” he jested and grinned at Hadrian’s eye roll. Did he catch that hint at another song of Queen’s or was it just the more lame part of Sirius’ joke that caused his reaction? “But he’s no wizard as far as I know,” Sirius added thoughtfully, “Nor are any of the other members. Maybe a squib though?”

Hadrian snorted at that and proceeded to place the record back on the shelf with a care that neared reverence. Sirius had to quell the urge to just buy it for him and reminded himself harshly that he was not one of those stuck up prats that thought they could buy someone’s favour. He had already justified a whole lot of purchases for the boy with the excuse that he really needed more of a wardrobe. It had been way too much fun to watch the horrified, incredulous and at the same time awed look on Hadrian’s face each time another article was shoved into his hands. Suddenly he was glad he already had tasked Rem to purchase some things at Scrivenshaft’s for Hadrian so he couldn’t talk himself out of it now. Humming *A Kind of Magic* under his breath, he purchased the album for himself. Yes, he definitely did it for himself and it had nothing to do with the fact that they would use the gramophone in the common room for all – Hadrian included – to listen to it. (*)

His magic prickled along his skin and Harry could feel the beginnings of the kind of headache that he was by now connecting to his wild magic. Or rather to the toll his magic took on his body. It originated behind his eyes and wasn’t a good sign on a ‘normal’ day and a far worse sign considering that he hadn’t even used his magic ever since yesterday’s classes.

After the situation with the Slytherins that ended up with them playing canvas and him coughing out his lungs, he had realised that his magic seemed to act up the most when he got caught up in his emotions. Not that that really was anything new, after all he had always suffered from accidental magic even after starting to attend Hogwarts. But because it was such a normal thing for him to happen he hadn’t really considered that being an emotional wreck was probably also the reason for his ever more slipping control. It was a vicious circle, if he thought about it. All that additional and constantly increasing magic reacted with his teenage hormones or something along those lines, making him feel like the slightest nudge would cause an explosion of the emotional kind that he really didn’t fancy. Add in the stress of the whole situation he was in and such explosions were bound to happen, making his magic lash out and attacking his already lacking health each time. It was making the effect his rising magic had on him even worse.

He had thought he was getting better ever since the time travel – and if that wasn’t an ironic development – but now he really wasn’t all that sure anymore. Considering the fact that they were being cornered by colourful Slytherins after a tiring shopping spree, maybe he shouldn’t be too surprised that his body was reacting the way it did. And what was that itching feeling along his neck and scalp?

Harry tried to shake away the nagging headache and mentally berated himself for the dumb action. Moving his head in a fast abrupt way really wasn’t the most intelligent thing to do right now. But he needed to concentrate. They were two against three and he would not think about how ridiculously déjà-vu this kind of scene felt like. Him with a friend facing off against three Slytherins. Really, it was not the time for inner sarcasm and it was not funny how Rabastan Lestrange seemed to have the
same habit as Malfoy in prancing around with two cronies that were obviously more brawn than brains. Not funny at all, nope. The difference lay with his own company. Sirius was nothing like Ron or Hermione as he sneered at the impending green doom in a fashion that made him look every inch the superior Pureblood his family had probably raised him to act like. It was a nice change, though, not to be on the receiving end of this kind of sneer. Though, looking at the cold eyes of Lestrange he wasn’t sure if the kind of dead indifference he found there was any better.

“Found you,” said creep smiled eerily and Harry tightened his grip on his wand. “I think, it’s time that you cancel whatever bloody spell you put on us, Cousin.”

Cousin? Harry frowned confused and chanced a glance at Sirius. It was an unfamiliar experience for him not to be the centre of attention – and mind you, he wasn’t complaining – but it also meant that someone else had to be. In this case Lestrange again directed his demand at Sirius and wait, did he say cousin? Somehow Harry’s thoughts felt more and more scattered the longer he tried to concentrate.

“Tell me, Lestrange,” Sirius asked in what sounded like honest curiosity or maybe fascination. “When you encounter a boggart… does it turn into a mirror?” (*)

Well, mostly honest if you ignored the mockingly wide eyes and overly innocent expression. It took Harry a second to understand the affront in that question – all due to his headache, obviously! – but when he did, he hastily took great interest in the dumb expression of one of Lestrange’s lackeys. Somehow he thought laughing right now would not exactly help the situation. The look in those icy eyes of Rabastan Lestrange though was probably intimidating, but still… Harry couldn’t find it in him to care too much. He rather liked the disregarding way Sirius was acting right now, even though part of Harry didn’t feel cocky at all. What the hell was wrong with him?

“You might want to rethink your course of action on this, Black.” The threat in Lestrange’s voice was unmistakable and reminded Harry of just who this was. Or who this would be. Harry wondered if his wild magic was responsible for his flighty thought process.

“Yes, I’m quite sorry about that, really, I am,” Sirius said. Oh yeah, he really sounded oh so sorry. “It’s just that your ugly visage made me wonder if you were an unregistered Animagus.”

Could someone please make him stop? Lestrange probably didn’t even know about the self-mockery that comparison insinuated and he still looked like he was on the verge of doing something more stupid Harry had thought him capable of. Actually, Harry had no idea why he himself felt so detached and somewhat unfazed by the danger someone like Lestrange definitely posed. Maybe it was the buzzing in his ears? Or the fact that the itching feeling along his scalp and neck slowly turned into a burning sensation?

“Well,” James’ voice suddenly sounded from behind them, “I’d say, it’s pretty obvious he didn’t get an O.W.L. in Transfiguration. Otherwise he would’ve done something about that thing he calls his face, right?”

This time Harry couldn’t help himself. He snickered and even to his own ears it sounded somewhat breathless. His skin hurt and everything just felt so unreal. He was pretty sure his magic was acting up again, but somehow he couldn’t bring himself to really care.

Sirius had hoped to avoid this kind of situation. To be honest, the Marauders had anticipated another ambush by the Slytherins because yeah, they had pretty much left that business unfinished. But being with Hadrian had the unexpected effect of making him feel like they were in their own little world.
He hadn’t spent another thought for the Slytherins and the possible threat they were posing ever since he had gone off shopping with Hadrian. Now, standing just around the corner to the Three Broomsticks, tossing insults back and forth with Rabastan Lestrange, he couldn’t help but feel utterly unprepared. Of course, their friends were probably just around said corner, but the group of three was effectively blocking their way to the pub.

But that wasn’t the real reason why he reverted back to his habit of making pseudo-witty remarks to hide his internal worry. The real reason why he felt like cursing a certain famous dead wizard’s balls was standing next to him, shuddering from the force of his own magic.

Chapter End Notes

(*) The Queen references...
Actually the mentioned album 'A Day At the Races' was published in Decembre 1976 which would be about three month after the current date in the story, but hey... magic. It's not my favourite record of Queen, but the cover really did remind me of Hogwarts' house emblems. Have a look:
A Day At the Races
Personally, I prefer the record that also includes the song Sirius is humming:
A Kind of Magic (official video)

(*) A boggart is a shape-shifting non-being that takes on the form of the viewer's worst fear. You know, that thing that turns into a full moon for Remus. So Sirius is asking Rabastan if he is so concerned about his looks that a boggart would turn into a mirror for him.
In which darkness consumes it all

Chapter Notes

Sorry for making you wait so long. Had to fight a nasty migraine these last days that wouldn't let me look at a display. But well, here we are. Time for the first stage of Harry's creature inheritance!

“Well,” James said from behind him when they rounded the corner, “I’d say, it’s pretty obvious he didn't get an O.W.L. in Transfiguration. Otherwise he would've done something about that thing he calls his face, right?”

His voice was a mocking drawl, but Remus knew his friend was already analysing the situation they found themselves in and the possible ways to solve the obvious issue. The magic around here was tangible. It was just a matter of time until anyone else would pick up on it. They had been following the ominous itching feeling in the air that somehow only Remus seemed to notice. He had recognised it instantly as Hadrian’s wild magic with the wonky edge to it that became so apparent whenever he was about to lose control. Since Hadrian was supposed to be with Sirius, the Marauders hadn’t hesitated to follow the trail just around the corner.

What they came upon wasn’t surprising, really, but it wasn’t the Slytherins that drew Remus’ attention. He had had his suspicions. Of course he had. Ever since he had noticed the sheer amount of unstable magic that constantly fluctuated around Hadrian, Remus had started to watch out for signs that would support his theory. There had been plenty. The magic itself that felt just too much like James’ had last year was just the starting point. He couldn’t exactly explain what it was about it since he wasn’t trained in the matter, but it definitely felt similar. Then the flailing control over said magic combined with the emotional outbursts. Though, it rubbed Remus the wrong way how all this magic affected Hadrian – that was a definite difference to James. His friend had never had any negative after effects from his accidental magic. If there had been any after effects at all, it had been a bit of tiredness and one time a slight soreness to his muscles. Really, James had reacted much more to the emotional component of his possible inheritance. But then again, James’ outbursts had not been as powerful as Hadrian’s. It was really no surprise the boy’s control was as poor as it was with such an amount of rogue power. And then, of course, Hadrian’s real identity. His last clue, so to speak.

It was the reason why Remus had wanted to read the inheritance book of the Potters. So, no, it came as no real surprise that he could determine the signals Hadrian gave off. And boy, did he show signs. It was a wonder no one else had pieced it together by now. Or maybe some had but couldn’t determine what kind of inheritance was building there right in front of their eyes. If they had realised it… well, Remus was pretty sure things would have turned out a lot dirtier.

But he hadn’t known if Hadrian himself knew. Creature inheritances were a very private thing, especially those inherent to specific family lines. It wasn’t just the pureblood shit and all that blood purity rot that played into such a situation. It was also the fact that certain creatures were very sought after for various reasons. It could be positively dangerous to have a creature inheritance if one didn’t inherit the gene of a more common creature. Veelas for example were not only protected by law that granted them the same rights as any witch or wizard, they were also common enough that a certain acceptance had built. Of course, there would always be prejudice just like there would always be about Muggleborns. But something as rare as an Elf Owl, an inheritance only seen in one wizarding
line for the last two hundred years and on top of that considered extinct for over a generation… there would be more than just prejudice to fear.

Hadrian’s breathless snicker drew the attention of all of them. Sirius saw the murderous glint in Lestrange’s eyes and didn’t stop to think before he acted. He threw out a stunner at the Slytherin, consequences be damned, and was just about to count himself lucky that he didn’t miss when he heard the pained sound.

He whirled around, trusting his friends to have his back, and watched Hadrian clasp his hand over a bloody gash in his cloak. Cutting Curse. Holy shit, Lestrange had really used a curse with the clear intention to do actual harm. And judging from the location of the injury on Hadrian’s left upper arm and the sudden movement of Lestrange’s arm that Sirius’ stunner had caused… had he really intended to hit Hadrian square in the chest with a fucking Cutting Curse?!

“Sirius!” Rem’s voice drew him out of his rage induced thoughts and Sirius looked up to find all three Slytherins incapacitated in one way or another. “We need to get him away from the open street!” His friend was hurrying over, Prongs and Wormy hot on his heels. He blinked and looked back to Hadrian, his eyes going wide.

The distinct feeling of illness. Again. It was like earlier this summer all over again. Like he had caught the flu and was slowly developing the accompanying symptoms – only not as slowly anymore. His skin burned, but he couldn’t see any cause. Every muscle was starting to ache underneath it all, but why? Every thud of his heart reverberated in his head and oh that hurt. He barely felt the gash on his arm anymore, there was just so much pain overall. When had his magic started to leap around him so much?

It was happening. That was it. He would have his creature inheritance in the middle of Hogsmeade in front of the Marauders. The panic about it all set in nearly instantly, pushing away the strange distanced feeling from before.

Hands. Hands on his shoulders and fuck did the touch have to hurt like that? Was it his skin or was it the hands? It didn’t matter, he had to rein his magic in if someone was this near. Only he couldn’t. His magic had grown far beyond the rushing current on his skin. It was swishing around him, tendrils of colourful power that were just a thread of his control away from lashing out at everything and everyone.

The hands on his shoulders gave a little shake and Harry finally focused on the person in front of him. Sirius was searching his face for something and as Harry’s eyes met his he seemed to find it. Behind him James and Pettigrew were levitating the three Slytherins out of the immediate view and there was Remus standing to his left bandaging something over the cut in his arm.

“Moore, take a breath. We did this before, remember?” Sirius voice drew Harry’s gaze back to him. “Breathe with me. Come on. You can do this,” he said and made a show of taking a breath himself, never looking away from Harry’s eyes.

But damn breathing hurt, too. It seemed to burn something inside of him.

“There’s no time for this,” Remus’ voice cut in. “He needs to be away from prying eyes yesterday.” He had finished the improvised bandage on Harry’s arm and gave a hissing sound when the volatile magic itched a little too much on his skin.
“Alright, where to?” James stepped up, helping to shield them from any passer-bys. Harry couldn’t help it, his eyes latched onto the form of his father, searching his eyes for the realisation about what was going on with Harry. For the moment though, James seemed to have pushed away everything else and was completely concentrating on the issue at hand.

“There’s a shortcut to the Shrieking Shack,” Remus said and nodded to a small hidden-away alley a few shops down the street. “Let’s take him there and fast.” His tone of voice left no room for discussion, but one Marauder didn’t seem to have caught on to the danger of the situation. Or he had and that knowledge now fuelled his own words.

“We can’t take him there! H-he will find out!” Wormtail nearly squeaked in his rush to get the words out. “And we shouldn’t be near him anyway. He’s dangerous!”

As if to confirm the accusation, Harry’s magic leaped up even more and one tendril lashed out like a whip towards the panicked boy. Harry’s breath hitched in his throat and he screwed his eyes shut in an attempt to stop it all. He felt like he was standing in the midst of some kind of storm, in the eye of the storm, and his grip on his magic was running through his fingers the more his concentration faded. It was so hard not to just give in and let it take over.

“He’s…,” he whispered out hoarsely, bringing the attention back to himself. “He’s right. You should… should go.” A part of him wanted to rage and rant at that, but Wormtail was right. Harry was dangerous like this, he couldn’t stop his magic any longer, and Gods he didn’t want to hurt them!

“Shut it, Moore,” a voice snapped at him. “I’m not leaving you alone like this. And now move your arse or I’m gonna throw you over my shoulder like some sack of doxy eggs.” Sirius. That was Sirius. Harry blinked a few times, trying to focus on them again, but his vision was as fuzzy as his head.

“But…”

“No buts, Hadrian,” Remus’ gentle voice had a hard edge to it. “Just try to hold it together a few more minutes and let us take care of you.”

“We can’t do this! He’s going to blow everything up!”

“Moony, is this what I think it is?”

The hands on his shoulders steered Harry around and he stumbled and swayed his way down the street. If it weren’t for those hands he would have met the ground after the first few steps. But Sirius didn’t let go of him, although the highly concentrated magic around Harry must have hurt him by now. He also kept up a constant murmur of soothing nonsense right by Harry’s ear. And Harry gave in. There was no way he could protest this anyway, his magic wasn’t giving him any choice.

None of them saw the tall figure cloaked in teacher’s robes that watched them leave.

They made it to the Shrieking Shack before Hadrian could really blow something – or someone – up. The last few yards were mostly Sirius and James dragging the boy, because Rem’s more sensitive werewolf senses made it ever more hurtful for him to be near Hadrian. The magic was impressive and bloody terrifying. Sirius could understand the fear Wormy obviously felt, but there was no way they would leave someone behind who couldn’t even stand on his own two feet anymore. Not to mention the pain that radiated off of Hadrian. It was like they could feel it themselves the longer they stayed close and Sirius swore he felt his inner grim prowl in some corner of his mind. Rem was
casting Notice-Me-Nots all around them on their way and they managed to sneak into the old hut unnoticed. Or so they thought.

“Up you go,” Sirius heard himself say encouragingly, not letting his own fear seep into his voice. “Just a little farther… yeah, just like that… only the steps…”

They closed every door behind them, Remus throwing some shields up which Sirius wouldn’t think about in detail purpose wise. They were obviously meant to hold something in and not to stop someone from following them. Up the stairs and into the ransacked bedroom Rems always used in those first few hours after turning back to his human form on a full moon.

“Alright, set him down on the bed and then out and down the corridor to the trap door,” his friend instructed them and Sirius gaped.

“Out? Like in leaving him alone?”

Every other protest was cut short by Hadrian’s pained gasping as he curled in on himself on the bed. The four of them – or rather three since Peter hadn’t even entered the room – took one look and backed away automatically. Hadrian’s magic had stopped to lash about and was now drawing in around the boy’s body. It still glowed in all those different colours, so unlike the normally monochrome magic of a spell. Hadrian’s skin had taken on a feverish tint and there was sweat making his hair stick to his skin. As they watched there was a sudden ripping sound and the fabric of his clothes started to rip and tear in seemingly random places. There was nothing that would explain it happening but the magic around the boy. Hadrian’s breath came in short gasps and for a moment everything stopped. The rushing sound that had somehow built around them on their way to the shack suddenly dropped away. Everything was utterly still for a long second.

Then Hadrian looked up and met Sirius’ eyes across the room.

Harry wasn’t really conscious anymore when they arrived at the Shrieking Shack. He felt the Marauders around him, heard scraps of their conversation, but wasn’t able to grasp the meaning of any of it. All there was for him was the rushing and leaping of his magic, running through his grip and trying to attack whatever was in reach. But he wouldn’t let it. He bit down on his lip, drawing blood in an attempt to not fucking let go. He would not hurt them.

Then there was sudden softness and he felt himself being lowered on something cool. A bed maybe? It didn’t matter, because from one moment to the next his whole world reduced itself to one sensation and one alone.

Hot, white pain pierced from the inside of his head and through his eyes. Harry didn’t even realise that he had lifted his head or that he was looking at Sirius when his pupils dilated far more than what should be humanly possible. They grew wide and made his eyes look totally blown out of proportion, but Harry didn’t notice any of that.

All he felt was the blinding pain and then the darkness that started to creep in from the edges of his vision. Everything went dark and all that was left was the terrifying thought how utterly lonely darkness could be.
In which there is only one important question

Chapter Notes

So I was looking after my nephew who was running a fever and that reminded me of something... I'm not sure when, but I would like to write a Master of Death!Harry story with baby Teddy. Maybe crossover. Because Harry taking care of baby Teddy is just chocolaty cuteness, especially in connection with the horrors of MoD and all those possibilities...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.” (*)

What do you know about that… didn’t you gave up on your dreams when you led your love drift away? But I… I was never even allowed to dream.

“The truth… It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution.” (*)

The truth never does me any good. It hurts, it only hurts to know that he wasn’t strong enough to stand up against you. I could have lived with him. Grimmauld was safe enough for everyone else, why not me?

“We must try not to sink beneath our anguish, Harry, but battle on.” (*)

Oh hell no. As if he ever did anything else. He always went on. And on and on and on. He just wanted it all to stop, this madness that had become his life… why could he never be just normal?

The remembered words drifted through the darkness, a voice he still knew so well now felt distant at the same time. As if the ears with which he had heard them were different from those that listened to them now. Only that this person wasn’t here now, speaking to him, but only in his head. But did that make him any less real?

Harry felt… strange. There really was no single word to describe how he felt right now. There was a heavy feeling that seemed to hover over his mind, made him hunch down internally. He nearly snorted. But it was true, he really felt like his mind was shying away from the heavy presence that felt unknown and familiar at the same time. And then there were the flashes. Literally flashes that reminded him of spells, but their colours weren’t right. He wasn’t even sure that he would be able to determine the colours and that really was just weird. He should at least be able to name them, right?

With the flashes came the voice and memories and the distanced feeling… as if he was distancing himself from those memories. They were his and yet not. They were part of another life, he realised. Before everything had changed, before he had been pushed through time and space by who knows what and became someone else. Here he wasn’t the infamous Boy-Who-Lived or even the dreaded Chosen One. Although one could definitely say that for all his supposed being different he still possessed his special type of trouble indrawing luck.

Oh yeah, his luck. Or maybe karma? He distantly remembered Aunt Petunia wax about some article she had read in one of her brightly coloured Another-Diet-A-Week magazines. And how she had
sniffed at him from her comfortable seat on one of the garden loungers while he tended to her roses and told him that he probably had accumulated more bad karma than what should be possible. Because he wasn’t normal and would never be. Then she had continued with the typical speech about how he should be grateful that they still had taken him in even with the risk of his ‘bad karma’ polluting their home. He had just barely held his temper in check at that moment, but now it just seemed so absurd.

Harry mentally shrugged and focused back on his former train of thoughts. His luck that had made sure that – of course – he would inherit one of the rarest creature genes the Wizarding World knew and then – of course – manifest a creature that no one had managed to manifest in decades. Of fucking course. So he wasn’t Harry bloody Potter here and maybe he would never have to be him again. But still he wasn’t allowed to be normal.

The ominous and heavy presence seemed to twitch at that thought. Huh. What was that thing? It didn’t feel like the blackened abyss he associated with the damn Horcrux thingy in his head that had started to niggle sometime last year, but had stopped to do so when he ended up in the past. No, this presence felt different. It was dark and light at the same time. And those flashes were colourful and felt so… familiar. Yes, they brought the memories, but somehow… somehow…

Had he passed out? Harry slowly blinked his eyes open. Or so he thought. When nothing came into view he frowned and blinked again, this time in rapid succession. Still nothing. Maybe he was still unconscious? But then he wouldn’t be aware of the bed underneath his prone form or the stale air around him, right? Harry bit his lip and focused all his admittedly rather drained energy on opening his eyes. He was sure he did it. But he still couldn’t see anything and not in the it’s-too-dark-to-really-see-anything sense. No, there was just nothing.

His breath caught in his throat. He couldn’t see! He couldn’t see the tiniest outline of anything, there was just a huge gaping nothingness. He was blind. He was alone in the fucking darkness of his mind with an ominous presence and-

“Hey, hey, hey,” a soothing voice said from next to him and Harry jumped. Or he tried to, but his limbs just twitched pitifully at the action. “Shh it’s alright, you’re not alone, I’m here…” With a startling clarity Harry recognised Sirius’ voice. For a moment though he thought he could hear the rougher edge of his godfather, but then it faded when the other boy continued speaking. “And just to make this clear, it’s Sirius. The great and merciful Sirius Black is sitting at your bedside, so you better be accordingly reverent.” He sniffed and Harry more felt than heard the attempt at cheering him up or at least draw him out of his funk.

Sirius hadn’t known what to expect when Rem declared Hadrian’s condition to be a creature inheritance. Yes, he had thought it resembled what he had read about some magical inheritances, but had dismissed that thought, because there was no way Hadrian could be old enough for something like that. Hell, that boy didn’t even look old enough to be in their year.

And when his friend had dropped the other bomb shell, Sirius and James were stunned into silence. Because that specific creature inheritance was just not possible. A creature inheritance? Alright, seldom, but possible. After all, they didn’t know shit about Hadrian’s family. But an Elf Owl?

James had turned and stared at the unconscious boy on the ransacked bed for a long moment. His eyes had wandered from the rebellious Potter hair that was just a few shades darker than his own and had traced the boy’s features. He had been looking for any more clues that would connect Hadrian Moore to his family. But Sirius had looked at Remus. Because there was just something in the way his friend had explained all that… He couldn’t pinpoint it, but it reminded him of all the barely there
moments he had thought Rems was hiding something from them. Something about Hadrian Moore. And listening to his friend telling them about his suspicions and how the boy was showing all the signs he had read about in that stupid book, Sirius couldn’t help but think that there was even more. More than Remus was telling them. But for now he would let it be, because that damn need to protect was back full force. Which brought them to another complicated matter.

Because if Hadrian really was undergoing a creature inheritance, no matter what creature exactly, they couldn’t just take him to the infirmary. Something like that was a delicate matter that would normally be handled by one’s family and only really, really trusted people would be allowed to be present. And here they were witnessing an inheritance that shouldn’t be there in the first place on a boy that had probably run away from home. Not to mention that there was not much time left before they had to go back to Hogwarts and according to Remus and the titbits James remembered his father telling him, this particular inheritance would last for at least 24 hours.

Harry wet his lips and tried to rein his growing panic in. He knew what had happened after all. Or he had known in a horribly vague way that something like this would happen when his inheritance finally showed. But no one had told him he would go blind! What would happen now? How was he supposed to … do anything?

“Moore?” Sirius voice was decidedly soft as if he was either trying to soothe him or as if he was trying to be as quiet as possible for some reason. Was there a reason to be quiet? Where were they even? “Moore. Hey.” How had all this even happened? Harry remembered shopping with Sirius, being overwhelmed with the whole situation and slowly panicking when he continued to not peruse any book stores in hopes to find any solution to his oncoming doom. He remembered feeling slightly dizzy the later it got and then… then… the Slytherins! They had been cornered by Rabastan Lestrange and two of his lackeys. But everything after that was a jumble of pain and anxiety and confusion.

“Hadrian.”

Harry blinked again. Sirius calling him by his chosen first name was a rare affair and there was just something in the way he said that name that Harry kind of liked. It pulled him back to the present at least.

“Oh, Hadrian,” Sirius said, still speaking in that soft voice, but now there was something oh so gentle about it that made Harry feel just a bit warm inside. “Even though I feel like a parrot by saying this, but take a deep breath and just listen to my voice.” He took a breath himself and Harry heard him shift in his place somewhere near his head. “You had an inheritance in the middle of Hogsmeade… or, well, you’re still in the process of it. And I don’t know how much you know about this yourself, but no matter what I’m gonna say next, just… try not to panic. Just listen, okay?”

Well now, that sounded reassuring.

One would probably assume that four sixteen year old boys faced with a situation like this would go and seek help from a trusted adult. And even though the Marauders and especially Remus, who already trusted their headmaster with his furry little problem, knew that Albus Dumbledore was thought to know the answer to virtually everything, they didn’t even consider telling him about this. Because they were the Marauders, known pranksters and Moony’s guard and now maybe Hadrian’s secret keeper. They just saw the adventure in keeping another great secret, in knowing something no one else was privy to. Well, Peter was all for running, but he wouldn’t go against his friends.
So it was decided that one of them would stay with Hadrian in the Shrieking Shack while the others covered for them. Later that night one of those at Hogwarts would return to the shack via the tunnel hidden beneath the Whomping Willow and bring some essentials. What actually brought on a discussion was who would be the one to stay with Hadrian. As it was, both Sirius and Remus felt a nearly overwhelming need to stay at the boy’s side, watch over him, protect him. Sirius actually felt like he really had no choice in the matter. He just couldn’t leave Hadrian and for once he didn’t fight the urge. Remus seemed to be slightly better off, or at least he was still able to think clearly. James was frowning at his friends through the whole discussion, but finally everyone accepted that it would be Sirius who stayed behind. After all, it was easier to cover the absence of a notorious flirt than that of a prefect.

Harry listened. Sirius was slowly recounting the events that led to them being currently in the upper bedroom of the Shrieking Shack. And Harry only just hid the shudder of the memories he connected with this room specifically. Then he went on about what Remus had determined was happening to him and Harry clearly heard the hesitance and the way Sirius was skirting around things… like he was trying not to say too much in hopes Harry would fill in the gaps for him. Only that Harry couldn’t. As it was, he was amazed and shocked and terrified by the information Sirius relayed.

After his not-godfather had finished, they stayed silent for a long moment while Harry was trying to wrap his head around everything. His inheritance was called an Elf Owl. He had known about the super rare stuff. What had happened to him so far was only the first stage. And Sirius didn’t seem to know much about what was going to happen in the next one. But they would stay here for now, because apparently creature inheritances were some damn private stuff. The way Sirius told him this made him feel like he was supposed to blush or something. After listening to all this stuff there should have been a vast amount of really important questions Harry probably should be asking.

But the only one he could think of was:

“Will I ever be able to paint again?”

Chapter End Notes

(*), Quotations from the books/movies that I’m really too lazy to look up. Just know they belong to either J.K. Rowling, Warner Bros. Entertainment, Inc., the Scholastic Corporation, Raincoast Books, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. you name it.
In which Padfoot gets to snuggle

Chapter Notes

Since I made you wait so long for the last one... :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

He was running a fever. And Sirius had not the slightest idea what he was supposed to do about it. Damn, what took Rem so long? He had no doubts that it would be Remus who would creep out from the castle and down the tunnel beneath the Whomping Willow to bring them... whatever he thought they would need. Right now Sirius hoped the Potter inheritance book mentioned this fever and what to do against it. Because he sincerely thought it ridiculously reckless of the creature magic to burn their hosts like this. It was insane! Hadrian was burning up in front of his eyes, moaning along the way and making Sirius totter constantly on a morally critical line between worry and arousal. No one should sound so damn sexy and at the same time pained while running a fever or at any time, really. It was just bound to make a morally totally upstanding wizard like himself feel dirty and he could happily live without that, thank you very much.

Or maybe he could not, because Sirius Black loved to feel dirty in that specific way, but it was just not right to feel like that about Hadrian right now.

What was he supposed to do?! They had been talking about what had happened and then Hadrian had asked him that question. His voice had sounded so tiny, Gods, Sirius never wanted to hear him speak like that again. As if everything that had happened to the boy would be acceptable as long as he just would be able to paint again. As if his very existence depended on his ability to use a brush and paint and-

Sirius threw his hands above his head and continued his pacing.

He had tried to reassure Hadrian that yes, of course the blindness would pass and yes, of course he would be able to paint again. But it wasn’t easy to sound sure of yourself if you didn’t really know that what you were saying was the truth. Well, yes, it would be logical that the blindness was just a stage of the inheritance. Something the magic did while concentrating around the area of the eyes. He had told Hadrian as much. But still... he had no proof and Rem wasn’t there to cite _Hogwarts, A His- err..._ that Potter inheritance heirloom thingy. And he felt just so damn helpless! It rattled with this freaking protectiveness and his inner Grim was prowling and... Sirius drew his wand and cast another _Aquamenti_ on the rag he had made out of a part of the bed sheets. He didn’t dare to use a cooling charm on Hadrian, because if he knew one thing it was that one shouldn’t use magic on someone whose magic was already agitated. And agitated was the understatement of the year in this case.

So Sirius had tried to reassure Hadrian and when that didn’t really work he had tried to distract him with asking about his own knowledge about the inheritance. He should have known that there wouldn’t be much of a forthcoming, but he hadn’t exactly expected to be flat out ignored. All right, the boy didn’t exactly ignore him, he just refused to answer. All those times before when the Marauders had tried to subtly pry some information from him, Hadrian had diffused or circumvented their questions. But now he seemed to lack the energy to do so and had just told Sirius off.

That had brought on another silence, this time even more uncomfortable than the first. It was a few
minutes later when Sirius, who had by then wandered to the other side of the room in an attempt to
gather himself and find his cool, noticed that Hadrian hadn’t tried to sit up yet. When he asked about
it and offered his help, there was no response. Thinking that Hadrian was now actually ignoring him
and not having any of that – no one ignores Sirius Black – he had approached the bed again. Poking
the boy in the side even though he knew he hated touch and was currently incapable of seeing the
hand approaching was not one of Sirius’ brighter moments. But he couldn’t have known that it
would hurt the boy. The resounding groan had made him shiver for more than one reason – and he
would only admit to one of those, if asked – and had made it clear that Hadrian was again in pain.

That was when Sirius noticed the flushed face.

Remus was feeling antsy. Alright, they were all feeling antsy. James was pacing their dorm room
ever since they had been back and continued to mutter to himself, while Peter was nervously
twitching in place. Remus himself was still caught inbetween the disbelief that his far fetched theory
actually had proven right and the amazement that their hastily thrown together plan for covering the
absence of two students had really worked. That had been quite the interesting development and
spoke volumes about the lack of security in Hogwarts. Not that they hadn’t already known about the
latter, but still…

They had timed their arrival back at the school carefully to make sure they would be coming in with
the brunt of students. A combination of transfiguration and a fast walking James had taken care of
Hadrian’s cover. Their leader had sneaked back out under his cloak then to come in as himself with
Remus and Peter. They hadn’t bothered to fake Sirius’ return, but made sure to let Filch hear them
talking about their friend sneaking off with some girl or another. It would do.

Now they were ensconced in their dorm planning on what to do next. Or at least Remus was since
James was still caught in his own thoughts and Peter seemed awfully interested in pretending nothing
had happened. Remus’ nose twitched slightly as he took in his friend’s scent. Fear. And something
that could be anger, but Remus was too occupied with his planning to really pay attention. After all,
Peter always smelled of nerves.

“The book says that the creature would start to manifest as soon as the magical core reaches its
maturity,” he said more to himself, “Which would mean Hadrian has turned 16 today.”

“Why hasn’t he mentioned anything then?” Peter’s voice sounded just a tad bit petulant and if Remus
had been paying more attention to him he would have recognised that Peter wasn’t disappointed
about not knowing someone’s birthday, but that he was annoyed for an entirely different reason.
“And why 16 if it’s about core maturity?”

This time James sighed and threw the rat Animagus a little frustrated side glance.

“Have you already forgotten about last year and what I told you about this specific inheritance,
Wormy?” He asked, but didn’t wait for an answer before he addressed Remus. “Anyway, what we
witnessed so far would be the maturity and then calming of the magic, right?”

“Yeah, though it looked more like concentrating than calming, if you ask me,” Remus answered
without looking up from where he was flicking through the Potter heirloom. “And from what
happened to his eyes, I’d say it’s a pretty sure thing he’s at least manifesting what the author calls
‘the Eyes’.”

James hm-ed and lifted a hand to emphasise his next words by counting off on his fingers.

“So the eyes mean he’s going to go blind, right? The wings are a possibility, but that hasn’t
happened for who knows how long. If he were a Potter, I’d wager he could inherit the feathers-in-the-hair thingy, ‘cause that’s a variation that still showed after the wings went extinct.” He made another thoughtful noise and then snorted. “Well, and he definitely has the allure.”

Remus didn’t answer, but he silently agreed with James. He had known that it was a possibility and from what he had read and observed over the course of the last week, he had already determined that Hadrian would at least manifest the allure. Being in the know of that had made it easier to recognise the influence on himself, though it had made it only marginally easier to fight it. And then he hadn’t always seen the need to fight the urges Hadrian’s rogue allure provoked in him. They had never been anything morally questionable. On the contrary, he had just found himself feeling even more protective than was normal for him and he couldn’t see fault in that. His wolf was protective of those it considered pack and could react quite irresponsible sometimes when those he cared for were in danger. Why the wolf would consider Hadrian pack, though, was beyond him.

“Allure?!” Peter’s squeak interrupted his thoughts and made Remus finally look up from the book in his lap. “Like a Veela? So that’s why everyone’s always sucking up to him?” He sounded half horrified and half relieved as if he had finally found an explanation for something he hadn’t been able to figure out for a long time. Remus frowned and exchanged a look with James. His friend was shrugging and made a sweeping gesture with his hand.

“The stage is all yours, Moony.”

Remus took the time to spare him a glare before he sighed and turned towards Peter.

“No, not like a Veela. An Elf Owl’s allure has nothing to do with sexual desires, Peter,” he explained and tried to not fall back into his ‘professor mode’. “It tends to… speak to inherent qualities in a person and draws them to the forefront.” At Peter’s blank expression and James’ snicker he pinched the bridge of his nose in an attempt to stall his oncoming headache.

“Simple put, Wormy,” James interjected as he spotted the sure signs of Moony losing patience, “Hadrian’s allure makes for example protective people even more protective.” He looked at Remus again, but continued nonetheless. “Or say, someone’s the jealous type. They would react even more jealous than normal towards Hadrian.”

Peter nodded obediently and scrunched up his nose as he thought through the implications, but he had no chance to ask more as Remus really had no patience for this right now. Hadrian was having his inheritance right at this moment. There were more important things than possible side effects and his wolf was making it hard to sit around and wait until even Peter would be able to write an essay about all this. He was antsy and overprotective and he wanted everything planned out so he could go and see how Hadrian was doing.

“Anyway,” he said with forced calm. “The book says that the attributes that are going to manifest determine the further bodily reactions. Meaning, if he is to manifest more than ‘the Eyes’ there will be more than what we have seen so far.”

James seemed to sense his friend’s state of mind and made sure to nod along and to show he was paying attention. No need to aggravate Moony further as he was obviously feeling the effect of Hadrian’s allure himself.

“Unfortunately the author was apparently not able to find any sources as to what would happen if the recipient would manifest ‘the Wings’. He only states a possible painful change during the blinded 24 hours and considering the state Hadrian was in this afternoon, I think it’s safe to say whatever happens next is going to be painful, too.”
Padfoot could smell the fever on Hadrian. But it didn’t smell sick, not like he was having the flu or something. It was a definite smell of ozone that was prickling in the dog Animagus’ nose and made him want to sneeze. At the same time it was a really fascinating smell and the black Grim couldn’t help but take another deep whiff of it right from Hadrian’s neck.

Sure enough he was sneezing and managed to turn away from the boy just in time. A soft little chuckle drew his attention back to the feverish form next to him. Hadrian was muttering something, but even with his enhanced dog senses Padfoot could only catch a few incoherent syllables. But it was enough to make him halt in his – completely innocent – doggy snuggling.

“Padfoot…”

How in the world did Hadrian know his Animagus form’s name?

Chapter End Notes

Hahhhhhhhhh........................ writing conversations will never be my strong point. But I sense some improvement in the way conversation between some characters feels more... fluent.
In which there is a lot of stealth

Chapter Notes

Let’s follow Rems for a bit before it all gets a little nasty.

It had been about six hours since Hadrian had started showing signs of his creature inheritance coming upon him in the middle of Hogsmeade. Or at least Remus estimated it to be six hours. It was hard to tell since none of them had had the foresight to check the time when they found Sirius and Hadrian near the Three Broomsticks. And it could always be that this kind of inheritance was one of those that just kind of crept up on you without anyone really noticing until it was too late. And on top of that Remus knew that magical inheritances were anything but precise. They depended too much on the individual magical core to be a completely predictable matter. He sighed and hid behind a suit of armor when a Ravenclaw prefect rounded the corner. He may be a prefect himself and could get away with being about after curfew, but he certainly could live without the hassle. Cloak of invisibility or not, he didn’t fancy explaining himself to anyone.

“You know,” he drawled at the mirror in his hand as the girl had rounded the next corner, “The whole reason for you to keep the map was to warn me when someone was coming my way.” He heard James snicker and chanced a glance down. He could see the side of his friend’s head bent low over the map where he was following Remus’ course through the corridors.

“Aw the big bad wolf afraid of being caught by a pretty bird.” He flashed a grin sideways. “Come on, Moony, I know you like that Abbott girl. What’s wrong with running into her and getting a little grab for yourself?”

Remus rolled his eyes at his friend and crept forward. He could have listed countless reasons why he wanted to avoid doing something like that right now – besides the obvious rudeness. Oh he had nothing against Mary Abbott. Why should he? She was a curvy blonde with a friendly persona. But right now he really wanted to be at the Shrieking Shack to check on Hadrian, because something told him things weren’t all that nice down there. And wasn’t it rather telling of how great he was resisting that allure if he preferred crawling down a hole in the ground to get to a ransacked old hut which contained a lot of unwanted memories over accidentally bumping into a pretty girl?

Sneaking out on the grounds in his human form was strange. It somehow felt wrong to be out and about at night like this. Not because it was against the rules, really now, his prefect sense was too underdeveloped for that, but it was so very different from being about as a werewolf. Everything was so dulled for his human senses. The next full moon was still quite a bit away and even though he would never admit to it, Remus missed the enhancement to his senses. There was no silky feeling of grass beneath paws and no listening to the almost musical lilt of the wind running around Hogwarts’ towers. He still had the slightly better sense of smell. It seemed to be the only sense that never left him, but the week before and after the full moon was when he could ‘wield’ a whole array of enhanced senses. Sirius once told him what he would do if he could see like that and… yeah, that was a train of thought he would not follow any further.

The shack was still and seemingly abandoned when Remus arrived. But he knew better and walked on silent feet down the hallway to the bedroom he to equal amounts loathed and was grateful for. Who would have thought that the room that always held him after the full moon, the room that
endured his sometimes volatile moods, the room that was his sanctuary and prison at the same time, would be the place that saved another student’s life simply because it was a place no one ever entered? And no, Remus didn’t think he was being overly dramatic here, because even though he doubted Hadrian or even the others had realised it yet – if anyone had gotten a hold of the boy while going through this inheritance, it could very well have been his death. Or the beginning of a life in captivity as a source for potion ingredients and Merlin knows what else. That was what happened to rare creatures nowadays even if no wizard or witch would admit to it out loud. Times were hard for everyone lacking the oh so pure blood, but being a rare creature was positively dangerous. It could easily lead to a life without human rights if you couldn’t count on a respected name or other means of backing. Remus sometimes wondered where all this would lead their society to.

His dark thoughts came to an abrupt halt when he opened the door to the bedroom. Well, now he knew what it looked like when Padfoot kept him company after an especially unpleasant transformation.

There on the old bed lay Hadrian wrapped closely around the dark form of Sirius’ Animagus, one hand tightly curled into shaggy fur. The scene could have looked cosy if it weren’t for the stale cold air, the lack of any illumination to hide their presence and the eerily yellow eye of the grim that fixed on him the moment he stepped into the room. Damn, if he hadn’t known that it was his friend, he probably would have turned on his heel and run. As if reading his thoughts the giant black dog huffed and Remus could only interpret the look on his face as a grin.

“Yeah, you can drop the whole evil omen of death show now, thank you very much,” he muttered closing the door behind himself and set his bag down near the lonely stool next to the bed. “How’s he doing?”

He tried to get a better look at Hadrian who had hidden himself rather successfully in Padfoot’s fur. Remus smothered a smile at that. Sirius never got that cuddly with him. He would stay on the bed and even snuggle into his side, yes, but not like this. The two of them were quite a bit tangled with one another. Padfoot’s head rested on Hadrian’s chest and the boy was snuggling his face into the soft fur of the grim’s neck. He would stow this little information away for later use as teasing material.

Hadrian seemed to be sleeping, but his breathing didn’t sound all that good. Padfoot gave a low whine and looked deliberately from Remus to Hadrian and then nudged the boy near his neck. There was no response other than a soft sigh that somehow managed to convey pain. Remus leaned over and hesitantly touched his hand to Hadrian’s forehead and then cheek. His fingers came away coated in cold sweat, but the skin beneath it had been burningly hot.

“Fever?” Remus murmured to himself and ignored the ‘you don’t say’ look Padfoot was giving him. “The book never mentioned any fever.” And that was not a good sign. Granted, that book was poorly written and the research done had been amateurly at best. But still – that there had been no mention of a fever at all contradicted Remus’ belief in books on a level he really didn’t appreciate.

For a moment he wanted to panic. What had they been thinking leaving the boy here when going through a creature inheritance? They should have contacted Dumbledore or Madam Pomfrey or even the Potters – just someone who would know more about this than they ever could. But the logical part of him won over the panic and reminded him that they had to protect Hadrian’s secret and that no one could actually do something for someone undergoing a magical inheritance. It was all about letting the magic run its course. So with no magical means allowed Remus fell back on the muggle part of his upbringing and cast a look around the room. Right. What did one do to reduce fever? Were you to help cool the body or to wrap the person up in blankets?
Harry was aware that he was not quite aware of his surroundings – if that made any sense. He knew he wasn’t exactly sleeping, but couldn’t really think clearly and his body was too heavy to react to anything he might pick up from the outside. Not like he was in fact noticing much about anything. All of his weary consciousness was focused on the ominous presence that was still lurking around his mind. The colour-memory-whatever-the-hell-they-were-flashes had stopped after he woke up the first time. But during all of Sirius’ explanations Harry had been able to sense that presence somewhere in his mind.

It should be frightening and on some level it definitely was. But Harry also somehow knew that this presence didn’t mean him harm. It didn’t exactly feel like an independent entity, but wasn’t completely unsuspecting either. Whatever it was, it was trapped with him in his mind and continued to hover as if waiting for something. He wasn’t conscious enough to really think it through and just did what he always did: He went with the spur of the moment and trusted his instincts. He couldn’t really do anything right now, so he tried to relax and let magic do what magic wanted to do.

Eight hours since it all started and Remus was falling asleep on the rickety chair next to Hadrian’s bed. Sirius had refused to change back and he hadn’t seen any reason to argue with his friend about it. Padfoot was clearly more in tune with his instincts than Sirius was and if the grim felt he needed to stay where he was then that was alright with Remus.

They had decided not to try and reduce the fever. Or rather, Remus had made that decision. Instead he used the wet cloth Sirius obviously had used before to cool Hadrian down somewhat and cleaned the boy’s face and neck from time to time. Padfoot stayed cuddled up to Hadrian and Remus tried to do something against the draft in the room. They couldn’t make a fire if they didn’t want to risk alerting someone to their presence. Warming charms weren’t allowed either for magic around an inheritance was never a good thing. Remus had even gone so far as to use the *Aquamenti* for the cloth outside of the room. He wouldn’t take any risks here.

He had brought them all something to eat when he had sneaked down from the castle, but Padfoot wasn’t interested in eating and Hadrian was still not conscious enough to even acknowledge him. So Remus ate in silence and made use of the time in thinking everything over once again. But that only helped so much. His inner wolf was better now that he was actually here, but it still was on edge and had him restlessly pacing time and again. He checked in with the others via the mirror two times, but there wasn’t much to report on both sides so eventually James and Peter went to bed. Remus somewhat envied them their peace of mind.

Suddenly he was jarred from his fitful half-slumber when Padfoot sat up with a low growl reverberating in his chest. Remus was up and had his wand out before he even made the conscious choice to do so.

“What?” He whispered to his friend and looked around the room wildly. “What is it, Padfoot?”

The grim jumped down from the bed with a grace that seemed at odds with his shaggy appearance and stealthily made his way to the lonely window. Remus followed him over, careful not to approach the panes directly but from the side so he could look around the edge. For a moment he didn’t notice anything out of order. The overgrown grounds around the shack were dark and stood out against the slightly illuminated village in the distance. It was hard to even tell the fence apart from the bushes or… what was that? Remus narrowed his eyes and then sucked in a breath. He looked down at Padfoot who was watching him impatiently and nodded before he retreated back to the bed. Sirius was at his side a moment later, shaking out his hair like the dog he had been just seconds ago.
“Who?” Was all he said.
Lucian Bole had never thought himself an overly lucky man. Yes, he was quite content with his job at Hogwarts for it allowed him to survey future talents that could be exploited for his own needs. He wasn’t as obvious about it as Slughorn was with his little club of favourite students nor was he as innocent in his intentions. But the fact of the matter was that he was the Defence professor, meaning he would be leaving at the end of the last term.

Bole knew the political atmosphere was changing and he wasn’t above finding himself a safe corner and stowing away safety reserves of a special kind to sit it out if necessary. He hadn’t been a Slytherin for nothing after all. Dark forces were on the rise and even if he wasn’t a pureblood fanatic he found himself rather glad for his own heritage. Knowing himself and his family safe in what surely was to come definitely didn’t hurt. But because he knew all this he kept an even more watchful eye on the students that passed through his defence classes. It was the perfect job to assess future forces if it wasn’t for that dreaded curse on the position.

Like many teachers at Hogwarts, Bole also used the school’s resources for his own benefit. But he didn’t go and pick the greenhouses for selling on the black market like Slughorn or harvest the Forbidden Forest for ingredients of the more rare kind. Oh no, he had a secret habit of a completely different and at the same time rather similar kind.

For he knew the real resources of the school were its students. And that was why he felt himself to be an unexpectedly lucky man the day Hadrian Moore nearly fainted in his DADA class.

They were hightailing it through the low tunnel that would eventually lead them out from under the Whomping Willow. Never before had Sirius been this thankful for his Animagus form – not even when they realised that Moony recognised Padfoot as a pack member. Holy shit, they had thought themselves totally safe in the shack! A few minutes later and Padfoot would have been asleep. No one would have noticed the approaching figure until it would have been too late.

But they had managed it. Though, considering they were dragging an unconscious and pitifully groaning Hadrian through a dirt tunnel that wasn’t even high enough to properly stand… one could say they were still in the very progress of managing it. As soon as they would touch Hogwarts’ grounds Remus would try to contact James through the mirror to give them some backup. But chances were rather good that their friends wouldn’t answer a call in the middle of the night.

“You know,” Sirius panted from where he was supporting Hadrian’s upper half, “Being this small skinny squirt I somehow expected him to be an easier dead weight.”

“Say that three times in a row,” Rem huffed in answer and threw him a grin.

“Wha?”
“You sure you completely transformed back and didn’t,” he stopped catching his breath, “Didn’t forget half of your brain in the shack?”

“Why, you,” Sirius growled at his friend.


They nearly dropped him in surprise. Lowering the boy carefully to the ground, Sirius knelt at Hadrian’s head and looked him over. He looked deathly pale and his skin was clammy, but those green eyes were open and more aware than they had been for hours. A small skinny squirt he may be, but Hadrian had a hell of a timing.

“You’re awake!” Stating the obvious, Rems crowded them in the narrow tunnel in an effort to better look at Hadrian. “How’re you feeling? No, no don’t speak. Wait,” he interrupted before the boy could even gather his wits enough to try and answer.

While Remus rummaged in the backpack he had brought with him from the castle, Sirius could barely take his eyes off of Hadrian. He had avoided thinking too much about all this inheritance stuff and being Padfoot had effectively cut his more logical thoughts down quite a bit. But being in his Animagus form had also given him a great sense of smell and other half-developed instincts humans normally didn’t listen to. He had noticed the steady change in the boy’s scent and he couldn’t help but miss it the moment he phased back into his human self. It was becoming a heady aroma and part of him knew that it had to do with the kind of inheritance Hadrian was having and that he really should inform himself more about it before he let something like this affect him too much.

But he couldn’t help it!

For Padfoot Hadrian smelled like… well, he had no real word for it. ‘Love interest’ wasn’t exactly something a dog would think, right? And ‘mate’ just sounded way too animalistic for his human brain. And it didn’t completely feel right either, though this could be because the inheritance wasn’t finished yet. Did Elf Owls have mates? He had read that some creatures did and the Wizarding World knew about the possibility of soul bonds. But he wouldn’t fool himself into believing anything like that. Creature mates were more of a fiction kind of thing – the kind of cheesy stuff witch novels were about. And soul bonds? As far as Sirius knew there had only ever been two recorded since Merlin himself, because to form such a bond the magic in both individuals needed to be exceptionally strong and both would have to be willing to accept their souls’ connection including all consequences. It couldn’t be forced not even by Magic herself. Such a thing was just too unlikely to happen.

But none of those reprimanding thoughts could change the fact that Sirius wanted Hadrian Moore. Not just in a sexual way though he could happily admit that he would not say no to that. ‘Cause come on! That boy was fifty shades of gorgeous. But he wanted more than that. He wanted the whole wooing, holding hands, going on dates, and being thoughtlessly possessive stuff. And if that wasn’t a frightening thing for one Sirius Black to want.

He watched his friend making Hadrian drink some water from a bottle he must have been given from the house-elves. Only then did he allow the boy to speak and Sirius moved unasked to support him when Hadrian sat up. It took him much longer than Sirius would have liked and when he finally was sitting upright, the bit of colour that had built during the last few moments drained from Hadrian’s face again. He nearly sagged back down, but Sirius propped him up against his own chest.

“Whoa there,” he cautioned, “No need to rush. I doubt our mystery visitor knows about the tunnel.”
Wrong thing to say apparently judging by the glare Rems sent his way. Oh well, they would have to tell him sometime anyway. As of now they didn’t even have a plan where to go. It wasn’t like they could hide Hadrian in their dorm when there was no way to predict what his magic was going to do next. Dark green eyes blinked unseeingly up at him and that was when Sirius realised that those eyes weren’t quite the same anymore. They were still as wide as they had been (and really, Sirius’ inner Marauder itched to put that ‘deer in the headlights’ look of innocence to use) but somehow the proportions were off. He remembered with a shudder how Hadrian’s pupils had dilated shortly before he had passed out the first time and tried not to stare at the result.

“Where are we?” The soft question shook him from his probably rude scrutiny of the boy. Ah yes, he wouldn’t recognise the tunnel, of course. Sirius was about to answer when he caught sight of the look on Rem’s face. He wagged an eyebrow at his friend who frowned in return before carefully taking Hadrian’s hand. Both of them ignored the flinch at that.

“There was someone coming to the shack,” he said while surreptitiously checking the boy’s pulse. “We managed to get out through a tunnel that’s hidden under a trapdoor. It’s underground and leads back to Hogwarts.”

“That explains the smell,” Hadrian answered and didn’t sound the least bit unsettled by the knowledge of being under the earth.

“You still blind?” Remus finally asked quietly though he of course knew the answer. It was there in the way Hadrian wouldn’t focus on any of them but look just barely in the direction of their voices. Sirius startled at that. He hadn’t known the blindness would take so long and had honestly no longer thought about it in the face of the fever and their sudden escape. But at least Remus didn’t look surprised when he got an affirmative to his question. So maybe it was expected? He really needed to read that heirloom thingy. After a moment of catching their breath, Hadrian insisted that he would be able to crawl the rest of the way himself. It wasn’t like they really had a choice though, so they set out through the tunnel that never had felt this long before.

“Watcha thinking, Rem?” Sirius asked over his shoulder just to distract himself from the wheezing coming out of Hadrian’s lungs.

“Huh?” His friend’s voice sounded much better now that he only had his own weight to support.

“’Bout where to,” Sirius said above a pained little gasp that Hadrian was obviously trying to smother. “I mean, we can’t exactly hide out in the dorm.”

Harry had tuned out the conversation of the other two boys in favour of concentrating on his movements. His limbs hurt like three days of Oliver Wood’s Quidditch training sessions without rest and he fought to keep up with Sirius’ pace that wasn’t even moderately fast. He was holding on to the back of Sirius’ shirt to navigate his way without the use of his eyes, trying to fight the burning in his muscles and the nauseating feeling that came with moving while all the while forcing down the anxiety about still being in the dark – literally. But his muddled brain somehow caught the fact about not being able to go back to the dorm and he stopped in his tracks.

Sirius hadn’t noticed the sudden stop behind him – really now, they were crawling through a bloody tunnel made out of dirt and tree roots – and felt therefore completely justified when a small squeak of surprise escaped him as a hand slipped from his shirt down to his buttocks. It didn’t really help that Rem just snickered at him and Hadrian looked like he hadn’t even noticed the excurse his hand had made.

Where could they go to? If what Sirius had told him in the shack and what he remembered adult
Remus telling him back in the day was true, his magic would act up quite a bit in the next few hours. It already had, Harry reminded himself wryly, and even now he could feel it – he could feel the way his magic was somehow clinging tightly to himself to the point of almost hurting, he could feel that it seemed to be waiting for something. So yeah, a place to hide out would be greatly appreciated and when had he started to sound like a mix of Remus and Sirius? Anyway, Harry briefly thought of the one place he could absolutely be sure no one would enter and that would be able to deal with volatile magic. But hiding in the Chamber of Secrets would entail revealing him being a Parselmouth and oh wait, the Basilisk would actually still be there, right? Alive and kicking.

“Hadrian?” Remus gentle voice from behind him brought Harry back to the present and he blinked a few times even though it never changed the darkness he ‘saw’.

“I’m alright,” he said. He didn’t exactly feel alright and he definitely didn’t sound the part, but the other two were considerate enough not to say anything about it for the moment. “Was just thinking about a place to go.”

Well, there was one place…

Chapter End Notes

For those who don’t remember: We got to know Lucian Bole in chapter 20 (I can’t believe that’s already more than ten chapters away!). There were only two correct guesses in the comments about the identity of the cloaked figure, so maybe I’m sneakier than I thought.
Chapter Notes

Possibly the chapter with the most swearwords and profanities yet. :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ask the elves, he said. They call it the ‘Come and Go Room’, he said. And then he decided that it would be a good time to pass out and leave Sirius and Remus wondering if what he had just said was a fever induced ramble or actually meant in earnest.

Well. Sirius for his part felt torn between his worry for Hadrian and his anger at him. Slightly childish, maybe, but being angry with Hadrian was so much easier than thinking about the fact that the boy had passed out on them yet again. That just couldn’t be a good sign! So, worrying his lip, cradling Hadrian against his chest, he watched Rem trying and failing for the third time to contact Prongs or Wormtail through the mirror. Clearly their friends were deep asleep or they would have answered by now.

Remus didn’t say it out loud for he could smell his friend’s anxiousness, but Hadrian’s condition was scaring him. He had read that book about the Elf Owls from cover to cover by now and just knew that there was something wrong. Of course it could be the result of Hadrian not being kept in a magic free zone and resting. But it also could be that the author was more of a nincompoop than they had realised and had actually not really all the information on this inheritance that he claimed to have. And on top of all this Hadrian had been forced to exert himself instead of taking the bed rest that was assigned for all magical inheritances. Now they were stuck beneath the Whomping Willow with no back up, an unconscious and probably endangered Hadrian and a rather vague description of a mysterious room none of them had ever heard of before.

So Remus fought to keep a cool façade and tried to contact their friends one last time before he decided that they would just have to hope for the best and risk it.

Up in Gryffindor Tower Peter Pettigrew watched the communication mirror glow a third time in what could only have been five minutes. He knew very well that it had to be one of his friends calling them and normally he would have leapt at the chance to prove himself worthy of their friendship. Oh yes, Peter would do everything and all for his little group of friends for he knew he would be nothing without them.

But there was this gut feeling he had ever since Hadrian Moore had made an appearance at Hogwarts. This feeling that told him to watch out for his position with the Marauders, this feeling that identified the scrawny newcomer as a threat. He would not have it. There was no way he would let that little manipulative shit take his place. He wasn’t dumb. He could see how Moore was milking his mystery appearance and poor grip on his magic for all it was worth and a part of him acknowledged the work of a pro there. But Peter would not just retreat and let himself be replaced.

Checking one last time that Prongs was still deeply asleep he lifted the silencing spell from the mirror on the bedside cabinet. It was unlikely that they would try to call them again after failing to get their attention three times in a row.
He had wanted Hadrian to change into something more comfortable than the torn school uniform he was still wearing. In an attempt to find suitable clothing he had gone through the boy’s trunk before going down to the shack – all with the fierce determination not to look at anything else than what he really needed to look at. He respected privacy. But upon opening the trunk Remus had been met with the sight of a minimal amount of standard issue clothing haphazardly thrown in a small heap. And nothing else.

He knew Hadrian was mostly wearing his school uniform, they all had noticed that, but this… It spoke volumes of his past and yet didn’t exactly explain anything. When they had found Hadrian in the Forbidden Forest that day he hadn’t had a single piece of clothing on him. Or at least that’s what the rest of the Marauders had told Remus. When Hadrian’s trunk had appeared in their dorm along with a new bed none of them had questioned it. They hadn’t thought about it, actually. Maybe they had assumed the trunk had been sent after the boy or something along those lines.

But this (And did Hadrian really only own two shirts? For Remus knew he was wearing one right then and the one remaining in his trunk was splattered with paint.) was something else entirely. Now Sirius’ shopping spree looked a lot less random and Remus had found himself wondering if his friend had made the same discovery that he just had not so long ago. It certainly explained why he was so determined to clothe Hogwarts’ newest addition. Unfortunately they wouldn’t be able to use those new clothes right away for they had been bought in a magical village and were most certainly made by magical means. Their very essence was possibly drenched in magic and therefore nothing Hadrian should be wearing right now. It would wear off the more often the clothing was washed, but right then Remus was rather glad he had taken the shopping bags with him when leaving Sirius and Hadrian at the Shrieking Shack.

Now, though, they were standing in this mysterious room Hadrian had told them about and all of them were dressed in dirt crusted and more or less torn up clothes. It would be no matter for him and Sirius to change after they went back to Gryffindor Tower, but with his knowledge of the state of Hadrian’s wardrobe Remus was wondering what the hell the boy should wear. There wasn’t actually anything left in that trunk! At least nothing suitable for the current situation – who would want to wear a school uniform when having a serious fever? Not to mention that they would have to go and bring back something to wear for him, because there really was no way Hadrian would be able to leave here anytime soon. How were they even going to cover his complete disappearance come morning? And could they risk leaving him here all on his own? Not that Remus actually thought he would be able to leave the boy alone right now. It felt utterly wrong just to think about it and his wolf growled in the back of his mind at the mere consideration.

He watched Sirius laying down Hadrian on the four poster bed that looked remarkably like those in their dorm. Strange though it may be that there was a hidden room with a bed on Hogwarts’ seventh floor, right now Remus was more concerned with their still unconscious charge. Had it been anything else than a magical inheritance this long a faint would have been a case long shipped off to St. Mungo’s. But as it was they could do nothing but wait. So Remus watched as Sirius removed Hadrian’s shoes and socks and then hesitated, his hands hovering over the dirty fabric of the torn up school uniform.

“D’you think…,” he started uncharacteristically nervous sounding.

“Do I think Hadrian would mind you stripping him?” Remus concluded with the hint of a smirk in his voice. “Probably, yes. He doesn’t exactly strike me as the self-confident type and if I remember correctly he always makes a point of changing in the en suite.”

That, Remus realised, was another fact for their list of oddities about Hadrian that spoke of an unfavourable home life. They were all boys living in the same dormitory after all. He knew for a fact
that James was planning on talking to his father about Hadrian and his possible situation. The whole inheritance stuff had just made the matter more pressing than it had been.

Remus didn’t see the frown on Sirius face or the thoughtful glance his friend was sending his way before he backed away from the bed. He didn’t know that Sirius already knew the reason why Hadrian never changed in front of anyone. He had seen it for himself that day he (rather deliberately) walked in on the boy in the shower. And Remus didn’t know that he himself was the real reason why Sirius didn’t attempt to free Hadrian from his clothing in that moment.

Remus wasn’t the only one that could respect someone’s privacy (most of the time).

“Bloody Padfoot…,” a sleep rumpled James Potter muttered rather unimpressed from behind a tapestry hiding one of the many shortcuts of Hogwarts. “Sends a house-elf… A house-elf! For Merlin’s sake! Is there any creature less fitting for a wake up call? …in the middle of the bloody fucking night and requests – he requests! Yeah right, ordering is more like it. Git. – …me bringing up clothes for the noble tosser. So here I am in the middle of the bloody fucking cold night in a freaking empty hallway and where is he?”

He continued muttering and complaining to the trolls in tutus about his fate. Barnabas the Barmy was raising an eyebrow at him, but hey, HE didn’t have to get up in the bloody fucking cold middle of the night! He was just the painting of a long dead guy so barmy he was even named for it.

“Never thought you had a fancy for tutus, Prongs. Or is it the trolls?”

James nearly jumped out of his skin at the voice of his best mate. Spinning around he came face to face with Sirius leaning casually against the wall next to a door that definitely hadn’t been there just minutes ago. And damn did that bloody wanker look smug.

“Man, Padfoot, what the hell?” Taking a calming breath, James tossed the stack of clothes at his friend before taking in his appearance. The moonlight streaming in through the wide windows of the seventh floor only faintly lit up the hallway, but even in this dim lighting he could see the mangled state of Sirius’ clothing. “Eh, the tunnel really did a number on ya, huh?”

He raised an eyebrow at the nonchalance with which his best mate took the snub to his looks. Sirius may be a Gryffindor, but he had been raised to be a ‘proper Pureblood’. Therefore Sirius took great delight in his good and most of the time deliberately mussed up looks. This state of dirt encrusted torn clothing though (And was that a leave in his hair?) was something else. Sirius Black never looked anything other than what he wanted to look like, so what was this about?

“Yeah, kindly shut your cake trap, Prongs. You’re not really in any position to criticise my awesome looks,” Sirius snarked with a meaningful look at James’ naturally untameable hair and then motioned to follow him into the mysterious room Hadrian had told them about.

The room where Hadrian was still lying unmoving with his magic buzzing along his skin. It had become nearly impossible for Remus with his sensitive werewolf senses to help carry the boy, so it had again been Sirius who risked a cramped up back. Not that Hadrian really was all that heavy, how could he, being so damn short and skinny? Sirius briefly wondered if Hadrian’s lack in height was maybe part of his creature heritage, but Rem’s incredulous voice stopped him from following that thought any further.

“How did you…” Remus blinked and then looked from James to Sirius as his two friends entered the strange hidden room. “Sirius!” His voice took on the (mostly unused) prefect edge and he rather enjoyed his friend cringing a little at the tone. “Did you take advantage of the house-elves again? I
told you, they are not here to do your every bidding. They are individuals just like you and me, not some slaves you can call on whenever you feel like it!”

Though he was chastising the grim Animagus, he felt somewhat relieved to see James. It had unsettled him to not be able to get a call through to his other friends and getting an unconscious Hadrian unnoticed up to the seventh floor in the middle of the night without any backing through the map had been quite the task. But they had made it, they were here now and it looked like James had brought them a change of clothes. Now Remus just hoped the magic of this mysterious room wouldn’t interfere with Hadrian’s inheritance.

Chapter End Notes

Am I taking things too slow with the inheritance or are you enjoying this detailed way?
In which there is a lot of POV jumping

Chapter Notes

Your comments to the last chapter told me that the overall feeling is just what I felt myself. Since I don't want to skip the details of the inheritance, but feel like we need some mind candy... well, I'm going to throw in just that throughout the next chapters. We're starting out light. Can't do too much too suddenly since Harry's just starting to become more aware of his changing feelings. ;)

This chapter goes with a little wink at Koi19.

Sirius wouldn’t leave Hadrian’s side. He just wouldn’t.

James had looked at him exasperatedly, but had given in after some time. Sirius had been a bit surprised and oddly pleased when his best mate had made it a point to check on Hadrian himself before he left to retreat to his bed again. Remus had been something else though. He seemed caught up in his thoughts for the whole time Sirius and James took to inspect the strange room they were in. Not that they were all that thorough with their inspection as they were all tired. But it was decided to meet up here after breakfast and go about it again with the combined knowledge of all the Marauders. Just then Rems had emerged from his thoughts and had started to again check Hadrian over. He had taken temperature, pulse and general appearance apparently. He had scribbled down notes and had only agreed to leave after Sirius had made it clear he would stay the night. He could already hear the comments that James was sure to make come morning.

Taking off Hadrian’s horrendous glasses and setting them down on the bedside table, Sirius contemplated what literally lay in front of him. Of course he would not take advantage of an unconscious and still feverish person. Even if he had any inclination for this kind of thing, which he had not thank you so much, the fierce protective feeling he nowadays felt for Hadrian wouldn’t let him do anything that even remotely posed a danger for the boy. Looking over at the merrily crackling fire at the opposite wall Sirius wondered if it would be warm enough for Hadrian to sleep in just his underwear or if he should dress him in the extra shirt he had made Prongs bring down from his own trunk.

After a moment spent in contemplation – and did that hearth just get bigger or was he really that tired? – Sirius carefully started unbuttoning Hadrian’s shirt, noting the slight bagginess. He tried to touch the boy as little as possible, still remembering the obvious pain his touch had caused the last time, though his fingers positively itched with the need to touch that silky looking skin. Feeling the warmth of the fire on his back, he took off Hadrian’s clothing bit by bit, revealing the reason he had waited with this until his friends were gone. The flickering light of the fire and lit torches danced across the expanse of pale skin, highlighting the scattered scars, and Sirius found himself hoping the heated tint came from that light and not the dangerously high fever. What was it with that fever? It couldn’t be right, he had seen Rem’s look when he checked on Hadrian that first time down in the shack.

He discarded the dirty shirt and torn robes to the floor and paused to watch for any signs that Hadrian was about to wake up. He was breathing with a slightly rasping sound that gave Sirius’ an unsettled feeling. It sounded so strained. His gaze travelled over the slender neck and small frame and before
He could stop himself his fingertips were lightly tracing over the burn scar that spanned across Hadrian’s ribcage down to his hip. He wanted to know the story behind that scar. He wanted to know what had caused any of the many scars on Hadrian’s body, he wanted to know what he dreamed about when he talked in his sleep and what it was that weighed him down so much it was like a tangible feeling always around him.

He came to with a panicked cry casting an *Expelliarmus* unconsciously. He heard a thump and someone cursing and pain shot through his nerve endings and burning his eyes. He gasped for breath, trying to look for the danger, but he was still in the darkness, still blind, and someone was with him here, wherever here was, and it hurt. Oh fuck did his eyes hurt.

“Shit, Hadrian!” A voice nearby, originating strangely lower in height than he currently was, reminded him that he was not Harry Potter, that he was not there and that it was not a curse hurting him. “Did you just curse me in your sleep? Without a wand?”

It took Harry’s sleep addled mind long moments filled with his gasping breath before he realised it was Sirius talking to him. It took another moment and the rustle of clothes and someone getting up from the floor in a clumsy way to actually filter any meaning from those words.

“I… I’m sorry, I…,” he whispered, wincing at the raw and dry feeling in his throat.

There was a confused sound and then a glass was lightly pressed against his lips. Drinking down a few gulps of cool water gratefully, Harry tried to remember where he was and what was going on. Inheritance. Pain. Being in and out of consciousness and them hightailing it through the dirt tunnel that ended beneath the Whomping Willow. Nothing after that, yet he clearly was in a bed and Sirius was with him so they must have made it somehow.

“Are we,” he had to clear his throat, “Are we in the Room of Requirement?” There was no answer for a while, but Harry could still hear Sirius moving about and placing the glass somewhere, presumably the bedside table.

“Requirement, mh?” There was a contemplating tone to his voice. “That certainly explains the water. I mean, I definitely didn’t conjure it and your wand is still on the table, so…”

It dawned on Harry then that he hadn’t told them before what the room was called or what it could do. The remembered scene was a bit fuzzy, but he thought he had told them to ask the elves for he had been too weak to say much at that moment. Then logically, he would have told them the name the elves used for the Room of Requirement. The name Dobby had given him all that time ago.

Sirius looked from Hadrian back to the glass on the bedside table. It had just appeared out of nowhere the moment the blind boy had obviously needed it. Sirius had briefly contemplated if it had been Hadrian himself, even without a wand, after all he had used a damn strong disarming charm the moment he woke up. Wandless magic. But Hadrian’s words had stopped that thought. Room of Requirement. Did that mean it would provide whatever was… required? And what were the limits, did they depend on the enchantments on the room or on what was available somewhere in the castle? If it was the first, he could already see himself spending hours conjuring setting after setting from beachfronts to muggle cinemas. If it was the latter, it would still be fascinating to discover what Castle Hogwarts hid in her depths. Interesting, though he really wondered how they could have overlooked such an awesome room all this time. And how did Hadrian know about it? Yet again, he knew about things he shouldn’t have any knowledge about.

A nearly inaudible whimper drew his attention back to the boy on the bed. Hadrian was attempting
to get up, but something seemed to cause him pain. From the looks of it, it had to do with his changed and still unseeing eyes. He kept screwing them shut whenever he turned towards the wide windows overlooking Hogwarts’ grounds and it took Sirius only a moment to piece it together. Now that the sun had risen, the room was unexpectedly bright. A whole wall was made up out of the large ground to ceiling windows and apparently it was going to be a rare clear day.

“Wait a sec,” he said and searched his pockets a moment for his own wand before he found it on the ground where Hadrian’s spell had sent it. “Keep your eyes shut, Hadrian, and turn your head towards my voice.”

The boy had lifted his hands to his face, shielding his eyes from the light he couldn’t see but obviously feel. Turning to Sirius, his slender shoulders slightly hunched with tension, he only hesitantly dropped them back into his lap. He looked more than just uncomfortable with the situation and Sirius could only imagine what it must be like to wake up to a world of darkness that somehow hurt you yet you were unable to actually see what caused the pain. It must be terrifying and yet Hadrian looked ready to fight if needed, or more like he would stubbornly take whatever came his way and would make it through by pure willpower.

“Sirius?” His voice was still a bit hoarse sounding and he was squinting, desperately trying to see what was going on and at the same time blinking against the pain his actions caused him.

“Don’t startle, I’m just going to conjure some… shawls for your eyes.” He was about to do just that (It was a naughty little spell to conjure up silk shawls for… various reasons.) when he remembered Remus’ warning about magic around Hadrian and why exactly he had dressed the boy in his own shirt – and damn if that didn’t look cute. “Ah, maybe not. Wait, I find you something we can use,” Sirius said lamely, looking around and startling himself when a cupboard appeared inbetween the many dusty bookshelves that lined two of the walls. “Wow, yeah, that’s requirement alright.”

He heard Hadrian chuckle behind him and just knew the boy knew what had startled him. Or that he at least wouldn’t be surprised even if Sirius would somehow produce the Sorting Hat itself. The cupboard contained old clothing items, all of them cleaned and pressed, and Sirius was tempted to look around for a house-elf. He chose one of the bigger shirts, only hesitating for a second before he ripped at one of the sleeves. That would do for now.

“All right,” he said pleased with himself, sauntering back to the bed but stopping short when he saw Hadrian flinch at his approach. “Hey,” he soothed, lowering his voice, “It’s only me here. I know you’re hurting and I think it’s because of the light. Your eyes…” He had no idea how to say this, but Hadrian apparently didn’t need or want an explanation. He just nodded, chewing on his bottom lip and clenching his hands in the blanket that was still covering his lower body. “I won’t hurt you, promise,” Sirius added in a near whisper, taking the last few steps that brought him right up to Hadrian’s side.

It was amazing how much the boy trusted him in some moments and at the same time seemed always so wary of everyone. Now, though, he clearly was afraid of the whole situation, Sirius or not, and who could blame him? He tried to keep it together, scared as he was, and the Marauder had the uncharacteristic urge to coo and coddle him, everything, as long as he could wipe away that scared look on Hadrian’s face.

“I made you a makeshift blindfold,” he explained in the same low soothing tone and reached out to the boy. He stopped at the last second, only millimetres away from a pale cheek. “I’m going to touch you now,” he warned, but waited until he got another nod before he finally made contact.

The room was warm in a pleasant mixture of the heat of a fire and sunshine. But the sunshine seemed also what was searing his eyes and made Harry want to rip them out of his skull. He tried
distracting himself from the pain by listening to Sirius move around him. It was strange, listening to someone in the same room without being able to see them - or feel, because it was Sirius and Harry had never been able to really pick up on his hidden magical signature. Briefly he wondered if it had been the same with his godfather, but by now that man and this Sirius had somehow separated themselves from each other in Harry’s mind. As though they were two different people and maybe they were, after all a person’s personality developed constantly or so he thought. Would he influence Sirius’ development now that he was here? It all depended on whether or not his presence actually changed the future. Was he even going to make enough of an impact?

The sudden sound of someone approaching made him flinch and hunch in on himself instinctively. It was Sirius, only Sirius, it was alright, but his paranoid instincts honed from years of being a madman’s target made it really hard to relax in this kind of situation. He was unable to see or feel a possible threat, he hadn’t even his wand though if he had heard right he had actually done accidental magic when waking up. Oh well, nothing new there. He made himself stay still and concentrate on Sirius’ voice to calm down. Sirius’ voice which he always associated with safety and trust.

Lifting the makeshift blindfold, Sirius first lightly touched Hadrian’s soft pale cheek to warn him further. He was amazed at the texture and lost his train of thought for a second when his fingertips made contact. A questioning noise from Hadrian made him blink and his gaze dropped to those slightly parted lips.

Oh shit, he was in so much trouble. Swallowing against the sudden dryness in his mouth, Sirius forced himself to concentrate on the task at hand. Lifting the fabric, he carefully wound it around Hadrian’s head, making his inky dark hair stand up in even more ridiculous angles. And had those strands always been this dark?

Harry could hear and then feel Sirius’ breath on his skin and for a moment he forgot about the clawing pain in his eyes. The proximity should be unsettling, but it wasn’t. Not at all and that surprised Harry more than the sudden blush he felt spreading over his cheeks. He didn’t stop to think why he was blushing so fiercely when the pain in his eyes receded the moment the blindfold made contact. It was such a relief that he leaned into the touch to his cheek gratefully.

Sirius was hypnotised by those lips and oh Merlin then Hadrian leaned into his hand and sighed in a way it neared a moan. That was just unfair and torture and oh he wanted to kiss him! But no, he couldn’t do that. Hadrian didn’t even know about his feelings and it was so, so wrong to want it right then when the boy was so vulnerable… but Gods, Sirius wasn’t sure how much longer he would be able to hold himself back.
Remus got up unhealthily early, especially considering their late night, and went to the library even before breakfast. He had wanted to do this particular research for a while now, but things had just moved so fast and he had let himself get distracted. So he went to Hogwarts’ library early on Sunday morning cursing the fact that he couldn’t just go and ask Madam Pomfrey about it. Bringing any kind of attention to Hadrian right now would be just dumb and Remus wasn’t about to risk anything concerning the boy’s safety.

Looking through the available medical books he tried to find proof for his suspicions. The fever wasn’t mentioned anywhere in the Potter heirloom which was why Remus hoped it was something related to Hadrian’s individual health and not a complication with the magic itself. He had remembered Madam Pomfrey’s comment about the lack in weight, the bruises and scars and wondered if any of that could be the cause for the fever that wreaked havoc with Hadrian’s body. Unfortunately he did not know how Hadrian had gotten the scars nor had he seen them himself. It could be anything from a light scratch scar to massive scarring, but then again, what amount of scarring would be enough to be mentioned by the matron? The bruises would be gone by now, so he ruled them out and concentrated on the weight issue, which he classed as malnutrition, and what little he could piece together about the scars.

They sat together on the bed while Sirius recounted the events to Hadrian once again. It was an amicable atmosphere, but Sirius couldn’t stop himself from looking at the boy. Like in really looking and taking advantage of the fact that Hadrian wouldn’t notice since he couldn’t see it.

“And the next thing I know is you cursing me awake and me making an absolutely graceful tumble to the floor,” he ended and looked from where Hadrian’s hands were playing with the blanket to where a tongue was wetting those damned lips.

“Uh sorry ’bout that,” Hadrian said with his still slightly husky voice and Sirius was abruptly reminded of his thoughts back in the infirmary when he had thought about that voice and how nice it would sound laughing… “My wand is somewhere nearby though, right? I think I can feel it around.”

“Oh,” Sirius blinked himself from his pleasant thoughts and looked over at the bedside table, “Yes, it’s right there next to the bed. But you didn’t have it when you woke up,” he pointed out.

“Yes, but accidental magic doesn’t require a wand, does it? I mean, you’ve seen me destroying the castle with it this past week.” Hadrian hunched his shoulders slightly in a self-deprecating way when he said this. It was quite obvious that he didn’t consider his magical outbursts as something admirable and that would not do in Sirius’ books.

“Hadrian.” He didn’t even stumble over the use of the first name anymore as he cautiously looked for the boy’s reaction to his words. “Accidental magic never is as precise as a disarming charm. I was asleep myself so I don’t know whether you talked in your sleep again or not, but you definitely disarmed me and the spell was strong enough to kick me from my chair as well. If it had been simple reactive accidental magic, it wouldn’t have bothered with the disarming.” He waited a second before he added: “What you did was wandless magic and not the kind of emotional caused accidental magic like that – btw really awesome – stunt with the Slytherins. Though, maybe that was more like wild magic what with you having an inheritance and all.”
Hadrian seemed to think about that and Sirius watched as one of his hands – and shit he wanted to take hold of that hand! – wandered up and lightly scratched underneath the blindfold. It was while he was looking that he noticed Hadrian blushing. Frowning, Sirius thought about his words but couldn’t detect a cause for that blush in them. He was about to comment, when the door opened and both of them jumped in place, Hadrian even reaching blindly for his wand.

Remus had nearly forgotten the questions that had popped into his mind when he first laid eyes on Hadrian Moore that day in the hospital wing. Was it really only a week ago? He had been led over to the other boy’s bed by his curiosity and the subtle scent of forest that he hadn’t been able to place anywhere – or rather with anyone. He remembered wondering who this person could be, smelling like he did, pleasant and somewhat wild but oh so familiar, and how all those questions had flown out of his mind when Hadrian looked at him.

He had looked like Remus was… well, not a ghost since ghosts aren’t all that scary to a wizard, really. More like Remus was a vision or something like that. He had wondered if it had been the knowledge of him being a werewolf that had scared Hadrian, but that idea had been discarded quickly when he noticed the boy having no problem with his presence after the initial shock. So Hadrian probably didn’t know about him, because Remus couldn’t imagine someone other than his closest friends and someone as old and powerful as Dumbledore being this accepting of his furry little problem. It was just too unlikely and why should Hadrian know it anyway?

And it had just started piling up from there. There were so many things about Hadrian Moore that one wouldn’t notice at first glance but couldn’t overlook if one really took the time. The way he came to stay at Hogwarts or the knowledge of a thousand little things that alone could be written off as coincidence, but together were way too much to be ignored. What were those rules-of-thumb? ‘Once Is Chance, Twice is Coincidence, Third Time Is A Pattern’? Or was it ‘Once is an accident. Twice is coincidence. Three times is an enemy action’? He rather thought the latter was from some novel and had nothing to do with The Moscow rules. (*)

Anyway, what it all meant was that Hadrian Moore – and let’s not forget the name the map had told him! – was much more than what meets the eye. And it all came down to one thing: He had to ask him. He would ask him. There was no way he could ignore it any longer.

“Ooh, did we interrupt something?” James’ suggestive tone of voice left no room for speculation as to what he was referring to. “Though I probably shouldn’t be too surprised, after all Padfoot was dead insistent to stay the night,” he snickered and Sirius groaned next to Harry. The sound sent unexpected shivers down his spine.

Though, maybe those came from the fact that James had said ‘we’. Who was with him? Remus? Or was it Pettigrew? Harry tried to concentrate on the magical signatures to figure it out, but the bickering between Sirius and James distracted him.

“Is that a blindfold?” James whistled mock impressed and his voice sounded much nearer this time. “Kinky.”

There was the sound of a door being closed which told Harry that whoever had come with his dad had just now entered the room completely. He strained his ears and tried to calm his suddenly racing heart, but to no avail.

“What did I tell you about your cake trap, Prongs?” Sirius sounded surprisingly embarrassed which in turn made Harry turn to him. He couldn’t remember ever seeing an embarrassed Sirius, not in this time and not in his. Not like he could actually see him right now, he thought with a huff.
“Touchy,” James remarked and there was the sound of a chair being dragged across the floor. “And I never thought I would get to say this to you, but you need a hairbrush, man.” Harry smiled at the smug tone in James’ voice. That he could understand, he knew exactly where his dad was coming from. After all, if Sirius’ annoyingly perfect hair did actually look in need of attention, it was a one in a million situation that definitely called for teasing. And when had he started to think about him as his dad again?

“Oi! It’s not like there’s a bathroom around now, is there?” There was a gasp and someone getting to their feet, someone running. Harry felt the bed next to him shift and knew Sirius was about to get up. And he also could imagine why that was.

“You sure that you’re not just getting lazy, Pads?” James’ voice sounded curiously hollow like he was speaking from inside of another room – a room which must have had some kind of reflective surfaces, like tiles. “This looks a lot like a bathroom to me.”

“Requirement alright…,” Sirius muttered next to Harry. “Couldn’t have done that when I needed to piss at four in the morning, now could it.”

It turned out to be Pettigrew who had come in with James and Harry couldn’t stop himself from constantly listening to where the other boy was in the room. They had brought some breakfast with them and as James ordered to ‘get the plates rolling’, whatever that was supposed to mean, they all seated themselves around Harry’s bed. Apparently the three Marauders wanted to wait for Remus before they indulged in more investigations of the Room of Requirement. Harry wasn’t hungry, but let himself be roped into nibbling on some toast and gratefully drinking down a whole bottle of Pumpkin juice. It didn’t escape his now more than ever alert ears that Sirius was happily munching on something and Pettigrew was making a lot of slurping noises while stuffing his face with a second breakfast. He was just about to admit to himself that it probably were more his negative feelings toward the rat than Pettigrew actually being as disgusting as Harry thought him to be, when Remus finally made an appearance.

The door opened and closed and Harry tensed slightly, but a hand on his upper thigh stopped him in his tracks. A hand that didn’t disturb him and actually made him lean slightly to his left into the person attached to the hand. He wrote it off as Sirius always being a safe haven for him and tuned in on the conversation again.

“Does he have the sleepy staggars?” James stage whispered from one of the chairs next to the bed. When it didn’t get him any reaction from a stumbling and yawning Remus he raised his voice a bit. “Moony, my furry friend, want some coffee before you share your discoveries with us?”

“Don’t shout, James,” was the moody reply before a heavy weight dropped onto the bed near Harry’s feet that made him flinch. “Sorry, Hadrian,” Remus’ yawn was muffled by the blanket as he let Pettigrew pour him a cup of coffee. “Wait. You’re awake again!”

Sirius chuckled next to Harry and patted his thigh soothingly another time before he reached over and stopped Remus from smothering the boy in his excitement. Remus’ tiredness was forgotten and he set to taking Harry’s vitals again and compared them to his notes from the night before.

“You’re doing better,” he informed them. “The fever’s down quite a bit though you’re still hotter than you should be.” His eyes unobtrusively traced the long inflamed looking scar on Hadrian’s arm that couldn’t be hidden with the short sleeves of Sirius’ shirt – even though said shirt was much bigger on Hadrian than it was on the grim Animagus. He hadn’t seen that scar before. Maybe Hadrian usually hid it with a Glamour?

“I dunno, Moony,” James chuckled, “Think Padfoot would disagree with you on that.”
There was a choking sound coming from Sirius at that and Harry frowned confused. Why would Sirius disagree with his temperature? He listened to Sirius getting up and chasing a laughing James around the room cheered on by Wormtail, but was soon distracted from Remus taking the chair right next to him. Maybe he would get some more information on this inheritance now, after all everyone seemed to know more about it than he himself.

“Did you sleep well?” Remus softly asked and Harry suddenly hoped this didn’t refer to his nightmares. He hadn’t done any more magic in his sleep during his stay in the dorm, had he?

“Er yeah, I think so,” he answered just as softly, not wanting to attract the others’ attention. Sirius had said it hadn’t been accidental but wandless magic. If Harry was honest, he didn’t really see a difference there – he had after all been emotionally invested through his nightmare and emotions were what always caused his accidental magical outbursts. And what was the difference between accidental and wild magic anyway? But wandless magic or not, what really unsettled him was a small, nearly unnoticeable word. Again. Sirius had said he didn’t know if Harry had talked in his sleep again. Fuck. He should have known. Why had he not used silencing charms? Was he a wizard or not? Did Remus know too? Had he talked in his sleep every night he had been here? Each time he had one of his horrible nightmares? What had he said? It couldn’t be something too revealing or there would have been questioning. Or rather more detailed questioning than what he had been subjected to so far.

“I see your eyes have become photosensitive,” Remus commented after a moment. When Harry looked confused, he elaborated: “Very sensitive to light. It’s what the book said would happen when a recipient of your specific inheritance would develop ‘the Eyes’.”

“What book?” Harry was confused, ignoring how he felt like a plant being called ‘photosensitive’ and all. Yes, Sirius had told him some about the inheritance, the name and rareness, but little more than that. He hadn’t known there was actually a book about it. There hadn’t been any mention of Elf Owls in the Hogwarts library as far as he knew, but then again, he hadn’t known the name then and hadn’t looked for it specifically.

“A Potter family heirloom,” Remus said and there was just something in his voice that indicated the significance of what he had just said. And Harry knew why, because his friend had stressed the family name in there. He had laid a specific emphasis on the fact that it was a Potter family heirloom, something with a significant connection to the Potter family… whereas Harry’s official alias had no connection to said family.

“Oh,” he said intelligently and fiddled with the blanket. “Can I… ah… can I read it when….,” he waved his hand around a bit vaguely, indicating himself and just everything. If there was an actual book about all this mess, then he would at least be able to learn more about what he had become. Or was in the process of becoming. If he would be able to see again, that is.

“You would have to ask James, but I don’t think he would deny it… since the last known Elf Owls were born Potters and he’s absolutely ecstatic of there being a new one.” Harry nervously chewed on his bottom lip and scratched at a little but insistent itch on his scalp. He was still feeling weak, but a lot better than the last time he had been awake and he wanted to use this respite. Something told him he wasn’t quite through with the pain.

“So, Rem,” Sirius suddenly popped up next to them and Harry nearly bit off his tongue. “Sorry, sorry Owlet,” he added distractedly and Harry blushed at the pet name, hearing someone who was most definitely James snicker again. “Right,” Sirius cleared his throat and spoke over James and a joining in Pettigrew. “What can ya tell us about this fellow’s future?”
Chapter End Notes

Is it 'sunglasses' or 'shades'?

(*) The Moscow rules are rules-of-thumb said to have been developed during the Cold War to be used by spies and others working in Moscow.
Being blind made room for a lot of thinking.

So far he had not thought too much about Voldemort, who was somewhere out there in this time, and the possibilities of Horcruxes. His mind had been too occupied with the little nondescript happening that was his jump through time. Oh right and then there was that funny genetic thing that was the reason for him now having nothing else to do than delve into the not so happy corners of his mind. Yes, there had been a lot to take in and a lot to use as reasoning for not thinking on the lingering problem of a dark lord. He had even tried to tell himself that it maybe wasn’t his problem any longer since he wasn’t in his own time any more and therefore wouldn’t be able to defeat Voldepants. Only that Harry had jumped into a past where Voldemort was existing, too. Which meant in the long run – if he was inclined to believe a prophecy that technically hadn’t been made yet – that he could still be considered in a position to go against him. That no one in this time would ever expect a boy his age to even consider this was comforting, but wouldn’t exactly stop what was meant to happen. Again, if he believed in the prophecy.

But there was another thought that bugged him now that he had the time to actually think about it. Because, even if he wasn’t there in the future in which everyone expected him to fight a dark lord and play saviour or sacrificial lamb (depending on the point of view), he had possibly taken a piece of the future Voldemort with him into the past. Meaning, it was impossible for those remaining in the future to destroy all of the soul anchors to make Snakeface mortal again. Basically, he had effectively helped Voldemort secure his immortality once and for all. That is, if he didn’t stop him here, where he was now, before it could ever get to that. Sigh.

Being blind and alone made room for anxiety.

They had been talking about his inheritance for a long time and Harry had learned quite a bit about what his life now entailed. It was a lot of information. It was ridiculous. And it was terrifying. He was going to have an allure. A freaking allure? First he had snorted at the sheer ridiculousness – him having an allure. Yeah right. What was there to be oh so alluring? But then Remus had explained what kind of allure he had exactly (because he said he already had it just not constantly or something like that) and Harry had felt like going into hysterics…

“The creature draws people in,” the gentle werewolf had told them. “As long as you aren’t able to control it, it will provoke strong emotional reactions. These reactions depend on the person, obviously, like for example Madam Pomfrey’s motherly affection towards you.” He had sent Hadrian a teasing smile that went unseen but still somehow earned him a scowl before he turned serious again. “But that also means they aren’t always going to be positive reactions. Or welcome.”

Sirius had not liked where this was hinting at. He had regarded Rem for a moment, but he knew his friend wasn’t having them on. And he didn’t like the clueless look on Hadrian’s face either – didn’t he realise how gorgeous he was? This was some serious matter and he couldn’t even grin over his own choice of words. They would have to make sure that Hadrian didn’t lose control, because no one could predict what his creature would do to others – or rather, what it would make others do to him. Crouch came to mind and Sirius forcefully shoved him right back out of his thoughts and into the pit of dragon dung he had mentally placed him in.
“So most peoples’ inherent reaction to our fearless leader would be what?” He had questioned instead to break the heavy silence that had followed Rem’s words. “I remember Prongs getting a whole lot more detentions last year mostly because the dork blew something up – oh and that one time for shouting at Slughorn that he, and I quote, ‘should shove his invitation to the ‘Slug Club’ up his own ‘slug arse’.” He snickered at James’ indignant sniff, but Peter’s face lit up with realisation.

“Is that why you got all those gifts on Valentine’s Day? Because you had allure back then?” He asked in an awed sounding voice that made Harry inwardly gag. James just took on a smug look that Harry could even hear without being able to see it and went with the distraction.

“As if,” he preened. “I’m just that awesome,” he added for good measure. “But that’s actually a great example, Padfoot. Remember how I got off for that with just one evening of writing lines and listening to Slugarse’ stories?”

From there the discussion had shortly devolved into jokes on Professor Slughorn’s expense, before Remus had reined them all in and brought them back to topic. He had seen the desperate look on Hadrian’s face who was obviously not coping well with the revelation of him having an allure – especially one as unspecific and unpredictable as its effect differed from person to person. And Remus thought that maybe he knew why: In Hadrian’s mind it would make it impossible to decipher which reaction was ‘real’ and which was ‘allure induced’.

“See this sentence here?” He pointed out to the other Marauders and then explained it out loud for Hadrian. “The one that says that the allure of an Elf Owl provokes strong emotions and subsequent reactions?” He had waited for a second to make sure he again had everyone’s attention. “It clearly says that those emotion fuelled reactions depend on us, the influenced. Which means, Hadrian, your allure can’t force us into doing something we wouldn’t normally be inclined to do. It just kind of… accelerates the process.”

There had been a pause in which James had looked long and hard at Sirius who in turn had looked long and considering at Hadrian.

“So…,” Hadrian finally started, sounding unsure.

“Right,” Remus immediately continued his explanation, not letting the boy fret over what he had just learned. “It is also not limited to what the author calls ‘romantic reactions’ which I suspect is a delicate way to say that your allure won’t only cause the sexual drive a Veela’s allure provokes – even though it is still a possible reaction. The Elf Owl allure can provoke any reaction depending on the influenced individual ranging from unwanted advances to… well, spiteful behaviour. It really depends on the person, it seems.”

“Advances, he says,” James snorted, but Remus threw him a look that shut him up. They all looked to Hadrian who had slightly blushed and seemed torn between embarrassment and something else that they couldn’t quite name.

“And,” Remus added with emphasis, “If you’re still unsure about our behaviour to be really ours and not forced through your allure, you can rely on James here. He’s your safe bet in this, since the book states the only unaffected by the allure are other born Elf Owls or descendants of the like.” That had obviously some effect. Hadrian blew out a breath no one but Remus had noticed he had been holding. One of his hands wandered up yet again to scratch at his scalp and he made a thoughtful sound.

“Okay,” he finally said softly. “I think I got it. Allure. Every reaction possible. Only James will be unaffected.”
Harry sighed and shifted in his bed. As if Voldemort’s behaviour towards him wasn’t already disturbing enough – now it was entirely possible it would only grow in its intensity if they should cross paths again. Thanks allure, thanks so much.

Being blind and alone really wasn’t anything Harry would fancy to experience any time soon again. Or ever. So far he didn’t fancy anything about this inheritance and even though he normally relished in his alone time he would rather not be on his own right now. But it hadn’t been avoidable if they wanted to keep anyone from noticing his disappearance. Around eleven in the morning James had announced their leave and had all but dragged Sirius from the room. Sirius hadn’t wanted to leave and when he realised Remus wouldn’t stay either he had sounded so betrayed in his protest. But the other Marauders were having none of it.

“You need to make an appearance, Pads.” James had said. “We could pass your absence yesterday as you being on one of your little amorous strays and you not being there for breakfast could be explained easily with a …lie in.” Harry was quickly learning that James had a knack for using synonyms to describe Sirius’ rather happy libido. He wasn’t sure what about it he didn’t like, but there was just something about the thought of Sirius sleeping his way through Hogwarts’ beds…

It had been a combination of blatant manipulation, Harry’s assurance that he would be fine, and Remus putting his foot down that finally convinced Sirius to leave. Though, he made sure to let Harry know he wouldn’t be long and that he only left because Harry was so much better now. It was adorable even if Harry would never say that out loud. It made something inside of him feel warm and gooey and he snorted to himself before he scratched at his scalp yet again. There was a persistent itch that had started underneath the blindfold which was why he hadn’t given it much thought. Maybe it was just a reaction to the fabric or sweaty skin. But the itch had spread and it was driving him insane. He didn’t want to scratch too much, but already his scalp felt hot from the irritation and he was sure he had broken skin in a few places. It just wouldn’t stop.

He was tired and alone and blind. His persistently itching scalp was giving him a headache and it was downright creepy to be alone in this room when unable to see anything around him. He trusted Hogwarts, he loved the castle, and he knew logically that there wasn’t anything in the Room of Requirement that would hurt him. Still, it was creepy. Never before had he been so aware of all the sounds an old castle like Hogwarts was constantly making!

Harry so wished he would be able to paint again. Or draw – he wanted to try that ever since he had seen another student in Muggle Arts drawing with charcoal. It looked messy and absolutely fascinating how the dark sooty colour spread and developed into pictures. He couldn’t wait to try if he had a hand for it; his paintings were alright, he thought, nothing special but quite nice. But charcoal looked so much more… practical. The thought of his paintings reminded him that there should be his very first painting somewhere hidden in this room. He had left the picture here in his haste to leave last time and since none of the others had mentioned it so far Harry supposed the room had probably hidden it away. It wasn’t something required at the moment so it wasn’t there.

He heard the door open and fought the urge to let himself fall to the side and off the bed to get some cover. Paranoid battle instincts, constant vigilance and all that jazz. Instead he stayed where he was, still and listening, kinda like a frightened animal playing dead. He knew no one who was not welcome should be able to get in here. But it was hard to fight the instinct and his hand clenched around the wand he had with him on the bed ever since the others had left. How long ago was that now? Harry hadn’t been able to calm himself enough to actually sleep even though he was bone tired. He had just laid there listening to his own thoughts (and the creepy castle sounds), unable to do much of anything.
“It’s alright, it’s just me,” a voice said and Harry felt the tension bleed from his still sore muscles.
“Remus,” was added for good measure as if he was unsure Harry would recognise him by his voice alone.

“Hey,” Harry smiled tiredly. “How long…?”

“Just about two hours. I would have been back earlier, but I needed to distract Madam Pomfrey from the fact that you’ve not shown up for your appointment.”

“My wh-… oh shit.” Harry groaned. He dimly remembered the matron advising him to take the prescribed Pepper Up potions and to make sure to come to another check up on Sunday. Today.
“I’m sorry,” he sighed.

“No need,” Remus said and Harry heard him settle in a chair next to the bed once again. “It’s not like you could have prevented this from happening. Though… did you actually know you would have this inheritance?”

And there was the tension again. Fuck. He couldn’t tell him, could he? Was it alright to say that yes, he had known it would happen? Harry wanted to think that it was okay to just give in and ask for the help he needed. But he knew if he gave in now there would be questions. And questions. And then lies, because he wouldn’t be able to tell them the truth. Not that he thought they would actually believe him – time travel magic just wasn’t advanced enough yet to even consider a journey like his. But then again… he was from the future… a future none of them knew which meant no one here would know what would be possible then. Could he risk it? Did he want to risk it?

“Harry.”

It took a long second for Harry to realise which name Remus had addressed him with.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter there'll be a bit of jealousy... <3
In which Harry is not gonna ask

Chapter Notes

Oh I adored the reactions to the last chapter!! <3
[insert evil villainish cackle here]

With a stumbled curtsy at Peramia even though I had this written before I read your awesome comment – it’s only right to mention you here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Rem had his hands in Hadrian’s hair. He was standing close and stroking through the thick black tresses. And then his friend shifted and he could see that Hadrian was shirtless. There was no mistaking the expanse of pale smooth skin littered with scars.

He had left the boy to Remus’ insistent blabbering that they all needed to keep up appearances so they wouldn’t draw attention to Hadrian. He had left the boy dressed in his shirt after he had stayed at his bedside the whole fucking night. And he came back to find his shirt discarded on the floor and one of his best friends touching and groping the boy he fancied. Sirius growled deep in his chest, an animalistic sound he couldn’t remember ever making before. He saw the exact moment Rem’s senses picked up on his presence or maybe he had even heard the growl. His… friend snapped to attention, muscles tensing up slightly and he looked over his shoulder at Sirius with a confused air.

“Having fun?” Sirius wanted to flinch at the bitter mocking sound of his own voice.

What the hell was happening here? Remus wasn’t even into blokes as far as he knew. For a second Sirius wondered if it was Hadrian’s allure doing this, but then he remembered what they had learned just this morning. The Elf Owl allure couldn’t force them into doing anything they wouldn’t be inclined to do. Oh it could strengthen the reaction, accelerate the process, and make them do whatever they were inclined to faster than they would normally. But it couldn’t force Rem to suddenly be into blokes if he hadn’t been before. Which meant the werewolf was doing it all on his own volition.

Sirius’ gaze zeroed in on the hands still buried in Hadrian’s thick mop of hair and he felt a surge of something vicious. He wanted to rip those hands away from the boy, wanted to place himself between those two, wanted to hide away Hadrian’s naked skin from the werewolf’s eyes. Possessiveness. He blinked when he realised what he was feeling was completely new to him. He had never felt like this for or about anyone before.

“Sirius?”

It was Hadrian’s soft voice with that cute rough edge that finally broke the spell. He blinked a few times more and finally took in the first aid kit on the bed next to the bloodied rag Rem had used back in Hogsmeade to treat the gash from that damned cutting curse. Oh hell. There was something seriously – so not funny – wrong with him.

Lucian Bole could not believe his luck. The day Hadrian Moore had nearly passed out in his class had been his most lucky in a long time. He had thought the too scrawny boy a good student, had
fleettlingly spent a second to wonder ifLe would be reason why Moore was this apt at practical defence, but the moment he touched him had changed his train of thought completely.

He could feel a magical inheritance a mile away. It wasn’t that hard a task if you knew what to look for and the wonky unstable magic around Moore had been more than telling. But Lucian Bole wasn’t dumb enough to believe it would be your everyday maturity inheritance. The boy was too young for that – he had checked himself just to be sure what he was witnessing. Hadrian Moore was listed as 16 as of yet in Hogwarts’ student registry. If it wasn’t the normal maturity boost at 17, then there was only one other possibility. A possibility that had become the reason he himself had to actually work to keep the triumphant smirk from his face at all times.

He hadn’t been absolutely sure though until he came across the group of students in Hogsmeade. Oh that had been another lucky shot. He had kept himself hidden, watching, listening, observing like the clever snake he always had been. He had followed the frantic students to the old haunted shack at the edge of the village, wondering all the while over the lack of surprise or headless actions on the boys’ side. He had waited in the shadows for them to come back out when he had felt it. A spike in the magical patterns that were so pronounced in an all magical area like Hogsmeade. What really did surprise him, though, had been the sheer strength of that spike. He had no knowledge of any creature inheritance that involved this amount of magic. This revelation made him only more gleeful – whatever the boy was it was rare and strong. Oh the Galleons that could be made.

Maybe an hour later three of the boys had made their way back to Hogsmeade, mingling with the other students and he had resigned himself to wait a bit longer. It had been a while before he realised that the remaining two had no intention to come back out of the shack. When night started to fall, the last Hogwarts students long back at the castle, he had made up his mind and went to investigate. He had expected the students to camp out in one of the ransacked dusty rooms and when he reached the upper floor bedroom it looked like they had been doing just that. Only that they weren’t there any longer. He hadn’t seen them leave, but maybe they had used a backdoor or window.

The magical residue had still been there open to his perusal and it wasn’t surprising considering the containment charms all over the doors and windows. Someone had really tried to hide what was happening inside and still the spike in the magical patterns had been noticeable. He doubted the lingering residue would have dispersed by now even without the containment. It was just too much, too imprinted in its surroundings. He had run every recognition spell he knew, but couldn’t make any sense of the readings he got. It was an unknown creature inheritance and he was over himself with glee.

Now, if only he could track those little mischief makers down. After returning to the castle he had tried to look for them, but it had been Saturday night by then and he couldn’t really justify a visit to Gryffindor Tower. But Sunday morning had come and gone without him being able to corner even one of those infamous four with their fifth addition. Somehow they kept eluding him and Lucian Bole didn’t like a secret hidden from him – especially not one so promising.

Hearing Remus use his actual given name had shut Harry up for a few long moments. Well, shit. He was so fucked. And doomed. And probably in so deep there was no way he could fight his way back out without admitting to the truth. He was absolutely out of his depths, had no idea what to do. So he did nothing, just held his breath, listening to Remus sitting next to him and waiting what would happen now. He didn’t even want to think about how the bloody hell Remus knew his actual name.

And oh Gods what would it mean if he knew more than his first name? What if Remus knew he was a Potter? What would happen now?

He listened to the werewolf blowing out a long breath and then there was a shuffle and the sound of
parchment being sifted through. It was a sound he was so familiar with after his nearly six years in the Wizarding World that it somehow managed to calm him down just that tiny bit he needed to actually breathe again. So he had no idea how to handle this situation - it wasn’t like he could fight off knowledge – which meant he would have to go with whatever Remus decided to do next. And that was just that.

Remus laid it out plainly for him, telling him he knew his actual full name, even if he didn’t confide how he knew, and that he suspected Harry to have been at Hogwarts before. He also told him that being a Potter and having this specific creature inheritance meant he would most likely not develop ‘the Wings’ – not that Harry had really thought about that, his mind had been too stunned with the revelation to have an allure, not really caring about any physical changes whatsoever. And Harry was also stunned to realise that Remus was giving him an out here. He wasn’t demanding to be told anything, nor was he threatening to rat him out to the others or anyone else. It was astounding and baffling and Harry was tempted to just accept it and trust his friend. Only he wasn’t really his friend or mentor in this time which meant Remus had no actual reason to do this.

“Why?” He had finally asked after chewing nervously on his bottom lip for quite some time. “Why are you telling me this? I mean… you really have no reason to trust me.” It hurt to admit it, but it was true. They didn’t really know him and yet they had done so much for him already and now Remus was even ready to keep a possibly dangerous secret from his best friends. There had to be a reason.

“I’m not sure,” Remus said after a pause. “Maybe it’s because you already had a lot of chances to hurt us or even just rat any of our pranks out to a professor. You did neither and you even tried to keep us from getting hurt when you actually needed help. Twice.” He cocked his head, considering. “But, if I’m honest, Hadrian… Harry, I think it’s your scent.”

He nearly laughed when Hadrian wrinkled his nose and bent his head to sniff at the collar of Sirius’ shirt. He looked thoroughly confused and Remus couldn’t really fault him for that. It was a weird thing to be told your scent was the reason a stranger trusted you despite obviously having a lot of secrets including a hidden identity.

“I probably need a shower by now,” he said unsurely and this time Remus did laugh.

“Probably, but that’s not what I meant,” he smiled at the boy. It really was strange, but he just couldn’t bring himself to mistrust Hadrian, Harry, even if he chose not to divulge any of his secrets. And that went completely against Remus’ nature, but still he couldn’t bring himself to really care. He wondered if it was the allure, but then again, he was a naturally suspicious person, had to be really, it wouldn’t make any sense if the allure suddenly made him more trusting. No, it really was just Hadrian… Harry himself. “Let’s just say I have a really strong sense of smell. I’m able to tag a smell to a specific person and recognise them by it.” He watched Hadrian closely, but there was no sign of surprise or even fear. Hadrian actually looked accepting.

“So you …like my smell?” It sounded half teasing, half serious, as if he was wondering how a smell could make someone more trustworthy. He wouldn’t know, of course, since he himself had no such ability. It wasn’t just a werewolf thing to associate a specific smell with safety, but most humans weren’t really aware of that.

“Kind of,” Remus relented. “You smell of something my… inner nature recognises as familiar.” He nearly had said ‘inner wolf’ and he never had been more grateful for Hadrian’s lack of eyesight than in that moment. Taking a deep breath he shoved down his fear and watched the boy scratching at his scalp in an unconscious gesture.

“I’m not gonna ask,” Hadrian said after a moment. “As long as you don’t either.” He felt awful for using his knowledge of Remus being a werewolf to keep his own secret, but he couldn’t afford to tell
him. It could destroy so much even if no one believed him. Meddling with time was dangerous, Hermione had told him so.

He was surprised when Remus chuckled. It sounded a little breathless and somehow relieved. Shouldn’t he be the one relieved that Remus chose not to just force him to share his secrets?

“Deal,” he said. “But, Harry, if I’m going to keep your secrets, you have to give me something.” He could trust the boy, he just knew he could. His wolf was sure of it and even if he ignored the furry little problem’s opinion, there was just something about Hadrian that screamed trustworthy. He didn’t think it was the allure, he really didn’t. It was his inherent protectiveness that was affected by the allure and maybe that buttered him up a bit, but he felt secure in the knowledge that it wasn’t happening unnoticed.

“Like what?” Hadrian, or Harry – really, it would be best if he kept with the name they all knew just to keep himself from slipping up – was again chewing on his bottom lip in a nervous gesture and his hand kept scratching at his scalp.

“A bit of trust would be nice for a beginning,” he smiled wryly. If he was going to trust Hadrian, then the same courtesy should be extended to him. “You don’t have to tell me everything, just enough to keep my mind at ease.”

Hadrian was tugging on strands of his hair, shifting in his seat and Remus caught sight of the reddened skin of his scalp as he pulled a hand through the dark tresses once again. It was a familiar gesture and with a jolt Remus realised where he had seen the exact same movement a million times before. He briefly wondered if it was a Potter thing. Maybe it came with the untameable hair like some genetic giveaway?

“You’re right in your assumption that I’m… a Potter,” Hadrian said softly, sitting really still now as if waiting for some violent reaction. “I can’t tell you why I’m hiding who I really am though,” he continued in an apologetic tone of voice. “It’s not something I want to do, but… you could probably say it’s to protect you. All of you.”

“I can’t imagine a reason to hide yourself from Lord Potter no matter who your parents are. I know from James that the number of actual blood related Potters is nearly down to zero.” Remus watched the confused expression on Hadrian’s face closely. “They would jump at the chance to keep the line intact. It’s risky if there is only one heir to keep the name from dying out.” Yeah, especially for an old Pureblood family like the Potters. Remus didn’t support any of that Pureblood rot, how could he, but he could understand the need to keep a family name alive. If James just so happened to not have any children or even just any male children then the Potter name would become extinct.

“Could we… could we please not talk about the Potters?” Hadrian’s voice sounded thin and Remus realised it was the strain to hide some deep rooted pain that made it so. It made something in his chest clench to realise that Hadrian seemed unable to talk about his own family without hurting. “I promise, I’m not a danger to them. Or you and Sirius.” Remus was too occupied by his own thoughts to realise Hadrian never mentioned Peter.

Chapter End Notes

What do you think Sirius would smell like? We know about Harry’s forest scent and I somehow think Remus would smell a bit earthy and wild. But what about the others?
In which Harry needs an itch scratched ;)

Chapter Notes

I loved the ideas for Sirius’ scent. Thank you!

The ‘jumper scene’ was especially written for Koi19.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Having fun?”

Sirius’ voice cut through the silence and the bitter edge to it made Harry shiver. It didn’t sound like the Sirius he knew and if Remus’ sudden tense hands in his hair were anything to go by it wasn’t a Sirius he knew either – or one he liked. Harry didn’t stop to think about how their current position might look like, or even why that might bother Sirius.

“Sirius?” He couldn’t stop the unsure sound of his voice and he loathed it. It wasn’t that he was unsure if this really was Sirius – if he hadn’t already recognised the voice, the distinct lack of a magical signature was a rather telling sign. But it was the heavy silence that followed the question that made him wonder what was wrong. Remus seemed as confused as he was, but then he suddenly pulled his hands back very slowly. Harry wished he could see what was going on, listening just wasn’t enough.

“I was just checking Hadrian’s scalp for any feathers,” Remus carefully explained and Harry thought he sounded as if he was trying to justify something. There were another few tense seconds and then Remus addressed his next words to him. “It’s no wonder your skin is itching so much. The feathers are about to break through, in a few places it actually already happened.”

There were steps and Harry felt Sirius’ presence right next to Remus’. He made a sound that was half gasp half sympathetic humming and Harry knew whatever was happening to his head didn’t look too nice. It didn’t feel all that nice either, he thought wryly, and went to scratch at the irritating skin again. Only he never reached it as a rather large hand grabbed his wrist in a gentle but firm grip.

“Don’t,” Sirius said and he realised it must be him stopping his hand from chasing that damn itch. “That really doesn’t look like you should scratch at it or even touch it.”

“Yeah, well, it’s driving me insane,” Harry snapped a bit impatiently. That was his skin after all, his head, and if he wanted to scratch it he would damn well scratch it. He tugged at his hand, fully intent on going back to his task, but quickly came to realise that Sirius was not about to let go. “Hey! Would you be so kind and give me my hand back?”

“If you’re actually asking… nope! You shouldn’t irritate that skin any more and if I let go now that’s exactly what you’re gonna do.”

Sirius sounded exasperated, but Harry thought there was more to it. It was fascinating just how much more one listened to the actual voices when unable to see the faces they belonged to. He dearly wished he was able to see Sirius’ face right now to find out what… but he couldn’t and that bloody itch was so annoying, he just wanted it to stop. He tried his other hand only to be caught again. Now Sirius was holding on to both of his wrists and Harry could tug all he wanted, he wasn’t getting free.
“Damn it, Sirius, it’s itching like mad!” He struggled some more, wondering where Remus had gone to and why the fuck he wasn’t helping him.

“I know,” Sirius’ voice had gone lower and that made Harry halt for just a moment. “But it’s not gonna get better if you scrape your skin off. Now, if you don’t mind telling me, why are you half naked?”

Harry had the childish urge to kick Sirius in the shin – or maybe some soft tissue regions. He bit his lip in an attempt to distract himself from the horrible feeling of his head. It felt like something was crawling beneath his skin, fighting to get out in the most irritating way possible. There was a soft groan and Harry blinked as he realised just how close Sirius was standing. Standing in front of him, holding his wrists and Harry belatedly registered the question. He blushed furiously as he remembered that yes, he was sitting there without anything covering his upper body. And his various scars.

Remus was staring at Sirius’ back. He could have sworn his friend had growled, actually growled, at him. And not in a human way, definitely not. He had sounded like his Animagus form and even though Remus knew that the inner animal became part of a person when they developed their Animagus successfully – he hadn’t thought it would happen quite so literally. Never before had his friend acted so… territorial. With a snort Remus thought he wouldn’t be surprised if Sirius would lift his leg to mark Hadrian as his.

His attention was drawn back to the two by the bed when he heard Hadrian yelp. He looked up just in time to see him fall back on the bed with the blankets spilling around him. It was the subtle scent Sirius was starting to emit though that caught his attention. His friend was standing right next to the bed, tense, looking down at the half naked boy lying there. Oh. Remus blushed nearly as dark as Hadrian as he realised that his friend was aroused by the sight in front of him and he cleared his throat pointedly to cut through the sudden heavy tension in the room.

Sirius had to suppress the urge to growl and spin around to chase away the disturbance, the intruder into his territory. Territory? What the bloody fuck was he thinking? He looked over his shoulder at Rem and met his friend’s eyes confused before he looked back down at Hadrian who was struggling to sit up again. The boy had continuously tried to get his hands free to scratch at his abused scalp again and Sirius – utterly at a loss how he was supposed to stop Hadrian from hurting himself further – had suddenly let go of his hands just to have him fall back on the bed with the movement. It had worked in so far that it shocked Hadrian into stopping for a moment, but it backfired enormously when Sirius found himself staring at the half naked body of the boy he fancied. Half naked, smooth skin warmed from the nearby fire and highlighted from the midday sun, sprawled across a bed and somewhat helpless looking with the blindfold still in place. Well, damn. That probably shouldn’t look so sexy.

“I uh…,” he cleared his throat embarrassed and took a few hasty steps back. “I brought you some clothes, thought you might want a change.” He rubbed the back of his neck and avoided looking at Hadrian, but that left him looking at Rem which didn’t exactly prove any better. His friend was staring at him with his ‘bug-on-a-pin’ kind of look which he normally reserved for fascinating problems in magical theory, especially dumb classmates and stuff like that. Sirius didn’t really fancy being the recipient of that look and he felt himself glaring back defensively and shifting in place.

“Oh,” Hadrian said into the still heavy silence of the room. “Thanks, I think I really need a shower.” There was a moment where Rem looked at Hadrian and Sirius watched both of them kind of share a smile even though Hadrian couldn’t see he was being smiled at. He didn’t like it.

“Hope you remembered my warning about the magical residue in his new clothes,” Rem said and
Sirius could hear he was trying to defuse the lingering tension. “You should avoid anything made with magical means for at least the next few hours,” he said to Hadrian and went on to explain about the possible interferences with the inheritance.

The next few hours. It was now around midday and Hadrian had first started to show signs of his inheritance around late afternoon yesterday. 24 hours of blindness. It couldn’t be much longer now, but did that mean the inheritance would be finished by then?

Prongs and Wormtail came by when Remus was just finishing answering Hadrian’s questions and they were contemplating whether a shower or a bath would be of any help right now. Hadrian was still sitting only half dressed, but at least he had slung the blanket around his shoulders. Sirius saw him drawing it closer when the door opened to their friends.

Harry was still feeling weak as a kitten and by the time James and Pettigrew came back he wasn’t sure he would actually be able to stand up long enough to take a shower or prevent himself from drowning in a bath. And he definitely wasn’t about to ask one of the others to help him with that. Right now he was feeling self-conscious enough with his scars on show and unable to notice if someone was staring. Only, he kinda felt like he was being stared at – but he had felt like this for a while now. He wasn’t exactly holding it against the other boys, he was a strange sight to see after all, he thought. Remus had said he wouldn’t be able to wear any of his new clothes. And wasn’t that just great? He had endured that ridiculously long shopping spree only to find himself with a lack of clothes. It was Sirius who interrupted that train of thought, steadfastly ignoring the snickers in the background that Harry thought were likely to be on his expense.

“See, after last night I thought you probably would need a change of clothes,” he said and sat next to Hadrian who to his great relief didn’t so much as twitch at the closeness. “We needed anyway and you were sweating quite a bit, so…” The snickers in the background grew to full blown laughter and Harry felt his cheeks heat up again. Sirius glared at the others though he noted Rem was still looking at him contemplatively. “Anyway,” he started again and raised his voice just enough to speak above Prongs’ now badly concealed amusement. “With your skin being so bloody sensitive to touch I thought you would need something wide and comfortable.”

He produced the hooded jumper he had brought, but was distracted by James who made some comment about territorial marking that hit just a bit too close to home for his liking. It was all so weird. He never had been this conscious about his behaviour towards a fancy before. When he looked back to Hadrian, Remus was just helping the blind boy to fold back too long sleeves. Oh bloody hell. Doomed. Just doomed, was all Sirius could think for a moment as he stared at Hadrian in his clothes. It was even better than seeing him in his shirt had been last night. The boy was positively drowning in the fabric and Sirius hastily put several feet between himself and the temptation on the bed.

“Prongs?” His voice was hoarse and there was a too tight feeling in his throat.

“Padfoot?” He didn’t need to look to know his best mate was smirking at him – not like he would have been able to tear his gaze away from the sight of Hadrian in his jumper, sleeves folded back, looking too adorable for his own good.

“I don’t think I’m gonna make it,” he croaked out and James patted his shoulder in a mockery of a supportive gesture.

“There, there,” he said sagely, “How’s this sound: Here lies Sirius Black, the cute was too formidable.” The serious tone of his voice made way to a snorted chuckle. “Yeah… I’ll work on it.”

There was a strange scar on Hadrian’s hand. Remus thought that after seeing the horrible remnants of
what once must have been even more horrible wounds on the boy’s torso, nothing would quite shock him anymore. He had not the slightest idea how Hadrian could have suffered these kinds of wounds and now felt a lot more understanding about the insistent secret keeping. No one would like to remember situations that caused this amount of scarring. But the scar on Hadrian’s hand was something else. While helping to fold the long sleeves of Sirius’ jumper back so Hadrian would be able to use his hands, he couldn’t help but take a closer look. Words. There on the back of a pale hand, pronounced by the fragile looking bones, were words etched into the skin. All the other scars looked like they had been caused by an outside force like a fire for the brutal looking one over Hadrian’s ribcage. But this one… how the fuck had he gained this kind of scars if not by doing it himself?

There was no time to decipher the exact words, but Remus was not about to let this one go. If Hadrian was prone to self harm, he needed help. Having promised to keep the secret the two of them now shared didn’t mean he wouldn’t try to find out more.

The ominous presence was still there. Harry felt it niggling in the back of his mind, constantly present, but still not exactly feeling like a threat. Same went for his wayward magic. It was still agitatedly buzzing around him, but hadn’t started to lash out again after that storm thingy back in Hogsmeade. There was still the feeling of anticipation, as if his magic was waiting for something and Harry thought that he would know sooner rather than later what that was.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will finally be the end of Harry's inheritance ordeal. We'll get to see the fully fledged Elf Owl... that is if I manage to actually write it and not let the characters get away with what they want again.
In which the creature finally emerges

Chapter Notes

With a nod to **Tetractys** and confetti for everyone! Thanks for staying with me all this time. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*Hot… the air was too hot, breathing was burning his lungs. Aching muscles and pain… magic in his veins like liquid fire. Stop… Make it stop… Make it stop!*

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Albus Dumbledore prided himself to be a very observant man. Oh yes, he was studious as well, always had been, but he had learned over the considerable amount of decades he had lived that sometimes being observant could gain a lot more valuable information than any book would ever be able to provide. And information was power.

So Albus Dumbledore had mastered different techniques to make himself as observant of the people around him and his general surroundings as possible. He had taught himself at a very young age the art of Legilimency, had studied human body language and various ways to notice magic around oneself. He was very adept at picking up on the different magical signatures that one encountered in the Wizarding World and he was more than able to notice fluctuations in what could be considered the normal patterns of magic. Especially in his own domain – Hogwarts – was he aware of every miniscule change in the magic around. As headmaster he was also keyed into the wards on a level that surpassed any other teacher’s connection to the castle, making him the only person able to apparate or notice any visitors from the moment they passed the gate.

Unfortunately Hogwarts’ wards did not include the Forbidden Forest which was, apart from the sheer amount of dangerous creatures residing in the woods, one major reason why the forest was *forbidden*. A fact Albus really disliked as it meant he had to rely on others to get information on what happened in the forest. Technically it also meant the school grounds were left glaringly open to any invaders should they seek entrance from inside the dark woods, though this was a feat that had yet to be accomplished by anyone. Furthermore it meant that he as headmaster felt it whenever a student crossed those borders. Yes, you could say Albus Dumbledore was very in tune with the magic of the castle and its grounds.

So when he had felt the werewolf crossing this last full moon he had not been surprised. The little group of students surrounding the infected crossed those borders into the forest every full moon since three of them had mastered their Animagus forms. He knew, of course he knew. But he chose to be lenient with James Potter and his friends as he thought the level of dedication to their friend remarkable and it could only prove helpful to have a possible future werewolf spy indebted to him. Tom Riddle was likely to try and use all those expelled from society for his own goals – which was quite humorous in a way, really, as he at the same time was a driving force behind those who did the expelling…

Anyway, Albus made sure to be extra observant on those nights, keeping an inner eye on the wards and letting the castle tell him if any other student might think of taking a stroll. He had not always been this careful. There had been the incident that involved a young Slytherin…
This full moon in September of 1976, though, he had felt the students cross back on school grounds early and in company of an additional magical signature. Which was supposed to be impossible if the additional magic user had not crossed through the forest, an unlikely feat to manage alive. The boy that chose the identity of Hadrian Moore was an interesting new factor in Albus Dumbledore’s planning and plotting and general fighting of the advancing dark forces. He didn’t know yet why this boy had been landed in this time, for he was a time traveller - of that Albus was sure. He kept back and watched the progress, wondering all the while about the magic capable of bringing someone this far back in time. It was unheard of and spoke of a power that was worth the time it would take to secure it. He knew, as he always did, that this boy could become a valuable asset on the side of the Light.

There was the presence… that damn ominous thing that he couldn’t really pinpoint. Stronger now, but still neither dark nor light. It was there, it was… him? No, not quite, not… yet.

They were listening to the record of Queen that Sirius had purchased on their Hogsmeade trip to distract themselves from the slowly creeping time. For some reason Sirius was thinking of four in the afternoon as the hour of no return. Like high noon in one of those muggle movies about cowboys and shooting each other with not-wands while standing drunkenly in midst a dusty little village, a tumbleweed dramatically… well tumbling across the street. Anyway, in Sirius’ mind this whole ordeal would come to an end in about 30 minutes.

He looked over to Rem who was sitting at a desk that had appeared a few hours ago right beside the window wall. His friend was working through books, one of which the Potter heirloom, and making notes ever since then. James and Peter had left them for lunch and had yet to make another appearance. Not that Sirius was actually wondering what they were doing. He knew, because the Marauders had talked it through when they had left Hadrian alone this morning. They would make sure to make their presence around the castle known and provide anyone who might ask with excuses for Hadrian’s absence.

Sirius looked back down to his hands which were entwined with Hadrian’s. Yes, they were holding hands under the pretence that Hadrian otherwise wouldn’t stop hurting his itching scalp. Sirius wasn’t complaining and only used the excuse so James would shut up. As if he wasn’t aware how cheesy this whole situation was and how ridiculous he was behaving. He couldn’t help it, though, a pattern that was becoming more and more familiar whenever the still blind boy was concerned. He could feel the tension in those rather fragile looking hands and resumed his stroking of Hadrian’s palms, his thumbs drawing small circles on the skin and occasionally slipping over the more sensitive patches of the wrists. He delighted in the small shudders that action caused each time and silently enjoyed how responsive Hadrian was to his touch.

Freddy Mercury was just starting a new song when he heard Rem sigh and check the time. They shared a glance, but didn’t say anything. Only ten minutes now, Sirius thought, and looked back to Hadrian who was half dozing on the bed. Rem and he had yet to talk about his strange behaviour when he had found those two this morning. He had no explanation and felt rather put upon by the territorial urges he had suppressed ever since then. And look how well that worked: He was sitting close to the boy, holding onto him, having him dressed in his scent and keeping the ‘threat’ – Remus – in his line of sight at all times. Sirius had a suspicion that Rem knew more about all this strangeness, but wanted to organise his thoughts on the matter and possibly research before he addressed the issue.

It was a bit creepy the way he had felt. It wasn’t like him, yet he hadn’t been able to do anything but act on the feeling of possessiveness and this incredibly strong urge to protect Hadrian, to protect what
was his. Only that Hadrian wasn’t his, right? He felt the part of him that he by now recognised as his Grim rear its head in anger and protest at this thought. But it was true, the bigger, human part of himself insisted. They weren’t anything, could possibly not even be considered friends. Hadrian stirred next to him and Sirius tightened his grip on his hands in reflex.

“Need the loo, Sirius,” Hadrian said softly, sounding slightly embarrassed. He tugged lightly at his hands, having stopped his attempts to get free of Sirius’ grip hours ago.

“Sure,” he said, helping Hadrian sit up. “You er… You need any help?” It wasn’t like he particularly wanted to help him take a piss, but Hadrian was slightly feverish again and didn’t exactly exude an aura of strength. He was rewarded with a small chuckle.

“Think I’m still capable enough to aim correctly,” Hadrian said, “’S not all that heavy either.”

“Aw, don’t tell me that Shrinking Solution from your first Potions class got you down there?” That earned him a startled sound that was just cute, not to mention the delectable blush that made its way across the apple of Hadrian’s cheeks. He helped him up and over to the little bathroom that had manifested when Prongs the git had mentioned it this morning. Sirius still thought this ‘requirement room’ was bullying him.

He felt it lunge at him, at his very essence. He felt the ominous thing, the presence, the whatever-the-fuck it was merge with his brain, his heart, his body, and soul. It was him, he was It, and he was… a creature?

“NO! Dammit, Sirius, don’t!”

He could hear Rem’s voice shouting in his ear, he could feel his friend’s arms around him, holding him back with every ounce of strength available. It didn’t matter. Sirius was struggling with just as much strength and a whole lot of desperation. Hadrian was in pain, Hadrian needed him. Though he had no idea how he would help him, he just had to get to him. Now. But Remus was a lot stronger than he looked and seemed just as determined as Sirius was desperate.

Hadrian had emerged from the bath, looking rather pale, and just like that it had happened. Sirius had been halfway across the room on his way to help the boy back to the bed when Rem had caught and stopped him. Just in time, too. The magic had lashed out, was still whirling about the slight form, and Hadrian was screaming. Screaming. **Screaming.**

The shift was more than a bit striking. He would have noticed it even if he had not been as in tune with the castle’s magic as he was.

Albus Dumbledore felt it when the rogue magic of an inheritance hit home – an inheritance that didn’t feel like the average core maturing that sometimes took place with the Muggleborns whose families didn’t know what to expect. Purebloods and Halfbloods were normally excused from school for the duration of an inheritance. This though felt different from a core maturing and from any creature he knew, too. Though, admittedly, not even he had been privy to more than two creature inheritances during his long life. It was just something too private, too personal to share outside of family. Too dangerous nowadays, too.

Closing his eyes, listening to the wards and Hogwarts’ ancient voice whispering all through the stonework from the dungeons to the top of the Astronomy tower, Albus Dumbledore identified the source and smiled. He had known that boy was powerful.
He was looking too pale, lying too still. The calmly reddening light of the sunset was highlighting the new appendages in Hadrian’s hair, half hidden feathers breaking the light into rainbow patterns. They were a deep, sooty black, spattered with blood and one was standing up in an awkward angle where Hadrian’s head had hit the ground.

There was more blood on his face, pouring from his nose and looking for all the world like life itself was leaving the magic riddled body of a sixteen year old boy. Too young, too skinny, too weak for the amount of magic that had wreaked havoc here. The makeshift blindfold was tangled in the messy strands of hair and feathers, clawed off, no longer protecting the sensitive eyes from the brightness of the slowly sinking sun.

For a long moment they could only stare. Then Sirius and Remus broke into a frenzy of action, the former gathering Hadrian into his arms, the latter checking for a pulse and trying to stop the nosebleed with a handkerchief. It was done, the creature emerged.

But at what cost?

Chapter End Notes

So we finally made it to the great bang that somehow ended on a slightly angsty and subdued note...
In which Lily did something different with her hair or maybe not

Chapter Notes

Many of you seemed to be rather disappointed with Harry not manifesting wings. So I was a bit indecisive if I should divulge this little bit of information for it could cause expectations that are not too likely to be met. Anyway… here we go:

It is still possible for him to get the wings. BUT – and that’s a huge but(t ;) – it is probably not going to happen in this story or only at the end of it. The Elf Owl inheritance as I made it out to be would normally complete itself in one go. But in true Harry-fashion I thought he may be able to receive the wings on his seventeenth birthday – just because he’s Harry and fuck the rules. So it all depends on if the story continues on until his birthday or comes to an end before that.

This chapter goes with a huge grin at DarkInuFan.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

She had told herself that she would keep an eye on Hadrian yet she hadn’t been able to find a source for his misery. And she was sure he was in some kind of misery. It was just too apparent in the tension always clinging to his shoulders, the stubborn yet somewhat desperate set to his jaw. The shadows lurking in his eyes. She had studied his small frame that didn’t really look like that of those boys who were still waiting for their growth spurt, but rather like it used all its energy to just keep moving. Hadrian’s body was that of someone who had used all available energy for more important things than growing, leaving him one of the shortest boys in his year and even shorter than most fifth and fourth years. And even if he tried to hide it with his clothes, he was too skinny still. Most of the time he looked like a strong wind would be able to sweep him off his feet - yet he had this air of determinedness and an aura of obvious magical power that covered all this up quite nicely.

Being as frail and small as he was one would think Hadrian would be easy to overlook, but as she had quickly noticed in her study of him, it was the other way around. There was no way Hadrian could be overlooked anywhere. She had wondered if it was his powerful magic that made him stand out wherever he went, but came to the conclusion that it was just… him. She never had met someone who exuded this strong a will, this obvious compassion in everything he did. Even if he did nothing, there was just so much of something she had no word for. Though, she was not above calling him ‘soulful’, at least in the safety of her own mind. Lily had never met someone who was so much more… more.

But he was lonely, forlorn. So desperately stubborn to accomplish… something, even if he had to do it all on his own. He looked so utterly lost it was heartbreaking and she couldn’t help herself, she wanted to know the reason. She wanted to make it better for him, whatever ‘it’ was. So finding out he had been admitted to the hospital wing yet again on Monday morning, had sent Lily straight there, leaving her breakfast mostly untouched.

Remus hadn’t been sure if Hadrian would actually survive the manifestation of his creature. Hell, he had been damn afraid, but at the same time there had been nothing they – or anyone for that matter – could do. The fever was something that really scared the shit out of him and not just because there was no mention of it in the damn book. His research had only helped to support his theory. Hadrian’s
body showed signs of continued neglect such as malnutrition and possibly sleep deprivation. If it wasn’t for his magic, Remus was sure the boy’s body would have given out a long time ago. But at the same time it was that magic that made the whole situation ever more dangerous. If Remus was honest, he thought Hadrian had only survived due to dumb luck.

He hadn’t said anything to the others, but he had told Hadrian himself. Even now Remus wasn’t sure if he had told the boy because it was only fair to do so or because he had hoped Hadrian would ask to bring a teacher in. Maybe Madam Pomfrey or even Dumbledore, even if no one could do something to help or make it easier. It would have taken the debilitating feeling of responsibility off of Remus’ shoulders, but it was not his call to make. Either way, magical inheritances couldn’t be avoided, they all had one when turning seventeen, but normally that would mean an evening without usage of their magic, a bit tiredness maybe and that was that. If Magic chose you for a creature inheritance, though, things could turn out completely different. That they knew next to nothing about Elf Owls had scared them all, but probably none more than Remus (and then Hadrian, of course) with his fear about Hadrian’s chances at survival. To say Hadrian had not reacted the way Remus had expected him to, was putting it lightly. To be fair, he had not been sure what exactly he had been expecting, but this calm acceptance was not it. Hadrian had just looked at him long and hard and then nodded. And that was it. No mention of it again and shortly thereafter the boy had been too weak to do much else than waiting for the inevitable anyway.

Remus still had questioned James and even thought of writing to Lord Potter himself, but his friend had told him that the knowledge about this particular creature in the family line was nearly as extinct as the creature was thought to be. It all came down to the book, written by a Potter himself, one of those distant uncles of James, who had not only been the only one remotely interested in this part of the Potter heritage, but who had also died shortly after writing said book. Actually, James had said, the book hadn’t been really finished at all, which was one of the reasons there was only the one copy. There had been no market for a book about a creature that had gone missing from all other wizarding lines so long ago and then the prejudice towards creatures had developed and increased which led to most of the lines ignoring their creature heritage or even denying it ever existed. Even the Potters kept quiet. If there were still information hidden in the vast libraries the Potters owned, it would take months to track them down.

Anyway, there was no one who knew more than what was written in the book and that meant there was nothing anyone could do to help. Hadrian had been on his own and Remus hadn’t been able to sleep ever since he had realised how the whole thing could possibly end. But it hadn’t. Ended too badly, that is.

Hadrian had lived even if it had been touch and go for a while according to Madam Pomfrey, because yes, after the deed was done and at the sight of all that blood they had gone against Hadrian’s wishes and involved the matron. They still did not know how he would react to that as the boy was still out of it. Sirius hadn’t left his bedside, not even when threatened by the matron with the headmaster or when Albus Dumbledore himself had made an appearance. He wouldn’t leave, could not apparently, and kicked up a fuss of proportions not even his friends expected. So in the end he was allowed to stay in the private room with the unconscious Hadrian. But the rest of the Marauders had been kicked out, after actually being sworn to secrecy as if they would ever betray Hadrian’s secret. Remus thought they probably would have even made an oath if asked. (*)

She could hear the aggravated voices of a heated argument the moment she poked her head through the heavy doors of the hospital wing.

“…is not to be disturbed.”
“If his sleep is magical, surely there would be no hurt in seeing him?” She immediately identified James Potter’s voice, lacking its normal smug edge and instead sounding as if he was trying to be persuasive. “Right, Poppy?” Ha. Now he even tried to be charming, as if that would ever work with the stern matron.

“Mr. Potter, as warming as your concern for your friend is, there is no way I can allow another visitor at this stage. The healing sleep needs to be as undisturbed as possible,” the matron replied in her no-nonsense tone of voice.

Lily saw them standing at the far left near the door that led to the few private rooms. Madam Pomfrey probably thought she was preventing James from entering, but Lily only needed a look at his face to realise that his intentions weren’t actually to convince her to let him through. The glimpse of a foot, only visible for a second or two as its owner sneaked past them under what was most likely an invisibility cloak, might have helped her with the assumption. James was making a fuss to distract the matron from whomever it was that was sneaking into the private rooms. A look around the hospital wing with its empty beds only added to her suspicion that Hadrian was the one currently kept in a private room in a healing sleep.

She cleared her throat as James was about to start another round of pointless whining and inwardly enjoyed the way his eyes went wide as he spun around to face her. For a second there she actually thought she would be treated to the sight of a speechless James Potter, but no such luck. After a moment of floundering, a wide silly smile stretched his lips and she sighed before he even opened his mouth.

„Darling,” he grinned. „Did you do something different with your hair today?”

Glowering at him for a moment she decided against the obvious jab that at least she was able to do anything with her hair at all and just dismissed him by turning her attention to Madam Pomfrey.

“Madam Pomfrey, I heard Hadrian Moore was admitted into your care again. I just wanted to ask if he will be alright?” Keeping her questioning as innocent and unobtrusive as possible was, she knew, the only way to get any answers here until she could corner James for more information. The matron would not betray her patient’s trust, but she also would not dismiss honest concern for his health. Unlike James, Lily wasn’t asking to see the boy, but only making sure her fellow Gryffindor would be fine.

Sirius thought it strange that he didn’t feel the need to fight the obvious compulsion of Hadrian’s Elf Owl allure. That is, after he had calmed down enough to actually acknowledge the effect of the allure. Well, hell. Shouldn’t he be freaked out by that invisible power seeking to force him into action? Probably. He was, after all, a Black, even if he loathed his heritage. A Black does not bow to anyone and certainly does not fall victim to a creature’s allure. Only that Sirius didn’t seem to give a flying fart if Hadrian’s special whatevers influenced him – simply because it was Hadrian. He knew enough by now to recognise the pull as what it was, and was able to keep a clear head… Okay, at least he was able to keep a clear head after he had made sure no one would dare to remove him from Hadrian’s side.

He looked over at the pale face of the boy who looked way too tiny in the hospital bed. It was ridiculous this need to protect, because he knew, had seen for himself, that Hadrian was anything but helpless even if he looked as harmless as a kitten. His magic was the most impressive Sirius had ever seen or felt and hell again, he was a Black and had seen his fair share of impressive magical feats.

Hadrian’s skin was paper white and kind of translucent in the weak sunlight drifting in through the lonely window. Maybe it was just the dreary weather and subsequent dull light that made it look like
that, but Sirius didn’t like it. Like the fact that the boy was knocked out in a hospital bed ever since the last stage of his inheritance it only drove home how vulnerable Hadrian was right now. He could be as magically powerful as Merlin, it couldn’t change that his body had not been able to cope with the stress, the pain, the fear… it had all been too much and Sirius thought he had heard Madam Pomfrey say that it was actually the amount of magic that was the worst. Hadrian was too powerful for his own good and no one knew when he would wake up and if he would be able to control and safely use his own magic.

There had been talk about binding part of his magic just to ensure his survival. Sirius didn’t want to believe that it maybe would be necessary. It couldn’t be right to rob someone of his inherent magic, the mere thought felt completely wrong. Why would Magic herself even grace a body with more power than it could handle? No, Sirius would cling to the hope that everything would right itself as soon as Hadrian woke up. He wanted to believe that Hadrian would be able to manage it. He wanted to believe in Hadrian.

The light of the dull September morning broke into arrays of rainbow coloured sparks when it touched the dark feathers interlaced with Hadrian’s hair. Like a prism, Remus had said, but Sirius had no idea what that was supposed to be. To him it looked like the sleek feathers were emitting a bit of the wild magic he had seen Hadrian display – multicoloured and so different from anything he had seen so far. Hadn’t that magic even painted the damn Slytherins in different colours? Like a bloody rainbow.

One black feather lay on the bedside table, its root still matted with dried blood where it had to be removed. Madam Pomfrey thought it would most likely regrow on its own, but made a point of telling Sirius to not let it fall into anyone’s hands. She had wanted to destroy it to ensure just that, but Sirius had managed to save it. It felt wrong to discard it without Hadrian’s permission. Wasn’t it a part of him?

He reached out to touch the place on Hadrian’s head where the feather had been nipped off by his fall to the floor of the Room of Requirement. He could feel the small downy feathers near Hadrian’s hair roots and smiled at the softness. There seemed to be two kinds of feathers hidden in the thick mop of hair: The long and sleek ones that broke the light in those intricate patterns and then something akin to fluff just at the scalp around the roots of the longer ones. It made for an even darker shade of black than before, but where Sirius’ own hair looked silky with this clear shade of almost blue, Hadrian’s hair colour was more like soot. Pitch black now, more than just a few shades darker than James’ was.

Sirius sighed and went back to staring at the boy’s unresponsive features.

“Just wake up already.”

Chapter End Notes

This is a quiet chapter. Harry is out for the count and therefore I wanted to convey this feeling of… standstill and another kind of waiting than the anticipation of the last chapters.

(*) I’ve decided to differentiate between oaths and vows, as in the Unbreakable Vow and a Wizarding Oath. Neither was required from the boys in this chapter, they simply had to promise. The difference will be of some minor significance later in the story, but
no worries, if needed an explanation will be added to the specific chapters.
In which Sirius' butt gets hit with a stinging hex

Chapter Notes

You know what... that last chapter garnered around 500 hits in under a week. I never thought I would actually get regular readers with this story let alone some so dedicated. You're awesome, all of you. Your comments always inspire me and already I have more ideas for future stories than I probably will ever be able to write - all because you don't mind discussing ideas and thoughts with me.
Alright. That was me being emotional.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The amount of time he was spending unconscious nowadays was utterly ridiculous, Harry thought before he even opened his eyes.

Days went by without any change in Hadrian’s condition. Oh, he was healing, at least that was what Madam Pomfrey told them. But to Sirius it only looked like Hadrian was becoming paler every day if that was even possible. What if one day he just vanished altogether into the bleach white sheets of his bed? He didn’t want to leave Hadrian’s bedside, camped out in the chair next to the bed ever since they had brought the boy to the hospital wing. And he actually got away with it for two whole days before he was literally dragged out by the matron herself.

Sirius didn’t give a shit if he missed classes. Not only was it early in the year, exams still in the far future and Remus was bringing him his assignments every day, but Sirius also was quite confident in his abilities. He knew he was ahead of most of his classmates. But even if none of these had applied to him, even if he had been the worst student Hogwarts had ever seen, would he not have given it a second thought. It just didn’t matter in the face of a vulnerable Hadrian.

And wasn’t that just terrifying?

There were rumours going around ever since the summer. Whispers about the Black heir being a runaway from his family home, speculations about the title of Heir Apparent being moved from the eldest Black son to the second. That last one was a rumour that was long overdue, Severus thought with a look to the pureblood elite in his class. Regulus Black himself had refrained from commenting on the rumours, manners flawless as always, no matter that he was ‘only’ the second son of a basically royal family.

Being sorted into a shameful house like Gryffindor of all things should have led to the elder Black’s removal as heir six years ago, yet nothing of the sort had occurred. Then Black’s continued escapades and obvious siding with Light families such as the Potters, associating with Mudbloods and worst of all snubbing the influential Purebloods in Slytherin... He should have been removed and possibly even banned from his family for a decade or two. But all those disgraces had managed to accomplish was an estrangement Black’s from his family and of course it had blocked any worthwhile alliances he could gain in the future. He was completely disconnecting himself from all that should matter and was a severe disgrace to his family who was already losing footing in their social standing.
Severus couldn’t understand it. It looked like Black actually wanted to cut ties with his family. Why would he do this? The brat had been born with the proverbial golden spoon and was part of one of the oldest wizarding families in existence – not just old either, but one of the Sacred 28. He was practically royalty or could have been if he had chosen his acquaintances better. It just made no sense.

His latest exploits, Severus was sure, were the last drop though. Black had been at odds with most of the Slytherins, especially the Purebloods, but so far he had avoided actual fights with the elite. Yes, of course, there had been arguments, mutual insulting and snubbing and definitely a lot of pranks that only went without consequences because Black and his abnormal friends couldn’t be verified as culprits. But nothing like the by now famous encounter near the greenhouses that had ended exceptionally unfavourable for the involved Slytherins including Black’s own brother, or even worse: The attack in Hogsmeade last weekend. It was only a matter of time now until the House of Black would be forced to take action. There was no way they could ignore their heir’s provocations any longer, the involved pureblood families such as the Lestranges were sure to shout for blood soon even if there had been a recent marriage contract made between them and the Blacks.

Severus looked down at his hand which had finally lost the murky green tinge it had been drenched with for these past days. He had been lucky compared to the others that had been hit with the mysterious prank. His colour markings had mostly been on body parts that he would only uncover in private, his hand being the only exception. Most of the others had no such luck, they had been marked in the face, or their hair had been partly dyed in eccentric colours.

But Severus was suspicious. The magic had been going strong with no hint at fading and no charm they tried would even manage to cover it up let alone make the markings disappear. So it came as a big surprise, if a welcome one, when the splatters that had disgraced a big part of the pureblood elite of Slytherin House had just up and vanished over night. Was it really a coincidence that it happened at the same time that the new student and little pet of Black’s group had a mysterious accident that sent him straight into a private room of the hospital wing? That boy had been there, Severus remembered, when the elaborate prank took place. And from what he had overheard Lestrange’s tagalongs say he had also been there when the attack in Hogsmeade happened.

So was it really that far fetched to think that the little dunderhead had a hand in it?

He wasn’t quite awake yet, but not completely asleep either. With no idea where he was or even the ability to open his eyes and look around, Harry decided to take account of what he could without most of his senses. As a wizard that was more than one would think.

Listening to his magic, searching it out, and letting it tell him about the condition his body was in, was one of those things. Weak, was the answer. His body was weak and had not moved itself for a long while. There had been inner injuries that were now mostly healed, probably due to a combination of healing from an outer source and his own magic. Good. But it was the feeling of his magic that was the actual surprise.

“Aren’t you supposed to be one of Hogwarts’ best students? I suppose talent doesn’t necessarily go hand in hand with intelligence.”

Lily Evans’ voice cut through the haze surrounding Sirius’ mind, albeit just barely. Blinking, he stared a moment at her uncomprehendingly, before her words actually registered. He hadn’t been this focused since… well, probably since Hadrian’s last stage of inheritance had happened. It was hard thinking of anything that wasn’t Hadrian related. And damn if he didn’t feel pathetic about that.
“Hey now, what’s that supposed to mean?”

“You know,” Prongs interjected with a fake cough, “If you actually have to ask you’re kinda
proving her right, mate,” he said with this smitten look he always got around that girl never wavering
from her form.

Sirius frowned at his best mate before he took in Evans standing there in front of him, arms crossed
over her pretty damn nice bust and with that fierce look of hers that she normally would reserve for
James. Huh. What was this all about?

“Alright,” he finally sighed dejectedly, simply too tired of it all to really care. “What did I do?”

James, so not inconspicuously, was edging his way towards Evans and didn’t really respond to his
question. Rem wasn’t around at the moment and Wormy couldn’t speak up around a pretty girl if his
life depended on it. Evans huffed, sidestepped Prongs, and came to a stop right in his personal space,
frowning up at him.

“Hadrian Moore,” she said slowly and clearly as if she thought him unable to understand her words
if she talked at a normal speed. Unnecessary, because she became the sole focus of his attention the
moment she said that name. “Healing sleep,” she continued in the same manner, her gaze never
wavering from his eyes and he got the impression she wanted to drive a point home.

“Yes,” he said as slowly as she had and wagged an eyebrow at her. “That’s what it’s called.”

Uh-oh. That had been the wrong course of action, but he too late noticed James’ hectic motions
behind her back and got not even the time to take a step back before her stinging hex hit him. In his
butt. Ouch.

“No, you daft pillock”, she hissed in his face, “It means he is going to wake up as soon as his body is
healed. He. Will. Wake. Up.” Evans stressed each word and finally Sirius understood what she was
doing.

He hadn’t meant to worry his friends with his behaviour. But everything had happened so fast,
Hadrian collapsing, Rem and him hurrying him to the infirmary, Madam Pomfrey’s surprise and
shock, the frantic activity that followed her first diagnostic spell. Then Dumbledore arriving in a
suddenly closed off hospital wing with Prongs and Wormtail on his heels. Hadrian in the bed with
the too white sheets. Hadrian himself even paler than those sheets. He couldn’t remember much of
what had happened afterwards, his whole world seemed to have narrowed down to Hadrian’s form
in that hospital bed.

Now though they were standing in front of the Transfiguration classroom, clearly waiting for class to
start and he had no idea how he had come to be here or even what day it was. Okay, so
Transfiguration could either mean Monday or Thursday and his sneaking suspicion was the latter
what meant he would have had Quidditch training in the morning – which he too could not
remember attending. Apparently he looked just like the lost puppy he actually felt like in this
moment, because Evans’ eyes softened and she reached up to pat his shoulder.

“You can stop your zombie-walk now,” she said with a little comforting smile. “Hadrian’s going to
wake up. He is just taking his time to heal properly.”

“What’s a zombie?” James piped up and Sirius’ gaze flickered to his friend. James too looked a bit
dishevelled but not overly worse for wear. There were worry lines in his face and his hair looked like
it always did when he had run his hand through it repeatedly in that nervous gesture of his.
“Mh?” Evans blinked confused, before her features cleared. “Oh. Right. Just the muggle version of an Inferius, actually. (*)” She seemed a bit embarrassed by that and Sirius randomly thought that she was acting different towards his best mate than she normally did.

“An Infe- Ha!” Prongs barked a laugh and smacked Sirius on the back. “Yeah, I see where you’re coming from. He definitely shares some characteristics with an Inferius lately.”

“Oh yeah?” Sirius challenged and tried not to see the deep rooted worry of his friend. “Says the wanker whose hair looks like a flock of pixies nested in it.”

“Language!”

The sound of running feet interrupted any further banter – or scolding in Lily’s case – and they all turned to an out of breath Remus coming to a stop in front of them. He was slightly red faced, uniform askew and his eyes were too bright with… something.

“Guys,” he gasped, “H- …Hadrian,” Rem forced out through deep gulps of air and suddenly Sirius felt cold.

Chapter End Notes

I think, I could enjoy writing more Sev in the future. It was a bit tricky to get the right mixture of him still being a teenager and that surly attitude of his adult self, but it was definitely fun.

(*) An Inferius (pl. Inferi) is a dead body, reanimated by a dark wizard, similar but intrinsically distinct from a zombie.
In which everything is different and yet not

Chapter Notes

So I'm currently re-reading my own story. Ugh. Tedium task, honestly... but I want to make sure that I'm not forgetting any clues and 'red threads' or loose ends along the way. While I'm doing this, maybe you could tell me about any questions that were left unanswered and that you don't feel are going to get answered when the story progresses. Eh. Too complicated a formulation... all I wanted to say is: If you think I'm forgetting something, tell me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The world had changed.

For one, everything seemed to be much brighter, but not overly so. The sunlight filtering in through the curtains was that of a typical Scottish midday nearing winter – in short, it should have been a bit on the grey side, somewhat dulled in comparison to the long gone days of summer. But to Harry’s eyes it was the purest thing he had ever seen. He found himself mindlessly staring at the rays of somewhat dusty sunlight for long moments, before he realised that he was no longer blind.

Looking up at the ceiling of the hospital wing, a sight he had thought he by now knew well enough, revealed more unexpected things. Squinting, Harry was able to see the very details of the wood itself, something that would have never been possible for his short-sighted eyes before. And then there were the colours! The simple wood and stone of the infirmary’s ceiling was captivating in its simplicity and yet complexity. Colours in shades he could not remember ever having come across anywhere in his sixteen years of life blended together in a playful way to create what he had always thought was one single colour. Who would have thought that brown was such an intricate dance of colourful swirls?

It was breathtaking and Harry felt a surge of want – want to catch all these new beautiful details on paper. Being blind had only driven home how much he loved to work with paint and he had itched to try so many different techniques. It had been maddening to be completely unable to do so and even with the others telling him the darkness would not last forever the uncertainty had lingered. So Harry, in the long hours of waiting for the inevitable, had started to ‘paint’ in his mind. He had remembered countless things and sights he wanted to capture on a canvas and had busied his nervous mind with imagining how he would do exactly that. He had created wonderful pictures in his head and now that he was finally able to see again, he could barely contain the need to start turning these images into reality. But for now something else needed his attention.

Harry had woken to the thought of how idiotic it was that he spent most of his time nowadays in a state that didn’t let him make use of this time at all. Being unconscious was just so utterly useless, he thought. Then his magic had told him why he had been out at all and he admitted to himself that his unconsciousness had probably spared him a lot of pain. Being Harry bloody Potter he was used to pain, but that definitely didn’t mean he fancied enduring it. His magic was also new. Or rather... different. He remembered how untamed and agitated it had felt for weeks now and how using it had tired and hurt him. He compared that feeling to how he felt now. For one, there was a whole lot of magic. That wasn’t exactly surprising as it had been growing all this time. But where before it had felt like a stormy current, balled together in a too tight space, and wont to lash out at the slightest
nudge, there now was this… pool of pure magical energy. It was just there, not angry, not overcharged, just there. He could feel it residing in every nerve-ending and silently floating through every inch of his very being. It wasn’t just a part of his body, no; it was part of his essence, his mind and soul. It was wonderfully reassuring in comparison to how it had been before. And it was so, so strange.

Hadrian had changed.

Of course, Sirius had seen the slight shift in his hair colour, the now smoky dark shade interlaced with those fascinating feathers, but still… Seeing him awake was like a huge wave of relief threatening to overwhelm him and for long minutes he could only stare at the sight of the slender boy in the huge looking hospital bed. He was so completely grateful that he only noticed the changes after the others had already entered the room and made their way over. Then it was hard to imagine how he could not have seen them at first sight.

Hadrian was still really pale, more so than he probably should be, but hey, he had just woken up from being in a healing coma for... too long. His hair could do with a wash and was fluffed up at the back of his head from sleep. The feathers he knew were there, weren’t actually visible if one didn’t specifically look for them. But his eyes… Sirius still remembered the wide-eyed look he had been given that first day in the hospital wing all those days ago. He still remembered the interesting shade of green and how it had reminded him of the wilderness of the Forbidden Forest. Now though it wasn’t just a reminder. Even though Sirius knew logically that it wasn’t possible he still felt like falling into the dark green depth of a forest when those eyes locked on him.

Blinking, he looked closer and realised that in some magical way Hadrian’s pupils had grown bigger, contrasting the green stronger and giving his eyes an even wider look. It should have looked unnatural and blown out of proportions, but it didn’t. It looked like it had always been this way and Sirius wondered if those who had not spent as much time with the boy as the Marauders had would even realise that there was a change. Sure, his eyes were beautiful, captivating even, but they had been so before. If no one had looked too closely before maybe Hadrian would still be able to walk the castle freely.

And wasn’t that a sobering thought. Maybe.

It was entirely possible that Hadrian would lose the simple freedom of going about his day if someone noticed the changes. Being a creature at Hogwarts, so long as he wasn’t a danger to anyone, would be frowned upon, but that was that. Not even the Board of Governors would be able to kick him out without an actual reason, but they would try. He knew they would, because traditionally the seats on the Board of Governors were held by pureblood families who bequeathed their places on the board to the next generation. They could hold a place in their family as long as there was a blood related student attending Hogwarts – which meant in the long run always, since nearly all pureblooded families were related in some way or another. The only good thing that came from such an out-dated tradition was that ‘light’ families like the Potters or Longbottoms would also hold places on the board for an unforeseen future.

But the day he left Hogwarts for the real world, Hadrian would face the same destiny as Remus, if not worse. Because where Rem’s hugest problem would be keeping a job when he had to take time off during the full moons each month, Hadrian could face the very real possibility of being captured and sold as a rare creature or… With a shake of his head Sirius returned to the sight in front of him and met those hauntingly vibrant eyes. Damn. There was no way he could let them get to Hadrian.
Remus thought irrationally that it was a good thing that Hadrian was shorter than most people. It would make it less likely that someone would look at his eyes up close. Well, at least someone who shouldn’t be near enough to look that closely, he thought with a sideways glance at Sirius. But then again… would it not make the possibility that someone noticed the feathers in his hair more probable if basically everyone and their Kneazle could look down on his head?

He had entered the room with James and Lily, a reluctant Peter trailing behind them and nearly running into Sirius who was rooted to the spot at the door. It was easy to see what stayed his friend though to Remus there was more than just the sight of Hadrian after his transition. Entering the room, he was bombarded with an intense scent of forest, greenery and wind. Wild and fresh and unspoiled. It was the most natural scent he had smelled so far and was far more pronounced than it had been when he first met Hadrian and even stronger than it had become during his inheritance. Maybe it was because now Hadrian was awake and in tune with the changes, but whatever it was, Remus found himself taking a deep breath, minutely closing his eyes in reverence.

When he opened them again it was to the sight of James and Lily, each standing on one side of the bed, and Hadrian looking up at them with a shy smile. Something about that picture struck a chord in Remus, but he couldn’t for the life of him put his finger on it. James was making pseudo-mysterious comments about Hadrian’s new looks that were entirely created for the sole purpose of annoying the teen who hadn’t seen his reflection ever since his inheritance blinded him. Lily was dividing her attention between softly asking Hadrian about his well-being and harshly telling James off. With a jolt he realised that no one had cared to think about the fact that Lily didn’t know that Hadrian had had a creature inheritance. They had just rushed here and Madam Pomfrey may or may not have overlooked the girl in their midst when they had barrelled into her lair. The moment he thought this, Hadrian finally had enough of James’ teasing and shot an irritated comment back – only, whatever he said went unheard when every occupant of the room could only stare at the threateningly raised feathers on his head that fluffed up the surrounding hair and made it stand on end.

“Well,” Sirius’ voice broke through the heavy silence that followed this sure signpost of Hadrian’s change, “We could call it your feathery little problem.”

Chapter End Notes

Say… if I had the hobby of sketching scenes of the stories I write… would you be able to name a suitable place for this kind of thing? Someplace to put it up for you to have a look? We're talking rough sketches of a hobbyist.
Remus was pouring over his notes and books submerged in his own thoughts which were all directed at the Elf Owl kind. He had read that disappointing book, written by a Potter (who obviously had no talent for writing or even research at all), from cover to cover and had taken to write down all his observations during Hadrian’s inheritance. He was so going to rewrite that load of crap and ensure that further generations had a more reliable source to go by. Remus was sure that if someone with Potter blood as diluted as Hadrian’s, who was most likely a descendant of some forgotten family branch, could manifest the Elf Owl then it was absolutely possible that any children James had could face the same fate. He would ensure his friend’s children’s safety.

But reading through his own notes and observing Hadrian throughout his inheritance and now after the change brought a lot of questions to mind that he could only theorise about. Though, he thought with a bout of dry humour, he would not lower himself to as unfounded theories as the former author of the inheritance book had. His most recent question concerning the Elf Owl kind (and one of them who he by now considered a friend) was about the actual reason for the allure of the creature. What point was there in having an allure if it didn’t affect those of the same kind? The allure of Elf Owls, as the former author had said, had no effect at all on other Elf Owls or even descendants of the like. James was the prime example as he was not in the least affected by Hadrian’s allure whereas all the other Marauders and even those students and teachers that had only miniscule contact with him, obviously felt it.

Wasn’t the reason for an allure to attract possible suitors? That wouldn’t work in this case. If this specific allure didn’t work on other Elf Owls it could have nothing to do with reproduction at all. On the contrary even. Considering the way Elf Owl allure was supposed to work, it would only attract the wrong kind of person, people with filthy minds, in the rare case that it would actually work in a sexual way. In such a case it would attract people whose most pronounced traits, inherent to their nature, would be those of a sexual kind. That didn’t have to be bad per se, but it didn’t exactly encourage anything long-term. And if it didn’t attract other Elf Owls it would encourage diluting the blood. Wasn’t that really counterproductive? No wonder the original Elf Owl kind had gone extinct and only surfaced through wizarding creature inheritances nowadays.

But what was the reason for this allure if not reproduction? Maybe it was a flaw in the genetics? Something developed only after Elf Owls started mixing with wizards? But wouldn’t that mean the originals had completely stopped reproducing with each other after they started breeding into wizarding lines? Putting it this way, the mixing with wizards had ultimately led to the self-destruction of a whole species.

Remus sighed. He couldn’t stop himself from thinking that maybe that was a more merciful fate than watching loved ones getting killed or exploited for the perverse needs of ruthless wizards. Though, at the time the Elf Owls had started mixing with wizards, the political landscape would have to be a
completely different one seeing as they had been accepted into pureblooded lines and these connections were even considered an honour. Alright, he determinedly finished noting his questions down. There was no use in pondering this with no access to the sources the former author mentioned. He would have to wait until winter holidays when he was going to visit the Potter family home together with the others to find any hope of answering all these thoughts.

With a smile he instead remembered a conversation shortly after Hadrian’s awakening. At the moment, he was still restricted to his bed in the hospital wing, but the Marauders would make it a point to visit every day after classes. Sirius, he was pretty sure, would spend most of his lunches with the boy, too. After Lily had been sworn to secrecy – surprisingly easy with no fuss at all, a fact that still made James grin from ear to ear – and had left for a bit alone time to get her head wrapped around all the new information, they had officially revealed the creature heritage of the Potter family to Hadrian. Of course, he already knew from Remus, but the other Marauders had not been privy to that conversation. As a result they had started a discussion about a suitable nickname for Hadrian who James had made ‘an honorary Potter’. Remus still felt guilty about that…

“Is it Bambi or Prongslet?” Sirius asked in a deliberately thoughtful tone, completely ignoring the horrified look he received from Hadrian. Then he started smirking and winked at James before letting his amusement bleed into his voice. “Watching you stagger your way around I definitely think Bambi. You’re like a fawn on those shaky legs of yours. How many times did you faint now since you’re here?”

Harry frowned. He really didn’t want to think about his tendency to pass out that he seemed to have developed over the summer. And that he had just been likened to a baby deer was embarrassing enough without the badly concealed snickers and James’ stage whisper of ‘I thought he was your little Owlet?’

“Aw don’t make that face!” Sirius gave Harry a half-hug that made his heart stutter in his chest for some reason he couldn’t pinpoint. “Bambi became the ‘Great Prince of the Forest’ in the end after all,” he murmured into Harry’s ear, lingering just a second longer than strictly necessary, before squeezing his shoulder gently. He leaned away again, but his hand stayed where it was.

“Bambi it is then,” Remus decided grinning while James watched the two speculatively. There was a definite mischievous spark in his eyes that promised nothing good. “It actually fits you rather well, Hadrian… I mean, Bambi.”

They all laughed at Hadrian’s pitiful groan.

“Why do I need an animal nickname anyway?” Harry scowled at Remus. He was so not a Bambi. He could understand the need to talk it through, make fun of it, to come to terms with all that had happened. Really, he understood what they were doing. But did that necessarily have to involve him getting an animal related nickname? He was still a bit reeling from James’ declaration to make him an honorary Potter, so it took Harry actually a moment to realise that they were in a way declaring him an honorary Marauder, too. Prongs, Padfoot… even Wormtail. All those names were likened to their spirit animal. Oh well. Maybe Bambi wasn’t all that bad; he could ignore the little slight to his equilibrium if it meant that warm feeling of belonging would stay.

“Now I can declare you officially as under my protection, lil’ bro! Or is it cousin? Anyway, come on: Mighty Prongs and little Bambi!” James puffed out his chest and took on a supposedly ‘mighty’ pose, not noticing Harry’s wide eyes at the familiar endearment.

But Sirius was looking at Remus suspiciously. There was just something… Ever since he had
witnessed Rem and Hadrian in the Room of Requirement touching so intimately he found himself watching those two interact more closely. What was Rem’s game now?

Remus sent his friend a small knowing smile and discreetly tapped his nose. Sirius looked at him oddly and he knew all too well that they still needed to have a conversation about those newly awakened instincts of them. He would tell him about Hadrian’s forest scent later – somehow he suspected neither of the others would appreciate it. That scent had been becoming even more prominent after the inheritance and was now something so distinct to Remus that he was sure he would even be able to trace Hadrian in the thickest of crowds. He briefly wondered if the same went for Padfoot.

Harry felt off kilter.

There was so much happening and no, he wasn’t just shaken by the whole inheritance mess. Okay, so, he had had more than enough time to come to terms with all that and he thought he was doing better. Or maybe he was just ignoring it, but whatever. And the time travel thingy was somehow rather easily pushed to the back of his mind as he was in a familiar environment. Hogwarts was safe. But what really felt like a huge impact to him was the simple announcement that James, his father, had made. An honorary Potter. Harry had no idea how he was supposed to feel about that. A part of him wanted to constantly smile and cheer about it. He was a part of the family. Even though James didn’t know who he truly was, he was accepting him! Another part felt incredibly guilty. They accepted him and he was lying to them. He was hiding who he really was and yes, he actually was a part of the family, much more so than they thought and… Harry had just no idea what he was supposed to do.

Something else, or rather someone else, was easier to think about. It was utterly fascinating to watch Sirius and his love for anything muggle. He had never noticed this in his godfather and wondered if it was one of those traits that had gotten lost during his imprisonment... Harry abruptly changed his train of thought: Sirius talking about a muggle movie, one for children on top of that. How had he even been able to watch it? Harry may be in the past, but he would think the original ‘Bambi’ to be a lot older than the 1970s. Did cinemas show movies that old? Since magic and technology didn’t mix, a cinema would be the only way for a pureblood wizard like Sirius to watch a movie, right? The thought brought a huge grin to his face and Harry decided then and there that he would use the chance to watch a movie with Sirius.

The next few days went by with much recuperating sleep for Harry, though he still was plagued with nightmares. But somehow being with a so obviously alive Sirius had slowly changed them. He was still dreaming about all the horrors he had gone through, was still seeing memories of Voldemort’s terror, but… there was no longer a dying Sirius haunting his sleep. That and the strict regimen of potions Madam Pomfrey kept him on helped his recovery more than he would have imagined.

He stayed in the private room of the hospital wing. He would sleep in as long as his dreams would allow and then spent some time on homework. At lunch Sirius would come around and they would just chat over a shared meal. Harry made sure to take care of everything that would force him out of bed before then. He was still annoyingly weak and a part of him wanted to conceal this from Sirius. After classes Remus, sometimes accompanied by James, would visit for a short while and they would either help him with his school work or joke around. They never spoke of his obvious changes after that first day again, but as much as Harry would have liked to just forget about it, he couldn’t. He didn’t even need a mirror to know that he was even more different now than he had been before.
BTW! I hope this was the last ‘filler chapter’ and we can concentrate a bit more on Harry/Sirius and the whole time travel thing from now on.
In which there is something Black in front of Harry's nose

Chapter Notes

There's a little thanks hidden here for all of you who answered to my question about Sirius’ scent. I don’t know exactly whose ideas I ended up using since they overlapped so nicely with my own, but I hope you all enjoy the little passage about Sirius’ scent anyway. There’s going to be some Remus POV in a later chapter that concentrates on scents, too.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ready?”

Sirius’ voice sounded hushed in the private room of the hospital wing. He was standing just in the door watching Hadrian who was self-consciously tugging on his bangs. It didn’t do much to hide ‘the Eyes’, but as long as he didn’t look at anyone directly the change wasn’t visible. The feathers were practically hidden in the nest (and wasn’t that just an ironic metaphor now?) of dark black locks, though Hadrian had not yet gotten the hang of how to control the reaction of the longer appendages. They had no clue if he ever would. Even his complexion had returned to the creamy pale tone it had been… before.

“I don’t think I can do this.”

Harry’s voice was just a whisper, sounding even more hushed than Sirius’. Today, Sunday the 26th of September 1976, he would be officially released from the hospital wing. Madam Pomfrey had wanted to keep him there for a bit longer, but Harry had put his foot down and argued that he would not be able to keep up with school work if he missed any more classes. He had taken a leaf out of McGonagall’s book and stated that the sixth year at Hogwarts was ‘one of the most important for one’s future and crucial for one’s later career choices’. But now that he had actually gotten his freedom – or at least freedom of the accursed white walls of the hospital wing – he was hesitant to leave. No, he was downright afraid of what would await him out there.

He was different now.

Though he had always known that he was, it had not been a visible difference, or at least nothing too obvious. But now he was a creature, something that was looked down upon in the society of this time and probably also in his own. He had had no idea it was that bad until he had noticed the worried looks Sirius and Remus had given him. Unlike James, who was overjoyed and gleeful for some reason, the other two obviously worried over something and that something had to do with him. Of course it had, as always. It had taken a lot of prodding, but finally they had given in and told him about the standing of creatures in the ‘modern’ society. They had wondered how he didn’t know, but he had ignored their questioning. He had known, but after his experiences with adult Remus and then Fleur in his fourth year, he had assumed the rejection focused on the kind of creatures that were ‘infected’ to become what they are. Like werewolves and vampires and… well, he didn’t really know any more, but there sure were some. He had seen how everyone coveted Fleur and had not realised that Veela were the most accepted in society as they were not too rare, not contagious and of course beautiful which probably always came as a bonus. Not to mention their allure that somehow Harry envied them for – at least they knew what to expect from those influenced
His only reassurance was that his creature, the Elf Owl, wasn’t well known and on top of that thought extinct. It was a thin layer of security, especially with his obvious changes, but Sirius and Remus had assured him that no one would suspect anything. They also promised they would do their best to help hide his true nature, but that actually worried Harry more than anything. If they concealed his being a creature and he was then discovered, they would be put in the spotlight as well. He didn’t care about Pettigrew and he was sure James would be safe as the Potter heir, but Sirius had estranged himself from his family which on top of that was one of the most outright dark families ever. There was no telling what could happen to him if it was revealed that he not only associated with a creature but also helped to hide… it. And then there was Remus. No, Harry didn’t even want to think of what could and most likely would happen if they looked at him too closely.

The heavy weight of warm hands on his shoulders brought Harry back to the present and he looked up to meet Sirius’ grey gaze. For some unknown reason he felt his breathing slow and the tension bleed from his tensed muscles. What the… There were flecks of blue in Sirius’ irises, Harry distractedly noticed, so pale they nearly blended in completely, but he was close enough to see them. Or was this due to his enhanced eyesight? Whatever it was, those light patches gave Sirius’ eyes an intensity that made it impossible to look away and Harry stared, caught like a deer in the headlights. Oh nice, a small part of his short-circuited brain commented, likening yourself to a deer already. Such a Bambi.

Suddenly there was something black directly in front of his nose, looking slightly blurred due to the proximity. Jerking back, Harry blinked rapidly only to frown when he realised Sirius was holding a feather in front of his face.

“Wha…?” His non-existent eloquence leaving him for a second until his brain caught up to the moment. Why had he been so distracted anyway? “Is that one of my…?”

He had yet to say out loud that he now possessed feathers and so far Harry was not overly inclined to do so anytime soon. He felt rather like some overgrown chicken whenever he saw those things in his hair. That the others called it his ‘feathery little problem’ didn’t help either. It was a double inside joke – one they thought he could only partly understand. Harry had no idea if Remus knew that he knew of his ‘furry little problem’. But then it didn’t really matter, never had for Harry anyway, and if his friend was willing to keep his own ‘pottery’ secret there was no reason for him to say anything. Back to the feather at hand.

“Yes,” Sirius said. There was something soft in his voice that Harry couldn’t really pinpoint. “Madam Pomfrey had to remove it after you… you collapsed back in that room.” He made a little gesture with his head that vaguely went in the direction of the Room of Requirement and at the same time somehow conveyed a small amount of annoyance. “I kept a hold of it in case you’d want it back. But…”

There he stopped and Harry wasn’t sure if he looked thoughtful or actually nervous. A nervous Sirius would be a strange sight to see, he thought absentmindedly.

Sirius had no idea what he was doing. One moment he was at the door, waiting for Hadrian to get ready to leave, the next he was standing right in front of the boy. His hands were on Hadrian’s shoulders, he noticed distractedly, as he stared back into that emerald gaze. Bugger, he hadn’t meant to lose himself there again, but… Hadrian had suddenly started to look like he was deep in thought and the thoughts seemed to be anything but pleasant, and then Sirius just had to break him out of whatever held his attention. Now they were staring at each other and that strange primal part of Sirius
that he by now connected to his Grim noted somewhat happily that Hadrian’s short stature made him just the right height to be tucked under his arm. Strange, he thought to that part empathetically before he pulled himself (with more effort than what should be normal) out of his reverie of those cursed green eyes… and brought out the feather. He heard himself babbling about how he had come into the possession of something so precious and intimate, but then he stopped. A thought had crossed his mind and he nervously wondered if Hadrian would allow it. It certainly would be a great way to disguise the boy’s own feathery little problem.

“Say…,” he started, glad that he sounded much more self-confident than he felt in that moment. “If there were to be two persons with feathers in their hair it wouldn’t be much of a curiosity anymore, wouldn’t it?”

Hadrian looked at him confused, and then a flicker of hurt crossed his features, before his face went back to a deliberately questioning expression. Sirius wouldn’t have been surprised if he had lifted an eyebrow in that typical Slytherin err… pureblood move. He himself sometimes pulled that one off.

“I mean,” Sirius continued hesitantly – and damn, since when was he so bloody unsure of himself anyway? “This one won’t go back into your hair and if I were to tie it in mine… it would be like some kind of fashion statement and people wouldn’t ask twice if they happened to notice yours.”

And, the Grim part added somewhat smugly, it would link Hadrian and himself in a visible way that went beyond the scent thing he had been trying with the borrowed clothes.

There was a moment of stretched silence in which Sirius felt like the biggest dipshidiot (He liked that word, he had read it in a muggle book.) in history and was just about to call it all a joke when suddenly he was met with one of those smiles. Oh hell. Had it been this radiant the first time he saw it with Evans that day before the whole potions mess happened? It was still this heart clenching mixture of serenity and grateful joy, but with those huge looking eyes it was just… just…

And then he was hugging Hadrian, because honestly, he couldn’t help himself.

It was warm. Harry couldn’t think past the warmth that came with Sirius’ words and then his hug, those arms around him, that felt so much like those of his godfather and yet different. He could feel the power in those arms and he could smell the distinct scent that was just Sirius – it smelled just slightly different from what he remembered and for that he was grateful. He wouldn’t want to mix those two people up in his mind. Not anymore.

Sirius smelled of leather and something dark and smoky that he couldn’t name. Then there was the faint scent of freshly cut grass as if he had just run through the forest as Padfoot. And there was something else, something that made the little but so important difference. Harry wasn’t sure, but he thought that maybe there was a hint of gunpowder hidden in the folds of Sirius’ shirt near his neck. Like he had just set off some prank somewhere. It reminded him that this was the mischievous, young, and alive Sirius and not the broken man he had once known.

Chapter End Notes

And then suddenly my light started flickering to the beat of my music and I thought 'Yeah, better save and upload now.'
Harry’s heart was loud in his chest and for some irrational reason he briefly wondered if Sirius had some of Padfoot’s senses when not in his Animagus form. But every thought process there might have been ended abruptly when they left the private room of the hospital wing to set foot into the brightly lit main part.

It hurt.

Sirius only noticed the sudden tenseness of his companion because he whirled around to Hadrian the moment he heard a pained gasp. He found the boy right behind him, cradling his head and screwing his eyes shut. He was biting into his bottom lip with a force that really couldn’t be healthy and Sirius connected the dots instantly.

He had seen Hadrian like this before.

Fuck. Was it supposed to hurt like this? It was just light! Harry thought back to how he had admired the dim light that streamed through the small window in his little private room and wished he would be able to look at the contrastingly bright light that apparently was everywhere in the main part of the hospital wing. It had to be even more mesmerizing in comparison. But every time he attempted to open his eyes it seemed to pierce his very retinas and that was just something he would not risk. Not to mention that searing pain that shot through his head every time the brightness reached his eyes. He liked his new eyesight, loved even how he no longer needed the restrictive glasses that had always felt like some sort of cage to him.

They hadn’t expected that. There was no plan. And Sirius didn’t like it for it again left Hadrian vulnerable and that just didn’t feel right. Don’t get him wrong, he kinda liked it when Hadrian was a bit dependent on him, but if it meant the boy wouldn’t be able to defend himself there was no way Sirius could enjoy it. And he definitely wasn’t one that liked his fancy hurt, or anyone for that matter – alright, let’s just pretend that last part wasn’t a complete lie.

“I’ve got you,” he said, sounding more sure of himself than he was. “Don’t worry, we did that before, remember?”

He reached out and took Hadrian’s hands in his, keeping up a constant chatter as he slowly lead him out of the infirmary, telling him that Remus would probably know what this all meant. The halls of Hogwarts weren’t as brightly lit if you avoided areas like the seventh floor, so they would just have to use a few secret passages to reach Gryffindor Tower. Or at least he hoped that would be enough for Hadrian’s sensitive eyes. Come to think of it, they didn’t exactly go unnoticed like this which admittedly wasn’t in their favour. They would need yet another explanation. Well, Sirius thought with a mental shrug as he kept a firm hold of Hadrian’s hands, that sounded like a task for the Marauders.

Being blind and completely dependent on others had changed Harry’s perception of touch. There had been no other way than relying on the Marauders when he himself had not been able to even find the loo without someone’s assistance. He had been too weak to actually adapt to the situation either so there had been no improvement in his handling of his lack of sight. This had left him
completely at the mercy of those around him, an experience that had frightened him nearly more than being blind in itself had. His concentration shot, his physical strength more or less nonexistent, and the constant fear of what was to come had forced Harry to accept the necessity for others’ touches. But it also took away the lingering resentfulness he had unconsciously linked to touch itself. While going through his inheritance touch had meant help and that had made it infinitely easier to feel alright with what others probably thought normal interaction. Touch had lost the awkward and uncomfortable edge it had held for the boy that had grown up knowing how much he was not wanted. But it was Sirius whose presence had ingrained itself into his body’s… memory? Harry wasn’t sure if one could talk of ‘muscle memory’ in this case, but that was a bit what it felt like. He unconsciously knew if it was Sirius that was touching him and therefore never shied away from his touch anymore. Just like now.

He let himself be led through the hospital wing until he saw and felt the receding of the light behind his closed eyelids. They probably had just passed the doors into the hall of the first floor and Harry was hoping that his eyes would be able to handle the intensity of light here. Carefully he blinked one eye open only to close it again immediately. It was still bright and uncomfortable, probably headache inducing, but bearable. He only needed a moment to adjust.

“We could get you some shades,” Sirius said, stopping near the wall and blocking Harry’s view of the corridor with his own form. “But for now I’m gonna lend you mine, alright? They’re totally awesome, anyway. I bought them in a muggle store after all.”

Leaning back against the cool stone wall, Harry slowly blinked both his eyes open and focused on Sirius’ face. It was easier than looking around, he found, and Sirius was talking anyway. But he could still hear the whispers of students passing them and it grated on his nerves. Could they see his changes? Did they know?

“Alright, Bambi?”

Harry scowled at the nickname and made a shooing motion to get Sirius to back up some. If people were talking about him, he wanted to be able to see them and estimate if they meant any danger. He was scared, oh yes, but that didn’t mean Harry wouldn’t face whatever came his way head on.

Harry kept close to Sirius on their way to Gryffindor Tower and not just because he occasionally had to grab his hand to let him lead the way whenever Harry was forced to close his eyes against the light. It was awkward when it happened while others were around, but somehow Harry couldn’t really find it in himself to mind that much. The other reason he didn’t move too far from his friend’s side was his fear of being discovered. He had that terrible feeling of being constantly watched and not in the way he was used to. He was afraid every person that so much as glanced his way was about to realise what he was and it was unnerving.

Sirius was great with both reasons. He never seemed to mind Harry taking a hold of him, he even pulled him closer and made sure he did not bump into anything. He warned him of one of the vanishing steps and that was while Harry could actually see where he went. Somehow that particular instance surprised Harry more than anything else – he would have suspected Sirius to let him get stuck in the staircase just for fun. Sirius also seemed to act as a buffer against everyone they encountered. Unnoticed by Harry he glared at everyone that looked as if they would like to approach them for some reason or another and he more or less subtly pushed himself between Harry and anyone that passed them in the hallways. On any other occasion it would have annoyed Harry to no end and he would probably never have allowed it, but today he was just grateful to not have to deal with anyone.

Halfway up one of the moving staircases, though, Hadrian suddenly stopped and instead of Sirius’
hands he grabbed tightly onto the banister. Turning around, Sirius silently noted how pale Hadrian had grown during their little trip and he slapped himself inwardly upside the head for not noticing earlier. The boy had just been released from hospital, earlier than the matron had wanted him to, and obviously he wasn’t completely up to par yet. Instead of pointing Hadrian’s weakness out, even though it was not exactly something that could go unnoticed by now, he just leaned on the banister himself.

“I always thought these staircases are unmatched to any other vantage point in Hogwarts,” he casually commented and pointed across and above from them to another staircase. “See that? You can actually overlook a lot from here. I bet that Ravenclaw over there doesn’t realise we can see him digging for gold like there’s no tomorrow.” He smiled at the slightly breathless snort from next to him, but kept his gaze straight ahead. “They are also quite nice if you need to have a private chat,” he continued just as the stairs they were on started another move around. “You just jump on just when they start their crazy moving shit and no one can listen in. The Ma- …the others and I are always using them for instant emergency debates.”

He frowned slightly when his little slip up did not trigger a question. That was something he had noticed only a few days earlier: Hadrian seldom asked anything. At all. It was as if he either already knew – which was frightening in itself – or just wasn’t really interested in anything or anyone – which was even more frightening if you asked Sirius. It just didn’t seem like a healthy way to live, he thought. One should be interested in what was going on around them, right? But he wasn’t Remus so he didn’t really continue that thought in any psychological direction and was instead a bit miffed that Hadrian maybe wasn’t all that interested in him as he should be.

And he should be interested, after all Sirius intended to make him his. It was something else he had decided on during these past days when Hadrian had been stuck in the hospital. If he was honest, it was not really any surprise. The moment he had met Hadrian there had been a connection and a rather obsessive need to know everything there was to know about the boy. It had probably been only a question of time for it to develop into more and even if he ignored the role Hadrian’s creature allure had in it all… Sirius just knew he wanted more from Hadrian than a simple snog and shag or even just friendship. He wanted Hadrian and he wanted him all to himself, but more than anything he wanted Hadrian to be happy. Happy and safe.

It was a strange and frightening territory and Sirius loved it. He was serious.

Chapter End Notes

Hope the chapter doesn't show how (seriously) annoyed I'm right now. Apparently my neighbor has the incessant need to start and restart the engine of his car or bike or whatever again and again and again. Now the air of my room is polluted and he's still interrupting my thought process every other second.
In which it's not Monday just yet

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry if it takes me a bit longer than usual to answer all those lovely comments of yours. Don't take it personally, please.

So we had two fluffy chapters for a bit of mind candy. Now the plot starts up again, if a bit slow. Next chapter it's finally going to be Monday again and ohh there's going to be a surprise for ickle Harry. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When they finally reached Gryffindor Tower, Harry was met with a hushed room and stares the moment he climbed through the portrait hole behind Sirius. Of course. He should have known. The last time they had seen him had been on the Hogsmeade weekend and Harry himself felt like this had been a long, long time ago. But, he reminded himself determinedly, it had only been about a week ago. Then again, he had only been here for five or so days before his inheritance hit and he had been in the hospital wing during that time, too. So, he supposed, it wasn’t all that surprising that his fellow Gryffindors were wondering about him.

Right?

It surely had nothing to do with his changes. They wouldn’t notice.

Right?

“There you are!” James strode through the hushed room, parting the masses like the red sea as if he owned the place. “You know,” he came to a stop in front of the two, crossing his arms over his chest and mock scowling down at them along his nose. “I recall a still unfinished potions project that you,” he snickered across the forehead, “Were supposed to research with me about – oh I dunno, about half an hour ago?” He conversationally asked Remus who by then had emerged from the still lingering Gryffindors.

The werewolf inwardly snorted at his friend’s rehearsed scene, but dutifully nodded and sent Sirius a stern mock-glare. They had expected the rest of their house to react with more interest than what they could afford at the moment to Hadrian’s return from the hospital wing. So James, as the self-proclaimed leader of the Marauders that by now included a still clueless Hadrian (even if it was still on an honorary basis), saw fit to take it upon himself to provide everyone present with a suitable distraction. Remus watched as Sirius jumped into the fray intent on defending his honour, making sure to be just as ridiculous about it as their fearless leader. He edged his way over and tugged the slightly stunned looking Hadrian away from the scene and over to the stairs just as the two idiots were about to instigate a sword fight of some kind. Never mind the ‘swords’ being two quills snacked from some unsuspectingly watching first years.

Peter had been keeping his distance, Harry noted absently, as he paged through the inheritance book Remus had almost thrown at him the moment they entered the dorm. Harry could tell his friend had a lot of questions and as the only living Elf Owl he was the only real source of information. Anyway, as much as Harry wanted to know more about his creature – this book was ludicrous. The author
seemed to have been as clueless as Harry himself felt about it all and wasn’t that encouraging? Considering that the book relied heavily on theory and speculation, Harry assumed he would have to find out a lot through default. And bloody hell, he was so tired of always being the odd one. Not even the book written especially about his newest freakishness could provide him with the answers he needed.

But there was one section, right at the beginning of the ‘load of crap insulting common human sense’, as Remus had so eloquently put it, that piqued Harry’s interest:

[...]According to family records the first Elf Owl known to marry into the family was the wife of Ignotus Peverell. From then on Elf Owls happened to breed into the Peverell line (and subsequently into other wizarding families) from time to time, though it was always considered a rare honour for a mundane witch or wizard to find one’s partner in an Elf Owl or Elf Owl descendant. [...]

Other wizarding families. Meaning the creature wasn’t limited to the Potter line and therefore Harry – or rather his Hadrian persona – didn’t necessarily have to be a Potter. He had been waiting for the day James would ask him more intently about his family, the so called Moores, and how it could be that he had the Elf Owl gene. But if having the gene didn’t necessarily mean that he was the descendant of a Potter, he could easily be from another of those wizarding lines that had mixed with the original Elf Owls. With the exception of Remus that was most likely what the others were thinking. Though, it probably wouldn’t stop James from trying to find a connection, what with Harry looking so much like a Potter. Ugh. The whole thing was giving him a headache and here he had revelled in the dimmed light of their dormitory that was so accommodating to his sensitive eyes.

Sigh.

Harry was still contemplating if he should ask Remus where the rat was at when the door banged open, making him jump in his place and even reach for his wand.

“Baaaambi,” Sirius whined as he entered the room, looking slightly ruffled. “Why didn’t you stay and watched my glorious triumph over pompous Sir Prongs?”

He didn’t wait for an answer – not that any was forthcoming what with Hadrian staring at him as if he was wondering if Sirius had misplaced his sanity somewhere in the common room. Instead the grim Animagus just plopped down on Hadrian’s bed, following up with dropping his head into said boy’s lap. He looked up at Hadrian’s astonished and increasingly flushed face and grinned cheekily. Oh he liked that reaction.

“Your triumph?” James’ indignant voice came from the door, “I’ll have you know, I’d defeat your shaggy hide even blind as Hadrian.” That elicited a splutter from their newest addition. ‘Blind as Hadrian’ had become a kind of fly phrase these past days after the boy had finally woken up and oh well, now Hadrian was privy to it too.

“Which reminds me,” Sirius said from his spot still in Hadrian’s lap, “Remus!” He made a demanding gesture with his hand, complete with a click of his fingers, that was met with a raised eyebrow above amber eyes. “The fruits of your Hogsmeade errand, if you please,” he declared imperiously to James’ snickers.

Harry could only watch, mouth slightly agape. Now that he wasn’t so preoccupied with his angsty thoughts about looming inheritances, the Marauders’ behaviour finally really registered with him. Had they been like this the whole time? Probably. It definitely suited the stories he had heard about them better than the jaded adults he had known. With a small shake of his head Harry focused back on the present and the people at hand… err… lap.
“While you were off getting dragged around by the princess there,” Remus nudged Sirius in the ribs as he came up to the bed, “I went to Scrivenshaft’s to get you these.”

He handed Harry a small paper bag with an inky looking print proclaiming the shop to be the most proficient for writing supplies. He dimly remembered Hermione visiting this exact shop every time she wanted a new quill and telling him and Ron each time how much she preferred their quills over those ‘childish’ things the boys always bought at Zonko’s. Harry just wondered why he would need even more writing supplies seeing as there had been plenty in his trunk when he arrived.

Sirius enjoyed his vantage point. Watching Hadrian unpack the drawing utensils was even better than seeing his reaction back in Hogsmeade when he had thrown so many new clothes at the boy. Those impossibly wide forest eyes went even wider, his mouth opened to a silent ‘Oh’ and he flushed a delicate pink that made Sirius’ urge to touch that skin nearly unbearable. But he reined those wants in. There really was no excuse for him touching Hadrian right now and definitely not in the way he wanted to. It was frustrating. He needed to get over this stage of dancing around each other soon or he would drive himself insane with his suppressed needs. Only, he had this sneaking suspicion that Hadrian had no clue whatsoever that he even was on the receiving end of such thoughts. And damn if that didn’t spike his possessive streak. If Hadrian remained oblivious he would have to make sure that at least everyone else knew the boy was off limits for them.

Lucian Bole was pacing the length of his office. He had watched this past week and observed and finally found what he needed. Hadrian Moore had been admitted to the hospital wing and Bole had listened to the roaming rumours about the reason. No one mentioned an inheritance and as always Hogwarts’ grapevine was ridiculous with its bizarre stories. But he had also observed the headmaster visiting the student of his interest.

So the esteemed Albus Dumbledore was privy to the secret that surrounded Hadrian Moore. That could complicate matters, but wouldn’t stop Bole from pursuing what he wanted. It was too much of a chance at prosperity and safeguarding of his family’s future in the rising dark regime to let it stop him. Still, he had no knowledge of the exact nature of the creature that had taken to manifesting in the scrawny boy. So Bole did what a snake was meant to do. He found himself a little spy in Hadrian Moore’s vicinity that could report everything he observed back to him.

Now, how to go about convincing said spy into working for him…

Chapter End Notes

So now that we all know how Harry’s allure is supposed to work… let’s collect ideas on the most dominant traits of each character, shall we? If Remus’ is protectiveness and Sirius is a mixture of protectiveness and possessiveness (what may or may not be related to his Animagus form) …then what do you think about Peter, Severus, Lily and of course Dumbledore?

(Since James as an Elf Owl descendant is immune to the allure there is no need to define his most prominent trait… though I somehow suspect it would be along the lines of pride.)
Dear Hadrian Moore,

This letter may come as a surprise...

Harry was sitting on his bed, blinking against the morning light and trying to make sense of what he was seeing. When he did, he wasn’t sure if he should flush in embarrassment or feel somewhat panicked. Or warm.

For right beside him, sitting on his own bed, was Sirius staring intently into a hovering mirror and attempting to tie a feather into his hair. He was furrowing his brows in deep concentration and pursing his lips as if he were about to exaggeratedly kiss his reflection. Okay, Harry thought with a small chuckle, he would go with amused for now and decide later on what that prickly warm feeling in his chest was trying to convey.

“It does have a 68ish feeling about it, doesn’t it?” Remus asked him with a small smile as he exited the en suite.

Harry blinked again, finally getting rid of the last dots creeping through his vision, and gave Sirius another thoughtful look over. To tie a feather in one’s hair as a fashion statement was neither something he would have thought of nor something he normally would have done. Then again, he had never been interested in anything concerning fashion, had no clue about it whatsoever and even less about fashion in this time. It was the 1970s after all.

“What are you on about, Rem?” Sirius asked, sounding confused and getting increasingly frustrated with either his hair or the feather, Harry wasn’t sure.

He vaguely recalled hearing about some muggle movement a few years prior that went with a lot of stuff like this and thought that Remus was probably talking about that. He was right, he realised a moment later, when his friend true to form went into ‘professor mode’ and started lecturing Sirius about the movements of 1968 and all the different developments that went with them. He was just about to explain the significance of a specific photography that had been popular in the muggle papers of that time when Sirius cursed out loud – in French.

“That mouth of yours is so not ‘toujours pur’ (*)&,” a raspy tired voice came from James’ bed after a moment of silence in which Harry tried to translate what he had just heard. Remus sighed and went around the beds to come to a stop behind Sirius, holding his hand out for the feather.

“No lecturing the evil spawn about his family before breakfast,” Sirius quipped back at James and Harry suddenly had the urge so reach out to him. He squashed it down confused. “Be careful, Rems.” Sirius handed the feather over, but then seemed to realise something and looked concerned at Hadrian. When he could not detect any protest or uneasiness his shoulders relaxed ever so slightly –
before a suspicious glint appeared in his eyes.

“Don’t worry, I’m not gonna cut your precious hair off and sell it to one of your creepy admirers,” Remus murmured, concentrated on his task of gathering the silky black tresses. Sirius scoffed.

“It’s not my hair I’m worried about,” he said and this time Harry did blush.

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He groaned pitifully when they entered the common room. It was so bloody bright! Rubbing at his eyes annoyed, Harry thought he would probably have a migraine before they even reached their first class with McGonagall. A hand on his lower back reminded him of the presence of others around, but he didn’t flinch away. He knew that hand and let it guide him across the room and away from prying eyes. Through the portrait hole they went and Harry sighed relieved at the dimming light. Hogwarts’ halls definitely were those of an ancient castle even if some floors had been renovated over the centuries. Most of the windows were small and far between and if one happened to know the place one would be able to reach most locations in the castle without ever using one of the outer hallways of the upper floors that were lined with the biggest windows. Yet, Harry knew, at midday today he would have to deal with a lot more light than he had to right now.

“Sorry, Hadrian,” Sirius said and steered him out of the way of half-asleep students. “Here you go.” He reached inside his robes and produced a pair of sunglasses. They were big with wide glasses and to Harry they had a definite ‘retro’ feel to them, but he supposed everything from the muggle world would in this time.

“Thanks,” he mumbled embarrassed and slipped them on. Oh relief. Blinking and looking around for the first time today without a stabbing sensation to his eyes, Harry found himself surrounded by the Marauders just outside of the Gryffindor common room.

“Ha!” Sirius made a triumphant noise at the same time that James sighed exaggeratedly in a disappointed way. He watched them exchange a few coins and looked questioningly on. Was this about him? They didn’t give him the feeling as if he had done something wrong, though James scowled playfully at him for a moment.

“Don’t ya worry, Owlet,” Sirius declared happily, throwing an arm around the other boy and starting to lead the group down to the Great Hall. “You just earned me quite some bucks just by looking good.”

Looking good? Now Harry was sure they were making fun of him, but he didn’t really care. He knew he looked most likely ridiculous, but couldn’t care less. His looks had always been the least of his concerns. He had long ago made his peace with the fact that he would most likely never grow out of his scrawny frame and that the scar on his face would mark him for the rest of his life - not to mention all those other mementos on his skin. Even without Dudley’s hand-me-downs and the prescribed glasses that caged his vision his looks were a moot point. He had always been too short, too pale, too skinny and his hair didn’t give his looks the nonchalant air it did to his father’s. Like aunt Petunia used to say: He just looked unkempt. Anyway, he didn’t care anymore. As long as these sunglasses did what they were meant to do, he only cared for the practical part. And honestly, it was hard to be annoyed with the Marauders’ comments when he found himself securely tucked into Sirius’ side. He could feel his heart racing, his skin was overly aware of the heat radiating off of Sirius’ arm… was this alright?

Harry tried to remember if his godfather had ever done something like that, but then shook his head rapidly to get the comparison out of his thoughts. No. No, he would not think of his godfather, he would not let himself be dragged down there right now. But the scene was there, no matter what he did. It played out in his head whenever he thought of his godfather. It was his fault that he was dead.
Just like Cedric, just like his parents. They died, they always…

“You okay there, Hadrian?” He didn’t hear the question, nor did he see the concerned looks from Remus and James or how the latter suddenly switched to his peacocking morning ritual when they entered the Great Hall. He did however notice when he suddenly stumbled and Sirius had to catch him.

“Hadrian?” Harry met the grey gaze, blinked and blushed. He could hear the sudden lull in conversation around him and just wanted to slap himself. Great. “How are your eyes?”

Eyes? Oh right, the sunglasses. Harry reached up to said glasses and shrugged self-consciously. It was alright. He could live like that, that is if the professors would allow him to wear the sunglasses during classes.

“What’s with the muggle attire?” A sneering voice from behind them asked and Harry realised that they had been standing just inside the Great Hall right by the entrance.

James had long gone off to impress Lily with… well, whatever it was he tried to do with his Malfoy strutting. Remus was sitting with him and Pettigrew being a no show once again finally registered with Harry. Though he didn’t really have the time to think about this as he found himself staring at Barty Crouch once again. He had had nearly forgotten about the bloke. Until now. In a matter of a second the memories of the night when he and Sirius had a fight and Harry had ended up in the owlery rushed him. He could suddenly feel the heated breath of Crouch ghosting over his skin again, those bony hands under his shirt… Harry shuddered.

“What do you care?” He said, barely suppressing the urge to step back when he met Crouch’s eyes. He was staring at him again and now Harry knew what those hungry eyes meant. He shuddered again.

“It’s a shame to hide those pretty eyes of yours,” Crouch nearly cooed, stepping closer to Harry. “Those muggle things aren’t worthy of a face like yours,” he hoarsely whispered and started to reach for said sunglasses. Or maybe he was reaching for Harry. He wanted to step back, wanted to distance himself as much as possible from this person, but Harry was utterly at a loss in this kind of situation. He had no experience with this and he sure as hell didn’t want to draw any more attention to them.

“I think,” a cold voice interrupted the moment, “You should watch those unworthy hands of yours.”

Sirius’ large hand came into Harry’s view and grabbed onto Crouch’s wrist, bringing the appendage down and away from Harry’s face. He could see the knuckles going white even though the gesture didn’t look like much strength had been used at all. There was a tense moment in which Harry could faintly hear a girl giggle, but he was still staring at Crouch who in turn didn’t avert his eyes from Harry. There was something… sincerely wrong with this gaze.

The clearing of a throat sped the moment back up to normal and Harry became aware of Professor McGonagall looming over them with one of her famous stern glares. If Sirius took a few seconds longer to crush whatever intent out of Crouch’s arm, no one said anything. The group dissolved then and Harry wondered what the hell this was all about. What was wrong with Barty Crouch? Well, apart from the obvious.

When the rushing of a thousand wings interrupted his thoughts, Harry expected the regular Daily Prophet to make an appearance at their part of the Gryffindor table. It did. But what really caught his – and everyone else’s – attention was the owl that was swooping in low circles above them seemingly confused.
“That’s Tipsy!” James exclaimed loud enough for half of the Great Hall to hear him.

“Why’s she acting like that?” Remus asked from where he had been trying to keep Sirius from hexing Crouch across the hall.

“Dunno,” James murmured, “Maybe she’s tipsy again.”

“Oh haha.”

The owl did a few more swoops as if making sure to really gain the attention of everyone present. Harry could see Dumbledore preparing to get up from the corner of his eyes and frowned. It was just an owl. A confused one, sure, but why would the headmaster feel the need to intervene?

“Tipsy, come down here, girl.”

At James’ call the owl finally settled and let the young Potter retrieve a small package from her leg. Though, when he reached for the letter on her other leg, he was met with an indignant squawk. The owl proceeded to manoeuvre her way across the laden table, knocking goblets over and swaying in a way that made Harry think she may really be tipsy Tipsy. She stopped in front of him and eyed him as if unsure if he really was who she seemed to look for. Blinking, Harry reached tentatively for the letter and gave a small sigh of relief when he wasn’t punished by the sharp beak for his action. It was addressed to him. Or well, it was addressed to Hadrian Moore which was probably the reason for the owl’s confusion. At least, the owl couldn’t outright tell the staring students that he wasn’t who he said he was.

Dear Hadrian Moore,

This letter may come as a surprise, though I sincerely hope you do not mind my intrusion. My son James mentioned in one of his last letters that he had made the acquaintance of someone that bore looks which are inherent to the Potter family line. He described your current situation and asked about a possible connection of our families.

I will admit that I did not take his request too seriously as my son lately feels the need to prove himself worthy of his title as Heir Apparent to the Potter line. A week ago, though, a second letter arrived informing me of the developments that took place during this time. I am glad to hear you were able to conceal the true nature of what has occurred. Do excuse the need for vagueness in my words, it is sadly a necessity at the current time. As you may already know, the mentioned circumstances are also inherent to the Potter line as well as some other wizarding lines.

Since your current situation seems to set you at odds with your family I would like to hereby extent an invitation for the coming winter solstice. You are welcome to spend the holidays with our family at the Potter mansion in Cornwall and make use of the family library. Perhaps we will be able to shed light on some of the questions you most likely feel overwhelmed with at this moment.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Fleamont Henry Potter
(*) "Toujours Pûr" (French): "Always Pure", Black family motto
In which Harry indulges in self-analysis

Chapter Notes

So I finished re-reading my own story. Found and obliterated some dumb typos and located a minor mistake of the logical kind. Nothing dramatic so I'm going to claim obliviousness. Have fun!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The question of his magic had been a much bigger one than Harry had realised. Back in the hospital wing Madam Pomfrey had tested his magic levels each day after he had woken up and even though it felt like an uncomfortable intrusion Harry was glad someone cared enough to make sure he wouldn’t endanger anyone with flailing control. Fact was: His magic was different. It was stronger, or simply 'more', than it had ever been, brimming just beneath the surface, but it also was calmer than it had been in weeks. Or maybe even months, he couldn't quite remember. After the Department of Mysteries at the end of his fifth year everything had been a blur and Harry actually didn’t want to remember much of anything.

But now here he was, sitting in Transfiguration and feeling slightly afraid of using said magic. He knew, he had more than enough of it, really, possibly draining himself would most likely never again be an issue. But the feeling of his magic was different. It wasn’t something overly obvious, more like a subtle change in colour in a painting. Just a few shades, nothing radical, but still… brighter. More intense. He was afraid it might respond differently too.

Harry peeked over at James and had to suppress a grin. Behind the safety of his sunglasses it was much easier to watch his new friends unobtrusively and Harry took liberal advantage of that as he watched James send his conjured bird over to Lily with a transfigured rose. He felt sympathetic when Lily responded with a whole flock of conjured birds that seemed to be overly interested in the stag Animagus’ hair. She innocently claimed lack of control, but Harry had seen the smug smirk that was only partly hidden by her dark red hair.

Sirius on his other side was muttering to himself and didn’t seem to be interested in even attempting the conjuring charm they were supposed to work on. Harry could understand it. What use was there for conjured birds or transfiguring said birds into an inanimate object? Well, unless you wanted to do a James Potter, that is. Considering said bloke’s hair was currently nesting ground for a flock of conjured birds…

“It’s about control,” Sirius muttered to himself and Harry wondered if he had spoken his thoughts out loud. But Sirius didn’t seem to be talking to him. Strangely, he had been like this ever since breakfast and Harry had a feeling he was planning something – and that something would be nothing good. He was Sirius Black, after all.

Hadrian’s blindness had changed more than his perception of touch. It had also endeared him to the Marauders to a degree that made them include him into their little band of misfits. He was no longer just the new and fascinating student whose secrets they wanted to unveil – now Hadrian was a friend and someone they wanted to protect. Though, that last part probably came as a side dish to his creature allure. Or maybe not. Who knew, Sirius didn’t care.
Being faced with Crouch again this morning had reminded him of his thoughts of revenge. Oh yes, he wanted to avenge Hadrian’s encounter with the Slytherin and he didn’t even make the attempt to fool himself into believing it was all just a matter of principle. No, Sirius knew very well that he was doing this for himself as much as for Hadrian. There would be hell to pay if anyone ever tried to touch the boy again and he would make Barty Crouch into an example.

Glancing over at said boy only helped strengthen his resolve. Hadrian was the picture of uneasy hesitation and from the looks of it, he had to do with his magic. He was staring at the wand in his hand – and was that holly? Wasn’t that like some super rare material used in wands? – seemingly more than a bit unsure how to proceed. Yet, Sirius was quite sure the boy had no problem understanding the required movements and incantation. No, what stayed his hand was most likely what those in his vicinity all could feel. The Marauders had all felt the change in Hadrian’s magic as they were the ones mostly exposed to it and of course the ones that had witnessed the change while it was happening. It felt different, yes, but that was to be expected when one became a magical creature. But it was also powerful. Not the raw kind of uncontrolled power that had terrified the shit out of them before, but a more subtle and steady power that was all the more impressive in its calmness.

Sirius watched a moment longer as the boy he fancied abused his bottom lip and continued staring at the wood in his hand. He couldn’t see those eyes behind the shades, but he imagined them to be lighter in anxiousness. Unfortunately, he wasn’t the only one noticing Hadrian’s hesitation and he could see Alice Fortescue, Evans’ Ravenclaw friend, readying herself to come help. Nope. Not with him here. He wouldn’t let such an opportunity slip.

Long, calloused fingers closed around his wand hand and Harry startled out of his anxious thoughts. Looking up, he was met with Sirius’ laughing grey gaze. Sirius who was standing a lot closer than he had the last time Harry had looked at him. Speaking of that last time, how long exactly had he been immersed in his thoughts about his magic?

“There’s a lot I loathe about my family,” Sirius’ low voice was not much more than a whisper, ensuring that no one else could listen in. “But there’s one thing I learned from them that I very much value.” His larger hand dwarfed Harry’s more delicate one and Harry could feel the warmth radiating off that skin. He found it hard to concentrate on the words spoken in his ear as Sirius leaned in even more. “Never fear your own magic,” he intoned, “As it is the one thing that will never betray you.”

A blush spread across his cheeks. He could feel the blood rushing just beneath his skin, feeling overly heated, and sensitising his skin to a nearly unbearable degree. Harry felt dumbfounded by his body’s reaction and his thoughts scrambled for a moment as he tried to locate the source of that reaction. Was it the words? The meaning? Or was it something else entirely… Unnoticed by Harry the sleek feathers in his hair flattened themselves to his head in this moment. Not that it was all that noticeable what with the sheer mass of unruly hair on Harry’s head. Yet it was an unconscious gesture, slightly ruffling said hair and expressing his feelings for all those to see who knew what to look for.

Harry was just sitting and watching the common room. Never before had he been this conscious and at the same time unconscious of physical touch. He had always been so awkward about everything concerning human interaction he just had no clue how it was supposed to be. The Dursleys had never bestowed him with anything remotely like a comforting touch that he could remember and later there had always been his status as blasted Boy-Who-Lived that kept people at a distance. Not that he had actually noticed this until recently.
Here, in the past, everything was different. No one seemed overly concerned with touching him – they even seemed to want him near and to be near to him and all without the undertone of awe or contempt that had always come with wizards and witches in his time. And to his continued surprise Harry found himself more and more seeking this new found comfort. But he had no idea how to go about it. He didn’t know what was acceptable to seek out and what would be seen as intrusive. He definitely didn’t want to creep anyone out with his need for touch. It was just… Harry felt starved of affection and being here where (or when) no one really knew who he was, was giving him an oh so tempting opportunity. But exactly this whole situation he was in was what made it even harder to actually go about all this. Okay, Harry thought and leaned back in his chair with a sigh, he needed to get his head around it all. Evading the trouble was all nice and fluffy, but apparently it also ensured even more confusion than what was normal for him – see example S (like Sirius) this morning.

So he was in the past due to circumstances he couldn’t really remember but thought there had been some mysterious artefact involved. Then he had become a creature. Okay. Alright. A rare creature that linked him to the Potters and risked his cover and with it the whole timeline (And was he really going to see his grandparents?!). A rare creature in a time that loathed creatures. Not so alright then. He also had an allure. But not the predictable kind like the Veelas, no. Harry bloody Potter of course secured himself the most idiotic allure ever to be developed in the history of magical creatures, unpredictable and individual to each person. Oh joy. That brought his thoughts to some of the reactions his creature allure had forced so far. There were the strange stares that followed him around these days, testament to the fact that he definitely couldn’t control his allure just yet. He had a suspicion that this was the reason Crouch reacted to him the way he did. Creep. And of course there were the Marauders. Remus with his fierce protectiveness that warmed Harry whenever he thought of it. Pettigrew with his deliberate distance that most likely was meant to conceal the hostile feeling Harry could sense whenever he was near the rat Animagus. It was a slight relief to see that James, as the only unaffected, seemed to have no problem with Harry at all. He was in fact a friendly companion and Harry very much hoped to get to know him better with time.

And what about Sirius? How much of what his not-godfather had been displaying all this time was really him? Oh Harry knew his allure couldn’t force sentiments that weren’t already there or more like it couldn’t force behaviour that would be out of character for a person. Which meant Sirius’ actions weren’t forced – or were they? Because Harry also knew that his damned allure accelerated the process, meaning, it sped it all up. Maybe Sirius would have acted the way he did without the allure and maybe he would only have done so in a few weeks from now or months or even years. There was no knowing how strongly he was affected. And Harry sure as hell didn’t want to ask.

And then there was another question concerning Sirius that Harry very much wanted to ignore. He probably would have done so just a few weeks prior, but the person he was now could see that evading the question wouldn’t help him in the long run. Of course that knowledge wouldn’t stop him from doing the same in the future over and over again. Honestly, it was sometimes just so much easier to ignore one’s problems. This though… this was a kind of ‘problem’ Harry had never faced before. He had slain a Basilisk, had fought a dragon, had been possessed and… – he had stood up against a dark lord, for Merlin’s sake!

But he never had to face the kind of possessive affection Sirius was showering him with. And Harry never had to face the kind of longing he experienced every time Sirius did just that.

Chapter End Notes

Alright, I feel like we need some Remus in the next chapter.
In which there is a badly written article

Chapter Notes

This chapter goes with extra cupcakes for Peramia!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The dimming light of the sinking sun was throwing deep shadows across Rem’s features as he turned to face him.

“Change,” he said ominously.

ATTACK ON DIAGON ALLEY: FATHER OF FOUR KILLS HIS FAMILY!

A new Dark Lord on the rise?

Just 30 years ago a dark wizard by the name Gellert Grindelwald, known for his terrible deeds in continental Europe, was defeated in one of the most impressive duels known to wizard kind. He found his master in the merciful Albus Dumbledore, Order of Merlin First Class, Grand Sorcerer, Supreme Mugwump and Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, who then proceeded to lead our forlorn society out of the dark.

But yesterday just at dusk a terrible scene took place in the outskirts of Diagon Alley that took this author’s mind back to the dark and sinister times that reigned until Grindelwald’s defeat in 1945.

Muggleborn Brodie Morce, 36, seemingly went rogue and killed his four children through gruesome dark curses unrelatable for the sensible mind. The young man, later found to be victim to the Unforgivable Imperius Curse, tortured his wife, Stefani Morce née Garfield, with the use of another Unforgivable into unconsciousness and set his own shop aflame. (For more information on the Unforgivables see p. 12).

The whole ordeal is thought to be…

Harry couldn’t continue reading. Dark wizards, torture and death, so much death. How could they write about it so nonchalantly as if it were nothing but the latest news on some celebrity?

“You don't know who his supporters are, you don't know who's working for him and who isn't; you know he can control people so that they do terrible things without being able to stop themselves…” (*)

The words spoken by his godfather crawled up from the recesses of his mind as Harry stared at the moving picture of destruction printed on the front page of the Daily Prophet. He felt his throat closing up. He had ignored it so long, had talked himself into believing this time were different. But people were dying! And no one seemed to realise that it was so much more than an article! Or were they?

“You're scared for yourself, and your family, and your friends. Every week, news comes of more
Why had no one else reacted to this during breakfast? Harry himself had only taken notice because he had moved the discarded newspaper out of the way for the books he had been assembling. No one had even talked about it as far as he remembered! Harry didn’t realise that his breathing had started to become erratic, nor did he notice Rem’s entrance to his corner of the library. His thoughts were consumed with memories of dead bodies, of torture and maliciousness, of everything he had witnessed in the visions Voldemort used to send him and which still haunted his sleep, his every breath, his...

“…the Ministry of Magic’s in disarray, they don’t know what to do, they’re trying to keep everything hidden from the Muggles, but meanwhile, Muggles are dying too. Terror everywhere... panic... confusion... that's how it used to be.”

He jolted to attention when Remus came to a stop right in front of him, staring at him intently.

“Shh hey,” the werewolf whispered, hesitantly taking a hold of Harry’s shoulders. “It’s okay.”

But those were hollow words, Harry knew and he knew that Remus knew. How could it ever be okay when things like that happened? He had thought everything different here, had thought himself and those he loved safe from the horrors that would only threaten them in a few years from now. But that was utter bullshit, Harry realised, and couldn’t suppress the distressed sound bubbling from his throat. Wherever and whenever he went, Voldemort was there, Voldemort haunted him. Even here. There was no escape and Harry realised with another jolt that here he hadn’t even the support system he relied so heavily on in his own time. There was no Order of the Phoenix or if it already was, it had no reason to protect him. Not even Dumbledore had a reason to give him one of his grandfatherly advises. He was utterly alone if he decided to stand up against Voldemort and had he even a choice? Was it even his decision? Had it ever been?

How could he ever have not panicked about this?

He allowed himself to be held by Remus and burrowed into the familiar warmth. Voldemort would most likely find him anyway, even if Harry decided not to go against him here. That was how it always had been. With a shudder he tried to ignore the blackened and charred part inside of him that had once been the connection he shared with the Dark Lord. It had been silent ever since he had arrived here, but Harry was suddenly afraid that it would flare back to life again for some reason.

“Hadrian,” Remus’ voice was low and soothing, “Please calm down, you’re safe here. I promise.”

Remus had reacted on instinct. There was no way he could have ignored the sudden anxious smell that wafted off of Hadrian or look away from the obvious distress. They were nearing the week before the next full moon and Remus already felt the heightening to his senses and the sharpening of his instinct. Seeing Hadrian like this, suddenly looking so small and frail, had been like a compulsion. He could NOT walk away from this, he HAD to comfort the boy. So Remus did just that.

When his words did not seem to make a difference, he enveloped Hadrian in a hug, whispering soothing nonsense. It didn’t help. When Hadrian made that distressed sound that in hindsight really wasn’t more than a small sound in the back of his throat like he had choked on a bit of air, his wolf nearly went rampant with its need to protect. It screamed ‘pack’ and ‘distress’ and ‘protect’ at him and Remus could only react. He felt himself pushing Hadrian’s face into his neck, for some reason believing that his scent would help to calm him down and tried to hide the boy from the world in his
arms. It actually helped or at least Hadrian wasn’t drawing away from him.

That is, it seemed to work until they both heard a distinct growl from the doorway and Hadrian went rigid in his arms.

Sirius had been looking for Hadrian ever since Quidditch practice ended for he really didn’t like to leave him out of his sight for long. He was all too aware of the still brewing problems with the Slytherins and let’s not forget the possible reactions Hadrian’s allure could produce. No, Sirius really didn’t like leaving, but Prongs would not have him slacking in matters of Quidditch. So he had made Rem promise he would keep an eye on the boy and his friend had been happy enough to comply. If he was honest, Sirius didn’t like that either, but the more logical part of his brain told him firmly that he was being stupid. He could trust Rem. They were friends. What he had witnessed in the Room of Requirement had been nothing like it had looked at first glance and Sirius knew that. Still, there was the Grim part that held on to its suspicion. And he really didn’t want to delve into that further.

So when he searched the library – because come on, it was Rem – he was kind of relieved to finally be able to watch over Hadrian again himself. Which was ridiculous. He knew that. But Merlin’s knickers, he just couldn’t stop this need…

He walked in on them hugging. And not just hugging. They were in an out of the way corner with no one else around and Hadrian being the small skinny squirt he was, was nearly drowning in Remus’ embrace. Sirius stopped. No, no, no don’t jump to conclusions again… But there were Rem’s fingers drawing circles into the skin of Hadrian’s neck and holding the boy right there just so… Like a switch had been flipped there was white hot anger and everything else was drowned out. The Grim growled.

Remus knew instinctively that he had to act and fast. Just like his instincts had told him to comfort Hadrian, he now was more than sure that he needed to placate Sirius until they could talk this through. But Hadrian was still in this strange state of shock and Remus wasn’t sure if he could leave him alone like this. Still, he had to do something.

Looking over at his friend he frowned at the dangerous glare he was receiving. Sirius’ hands were clenching and unclenching as if he couldn’t decide if he wanted to draw his wand or rather beat the shit out of Remus. It was an overreaction and he knew if Sirius were in his right state of mind he wouldn’t even consider anything like this. Making eye contact, Remus slowly let go of Hadrian and took a step back. His wolf was telling him that he needed to tread really careful here especially since it wasn’t the first time this was happening. If he didn’t back down immediately the Grim in Sirius would see it as a challenge. Though, he seemed to have underestimated Hadrian.

Harry had no idea what was going on. One moment he was caught up in his ever more panicking mind and couldn’t for the life of him stop it, the next he was flung out back into reality. He was so screwed! Everything was just so wrong and the dead connection to Voldemort was suddenly scaring him nearly as much as it had when he had first realised what it really was. A horcrux. A piece of a killer’s soul inside of him, latched onto him and maybe even a part of him by now. Could that happen? Could the horrendous part of Voldemort’s soul merge with his own?

Then there was …something that pulled him back and just like that he was able to think clearly again. He found himself enveloped in Remus’ arms in a protective gesture and would have smiled at
the warm feeling that gave him if it wasn’t for the distinctive knowledge that something was wrong. Sensing someone else’s presence, he looked up just in time for Remus’ attempt at ending the hug. One second he was spotting Sirius, the next something seemed to click and Harry just knew what he had to do. Murmuring a low thank you to Remus, he let go and walked straight over to Sirius. He had no idea why he was doing it, especially considering that Sirius looked ready to commit murder (and Harry would ignore the shudder that thought gave him), but he stepped right up into the personal space of the grim Animagus…

“Sirius.”

…and grabbed said student’s face in his hands to make him look at him.


“We need to talk.”

Remus’ voice cut through the moment and Sirius’ head snapped up. Locating the werewolf again, Sirius could only glare. There was the red haze again. How dare he touch what was his! He managed a minute nod in his seething, moved Hadrian out of the way so he would be between the boy and the wolf, and then followed Remus silently out of the library. He was walking down the corridor obviously in search of an empty classroom and Sirius found himself stalking after him while replaying the scene he had just witnessed over and over in his head. He couldn’t stop the image of his supposed friend holding Hadrian like this. Every instinct screamed at him that he eliminate his rival and re-stake his claim on the boy.

Remus sighed silently to himself. He had known that they would need to have this talk, but he hadn’t realised just how strong Sirius’ instincts had become. This was not like he had wanted it to go and he hoped his plan would still work. It would be so much easier if the scent Sirius was currently emitting wouldn’t constantly raise his wolf’s hackles… Finding one of the empty classrooms, he reached into his pocket and cancelled the shrinking charm he had on the content.

The dimming light of the sinking sun was throwing deep shadows across Rem’s features as he turned to face him.

“Change,” he said ominously.

“What?” Sirius blinked perplexed. His possessive anger forgotten for a moment, he eyed the lonely shirt in Remus’ hand that had suddenly appeared. “Isn’t that one of Hadrian’s? In fact,” he felt his anger rising again, “Isn’t that the shirt he wore last night?”

He wasn’t sure why exactly that was even worse than Remus having any other piece of Hadrian’s clothing. Maybe it was just more intimate that he was holding the clothes in which his… in which Hadrian had been sleeping and no one else than Sirius himself should be allowed to- Oh wow. Sirius took a deep breath. Restaking a claim. Being possessive of even the clothes Hadrian wore. Something was very, very wrong with him.

“Just do what I say, Padfoot,” Remus said with emphasis to the Marauder name.
The smells of the Marauders were ingrained in Remus’ or rather Moony’s mind. During the weeks right before and after the full moon he could pick them out everywhere and after the inheritance he knew the same went for Hadrian. He knew James always smelled a bit like lightning and shared the same scent of freshly cut grass that sometimes lingered around Sirius. He knew Peter always smelled of his nerves for he was a shy and nervous person. He knew Sirius had a complex mixture of smells on him that was dominated by the smoky stench of his family’s dark magic. It was in his blood just like Remus presumed the ozone smell was in James’. Those were the scents of Moony’s pack, but transformed the werewolf would only recognise them as such when they were in their Animagi forms. It was strange, but his wolf had never before reacted like this to a human. It had never before so distinctly recognised a human as pack as it did Hadrian.

Anyway, the point was, it all came down to a certain scent, and he hoped the same would go for Sirius or rather Padfoot. Maybe he would realise what was happening to him when he got a whiff of Hadrian’s scent now that the inheritance was completed.

Chapter End Notes

dramatic cliffhanger.

(*): Quotes by Sirius in book four ‘Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire’
“Just do what I say, Padfoot,” Remus said with emphasis to the Marauder name.

Breathing slowly in, counting to any odd number and then breathing out again just as slowly, Harry tried to calm down. He was still standing where Sirius had, well, discarded him, before he and Remus made their hasty retreat. But by now Harry was finally able to really let register what had just happened.

Firmly ignoring what actually had led to him having what he thought of as a mixture of a panic attack and a memory flash, Harry looked back at what had happened when he resurfaced from his mind. Remus had been hugging him, probably in an attempt to calm him down for he even now could feel the remnants of his ragged breathing. And then there had been Sirius. That was where everything became even stranger. Harry’s cheeks burned bright red at the thought of what he had done, grabbing Sirius like that. But in that moment it had felt like the only thing he could and should do! He had somehow felt compelled to stop what was going on between his friends, to break through whatever was clouding Sirius’ judgement. Never again did he want to see Sirius look at Remus like that, it was just wrong. If his own embarrassment could prevent that then Harry would not complain.

But what had happened between those two anyway?

The scent was enchanting. It was all encompassing. It was… Padfoot concentrated to put a name to it. Hadrian’s fragrance was intense. There was the scent of forest, greenery and wind. Oh he liked the wind part… it was wild and fresh and unspoiled. It felt free and untamed and he wanted it… Was it possible for a scent to be addictive? But why was this scent near the werewolf? Why was it near earth, books, chocolate… it was supposed to be with him!

“Sirius…”

The voice was unexpected. It belonged to earth, books, chocolate, wild, angst… Remus. Oh. Remus was standing right in front of him, looking apprehensive. Or was he standing right in front of Rem? What was he… he was growling. That couldn’t be right, Rem was his friend, he shouldn’t be growling at Rem. Padfoot shook himself and consciously focused on his human mind.

With a lot more effort than it would normally take Sirius changed back to his human form. It was rapidly becoming obvious to him that he would need to be careful in his Animagus form when around Hadrian, or even his scent apparently. Oh yeah… that would go well if he ever came across him like that. Sirius briefly wondered if Padfoot would try to hump the poor boy or something. Anyway, he was at a loss about the WHY.

“Rem… what…” Sirius found himself taking the shirt from his friend with a swift move. For some reason he no longer could stand Remus holding Hadrian’s clothing. “What does it mean?”
Fiddling with the shirt for a moment, he finally brought it up to his face and inhaled the now dulled scent. The potency wasn’t nearly as affective, but still… it was distinctly Hadrian and he had to consciously push down the urge to growl at Rem again for taking it in the first place. It had been necessary, but that didn’t mean he had to like it. Remus sighed, breaking Sirius back out of his possessive thoughts.

“I’m not sure,” he admitted and sat heavily on the edge of one of the unused desks. The tension that had taken a hold of him for the whole encounter was now slowly bleeding away, leaving him tired and worn. “I mean, I read about the theory, but… honestly, there are not enough recorded cases to be sure.”

Sirius frowned at his friend as he rambled on for a few seconds. Finally, he had enough and cut through the professor mode a bit more forcefully than he normally would.

“Care to tell me what you’re actually talking about, now would you?”

Rem stopped his monologue and looked up. He studied Sirius for a moment and then looked away again. There was a thoughtful expression on his face, his brow creased and his bottom lip encased between his teeth. Sirius was about to ask again when the werewolf finally voiced his thoughts.

“Your Animagus has a magical form.”

He ignored Sirius’ slightly affronted DUH look. Well, yes. Animagi were generally magical, wasn’t that what it was all about? Your spirit animal and all that flower power stuff. (Sirius so liked that muggle term. He really wanted to look into those movements Rem had mentioned earlier that day.)

“The Grim is a magical creature,” Remus elaborated. “Not like James’ stag or Peter’s rat. See, those are just your everyday animals though I see why you as a Pureblood would maybe not notice this. Are grims seen as actual animals in wizarding society?”

Sirius saw the symptoms of an impending session of more professor mode and hurried to keep his friend on track.

“So what? My Animagus is special?” He smirked what James had once dubbed his Slytherin smirk. “Not that I’m surprised about that…”

Rem wasn’t affected. He simply raised an eyebrow at him and Sirius shrugged and made himself comfortable on one of the other desks. Hadrian’s shirt was still safely in his hands and he didn’t see himself letting go of it any time soon.

“What do you know about grims, about the actual magical animal?” Remus’ question seemed like an opening, like he expected a certain answer and was just waiting to refute it. Sirius was used to knowing his answers, but whenever Rem asked something that seemed just a bit too obvious… well, he would indulge his friend anyway.

“The Grim is an omen of death, which is reputed to bring about the demise of the person who encounters it,” he rattled off and then continued with a large grin. “It takes the shape of a large, black, spectral dog.” Here he waggled his eyebrows just that tad bit exaggeratedly. “Though, I would add ‘awesome’ to that list. Anyway, the Grim is probably the most well-known of omens and,” he let his voice drop to something like a stage whisper, “It is considered to be one of the worst, if not the worst, omens around.”(* He leaned back on his perch and added: “Though I always wondered how anyone would know, if one is supposed to die on the spot…”

“Exactly,” Remus interrupted. “You don’t know shit.”
“Now, that’s just rude.”

“You’ve no idea if they actually exist and even less knowledge about possible instincts.” Remus looked at him seriously. Yes, he looked seriously at Sirius. Hah. Nope, no time for this right now. “Behaviour. What’s typical for a Grim? How does it live?” Sirius was given no chance to answer, his friend just ploughing on and relaying his thoughts. “I’m just saying that there is a theory about magical Animagi. A theory which of course has no proof to it.”

As was the nature of theories.

“So what does it say?” Sirius shifted uncomfortably. This talk hadn’t gone the way he had expected it. Possessive feelings, scents, and then talking about his Animagus form and its possible implications. Nope, definitely not what he had pictured when stalking Rem to an abandoned classroom. Though, he was mostly glad that things had gone differently from what he had pictured. Mostly.

Remus took a deep breath, steadying himself.

“The theory talks about magical Animagi and the possibility of them having… mates.”

Harry blinked. And blinked. And then moved away from the door to the classroom and walked down the corridor. He turned into one of the hidden passages on autopilot, walked a bit longer and came finally to third floor level. He was near the Clock Tower Courtyard, but his mind was far away.

He had followed his friends after he had regained most of his composure. Or rather he had followed them after he had been able to breathe normally enough again to avoid getting caught eavesdropping. Harry hadn’t exactly intended to listen in on the conversation, but he had been worried about Sirius and Remus. And why had they moved away from him anyway? He understood that he was just the new student that was hanging around them and staying in their dorm. But a part of him had started to feel like he belonged. Like he was accepted within their group, that he was considered a friend.

Running his hands through his hair and wincing at the feel of the feathers there, Harry pushed those thoughts aside and considered what he had heard. A lot of it had been confusing and went just over his head, but he thought the gist of it all was that Remus thought Sirius had a mate. Because he apparently had read that Animagi that formed as magical creatures were special in that matter. And considering the timing, Remus most likely thought that Harry was this mate.

He let go of a long breath and looked up at the cloudy sky. The sun had set by now and Harry took off his sunglasses.

Was it wrong that he wasn’t exactly opposed to the idea? Was it wrong that he maybe even wanted this? Sirius, this Sirius, wasn’t his godfather. They were similar, of course, but they were not one and the same. Too many things had happened to his godfather for him to still be this mischievous youngster. But genetically speaking they were the same person. Not that that should matter, they weren’t really related, right? But what would happen in a few years when Harry himself was born? Hadn’t Hermione said one should never ever meet oneself when time travelling? Would it change whatever was between Harry and Sirius now and whatever could be?

It most likely depended on whether or not he would tell anyone who he really was. If he didn’t, there would be no reason for them to change anything concerning baby Harry (Ugh. Not something he wanted to think anytime soon again, ‘baby Harry’). Not even the name. Only, one already knew. Remus. The moment James and Lily named their son, he would know. And even if he didn’t make
the connection, which was woefully unrealistic, would Harry still want to keep his identity a secret for the rest of his life?

He sighed dejectedly.

All these thoughts assumed he would be staying in the past. And that wasn’t even preposterous since he had no way of going back where he belonged. Belonging… Thinking about it this way he had never felt like he belonged back in his original time. He had always been… different and not in the good way. They had needed him and maybe still did, or would, whatever. But beyond his purpose of defeating some demented maniac? Harry thought about it, thought about everything that waited for him in his time. There was nothing there that he hadn’t here, too. Yes, there were Ron and Hermione and the rest of the DA. But they hadn’t been there for him when he really needed them; they hadn’t even contacted him once when he had been falling apart this last summer. Not that Harry felt like he deserved them after his stunt in the Department of Mysteries, he was far from over his self-loathing. But still, they were supposed to be his friends.

For a moment Harry tried to empathise with his supposed friends. How had Ron felt after their ordeal in the Ministry? He had been injured rather badly, those brains sure as hell weren’t something one could forget easily. How was Hermione faring after being hit with that curse? All of them had faced the terror of near death experiences, they had fought at his side, were there because of him, because they trusted him. And in the end everything had been for naught – or rather, it had made everything even worse. Worse, huh. Harry snorted at his own choice of words. ‘Worse’ couldn’t even hope to encompass the horrific dark abyss that was left where his life had been. He was being dramatic, but honestly… the reality back there had been impossible for him to live in. He had felt himself fading away, slowly withering away beneath the pain after Sirius’ death. He was quite sure he would have been the easiest target ever had he met a Dementor back then. There had simply been nothing left that he could have summoned for a Patronus. Even now Harry was hard pressed to find anything remotely happy that would do the job.

Well, actually… If he thought about staying here, staying with the Marauders, his parents… Sirius… there was a distinct warmth in his chest, something he hadn’t felt in so long he barely was able to recognise it. Belonging. He felt like he was wanted here, like he belonged here. Was it alright to say yes? To give in? Was it alright to allow himself to be happy for once? Was it alright to let them save themselves and just stay here?

No.

Harry knew he couldn’t do this. Even if they hated him after the Ministry incident, even if the whole Wizarding World thought him a lunatic, an attention whore or simply a disappointment… he would never be able to just ignore their need for help. There were too many lives depending on this decision for him to just say whatever and stay here. But then again… what if he took care of the threat of He-Who-Has-No-Nose while here and then just… stayed?

But would Sirius still want this, him, if he knew?

Chapter End Notes

(*) The part about the Grim was mostly copied from the Harry Potter wikia because I was lazy like that.

So now I feel like sleeping for a week, but this just needed to be written. The
conversation was originally intended to be part of the last chapter, but then I couldn’t stand you waiting so long and... anyway, here it is and now I siriusly need some sleep.
In which Remus eyes some birds

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A mate. That was… just… He was going to have a panic attack.

Sirius Black having a mate. Someone supposed to be one’s partner for life. Yeah right, as if he were the type for that kind of commitment. But then again, it was Hadrian, the boy that had fascinated him ever since he had first met him. And hadn’t he thought about how he wanted to make him his? Only, Sirius never thought about something so very binding. Accepting a mate was the ultimate commitment. There would never again be another for after accepting the bond their magic would refuse anyone else. Or at least that was what Sirius knew about that mate stuff. Or wait were those special bonds?

Looking over at the very person that was occupying his thoughts, Sirius thought back on what he had noticed that day they had dragged Hadrian through the tunnel beneath the Whomping Willow. Even then the scent the boy was emitting had touched something inside Sirius that he couldn’t quite place, but it had started thoughts about mates. Even then. Only it had been more of the amused kind of thoughts, nothing serious. Nothing he would ever honestly consider. Come on, he wasn’t even 17 yet! He was so not looking for a life commitment.

They were sitting through the theory part of DADA and Hadrian was once again showing off. Or, well, if you could call giving your professor better solutions for the problem at hand than what the textbook taught ‘showing off’. Sirius was actually looking forward to the practical part of the class, mainly because it would mean Hadrian would have to act out the theory again. He liked watching Hadrian. Though, after yesterday’s Transfiguration class and the boy’s hesitation to use his magic… and then there was the memory of the last DADA class they had had together. That time, before the whole inheritance mess, Hadrian had over-exerted himself, nearly collapsed and then they had fought. It wasn’t something Sirius liked to think about.

A little breeze from one of the open windows brought just a hint of the boy’s scent over. It was possible that he wouldn’t even have a choice in the matter. As far as he knew Magic herself made decisions like that, she decided who would be a good companion for another. She decided who would complete another. Sirius would need to read up on everything known about mates and then of course the theory about magical Animagi that Rem had mentioned. It wasn’t like Sirius wasn’t interested. Hell, he was positively intrigued with Hadrian. And he wouldn’t even think about going against Magic herself - ‘Never fear your own magic’ and all that. But still. A mate. It was a terrifying thought that he was meant for this one person and no one else. Terrifying and reassuring. Just like Hadrian himself.

He had been waiting. Oh, he had been forced to wait for so long. But finally there he was and yes, now every last doubt there might still have been was laid to rest at the sight and feel of the boy. The energy, the sheer power around him was wonderfully promising. Though, he still was unsure about the actual creature. Maybe a Fae? The boy certainly exhibited the typical slight stature and delicate features, though that didn’t seem to add up with his colouring. Maybe he was one of those rare ones of the water elementals? He had read somewhere that sometimes they occurred to be black haired, but only in really rare cases. That would be great, because even if those looks were frowned upon in the Fae society, they sure were sought after with the wizards. The rarer the better.
Anyway, there was only one way to find out for sure.

Remus thought his friend was taking the news astonishingly well. He hadn’t even denied anything and as far as he knew, Sirius had not jumped the next bird around just to prove to himself he still could do that, mate or no.

Speaking of birds, the next full moon would make him seek out the company of one himself. It was an occurrence that had started developing every since he was fourteen – he would feel drawn to girls around the full moon. Most likely something to do with the moon’s influence on his wolf’s hormones and if that didn’t make him want to blush… He had made the experience that it helped when he already had spent some time with one specific girl in the weeks prior, so she wouldn’t feel overwhelmed with his suddenly increasing attention on the last days before his transformation. It also prevented him from chasing just about every skirt around on those days. But Remus wasn’t the kind to jump from one bird to the next, at least not if he was conscious of his actions, and he hadn’t found one so far that he would like to have around longer than three months tops. It didn’t feel right to date a girl just so his wolf would have someone to pounce on, anyway. So Remus tended to deny himself that particular pleasure. This month though, he felt like it would perhaps be helpful for his transformation if he gave in to his hormones beforehand. Just this once. And that had so nothing to do with the fact that Mary Abbott, the Ravenclaw prefect, had developed some more beautiful curves to her already curvy figure.

Little did Remus know, though, that Sirius already had one major freak out about the whole mate matter. Right after their conversation Sirius hadn’t felt up to go back to Hadrian. The revelation was still too fresh though it didn’t stop him from tasking Rem again with bambi-sitting. They still hadn’t exactly talked about the ‘little’ jealousy problem between them, but the fact that Rem made him realise the mate issue spoke volumes in his favour. Still, there definitely needed to be some sorting out intentions.

Instead of going back to the library, Sirius had ignored his slightly guilty conscience and went straight for his best mate. He needed someone who knew him well enough not to judge everything that would spill from his cake trap right now, someone who could endure his rant. And rant he did. When he finally stopped to just breathe, James was still sitting there and looking at him. Then, after some moments of complete silence he said:

“At least your Animagus isn’t a unicorn, mate.” And that was that. Afterwards they fell into easy discussions about their planned pranks for one Bartemius Crouch.

His eyes following the creature, he tried to catch a glimpse, a hint, anything that would reveal its true nature…

A mate. Sirius’ mate. The thought and everything it entailed was rather mind boggling. Still… Harry couldn’t shake the little glowing ball of hope curling in his chest. He didn’t know much about the concept of ‘mates’ in the magical way. He remembered reading in one of his defence books about creature mates, though he didn’t quite think this was the kind of connection Remus had meant. He may be a creature, but Remus had talked about Sirius’ mate, or rather his Animagus’ mate. Well, the thought was a bit confusing and he resolved not to think about it too closely right now.

Anyway, even if it didn’t mean the romantic kind of bond that his muggle raised mind dredged up at
the thought of being someone’s mate (though to be fair, his very first thought was that of ‘friendship’), even if it was just meant to be a companion kind of connection… Harry would gladly take it. It was Sirius after all and it would give him a place, a person to belong to. That is, if he stayed in this time.

The practical part of Defence Against the Dark Arts was upon them. Hadrian was dutifully showing those who needed help how to move best through the newest defence combo. Though, up until now he had only helped with the physical part, carefully avoiding body contact and definitely not using his magic. But it was only a matter of time until there would be no more avoiding the inevitable. And even if he managed today, they would be moving on to spell chains soon.

The sunglasses were curious. A Fae wouldn’t have need of them, their eyes could easily be concealed with a Glamour as could any other creaturesque looking eyes, though it would be draining. So, if it wasn’t to hide something, it most likely was to help with a creature induced issue to the boy’s sight. The official statement that forced every professor to allow the boy to wear the glasses was migraine: An especially light sensitive migraine that couldn’t be healed with magical means, something about a family inherent sensitivity that started to occur around the time of magical maturity. How very convenient. Too convenient to be anything near true.

Yes, the issues with his eyes would be what would reveal the boy’s creature. Now Lucian Bole only needed to get his spy into actually spying for him.

Professor Bole was watching Hadrian. To be fair, most occupants of the classroom were watching Hadrian, but Sirius didn’t like the look in those pale eyes. There were other looks he didn’t like, too, but the professor was looking at the boy in a way that resembled Crouch – it was the same hungry look only less sexual. He couldn’t quite place it, but it definitely sent shivers down his spine. And no, he wasn’t talking about the pleasant kind of shivers.

Sirius watched the professor approach Hadrian and quite sternly ordering him to act out the theory. There was something that hadn’t been there before, Sirius thought. The way he was talking to Hadrian as if he were talking to… a servant? Or even a lesser being? Whatever it was, it rankled with Sirius and from the looks it also ruffled Prongs’ and Rem’s feathers. Wormy, though, was an odd sight, staring at the scene somewhat greedily, but maybe he was just nervous about the proceedings. But what honestly dumbfounded Sirius was the fact that Hadrian didn’t even twitch at the condescending treatment. He acted as if he didn’t even notice or as if he was used to it. It abruptly brought back the thoughts about the boy’s home situation and if the Marauders hadn’t been at the other end of the large room, they definitely would have intervened.

As it was, though, Hadrian just nodded, squared his shoulders, and proceeded to cast a barrage of defensive spells to perfection. He looked faintly surprised and Sirius was again caught in the ease and fluidity with which the boy moved through the stances. It was a beautiful sight. Hadrian’s inky black hair whipped around him with his movements and he could see the occasional flash of those green, green eyes behind the shades. There was no sign of the tiredness that had weighed him down before his inheritance had hit. Sirius wanted to stare and then he wanted to touch, but before any of those urges could manage to overwhelm his meticulously crafted image of cool aloofness, the lesson ended and they were dismissed.

“Mr. Pettigrew,” the Defence teacher said seemingly distracted, “A word, please? Your last essay…
well.”

Chapter End Notes

I want some Sirius/Harry moments in the next chapter. I dare the charas to contradict me!
Okay, so the characters won the dare. No direct Harry/Sirius in here, but ending on a dramatic note that leads to one-on-one time. As I'm already writing the next chapter, I know that for sure. Nevertheless, I'm kinda sorry to make you wait again.

Hadrian vanished after dinner and he had already been asleep when the Marauders came back to their dorm. Or at least they assumed he was as the curtains to his bed had been closed and the room was silent. During the rest of the evening Sirius had found his gaze wandering ever so often to Hadrian’s bed, but he reined the urge to check on the boy in determinedly. He was not Hadrian’s babysitter. He wasn’t even his boyfriend… yet.

But lately Hadrian had been curiously quiet at night – to be exact ever since he had moved back into the dorm from the hospital wing. Sirius knew that the boy most likely was embarrassed about his nightmares and was therefore suspicious. They could pretend as much as they wanted, but they all knew he and Rem had woken Hadrian up the last time he had had a nightmare in their presence. There was no more hiding it yet he was pretty sure that was exactly what Hadrian was doing. They were wizards after all.

So Sirius was suspicious, but he had not the slightest what to do about it. Not that he would ever hesitate to check up on a friend of his in this kind of situation and he definitely wouldn’t stop himself from doing so with anyone else who caught his attention. It wasn’t like him to ignore something he wanted to know. And having an impeccable invisibility cloak at your beck and call sure was helpful. But with the whole idea of being mates – and he had to remind himself that it was only an idea without proof so far – every action seemed so much more important. Every glance, every word, every damn touch… it was maddening how Sirius suddenly found himself second guessing.

He had needed some time to himself. He needed to think. Harry was well aware of his own rather simple acceptance of the whole prospect of having a mate. Or being someone’s mate. It didn’t disturb him as much as he would have thought it should and that kind of scared him. Yes, he was scared that he wasn’t disturbed. What was wrong with him? Where was his sense of responsibility? Shouldn’t he question himself more? Shouldn’t he concentrate on planning a way home? Only that there was no home, not anywhere nor any… when.

“Mr. Moore!” Snapping out of his thoughts, Harry smiled sheepishly at Madam Pomfrey.

“Sorry, Ma’am,” he said. “Still tired.”

She only huffed, but Harry knew her well enough to notice the hidden worry in her eyes. Not that she knew that, to her he was just that poor new student that popped out of nothing one day, injured and magically depleted.

“Now, sit down a moment, please, dear.”

He sat and watched her perform another of those endless diagnostic spells he had endured the last
week or so. It was Wednesday early morning, exactly three days since his release from the hospital wing. He had told no one about this appointment and had sneaked out of the dorm at the crack of dawn. He had gotten slightly distracted on his way down to the infirmary though – he blamed his new eyesight, there was no way he would have gotten this easily distracted before. Honestly, he had felt like some single-minded kitten with a woollen ball when he caught himself tracing the patterns of lights on the castle walls. But the sight was just so amazing! Light was like a rainbow, swirling colours, shades he hadn’t known existed before and Harry couldn’t help but watch them entranced. But he was getting off track again.

“These are better than I expected,” Madam Pomfrey said, sounding surprised. “These readings indicate that using your magic again after that long intermission has helped your body recover much faster than it normally would.” She looked him over once more, carefully comparing notes of earlier readings. “In fact, you are now at a stage I would actually allow you to leave my domain and go about your normal every day life again.” She gave him a small reprimanding frown that he skilfully ignored. “Yes, dear, I dare say, you are completely healed again.” She nodded at Harry and gave him a motherly smile. He was just about to cheer, when she added: “Though, you still lack weight, even if it’s not as unhealthy any more. You won’t have need of nutrient potions any longer, but don’t you dare to skip any meals.”

The stern glare she fixed him with was met with a bright and absolutely insincere smile. There was no way Harry would promise to never skip a meal, it was hard enough to keep up the pretence of eating enough as it was. He was well aware how unhealthy his eating habits were, but he couldn’t change it and part of him didn’t even want to. Yes, originally the low intake of sustenance was due to the conditioning of the Dursleys, but over the summer Harry had found himself unable to eat more often than not even if food was available. The guilt over the Ministry incident was gnawing at his insides and made it sometimes impossible to stomach anything at all. It had gotten better after Remus had rescued him from Privet Drive and it had improved again when he came here and was able to spend time with a Sirius that was quite obviously alive. But it still wasn’t anywhere near what was considered normal and Harry wondered if it ever would be.

Alright, so he had been suspicious, but waking up early only to notice that Hadrian had been gone for a while already was making him downright anxious. Not that he would ever admit that, but it grated on his protective instincts not to know where they boy he fancied, his maybe future mate, was. He would have checked the map, but couldn’t find it which normally meant Rem had stashed it away somewhere to improve the charms on it. It was still a running project after all.

That was how Sirius found himself in the Great Hall early, waiting for Hadrian to show up. They would only be having Charms together today and he was damned if he- Sirius snapped to attention as he overheard someone talking about his target. Okay, so maybe he was a bit too fixed on…

“…that new bloke, Moo-something?”

“With Snape?”

The by-passing Hufflepuffs sounded horrified at the prospect and Sirius could only agree. Standing swiftly, he intercepted the two girls on their way to their house table and granted them his trademark half-smirk-half-smile that never failed to make the birds swoon. These two were no exception, but then again, Hufflepuffs may be easily thrown off-balance, but they were not prone to fall for false niceties. They would see right through
his façade if he tried to charm them too much. “Hadrian Moore?” He asked with an only half-deliberate hopeful edge.

It would be a mostly peaceful day, Charms and Herbology both shared with Hufflepuff. Those classes didn’t give him a headache as Professor Flitwick’s teaching always ended in happy chaos with everyone doing their own thing and talking between each other, and Herbology was rather relaxing as well. The sixth year Gryffindors shared the greenhouses with Hufflepuff as well and (even if this point was new on his ‘need to be for a remotely calm mind’ list) Sirius wasn’t taking that class. He and James would be at Alchemy and Harry couldn’t help but be relieved about that.

He was unsure how to act around Sirius right now. It was strange. He knew that Sirius most likely didn’t know that Harry knew about the mate stuff. Confusing thought. Anyway, that didn’t stop Harry from analysing every move his friend made and finding himself over-interpreting every word uttered his way by Sirius. Harry stopped mid-stride and groaned. He sounded like Hermione on one of those scary occasions that she would drop the annoyed act and show her insecurity about Ron and what he probably thought about her and what thought Harry was Ron thinking about her? She would ramble on, driving herself into a panicked frenzy and constantly asking Harry for is opinion only to dismiss it the moment he had found something remotely acceptable to say. Horrified with himself and ignoring the twinge in his chest at the thought of his friends, Harry deliberately looked around, surveying his surroundings, desperate to distract himself from the girly thoughts in his head. He was not going to think about Sirius right now or about how Sirius was looking at him or how that made him feel… no, Harry would so not think about that right now. Or ever.

He was in the Clock Tower Courtyard again. Somehow his feet had manoeuvred him here without conscious input from Harry himself. Looking around, his eyes were drawn to the Wooden Bridge at the end of the courtyard right at the base of the Clock Tower. Somehow he suddenly wanted to walk over that bridge as if something were calling him to do so. Suspicious and maybe a little paranoid Harry looked around again, but couldn’t see a source for his sudden urge or anyone about actually. It was still early, the sun still pale and not yet fully risen and so Harry decided to enjoy the few minutes he would be able to stand the light without his sunglasses.

Okay, so the squealing wasn’t expected. But now that he had left that unpleasant encounter behind, Sirius realised, that it wasn’t completely unfounded. Apparently he had been more than obvious in his pursuit of a certain boy and as was the nature of the dark and creepy minds of teenage girls it had become a kind of… hobby to watch the proceedings.

His honourable pursuit of Hadrian Moore had been reduced to a school wide soap opera and everyone was participating.

As far as Sirius had been able to gather in between the squeals and the gushing, there were two groups among their audience: The Fluffs (what to Sirius sounded suspiciously like Puffs and most likely related to the fact that 80% of that group were Hufflepuffs) and the Tragics. He didn’t quite get the actual difference between those two groups as he was busy escaping the apparent fangirls, but he thought the gist was that group one wanted a happy ending for him and Hadrian while group two wanted drama and tragical happenings. Sirius shuddered again. As much as he could admire their looks, sometimes girls were just scary.

Wandering over the slightly derelict appearing bridge, Harry let his hand slide along the wood while watching the sunrays slowly move over the scenery beneath. He couldn’t remember if he had ever taken the time to just look at the landscape or the wooden beams that extended down to the ravine the bridge was constructed above. He liked it out here, it was peaceful, but he couldn’t bring himself
to stop and enjoy the surroundings as there was still this strange silent call that came from the other side of the bridge. He couldn’t quite recall what lay there… sure, some grouped trees and a bit further away the forest. But… there was something else, wasn’t there?

“Weren’t you wearing glasses last time my eyes were assaulted with your appearance?”

Harry whirled around at the sudden sound. He had been so immersed in that ‘call’ from behind the trees that he hadn’t noticed someone following him. He came face to face with who he identified as Rabastan Lestrange.

“Yes,” a silky voice that Harry would recognise everywhere sounded from behind him. “He was sporting the most horrendous spectacles I’ve ever had the misfortune of seeing.”

Harry glanced at Snape wondering how he had gotten behind him, but he didn’t turn around. There was no way he was leaving Lestrange out of his sight, he still remembered that cutting hex aimed at him. Maybe it was dumb though to leave Snape unsupervised at his back. Harry wasn’t sure, maybe it was the knowledge that this bloke would some day become his teacher that made him give Snape the benefit of a doubt whereas the only thing he knew about Lestrange was the fact that he would become a murderer.

“What do you want?” He tried to sound as polite as the chosen words would allow. No need to antagonise the already hostile Slytherins, but his hand still strayed to where his wand was tucked away in his sleeve.

“Oh I don’t know, what do we want?” Lestrange adopted a mockingly conversational tone of voice. “Maybe we just want to get to know the new student? Yes, that sounds like something we could want.” He nodded to himself and smiled creepily at Harry.

Snape behind him was curiously quiet, but Harry didn’t dare to turn around. It was just like the snarky future Potions master to unsettle him just by his presence. No, Lestrange was the more direct danger here, but that didn’t mean he could just ignore Snape.

“Alright, hi then. The name’s Hadrian Moore,” Harry said, inwardly congratulating himself on sounding just that tiny bit like his father. “Nice to meet you,” he added and for a second there he was tempted to imitate one of Sirius’ more condescending smirks. Not that Harry thought he would be able to pull it off, but really now, couldn’t they just cut to the point?

“See and that right there makes me wonder,” Lestrange drawled, suddenly wand in hand and lazily letting it roll around his fingers. “Where are you from, Moore?”

He was still speaking in this false politely interested tone of voice, but Harry had a feeling it wouldn’t stay that way much longer. It was a bit strange, Harry realised, that no one had asked him that before. Unfortunately that also meant he had no answer and with his limited knowledge of literally anything it would be way too easy to look through any lie he might construct.

“What’s it to you?” He swore he heard Snape snort slightly behind him at his words.

“Typically Gryffindor,” the silky voice added for good measure and Harry rolled his eyes. Good to know that some things never changed. There was a low intake of breath and then Snape spoke again, sounding bored. “His back-up is on the way.”

Harry turned his head just enough to be able to see where Snape was looking and that was a mistake. The second he needed to follow the Slytherin’s gaze was enough for Lestrange to attack. Dumb, so dumb. Harry saw the bright purple light heading towards him from the corner of his eye and
attempted to dodge, but found a cool hand pushing him from behind right into the hex’s course.

An uncomfortable burning sensation engulfed him. Harry heard an enraged shout from somewhere, but could no longer see his surroundings as smoke billowed around, drowning out sight and noise equally.

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't resist the fangirling. Honestly, Hogwarts is made for this. :D
Sirius found himself minutely distracted by the pure flashiness of the jinx (or hex, if you asked him). The purple light heading towards its target, developing into similarly coloured flames engulfing the slender form of Hadrian. A lot of smoke billowing around the bridge, the two Slytherins attempting to use it to their advantage. They were both not to be underestimated, Lestrange as the heir to a darker than dark family and Snape being much more intelligent and cunning than Sirius would ever admit out loud. Though, it was rather curious that Snape would participate in something like this… A streak of light heading his way had him dodging to the side, bracing against the railings. He squinted into the smoke, silently sending out his own hex and changing position the next second. Just in time too, as a blast of some kind hit the spot he had just been standing. Sirius made a hairbreadth escape, rolling back into a stand and thanking the exercise that came with having an Animagus form that loved running.

“Cousin,” the drawling voice of Lestrange wavered through the finally clearing smoke, “I’d stop if I were you,” he said, though Sirius would have stopped in his tracks anyway at what he saw. “Of course I would never find myself in such a pathetic situation. One would think you as a Black would know what hindrance personal attachments are.”

Hadrian was suspended in a large purple coloured bubble, looking slightly dazed but seemingly unharmed. But it was the fact that Lestrange had his wand trained at said bubble that made Sirius stop and glare. Trapped in the bubble, Hadrian wouldn’t be able to dodge anything and considering it was Lestrange who had him at wand point the situation was dangerous. One might think the Slytherin wouldn’t cast anything lethal on school grounds and under normal circumstances that would most likely be true. But with Hadrian’s allure in the mix, Sirius wasn’t too sure anymore.

“So what, Cousin?” Sirius slipped back behind a perfectly crafted sneer, hiding his rising anxiousness that came with seeing Hadrian like this. “You gonna get yourself expelled?”

Harry felt slightly dizzy, confused. The world seemed to be at a strange angle, somewhat tilting… Blinking back into complete awareness, he realised he was half sitting, half lying in something like… a bubble? Harry had never before seen anything like it, not that that really meant much, he thought sarcastically.

Muffled voices made him look around. Through the bubble the world outside appeared distorted, the sight reminding him of his short-sighted eyes before the inheritance. Everything was blurry and somewhat smudged. Squinting around he tried to figure out what was going on, trying to get to his feet at the same time. Giving an undignified squeak, Harry tumbled back down, sliding around the cursed bubble, unable to get into any kind of useful position. The surface around him wasn’t squishy like a soap bubble but unyielding. That didn’t stop it from being bloody slippery though.

Someone was right beside his bubble. Lestrange, he thought. Harry wasn’t able to identify many details, but the position indicated a wand pointed at him. The figure slightly to the side probably was Snape and Harry frowned. It was curious. Why would Snape participate in something like this? Sure, he hated his father’s guts, but he had no idea about their relation right now. He couldn’t. Right?
The voices suddenly became louder, overlapping. There was someone there that hadn’t been at the bridge before. Ah. That would be his ‘back-up’. Ugh. Why was he always ending in this kind of situation ever since he came here? He wasn’t some bloody damsel in distress! He couldn’t figure out the conversation, but it looked like his back-up was in the defensive now. Harry wouldn’t stand for it. No one should be at any disadvantage because of him. He was so not in need of rescuing, damn it! 

Hitting at the bubble, he hissed when all that got him was smarting palms. The surface wasn’t giving an inch and his hand just slipped on impact. Harry tried hitting it with a well placed kick, only to dislodge his already unpleasant position and slipping nearly upside down. He was fucked. Looking at Lestrange still training his wand at him, gave Harry an idea. Maybe he should try a cutting hex? But then again, this was a magical bubble. What if it reflected anything cast at it? But then there would be no danger in Lestrange having him at wand point and from the looks of it that was exactly what was causing his back-up problems. Huh. Maybe he really should try…

Wait. A bubble. Containing. Like McGonagall had done to him that day with the potions accident. That had felt different, but it had acted similarly and had contained a whole lot of accidental magic. That then had turned against him. Okay, alright, maybe not using a cutting hex to open up his bubble prison.

His back-up – was that Sirius? – suddenly drew his attention. The conversation seemed to have reached some understanding. No, stop. His back-up, Sirius, was raising his hands in the universal gesture of surrender. No!

“Sirius!” Harry slammed his hands against the purple bubble.

Seeing Sirius seemingly giving up, giving in to whatever the Slytherins wanted because of him… no, that couldn’t be happening. He couldn’t let them get at him. Harry felt a spike deep within him that surged to the surface, prickling along his skin and rapidly developing into a long familiar current only it was much, much more powerful. With a gasp he realised his magic was readying itself to lash out and there was no way Harry would be able to stop it now.

He didn’t want to. No matter if it would turn against him, he would not just sit here and wait to be rescued.

Sirius felt it the second Hadrian’s magic started to stir. He was so in tune with it by now, more so than he himself had realised, that he instinctively knew what was about to happen. His hands were still raised in a peaceful gesture, so not surrender if you asked him, and the soft flicker of Hadrian’s magic helped to clear his mind. He had danced dangerously close along the edge of losing his mind to the rage inside. His instincts were urging him to rip apart these snakes, making it hard to make considerate decisions, but at least he had stopped himself from doing anything too stupid. A moment later and maybe…

Lestrange had his wand still trained at the bubble that held Hadrian, a cruel grin smeared across his face. He knew he had Sirius right where he wanted him. With Hadrian at his mercy, Sirius would agree to quite a lot. Though Lestrange had no idea how far Sirius would actually go and the realisation that there were very little limits to that had hit Sirius like a bludger to the face. There really wasn’t much he would not do for this boy.

“Well, Cousin, what do you say?”

Ignoring Lestrange, Sirius’ eyes wandered over to Snape in confusion. Of course he had known about Snape’s contempt for him, it was justified after all, but that it reached this far? Lestrange had
made his demands absolutely clear, but Snape had not said a word the whole time. The burning hatred that met him when he looked into those smouldering black eyes though made any words unnecessary. Snape hated him and he was not above using Hadrian to get what he wanted, whatever that might be. Sirius was just glad he wouldn’t have to answer anymore.

Suddenly Hadrian’s bubble prison started to glow an eerily purple colour… or maybe Hadrian’s magic was just illuminating the Ebublio Jinx from the inside out. Whatever it was, the feeling was unmistakable and Sirius found himself smirking even as he discreetly reached for the railings to secure himself. Lestrange and Snape stared shocked at the bubble, attention riveted on the strange sight that should be impossible.

“Shit! What’s he doing?! Doesn’t he realise Ebublio is constructed to keep everything inside?” Lestrange actually sounded worried though more likely about the consequences to him than for Hadrian’s health.

Sirius just stared at him coldly.

The blast was surprisingly silent.

Hadrian’s magic filled the bubble and just… busted it with its sheer power. A wave of that colourful magic that just felt so wonderfully natural rocked the bridge, shoving everyone back and making the wood creak ominously beneath their feet. Sirius swore he felt the bridge sway slightly. Squinting against the receding light, he kept standing, holding on to the railings tightly. The other two though weren’t all that lucky and Sirius fervently wished for a second he had had a camera set up to catch the look of ‘scared shitless piss-panic’ on Snape’s face as he rolled across the planks in a heap of dark robes.

The next second everything seemed to slow down as Sirius caught sight of Hadrian in midst the bright light. He seemed to float for that minimal amount of time, glowing from the inside out, before the wave of magic started receding in a powerful roll right back towards Hadrian. Watching in horror as the backlash tipped the boy off balance and over the edge of the bridge, Sirius shouted nothing coherent. Hadrian was tumbling downwards, towards the ravine and out of sight. Throwing himself forward, landing on his stomach, and thrusting his arm through the bars of the railings, Sirius had no idea how he had made it from the moment he realised what was happening to the here and now. Accidental magic most likely.

But the feeling of Hadrian’s hand in his as the boy grabbed onto it brought him back to himself. Looking down, he caught sight of Hadrian holding onto his hand and one of the bridge’s bars. Thank Magic, was all Sirius could think.

It was too early for many students to be about and they seldom came out here anyway, but that magical backlash was bound to attract them – and any professor around – soon enough. Not that Sirius cared. For all he cared they could all fuck themselves as long as he got Hadrian safely back on the bridge. With that thought he determinedly shifted and brought himself in a better position to lever the boy up, his shoulder screaming at him with the weight hanging on his arm. Looking down, Hadrian’s too pale face looked back up at him, wide eyes bright. He looked drained. No wonder, that was a hell of a lot magic he just used and now hanging from the damned bridge wasn’t helping matters.

“Gryffindors,” drawled a silky voice from above them. “Honestly, it always astounds me how you manage anything at all.” The sneer obvious in his voice, Snape stood above them, wand raised. Sirius stiffened. He had no way of defending them in this position, his hands and all his strength
occupied with keeping them from falling to the rocky underground. “Do not sully yourself any more, Black,” Snape sneered.

The feather light charm hit Hadrian and the sudden shift in weight toppled Sirius back, pulling Hadrian with him. With a muffled *ooumph* Sirius was rather painfully informed that Snape had returned Hadrian’s actual weight the second he was out of danger, making him land full force on Sirius’ stomach. Breathless, he could feel the tremors running down his frame.

“You okay?” He asked hoarsely and wrapped his arms around the boy lying on his chest. The ache in his shoulder was drowned out by a wave of something so, so warm... He was just so damned relieved Hadrian was safe again, nothing else fully registering beyond the feeling of this slender body in his arms. He would not let go again.

“I…” He could feel Hadrian shivering, muscles cramping every now and then. He wasn’t protesting in the least about the position they were in. Maybe he hadn’t really noticed yet. Whatever. “I’m not purple now, right?”

Hadrian’s voice sounded a little higher than normal and Sirius choked a breathless laugh.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, they are lying on the bridge. And I'm not about to let them get up any time soon.

(*)**Ebublio Jinx** entraps the target in a very large bubble that cannot be popped by physical force

BTW the difference between jinxes and hexes lies as far as I know in the relation to Dark Magic. Jinxes are considered minor dark magic whose effects are irritating but amusing. Hexes on the other hand affect an object or person in a clearly negative manner, they create a major inconvenience to the target. Which would be why Sirius thinks of Ebublio as a hex and not a jinx, but then again it’s important to know that jinxes can only be maintained as long as the caster keeps eye contact... me stops rambling now.
Severus watched his fellow Slytherin pick himself up, looking slightly dazed, before he hightailed it without a thought for Severus himself. Not that he was surprised or even cared or Merlin forbid hurt. Severus snorted disgusted. Straightening out his robes, he looked around and caught sight of the dunderheads of Gryffindors. Or more like, he caught sight of the backside of Black, a view he would have preferred never to be privy to. Silently moving over and taking note of the discarded wand on the ground next to the idiot, Severus looked on for a moment before he sighed annoyed. Salazar, what was it with the idiocy of Gryffindors?

“Gryffindors,” he made his thoughts known. “Honestly, it always astounds me how you manage anything at all.”

He might have gone along with Lestrange’s plan and would most likely follow through with it in the future, but there would be no use in Black dying off right now. And Severus definitely would not let the suspicious new Gryffindork fall to his death before he had unveiled all of the misconceptions there surely were to be found about him. Watching Black stiffen at being caught in such a pathetic situation, Severus sighed again with undisguised contempt.

“Do not sully yourself any more, Black,” he sneered, fighting the urge to pinch the bridge of his nose.

Then of course there was the strange behaviour that had slowly managed to infiltrate Slytherin ranks ever since the so called Hadrian Moore had appeared at the school. It was subtle in most cases and shockingly obvious in others. Severus had yet to find out how the little cretin was doing it, but there was no doubt he was responsible for the changes occurring. First, Severus had thought it was a kind of compulsion and had sneered at the weak willed students all around him. Falling victim to something that despically obvious was just another proof of the superiority of Slytherin in comparison to the other houses. But then he had noticed the changes in his fellow house mates, foremost Lestrange who Severus until now had honestly thought of as an intelligent being with quite the strategically inclined mind. But the outright attacks Lestrange had started to instigate first against their traditional enemy and then specifically against the new student… It was more than a bit out of character for the heir to the Lestrange line and this newest stunt with its crude tactic nearly screamed ‘outward influence’ in Severus’ opinion.

After all, this whole farce had been part of Severus’ own plan to prove his theory of an unknown influence. The way Lestrange had readily jumped into action when Severus uttered the slightest suspicion about Moore was more than enough proof. The embarrassingly sloppy way of carrying out the ‘trap’ went even more to show. There was something going on and it all came down to the new student. He was doing something to them and Severus would find out what and with what kind of ulterior motive the Gryffindor worked. Though, he had to admit, it seemed a much too elaborate machination for an idiot of a Gryffindor to instigate.

Helping the dunderheads, Severus stayed long enough to smirk ever so slightly at the gratifying sound of breath getting knocked from Black’s lungs before he too left the scene. He had some suspicions to research.
His muscles hurt. His body shivering ever so slightly. His breath slowly coming back to him as the adrenaline receded. He could still feel his magic churning inside. In spite of all that Harry felt ridiculously warm and safe... and that was when reality finally caught up with him. It barrelled into him abruptly and left him reeling and suddenly acutely aware of every puff of breath that left him still too fast to be normal. Near death experiences could do that.

His cheek rested on the soft fabric of Sirius’ shirt and he tried to calm his breathing down the rest of the way. The scent invading his mind was smoky, the hint of grass lesser than the last time he had been this close. But the gunpowder seemed more pronounced... Maybe it was just that Harry had his head tucked so close to Sirius’ neck? Concentrating on the different aspects of the scent helped Harry calming down and clearing his mind from the shock and adrenaline of nearly falling to his death. Sighing, he finally blinked and felt a lot more in control. That was when he really registered the position they were in, him lying on Sirius’ chest, held close, Sirius’ heartbeat beneath his ear. Harry flushed.

“Um...” He made to sit up, but the arms around him tightened. “Sirius?”

Awkwardly lifting his head, Harry caught a glimpse of the pale skin of Sirius’ neck and jaw and felt a sudden urge to get even closer to... to do what? Harry frowned. That was certainly nothing he had ever felt around his godfather. But then again, he had had never much time around Sirius or was free to actually think about something not related to the brewing war.

“Just stay a moment longer like this,” Sirius said lowly, his voice rumbling in the chest beneath Harry, “Please?”

He blinked. Sirius wanted him to stay like this? He wanted Harry in his arms enough to actually plead with him? Blushing, Harry nodded and tucked his head back down. He breathed in deeply, trying to ignore the fluttering in his stomach. This was Sirius.

“Okay.” This felt right.

Maybe Sirius was equally shocked at what had just happened. Harry thought it was most likely a need to make sure he had really saved Harry from falling, a need to make sure everything was alright again. A niggling thought in the back of his mind tried to sneak up on him. What if it was more? What if Sirius maybe... perhaps... perchance... just a little bit enjoyed having him in his arms? Breathing the dark smoky scent in deeply, Harry decided that he didn’t mind.

Cool wind was ruffling the already tousled hair of Hadrian and making it brush up and tickle Sirius’ face. He couldn’t quite comprehend what had just happened. It was all a jumble of fast moving pictures tinged heavily with anger and fear. For a second he had believed he had lost Hadrian.

He felt a tremor run down his spine at the thought and instinctively tightened his hold on the boy. Gods, he never wanted to feel so utterly empty again. If Sirius had thought he had felt empty before – empty and devoid of a family’s love, empty without his little brother’s playful nagging, empty but longing for the cold sideways glances of a father that never seemed to approve or worse: never seemed to care either way. Even empty without the wrath of what once may have been his mother even if he didn’t remember her ever acting remotely like a sane person. If he had believed he was empty before it was nothing compared to the sudden and absolute tearing sensation in his chest, right where his heart was located, the moment he believed Hadrian lost. It was like a void of pure nothingness had ripped itself open in his chest swallowing anything that made Sirius who he was.

It was scary. No, it was downright terrifying and he never wanted to feel like that again. And it was extremely alarming. Just thinking about it made him feel nauseated and he couldn’t even say he was being his usual dramatic self, because it was just the plain truth. If this was what the mere thought of
losing Hadrian did to him, he simply knew he would not be able to survive if it actually happened. When the bloody fuck had that happened?!

A small sound from the very reason for his inner… no, he wasn’t panicking. He was not. Anyway, Hadrian made a soft sound of discomfort and Sirius realised he had been holding on to the boy rather forcefully. He was most likely half crushing him and couldn’t even find it in himself to feel embarrassed about it. Nevertheless, he loosened his hold a bit and then thought screw it and started carding his fingers through the sooty black locks and interlaced feathers. They were so soft. He loved the feeling of the raven strands running through his fingers, the feeling of the silky sleek feathers and there right at Hadrian’s scalp the touch of downy fluff. In the hospital wing Sirius had spent hours just admiring the texture of all that while Hadrian had been unconscious. But ever since the boy had woken up, Sirius hadn’t been able to do more than a short ruffle of said hair for fear of scaring him away. After all there had been no valid reason for him to touch Hadrian so intimately.

But not anymore. Not if the Slytherins were out for Hadrian’s blood in hopes of using him against Sirius. So Lestrange wanted to force him into line, into acting the upscale Pureblood he should have been with all that maybe entailed? So Snape wanted for some reason to have a part in it? Yeah, right. Not if he had any say in it.

“Hadrian,” he heard himself say to the boy still cuddled up to him on the derelict wooden bridge, “Would you like to go out with me?”

Chapter End Notes

So Sirius is his usual possessive self and Harry is like "Meh. Why not."
In which Bambi is a liar

Chapter Notes

With a nod to bakazuki26 and Koi19.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Harry abruptly sat up.

Ignoring everything else, he stared down at Sirius wide eyed. Going out? As in a date? No, that couldn’t be right, that couldn’t be what Sirius meant. Right? It couldn’t be. Or could it? He stared down at the bloke who had just for all intents and purposes saved his life and just took him in. Sirius was laying there on his back, the harsh planks of the Wooden Bridge beneath him, his dark hair splayed out haphazardly around his head. Harry absently noted that he had never seen this Sirius’ hair tangled like that. It made for a strangely alluring sight and Harry felt the blood rise to his cheeks. He was met with a cocky smirk and realised he still had to answer the question.

Hadrian’s reaction to his question wasn’t completely unexpected, yet Sirius couldn’t help but tense slightly at the following silence. He concentrated on not showing his uncertainty and dredged up all the patience he could muster. Hadrian didn’t exactly seem to be the experienced type even though Sirius had no idea how he had managed to stay so damn naïve with looks like that. The boy sat there straddling him seemingly unaware of the position he was in or the sight he made. Wide eyes and fluffy hair, tousled from wind and exertion gave him an adorable look, but the always underlying current of power and the intensity of those bright green eyes gave the whole image an edge that rubbed Sirius in an unexpectedly arousing way. Pun intended. The rising blush in Hadrian’s cheeks wasn’t helping matters and Sirius fought internally to keep the calm façade. Bugger, it should be illegal to look so debauched and at the same time innocent. It was a positively intoxicating sight.

Suddenly Sirius wasn’t sure he would be able to keep his hands to himself much longer. Having the boy straddling him like that, looking so bloody delectable… He wanted to know if Hadrian still retained the sensitivity to touch. He wanted to keep that blush and find out how far it extended, he wanted to… He remembered the reactions the slightest touches had caused during their stay in the Room of Requirement. Hadrian had shivered deliciously every time Sirius made skin to skin contact while shying away from everyone else’s touch. He couldn’t help the smug feeling at that realisation and thought he could faintly hear his inner Grim purr at that. Huh. Grims purred? Wasn’t that more like a feline thing to do?

Looking into Hadrian’s eyes, smirking at the heated skin and relishing the effect he seemed to have on the boy, Sirius unsuccessfully tried to rein his possessive feelings in. No matter what, he would have to make sure everyone knew who Hadrian belonged to and then make sure no one used that knowledge against them. Though he was giving in to these possessive feelings and thoughts, Sirius wasn’t nearly as sure of himself as he himself liked to believe. No, he thought, as he pushed any doubt at the continuing silence down, he couldn’t let himself show how very afraid he was Hadrian could actually deny him this. Because if Hadrian said no to this simple request, the boy would be in more danger than he probably already was. And that thought scared him. If Hadrian didn’t want to go out with him, didn’t want to be with him, then Sirius would have no excuse to linger in his presence as much as he could. He wouldn’t be able to protect him. Oh he wouldn’t give up just like that if he really was shot down, but wooing Hadrian would be so much easier on his protective
instincts if the boy actually wanted him.

“Um…,” Hadrian finally stammered, “That is… you…”

Sirius smirked. He would make Hadrian want him. He couldn’t let this chance at happiness pass. Not for himself and not for Hadrian. Whatever loomed in his Bambi’s past, it wouldn’t stop Sirius from working on a future with him. Hell, he really was done for.

Decision made, he wagged an inquisitive eyebrow at the still floundering Hadrian, before he raised his hands to barely touch the boy’s thighs. He thought it a brilliant thing how Hadrian suddenly looked down in realisation, eyes shooting up again to meet his own, and how the pale skin darkened to a nice strawberry colour. He could watch this for hours as long as it was him who caused this kind of reaction. Sadly it wasn’t meant to be.

“Boys!” The squeaking voice of one Filius Flitwick interrupted anything Harry might have answered. He nearly sighed in relief. “Now, this is really not the place for…” The short man took in the two students in front of him, colouring slightly across the bridge of his rather enormous nose.

Sirius craned his neck back to look up at the advancing professor, his hands still lingering on Harry’s thighs. Harry himself blushed profusely and instantly tried to get up only to realise that his muscles were still quivering. He knew he would ache in a few hours. For a second he thought Sirius would stop him from standing as he felt his hands grip onto his legs for a moment, but then Sirius sat up too fast for Harry to react and suddenly he was just so damn close. The world narrowed down to only the two of them. Sound and smell and sight… There was his racing heart, the gunpowder smell of Sirius enveloping him. They stared at each other and Harry, still sitting in his lap, once again noticed the lighter flecks in Sirius’ grey eyes. There was something shadowing those eyes as he looked into them now, something that sent shivers down his spine that had nothing to do with the tremors in his muscles. They were so close, so…

“Mr. Black,” the reprimand was evident in the exasperated professor’s voice, “I do believe you need to let go of Mr. Moore in order to get up.” Flitwick cleared his throat, clearly flustered. “Maybe Minerva is right and this school needs a program for proper conduct in public. Now, I know of your reputation, Mr. Black, but I would have never assumed you would…”

If Harry hadn’t been so flustered himself he would have snickered at the instant assumption that it was Sirius who concocted the whole situation – their current position included. It was somewhat nice not to be immediately suspected of anything ranging from attention seeking to being the next Dark Lord. Trying again to get to his feet while the professor rambled on about morals, he found himself half lifted by Sirius who helped him up and steadied him. He only let go when he had made absolutely sure Harry was standing properly on his own two feet. Harry couldn’t quite make eye contact throughout the whole procedure and tried his hardest to stop the damn blush. Really, he thought annoyed, what was the big deal all of a sudden? Oh yeah, right, Sirius wanted to go out with him. Go out. Date. With Sirius. Harry’s ears felt so hot he was sure they would be positively glowing by now.

“Beg your pardon, Professor,” Sirius smiled lazily, his hand latching onto Harry’s, “If you don’t mind, as the morally upstanding and proper students that we are, my friend and I need to go now in order to continue a conversation of a private nature.” His eyes never quite left Harry’s form as he started to drag him back towards the school.

Harry looked back once to the end of the Wooden Bridge and frowned. He couldn’t feel the strange call anymore that had led him there in the first place and he wondered if it had been part of the Slytherins’ trap. Though, it had felt so familiar… just like in Remus’ apartment…
Harry was tugged into the castle before he could think on it much more.

Remus was absently chewing on his cheese and contemplating the mystery of Hadrian Moore once again when said boy was entering the Great Hall. He watched how Sirius led them to the Gryffindor table and noticed how a slight hush fell over the students present. He could practically feel the intensity with which everyone seemed to fairly scrutinise the pair. Looking the two of them over more thoroughly, Remus noted the more than normal windswept hair and blush on Hadrian and the uncharacteristically ruffled look of Sirius. Well… considering the heated gazes those two were receiving and the way Sirius seemed unable to stop touching Hadrian, Remus was quite sure the school would be brimming with new rumours before the first lesson of the day even started.

“Say, Bambi,” James suddenly called over the table the moment the two sat down, getting more than one confused look, “What’s your second name? You’ve got one, right?”

Hadrian tensed at the rather apropos question and even seemed to forget to scowl at the nickname while Sirius’ intense gaze fixed on his face, watching for the slightest hint. Remus too looked up at that question and couldn’t quite hide his interest in the answer. He was still collecting bits and pieces of information on ‘Harry Potter’ and this right there would be an essential clue – which was probably the reason James was asking. Remus knew he wasn’t the only one still hoping to unveil the mysteries surrounding their newest friend, though he and James were most likely following different trails. He had made a promise to keep Hadrian’s real name hidden after all.

“What?” James looked over the rim of his goblet confused, his gaze wandering from one member of the Marauders to the next. “Does he have two or what?”

Remus rolled his eyes. Yes, definitely different trails.

“It’s probably something embarrassing,” Peter piped up, receiving a confused frown from Sirius and a dark look from Hadrian that made him flinch.

It was happening. Dammit, it really was happening.

And here he sat, Harry bloody Potter, or should he say Harry James Potter, unable to give an answer to the simplest question. Which made two for this morning and no, he would not think about that right now. He would not. Nope. Okay, well, blushing was probably better than paling at this moment. Blinking and sending Pettigrew a disgusted look, Harry proceeded to act on instinct as he was known to do. Or rather, he proceeded to blurt the first name out that came to mind.

“A-Aloysius,” he stammered and now he was blushing for a whole new reason. Gods, why did Lily have to insist he study that damn Transfiguration book so much? (*)

James made a surprised sound and Remus cocked his head. Harry thought they were probably near enough to the next full moon that the werewolf in Remus could smell the lie. But his gaze wandered inevitably to Sirius. Meeting those eyes again for the first time since the bridge, Harry hated the fact that he had to lie. He wanted Sirius to know the real him.

“Aloysius?” Sirius asked, giving the name a pronunciation that sounded suspiciously like ‘delicious’, smirking along the way. “That would make your initials H.A.M., right?”

Across the table, James was mouthing the name and looking about ready to burst out laughing. Remus grinned into his goblet. But it was the snarky answer Hadrian gave that finally made them lose composure.
“Well,” he drawled annoyed, “At least mine aren’t S.O.B."

Chapter End Notes

(*) **About Harry's middle name:** A Guide to Advanced Transfiguration by Aloysius Changeling, mentioned in chapter 28.

Is it “Hadrius” or “Sirian”? ;)

In which James is not an intrusive pillock

Chapter Notes

...and names are contemplated.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Orion. Sirius Orion Black, a name given to him in family tradition of naming children after star constellations. A name tying him to his father, Orion Arcturus Black, a name he tended to forget about. A name he never spoke about to others. So how had Hadrian known? How had he known the initials to his name, initials with a meaning he himself had never realised? S.O.B. – really?

But that was by far not all. From the beginning Hadrian had known little things about Hogwarts (knowledge about the castle not even the esteemed Marauders possessed), the professors and by extension the Marauders. Things he shouldn’t have known like for example the name to Sirius’ Animagus form. He hadn’t forgotten how the boy had called him Padfoot while lying half-delirious in the Shrieking Shack, though it had slipped his mind for a while with all the drama around. Had Hadrian actually realised it had been Sirius in his Animagus form?

And then the fact that Hadrian never addressed them directly by name – at least not if he was conscious enough to realise he was talking to them. But when he did address them directly it was always by first name. He had never used their last names the few times he had actually used names at all. It was a strange thing to do with people one didn’t really know. Or maybe Sirius only felt that way because he himself was so wary of using first names for people he did not explicitly trust.

For a second the memory of Hadrian having a nightmare that first night together in the dorm came to mind. He remembered him talking in his sleep and how Sirius had thought the mumbled words might be names – names that sounded suspiciously familiar. But that didn’t make any sense. Why would Hadrian talk about people in his sleep he had just met? Especially in such an emotional way. Whatever all this meant, one thing was for sure: Hadrian Moore knew much more than he let on. And another thing was just as sure: Sirius didn’t care.

Rolling his aching shoulder, he looked over at Hadrian, watching him shift in his place and generally emit a nervous aura. Right, he didn’t give a lick if Hadrian knew things he shouldn’t know, but that didn’t mean Sirius didn’t want to know how Hadrian was doing it. There were a lot of possible explanations, magic made much more possible than most people realised. And he was a Marauder, secrets were his caffeine. But this was Hadrian.

Watching Hadrian chew on his bottom lip, ignoring the spike of arousal that went through him at the sight, he decided not to act on it, even though not knowing went against his nature. He would get to know Hadrian, would earn his trust and maybe then the boy would feel safe enough to tell him. Though even if he didn’t, Sirius couldn’t really bring himself to care too much. As long as the secrets wouldn’t hurt Hadrian in the long run, he could accept them. And wasn’t that peculiar? He, Marauder supreme, accepted willingly not to find out secrets that were taunting him on a daily basis. Well Hell. He had changed quite a bit, hadn’t he? Change, yes… Hadrian had that effect on people. Changing them without intending to do so. Was it really only the allure? Thinking back to the morning’s happenings, Sirius thought that there was way more to it. Though, maybe that was just him being in- …having a severe crush.
He had Hadrian’s hand secure in his and was tugging the boy across the Clock Tower Courtyard. There was no resistance and he glanced back a few times to make sure Hadrian was really okay. He was looking pale and still a bit out of it, but not worse for wear. Considering what they just went through, it could – and most likely should – be much worse. Sirius wouldn’t be surprised if he himself went into some kind of shock as soon as everything caught up to him. But as it was, he was far more concerned about Hadrian and his lack of reaction.

Leading him into the castle, a few corridors down and then with a surreptitious look around into one of the secret passage ways, Sirius didn’t say a word. When they finally were out of the way and alone, he stopped and took a more thorough look at Hadrian. The first thing he noticed was how the boy avoided eye contact. He didn’t like it, but then he caught sight of the again blooming blush and grinned smugly. Oh well. That was a reason he could accept for now.

“How do you feel?” He asked nonetheless, taking a hold of Hadrian’s shoulders. He could feel little tremors in the muscles there and thought that maybe they should go to the hospital wing. He suppressed a grimace at that. He had seen how much Hadrian disliked that place and Sirius could definitely live without the ‘tender’ care of an enraged Madam Pomfrey.

“A-alright.” The soft answer came after a few seconds. “I guess.”

“You sure?” He heard Hadrian take a deep breath and then the slender shoulders beneath his hands straightened themselves.

“Yes,” Hadrian said more firmly, looking up, though his eyes kept wandering to a point above Sirius’ shoulder. “What about you? I couldn’t really see what was going on when I was…”

“So what happened? Are you hurt?”

His heart skipped a little at the honest concern he could clearly hear in Hadrian’s voice. It was something he rarely got to hear and never from anyone outside his little group of trusted friends. As if in answer he felt his shoulder ache, but resisted the urge to roll it and loosen the slightly cramped muscles that were a result of half hanging off of some bleedin’ bridge.

“Nope,” he said, exaggeratedly popping the ‘P’ and conveniently ignoring the first question. “But I bet those snakes are quite bruised by now. Damn, you got them well.”

And it was true. Hadrian’s magical outburst had not only solved the sticky situation Sirius had found himself in, it had also taught those Slytherins quite the lesson. They would think twice before they went after Hadrian again, at least Sirius hoped they would. No matter how magically strong the boy was, if he was caught off guard again, it could backfire horribly. Another reason to make sure he stayed in his presence as much as possible. That thought brought back the question he had asked just minutes ago and to which he still had gotten no answer.

“So,” he said into the slightly awkward silence, “Before our dearest professor went onto the moral trip you were about to say something, weren’t you?”

He watched as Hadrian looked down again, pulled his bottom lip between his teeth, and generally
looked uncomfortable. Shit. That didn’t look good. Was he about to be turned down for the first time in his life? Okay, not exactly the first time, but whenever one of the girls he asked out did this it was obvious that they just wanted to be chased after a bit more. Somehow he doubted Hadrian was someone who would turn him down just to play hard to get. If he said no, he likely meant no. No. He couldn’t let that happen.

“You know,” he said before Hadrian found his voice, “How about you think on it for a bit, alright? It’s not like we’re going to lose the Quidditch Cup just because you take your time with this.” He tried for casual and thanked Merlin internally when he saw Hadrian relax somewhat.

“Um,” Hadrian cleared his throat and looked up again, though still not directly at Sirius, “Yeah okay.” He even smiled a bit and Sirius viciously shoved the urge down to try and persuade Hadrian in a more hands on way. That wouldn’t do right now. So wooing it was. They went to get some breakfast after that.

James Potter liked the new student. James Potter thought he was a nice chap, not annoyingly intelligent, but not dumb either and interesting to boot. Which of course came with being mysterious and possibly related to the House of Potter. Learning that Hadrian Moore had the elusive creature gene of an Elf Owl made the matter even more exciting. James had taken to calling Hadrian his little brother as he already had enough cousins what with all the pureblood families being somehow related. He had always enjoyed being the spoiled only child of his parents, the doted on heir, but meeting Hadrian had started another thought process all together. Hadrian was on the small side and generally just looked like someone that needed protecting. That he most likely came from an abusive household made James want to do just that even more.

But it was something else that acted as decisive factor.

He had always liked strong personalities, his all time sweetheart Lily Evans being the picture perfect example. And watching the frail looking Hadrian pull through the shock of an unexpected creature inheritance and standing tall when others would have caved and despaired about the onslaught of changes… it taught James another lesson. A lesson that made him want Hadrian as part of his family even more. So James Potter wanted Hadrian Moore to really be part of his family, but maybe he already was?

That was how James came to write his father about his newest acquaintance in the hope the Lord of House Potter would know more about the mysterious Moores. No such luck. Which only meant James had to find out more about his new baby brother - for example a middle name. Middle names, James was sure, were the easiest way to find information about a family likely to be related to an old house like the Potters, as they generally were given in honour of relatives. In case of the first born son more often than not in honour of the father. If he knew Hadrian’s father’s name he would most likely be able to find the connection to the Potters without being an intrusive pillock. And when he got home he would look up the family tree and all its forgotten branches.

Albus Dumbledore wasn’t a bad person. He wasn’t out to take over the world, he generally abhorred violence, and he believed in second chances. But Albus Dumbledore also knew that the world wasn’t really black and white, or dark and light in wizarding terms. He may be the leader of the Light, but he knew all too well that the world, magic included, was made up out of many shades of grey. There was never an evil without reason and there could be no good without the bad. There also could be no shadow, no dark without light. He knew that no human would recognise the light without the dark.

But Albus Dumbledore also believed that the Light, the side he led, was the right side. He accepted
that there always needed to be some Dark, but he had dedicated his life to making sure the Light would always have the upper hand. And to ensure this there needed to be enough power to overcome the dark forces. So Albus Dumbledore, the leader of the Light, accepted some darkness and with it some methods that might not be considered ‘light’ as long as they were used for the Greater Good.

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore thought he had found a new power source that would give him the much needed advantage to beat the rising Dark and this source actually resided in the very walls of his castle. He had made sure that the existence of the little time traveller was kept a secret, had made sure his unexpected creature inheritance wouldn’t stand in the way of his education so he wouldn’t lose access to the boy, and had generally looked on with interest. He was astonished by the little one’s powers, but noted the need of training. He could ensure that too.

So he decided with a heavy heart that it would be for the Greater Good if this child was going to be trained for a fight no child should ever have to encounter.

Harry was nervous. His foot was bouncing, he was shifting every other second in his place, and he was chewing on his thumbnail. He kept glancing over to Sirius while simultaneously trying to look attentive enough to keep the professor from calling on him. It was ridiculous. His thoughts should be running over what had happened this morning – being attacked, nearly falling to his death, the surge of enormous magic or how he wasn’t feeling drained but only a bit achy. Instead he kept thinking about the question Sirius had asked… and Merlin help him he was completely out of his depths.

It wasn’t like no one had asked him this kind of question before. In fact, there had been quite some girls who wanted a date with the so called Chosen One. But then he had known it wasn’t really him they wanted to date but his title, his fame, maybe even his supposed money. They liked what he stood for not who he was as a person. It was different with Sirius. He didn’t know about all the Boy-Who-Lived-To-Be-Hyphened crap, didn’t know about anything really. All Sirius knew was the person he had been ever since he had come here. He knew Hadrian and Hadrian was just the boy no one else ever noticed behind the name, the rumours, the fame, the money or whatever. Technically, Hadrian was ‘just Harry’ …with a little added creature bonus.

So it really was different with Sirius, because Sirius wanted to go out with him. And that scared the shit out of Harry. But at the same time it made something in his chest flutter, his stomach flip, and his head curiously light.

Chapter End Notes

So James already realised there is more to Harry than the frail facade (as did Lily in an earlier chapter), Dumbles is after his power and Sirius... well, Sirius being Sirius feels attracted to the strong personality of Harry, but doesn't really realise that it's THAT he's attracted to. I think. Maybe. Somehow these charas developed themselves farther than I had planned. Not complaining, but it does make for some surprises even for me.

Next chapter we're going to witness some attempts at wooing Sirius-style. Any suggestions? ;)

Chapter End Notes
In which a strategy is initiated

Chapter Notes

Thank you and cookies for **Koi19**, **chocolatemilk**, **StickShift**, **Kidagirl8**, **Ry** and probably **DarkInuFan**. :) 

If Harry had thought he would spend the next days carefully and nervously weighing his options while awkwardly attempting to act as if nothing had happened… He couldn’t be more wrong. Any onlooker would snort in amusement. Oh Harry definitely tried to think the whole “Would you like to go out with me?” issue through logically. He also tried to act as if nothing had occurred, because some idiotic teenage sense told him that was how he was supposed to act. Not that it mattered. It took all but the time apart during Herbology of that same day for Sirius to start his mission of wooing Harry. And he was not shy about it.

It started out rather harmless with Sirius awaiting him outside the greenhouses at the end of their lesson. How he had managed to be there without skipping half of his own Alchemy lesson was a mystery to Harry, but he was given no time to contemplate it. Sirius descended upon him with a charming smile that made the exited girls behind Harry swoon. Harry could only blink as he was offered a chocolate frog in lieu of flowers accompanied by a sultry wink that made the blood rush to his face. Sirius didn’t do anything else, just walked very close, occasionally brushing their hands together, but somehow it managed to make Harry hyper aware of his presence.

It followed an afternoon full of tutoring. Yes, tutoring. That is, as much as one is able to be tutored by the person dominating one’s senses. Harry had wanted to spend the afternoon and evening in the library studying (and maybe researching time travel whenever he caught time unsupervised) as he had still a lot to catch up on and would be able to sleep in the next day. He had expected Remus to maybe offer help. He even considered asking Lily for some of the more confusing stuff in Potions. What he hadn’t counted on was Sirius not leaving his side for a minute, following him through the aisles like a lost puppy, using said puppy charm to thoroughly distract him from his homework and initiating little touches here and there that made it impossible for Harry to concentrate on anything else.

It was annoying and for a while Harry was sorely tempted to snap at Sirius for preventing him from actually studying. But he stopped himself in the last moment as he realised that technically Sirius wasn’t doing anything to actively disrupt Harry’s concentration. He was just *there*. Snapping at him for that reason would be like admitting out loud how much of an embarrassing effect Sirius was having on him. Damn those teenage hormones and his sudden awareness of them.

During dinner Harry opted to sit next to Remus for some inconspicuous reprieve. Of course Sirius slid in next to him. Harry suppressed a scowl. It wasn’t like he had anything against Sirius being there, it was just that he was constantly there. He didn’t give Harry the slightest chance to actually think about his question or possible consequences. And it didn’t help how much Harry suddenly craved and at the same time feared his touch. They were always harmless touches like a brush to his hand, a one-armed hug, a hand on his arm to get his attention, said hand on his shoulder or in his hair for a short ruffle. It was all completely innocent yet it always managed to make Harry’s skin burn beneath the touch in a way that shocked him the first few times it happened.
Had he reacted that way before too? He couldn’t remember.

On Thursday morning Harry woke up to another chocolate frog on the pillow next to him, making him blush at the thought that Sirius had snuck behind his closed curtains while he was asleep. The frog way lying there innocently and for a moment Harry just looked at it. They had talked in the group about the trading cards sold with the chocolate frogs and even though Harry could actually contribute somewhat to the topic of conversation for once, he had no cards in his possession to actually participate in the trading or the different games. Now it looked as if Sirius had taken it upon himself to provide Harry with a collection of his own.

Chewing thoughtfully on the chocolaty treat, Harry listened for the snores of Pettigrew, the only one normally still in the dorm at this hour on Thursdays, only to realise that they were nonexistent. In fact, the only sounds reaching his ears through his own chewing sounds were the murmur of conversation down in the common room and the pitter-patter of rain outside. Licking his fingers clean from the chocolate, Harry silently left the bed, shivering at the cool floor beneath his bare feet. He looked around carefully, but the dorm was indeed empty. The rain outside was becoming more dense by the minute. He really didn’t miss Quidditch training on days like this and felt almost sympathetic for James and Sirius who were most likely out there right now. Almost.

Harry took advantage of Pettigrew’s absence and revelled in a long shower. The warm water felt heavenly on his slightly stiff muscles and allowed him to let go of a tension he hadn’t consciously realised. Finally he had the time to actually think about the day before - only to find that his thoughts were still running in the same vicious circle of ‘Sirius’, ‘date’ and ‘what the hell am I supposed to do?’. It was no use. Every time he tried to examine the whole situation in an objective kind of way his brain would conjure up memories of Sirius’ barking laughter, his puppy dog eyes and his scent. Merlin, his scent. Harry was honestly considering if his creature inheritance had influenced his sense of smell on top of all the feeling like an overgrown chicken stuff. Never before had a scent managed to capture his attention like this. Sure, he would recognise scents like every other person would and yes, he had loved his godfather’s familiar scent for some reason, but Sirius’ scent was fast becoming as addicting to Harry as the little touches and friendly gestures.

And there went the vicious circle again.

During Transfiguration that day they were training nonverbal spell casting – something Harry was abysmal at. He was just more of the ‘shouting your intent out loud for the whole world to hear’ kind of wizard. Unfortunately, he was the only one of his new group of friends with this kind of problem. And no, he never counted Pettigrew.

Being the only one truly struggling, Harry hadn’t really kept an eye on the Marauders. So it came as a bit of a surprise when suddenly a little magically created paper bird flew in his line of sight, hovering a second right in front of his nose before it descended on his tabletop. Looking around for the bird’s sender, Harry was met with storm grey eyes from across the classroom, watching his every move. He hadn’t realised that Sirius had accompanied James on his latest attempt at impressing Lily (who was sitting once again with her Ravenclaw friends) and therefore found a seat a bit farther away than usual. Blinking, Harry cocked his head to the side in question, but Sirius only smirked at him and then seemed to redirect his attention back to James.

Harry frowned. What was that about? If Sirius wanted to tell him something, he could have just come over. It wasn’t like Professor McGonagall seemed to care today. She had encouraged the students to mingle and help each other in a Flitwick kind of way and was currently occupied with what looked like a serious discussion with one of the Ravenclaw blokes. Poking the paper bird with
his wand, Harry wished he knew some of those nifty revealing spells Hermione used to cast over his post ever since third year. Hermione… no, he would not go down that specific road right now. Or ever again.

Harry sighed and shrugged. If the Marauders were going to prank him, there was no escape even if he chose to ignore the birdy note. Actually, he had expected them to prank him the moment he had come out of his shock of travelling back in time.

_You look cute when you scrunch your nose up in concentration._

Harry blushed bright red and refused to look up at Sirius. What was that supposed to mean? Okay, he understood the written words, sure. But… what? Harry was so surprised and confused and embarrassed that he had no idea how to react. He sat there staring at the note in his hand, cheeks burning and mind going blank to a point he could imagine crickets chirping. This was not a prank, was it?

Things continued on like this throughout the whole day. Sirius would accompany him everywhere, always casually touching him without being overly obvious about it. Sometimes Harry wouldn’t even realise Sirius had draped an arm around him for a while before he suddenly shifted or caught someone looking. It was disconcerting for Harry who still shied away from touch, though obviously Sirius was now an infinite exception. As long as Sirius didn’t touch his skin and elicited that dreaded (and anticipated) sensation, Harry would just feel so damn safe that his guard went down enough to actually not realise the touch as such. Suffice to say, Sirius was incredibly smug about it.

Friday went down similar, only the start deviated from the pattern. Harry couldn’t remember if he had had a nightmare the moment he woke up, because Sirius was perching on his bed right next to him.

“What?” Harry blinked owlishly (yep, I made that pun) up at the Marauder who was looking at him with an unreadable expression. “…’irius?”

There was a moment of silence in which Harry tried to rub the sleep from his eyes and actually get his brain to work while Sirius was just looking at him. Had Harry been more awake that situation might have struck him as strange, but as it was, his sleepy mind couldn’t find anything wrong with Sirius apparently watching him sleep.

“There, Bambi,” he said and the moment was broken as another chocolate frog – this one already unpacked and animated – was set right on his forehead.

Harry received another note in Potions that day, easily circumventing Slughorn. For a second he hesitated, watching the paper bird cautiously and ignoring Remus’ smirk from beside him. He was still sharing a table with the werewolf and sometimes Lily, he supposed. At the moment his mo- … Lily was sitting with her regular group of friends. Harry couldn’t be bothered to remember their names.

_Did you know that potion reflects beautifully in your eyes?_

He wanted his sunglasses back. Harry didn’t wear them in the dungeons as those were shaded enough for his new eyesight, but right now he dearly wished he could hide behind the wide lenses. Potion reflecting in his eyes, as if. Still, he couldn’t stop himself from seeking out Sirius a few aisles behind him. The smirk and patented waggle of eyebrows he received did nothing to curb the again
rising blush.

Harry started to get used to the attention. No, he did not. But he got used to the idea that Sirius was there and that he had something else in mind than plain camaraderie. Harry started to anticipate the little gestures and touches and generally Sirius’ constant presence. And that was a mistake. Or was it?
In which the next stage is initiated

Chapter Notes

So now that we all are on our way falling for Sirius... let's remember that he's a Marauder and sometimes a right prat. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Saturday morning came with more rain drumming against the window panes creating the illusion of the world outside being nonexistent. Harry lay still for a moment, listening to the rain washing the ancient stone walls and the soft snores of his dorm mates.

It was still early especially for a lesson free day, but he knew there was no way he would be able to go back to sleep. His dream hadn’t been exactly violent nor was he drenched in sweat like he used to whenever dreaming of all the deaths in his past. No, Harry had dreamt of his friends, those who would walk these castle halls in about twenty years from now. He had felt like a foreign entity watching from the shadows as Hermione, Ron, Luna, Neville, Ginny and all the others met in the Room of Requirement. They were just having fun, laughing and fooling around. They weren’t training like they used to under Umbridge’s reign, the whole atmosphere one of carelessness and safety. It was like a vision of what could be if Voldemort never existed in their time.

Harry blinked against the sudden burning in his eyes. He didn’t want to cry over something like ‘what if’. Sighing, he sat up, noting the lack of chocolate frog with a curious little stab in his chest, but realising that Sirius was most likely still asleep. Not that there was anything wrong with that. He shook his head and peered out behind the curtains, surveying the dorm and his sleeping friends. James was lying diagonally on his bed, curtains open, and feet dangling over the edge. Next to him the curtains of Sirius’ bed were drawn close, no sounds coming from behind the fabric. For a second Harry was tempted to return the favour and watch him sleep, but decided against it. No, that was just… Remus was snoring lightly, curtains half open giving Harry a view of his peaceful face, free of the worried frown that Harry knew too well from his own time. The next full moon was near.

Making use of the facilities in the en suite, Harry contemplated what he was going to do for the day. He would need to do homework, but wasn’t too inclined to try his hand on that before tomorrow. Then there was Sirius. He hadn’t left Harry’s side these last days and Harry had started to plan for his presence. He had accommodated Sirius being there and thinking on the day ahead now made him realise just how much he had Sirius integrated in his plans already. As if it was completely natural for them to spend their time together. Harry smiled slightly. He liked that thought.

Rummaging through his trunk and the new clothes Sirius had bought him at Hogsmeade made Harry blush a little. So far he had successfully ignored most of those purchases, only making use of the needed items such as the white shirts for his school uniform. But it was the weekend and he was finally out of the hospital wing and able to spend the day around the castle grounds. It was time to make use of the casual clothes, but Harry felt oddly embarrassed about wearing them. Deciding on what looked like simple jeans and one of the hooded jumpers Sirius had chosen, Harry slipped back into the en suite.

Remus watched his friend meander through the dorm and then spent some time halfway in his trunk.
He was still mostly asleep, but as always his instincts made him take a look at Hadrian to make sure everything was okay. He watched Hadrian frown and blush before he decided on some clothes and left the room again.

Remus yawned tiredly and redirected his gaze to the canopy of his bed. Hadrian always changed in the en suite. Even after everything that had happened during his creature inheritance and the time spend in the Room of Requirement he seemed shy about something, most likely his body. Remus could understand that. He himself had scars he always hid from everyone who wasn’t in the know of his furry little problem. There was just no way to explain these kinds of scars away without causing even more questions.

Hadrian seemed to have a similar issue. Remus still remembered the long inflamed looking scar he had seen on the boy’s arm, not to mention the cruel looking ones on his torso. And then there was the strange scarring on his hand that he still hadn’t seen up close – words written on Hadrian’s hand that had made him wonder if the boy was prone to self-harm. He sighed. He had a feeling Sirius’ plan for the day would backfire, but hoped it wouldn’t end up actually hurting Hadrian.

Harry still took care to always change in the en suite. Remus and Sirius had both seen his upper body, his scars, but it didn’t change how Harry felt about them. Yes, he had made his peace with his accumulating scars and what they stood for. But he couldn’t stand seeing the horror that passed through his friends’ eyes whenever they saw the reminders of Harry’s not so ideal past. He still feared that they could ask about them more specifically.

And then there was James. He had seen Harry’s arm in the Room of Requirement, or at least he could have if he had been observant enough. But Harry didn’t want him to see any more evidence of violence and neglect on his body. There was after all the always lingering possibility that James one day would find out who exactly Harry really was. So if Harry could he would protect his father from seeing what the Wizarding World had left his son with. There was no need for James to feel any of the more than unpleasant feelings Harry imagined one would feel if the own child was hurt. He thought that he himself would most likely feel incredibly guilty and cold and there really was no reason why his father should go through any of that. None of it was his fault.

Sighing to himself, Harry pulled the jeans up, only to hesitate. Staring down at the clothes, a vague memory from their visit to Hogsmeade drifted into his mind. Sirius had called the jeans he wanted to look at ‘sexy’. And damn, now Harry knew why. The fabric was hugging his legs and especially his backside in a way that was completely untypical for Harry. Oh well, he would hide it beneath the jumper, he thought and tugged on the piece. Sadly, it wasn’t like one of his oversized hand-me-downs and there was no hiding in these clothes. He really shouldn’t have let Sirius chose his clothing.

It was much later that morning when the Marauders came down to the common room where Harry had camped out reading the inheritance book by the fire. He hadn’t felt like going down to breakfast, especially not alone. He looked up and smiled hesitantly at them. He was greeted happily enough as the group crossed the room and clambered through the portrait hole.

Harry blinked.

He had been in the process of getting up and joining them when they had already reached the exit. Now they were gone and Harry felt oddly hurt. The Marauders weren’t exactly obligated to wait on him or anything, but they had never left him behind these past weeks. Especially not Sirius. Harry shook his head. No, it probably wasn’t meant as a slight. They most likely just thought he would
follow them, but somehow Harry didn’t feel like it anymore. It was ridiculous to feel that way, he
told himself, but he had anticipated Sirius’ appearance. To be brushed off like that with nothing but a
greeting in passing…

He shivered. He had known that it was a bad idea to get used to the attention, he thought bitterly. It
was a dumb move on his side. And it was idiotic to react the way he did now. It wasn’t like Sirius
had done anything – but that was just the point. He hadn’t done anything, he had acted like the last
few days hadn’t happened at all. Harry had no idea what that meant. Had Sirius changed his mind?
Had Harry taken too long to answer his question about the date thing? Or did it mean nothing at all
and he was just overreacting?

The little appetite he had worked up over the last few hours gone, Harry gathered the inheritance
book and went back up to the dorm. There he stowed it away on his bedside table, hidden between
some other books just in case, before he rooted aimlessly through his trunk once again. Finally, he
found something to occupy his time with and went outside with the drawing utensils Sirius had gifted
him the day of his release from the hospital wing. It was a bit annoying to his pride that he was using
something Sirius had given him in this situation, but he didn’t feel like going to the Muggle Arts
classroom.

Harry made his way through the halls and wasn’t surprised when he found himself in the Clock
Tower Courtyard once again. With all the new and hormonal experiences these last days he hadn’t
spent much thought to the strange call that had entranced him last time he had been here. Now
though he obviously had the time and was almost desperate to not think about the source of his
hormonal adventures. Any distraction would be welcome.

Chapter End Notes

Who can guess the ‘strategy’ Sirius is employing?
In which Remus has a wolfy moment (or two)

Chapter Notes

Remus has some need for anger management and Harry comes across something unexpected.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Remus watched the entrance to the Great Hall with trepidation. They had been here for over twenty minutes already, but Hadrian hadn’t shown up. He understood the strategy Sirius was going by, of course he did. His friend had briefed the Marauders on it after all. But still… Hadrian wasn’t one of the girls Sirius usually dated. Remus was worried that feigning lack of interest could backfire badly with Hadrian. Sure, it was a common strategy that generally worked out for a guy like Sirius, but Hadrian had a lot of issues that could easily lead him to completely misunderstand the action. Or more like lack of action.

Looking over at Sirius, he almost snorted. His friend was desperately trying to look nonchalant, but was failing miserably. It was obvious that he felt bad for acting the way he had or even that he already missed Hadrian. Well, it was his own fault. Remus sent him a dark look that clearly said how he felt about the whole plan to ‘make Hadrian realise that he liked Sirius’. To him it wasn’t any better than leading him on even if it was meant to help the boy understand his own feelings better. It was presumptuous, that is what it was.

“Where is he?” Sirius finally gave in and voiced his worry. “He shouldn’t miss a meal,” he muttered guiltily. Remus frowned at him.

“Maybe you should have thought about that before you acted like a prick and made us all go along with you.”

He had a hard time reining his protective instincts in and took a moment to focus on those feelings to make sure he wasn’t acting irrationally due to Hadrian’s creature allure. No, Remus thought, it was completely justified to hex Sirius where the sun didn’t reach for this, but then he should probably curse himself too for going along with it.

“Moony,” Sirius whined and got a few surprised glances from his friends for the use of the Marauder name. Usually Sirius went with shortened versions of Remus’ name, unless something really bothered him.

“What, Padfoot?” He snapped back, registering faintly that it wasn’t the allure that was influencing him, but his wolf.

Sirius sighed heavily.

Remus growled and kicked his shin under the table.

Peter squeaked.

James threw a piece of bacon at Sirius.
The things he did for that idiot of a dog! Remus sighed annoyed as he clambered through the portrait hole, ignoring the Fat Lady for once. He was feeling increasingly pissed off and had a hard time not snapping at each and every student that passed him on his way. It was too early for this. The next full moon was about a week away and here he was fighting down the aggressive urges that normally would only surface around the three day mark. Maybe it really was the allure? After all it was the first full moon since Hadrian’s arrival at Hogwarts. Was that really only a month ago?

The dorm was empty. Remus huffed.

Not that he had expected the boy to be here, but he had to start his search somewhere and the map was here, too. He set down the little breakfast package that was his current errand on behalf of one Sirius Black. No, that dimwit could of course not find Hadrian himself to make sure he ate something. No, of course not, because that would ruin the oh so carefully planned strategy. Never mind the idiocy of it all.

Spreading the map on his bed, Remus looked for the one name that was the reason he had hidden the map away until now. Harry Potter could not be revealed to the rest of the Marauders, he had given his word after all, but Remus had no idea how much longer he would be able to prevent them from finding out. He couldn’t hog the map for all eternity. The little dot labelled with the name in his thoughts flashed at him from the very edge of Hogwarts’ grounds, right behind the Wooden Bridge.

Remus frowned.

The wind was freezing and the rain was pelting the roof of the old Wooden Bridge, yet Harry didn’t hesitate in his steps. He felt it again, that ‘call’. This time though, he made absolutely sure that no one was following him. Knowing that there was the possibility of the entrancing effect of the call was helping a great deal in keeping his awareness. No Slytherin would get the jump on him again, at least not here.

Walking briskly passed the place where Sirius had saved his life and then asked him that question, Harry reached the end of the bridge. There was a small stone gazebo with benches, overgrowing grass and an open view of the surrounding area. Harry hurried from beneath the cover of the bridge over the slightly muddy lawn and ducked under the roof. He looked at the dreary appearing mountains around Hogwarts’ grounds for a moment, just taking them in. He truly loved the landscape surrounding the castle, it was all wilderness contrasting strongly with the gentle weaving sights he was used to down in England.

He took a deep breath when he felt it again.

‘Call’ really was a suitable term. Something was calling out to him without making any sound. It was not much more than a feeling, coaxing him, nudging him in the right direction. It felt so familiar, yet Harry couldn’t truly place it, nor could he tell if it was light or dark magic. ‘Inbetween’ was another fitting term. Flicking his gaze around and trying to ‘listen’ passed the slowing rain, Harry tried to pinpoint where the call was coming from. It was somewhere around here and he had made sure that no one else was in the vicinity. It definitely was something not someone.

There, backed up to the first sprouts of the Forbidden Forest huge moss covered stones were standing in a kind of circle. They looked ancient and fitted into the landscape like they had grown right there. A little stone hut, similar to an open kind of chapel, was nearly swallowed by looming trees, their branches reaching out like creepy arms covered in green. Harry looked closer. He couldn’t remember ever seeing the strange structure before, yet his memory provided him with random glimpses of the stone circle, always in passing, never in complete focus. Yes, it had been here, but never before had he really taken notice of it. Never before had there been this call.
The words just drifted into his mind and Harry frowned. What was a sundial anyway? Whatever, the call was coming from there and with a last look around, Harry took determined steps out into the rain towards the huge stones. The atmosphere should have been gloomy and maybe it was, but to Harry every step took him nearer to a blissful kind of peace. It felt like he belonged right there in this circle between the ancient stones and looming trees. He heard the Clock Tower chime, or rather he heard the hoarse yet melodic sound of the hidden bells, and wondered briefly what hour was being announced. The time though lost any significance as he took the last step and entered the circle.

Harry gasped.

While Remus made his way down to third floor level and the Clock Tower Courtyard, he was contemplating once again his newest pack member. It had been obvious from the moment Moony had found and not even attempted to maul Hadrian, that he recognised the boy as family, as pack. It had taken Remus a bit longer to come to the same conclusion, though he couldn’t deny that there had been something like instant friendly feelings towards him. It really wasn’t hard to like Hadrian even though he tended to be withdrawn. Only that it was more than just liking Hadrian when it came to his wolf.

Hadrian may have needed their help and generally had a frighteningly strong knack for attracting trouble, but thinking back Remus had also noticed the strength hidden behind all that. It had been Hadrian that made the decision of a hiding place back during his inheritance when they had been completely thrown, even though he had been delirious. It had been Hadrian that cleared most of the situations with the Slytherins and it had been Hadrian that made Sirius actually serious (yes, he had just thought that) about someone for the first time. Okay, so maybe none of these thoughts explained the connection he felt, but Remus couldn’t change it. For some kind of twisted reason he was actually proud of the boy. He was pretty sure that was nothing he would normally feel for a fellow classmate.

Watching Hadrian through all of what had been happening lately and considering that he most likely had his own little adventure before he even reached Hogwarts, had only helped strengthen Remus’ resolve. He really wanted to protect that boy. He wanted to make sure he never had to go through whatever it was that had brought him here in that condition. All those scars, the malnutrition, the fear of touch… Godric help him, he would hex Sirius into oblivion if he really hurt Hadrian.

Stumped by the intensity of his feelings and recognising the influence of the impending full moon once again, Remus redirected his thoughts to something else, though not someone else. Hadrian’s reaction to the article in the Daily Prophet had been on his mind for a while now. It was a reaction that spoke of unprocessed trauma, but Remus couldn’t identify what part of the article had been the trigger. Had Hadrian witnessed something similar? There had been more and more attacks these last months though none in Diagon Alley. It had been shocking – in fact, it had been so shocking that no one even spoke about it, unsure how to cope. Remus guessed everyone was still reeling from the revelation that even a highly magical place like the popular shopping district wasn’t safe anymore. Or maybe no one actually believed something so gruesome really had happened, or rather, maybe no one wanted to believe it. It would be just like the Wizarding World to ignore the obvious if it contradicted their favoured world view. Then again, it wasn’t like the Prophet was known for its faithful reporting. It was just too much of a tabloid newspaper.

Remus himself thought it all horrible, but he lacked the strong connection to the wizarding community in general to be that shell-shocked. His parents had never really taken him anywhere completely magical outside of shopping trips for school supplies and had made sure to keep him out
of contact with other magicals as much as possible. It was just too risky with his condition. Perhaps Hadrian had muggleborn relatives, perhaps they even suffered similarly? It could be a case of relating to the family that had fallen victim to the dark forces. Or was he maybe himself... no, he was a Potter, but still... maybe his mother was muggleborn? There were just too many possibilities and it was frustrating to say the least. He wanted to ask and yet he could still remember the pain in Hadrian’s voice back in the Room of Requirement when he had suggested coming clean to the Potters. Everything in Remus recoiled from the notion of intentionally hurting this boy.

The rain was slowing down as he reached the Wooden Bridge. The map had shown Hadrian at its end so Remus only took a short look around the courtyard to make sure he hadn’t come back by now before walking under the cover of the bridge. The wood was softly creaking beneath his feet and Remus glanced cautiously over the railing down to the ravine. He really didn’t fancy heights.

Hadrian was sitting peacefully in the rain drawing.

Remus blinked confused at the scene until he noticed the shimmer to the sketchpad. It gave away the infused magic keeping the paper dry. That wasn’t a feature normally sold and he was sure the drawing utensils he had bought at Hogsmeade that day were of the completely mundane – muggle – kind. Though the boy didn’t look fazed by it, he didn’t look too aware either. Maybe he was doing it unconsciously? Hadrian must be cold, sitting out there completely still like that getting slowly drenched. He had the sudden urge to kick Sirius again. For a moment Remus hesitated to make his presence known. Hadrian seemed so concentrated on his work that he didn’t want to disrupt the near trancelike state. Somehow it was a sight of melancholy beauty that just fitted right there into Hogwarts’ grounds.

Chapter End Notes

FLYING BACON OF DOOM!

Oh and I have been made aware that the passage of time is a bit confusing. It’s Saturday the 2nd October 1976, Harry landed in the past on 11th September. :)


In which Peter thinks up a lot of not-so-eloquent names

Chapter Notes

With a late nod to **Tetractys**.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Lucian Bole had himself secured a spy. It had been much easier than he would have thought. But then again, the little cretin was so hung on his inferiority complex, it was nearly too easy to get him to do his bidding. Peter Pettigrew would probably do anything in self-preservation and Hadrian Moore, the little mystery creature, was severely endangering Mr. Pettigrew’s place in his group of friends.

But for some unexplainable reason his spy didn’t seem to know the exact kind of creature the Moore child was. Yet, at the same time Bole thought Mr. Pettigrew was very well aware of it. Could it be that his student actually felt some kind of sympathy for his target? No, that didn’t make sense, not with the all too eager way he had jumped at the suggestion of spying on the creature. But maybe Mr. Pettigrew was some kind of double agent only relaying the information needed to stay in the position he currently was in? Not like Pettigrew really struck him as that much of a cunning person. Or maybe he was hoping to bargain for more than a passing grade for his ‘troubles’?

Whatever it was, it didn’t matter as of yet. To get what he wanted Bole knew he would need time. A well planned trap that would not only capture the little creature but would also ensure his continued working out of sight would take time, maybe even months. That was alright though, the longer he took to think every inconsequential detail through the more miniscule was the chance of the Moore child escaping.

Sirius felt bad. His stomach gave yet again an uncomfortable twinge as if to remind him of his wrongdoings. As if he could forget them. Really, he hadn’t thought it would be that hard to give Hadrian some space to breathe. And again his stomach ached and he groaned. He could have sworn his Grim was punishing him for upsetting its mate.

But honestly, he hadn’t done anything too bad, had he? In fact, he had done nothing, really. He greeted Hadrian that morning with a smile that he couldn’t fight even if he wanted to. He didn’t do anything to directly hurt him and he was pretty sure if he so much as tried his Grim wouldn’t be his only problem. Remus was awfully protective of Hadrian. So far Sirius had thought that mostly a good thing, but considering the purple coloured bruise on his shin, Rem’s protective nature was rather counterproductive in his attempts at wooing Hadrian. But really, what was he supposed to do?

Hadrian may have started accepting his presence and sometimes even enjoying it if Sirius could be counted a reliable judge of that, but he would probably never completely come to terms with the prospect of them dating. And why should he if he could have Sirius at his beck and call anyways? Same sex relationships weren’t as shunned in the Wizarding World as they were with the Muggles, but being openly gay would still lead to some trouble. Sirius wasn’t deluding himself, he was painfully aware of the fact that he would most likely succumb to the friendzone if it meant he could stay with Hadrian. And he could not let that happen.

So Sirius had tried stepping up the game, making Hadrian realise that he would miss Sirius if he left.
Never mind that Sirius never would be able to leave that boy, Hadrian didn’t know that. And if Sirius was honest, he would prefer if it stayed that way. No one needed to know how desperate he was becoming. Really, it was ridiculous. It had been what – two days? Only that he had been pining after the little Elf Owl for so much longer that to him it had been way more. Was he maybe extremely susceptible to that strange allure? He still didn’t give a rainbow coloured shit if his feelings for Hadrian were being influenced; he knew after all that he wasn’t being forced into something that he would never consider. And well… There were worse fates than falling for someone like Hadrian.

Remus pulled his school robe off and used it as shield against the rain as he approached the sundial garden and Hadrian. The short boy might have been entranced in his work, but he still noticed his advance and looked up. His huge emerald eyes had a far away look to them before he blinked a few times and focused on Remus.

“Hey,” Hadrian said and smiled a small somewhat melancholy smile. Remus’ heart ached at the sight.

“Hey yourself,” he said and extended his robe-umbrella over Hadrian. “What are you doing out in the rain?”

“Rain?” He looked around confused for a moment and then gave a gasp and looked down at his sketchpad. “Oh thank Merlin,” he murmured and then shivered.

Remus took a good look at Hadrian and sighed. He must have been sitting there for a while; his jumper was soaked and his jeans were more than one shade darker than when he had put them on earlier this morning. The only dry thing about him was the sketchpad. Remus pulled the robe down and around the boy, nudging him into standing.

“Come on. Let’s get you inside.”

They were halfway across the lawn when Hadrian pulled at his sleeve to stop him. He was staring back at the sundial garden with an unreadable look, somewhat expectant yet not.

“You couldn’t hear it, could you?” He asked softly.

“Hear?”

“Never mind.”

Peter was having a blast. Oh how he had missed this! Here he was, lounging with his two popular friends, getting all kinds of attention that always came with being in his friends’ vicinity. And no whiny little bastard around milking non-existent health issues to spoil their fun.

They were doing what they did best: Talking pranks. And it didn’t even matter that they were only planning on pranking Barty Crouch because he got a bit too handsy with the very reason why Peter couldn’t enjoy being in his friends’ presence regularly anymore. He didn’t even care that Remus was looking for the creature boy right at this moment. The werewolf was nice and always helpful for Peter’s homework, but lately he had been nearly as glued to the skinny streak of piss as Sirius. So Peter really couldn’t care less if Remus was missing out on the fun. Let the creatures do their creature stuff.

Just now James was teasing Sirius if he was suffering from some strange muggle illness called ‘diarrhoea’ with all the shifting in place he was doing. Peter ignored the little twinge of annoyance he got from not knowing what they were talking about and steered the conversation back to the prank.
He still needed to figure out a way to keep his friends while still relaying the actual kind of creature the brat was to Professor Bole. It was the only way to rid them of the parasite that was tearing their group apart, his friends were just too caught up in their popularity to notice this. But right now, this could wait. He was enjoying himself too much.

Remus was ushering him up two flights of stairs, not exactly touching but keeping close. Harry felt chillier by the minute and was clutching his sketchpad beneath Remus’ robe in frozen fingers. What had he been doing sitting in the rain like that? And what about his sketches, how could they be dry and not the least bit smudged?

He had thought he had the entrancing effect of the ‘call’ under control, but considering that he had forgotten about the rain and sat in the sundial garden for who knows how long, it didn’t look like he really had. At least he had noticed someone approaching, which was a step up from last time, right? Maybe he should ask Remus about the sundial garden. His friend seemed to be just as well-versed in anything concerning Hogwarts (and numerous other topics) as Hermione was. Had been. Would be? Harry shuddered at the thought of his old friend and tried to focus back on the actual question.

What was a sundial, why was it there on Hogwarts’ grounds and what had it to do with him? Why was whatever was there calling to him?

Harry came out of his thoughts when they stopped in front of a statue he knew quite well. Boris the Bewildered was staring blindly and as lost-looking as always down at them, his gloves on the wrong hands. He was the picture of confusion. Harry blinked and then realised what Remus was planning. This was the entrance to the Prefects’ bathroom, fifth floor. He wanted Harry to take a bath after getting himself near hypothermia outside. Well at least it felt that way by now and a hot bath sounded better the longer he thought about it, but still…

“Whiff of lavender,” Remus said matter-of-factly and then turned to Harry. “It’s alright, no one’s going to disturb us in there. You’ll have your privacy.” He didn’t even attempt to explain to Harry where they were – he seemed to be aware that Harry already knew.

The room looked just how he remembered it from his fourth year. He never came back here after that fateful day of discovering the key to the riddle of the golden egg on Cedric’s advice. Cedric’s death had tainted this place for some reason and Harry never again felt the urge to relax in the huge pool-like tub. Yet, here he was, following Remus into the dimly lit room with the high ceiling and beautifully painted windows. The candlelight was flickering across the marble flooring and gleaming on the hundreds of golden taps with their different inlaid jewels. Harry’s gaze went up to the stained glass window on its own accord, looking for the mermaid brushing her long pretty hair. She didn’t even grace them with a sideways glance and Harry was glad about it. He had no idea how he would cope if she attempted any kind of communication like she did back during his first visit.

Remus led him to one of the stalls on one side of the grand room, handing him a huge fluffy looking bathrobe, and gently freeing the sketchpad from his cramped and numb fingers.

“I’ll wait over there,” he said and went to presumably start on filling the huge tub.

Chapter End Notes

Do you have a favourite song that uses references to time (travel)? It could even be something as simple as a single line.
For example, I plan on using the line...
"Even a half-smile would have slowed down time/This is the safest way so nobody gets hurt"
(Walking on Cars - Speeding Cars)
...in one of the later chapters for a Sirius/Harry moment.
“I brought you some breakfast,” Remus said as he leaned back on his hands. “Don’t look at me like that. You know what Madam Pomfrey said.”

His legs were dangling in the warm water as he smirked over at the pouting Hadrian. Yeah, he was a great Red Riding Hood, wasn’t he? Dutifully carrying his little makeshift basket… Remus’ smirk fell at his thoughts. No, he was by no means a ‘good little girl’ and it wasn’t even the part about being a girl that felt the most wrong. There was nothing good about him. He was the wolf of the story, he was the monster.

“But I’m not hungry,” Hadrian whined and his voice broke through Remus’ gloomy thoughts. He smiled slightly at the other boy. As always, something about Hadrian soothed his inner beast, made it easier to coexist with the wolf. He wondered if there was just something so inherently innocent about Hadrian that even he monster inside Remus couldn’t stand for him being hurt.

“Hogwarts’ mighty matron doesn’t care about that, Bambi,” he grinned at the annoyed huff the nickname was eliciting. “Just obey her commands, it’s much less dangerous for all of us.”

Their voices were reverberating throughout the Prefects’ bathroom, little bubbles floating around them and across the marble flooring in thick flocks Harry was thankful for. The atmosphere was light and he was enjoying the relaxing effect of the bath. He really had been cold after his visit to the sundial garden. The bubble carpet was thicker than he remembered and Harry thought that was Remus’ doing. He had taken careful actions to preserve Harry’s ‘modesty’, even going so far as to wait across the room with his back turned until Harry had made his way deep into the pool and only sitting down at the side after asking for permission. Maybe he was just being considerate, he knew of Harry’s issues after all.

He chewed on his bottom lip for a moment. Remus was awfully nice to him, but he had been as disregarding as the others that morning. Maybe he really had just imagined them brushing him off? Maybe it was all a misunderstanding? Harry wasn’t the most adept at social stuff, he thought, so it was a possibility. He looked over at Remus who was busying himself with some floating green bubbles. He didn’t particularly want to ask. Nope. Harry really didn’t want to ask about that morning, the rain incident had been embarrassing enough. Besides, he was pretty sure they hadn’t meant anything by it. Right.

“You know,” Remus’ voice drifted over the water from the other side of the pool, “He isn’t doing it to hurt you.”

So it had not been his imagination. Harry really didn’t want to talk about this, ignoring it would hurt so much less. He didn’t want to hear Sirius’ reasoning or why everyone went along with it. He just knew it would hurt, no matter their original intent. It would all come down to him overestimating his own value, overestimating how serious Sirius had been. He couldn’t even snicker at the wording.
“Yeah, I know,” he said and then just dipped down beneath the water’s surface.

So much was happening at the moment and Harry just didn’t feel able to comprehend it all right then. He needed to concentrate on other things. He had allowed himself to get distracted, had allowed himself to believe he could have a normal life here in the past. But the truth was that he was not supposed to be normal. He was the freak of nature, the one that always defied nature’s laws even if he didn’t intend to.

No, no he couldn’t let himself think like that.

Harry was still holding onto the hope that one day he would be allowed to lead a life somewhat normal, a life just like everyone else. But to do that he needed to get rid of the one thing that had made him abnormal in the first place. Well, not a thing exactly, but really, in his mind Voldemort had never been a real human but an entity that loomed over him only waiting to kill off everything that made him even remotely normal. And to kill off anyone that… No, don’t think that way, he told himself firmly as his head re-emerged from the water.

It was just so much responsibility.

He was supposed to free a whole society if not world from an evil that was far stronger than he could ever hope to be. And yet, here he was, feeling hurt and letting himself get distracted by some boy that had been a bit flirty. Harry just wanted to live, just wanted to enjoy the fact that no one in this time would ever make him fight the rising darkness. They would want to protect him like every other child and for once he was glad to be considered as such. But he couldn’t do this. He could not let Voldemort win.

The mermaid was still ignoring them though Harry thought she was sneaking peeks every now and then. A sudden thought struck him and he stared at her transfixed. Was maybe his presence here now the reason she had helped him, would help him, in his fourth year?

Remus was covertly watching Hadrian splashing about the water at the far side of the huge tub. He suppressed a sigh at the boy’s deflecting attitude and felt his wolf shift angrily. Sirius had really botched this up. They hadn’t intended to hurt Hadrian the way he obviously was now – or at all. Looking over again, Remus noticed Hadrian staring at the stained glass window. He had always wondered why someone would put a somewhat sentient ‘portrait’ in a bathroom, but after using said bathroom a few times ever since he became a prefect, Remus decided that the mermaid probably wasn’t on the same level as the many portraits of Hogwarts. For one, she didn’t talk and was most likely not able to do so. And then she never interacted with the visitors of her domain… though this could be only him being not interesting enough for her.

Remus blinked confused at his wandering thoughts and focused back on the boy appearing lost in his own world. He was amazed that Hadrian allowed him to stay, let him sit here while he was taking a bath. But maybe that was due to their time in the Room of Requirement. Maybe he would let Sirius stay, too, trusted him enough, after all those two had an undeniable connection. Even if Sirius was currently acting like the biggest jerk ever walking this castle’s halls.

They talked a bit more about random stuff, but Remus’ thoughts were miles away. He wanted to tell Hadrian what Sirius was intending to do, but that would ruin the whole strategy. Not that Remus really believed in that crap and being as pissed off as he was regarding Sirius he really didn’t quite know why he was hesitating. Probably because the damage was already done, so now there was hoping it would at least work somewhat in the intended way. But there was more, just out of his reach. His thoughts seemed to run as if chased by Fiendfyre. (*)

Something was there, just waiting for him to make the connection, to solve the riddle. Hadrian’s
reaction to this whole situation seemed much stronger than what he would have expected. Sure, he knew the boy had issues and was a bit unstable after the whole inheritance stuff, but… was he perhaps working through what had happened the other day? Remus didn’t know much about the latest incident with the Slytherins, just that Sirius had been furious and was planning something surpassing their normal pranks in revenge. He had a feeling this time Sirius wouldn’t let himself be stopped by any possible backlashes for his family. And why should he? He had left his family over the summer, he was of age, and he was living with the Potters when not at school. It was more than likely that he would be disowned soon if he hadn’t already. The Blacks had a second son, after all, and Sirius himself couldn’t give a Kneazle lick about the family’s reputation.

But Hadrian… whatever had happened could very well affect him much more than they realised. They didn’t know much of anything about his past and Hadrian had reacted strongly to the Slytherins before. Remus had thought it had been the magic running wild, growing and preparing itself for the inheritance, but what if it was more? The last overly strong reaction he was aware of had happened long after Hadrian’s magic had calmed and there had been no Slytherins around. He had just read an article in the Daily Prophet. Alone. Granted, it was a horrible article (And no, he wasn’t talking about the style of writing, though that was another can of flobberworms.), but still… What if it had been something emotional triggered by the circumstances described in that article? What if the other incidents had been the same only amplified by the wild magic?

It was all falling into place. Hadrian coming to Hogwarts the way he had, looking like he had been through hell. Hadrian reacting badly to situations with sudden movements or loud sounds like the Potions accident. There was more, but…

Exploding potions could be quite loud… though no, Hadrian’s magic had reacted after he had gotten hurt. So was it the pain that triggered the … panic attacks? Remus tried to ignore the implication of this observation and tried to look at all the information objectively. There had been no pain during the first confrontation with the Slytherins when Hadrian’s magic went haywire, then what was the trigger? Where was the connection to the Potions incident? Or was there more than one trigger?

Whatever it was, one thing was clear now: Hadrian was suffering from what the Muggles called Soldier’s Heart, or rather a case of post-traumatic stress disorder as it had been defined by a very talented Squib of the 16th century. Though Shakespeare chose to only let the Muggles know of his insights into the human mind through his fictional works, he did publish a whole collection of essays on the topic in the Wizarding World. But being a Squib his work had never found much recognition and to this day common mind healers preferred obliviation of the memory of the traumatic event instead of any of the methods Shakespeare had worked out. Remus wasn’t familiar with those methods, but he had to find out what had caused the reactions in Hadrian so they could at least try to avoid future panic attacks. (*)

Though… Smiling at Hadrian, Remus got up and went to the far side of the grand room, turning his back while he dried his feet and pulled his shoes back on. He could hear Hadrian getting out of the water and dressed. Hadrian was shy, yes, but his fear of being touched was something else entirely and living through something similar to the attack on Diagon Alley would most likely not cause a fear like that. There was more.

Remus smiled at Hadrian again when he tapped him on the shoulder, it was rare that he initiated contact even if it was so brief. They left together and made their way to Gryffindor tower. He came to the conclusion that the thing about touch had nothing to do with whatever caused the PTSD, or Soldier’s Heart, or whatever. Scars, so many scars. It had to do with whatever home life Hadrian had had. Oh he so needed to talk to the others.
Remus is a clever boy, Harry is confused, depressed and wavering. Sirius is an idiot. That said, next chapter he'll start making amends.

(*) **Fiendfyre**: a bewitched flame of abnormal size and heat, immensely powerful, cannot be extinguished by either normal or enchanted water. It’s not sentient yet able to seek out living targets, and pretty much instantly deadly at a mere touch. Left burning long enough, the fire will take the shapes of gigantic fiery beasts.

(*) **PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)** wasn’t defined as such in the 1970s, so I chose Shakespeare as the wizarding forerunner. This way Remus’ knowledge isn’t too far-fetched. Also, some of Shakespeare’s characters show distinct signs of suffering from PTSD, so …yeah.
Harry was determined. He would not let a certain snake-faced, noseless creepyness rule over his life any more than he had already. He would never be able to have a somewhat normal existence if he let this continue. It wasn’t right that even in another timeline Voldemort would haunt him, could and would and did. It wasn’t fair, but it was Harry’s reality.

He didn’t think he would be able to survive this, but ever since he had heard the prophecy it had sunken in that he wasn’t supposed to. He had known he was supposed to fight Voldemort, had known what his purpose in life was. The value of his life though wasn’t much apparently. That may be, he wouldn’t know, but Harry would not just roll over and accept it. He would get rid of Voldemort and if there was even the slightest sliver of a chance to survive he would grasp it and he would stay here in the past. If he finished Voldemort off here, it would change everything and everyone. Even him. And that was okay; if he never returned, he would not interfere with the new Harry’s life. He would be someone else, he would be Hadrian.

It would make it all better. And he had the ability to do that. Fuck how time travel was supposed to work, no one knew for sure anyway.

First things first: If he wanted to get rid of the future threat he had to find out where Voldemort was right now and what he was doing. And then of course he needed to know all there was to know about the horcruxes. How many there were and how to destroy them and-

Harry’s thoughts came to a screeching halt as he and Remus entered Gryffindor Tower.

His new eyesight was great. His new eyesight was so much better than it ever used to be and even the occasional stabbing from too bright light was okay in his books if it meant he would never again need his glasses. But sometimes Harry really wished the blurry peace back that used to be his world. Seeing Sirius lounging there, sprawled across a worn armchair laughing his loud bark of a laugh at something James had said… Gone were any thoughts of dark lords and sacrifice, and all Harry could think of was how much he loved hearing this laugh.

Sirius led himself be swept away by Prongs’ jokes and for a minute he actually forgot why he was feeling like utter shite. He found himself laughing out loud at his best mate’s comments until something at the other end of the common room caught his eye. Remus had just entered together with Hadrian and the latter was looking straight at him. Sirius felt like someone had just slipped him a portkey, his stomach flipped and something tugged behind his navel. Sweet Merlin, Hadrian looked absolutely gorgeous! The jeans hugging those coltish legs in a way that made him want to hide his boy away from any prying eyes. A jumper wasn’t just a jumper when Hadrian was wearing it. Even though he was still skinnier than he should be, the fabric clung to his frame in all the right places, its colour emphasising those beautiful eyes…
Prongs coughed deliberately beside him.

“Mate, you want to catch that drool,” he commented pointedly.

Gods, whatever he had thought about the whole mate stuff before, it just had to be true. Completing each other, the perfect match and all that rotten clichéd stuff… In that moment Sirius was willing to believe it all and he was lost for any words. Vaguely, he heard Prongs snort next to him. It didn’t bother him. He just knew he had to apologise, he had to make this right.

Oh no, not like that. Sirius would not get away with whatever the fuck he had thought he was doing making Harry believe he really wanted him. No matter how much Harry loved that laugh, no matter how much he had loved his godfather and was struggling to distinguish between those feelings and what he felt for this Sirius… He could look as handsome as he wanted with his aristocratic features, bright eyes and this damn mischievous smirk of his. Nope. Harry was not falling for this, not even if he looked at him like… like…

“Hey, what do you know about the Sundial Garden?” He abruptly asked Remus and turned his back on the sight of an intently staring Sirius.

If Remus knew what he was doing, he wasn’t showing it. He just gave Harry a somewhat melancholy smile with those gentle eyes and nodded over to a secluded desk near the windows – far away from the rest of the Marauders.

“Well, in Hogwarts: A History it says that the Sundial Garden, also known as the Stone Circle, is suspected to be the spot where the founders found the Hogwarts Pensieve,” he started off in full professor mode, making Harry crack a slight smile. “That ultimately let to the founding of the school.”

They sat down across from each other and Harry hiked his legs up Indian style. He was determined not to look over at Sirius and gave Remus his whole attention.

“The Hogwarts Pensieve?”

“Oh that’s an interesting story! Legend has it that the founders of the school found the Pensieve half buried in the ground exactly where the Sundial Garden is located. There are supposedly Saxon runes carved into it and its creation goes far back, long before the school was founded and-”

Harry couldn’t contain the snicker that broke free as his friend descended into information overload. Though the scene was tinged with a bit of sadness, as it reminded him so much of Hermione, he was glad to have someone like Remus here.

“Okay, so they found that pensieve in the Sundial Garden?”

“Probably, though I don’t know enough about the Saxon culture to tell you what happened to be there first: The Stone Circle or the Pensieve.”

Harry blinked. He was pretty sure that he knew where that pensieve was, or would be if it wasn’t yet, and that was in Professor Dumbledore’s office, the office of the headmaster. It would make sense if the pensieve had been the reason why the school was founded here. For a second he wondered how Remus would react if he told him that he had not only seen the Hogwarts Pensieve but also used it.

“Um, at the risk of sounding stupid…” Harry gave a short look around, “What exactly is a sundial?”
It obviously had something to do with the sun and he was sure he had seen something like the structure in the Stone Circle before, but…

“Yeah, sundials aren’t as common as they used to be,” Remus smiled reassuringly, “It’s a device used to tell the time through the position of the sun in the sky. You would use something not too different during Astronomy when telling the position of stars.”

Harry nodded at that. A time device, that made a lot of sense and he couldn’t even say why that was. The strange call he had ‘heard’ had felt familiar like the artefact he had seen in adult Remus’ apartment – the thing that had sent him here. Yes, a time device definitely sounded suitable the longer he thought about it.

“So it has been here ever since or…”

“Ah no,” Remus shook his head, looking exceedingly happy to have someone so obviously interested in the information he had stored away. “The Stone Circle was here before the school was founded, but the Sundial was probably added after the founders found the Pensieve. In Hogwarts: A History it says it was most likely used to adjust the time in the Clock Tower.”

So the famous founders of Hogwarts had come across an ancient stone circle in which they found a buried pensieve and to honour the spot they had built a sundial in there. Or something along those lines. The sundial had then been used to tell the time for the Clock Tower’s dial. Hm. To Harry it sounded as though someone had planted the pensieve there to be found, but what that would have to do with him and the call thingy was beyond him.

“Hadrian, I…” Sirius didn’t know what he was supposed to say in this kind of situation. He had never before honestly wanted to apologise, had never had to do so really. “We… I really didn’t mean anything by it.”

He nearly flinched at the intense glare that was sent his way. If he had thought Hadrian’s eyes were beautiful on a normal day, they were irresistible with this fierce glint of anger in them. And didn’t that just sound completely masochistic? He couldn’t help it though, he loved the sight an enraged Hadrian was. His eyes were alight with power that even seemed to thrum beneath his glowing skin and those silky feathers were raised in a threatening arch. Sirius was sure, if it had been before the inheritance, Hadrian’s magic would be swirling around them by now.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Oh his voice wasn’t raised. It was a low pitched tone that really shouldn’t sound so sensual. And Sirius had never been so sure that someone knew exactly what he was talking about.

“This morning when we just… went without you.” It sounded ridiculous when saying it like that. So what if they had left for breakfast without Hadrian? The thing though was that it had been deliberate and to top it off he had made the others go along with it. “It really wasn’t meant to hurt you.” Well, at least not exactly. He should be honest, at least with himself if he was too scared to be completely honest with Hadrian. And yes, he could admit it in the security of his own mind: He was a bit scared here.

“Who says it did?” Hadrian had turned away from him, hiding his face, sounding sullen and Sirius didn’t like it. He would feel better if the boy shouted at him or even hexed him.

“No one needed to tell me,” he said, feeling the ugly sensation of guilt coil in his gut again. “I knew the moment I did it, that it was wrong.”
Or he had known when he had realised that Hadrian wasn’t coming down for breakfast. Until that moment he had fully believed his strategy was ingenious – well, he had wanted to believe that. It had worked all the other times, but Hadrian so obviously wasn’t like those girls and Sirius should have known that. There was a long moment of silence before Hadrian said something again. He turned around and looked at Sirius with a deep searching gaze.

“I never did get around to thank you, did I?” He asked suddenly and Sirius frowned confused, sensing danger.

“Thank me?”

“Yes,” Hadrian’s soft voice said and Sirius felt a sliver of dread. Something was wrong about this reaction. “For saving my life on the bridge.”

Sirius gulped slightly, but stood his ground. The sense of dread was getting stronger.

“No need,” he answered and tried a charming smile that fell short at the lack of reaction, “Really, that was…” His voice dried away when Hadrian suddenly yanked his jumper off, exposing far more naked skin than Sirius was prepared for. What the…? Surely he didn’t mean to…?

“So you’re sorry?” He felt like getting whiplash from the rapid topic changes and scrambled to nod. “You want to make amends?”

He nodded again though his instincts were screaming to be on guard. But this was Hadrian, sweet, harmless Hadrian. Hadrian with the most powerful magic he had ever witnessed that tended to knock people out… Sirius wasn’t prepared for what happened next. Hadrian raised an eyebrow at his nod and even though he was blushing heavily in his half-naked state, his eyes were still fierce and full of an unknown emotion. He gestured to Sirius’ own hooded jumper, a bigger, wider piece of clothing that he only wore when he wanted to be extra comfortable.

“Well,” Hadrian snarked, “Give me that jumper.”

Chapter End Notes

So who can guess why Harry wants that jumper?
In which Bambi feels a bit flowery

Chapter Notes

Thanks to lovely dracodomitor who helped me sort through that jumper-sweater mess.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Harry was angry. Oh he was really angry. But more than anything else was he hurt and he didn’t want Sirius to see that. He didn’t want him to know how much he had managed to get to him without actually doing anything. And the fact that he was so damn hurt only made him angrier.

The moment Remus had excused himself to the loo or something, Sirius had sat down in his vacated chair. He had worn that Merlin forsaken smirk and generally seemed sure he owned the world. That had raised Harry’s hackles as he was still in denial about it all. He preferred to just act as if nothing had ever happened between the two of them, as if Sirius had never asked him out. It was childish, but Harry didn’t give a pink Pygmy Puff (oh the alliteration) about that. It hurt and he didn’t want it to hurt – he didn’t want Sirius to hurt him. So before Sirius could even open his filthy mouth, Harry stood up from his comfortable spot and quite blandly told him he was going to do homework. He attempted to not show how he felt, but apparently it didn’t work. Sirius sat there for a second or two before he jumped up and followed Harry to the dorm, all the while calling out to him and growing ever more unsure in his attempts.

That actually coaxed a small satisfied smirk from Harry, even if only for a moment. Upon reaching their dorm, Sirius obviously had enough of Harry’s deflecting attitude. The moment the door shut behind them, he reached out and grabbed Harry’s arm, turning him around. It was then that Harry’s anger spiked even stronger than before. He felt like abruptly drawing away from Sirius, felt like making some kind of scene. It even annoyed him that he hadn’t flinched away from the touch.

But Harry normally wasn’t one to be so melodramatic and settled for just shrugging the hand off of his arm. He pretended not to notice the surprised hurt that flashed through Sirius’ eyes. Instead he hid behind his anger, buried the hurt deep within, and listened to Sirius stutter his way through something akin to an apology. It was a strange sight, really, Sirius stumbling over words, being so unsure of himself all of a sudden. It gave Harry hope that maybe, just maybe-

“I knew the moment I did it, that it was wrong.”

He had known it was wrong, yet he had still done it and hadn’t even attempted to make it right. Until now, but did it really count if one considered that Sirius had just minutes before lounged around laughing with his friends as if he had not a single concern in the world? Harry’s little bout of wishful thinking extinguished with an inaudible snap and he turned away. It hurt.

“I never did get around to thank you, did I?” He finally addressed Sirius, deliberately drowning his hurt beneath red hot anger.

He felt like hitting Sirius across the head, like shoving a broomstick down his throat for uttering those damn words. Why the hell did he do it if he had known it was wrong and why the bloody fuck did he think telling Harry this would make anything better? If this were any other person, Harry would assume he actually wanted to hurt him. But this was Sirius. Sirius was safe, Sirius would never intentionally hurt him. Right?
Harry had never been a violent person, yet here he was, barely containing his hurt fuelled rage. It shocked him quite a bit and Harry had the most peculiar feeling of watching himself from the outside. He watched as he yanked off the ridiculously formfitting jumper Sirius had bought him in Hogsmeade and watched as he demanded the one Sirius was wearing at that very moment. Merlin, he had no idea what possessed him to do that, but he really just desperately wanted to hide from all those looks he was getting in these clothes. And he wanted to hide from Sirius. But demanding his clothes like this…

Harry knew it was a bad idea the moment Sirius’ eyes hardened in determination. He nodded again at Harry and then stripped out of his jumper in one fluid motion. And Harry stared. Really, it wasn’t fair. His anger flew out the window in the face of the hard planes of Sirius’ naked chest… Oh well, it wasn’t like he wasn’t used to blushing bright red.

“Did I just see little Bambi run away in your-”, James interrupted himself at the sight of a bare-chested Sirius in the middle of their dorm. “Oh never mind,” he said wagging his eyebrows and plopping down on his bed.

Remus, entering behind him, looked at Sirius carefully, noting the slight paleness and barely veiled… excitement? No, but he was definitely thrumming with some kind of energy… that was no anger. Hm.

“What happened?” He asked casually, but at Sirius’ wince he directed a glare at his dumb friend. “You did apologise, right?”

After all, they had timed it all, including his leaving for the ‘loo’, to give Sirius a chance to make this right. Sirius mumbled something unintelligible and Remus felt his patience grow thin. He really was not in the mood for this today, his wolf was shifting restlessly again now that he wasn’t in Hadrian’s soothing company anymore.

“Sirius?” His voice was hard and there was a growling edge to it.

“Sort of,” he mumbled in reply, letting his head drop slightly and his hair obscure his face.

“Ohhh,” James’ excited shout interrupted anything else Sirius might have said and everyone turned to look at the stag Animagus. He was nearly jumping up and down in his seat, making Peter stare at him with wide eyes. “You apologised,” he purred with a suggestiveness that left no room for doubt as to what he was referring to. “So that’s why he was wearing your jumper, looking all flushed, and you’re prancing around in half your birthday suit.”

He chuckled into the short silence that followed, nobody noticing the disgusted look on Peter’s face. Remus looked sharply over to the dishevelled bedding of Sirius’ part of the room.

“He’s not like that!” Sirius’ voice made everyone’s head swivel yet again, taking in the sudden angry blush, though no one missed how he didn’t deny being ‘like that’ himself. “And I doubt he’d want to do anything with me,” he murmured subdued though in his mind he added a hopeful ‘yet’.

Remus took a deep breath, both to confirm Sirius’ statement and to calm himself down. They had all seen Hadrian run out of the dorm and leaving swiftly, but he had hoped the fact that the boy had indeed been wearing Sirius’ jumper was a good sign. It didn’t look like his friend had achieved what he had obviously wanted to do ever since this morning’s breakfast, but Remus was honestly curious as to what had happened. Surely Sirius had not tried to charm his way out of the situation? He couldn’t be that dumb. But whatever had happened, if Hadrian had taken off with Sirius’ jumper it couldn’t be too bad. Hopefully.
“You’re going to continue making amends.” Remus stated, leaving no room for any protest as he focused his amber glare back on his stupid friend. “Do I make myself clear?”

He would not let Hadrian suffer any more from Sirius’ thoughtlessness, especially not with what he had learned today. Though, looking at the determined look on his friend’s face, Remus was sure he would at least honestly try to win Hadrian back. If only that would protect the boy from the prattish idiocy that seemed inherent to Sirius’ nature.

So, conveniently ignoring James’ snickers, Remus launched into a carefully edited version of what he had gathered about Hadrian today. It felt wrong to keep things from his friends, but as long as the secret identity of their newest addition did not pose a threat, he would keep his promise. The talk about Hadrian’s supposed PTSD took longer than expected as his friends had no idea what either the muggle term or the one coined by Shakespeare meant, and Peter repeatedly tried to change the subject. Remus wondered if the rat Animagus had been hit with a low rate cheering charm to lower his attention span or if he really thought the emotional terror their friend suffered from as inconsequential as he made it out to be.

The final result though, after Remus had explained what he knew of the stress disorder, was a new plan concerning Hadrian. A new strategy was decided on, this time with the intent to make him feel safe. Of course this new plan wasn’t completely selfless as they hoped the boy would become more trusting and therefore divulge his secrets when feeling safer. But still, it wasn’t completely egotistical either. The Marauders truly wanted to help Hadrian. Well, most of them.

It was nearing dinner time when James declared he wanted to look if Lily needed help with her Transfiguration homework. Not that any of them believed he would be successful in his endeavour even if Lily had problems with Professor McGonagall’s latest lesson. James was just bending down to get his favourite snitch from where it had taken refuge under Hadrian’s bed when his voice broke through the half-hearted remaining talk.

“Hey Pads?” He asked. “Have you shown Bambi your Animagus’ form?”

Because there on Hadrian’s neatly made bed lay his sketchpad and the top sheet clearly showed a lounging huge black dog. Behind the supposed Grim there were shadows of yet unfinished other animals and a tree that very well could have been the Whomping Willow. In the background of the shadowy scene a glowing full moon was just raising behind the branches of a swaying willow…

It wasn’t the first time the two of them had fought – well, okay, so it was the second time. He and Sirius never really ‘fought’ before, not even back then. They maybe argued a little, but there had only been one time that they had come close to an actual fight. He had shouted at Sirius that time and then he had run away, swept away by all the emotional crap that came with time travel, creature stuff and generally puberty. Considering the mess with Crouch that had followed, running away now probably wasn’t that much of a good idea. Then again, he had found a safe haven in the Room of Requirement that day, too.

This time he had not shouted wounded pride at Sirius. This time he hadn’t shouted at all, yet it felt far more sinister and he wondered for a moment if he would feel better in the hidden room with his paintings. But if he was honest, he wasn’t too keen on being completely hidden from his new friends, a part of him still wanted to be found if they even cared to look for him. He wasn’t quite so sure anymore. And he felt like a pansy.

Harry burrowed down in the too big jumper with a sigh. He didn’t ponder on the contradiction of hiding in Sirius’ clothing when running from him at the same time. It just felt so much better having something wide to dress himself with that was no robe. Right. That was the only reason for his
strange clothes-stealing behaviour. Shaking his head decisively, Harry pulled the hood of ‘his’ jumper up and exited the entry hall. The rain had slowed down to nothing but an icy trickle that was more of a drizzle. Still, it was cold and Harry cursed his knee-jerk reaction and not thinking about a cloak. Well, he had the password for the Prefects’ bathroom…

He hadn’t wanted to think about Sirius anymore, but he couldn’t stop his thoughts. Yes, he knew he should be making plans concerning a certain dark lord (in making?), but there was one thought in particular that just wouldn’t leave his mind: What about the whole Animagus mate stuff? Had Remus’ theory proven wrong and was that why Sirius suddenly had lost interest?

His chest aching, Harry trudged along the muddy path around the Black Lake. In hindsight Sirius hadn’t really acted like someone that had lost interest in his newest conquest and more like someone trying to make things right. Or well… he had acted like someone too awkward to know how to apologise but desperate enough to strip down if needed in order to… in order to what? Save their friendship after he had decided that Harry wasn’t worth the hassle? Gods, what he must think now, left standing half-naked while Harry had taken off with his jumper. Harry sighed.

He really was totally useless with this emotional stuff. Hermione would have known exactly what to do in this kind of situation. Hermione always knew what to do or at least where to find the answers… or she would call him a tea spoon. (*) For a while, Harry allowed himself a secret pity party and wallowed in his memories. The wind was cold, rippling along the surface of the lake and he could make out the Giant Squid lazily waving one of his long arms around. How often had they ventured out here together, the three of them? He missed them…

“Hey there, Mr. Absent-Minded-Mystery,” a musical, female voice interrupted his drifting thoughts.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter we'll have the final flashback to the Sirius/Harry/Jumper scene ;)

(*) “Just because you have the emotional range of a teaspoon doesn't mean we all have.”
— Hermione, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
In which Harry has a proposition for Sirius

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

He had never thought he would ever have this kind of conversation with his mother. Or any conversation, actually. But here he was sitting, his slightly trembling hand encased in Lily’s soft ones, trying to find words for what was confusing him out of his mind.

“It’s just… I mean, I never…” He heard himself stumble and stutter, not really forming much of coherent sentences, yet Lily looked at him as if he was relaying a perfectly detailed problem, or some kind of equally logical equation. Harry just hoped she had the answers her demeanour promised.

Finally he gave up putting his jumbled thoughts and emotions into actual sentences and just looked pleadingly at her. Why he thought she would be able to help, he had no idea. Maybe it was because he was used to females that told him what to do, what with his aunt, then Hermione (and Hermione, Hermione, Hermione) and let’s not forget Professor McGonagall. He had always thought that woman impressive. And Luna, of course, always serene, strangely wise beyond her years Luna. Or maybe it was the wish of the little boy from under the stairs that still hid deep inside him that wanted his mother to be just that: A mother.

“You never felt the way you do now before and that scares you,” Lily said matter-of-factly. “Also, you are completely overwhelmed with the attention Black is showering you with and have no idea how to respond,” she continued, sounding like she was just conveying the obvious. “This coupled with the psychological upheaval of your creature inheritance and the circumstances of your sudden arrival here, whatever those may be, leaves you completely confused and unable to pinpoint a way to deal with it all.”

Harry’s gaze strayed from her piercing eyes that looked so much like his… or like his once had. Instead he leant his head back against the bark of the giant tree they were sitting under and looked up to the thick greenery above. It was a nice place that gave off a somewhat homely feeling, but above all it was dry and even fairly warm. The first thing Lily did after catching up to Harry was dragging him here, casting a drying charm on the ground between the big protruding roots of the tree and then proceed casting warming charms on the both of them. Really, sometimes he honestly had no words for his own – how would Snape call it? – dunderheadedness. Here he was bemoaning the cold, but never even thinking about warming himself up with his magic. He would have liked to blame it on his muggle upbringing, but Lily had been raised by Muggles, too. Anyway, they were sitting beneath a giant tree with a trunk wide enough for both of them to sit next to each other comfortably, talking about his confusing feelings. Feelings for another person. Feelings for Sirius.

“Well?” Lily interrupted his again straying thoughts. “I’m right, am I not?”

Harry nodded numbly, feeling slightly nostalgic about the whole situation.

“As long as you don’t say something about a teaspoon now,” he muttered, “Yeah, you’re right, I guess.”

Sirius stared at the sketch dumbfounded. That was undeniably his Animagus form, this was Padfoot and he was pretty sure the barely outlined figures in the background were Prongs and Moony. He couldn’t see anything that might resemble a rat, but then again Hadrian and Wormy never got on all that great. Now that he thought about it, he hadn’t ever seen the two of them talk with each other.
after that very first day at breakfast (Not that he really counted that situation as conversation, but hey,). They actually avoided each other’s company however possible, not even sitting remotely close if avoidable.

Anyway, the important question was, how did Hadrian know about their Animagi? They had all been looking forward to the fast approaching next full moon a bit warily as they had not yet figured out how to circumvent their newest dorm mate that night. How were they supposed to get past him and later back inside without Hadrian noticing? It wasn’t only that Hadrian could confront them about their adventures after curfew, it was also frighteningly dangerous for the boy himself. Sirius honestly never wanted a repeat of the Snape-Moony incident. And then there was the little worried voice that constantly nagged Sirius about not letting Hadrian out of his sight. He didn’t want him to be alone, especially not at night when his nightmares hit. Which reminded him that right now Hadrian wasn’t anywhere near him just like this morning and that set Sirius' teeth on edge.

Yep, he was going to go find Hadrian for dinner now.

Walking down the halls, looking around for the head of tousled dark, dark hair, Sirius pondered his ‘edginess’ in regards of Hadrian alone anywhere. It wasn’t only about the dangers of having a creature heritage nowadays, though that definitely was part of it. There was a rapidly growing list of people in his mind that needed a lesson in respect. Not only were Crouch, Lestrange and Snape acting their normal snobbish selves, they also had gotten far more vicious and direct in their behaviour towards the Marauders and him especially. He was a deserter of their cause, of everything his and their families stood for. Renegade, turncoat. But those had been him and on a more disregarding level the Marauders by association. Now they targeted Hadrian and he had a feeling that that was not only happening because of his own personal relation to the boy. He would not stand by while those prats tried to get at Hadrian – in whatever way that may be and no, he would not think about Crouch now, he would not…

Oh how he wanted to hex that wannabe Death Eater’s arse. Or better yet, curse him beyond recognition. The way he continued to outright stare at his Hadrian, not even bothering to conceal his intent, was sickening to say the least. And Sirius honestly tried to not let his mind wander to the scene he had come across in the owlery back when he and Hadrian had fought (the first time), but the image was forever burnt into his mind. Hadrian had run from them because Sirius just couldn’t keep his big mouth shut. They had fought like they were doing at the moment…

And with startling and slightly nauseating clarity it hit Sirius again that Hadrian was alone somewhere out there with all those who wanted a piece of him for one reason or another.

“But what do I do now?”

Harry didn’t even care how desperate he sounded. Lily had perfectly summarised the mess in his head in a fashion that reminded him eerily of Hermione, but even if he had now the words to put it all in coherent sentences, he still had no idea what to do about it all. Lily hm-ed and looked at him searchingly, though what she was looking for Harry couldn’t even begin to imagine. Then she gave his hand a light squeeze and let go, only to reach up and tuck one of Harry’s untameable strands of hair behind his ear. He didn’t flinch.

“Do you like Bl- …Sirius?”

Harry flushed. Of course he liked Sirius, always had. From the minute it was clear that Sirius was not the one to betray his parents, that he in fact had been framed, Harry had liked him. But, no, that had
been his godfather. Who was someone else entirely than the person he now called Sirius, that much he had deduced long ago. Did he like this Sirius? Yes. But then again, he also liked Remus and James, right? Lily sighed after a moment.

“Alright, let me ask again: Do you like Sirius?” She gave him a small impish grin and continued: “Do you like it when he smiles at you as if you’re the only person around? Because he does that. Do you like all the little cute gestures he makes, like... what was it, chocolate frogs?”

Harry blushed even more.

“Do you like it when he touches your arm to get your attention, like it when he somehow brushes against you even though he’s only walking next to you? Do you like it when he hugs you?”

Harry gulped. He wanted her to stop this, but couldn’t find the words. His throat felt parched and he thought he probably made a reasonable imitation of a tomato by now. Or a pink Pygmy Puff.

“Do you like how he makes you feel?” Lily finally asked in a much softer voice, eyes taking on a slightly glazed look as if she wasn’t really seeing Harry anymore. And Harry descended into his own flashback.

Sirius was standing tall, comfortable in his own skin. He had nothing to be ashamed of, not that his looks had been at the forefront of his mind in that moment. Well, they hadn’t been until he saw the undeniable reaction Hadrian had to him stripping out of his jumper. Seeing the slow spread of soft pink across that beautiful snowy skin... watching those huge forest eyes fixing themselves solely on him, taking in every inch of revealed skin... Yes, Sirius could admit he enjoyed the positive attention.

Straightening just that tiny bit more, he nearly showcased his Quidditch built, feeling self-assured in the fact that his position as Beater had helped a lot to develop the predisposition for broad shoulders. He was very well aware of the strength that showed clearly in his arms and couldn’t help the minute smirk at Hadrian’s so obvious enjoyment of his stature.

Sirius had fast realised that he wouldn’t be able to talk his way out of this. He had royally fucked up the moment he let his mouth run away from him. He knew he should have just apologised and then leave it at that. Maybe even ask for another chance.

But he had not and now they were standing across each other, eyes raking, taking in the image the other made. He was probably enjoying himself just as much as Hadrian did, his eyes tracing every line, every dip of muscle and smooth skin and every scarring that ran across the expanse of skin like an artist’s brushwork on a perfect canvas. Hadrian’s scars did not disturb his beauty, Sirius decided, they added to it, gave his looks that little edge of excitement and danger. He was undeniably the image of a survivor and nothing was more perfect in its imperfection than life itself.

As the silent stare down continued on, Sirius felt the urge to touch burning at his fingertips. It was growing stronger by the minute and he felt the need to swallow around the sudden lump in his throat. He didn’t want to destroy the little ground he thought he had gained with his immediate comply with the jumper demand, but his hand acted on its own accord. Before Sirius knew what was happening, he felt the heat of Hadrian’s skin beneath his own as his fingers traced up the boy’s bare arm gently. He watched as a shiver followed in the wake of his touch and listened to the sudden sharp intake of breath. Closer, closer.

And Hadrian looked at him. For a long moment there was nothing for him but that vivid green gaze, drawing him in. Leaning in, ever closer, he suddenly felt hands on his and...
“Go insult a Hippogriff,” Hadrian whispered hoarsely.

Then he wrenched the jumper from Sirius’ hands, eyes wide and fearful, and left. Scared.

He watched from afar, as he always did. He so wanted to be near but knew he could not.

No longer.

Sometimes he so wished to go back to that fateful day – had it really only been last year? – that marked the irreconcilable end of their relationship. Even if he tried to take it back, even if he were able to associate with her again… it could never be the same, because he was not the same anymore.

No longer.

But Lily, his Lily, was all that was good, was all that was Light. She was all that he could never be. If only her heritage was another, if only he could be free from the grasp of his house. If only.

So he watched from afar as he always did as Lily went out into the rain and found the newest Gryffindork. What was it with that strange bloke? Everything always seemed to come back to him – from the instant protective stance Potter and his cronies took in regards to him, over the increasing and unsettling effect he seemed to have on everyone, professors included, to Severus himself. Oh he felt it and he analysed it. It was an allure that much was clear to him, yet he was not able to make the connection. Where was it originating from? Who was Hadrian Moore? Or should he phrase that question differently?

What was Hadrian Moore?

So Severus watched his beautiful Lily from afar, but he also kept an eye on the imbecile that the whole school was talking about. Only, he had not counted on that imbecile to notice him.

Chapter End Notes

Pink Pygmy Puffs are gonna rule the world with teaspoons one day.
In which a chicken scrawls

Chapter Notes

I’m winking at Koi19 here, though there’s definitely going to be another more pronounced BSOD moment sometime. ;)

Thanks also to Zee! Your comment helped my muddled memory a lot.

Black hair? Check.

Adorably tousled tresses? Nope.

Looking fluffy and just plain cute? Ugh no!

Sirius shuddered internally as he realised the black mop of hair he had been spotting was no other than Severus Snape. So not the kittenish Elf Owl with a fierce temper he had been looking for. He was about to turn away (Nope, he was not gonna poke that Snape issue with a twenty feet broomstick. Not anymore.) when he noticed that Snivellus himself was also watching someone.

At first he only saw the rare sunbeam reflect in a mass of deep red seemingly ignited by an inner fire… He snorted at his own thoughts and Snape’s obvious fixation with Lily Evans, vowing silently not to mention this to Prongs. It would only lead to more encounters with the greasy haired snake and his best mate was rather in the dumps concerning the girl of his dreams anyway. But then the redhead shifted and Sirius caught sight of a glint of jewelled green that could only belong to one person. And how was it even possible to see someone’s eyes from this far a distance? Must have been the creature.

So was Snivellus watching Evans and by association Hadrian or was this another of those attempts to get at the boy for some reason or another?

Lily had taken to holding Harry’s hand again and he let her. His thoughts were a jumbled mess, he was more than a bit embarrassed by his behaviour, and yet he couldn’t stop himself from burrowing down in the soft warm fabric of Sirius’ jumper. A giggle next to him brought him back to the redhead and he smiled confusedly in reflex. She was examining his hand and comparing it to her own.

“You hands are tiny!” She exclaimed and Harry scowled.

Yeah, his hands were rather nimble and a bit smaller than most of the boys’ his age, but calling them ‘tiny’ really was just insulting. He preferred to think they were able to catch a snitch perfectly, able to reach into nooks and crannies others couldn’t even hope to and whatever, it were just hands! It wasn’t like Lily’s were any bigger! He saw her open her mouth to probably tease him some more, but a rare ray of sunlight broke through the thick greenery above and caught in her beautiful fire hair. It also caught in the scarring on the back of his hand and Harry had a second in which he swore he could see her thoughts coming to a screeching halt. The hands around his tightened their hold minutely and he felt a cold lead settle in his stomach.
She had seen the writing.

A soft fingertip traced the pale lines on his skin and Harry was torn between the need to look away, not wanting to see her face or acknowledging the scars Umbridge had left him with, and staring somewhat transfixed at that finger. Lily seemed shocked but at the same time concentrated as if she were analysing what she was seeing. Could she read his chicken scrawl? Most that really noticed this particular scar never seemed to realise that it was actual writing, but then again, those instances had been back in the future where he had been Harry Potter, the Chosen One, who was basically famous for a scar already. What were one or two more?

His face flushed in humiliation at that thought. Umbridge had scarred far more than his skin in her attempts to subdue him, failing as they were. He had never admitted to it out loud, but the detention sessions with that mad woman had scared she shit out of him. She had enjoyed hurting him, a student, a child, had enjoyed breaking him. She hadn’t succeeded, yet Harry felt the damage she had done with her actions had killed off another part of his remaining innocence. Though watching his godfather die and then hearing about the prophecy had probably taken care of that…

“This is your writing,” the soft voice of his sometime-to-be-mother interrupted his spiralling thoughts and Harry scrambled internally for a believable explanation. “I recognise the script so don’t even try to,” she warned him sharply, finally looking up.

The look in her eyes was contrasting strongly with her tone of voice though, as the green seemed dulled with sadness and the white slightly red tinged with suppressed tears. Harry swallowed around the lump in his throat and forced himself to hold her gaze as he turned his hand in hers, becoming the one to hold instead of being held.

“What’s done is done, Lily,” he said just above a whisper, not trusting his voice with more volume, “It’s long over and being… angry about it won’t make it undone.”

“Nonsense,” she growled, pulling him close and hugging him in a fashion somewhere between Hermione and Mrs. Weasley, “Just because it’s already happened doesn’t make it right. And don’t you dare telling me what I can be angry about!”

Harry would have said something more, even though he had not the slightest idea what to do faced with such compassion that was for once directed at him, but he halted in his attempt as his new enhanced eyesight caught something in the distance.

Severus watched the cuddly scene beneath the tree, ignoring the rain that was slowly drenching him. He felt bile rise in his throat at the sheer tenderness his Lily was bestowing upon the strange boy, but forced it down. The touching was a Gryffindor thing, he had learned that long ago. They were all disgustingly hands-on with each other, always touching, never respecting one’s personal space. Not that he ever had been on the receiving end of such actions, at least not in a pleasant way. Well, he had been with Lily and back then he had not thought it disgusting. He had loved every single second of it, as it was the only gentle touch apart from his mother he could remember ever receiving.

But the older they got, the more he became aware of the way his housemates were regarding their friendship. He became aware of their view of Lily’s touch defiling him, they made sure of that. And he had slowly retreated, even begged her to start meeting in secret. He had been ashamed of her, a Muggleborn, a Gryffindor, but he had not wanted to lose her. There was no one else that made him feel the way Lily did. In her presence he wanted to be a better person. In her presence he felt somehow purer. He couldn’t understand how anyone could ever perceive her touch as dirty, Muggleborn or not. Lily was pure and perfect. But he had bowed to their views nonetheless, the
pressure too much, and then Potter had made him say this awful word. A word he had been using for a long time already, yet he had never done so in front of her and definitely not in relation to her.

Mudblood.

Angry jealousy churned in his gut as Severus watched the two beneath the tree hug each other. How he wanted to pry that imbecile’s sullied hands from his Lily, wanted to hide her away from all those that were staining her pureness.

He blinked as the sun yet again caught in a spot of colour, only that it wasn’t fiery red this time. It was green. A green deeper and fresher than he had ever seen… or… had seen only on one person before. But this green, verdant eyes, didn’t belong to Lily, she wasn’t looking his way. A shudder ran down Severus’ spine as he took those two in, red and black. At first the new bloke had reminded him awfully of Potter, but now he wasn’t looking like the bastard so much. Pale flawless skin, narrow shoulders and slender legs. And those eyes. Lily’s eyes. Lily’s skin, Lily’s stature and Lily’s eyes.

“They do make a nice picture, don’t they?” The haughty voice cut through his thoughts and he turned at once, a sneer already in place. But Black was alone, something that came as a surprise.

“Sadly I cannot say the same about you,” he said lowly, letting his hatred bleed ever so slightly into his voice. And Black winced. That was new, too. How curious. Severus raised an eyebrow at him.

Sirius cringed at the comment, knowing fully well that under different circumstances it would have been exactly what he himself might say. Snivellus certainly did not make a ‘nice picture’, nope. But he had stepped back from the Snivellus front ever since the Moony incident, though that did not stop him from disliking the slimy git like a pound of foul doxy eggs on a hot summer’s day.

“Busy, are we?” He drawled instead, smirking suggestively and hoping the snake would reveal if it really was Evans he was stalking and not Hadrian. “Are all the other little evil minions kept inside licking someone’s boots?”

Snape just sneered at him. It was obvious he would have liked to leave, but didn’t dare to turn his back on Sirius. As insulting as that suspicious assumption was, Sirius could admit to himself that it wasn’t completely unfounded. They had done some rather despicable things over the years, all of those more or less affecting Snape.

Someone was clearing their throat and both he and Snivellus broke the stare down.

Hadrian and Evans were standing just a few feet away, though the latter was quite insistently not looking at Snape. Her venomous glare was directed at Sirius instead and he found himself gulping slightly. The look in those eyes somehow was more potent than he remembered it ever being. Those green eyes… Wait. Sirius’ gaze flitted between Hadrian and Lily, taking in their faces with a more critical eye and for the moment completely ignoring the flutter in his stomach at the sight of his fancy. The eyes weren’t the same, but that was mostly because Hadrian’s eyes had changed so much during his inheritance. They were still both greener than any eyes he had ever seen and the shape was just the same. He had always thought Hadrian’s eyes had a slightly girlish quality that was only enhanced with the dilated Elf Owl pupils. And here was the living evidence, glaring at him for some reason or another.

Oh. Evans’ glare was not only more venomous than he remembered, it was also somewhat different in its intent, as far as one could glean that much from a deadly glare. He briefly wondered if this was what staring down a Basilisk felt like before one kicked the bucket, but couldn’t stop himself any longer from looking longingly at Hadrian.
Hadrian. And that look struck him even more, for Hadrian gazed at him with a mixture of disappointment and hurt, embarrassment hiding somewhere in the deep. He was also torturing his lower lip again and damn! Sirius wanted to wipe that look away with a good snog.

“Well, isn’t that nice,” Snape’s cool voice interrupted the newest staring contest, though Sirius thought he heard a miniscule tremor in the tone. “A Gryffindor picnic meeting. Do not mind me, I do have some more notable gatherings to attend.”

And with that he left, though no one missed the glance he sent Lily before his face went blank and he swept away.

“Sure he does,” Sirius muttered darkly, “Wouldn’t want to miss the next wannabe Death Eater party, now would he?” He sneered at Snape’s retreating form. He had expected a reaction from Evans, but wasn’t prepared for the shove he received from Hadrian. It actually made him stumble slightly.

“Don’t… don’t talk like that,” the boy nearly shouted, cheeks blooming pink, but not backing down. There was the anger again, but somehow it felt different.

“Like what?” Sirius was honestly confused. What had he done now? He just wanted to make things right with Hadrian.

“So bloody condescendingly! Like he’s beneath you or something.” Hadrian seemed unsure of his own words, but at least he was looking at him again. And he didn’t look so horribly scared anymore like he had back in the dorm – not to mention he was a darn adorable sight drowning in Sirius’ big jumper like he was. “Just… just don’t,” he added more softly.

Sirius cocked his head.

To him it seemed Hadrian didn’t so much dislike the fact that he was talking foully about Snape, but disliking that he was talking like that in general. Was this maybe… Had someone maybe done so with Hadrian? Had someone maybe done so with Hadrian? Had someone talked about him, to him, in such a manner that he couldn’t stand anyone being treated …well, snootily? If that was the case, Sirius would acquiesce to his wishes, or at least he could try to. He had wanted to cut any ties to that front anyway, but changes like that just didn’t happen immediately. Old habits die hard and all that, but he could surely try. For Hadrian he could, yes. Chancing a glance at a somewhat absent seeming Evans, Sirius stepped close to Hadrian and nodded, delighting in the absence of a flinch.

“You’re right,” he said just as softly, carefully and in plain view reaching out for the other’s hand. “I’ll try, okay?”

He waited with bated breath, but Hadrian did not turn away and he was allowing the contact. Relief flooded Sirius as their hands made contact. Maybe he hadn’t fucked everything up as much as he thought.
In which Sirius lives a dangerous life

Chapter Notes

This one goes to Zee! Hope you like my interpretation of the conversation.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After that day things went back to normal, or as normal as things around Harry could be. Sirius started the wooing again, this time around with even more dedication and quite a bit cheered on by the two fangirl-groups that inhabited Hogwarts. He delighted in accompanying Harry around the castle, acting endearingly protective and surprisingly humble, and could always be found at least in visibility range. He seemed dedicated to generally make Harry feel wanted. Harry himself had a suspicion that Remus had a hand in this.

There had been the odd occasion on which the werewolf would stare pointedly at Sirius who in turn would then re-evaluate whatever he had just said or done. It was rather amusing to watch, but had the added effect that Harry doubted whatever was between him and Sirius. And by now not even he could deny that there was something. But Remus’ behaviour was making him uncertain that ‘it’ could work if they needed someone else to prevent possibly complicated situations. Little did Harry know though, that Sirius was first and foremost scared to trigger any bad memories related to Harry’s PTSD. He trusted Rem more than himself to notice the signs, but wasn’t less determined to learn recognising them himself.

As it was, the week went by rather unexciting. Nothing happened apart from lessons, hidden nightmares, homework, surprisingly no Slytherin encounters, Sirius being Sirius and a lot of Sirius attempting to initiate more contact than just the occasional sideways hug or random friendly touches. It seemed to him, though, that Hadrian was out to test him – or drive him crazy for that matter – as he wouldn’t allow anything that went above ‘friendly’. And the worst about it all was that Sirius wasn’t sure Hadrian actually did it on purpose. He always seemed to just not notice the advance or be suddenly distracted by something or someone. As it was he hadn’t even managed to hold Hadrian’s hand again for longer than a few seconds. His mind’s only saving grace was the fact that his jumper tended to vanish on occasion only to be found worn by Hadrian later. He wasn’t sure what that was about, but found it undeniably cute.

Remus, apart from keeping Sirius in line, had his own issues to work through. The revelation of Hadrian possibly knowing about his wolfish side scared him in a way he hadn’t been in a long time. Not since his friends first had started connecting the dots. And that was not even touching on the subject of Hadrian possibly knowing about his friends’ Animagi, but there really were not many other ways to interpret the sketch they had found.

He felt guilty. It was his fault the Marauders had tackled that particular Transfiguration even though doing so at their age and without registration with the Ministry was highly illegal. Not to mention dangerous. Remus wasn’t sure if he should feel better about the fact that he at least wasn’t alone in this – to him it only meant his friends would be dragged down with him if things were revealed. The day they had found Hadrian’s sketch had caused more than just one argument on the subject, the first of which the most telling in Remus’ books. It had set the perimeter for any and all discussions they had about the topic later and even though his wolf felt so at home in Hadrian’s presence, Remus just couldn’t stop himself from being high-strung and jumpy…
As Sirius left to get Hadrian for dinner, clearly consumed by his own rather cheesy thoughts, the rest of the Marauders descended into a bit of a panic. For a long precious moment it was silent, James, Remus and Peter just staring at one another across the dorm, then everyone started talking above each other.

“Did he follow us on the last moon?” Peter screeched half outraged, half panicky. He couldn’t believe the nerve of that parasitic creature! It was probably all planned from the beginning, him being found by the Marauders so he could push his way into their group and using Sirius’ libido to get more control was just another part of the plan.

“Merlin, I-,” Remus was horrified. “Moony could have-” He had been told that it had been his wolf that found Hadrian and that for some strange reason he had not attacked. But the thought that maybe the boy could have been following them on purpose just like Snape had done last year... The thought of attacking another person, infecting, hurting or even killing them... It was the worst part of being a werewolf for Remus, even worse than the painful transformation with its snapping and rearranging of his bone structure.

“Of course not,” James rolled his eyes at his friends, being the voice of reason for once. “We would have noticed him and you know we wouldn’t let Moony attack anyone!”

“But-”

“He will tell on us! We’re all ending up in Azkaban!” Peter’s voice went ever higher in his hysterics as he finally realised that not only did an outsider manage to find out about their adventures on full moons – an outsider also knew about their illegal transformation into Animagi.

“If he had wanted to do that he could have done so ages ago!” About this Remus was sure. Hadrian might know about their Animagi, but he would not tell on them – at least not intentionally.

“Maybe he isn’t sure...,” Peter started again, but Remus wouldn’t have any of it.

“Yeah, but that picture kinda speaks for itself,” he said, ignoring the sudden cold that came with the thought that maybe one of those still unshapely forms in Hadrian’s sketch might be a werewolf.

“He didn’t see us. He was out of it,” James said decisively. “But well... unless he's a bloody Seer he must have managed it somehow. Maybe he overheard us sometime?”

“He’s a creature,” the rat Animagus scoffed. “Those are no Seers!”

Remus flinched slightly at that comment.

“What’s that supposed to mean, Peter?”

“Alright, everyone, calm down,” James interfered once more, hands raised in a peaceful gesture. There was no way the Marauders would get into a fight over this.

Everyone was breathing a bit heavily, but followed James’ command. Peter was wringing his hands, sweat beading on his brow and James groaned and plopped down next to the sketchpad. This was such a mess.

“Sirius was with him as Padfoot in the shack, but...,” Remus started softly after a moment, sounding a bit sceptically, only to be interrupted by James.
“Hadrian was completely blind, wasn’t he?” He completed the sentence. James wanted to make sure he had all the facts, but didn’t wait for an affirmative nod. “How’d he know what Pads was like with him if he couldn’t see?” That really was the most pressing question right now. How did Hadrian know? Because to James it was obvious that he did, the question was the how. If there was something like a leak, a mistake they continued making, the risk was high someone else would catch on.

“Well,” Rem blushed slightly at the memory, “They were maybe, perhaps a bit erm… snuggling.”

That one stopped James for a second. He spared the thought a grin after a moment and silently congratulated his absent mate. Still, if a love struck Sirius meant he went about spouting their secret… but that didn’t sound like his best mate at all.

“Maybe he thought it was a Grim?” Peter interjected with a disgusted grimace, voice still quite squeaky. “He was kind of in a bad way,” he said shrugging.

“It was touch and go for a while,” Remus conceded, trying to ignore the hurt Peter’s tone when commenting about creatures had brought on, only to be interrupted by James again.

“Yeah, ’cause everyone’d just snuggle up to a bloody Grim, alright. Pads’ an overgrown puppy if you know him, but Hadrian was so out of it…” This time he waited for Remus’ affirmation. “Yeah, right, a cuddly Grim. That wouldn’t terrify anyone.” He scoffed, half amused half exasperated. It was such a Sirius thing to not realise how his Animagus form, known as a death omen, would be received in such a situation.

“Maybe that’s just it,” Rem suddenly said, still rather pale but with some kind of gleam in his eyes. “You said it yourself: Padfoot is only terrifying if you don’t know him.”

James stared. Peter stuttered.

“So… you’re saying…”

“Hadrian knows. At least he knows about your Animagi.” Remus sat down heavily. “I mean, what about the rest of the drawing? The stag…” He interrupted himself and eyed the second form behind the drawn Grim. It was huge and still rather unshapely, but… “No,” he muttered, blanching even further. James followed his friend’s gaze and made the connection instantly.

“He could have seen us out in the forest,” he tried to reassure, contradicting his own words from before to make his friend feel better, “On that first night, when Moony found him.”

“…after he woke up he asked Madam Pomfrey how I was,” he whispered hoarsely, terrified with the idea of someone knowing his darkest secret. “I- …I thought maybe he might have, but then he didn’t say anything.”

The silence descended again. Remus looking haunted, Peter shifting and glaring and James staring at the ceiling contemplatively.

“The silence descended again. Remus looking haunted, Peter shifting and glaring and James staring at the ceiling contemplatively.

“Okay,” the latter said suddenly, getting up. “If he knows and hasn’t ratted us out yet, there’s only one thing we can do.” He waited just long enough until both his friends looked at him inquisitively and then made a show of opening his arms in a grand gesture:

“We’ll make him one of us. A Marauder.”
He was brought out of his thoughts by a sound he hadn’t heard ever since the day after the last full moon. Hadrian was laughing. Looking over, Remus had no difficulties spotting the reason and found himself smiling softly at the scene unfolding. They had started on the rather difficult topic of human transfiguration and today had been dedicated to Crinus Muto, the spell used to change the colour of one’s hair. (*) Currently Sirius, seated next to Hadrian as had become a fixture, was sporting rainbow coloured eyebrows and enjoying himself splendidly if the waggling and purposeful grimacing were any indication. He was happily making a show of himself and looking pleased with his reception as Hadrian couldn’t seem to stop laughing.

Looking around, for Professor McGonagall was sure to put a stop to the noise disrupting her lesson soon, Remus noticed that nearly everyone present was watching the two. They were trying to be inconspicuous, but he thought it rather obvious. There were surprised looks, exasperated ones, and even some that looked suspiciously fond. Some were jealous, but not overly so, a fact that honestly surprised Remus. He knew that at least Sirius was a popular victim of crushes, but it looked like the fanbase he and Hadrian had unintentionally created had grown dramatically. Some girls were even cooing. Even the professor was stifling a smile, though he was pretty sure it was more aimed at the laughing Hadrian than Sirius. That boy definitely had a knack for bringing out motherly tendencies in women, he thought with a glance at Lily who wasn’t exactly trying to hide her own smile. Well, not only women, if he was honest and with his wolf so close to the surface it was rather hard to deny his own ‘mother henning tendencies’ in regards to Hadrian.

His wolf. That thought brought the anxiousness back. It was Thursday 8th, last lesson of the day. After dinner today he would leave for the hospital wing and as soon as the sun went down, Madam Pomfrey would escort him to the Shrieking Shack. The full moon was tomorrow, but with how active his wolf had been this last week, he had asked to be excused earlier. They would not take any chance with this. But the problem now was still the same: What to tell Hadrian?

Even though they had decided to make the boy a Marauder, to fully welcome him to their group and subsequently let him in officially on their most guarded secrets, they hadn’t actually gone through with it yet. Somehow the perfect moment seemed to constantly evade them and it wasn’t really helping that Sirius was now completely besotted with the other boy. Not that he hadn’t been before, but now he wasn’t trying any longer to keep up the façade of aloofness. He certainly hadn’t tried anything as stupid as that avoiding thing again, though Remus felt quite smug about his own involvement there. He had made sure that Sirius knew exactly what would happen to him if he so much as attempted something like that again.

“So,” the werewolf drawled as he took in the sight of his beaming friend. “You managed to make a comeback.”

Sirius was positively radiant ever since he had gone out to find Hadrian. They had come back together, walking closely and if Remus hadn’t imagined things, holding hands up until they reached the Great Hall. But the squealing that followed their entry had put a stop to this immediately as Hadrian seemed to only then realise what they were doing. He had blushed profusely letting go of Sirius’ hand, who had scowled at the masses for ruining this little bit of intimacy. But his scowl had soon been replaced by the bright grin that he was still sporting now, hours later, sitting in the common room. Maybe the fact that Hadrian had fallen asleep in an armchair near the fire was one of the reasons for this as even Remus could admit the boy looked adorable all curled up and snoozing.
“Well, yes, of course,” Sirius declared self-confidently as if the last day hadn’t happened at all, not even looking away from the cute sight near the fireplace.

“Of course,” Remus said coolly, raising an eyebrow at the Grim Animagus.

His tone finally managed to snap Sirius out of his reverie and he looked up, catching the dark stare his friend was sending his way. There was a moment of tense silence in which Remus stared his idiotic friend down who in turn shifted in his place uncomfortably. It didn’t take long for Sirius to relent.

“He… I think, he has granted me a second chance,” he mumbled, now avoiding Remus’ eyes.

“Hadrian is entirely too nice a person,” the werewolf commented still in the same cool tone of voice. “He is the type to forgive things that should not be forgiven for they shouldn’t have happened in the first place,” he said, now sounding nearly casual, but Sirius wasn’t dumb enough to fall for that. “So he needs someone to take care of the idiots that don’t deserve his forgiveness.”

Sirius actually gulped slightly.

“I’m not gonna make him angry at me again!” he defended, then shuddered. “He told me to insult a Hippogriff, for Godric’s sake!” Though Hadrian had looked sexier than anyone should be allowed when angry…

“Hm,” Remus acknowledged seemingly disinterested, turning back to his book, “I’ve heard werewolves are equally vicious as insulted Hippogriffs.”

It had also been rather helpful that Lily seemed determined to keep an eye on Sirius’ behaviour, too. Remus had wondered if it was the creature allure or the way those two had met during that fateful Potions lesson, but Lily Evans was quite dedicated to protect Hadrian. It was the kind of protection that consisted mainly of her not-to-be-underestimated wrath should anyone, read Sirius, dare to hurt the boy. And well, none of the Marauders were willing to chance that, not with their track record concerning the surprisingly vicious redhead. Hadrian himself seemed to be oblivious to it all, not that Remus was surprised about that. He had suspected him to be of the thick type whenever emotions or social interactions came into play and wasn’t that just screaming trouble if paired with someone like Sirius?

Sighing, Remus packed his things neatly into his bag. The lesson was ending and he felt antsy. Exchanging glances with James, the two of them got up to go meet Peter. Sirius and Hadrian were sure to take their time anyway.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Crinus Muto is the incantation of a Transfiguration spell that can be used to transform the colour and style of (body)hair.

Say... do you have favourite scenes in this story? I for example loved writing the scene in which Moony finds Harry (chapter 7).
There had been another attack. It was in the special issue of the Daily Prophet that sailed in during dinner, immediately followed by a hush that settled over the Great Hall ominously. The look on Rem’s face said it all and the paling of his best mate who was reading over his shoulder was probably even more telling. James wasn’t one to easily be shocked after all. Sirius was torn between wanting to know what exactly was going on and shielding Hadrian from the knowledge. For all he knew it would trigger another panic attack and that would ultimately reveal his creature heritage if it went down in the middle of the Great Hall.

A bit down the table a girl started crying and he could hear more than one of the Hufflepuffs sobbing quietly. Okay, this was obviously more serious than all the other attacks if it was able to break through the stoic indifference that most of Hogwarts had adopted ever since this all started. His gaze wandered to Hadrian as did his hand. He grabbed a hold of the other’s bird bone fingers, not sure if he wanted to drag him out of here or hold on for comfort. Hadrian had been surveying the hall with wide eyes taking everything in, but at the contact his gaze snapped back to Sirius. The unspoken question in the for once unveiled eyes took the decision from him. He couldn’t shield Hadrian from this. Sirius just hoped he could fight off the possible flashbacks.

Harry looked up at the incoming owls in surprise and then trepidation. Sure, it wasn’t the first time the Daily Prophet had published a special edition, but it never spelled anything positive. He remembered all too well how these editions always spoke of things he could have lived without – like special issues about him and his newest misstep. Or they brought news of horrible occurrences that had a huge impact on the whole Wizarding World.

The hush that fell over the Great Hall only confirmed the feeling. Something had happened. Looking over at Remus, the one in this group that had latched onto the paper the moment it flashed into existence, he watched the emotions that played across his friend’s face. James was reading over Remus’ shoulder and even Pettigrew was taking interest in the article. He looked up again at the sound of someone crying and took in the reactions throughout the hall. Harry knew this kind of atmosphere and felt like an idiot for not recognising it earlier. There had been more than one article in the cursed newspaper that spoke of horrible things, he was quite sure of that. Yet Harry had not really taken notice of it all, too caught up in his own little world. Thinking about it now it was rather obvious, really.

He had known about the First Wizarding War officially beginning sometime in the 70s, had heard first hand from the Marauders about the political situation at the moment, and had even read that one article about the attack on a Muggleborn and his family. Then there were other hints, little things that could easily be overseen by someone not familiar with this time, like the low student rate for one. It was likely many parents deemed the current atmosphere too dangerous to leave their children out of sight. Sitting there now, Harry couldn’t understand how he had not noticed the ever present undercurrent of tension that was now more visible in the way students were openly showing their distress. The strained tension in the air all this time he had been here… it was like everyone had been holding their breath, too afraid to breathe freely.

Hogwarts was a safe haven for the students like it had been in his time, or it was supposed to be. The horrors that wrecked havoc outside of these walls were more easily ignored in the steady rhythm of school, safe and sound, away from it all. It was how it should be considering that they were all
children, yet Harry knew it wasn’t to be. Their families were out there. He had no idea if there already was an established front, if Voldemort was acting openly or ‘only’ terrorizing from the shadows through his Death Eaters. How was the Ministry’s stand in all this? Were they ignoring the threat like they had back in Harry’s time? Was that maybe the reason the Order of the Phoenix had been brought into being? He cursed in his head for being so ignorant. A touch to his hand brought him out of his self-deprecating thoughts and his eyes met Sirius’.

Tugging Hadrian into his side, Sirius leaned over the table to address their friends.

“What is it?” His voice was low as he waited for them to finish reading. The hush that had fallen over everyone present slowly tapered off into whispers and near silent sobs. Even the professors looked shaken but made no move to address the student body.

“Another attack,” Remus confirmed the obvious, his voice bitter. “Multiple attacks in Tinworth. (*)& Many deaths. Carnage.” Sirius’ gaze snapped to Prongs.

“That’s where…” His best mate nodded. “Go. Write your parents.”

James looked uncertain for a second, but then shook his head.

“They aren’t supposed to be in Cornwall yet,” he said determinedly.

Harry wasn’t quite sure what to make of the conversation until James mentioned Cornwall. Oh. Right. The Potter mansion was apparently located there, at least the letter from Lord Potter had invited him there for the winter solstice. From what James said it seemed to be more of a vacation home… And why had he never heard about the Potter mansion (or mansions?) anyway? The look on James’ face, though, made any thoughts in that direction unimportant. His friend was bravely trying to hide the worry, but to Harry and the rest of the Marauders it was plainly visible. Remus looked at the head table for a moment and when none of the professors made any indication of wanting to say something he got up, tugging James along.

“Come on,” he said softly, sending Harry his own worried glance, “Let’s get out of here.”

They spent the rest of the evening huddled together in front of one of the fireplaces in the common room. The atmosphere was subdued and strangely dreamlike. Harry felt reminded of the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, everyone seemed to move as if underwater. He briefly wondered if it was the shock they all felt, but he couldn’t help but feel rather detached from it all. To him there was no difference between this attack and the one he had read about that day he had overheard Remus and Sirius talking about Animagus mates – they were both horrible and shouldn’t have happened in the first place. Yet, looking at James’ pale faced worry, valiantly hidden behind his customary grin, he understood that this attack was more personal for the Marauders. Literally closer to home.

What he could not quite grasp was the reaction of all the other students. Sure, there had to be some with relatives in Tinworth as it was one of the few magical villages throughout Britain, but the overall shock was just… Maybe the fear and worry and distress had been there all along and this had just been the last drop to tip the barrel over?

The warm weight of Sirius’ arm around his shoulders was comfortable and in the strange dreamlike atmosphere Harry had no problem snuggling a bit closer. The arm tightened its hold and he felt Sirius nose briefly at his hair. He didn’t even blush, he just felt warm and cared for. He could nearly hear Mrs. Weasley saying how family moved closer together in times like these and wondered… The flash of a camera jostled Harry out of his slightly dazed musings and he looked up at a smiling Lily. Next to him Sirius grinned brightly at the redhead, obviously unconcerned with being the target of...
her Creevey-like tendencies.

“You were looking so cute just now,” she declared, “That I just had to preserve it for the future.”

Harry blinked. Then blushed. Then shuddered a second later as he realised that there now existed a photography showing him in a time he wasn’t supposed to be in. Not to mention the little fact that he had been cuddling with the person that was supposed to become his godfather. He didn’t get the chance to comment though as James crowed from his seat at the sight of his crush and the whole group dissolved into laughter listening to his saucy remarks and Lily’s snide answers. Harry smiled.

It was much later when they finally ascended the stairs to their dorm. Harry sighed as he stretched his hands high up above his head and felt his joints pop slightly. He snorted silently. He felt quite a bit out of practice what with the lack of any Quidditch training or even the labour he used to do at his relatives’ house. Opening his trunk to look for some sleeping clothes, he felt the eyes on his back and hid a smile. Sirius was watching him again and for once it didn’t make Harry uncomfortable. In fact, he rather enjoyed it… somewhat. He would probably never be completely happy with being watched in any way, but Sirius really went out of his way to convince him of his sincere intentions. The thought made him blush and he didn’t even realise he was staring at the piles of clothes unmoving as he thought back on all the time the two of them had spent together this last week. Sirius was really trying, but Harry was just so scared of all the what-ifs...

What if he let this happen and then Sirius decided Harry wasn’t what he wanted anymore? It had been easy for him to turn his back once, hadn't it? Why not do it again.

What if they did this and then Harry botched it up? He was horribly unskilled in anything social, wasn't he? He was a nightmare to be around and... What if he died in his conquest of defeating Voldemort and left Sirius behind?

What if they tried this dating thing only to realise that it wouldn't work without Remus as a buffer?

What if he had to return to the future?

Remus watched Sirius stare at the stretching Hadrian and shared a grin with James. They all had watched their friend’s unsuccessful attempts at creating a bit more intimacy, yet the cuddle this evening was the most Sirius had been able to get. It was somehow sad that it took a terrorist attack for those two to finally get some contact in their budding relationship. Looking at the rising moon and then over at the daydreaming Hadrian, Remus nervously tugged at his sleeve. He had wanted to go down to the infirmary early this month because of the activity his wolf was exhibiting, but with the attack he hadn’t wanted to be alone or leave his friends, especially James, behind. As he hadn’t talked to Madam Pomfrey about it beforehand, no one would come for him, but that didn’t mean the anxiousness had stopped. Now that the shock of the article had worn off somewhat, he felt his wolf shifting again, closely beneath the surface and eager to come out and play.

That was the most curious though. His wolf was active, yes, much more active and influential on Remus’ own behaviour than it had been for years. But for some unidentified reason it didn’t feel as volatile as it used to be. Moony seemed to be more on the playful side, like a hyperactive puppy maybe. Sure, he had to fight down more aggressions than normal, but overall the feeling was different. It was as if... as if... Remus’ gaze landed back on Hadrian and he felt himself calm a bit.

Yes, it was as if he was more in tune with the wolf, leaving him more at the mercy of his emotions yet more in control as well, if that made any sense. He had a feeling he would be able to learn to adept to the stronger influence. The question now though was: Did he want to be so much in tune...
with the monster inside of him?

Sirius watched Hadrian move across the room and then traced that delicious back with a smouldering stare. Bloody hell, he wanted to walk over there and just wrap that boy in his arms. He wanted to press close and maybe hide his face in the sooty black locks again or trace the thin neck with his nose to take in that scent… damn that scent! Sitting in front of the fire with Hadrian in his arms, or well, at least cuddled up to him, had been near perfect. The boy’s scent had surrounded him as if enhanced by the heat of the flames and Sirius had felt himself calm. It was like nothing could touch him in that moment.

Seeing Hadrian staring down into his trunk brought a sudden grin to Sirius’ lips. Wandering over, he looked over the slightly hunched shoulder and grinned even broader at what he spotted. He had yet to see his boy in more of the clothes they had bought at Hogsmeade. Hadrian wore the jeans, yeah, but he mostly hid them under Sirius’ wide jumper, completely obscuring the view of his cute little bum and a good portion of his slender legs. That had to change, if Sirius had any say in the matter.

Reaching down, he ignored the startled sound Hadrian made and caught his prize. Pyjama pants with winking cupcakes swayed with the movement and Sirius prepared himself to employ his best puppy eyes.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Tinworth in Cornwall is listed as a half-magical village near the coast. Shell Cottage (home of Bill Weasley and Fleur Delacour) is located in the outskirts of Tinworth.

Next chapter it’s the full moon!
In which the moon rises

Harry scowled. Oh he knew the others were trying to be sneaky and oh so unobtrusive with their silent conversations, but hey. Even he knew it was the full moon, not to mention the little fact that Remus had excused himself after dinner, saying he wasn’t feeling well, unable to look Harry in the eyes. Frankly, Harry had been surprised he had stayed that long what with his increasing uneasiness these last days. He still remembered his adult version being always so very careful and afraid...

Though it undeniably hurt that they were lying to him, he at least knew and understood the reason. And honestly, he was one to talk. No, the real reason Harry was scowling was winking up at him from his legs. He had no idea how Sirius had managed it, but after standing his ground yesterday and refusing to wear the ridiculous pyjama pants, Harry had been forced to give in today. The moment he had opened his trunk this evening he had known something was very very wrong – there was nothing in there other than his cloaks, underwear and books. And wasn’t it convenient that James had spilled pumpkin juice over Harry’s whole front during dinner? He still reeked of the sweet beverage even now.

Harry had looked up from his trunk and was met with a snickering James, a somewhat grumpily malicious Pettigrew and a gleefully grinning Sirius. No words were needed when the Grim Animagus pointed at Harry’s bed towards an innocently waiting bundle of clothes. Freaking winking cupcakes, Gryffindor’s hairy bottom! If he didn’t want to sleep in only his underwear – and nope, he so not wanted to do that here and he knew they knew that – Harry had to wear the pyjama Sirius had bought for him in Hogsmeade. No amount of bargaining helped his case with these three. If Remus were here then maybe Harry would be spared the humiliation of having his clothes chosen for him like a toddler, not to mention the BLOODY WINKING CUPCAKES!

In the end, Harry had relented, scooped the pyjama up, and hid himself away in the en suite to change and get a look at himself before anyone else. Sirius had looked slightly disappointed with this, but really, even after over a month here, Harry just didn’t feel comfortable with changing in front of the others. He had no issues with them changing in the dorm, he had lived in this very dorm with a bunch of boys before after all, though he had noticed himself curiously turning his back more often than not these last two weeks.

The pyjama wasn’t bad at all if one overlooked the design. It was really comfortable on a level that Harry supposed came with magical production means. Though the moving design was highly distracting (And wasn’t there some kind of charm to stop the winking?), the overall form was fitting him just fine. Wide enough without looking oversized, tight enough without being too revealing for his taste like those trice damned jeans and jumpers. Harry sighed.

It hadn’t even been as horrible as he had thought it would be to come out of the en suite dressed like that. Though Pettigrew had started laughing in a condescending way that no one else seemed to notice, and James had happily snickered before making a remark (something about sweets and bums in general), it all drifted into the background when Harry looked up at Sirius. His… friend had smiled at him with a gentleness that had made Harry’s heart flutter. He hadn’t expected to get this kind of reaction, he had honestly thought it was meant as a prank. But looking at him like that, Sirius looked anything but a prankster. He looked like he was earnestly happy that Harry wore the clothes he had provided him with. So Harry had tentatively smiled back and hurried to get into bed. No need to showcase the embarrassing pyjama any more than necessary. He had wondered for a moment if he
should keep his curtains open just to be sure he would notice the Marauders leaving at moon rise, but
decided against it. There was no reason to make it needlessly complicated for them and he didn’t
want Remus to be alone if it could be avoided. He had closed his curtains after wishing everyone a
good night and then proceeded to stare at the bit of dark cloudy sky he could see from his lying
position.

That had been hours ago.

Harry yawned silently and rubbed at his eyes. His eyesight was amazing even without light or
actually... especially without light. He had bloody night vision! How he hadn’t noticed this before
was beyond him, though he hadn’t really been that much out and about after his inheritance had
finally been over with. He watched the subtle blinking of a starry sky hidden behind thick clouds and
wondered if Remus already was stalking the Shrieking Shack in his furry form.

Finally there was a subtle shifting of fabric and the telltale creaking of a mattress. Harry was tired,
but he really wanted to see the Animagi he had heard so many stories about. Though, now that he
thought about it, it was rather unlikely for them to shift here in the dorm and he so wanted to see
them up close. It just was something else entirely to see Prongs in flesh than as his Patronus – like
seeing his father in person opposed to in pictures had been. Listening closely, he just barely managed
to close his eyes and try breathing evenly in time as suddenly his curtains shifted. Someone was
checking on him and even though he couldn’t be sure, Harry thought he felt Sirius’ presence. Now,
don’t blush...

“Pads,” James’ voice drifted over from a few feet away, nothing more but a barely there whisper yet
still audible in the overall silence of the castle. “He’s gonna be fine. Move it.”

Harry barely refrained from holding his breath. He could feel the gaze on him, knew Sirius was
looking at him closely. Did he know that Harry was only faking sleep? That thought sparked the
question how Harry normally looked like when asleep. Judging by the tangles his sheets were in
every morning, he was a restless sleeper and he knew Sirius had seen him at least twice sleeping. For
a second Harry thought Sirius were about to touch him, but a clumsy move somewhere farther in the
room interrupted whatever had been about to happen. He heard the distant voice of James
(“Wormy!”) and felt Sirius shift away. As the curtains fell back into place, Harry risked a slitted gaze
but refrained from moving. He waited with baited breath until he clearly heard the door open and
close. There were no more noises of moving, not even footsteps and Harry marvelled at the
Marauders’ efficiency before he realised they must have cast silencing spells on themselves. Clever.
Much cleverer than he had been in his nightly roaming of Hogwarts back in his time.

Waiting the next few minutes just to be absolutely sure, Harry wondered if he could risk following
them even if he hadn’t planned on doing so. After all, he could still clearly remember the situation
with a rogue Moony in his third year and knew it would be absolutely dumb to risk running after
them now. Yet, he so wanted to see them and just the knowledge that they were now out there…
What if he somehow managed to keep his distance and just observed?

Sitting up, Harry moved to the nearest window and peered down on the grounds. Even with his
greatly enhanced vision he was barely able to discern anything. Hogwarts’ grounds were draped in
the absolute darkness that only existed in regions without any artificial lighting and under an overcast
sky. It might be the full moon, but its light was hidden behind mountains of clouds. No movement
registered and Harry wondered if they were already in the shack or even in the forest by now. In
their Animagi forms they sure would be faster than on two legs. If only- …Smacking the palm of his
hand against his forehead, Harry groaned at his own stupidity.

“I know it must be somewhere around here,” he mumbled as he looked around the dark dorm
searchingly. “They probably didn’t take it with them…”

But he didn’t want to look through their stuff even if they obviously had no such qualms considering his still rather empty trunk. Oh well. He was a wizard after all. Harry reached for his wand, silently sighing at the familiar warmth that spread along his skin at the contact, and risked summoning the Marauder’s Map. If they had taken it along, well… He knew his magic was easily strong enough to summon a familiar object from a great distance, after all it had been able to do so even long before his inheritance. Quenching any thoughts of the Triwizard Tournament, Harry 'listened' a bit anxiously for the little nudge in his magic that meant it had latched onto the summoned object. It would blow his cover entirely, if… but he wasn’t disappointed. The map came flying at him from somewhere behind Remus’ curtains.

“I solemnly swear I am up to no good.”

The words tumbled from his lips and Harry watched the map unravel. If the Marauders were still on Hogwarts’ grounds, meaning not yet in the Shrieking Shack or the Forbidden Forest, he would see them. Maybe he could sneak up to the Astronomy tower or any other outlook that would grant him the view he needed. He sighed again. The chance was slim, especially after taking so long to come up with the idea. There was no reason for them to be around any more, but maybe he could watch them on their way back? The map would alert him the moment they came onto monitored ground and he could catch a glimpse from some hiding point. He didn’t stop to think about how he would get back into the tower before them.

Making himself comfortable once again, Harry studied the map by the light of his wand, watching the prefects on their rounds and the random professor moving in their quarters. The names were mostly unfamiliar and he settled in for a long wait. That was until he noticed one name that he connected with warm memories and realised he had one more familiar person in this time that he hadn’t seen yet.

There was still movement in Hagrid’s hut.

Chapter End Notes

Alright. I'm evil.
Just like with Hogsmeade the full moon will occupy more than one chapter.
In which Harry is a scatterbrain. And sticky.

A shadow ran through the trees, huge, furry form panting, the sound of big paws stirring up fallen leaves…

Harry woke up with a start and blinked furiously as his view blurred for a moment. He was in a half lying half sitting position on his bed, the Marauder’s Map having dropped to the side somehow and still actively showing the castle’s layout. He had nodded off.

Rubbing at his eyes, Harry looked around nervously, but breathed a sigh of relief a second later. It was this moment directly before dawn, he recognised, when the stars had dulled and everything was washed in grey. His sleep addled mind pondered a moment over the term to name that explicit moment before sunrise that wasn’t dawn yet, but a movement in the corner of his eye broke him out of it. The map. It was still dark, but the moon must have paled considerably by now, meaning Moony would be back in the shack and the Marauders… It was eerily silent, no rustling sheets or snores, indicating that he was still alone.

He got up, made sure that the curtains around his bed were closed and pulled on his shoes hurriedly. Harry sneaked down the stairs, relieved to see that no one was up and about in the common room, and left Gryffindor Tower. Time to find himself a good vantage point to take a look at the Animagi he so wanted to see.

The moon had been strange. If he hadn’t known Moony so well and accompanied him for so long, he probably wouldn’t have noticed, but still… It wasn’t like the werewolf was less ferocious or volatile just less… angry? Yes, that was it. Moony seemed more at ease and Padfoot had to remind himself more than once that it didn’t make the wolf any less dangerous. He could still turn feral any second or lose it over a scent he had caught.

With all the struggling Remus had done with his wolf this last week, Padfoot had honestly expected an even more savage Moony, yet here they were on their way back from the shack where they had left a sleeping Rem just marginally scratched up. In comparison to how they and Rem normally looked after a full moon it was laughable. Now Padfoot couldn’t wait to crawl in his bed and sleep until way after midday if possible. Of course not without checking on his Bambi first.

They smelled him long before they were in visibility range. The smell of the spilled pumpkin juice was still clinging to the boy’s skin and Padfoot would have recognised his mate’s scent anyway. He growled at the implications of smelling Hadrian out in the grounds at this time and motioned Prongs to follow him as he veered from their current path back to the castle. He changed back to human form the moment they were out of sight of any windows.

“Did I just smell pumpkin juice?” His best mate asked while setting down Wormtail who promptly changed back too. Of course, a stag’s sense of smell was probably even better than a Grim’s, but James hadn’t scented Hadrian in his Animagus form yet.

“Yes, Hadrian’s somewhere up ahead,” Sirius confirmed with a sigh. “And here I thought dousing him in that sticky juice and forcing the pants he loathes so much on him would prevent him from leaving.”
They had concocted the plan on a whim, some kind of last minute decision to discourage Hadrian from following them should he wake up while they were gone. They knew how embarrassed he was about wearing the cupcake pyjama and had somewhat gullibly hoped it would stop him from being about where anyone could see him. Now though that he had the time to think about it, Sirius thought it funny if it weren’t for the shiver the thought of Hadrian around school grounds during the full moon gave him. Cupcakes as safeguards. James gave him a Look.

“Did you honestly just say ‘dousing him in that sticky juice’?”

He had tried finding a window that would grant him a good look out on the grounds, but soon realised it just wasn’t what he wanted. Gazing out of one of the windows, high up so he could overlook the lawn bordering on the forest, wouldn’t allow him a close enough view even with his amazing eyesight. He wasn’t an actual owl after all. With the sun still behind the horizon and everything drained off colour all Harry would be able to see were some moving lumps and he doubted the Marauders would move near the castle in their Animagi forms.

So he had slunk down the stairs, masterfully avoiding a strangely mellow Mrs. Norris (Or however the caretaker’s cat of this decade was called) and moving out in the dying night. It was frigid, he realised with a frustrated groan, and looked down at himself. Of course he would forget to bring a cloak, of course he would forget the bloody cupcakes! Cheeks burning from embarrassment and cold, Harry determinedly moved across the dewy grass. He would hide somewhere near Hagrid’s hut just for the possibility someone caught him. He could say he had wanted to visit Hagrid, right? Right.

Harry found himself a hidden corner near the tree line and checked the Marauder’s Map again- shit. He had left the map up in the tower. On his bed. Fuck.

He was stealthily moving through the trees ever nearer his little Bambi’s hiding place. It was cute how Hadrian thought he could hide from them, he was a Grim after all, a bloody dog! Nothing compared to his sense of smell. Well, maybe a stag’s, but that was neither here nor there. Then again, maybe the boy didn’t really know that. It was possible that he just woke up and found the dorm empty and decided to look around.

Right. Wouldn’t explain why he was hiding outside near the forest as if waiting for something. But that was just why Padfoot was weaving his way through the shadows right now, sneaking up on Hadrian, and waiting for Prongs to make a nice impression of an actual deer grazing on Hogwarts’ grounds.

There! Harry’s head snapped up from where he had been shifting from foot to foot silently trying to get the feeling back into his toes. There, making no sound at all, appearing like a ghost out of the morning’s mist, was a regal looking stag. Its antlers swaying majestically as the large animal seemingly unaware of its surroundings nipped at the fresh grass.

Harry frowned.

That definitely looked like his Patronus, but then again it was hard to compare considering that his charm was a glowing animal spirit. This was an actual stag, just as huge as his Patronus, but it didn’t act like he was used to from Sirius’ Animagus form. This stag acted just like actual deer, grazing peacefully with seemingly no human mannerisms. And if this was Prongs then where were Padfoot and Wormtail? He wondered if he would be able to concentrate on a magical signature from this
distance...

CRACK.

Harry whirled around to the sound coming from the nearby trees. Heart rate speeding up, his hand crept to his wand. This was the Forbidden Forest after all, even if he was hiding in the thinner outskirts. Who really knew what hid in these shadows? His eyes scanned his surroundings, having much less problems to distinguish trees and bushes from anything maybe lurking in the dark than he was used to.

THUMP.

Harry grabbed tightly onto his wand and moved his back against a thick tree, gaze roaming nervously. He couldn’t see anything, but he felt the eyes on him, felt something watching him. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end and his crest feathers flattened themselves to his head. He could hear his loud and frantic heartbeat, but his breathing was calm. He felt the familiar rush of adrenaline that came with the experience of living for years with the danger of a dark lord after his blood and a ridiculous penchant for getting himself into trouble.

Harry gasped nearly inaudible when he caught the movement in the corner of his eye. Wand raised he moved his feet slightly apart, lowering himself in a fighting stance on instinct. Wide owl eyes zeroing in on a shadow running through the trees, huge, furry form panting, the sound of big paws stirring up fallen leaves… The cold crept into Harry’s limbs like someone had just tossed him into the Black Lake. This… this…!

He jumped nearly a foot high as the dark form suddenly emerged from the darkness, eerily glowing yellow eyes focused on him, disturbingly sharp looking teeth bared in a ferocious snarl. For a moment nothing moved, Harry stared at the huge furry form, thumping of his heart in his ears, breathing suspiciously even in the eye of danger, and glowing feral eyes fixed on him.

Then the huge black dog just turned and vanished in the trees.

Harry stared after him for a long moment.

“Oh right, a Grim,” he finally caught himself a second later.

He realised belatedly what was going on and tried to look frightened, but couldn’t really pull it off with the reflexive warmth pouring into him at the sight of Padfoot. For a moment there he thought he miscalculated the time and Moony… He shook his head in slight hilarity, both in reaction to himself and the Marauders’ interpretation of an interrogation.

“Right,” he cleared his throat, “I’d better kick the bucket then,” Harry muttered sarcastically to himself. He hadn’t intended for anyone to hear that little bout of gallows humour, death omen and all that, but he thought he heard the distinct sound of someone half drawing in a breath in shock, half snorting in exasperated amusement. Well, so much for him seeing his dad’s Animagus up close.

“Did you see my Owlet’s reaction?” Sirius gushed the moment he found the others at their agreed meeting point and had changed back to his human form. “Oh I bet he could be vicious if he wanted to,” he swooned dramatically leaning against a tree.

Wormy was busy scowling at the castle and subsequently Hadrian in the distance. He didn’t like to be caught by their new friend, but Sirius honestly couldn’t care less. He felt like a huge weight had been lifted off his shoulders.
“Your little ‘Owlet’ didn’t even twitch at seeing a Grim, mate,” James said uncharacteristically serious. “I’d say it’s pretty safe to say the Puffskein’s out of the bag. (*)” He sighed and rubbed a hand through his hair, making it stick up in all directions. “You know what that means,” he added.

“What? No way!” Peter screeched, finally snapping his attention back to his friends. “You can’t be sure he really knows. Maybe he’s just too dumb to realise it was a Grim and just thought…”

Sirius frowned at the insult to his soon-to-be-boyfriend.

“Wormy,” James sighed annoyed. “He knows. Suck it up.”

Chapter End Notes

You know, I wrote more than once ‘fool moon’ instead of ‘full moon’.

(*) Puffskein: A popular pet, spherical in shape and covered in soft fur. Puffskeins do not object to being cuddled or thrown about.
In which Harry is cold

Harry waited for a few more moments, but when nothing moved and no sound other than the slowly waking birds was heard, he decided to go back to the castle. As far as he had seen, the others hadn’t gone back yet so maybe he would at least be able to hide the map back with Remus’ stuff. He shivered as he stumbled his way back up to the towering dark walls, his feet and legs feeling slightly numb from the damp cold. It was seeping through the fabric of his pyjama, clinging to his skin and hair, but Harry’s mind was fixed on what had just happened.

They knew.

The Marauders knew that he knew about them.

It was the only explanation he could come up with for what had just transpired and even though Harry dreaded the conversation that was sure to follow he couldn’t help the relief coursing through him. He was so tired of always lying and hiding. Maybe now that at least the Animagus issue was out of the way he could allow himself to… He was in fact so focused on his relief that he noticed too late that the entrance hall wasn’t as empty as it had been before.

“So,” James said carefully, “How’re we going about this?”

They were still hiding between the trees, watching the sun rise. James couldn’t stop torturing his already frazzled hair, Peter was continuously pacing and Sirius… well, he was still lounging casually against a tree, grinning madly.

“How about not at all…,” Peter was muttering, annoyed that no one seemed to acknowledge his perfectly rational reasoning.

“Well, we should tell him of course,” Sirius talked over Peter as if he hadn’t heard him. Which he had, but for the moment he decided to ignore the rat Animagus. That was an issue he would have to confront another time, right now they needed to decide how to act when returning to the tower. Hadrian knew! Most of Sirius was just so damn glad he wouldn’t have to hide from someone so close to him anymore, not that he had been particularly careful in hiding this specific secret. The rest of him, a not-so-surprisingly rather small part, was wondering how Hadrian knew, if it had been his own carelessness or if there was more. After all…

“Yes, just…” James agitatedly ran his hands through his hair yet again, “It’s as much Moony’s secret as it is ours. We shouldn’t do this without him.”

After all Hadrian seemed to know so much more than he should be able to know. What if he not only knew about their Animagi but also why they had chosen to find their spirit animals in the first place?

“What if we, you know, just admit to the Animagus thing?” Sirius looked at the castle in the distance and wondered if Hadrian had gone back inside. He hoped so. “I mean… we could let him do the talking and wait what he actually knows.”

He wasn’t happy with this, he wanted Hadrian to know it all. But he understood where Prongs was coming from and he did consider himself just as much Rem’s ‘guard’ as the others did. They had sworn to protect their friend’s secret, they couldn’t just reveal it to someone even if this someone was their friend and seemed to already know. If anyone had the right to do this, it was Rem and Rem
“So we just… go up there all casual and wait for him to start talking?”

Sirius shrugged. It was better than staying outside any longer. It was way too cold for a picnic in the forest and he didn’t see any food around either. If they waited much longer they could just walk straight into the Great Hall for breakfast and he honestly would prefer at least a hot shower beforehand – he had a reputation to live up to.

“A-and what if he really knows? He could try to blackmail us with this!”

This time Sirius snorted. Where did Wormy get these kinds of ideas from? Seriously, this was Hadrian they were talking about. That boy wouldn’t be able to blackmail a Death Eater, let alone his own friends. He was far too sweet for something like that. James gasped dramatically.

“Yeah, what if?” He asked mock-horrified, eyes wide and arms flailing. “Woe is me! Er… us, you know what I mean. Whatever, just… blackmail? Really, Wormy?”

They watched as their chubby little friend flushed an unhealthy shade of red, looking somewhere between embarrassed, nervous and surprisingly annoyed. What was going on with all this antagonism towards Hadrian anyway?

“Alright, gents,” Sirius swooped up with some overly dramatic flare and turned towards the castle, “As nice and dandy as this discussion is, I for one want out of this dampness and into a warm fluffy bed, preferably that of a cute little Bambi, but hey even I can’t have it all.” He stretched once and winked back at his friends. “Well, not yet anyway.”

The office was cold. It wasn’t his first time in here though he mostly had avoided ending up in this particular room in his own time. His ‘own time’ …what a strange thing to say. He felt a shiver wreak through his body as he was roughly forced down on the rickety chair in front of the laden dusty table. There were rows upon rows of yellowed parchment in the shelves that lined the walls and even more dust seemed to hang from the ceiling, clinging to the corners and the lonely oil lamp. Harry wasn’t particularly queasy about dirt what with his upbringing, but even he had to wonder if Filch had maybe insulted Hogwarts’ house-elves.

He was shivering by now, his hands and feet hurting from the cold and he could have sworn his nose was slowly turning from red to blue. But that was probably only his imagination. Squinting at his nose, he didn’t really listen to the grouchy man in front of him ranting about disrespectful students that were out to torment him. Harry just wanted to crawl into his bed or better yet get a hot shower and then crawl into his bed, preferably without having to talk to the Marauders. Sure, he was somewhat glad that at least some things were now out in the open, but that didn’t make it easier to explain how he knew in the first place.

Shivering yet again, Harry pondered if he could get away with having seen Padfoot back in the shack when he was in the early stages of his inheritance. If he was honest, he had no idea if the whole snuggly Grim thing maybe had just been his feverish imagination, his distressed mind wishing for the company of the one person he had lost most recently.

No, no, don’t go down that road…

Looking up, Harry stared at Filch with dull eyes. The man was still ranting, now though he was contemplating possible ways to punish Harry for his supposed wrongdoing, threateningly rattling with the chains he was infamous for keeping in his office. Why was he here listening to that man in
the first place? It wasn’t like anything much could happen to him if he didn’t listen to the caretaker, now could it? Yes, sure, Filch could go to McGonagall – if he even knew Harry was a Gryffindor – or maybe to the headmaster, but honestly… that didn’t scare Harry as much as it probably was supposed to. Now that Filch was no longer holding him in that vicelike grip, there was nothing that stopped Harry from just leaving. If Filch then went and reported him… so what? He would get a detention and that was that, in for a knut, in for a galleon and all that jazz.

It wasn’t like there would be Umbridge with a blood quill waiting for him.

Making up his mind, Harry decided that sitting here freezing really wasn’t worth it. He would leave. Now, just how to distract the man enough that he could make a run for it?

“That’s…” Nope, he couldn’t say it. There really wasn’t any logical explanation for this. Or was there?

Staring down at the Marauder’s Map he had just fished from Hadrian’s – still unoccupied - bed, Sirius wracked his brain for a logical reason, anything, that could explain how the boy not only knew of their secret project but also obviously had the needed password to activate it. If none of them had told him about it there really was no way Hadrian could know the activating phrase for the Marauder’s Map.

“How for Merlin’s saggy left-”

“Oh I knew it! He’s a magic forsaken bastard, that’s what he is!”

Stomping around their dorm, making more noise than any of the other dorms around would appreciate for sure, Peter was raving about this newest discovery. For once no one was interrupting him as Remus, the most sensitive when it came to vulgarities, wasn’t present and James and Sirius were just too stunned to react.

Upon coming to their dorm they had all expected to find Hadrian, maybe in the en suite or feigning sleep or whatever. But the room had been silent. Sirius had been the one to finally glance behind Hadrian’s closed curtains, only to find the bed empty. Empty but for one certain piece of parchment, that is. So now they were not only confronted with the knowledge that their newest friend knew about them being Animagi but that he also knew about another project they had never told anyone about.

“He’s gone grassing on us, I told you he would do something like that!”

“Pads.” Prongs’ voice sounded a bit gruff in its attempt to hide the uncertainty they were all feeling. “This is more than a coincidence.”

Sirius was still staring intently at the parchment in his hand. How was this possible? Was Hadrian really gone to rat them out to a professor like Wormy suggested? But then why would he leave the evidence behind? Funny enough though, Sirius didn’t really care what it was. He didn’t care if Hadrian knew all their dirty or not so dirty little secrets, because it was Hadrian – and that really should have scared him, right?

“Lying little shit!”

But it didn’t. He was wondering about it, yes, and he definitely would question the boy as soon as possible, but… right now, all he really wanted to know was why Hadrian wasn’t here where it was warm. He had seen it, after all - the way the cold had been getting to him in that winking pyjama. It had been so obvious out there in the forest that for a moment Sirius, or Padfoot at that moment, had
been fighting the urge to drag Hadrian somewhere nice and most of all make sure he was warm. He had read Muggles liked to use body heat in such a case…

“Hold your Hippogriffs, gents,” Sirius finally interrupted the Peter-induced mayhem, waving the map around. “We just have to look, now don’t we?”

Prongs stared at him a second before he snorted in an exasperated way, shaking his head.

“Whatever you say, mate,” he yawned and shrugged out of his cold clothes, grabbing something dry along the way, clearly not in the mood for anymore drama. “And while you’re at it, I’m making sure the shower didn’t miss me too much.”

Peter glared at them both, but stopped his rant. He seemed angry but was more than anything twitching nervously as he inched his way over to Sirius. The latter was now checking the map for one wayward Bambi, only to utter an astonished expletive a moment later.

“Now that’s interesting…”
In which there is some owlnapping

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all those lovely comments to the last chapter. <3
For the drama!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He was running up the stairs, slightly stumbling on his numb legs. The cold really got to him this time. Hearing the panting breath of one Argus Filch not too far behind him reminded Harry again that this caretaker was at least twenty years younger than the one he was used to and damn why did he have to be so out of shape himself?

His heartbeat loud in his ears and his own breath much shorter than he would have liked, Harry dove for one of the secret passageways. He didn’t hesitate to run down the shortcut, not stopping to look back to check if Filch had noticed. There was a good chance that the man knew a lot of the supposed secrets of Hogwarts. Turning yet another corner, Harry suddenly stumbled over a raised stone or something and with a shout tumbled down to the ground.

Only that the impact never came.

In its stead a hand suddenly clamped down over Harry’s mouth and a strong arm wound itself around his waist, hoisting him up. He froze for all but two seconds before instinct set in and Harry started to struggle. He couldn’t reach his wand in this position, but that didn’t mean he couldn’t fight back. Clawing at the arms and kicking at his attacker, Harry had a moment of triumph when he heard a pained grunt as his foot made contact with… something. But it wasn’t enough. He was dragged back behind a tapestry and down another shortcut, one that was barely lit as there were no windows or torches around.

Finally his attacker seemed to have enough of Harry’s struggles or maybe they had reached their destination, because from one moment to the next the floor vanished beneath Harry’s dragging and kicking feet. Only to reappear as he suddenly found himself on his arse and encased in the heat of another body that was hugging him from behind.

“Could you stop gnawing off my hand?” A familiar voice whispered, mouth barely touching the shell of his ear. Harry blushed and stopped biting at the hand over his mouth. Slowly the grip loosened and Harry didn’t hesitate to turn in the embrace to look at Sirius.

“What the-”

The hand was back and Sirius shook his head, raising his eyebrows meaningfully as they listened to the hurried steps of a bypassing Filch.

“Keep it down,” he whispered and Harry stared at him wide-eyed. What was going on here?

Sirius didn’t answer his unspoken question and Harry noticed the arm around his waist was still in place too. Not that it was unwelcome. In fact, he had to fight down the urge to just lean back into the embrace and revel in the warmth that came with Sirius’ proximity. It didn’t really help that Sirius didn’t seem inclined to let go of him any time soon which made looking at him rather difficult.
Noticing the movement of Sirius’ free arm, Harry craned his neck to see what his friend was doing. He pulled something from his back pocket it seemed…

Then there was a parchment in front of him and the arm around his waist pulled him back against Sirius’ chest. The Marauder’s Map. Harry tensed.

The boy in his arms was cold, way too cold for Sirius’ liking. He could feel the dampness of the pyjama and wondered why Hadrian hadn’t cast a warming charm. He was capable of it, he had seen him casting one on that bastard Crouch back in the owlery. Maybe he hadn’t had the time what with Filch obviously catching him along the way and then casting such charms while running was a tricky thing. Yet, Sirius didn’t take the time to do so himself either. He was more focused on the feeling of the slender body pressing close to his… but for once he didn’t let himself get distracted, or at least not for long. Fishing the map out from his back pocket, he opened the still active parchment right in front of Hadrian, making sure it was the right side up and all.

Silence.

“So,” he whispered in that delicate ear again, eyes fixed on the two dots hiding in a secret passageway, “Long night?”

He could feel the tension, could feel the stirring of Hadrian’s magic beneath that pale skin. He wasn’t aiming for a magical backlash though he hoped the little intimidation tactic would work in his favour. They needed to talk and he had a feeling his chances at getting actual answers were better when questioning Hadrian alone. He wanted to trust the boy, something he honestly had never believed he would truly want to do with anyone other than his three best friends. But he wanted it with Hadrian, he wanted Hadrian to be part of his future. So trust it was and to achieve that they had to be honest with each other. No more avoiding questions.

“I…” The voice was soft, unsure and Sirius was glad Hadrian couldn’t see his face right now. Hearing the little hitch in the boy’s voice was tearing at his resolve something fierce. “Sirius, I can’t…”

He involuntarily tightened his hold around the slim waist. He wanted honesty between them, but if Hadrian wasn’t willing to answer his questions… how would they be able to ever have an actual relationship? Or even friendship for that matter. There was no way Sirius Black would be able to call anyone he didn’t trust a friend or anything more. But he couldn’t accept that! He wouldn’t.

“Why?” He asked maybe a bit gruffly. “Why do you need to keep lying to us? To me?”

Harry wanted to be angry, he wanted to point out that he wasn’t the only one lying. But he couldn’t find it in himself to do so. Maybe it was because he knew the reason why the Marauders were hiding their achievements from him. He understood that they were protecting Remus and themselves whereas Sirius had no idea why Harry was lying to him. And he definitely knew Harry had been lying to them. Case in point the Marauder’s Map right in front of his nose. He could see the dot labelled with his name, not his alias, snuggling up to the dot labelled as Sirius Black.

Harry shivered at the sudden reminder of his current position, the contrast of his own too cold skin and Sirius’ warm breath, scratch that, Sirius’ heat all around him. It made concentrating rather difficult and Harry felt all the fight draining from him. Why was it important that he kept his secrets again? There was a really good reason… he knew he couldn’t tell them about… what? What couldn’t he tell?

“I can see the lie right in front of me,” Sirius’ chest was rumbling with the low tone of his voice, his breath tickling the shell of Harry’s ear, eliciting a shiver, “Remus might have tried concealing the
truth, but the map’s not able to lie to one of its creators.”

Harry blinked confused. What was he talking about? What had Remus done? Craning his head, he carefully looked at Sirius’ face. He wasn’t sure what he had been expecting, but it wasn’t the thinly veiled emotion he could clearly see in those grey eyes. Eyes that seemed much darker in the shadowed hall they were sitting in… dark not with anger but desperation.

“So I wonder,” he continued, not looking at Harry but the two dots, “Why do you keep lying if Remus knows? Why is he allowed in on your secret but not me?” Okay, so maybe now there was anger. “Did he found out himself or did you tell him? Do you trust him more than me?”

The grip around his waist was a bit too tight for comfort by now, but Harry didn’t mind. He was staring at Sirius’ face, tracing the tense jaw and furrowed brow with a nervous gaze. Was it possible that he wasn’t really angry about the lies but about not being the one to find out first? No, that wasn’t quite right. Sirius was angry that Harry kept things from him and it made him… jealous? …that Remus seemed to have known part of those things before him. He knew by now how possessive Sirius could be. But there was something else, wasn’t there?

“Harry,” Sirius whispered hoarsely and finally looked at him. Harry couldn’t stop the flinch at the name. It didn’t feel right to be called that now, especially by Sirius. It brought back memories of another Sirius that called him this and- “Harry, tell me.”

Staring into those familiar eyes, Harry decided that it didn’t matter anymore. He was here, not back there. He was here and even if he should ever find a way to return, it wouldn’t be the same place anymore. He could have tried as much as he wanted not to change the future, but the truth was, simply being here already changed it all. There had been no ‘Hadrian’ in any of the stories the adult Remus had told him about the Marauders and even though it could just mean he had no real impact on their lives… Right then and there Harry decided that he couldn’t go on lying like this. He was here now and living for a future (or past) that lay behind him didn’t make any sense. He wasn’t the right person to theorise about time travel, he wasn’t the right person to consider the possible outcomes of his actions in the here and now. Diving in head first and act on instinct, that was who he was and trying to be someone else had landed him in this situation. No, he was done lying.

“I didn’t tell him,” he heard himself say. “He found it out the same way you did. And I… I made him promise not to tell.”

Sirius was looking at him carefully, obviously searching for another lie. Harry swallowed down the panic that finally caught up with him. Was he really going to do this? Was he really going to tell Sirius everything?

“I didn’t tell him,” he whispered again, unable to say more, but desperate for Sirius to understand. He wasn’t good with words, but if Sirius asked he would do his best to answer. He wouldn’t just blurt everything out, but… he would not lie outright again. And more than anything he wanted that desperation gone from Sirius’ eyes. No matter what.

He needed to know. He needed to know. He needed to know.

Sirius hadn’t realised what it all meant, what Rem trying to conceal Hadrian’s – no, Harry, his name was Harry – real name on the map really meant. His friend had known all along that the boy Sirius was fast falling for was living a lie. He had known and he had tried to hide it from them. Sirius thought it alarming that he didn’t actually care about the reason behind those actions. It just wasn’t all that important in this moment when he felt his jealousy burn him from the inside out. He had tried to ignore the closeness of those two even though it was repeatedly thrown right into his face. He had tried to believe in Rem’s words, had tried to trust in the mate theory. But that primal part of him just
couldn’t ignore that Remus had been privy to something so important concerning Hadrian while he was not.

And then… there was this desperate need to make sure that Hadrian wanted the same as he did. Sirius would only be able to further pursue him if he could trust him and that would only be possible if they cleared this up. Hadrian could keep as many secrets as he wanted so long as he didn’t lie about it. So he needed to know. He needed Hadrian to tell him why he was hiding who he really was.

...Right?

Chapter End Notes

Harry's having the time travel woes and is ready to sell the future away just to keep Sirius from hurting.
He is siriusly confused but determined nonetheless.
In which there is an identity crisis

Chapter Notes

With a respectful nod at Zee :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry was shivering, but he was no longer sure if from cold or from tension. They were still sitting in the dark hallway, his back to Sirius’ chest and the light from the rising sun slowly creeping along the floor, invading their hideaway.

He could hear Sirius taking deep breaths behind him and his gaze wandered down to the Marauder’s Map now lying on the stone slaps in front of them. He had told the truth, Remus had found out himself and Harry wasn’t putting more trust into him than Sirius. But there was no logical reason he could share that would explain why he trusted all of them so much – who would even believe him? Yet he wanted Sirius to know just how important he was to him. And he wanted it all out in the open, the reasons and motivation. No more hiding. Only, he had no idea where he should start, what to say or do. So he concentrated on the feeling of Sirius’ closeness and leaned back into him ever so slightly. It was a heady feeling to know that even after his false play had been revealed, Sirius hadn’t pulled away from him. Yet.

“I’m s-” And there was the hand over his mouth again. Blinking, Harry turned in the hold to look at Sirius questioningly. He had seen on the map that no one else was around this time, so what…

“Don’t say you’re sorry,” Sirius told him, letting his hand drop only to pull him close again. Something in that gesture tore at Harry’s heart.

“But-”

“No, Hadrian… Harry,” he barked a short laugh that didn’t sound happy at all. “I don’t even know how to call you now,” he muttered and Harry shivered again. This time it was from the dread that settled in his gut like lead. “No, I don’t need an apology, I…” Sirius took another deep breath, hiding his face in Harry’s hair and making him blush. “I just need the truth.”

He could have accepted never knowing about Hadrian’s past. He would have stood by him nevertheless, would have been there for him if that past caught up to him even if he decided to never share any details. But this was different. Finding out that the little he did know was a lie was different. How much of what Hadri- …Harry had told him was actually true and what were just more lies? Though, admittedly, their Bambi had never talked much about himself and they had never really asked either. Honestly, Sirius wouldn’t even know the boy’s birthday if it wasn’t for the creature inheritance. And to make it worse, Bambi knew his secrets, he knew about their Animagi, the map and maybe even Moony. It was the kind of imbalance that just didn’t sit right with Sirius.

So he needed the truth and the security that Hadri- …Harry would never lie to him again, at least not like this. He could keep his secrets, he could keep his past, but please, Sirius couldn’t stand any more lies to his face from him. So he clutched the boy close, desperate to confirm he was really here, no matter how he was called.

“Who are you?”
“Man, I tell you-” James interrupted himself the moment he entered an empty dorm from the en suite.

“Eh.”

Looking around, he towelled his hair dry until he spotted a sulking Wormy on his bed. Ah so not a completely empty dorm. But where was his best mate? And shouldn’t the wayward Bambi that somehow knew about their portable furs be here by now, too?

“What’s the matter, Wormy? Where are they?”

“No idea,” came the frustrated sounding answer. “He looked at the map, saw apparently something interesting and then he ran like Slughorn was trying to invite him into his club. Took the map with him, too.”

James cocked his head for a moment, then sighed dramatically. His best mate was in love. Who would have guessed something like this just a month ago? Hadrian Moore sure was a hand full what with his penchant for getting into trouble, the mysteries, and now the dangerous knowledge he had. Actually, James thought with a snort, it really shouldn’t be that much of a surprise that Pads was falling fast for this enigma of a boy.

“That guy’s going to give me grey hair before my years, I tell you,” he informed Wormy who still seemed to sulk. “Do you think the Potter hair’s still gonna look this awesome with grey temples? Salt and pepper hair, ya know?” He ran his hand through said hair, fluffing it up for a more windswept style, while making himself comfortable on his bed. “It’s rather hard to tell what with my dad not having all that much left on his head.”

They would need to talk about all of this, the Animagi, the map and whatever Sirius had witnessed on that masterpiece of a marauder’s work. He had no doubt his mate was out to confront Hadrian alone, probably with his usual dramatic flair. Merlin knows what those two were doing right now… and for once James wasn’t exactly envying Merlin for that knowledge. Yep, he could live without those images. Anyway, right now he just needed a good night’s… err… morning’s sleep so he would be up for some more lovely banter with his beautiful Lily flower. He would trust Pads to make sure their Bambi wouldn’t do something stupid again.

James didn’t spend a second thought for Peter who was still quietly contemplating his options.

Who was he? Genetically speaking was he the son of James Potter and Lily Evans. He had the infamous Potter hair and the soulful green eyes that everyone connected with Lily. Were one to ask the people he got to know ever since his eleventh birthday, he was the Boy-Who-Lived, famous for being the reason his parents had died, the media’s plaything. Harry Potter was a symbol for the Light and their favourite scapegoat at the same time. Though, technically, Harry Potter had not even been born yet let alone survived an attack on his life to make him famous. Harry Potter was no one here and even if he were… Harry wasn’t sure he would want to be him. And he didn’t want to be called Harry either, especially not by Sirius. The Sirius that called him Harry was dead and gone. His godfather.

But was he Hadrian? The boy that fell through time or got kicked more like it, the boy that became a creature that he still feared, and the boy that liked Sirius in a completely new way. This person had still so much to discover about himself whereas Harry Potter had his destiny determined for him by some prophecy. A prophecy that didn’t necessarily had to have an impact on Hadrian’s life as it hadn’t even been made yet. But, just like Harry Potter, was Hadrian Moore unable to look the other way when someone was suffering.
Harry Potter hadn’t been born yet so technically speaking was it impossible for him to be that person. Hadrian Moore was here right now and wanted to discover the person he was. Well, except for the little fact that the map in front of him told otherwise, he was more Hadrian than Harry here. Harry Potter would have never been found in the arms of another boy hidden away in a dark hallway, because Harry Potter was always watched, always put under the public’s microscope to point any and all mistakes out for the world to see. Maybe Hadrian had more potential to actually do something without the constant surveillance… Harry shook his head. He was confused. He couldn’t answer this question, but Sirius was waiting. So he was honest.

“I don’t know,” he said in not much more than a whisper. “Not anymore. I don’t know who I am.” He heard the intake of breath behind him and turned to look at Sirius. “Please, Sirius, I’m sorry, but… I… I really don’t know how to answer that question.”

Sirius had expected… well, he had no idea what he had expected. Probably not the vulnerable sounding confession that was his answer or the wide-eyed stare begging for him to understand. Did he understand? Could he? Secrets, always more secrets. He couldn’t deny that it was completely intriguing and kept him on his toes, but also totally frustrating. He enjoyed a good riddle like any real Marauder, he loved secrets and lived off of mischief. But this was getting ridiculous. And still… looking into those eyes he felt himself cave like Rem did each time he smelled his favourite chocolate.

“Harry…,” he sighed at the flinch. Well, he had said the boy could keep his secrets as long as he didn’t lie anymore. “How about I help you find out?” He finally asked studying the pale face and wondering what the hell he was getting himself into. Harry blinked a bit confused and damn did he need to cock his head in this adorable way?

“How?”

“How about we start with a name. You clearly don’t like me calling you ‘Harry’-“ Flinch. “And ‘Hadrian’ seems to be an… alias according to the map,” he said, gesturing to said parchment, noting the increasing amount of moving dots. “And from there…” He sighed again, realising that he had fallen for this boy a long time ago, too long ago to honestly consider not getting himself into whatever this was. “One question at a time.”

They looked at each other for a moment, still sitting close and half entwined on the cool stone floor in a not-so-dark-anymore hallway. Harry seemed to be at a loss for words and Sirius thought that that was the case quite often. Not that he minded, there were a lot of things one could do without talking, after all. He moved without warning, getting up in a less fluid motion than he would have liked, pulling Harry with him. They steadied each other and Sirius used the movement to pull the boy close again. He adored that little gasp.

Harry looked at him and for a moment Sirius could clearly see past the persona of the shy new student Hadrian Moore. He could see the weariness of someone who had seen and lived through things no child should ever have to. He could see how tired Harry was of whatever lay behind him, but he could also see a determination and curiosity for the things ahead, whatever those may be. Perhaps he was reading too much into those emerald eyes. His arms around Harry’s waist, he felt the soft fabric of a pyjama as he leaned in close. Harry didn’t move away and for a moment they were breathing each other’s air. It was tempting…

Then Sirius grinned mischievously and grabbed one of those bird-bone hands, tugging the boy with him and out of the hallway. He didn’t know if he was reading too much into Harry, but he wouldn’t mind finding out.

“Come along, Bambi.”
Chapter End Notes

..................don't burn me at the stake, please?
In which it's not H.A.M anymore

Chapter Notes

I never intended for people to feel like I was stringing them along, the story just needs to be told the way it feels right.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I was named Harry ...James Potter. And apparently I’m Fate’s bitch.”

“...so you went owl-napping,” James said in a dead-pan voice, taking in the way Sirius was still holding onto Hadrian’s hand even now.

They were sitting around the dorm, or rather he and Wormy were sitting while Pads was standing with his napped owl near the entrance as if making sure there was a free escape route. Interesting. Considering that they had been freaking out about Hadrian knowing their furry secrets and how to confront him about it before he had gone to take a shower, this was a development James had not expected. Right now it looked like whatever his best mate had witnessed on the map had changed his priorities from confronting Hadrian to protecting Hadrian from the necessary confrontation. Maybe he already had his answers and now his allure induced instincts were taking over?

“Yeah, well...” Sirius grinned and tugged Hadrian a bit closer – and Hadrian just went with it as if he hadn’t avoided anything that went beyond friendly from Sirius... and actually much of any human contact regarding everyone else so far. “Bambi here is going to answer some questions, but... he requested that we wait until Rem’s awake.”

And now Sirius was avoiding answering his indirect question. Interesting, indeed. James looked at Hadrian and took him in the paler than usual complexion, the slightly red nose and too bright eyes. He looked nervous and cold and he was still wearing that ridiculously cute pyjama. But his mouth was set in a determined way and his hold on Sirius’ hand looked more like a gesture to steady himself instead of some cheesy romantic thing that James so dearly wanted to do with Lily... ah, his thoughts were wandering again.

And then Hadrian sneezed.

It was a full blown sneeze, not some reaction of an irritated nose or something, and it actually made everyone present jump. Including Hadrian. James couldn’t help himself, he laughed and heard Wormy join in a moment later. Hadrian’s whole body had jumped when he sneezed and the look on his face, the crunched up nose and somewhat embarrassed flush were just too funny to ignore. Or maybe it was just the whole situation, him sneezing right into a solemn silence and breaking tension.

“Right,” Hadrian said, half-grinning at himself and shifting in place, “I think, I-”

“Need a shower,” Sirius completed with a stern look that sent James into another laughing fit. “Go on, take your time. Rem’s not waking for another few hours and we all could do with a little rest.”

And that’s what they did. Hadrian went to take a shower, James reclined on his bed, as did Sirius though the latter chanced a glance at the door to the en suite every now and then. Wormtail didn’t
The hospital wing was as uncomfortably bright as he remembered, but the real reason Harry was so grateful for his sunglasses right now was another. Sitting around Remus’ bed, a simple privacy charm cast around them that Harry had never heard about, the Marauders were all staring at the map. Well, Sirius wasn’t staring at the map but at Remus and the latter was more trying to avoid anyone’s eyes than anything else. The werewolf looked tired, but not as scratched up as the last time, Harry noted. And he was more embarrassed than ashamed for attempting to hide Harry’s actual identity from his friends.

That was a surprise.

Apparently Remus had tried to conceal his name with the name of his alias, and would anyone but one of the creators look at it, the name would read ‘Hadrian Moore’. Why it didn’t work on Harry himself was another matter altogether, but he wasn’t about to point it out. The Marauders were talking amongst themselves with Harry just standing awkwardly by while Remus explained how he had promised to keep the secret he had unveiled and how that was why he had gone to such lengths. Harry felt guilty, but neither James nor Sirius looked really angry. More like astonished. Getting a Marauder to keep a secret from the rest of them seemed to be something akin to impossible.

Pettigrew was… Well, Harry would prefer not to think about the rat as he knew he was about to divulge a lot of secrets and couldn’t avoid for the traitor to listen in. Even if he were to tell all of them what Pettigrew would do in the future, there was no way he could prove anything and why should they believe him over their long time friend anyway?

“Right,” the voice drew him out of his thoughts and he looked up at the four gazes now focused on him, “Are we to call you Harry or Hadrian for the duration of this talk?”

It was James that asked and Harry chewed nervously on his bottom lip as he pondered the question. His father was asking him how to call him – if he should call him by his real name, the name he had given him, or an alias that didn’t mean anything to anyone.

“Hadrian,” he answered after a moment, “Hadrian, please.” He wasn’t Harry here, regardless what that map said. He wasn’t the son of James Potter right now, but his friend. He was glad the wide sunglasses hid the way his eyes searched the faces in front of him for the anger he was expecting. He had lied to all of them, after all.

“Okay,” Remus’ slightly hoarse voice said into the silence. “I remember you telling me you had to hide your true identity for a reason that you couldn’t tell me. It was something about protecting us which is why I didn’t pry more than I did, but… well, let’s just say I picked up on a few things nonetheless.” He grinned a bit bashfully and Harry frowned. What he said wasn’t completely true, was it? Harry had insinuated that he knew about Remus’ wolf and that he wouldn’t question him as long as Remus returned the courtesy. Yet here he was protecting Harry again.

“We probably all did,” James added with a nod, raising his eyebrows and fixing an intense gaze on Harry. “It’s hard to ignore when your new acquaintance, that for all logic shouldn’t know a bloody thing about Hogwarts, navigates the corridors without a hitch and even unconsciously uses hidden passageways.”

“Not to mention the knowledge of some professors’ names and quirks,” Rem added.

“Or knowing about us,” Sirius said lowly.
Harry stared a bit dumbfounded. He had been far more obvious than he had thought, apparently. So now here he was, faced with the people that had welcomed and helped him when he was alone and vulnerable. He couldn’t lie anymore and he didn’t want to either. But there was still this niggling sense of not wanting to make the future even worse. His gaze drifted over to Pettigrew. The rat was sitting in one of the chairs, feet up on another to stop Harry from taking a seat himself, or at least that was how it looked like to Harry. James had sat himself on the bed next to Remus and Sirius was sitting on the last chair available. So Harry stood there, feeling lost.

Sirius sighed. He had promised to help… Hadrian. One question at a time, that was exactly what they were going to do, but right now the boy looked way too forlorn for him to stand. As if waiting to be cast aside.

“Come here,” he said with a half-smile, hand outstretched. It took a moment, but then Hadrian took the offered hand and with a sly grin, Sirius tugged him down right into his lap. Hadrian yelped and the others chuckled, but Sirius didn’t let him get up again. “One question at a time, like I said.”

He nodded at Prongs, knowing he would have the most pressing question waiting. His best mate nodded back, beaming at Hadrian who had given up on trying to escape Sirius’ lap and now sat a bit stiffly, blushing profusely.

“Alright,” Prongs started, nearly bouncing in his place, “So you actually ARE a Potter?”

If Sirius hadn’t been a Grim Animagus he would have commented on James looking like a hyperactive puppy right now. But then again, he had a blushing little Elf Owl in his lap. He was preoccupied.

“Um,” Hadrian cleared his throat carefully, “Technically… yes, I am a Potter.”

He seemed to want to say something more, but decided against it. Not that James would let him get away with that.

“Awesome! So are you like… my cousin or something? I don’t remember seeing your name on the tapestry or anything.”

“You wouldn’t. Not yet anyway,” Harry shifted and dropped his gaze.

He hadn’t planned on revealing his heritage like that, he had wanted to divulge the most immediately relevant information, but it looked like the Marauders wouldn’t make it that easy on him. He didn’t understand it though. Why were they being so friendly? Looking back up he met Remus’ knowing gaze and his eyes grew wide. Was it possible that Remus already knew? He was frighteningly intelligent after all and he had said he had picked up on a few things. A little nudge into his side prompted him to meet Sirius’ and from there James’ gaze again. He studiously avoided looking at Pettigrew who had a strangely greedy air about him, like… but that wasn’t important right now.

“I was born on July 31st…1980.”

There. He had said it. And if the frown on everyone’s faces was any indication… ah there were the gasps and incredulous looks. He didn’t wait for them to cotton on and just started talking. If he stopped now he would never get it out of his system.

“I was named Harry …James Potter,” this time he looked up and above the rim of his glasses to catch James’ eyes, to see the realisation there and what would follow. The look in those hazel eyes was blank and Harry had to avert his gaze. Maybe he didn’t make the connection. “And apparently I’m Fate’s bitch,” he added in a mutter.
He felt the arms around him tighten and waited for the inevitable. Sirius had been so very considerate, but with the truth revealed it was only a matter of time until that would change. Time, that was just what was the problem here. If Sirius took the time to make the equation he would realise what being born in 1980 really meant apart from obviously travelling through time. And really, with magic in said equation, the time travel wasn’t exactly the most shocking about all this. There was a long silence during which Harry didn’t dare looking up again. He could feel their stares and he couldn’t help the little tremor in his hands, so he clenched them in the hem of his jumper. Sirius felt too still behind him, his grip on Harry frozen.

“…So it’s not H.A.M. then,” Remus finally said, not sounding surprised.

But it was James that made Harry look up once more. And he definitely didn’t say what Harry had expected. There was no accusation of him lying, no horror at meeting his own disappointment of a son, but only a quiet voice and an earnest look.

“What have I done for you to not want to be yourself?”

Chapter End Notes

So the stage is open for a lot of possibilities... I'm honestly not sure how much he should divulge now. I'm leaning more to the 'immediately relevant' and not the 'whole life story' thing. It just wouldn't really be Harry to do the whole heart baring thing.
Waking up to his friends all around him was an experience that had brought Remus’ mind back to the beginnings of the Marauders’ exploits with their Animagi.

Back then they used to stay with him until after the change back to his human form and only short of being caught by Madam Pomfrey. Nowadays they had an agreement: The Marauders would leave the moment Remus had turned back into his human self, he normally fell asleep right after anyway, and this way they were at a much lesser risk. But he never again had to wake up alone, naked and scratched up in a cold place. Ever since those days Remus would wake up alone, yes, but in his pyjama, tugged into the old bed in the Shrieking Shack and then Madam Pomfrey would be there soon after.

Blinking memories away, Remus watched as Hadrian revealed what he had suspected for a while now. Well, to be completely honest, he hadn’t exactly expected the boy to be James’ son, not with the home life he most likely had led. But then again… it would explain a lot. And it brought up a whole barrage of new questions.

Looking at Sirius sitting there so still and silent was a bit unnerving, yet Remus thought he could relate. Alright, so not exactly relate as his own feelings for Hadrian weren’t of the romantic kind, but he understood part of the dilemma his friend suddenly found himself in. He for one was quite a bit relieved to finally have something of a reason for his strange paternal affections towards that boy, but Sirius must feel like the floor had just been swiped away beneath his feet. He had been pursuing his best mate’s son. A son that shouldn’t even be alive yet, much less their age. Remus just itched to go to the library and check out everything on time travel theory. He wasn’t yet proficient with the topic, but he vowed to become so soon. How much did Hadrian know about his journey? Had it been intentional or an accident? Considering his condition when they found him on Hogwarts’ grounds it had probably been the latter… though, who was to say he hadn’t been in the past for longer?

“What have I done for you to not want to be yourself?”

James’ question brought Remus back to the matter at hand. Right now there really were more important things – such as the emotional turmoil he could practically feel radiating off of his friend next to him.

“What?”

Harry cringed at noticing he and Pettigrew had spoken at the same time. He didn’t like thinking along the same lines as that rat and from the glare he was receiving the sentiment was returned. James though looked thunderous and Harry felt like shrinking in on himself or even hiding in Sirius’ chest, but then again… Sirius was still not moving.

“Don’t ‘what’ me,” James said quietly, eyes fixed on Harry, “I remember your injuries. Hell, you were so very thin it hurt to look at you! You can’t even stand being touched! What… what a monster of a father was I… will I be… for you to end up like that?” His voice broke and Remus put a strong hand on his shoulder, half restraining, half comforting.

“FATHER?!” Pettigrew shrieked and Remus winced at the tone, before sighing.
“Yes, Peter, that’s what he said.”

“But what… that’s just…”

“Have you not listened, Wormtail?” James snapped without taking his eyes off of Harry who was trying to hide behind his hair, trying hard to hide the tremors wracking up his whole frame. “He was born in 1980, he is a POTTER and there are no other Potters alive that he could be descended from if he really was born four years from now.”

Pettigrew seemed to flounder for a moment, but then scowled defensively.

“Well, four years isn’t that much! Your father’s not that old!”

The silence that followed was deafening and Harry chanced a peek up at the others around. James seemed to stare into nothingness for a moment while Remus was looking uncharacteristically wide-eyed at Pettigrew who in turn had his hands slapped over his mouth and was rapidly losing colour. Sirius wasn’t saying anything. He was too quiet. Why was he not saying anything?

“Peter,” James’ voice sounded strange, but Harry couldn’t pinpoint what exactly it was that made it so, “Are you insinuating what I think you are?”

Harry blinked. What was he missing? James was only sixteen, it wasn’t impossible for him to have another sibling… was it? Then again, he had no idea how old the Potters were, they certainly hadn’t been alive back when he had been orphaned, he thought grimly. And from the reaction just now… Internally shaking the thought away, Harry decided that Mrs. Potter was probably too old to have another child which meant Mr. Potter (Or was that Lord?) would have to sire a child with a mistress …and why for Godric’s love of saucy jokes was he even thinking about that right now? Or ever? The tension in the room was broken or more like diverted as Remus spoke up.

“So you really are? James’ son, I mean?”

Harry’s eyes flickered from the werewolf’s amber ones to James’ hazel gaze and then down again into his lap. He fiddled with the hem of his jumper, chewing on his bottom lip until he finally gave a jerky nod. James’ reaction was confusing him. He had expected anything from revulsion to a dismissing attitude, but nothing could have prepared him for the self-loathing and horror he could clearly hear in his father’s voice, no matter how intimidating it had been. And he hadn’t even seen his scars. More than ever was Harry glad it hadn’t been James that saw the extent of those marks on his body back in the Room of Requirement.

James couldn’t believe it, he wasn’t sure what he was supposed to think or feel right now. Even Wormtail’s ignorant comment just now couldn’t derail the confusion for more than a few moments. He would be a father and he would be a horrible one… What for Merlin’s sake could make him treat his son in a way that would result in the skinny boy with contact fears in front of him? He felt like he might be sick at the implications.

Sure, there was also a second of elation, knowing that he would be the one to finally revive the revered Elf Owl gene, that his son would be blessed by Magic herself. That he would even have a child. But then it was overshadowed with fear for said son who would be living as a creature in a society that had long forgotten about the old ways.

“Prongs, you dog,” Pads’ voice broke through his spiralling thoughts and James looked up at his best mate. His best mate who was holding his son on his lap in a possessive gesture, and was looking at him with a bizarre farce of his customary grin slapped across his face. It took James a long moment to realise that it was fear and hurt and sheer panic he could see hidden behind that fake smile. “Four
years… Man, you’re going to be a father in FOUR freaking years!”

For the first time since the big revelation did James think about what this all meant for Sirius. He was in love with Hadrian… Harry (And had he really chosen such a common name for his son?), a boy that not only shouldn’t be here right now, but that would be no more than a baby when Sirius were to meet him the (technically) very first time in four years from now. Circe, those time travel thoughts were confusing. (*)

His best mate was in love with his son.

The sheer age difference had Hadrian not travelled through time was mind boggling.

He would be a father at twenty and Sirius was in love with his baby son.

This was kind of sick.

But then he met Pads’ gaze again and understood that it was way too late for thoughts like this. Sirius was irreversibly in love and right in this moment his son was a teenager just like Sirius and himself. It wasn’t sick if you looked at it objectively. But what would all this mean for the future? What would it mean for the baby that would be his son, the son that was sitting in Sirius’ lap right now?

Harry flinched almost violently when Sirius finally spoke up. As if in response the arms around him tightened once again, but Sirius wasn’t addressing him or acknowledging him in any other way. He was talking to James and Harry scraped up his Gryffindor bravery to take a closer look at those around him.

James had half leaped off the bed, but Remus’ hand on his shoulder seemed to have kept him in place. He was gripping the edge of the bed hard enough to make his knuckles go completely white and Harry couldn’t bring himself to meet his eyes again. Remus himself looked very much intrigued while at the same time concerned for his friend – no surprise there, Harry was starting to think Remus was as bad as Dumbledore with always knowing kind of everything. Pettigrew… After that comment about James’ father he hadn’t said another word. Instead he was now staring at Harry in a way that made Harry feel more like a thing than a human being. There was still the thinly veiled disgust that Harry whole-heartedly returned but had no idea why Pettigrew was feeling that way in the first place. Contrary to Harry he didn’t really have a reason for that strong negative emotions, had he? Dislike, sure, but… anyway, right there with the disgust was something akin to greed. He was sizing Harry up like something to make a profit of.

Then there was Sirius. Harry took a shaky breath before he forced himself to turn around on his perch. That at least got the other’s attention… or maybe he had been looking at Harry all along without him noticing. It didn’t matter anyway. Looking into those grey eyes from this short a distance once again, Harry was met with an earnest look, grey eyes studying him and a large hand in the small of his back steadying him. He couldn’t help the blush at the reminder of his current seating arrangement.

“So,” Remus voice broke through their silent evaluation of each other, “To sum this up: You are born Harry Potter, son to James Potter, in about four years from now and …now you’re in the past.”

The matter-of-fact tone of voice was rather anticlimactic after all the tension and Harry glanced over to the bed once more. James was still looking incredibly tense and on the verge of… Harry had no idea. He gave a slight nod, his hands holding onto the hem of his jumper to hide the tremors. Sirius would be able to feel them, he suddenly realised, but forced himself not to look back into the searching grey gaze again.
“Well, then… I guess the next most pressing question would be: Why are you here?”

Chapter End Notes

(*) **Circe:** Depending on your mythology, Circe is either a goddess of magic or sometimes a nymph, witch, enchantress or sorceress. Like most gods and goddesses of (Greek) mythology she is ‘patron’ to a lot of things, for example she's renowned for her vast knowledge of potions and herbs. She is also often depicted as kinda moody and she likes to transform her enemies, or those who offended her, into ‘wild beasts’. I think, James would like her. ;)

Mwahaha... I enjoyed shutting Pettigrew up...! <3
In which creepiness is present

Chapter Notes

I want to apologise to everyone that didn't get an answer to a question asked in the comment section. If this happened to you, please ask again.

He could feel the creature allure running wild even from where he was sitting. He had no idea if there even was something like a perimeter for this kind of thing, but the distinct tug to get close, to comfort, to protect… it was compelling and he was just glad that James at least was immune to this. Merlin knew his friend had enough to get his head wrapped around right now. Sirius though… Studying the tense and possessive grip he had on Hadrian, Remus had to wonder if the boy - James son! - would be a bit bruised by this. He certainly looked uncomfortable though that could just as easily be a reaction to the whole situation. He watched Hadrian shuffle a bit in his place and had to hide a smirk at Sirius’ sudden wide eyes and slight flush.

“So?” Peter challenged next to him when Hadrian failed to answer.

Remus raised an eyebrow. If he and Sirius were this strongly affected by the allure, Peter should be the same. But his reaction was completely different to theirs. At least there definitely was no protective vibe coming off of the rat Animagus and Remus frowned. Yes, he knew those two didn’t get along… well, no, he only knew they avoided each other, but there could be a number of reasons for this. He sighed. This was all too much at once, he really wanted to make some kind of list to address one issue at a time.

“Well,” Sirius interrupted the again tense atmosphere when Hadrian didn’t come forth with an answer. “Is it because you… maybe wanted to change something?” He prodded gently.

“You mean like… stopping something from happening in the past to change his present? Our future?” Remus clarified just to be sure.

He could imagine a number of possibilities relating to time travel theory, but one question forced itself to the forefront of his mind: Was it even possible to change the past? What if Hadrian was always supposed to be here?

He watched his son… his SON! …shifting around on his perch, not looking anyone in the eyes. He listened to his friends questioning the too frail boy when the silence continued and yes, James was wondering about the same. Why was he here? Had it to do with the condition he had been in when arriving? Was he here to change the future, the time he would live in? Was supposed to live in? Could one even change a future that one had already lived, wait… would live in? But what really tormented James’ mind was another question altogether: Why was Hadrian, a son of his, this painfully shy? If one could even still call that shy. He remembered all the situations ever since Hadrian had appeared at Hogwarts, remembered him shying away from contact, never putting himself in the spotlight, remembered him never asking for anything not even when he had been in so much pain from his inheritance. Shy, timid… cautious? It felt wrong, so wrong.

He couldn’t take his eyes off of the boy. He was still thin, but his paleness appeared to be more natural now, enhanced by the darkness of his hair. The hair that was so obviously Potter… He was small, too. A lot smaller than James himself was, yet Hadrian was sixteen right now, just like himself.
But then again, his whole stature was different and for a second James entertained the thought about
the boy’s mother. Who was she? Hadrian obviously had inherited a lot from her.

“It was an accident,” the soft voice of his son (By Merlin, he would never get used to this!) interrupted his thought process and he refocused on the conversation. Hadrian was still sitting on Sirius’ lap and James had the strangest feeling of protective anger surging through him for a second. He shook his head. “I was staying… at a friend’s house,” he said, eyes still downcast, “I was watching the news and thinking about how Hogwarts would have been like during my pa- …during your schooling. Then…”

He frowned and his head tilted to the side in a contemplative way. James’ eyebrows rose at the look that crossed his best mate’s face at that gesture.

“What d’ya mean ‘watching the news’?” Sirius asked slightly confused.

To Remus he looked like someone grasping onto the next best thing just to escape his own confusing emotions and thoughts. James, he noticed, perked up at this too. Hadrian blinked at them for a moment before something seemed to light up behind his eyes and he sent them a small smile.

As in on the telly,” he said. “I take it the television isn’t as known to wizards in the 70s?”

James made a low choking noise and shook his head, staring at the boy.

“Well, not to Purebloods anyway,” Remus interjected with a teasing grin. “So it’s a common thing in ah… the 90s? They found a way to combine magic with technology?”

He couldn’t help it, the thought made him giddy. Growing up in a household that had both, typical muggle appliances and wizarding traditions had made him sensible to this specific problem. One couldn’t have both in the same household without having to restrain and limit certain things. Either the occupants of the house restricted their own usage of magic or their usage of anything powered with electricity. For the household Hadrian was speaking of to have a functioning television in it…

“Not as far as I know,” Hadrian answered sounding slightly absentminded, “Though I’d be the wrong person to ask.” Here his eyes took on a faraway look and Remus had a feeling he was thinking of someone…

Hermione would have known how to answer this kind of question, Harry thought idly. He had never been good at things like this… or anything that wasn’t Quidditch related. Growing up with the Dursleys had made sure that he theoretically knew about muggle technology and as long as it involved kitchen appliances he could honestly say he was proficient enough, but that was where his knowledge ended. He had never officially been allowed to use the telly or Dudley’s computer. Sure, he had used both when the Dursleys had been out, but there was only so much one could learn about these things without risking to leave a trace. Shaking his head, Harry turned his thoughts away from the past and back to… the past. He nearly snorted at his own inside joke and sighed wearily.

“My friend lives… lived… will live? Whatever,” he said, rubbing tiredly at his eyes and running his
hands agitatedly through his hair, wincing at the feeling of feathers. “The household was… is…” He groaned at his own muddled thoughts. “Mostly muggle.”

He never saw the way the Marauders stared at his nervous gesture and the way his hair started to stick up in all directions.

“You were staying with a friend so shortly before your upcoming inheritance?” James’ voice was quiet and Remus was about to steer the conversation back to the question how Hadrian had come to be with them in the… past… but something caught his attention.

There was a scent. A scent that hadn’t been here just a minute ago and he found himself scanning the room for anyone trying to listen in on their little meeting. The hospital wing was bar any other students at the moment which considering the season was rather surprising, even Madam Pomfrey had left them to talk in a rare show of softness (that probably came with Hadrian’s presence).

“Well, Prongs,” he heard Sirius’ voice, “You were at Hogwarts last year. No one expected you to manifest, so…” His friend still sounded a bit out of sorts, but nothing showed on his face when Remus looked at him again. Though, he was still holding onto the boy on his lap with something akin to a death grip…

There was the scent again. It was familiar, he knew that specific sugary… lemony… slightly dusty and… old… but powerful… He gasped and drew involuntarily his friends’ attention. Was that possible? But why would this person do this? He had no reason to-

“Rem?”

He couldn’t tell them with Pettigrew present. What was he supposed to say anyway? If he told them he had been staying with Remus, they would probably ask why, just like James had just now. If he confirmed Sirius’ thoughts that no one had expected him to manifest the creature that would be a lie and he so did not want to lie to them anymore. It was frustrating and tiring and… why did his life have to be made up of so many strange occurrences and happenings? There were just too many things he had to keep secret, too many things that even in his time most people wouldn’t believe and there he was famous for doing the impossible. And as if all of this wasn’t enough… he now was developing honest feelings for the guy that would be his future godfather, feelings that had no longer anything to do with simple familiarity. Feelings that now that Sirius knew the truth would have to be forgotten, because there was no way he would be with his godson, right?

“Ah… guys,” Remus’ voice sounded slightly distracted, his thoughts obviously somewhere else. “Let’s continue this tomorrow, okay?” He just talked over the immediate protest of everyone except Harry. “No. Just stop right there. I’m tired right now and we all need to digest these revelations anyway before we can have any kind of serious conversation. Right now emotions are running way too high, believe me, I know.” He tapped his nose pointedly to underline his point and then fixed his amber eyes on the Marauders with a stern look. “Need-to-know basis until we all are a bit more rested. That clear?”

They started to take their leave after that, everyone emotionally drained and overwhelmed with what had been revealed. James stared at Harry a moment longer, then turned and left the hospital wing, Pettigrew following after. Harry fidgeted for a moment before he could dislodge the strong hold Sirius had on him and make his own escape. He managed about half a corridor outside the infirmary before someone stopped him.

“You never answered Prongs’ question about why you don’t want to be Harry Potter,” Sirius said and Harry dropped his gaze immediately, staring at the large hand holding his wrist and stopping him from running. He had kinda hoped they would forget about that. “You told me you don’t know who
you are. Is this why? You being… his son and not wanting us to know?”

His voice sounded a bit choked on the last part, but the question was there nonetheless. Harry shrugged, then sighed.

“I needed an alias so I wouldn’t influence the timeline,” he finally answered, not even trying to free his arm. At least it wasn’t a lie, right? “But I had forgotten about the map and then Remus confronted me and… Hermione always said how dangerous it is to change the past, what horrible consequences it can have on the future and… I just…”

Looking up, Harry realised belatedly what he had just said. Sirius stared at him wide-eyed and Harry could imagine the wheels turning in his head, thinking over the words and realising what they meant.

“Not your first time-jumping-trip, mh?” He finally said and to Harry’s complete confusion Sirius just smiled down at him. “You, Bambi, are an enigma.”
It was tugging at him, urging him on, pushing and screaming and… whispering sweet nothings and oh he wasn’t even sure he should withstand. No, actually he knew he should not. It was right, it had to be. How could it not if it asked him to love the one person that had changed his whole outlook on life for the better?

No longer was he thinking non-stop about the ugly things his family said, what they put him through, what they wanted him to be. No longer was he drifting aimlessly about with no real goal. He now knew what he wanted other than freeing himself from his family’s poisonous influence. He wanted Hadrian and he wanted only him. He wanted him safe and happy and for a long time. He wanted the future to be safe for him.

So no, Sirius didn’t think listening to the allure was wrong, if it was only enhancing what he already was feeling. Not even if it told him to love the son of his best friend.

The atmosphere around the table was strange, there was no better word to describe it. Harry was sitting stiffly next to Remus and Sirius who were having a slightly stilted conversation above his head while James and Pettigrew were doing their best not to look in Harry’s direction. He wasn’t sure if he felt hurt by this.

Part of him had hoped for his father to like him, to accept him as more than a dorm mate, but mostly he had expected denial or even revulsion. He knew he wasn’t the poster boy for son of the year, after all. But James didn’t exactly look like he denied or loathed his existence, it was more like he was at a loss at how to react so he avoided it altogether. The rest of the Marauders, bar Pettigrew, seemed determined to act as if nothing had happened. At least for the moment. Harry wasn’t deluding himself, the next interrogation was soon to follow for sure.

So breakfast was a strained affair and it didn’t help that he was feeling a bit sick this morning. He was listening to Sirius and Remus discussing their newest prank that seemed to be centred around Barty Crouch though they never said his name. They referred to him as ‘the target’, but the way Sirius’ eyes darkened and his jaw tensed whenever doing so was enough for Harry to give it away. He had observed that specific reaction too often by now to not know. Remus was just trying to enlist James’ help for the planning when said target entered the Great Hall in company of a few students even Harry recognised as future Death Eaters without knowing about their current reputation.

“You know,” Sirius said lowly, “It’s rather curious.” His eyes followed the group of mainly Slytherins across the hall. “The Crouch’s are deeply rooted into the Light side, Crouch Senior even is our proper, well-known and oh so fierce Head of Law Enforcement,” he sneered slightly. “He is the one that decides your fate if you are suspected of being a bit too dark for the Ministry’s official image.”

Harry tensed at that. He couldn’t stop his mind from jumping to the memory of Bartemius Crouch Jr. in front of the Wizengamot, being sentenced to life in Azkaban, that he had once witnessed in a pensieve. The very same Crouch that was just sitting down at the Slytherin table. It didn’t help the nausea in his gut that his mind supplied directly after the knowledge of Sirius’ own lack of trial.

“Yet his son…”
He heard Pettigrew make a derogatory comment in regards to Crouch’s apparent siding with the dark side and couldn’t stop the surge of rage that prickled along his skin. His eyes snapped up and zeroed in on the disgusting traitor across the table. How could he be so hypocritical, so false right into his supposed friends’ faces?

Harry didn’t realise his magic was starting to dance along the tips of his fingers, visible to those sitting next to him. He was too focused on breathing evenly, on stopping himself from lunging and ending Pettigrew right here and now. Harry frowned. This wasn’t right. He couldn’t do anything to the traitor, not if it meant hurting his family who still saw the rat as one of their closest friends. But was there another way? Scrutinising Pettigrew and gritting his teeth in anger, Harry reminded himself that right now this was just a boy even though everything in him recoiled from thinking about Pettigrew as innocent.

A hand in his hair made him flinch, but then he blinked and recognised it as Sirius’. He bit his lip and dropped his gaze. He could feel that Sirius wasn’t looking at him, but his hand was carding carefully through Harry’s hair, soothing him. It reminded him that there was more in this time for him than his parents that weren’t really his parents, and future enemies. It was the first time that Harry honestly considered staying with with no buts and whatnot. They knew now who he was and even though James was still floundering, Sirius had obviously accepted him if his actions were anything to go by. Harry didn’t begrudge his father’s hesitance, he probably would have understood a much more volatile reaction too.

So for a moment Harry allowed himself to visualise a future if he stayed here. If he stayed, pursued a relationship with Sirius and gave his all to stop Voldemort from killing his parents. Maybe he could even destroy what Horcruxes were already there and make Riddle mortal again for those that were better equipped to battle a fully grown wizard than he was. He didn’t have to fight him alone in this time, because the dark lord didn’t even know of his existence yet. Harry neatly ignored the wiggling thought in the back of his mind that reminded him of the momentarily quiet piece of Voldemort’s soul inside his scar.

James stared at his best mate’s hand in his so- … in Hadrian’s hair. They were calling him Hadrian to keep up appearances, but inside his head James was constantly warring with himself about what to call this boy. Well, he didn’t call him anything out loud so far, not since he left the infirmary yesterday. He had only come back to the dormitory long after curfew and by then Hadrian had long since been asleep.

It was better this way, James told himself. He wouldn’t know what to say to him anyway yet he could just imagine that Hadrian was expecting him to say… something. So James spent the time he couldn’t avoid the boy subtly staring at him and memorising his features and gestures, little quirks and aspects. He noticed the slight changes in the wide creature eyes, how the morning’s light made them glow before Hadrian hid them behind his sunglasses. After that he watched how the light broke on the hidden feathers and cast nearly invisible sparks that reminded him of rainbows… It was fascinating and he wondered how he could not have noticed all those details before.

Light seemed to be something that was naturally drawn to his son. He wondered if it was the Elf Owl and if he had ever read about anything like that concerning the family inherent creature gene, before his attention was drawn to the way Hadrian would wrinkle his nose over the food that Sirius still tended to pile on his plate, or how he would shy away from the other students when moving through the halls.

What was his story? He wanted to just go over and ask but couldn’t bring himself to do so. If he was responsible for any of the damage done to the boy, there was no way Hadrian would want to talk to him about it and James wasn’t sure he really wanted to know. He wasn’t sure if he would be able to
stomach the truth.

Sirius hadn’t heard Hadrian last night, just like every other night ever since his return to the dormitory, the place behind his closed curtains eerily silent. He knew it was a silencing charm, he knew and Rem did, but none of them had made another attempt at waking the boy up from those nightmares he was so desperately trying to hide.

And now that they knew who Hadrian really was Sirius felt it even more important to keep up appearances. It wasn’t only Hadrian’s pride anymore that would suffer if they pointed out the truth hidden behind Gryffindor curtains. Now it would also affect James and Sirius wasn’t blind… his best mate was already beating himself up over the possible implications of Hadrian’s condition. Seeing those nightmares, or even just knowing about them, would only serve to confirm James’ horrible view of his future parenting. It didn’t matter that they all knew for certain that James Potter would never do whatever had been done to Hadrian. It wasn’t, couldn’t be, his fault.

Now Sirius only wondered why Hadrian wasn’t telling him this. But then again… Hadrian hadn’t seen much of James since yesterday’s little talk in the hospital wing. He had long been asleep, or at least hidden behind his silenced curtains, when James finally returned to the dorm.

As his hand stroked soothingly through Hadrian’s thick hair and hidden feathers, Sirius looked over at his best mate. He would need to talk to him. There was no way he would give up on Hadrian and that meant he and James would need to talk this through. As strange as it was, Hadrian was James’ son, so Sirius would have to clear the air between them. Technically he would have to ask James for permission to pursue Hadrian, it was common courtesy among Purebloods, though Sirius was more concerned with the fact that it was his best mate’s son he was after. His respect for James demanded his complete honesty with his intentions.

Remus was tired, tired and suspicious and confused. His gaze wandered up to the head table where Headmaster Dumbledore was sitting, smiling benignly as always. What had he been doing in the hospital wing yesterday? Why had he listened in on their conversation? It wasn’t as if he didn’t already know about Remus’ furry little problem and most likely about Hadrian’s origins. He had been the one to try and keep it from Remus in the first place, hadn’t he? Back then when they both woke up in the hospital wing?

He sighed and rubbed at the bridge of his nose. Everything was a bit of a jumbled mess at the moment. Hadrian being now revealed as James’ son from the future was probably what kept everyone’s mind busy, but Remus was also thinking about the consequences that came with someone else possibly knowing about Moony. They had established a need-to-know basis until they all had time to come to terms with their new circumstances, but well… none of the others had to fear as much as Remus had.

He trusted Hadrian, he really did. He had done so long before he even had a logical reason to and now that the boy had not only proven himself but also was a son of one of them… Let’s just say, Remus really had no reason to be this jumpy about it all. No reason but one and that was the headmaster’s curious behaviour.

The sudden appearance of a small scroll of parchment on Harry’s plate drew everyone’s attention. While the Marauders looked confused, Harry calmly reached for what he knew to be a message for him. Sirius’ hand closed around his.

“Wait,” he said tensely, “You don’t know who sent it.”

Harry’s eyebrows wandered up and beneath his shaggy fringe before he looked pointedly at the head table where Dumbledore was twinkling in his colourful robes. The Marauders followed his gaze
surprised.

“Seriously?” Remus asked, looking between Harry and Dumbledore. Sirius snorted but let go of Harry’s hand.

“He used to do that in my- …back home,” he said softly, finally opening the scroll and letting the others read it over his shoulders.

Dear Hadrian,

There is a matter I would like to discuss with you in private.

Kindly come along to my office after breakfast. I hope you are enjoying your time at Hogwarts.

Yours sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore

P.S. I enjoy Acid Pops

“Funny,” Harry said, slight sarcasm coating his words. “I used to think the headmaster is a creative person.” He ignored the incredulous looks he received and stood up.

“Hey,” Sirius stopped him, looking even more disbelieving. “You just intend to…” He made some elaborate gestures to make his point without saying something out loud that would draw even more attention to them. As it was he could already feel half the female population inside the Great Hall stare at his back – at least he hoped it was his back. Harry just looked at him confused.

“Well yeah, what else would I do?” It never came to mind that he might just ignore the headmaster’s summons because really, why should he? Dumbledore already knew he was a time traveller and he trusted him to be knowledgeable enough to realise that he shouldn’t try and pry information from Harry.

“You…” Sirius stared at him for a moment before he huffed exasperated. “Come on,” he said sounding a bit annoyed and tugged Harry along out of the Great Hall. There were loud whispers following their retreat.

“What?” Hadrian tried to make him let go of his hand, but Sirius led him further down the corridor and around a corner near the dungeons. “Sirius? What is it?”

He frowned. Hadrian’s voice sounded a bit hoarse like he had a slightly sore throat. He would have liked to get him to Madam Pomfrey for a check up, but knew all too well that there was no way Hadrian would willingly go to the hospital wing again if there was no dire need for it. He shook his head. It was just a sore throat, no need to be so overprotective.

“You get a message out of nowhere and just decide to follow its instructions without even checking its validity?” He didn’t like the clueless look on the boy’s face. Didn’t he realise what times they lived in? That message could- …No, he probably really didn’t realise the times they lived in. “Listen, Bambi, you can’t just… okay, you know what? I’ll come with you.” This time he got more than a confused frown as Hadrian took off his shades.

“I don’t need a babysitter, Sirius.” The glare Hadrian sent his way did nothing but look too adorable for his own good and Sirius would not let him leave like this.
“I don’t know about that, but you definitely won’t be going there alone,” he said decisively.

There was a moment of stony silence and Sirius was about to congratulate himself when he realised he had done it again. Looking into those glowing eyes, Sirius had just one question on his mind: Where was Rem when you needed him?

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter was probably a bit of a disappointment - at least to me it was. I had planned something completely different and ended up writing about everyone's feelings once again. Well. At least now the stage is open for some recklessness.

On another note: Would you like to plan a slightly cruel prank for Barty Crouch? <3
In which a Marauder is not to be underestimated

Chapter Notes

I think this one should go with a grin at Dokidokibaka.

Okay, so maybe he was being a coward, but seeing Hadrian glower at him, his Elf Owl features more prominent than just a second ago, had spurred him into action. He was so not risking the boy blowing up at him again, he didn’t want to see his Bambi give him that kind of look again. Not to mention a certain werewolf would probably force-feed him his own homework or something, if he messed up again.

So Sirius grinned roguishly and even winked at Hadrian for good measure before he turned and started making his way to the headmaster’s office. Now that he knew Hadrian had attended Hogwarts before, he could easily do so without risking another misunderstanding. Being familiar with the route, Hadrian would know he wasn’t being left behind the moment he realised where Sirius was heading. He heard the sputtering behind him, silently praying the evasion would save his hide, and walked on more or less confidently. It took Hadrian just a moment to catch up with him and Sirius glanced down at the boy without halting in his step. Oh yes, evading had been the right action if that scowl was anything to go by.

They never noticed the invisible person following silently in their wake.

Knocking on Dumbledore’s office door, Harry waited for permission to enter. They walked in together and he threw Sirius an annoyed look when said bloke held the door for him, wearing his trademark smirk, all signs of their little would-be-argument forgotten.

“Now boys, I do believe I only asked for Mr. Moore to come up to my office,” the headmaster greeted them with twinkling knowing eyes.

“Yeah, well, here I am,” Sirius grinned broadly, walking up to the desk. Harry felt his eye twitch. Sirius wasn’t even trying to come up with an excuse and seemed altogether completely unfazed with the situation.

“Indeed, Mr. Black, that you are.” Dumbledore was still smiling at them, but Harry knew this man a lot better than the headmaster was currently aware of. He could see the slight dimming of the damned twinkle and the subtle tightening of his steepled fingers. “And your thoughtfulness in showing Mr. Moore the way is admirable, but I do believe you better had hurry now. There seems to be a potions project with Mr. Potter still waiting for your attention.”

It wasn’t a statement. It was a clear dismissal and even Sirius Black couldn’t ignore his headmaster’s direct command to leave his office. Whatever he had planned on doing was thwarted before he could even try talking his way out of leaving. And Sirius knew when he was losing, not that it kept him from trying again. With a barely visible sideways glance at Harry, he straightened his posture and just said it outright to the old man’s face.

“Headmaster, I would like to stay.”

Harry, still standing near the door, looked up at that. His eyes and mind had been wandering, his
gaze taking in the intact odds and ends in the circular room that he remembered smashing in his hurt and anger the last time he had been here. The last time when he had been... back in the year 1996... just after their stunt at the Ministry and his godfather’s fall through the veil. Harry lifted his eyes up and stared at Sirius. It was a sick kind of irony that he should be here in this twisted version of a remembered scene, Sirius asking to stay when he had been lost, when he had died...

“Bambi?” Harry blinked rapidly and focused on the person standing now right in front of him.
“Okay?” Sirius asked quietly and Harry realised he had been caught up in his flashback for the whole conversation that must have happened. There were hands on each side of his face and Harry took a deep breath before he nodded. “Mhm,” Sirius hummed, not sounding convinced, “I’ll be right outside, yeah?”

Harry frowned and nodded again, dislodging the hands. He didn’t need a babysitter. It was clear that Sirius still didn’t want to leave, but the door opened and closed without Harry turning to see him go.

“Hadrian, my boy, please take a seat,” Dumbledore’s grandfatherly voice said and Harry did what he was told.

He saw the door open just minutes after Sirius and Hadrian had entered and positioned himself in a way that would allow him a glimpse of the inside. He hadn’t been able to slip in with them the first time, but maybe there was something to be seen in the headmaster’s office that would give away the reason for this unusual summons.

James blinked confused when his best mate exited the room alone, but didn’t hesitate to use an opportunity when it was presented to him like that. He had to wonder if Sirius knew he was there, hidden beneath his invisibility cloak as he was, when his mate took more time than absolutely necessary to close the door behind him. They were quite the excellently coordinated team after all.

So James managed to slip into the headmaster’s office just as Sirius closed the door, hoping the fabric of his cloak didn’t catch a breeze or something. Hadrian was just sitting down in front of the huge desk Dumbledore used to receive (and intimidate) any visitors to his rooms and James held his breath for a moment. But the two other occupants didn’t seem aware of his presence, so he positioned himself as silently as possible somewhere near the door. He would be able to escape together with his so-...with Hadrian later, but still had a good view of the headmaster. That man was no – what was the word Sirius had used the other day? - dipshidiot, after all.

Harry sat down with a relieved sigh as Sirius left the room and looked up at Dumbledore. At least now he would only be reminded of similar scenes when he had met the headmaster in his office, no Sirius anywhere and no memories of his godfather either.

“What was it you wanted to talk to me about, Sir?” He asked, automatically but politely declining the offer of a lemon drop before Dumbledore had even opened his mouth to offer the sweets from the tin he had just picked up.

Albus Dumbledore smiled at him and Harry thought there was a hint of eagerness or excitement hidden in the twinkling blue gaze. He couldn’t help himself but wonder how much this Dumbledore resembled the one he had left behind in the future. He still had more than a little grudge towards the latter, the betrayal of being left behind when he most needed the support was one of those invisible scars he always carried with him now. It wasn’t easy to keep from transferring these feelings on the man sitting regally in front of him. This Albus Dumbledore had not left him at his relatives’ without contact to the outside world, broken and beating himself up with guilt. No, not yet anyway.
“Yes, yes, right to the point, of course you are quite right,” the headmaster said, leaning a bit forward on his desk, “Now, as you might recall, we came to an agreement the last time we spoke.”

Harry tilted his head in thought. Well, their last and technically only conversation had been the one right after his arrival in this timeline. The only agreement of sorts he could remember was that of keeping his true identity hidden behind the persona of Hadrian Moore. They hadn’t really talked all that much back then, had they?

“I see, you remember. But it seems there has been an occurrence that, let’s say… disrupted your part of the agreement, has there not?”

Harry blinked. And then it dawned on him. He was no longer keeping his identity hidden, the Marauders not only knew his actual name but also who he really was – which was probably more than the headmaster knew right now.

“I’m sorry, Professor,” he said, dropping his gaze ashamed of himself. He had been so adamant about keeping it all a secret and then he caved just because the map spewed out his actual name. So what if he went by a different name, there could be tons of reason for this, but no, Harry bloody Potter just had to go and blurt out the damaging truth. “It’s just… I really didn’t want to lie to them and…”

It was all moot now anyway, the Puffskein was out of the bag, like James tended to say. James, his father, that now knew who he was. Shit, he was such a hypocrite with all his spouting of not wanting to change the future and then going and telling them at the first sign of pressure…

“Alas, my boy, what’s done is done,” Dumbledore’s voice broke through his self-loathing and Harry chanced a glance up from behind his fringe. His hair was getting ridiculously long, he thought absentmindedly. “And per chance what happened was supposed to come to be, we will most likely never know. But, Hadrian, now that things have changed in such a manner you might want to reconsider your standing about time travelling issues.”

Harry blinked wide eyes at the man in front of him, trying to sift through the words, and pinpointing the actual meaning behind them. He wondered when the headmaster had changed from his mentor to this entity he couldn’t seem to trust anymore. Because he just knew there was something wrong here, just what exactly he couldn’t seem to put his finger on.

“So what is it you’re suggesting?” He asked, his head tilting to the side once again.

James couldn’t believe what he was hearing. This was just… just…! Here he was, standing stock still under his invisibility cloak listening to the esteemed Albus Dumbledore guilt tripping his son into fighting a war. He wasn’t sure what to think about all this anymore. His whole outlook on the world had just undergone an abrupt shift in which the headmaster, the powerful leader of the Light, was no longer starring as someone to look up to. He was no longer the unfaultable all-wizard but a ruthless puppeteer dragging an innocent child to the frontlines just because said child happened to have unseen power at its disposal.

And it wasn’t even any child, not that James would have been able to ignore it if it had been some random student he had never spoken a word to. But the fact that this was his son made the whole instance even more shocking to him.

James was shocked, yes. These last days and hours had come with a whole barrage of unbelievable information that he was just beginning to fully register, but this… this was just not right. So while
James was standing silently, watching the headmaster manipulate his son into agreeing to let himself be trained up for the greater good, the shock made room for a cool rage. Hadrian might be the forgiving type, too kind for his own good, but James was another calibre.

He was a Marauder.
In which the author happily invented magical swearwords

Chapter Notes

**It’s been a year, lovelies. A whole year.**
So I did a little math before uploading this chapter: 81 chapters over the course of one year, meaning an average of around 7 chapters each month. Yes, I’m awesome, thank you very much. Now enjoy a scene we all waited for way too long.

[@Koi19](https://www.example.com): some 'Sirius Grim-ing out over Harry' for you, sweety ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kissing Hadrian was nothing like kissing a girl.

Sure, it was just another classroom somewhere inside the castle and yes, there was probably nothing special about the whole situation and yet… He could hear nothing but his own heart beating rapidly in his chest, he could feel nothing but the heat of those lips on his and his calloused fingers tracing soft cool skin and the odd rough scar. Hands much smaller than his held onto his upper arms, bunching up the fabric of his shirt, and then there were slender fingers tracing the base of his skull.

No, kissing Hadrian was nothing like kissing a girl, no soft curves but astoundingly hard planes beneath his hands and he even tasted different than any girl Sirius had ever kissed. And he had kissed quite a few. Yet none of those sweet birds could compare to this; it was fresh in a way that had nothing to do with mint or toothpaste, but everything with Hadrian. Everything was Hadrian.

Like crisp morning air and dewy woodland.

Like running through the Forbidden Forest.

Like laughing with the Marauders.

Kissing Hadrian was freedom and no, he didn’t think this thought too cheesy.

Then he traced Hadrian’s soft cheek with the palm of his hand and carded his fingers through those wild tangles he called hair. Sirius had no complete thought after that for a long moment.

Remus groaned quietly and rubbed at his tired eyes. He was still a bit exhausted after the full moon, not having slept through the day after as he normally would. Yet he couldn’t bring himself to lie down and instead sat in an out of the way corner of the library, flipping through the inheritance book on Elf Owls once again.

He had made it a point to make notes throughout it all, from the moment they realised Hadrian was going through a creature inheritance until now. Yes, even now Remus noted down things about Hadrian he thought had to do with his creature. But now that he had the knowledge of the boy having travelled through time, Remus was pretty sure he would have to re-evaluate some of those observations. It would all be so much easier if they were able to just contact another Elf Owl, but as it was the Potter heirloom seemed to be the only remnant of this particular race. It was a shame, really, and Remus could only hope there would be more information in the Potter manor.
It was now more important than ever that they found out as much as possible about what Hadrian had to expect in the future. For example, were there phases of development for Elf Owls or did they maybe have special ‘powers’ other than the allure thingy? Remus had wanted to gather the information for Hadrian and James’ future children when he had thought the boy to be just some distant relative of the resident Potter. But now that he was actually revealed as James’ son, Remus’ quest had become even more necessary. James was likely the only Potter that would have children in the near future, children that if one looked at Hadrian would need every help they could possibly get. What was it that had made the boy become such a skittish mess, suffering from a Soldier’s Heart and whatnot?

Shaking his head, Remus once again concentrated on the words written in the gibberish the author called scientific: “The last recorded manifestations were those in the Peverell line whose descendants lost more and more attributes of the creature. The final recorded manifestation of this line happened in the early 20th century and its recipient only manifested ‘the Eyes’. (...)”

Hm that wasn’t that long ago considering that they were still living in the 20th century. Actually… Remus tried to remember if he had ever heard James talk about his parents’ age. Maybe the mentioned Potter in this book was the current Lord Potter himself? He supposed that might just work out if he crunched the numbers, but wasn’t likely. As much as the Potters were rather advanced in years for a son as young as James, if all Elf Owls inherited at sixteen, Lord Potter would have had to write this book very early in life to still fit the description. (*) And, frankly, Remus thought the current Potter Lord much more eloquent than the author of this utter piece of crap.

“For further information on the Peverell family see Nature’s Nobility: A Wizarding Genealogy”

Yes, well, that was probably his next starting point, Remus thought wryly. James as the proper pureblood heir had his family tree memorised for at least three generations, but the name Peverell went way back.

“Is this about Hadrian?” A soft female voice said over his shoulder and Remus jumped in his seat, though he relaxed a second later as he recognised Lily’s laugh. He hadn’t intended for her to see the Potter heirloom as she was only in the know of Hadrian having a creature inheritance and not that it was a creature last seen in the Potter line. But oh well, he could use the help of another mind and Lily’s was certainly not one to disregard.

Sirius was pacing the length of the small landing in front of the headmaster’s office, fighting the strangest feeling of having his Grim pacing inside his mind as well. For some unexplainable reason it went against his every instinct to leave Hadrian alone with the headmaster – but for Merlin’s hairy balls, this was Albus Dumbledore! The same person that was not only known as the Light side’s most powerful asset, but also the very same person that accepted Rem into the school and even provided him with a monthly solution for his furry little problem. He sure as hell was no danger for the creature in the boy so what was it that set Sirius so on edge?

He couldn’t hear a thing from inside the office and Hadrian’s reaction to Godric-knows-what right before he had to leave him behind wasn’t making it any easier for Sirius to remain outside. And he would go in there if he felt he had to, headmaster or no.

He had no idea how long he waited, but Hadrian was pale when he finally emerged from the office, pale but with a determined look in his green eyes. He didn’t like it. Whatever had been discussed in there had changed something important for his boy and Sirius just knew it wasn’t something good. He couldn’t help it, he reached over and took hold of Hadrian’s hand. He expected more scowls and resistance, so he wasn’t sure what scared him more: Hadrian looking like someone ready to go to
war or Hadrian letting him hold his hand after their little argument. As it was he kept his mouth shut and led Hadrian down the staircase behind the gargoyle and into one of the unused classrooms. All the while the boy didn’t say a word.

“So what was this all about?” He asked and watched Hadrian just standing there as if lost in thought. “What did he want? Hadrian?”

He wouldn’t let himself be brushed aside again this time, the whole situation was fishy, and Sirius’ inner Marauder wanted to unveil the machinations he could practically smell being at work. Hadrian shifted a moment and ran his hand through his nest of hair in a painfully familiar gesture. He was about to shrug his shoulder when a voice interrupted them.

“That fucking bastard!”

They both jumped in place, but Sirius saw out of the corner of his eye how Hadrian’s hand was on his wand in an instant. That reaction time was something else he would love to question him about, but for now his attention was drawn to the one speaking or rather cursing. James stood at the door, invisibility cloak in hand, looking murderous.

“Prongs?” His best mate was vibrating with anger, magic simmering just under the surface and his hands were clenching and unclenching as if he was fighting the urge to wrap them around someone’s throat.

“That filthy bag of dragon dung! I can’t believe he’d do something so despicable. Miserable son of a ghoul!”

Sirius mouth twitched. It wasn’t often James went off like that and from the look on Hadrian’s face that wouldn’t change in the future. The boy was staring at his… father with a wide-eyed look that was stuck somewhere between astonished and worried. James all the while continued his rant, drifting slowly off into bitter mutterings.

“…Oh I wish some damn Basilisk would give ‘im the stink eye…,” was just one of the growled slurs that reached his ears. And if Sirius hadn’t been watching Hadrian so intently, he wouldn’t have noticed the flinch. He frowned. What about that last curse was so much worse than the rest? Time to cut to the chase.

“Alright, Prongs, we got it. Who kissed Evans?”

James stopped and finally looked up, his hair standing up in all directions. Obviously he had run his hands through there a lot already, from the looks of it long before he even reached this classroom. His eyes zeroed in on Hadrian and with two swift steps he was right in his face, Sirius hadn’t even time to comprehend the movement before he froze in place as his best mate’s words registered.

“You shouldn’t have let him do that to you,” James growled with a strange intensity to his voice. “He was manipulating you into agreeing, using your guilt to get you to say yes. Whatever power you have, you are just a teenager, just one person, bloody hell you can’t be serious about fighting right now!” His hazel eyes hard, he was staring at an now even paler Hadrian. “I get that you want to help, fuck I want to fight myself, but not yet, not without proper training. Harry, please, that bastard’s using you, playing at your kindness. Please promise me you won’t be going out there any time soon regardless what the headmaster says. Promise me!”

During his entire rant and plea James never once moved to touch Hadrian even though he looked as if he desperately wanted to clutch at the boy to make sure he was still there. Sirius watched the scene unfold, scrambling to process what he was hearing. Apparently James had been with Hadrian in the
headmaster’s office, his best mate was casually great like that, and obviously whatever had happened in there had forced Prongs’ view on Dumbledore to do the 180°. But what really made Sirius’ blood feel like boiling over and his Grim snarling in the back of his mind was the mention of Hadrian fighting out there. This was war and the headmaster had the gall to guilt trip a boy, his boy, into fighting when it wasn’t even remotely his place to do so. Worse even, it sounded like he had used Hadrian’s kind heart to make him feel like he had to fight, like it was his responsibility.

Fucking hell, the headmaster was forcing a sixteen-year-old to go out there and face off against Death Eaters, people that had no qualms torturing and killing without so much as a second thought if the reports were to be believed. Did he expect Hadrian to kill too? It was inevitable, Sirius knew, he had lived in a dark household his entire life, he knew that with those people it would be kill or be killed. He couldn’t picture Hadrian doing this, probably not even to defend himself. That boy was too good, too gentle. And even if he were to do it, it would kill him inside, destroy his very being. No, he couldn’t let that happen.

A choked sound brought Sirius out of his rage and his gaze snapped over to see Hadrian tremble with suppressed emotion, eyes shimmering with unshed tears. He wasn’t crying, not yet anyway, but the look on his face… There was awe, incomprehension, confusion, yet absolute awe and Sirius could only think of one reason for that emotion to be there. Whatever future he came from, it was clear as day now that no one had ever told him to simply not fight, not to go sacrifice himself. Or perhaps, no one had even told him to think about himself out of concern like James just had. But was that even possible? Sirius wasn’t the most optimistic person, but even he couldn’t believe people in the future would expect someone like Hadrian or any teenager really to fight a war. Wasn’t that what the Muggles called child soldiers? Maybe he was reading too much into this, maybe it was just about whatever had happened or would happen with Hadrian and James as a family.

“Crap,” James muttered, suddenly sounding slightly panicky. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to shout at you,” he apologised, hands fluttering but still not touching. And Hadrian made that sound again, something between a sob and a laugh before he nodded.

“’s okay, you’re right, I can’t do much by myself,” he mumbled, still trembling and avoiding their eyes.

And Sirius snapped.

“No, you idiot, that’s not the bloody point!” Contrary to James, he wasn’t hesitating and grabbed a rough hold of Hadrian’s shoulder. “You aren’t supposed to fight this war. You’re not even of age! And even if you were, you aren’t trained. It is NOT your duty to do the work of an auror. It is NOT your duty to do anything just because the fucking headmaster says you should!”

He didn’t like the look in Hadrian’s eyes, it spoke of a sense of duty that bordered on ignorance for any self-preservation, it bordered on a lack of comprehension… As if he disregarded his own life as something unimportant. And Sirius suddenly hated the future.

“Why not?” It was a soft spoken question but it spoke worlds of Hadrian’s inner workings, of his thought process and Sirius could only stare at him in shock. “If I can make a difference, wouldn’t it only be right?”

The classroom was silent for a minute. James and Sirius were either staring at nothing in particular or at Hadrian who didn’t seem to understand their concern. Then Sirius groaned. It was so damn Gryffindor, the way Hadrian spoke and acted, that even the Black heir that went against all odds felt the need to bang his head against the nearest wall.

“Bloody hell, Prongs, your son’s a Merlin forsaken hero.”
He didn’t say it as a compliment.

Harry cringed at the title. He was no hero, he was just desperate. The headmaster was using him, he knew that now, had known ever since he heard of the prophecy. A damn foretold story Dumbledore had known about all Harry’s life and hadn’t deigned to inform him about. But recognising the manipulations didn’t change the connection he had to Voldemort, it didn’t change that he had knowledge of what was to come, knowledge that could be used to make a difference. And it didn’t change that he now actually had a lot of power at his disposal. The odds were so much better then they had been in the future! But James was right, he needed training. Without it he would be nothing but a drop of water in a desert. Harry was shortly sidetracked by the question if he would actually be able to become an auror together with his father? Well, if things played out like they did ‘the first time’, it was a likely possibility. Though, there was this tiny part of Harry that had started thinking of other possible ways, of other possible futures, including a different career choice…

They didn’t speak much after that. James looked still conflicted with a simmering anger underneath and he would sent Harry worried and contemplative glances from time to time. But he seemed also torn and shaken. Understandably, Harry thought. He had just lost one of his biggest idols. He had just lost a bit of the innocence that came with growing up in a world of black and white – it was the kind of innocence Harry himself had been forced to grow out of not too long ago.

“We’ll talk about this in the group,” James said quietly but in a no nonsense tone of voice. Then he left Sirius and Harry to their own devices, presumably needing the distance to come to terms with it all.

The silence that followed felt awkward to Harry. He wasn’t sure what to make of this all, first the headmaster trying to make him into a bloody chess piece once again, then the revelation that James had been there the whole time and let’s not forget having both James and Sirius blow up at him. He wasn’t used to concern like this. Sure, his friends used to try and stop him from doing stupid things and they worried, yes, but never before had anyone ever told him to actually not fight. They all accepted that he was the Boy-Who-Lived with all that seemed to entail. But this was different and the fact that it had been his father…

A hand on his arm brought Harry out of his thoughts. Sirius was standing right in front of him, but this time his grip wasn’t as rough but gentle in a way that made Harry suddenly conscious of his proximity. He looked up to meet those grey eyes, his own eyes vulnerable with his mind still reeling over the display of concern from before.

“You’re going to be trouble, aren’t you?” Sirius asked, but it wasn’t an accusation.

There was humour lining his face and Harry saw the corner of his mouth twitch. The shift in the situation was abrupt and suddenly Harry felt Sirius’ presence more strongly than he had during the whole conversation or even when he had ranted at him. He blushed furiously when he realised he was staring at Sirius’ lips, his gaze snapping back up, wanting to make sure he hadn’t been caught staring.

But he had. Sirius eyes were darker with realisation, gaze intense and never wavering. Harry felt like he had been caught in a way that was completely new to him, it wasn’t like Legilimency, it wasn’t an intrusion, but it was holding him in place with just that look in Sirius’ eyes. The hand on his arm was skimming over the skin beneath his rolled up sleeve, leaving a trace of heat and cold both in its wake. Harry completely forgot to answer even if he suspected the question to be rhetorical, his breathing speeding up against his will.

And then it just happened.
Harry would probably have freaked if he had been thinking at all. As it was he wasn’t able to do anything but holding on as Sirius kissed the living daylights out of him. It started softly, just a gentle press of lips against his own that turned rather suddenly into more, heated skin on skin and mingling breaths. He had never kissed a boy before and his experiences with girls were scarce too, but whatever he had felt before with anyone else was nothing like kissing Sirius. It was so different. It was all-consuming. It was so… right.

It was like coming home.

Chapter End Notes

So I wrote you a longer chapter to celebrate the one-year-anniversary.
You know what... I looked it up and that was actually my very first kissing scene. I never wrote something like it before.

(*) Fleamont Potter, James’ father, was born pre 1909. For this story I didn’t decide on an exact year, but imagine him being somewhere around 70 at this point in the story. Assuming his wife is about the same age, she would have been around 55 when falling pregnant with James.
In which everything moves fast, even Harry

Breaking apart, but not moving much, they breathed each other’s air for a moment. Sirius’ heart was beating loud in his chest, elation and apprehension both running through his blood. What had he done? Sure he had wanted this for a long time, but he had wanted to wait on Hadrian to be ready.

“I feel like I should apologise for this,” he whispered against the shorter boy’s lips, still staying in his slightly crouched position, hands tangled in the dark mop of hair and feather.

“Huh?” He couldn’t contain the chuckle at the dazed look he was being given, nor could he stop himself from nosing along Hadrian’s jaw, taking in more of the soft skin.

“I didn’t even ask if I could kiss you,” he murmured, mouthing slightly at the slender neck in front of him.

“Oh.” Hadrian’s breath hitched and Sirius could feel a barely there tremble that seemed to echo in his own limbs. “Merlin…”

“Nuh-uh,” he interrupted, smiling against heated skin and eliciting another gasp, “It’s ‘Sirius’.” That seemed to finally break Hadrian out of his daze as he could feel the boy suddenly tensing up. He straightened out of his position and dropped his hands carefully to Hadrian’s arms, letting them wander down until he could grasp those bird bone hands in his. “Too fast?”

Hadrian blushed heavily and avoided his eyes, but nodded so Sirius took a measured step back out of his personal space.

“I’d say I’m sorry, but you probably wouldn’t appreciate me lying,” Sirius grinned cheekily down at Hadrian, hiding his own uncertainty.

Hadrian had been a walking temptation for longer than he cared to admit, and now knowing what that silky skin tasted like, Sirius seriously had to force himself to concentrate on taking it slow. He couldn’t risk jeopardizing this. He would still need to talk to James, he reminded himself sternly. Though, as shy and embarrassed as Hadrian seemed to be, at least he didn’t look like he regretted the kiss happening. James might technically be the right person to ask – weird shit that – but it would be Hadrian’s decision in the end. If the boy backed out of this, Sirius would respect his wish, but he wouldn’t just give up. He didn’t think he actually could give up on Hadrian at this point.

Harry was scrambling on what to say. He should say something, right? Sirius had just kissed him! Or had he kissed Sirius? Anyway, they had kissed! And damn he needed to expand his vocabulary. Looking down at their still linked hands, Harry tried to mentally come to terms with the morning’s happenings.

First the tense atmosphere at breakfast after the revelations of yesterday – they now knew exactly who he was and so far everyone had kind of avoided talking about it. Then being summoned to the headmaster’s office in order to talk about the fact that Harry’s secret was no longer a secret. The
headmaster ‘asking’ him to agree to being trained for … well, he had called it ‘helping the Light side’, but Harry wasn’t fooled. Sure, he could be helpful, but Dumbledore had gone out of his way not to specify what Harry would be expected to do. It was why he hadn’t made any obligations even though James seemed to think he had. James. His father being angry on his behalf, his father telling him not to fight. Harry had no words for the feeling James’ reaction had ignited in his chest, it was all fuzzy and warm. And then there was Sirius and with that Harry had made a whole circle and was back for the situation literally at hand.

Looking up, he was met with smiling grey eyes as if Sirius knew exactly what he had been thinking. Apparently Harry hadn’t taken too long in thinking everything through or Sirius just had no problem with waiting him out.

“So, um…” He cleared his throat awkwardly. “Does that mean we’re… uhh…” he rambled before dropping his gaze down to the floor in embarrassment.

Merlin, he was making a fool out of himself. But really, Harry had no idea how situations like these would normally continue. Were they now ‘together’ because they had kissed? Or was this just, well, a kiss with no strings attached? Or-

“If you want to, then yes, Bambi. I would love to be with you.” Sirius made it look so easy, it was frustrating. But Harry felt a bit of his awkwardness ease when glancing up again, he spotted the slight pink dusting of Sirius’ cheeks. It made him smile.

“I would like that.”

Peter was pissed off. Why the hell was everything revolving around that new brat?

And as if it wasn’t already annoying enough that his friends seemed to ditch him for some stray, now said stray was revealed as not only a Potter but also a time travelling Potter. He claimed to be James bloody son!

Peter scoffed. Yeah, right. Time travel and then of course he would turn out to be their leader’s son. Was there a better position to have in their group? That little parasite had worked his way up the ladder from a no one to the top and his friends actually took him by his word. If it wasn’t for the map, things would look different, he was sure. There was just no way that bloke could be who he said he was.

Unfortunately, even if he was lying about the time travel stuff that just about confused Peter out of his mind, the map still revealed him as a Potter. And with the parasitic creature being a member of an influential family, the family he was trying to get into good graces with, there was just no way for Peter to continue the way he had until now. He had kept his distance as much as he could so far while still gathering information for Professor Bole. But it was obvious, had been from the very first meeting, that the creature didn’t like him and Peter’s behaviour certainly hadn’t helped with that. It would be pretty suspicious if he suddenly up and tried to become friends – not that he wanted to be friends with something like that.

So really, there was only one way, Peter decided with a nod to himself. He couldn’t back out of his agreement with Bole, after all there were grades to think about, and even if him passing this year’s classes wasn’t an issue, he would still be busted if he tried nixing the deal now. Professor Bole had made it certainly clear how important it was to keep it all under wraps and that he would make sure his friends would be informed about his actions if he failed him.

So, only one way. Get rid of the danger and fast, fast enough to prevent Lord Potter from claiming
the creature as a family member. He would be doing them all a favour anyway.

Monday had dawned grey with a sun that didn’t seem to produce as much light as they were used to, winter was truly coming their way now. The only good that came with such gloomy weather was in Harry’s opinion that he would have no need for his sunglasses. He loved being free of his prescribed glasses and having to wear the wide shades Sirius had lent him was kinda ruining the effect. As his head felt somewhat heavy that day anyway, he was also glad no glasses stopped him from rubbing at tired eyes.

As Harry sprinted down the hallways towards the nearest loo, his thoughts ran over the talk the group had had until late yesterday.

The Marauders had called an ‘emergency meeting’ in the Room of Requirement and even though Harry would have given a lot to keep Pettigrew out of it, he had acquiesced to James’ need to get it all off his chest. There were after all more important things than his dislike for the rat right now. They had sat together and discussed his visit with the headmaster, just bringing everyone up to par and finding out each other’s opinion on the matter.

As it stood, James was still raging about the nerve Dumbledore had in trying to guilt trip Harry into training for the war and whatnot. He was slowly, very slowly mind you, coming to terms with Harry being his son, though he still was floundering on how to act around him now. That whole revelation left him indescribably afraid for Harry, not that he told them about that.

Sirius for his part was contenting himself with planning ways to dispose of a certain old codger, his mind enjoying the most vicious and ruthless methods his imagination could come up with. Though he never voiced those half-serious thoughts, he couldn’t stop himself from keeping a possessive hold on Harry most of the time.

Remus was first and foremost reeling from the revelation. The man that had allowed him into this school despite his condition, the man that stood for everything good and Light, was now appearing a warped shadow of himself, seemingly ready to sacrifice a child in the war effort if it granted his side an advantage. He was holding out judgement though. He didn’t want to just believe that Albus Dumbledore’s intentions were of a malicious nature as long as they had yet to see more evidence than a carefully worded conversation. It could all be a huge misunderstanding, after all, and Remus wasn’t ready to condemn someone he had relied on and trusted for so long without further investigation.

Finally reaching his destination, Harry didn’t hesitate to make use of the facilities. He had been late for Potions and therefore no time for a piss beforehand. So he had been sitting through the whole class quietly begging the clock to run faster. If it hadn’t been Potions, a class in which every unsupervised second could destroy the whole lesson’s effort, he would have excused himself to the loo sometime during class. As it was, he was more than glad to finally be able to do so and hadn’t even waited on any of the others.

He was just flushing the toilet as the door to his stall opened ominously.

Harry spun around confused, feeling slightly dizzy from the movement as he had the whole morning whenever moving his head too fast. There in front of him, blocking the exit and calmly closing the door behind him stood Barty Crouch. Harry had never been gladder for school robes that obscured the view of the trousers beneath.

“Damn he’s a fast one,” James whistled, looking at where Hadrian had sat just a few seconds before.
“Where’d he go?”

He wouldn’t say it out loud, but he kinda felt uncomfortable with having the boy out of his sight. He was still reeling from the revelations of yesterday, but his subconscious was already coming to terms with the connection he shared with Hadrian, as weird as it was.

“Loo,” Remus snickered, coming up next to his friends. “He was trying to talk the clock into running faster throughout half of the lesson.”

He too didn’t like Hadrian away from their group, that boy had just too much of a danger magnet in him. But he realised they couldn’t always keep him in their sights, he was a teenager just like them and entitled to some privacy.

“I don’t like my Bambi being all alone, especially not here,” Sirius added with a pensive look down the dungeon corridor.

“Your Bambi, huh?” James regarded his best mate carefully, taking in the smug air despite the frown currently marring his features. “Oh I see…”

His light-bulb-tone of voice drew the rest of the Marauders’ attention and Sirius actually looked uncertain for a second. He hadn’t had time to get James alone to speak with him about the now official relationship of him and Hadrian as of yesterday. The thought brought back the memory of the kiss and made him grin so wide his face hurt, completely ignorant to the sniggers going on behind his back.

“So you two are now…?”

“Yep.”

Everyone was quiet for a minute, James staring intently at Sirius while the latter sported the smuggest smile they could ever remember seeing on him – and talking about Sirius Black that certainly spoke for itself. Peter was just looking between everyone confused while Remus was pinching the bridge of his nose, waiting for the inevitable.

Then James gasped.

“Wait, wait, wait,” he cried dramatically, flailing arms in his best mate’s face. “Does this mean I have to give him The Talk?!”

Harry could hold his own in a magical duel which was most likely why Crouch chose this setting. By now his escapades in Defense Against the Dark Arts were well-known enough, anyway. But the narrowness of the stall restricted movement as it was and with two of them in here there was barely room to wield a wand. It would come down to simple physical strength and Harry wasn’t kidding himself: If he let Crouch get a hold of him, this, whatever it was, would be over for him before he could say ‘Quidditch’.

“Now, no need to look so scared, pretty,” the Slytherin purred and Harry felt himself growing cold.

He was fast on his feet and had great reflexes, but there was no running when trapped and there was only so much avoiding he could do in an enclosed space like this. So yes, physically speaking Harry didn’t stand a chance against someone of Crouch’s stature, but Harry had been targeted throughout his whole childhood by Dudley and his gang. He might not possess the same strength as Crouch, but he knew where to hit to make it hurt.
He breathed out evenly, shifting his stance and ignoring the oncoming tremble.

“See, I’ve been waiting for an opportunity like this.” Crouch cracked his neck slightly, eyes raking over Harry’s form appreciatively. “But Black has this annoying ability to just pop up everywhere, pawing all over that delicious body of yours.” Spidery large hands were reaching out for him, a confident smirk on the Slytherin’s face. “Not this time though, you were careless, little lion, and I’m not letting a sweet like you go to waste…”

All these assessments ran through Harry’s head in the moment Crouch needed to grin salaciously at him and make his lewd comments. Harry didn’t waste time for an answer. He reached up and grabbed onto the upper edges of the stall’s walls, levered himself up with one mighty jump and used the momentum to kick out at his perplexed attacker. He aimed for the sternum, his whole body vibrating with the impact.

That was all Harry’s arms could support before his own force behind the kick dragged him back down.

Luckily for him it was enough to knock Crouch off balance and for him to squeeze past and out into the bathroom. Harry had his wand in hand before the Slytherin was even back on his feet. No, Harry had learnt his lesson when it came to this bloke, he would not get caught by surprise again like back in the owlery.

“Keep your fucking hands to yourself!”

The slight dizziness in his head didn’t agree with the physical exertion, but Harry forced himself to focus. There was no way he would let that pervert get to him again, this had to end once and for all. Crouch groaned and rolled back up, eyes clouded with rage.

“You little shit,” he spat, lunging at Harry, completely forgoing any magical attack.

He wasn’t dumb, even in his anger he remembered how easy it had been to bodily overtake the Gryffindor. It was far less risky than attacking a student famous for his defence magic with any hex or curse he would have been able to scrounge up right now. He barrelled into Harry at the same time as the bright red light of a stunner lit up the room.

CRACK

“Ow…,” Harry groaned slightly from where he lay half buried beneath the tall Slytherin.

He thought he had hit his head on the floor’s tiles with the impact, his whole brain felt jarred. Trying to blink away the growing fuzziness, Harry looked at Crouch. His stunner had hit the bloke square in the chest and he just hoped the wanker got as terrible a headache from it as he now had.

“Hadrian? You in there?” Remus’ voice drifted into the bathroom moments before he opened the door. “What-”

He took one look at the sight of Harry looking pale and attempting to push an unconscious Barty Crouch off him, before he rushed over to help. Together they rolled the Slytherin to the side, uncaring of the lolling head. Getting up on slightly wobbly legs, Harry let Remus support him. His friend brushed the hair from his face and scanned his form for any obvious injuries, before he stared down at Crouch with an unreadable look.

“He is so going to regret this.”
In which Pepper Up is not to be administered

Chapter Notes

There'll be another chapter in a few hours! <3

Harry was rather puzzled. Normally at this point there would be a teacher suddenly appearing and making assumptions about his latest misstep. Like how he obviously attacked another student and how surely he was plotting some evil. Yet here they were, Remus, Harry and a stunned Crouch in a bathroom near the dungeons and no teacher whatsoever in sight. And damn did his head hurt.

“What happened?” Remus’ quiet voice penetrated Harry’s light daze as the adrenaline slowly ebbed away. “I know you’d never have done this without a reason.”

Harry stared a moment longer at Crouch’s prone form before he gave his friend a shaky smile. “I’m not sure,” he said, biting on his bottom lip and wincing at the slightly raspy sound of his voice. “He suddenly came into my stall while I was… you know… and then he started talking about how he waited for some kind of opportunity and…” Harry touched his forehead wearily as he was hit with a dizzy spell, “…crap, I need to sit down a sec.”

He was dimly aware of Remus grabbing a hold of his shoulders as he was about to take a seat next to Crouch on the floor.

“Come on, I’ll take you to the hospital wing and get some professor to look for Crouch,” he gave the prone form a dismissive glance before he manoeuvred the stumbling Harry out into the hallway. “I wanted to get you so we could join the others at the Quidditch pitch, but seeing you now there’s no way I’ll let you go anywhere without a check-up.”

He ignored Harry’s feebly protest that lacked a lot of strength as his vision blurred and he leaned more onto Remus for support. Harry frowned. Yes, he had hit his head on the tiles, but this was… He had been feeling a bit fuzzy in the head before Crouch’s whatever-he-had-been-trying-to-do. But really, he just needed to sit down for a minute, no need for the trice damned hospital wing and Madam Pomfrey’s tender care yet again.

Remus managed to get Hadrian out into the hall before he growled lowly in the back of his throat. The boy was severely stumbling by now, obviously unwell - and still insisted that he was fine! On top of that the still rather ‘active’ Moony could smell the distress on Hadrian and it really didn’t serve to keep him calm. Oh how he would have liked to hang Crouch by his robes into one of the stalls, covered in *Furnunculus* (*) or something, but Hadrian needed him right now.

There would be a time for retribution.

Swiftly moving Hadrian’s arm over his shoulder, muttering a quiet ‘sorry’ at the boy’s flinch, Remus nearly manhandled his friend down the hall towards the stairs. Luckily, they were on dungeon level which meant only one actual staircase till first floor and infirmary. They met clusters of students just out of class that watched the two of them march by with curious eyes. Magical accidents or pranks were a regular sight at Hogwarts so no one reacted all that shocked, though the more surprising was
probably the lack of any obvious magical predicament like jelly legs or perhaps rapidly growing teeth. Still, Remus’ sensitive ears picked up on the erupting whispers as Hadrian was recognised. They were of course speculating about what had happened, though the main focus was actually on the fact that it was him and not Sirius with Hadrian. He even heard someone questioning if they were now a threesome.

“Abbott?” He asked one of the older passing students, coincidentally the cousin of his light fancy Mary Abbott, the Ravenclaw prefect. “Can you get a professor to the boy’s bathroom near the dungeon stairs? Some Slytherin needs a Rennervate.” (*)

He could clearly hear the growl in this last statement and saw the surprise in Abbott’s eyes before he nodded in understanding. Normally Remus wouldn’t openly judge someone for their house and that stance was well known - even though he was friends with the two most popular trouble makers. Yet, the way he spoke the word ‘Slytherin’ had been anything but friendly. Or even neutral for that matter.

Harry would have been pouting by the time they reached the hospital wing if it weren’t for the fact that he by now was relying heavily on Remus to actually move. His world was hazy and swaying in a nauseating way and his head hurt something fierce. He couldn’t walk straight with the floor seemingly rolling in waves and the twisting in his stomach. Yep, he really needed to sit down now or he would spill his lunch all over those rolling slaps of stone and probably the front of his robes… He blinked confusedly as the stone floor vanished from his limited sight and he found himself instead sat down on something more or less comfortable. A hospital bed, his befuddled mind supplied, and Harry groaned relieved and closed his eyes. Finally he could lie down…

“Oh my,” Madam Pomfrey’s voice had never sounded so unpleasant before, he decided, as he felt it reverberate through his pounding head. “Why am I not surprised,” the matron sighed and Harry blocked the following conversation between her and Remus out. He only twitched a bit when he felt someone’s hand on his forehead.

“Well, young man, you’re running a fever,” the matron said ignoring the blatant lack of response. “Now, I know the cold season is always a bit strenuous on the immune system in this drafty old castle, but I get the feeling this is something else…” She waved her wand over Harry for a brisk diagnostic charm, then made a tsk-ing noise. “Do you have something to confess, Mr. Moore?”

As Hadrian failed to respond once again, just laying there looking pale and yet flushed in that unhealthy way that came with fevers, Remus watched the Hogwarts matron become more concerned. She started waving her wand in the intricate patterns of more diagnostic spells, and Remus only felt his worry ease a little at the thought that he had gotten Hadrian the best help there was. Still, he would not leave until he knew his friend was being treated for whatever was wrong with him. He had really started to be scared for the boy when he stopped responding somewhere on the stairs and Remus had to half drag him on. He would probably have picked him up if Hadrian hadn’t pushed on so determinedly. Whatever this was, it had to be more than a cold and Remus felt dread curling in his gut at the thought what might have gone down between those two in that creepy dungeon lavatory before he reached them. He was brought out of his silent vigil over James’ future son by Madam Pomfrey’s scolding voice, though he noted how she had toned down the noise level compared to before.

“The fever seems to be the result of a cold though you are also suffering from a concussion. I will only be able to treat the latter as a Pepper Up or any other medication for the cold would interfere with the potion for your concussion.”

Remus watched her summoning a potions kit from her office and thought back on what could have
caused the concussion. It obviously had to be whatever had happened with Crouch. If only he had been there earlier… The cold was not really a surprise, he decided and wondered why he hadn’t actually expected it. Hadrian had gotten drenched in the rain one time too often these last days and it definitely wouldn’t help to spend half of the night out on the grounds in only your pyjamas.

“As I said before, Mr. Moore, Pepper Up is not to be administered while suffering from a concussion, so you will require bed rest once again.”

Remus blinked and noticed that Hadrian was looking much more alert, even attempting to sit up on the bed. It seemed he had missed the matron spelling whatever potion helped with concussions right into Hadrian.

“Not that I would let you move around while recovering from something like this,” she added with a huff, summoning what reminded Remus of the cooling patches his mother used to buy when he was a small child. They were even the same blue colour!

Watching his best mate go at it so determinedly these last few weeks – and for the moment ignoring the identity of Sirius’ conquest – had made James realise how stagnant his own pursuit of Lily Evans had become. He was only repeating the motions it seemed, not even expecting a positive answer anymore.

And damn was he pining after that beautiful girl.

Making some dramatic loop with his broom, James rallied his team up for another set of practice moves. He needed to get a move on, he decided. Things couldn’t stay this way, especially considering that it was already their sixth year at Hogwarts and so far he had no reason to keep contact with Lily Evans after graduation. And that just wouldn’t do. He would step up the came and if he had to use some underhanded methods so be it.

With this decision made James felt newly invigorated for his insistent quest for Lily. He knew, his attempts at wooing her would seem ridiculous to any outsider and he was aware that his mates secretly thought them slightly desperate, but nonetheless the Marauders stayed supportive. Even though it didn’t change much. But with Hadrian’s presence – and now not so much ignoring his identity quite so blatantly anymore – James had a new possible way of pursuing his lovely fierce redhead. So with another swoop of his broom James started plotting anew and let Hadrian become an important asset in most of his plans. That boy had started a tentative friendship with Lily ever since his release out of the hospital wing after the inheritance and James was desperate enough to take advantage of that.

He grinned. Who knew? Maybe his son would be the one to secure him the woman of his life – maybe Lily Evans actually would be Hadrian’s mother.

It wasn’t until after training and they were just making their way towards the changing rooms that Hogwarts’ grapevine reached them. The rumours ranged from an unfortunate accident in a bathroom that somehow involved the Moaning Myrtle to a gruesome attack that ended in cold blooded murder of a house-elf. But all of them pictured Hadrian in a starring role and James had just enough time to frown concerned before he saw Sirius taking off towards the castle in a sprint. Heaving a sigh, he followed his best mate.

Chapter End Notes
(*) **Furnunculus**: A sort of pimple jinx that causes a person to break out in boils (or pimples) when it comes in contact with their skin. Better not combine that with the Jelly-Legs-Curse unless you’re into tentacles ;)

(*) **Rennervate, the Reviving Spell**: The original incantation was Enervate, which means “to weaken”. Due to this misconception, J.K. Rowling officially renamed it to Rennervate, which means “to energise”.

(Harry Potter Lexicon)
"(...)

**In which there is probably a dent in a doorframe**

Chapter Notes

The second for today, just because.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"(...)*But all of them pictured Hadrian in a starring role and James had just enough time to frown concerned before he saw Sirius taking off towards the castle in a sprint. Heaving a sigh, he followed his best mate.*"  

Harry hated the hospital wing with a passion. He was so done with finding himself in one of the uncomfortable beds with their too white sheets surrounded by annoyingly white curtains that so not preserved anyone’s modesty. At least this time he hadn’t woken up here… well, sort of. Another small bout of luck was that Madam Pomfrey knew about his inheritance, sworn to secrecy as she was, and didn’t protest him wearing Sirius’ sunglasses, nor did he have to worry about hiding his feathers when she examined his head. His feathers. Harry snorted. He wondered if that would ever sound less strange to him.

With the grey weather and dull light he didn’t really need the sunglasses today yet he found himself slipping them on every other minute. He was just glad to have the option as for some ridiculous reason there was an influx of unfortunate students that seemed to pop up out of no where whenever Harry thought he could catch a break. Simply said, it was suspicious and didn’t help him or his head in the least.

He was sitting propped up against a mountain of pillows courtesy of an overly motherly Madam Pomfrey, trying in vain to sketch despite feeling like shit, when he heard the sound of rapidly advancing feet. Someone was running right through the double doors of the hospital wing and Harry’s eyes snapped up, though he managed to prevent himself from moving his head.

Skidding into the hospital wing still in Quidditch uniform and drenched in sweat was Sirius, looking harried and breathing heavily. For a second Harry’s eyes trailed along that damp neck and over the form fitting uniform that was clinging to the broad shoulders. That was until he met Sirius’ eyes and noticed the panic in the grey gaze.

Sirius nearly stumbled upon his hasty entry to the infirmary, his eyes scanning the room for his boyfriend. He frowned when he noticed the unusual amount of students requiring medical attention, but dismissed his observation the moment his eyes latched onto the person he had been looking for. Feeling his breath leave him in a rush, Sirius silently thanked Merlin and even Hecate that Hadrian seemed to be alright or at least not in any critical condition. (*) Though, there was some strange bluish patch on his forehead… He forced himself to head over to where the boy was sitting in a more sedate pace, heart rate finally calming down.

“Being troublesome already, Bambi?” He asked, attempting to sound like his usual cocky self but feeling like he kinda messed that one up.
He raked his gaze over what little he could see of Hadrian, taking in every little detail. There was an unhealthy looking flush to his skin and as Hadrian shifted, his longish fringe revealed again what he suspected to be some kind of ice-pack spelled to his forehead. Fever then, though why they were resorting to such inadequate methods was beyond him. Sirius knew for sure there was more than one magical way to lower someone’s fever, he had read up on the topic after that horrible night in the Shrieking Shack. It made him angry that for some reason Madam Pomfrey wasn’t being her normal medical genius self, but he forced the emotion down. There was probably a reasonable excuse for the treatment and it most definitely wasn’t Hadrian’s fault so he would not let the boy draw the wrong assumption. Internally congratulating himself for that accomplishment, he nodded to Remus as he sat himself on the side of his boyfriend’s bed. He more felt than heard James finally catching up to him.

James was experiencing rather conflicted emotions coming upon the sight of his best mate sitting so close to his son as he was. It didn’t help that Sirius was holding Hadrian’s hand (and yes, James noted the sudden hush of the other students present) or that Hadrian himself was smiling the kind of shy smile that spoke of at least a healthy crush.

“I’m missing my Arts class again,” he heard the boy complain and felt a smile tug at his lips. His son was pouting over missing a class – the possibility of Lily being his mother becoming that much more logical in James’ mind. “Madam Pomfrey said I had to sit it out at least until tomorrow.”

James came to a stop near the bed and well in Hadrian’s line of sight, finally registering Remus standing on the other side half turned away in what looked to be an attempt at giving the love birds some semblance of privacy. James snorted. Nope, he was not going down that road.

“You alright, Hadrian?” He asked, making Sirius jump. “The rumours were rather creative ‘bout your role in what seemed to be a murder case…,” he trailed off at the incredulous and then bitter look on his son’s face. Something about that reaction was ringing a bell in his mind, but he couldn’t quite put his finger on it. Remus chose that moment to officially turn his attention back to the conversation.

“Just a cold,” Hadrian shrugged.

“He has a concussion AND a fever,” Remus interrupted sternly. “And I really want to know what happened with Crouch that caused the concussion,” he added with a surprisingly obvious growl to his voice. Someone was clearly furry – sort of.

“Crouch?”

Hadrian made a nice impression of being part of the cushions, but Sirius was having none of that. He leaned forward, large hands swallowing Hadrian’s smaller one, and eyes intent on mesmerizing green. James felt himself shift a bit closer.

“What did he do?” His best mate’s voice was that low and dangerous sounding rumble, deceivingly calm and so not something James ever wanted directed his way. The fragile looking boy on the bed though only raised an unimpressed eyebrow as if he had dealt with much more intimidating behaviour – well, he obviously didn’t know any better. Yet.

“I don’t know what it was about,” his son’s reply sounded resolute, but James thought he caught a flicker of disturbed uneasiness in his wide eyes that had nothing to do with Sirius’ reaction. “He attacked me. I stunned him.” He shrugged again and James looked over at Remus who was frowning heavily.

“Attacked you?” Sirius growled, “As in trying to hex you?”

Hadrian shook his head, but stopped the motion abruptly with an only halfway suppressed moan. He
definitely was still suffering from the concussion even though it must have been treated by now. Or maybe it was the fever, not a pleasant combination after all. What was that blue sticky thing on his forehead anyway?

The sudden squealing all around the hospital wing jolted James back to attention and he looked around bewildered. There was an awful lot of students around and no, not even half of them looked like they really needed medical attention. Looking back to the bed he was standing next to cleared up the reason for the sudden squealing contest: Sirius had reached out to the boy between the Pillow Mountains and was cupping his cheek in a tender gesture, his face lined with concern as he leaned in.

James cleared his throat pointedly.

He didn’t get to enjoy the slightly sheepish look on Sirius’ face as Madam Pomfrey seemed to finally realise that more than half her patients weren’t actually in need of her attention. She made short work of herding the flocks of fangirls and –boys out of her domain, giving Hadrian an apologetic look, before closing the heavy double doors and retreating to her office.

“So he didn’t attack you magically?”

The thought seemed to make Sirius even angrier, probably because he knew his boyfriend was more than capable in magical defence and would have been easily able to give twice as hard as he got. But he was looking at Hadrian’s small frame and James could practically see him mentally comparing it to the lanky, and very tall, stature of Crouch. It was equally easy to see the moment the conclusion made his best mate see red. James actually thought for a moment he could hear the Grim through Sirius’ voice, growling and spitting with rage.

“We’re together what? A day? And he just-”

He made a strangled sound as he stood up abruptly, making Hadrian flinch slightly, and started pacing furiously.

“That’s it, I’ll not stand for this! Sick bastard’ll suffer for what he did…”

Sirius threw one last look at Hadrian still feverish and ensconced in the hospital bed, before he stormed out of the hospital wing, punching the door frame in his rage as he went. It made Hadrian flinch once again.

James sighed. His best mate seldom let himself get swept away by his temper like this and he had a feeling his Animagus was also playing a part in this. He looked over at Moony and raised an eyebrow questioningly. In a situation like this Sirius would need a calm presence and who was better suited for that than Remus? Said friend only nodded in understanding before he followed Sirius, leaving James and his son alone.

Harry stared at the double doors to the hospital wing a moment longer before he decided that he really didn’t want to know. Sirius was more than capable to stand up to someone like Crouch, magically and physically, and Remus was with him so Harry decided worrying wasn’t worth it right now. Not when he was alone with James for the first time since he had spilled his secret.

He watched as his future father pulled a chair over and cast a *Muffliato* spell around them, just in case more fangirls tried their luck. (*) Not like Madam Pomfrey had let any of those creepy girls (or the few boys for that matter) stay. James was quiet for a long moment and Harry felt nervous and awkward, valiantly trying not to shift too much around. It didn’t help that he was still feeling weak from his cold, body aching and head fuzzy from the fever.
“James?” He finally asked softly, careful not to make any loud noise that would only serve to aggravate his head more. “You don’t have to stay, you know?”

He smiled slightly at his teenaged father, but was surprised by the momentary anguish he thought crossed James’ face. What was that about? It took another long moment and the repeated clearing of a throat before James seemed to feel able to answer him, though Harry had no idea why he would be that affected by his words.

“Isn’t it weird? Calling your… father by his name?”

Oh. Now this made more sense. Looking into the hazel eyes of James Potter, who was for all intents and purposes his father, Harry decided that they needed to talk. There was just something there… it made him realise that he hadn’t even thought about how all this could affect James, all those revelations, suddenly learning that his new friend was actually his son and then, Harry thought, he really wasn’t much of a son either. It must be disconcerting to be confronted with all these things.

“I wouldn’t know,” he answered carefully, wondering how much he could tell him without making him feel even worse.

Right now James only thought he had a disappointment for a son, even though he for some reason seemed to love the fact Harry had inherited the Elf Owl gene. But telling him the reason just why Harry wouldn’t know if calling your father by his name was weird…

“I am so sorry,” James’ whispered words were nearly inaudible.

Harry was stumped. Why was James apologising? What for? Shouldn’t he be the one being sorry for ruining James’ outlook on life? Here he was, just randomly appearing during his father’s teen years, putting him and his friends into danger of being discovered as illegal Animagi, hiding a werewolf, and now endangering the whole House of Potter with his relation and creature heritage. Not to mention the abrupt shift in James’ world view when he had to witness Dumbledore’s machinations.

Harry sighed.

“It was nice as long as it lasted,” he muttered, not looking at James. He had really enjoyed being just Hadrian, but as always trouble found him and in relation the people close to him. “I don’t know what you’re apologising for, but I’m sorry too for… well, forcing all this onto you.”

James blinked at the boy on the bed. A boy that he knew to be his son, yet someone he did know nearly nothing about. There were a few things that he had deduced long before Hadrian’s true identity had been revealed and in light of the latter those things had cemented James’ belief of being an abusive father.

The thought felt like burning his guts.

But here was Hadrian telling him he was sorry for forcing something onto him when all the things that kept happening to his son weren’t even by far his fault. There was nothing Hadrian could have done about his genetics and there was not much he could do about the students that kept reacting strangely to the allure that came with said genetics. None of this was really Hadrian’s fault yet he was apologising and if James had heard that muttered bit right…

“What I’m apologising for?” James asked, cursing his future self to Hell and back for whatever he had instilled in his son. Whatever it was, it couldn’t be healthy if Hadrian couldn’t see all the wrongs that were so obviously waving back at James from those green eyes. “I… you… I mean, look at you! You’re thin as a broomstick, flinch away from contact and what does it say that you were afraid of
telling your own father, me, who you are?” His voice broke a bit on the last bit. “What have I done to you?”

Hadrian had hunched in on himself as he started talking agitatedly and James felt like slapping himself for yet again making his son react this way to him. But then Hadrian looked up, a heavy frown on his face and determination burning in his eyes. Somehow those eyes made something in James’ stomach summersault.

“You didn’t, you know,” Hadrian said, not as softly anymore but with a steel underlining his voice that yet again nudged something in James’ mind. He hadn’t heard the boy speak like this before and just knowing that he was capable of that after all what probably had been done to him, let something akin to pride swell in James’ chest.

“Do anything to me, I mean. I always wondered what life would have been like if you and mum had been there to raise me,” Hadrian continued and James felt his eyes go wide, he couldn’t even begin to comprehend what this statement meant. He was staring transfixed at the wide forest eyes of his son, unable to look away. “Getting to know you now just confirms for me that you would’ve never raised a hand against me,” Hadrian smiled a bit sadly at him, before he added:

“You’re not that kind of person, James.”

Chapter End Notes

(*) Hecate/Hekate: An Ancient Greek goddess, mentioned in religion and mythology. I thought, if Sirius were to call upon a deity it should be someone associated with magic or witchcraft. Hecate is also associated with crossroads, entrance ways, light, knowledge of herbs and poisonous plants. Oh and also ghosts, necromancy, and sorcery. (Though I’d be incapable to explain the difference between magic, witchcraft and sorcery at this point in time.)

(*) Muffliato Charm: Fills the ears of any person in the vicinity of the caster with an unidentifiable buzzing sound so as to allow conversing without being overheard. Was funnily enough created by Severus Snape.
In which a knee jerks

Chapter Notes

I struggled with this one...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sirius stormed through the chilly halls of Hogwarts, not really seeing where he was going yet trusting his feet to take him just where he needed to be. The red haze in is mind prevented him from seeing the perplexed students scurrying out of his way or the shocked looks on their faces when they noticed his eyes.

He felt distinctly murderous.

If Sirius had been in any state to analyse the situation, he might have realised that his inner Grim was amplifying the anger he was feeling towards one Bartemius Crouch to a dangerous level. But as it was, Sirius was on a rampage, red haze of rage clouding his mind. He was replaying the scene in the owlery that he had come upon all those days ago, Crouch’s spidery hands touching a squirming Hadrian, his lanky form looming over the slender boy and the look in those wide green eyes. Hadrian had been so confused, not understanding the Slytherin’s actions.

In his mind the owlery changed into an imaginary scene of what yet again had happened between Crouch and his boyfriend. He saw the Slytherin coming at Hadrian in an unnamed room, hidden away from any possible help, saw the confusion in Hadrian’s eyes melt away to fear. The scenes were blurring, overlapping until Sirius wasn’t sure anymore what really had happened and what was just a product of his overactive imagination.

He remembered wondering if Hadrian really was that naïve or if his reaction back in the owlery had been simply shock induced. Well. He was faced with a similar question this time. There certainly was a worrying amount of naivety in his boyfriend, but something about his statement just now… Sirius somehow was rather sure Hadrian was aware what his latest encounter with Crouch had been about. Though, to which extent remained unknown.

“Rem.” He stopped abruptly and waited for his friend to catch up. “Tell me everything you know.”

Remus was slightly out of breath when he caught up to Sirius, having run after him all the way from the infirmary. He looked a bit dishevelled and for a second Sirius felt the red haze retreat enough to focus on the answers Remus could provide.

“Oh come on,” his friend said slyly. “If I were to do that, we’d stay far longer at Hogwarts than our planned seven years.”

Any other time and Sirius would have scoffed and countered Rem’s words with some quip about this mental illness his friend called academicism. But right now he didn’t have the patience for anything that wasn’t helping him finding out what exactly happened between that bastard Crouch and Hadrian. Rem probably saw something in his eyes or maybe it was the impatient growl he couldn’t quite contain. Not that he tried. Right now his Grim was far more part of his personality than he cared to admit and he had no qualms about letting the death omen out for a bit, preferably to play with some Merlin forsaken Slytherin.
“Right,” Rem sighed and shifted a bit. Sirius watched as he looked up and down the corridor, making sure no one would overhear them. “I only came upon them after Hadrian had already incapacitated him,” he said, but Sirius wasn’t fooled.

There was more to the story and Remus was nervous about telling him. Which was incidentally very telling in itself. He fixed his friend with a glare, willing him to continue. He had no time for sugar-coating. Remus sighed again and ran his hands through his hair in a gesture reminiscent of James… and Hadrian.

“They were in a bathroom,” he finally admitted. “You know, the one near the dungeons.” Sirius stiffened at those words. A bathroom, an intimate place for any kind of encounter. “They were on the floor. Well, Hadrian had stunned Crouch so I guess that’s not really a surprise, I mean, have you ever heard of anyone that remains in balance after being stunned? It’s probably due to-”

“Remus.”

“Right,” the werewolf cleared his throat uncomfortably. “Right. They were on the floor. Crouch was stunned and he… he was lying on top of Hadrian,” he rushed the last part out, barely loud enough to catch the words.

But it was enough for Sirius to understand.

“You’re not that kind of person, James.”

Not that kind of person. Well, what kind of person had he been, would be, you know whatever? Staring at the boy in front of him, his son, James replayed what he had just learned. For some reason he and his supposed future wife had not been there to raise Hadrian. Now, that could have any number of reasons, though really, James thought there couldn’t be anything short of death that would keep him from being a part of his son’s (or any child that he might have) life. Well damn.

He carefully traced Hadrian’s features with a searching gaze. His son had a tired look about him that had nothing to do with the fever he was currently suffering from, he decided. No, this kind of tiredness was bone deep, the kind that wears you down until you’re not even sure yourself what you’re functioning on. It had to have something to do with whatever happened to him in the past err… future – or with whoever played a major role in his raising. Maybe both. And if it wasn’t him or his future wife… Logically, if anything, especially death, prevented them from taking care of Hadrian that job would fall to other family members, meaning his own parents or his wife’s family or any godparents that Hadrian might have. James couldn’t see any of those possible people abusing a child.

“James?”

Then there was the question: If James was going to die an early death together with his wife, leaving behind at least one child, could he really condemn anyone to that fate? Could he marry anyone, Lily, if it meant an early death? And what about Hadrian? Would James not marrying anyone based on the knowledge Hadrian provided him with condemn his son, to… what? Non-existence? What would happen to the person Hadrian was now, in the here and now, if the son of James Potter never was born? Would he even be here? Well he had to be or he wouldn’t be able to provide the information that would ultimately prevent him from being born… he was getting a headache. James groaned and rubbed at his temples. This time travel stuff was more confusing than a Confundus Charm. (*) He should probably ask Moony about it, really, that was definitely more his forte.

“You’ve no idea how many questions I have just now,” he finally declared, much to Hadrian’s
amusement it seemed.

“You sure about that?”

His son grinned a crooked smile at him that lit up his whole face even though it was tinged with a weary kind of sadness. Was that gallows humour? Oh he liked that side of Hadrian… James couldn’t imagine what it must be like to suddenly find yourself in the past, especially for this boy. Seeing the father that hadn’t been there for him and people he must have grown up with as teenagers his own age. Just thinking about going to school with his own dad made James shudder. Then he stopped.

Hadrian was now going to school with people he must have grown up with as authority figures even if James and his wife hadn’t been there. Thinking about it, he definitely had to have known the rest of the Marauders… probably as uncles… godparents even. Which meant…

“Who raised you?”

He couldn’t believe it, it wasn’t possible any of his friends would have treated a child of his, or any child for that matter, in a way even remotely close to the abuse Hadrian had so obviously suffered. Yet, there was no other answer, was there? It was silent in the hospital wing and the boy on the bed wasn’t looking at him. James could hear the faint sounds of the students on their way to dinner – was it really that late already? He watched as Hadrian pulled his bottom lip into his mouth and started to nibble on it. He was also continuously rubbing over the back of one of his hands with the thumb of the other in what seemed to be a nervous gesture.

“Hadrian?” He urged on, he needed to know this. “Answer my question,” he said quietly, but sternly. “Please.”

Hadrian hadn’t been raised the way he should have been. James himself had had a wonderful childhood, being the only child of a loving couple that wasn’t able to have any more children and had already given up hope when suddenly his mother had fallen pregnant with him. He was spoiled, he knew that, though he probably would never admit it out loud. So whoever raised Hadrian, it couldn’t have been Fleamont and Euphemia Potter for James was sure if it had been them, his son would have been just as spoiled as he was.

That only left his godparents or the family of this ominous wife of his. Any godparents would logically be part of the Marauders, there was no other possibility. So who ever hurt Hadrian, James would ensure it wouldn’t be happening again. The surge of fierce protectiveness surprised even him.

“Should… should I really tell you this?” Hadrian asked, finally looking up again. “I mean… I know I probably changed the future in horrible ways already, but… wouldn’t it be better if I gave you as little information as possible?”

The excuse was flimsy, even Hadrian seemed to realise this, though he also seemed determined to keep it at that. It only served to make James more suspicious. Why was he trying to hide the identity of his guardians? Wouldn’t it only make sense to get his father to change them now when it was still possible?

“That’s bullshit,” James said with a heavy frown.

“Language, Mr. Potter!”

They both jumped in their seats at the voice of Professor McGonagall. How had she been able to hear him over the Muffliato? Oh right. Dinner. The charm had probably dissolved by now.

Harry watched as James abruptly stood up and took on a protective stance. He blinked confused and
tried to look past his teenaged father to get a better look at the people walking into the otherwise
deserted hospital wing.

What he saw made his eyes go wide.

Professor McGonagall was striding briskly towards them, an air of exasperated indignation around
her that reminded Harry of the times she had (or would?) scolded Lee Jordan for his undiplomatically
honest commentating of Quidditch matches. Though, it was the bloodied face of Crouch that drew
Harry’s gaze. Someone had obviously punched the Slytherin and from the smug and unrepentant air
Sirius had going, Harry didn’t have to ask who had done it. His… boyfriend was still shooting
Crouch deadly glares every now and then, not even bothering to hide them from the professor, but
otherwise seemed quite happy with the outcome of whatever had happened.

Remus seemed torn between exasperation and a barely hidden righteous anger also directed at the
Slytherin who was pinching his still bleeding nose. As Harry’s eyes fell again on Crouch, he realised
too late that he wasn’t wearing his sunglasses. Crap, hopefully the Slytherin wouldn’t look too
closely at him considering their current company. It wasn’t like Harry could distract him with well
aimed kicks this time, nor was it as dark as it had been in the owlery. It would be extremely
suspicious anyway if he suddenly felt the need to slip his sunglasses on.

McGonagall didn’t know about his inheritance as far as Harry was aware. He just hoped neither she
nor Crouch would notice anything amiss with his appearance up close like this – and he wished
Crouch wouldn’t be here at all. Harry shuddered and was suddenly grateful for James mostly
blocking his view. He didn’t like the way that bloke was still staring at him, even with that bruised
and bloody nose. And it wasn’t making Harry feel any better that he was to sit in a bed while being
interrogated and having the creep look at him like he was something to eat. If anything that look in
the Slytherin’s eyes was even more disturbing than it had been before. So much for not looking too
closely.

“Now,” McGonagall started as soon as she reached Harry’s bed. “I understand that children your age
are plagued with hormones and that the workload of a sixth year is not to be underestimated.” She
took a breath and Harry knew what would be said next. “But I will not condone behaviour the way it
was presented to me just now. By my own lions no less!”

She had been speaking to the whole group, making Harry wince with her loud voice. Now though
she turned her stern glare on Sirius who looked wholly unbothered by her speech, walking over and
smiling down at Hadrian as if there was no irate professor ranting at him.

“The house of Godric Gryffindor has commanded the respect of the Wizarding World for nearly ten
centuries. I will not have you besmirching that name by behaving like a babbling, bumbling band of
baboons!” If Harry had been feeling any less miserable, he would have snickered at the sentence as
he remembered his professor using nearly the same wording in his fourth year. “And just to act out
revenge for some petty schoolyard scuffles. Why, I never!”

This though made the group stir. The present Marauders had somehow positioned themselves in a
protective circle around the bed, mostly hiding Harry from view, Sirius taking a gentle hold of his
shoulder as if expecting him to jump up in anger. Not that he would. For one, he definitely wasn’t in
any shape to do much of anything right now and then… Harry wouldn’t contradict McGonagall if it
meant no one had to know about what really happened in that bathroom. Or rather would have
happened. He shuddered again.

“It’s no ‘petty schoolyard scuffle’ if someone goes after another in a bathroom, ma’am,” Sirius bit
out, making the professor’s eyes snap over to him yet again.
She looked from Sirius to Harry and back to Crouch who seemed to sense the change in luck and spoke up for the first time. His voice sounded slightly nasal as he was still trying to staunch the bleeding from his broken nose.

“I wasn’t going after him, Professor,” he said, feigning confusion, but his eyes were still drawn repeatedly to Harry. “We just happened to be in there at the same time.”

“Don’t you dare—” Remus growled out, but quieted when McGonagall gave him a sharp look. Remus took a deep breath and then dismissed Crouch completely, turning to the professor. “Professor, he attacked Hadrian. It is the only reason why Hadrian had to resort to Stunning him and why Sirius felt the need to...,” he stopped and gestured at Crouch’s face.

She frowned for a moment, obviously going over what had been said in her mind, before turning to Harry. There was something in her gaze that made Harry cringe internally. She had figured it out.

“Is this true?” Everyone turned to look at him and Harry wished he could just be assigned detention and forget about the incident. “Mr. Moore?”

The hand on his shoulder wandered to his head and he felt himself blush and relax at the same time as Sirius carefully carded his fingers through Harry’s hair. It was a strange feeling to have someone do something so obviously loving in front of an audience as if it were the most natural thing there is. Maybe it was. Harry sighed and nodded, feeling like a total hypocrite. Technically it had been him attacking Crouch, hadn’t it? He had felt threatened and... scared. He had just known what was about to happen and acted on his only chance.

“That’s a lie!” Crouch snapped out furiously, taking a threatening step towards the bed, only to be blocked by James and Remus. “And Black still punched me!”

There was a moment of strained silence, then James reached out and clapped Sirius on the back in obvious approval and congratulation.

It ended with Sirius having to serve a week of detention with Professor McGonagall for the direct attack and Harry having to report back to her office as soon as he was declared healthy enough. Crouch was only warned for now as there was no actual evidence at the moment, but would have to submit himself to a more in-depth interrogation as soon as all involved – meaning mainly Harry – had been able to recount their view of the encounter in a more private setting. The professor sent Crouch out before she left herself as if sensing the danger the boy would be in if he stayed behind with the Gryffindors.

The silence she left behind was interrupted by a gusty sigh from Harry. Professor McGonagall had figured out what was going on between him and Crouch and he would be required to recount it all. He just hoped none of the others would have to be present. There really was no need for James to know the details and what Sirius would do if he knew...

“You punched him?” He asked his boyfriend quietly, getting a smug smirk in return. He turned to Remus. “And you didn’t stop him? You, the prefect?” Remus just snorted derisively, then grinned feraly.

“Blacks are vindictive shits,” he said. “That punch was just the initial knee jerk reaction.”

Chapter End Notes
(* Confundus Charm: causes confusion in a person or bewitches an object. There are probably varying degrees of confusion caused by the spell, from simply tricking a person or thing (remember that bludger?) about a specific incident to confusing a person to a point at which they endanger themselves.

Just noticed that no one tended to Crouch's nose. Oh so sorry.
He skidded a few steps and veered to the side, Death Eaters were coming for him, he could see their shadows move around him...

Being alone in the hospital wing at night wasn’t exactly new to Harry, but it definitely didn’t make it on his list of favourite places and times to be. It was even more daunting to him now after the incident with Crouch that somehow had left him more shaken than he cared to admit even to himself.

Harry had been in so many life threatening situations over the years and yet he had never been the target of sexual harassment before. He hadn’t even been aware that it could be an issue for him before coming to the past. Now here he was, lying in an uncomfortable hospital bed, the dark infirmary creeping him out more than it ever had done, and listening to the creaking wood above. All he could think about was the way Crouch looked at him, leered at him, stared, and undressed him with his eyes and it made Harry shudder in disgust.

If he was honest, it scared him.

Sure, he had fought him off this time. He had known what was about to happen, could still remember the cold spidery hands on his skin from the encounter in the owlery. He hadn’t given Crouch a chance to overpower him this time. He had saved himself. Yet he felt goose bumps crawl over his skin by the mere thought of that bloke - and not the nice kind of goose bumps.

He felt vulnerable.

All it would take for Crouch to get at him was to relieve Harry of his wand. There was no way he could stand his ground against the Slytherin in a physical fight and he would probably not be able to surprise him again like he had in the toilet stall. All that little stunt had earned him was a concussion, bruising, a pissed off boyfriend, a most likely revenge plotting Slytherin and possible future detention on top of being forced to explain the embarrassing situation to a professor. All for a small reprieve that would only last until Crouch could corner him again. And who knew if the Slytherin would be as ‘harmless’ about it as he had been the first two times.

Harry sighed and shifted once again on the lumpy mattress. Normally he could sleep no matter the surface, his childhood had made him rather insensitive for unimportant matters like sleeping places. But with the fever still going his body was feeling sore and aching, making it nearly impossible to get comfortable. He didn’t like feeling weak, he had done so way too often since coming to the past. It made him feel like some sorry excuse of a damsel in distress, minus the pretty face, and Sirius going on his little vendetta hadn’t helped with that sentiment.

Though, if he was honest, a small (really, really small, mostly non-existent and probably only imagined) part of Harry had liked how his boyfriend went all apeshit on Crouch, acting out revenge for Harry and his virtue. It was a strange feeling being the one cared for and not the one expected to
protect and act all strong.

Then there was his conversation with James, as interrupted and incomplete as it had been. James who thought he was the reason Harry had all those not so nice little quirks, James who revealed a much more insecure side of himself than Harry had ever imagined possible, James who wanted to make Harry’s past (future?) better for him and James who grinned in the face of the revelation of his early death. There were some traits there that reminded Harry of himself and seeing them on James made them somehow more admirable than he had ever seen them as.

Shifting yet again, Harry cast his eyes around the dark hospital wing, trying to ignore the eerie atmosphere that had never bothered him before. He had to remind himself that Madam Pomfrey’s quarters were right there with her office, that if someone came for him, he only needed to make a loud enough ruckus to gain her attention. It was ridiculous and Harry felt annoyed with himself for being still so shaken with the whole Crouch thing going on. Really, there were so much more important things he should be thinking about right now…

Sirius hadn’t thought much about borrowing Prongs’ invisibility cloak and sneaking down to the hospital wing after curfew. He had just somehow known that he couldn’t leave Hadrian on his own after the events of the day. It felt just wrong. Whether it was his possessive Grim or maybe the allure making him overprotective again, he didn’t really care. If he was honest, he didn’t believe it was any of those two reasons that sent him down the deserted cold corridors to find his boy sometime after one in the morning. Maybe it was because he hadn’t had a minute alone with Hadrian after finding out about Crouch once again attacking him. Or maybe Sirius just wanted to be with his lo- …fancy.

He had left right after checking on Hadrian in the infirmary, urged on by his Grim and that rage… He had only come back to himself after McGonagall hexed him away from Crouch. He hadn’t even realised he had punched that bastard right in front of his head of house. Not that Sirius particularly cared, it wasn’t like the professor contacting his so-called family about his behaviour, or as she had phrased it ‘misconduct’, would scare him nowadays. He wasn’t planning on ever returning to Black property and his parents had never been the sort that would come to the school personally as they thought themselves above such plebeian matters. So, there really wasn’t much of a chance of coming into contact with his blood-family any time soon.

Sirius spared a second to ponder if him directly attacking the heir to another pure-blooded family would be offence enough for his father to actually take note of him or for his mother to ‘lower’ herself enough to visit the headmaster’s office in order to see her son. He snorted derisively. Right. Maybe if it had been a Malfoy’s nose he broke or even Lestrange’s, after all they were now ‘family’ by marriage. Then again, technically the Crouch’s were also related to the Black’s… He shuddered at the reminder.

No, the Crouch’s were a Light family, even if Junior was desperately wooing the wannabe Death Eaters in Slytherin House. Sirius wondered for another second if Crouch Senior knew about that and if he could use the knowledge in his plotting for revenge. After all, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement was said to have aspirations for Minister. He was sure to put a certain pressure on his son in regards to the reputation and image of the family…

That was when he finally reached the hospital wing and slipped inside as silently as the heavy double doors would allow, only to stop dead in his tracks at the sounds that greeted him.

Thrashing. Whimpering. Little panicked noises.

Sirius was racing across the room and to the only occupied bed before he fully registered his own actions. His mind was creating horrible visions of what could possibly be taking place behind those
closed curtains and he was painfully aware of the relieved sigh he breathed when he found Hadrian alone and well. That is, as well as one could be in the throws of a nightmare. Or night terror, more like it.

Hadrian was writhing on the sheets, hands clawing at the duvet, his fingers raking across the material in a way that promised chapped nails. He was thrashing as if in pain, face contorting in anguish, and whispering harshly in a breaking voice so unlike the smooth timbre Sirius adored. He wasn’t sure he wanted to know what Hadrian was saying. It was scary to look at and Sirius lunged for the bed, shaking his boyfriend’s shoulder near frantic in his haste to wake him from whatever was tormenting him. Hadrian woke with a startled gasp and wide unseeing eyes, only to suck in sudden gasps, too short and panicked. He was hyperventilating, not hearing Sirius’ voice, or not listening.

He had no idea if touching Hadrian had been such a good idea, but he hadn’t been able to stop himself from doing just that. It was a reflex that felt more like a constant need the longer he stayed in Hadrian’s presence. Considering just how volatile this boy’s magic could be Sirius thanked his lucky stars that his action hadn’t caused more damage, but now his Bambi was straining for oxygen. Hands only fluttering around for a moment in indecision, Sirius clambered onto the bed and gently but resolutely tugged the panicking boy into his arms.

He squeezed his own eyes shut as Hadrian started thrashing in his hold.

Legs and arms were flailing, the slender body bucking wildly, gasps and grunts filling the cool air around them. He didn’t let go, just started soothing whispers, hoping he wasn’t doing even more harm. Sirius lost all sense of time as he sat there with his struggling boyfriend, warring with the different feelings inside of himself. Was he helping or was he making it worse? Had touching him been the wrong decision considering the vehement resistance his embrace was met with?

It took him a moment to realise Hadrian had stopped the thrashing and the eerily dark hospital wing was silent but for the shallow and too frantic breaths. Sirius was glad the resistance had stopped, but what about the breathing? He really would need to get Madam Pomfrey if Hadrian didn’t calm down soon, this was becoming dangerous. Just as Sirius was preparing himself to shout for help – there was no way he would leave Hadrian alone now – the breathing finally evened out. There was a long shaky breath and Sirius knew they had made it through the panic attack.

Running, jumping. Down! Rolling out of the way, running, running, running… Don’t look back!

There was a shadow falling over him from behind, but Harry didn’t dare to risk a glance over his shoulder. He was stumbling in the dark as it was, out of breath, so tired. His legs hurt, weighing him down like lead. His lungs burned and the shadow was growing larger, darker…

No, no he couldn’t get caught now, he wasn’t allowed to fail!

There were figures moving in the dark, just out of reach, but there. He skidded a few steps and veered to the side, Death Eaters were coming for him, he could see their shadows move around him… He veered off again, but they were crowding him from all sides, wanting a piece of him, faces merging to…

A hand grabbed him.

“…-rian. Hadrian!”

Harry woke up with a gasp, jumping when he came face to face with a pair of eyes, shit he was
caught, they had him, he had him, he had lost… The images of his dream crowded him, drowning out any rational thought. He had to get away!

“Bambi?” A voice broke through the panicky haze and Harry suddenly realised he was hyperventilating, drawing in too short breaths, too fast, his head was swimming. “Hey now, shssh, you’re alright,” the whispered words seemed to flow soothingly around him and Harry tried with all his scattered focus to concentrate on those words, continuously murmured into his ear.

A distant part of his mind registered that he must have been dreaming and was now awake, because if it hadn’t been a dream, if they, if he really caught him, there sure as hell would be no tender hand carding through his hair and no strong but careful arms would be holding him like he was made of spun glass…

“Please, Bambi,” the voice whispered, sounding more desperate, “Please calm down, you need to breathe or I’ll have to call Madam Pomfrey.”


Harry blinked and registered the lack of lighting around him and the person holding him close to a broad chest. Another set of too fast and shallow gasps later and Harry recognised the scent surrounding him. It was a dark scent even though his mind couldn’t explain how a scent could be ‘dark’, but then it seemed to contrast with what he thought would smell ‘light’. He realised it was this person’s magic he was smelling and strangely it didn’t scare him even though he distinctly knew he was smelling dark magic as far as one could smell magic. And then… there was more, something familiar, something…

Sirius smelled of leather and something dark and smoky that he couldn’t name. Then there was the faint scent of freshly cut grass as if he had just run through the forest as Padfoot. And there was something else, something that made the little but so important difference. Harry wasn’t sure, but he thought that maybe there was a hint of gunpowder hidden in the folds of Sirius’ shirt near his neck. It reminded him that this was the mischievous, young and alive Sirius and not the broken man he had once known.

The memory of Sirius embracing him in the hospital wing, here, not too long ago flooded Harry’s mind. His senses tuned in on the person still holding him, whispering nonsense, and carding a hand through his unruly hair. Taking in one long shaky but deep breath, Harry came back to himself fully. Everything hurt, his whole body ached, even the air seemed to scratch his windpipe raw from the inside out.

“Hey there,” Sirius whispered from where he was sitting on Harry’s hospital bed, holding him close, the mop of dark hair and feather tucked beneath his chin. Harry thought he heard a tremor in his boyfriend’s voice and sat up with a groan, mindful of the tangled limbs. “You scared me there for a moment,” Sirius added, looking into Harry’s eyes searchingly.

He was just so glad it stopped. He wouldn’t have in any good conscience been able to delay getting help from Madam Pomfrey even a minute longer. Sirius had never realised how precious a simple breath could be, but listening to Hadrian nearly suffocating himself – yet again! – was definitely driving the point home. Maybe it was the darkness all around them or the fact that they were in the hospital wing, but everything seemed just so much more frightening, so much more dangerous, so much more… intense. He was overly aware of the fact that Hadrian was still not up to par in health or at least weight, his body feeling way too delicate in the dark.

Delicate and only half dressed.
Sirius tried to ignore his screaming sense of touch that relayed every little detail he felt now that he wasn’t preoccupied any longer. His hands itched to explore, only hindered by the thin fabric of a simple and slightly worn shirt. He looked down into Hadrian’s eyes, simultaneously looking for an explanation for the night terror, reassuring himself that his boyfriend really was better now and distracting himself from his body’s inappropriate reactions to the closeness. He was getting a similar searching look in return and there it was again: The sensation of falling right into that green, luminous gaze, the world narrowing down to only Hadrian’s eyes. They seemed to glow in the dark…

The kiss this time was soft and gentle, not much more than a tender brushing of lips, reassuring themselves that the other was really there. Sirius couldn’t remember ever feeling so thankful for someone else’s presence, not even Prongs’ companionship during the summer when Sirius had just run away from his family had felt this reassuring, this safe and so… right.

Drawing back, he ran his hand once again through the tangled dark locks with a smile. It was strange the way Hadrian made him feel, strange but not unwelcome. He wondered briefly if he had the same effect on the other boy, but stopped his musing when he felt Hadrian snuggle impossibly closer as if trying to hide himself away in Sirius’ embrace. There was a tremor running through his form that made Sirius clench his jaw in anger at who or whatever had caused so much fear in his boyfriend.

“What was it about?”

He toned his voice down to a murmur, just enough to not sound ominous in the emptiness of the hospital wing. His answer was the shaking of a head, slightly hindered by Hadrian’s probably unconscious attempt to nearly crawl into his lap. It didn’t help Sirius’ predicament any, but he knew it wasn’t the right time to even consider more than what they had.

So Sirius held Hadrian close, listened to his now even breathing, and wondered about all the things he didn’t know about the boy in his arms. It didn’t always seem to matter, not when Hadrian was laughing with him and the Marauders. But moments like this, when Hadrian was fighting against an invisible foe, when he wasn’t talking about what was tormenting him… It made Sirius want to shake Hadrian so he would finally spill. If he would just say *something*, anything, Sirius would be able to help or at least he would have a starting point. Maybe it would even help Hadrian if he just talked about it.

At the same time the reaction right now, Hadrian trusting him after a night terror like this, gave Sirius a feeling he had never experienced before: It made him feel like he was needed. Even if it was just to hold Hadrian after his nightmares or to talk him through one of his flashback thingies, it was Sirius he would let in enough to help him and that was something the black sheep of the Black family had never known before.

Chapter End Notes

I wonder if this counts as a filler chapter? Not really... right?
There was a single beam of light stealing its way through the curtains around Hadrian’s bed in the hospital wing. It was silently wandering along the pillow, igniting magical sparks in raven hair, and then highlighting something that broke Sirius out of his reverie of his sleeping boyfriend.

The scar was half hidden by the mass of dark locks that stood up in all directions.

Sirius had thought he had by now seen all of Hadrian’s scars, from those on his arms to the heavy scarring over his rips that looked like burning from magical fire. Sirius only knew how that looked because his father had a small burn like that on the palm of his wandhand from when he had lost control over one of his nastier curses. At least that’s what his son suspected as a reason. And if Hadrian’s scar had been a mundane kind of burn, Madam Pomfrey would have treated it the second she saw the boy for the first time. Because that was the thing with magical burns: More often than not they were simply not healable.

Actually, Sirius seriously (yep.) had to wonder why the matron hadn’t prescribed a scar reducer considering the amount of scar tissue littering his boyfriend’s skin. Did that mean they all originated from magical means? The thought sent shivers of the angry kind down Sirius’ spine. That scar on Hadrian’s forehead definitely looked like a curse scar, the form too distinct to be anything but. Though what kind of curse would cause a lightning bolt, he had no idea. His fingers were itching to trace it yet something told him not to. The scar didn’t look enflamed like the one on Hadrian’s arm, the jagged one, that hadn’t ‘healed’ up more ever since he had first seen it in the shower. No, this ‘lightning bolt’ was a pale smooth line, prominent as if relatively new but not reddened in any way.

“D’you really wanna know?” The sleep roughened voice of Hadrian broke Sirius out of his thoughts and he looked down into the wide green eyes staring right back up at him. How he hadn’t noticed those eyes opening was beyond Sirius, but now that they were…

He leaned a bit further over Hadrian and descended into the best distraction means he knew.

Yes, he wanted to know.

No, he didn’t want to.

He had promised this boy his secrets and wanted to believe that Hadrian would tell him if his scars were to play any significant role in the present. If they weren’t important for the now, he wouldn’t pressure his boyfriend to tell him about them. Though maybe-

“How, I never…!”

The shocked exclamation was followed by a swift move and a THUD! Sirius flinched away from Hadrian who was blushing profusely and looking wide-eyed at Madam Pomfrey. Said matron was still wielding the rolled up newspaper she had used to cuff Sirius around the head with.
“Mr. Black, will you let go of my patient this instant! He is a sick young man that needs rest, not your promiscuous behaviour and definitely not under my supervision.”

Her rant was interrupted by the quiet chuckles of Hadrian, who wasn’t looking all that sick, really, more like he was trying to stop himself from outright laughter.

“She… she hit you with… the newspaper…!” Sirius blinked. The sight of a laughing Hadrian always had that effect on him, brain feeling slightly out of service for a moment, thank you very much, so maybe that sentence made sense and he just couldn’t grasp it right now… “Like a dog!”

Walking through the corridors of Hogwarts with Sirius, Harry wished he could get a shower before he had to sit through the interrogation with Professor McGonagall. But as Madam Pomfrey had relayed to him when she gave him the Pepper Up with his hospital breakfast, the deputy headmistress was already waiting for him. Apparently the whole situation wasn’t sitting right with the stern woman and now Harry felt like he was walking to more than a simple questioning.

He sighed and allowed himself to drift a bit closer to Sirius. He had stayed with him the night and hadn’t even left after Madam Pomfrey surprised them this morning. Harry snickered at the memory and earned himself a raised eyebrow from Sirius. He sent a cheeky smile back. He had been caught kissing his boyfriend in a bed in the infirmary. He couldn’t help but wonder how everyone back in his original time would have reacted to such a revelation. Oh and there certainly were worse sights than Sirius Black being whacked over the head with a rolled up newspaper like a naughty dog…

They had met more and more students on their way to Professor McGonagall’s office and though Harry mostly ignored them, he noticed when the halls became emptier again. It was already time for the first class.

“Shouldn’t you go? You’ll be late for class,” he said as they rounded a corner.

He didn’t really want to be alone, but at the same time he wasn’t sure the professor would actually insist on interrogating him privately. He still didn’t want anyone to know the details about Crouch and him, not that there really were many so far, and Sirius certainly knew the gist of it, but still.

“Psh,” Sirius waved his hand dismissively. “It’s Tuesday. We’ll have Defence the whole day.”

There was contempt in his voice that Harry couldn’t really place, but he had a feeling his boyfriend didn’t like their Defence teacher for some reason or another. Sure, Professor Bole wasn’t the nicest fellow around, but Harry definitely had had to suffer through worse lessons before. Lockhart, anyone? Alright, so maybe Harry wasn’t the best judge when it came to sufficient teachers considering his experience so far…

Minerva McGonagall was not a stupid woman.

It may be said that she tended to secretly favour some of her lions on the odd occasion, but she was not, under any circumstance, an unfair party. So seeing one of her secret favourite students punch one of the Slytherins, a younger one at that, had her hackles rising.

She had been called by a Ravenclaw who informed her of a Stupefy-ed student in one of the lavatories near the dungeons. Normally it would most likely have been Horace to deal with it, but the Slytherin head of house was once again unavailable – meaning he was most likely sneaking down to the greenhouses to snatch some of the more rare ingredients. And to be completely honest, Minerva had not actually believed the student to be stunned, as in through the usage of an actual Stupefy.
Such charms weren’t on the curriculum of any class and wouldn’t even be used by the average wizard out of school. They belonged into the arsenal of a trained auror or maybe an above average educated wizard.

Imagine her surprise when she found the aforementioned student in a properly stunned state, though the Stupefy used seemed to be slightly overpowered. Any more and it could have proven dangerous for the young Slytherin. Releasing him out of his immobility, Minerva recognised the only son of the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Bartemius Crouch Junior. He was unable or maybe unwilling, she was holding back judgement, to tell her exactly who sent him into this state and why. Not that he had much time to say anything as the second they exited the lavatory a blur descended upon him and Minerva was treated to the sickening crunching sound of a breaking bone.

To her shame it took her a moment to react to the sight that met her eyes. Sirius Black, legendary prankster, known for his open Light stance that went against the beliefs of his own family and certainly had rocked said family to the bone, was punching a younger student square on the nose. It was the look of pure rage on his face that took Minerva by surprise the most. Never before had she seen the young Black act this way. She had to hex him away from Crouch Junior as Sirius didn’t seem to hear her reprimand. The moment she did that, Remus Lupin, prefect and more or less secret comrade in arms with Sirius, appeared around the corner as if on cue and helped restrain his friend. The whole situation appeared rather fishy to Minerva and a short interrogation led the group to the infirmary. In any case the young Slytherin would need treatment.

What she learned there, though, disturbed her more than she could voice in that instant. She was a firm advocate for the upholding of proper conduct of the likes that had been taught to her from a very young age on. So hearing what she thought she heard between the lines…

Minerva sighed and leaned back in her seat as a shy knock on her door drew her out of her thoughts and back to the present. It was time to question the one person that seemed to connect both instances, the stunned Crouch Junior and the violent behaviour of Sirius Black.

“Come in,” she called and folded her hands primly in her lap.

Prongs rounded the corner the moment the office door closed behind Hadrian. He leant against the wall next to Sirius and the two of them stared at the wood for a moment, contemplating the interrogation that was taking place behind it.

“Let’s summarise,” James finally started in a quiet voice, seemingly out of nowhere. “He’s sixteen, born in 1980, my son, fell through time back here, and was apparently not raised by his parents – meaning me and my lovely hopefully redhead future wife.” He took a deep breath, still staring at the closed office door. “And considering the state he was in and the things Moony observed… whoever raised that boy did an awful job.”

Sirius cast a glance at his best mate and thought back to this morning. He was pretty sure Prongs (and the others) knew where he had spent the night, but it were the thoughts about Hadrian’s scars that really occupied his mind right now. Should he tell James about it? Perhaps. Instead he latched onto something in his best mate’s little speech that just now registered.

“So he didn’t tell you who his guardians were?”

It wasn’t a surprise that James hadn’t been the one to raise Hadrian, at least not to Sirius. He knew his friend would have never been an abusive father, there was just no way. James slowly shook his head in the negative, a small frown marring his otherwise handsomely rugged features. It struck Sirius then and there that James and Hadrian may look related, but their features were still
considerably different.

“Prongs?” He finally asked into the silence, not really knowing where the sudden urge to ask this question was coming from. He only knew that it had to be asked. “How d’you feel about it? Me and him?”

He was treated to an unreadable look courtesy of his best mate. It was a kind of look Sirius had never seen on James’ face before, but then again it wasn’t everyday you get to know your own son from the future while still a teenager yourself. He couldn’t really help it, he was nervous about the answer to his question. Hadrian was James’ son and he had watched his best mate slowly come to grips with this over the last days. On top of that Prongs knew better than anyone else how Sirius normally was like concerning fancies. Hell, he had made fun of him for it more than once or had worked as his partner in crime. Sirius winced slightly as he remembered their talks about Hadrian before they knew who he really was.

“Somehow I think maybe you should ask him that question,” James said after a moment, sounding careful as if testing the words as he spoke them. “I mean… think about it, Pads.” He ran his hand through his unruly hair, but all Sirius noticed was the different shade of those locks. They weren’t nearly as dark as Hadrian’s. “He comes from a time in which you and I would be freaking old.”

Now that got Sirius’ attention.

“You don’t think…?” He stared at James, shocked. That couldn’t be… He would never…! And if he had, surely Hadrian wouldn’t be okay with dating him now, right? Right? “No, no it couldn’t have been me,” he said determined, staring straight ahead at the door to McGonagall’s office.

James made a choking noise and shook his head fast enough to make himself dizzy.

“Of course it wasn’t you! Merlin’s balls, as if you would ever hurt an innocent!” He took a few deep breaths to calm himself. “No, it wasn’t you and I won’t even think about the possibility. I mean that would just be bloody creepy, wouldn’t it? If he were to date the person that raised and probably abused him…” He looked decidedly green as he said this.

Watching the smallish boy enter her office and greet her politely, Minerva was once again astonished by the sheer magical strength she could feel radiating off of him. It had happened shortly after the incident down in the dungeons in which she had to contain Hadrian Moore’s magic during a fit due to the shock to his system when he got hurt. She hadn’t paid close attention, but it couldn’t have been too long after that his magical presence changed to what it was now.

“Take a seat, Mr. Moore,” she said, gesturing to the lonely chair in front of her desk. “Tea?”

At his nod she conjured up a set from her hidden private stash of a special blend of Earl Grey and fixed two cups. All the while the boy sat still, watching her movements attentively. He was rubbing over the back of his hand with the thumb of the other in what she guessed to be a nervous gesture and even though he watched her every move he still jumped slightly when she offered him some of her beloved ginger newts.

They sat in silence for a while, Moore now staring absent-mindedly in his cup while Minerva contemplated the student in front of her. Moore had been a surprise for everyone and not just because he had arrived unannounced and in a rather unconventional way. With his looks he could easily be James Potter’s younger brother which was why his personality had raised more than a few eyebrows. Hadrian Moore was shy, to put it simply. Painfully shy in a way that bordered on anti-social. Not that he was rude about it, oh no. He was actually one of the most well-mannered students Minerva had
So Hadrian Moore was a shy, polite version of a younger James Potter, only that he wasn’t actually younger, which was another thing that raised eyebrows. He was too slender, too small to be at the same age as his peers, yet he had been sorted into sixth year. He was listed as sixteen in the student registry, she had looked it up. Combined with the reclusive behaviour and the way he had arrived at Hogwarts as if on the run, these observations had led the more observant of his teachers to think the child had been abused.

Minerva was very proud the day she realised a group of her favourite students had apparently taken Hadrian Moore under their wing. Which reminded her of the reason for their current little tea party and of Sirius Black’s uncommon behaviour.

“Mr. Moore,” she started, carefully watching her student’s reaction to her words, “Please explain the situation that ended with a stupefied Mr. Crouch and you in the hospital wing.” She had of course talked to Poppy and already knew the boy had had a rather severe concussion and a fever. Considering the magical strength Moore could call his own and the slightly overpowered Stupefy Crouch had been incapacitated with, she had inkling to what had happened. Though why those two students would get into a fight… Was it really only the typical house rivalry? The comments made by Mr. Black and his friends seemed to contradict this thought.

“It was… a stupid fight,” Moore said, looking up at her with determination in his eyes. Eyes that definitely didn’t look like James Potter’s. “Nothing important. We just can’t stand each other,” he added, sounding as if he was trying to convince not only her but also himself.

Minerva was not impressed.

“You mean to tell me, Mr. Moore, that a simple argument led you to attack a fellow student with a charm that very well could have caused lasting damage?”

The incredulous look Moore gave her for a second before he seemed to catch himself was curious. For some reason Minerva had a feeling the boy was slightly offended at the implication he wasn’t able to use a Stupefy in the correct way.

“…Yes,” he finally declared, sounding forced.

He wasn’t meeting her eyes anymore and she noticed the nervous gesture with his hands again. There was a long silence following his answer. She knew for sure he wasn’t telling the truth, but she could see the angry blush now staining his cheeks and the embarrassed air his slightly hunched figure gave off was a telling sign too. Minerva would have liked to reassure this boy that he had nothing to be ashamed of if what she thought had happened between him and Mr. Crouch was true. But if he wasn’t going to tell her, she would be forced to punish him for attacking another student. She huffed.

“You know I will have to at least assign detention for this,” she finally said, her voice betraying her thoughts just that tiny bit, giving them a softer undertone. “And considering that both you and Mr. Crouch have been injured, I will have to contact your guardians-”

She stopped at the ill concealed flinch her words caused.

The door to Professor McGonagall’s office opened with a quiet creaking sound and Hadrian exited, mumbling something along the lines of ‘At least it wasn’t the girls lavatory’. Sirius caught a glimpse of the professor sitting primly behind her desk and watching the boy leave with a sharp gaze. There was something in that gaze that reminded Sirius of the look he sometimes caught on Rem’s face.
when he looked at Hadrian.

The door closed and said boy leaned against it heavily, his head bowed and hair obscuring his features. Sirius felt any words he could have said would be meaningless right now. They would need to have another group meeting for sure, there were just too many things now that needed discussing – the prank rain that would chase Crouch around the castle soon enough not the least of those.

He didn’t have to wait long though before Hadrian looked up and met his eyes. A look passed between the two of them without any words disturbing the silent communication until Sirius tilted his head slightly into the direction of their defence classroom. They had another day of classes ahead and he would not let his boyfriend out of his sight again.

Chapter End Notes

So I have a question for you...

What do you think Harry's Patronus should look like now?

Would it still be an image of his father's Animagus (Prongs) or would it have changed now like the circumstances Harry is living in have?

(A Patronus is a magical guardian, a projection of all your most positive feelings, and it generally takes the shape of the animal with whom you share the deepest affinity.)
Harry smiled up at Sirius when he felt the soft brush of lips against his forehead, ignoring the loud cooing from a few girls sitting nearby.

“Were you hungry?” Sirius asked, eyeing the nearly completely emptied state of Harry’s plate. He was asking more than that though and Harry knew.

He had gone down to breakfast this morning long before even Remus was up, meaning he had gone alone which went against Sirius’ over-protectiveness of him. And then there was the fact that Harry had obviously eaten without being prompted and Sirius was letting him know how happy this made him. Never mind that there hadn’t been much on his plate to begin with. It was funny, really, how much they were already in sync by now considering Harry had only been here since the start of September. Now it was nearing the end of October, the 30th to be exact.

“Very much so,” Harry answered rather unconvincingly, giving his… boyfriend a small smile.

That was another development, one he was still quite a bit overwhelmed with. Calling anyone his girl- or boyfriend was something Harry never had the opportunity to do before and if he had stayed in the 90s it was more than likely that it would never have happened. You don’t get to know anyone on that level if people only see you as a celebrity or weapon respectively, whatever suits their needs anyway.

Sirius was frowning at him a bit as he sat down and pulled a pitcher of pumpkin juice towards himself. Harry raised an eyebrow at that, remembering how the other normally would prefer tea like the upstanding British Pureblood that he was. Well, by blood at least if not by behaviour. Yet there were those little quirks Sirius had never managed to shake or maybe wasn’t even aware of, like the way he was always perfectly imperfect looking. It was obvious on first glance that Sirius styled his looks to be ‘not perfectly prim’ – and he did so in a ‘perfect’ way. Harry kinda liked these small contradictions…

“Today’s the date,” Sirius let him know under his breath, careful not to look up from his task of filling his goblet. “Everything went splendidly and you should be treated to the results any moment now.”

Harry blinked a moment before his tired brain worked through the morning fuzz and he realised what exactly his boyfriend was referring to. There had been a rain of pranks all around the castle this last month that somehow all revolved around Crouch and for some reason always seemed to happen whenever said student came into viewing distance of Harry. If anyone noticed the connection, no one said anything, what may or may not be due to the vicious rumours about what had gone down in the bathroom by the dungeons that day. Harry shuddered at the thought and at the reminder of the more elaborate rumours – none of which were in favour of Crouch, but that didn’t necessarily make it any better for Harry.
The creepy fangirl-groups had lapped it all up and included in their twisted view of his and Sirius’ relationship. The day those groups had finally realised that they were now ‘official’ had been a shock to Harry’s system. Never before had he seen girls, or anyone for that matter, act that way and he had seen his fair share of fangirling. No, the two groups (And were they really calling themselves Fluffs and Tragics?) were creepy at best and scary any other time in their squealing and attempts to get intimate information or even their claws into one of them. How in Godric’s name was it considered completely alright to ask a virtual stranger what they thought of their boyfriend’s prick?! Not that Harry had actually seen Sirius’ …his… down there.

Ever since then Harry was careful to not be alone, not that Sirius or Remus or James (yes, they were now all in the ‘protect Harry’ boat) would let him anyway. This was why he had risked his little escape this early morning. There was only so much supervision Harry could stand even with the threat of unhinged girls lurking in the hallways. And they couldn’t all be like that, right? The idea of his mother being one of them made Harry feel ill to the stomach and he quickly directed his attention back to Sirius’ words. So it was finally the day of the ultimate prank on Barty Crouch. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that.

Sirius smiled darkly into his goblet as he thought of the living breathing evidence on its way to the Great Hall. Oh they had finally done it and his darker side, or maybe his Grim, was purring at their success. They had been kicking Crouch’s ass all through the month, but today would be the ultimate prank, the final blow the Marauders had been working up to all this time. It wouldn’t be the longest planning they had done for a prank, but it most definitely would be one of their more cruel ones. And not one of them would regret it, though they had made sure not to tell Hadrian any of it. He only knew they were working on a larger scale prank but had no idea as to what exactly they were about to do. Or more like had just done.

They all had agreed on one thing: Hadrian might have been Crouch’s victim, but he wasn’t likely to stand for what they had planned in retaliation. He was too much a good person; in fact so much so that he needed someone to act out the dirtier, shadier things that would never even cross Hadrian’s mind but sometimes needed to be done. Because as long as he was the only one suffering, Hadrian was more likely to just accept what was happening than do something about it. James especially had frowned at that realisation. His best mate was still chafing about the implications that came with the knowledge they had of Hadrian’s upbringing and such a self-sacrificing disposition.

Anyway, this was where the Marauders came into play. Looking up, Sirius scanned the Great Hall again though he was pretty sure he would hear it the moment their target entered.

Even though Hadrian wouldn’t help with their crueller prank, he had indirectly contributed nonetheless. Their prank planning had been made a lot easier by the simple but very helpful fact that they now had a room that was safe from eavesdroppers. Using each other as test subjects for the necessary charms, they had taken to the Room of Requirement that Hadrian had introduced them to for their Marauder meetings. Of course they also had to be perfect in their timing if they wanted to keep Hadrian in the dark about the actual prank, meaning they had to rely on the times he spent in the Muggle Arts classroom.

Yes, the map had come in handy with that while constantly reminding them just who it was they were avenging.

At the same time the Marauders were determined not to leave Sirius’ new boyfriend, their newest and now most protected member, alone outside of class. And for good reason too. Crouch, Lestrange and the bunch of fangirls still manic about the supposed ‘tragic love against all odds’ were all strangely focused on Hadrian. Fangirls lying in wait, even if James thought it hilarious, were not to be underestimated. They had cornered the pair on more than one occasion, not being the least bit
ashamed about their attempts at getting a look at their private moments (and alright, funnily enough cock-blocking Sirius in the process).

And let’s not forget Dumbledore, Sirius thought with an annoyed snort. That old bastard might still try and act the good Leader of the Light, grandfatherly twinkle included, but the Marauders were no longer fooled. Remus had put it quite simply: What Dumbledore was seeing when looking at Hadrian was not someone lost in time, but a pawn with all strings of attachment already severed. No way would they leave Hadrian to that big fat manipulative spider.

Looking over at the Slytherin table, Sirius considered the other threats to his boyfriend. Though the Slytherins had been suspiciously silent all through the month, Snivellus spotted watching them carefully more than a few times but keeping his distance, Lestrange sneering from the distance too, but not attempting anything, Sirius wasn’t going to forget their past actions.

Glancing at his boyfriend - and damn was he proud to call such a beautiful and powerful creature his - he was not deluding himself. Blacks like most Slytherins were attracted to power and Hadrian had a whole lot of it. But really, that boy made the perfect package if one were to ask Sirius, what with his gentle and friendly personality yet hidden fierceness that Sirius had only glimpsed so far. Hadrian may not look it, but he was all determination and strong will as showed during his long and torturous inheritance and all that was wrapped up in a delectable body. Yes, he could understand the attention his boyfriend was getting from all sides, but that didn’t mean he had to be happy about it.

If at least it weren’t for the shadow of Hadrian’s past making him miserable even from a future that hopefully would never come to be…

“So,” Prongs leaned forward in his seat around the fireplace in the Room of Requirement, “What did old McMinnie say?”

They watched Hadrian’s eyes go wide at the way his father spoke of their professor, before the words really registered. What followed was all too well known to the Marauders by now, Hadrian looking away and shrugging it off. Only today they would not let him get away with that.

“My detention’s to start later today,” Sirius shrugged from his seat next to Hadrian. “Are you to join me, Bambi?” He added with a suggestive lilt to his voice, ignoring his best mate’s Look.

“Yes,” Hadrian said, obviously trying to look unconcerned but failing. James frowned at the boy, he probably couldn’t see a son of his being that concerned about a bit of detention. But then again, maybe he really was also Evans’.

“What else?” Rem voiced from the side, obviously thinking along the same lines as James.

Hadrian was sucking on his bottom lip, not meeting anyone’s eyes. Sirius heard Wormy scoff from where he was sitting a bit away and thought again that he needed to have a talk with the rat Animagus. Something was going on with him and not just since yesterday.

“Hadrian?” He gently nudged his boyfriend in the side. “What else?”

It took a moment, the Marauders trading looks over their newest addition’s head, before Hadrian finally spoke up again. He was still trying for nonchalance and still not being very successful.

“She wanted to contact my… guardians.”

Hadrian finally looked up and straight into James’ eyes. He most likely hadn’t wanted that to be his
grandfather’s first impression of him, being called about a family member’s misconduct. Not to mention it would raise a lot of eyebrows if Hadrian were to tell McGonagall to contact Lord Potter as his guardian. And all that was not including the boy’s own feelings about thinking of Lord Potter as a guardian before even meeting the man in this time, but Sirius knew that Prongs had told him to think that way even before knowing who Hadrian really was. Ah time travel woes.

“You of course told her to contact dad,” James stated, looking right back into those green eyes, “…Right?”

Hadrian was taking a deep breath as if to steel himself for what he was about to say next, though Sirius had the distinct impression he was expecting a different reaction from what was most likely to happen. It wasn’t the first time that Hadrian seemed to wait for them to say or do something negative or to doubt him, though why they should Sirius had no idea. In his not so humble opinion the boy had done nothing to warrant such a reaction.

“I didn’t get to answer at all,” Hadrian said carefully, looking between the three Marauders sitting around him, not sparing a single glance at Wormtail. “As if on cue Dumbledore was floo-calling McGonagall and telling her that no guardians needed to be informed.”

Sirius felt his eyebrows shoot up, but considering that the headmaster knew about his boyfriend’s origins, or at least part of them, it wasn’t all that surprising. Even the timing wasn’t unexpected from the oh so great Albus Dumbledore.

“Well,” Remus said after a moment, “How very… convenient.”

“Though it does raise a question,” Sirius voiced his own thoughts, ignoring the ‘More than one’ from Prongs, “Who was it?” He stared at Hadrian at his side, watching closely how he was shifting nervously in place. “Who was your guardian back in the future?”

Looking contemplative, Hadrian’s gaze switched from Sirius over to Remus and then to James. Again, not even a glance at Wormtail. Sirius watched Prongs tense in anticipation and felt his own gaze wandering shortly to Rem, only to dismiss the idea of his furry friend as an abusive guardian. Though, what about… maybe that would explain-

“None of you,” Hadrian finally answered in that soft voice of his. “It was none of you.”

To Sirius it was becoming ever more obvious that the reason for Hadrian’s secrecy wasn’t really the fear of changing the timeline for the worse. No, there was at least one other reason. What was he trying to achieve with his silence?

The sudden hush that fell over the Great Hall drew Sirius out of his memories. Looking up, he barely contained his glee at the sight that entered through the huge double doors and he took in the varying expressions of shock and disbelief on the faces of the student body. It took his boyfriend a second longer to notice that something was going on, but as the first squeals and shouts rose, accompanied by a lot of snickers, Hadrian finally turned to look.

There Barty Crouch stood, naked as the day he was born, looking thoroughly confused about the attention he was receiving.

Hadrian’s mouth fell open. He stared dumbfounded at the Slytherin who was walking completely starkers through the Great Hall seemingly not realising his predicament. Students were starting to cackle and make lewd comments, but the derogatory slander of the naked boy trying to find a seat at his
house table was the most noticeable. The Slytherins already seated weren’t helping with that
eendeavour as they looked horribly embarrassed by their own housemate and didn’t want to be seen
with what was obviously the victim of an elaborate prank.

Oh yes, they had utterly destroyed any and all future alliances with the bigger fish for that particular
snake. Sirius internally congratulated himself and his mates for that manoeuvre and grinned
maliciously at the thought that they even had kind of mooned into Crouch Senior’s face. Hadrian
next to him gasped as they watched Crouch looking confused at the way he was suddenly treated,
not understanding what was wrong. It took a flustered Professor Slughorn, hurriedly waddling down
from the head table, to break whatever charm the Marauders had placed on him, to finally realise his
nakedness.

As the professor ushered his humiliated student out of the Great Hall, everyone still present was
treated to the sight of glowing letters on Crouch’s back, labelling the wanker for all to see: Blight(er)

That evening the atmosphere in the sixth year boys’ dorm was tense. Hadrian hadn’t spoken a word
to any of them after the prank had taken place and even though they didn’t regret putting the bastard
in his place, they hadn’t quite expected their Bambi to react so strongly.

Hadrian seemed at a loss for words. They had repeatedly watched him open his mouth as if to speak
over the course of the day, obviously intending to say something not all pleasant, but always
deciding against it. It hadn’t been easy to stay at his side today with the tension running high, but the
Marauders were both unwilling to risk possible retaliation if someone should connect the dots and
careful to keep up appearances. Sudden changes in behaviour would only make them suspicious and
for once the Marauders were not intending to be connected to their masterpiece of a prank.

Sirius watched the closed curtains of his boyfriend’s bed through the darkness, listening to the snores
of his friends all around him. Making up his mind, he silently slid out from under his covers and
moved over to the bed beside his. He was most likely pressing his luck inviting himself into
Hadrian’s bed right now, but he just knew they needed to talk about this. Hadrian needed to
understand. Opening the curtains, he felt the silencing charms he had known to be there shift and
accommodate him. He was met with wide green eyes, looking slightly shocked at his entry before
going carefully blank. It hurt to see Hadrian act that way around him.

Sirius climbed onto the bed, eyes trained on the boy half hidden beneath the sheets. There was a long
moment of silence before Hadrian finally spoke up. His voice was troubled, his face valiantly trying
to hide the warring emotions inside as he sat up.

“It was cruel. Unnecessary. You went too far,” he said.

Sirius felt his Grim push at him at those words. It wasn’t happy with its mate’s reaction, he supposed,
but Sirius was more of a pragmatic mind. It had needed to be done to teach Crouch a lesson, to
protect Hadrian from future attacks, to make an example of what happened to those daring to touch
what was his. And he knew Hadrian would have never done it himself and that was alright, because
Hadrian had him and the Marauders. They would make sure he could stay the untainted and pure
creature he was. But Hadrian needed to understand that it had been their decision to do what they
had done, not his and therefore…

“Oh no, you don’t get to feel sorry for that bastard,” Sirius growled, pinning his boyfriend with a
dark look. “He got exactly what he deserved.”

And with that said, Sirius moved swiftly, pushing his boyfriend onto his back and looming over him.
He watched Hadrian’s initial fight or flight reaction that he had observed so many times whenever
someone touched him unexpected. Another surge of possessive protectiveness flared up at that. It took Hadrian only a second to suppress the flinch and move on from it, but to Sirius it was all there. Making sure he had Hadrian’s complete attention, he reached up and smoothed his thumb over the furrow between two dark brows, the tender gesture at odds with his previous actions.

“I know, you have this conditioned urge to protect everyone,” he said, gently cupping Hadrian’s cheek. “To always put others before yourself, but,” he ran his thumb over a still too sharp cheekbone, “Sometimes you have to think of yourself first even if only to make sure you can continue your self-sacrificial tendencies later.”

Sirius would have preferred if Hadrian stopped those urges completely, but they were as much a part of this boy as the wide green eyes that were already threatening to drown him again.

“And if you won’t protect yourself…,” he added and trailed off with a sigh, turning his gaze away, suddenly afraid of Hadrian’s reaction.

Maybe they had really gone too far, but he couldn’t find it in himself to feel the least bit sorry for Crouch. What he was sorry for though was the way it had made Hadrian feel. He was about to draw back, to accept that he had messed it up once more, when a cool hand suddenly traced along the side of his face. Eyes snapping back to Hadrian’s, Sirius was met with a doubtful yet somewhat hopeful look.

“It was more than a prank for you, wasn’t it?”

The question hung between them long after Sirius nodded his agreement, but the silence was no longer tense.

Chapter End Notes

I’ll admit... I felt a bit sick writing this prank, but it worked quite nicely to show the extent Sirius and the Marauders are willing to go to for Harry. Maybe I'm just too much of a Hufflepuff.

The original story that’s referenced in this chapter is ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’ (‘Keiserens nye Kłæder’, 1837) by the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen, though I think the inspiration for Andersen’s story comes from way back in the 14th century… Anyway, the credit for the idea to use this story for the Marauders’ prank goes to DarkInuFan.
In which something happens

Chapter Notes

I had to cut the actual chapter in two so you wouldn't have to wait for who knows how long until I had the chance to write the rest. It would be grand if I could spoil you with as many chapters as I used to, but at the moment that just isn't possible. All the more reason to keep up with my schedule of at least one chapter a week :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Halloween. All Hallows’ Eve. You know the one.

Harry wished every year that he could just go to sleep on the 30th and wake up on November 1st and never have to deal with the horrors that were sure to unfold on that cursed day of Jack O’Lanterns’ grins. And no, being a wizard his horrors certainly didn’t mean the muggle tradition of dressing up in various stages of ridiculousness. But being Harry bloody Potter meant Halloween, 31st of October, held a special kind of horror for him, one that he couldn’t escape even in the past. His memories had come back in time with him after all.

Rolling over in bed, Harry lamented the loss of Sirius to wake up to, especially today. But it was his own fault, really, what with finding some flimsy excuse yesterday to kick his boyfriend back out of his bed. He had a feeling that he would need an excuse if he ever wanted to sleep alone from now on. Not that he minded having Sirius there with him as he had realised that last time in the hospital wing. There was no better way to deal with his nightmares than having his boyfriend hold him afterwards, assuring him of reality. Not to mention Sirius was always so warm, he thought with a blush.

But last night Harry had known he wouldn’t be able to sleep at all or if he actually fell asleep, he would be tossing and turning the whole night. It was one thing to rely on Sirius when it came to the occasional nightmare, it was another thing altogether to expect him to deal with a whole night without sleep and instead a distraught boyfriend who couldn’t decide if he wanted to be hold or left alone.

Or so Harry thought.

He had made it through the night, knowing that it probably was better not to try and sleep, but to ‘condense’ his energy instead. He knew he would most likely need it today. So Harry lay awake contemplating the horrors that were sure to happen today. Halloween.

It wasn’t really encouraging that he had more than enough incentive for his worries what with the continued articles about Death Eater attacks and the like. Harry had taken to reading the Prophet ever since he realised he really needed to understand the political situation of this time better if he was to ever find a way to get rid of a certain noseless bastard. (That thought actually sparked the question how Voldemort was looking like nowadays. Harry’s tired brain was of the opinion that maybe it was a mix of the youth who had been trapped in the notebook and the creature that exited the cauldron back in his fourth year. He probably still had his nose, right?)

But reading the cursed newspaper meant he was all too aware of the terrible happenings outside the
castle walls. It wasn’t outright war, oh no, it was a regime of terror from the shadows. Voldemort’s supporters could be everywhere, could be everyone actually, and no one could be sure to trust another anymore. It was a tactic, Harry realised, that of course worked in Voldemort’s favour. Everyone would be suspecting each other, successfully preventing them from organising a united front against the dark forces. All the while Death Eaters would rain down sudden and unexpected attacks, ensuring that the masses remained scared.

It was escalating, and fast.

Harry groaned and got out of bed. It was still early, the Marauders (plus rat) asleep and Harry managed to get dressed without changing that. He sneaked out of their dorm and out of the common room without interference. He contemplated for a moment if he really wanted to go down to the Great Hall before he decided that he could do with a pick me up. And Hogwarts’ Great Hall on 31st of October was a sight that could even win over the most adamant Halloween grinch.

Lily and Remus had taken to meeting in the library for study sessions, though they weren’t exactly studying anything from the Hogwarts curriculum. Seeing as neither Hadrian nor James knew much about their creature heritage, Remus had taken to looking up everything Hogwarts’ library had to offer concerning creature inheritances and compare it to his own notes and the thing the Potters called an inheritance book on Elf Owls.

Lily was great help, especially when it came to understanding the differences and possible consequences of a creature heritage that tended to be glossed over in the available books. Her unique, less magical perspective helped Remus with the bigger picture, not to mention he genuinely enjoyed their discussions. It was nice having someone as interested and intelligent as Lily to talk with, especially since he couldn’t really talk to anyone else about Elf Owls. Even though Hadrian was technically the one he should discuss all this with, his new friend tended to be a rather unsatisfying source of information. He was an Elf Owl, he should be able to gain a lot of information just by watching himself and any changes in behaviour et cetera, but Hadrian was still not fully acknowledging what had happened to him. Remus supposed it wasn’t all that surprising what with the time travel on top of it all, but he really thought the boy should start to accept the changes happened to him. Not that Remus would say anything as he felt like an utter hypocrite just by thinking it, he who still fought his wolf even after all these years, yet he honestly wished Hadrian could do what he himself couldn’t.

It was another reason for his extensive research on the matter as it would ensure that at least one of them would be as prepared as they could be when the inevitable happened. And it would happen. The creature would catch up with Hadrian and with it would come a whole barrage of things they didn’t know of yet. Remus’ opinion on this was that Hadrian was suppressing possible instincts or whatever else came with an Elf Owl inheritance by not truly acknowledging the change. After all, Remus knew what he was talking about.

“You know,” Lily’s voice drifted over from across the table, muffled by another thick tome, “I’ve been wondering ever since you showed me that book,” she indicated the Potter heirloom without looking up, “Are there any theories on the origins of Elf Owls? I mean,” she sat the book down and wiped a stray red curl from her face, “Take vampires for example. There are a lot of different theories such as Vlad the Impaler becoming the very first vampire due to his excessive cruelty and blood thirst, literally and figuratively speaking. (*) Or Veela-”

“Whose origins are either ghosts of women who drowned, especially those who were betrayed by their lovers, or the sirens of the Greek mythology that are considered daughters of some river god,” Remus continued, nodding to signal he understood her point.
“Exactly!” Lily exclaimed. “There are at least these legends and since we’re talking magical creatures they could probably actually be more than just that. But there is no such thing for Elf Owls, not mentioned in this ridiculous book or anywhere else. It isn’t like they could originate from actual owls, after all.”

Remus snorted a laugh at that thought.

Sure, Hadrian had ‘the Eyes’ with that sometimes disturbingly intense look and he even did the cute head tilting to one side sometimes, but that was pretty much all there was that could perhaps relate to actual owls. Not that any humanoid creature could be descendant to a bird, it just wasn’t possible. Though, he thought with a frown as an idea struck him, he vaguely recalled stories of animals that turned into humans for one reason or another. Like the Scottish selkies that shed their skin to become human on land or even that muggle fairy tale of the little mermaid who was willing to give up her life in the sea and her identity as a mermaid to gain a human soul. Though as a wizard that specific story was rather scary, considering how actual merpeople looked like to humans.

Anyway, the point was, he had yet another lead to look into, and this one he would actually be able to look up in Lily’s presence. Yes, there was one lead he hoped could and would shed some more light on Elf Owls as a whole, but looking it up in his redhead study partner’s presence would mean giving away Hadrian’s secret. Even if Remus had more than a sneaky suspicion that Lily actually was, or rather would be, Hadrian’s mother there was no way he could just reveal the involved time travel.

But Remus was playing with one particular thought ever since the boy asked him about the stone circle on Hogwarts’ grounds: What if Elf Owls had not gone extinct because of their cross-breeding with humans but due to an affinity for time travel? Maybe the Elf Owls had not gone extinct at all but left on their own account, left via time travel. There was after all no explanation so far as to how Hadrian had travelled back in time, only that it had drained him nearly completely of his magic and that he had possibly even navigated the travel with his focus on the Marauders in the moment it happened.

So what if Hadrian wasn’t the only one?

Shaking his head free of those rather far-fetched theories that sounded a bit as if the Potter heirloom’s author had infected him with the gimcrack-research-virus, Remus started his discussion with Lily up once again - none of them noticing Severus Snape leaning against a high stacked shelf near their corner, listening to the two discussing animatedly.

Listening to the silent magic of Hogwarts, Harry wandered around the cold and rather empty corridors. He was tired, his eyes felt itchy and there was a headache building at some unidentified point in his head. He had ditched the Marauders yet again, not that it had been all that hard what with James dragging Sirius off to yet another Quidditch training session for the upcoming game. Remus had been easy enough too when Harry used his sleepiness as an excuse to stay in the dorm, reading or napping or whatever and Remus had gone to the library in true Hermione fashion.

As if Harry would risk sleeping today. But they wouldn’t know that.

So here he was, wandering listlessly but way too strung up and tensed through the castle. He just knew something would happen today, he could feel it in his gut and even his magic was agitated. Ever since his inheritance his magic had been so controlled that it was rather disconcerting to have it crawling about him again. It was no where near the way it had been just before his belated birthday, but still…
It happened suddenly and somewhat anticlimactic. Though, if he hadn’t been that sure that it was no longer possible, Harry probably would have recognised the signs for what they were.

A sudden flare of burning pain in his scar. Flashes of things he had never encountered before, a strange clumpy looking ring, an ugly locket, an unnecessarily decorated cup, something like a tiara… or a crown… and then a small black book.

Harry gasped as he recognised the diary he had destroyed in his second year.

He knew what those things were, remembered the memory of Horace Slughorn telling him what a Horcrux is- …Anger, so much anger. Red hot rage and it hurt. What- …more flashes of the same objects and then hisses, a voice. He knew, could understand words where others would only hear terrifying sounds of a huge snake. A snake, green, big… Nagini.

A flash of green, someone died, he just knew, someone was dead now even though he never saw who it was and Nagini, Nagini was staring right at him. She was glowing, eerily glowing with some sickly greenish tinged light and-

Harry pulled back into himself with a huge intake of breath, shivering all over as he gasped for air. That wasn’t possibly. This had not just happened. No, no, it couldn’t be!

But it had. He had just lived through the definite proof. Voldemort was active and the piece of his soul, the leech that had latched onto Harry when the monster tried to kill him as a baby, was active again. How was this possible? It had been so wonderfully inactive, dead and charred, closed after Harry had come to the past and yet…

He wanted to cry and scream and claw at his scar until he could dig the disgusting thing out of himself, but there was nothing he could do. Something had re-opened the connection and- Nagini. Voldemort had done something to the snake and it had been important. Could it be…?

They, the headmaster and Harry, hadn’t discussed what objects Voldemort had possibly used as Horcruxes before Harry had been kicked out of his own time. That had been planned for his sixth year, but here he was now, living a sixth year at Hogwarts in another time and suddenly knowing exactly what the dark lord had used to contain his disrupted soul.

Listing heavily against the wall, Harry felt ill. His stomach lurched and for a moment he thought he would actually be sick all over the floor, but breathing deeply he kept his breakfast. Merlin, what was he to do now? If the connection was open again, the visions would start up again and he just couldn’t do that anymore. Shivering violently, Harry started walking. Just walking. He had no idea where he was going, he just needed to move, to do something.

Hidden in the shadows of just another of the countless statues of some long deceased witch or wizard stood Lucian Bole. He was shaking slightly in a mix of gleeful shock and amazement over his newest discovery.

It had been sheer dumb luck and a fast reflex that had him coming across the Moore child alone today and diving out of view on a whim. Maybe he had hoped to get a closer look at those mysterious eyes as the boy wasn’t wearing those annoying sunglasses for once. Maybe he had just wanted to ogle his future investment a bit. Whatever it was, he had certainly not expected feathers to sprout from the mop of unkempt hair just as the creature was about to move around a corner and out
of his sight. Something must have scared it enough to create such a reaction, though Bole hadn’t seen anything that would warrant as such.

Well. One thing was for sure: Feathers in such a strange position and something noticeable with the eyes meant a breed he didn’t recognise, meaning he needed to do more research. He wanted to be able to make the most out of his luck, after all. And what better way to find out the creature (and possible income to make) than taking samples to analyse?

Yes, Lucian Bole had just found a new task for his less than useful spy.

Chapter End Notes

As far as I know, it’s undefined when exactly Nagini became a Horcrux though it probably happened after 1981 when Voldemort’s husk was in exile in Albania. But since no one really knows…

(*) **Vlad the Impaler** (1428/1431–1476/77): a prince of Wallachia (Romania), also known as Vlad Dracula, though it depends on your legend if he actually was. Not gonna go into detail as to why he was called 'the Impaler', because gross.
In which an Elf Owl is not to be pissed off

Chapter Notes

There were quite a few opinions on Nagini and when she became a Horcrux (in canon) in the comment section of the last chapter. As I didn't answer all of those, I hope you don't mind me giving an overall answer right here:
I really don't know if the moment she became a Horcrux was ever confirmed or which of the many theories is the correct one. Thank you all for the input anyway, I honestly appreciate it as this kind of thing always gives me more insight on the Potterverse. And there is no such thing as too much knowledge.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“…and with that we will mop the field with their sorry excuse of a game!”

James’ impassioned speech was interrupted by a surprised shout from one of the watchers in the stands and everyone turned to look at what had caused it. There a horribly pale looking Hadrian was making his way over in their direction near the goal posts, stumbling and staggering the whole way.

As James started moving to meet Hadrian halfway, Sirius charged forward, easily surpassing his friend and catching the boy that was swaying dangerously in place. James walked on in a slightly more sedate pace and watched his best mate envelope his son and fuss over him. It had happened again, some trouble had found Hadrian yet again. That boy was worse than James himself and for the love of Merlin’s hairy balls, he wished there was something he could do to protect his son from his apparent bad luck.

He came up to the pair, followed closely by the rest of the team, just in time to see Sirius examine Hadrian, obviously looking for injuries. It wasn’t until he carefully swiped away the shaggy fringe from a sweaty forehead that anything looked out of order apart from the sickly shade of Hadrian’s skin. James felt his hands tighten to fists as he stared at the reddened scar over his son’s brow. It looked irritated and just shy of exuding puss if one were to ask James, the skin around it scratched up and inflamed looking.

Why was there a curse scar on his son’s face at all? It looked like it had been done recently so maybe Hadrian really had been attacked and from the looks of it a curse had been involved, but James didn’t know enough about that kind of thing to pass judgement. Whatever it was, Hadrian would need another trip to the hospital wing. Why the boy had come out here when he so obviously wasn’t well, he had no idea.

Wrapping his shivering boyfriend up in his arms to prevent him from stumbling any more, Sirius looked down at Hadrian concerned. ‘What now?’ was the first thought running through his head, closely followed by ‘Why is it always him?’

“Look at me,” he commanded Hadrian softly, trying to catch his eyes and frowning at the despaired look in the beautiful forest gaze. “Breathe,” he added, “Breathe and then tell me what happened.”

Whatever it was, Hadrian looked as if he were once again fighting one of his – what had Rem called it? Post traumatic thingy… PTSD - attacks. The thing with the soldier and the heart. Or was he? Maybe not quite, but whatever it was, it didn’t look healthy. Though he looked sickly pale and
sweaty, there was also a far away look in his eyes and Sirius didn’t like it. It reminded him of the fact that he didn’t know shit about his boyfriend’s past.

“It’s happening again…,” Hadrian croaked, looking up at him, not registering Prongs and the rest of the Quidditch team coming to stand around them. “I thought… I thought it wasn’t possible any more…”

Sirius frowned in confusion and started looking Hadrian over. He carefully let his hands wander along the boy’s back and arms, trying to find possible injuries, but coming up blank. On a whim he carded the tufts of black hair back and away from Hadrian’s face and gasped at the sight of the once innocent looking scar. Gone was the barely noticeable line, replaced by a scratched up and inflamed looking patch of skin. If he didn’t know better, Sirius would think something was trying to get out of that lightning bolt. Shaking his head, he placed his hands gently on both sides of Hadrian’s face and tilted his head up to once again meet those eyes.

“What does? What’s happening again, Bambi?”

Harry didn’t fully register Sirius until he felt the large warm hand in his hair. Blinking rapidly, he looked up into the grey gaze and forced himself to focus. Where had Sirius come from? The last Harry knew, the Marauder had been down at the Quidditch pitch and-

Sirius was wearing his Quidditch uniform. Harry could feel the ripple of muscle beneath his fingers and realised he was clenching his hands into the fabric on those Beater arms. What the… his eyes snapped up when he felt hands on his face again and Harry tilted his head confused at the question asked. Had he… unconsciously sought out Sirius?

“Fetched your girlfriend to bend over for the team, Black?”

A loud voice sneered from a few yards away and Harry tensed as he finally took in his surroundings. He was standing somewhere outside, a group of students all clad in the Gryffindor Quidditch gear around him. The voice caused an instant reaction though, students looking up, away from Harry, and towards somewhere beyond the circle he found himself in. Not that he could see who had spoken, nope, and why the bloody hell seemed the whole team to be made up out of tall students anyway?

“Watch your trap, Lestrange,” James’ voice barked from somewhere nearby, causing Harry to look around until he located his father on his left side.

“No one talked to you, Potter, or are you afraid I’ll prevent your turn with the little bimbo?”

It took Harry a moment to realise they were talking about him. When he did though, he was completely floored. Never before had he been referred to as… as… Was this because of the more elaborate rumours of what had gone down in the dungeons’ lavatory? He hadn’t expected anyone to take those seriously, but really, he shouldn’t be surprised. This was the Wizarding World, they weren’t really famous for questioning rumours, especially those about him. The people of this world had tended to judge him by what they thought they knew about him from the get go.

“What was that?!”

The growling hiss was barely recognisable as Sirius’ voice and Harry felt a shiver run down his spine as he looked up again and into the murderous face of the boy holding him close. The Quidditch team around them shifted nervously, eying their Beater and Harry saw more than one sigh relieved when they couldn’t spot the bat Sirius would be carrying when in a game.

“Now that’s just wrong…,” James muttered next to Harry, frowning heavily.
Sirius was holding Hadrian close to keep himself grounded. His hold on the boy was too strong, he knew, but he hoped Hadrian wouldn’t mind. There was nothing he could do about it right now anyway, not if he wanted to keep from beating up Lestrange until not even an acromantula would snack on him. Lestrange was for some reason standing with the Slytherin Quidditch team, though he wasn’t wearing their gear. The prat most likely wouldn’t even have dared to open his filthy mouth if the bulky forms of the other Slytherins hadn’t been around him. The tension between the teams was running high as it was, the upcoming match in a few days would be the first of the year, Gryffindor versus Slytherin.

Having his ‘cousin’ act like that, openly attacking their captain even if it was only verbally… Well, if Sirius was honest, he wasn’t fazed by Lestrange’s verbal diarrhoea in regards to Prongs. He had heard worse and his best mate was more than capable of defending himself. What really made Sirius see red though was the slander of his boyfriend falling from his cousin’s esteemed trap…

“Though…,” Lestrange’s voice was heard drawling again, “Maybe you’ll have to wait your turn a little longer. A few more or less won’t make much of a difference, won’t they?”

“Oh shut the fuck up!”

The words rang out loudly from the midst of the Gryffindor Quidditch team accompanied by a surge of magic and a sudden yelp from Lestrange. Heads swivelled as everyone tried to understand what had just happened, but Sirius had only eyes for Hadrian - his boyfriend who had just cut through Lestrange’s next comment in an impatient and annoyed sounding manner and with a stinging hex. A wandless stinging hex that hit its target without it being in Hadrian’s line of sight.

“What just happened?”

“Woah”

“Did you feel that?”

“I think, he just cursed him wandlessly…”

“Impossible! I mean, the squirt couldn’t even have seen him!”

The shouts all around them were drowned out as Sirius watched his boyfriend shrug off his hold and shove his way through the Gryffindor Quidditch team until he came face to face with Lestrange, right there in front of all the other Slytherins. Sirius’ eyes widened and his Grim shifted agitatedly as he stared at the sight of Hadrian’s small form fearlessly getting into another’s face. He wanted to charge forward and snag his boyfriend away out of reach of those much taller and stronger than him, but a hand on his shoulder stopped him. He only chanced a quick glance at James before his eyes found Hadrian once again. The boy was positively thrumming with magic and it had the Slytherins all taking a step back from him. Still, Sirius didn’t like seeing him in danger’s proximity like that…

“I don’t know what the fuck is wrong with you,” Hadrian hissed at Lestrange, voice strangely distorting on some syllables, “And I don’t give a bloody fuck either. No one cares about the fucking crap falling out that shithole you call your mouth.” He got even further into the Slytherin’s personal space, magic swirling around him and crackling in the air. “So, do us all a favour and shut. The. Fuck. Up.”

And with that said, Hadrian whirled around and strode off towards the castle as if his previous dizzy spell had never happened. Silence reigned for long moments as everyone kind of gaped after the retreating form of the short, normally shy boy. Sirius for his part thought he desperately needed to snog Hadrian senseless after that display. Damn, his boyfriend was hot.
“Eh. Think you should follow him, Black,” one of his team mates finally spoke up.

“Didn’t expect that,” another muttered.

“Firecracker, is he?” Yet another grinned unrepentantly, making some rude gesture towards the frazzled looking Slytherins.

Finally Sirius was able to shake the mix of arousal and shock off. Turning to James, he couldn’t help the smug tone of voice. The Potter heir was staring after Hadrian as if he had never seen him before and was very pleased with what he had just witnessed.

“That was a lot of ‘fuck’ in your boy’s speech, Prongs,” he smirked over at his astonished looking best mate. “Think you should clean out his mouth with soap?”

Elf Owl. It wasn’t completely unexpected, he had after all already deduced that an allure was influencing the happenings around Hogwarts lately. Not that Severus had an idea what exactly an Elf Owl was other than one of the more rare creatures once said to inhabit the Wizarding World. So Hadrian Moore, the newest Gryffindork, had had a creature inheritance, probably sometime after arriving so unexpectedly at the school.

Frowning, Severus went through his observations and decided that yes, he had understood Lily and Lupin correctly. They had talked about Moore. Really, the subtlety of Gryffindors, discussing a delicate matter like that in the middle of the library.

Severus wasn’t all that bothered with the revelation of a creature in their midst, or more like another creature next to the thrice damned werewolf. Other than many of the Purebloods around he acknowledged the connection most wizarding families shared with magical creatures as they were so completely and irremovably intertwined with their genes. It would be foolish to shun those with creature heritage considering there was creature blood in most of the prominent families. Of course that did not include the infected species.

The Dark Lord himself did not care overly much for the way creatures were looked upon in modern society, though he did not voice any criticism either. It would not do to alienate the more extreme of his pure-blooded followers, after all. And the Dark Lord Severus so revered knew how to use the shunning of the cursed infected species to further his cause without risking their stain to taint his ranks.

So it wasn’t the fact that Hadrian Moore had had a creature inheritance that made Severus feel uncomfortable with the knowledge he had just acquired. No, it was the compulsion, the creeping allure that seemed to influence everyone around without anyone being the wiser. Except him, that is. Severus disliked being influenced on a level that rivalled his dislike of James Potter. Considering all this, he wasn’t entirely sure what made him seek out the very source of his uneasiness when he caught sight of Moore wandering around the school grounds on his own. Maybe he wanted confirmation for his observations, maybe he wanted to extract or blackmail a promise to be excluded from the unfortunate compulsion. Or maybe it actually was said compulsive allure that made him act.

“Moore,” he said coolly, catching the boy’s attention just as he was about to walk right past him. Dunderheaded Gryffindors and their overly self-assured behaviour, prancing around like no one would even dare to attack them. Moore stopped short and looked, no stared, at him as if he couldn’t quite believe what he was seeing.

“Snape?” He acknowledged, voice strained with some poorly suppressed emotion.
Severus eyed the Gryffindor warily, taking in the pulsing magic around him. Maybe it had been a rash decision to confront him right now, something Severus was loathe admitting. He normally did not do rash. But what was done was done, no going back now. He cast a cursory glance around, checking for any eavesdroppers, before he spoke his next words.

“I know what you are.”

Chapter End Notes

/snicker...
In which Sirius’ view of the world gets kicked

Sirius Black had a rather set view of the world.

Sure, being the only ‘Light’ in a family for centuries firmly ensconced in the ‘Dark’ he had a better understanding of both sides. Kind of inside information, if you get his drift. Growing up as the heir to a pureblood line also meant he had all the training generally only bestowed upon first born sons of the noble families. Then forcing his way into Gryffindor House by pure pigheadedness had freed him a great deal from the poisonous clutches of his family and simultaneously opened a whole new world for him.

He now could call knowledge of both sides his own, could grasp the differences in their workings. So even though he had willingly escaped the ‘Dark’ and run into the ‘Light’, which is by the way a nice metaphor, he wouldn’t necessarily call himself a light wizard. Well, at least inside his own head he would be honest enough to call himself ‘Grey’. He was born into Dark magic, but respected and understood Light ideals. But all of this did not change the clear setting his sixteen-year-old mind had for the people in his life. Even though he himself thought more along the lines of ‘Grey’, the people in his life, his friends same as his enemies, were steadfastly sorted into either ‘Light’ or ‘Dark’. There was no in-between.

So excuse his shock when he came upon the scene currently unfolding in front of him.

They were sitting in an out of the way alcove and Sirius only noticed them there because he had been consciously looking for the shock of black hair and feather his fiery boyfriend sported. With Hadrian was someone he really would have never expected to be there - at least not in a non-hostile way. There sat Snivellus, looking quite a bit ruffled in contrast to his normally neat appearance, eyes slightly wide and with a careful distance between him and the little Elf Owl Sirius was looking for. But he was sitting with him there, scowling but non-threatening, and keeping a wary eye on Hadrian. They seemed to be talking. Civilly. Considering the only actual encounter those two had had until now was as far as Sirius knew the one on the Wooden Bridge, he probably should be more surprised that Hadrian was even willing to stay in Snivellus’ presence. But as it stood Sirius couldn’t quite comprehend Snape being there, sitting there, talking, no wand in sight and… just… It went against all he thought he knew about the slimy snake.

“…have to admit is quite impressing,” Snape’s drawl drifted over to where Sirius stood frozen in place, staring. “Though I am a bit surprised considering your obvious muggle name.”

The sneer on that sallow face made Sirius want to punch the git, but he kept himself in check for now. Not like he felt like moving anyway, the surreal feeling of the whole scene having petrified him for now.

“Ah… that is…” Hadrian was mumbling something incomprehensible and Snape raised an eyebrow at him.
“So I was thinking,” he started again, black gaze never waver ing from the boy in front of him, “Per chance you were as ill-fated concerning your mother’s choice in partner as I was, leaving you with such an unfortunate name that hides your true heritage.”

Sirius watched with a frown how Hadrian’s head snapped up again at those words. He had never thought about it, but Snape was no pureblood name he was aware of and bearing in mind how close-knit the magical community was, he should have at least heard it in passing outside of Snivellus himself. So Snivellus was a Halfblood, how very curious. Logically there couldn’t only be Purebloods in Slytherin House, but Sirius didn’t know of anyone there who would admit to it out loud. Not that he particularly cared beyond the implications to Hadrian’s own heritage. They knew his actual name was Potter. They knew he was James’ son. So in light of that reaction just there… it was entirely possible that his mother was a Muggleborn. Oh Prongs would love that little bit of information.

“Halfblood Prince… (*)” The words were spoken without thought, as if Hadrian hadn’t been aware he was saying them out loud, but the reaction was instantaneous. Sirius watched Snivellus get abruptly to his feet and drawing his wand in one fluid motion, though his wand arm was noticeably trembling.

“Where have you heard that name?”

The Slytherin’s voice was down to a quiet tone with just a hint of a tremor in there. Sirius didn’t wait for any more fascinating facts spewed, not with Hadrian at wand point. Though… his boyfriend hadn’t even moved. He just sat there looking calmly back at Snape when Sirius charged forward into the alcove.

“Down boy,” he drawled with sardonic amusement, watching Snivellus switch direction of his wand. “Don’t you have somewhere else to be? You know, doing whatever it is you evil little minions do.”

“Black,” Snivellus spat at him, though his gaze flitted back to Hadrian for a second, looking… thoughtful?

“Impressive recollection of my name,” Sirius sneered right back, trying not to notice the sudden rising of familiar magic from behind him.

“Prince,” Hadrian’s voice sounded and then Sirius felt a small hand push at his side as his boyfriend came to stand next to him. “Eileen Prince, right?”

Glancing only shortly at Hadrian, Sirius didn’t lower his wand. No, he was watching Snape’s face and the uncommon emotions changing the usual disdainful scowl. It was a strange sight for the Marauder who really wasn’t used to seeing anything but hatred, disdain or maybe even a flicker of fear on the Slytherin’s face.

“…Yes,” Snape said tersely after a moment, wand still pointing at Sirius, but eyes fixed on Hadrian.

Hadrian who smiled. At Snivellus. Sirius wasn’t sure which part was more disturbing: Someone smiling like that at Snape or the slight blush rising on Snape’s cheeks at that smile.

His thoughts were continuously straying to the upcoming full moon. It would be this Saturday, on the 6th, right there with the first Quidditch match of the season that just so happened to be Gryffindor versus Slytherin. There were a number of reasons why that was not a good thing.
For one there were the Marauders who normally would accompany him on his run or rather make it possible that he went running at all. Without their Animagi there he would never risk leaving the Shrieking Shack in his werewolf form. But with the game on that day there was no guarantee they would be in any state to run with him, it was more likely that they – at least Sirius and James – would be too exhausted to do so or they could even be in the hospital wing after the game. It was Gryffindor versus Slytherin after all.

And then there was Hadrian.

Technically they hadn’t told Hadrian about Remus being a werewolf. They had just assumed he knew just as he knew about them being Animagi. But what if he didn’t? The thought was probably ridiculously unnecessary yet it kept pestering Remus and he just couldn’t bring himself to ask. Because if for some unknown reason his fear was justified and Hadrian really didn’t know about his furry little problem then him asking about it would force the boy to make a decision no one should be forced to make. Would he keep the secret of a new friend and endanger himself with it for keeping something to himself that went against more laws Remus dared to count? Or would he go and report to the authorities as was his duty under the current legislation?

But then again, Hadrian was a special case. He was a creature himself though not one that was officially categorised as dark like Remus was. But reporting Remus would not only put Hadrian himself under scrutiny, but the rest of the Marauders as well. No, Remus didn’t believe their Bambi would do that. Why he even considered these thoughts, he had no idea. He had trusted Hadrian from the get go even before he had known the boy really was James’ son. Why was he questioning his loyalty now? It wasn’t right. Maybe he had spent too much time cooped up in the library. It always made him anxious anyway when he stayed away from Hadrian for too long… which should be weird, but felt completely natural. Maybe his wolf made him paranoid so he would go check on the boy. Right. Somehow this sounded just as far fetched as those thoughts about time travelling Elf Owls.

But as he packed up his things, Remus couldn’t deny the feeling that something was up, something was working behind the scenes and eluding his grasp. He could feel it, his wolf could feel it. It had to do with Hadrian which was why his thoughts had strayed to him first, but that didn’t have to mean it was Hadrian himself that set him so on edge.

So he thought his boyfriend was hot when he was angry. He would like to snog the temper right out of him, if Hadrian would allow him to. Huh. That sounded awfully like an even creepier impression of a Dementor… anyway, considering the magic pulsing around Hadrian and the blazing glare pinned on him, trying to initiate a make out session right now might not be the best course of action. But the fact that Hadrian was damn hot like this wasn’t he only reason Sirius had the urge to re-stake his claim. He just couldn’t get the way Snivellus had looked at Hadrian out of his mind. Never mind that the snake was long gone.

“Well,” he cleared his throat, gaze straying from the poison green still glaring at him, “Are you okay? What happened?”

He nearly flinched at the little growl directed his way. Yes, nearly, because it was darn cute. Alright, maybe he was a bit masochistically inclined.

“I mean back at the pitch!” He hurried to explain, Merlin forbid he asked about Snape.

It was more than obvious that Hadrian was not happy with his interference in… whatever that had been. But really, was he supposed to just ignore a wand pointed at his boyfriend? The boyfriend that had just had some kind of meltdown, then confronted the whole Slytherin Quidditch team and
threatened the glittering crap out of Lestrange.

“Huh?” The wide forest eyes blinked at him for a moment before Hadrian seemed to mentally catch up with him. Okay, suspicious. What else had happened while his Bambi had been out of his sight? “Oh. Y-yes… I’m fine.”

So not convincing.

He had acted on a whim after the sudden anger had petered off and he realised he had used the wrong person to unleash his temper at. Severus Snape might be a prat and a git, but he hadn’t done anything that would excuse Harry kicking him around with his magic. Not quite literally kicking, but still…

So Harry had gone with his instinct and somehow, no idea how really, made Snape sit down and listen to him. Maybe it had been because the Slytherin had been slightly scared of his angry magic or maybe he just saw an opportunity to get information. Harry wasn’t even going to consider his allure. Whatever it was, Harry had caught his own opportunity to, if not exactly make friends, at least ensure Snape wouldn’t consider him an enemy either. The thought had been simple and reminiscent to his thought process back on the Wooden Bridge when Snape and Lestrange had trapped him in that bubble thingy. He just couldn’t ignore that little spark of hope that Snape wasn’t completely bad. Back in his time he had hated the man, hadn’t trusted him as far as he could throw him, and yet he had respected him. Somewhat.

This Snape wasn’t yet a spy for either side as far as Harry knew. This Snape wasn’t yet a Death Eater either, right? He wasn’t completely indoctrinated in Moldy Short’s sick beliefs and therefore Harry might be able to reach him. That was why he acted on another whim as he remembered the information Hermione had once found in an old copy of the Prophet back when Harry had enjoyed a certain Potions book. (*)&

“Right.”

Sirius’ voice interrupted his thoughts and he didn’t need to look up to know that he hadn’t been as convincing as he had hoped to be. But then again, he was so used to people asking how he was without actually meaning it or caring beyond what new information he might be able to report from his connection with Voldemort… Let’s just say Harry hadn’t put much effort into sounding convincing as he hadn’t expected Sirius to really be interested.

Dumb, but hey, he never said emotional stuff was his forte!

“So,” Sirius drew the word out, watching him with raised eyebrows and Harry suddenly realised that they were for once alone and no fangirls were lurking around. “If you’re alright, what was up with that stunt down at the pitch? As gorgeous as you are, you did look kinda ill when you arrived.”

Harry fought down the blush threatening to rise and averted his eyes in an attempt to get his bearings. Sirius liked to call him all kinds of outrageous stuff ranging from ‘cute’ over ‘sexy’ to strange convoluted ramblings that somehow all entailed him being apparently not as hard on the eyes as he himself might thought. Right, back to topic.

“Um,” Harry stalled and scratched nervously at his neck. “I wanted to watch you play?”

He more asked than stated and could have cursed himself for his inability of lying convincingly. To be completely honest, he had no idea why he had walked down to the Quidditch pitch in the first place. He had only vague recollection of what he had done after that sudden re-opening of the Horcrux connection and… the Horcrux. It was active again. The sudden reminder made Harry feel
sick. He took in a large gulp of air and quite unceremoniously sat down on the little carved out bench in their hidden alcove. Oh how he wished that specific aspect of his past life had never come back to his attention. He could have happily lived without ever thinking on that twisted soul piece anchored inside him and… he was going to be sick.

“Hadrian?”

The slightly anxious voice of his boyfriend (And could he really risk being near Sirius, having these emotions for him with Voldemort once again having access to his mind?) made Harry blink. He came face to face with the grey gaze he always associated with safety, Sirius having crouched down in front of him to get a better look at him.

“I’m…”

The thought was violent and scary and… staring into this face, so young so unblemished, he couldn’t stop the memories from resurfacing. Sirius, his godfather, being supposedly tortured because of Harry and some damn prophecy. His godfather coming to his aid when he had led his trusting friends right into the trap Voldemort had so conveniently placed in his mind. His godfather dying because Harry hadn’t been able to distinguish between what really had been going on and what Voldemort had wanted him to see… He couldn’t let that happen again, he couldn’t let that bastard take advantage of his feelings for Sirius or anyone ever again.

“No, you’re not,” Sirius said quietly, looking right back. “Don’t lie to me. Not again.”

He wasn’t sure if he could take it if Hadrian decided not to answer, but Sirius knew for a fact he wasn’t going to stand for more lies. They had been over this more than once and he had so hoped Hadrian wouldn’t lie anymore now that they knew the truth.

But did they really know the truth? It wasn’t like the boy was especially forthcoming with information, no, Hadrian kept his secrets close to his chest, only giving the minimum and trying to avoid answering their questions whenever possible. And Sirius had not wanted to hold it against him, had decided for himself not to pressure Hadrian into telling them anything if it wasn’t absolutely necessary. But it was becoming harder every day to stand by this decision.

Here they were in another random hallway, mostly hidden away from prying eyes for now and once again Hadrian wasn’t telling him what so obviously bothered him. And it wasn’t even ‘only’ bothering him emotionally as Sirius could clearly see the reddened scar on his forehead. That had to be painful. So was he to keep his mouth shut even though Hadrian wasn’t coping well alone? Was he to stand by and watch and wait it out?

Even if it weren’t for the powerful protective instinct tugging at him, that just didn’t feel right. That wasn’t him. So Sirius took hold of his boyfriend’s hands and stared imploringly into those too wide eyes, trying to make Hadrian tell him what was going on by sheer strength if will.

“Tell me about that scar.”

Chapter End Notes

(*) So I mixed up the timelines. Harry technically can't be aware of the potions book of the Halfblood Prince, Snape, because as far as my muddled memory recalls he gets it (and subsequently Hermione's information about Snape's mother) in his sixth year.
Which he is in right now just in the wrong timeline. I'm sorry about that and it annoys me to no end, but I had the chapter already mostly finished when I noticed and... well, I'm dizzy and annoyed with myself.
He didn’t quite remember how they had gotten up to Gryffindor Tower but here he sat on his bed with Sirius next to him, Remus on the bed next to his and James leaning against the post next to Remus… and they were all looking at him.

Harry drew in a deep shaky breath and relished the feeling of Sirius’ hand in his. He wasn’t so sure he would be allowed that touch after he had told them this. But there was no way around it, not if he wanted to save the future. He had taken a Horcrux with him into the past, making the noseless bastard truly immortal in that time. So if he wanted to stop him he had to prevent things from happening that way… whatever it might mean for himself.

“Back in my time Dumbledore led a secret organisation against …the dark forces,” he started carefully, ignoring the confused looks on his audience’s faces. They were after all expecting him to tell them about his scar. “He led them with the knowledge of a prophecy made long ago… well, still in the future from this point in time.”

“So that’s why you didn’t outright tell him no…,” James muttered more to himself.

Harry drew in another deep breath and sent a quick glance at Sirius who responded with a tightening of his hold on Harry’s hand.

“The prophecy goes like this…” Harry quickly stomped down his fear and forced the words out. “The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches,” he near whispered, feeling sorry for his friends when he heard their gasps.

Yes, these three were clever. They had immediately understood what a prophecy from the future proclaiming the approaching of someone able to end the Dark Lord meant for them: Voldemort would be around for a long while yet.

“Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies.” Harry let his voice go carefully blank, detaching himself as best he could. It was so easy to recite it, like the words had been branded into his mind. Maybe they had. “And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives.” One last shaky intake of breath. “The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies.”

He liked the idea of Elf Owls originating from a species like the legendary Selkies. He liked the idea
that those creatures just shed their fur, or feathers in this case, and became human with it. Hadrian – and James – being descended from such a race was so fascinating, the thought captivated Remus for the rest of the time he spent in the library even drowning out the thoughts about whatever went on behind the scenes.

But all of this had left his mind in a rush of… mind boggling information when he found his friends back up in their dorm. Well, everyone but Peter that had once again seemingly vanished. He felt his wolf take notice, but Remus was distracted by the conversation he was partaking in.

It was the story of a child cursed to have its life planned out before they were even born. It was a story of hope that brought death and devastation and yet in the end still the hope survived. It was a story about the impossible becoming possible, about someone, an infant at that, surviving a curse no one ever had survived, a curse not only forbidden but without any possible counter curse. No shield no nothing could stop this one *Unforgivable*. Yet this child had survived. And even though he told it in a detached sort of way, never mentioning names or anything remotely identifying, Remus knew it was Hadrian’s story. It was the story of Harry Potter, destined by a prophecy made before his birth to be the whole world’s only hope.

 Silence followed Hadrian’s story. He had relayed the prophecy and its consequences for the child – that he still had not confirmed to be him – and the Dark Lord. Then he had stopped talking and now… Sirius jumped from his place next to Hadrian and started pacing the dorm.

“…The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies,” Hadrian ended the repetition, his voice so void of emotion it sounded hollow.

They had thought Hadrian’s birthday had been when his inheritance hit, meaning sometime after his arrival in their time, September. But while James breathed an obvious sigh of relief, Remus’ mind went into overdrive. Hadrian had travelled through time in a way that was as of yet technically impossible and if he remembered correctly it was still thought to be impossible in Hadrian’s original time. A plethora of time travel theories started popping up in Remus’ mind, his brain spouting out all the facts he had managed to soak up like a sponge on his research visits to the library.

There was the *Novikov Self-Consistency Principle*. (*) This theory of time travel was essentially that of a self-fulfilling prophecy, stating that ‘Nothing can be changed because anything a traveller does merely produces the circumstances they had noted before travelling.’ If that were true there was a whole damn lot that had yet to happen that would still lead to Hadrian losing his parents, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named trying to kill him and failing and finally Hadrian coming back in time to start it all over again.

Nope, Remus somehow didn’t think that was it in this case. Maybe it was just him wanting to believe everything could be changed for the better, but he didn’t want to think about the future Hadrian had relayed to them… about James and his wife dying while protecting Hadrian only for the boy to become… wait, what?

“Hadrian,” he cleared his throat and leaned a bit forward toward his friend, “What happened to… the child after they survived the attack?”

Pushing back the thought about the influence time travel could maybe have on creature inheritances, Remus focused on the consequences happenings like those in the story could have for a child’s
future. With how society nowadays treated those different from the norm it was an important question. After all, surviving the impossible and being ‘marked’ for it would make a child very much different from what society claimed as normal these days. What if Hadrian already was very well accustomed to being ostracised for something he had no control over?

Sirius didn’t like the fact that he hadn’t seen Hadrian for most of the day so far. It had taken all of James’ considerable persuasiveness and Rem’s suggestion to occasionally check on the map if Hadrian was in any danger of being hounded by either Slytherins or fangirls to get him to go down to the Quidditch pitch at all. He didn’t think they actually needed that much training, but Prongs was manic when it came to Quidditch and since he was the captain…

Everything had been fine until Hadrian had stumbled onto the pitch. First he had been scared for his boyfriend, then he had been extremely turned on by his display of magic and temper and then his world view had been kicked into soft tissue parts when he had come across Hadrian and Snape being civil to one another. And from there everything had gone down the drain.

Sirius had expected a story about abuse, maybe something akin to his own abuse though probably even worse. His mother had always taken care not to leave any mark which had been easy considering she always used magic to enforce her mental outbursts. She would have never touched him with the risk of marring his looks – or well, she wouldn’t touch him if she could avoid it, period. There was a reason why he was such a tactile person after all.

He had prepared himself for surging anger and the need to hold his boyfriend close, but this…

Pacing the dorm, Sirius tried to process the flood of information he had been told. The organisation led by Dumbledore who knew of a prophecy, a prophecy determining the life of an unborn child that suspiciously sounded like his boyfriend. Why else would Hadrian tell them now when they had asked him about his curse scar?

Sirius shoved the horror down and tried to think logically. The prophecy talked about a child born at the end of July and Hadrian’s birthday should be in September considering his inheritance. He wanted to believe that. It would mean the story wasn’t about the boy he had fallen for and didn’t detail the demise of his best mate. But Sirius wasn’t going to fool himself. There was a reason Hadrian had brought up this story right now.

He looked up when Remus asked about the child mentioned in the prophecy. He so wanted to believe that it wasn’t Hadrian, that his best mate was not doomed to die young and his boyfriend would not grow up without his parents. It did however explain the abuse they had figured Hadrian had suffered. And a child, Hadrian, marked by an unforgivable curse would explain the strange scar which would close the circle to the original reason of this conversation.

Still… He could see where Rem’s thoughts were going. Hadrian was a creature now which made him special and put him in a lot of danger from society. Being a creature could be like having a big fucking target painted on you. But if Hadrian really was that child…

Harry felt numb. Divulging all those secrets had drained him, yet he knew he had really only skimmed the surface. He had told them the truth about the prophecy and Voldemort and the story of the Chosen One. He hadn’t exactly said it was him, but chancing a glance at Remus made it clear at least his werewolf friend had cottoned on. He could feel Sirius’ stare on him, but couldn’t bring himself to look up. And James… James, his father… he had technically just told him that he had only a few years left before he would die a violent death.

No.

Harry wanted to believe that in telling them he could change what was to come.
He hadn’t told them he himself was the Chosen One, but Remus knew, Sirius probably too and it wouldn’t take James long to get it also. He would not tell James who his mother was, he would let him find whoever the right choice was for him. Maybe it was Lily, maybe not. Who knew what other changes he already had started unknowingly. And with them knowing, there were more things they could change. Maybe he could even prevent the rat from becoming a traitor. Or maybe, with Snape not seeing him as an enemy, he might be able to stop the prophecy from ever reaching Voldemort’s ears. (He had ears, right? Harry wasn’t all that sure anymore, he always got stuck on that missing nose thingy.)

He was so tired.

Fuck, how he hated Halloween.

“Alright,” Remus’ gentle voice broke the silence Harry hadn’t realised had descended. “You don’t have to tell us right now.” Huh?

Harry blinked confused while James and Sirius protested against their friend’s decision. Oh. Right. Remus had asked about the prophecy child after the attack. Oh well.

“I think you could do with a nap,” Remus said decisively and Harry frowned. “It’s enough for today. I need to think and you’re exhausted.”

He caught the looks James was chancing in his direction, but Harry still couldn’t bring himself to look at Sirius. His boyfriend was in so much danger just being near him now that the connection was active again. They all were, but still… He didn’t even realise James and Remus had left the dorm until there was a touch to his shoulder. Looking up, his face was caught by Sirius’ large hand under his chin preventing him from looking away again.

“You didn’t tell us about the scar in the end,” he said quietly.

Well, technically he had, but he had left out the actually important part and glancing at Sirius, he was very much aware that there was more to it all. Harry tried nodding nonetheless, but instead grimaced slightly when the grip on his chin prevented the movement.

“It’s not all, is it?”

Finally Harry raised his eyes to really meet Sirius’. No, it was by far not all, but he couldn’t bring himself to tell. Not yet, maybe not ever. But he had to if he wanted things to change. He couldn’t do this by himself. Sirius though seemed to take his silence for defiance, because suddenly there were two hands framing his face, tilting his head up.

“Don’t. Lie.” A hint of a growl vibrated through the voice of the bloke Harry liked so much. Maybe he even-

“I won’t,” he whispered back.

He hoped he would be able to keep that promise. For now though there was no need to lie, the truth would probably protect the Marauders, protect Sirius better than keeping them out ever would be able to. It wasn’t really lying if he kept the Horcruxes a secret a little longer, was it? Sirius’ shoulders sagged. He let his hands drop away from Harry and turned to stare at the door to the dorm for a long moment.

Did he expect too much? Was he too demanding?

He only wanted to keep Hadrian safe yet with all those secrets he felt utterly helpless. The
information they had been given today were enormous. This was huge. But it was all too much at once too. And he could see in Hadrian’s eyes that there was still so much more. The thought that an infant would be the Dark Lord’s downfall alone was sickening in its own way and not only because it would probably take his best mate’s life and render an innocent child that may or may not would become the love of his life an orphan.

Looking back at Hadrian, Sirius took in the exhaustion visibly tugging at the boy. He looked so weary. The too pale skin, bruised looking eyes… eyes that begged him to back off, to just let it go for now. He sighed. With another look towards the door, Sirius did let it go in more ways than one. He swiftly changed, letting the transition into his Animagus form take him over. It would grant Hadrian the break he needed from the questions Sirius couldn’t seem to contain and it would give Sirius just the right amount of distance from it all.

He gave a doggy smile at the little gasp of his boyfriend when the change took place. Oh yes, he had wanted to do this forever, ever since Hadrian had whispered ‘Padfoot’ when delirious from his inheritance. The look he was given told him all he needed to know. Hadrian knew and Hadrian was not afraid of him in this form.

He jumped up on the bed, his heavy form dipping the mattress precariously, and nudged his mate into a lying position, relishing the little giggles his action elicited. If they sounded a little hysterical, Padfoot was willing to ignore it.

He arranged himself for a moment, until his head came to rest on Hadrian’s chest. Taking a deep breath, Padfoot took in the lovely scent of forest, greenery, and wind that was all his mate. So wild, so fresh and unspoiled. It was the most natural scent he remembered ever encountering and it was addictive. Making himself comfortable, Padfoot checked one last time on his mate, making sure the boy was comfortable as well, before he let himself drift. He would guard Hadrian’s sleep and try to come to grips with everything he had learned today.

Chapter End Notes

Say... are there any more scenes you really want to see before we do a little time jump? If not, winter solstice would be next, I suppose.

(*) 'Novikov Self-Consistency Principle': A theory that is much more complex than what Rem relays in his POV so if anyone wants to actually read all the information given when following the link... I'm not gonna claim that I got it completely right.
In which Harry mistakes strength for weakness

Chapter Notes

I think, this was the longest I made you wait for a chapter so far. Sorry about that, but now we finally have reached a point in the story I've been waiting to write forever :D Oh and a little nod of thanks to DarkInuFan and Alyaa-chan!

A Horcrux is a dark and twisted thing. Even though the soul is inherently pure there are a lot of ways to taint it, but none of those is as damaging as the creation of a Horcrux. Were one to speak of it in technical terms, a Horcrux is a mere fragment of what used to be a soul, a torn piece, mutilated and as far from the pureness it once was a part of as it can become.

Harry knew all this, had heard it all when Dumbledore pushed all the information on him. Oh he was glad to finally be included in what were significant facts of his life, but he could have done with a better moment. Being told you are not only burdened with the responsibility for thousands of lives (and that was only talking wizarding Britain) but also a Horcrux. Well, technically Dumbledore hadn’t told him about that last part, but Harry wasn’t dumb enough not to realise it. Still… the headmaster had taken a decidedly horrid moment to finally let Harry in on it all. Right after the fight at the Ministry, right after his godfather’s… death. Harry had been in shock. Vulnerable.

Sometimes he wondered what life would have been like if he had known about it all from the beginning. Maybe he would have put more effort into Occlumency. Maybe he wouldn’t have thought himself evil but would have understood that it was Voldemort messing with him. Maybe he would have been able to distinguish better what was really happening and what was only planted in his mind and Sirius would have lived.

But that was pushing guilt around. Maybe the knowledge would have messed him up even more than it had this way and it certainly didn’t stop him from feeling tainted either way. Sullied by the presence of something so vile attached to himself. He had tried fooling himself into believing it was alright now that the connection had gone silent. He had wanted to believe it was safe to let people in again so much. And then just as he was becoming surer of himself the Horcrux had flared back to… ‘life’ again.

So here he was now, once again all too aware of the foreign and twisted soul piece inside of him, and again Sirius was on the forefront of his mind. He couldn’t let things develop the way they did the last time, he couldn’t- Just like every other time he couldn’t stop the memories from flashing through his head, his heart clenching at the remembered sight of his tortured godfather and the veil and then he was falling, falling…

With a gasp Harry wrenched his eyes open, only then realising he had closed them. He came face to face with a sleeping Sirius and blinked in confusion for a long moment before the events of last night – Halloween – came back to him. Sirius must have turned back from his Animagus form sometime during the night, though if actively or while asleep was anyone’s guess. His boyfriend certainly wouldn’t turn down the possibility of staying in Harry’s bed as more than a dog, Grim or not.

Staring at Sirius’ face while he slept, Harry traced every line with a careful gaze. His eyes followed the strong jaw and along the high cheekbones and the aristocratic nose. He stopped longer at those
lips, wishing with all his might that there was no dark lord after him, that he wasn’t linked to a murderous cruel monster that wouldn’t hesitate to use him as soon as he got the chance. Harry’s glance drifted up again to the tussled hair that normally would never be in such a state of disarray and he wished…

“’Rian…?” A sleep-roughened voice interrupted Harry’s silent staring.

Blinking, he noticed Sirius looking right back at him, grey eyes still hazy from sleep. He so wanted to tell him. He wanted to tell Sirius every dirty little bit, but if he did Sirius would either run as fast as he could or worse, he would try to help and find a way to save Harry from the evil leeching off him. Only that there was no way and he would end up in the line of fire just like last time.

“What’s with the frown?” A thumb smoothed down between Harry’s eyebrows and he couldn’t help but lean into the touch. He wanted this so much, he wanted to be with Sirius, but he was afraid. What if history was about to repeat itself just because he couldn’t help being selfish? “You okay?”

“…Yes,” he answered softly.

The truth is I am something so disgusting and despicable that you shouldn’t even touch me. I am a bloody soul container, a thing that should be destroyed not be near you. But Sirius was his safe haven. Leaving him after he had just found him again… Harry wasn’t sure he had the strength to do so. Maybe this Voldemort didn’t yet know there actually was a connection between them. Why should he anyway? He wouldn’t even know Harry existed, right? A weary sigh made him look back at Sirius again.

“We talked about this,” he said sternly, drawing Harry in for a warm hug. “If you really can’t tell me the truth, don’t say anything.” He pulled him close, tucking Harry’s head beneath his chin. “Just don’t lie to me.”

If only it were so easy.

The beginning of November went by in a blurred kind of way for Harry and the Marauders, each of them trying to get their head around the newest revelations of the future.

James tried hard to come to terms with the possibility of his son being the object of a prophecy that basically made – had made? Would make? – him the expected saviour of the Wizarding World… or maybe even the world as a whole. And let’s not forget what Harry being the prophecy child implied for him and his future wife.

Remus dived head first into time travel theory and all those possibilities that came with Harry actually travelling in time. Sirius tried his best to be there for his boyfriend that grew more distant each day, but it was hard to do so without knowing the whole story and none of them felt up to asking more as of yet.

And each one of them forgot about Peter during it all. They hadn’t even thought of calling Peter when they had their talk about Harry’s past and all that mind-boggling prophecy stuff. Now that all was said and done they were slightly out of their depths as to how to tell him something so big – not that they really spared a thought to it. It didn’t help that Harry was so very uncomfortable with their friend.

Peter meanwhile had of course noticed that something was going on and it irked him, no, angered him deeply, that his supposed friends obviously kept him in the dark. He was sure that it had something to do with the damn parasitic creature that posed as James’ son, but just as well… he
would get rid of it soon. The professor had ordered him to get a few ‘samples’ so he would be able to define the creature’s heritage. Oh yes, Peter had kept that specific information secret, pleading ignorance, while stowing away as much blackmail material he could get his hands on. He wasn’t dumb after all, he needed something tradable that evened out his failed essays and tests.

So it was on 6th of November, day of the dreaded and anticipated match between Gryffindor and Slytherin and also the (definitely dreaded) full moon, that Peter searched through Hadrian’s stuff while the rest of his dorm mates were down at the pitch.

“Somewhere…,” a certain rat Animagus was mumbling to himself while carefully lifting item after item out of the hated creature’s trunk. “Damn, Sirius, why’d you have to spend so much on that floozy?”

There was certainly a lot more clothing in the trunk than there had been the first time Peter had went through it. Right after the creature had arrived, he had taken a look to find something disparaging that would make his friends see reason, but without any luck. In fact, the trunk had been nearly empty back then – pretty much the opposite of how it was now. There were robes and slacks and those muggle trousers… jeans or something, jumpers, shirts… Peter even went through the creature’s underwear and shoes (And how had it gotten Sirius to spend enough for dragonhide boots?!), but to no avail.

“Just one feather, come on…” Growling, Peter put everything back in, making sure to do it in the correct order. “Right, so… maybe hair.”

He was just about to search the pillows when his gaze fell on the bedside table. There was the sketchbook Remus had bought on Sirius’ order back when they last visited Hogsmeade. Peter didn’t honestly give a flying fart about that thing’s supposed talent, but he was curious. Maybe the creature had drawn something that would give Peter an advantage.

Down at the Quidditch pitch the match was nearing its end. Gryffindor was going to win, of course, James wouldn’t stand for anything else. That is if the Slytherin seeker didn’t manage to catch the snitch before Gryffindor’s had any luck and evened out their leading score – really, that seeker was Slytherin’s only saving grace. They wouldn’t stand a chance against James’ team if it weren’t for their sneakiness in playing off fouls as legal play.

James chanced a glance at Sirius. His best mate, the team’s top Beater, had been injured near the beginning of the game when one of the opponent’s players had feigned to accidentally mistake Sirius for one of his own team. While distracted, Sirius hadn’t noticed the Slytherin Beater behind him. He had been hit hard with a bludger and was visibly having problems staying steady on his broom ever since then. But he was stubbornly holding on.

Well, James thought with a wry grin, he had been wary of having Hadrian in the stands watching when it came to Sirius. Especially considering how skittish the boy had been these last days. He had thought the petite raven would be a distraction for his best mate and maybe he really was… but in a good kind of way. Sirius wasn’t willing to give in to a Slytherin induced injury while his boyfriend was watching. Still, James hoped Sirius knew when enough was enough.

Harry was down on the field the moment he saw the Gryffindor seeker finally grabbing the snitch out of the air. His fingers had itched throughout the whole game to show that idiot what a seeker was actually supposed to do and it didn’t really help his restlessness that he had seen Sirius being hit hard on the upper thigh by that damn bludger. Why that hadn’t been counted a foul he had no idea, but then again, Quidditch wasn’t exactly famous for its safety measures. He was running towards the team, searching for Sirius among the landing players, not even noticing the Slytherin team skirting
out of his way like scattering insects.

He was just in time to see James and the rest of the team cheering and congratulating each other and Harry briefly smiled at the smug look on his father’s face. Then he caught sight of Sirius leaning heavily on his broom, grinning madly. Maybe he had overestimated the injury?

“Hey shorty,” greeted one of the (way too tall, in Harry’s opinion) Gryffindors, only to back away laughing nervously when he was met with Harry’s disgruntled stare. But the call had drawn Sirius’ attention.

“Bambi!” He crowed happily, grin softening to a smile. “We were awesome, right? We always are, of course, but did you see that stunt-”

Harry grabbed Sirius’ broom and pulled, watching carefully as his boyfriend struggled to keep his balance before hissing when he put too much weight on his injured leg. Harry sighed. He had a feeling Sirius would have tried walking on that leg until at least Gryffindor’s win had been celebrated or even after that – meaning he would have made it through the night with it. And it was the full moon.

“That was sneaky,” Sirius pouted, wobbling slightly in place. “And here I was the perfect picture of post-game ruggedness.”

“Prat,” Harry commented offhandedly, rolling his eyes. Sirius just grinned and pulled him close, using Harry as his new prop up.

“Gorgeous,” he answered, snaking his arms around Harry’s waist.

“Oi! Lovebirds,” James called, making them look up in unison. “Hadrian, get that hero to the infirmary, would you? And no, Pads, don’t even try.”

Sirius huffed at the stern ‘captains’ tone of his best mate, but relented. With a sly look down at Harry, he transferred his arm around his boyfriend’s shoulder, leaning onto him a bit more heavily.

“Yeah, Hadrian, would you?”

Harry sighed again. He really wasn’t doing all that well with the distance thing. He only hoped his weakness wouldn’t lead to Sirius or anyone else getting hurt. They headed back up to the castle on their own, Sirius slightly hobbling along while leaning on Harry. Though, Harry had a suspicion that the other was trying to keep most of the weight off of him now that they were actually moving.

The walk was silent between the two, the distant cheers of hundreds of students the only noise. Even though Harry wondered if he should say something, the atmosphere between them was not awkward for the first time in quite a while. He knew it was his own fault for pushing Sirius away, but he couldn’t help it. It was just too dangerous to be around Harry if that cursed connection to Voldemort was open once again. But being this near to his …they were still boyfriends, were they? was easing some of the tension inside of him, even though it should have an adverse effect. Sirius’ breath was brushing along the side of Harry’s face and he realised he was being looked at.

“What?”

“Just wondering if I’ll ever be able to read those mesmerizing eyes of yours,” Sirius answered him, sounding slightly absent-minded. “Maybe then I wouldn’t have to make you talk when I know you don’t want to.”

Harry blinked rapidly at that. It was statements like this that made it so hard not to give in to Sirius,
especially if Harry wanted it so much. If he just let himself go, if he let himself believe that no harm would come from relying on someone else…

Remus closed his latest book on time travel theory and stood up to do some stretching. He would have to go to the infirmary soon to meet Madam Pomfrey, his escort down to the Whomping Willow. He knew this full moon would be different than he was used to what with Sirius injured, James already slightly inebriated, and Peter being annoyingly moody once again.

Still it was Hadrian that was mostly occupying his thoughts. He felt always so much better with the short boy around, his very presence soothing to his wolf. But as Hadrian was no Animagus there was no way he would be able to accompany Moony on the full moon. Remus rolled his aching shoulders with a grimace. He was already hurting and the noise the rowdy Gryffindors around him in the common room were making wasn’t helping to relax him.

He watched James’ newest attempt at wooing Lily and smiled when he spotted a barely there blush on her cheeks. He wondered if James was too intoxicated to notice or if Lily would ever accept the fact that she was actually attracted to the resident Potter. Well, the taller resident Potter. She and Hadrian had formed some kind of study buddy friendship, especially over the last week when the boy had tried to subtly avoid everyone but still ended up with a persistent Lily whenever he managed to shake off his tail of Marauders.

Remus had a good inkling as to why Hadrian was acting that way. A certain prophecy was obviously playing into this newest behaviour, though why he would choose now to retreat… If he was the prophecy child – and at this point Remus was rather sure he was – then what was to say the time travel hadn’t already been expected when the prophecy was made? Well, maybe not expected in the exact sense of the word. Obviously no one could have known that the time travel would happen as the words of the prophecy didn’t even imply anything relating to travel let alone time travel. But at the same time nothing in those foretold phrases defined the moment when ‘the one with the power to vanquish’ would actually do all the vanquishing stuff.

Remus frowned in thought.

Just because the prophecy child had travelled back in time didn’t mean the prophecy itself couldn’t be fulfilled in the time the child had travelled to. After all, no one knew which one of the many theories about time travel was true. It didn’t have to be the Novikov Self-Consistency Principle, the self-fulfilling prophecy. It could just as well be something like the Yggdrasil in which each decision changed the possible future, meaning a traveller back in time would inevitably create a kind of new dimension. (*) Hadn’t Hadrian actually done so already with coming into his inheritance on a day that – at least if the prophecy were to be believed – was obviously not his birthday?

“Now that I think about it…,” Remus muttered to himself, sitting back down in his armchair. “He actually did say his birthday was in July, didn’t he? Back when he first told us, I mean…”

Huh. So… Hadrian’s birthday was the one mentioned in the prophecy, ‘as the seventh month dies’, but he came into his inheritance early in September. Did that mean he had already changed the future or rather created another dimension of a kind?

Sighing, Remus closed his eyes and rubbed at the bridge of his nose. There was no telling what influence the time travel would have on the prophecy and how dependable were prophecies anyway? Maybe he should try and get a visitors pass to the hall of prophecies during winter solstice. James had planned on visiting Diagon anyway, a detour to the Ministry wouldn’t hurt.
Next up: The long awaited start of winter solstice and hopefully some Sev/Harry interaction!

(*) That's a VERY loose interpretation of the Yggdrasil which not necessarily even has to do anything with time travel, but hey...
In which a bubble is mentioned again

Chapter Notes

We make a whole lot of a time jump here: Last chapter was jumping from **Halloween to 6th of November**, this chapter starts up on **23rd of December**.

And again no Sev/Harry, but it's the Marauders' fault! They just wouldn't stop being all over Hadrian, so the scene for those two has again to wait... sigh.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was not a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was not. No, Hadrian coming to the past would change everything, he was sure of it. There was no room for doubts in Remus’ mind if he wanted to stay sane. He couldn’t live with a future like the one Hadrian had told them about and that was not even taking into account what Hadrian was so obviously **not** telling them. No, Remus believed steadfastly that the future from the day Hadrian had arrived in the past on had become an unknown once again even for the time traveller himself. Hadrian’s presence would change everything.

Another fact Remus was sure of was that Hadrian was the prophecy child, the ‘Chosen One’ like he had told them bitterly, at least if they were inclined to believe into a prophecy made in the future – A future that now was an entirely different one from before. Maybe there never would be a prophecy now, though Remus kept that last thought to himself.

So they had a new, unknown future and a possible prophecy, and still there was so very much clogging his mind, driving him slightly bat-shit this last month, that Remus had decided to write it all down. For the moment his project on Elf Owls had been put aside and he had charmed a notebook similar to the Marauder’s Map to only reveal its secrets if one had the correct password phrase. He told no one about it, but it helped bring his thoughts in a resemblance of order. Sadly it also led to him being able to draw more and more conclusions about the whole mess that he could have happily lived without.

So yes, Remus was very glad when the winter holidays came around. He would be going home for Christmas, but visit with the Potters to ring in the New Year. His head felt like it was going to burst at the seams and for once Remus was just glad he would be able to sleep in and not touch a single book for a few days.

They were standing at Hogsmeade’s train station waiting for the Hogwarts Express to arrive, terribly cold wind biting at every bit of exposed skin. Winter was truly upon them, the temperatures having dropped significantly in the past few days.

Harry shivered violently, prompting Sirius to drape an arm across his shoulders and pull him close. He didn’t hesitate to burrow into the soft material of Sirius’ expensive winter cloak, making his boyfriend shudder in reaction and hug him even closer. He should probably be embarrassed about the display when half of the school was watching, but with Sirius’ warmth right there Harry couldn’t be bothered to care.

“If I could get you to eat more you wouldn’t be so sensitive to the cold,”’ Sirius’ quiet voice sent warm puffs of air into Harry’s hair. He shivered again. “But then I also would have one less excuse
to cuddle you.”

“As if you need an excuse for that,” James snorted from beside them, voicing Harry’s thoughts on the matter. “Not that I disagree with keeping our Bambi warm, but I believe his bottom his bundled up warm enough without your hand helping out,” he drawled, looking pointedly to where Sirius’ hand had been sneaking into Harry’s own coat and decidedly south.

Harry decided to hide his blushing face more firmly in the warmth in front of him and to ignore the banter. His teeth were chattering anyway, making any dignified comment impossible. He wished he had a hat or something else to keep his ears warm, the wind hurting them more than any other half-frozen part of him. His feathers as well. He could swear he felt their tips freeze over and he was getting a headache from the icy sensation crawling down into the downy fluff hidden at their roots.

Harry tried to distract himself from his increasingly freezing person by remembering what had led to the change in their group’s dynamic back to what he silently called ‘before prophecy’. Not that the Marauders had ever really stopped their protective behaviour, but Harry retreating into himself to keep the Marauders away and safe from the monster lurking in his mind hadn’t exactly been making it easy on anyone. But then, of course, Sirius had happened.

He wasn’t even considering letting Harry get away and Harry wasn’t particularly trying either. It had been not much more than a token resistance anyway, he had known right away that he couldn’t leave Sirius or the Marauders now that he was here. He didn’t want to and so Harry had given into what he considered his selfishness right after that Quidditch match. Really, how was he to resist Sirius kissing him anyway?

It probably helped that there had been no immediate threat in the castle then.

After that, the four of them (minus Pettigrew) had talked about everything. Well, everything with one exception and maybe he had kept some finer details to himself as well. He didn’t feel able to let go of this last horrible secret. The Horcruxes as a whole maybe, it would be the logical conclusion as soon as the Marauders would inevitably be exposed to the terrors outside of school and decided they wanted to fight. Then, and Harry knew that time would come, he would tell them about the soul anchors of the dark lord. Because that was something they simply needed to know if they were to stand even a miniscule chance. But… how that was tied to him… Harry wasn’t sure he could tell them that.

“H-how m-much longer?”

The soft voice of his boyfriend sounded slightly forced through chattering teeth and Sirius felt a particularly strong tremor wreck the slender form pressed into him.

“Alright,” he said frustrated, “That’s just too much.” And with that he cast a warming charm on Hadrian’s cloak, eliciting a muffled squeak from his favourite Elf Owl. “I don’t give a damn if you say those charms are bad for the fabrics and make them disintegrate faster – Merlin only knows how you know shit like that anyway.”

There was an indignant mumble that sounded strangely like ‘Mione’ or something… or maybe Hadrian was muttering on about the money spent on him yet again. His boyfriend didn’t cope all that well with being the recipient of presents, he had noticed, so Sirius tried to keep himself in check. Really, he tried, but honestly, it had only been a few clothes. Hadrian’s wardrobe wasn’t even complete yet, though that would change as soon as he got him to go out into the muggle world with him. The thought alone brought a devilish little smirk to Sirius’ face.

“At least now he’s wearing the boots you got him,” Prongs chimed in from beside him, “And isn’t
trying any longer to save them. That was seriously wrong, Bambi,” he scolded in a voice that had made all Marauders crack up the first few times James had used it. It was a near perfect imitation of Lord Potter’s parental voice, the one he used when James did something exceptionally stupid.
“Dragonhide is the perfect protection against the elements. Not to wear those boots in weather like this-”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it,” Hadrian interrupted the tirade and then he sneezed. “When’s the goddamn train arriving?” He groused, ignoring how Sirius gaped down at him.

“You sneezed into my neck!” He whined, much to James’ amusement.

“It’s strange, you’re right,” Remus answered Hadrian, looking around with a frown. “We’re not supposed to wait out here so long, especially not with the many attacks from dark forces these days.”

He kept scanning the area and the many students suspiciously, edging closer to Hadrian – or the Hadrian-Sirius-cuddle-bundle what with Hadrian trying to climb right into his boyfriend’s warmth. Peter looked around too at the comment, stepping closer to James in the process. Sirius just snorted.

“It’s not like You-Know-Who’s gonna attack pureblood students,” he said grandly, resisting the urge to pull Hadrian even closer. “So just stay near Prongsi and me and everything’s gonna be fine,” he declared with a wink.

“You wouldn’t know though, would you, Black?” A sneering voice interrupted any response Rem might have intended. “Wonder if the likes of you wouldn’t be considered a blood traitor,” Lestrange mused out loud as the surrounding students parted for him and his two cronies.

Harry gave a disgusted snort. Of course the damn Slytherin would take this specific moment to once again annoy them, of fucking course. It had all been too peaceful this last month, he should have known. Even Sirius’ birthday had gone by without a hitch apart from his own rather anti-climactic maturity inheritance and Harry had silently wondered if the snakes were maybe planning something. Though, if he was honest, he had more thought along the lines of Crouch, Lestrange not really making it into his thoughts beyond a passing curiosity.

“But you would, wouldn’t you?” Sirius’ voice was astoundingly quiet for the amount of contempt it held. “And the likes of you would know if this is more than a late train, ain’t that right?”

Harry pondered for a second if he should turn and face the irritating students. It was still strange for him not to be the actual target of posturing like this but rather a target by association. And it was even more unsettling to realise that he hadn’t immediately spun around battle ready when they approached. Instead he had stayed where he was, cuddled up to Sirius and not even facing the Slytherins. It was rather disconcerting yet all Harry felt was an annoyed sensation, wanting them gone so he could wallow in his cold induced misery a bit longer until finally the train would arrive. It just felt all so meaningless in the bigger picture, schoolyard scuffles like this.

“Whatever are you talking about, dear cousin?” Lestrange’s overly sweet voice made Harry shudder, though he would blame it on the chill. Seriously, that damn train better be coming soon or he would probably lose some feathers. “The company you keep seems to have muddled with your judgement,” the voice said, turning into a sneer again. “Halfbloods and street urchins that they are.”

The arms around Harry tightened their hold for a moment and then the hand that had been warming his neck moved away, presumably to free Sirius wand arm. Harry couldn’t help the constant shiver now, really, he couldn’t remember ever being so sensitive to low temperatures. Had he not been wandering around Hogsmeade with just a jumper during winter on the odd occasion?
Shifting just the slightest bit, Harry caught sight of Remus, standing closer than before and shielding Harry on his unprotected side, the action so familiar by now, yet still a bit unsettling. He would never get used to being protected like this when all he had known before was being the one the others relied on and looked at for help and protection.

“I think we should all calm down now,” Prongs interrupted the stand-off, raising eyebrows all around the watching students. He wasn’t exactly known to be the responsible one.

Sirius though was staring down Lestrange and his lackeys, the one on the left in particular. He didn’t like the way that bulk of a guy was eying his boyfriend. It reminded him too much of Crouch and all that thought brought with it was that by now familiar red tinged haze of fury. No one would touch Hadrian against his will again. Hadrian, who clearly shouldn’t be out here any longer. The reminder made Sirius blink and glance down at the boy for a moment, trusting the others to have his back. His boyfriend was shivering much more than he had just minutes before, the warming charm on his coat clearly not helping. The small tip of his nose was red and Sirius could see a blue hue of colour to his lips...

Looking down at his love, Sirius noticed something else. Normally at this point in time there would be some kind of reaction from Hadrian. Before his inheritance encounters like this had triggered his wild magic and after the deed Hadrian had shown an impressive reaction time, always ready to fight, always aware. Yet the boy was huddled to him, not moving much at all and his magic... it felt lethargic in a way. Sluggish.

Not that Sirius had a problem with being in charge, on the contrary, he relished the trust shown to him here, but... something wasn’t right. Maybe the cold was getting more to Hadrian than they had realised? Maybe Elf Owls were especially sensitive to certain temperatures? He remembered vaguely Rem telling them about the original animal which seemed to share the same name as Hadrian’s creature. Elf owls, the animal, lived in cacti and preferred warm seasons.

The sudden whistle of the arriving Hogwarts Express brought Sirius out of his worried thoughts and looking up, he saw the crowd around them dispersing and flocking in other areas, Lestrange and company already halfway down the platform.

“What did I miss?” He asked bemused, looking between his friends.

“A creepily level-headed and grown-up acting James,” Remus answered, sounding partly amused, partly nervous. Sirius noticed the werewolf’s gaze straying to Hadrian’s form and couldn’t help but do the same. “We should get him inside,” he added quietly.

The constant rhythm of the moving train had lulled Harry even deeper into his lethargic state, though this time the air was comfortably warm around him. He couldn’t quite recollect how he had gotten where he was now, but from what he could hear and feel from his surroundings, the others must have taken care of him. Strange, it wasn’t exactly his habit to be so unaware of the things going on around him...

“- ...quite strange,” Remus’ voice was just saying and someone was snorting in answer. Harry pictured James with a sardonic look on his face when he spoke up next.

“You could say that,” he drawled. “Or you could call it planned and failed.”

He heard a questioning sound from somewhere farther away and thought it must have been Pettigrew. The thought of the rat near him when he was in an only half-aware state like this should have woken Harry up completely. But it didn’t. He faintly registered the weirdness of it all once
more before Remus spoke up again from across him.

“You think….” he lowered his voice somewhat, though not in a ‘we could be overheard’ kind of way but more like the words themselves made him nervous. “The train being this late was deliberate to keep the students out in the open and… easily accessible?”

“Yes,” James said confidently though obviously unhappy about the fact. “But whatever was planned was foiled when the train finally came in… most likely due to some interference from Dumbledore, I’d say.”

There was a hand carding through Harry’s hair, the motion soothing and very much enjoyable. He knew without a doubt that it was Sirius just as he knew it was his boyfriend’s lap he was sprawled over. The warmth and scent were unmistakably Sirius and then there was this distinct feeling Harry always had around the other. It was this absolute knowledge, the recognition of Sirius’ touch, he had acquired during the blinded time of his inheritance.

“…looked some more theories up,” Remus’ voice drifted through the haze of his mind vaguely. “Now that Hadrian’s asleep… I want to give you a little rundown on what I found.”

Pettigrew was groaning in an annoyed fashion, but Harry was occupied with feeling slightly miffed by the fact Remus was intentionally keeping information on whatever topic from him.

“You explained the …self-fulfilling prophecy, was it?” Sirius finally spoke up in a quiet voice. “The one we all hope is a bust ‘cause it would mean death and mutilation all around?” The hand in Harry’s hair never stopped its ministrations even when Sirius’ voice was dripping with a level of sarcasm so thick it felt nearly touchable.

“Yep, sounds cosy that one, doesn’t it?” Remus confirmed dryly. “Another would be-”

Listening to the others talk and banter, Harry drifted along in a somewhat fuzzy state, not quite asleep but not awake either. It wasn’t until James’ voice came a bit nearer than it had been before that the words spoken really registered again.

“How’s he?”

Harry could clearly hear the concern in his father’s voice and wanted to speak up then to assure him he was alright. Though he wasn’t all that sure actually and he somehow couldn’t bring himself to open his eyes. The hand in his hair moved to his neck and then up to his forehead before going back to stroking his feathers in a purr inducing manner.

“Not cold anymore,” Sirius answered, his voice low. “Not a fever either.”

Relief coloured his voice and Harry felt himself frown. Why would he have a fever? He had just been a bit cold. Okay, so maybe he had been really damn bloody freezing and even lost track of his surroundings for a while, but-

“I wish we could have warmed him up with a bath,” Remus said softly and Harry heard some shuffling as if James had moved back to his seat. “Last time I didn’t drag him to the prefects’ bath he ended up with that nasty cold.”

There was a beat of silence.

“You went bathing with Hadrian?”

Harry could swear he felt a sudden vibration originating from his Sirius-pillow that hadn’t been there
“Anyway,” Remus hastily continued, “The cold was the second time he came down with a fever and I was wondering… well…” He suddenly seemed hesitant to divulge his musings and Harry briefly wondered if Remus had noticed him being more aware than before.

“What, Rem?” Sirius sounded impatient and slightly tense. “I can see the trouble from over here so what did that overactive mind of yours come up with this time?”

Remus hadn’t really meant to tell them about his little excursus with Hadrian to the prefects’ bathroom, but what was done was done and Sirius could go and feed his jealousy to the caretaker’s cat for all he cared. But his thoughts before being taken over by time travel theories had all been coursing around Hadrian and James’ creature heritage. He had read the heirloom, he had observed Hadrian’s various stages of inheritance, and had continued observing even after that. He had taken elaborate notes on it all in his attempt to rewrite the annoying book on Elf Owls, too, so he was quite capable of verifying some of his assumptions.

“When I looked up Elf Owls in the library I was only able to find some stuff about the actual animal, remember?” He started carefully, easing them into what he thought a likely possibility. “Those animals preferring warm habitats and avoiding cooler seasons by migrating into warmer regions made me wonder if the same could apply to Hadrian.”

“You’re talking about his sensitivity to the cold,” Sirius said, looking down at the Elf Owl currently residing in his lap. “I thought so too out there,” he added, nodding to the window.

“Yes,” Remus acknowledged, taking a deep breath, “And him being prone to fevers as a reaction reminded me of the fever he caught during his inheritance.”

“So?”

“Did you,” he hesitated before deciding to look at James as Sirius was now fixing him with a look so intense he felt like he would be flayed alive if he relayed something his friend didn’t want to hear, “Did you ever hear about a symptom occurring with magical overload? When a person uses too much magic at once, either draining their own or channelling magic from another source, it sometimes comes to the occurrence of a fever afterwards. It’s supposedly a way of the body protesting the overuse of its magical ‘veins’.”

They all looked down at the sleeping Hadrian at that. The boy looked very comfortable with his head in Sirius’ lap, cuddled close to his source of warmth.

“Let me summarise this,” James said slowly. “You think Hadrian’s not only overly sensitive to the cold but also likely to suffer from his own magic? And that’ll show in him contracting fevers?”

Remus sighed. That was the problem with theories, they were just that: Theoretical.

“It could be similar,” he cautioned. “Maybe, considering the amount of magic he possesses, his body is just not strong enough to cope if he actually tries to use it in greater quantities. He did get a nosebleed each time that happened before his inheritance, didn’t he? And even in a state like this,” he indicated the still slumbering form of Hadrian, “His magical aura is palpable around him. It’s positively drenching the compartment.”

“He didn’t get fevers back when he still had those outbursts though,” Sirius interjected quietly, his hand stilling in Hadrian’s dark hair. “You weren’t there on the bridge, but he busted that Ebublio Jinx from the inside out. And then that little colour tagging he did with the Slytherins…” (*)
Remus knew his theories might be far-fetched, but he had a gut feeling they were right concerning Hadrian. As if it wasn’t enough to become a rare creature in a society that loathed everything diverting from ‘the norm’, no, he had to do so in a past that wasn’t his and suffer from a body that likely was too weakened to cope with it all.

“It was those people, isn’t it?” James asked, voice tight. “And what they did to him. The ones he won’t tell us about,” he said tensely, hands tightening to fists.

Remus only nodded. There was no need to list it all if James already made the connection. No need to tell him the signs of prolonged malnutrition and near constant exhaustion.

They were still talking about it. Why wouldn’t they stop even when it was for once out for the count? Peter abhorred that abomination more and more each day.

But not much longer, oh no. He had found what the professor had wanted, had brought him hair from the creature’s pillow. Sure, the professor hadn’t had time yet to do the needed potion what with students and teachers sniffing all around. But with the holidays the castle emptied out a lot and when they came back to school, then, finally…

Chapter End Notes

(*) Chapter 56: Harry was trapped in a large bubble, the Ebublio Jinx, by Lestrange and Snape on the Wooden Bridge. That bubble can supposedly not be popped by physical force.
Harry blinked his eyes open to a game of Exploding Snap going on between James and Pettigrew, Remus snoring lightly in the window seat across from him.

“Awake, Bambi?”

He raised his hands to rub at his tired eyes, blinking a bit more before shifting and looking up into Sirius’ face. Dim light was streaming in through the window of the Hogwarts Express, alternating with flickering shadows of whatever landscape was rushing by outside.

“How long was I asleep?” He murmured, voice still rough.

His eyes found grey and he smiled sleepily for a long moment until he realised his position in his boyfriend’s lap. Harry blushed, but didn’t move away.

“A few hours. The trolley should be ‘round soon,” Sirius said quietly, smiling down at him and reaching up to tuck a few strands of Harry’s wayward hair behind his ear.

Harry hummed thoughtfully, leaning into the hand still lingering near his cheek. He had the strange feeling to be missing something, but couldn’t for the life of him pin it down. Not that he could think of much anyway with Sirius so close… and getting ever closer- Someone cleared their throat rather pointedly and suddenly Sirius scowled before he looked up from where he had been bending down towards Harry.

“Yes, James?” He asked decidedly polite, confusing his boyfriend for a moment with the use of his best mate’s first name instead of the ever present Marauder nickname.

“Oh nothin’ all that important, mate,” James answered airily and Harry shifted to catch the smirk his father sent in Sirius’ direction before he turned his gaze onto Harry. “You all awake, Hadrian?”

Harry frowned a moment, wondering why everyone seemed to ask him that before he finally remembered the strange half aware state he had been in since Hogsmeade’s train station. That had been weird and it got even weirder when Harry tried to remember the conversations he was sure had been held before he came around fully.

“Yeah,” he said carefully, slowly sitting up and moving to the seat next to Sirius.

His boyfriend’s hand lingered on his back for a moment longer before Sirius settled on just sitting close, their legs and shoulders touching.

“Okay, so…” James shifted a moment, then leant forward in his seat. “We’re meeting my dad at the station like always, but…”

In which Sirius is mildly aggravated

Chapter Notes

This one is just a simple inbetween chapter, but with a little scene in there for JaeMine and everyone else that has been patiently waiting for some Sev/Harry moments.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Harry watched his father shift a bit more and felt anxiousness creep up on him. He had in an abstract kind of way known he would meet his grandparents today and even spend the holidays in their home. James’ home. It would be his very first actual family Christmas (or the first in which he was allowed to participate), not that the others really knew that. But looking at James now, it all became so much more real.

“Great going, Prongs,” Sirius scoffed from beside him, his warm hand settling on Harry’s lower back in a soothing gesture. “That’s so going to put him at ease.”

Harry shivered as nimble fingers found his spine, tracing along the ridges seemingly absent-minded. For a moment he lost track of the conversation and just focused on the feeling, the light touch, the warmth…

“-rian. Hadrian?” Harry’s eyes snapped back open, only then noticing he had closed them. James was looking at him with an amused glint in his own hazel eyes, but he didn’t comment on it. “I was just saying that Dad still knows you as ‘Hadrian Moore’. Didn’t want to jump the whole ‘You’re my kid from the future’ thingy on him in a letter,” he explained, watching Harry’s face in a hesitant way as if afraid of his reaction. “It’s gonna be hard enough to prove it without the map and all.”

To be honest, James had no idea how he was going to tell his father about Hadrian. He would, of course he would, just when and how was still undetermined. Right now, his father knew Hadrian was an Elf Owl, not only a carrier of the gene, and that he had no family claiming him. Obviously his father would have researched the Moores by now and would have come across some people as it didn’t sound like a rare name or anything. Only that those people wouldn’t have the slightest about a boy named Hadrian. Or probably even magic. After that, James supposed, his dad would have started his research with the families known to once have carried the Elf Owl gene in their lines and coming up empty handed again, he would have finally looked at the last family, the one last known to have anything resembling an Elf Owl inheritance: the Potters.

He wouldn’t find anything there either which would ultimately lead him to question his son. His father wasn’t dumb even if he was getting there in years. He knew his son quite well. He would know James was up to something.

Remus was carefully watching Hadrian from under his lashes. He was still paler than he should be and his nose was slightly reddened at the tip, but otherwise he looked fine again. Hadrian had given them quite the scare when he suddenly didn’t respond to much of anything anymore. Sure, his body still reacted to outward influences, but it was as if his mind had been half asleep. If it hadn’t been for the apparent signs of creeping hypothermia Remus would have thought Hadrian was an active sleep walker.

They had brought him into one of the compartments, making sure no one noticed his predicament. It wouldn’t be something Hadrian would want known. He had helped Sirius strip Hadrian of his shoes and coat to enable him to better soak up body heat, had heated up the compartment with warming charms, and had watched his friend fuss over the boy. Sirius tried not to show it, but it was blatantly obvious how much the situation scared him. If Remus hadn’t been able to tell them Hadrian’s heart was still beating normally, just a bit slower as if he really were asleep, he was sure Sirius would have carted his boyfriend off to the next teacher, Hogwarts Express be damned.

Now he watched Hadrian shift about, worrying his lip, and suddenly standing up. He was pulling his shoes on and excusing himself to the loo before anyone could stop him. And Remus stood and stopped Sirius from following the boy the next moment.

“Let him be,” he cautioned, “Give him at least a moment to gather himself, it’s not like he could go missing on the train.”
He needed an out now, a moment to himself to get his head around it all. So excusing himself to the bathroom, Harry made his way out of the compartment. He was going to meet his grandparents, people he had never known, never even heard about before. He frowned. He had never thought about it before, but it was strange that no one had cared to tell him about his family until he came back in time and actually met them.

Sure, there had been stories about his parents, but those always seemed to revolve around how he was so much like them. He looked like his father, they had said, his carbon copy. He had his mother’s eyes, they had said. And then they had told him about the Marauders.

Harry snorted softly to himself as he caught his image in the mirror while washing his hands. He didn’t look all that much like his father now and his eyes might resemble those of his mother, but they quite obviously weren’t the same anymore. Not since his inheritance anyway. But none of this helped with the fact that he had no knowledge at all of the rest of his family. He hadn’t even known his grandfather was a lord, meaning his father had been as well, right? Wouldn’t that mean he was too, or rather had been back in the future, because he had been the last of the Potters back then?

Harry sighed again and leant his head against the cool surface of the mirror. What did it matter anyway?

To be honest, Harry was just worried they would notice his lack of knowledge and question him about it. He was afraid they would notice that he didn’t know his own family, didn’t even know his way around the family manor (or was that manors?), hadn’t even known there was more to the name of Potter than what was probably left of the place his parents had gone to when in hiding. And with their questions would inevitably come up the truth about his upbringing.

He had kept the Dursleys’ treatment of him a secret all his life, had not told anyone, not even Ron and Hermione, about the extent of his relatives’ disdain of him. His pride was all he had, after all and it had always demanded to keep these things to himself. It also meant he never had anyone to talk about it with, which was okay, because he didn’t want to do that. Right? He was pretty sure most of the people in the Wizarding World wouldn’t even have believed him if he had told them about his existence in Surrey. It wouldn’t have matched their view of their ‘Saviour’, of the famous Harry Potter. Though, here, now, he wasn’t Harry Potter. He wasn’t famous and there were no expectations apart from his own. Only, that wasn’t true either, was it? Because there were expectations, even though they were completely different to those back in his time. No, in Harry Potter’s time…

“Alone for once,” a silky voice spoke up from behind him and Harry whirled around surprised. He had not noticed anyone coming into the bathroom, but then his thoughts were pretty muddled today.

“Snape,” he acknowledged the person standing just inside, watching the other student close the door silently and hover there. He looked oddly… uncertain.

Harry watched as Snape – who he just couldn’t completely identify as his loathed teacher, as the same person that hated him with a passion – stared at him considering. Those black eyes that Harry remembered as fathomless and blank were anything but. There was intensity, but not the cold scrutiny he was used to. He couldn’t quite pinpoint what he was seeing and the mere thought of seeing emotion in Severus Snape’s eyes was somewhat bewildering to him.

“Did you,” he cleared his throat, trying in vain not to squirm too much under that gaze, “Did you need something?”
That brought another flicker of emotion and Harry felt decidedly uneasy with the situation now. Here they were in the train’s small bathroom, door closed and any exit blocked to him. And Severus bloody Snape was staring at him with an unidentifiable emotion.

The light streaming in shifting rays through the small window to the side was the most unsettling thing Severus had seen for a long time. Well, not exactly the light, but the way it reflected in Moore’s eyes. Those eyes… He had noticed them before, the way they seemed to command attention with just the slightest glance. The way they were just the same shade of unearthly green as Lily’s. Moore didn’t have Lily’s beautifully contrasting mane of blood red, but he did share the same complexion which was even more unsettling to Severus the more he looked at him.

But right there, in the flickering light of a cold December afternoon, Hadrian Moore’s eyes looked ethereal in a way that was definitely not human. Though Severus supposed he shouldn’t be surprised by that particular observation. He had after all long since deduced that the newest Gryffindork had a kind of allure that seemed to differ in its influence from person to person. He even had the boy’s confirmation that yes, he was what Lily and Lupin had called an Elf Owl.

And wasn’t that infuriating? Severus hadn’t been able to find even a thread of information on this specific creature and was beginning to wonder if it all was an elaborate prank at his expense. Yet, Moore himself… dare he say it… after that small conversation he had had with the boy before they had been interrupted by that overzealous dog… Severus was rather sure Moore had no ill intentions whatsoever. Even after being quite literally smacked around by that boy’s magic, all Severus could say about Moore with complete conviction was that he sorely lacked in control. Which was such a Gryffindor trait that it wasn’t the least bit surprising to Severus.

He started at the question suddenly hanging between them and reigned in his disgustingly emotion laden thoughts. This boy was not Lily just because he shared her colouring. Yet, the moment Severus met those eyes again, he felt his thoughts stutter and his heart-

“Yes,” he acknowledged with a slight nod. “I would like to ask for specific information on your creature heritage.”

Of course he did not expect to actually get anything from Moore. Asking for information was one thing, but asking quite so bluntly for something this personal and private was highly improper. Not even a Gryffindor would acquiesce to such an inquiry and Severus couldn’t help but frown at the words leaving his mouth. This was not what he had wanted to say. What had he wanted to say? Why exactly was he seeking out Moore?

“I can’t do that, you know?”

It was said completely differently than Severus had expected it to. Moore was looking at him with those impossibly wide eyes, not the least bit indignant or insulted by Severus’ disregard of common courtesy. He even gave him a small smile-

The door was shoved open behind him.

Sirius watched Snivellus turn around hastily, wand at the ready in an instant, muscles taunt, ready to strike. And Sirius looked over to Hadrian, looking on with something akin to concern in his gorgeous eyes, but not going for his wand or even readying himself for any conflict at all. He could feel Rem at his back, his inner Grim not completely happy with that as it still chafed at the knowledge of its pack mate having seen Hadrian naked. He shook that thought away confused. Rem was not a threat to him.

“Alright, Hadrian?” He asked, eyeing Snivellus suspiciously.
What had he wanted in here, alone with Hadrian? Someone like Snape never did anything without reason so there had to be something fishy about this situation. It didn’t help that Sirius was still aggravated from earlier, his jealousy churning just beneath the skin. He saw his boyfriend nodding out of the corner of his eye.

“Yeah, sure,” he heard him say, sounding cautious, but he wasn’t looking at Snivellus. No, Hadrian was watching him, Sirius, carefully as if considering him to be – what? Trouble? “We were just talking,” Hadrian said with emphasis.

“Why would you do that?” He couldn’t help it, the concept too foreign to his mind. Talking to Snivellus without having to do so, without doing it to gain something from it... It was something he and the rest of the Marauders never had done before. And Hadrian frowned at him now, so obviously that had been the wrong question.

“Of course,” Snape’s slimy voice interrupted his thoughts, “Someone as full of himself as Black would never consider conversing with anyone outside his … comfort zone.”

He was sneering and Sirius didn’t miss the way the snake was edging closer to Hadrian. He felt his own wand fall into his hand in reaction, ready to curse the Slytherin into next year when suddenly...

...Hadrian gave a frustrated sigh, drawing everyone’s attention.

“Would you just stop?” Harry exclaimed annoyed. This was just so meaningless. “Both of you!” He added, when Sirius gave Snape a smug smirk.

Those two were constantly at each other’s throats back in... back then. He remembered that. But both had been different people from who they were at this very moment. Sirius had been the broken shell of the man he used to be, Snape had been so embittered Harry wasn’t sure he was even capable of normal human emotions. But now, here, they were different. There should at least be the potential for them to be civil with each other and hadn’t Sirius even promised him he would try?

And Snape quite obviously wasn’t completely gone to emotions yet either. He was just extremely cautious and highly suspicious of everyone, especially the Marauders. He had his reasons of course, as had probably Sirius, but still... Harry wanted to believe they could function together. He would need every ally he could get and Snape would be so very valuable if Harry could stop him from ever fully getting indoctrinated to the Dark. And if Harry could save him from a lot of hurt along the way that was even better.

He had no idea when he had decided to save everyone’s future again and he wouldn’t think on it too much now. It just felt right to get these two and then maybe even his father to be on speaking terms.

“He knows, Sirius.” he said softly, catching sight of Remus behind his boyfriend and motioning him inside. “He overheard Remus and Lily and came directly to me. He didn’t do anything.”

Now that he thought about it, that was probably strange. Snape may not have been a Death Eater yet, but he was a Slytherin to boot and he had information on Harry that was potentially lethal. Was that why he had sought him out?

Black gave a low hiss somewhere between displeasure and anxiousness. He wasn’t pleased at all that Severus had Intel on his precious little paramour and Severus could only wonder why Moore hadn’t told him before. If he didn’t know better, he might think Moore had tried to protect him, the Slytherin, in a way. Why was Moore not more afraid of the consequences that came with someone knowing his secret? Someone like Severus no less. But then again, it was possible that Hadrian Moore was really just that gullible. He didn’t strike Severus as a malicious person or even capable of ill intentions, so was it really all that far fetched to think Moore might not realise others wouldn’t
have such high morals?

Seriously, Gryffindors. It was true, Severus had not betrayed the secret he was privy to. Yet. But he was under no delusions that he would do so without hesitation if it would gain him something equally valuable.

“You can’t be sure about that,” Black bit out in answer to Moore’s explanation. “You can’t trust a Slytherin.” Somehow though Severus got the distinct impression Black was counting himself into that fold of untrustworthy Slytherins. Perhaps rightfully so, still…

“Sirius…,” the werewolf sighed exasperated, catching Severus’ attention for a moment. “So long as Snape did not do anything offensive, this argument really is unnecessary. Let’s just go back to the compartment now that we found Hadrian.”

As always the werewolf was only half-heartedly trying to stop his foul friends from making a move against Severus, but the situation in itself seemed also different to how he was used to. For one, Moore didn’t seem the least bit inclined to start any row with him and even went so far as to placate his overbearing puppy of a boyfriend.

Black snorted derisively and Severus watched indifferently when he reached out and pulled Moore away from the Slytherin. The action was possessive yet gentle in a way Severus hadn’t known Black was even capable of. He couldn’t stop himself from pushing it a bit more though, just to see how far that civilized thread went, of course.

“It was quite agreeable talking to you… Hadrian,” he said silkily, meeting those commanding eyes again and promptly feeling his good sense slither away from him yet again. “I do wish you a pleasant holiday.”

He only just contained the smirk at the reaction he got and took his leave with a slight nod to the short Gryffindor, leaving behind a wide-eyed Moore, a thoughtful werewolf and a bristling blood traitor.

Chapter End Notes

So I decided to put the meet and greet with the Potters into the next chapter. Which allows me to ask you all a question, so attention please~

**What do you think an English gentleman of Lord Potter’s generation (born pre 1909) would call his wife in endearment terms?**

I kinda feel like he would shorten her name (Euphemia) only when they are just the two of them, so I was wondering what kinds of endearments he would use in public?
In which they go home

Chapter Notes

So I was knocked out with fever and other accompanying symptoms for the last ten days which is why I wasn't able to answer more than a few comments to the last chapter. Please don't take it personally and thank you for all the wonderful ideas for possible endearments!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sirius was tugging him along back to their compartment and Harry would have been annoyed with this treatment if he hadn’t been so lost in thought. He had nearly forgotten why exactly he had been shadowed by the Marauders all this time, had forgotten or maybe had wanted to simply not think about it too much. He was a creature. A creature that could be discovered at any moment if someone were to look a little bit closer or overhear something - just like Snape had. That no one had announced his predicament out for all to hear so far was bordering on impossible.

To good to be true. It wasn’t likely to stay that way, not with his special brand of luck.

The lady with the snack trolley was just ahead and forced Sirius to finally stop for a moment, making Harry nearly stumble into him. Harry felt his gaze on him and took a deep breath before lifting his eyes to meet grey, only now really registering his surroundings again. There was a moment of silence between them as he watched those eyes as they watched him in return, taking in those light blue flecks hidden in the grey and only visible from up close. He adored those eyes, Harry thought absently.

“Can I get you something, Bambi?” Sirius finally asked quietly, looking at the trolley in front of them in consideration, probably already planning what all he could get Harry to eat.

Following his boyfriend’s gaze, Harry winced slightly. Being at Hogwarts most of the time, he also had forgotten that he now had no money to call his own and would therefore have to rely on others to buy anything for him. He would never have asked, though. That was just not something he could do with his upbringing weighing down on him even now and most likely for a long time to come. Years of being taught not to expect anything, not to ask questions and to definitely not be a burden made it impossible for him - even though he knew the Marauders at least wouldn’t mind.

“Ah no,” Harry hastily shook his head, wanting to push past Sirius and the trolley, but all too aware of the large hand still holding onto his wrist. “I’m still full from breakfast.”

It really didn’t feel right to expect Sirius or any of the others to buy him something to eat just because he hadn’t thought to pack some sandwiches from the breakfast in the Great Hall. A sigh was all the warning he got. Sirius’ hand on his wrist that had tugged him along in a jealous haze, away from Snape, shifted to encircle his own, fingers lacing through his. Harry found himself staring at their interlaced fingers before Sirius’ free hand nudged his chin up again.

“Bullshit,” he said precisely, like stating a simple fact. “Now, Pumpkin Pasties or Cauldron Cakes?”

Harry frowned up at him, not liking Sirius’ behaviour ever since their encounter with Snape in the bathroom, but before he could open his mouth to retort, a strangely familiar voice spoke up.
“Oh yes, listen to him, dearie,” the elderly trolley witch crooned in a motherly tone of voice, making Harry startle at her unchanged appearance from… back in the future. “You do look like you could do with some sugar…” Her gaze drifted over Harry’s slender form before she descended on the food in front of her, picking through the many different sweets, finally handing over a handful of Liquorice wands that seemed to have some cracks along the surface but otherwise looked just as delicious as Harry remembered them. “These are still perfectly edible, but with those little flaws I cannot sell them in good conscience. You’ll have them,” she said, already pressing the sweets into Harry’s hands.

“Ma’am, that’s-”

“-very generous, thank you,” Sirius interrupted, nodding regally at the witch. “Why don’t you go ahead to the compartment, Hadrian? I’ll be there shortly with the food.”

Harry frowned, but relented. Something about his boyfriend’s behaviour was rubbing him the wrong way.

A chocolate frog was thrown into his lap and broke Harry out of his brooding. Looking up, he saw Sirius just closing the door to the compartment before seating himself next to Harry. He eyed the pile of food warily before he decided to concentrate on the chocolate already gifted to him.

Chocolate frogs still sent this little warm flutter through his chest. They were a reminder of his boyfriend’s wooing of him, Harry, and held a special place in their relationship ever since. Whenever possible Sirius would acquire one of the sweet treats to gift Hadrian with. While sequestered at Hogwarts his methods to do just that ranged from charming the chocolate off of housemates and winning them through bets or card games until the next Hogsmeade trip came around and he would be able to buy some of his own. Smiling at the memory of Sirius losing a game of cards against Lily spectacularly, Harry let himself be coaxed into eating some of the wizarding foods now being contributed between the friends. It was soothing, sitting in the Hogwarts Express with friends, just listening to them converse and laugh. It was almost normal.

When the train finally reached King’s Cross, Harry was actually feeling quite calm, even his slight annoyance at Sirius’ possessive behaviour had taken a back seat during the familiar ride. It was when they were getting off the train and onto the crowded platform that his nerves made themselves known again. There, standing in companionable distance with the many other parents and family members waiting for their children to arrive, was one man Harry knew without being told to be his grandfather.

He didn’t know if it was due to his now enhanced eyesight or if it was something about the man himself, but Harry spotted Lord Potter on his first glance around. Maybe it was because the man was so bloody tall, Harry’s inner voice groused indignantly. From the distance James’ father looked a lot like a more sophisticated and older version of his son. He was standing regally, broad shoulders and back straight, watching the crowds with a miniature curl of a smile touching his lips. Harry couldn’t help but wonder if this was what James would have looked like if he hadn’t been killed- ...no, Harry berated himself internally, he wondered if this was what James would look like one day.

He was jostled, literally, from his staring by Pettigrew who pushed past him with his bulky trunk. Harry ignored him. Many times over the last weeks he had wondered if maybe he should try and befriend the chubby boy, but he found that he simply couldn’t. Harry knew that technically Pettigrew wasn’t yet a Death Eater, wasn’t yet a traitor, had probably not done any of the horrendous things of the future. Just like with Snape, Harry tried to tell himself that he might be able to prevent all that from actually happening if he just stopped Pettigrew from ever falling prey to the Dark.
But not for the first time in his life Harry’s inherent honesty made things that tad bit more complicated. It was impossible for him to pursue a friendship with a person he knew he would never be able to trust. It grated against his very being to try and befriend someone if he knew he himself would never be able to completely commit to the friendship. Maybe it was ridiculous and petty – maybe it was no such thing. He didn’t know, but what Harry did know was that believing to have a friend and then finding out said friend never really wanted to be even near you, was not a pretty thing. What if his half-hearted attempt at a friendship turned out to be what pushed Pettigrew finally too far? No, Harry decided to just keep away from Pettigrew as much as possible and keep an eye out for any strange behaviour whenever he was forced into his presence.

“Hadrian!”

Lily’s bell-like voice rose over the loud buzzing of the crowd of students and their families, making Harry and the rest of the Marauders look around for the source. The flash of flame coloured hair darted around a group of seventh years and then neatly came to a stop right in front of Harry.

“Hadrian, I’m glad I caught up to you in time,” Lily smiled, pointedly ignoring the others, especially James’ instant shift into… well, that part desperate, part hilarious behaviour thing he had going with her around.

Harry grinned back. He liked Lily and not just because she would be hi- …Harry Potter’s mother. For a girl, she was exceptionally easy to be around and it was nice to have a study partner that did not react in any way condescending when he didn’t get it straight away. She and her Ravenclaw friend Alice had practically become his Charms and Transfiguration tutors. And for some reason he couldn’t quite fathom, Harry also had never been bothered by any of the fangirls with Lily around.

“I just wanted to wish you happy holidays and give you this,” she said and handed him a carefully wrapped parcel that quite obviously was a book. Harry smiled and thanked her before he was distracted by Remus taking his leave to meet up with his parents.

Sirius was eying Rems enveloping Hadrian into one of his rarely given hugs warily. He still couldn’t completely shake off the edge of jealousy that sometimes crawled up from the depths of his mind – today especially after hearing about those two taking a bath together. A bath! Did it have to be something so intimate? He couldn’t help the internal whine.

“Black.” Blinking, he looked down and was met with eyes that still threw him off in their resemblance to his boyfriend’s. “I hope you know to keep your act together over the holidays,” Lily said, smiling way too sweetly at him to be anything short of scary.

“If I even so much as suspect you consider messing with him again,” she started, her voice low, gaze unwavering and Sirius didn’t need to ask to know who she was talking about. Her green eyes glinted with steel up at him before she simply added: “I will come for you.”

With that she turned, nodded to James, and left into the maze of people running around the platform. This time, Sirius did gulp.

It was only a few minutes later that the three of them, James, Hadrian and Sirius, were making their way through the crowd over to Lord Potter. They hadn’t quite reached the elderly aristocrat when Sirius suddenly stiffened. Right next to him his younger brother emerged from a group of Slytherins with his trunk floating after him with no concern for the people milling about. They regarded each other for a moment before the younger Black spoke up, an arrogant lilt to his voice.
“Are you coming home, brother?”

The question was posed stiffly, Regulus’ face stoic, but Sirius still knew his little brother good enough to detect the little glimmer of hope hiding in his grey eyes. Eyes so like his own.

“We’re no longer sharing the same home, Reggie,” Sirius answered after a moment of silence.

He couldn’t help the tinge of sadness to his voice as he denied his brother, but it was true. Sirius was no longer welcome with the rest of the Blacks, or he wouldn’t be welcome with his mother at least. His father might actually take him back if Sirius were to be repentant enough to go along with everything his parents had always wanted him to be - everything he so detested. His words were met with gleaming hatred and Sirius stared after his brother with a forlornly blank look as Regulus made his way over to the house-elf waiting to the side of the platform. That is until a small hand made itself known in his own.

Harry was worried. He was worried about the present, he was worried about the future and the past and Horcruxes and wannabe Death Eaters and being a creature and quite a bit about getting ever closer to Sirius these last weeks and what that might entail. But right now he was really worried about how to act around Lord Potter and presumably Lady Potter later. James had said his father still knew him as Hadrian Moore, not a relative, but that only helped so much. Harry didn’t exactly have social experience, the adults he knew were either his teachers or relatives he couldn’t care less about. But this was not only his grandfather who he really wanted to make a good impression on – this was also a lord, one born around the turn of the century and completely raised in the Wizarding World as far as Harry knew.

What would Lord Potter expect of him?

His mounting uneasiness was interrupted when Sirius suddenly stopped amidst the milling people. Harry watched the short stilted interaction between the Black brothers and felt his heart ache. This was the brother he remembered his godfather telling him about, the one he had spoken of in a mixture of bitterness and longing. As Regulus walked away to an eerily lively looking Kreacher, Harry slipped his hand into his boyfriend’s.

“Come on, Pads,” James interrupted, none too gently shoving his shoulder against his best mate’s. “Dad’s waiting and I’m famished.”

Finally they pushed the rest of the way through the crowd, reaching the tall Lord Potter and Harry couldn’t help but slow his steps just enough to fall behind Sirius. The hand in his tightened its hold.

Up close Lord Potter looked a lot older than he had from afar. His Potter hair looked tamer than that of James or Harry himself, but that could have been the result of its slightly thinned state. He still had a full head of hair, yet it lacked the energetic wildness that made it uniquely Potter. Sophistically greying temples, frameless glasses in a wrinkly yet strong face, and skin that looked weathered in a more leather like way than the papery version Harry had often observed on older people. The wrinkles didn’t stop his eyes from looking them over sharply with just a smidgen of hidden mischief in the paling hazel.

“Boys,” he greeted with a warm smile, reaching out for James to give him a hug. Harry was actually a bit surprised at that, somehow having expected a lord to be more reserved. “It’s good to see you,” Lord Potter told his son, holding onto James’ shoulders for a moment, before his gaze drifted over to Sirius and consequently Harry who still remained that half step behind his boyfriend. “Sirius, my favourite trouble, my Lady Potter is looking forward to go shopping for those muggle appliances you
told her about before term.”

“Not a problem, sir,” Sirius grinned cheekily back. “I’ll take the lovely Lady Potter on an adventure
into the vast and mysterious muggle world.”

Then Lord Potter’s gaze reached Harry.

And Harry clamped down on his worry, squeezed Sirius’ hand, and looked straight back into the
light hazel eyes of his grandfather. He had no idea how he was supposed to act, what kind of
greeting would be appropriate or even what to say, but…

“Hello there,” Lord Potter said and Harry blinked at the gentle smile aimed his way. “You must be
Hadrian Moore.”

A strong hand was extended his way and Harry felt all eyes on him as he hesitantly reached out to
take it. His own hand was dwarfed in that of his grandfather, a fact that was not missed by the tall
man who held the appendage with care.

“A… a pleasure to meet you, sir,” Harry answered politely, trying not to shift in place.

The hand holding his was warm and rougher than expected but gentle just like the voice, the gaze
holding his sharp but not intrusive. Harry looked up into the weathered face of his grandfather and
wondered what the elderly gentleman might see when looking at him. A scrawny slip of a boy? An
impostor? When would they address the Elf Owl issue?

Lord Potter’s gaze finally drifted away and down and Harry suddenly was very aware of the fact that
he and Sirius were still holding onto each other. For a moment he held his breath. He had no idea
how same sex relationships were regarded in this time, but so far the derisive comments had been
few and far between. His grandfather said nothing, but there was a distinctly mischievous spark in
his eyes.

“Alright, James, over here,” Lord Potter suddenly directed his son to his right, then beckoned Sirius
and Harry forward too until they stood in a lose circle.

Harry had an ominous feeling that he knew what was to come. To his chagrin, he was proven right
when the older man produced a strange wheel made of wood and held it out to them. Harry spied
some darkish writing on the object and frowned confused until he heard James lament how he had
been looking forward to apparating.

“Shush now, son,” Lord Potter admonished amused. “I know you are perfectly capable to apparate,
but until you acquire your license I can not let you do that.” He mock scowled at James and Harry
felt his lips twitch. He recognised that tone of voice. “Also, Sirius and young Mr. Moore would
require to side-along with either you or me to pass the wards.”

He straightened up and held out the weird wheel thing again.

“This is a Ministry issued portkey to Potter Manor in Cornwall,” he added, winking boyishly and
making his son and friends groan. “Let’s go home.”

Chapter End Notes

Starting: Winter holiday 'arc', 23rd December-2nd January
He lost his balance the moment the horrible feeling of the portkey ended, his bottom giving an impromptu greeting to the hard ground they found themselves on. Harry groaned. The world was churning around him spectacularly, much more than he remembered it doing when using the portkey to the Quidditch World Cup or even that blasted Triwizard Cup in his fourth year. Closing his eyes, Harry just remained where he was, hoping the feeling of being tossed about a whirlwind while his organs where pulled and twisted from the inside out would just go away on its own.

Suddenly there was warmth enveloping him, muffling the strange sounds he had just begun to pick up on around him. It took him a moment to realise that someone had draped their cloak around him, shielding him from whatever weather they had met upon arrival.

“Just be glad we didn’t take a portkey directly from Hogwarts,” Sirius’ voice murmured in his ear and Harry felt himself relax slightly. “That’d have been a distance even greater than what we rode with the ‘Express from Hogwarts to London. This way we only travelled from London to the southwest and not the whole way down from the far north.”

Well, that was one way to view it, Harry conceded. The other, more pressing way, was that of his stomach that insisted he should not have eaten the last Cauldron Cake even on Sirius’ insistence.

“Is everything alright?”

Harry blinked as the concerned voice of his grandfather interrupted his slightly rambling thoughts and he startled for a moment when he couldn’t see much of anything. Then there were hands on his forearms and he was being tugged up and back into a standing position. Looking around once again, Harry carefully ignored the still slightly askew world around him in favour of finding his grandfather’s gaze. This close, he had to crane his neck in order to meet his eyes.

“Yes, sir,” he assured softly. “I’m sorry, my body never seems to agree with magical travel.”

It took him another moment to realise that he might have been enveloped in Sirius’ cloak, but it had been Lord Potter that helped him up on his feet and who was still stabilising him now. Harry blushed, wondering how it was he didn’t feel the need to flinch away from the contact. He was better with touch now than he had been when arriving in the past, but he still flinched when someone other than Sirius touched him unexpectedly.

“Mhm,” Lord Potter hummed thoughtfully, looking him over and then glancing to Sirius. “And what is this about my second son’s need to …protect you from Cornwall’s fine winds?”

Next to Harry, Sirius shifted a bit bashfully, though it took Harry yet another moment to realise who his grandfather was calling his ‘second son’. He smiled at that. It seemed Sirius finally had found a place to really call home.

“Well, Hadrian here’s a bit…,” James started.

“…sensitive to the cold,” Sirius continued with a shrug. Harry scowled at them.

“Don’t make it sound like I’m some delicate maiden,” Harry huffed under his breath, but chancing a glance at his grandfather, he was pretty sure the elderly gentleman had heard him just right.
Still, the moment Lord Potter looked at James for a second, Harry stuck his tongue out at his boyfriend. Sirius smirked.

“That an offer?” He purred, sneaking closer to Harry, but not getting very far before something distracted his elusive boyfriend.

A sudden breeze brought Harry’s attention to the strong wind whipping all around them, constantly tugging on his clothes. It was windy around here alright. Taking a deep steadying breath, Harry couldn’t help but smile. The air smelled of salt and something tangy that he couldn’t quite place but liked. And it was cold, but not as violently as it had been at the station in Hogsmeade. Looking around, Harry’s eyes went wide and he didn’t even realise that he stepped away from Sirius’ grasp, ignoring his boyfriend’s pout.

They were standing on the far edge of what appeared to be a cliff. Behind them wide lawns with a few thick trees and such stretched out towards what clearly was a manor. But Harry didn’t care for that grandeur at the moment. He was mesmerized with the fact that he was seeing the ocean. The ocean!

His eyes followed the coastline that was ending abruptly in harsh slopes with sharp edges stretching out over the waters, yet he could see softer looking contours further down the coast. Those slopes farther away had a distinct ‘pile’ character that reminded Harry of the standing stones near Hogwarts, just all piled in one place and fused together to a steeping rock, washed out by the constant onslaught of waves. Tearing his gaze away from the water – the ocean! – Harry looked down the overgrown cliff or… more like dune kind of thing they were standing on.

He had not expected a bloody beach pitch.

A Quidditch Pitch encased in the rocky cove their ‘dune’ was above. James behind him followed his gaze and was quite happy to explain that the surrounding land still belonged to the estate, meaning the beach was perfect for the magical sport that really should not be observed by Muggles. When Harry went to ask about the possibility of being seen from the sea, James grinned smugly and went off on a boast about the special ward extending from one cliff to the next, spanning the whole of the beach, and ensuring that whoever looked upon Potter Cove would see nothing but plain sand and rocks.

Potter Cove. Potter Manor, Potter estates… they had a bloody beach with a pitch and the estate included the sloping lawns in the front, a little creek winding its way down to the coast and that was not taking into account the lands Harry could now see beginning behind the manor.

The manor.

Well, at least it was not some over the top castle, Harry thought numbly, taking in the tall three (or four? He wasn’t sure from the distance) story building residing in the gentle hillside so contrasting to the harsh coast. It was still huge, but at least it looked like it belonged into the landscape, halfway encased in ivy and framed by beautiful old trees as it was. There was something mystical about the place that Harry could not pinpoint, but it felt ancient and… welcoming.

He felt someone looking at him and caught not only James but also Sirius observing his reactions. He wondered at that for a moment, before he remembered that they did not know he had never been here ‘back in the future’. Lord Potter on the other hand was happily explaining their surroundings to Harry’s benefit, though he never sounded as boastingly as James had. Really, the man had more of an indulgent air around him while he talked about the Potter estates they were currently traipsing about.
“Most of the time we don’t live here anymore,” he was just adding, smiling down at Harry with a strangely thoughtful look to his hazel eyes, “Because it’s so far out, but technically this is the Potter Ancestral Home.” He waved one of those massive hands around and back to where they had come from. “They say the constant winds and rocky cliffs have seeped into our magic which is where the untameable Potter hair is said to originate from.”

And then he ruffled Harry’s hair.

James had not thought much about Hadrian at the Potter Ancestral Home. After all, it was his home as well, right? But seeing the boy take in his surroundings now was speaking of something else. Okay, so, maybe the pitch was not there in the future. It could after all be that it had been dismantled for some reason, though seeing as Hadrian was his kid and he couldn’t even imagine a reason to ever get rid of his beloved Quidditch playground, that theory seemed rather unlikely. Trying to figure the riddle of Hadrian’s past out, James had covered his confusion with some boasting about the absolute awesomeness that was this place. There was definitely something off with the boy’s reactions.

Following his father up the long winded gravel path to the manor, James listened to the different explanations and watched how Hadrian took it all in. That was not the kind of look one put on just to appease someone else. This was not a show to play the role of the unrelated Hadrian Moore, guest to the House of Potter. No, Hadrian was honestly listening to every tiny unimportant fact Lord Fleamont Potter was spouting.

James also couldn’t imagine a reason to deny his future children the fun he always had in the Potter Ancestral Home, the place was simply perfect for adventurous children. So why was it that his son didn’t know shit about all this? Sure, he knew by now he had not raised the boy, but still… It hit him while they were walking through the many halls built by his ancestors and redecorated by his mother: Hadrian didn’t know because Hadrian had never been here. Hadrian had not been raised a Potter.

Harry was in a bit of a daze. He had no idea what he had expected the interior of a building like this to be like, but Potter Manor was… airy? It was a bit of a contrast to the exterior, really, and was most likely made possible through magic. And then there were all those obvious muggle influences! It was clear as day that the family living here was very open-minded concerning the muggle population.

Lord Potter had been leading them to what Harry thought was the east wing, meaning it looked out to what Harry in his innocence had called the ‘backyard’. Through the wide windows he could see a decorative maze and greenhouses. And let’s not even start on the gardens further down with all kinds of picturesque bridges dotted with wild plant life and… And this was the place they stayed only on holidays?

Lord Potter stopped in front of a set of double doors, briefly glancing back at Harry, though what for, Harry had no idea.

“Let’s go meet the Lady of this home,” his grandfather said, eliciting a snort from James.

With that he opened the doors with a flourish, walking ahead of the boys, soon vanishing between countless flowers, plants and even the odd kind of tree. Harry blinked.

“Solarium,” Sirius grinned next to him, giving him a light shove into the room.

Harry hadn’t known what exactly a solarium was supposed to be, but considering the various greens and the fact that sunlight seemed to stream in from everywhere, he decided it was something like a more sophisticated version of a conservatory. Harry followed Lord Potter and James, circumventing hanging flowerpots and other plant life until a small sitting area came into view. There, bathed in
sunlight, sat who only could be Lady Potter, his grandmother.

Staring at the way the winter sunlight ignited in shiny hair, Harry suddenly flashed back to cold nights during another set of Christmas holidays. Thinking about it, he realised there was an actual reason why Lord Potter had seemed so familiar to him, as well. There had been a lot of faces looking back at him from the Mirror of Erised back on his very first Christmas at Hogwarts…

“Mia,” he heard Lord Potter say, love shining through his voice like light, “Dearest, look who I found frolicking at the station.”

“Don’t listen to the puppy, Mum,” James chimed in, smiling widely at his mother. “You know he always judges others by his own standards.”

Harry tried not to stare, but considering that this woman was at least in her sixties… she was beautiful. Dark brown hair, grey nowhere in sight, fell in gentle waves down over one of her shoulders, kept up in elegant patterns on the other side of her head. Her face was finely built, looking for the entire world like the perfect example of aristocracy, but her eyes were what really caught his attention. Dark blue, still wide despite her age and so very warm, it made Harry’s breath catch. In that moment he knew for a fact that this woman would turn no one in need of help away, ever.

But her eyes also held obvious amusement at her husband’s antics and an intelligence that somehow shoved Harry’s nervousness right back to the forefront of his mind. Meeting Lord Potter was one thing, but Harry was sure there were rules to abide when meeting a witch that was not his peer, especially one of Lady Potter’s social standing. Was he to kiss her knuckles or something?

But then he saw Lord Potter reaching out and kissing his wife’s hand… on the palm. He folded the slender fingers over the kissed area as if to protect a secret and Harry wasn’t sure he should be watching. It seemed such an intimate gesture. Next was James, hugging his mother fiercely and letting himself be kissed on the forehead. The family of three clearly was affectionate and Harry felt himself tense as he wondered how he was to act now. Sirius next to him suddenly stepped forward, taking a hold of both of Lady Potter’s hands, before he leant forward and kissed her cheek lightly. Said Lady smiled brightly back at him before she turned and her intelligent gaze locked on Harry.

Sirius led his boyfriend through the solarium, carefully trying to project a calming air. He could feel the tense muscles in Hadrian’s back where his hand was resting, not to mention the obvious nervousness displayed in those eyes. Even if Hadrian had had perfected the art of keeping his face void of emotion (which he had not), his eyes would always betray him. Sirius smiled at the Potters, the ache in his chest at the obvious love between those three milder than it had been before, a reminder that he was welcome to join them. Still, like always, it took him a moment to overcome the ingrained composure and upright posture when faced with a person high up the social ladder

He loved these people that were so much more a family to him than those that were by blood. They filled the empty space that had always been lodged in his chest, right there where a mother’s love should have been. He left Hadrian’s side to greet the Lady Potter, a lovely woman, filled to the brim with compassion and sharp wit, but couldn’t help the glance back. His boyfriend was trying hard, but his wide eyes were displaying his emotions openly for all who cared to look. Hadrian was nervous and insecure and also hopeful, longing for acceptance. It was a look that stirred the anger in Sirius, that red tinged rage that was connected to his Grim. He felt so very protective of this boy that even only witnessing these emotions on Hadrian’s face made him want to go after whoever had put them there.
Lord Potter seemed to sense his uneasiness as he straightened up the moment his wife looked over to Harry. He beckoned him forward with a smile and Harry complied… at least enough to not come across as impolite. The smile on his grandfather’s face never wavered.

“This is the child I have told you about, Dearest,” he said, smirking briefly at Harry’s scowl for being called a child. “Hadrian Moore, the one who was blessed by Lady Magic.”

Harry looked into those deep blue eyes and smiled shyly.

“It’s nice to meet you,” he greeted, trying very hard not to let it sound like a question or shift in place. Lady Potter smiled gently at him, once again throwing Harry with the kind reception he received.

“And it is certainly a pleasure to meet you, young man,” she answered, holding his gaze a moment longer. Then, as if a switch had been turned, she started shooing the assembled males into places all around the pretty little table she had been sitting at. “Now, you all sit down and tell me about your plans for these holidays.” With a contemplative look at her son, she added: “It’s not quite dinner time yet, but we can have tea and some of those adorable petits fours I acquired just this morning.” (*)

That said and once everyone was settled, a tea set and an étagère… (And wasn’t Harry proud to know the name of this thing! At least Aunt Petunia’s constant thriving for what she perceived upper class standards had been good for something…) …filled with delicious looking cakes appeared. Well, Harry called them cakes in his mind, but really, they looked more like bite-sized artworks. There were no house-elves to be seen, but Harry had no doubt that they were somewhere around, just silently complying with their mistress’ implied command.

What followed was a mixture of a perfectly performed tea ritual and obvious …hominess. James kicked his feet up over the arm rest of his seat and no one admonished him. Lord Potter took the place next to his wife, sitting decidedly closer than what would have been polite in company, and Sirius slouched comfortably in his seat. It was nice, even if Harry couldn’t completely relax. He could sense that there was no need for his caution here, but it wasn’t that easy to ignore his trained vigilance.

Petits fours turned out to be fascinating to Harry who had to consciously stop himself from trying each and every one just to find out the differences between the little cakes. He had started with something obviously sweet, a tiny something iced and decoratedcolourfully, but quickly found out that not every petit four, or ‘small oven’ as Lady Potter explained, was necessarily sweet. He was just contemplating if it would be rude to try yet another one… (There was one that looked like a little puffy sponge and Harry was curious what it would taste like.) …when James announced he wanted to show everyone their rooms.

As the three boys left to James’ transparent excuse to get away, Lady Euphemia Potter leaned back into her husband’s side, savouring the warmth of his arms that came up to embrace her.

“That boy is sweetness personified, husband mine,” she said, sending Fleamont a smirk. “Are you sure he is related to your unruly ways?”

Chapter End Notes

(*) petits fours: As Harry describes, a kind of bite-sized confectionery
or savoury appetizer that for some reason is often made with very specific measurements concerning size. They come in different variants that can basically be divided into glacé ("glazed"), salé ("salted") and sec ("dry").
In which there is a winter butterfly

Chapter Notes

The author trying to be romantic and ending up with more hilarity. Sort of.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

He hadn’t thought too much about it then, but 3rd of November had been Sirius’ seventeenth birthday. Harry hadn’t realised what that meant until the Marauders took him with them up to their dorm around midnight, away from the party in the common room. Sirius had taken up place in his bed, the others all around him and they had toasted with firewhiskey on a bunch of nonsensical things. It had been all fun and happy banter until Sirius had suddenly stopped and closed his eyes with a low groan that had sent shivers down Harry’s back.

He remembered the others perking up and James asking if it was time. That was when Harry realised that Sirius was seventeen, that this was the moment of his magical maturity. It was the equivalent of what Harry had gone through on his belated sixteenth birthday back in the shack – only Sirius wasn’t going through a creature inheritance but the normal wizarding one. His core was reaching full capacity and they were there sharing this moment with him, a moment Harry had been told was something so very private that students would be taken out of school for a few days when their inheritance approached.

Yet Sirius had been there with them. That more than anything spoke volumes of Sirius’ relationship with his parents, his ‘family’.

His boyfriend was an adult now. Harry cocked his head slightly as he studied the relaxed face in front of him, mussed bluish black hair falling over high cheekbones and long lashes casting shadows in the morning light. Sirius was handsome when awake, there was no questioning that, but he was breathtaking when asleep. His features lost that guarded tension that Harry was now able to recognise as part of the mask he had witnessed on Purebloods in both times, his original and the one he was in now. He was so peaceful when sleeping, it was everything Harry had never seen on his godfather. It was a major difference.

Lying there in the enormous room that was Sirius’ permanent place in the Potter Ancestral Home, a suite kind of thing with attached bathroom in the family wing, Harry couldn’t resist reaching out to touch. On Sirius’ insistence he had spent the night here even though he technically had been assigned a guestroom. They had even gone behind James’ back, though Harry would not bet on his father’s ignorance. James knew his best mate after all and his room was just across the hallway.

Thinking about last night still made Harry blush. Oh they hadn’t done anything more than cuddle just like they tended to do at Hogwarts, something Harry secretly very much enjoyed. No, it was the whole sneaking about after everyone else had retired to bed that made Harry feel agitated. It was… exhilarating in a way. Ignoring rules wasn’t anything new to Harry, but ignoring them in order to do something simply for his own (and Sirius’) pleasure made his heart race. There were no secrets to unveil and the whole adventure consisted of not being caught sneaking into his boyfriend’s room at night. More than anything else it made him feel like an ordinary teenager and Harry loved it.

So while he laid there, his fingertips ghosting across Sirius’ slumbering face, Harry decided that he
wanted more of these normal teenage experiences. Pushing up on his elbow, Harry leant forward. He hesitated only a second, his breath teasing along Sirius’ slightly parted lips, before he closed the distance. It was the very first time that he initiated anything like this and Harry’s blood was loud in his ears at the simple touch. He kissed Sirius softly, gently, not even aware of he tremor going through his whole body.

Sirius was dreaming. There was a butterfly fluttering along his face, not irritating, just softly making its presence known. Mind still fogged with sleep, he wondered what a butterfly was doing in his rooms… Maybe he had fallen asleep in the gardens again? It wouldn’t be the first time. But no, it was winter, he wouldn’t have been comfortable enough outside to fall asleep. The butterfly took flight then, leaving behind tingling skin. There was a gentle breeze in its wake, astoundingly sweet smelling and Sirius wondered where he had smelled that particular scent before.

He didn’t get to wonder long though. The sensation that followed was one he would recognise everywhere and in every state of mind. He was Sirius Black after all.

With a smile breaking free, his mind connected the dots, identified the butterfly sensation and the sweet scent he positively adored. It was easy then to wake up fully and enjoy the sensation of his boyfriend’s lips against his. The feeling sent heat down to his groin, the innocent touch igniting surprising but not unexpected fires. With a groan he reached up, cupping Hadrian’s neck to keep him in place when he felt him trying to back away. After a second, his boyfriend relaxed again and Sirius tugged just enough to get him to lie down against him.

The last night came back to him then and he remembered convincing Hadrian to come back to his rooms, to stay the night in his bed. His thoughts hadn’t been of the dirty kind then (though he certainly liked to indulge from time to time), he knew Hadrian wasn’t ready yet, but he wouldn’t be who he was if he hadn’t been holding some devious hope. And now that he had Hadrian in his bed, initiating a moment Sirius had been dreaming about for longer than he cared to admit, there was no way he would let him get away just yet.

Carding his free hand through the tangled locks, he let his fingers wander down, tracing along Hadrian’s back until he felt him shiver. His boyfriend’s heart was beating so strongly by now, he could feel it fluttering against his chest.

Pushing up, Sirius reversed positions, pressing Hadrian back into the pillows. He allowed himself a moment to revel in the quiet gasp his actions caused, before he deepened the kiss. Hadrian’s hands were tugging at his shoulders, half pulling Sirius even closer, half holding on for the ride. He traced the palm of his hand down Hadrian’s side, along the narrow hips and down that slender yet strong thigh. Sirius’ tongue slipped between the slightly bruised lips of his boyfriend, loving every second. As he cradled the precious head of sooty black hair and feather, Sirius thanked whatever deity was out there for this chance at happiness.

“Oh I so did not need to see that!”

The voice broke through the pleasant haze in Harry’s mind and he tensed. There in the doorway was James, hand slapped over his eyes, but peeking through the fingers anyway.

“Geez, Pads! What if it had been my mum waking you?”

But before Harry could do more than tense up and blush profusely, a low growl ripped through the air, breaking James’ whining. Wide-eyed Harry stared up at his boyfriend who had lifted himself into something of a half crouch over Harry’s prone form, glaring ferociously at the intruder to his rooms.
There weren’t any more words spoken.

James returned the glare for a moment, gaze flicking to Harry for a second, before he backed out of the room and closed the door. But Harry was too busy cataloguing Sirius’ reaction to notice. There was something positively feral about Sirius in that moment, from the way he held himself to the dangerous gleam in his eyes. Had it been anyone else, Harry probably would have been scared, especially with him being so damn close. But this was Sirius and Harry was… intrigued.

“Sirius?” He whispered after a moment. Said bloke blinked, frowned, and then looked down at Harry sheepishly.

“Sorry,” he answered, voice slightly rough. “That was strange, huh?” Harry blinked back at him slowly.

“Did you just growl at my- …at James?” He asked plainly, staring the grey gaze down as if there hadn’t just been some very unsettling behaviour in his bed. His… bed… oh. Sirius just smirked, foregoing any answer and seemingly reading Harry’s suddenly very embarrassed thoughts.

“I’m glad you decided on one of those,” he said, hand sneaking up Harry’s side and tugging gently at the hem of his shirt. Or rather Sirius’ shirt. He hadn’t thought to bring anything and had ended up sleeping in his underwear and one of his boyfriend’s shirts.

“Wha…?”

“Can’t have Prongs see that luscious body of yours, now can we?”

Sirius purred and Harry squirmed, suddenly very aware of the position they still were in. It hadn’t bothered him until now, his mind too far gone and fogged up with pleasure to really care, but now… There was a low chuckle from above and then Sirius’ weight lifted off of him. He watched him stand up from the bed and stretch languidly for a moment, completely unfazed by what had just occurred and Harry could only stare. Really, no one should be allowed to be so bloody attractive!

As Sirius walked across the room and entered the en suite with a wink thrown over his shoulder, Harry suddenly caught up with the situation. They had just been caught snogging. By his father. Harry paled rapidly. Oh no, not like this. At least it had been James, but still! He could not be found in someone else’s bed the very first night at his grandparents’ home! That said, Harry got up himself and began to hastily pull on his jeans. He would try and sneak back to the guestroom he had been assigned to change clothes.

Breakfast, or rather brunch as it was already nearly noon when they all wound up in what James called a breakfast parlour, was a comfy affair. The three boys were joined by the lord and lady of the house, but the atmosphere was nowhere as stilted as Harry had worried it might be. Not even James shooting half-hearted glares at Sirius only to turn and waggle his eyebrows at Harry to make him blush could ruin the decidedly warm feeling all around. It was 24th December, Christmas Eve, and apparently there were plans for the day.

“Boys, are you going to take young Hadrian out to the village? I am sure he would enjoy the scenery,” Lady Potter was just saying, delicately pouring honey into her tea.

Harry did an unobtrusive double take at that not very ‘British’ behaviour, wondering if his grandmother might have some different heritage… Or maybe she had just a more individual taste. After all, Harry chastised himself mentally, just because he was used to wizards being old-fashioned in pretty much every way didn’t mean it had to be like that with everyone.
“Good thinking, mum,” James chimed, “Tinworth should occupy us long enough for the preparations to be made. And if not,” here he grinned over at his two friends, for once not glowering at Sirius, “I happen to know this lovely little pitch just down the road.”

Sirius snorted, muttering under his breath how he could imagine another way to occupy Hadrian’s time, hiding a smirk when he caught said boy blush yet again.

“Don’t worry, Prongs, you’ll get to show off your awesome Quidditch playground soon enough,” he said out loud before turning to his way too cute boyfriend. “But he’s right, Bambi, I think you’d enjoy the village. It’s this mixture of wizarding and muggle culture and it’s definitely worth a look how the muggles steadfastly ignore the obvious presence of magic.”

There was a slight, barely there sputtering in the background, but Sirius was too occupied with those wide green eyes to look who had strange reactions to his rather harmless words.

“You could take that sketchbook of yours along,” James added, nodding. Apparently his best mate was not the one with the unexpected reaction. But that would only leave Lord Potter as the lovely lady was too much just that: A lady.

“Sketchbook?” said lady questioned, sounding pleasantly surprised. “Am I to understand you have a liking for the fine arts?”

Hadrian apparently hadn’t expected any kind of interest in him beyond the Elf Owl stuff, at least that was what his deer in the headlights look seemed to convey. And didn’t that just stir Sirius’ righteous anger again? Hadrian should not be surprised by genuine interest in his person!

“I… I just started Muggle Arts class, Lady Potter,” his boyfriend replied in a way that simply screamed insecure confusion. “I’m still learning the basics.”

Sirius snorted. That was so not describing the awesomeness of Hadrian’s artistic works. Sure, he was still exploring different styles and whatnot, still experimenting around, but the talent there was unmistakable. He would have said so out loud, but Lady Potter’s laugh stopped him.

“Oh no,” she giggled, yes, giggled, “Please do not concern yourself with formalities, Hadrian, dear.” She smiled her mysterious smile full of knowledge. “Just call me Auntie. Heaven knows I have been trying to get Sirius to call me something appropriate, but that rascal is just too much a flirt.”

“Now, how could he not?” Lord Potter smiled dotingly from beside her. “Considering he finds himself confronted with the epitome of Ravenclaw brilliance?”

“Why, you,” Lady Potter cooed at her husband, giving him a coy look from under long lashes. Hadrian was now looking back and forth between the elder couple unashamedly flirting with each other, awe clearly written across his face. Sirius wondered what exactly had caused that reaction, but resolved now was not the time to ask.

“Yes, dear,” Lady Potter finally said, belatedly returning to the conversation and obviously misinterpreting Hadrian’s facial expression. “I am a proud raven of knowledge,” she tapped one elegant finger against her lips, “Though we did call ourselves eagles back then.”

They were standing in the lavish entrance hall and Harry was bravely enduring Sirius’ fussing over him. His boyfriend was double checking Harry was dressed warm enough for the rough Cornwall winds, especially careful now that they had been confronted with the Elf Owl’s sensitivity to certain temperatures. Harry was biting his tongue, determined not to react to the obvious amusement in his
grandfather’s eyes. Lord Potter, standing nearby while his wife was doing the exact same thing to a thoroughly embarrassed James, was clearly entertained by the proceedings.

“Sirius,” Harry finally whispered pleadingly when his boyfriend was securing a warm sort of knitted hat on his untameable hair, “I’m fine.” But Sirius was silently shaking his head, checking if the fabric of the hat was truly covering all that he deemed necessary.

“I’m not taking any risk. You scared the shit out of m- …us back in Hogsmeade.”

What was he supposed to say to that? It wasn’t like Harry wanted anyone to worry about him and if letting Sirius fuss over him would help with that, he was willing to endure it a bit longer. But really, he was fully capable of putting gloves on by himself. He said as much when Sirius tried doing it for him and pulled away to handle the slightly large gloves. They, along with the knitted hat, belonged to his boyfriend, a fact that was sure to spark another shopping spree in the near future. Finally they were deemed ready to leave and were already making their way down the front steps of the manor when a voice called out to them one last time.

“Oh dumpling,” Lady Potter called after them, making James freeze and colour rapidly, “Do not forget to be on time for the solstice celebrations. You know the wards lock down on time on special occasions like this.”

“Mum,” James whined and Sirius snickered next to him, throwing an arm around his boyfriend’s slender shoulders. Harry distinctly heard Lord Potter’s low voice as they turned toward where the village Tinworth was located.

“Now, my honeysuckle,” his grandfather said, voice full of amusement, “That was a deliciously evil move. Would you care to accompany your devoted husband on a little… adventure in our rooms?”

Chapter End Notes

The opening scene wasn’t even anything naughty yet I was blushing fiercely while writing it. It just goes to show that I have never written anything like this before… remember chapter 81? The very first time I wrote a kiss. Yep.
In which another village gets conquered

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The village was located in the hillside some two miles outside the Potter estates, but it was the actual estates that made it a surprisingly long walk. Harry was no where lazy concerning exercise and he was honestly enjoying the landscape they were traipsing upon, but he hadn’t anticipated the walk to take this long. Well, at least the exercise kept him warm. Still, when they finally reached the outskirts of Tinworth, he was rather glad his boots were not only warm but also very comfortable.

Harry had never been to a place where wizards and witches lived openly alongside muggles, so he was quite surprised to notice the village didn’t look much different from any regular one. Oh yes, it was rather picturesque with its quaint obviously old but well maintained houses along the sides of the streets. Streets that went up and down the gentle hills, forcing everyone to half-climb their way through the village. Harry supposed one would get used to it with time, but at the moment he just found it part fascinating, part annoying. Next to him James and Sirius were huffing along, being unused to long walks like this or maybe it was the gradient of the upward slope that got to them. They were wizard-raised, had been their whole life, they were used to instant travel or travelling by broom to be the most strenuous. Harry for once was glad he had been raised mostly muggle and was very much used to manual labour.

He shrugged the thoughts away when his companions started to tell him about Tinworth and how funny it was that the muggles could ignore the obvious magic all around. Harry frowned at that and looked closer at his surroundings only to chuckle at himself. He had only been in the Wizarding World for roughly six years and yet he hadn’t even thought that fairy lights with actual fairies might not be normal to see for a muggle. And those lights were everywhere around the shop fronts, used liberally in the Christmas decorations, as were the never melting icicles and magical snow falling inside many of the store windows. But then again, muggles would probably explain those away with clever decorating skills or some new technology, even if this was the 70s.

Now that he had been made aware it was also impossible to ignore the magic he could feel vibrating in the air. It felt much like Hogsmeade though somewhat subtler, more intense in some spots than others rather than being a kind of layer over the entire village. He supposed it was the wizarding shops and homes that spread the magical essence while the muggle parts diffused the magic, being somewhat ‘blind spots’.

“Ever heard of Dymphna Furnage?” James asked, pointing to the statue of a witch in very antiquated robes, out-dated even for wizarding kind. “She was supposedly abducted around here in the 17th century,” he paused for the dramatic effect, “by Pixies.” (*)

Harry blinked owlishly at him for a moment. Pixies?

“Yeah,” Sirius nodded along, winking at Harry, “Pixies are known to live in Cornwall. Actually,” he added with a sly smile to his boyfriend, “We should probably keep an eye on you when wandering around the less populated areas. I’m sure the Pixies would be interested in your delicious self, Bambi.”

Sirius then proceeded to eye up Harry and let his hand drift over a certain part of his boyfriend’s anatomy he obviously coveted. While Harry scowled and flushed, James groaned and slapped his best mate’s hand away from Harry’s backside.
“Stop the blatant flirting for a moment, would you?” He growled. “At least keep down the groping with me around.”

Sirius’ reaction made Harry pause. It was obvious James’ words had taken him by surprise and yet he looked also particularly pissed off. Harry had never seen the friends look at each other like that and thought he could actually feel the tension suddenly rising around them as the two Marauders continued to stare each other down.

“Don’t even try to take the piss out of me, Dumpling,” Sirius said lowly, pinning his best mate with a dark look. “I know, you knew he would be there with me.”

“Oh don’t give me that shit, Padfoot!”

Blinking in confusion for a moment, Harry felt himself slowly turn bright red before he suddenly paled as he realised what this was about. Nope, he decided, he didn’t want to think on what they were talking about and directed his gaze back to the statue, wondering why none of the muggles questioned the strange clothing. He also vaguely thought he should probably move to stop whatever was brewing between his father and his boyfriend, but seeing as the two had been friends half their lives and he really did not want to get between the fronts on this specific topic… especially after this morning…

Some passer-bys started to take notice and Harry did move then. To the side. He stepped away a few paces and leaned against the wall of a small shop selling things made of driftwood from the nearby coast. It was actually a very interesting handiwork, he decided, looking closely at the few pieces on display. Maybe he could ask Lord Potter for a carving knife and then go looking for driftwood himself?

“But Pads,” James’ voice finally whined after some more barbs had been thrown back and forth, and the tension seemed to just evaporate, “It’s basically me chaperoning my kid and his boyfriend. I did not sign up for this!”

And that was that.

After his half-spat with Prongs, they spent some time in a shop mostly directed at a tourist audience. Sirius was more watching Hadrian move around the shop than the actual merchandise that happened to be some kind of carvings. His little love seemed to be delighted with pretty much everything on display, reverently touching parts of the different works, the soft pad of his finger tracing along the sanded parts of the wood.

More than anything, though, Hadrian was drawing the attention of the shop keeper. Sirius narrowed his eyes on the bloke standing behind the counter eying up his boyfriend. He was quite obviously a muggle seeing as the skin of his face was riddled with acne and wizards had long since developed a remedy for things like that. Of course it was possible the bloke just couldn’t afford the necessary potion or maybe simply didn’t care, but Sirius somehow doubted it. Wizards were peculiar when it came to their appearances, they were used to instant healing and all that. So… it probably was the apparent lack of anything even remotely magical inside the shop. Not that that would have bothered him, he was after all quite fascinated with anything muggle, but seeing those beady eyes following his Hadrian around…

Sirius wondered then if Hadrian’s Elf Owl allure was especially effective on teenagers since those were ruled by their hormones and most certainly directed every second thought to something sexual. It would make sense if this special brand of allure affected them more like the regular Veela allure would simply because the sexual drive was very prominent in their developing brains and bodies. He himself could admit his possessive streak wasn’t the only thing triggered by Hadrian’s allure, it
actually tended to entwine with his libido on more than the odd occasion. Just like this morning. It probably wasn’t such a bad thing that Prongs had interrupted them when he had; annoying, yes, but in the long run better for Hadrian.

Sighing, Sirius went to stand beside his boyfriend, a possessive hand coming up and taking obvious position on Hadrian’s hip as he pretended to look over the slender shoulder at whatever his boyfriend was currently studying. Sirius made very sure the shop keeper could see exactly where his hand was laying, only barely smothering a smirk when said bloke’s face fell in clear disappointment.

Once again he felt his Grim shift and preen in pleasure when Hadrian unconsciously leaned back into him. Breathing in the scent of everything he associated with freedom, he couldn’t help but wonder if Hadrian knew about the possibility of being Animagus mates… And he also couldn’t help but notice that it most likely no longer was a mere possibility.

They spent most of the day strolling around the village, going through the different shops and admiring the Christmas decorations. James and Sirius were especially fascinated with the electrical lighting, asking Harry all kinds of questions, while Harry himself simply wondered why electronics even worked with that much magic around. It wasn’t until they overheard two older women talk and wonder about the many new graves on the nearby cemetery that Harry remembered that there had been a Death Eater attack in this village not too long ago. Those women must be muggles then, he decided, since they were actually wondering when the people newly buried on the cemetery had died. Considering Tinworth really wasn’t a village of great proportions, people would most likely all know each other in some way.

With a jolt he remembered that article in the Prophet, the one that had finally brought Harry’s attention to the reality of war all around them. He remembered the few details he had absorbed about the multiple attacks that had happened… but looking around him there was nothing even hinting at damage. Most likely the wizards had repaired what had been destroyed and obliviated the muggles. Somehow that really didn’t sit right with Harry.

The carefree mood gone they decided to go back to the manor, the sun would be setting soon anyway. Looking over the picturesque village one last time, Harry promised himself to come back here sometime during the next few days to draw some of the scenery. He would have liked to actually put a brush and paint to use to catch the different colour shadings his creature eyesight let him see, but he had had to leave the painting utensils back in the Room of Requirement. They weren’t his after all.

When they crossed the bridge to the Potter estates and Harry felt the heavy wards slither across his skin, Lady Potter’s words about a timely lockdown came back to him. But neither James nor Sirius was willing to tell him just what would happen this evening that not only required this much preparation, but also tightly closed wards.

“Maybe during the summer we can visit again,” Sirius instead said, throwing a last look back at the village. “I’ve heard the muggles actually celebrate the summer solstice here. They call it the Golowan festivities or something.” (*)

The flames licked across the wood faster than Harry would have expected them to, in no time engulfing the complete circle of the strange wheel. He could feel the magic thick in the air, pressing onto him, surrounding him. It felt a bit like apparition yet it wasn’t nearly as uncomfortable and his stomach wasn’t rebelling either. In fact, Harry didn’t feel threatened by the heavy power all around him and that was not only because the Potters and Sirius were nearby, probably experiencing the
same and not looking concerned by it in the least.

They had congregated in what Harry had thought was simply a decorative maze on the east side of the manor. Standing near the centre they had listened to his grandmother sing in a language he did not understand nor recognise just as the moon had started to rise. Her voice was just as lovely as the rest of her, but hadn’t it been for James, Harry would have felt pretty wary of the proceedings.

“The actual winter solstice has been on 21st December,” his father had said in a hushed voice so he wouldn’t disturb the ominous singing, “And my parents probably burned another solar cross then, but it’s meant to be done with the people that mean the most to you, your chosen family, so we’re doing a burning every year on the 24th since Hogwarts doesn’t honour the tradition any more.”

Harry had stared at him uncomprehendingly, not ever having heard of such a tradition before. But then again, what did he know about wizarding traditions? The thought was rather bitter, but they could have told Harry it was normal to behead chickens and paint each other with the animals’ blood while singing Christmas songs was a wizarding tradition and he wouldn’t have been able to refute it.

After that it had become an unspoken agreement that the proceedings of the evening would be explained to Harry as they went. He knew there would be questions later, but right now he was completely taken with what he now knew was the family celebration of the winter solstice. The magic was still thickening and Harry was staring avidly at what James had called a ‘solar cross’. It was the strange wheel thing Lord Potter had used as a portkey to bring them from King’s Cross to Cornwall.

“The solar cross, or sun cross, represents the sun obviously,” Sirius whispered into his ear, his breath hot against Harry’s skin, “Remus would be able to better explain it, but the four quadrants inside the circle also stand for the four seasons.” (*)

Harry watched the burning solar cross, a wheel made out of wood with an equilateral cross inside, feeling the magic reach a peak in the air. He couldn’t help but holding his breath.

“It’s old Wicca magic,” James added his own two pence, “And celebrating it on the winter solstice is supposed to strengthen familial magic.”

Just then the magic around them flared and the air started to glow slightly, humming with power that was exhilarating Harry’s heartbeat to an excited thunder in his chest. He felt suddenly so alive! Breathing in carefully and deeply, Harry savoured the heady experience, wondering if the invigorating feeling maybe was just his imagination. He couldn’t say how long he simply breathed and stared, but after a while the magic started to slowly taper off and the air returned to its former chilly state. Tearing his eyes from the remnants of the now mostly burned up solar cross thingy, Harry looked wide-eyed at the people around him. They all had a brightness to their eyes that made him realise he hadn’t imagined the feeling of being filled up with wild magic, resources refilling he hadn’t known were nearly depleted. It was something different from the magic he used daily, Harry thought. It wasn’t his own magic nor that of his creature, no. This had been nature’s magic, connecting him to the people around and to earth itself, it seemed.

“So,” Lady Potter asked into the reverend silence, “Who wants pudding?”

Harry laughed.

Chapter End Notes
(*) **Dymphna Furmage (1612-1698)**: a witch who famously campaigned for the destruction of Pixies after being abducted by them while holidaying in Cornwall.

(*) **Golowan (sometimes also Goluan or Gol-Jowan)**: in the Cornish language the word for the Midsummer celebrations in Cornwall. Celebrations originally were centred on the lighting of bonfires and fireworks and the performance of associated rituals. These days the Golowan festival has grown to become a major arts and culture festival.

(*) **The solar cross** actually exists in Wicca religions and such, though it normally is made out of straw. The explanations of the boys are mostly true, but I added a few things just to make it more important to Harry (e.g. It isn't necessarily a family celebration). I'm obviously not trying to hint at any perverted versions like the swastika, but thought it would be better to say so clearly.
In which most things are warm and fluffy (and some are not)

Chapter Notes

So chapter 100, folks! <3
I would love to think that nearly 60,000 hits at 100 chapters actually means around 600 regular readers, but somehow I don't believe there are actually that many of you lovelies out there. ;)
Anyway, this chapter is mostly about family bonding and ending on a slightly ominous note... Nope, I did not just make that pun.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Nadelik Lowen, little one,” Lord Potter said with a smile, startling Harry from his doze in front of the fireplace. Harry had never heard that particular saying before, but considering the date it was probably just another way of wishing him Merry Christmas. (*) “Was your room not to your liking?” His grandfather asked, coming into the out of the way sitting room Harry had camped out in. “You should have said something, Hadrian. We want you to be comfortable here.”

Harry sat up slowly, eyes flickering to one of the windows. The sun was already up, he had slept longer than expected. Last night Harry had insisted to sleep in his assigned room not wanting to risk being found out by his grandparents. It was a bit ridiculous trying to hide like that when really his relationship with Sirius was quite obvious. At least that’s what Harry thought. But then again, just because they were… ‘dating’ …didn’t mean his grandparents would be alright with him sleeping in Sirius’ bed. Maybe they wouldn’t want it exactly because they were more than friends.

“No, the room’s great,” he hurried to say, watching Lord Potter navigate around the furniture and unceremoniously plop down on the rug next to Harry. “It’s just… I felt so…

Too embarrassed to say it out loud, Harry gestured vaguely to the merrily crackling fire in front of them. His room was great, big and spacey and… cold. Impersonal. It was a guestroom, not located in the family wing, and even though it was to be expected as they couldn’t know who Harry really was… it hurt. Lord Potter looked over to the fireplace, seemingly entranced by the flames, but Harry could feel his gaze on him. Blushing, he pulled his pyjama-clad legs in, hugging them to his chest. It had probably been preposterous to think it was okay to wander the manor at night and camp out in some room not assigned to him. He was a guest here and-

“Don’t do that, little one,” his grandfather said and one of his large hands came to rest on Harry’s shoulder. “You’re fine. You can come here whenever you feel like it and you’re free to explore the grounds.”

Lord Potter’s eyes were smiling knowingly at him when Harry chanced a glance at the man beside him and Harry couldn’t even feel frustrated with being referred to as little. Next to the large frame of his grandfather he definitely was quite small, after all. With a sigh, Harry leaned back on his hands, feet stretching towards the warmth of the flames.

“Thank you,” he said softly, wiggling his toes a little. “In Hogwarts you don’t get to just enjoy the heat like this, there’s always someone around or there’s simply no fireplace to sit in front,” he added in way of explanation.
“You like the warmth then?” Lord Potter asked after a moment of companionable silence only interrupted by the cracking of the logs. Harry looked over, peeking through his by now rather long fringe, studying the profile of his grandfather.

“I…,” he started, only to hesitate and frown. “Yes? I think so.”

Shrugging a bit confused, Harry pondered his need to curl up in front of the fire after stalking barefoot through the large manor. He had felt cut off and alone in his assigned room and had cursed himself for insisting Sirius stay in his own rooms in the family wing. The little sitting room was located somewhere between the guestrooms and the family wing and had looked …nice. Harry hadn’t been surprised when the fire lit up the moment he stepped into the room even though no house elves had been around. Visible, that is. The hearth had been the only light source and the rug in front of it had looked so inviting… Harry had just curled up right there and drifted off to the comforting feeling of the warmth caressing his skin.

“More than the cold?” Lord Potter asked as if he already knew the answer and Harry nodded without having to think about it. “James told us about your reaction to the low temperatures in Hogsmeade, but we should have expected something along those lines.” He smiled encouragingly at Harry and added: “It is one of the symptoms lesser known or rather… even lesser known than the Elf Owl inheritance itself.”

Oh right. Another weakness. So he was sensitive to light and cold. Oh yeah, didn’t make him feel vulnerable at all. Harry scowled at the mention of his feathery problem. He couldn’t help but think the whole Elf Owl stuff was much more trouble than anything else. So it wasn’t enough to change species without any warning and having to hide, no, he had to gain new weaknesses as well. Great. Lord Potter watched him a moment before shifting until he was facing Harry.

“You didn’t know you would inherit, did you? Or that there even was the possibility?” At Harry’s affirmative he pursed his lips a moment thoughtfully before continuing: “The Elf Owl gene has been running in the Potter family for as long as the recorded generations reach back. I don’t know if James has given you the little guide one of my uncles wrote to conserve the information when it became apparent that the gene would no longer manifest?”

At Harry’s nod he snorted softly.

“That book is utter rubbish as I am sure you have noticed already,” Lord Potter said, smirking slightly at Harry’s caught look. “But some of the information contained is actually useful. My uncle may have lacked any true talent for writing or even proper research, but he did have the respect for any living being that our society nowadays sorely lacks.”

Here Lord Potter’s eyes went dark and Harry watched as his grandfather stared into the fire for a moment, gaze clouded and posture rigid. He was about to try and regain the older man’s attention when a shudder ran through Lord Potter’s frame and he seemed to shake off the darker thoughts.

“What I am trying to tell you, Hadrian,” he started up again, capturing Harry’s gaze with his own, “I meant it when I said Lady Magic has blessed you. The gene had vanished and with it a whole species, but then you came along.” He smiled and Harry couldn’t find it in himself to point out how very much he would like to give back that particular ‘blessing’. “Life is precious no matter the species, little one, and once you accept your new self you will feel so much better, I am sure.”

Harry sighed. His grandfather obviously was just as happy as James was about his inheritance and Harry could somehow understand that they were glad the Elf Owls had apparently not completely died out, but still… He tugged at one of his longer feathers with a scowl. Why did it always have to be him? James would have been delirious with happiness had he been the one inheriting the gene,
but no, it had to be Harry. Of course it had to be Harry bloody Potter. Why could he not be normal for once?

“You may consider them only inconveniences right now,” Lord Potter’s voice interrupted Harry’s pity party and he looked up to see his grandfather study the top of his head or more likely the feathers interlaced with his hair. “Your Elf Owl traits,” he clarified, “Considering the width of your pupils you most likely suffer from sensitivity to light in addition to the incapacitating reaction to low temperatures, correct?”

“Yes, it is… it makes me feel so…”

Lord Potter hummed in understanding to Harry’s not so eloquent stuttering.

“But then again, what makes you so sensitive to the light should also heighten your general eyesight. You probably even have a form of night vision which does even out the disadvantage quite nicely, doesn’t it?”

“I guess,” Harry grudgingly agreed.

It was true, night vision was an awesome thing to have now that he thought about it. He had navigated the manor last night without any problem, not even thinking about it, and he definitely loved being able to see so clearly whenever the sun wasn’t half blinding him. Yes, he could accept the changes to his eyes, it wasn’t hard, really. His eyes had never been perfect and now it was pretty much like his capabilities had just shifted a bit, taking away some at one point and adding some to another.

“What about the allure though?” Harry questioned with a pained expression, shuddering in remembrance. “It’s just bloody awful! People have these urges around me and I’m just… I don’t know, it’s… unsettling.” He ran a hand through his hair, grimacing at the feeling of feathers. “I constantly wonder if they realise what’s happening, if they realise it’s my freakiness that makes them act that way and… and I can’t help but wonder when they are going to get angry about it. It must be horrible to act on one’s prominent traits so unchecked, right? I-” He gasped in a shaky breath. “I can’t even be truly angry with Crouch for… for…”

Harry never saw the concerned frown on his grandfather’s face or the flash of anger in his eyes for the expression had been smoothed out the second he lifted his green gaze.

“For what, little one?” Lord Potter urged quietly. “What did he do?”

Blinking, Harry registered once more who he was talking to. So he had just spilled a whole lot of what had been bothering him since his inheritance to a person he had known for all but a day. It didn’t matter that this was his grandfather; Harry was just not the kind of person to go and talk about his feelings like this. He was the bloody brooding type, building things up inside until he exploded. He had a temper when that happened, but this right now had been different. It had been like unloading a weight he had known was there yet not fully realised how much it burdened him.

“I should probably go and change,” Harry muttered, looking down at the pyjama pants he was wearing and blushing furiously when cupcakes winked up at him. These were the only actual pyjama pants he owned, which was the reason he normally slept in one of Sirius’. Only Sirius hadn’t been with him when he changed into his night clothes yesterday.

“Oh I don’t know,” Lord Potter chuckled, seemingly going along with him dodging the topic.

“I think you look quite adorable like this. My Lady Potter would love the charm work necessary for
All the way down the banisters of any stairs and especially those of the grand one down into the entrance hall were decorated with ivy, a rather massive Christmas tree was waiting in said hall glittering with magical snow and fairy lights. Here and there Harry spotted mistletoe and funnily enough five present filled socks hanging over the great fireplace in the main family room. The room was pleasantly warm in contrast to the rest of the airy manor and Harry was greeted with cheers from James and Sirius.

“We’ve been waiting for you.” James started from where they were sitting in front of the fireplace apparently busy roasting marshmallows.

“…fluffy little dawdler that you are…,” inserted Sirius with a grin towards Harry’s fluffed up hair.

“Waiting for endless torturous hours we did.”

“…thinking of your gorgeous self…,” Sirius interjected, earning a flat look from his best mate.

“So we could open presents together and.”

“Oh hush, you two,” Lady Potter stopped their rambling that made Harry think an awful lot of the Weasley twins. “Do not believe a word from those two, Hadrian dear, and have a seat. I am sure you are hungry.”

Harry smiled at her and sat on the deserted couch. The instant he was comfortable, Sirius leaned against the side of his legs, an arm sneaking around, and his hand coming to rest on Harry’s ankle. Sirius’ body heat was seeping through his clothes making Harry overly aware of his boyfriend’s proximity. He hadn’t even realised how much he had missed that warmth… maybe that was why he had felt the urge to curl up in front of the fire…

James studied the kid, his kid, carefully the moment he entered the family room. His dad had had them stay downstairs and wait when it became apparent that Hadrian wasn’t just taking his time somewhere along the way. Pads had gone to wake him only to come back slightly harried, saying Hadrian hadn’t been in his room and the bed looked untouched. Of course his dad could tell the boy was still on the grounds, in the manor even, the wards keyed to the head of house made sure of that. So his old man had gone to retrieve the wayward Elf Owl while the rest of them made a show of being comfortable in the family room. James and Sirius had gotten to know their favourite time traveller good enough by now to know he would feel bad for making them worry.

On the note of getting to know Hadrian, James sent a mild glare at his best mate. The moment the boy sat down, Sirius was all over him again… or well, close to him. At least his best mate was refraining from groping Hadrian the way he loved to do any chance he got normally. Honestly, James was feeling a bit out of his depths with all that. On the one hand he had this notion that as the father it was his responsibility to protect Hadrian from Casanovas like he knew his best mate to be. Sirius had a bit of a reputation and until his attentions focused on Hadrian (or more like until James knew who Hadrian really was) he had had no problem with being wingman or generally supporting Sirius’ rather… promiscuous ways. But that was different now!

On the other hand he would have to be blind to not see the devotion his best mate felt for Hadrian. When looking at the boy, there was nothing left of the manwhore Sirius had become sometime during their fifth year, in fact, James swore the look in those eyes was one of adoration to a tooth-rottingly sweet level. So yes, James was in a bit of a complicated situation here. And that wasn’t even taking into account the obvious positive reaction Hadrian had to anything Sirius. Even now he
could see the colour coming back to the previously too pale face and that was just from sitting near Sirius. There was so much trust on both sides yet he knew, they all knew, there were still a lot of secrets hanging over their heads.

Sirius stroked his thumb along the inside of his boyfriend’s ankle, just out of sight of the elder Potters. Sure, Prongs wasn’t all that happy with his hands-on tendencies, but he was sure were their positions reversed Prongs would be just as bad. Not that Sirius thought being all cuddly with Hadrian was a bad thing.

With a silent sigh he tipped his head back, looking up at the object of his possessiveness, or maybe he should call it an obsession. He couldn’t get enough of Hadrian and being away from him even if it had only been for the night had made him restless. He wanted, no needed, to be close, in case something happened. Yes, they were in a well protected place, but he had seen with his own eyes the trouble that boy seemed to attract. Focusing on Hadrian, Sirius took in the strange look on the boy’s face as he looked around at the happy family. There was something akin to longing that Sirius could relate to quite a bit, but also… uncertainty. As if Hadrian was unsure where he fit in this obvious family celebration, what he was supposed to do. It spoke volumes of the past he had lived.

“So,” Sirius spoke into the hum of pleasantly relaxed conversation, “Time for presents, I’d say.”

Lord Potter laughed out loud and nodded, waving them towards the colourful socks strung up over the enormous fireplace. Sirius knew they had to be magically enlarged on the inside to fit the amount of presents his best mate was used to receiving on pretty much every occasion that would justify the indulgence. Christmas certainly was no exception. He watched James jumping up, discarding the conjured stick he had used to roast his marshmallows on (a muggle invention they had come to adore) and inspecting the different socks. Hadrian was hiding behind his tea cup, suddenly very interested in its contents. Well, that would not do.

Getting up, Sirius approached the fireplace, giving the socks a short once-over before picking the one he wanted. He knew there wouldn’t be nearly as much inside as in James’ or even his own, after all the Potters hadn’t known Hadrian until yesterday, but he also had a hunch that the gesture in itself would mean the most to his boyfriend. Not to mention he very much wanted to see Hadrian’s reaction to the present he had gotten him.

Harry was in a daze of warm feelings. The restlessness and loneliness of last night had vanished together with the cold and having Sirius and James near definitely helped a lot. It was the absolute knowledge that these two accepted him and wanted him there that made all the difference. After all, if they could accept him being James’ time travelling son from the future without batting an eye or help him through a strange unexpected inheritance with unforeseen consequences…

Presents. He was actually getting presents even though all his friends were not even born yet – well, except the Marauders who had turned out to be remarkable friends. Family. As the heavy sock plumped down into his lap, Harry stared at it for a long moment, until he felt Sirius’ hand brush through his hair.

“Merry Christmas, Bambi,” he said softly.

Harry didn’t acknowledge the slight trembling of his hands as he reached into the ridiculous Christmas sock, fingers skimming along more than just one present. Closing his eyes, he concentrated until he could identify the one drenched just barely in Sirius’ normally hidden magical signature. He knew his boyfriend by now good enough to realise what Sirius wanted the most right now. He wanted to see Harry unwrap the present he had gotten him, wanted to make sure Harry liked it. Though Harry had loved each and every little thing Sirius had gifted him over the course of the last months (from the chocolate frogs to the drawing utensils and even the horrible cupcake
pyjama, though Harry would never admit to the last one), he still had that urge to never disappoint Harry.

The package had an odd form. Harry traced his finger along one lumpy edge only to wince when the edge turned out to be decidedly sharp, cutting through the paper with the slightest of pressure. A sudden intake of breath from beside him made him aware Sirius had sat down on the couch next to him.

“Shit,” he cursed, instantly reaching out for Harry’s hand. “Shit, shit, shit… Merlin, I’m so sorry!”

His rant had caught the attention of the Potters, the elder ones frowning heavily at Sirius’ language until Lady Potter saw the little bit of blood dribbling down Harry’s hand.

“It’s okay,” Harry tried, but didn’t get to say more.

He blushed heavily when Sirius cradled his bloodied hand close only to tip his head and … close his soft lips over the cut on Harry’s finger. Harry was sure his heart had just skipped a beat. Now it was his turn to curse, though he did so in his head, unable to look away from the display. Sirius’ mouth was hot and wet and he was lightly sucking on Harry’s finger and-

“Right,” James said a bit louder than necessary, clearing his throat pointedly. Harry thought he heard some faint giggles. “How ‘bout you heal that cut, Pads, so Hadrian gets to see his present. What the heck did you get him anyway?”

“That’s what I would like to know,” Lord Potter added, sounding just a tad bit strained.

Harry couldn’t look at him and that was not only because Sirius used that moment to give his finger a little lick like a goodbye accompanied by a wink. Harry was so not used to feeling like this.

As it turned out Sirius had gotten him a carving knife. How and when was anyone’s guess, though Harry suspected midnight owl-order. It was beautiful, the blade made out of some dark material that had a decidedly wicked visual effect. It looked more deadly than made for carving, but who was he to complain? Harry was so fascinated with the knife (or maybe he should call it a dagger?) that the ensuing discussion around him barely registered. If only his own present for Sirius wouldn’t be paling so much against that of his boyfriend.

“What is this all about, Sirius?”

Lord Potter’s voice was uncharacteristically serious as he addressed Sirius – who was just suppressing the smirk threatening to make an appearance at his own thoughts. Such a shame no one quite appreciated his serious Sirius jokes the way such awesomeness deserved. Schooling his features, he tore his gaze away from where it had been glued to his gorgeous love who was rather engrossed with his present. The carving knife (cough, dagger, cough) might not be Goblin made, but Sirius was enough of a Black to know his way around with weapons. Well, at least he could recognise a masterpiece when he saw one and he had tested the workmanship and balance of this specific one himself. Now if only he had had more time, he would have something engraved into the hilt… but oh well, they were going to visit Diagon Alley soon anyway. Maybe it could be a New Year’s present for his boyfriend… Why ever Hadrian needed excuses to accept Sirius’ gifts, he would never understand.

“Sirius?” Prongs was frowning, looking between his best mate and his father. Oh right.

“I saw how much Hadrian enjoyed the driftwood carvings we saw in Tinworth yesterday,” he finally answered with a shrug, giving his best innocent look and expertly ignoring Prongs’ snort at the sight.
“Carving?” Lady Potter questioned slightly doubtful, eyeing the da- knife suspiciously.

“Sure,” Sirius smiled brightly.

Lord Potter looked from Sirius to Hadrian, studying the small boy who was still inspecting his present with obvious delight. The head of House Potter was frowning, concern clear on his face. Sirius thought the man disliked anything remotely dangerous in Hadrian’s hands. The thought made him smile, his boyfriend had no idea how much he already had been accepted into this family.

“We will talk about this later,” Lord Potter finally said.

When trying to get some semblance of order into his wild hair some week before Christmas holidays, Harry had lost his very first feather. It had not hurt and he could already feel the slight protruding of a new one in its place so he suspected that it was a normal thing… maybe he should read up on birds.

It was one of the long, sleek feathers that reflected the light in an interesting way and while Harry disliked his feathery problem, he knew of one person who had taken a special kind of liking to his avian traits. And with no money to his person and Christmas around the corner, Harry had turned the feather carefully into an artful kind of hairpin (heavily enlisting Lily’s help for knowledge on any kind of accessory). It was a combination of some leather string he had dyed with paint from the Room of Requirement and his own magic, making the end result something Harry actually was proud of.

He wasn’t afraid his boyfriend would think it too girly or something along those lines, after all Sirius loved to tie the one feather Harry had lost during his transformation into those silky locks of his anyway. The reason Harry had even come up with the idea was the constant whining that went along with those tendencies: Sirius always wanted the feather on display, but couldn’t get it to stick without a lot of tricky magic which apparently messed up his ‘style’. It was a time (and nerve) consuming thing to do (and watch) that they would be able to avoid now. At least that was what Harry told himself had been the reason he wanted to ensure Sirius had the feather on him at all times. No, there definitely was no claim staked there, nope.

And he was right, Sirius apparently loved his present, immediately tying it into his impeccable hairdo and of course looking like some muggle hair model while doing so. Blushing, Harry focused his attention back on the still heavy Christmas sock in his lap. When he opened Remus’ present, delivered that morning with the Lupin’s family owl, he snorted in amusement loud enough to catch everyone’s attention once again. Remus had sent him extra warm gloves and a warm hat made out of a soft material that probably was the fur of some magical animal. Either way, moments later found Harry being cooed over while Lady Potter secured the hat on his head, exclaiming happily over the spacious make-up that allowed all of Harry’s wild locks and feathers to vanish underneath the fabric.

It wasn’t until Harry reached the bottom of his Christmas sock that the happy atmosphere changed. There, slightly lodged in the small end usually made for the toes, was a Christmas card adorned with a loopy writing Harry recognised on first glance. Dumbledore had sent him a Christmas card:

Dear Hadrian,

Merry Christmas, my boy!

I hope this little message finds you well and you are enjoying the time with your friends.

On another note: The preparations for your future training have been made and
everything is ready and awaits your return.

Best of wishes,

Albus Dumbledore

Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Chapter End Notes

(*) Nadelik Lowen: Like Harry assumes, this basically just means ‘Merry Christmas’ in the Cornish language.
A piercing scream cut through the dark manor sometime after midnight.

The Potter Manor in Cornwall was a vast building, swallowing up sound as it went, noises getting lost on their travel through the wide expanses. But there was one resident currently asleep in the family wing whose senses were enhanced by his innate Animagus form. Sirius Black sat up straight, eyes wide, sleep gone in an instant.

“Hadrian?”

The name was whispered into the thick darkness of his rooms, eyes needlessly searching the empty bed next to him. He knew he was alone in his rooms just as he knew Hadrian was alone in his assigned guestroom. Or should be at least. There were no more screams and for a moment Sirius wondered if it all had been a dream, only a figment of his imagination. But something was tugging at him, his Grim restlessly prowling and urging him on to check on his wilful mate. Hadrian was so stubborn, insisting on sleeping alone away from the family even though Sirius could see it made him unhappy to do so. Why was he so adamant about this?

Getting up, Sirius shrugged on one of his muggle zip-up jumpers to cover his rapidly cooling skin and started making his way out into the gloomy hallway. For a moment he wondered if he should get Prongs to come along, but his possessiveness wouldn’t let him. So Sirius lit his wand and silently made his way towards the guestrooms, hurrying his steps the further he got until he was running and skidding around corners.

Why had Hadrian been screaming? It could not be an intruder attacking him, right? Lord Potter would know if the wards had been breached and considering that this was one of the oldest family manors in Britain, strong old family magic drenching every inch of the grounds, a breach in the wards was pretty much impossible. Well, at least if it wasn’t a long planned out raid finding any loopholes in the wards and specifically attacking those… But there was no reason for anyone to attack this place or Hadrian, was there?

No, no this was something else and Sirius knew. It was why he didn’t think to alarm anyone else, why he wanted to be the only one getting to Hadrian. No one should see his boyfriend like this. There! Spotting the door to Hadrian’s room, Sirius didn’t knock but barged right in- Only to duck with a shout of surprise as nearly instantly a red light was thrown his way.

“Stop!” He called into the pitch-black room, the stunner having left blotches of flickering light in his vision. “It’s me! Bambi, it’s me!”

He was met with silence and blinking rapidly, Sirius tried to make out his boyfriend’s form in the room. He couldn’t see much of anything and it took him a moment to realise his wand had gone out. There was a gasping breath somewhere to his right and finally Sirius cast another Lumos spell.
Hadrian was hunched against the far wall near the obscured window, half hidden behind curtains and a chair pulled up as cover. As the pale light of Sirius’ wand found the small figure, Sirius felt his heart clench. Hadrian was shivering so much he could see it all across the grand room, skin glistening with cold sweat and eyes huge with the horror he felt. Something was wrong, so very wrong. Sirius couldn’t believe that this was really only one of those nightmares he had witnessed under silencing spells before. Hadrian radiated terror and even though he clearly had aimed his self-defensive stunner at Sirius, his wide eyes seemed unable to truly focus.


He felt like approaching a wild animal, hands raised in surrender yet his wand still ready if he had to deflect another spell. Slowly he closed in on his trembling boyfriend, overly conscious of his every move. More than once he stopped his approach, cautiously trying to evaluate his Bambi’s reaction. He was afraid to scare Hadrian again, but the boy simply cowered in his little hide-away, gasping for breath, eyes red and irritated but wide open still. He had never seen his boyfriend act like this after a nightmare, but then again he hadn’t exactly witnessed many of those. Hadrian was sneaky like that and also never seemed too troubled whenever Sirius invited himself into his bed. He liked to believe Hadrian slept better with him around.

He reached for the chair and carefully pulled it away, freezing on the spot when Hadrian’s eyes snapped towards him. Those huge Elf Owl eyes that now that Sirius thought about it could probably see him much better than he could see Hadrian in the dark… yet they still had a hazy far away look to them. Green vacant eyes made Sirius shudder.

Pulling on the experience of uncounted panic attacks, he ever so slowly settled in front of his boyfriend. A boy who had never felt so deserving of his nickname of Bambi as he did in that very moment. Like a deer in the headlights was the muggle saying, wasn’t it? Sirius rubbed his hands together for a moment to chase away the encroaching chill, absent-mindedly noting the freezing temperatures of the floor, and finally reached out. He half expected some violent reaction, be it physical or magical, but the only indication that Hadrian felt his touch was a small gasp. Sirius took those bird-bone hands into his own, thumb rubbing along the knuckles, before moving up to the inside of Hadrian’s wrists. He could feel the magic thrumming just beneath the skin, panicked like the pulse it ran alongside of.

“Listen to me, Hadrian,” he spoke lowly and with as much calm as he could muster in this situation. “You’re at Potter Manor, you’re with me and Prongs is somewhere around here too. Yesterday you gave me the most thoughtful Christmas present I ever got, remember? Bambi… My Hadrian, you’re fine,” he continued babbling nonsensical soothing things, never looking away from the red rimmed eyes staring blankly back at him.

Sirius lost track of time as he sat there on the cold floor, comforting Hadrian and pushing down the fear creeping up on him. Ever since that scream had woken him he just knew something was up, something more than a nightmare. The awareness didn’t come in some sudden way from one moment to the next. No, it was a slow, barely visible process that Sirius would have missed all together if he hadn’t been watching his boyfriend so closely. So it didn’t come as a surprise when Hadrian finally spoke, eyes still haunted but focused on Sirius, clearly recognising and understanding.

“They killed them all.”

The words were whispered as if he was afraid to say them out loud, as if afraid speaking about it would make it all real. Yet Sirius knew, he just knew, what Hadrian was talking about was not a
simple dream.

“They came after everyone had gone to sleep. They stepped over the presents…” Breath hitched in
the dark and Sirius tugged him closer. “They… they started with the parents. Made the children
watch. Told them it was to prevent them having any more… any more children like them.”

Staring down into Hadrian’s eyes, Sirius tried to make sense of what he was being told. It wasn’t
hard to make the connection, really, they had all followed the Daily Prophet these last weeks, they
had all seen the articles about new attacks. He desperately wanted to believe this was the reason
Hadrian had dreamt what he had, he so wished it was just his subconscious working through the
horrors they had all read about.

“Morsmordre,” was choked out against his shoulder.

And Sirius’ entire world narrowed down to the weight of the boy in his arms. He knew this
incantation. He knew that he shouldn’t know it, too. Knew that only members of the Dark Lord’s
inner circle had the knowledge of it… the knowledge of the incantation that would create the Dark
Mark. He shuddered as he remembered overhearing his father talk to Abraaxas Malfoy who had been
advertising for new members and parading his mark around like it was something to be proud of.
Sirius thought it was like branding cattle.

“Where have you heard this?” He whispered hoarsely into Hadrian’s ear, not trusting his voice to
stay steady if he attempted anything more. Please tell me it was just a coincidence, please tell me it
isn’t-

“They cast it when they were …finished. Over every house.”

Sirius knew then Hadrian hadn’t had only a bad dream. Hadrian had seen something that really
happened or maybe would happen… There was still the hope it had been some kind of foretelling, a
vision. He would rather Hadrian be a Seer than his nightmare be something that already had taken
place.

Harry forced himself to concentrate on the scent of Sirius and the feeling of his warmth surrounding
him. He knew what had happened yet it still shocked him to the core. It hadn’t happened ever since
he had come to the past and he had firmly believed the one time had been because Voldepants had
created another Horcrux. He had so wanted to believe this, had wanted to believe he would never
have to endure those visions again.

But here he was, clammy and cold and bloody scared after witnessing countless tortures and deaths.
Murder. There was nothing that could describe the feeling of utter helplessness as he had to watch,
unable to help or even wake up. After the first few, when the course of the vision became more than
apparent, Harry had tried to close himself off, to hide away in some corner of his mind until it was all
over and he could wake up. But they wouldn’t let him. He couldn’t stop anything from happening,
he couldn’t do anything to help. He couldn’t save them. He couldn’t even close his eyes. If he hadn’t
known better, he would have sworn they knew he was there and made him watch on purpose.

They. Him. He might have said ‘they’ and there definitely had been quite a few Death Eaters, but
Harry wasn’t deluding himself. He knew exactly through whose eyes he had witnessed those
murders. Apparently a younger Tom Riddle did more than sit on some obscene throne and cackle
insanely. But there was no way he was going to tell Sirius he was seeing, experiencing these things
as if he himself enacted them. Harry felt dirty and tainted. Raw.

He sensed more than saw Sirius shifting and then there was an arm underneath him, supporting his
weight as he was being lifted. Any other time Harry would have protested vehemently being carried
like a small child, but right now he couldn’t really find it in himself to care all that much. This was Sirius and Harry was suddenly so, so tired…

He was being tucked into bed, the sheets cold and brushing along his oversensitive skin. He could still see those children, their eyes as they were forced to watch the torture of their parents. There had been rounds of _Crucios_ and other nasty hexes with even nastier results and those screams… In the end death had seemed like mercy to those parents, but Harry couldn’t look away from the eyes of their children, horrified, pleading, terrified. And empty at last.

Faintly he registered Sirius calling and talking to a house-elf. Then there was movement that jarred him just enough to blink eyes open he hadn’t realised were closed. Sirius was climbing into bed with him, pulling him close again.

“I sent for Lord Potter,” a voice quietly spoke into his ear. “I know you won’t want to talk about it, but… please just let him check you over?” It was so strange to hear Sirius talk like this, nearly begging, insecure. Harry realised then he must have scared his boyfriend horribly.

Contrary to his lovely wife, Lord Fleamont Henry Potter was a morning person. He had no problems whatsoever to get up with the first rays of sunlight to do a routinely check on the wards, getting a brief report from the head house-elf and then going on a lengthy walk across his properties. He would enjoy the exercise and fresh air even though he no longer was as fit as he used to be. He was advancing in age after all.

He was not, though, a person that liked to be disturbed during the night. So when one of the many elves resident at his Cornwall manor popped into his bedroom, squeaking at what seemed to be the top of its lungs, he was not amused. It wasn’t really encouraging that his beloved wife simply gave a soft sigh and turned over. She then proceeded to utterly ignore her surroundings, including her husband, and the excited house-elf was still squeaking. In truth though only a few seconds had passed before he felt himself slip into the role of Lord Potter and his old duellist instincts snapped to attention. The noisy house-elf was not supposed to be there without a really good reason and the head of Potter House knew his elves would never bother him needlessly. Though Potter elves were treated with respect and corporeal punishments were frowned upon severely, the elves bound to the Potters were known to be especially efficient. He liked to believe their efficiency came with true loyalty instead of the bond. Lord Potter also knew they were devoted and suspected the little creatures were aware of their brethren’s lacking treatment in most wizarding households. So yes, one of them being there in the middle of the night was a reason for concern.

“Big Boss Master,” the house elf, Dippy, one of the young ones, he noted, was starting up again, “Master Potter, Sir,” Dippy was hopping in place now, “Little Master’s friend be hurt. Serious Little Master be calling for your help.”

It took a moment to decipher what exactly the bouncy creature was telling him. The title of ‘Little Master’ had always been James’, but considering that there were two other boys currently staying at the manor, Lord Potter was floundering a moment over the question who exactly ‘Little Master’s friend’ was meant to be. After a moment he decided it must be Hadrian the elf was talking about. He snorted at the name the elves had given to Sirius from the moment he had been welcomed permanently in the Potter household. Though Sirius was most likely very smug about the ‘serious’ naming, there couldn’t have been a lesser fitting title in Lord Potter’s opinion.

Finally the words fully registered and he was out of bed and instructing the house-elf to get him the Potions first aid kit before following the directions to the guestrooms. Hadrian was hurt and Sirius was calling for help. In the middle of the night. While hurrying through the now lit corridors, Lord Potter sent his magic out to check on the wards just to be on the safe side. Obviously the elf would
have mentioned it if the wards had been breached, but Dippy was still young and he would rather be safe than sorry.

No breach was found, the wards' echoing response declaring the grounds and house clear. They also informed him, the head of house, about the current position of any inhabitants. Euphemia was still where he had left her, securely tucked away in their bedchambers, and his son too seemed to be asleep in his rooms. Sirius and the magical presence of the newest addition to the house were both together in the room assigned to Hadrian. After having found the small boy in one of the remote sitting rooms yesterday, Lord Potter was slightly surprised at that, but didn’t get to think about it more as the scene he came upon immediately took up all of his thought processes. A scene that had him switching quite abruptly back to being ‘just Fleamont’ instead of ‘Lord Potter’.

Sirius and Hadrian were on the bed, together. No, he corrected himself, Hadrian was tucked in bed, wrapped up in sheets and cuddled close to Sirius lying next to him. Sirius, who had a very obviously possessive grip on the small boy. As Fleamont entered the room, the lights sprung to life, though there was no fireplace to help warm up the space that felt decidedly chilly. He absent-mindedly noted how he would never have noticed this if he hadn’t been aware of Hadrian’s dislike of the cold.

Both boys were pale, Hadrian more so, though not in his usual way. What Fleamont could see of his skin appeared sickly, but he would need to get a better look at him to be sure. The boy was hiding his face in Sirius’ shoulder whose eyes had snapped over to him the second he entered the room. There was something haunted in those typical Black eyes, a trademark sign of the famed good looks of that house. That stare alone made Fleamont forget about the implications of the scene in front of him.

“What happened?” He asked, already moving to discard the blankets Hadrian was huddled in. “Give me as many details as possible.”

Though he noted the aborted movement Sirius made when he reached out to free Hadrian from his covers, he pushed it away for the moment, focusing on the task at hand. Getting Sirius to tell him in detail what was going on was as much helpful for him as it was for Sirius. Keeping him talking would give him a sense of being helpful when otherwise he might have panicked.

“Hadrian?” Fleamont asked, gently touching the shoulder that felt disturbingly fragile beneath his touch. There was no verbal response though the boy’s eyes snapped open and he was met with a sorrowful look that tugged at something in his chest.

He was listing every detail he could remember, from the moment the scream had woken him up to each and every word Hadrian had said to him, but Sirius’ eyes never left his boyfriend. He watched as Lord Potter carefully looked him over and had to consciously rein his Grim in when the man he considered an adoptive father went to touch his mate. It was only the absolute trust that Lord Potter was only trying to help Hadrian which made it possible, his Animagus too agitated and worried to accept anything less.

Right now the head of Potter House was running his wand down the unresponsive form of Hadrian and Sirius balled his hands into fists to keep from touching him. It would screw with the diagnostic spell and then he would only have to wait longer until he could gather Hadrian up in his arms again. Hadrian, who was watching everything with a distant kind of interest, but never speaking up…

“His body temperature is a bit too low,” Lord Potter quietly relayed the results of his scan as they came in, “No apparent injuries. He is exhausted and a little underweight, though not to a dangerous degree.” He sighed and smoothed the sweaty black locks back from Hadrian’s face. “And considering his lack of response and general heart rate I would say he is suffering from some kind of shock, though I am the first to admit I am not a healer.”
With those words a tension was suddenly leaving Sirius’ muscles he hadn’t even been aware was there. Hadrian would be alright, that was the most important thing right now. Any really dangerous complication would have showed up during the diagnostic. Taking a deep breath, he tucked the blankets around the slender form again, making eye contact but not expecting any verbal response.

“You heard that, Bambi? You’re alright, everything’s gonna be okay.” He ignored the other man in the room and concentrated on those drooping green eyes. “Just go back to sleep,” he whispered, carding his fingers through the dark hair and feather and watching until the forest vanished behind closed lids. Only then did he acknowledge Lord Potter again who just finished weaving a warming charm over Hadrian’s blanket before gesturing to the door.

“Tell me about his dream again,” he said solemnly the moment they were standing in the hallway. “Everything you remember.”

Sirius nodded, trying to remember if he had forgotten about anything, while watching Lord Potter instruct a house-elf bearing a Potions kit to notify him the moment Hadrian woke up. They were well on their way to Lord Potter’s study before Sirius felt sure enough of his words.

“Basically he said families were killed, parents and children,” he retold with a bitter edge to his voice. “Though he didn’t exactly mention them, I’m pretty sure he meant Death Eater attacks. He… he said they cast the Dark Mark.”

Whatever Lord Potter had to say to that particular detail went unheard as they entered the study. The room was a mass of fluttering and hooting as an influx of owls all tried to deliver their burden first.

Chapter End Notes

QUESTION!

You might have noticed me hinting more and more at Harry’s ever growing hair. I thought that being with the Dursleys would most likely not exactly help him take care of his hair and then it's months ago already that he came to the past. His hair is probably rather shaggy at the moment.

So! Would you like him to:

A: grow it out as in reeeeeally long
(and only get it trimmed or something)

or

B: have it cut, probably by Lady Potter 'cause of his feathers
(Or he could go to a magical hairdresser/barber and I could write a nasty scene with lots of prejudice concerning creatures.)
In which there are not enough berries

Chapter Notes

With a little wink at Koi19. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

For a moment Sirius felt slightly disoriented with all the fluttering around. There were at least half a dozen owls in Lord Potter’s study and all of them were currently trying to deliver their burden to the owner of said study. If he hadn’t been so shaken up about the whole thing with Hadrian, Sirius would have laughed at the sight of the tall lord standing amidst all the determined birds blinking confusedly.

After a moment, Lord Potter jerked a little in place and then took control of the situation once again. With the ease of long years of experience he directed the owls to all sit in a line on his huge desk, before he went to relieve the first one, a stern looking barn owl, from its burden.

“Harfang…?”

Sirius heard his adoptive father mutter while reading the scroll. He could see it was a hastily scribbled note, but the parchment used was heavy and of good quality. The same went for the missives he could see the other owls carrying, so who ever was trying to contact Lord Potter was not of the stingy sort.

Shivering slightly in the cool night air, Sirius watched for a moment longer as the head of House Potter went through his post, but soon his thoughts drifted back to his boyfriend. He didn’t like leaving Hadrian alone, especially not right now. He wanted to crawl into bed with him and warm him up, he wanted to be there if Hadrian woke up or had another nightmare. Sirius was just drifting over to where the huge Potter family tree decorated a whole wall when Lord Potter’s shout of surprised horror drew his attention.

“It cannot be…,” he hoarsely denied before looking up, his hazel gaze landing on Sirius. Now, that was interesting.

“What, Sir?” Sirius asked, moving closer.

It was a testament of how shocked Lord Potter was that he did not reprimand Sirius for his too formal address. He watched as the tall man took a few deep breaths, his hands running through his hair in a gesture reminiscent of James (and funnily enough Hadrian), never looking away.

“These are missives from a few friends and Ministry employees,” Lord Potter said, still staring back at Sirius with an unreadable expression. “Harfang Longbottom, Septimus Weasley… even the infamous Prewett twins. Sirius, son, they are all speaking of attacks on the homes of Muggleborn students.”

Sirius’ eyes went wide at the implications.

James sighed dramatically. Here he was hanging in the library throwing random pieces of parchment
into the fireplace. On Boxing Day! That was not how it was supposed to be. He was frankly bored out of his mind. Leaning back on his hands, James stared at the flames pensively. It was true, he was bored, but it wasn’t like he couldn’t have done anything against it. He was at his favourite mansion, the grounds were full of ways to occupy your mind. But he couldn’t because his mind was stuck on a few things he wished he could just forget while at the same time it felt wrong to act as if they weren’t happening.

Pads was up in Hadrian’s room, once again refusing to leave his side until he woke up. His dad was out and about, running around who knows where and meeting his acquaintances. And well, his mother was so worried that she had tired herself out around noon and had gone to take a nap. So here James was, afraid to think about the attacks until he knew who exactly had been targeted, but feeling sick to the stomach for wanting to act as if nothing was wrong. Sure, he knew it was a self-defensive mechanism. He could practically hear Moony in the back of his head telling him exactly that and listing facts as he went. Not that it made anything better.

He sighed again.

Seven attacks, seven families and all of them including Muggleborns. Muggleborn. Like Lily— not thinking about it, not damn thinking about it! He had managed to eavesdrop on one of his father’s floo conversations that morning, so James knew a few details. He knew no one had survived. He knew over each massacre there had been the Dark Mark cast into the sky. He knew the aurors had found a kind of tracer on some of the bodies which incidentally had been the bodies of the Muggleborns that already were students at Hogwarts. Students he knew, though he had yet to hear the names.

He had a theory on that one, a theory that was raising the hairs on his neck.

Because James could imagine just the place and time when those tracers had been placed on the muggleborn students. His thoughts wandered back to a very cold morning, a crowded platform, and a freezing little Elf Owl. They had been waiting way too long on the Hogwarts Express back then and with all those students around it would have been easy to mark a few with the tracers that would essentially lead the Death Eaters to their homes.

He shuddered at the implications. To mark someone in that thick a crowd you would have to be part of that crowd. And only a student or teacher would have been able to move around without raising suspicion. Then there was Hadrian and his obvious involvement that resulted in those horrible dreams Pads had told him about that morning. James shuddered again, shifting in place. Yep, he was bored, that was much better to concentrate on.

Hadrian didn’t wake until well into the day. Sirius didn’t mind, at least not after he had assured himself his boyfriend was just sleeping. After a night like that he probably needed the rest, that dream couldn’t have been restful at all.

Lying on the bed next to the sleeping boy, Sirius tried to come to terms with everything that had happened. Waking up to Hadrian screaming, coaching him through the terror after the dream, getting him checked out, and finally realising that it hadn’t been a simple dream at all. Hadrian had witnessed the attacks on the muggleborn students and their families in his sleep. The thought was terrifying. And it didn’t end there.

The question that continued on a loop inside Sirius’ head was: How? How was it possible, how had Hadrian’s dream-self been drawn to those scenes of terror and then why? How and why and more importantly: What could be done to prevent it from happening again?
Staring at the pale face with cheeks slightly pinked from sleep, Sirius couldn’t help but fervently wish for the power to protect Hadrian from whoever had done that. Sirius was far from dumb. He realised that things like this didn’t just happen, not even with magic. There was a reason for it and that reason had to origin from a person. Someone had done something to Hadrian that made him see these things in his dreams. But to help him, to stop it from happening again, Sirius would have to find out if it was something from his past or if Hadrian was just as surprised by it as he was.

A soft touch to his face brought Sirius’ attention to the person occupying his thoughts. Hadrian had woken up and was now looking at him with a concerned frown marring his (in Sirius’ humble opinion) way too gorgeous features.

“Hey,” Sirius greeted softly, peering closely into those green eyes.

Hadrian looked much better than he had last night, the paleness of his skin more natural now and the haunted flat look seemingly absent.

“Hey,” his boyfriend returned the greeting, voice a tad bit husky from sleep. It was the nice kind of husky, an edge of roughness that sent delightful shivers down Sirius’ spine. “Are you alright?”

That had Sirius blink.

“You’re asking *me*?”

He couldn’t help the rather incredulous tone of his voice, really. Here they were lying in bed after a night full of horrors that had taken their toll on Hadrian in probably more ways than Sirius could even imagine and the first thing he did was asking him…? This time Hadrian blinked.

“Yes,” he said, though it sounded more like a question and his nose wrinkled in confusion – which just about made Sirius groan. Too adorable.

“Bambi, you were out like a light ever since Lord Potter looked you over,” he tried again, steadfastly NOT concentrating on the apparent cuteness right in front of him.

Not that it helped, it only made him concentrate on other details, like how the sunlight streaming in from the window made Hadrian’s skin glow, or…

“Oh,” was his whispered answer.

Then he watched as Hadrian sat up and looked around, his hair standing up in all directions and the tips of his feathers peeking out of the mess. The light catching in them made those magical sparks appear once more and Sirius found himself wondering if the feathers Hadrian had gifted him still did the same thing. Enchanted, he reached out and stroked his finger along one of the slightly ruffled feathers. He had done so before when he stroked Hadrian’s hair, but either his boyfriend had been asleep/unconscious in those situations or it had only been a playful little ruffle in passing. Apparently it was a good thing he did so now without any audience there to see Hadrian’s reaction.

There was a moan. A soft one, mind you, barely audible, but definitely there. There was a shudder as well. And one of those lovely blushes started creeping up from Hadrian’s shirt collar. And then Sirius’ boyfriend, that tended to alternate between too damn adorable and gorgeous without even noticing, leant into the touch of his hand. It was a clear invitation in Sirius’ books. Well, damn.

Probably a good thing that the house-elf tasked with watching Hadrian’s sleep popped into the room at that moment, announcing that ‘Little Master’s friend’ needed to eat.
They had wanted to visit Diagon Alley today, but now no one really was feeling up to the trip. Lady Potter even made it clear she would not allow them to leave on their own, so it was decided that when they finally went Lord Potter would accompany them. Not that that would happen any time soon now since Lord Potter was in and out of the manor, visiting with other lords and important peacocks, and pacing his study whenever he was in. And during one of those more hectic ‘ins’ of the head of house, Harry had managed to slip away.

Now he was wandering the vast grounds belonging to the Potter estates, trying to disconnect himself from everything for a few precious moments. Harry had known this time would come, though he honestly had hoped for a few more years of reprieve from the constant tugging at his person and the war mongering all around. Maybe he had hoped to be able to finish his schooling this time around. But who was he kidding, he had already signed himself up for Dumbledore’s training at the very first mention of it, too grateful that he would be allowed to actually learn how to fight. Why he hadn’t been allowed when being the Boy-Who-Lived was beyond him, though it probably had to do with Dumbledore’s greater scheme.

Harry wasn’t as innocently oblivious to the machinations of the headmaster as he used to be, fifth year had changed a lot, but he still truly believed the old man did what he thought was best for the ‘Greater Good’. As long as one was part of that ‘Greater Good’, all was well – only Harry had always seemed to fall through the cracks. Still, if you asked him, it was entirely possible that what Dumbledore did was really needed, though Harry now was a lot more critical and observant than he had been in the past… er… future. Harry was no longer a blindly following sheep, yet he was willingly moving himself into the position of pawn. A weapon. The difference, the one important little change, was that he had decided on his own to become the headmaster’s weapon.

Though, what no one, not even the Marauders, knew as of yet: Harry did not intend to bind himself to any obligations. He would take the training gladly, he would do his best to be prepared for the war that would soon step out of the proverbial shadows, and then he would proceed to fight the Dark with the knowledge he had brought with him from the future. Combined with what he had gleaned from the vision when Voldemort created his newest Horcrux, Nagini, Harry believed he could have a fighting chance. At least he would so long as his existence stayed a secret to the Dark Lord – which had become a far greater problem since last night. How long would it take a younger, probably saner Tom Riddle to notice the little involuntary spy in his head? Yet, there would not be the same sense of obligation, because no one knew Harry used to be the Boy-Who-Lived, no one had any reason to stylize him into an icon once again. He would fight, yes, but the wizarding populace would have no excuse to hide behind him once again. Perhaps without a prophesied saviour they would actually step up and fight for themselves instead of expecting an untrained child to do so.

Closing his eyes, Harry plopped down beneath one of the palm trees that strangely enough grew in the vast gardens of Potter Manor. He strongly suspected a magical type. Looking to the east, he watched the crowns of the more regular trees of the forest sway in the constant winds from the nearby coast and idly wondered if those woods housed some of the fabled Pixies. Something about that forest suggested magic in its depth, though Harry wasn’t able to actually pin down what exactly caused the feeling.

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Closing his eyes, Harry listened to the sounds around him. There was the wind from the open sea, a bit softer here in the lee of the grand manor than it had been in front of the building. Even though it was winter he could clearly hear some animal life around him. A few birds making nearby bushes rustle in their search for food and he swore he had seen a small fox skulking in the distant shadows between the greenhouses. He had no idea if foxes were even native in this region, but with that strange and probably magical forest nearby he wouldn’t be surprised if it was more than a mundane fox.
Breathing deeply, Harry attempted to clear his mind. Occlumency wasn’t by far an ability he had accomplished, in fact he was pretty sure he never even managed the first stage of ‘clearing one’s mind’ completely, but nowadays trying it gave Harry a sense of protection, even if it might only be an imagined protection. He would search out a quiet remote place and proceed to lower himself into a meditative kind of state by breathing evenly and deeply and concentrating only on the beating of his heart.

Sadly, it wasn’t to be after the events of last night. In fact, Harry’s senses seemed to be intent on getting ever sharper and observant the more he attempted to dive into is meditative state. He found himself focusing on pretty much everything but his heartbeat, even on that distinct shift in the air that told him that it would snow soon. Maybe tonight. It wasn’t until he felt someone approaching that Harry opened his eyes again. There was no way he could meditate with someone else around.

Sirius had been looking for his boyfriend for a while (read: any longer and he would be asking Lord Potter to locate his Elf Owl for him) when he finally spotted the boy in the tropical part of the gardens. The light was already waning and he thought he could hear the faint hoots of owls in the nearby forest. He vaguely recalled Lady Potter once telling him that those woods housed a magical breed of owl which considering what he now knew about the creature heritage of the Potters was a fascinating coincidence.

Hadrian was sitting beneath one of the palm trees, looking a cross between relaxation and annoyance, if that was even possible. Somehow Sirius got the distinct impression Hadrian was trying to accomplish something but wasn’t quite succeeding. He hadn’t even walked half of the way through the various greens when he saw his boyfriend’s eyes snapping open. He hadn’t been spotted, Hadrian wasn’t even looking in his direction, yet Sirius simply knew his presence was no longer a secret.

It took him a moment to realise he hadn’t camouflaged his magical signature like he usually did. He felt so at ease in this house, safe and protected, that he hadn’t even noticed his slacking vigilance. There was just no need here where he was with chosen family and safe from those that weren’t. Though, Hadrian noticing his presence simply by his magical signature was an impressive (and rather telling) feat in itself. As if listening in on his thoughts, Hadrian’s deep forest eyes focused on him a second later. Sirius felt the instant draw, the tug, the need to get closer. It was something he only ever fought when afraid that him losing control would scare Hadrian. It was just too easy to get lost in those eyes… and by Gryffindor’s saggy balls, he sounded mushier than a Hufflepuff on sugar high!

Never breaking eye contact, Sirius walked the rest of the way to his boyfriend’s not so hidden hide-away before sitting down gracefully. From here he could see Hadrian’s view consisted mainly of the greenhouses in the distance to one side and the forest on the other with the manor in the west. It was a strategically useful spot, he realised, giving Hadrian the possibility to notice anyone approaching long before they would reach spellfire vicinity. The only downside was the maze at his back, though one would have to walk completely around the grand structure to reach Hadrian which again was an advantage. Not that there was a need to be this guarded here. It was probably an ingrained habit, just like those frighteningly fast reflexes and awareness of his surroundings.

“It’s nice out here,” Hadrian spoke up, voice toned down as if unwilling to disturb the silence. “Peaceful.”

Sirius nodded, looking away from the landscape and over at his boyfriend. Those words just proved his speculations right.
“Things have calmed down inside,” he said offhandedly, pitching his voice to match Hadrian’s need for quiet. “I’m tasked to collect you to ensure ‘dear young Hadrian’ is eating enough,” he added with a wink.

They needed to get back soon anyway even if he hadn’t exactly been tasked with finding Hadrian. He knew Lady Potter would worry herself sick if they weren’t back in her sight at dark. The day’s events had been keeping her on edge enough as it was. Hadrian took a deep breath before nodding and getting up. Sirius made a note to take him out into the forest soon and not only to explore. They hadn’t had the chance for a proper date yet and the notion just rubbed him the wrong way. He wanted to take Hadrian out, he wanted to spoil and court him and generally do it the right way.

They wandered back through the gardens, sneaking peeks at each other from time to time though Sirius wasn’t bothering to hide his glances. He was appreciating the view and had no qualms to let it be known. They reached the steps up to one of the side entrances just as the sun went down behind the horizon and Sirius thought it couldn’t be timed any better. Sometimes clichés had their use after all.

The wind was blowing Hadrian’s hair around his head, much stronger now that they were no longer at the lee side of the manor. Reaching out, he stopped his boyfriend from entering just yet and gave a small smile when those huge eyes met his questioningly. Smile sharpening into a smirk and arm sneaking around Hadrian’s small waist, Sirius pointed up with his free hand.

The room was warm, but not stifling and neither lord nor lady was currently present.

“There’s a limit to it, you know,” James drawled casually from where he sat near one of the windows playing a lonely game of chess. “The amount of kissing that’s allowed under one sprig of mistletoe, I mean.” He looked up at them with a knowing smirk, causing Hadrian to blush a cherry red and Sirius to send his best mate a scrutinising glare. James just cleared his throat and adopted an obviously Remus influenced lecturing tone of voice: “For each kiss a berry must be removed and once all the berries are gone,” here he waggled his eyebrows, “No more snogging!”

Chapter End Notes

So this was a bit of an inbetween chapter before we move on to the Diagon Alley ‘arc’ (which is kinda an arc in an arc, but hey).

It looks like most of you want Harry to grow his hair out which is alright with me, I don’t exactly have a preference. But you know me, I’m going to write it with a bit of a twist (and not necessarily in the next chapter) to make the long hair more acceptable for those who really did not like the idea. ;}
In which Harry smells

Chapter Notes

Okay so... I actually like the Harry Potter goblins but needed them to be rather nasty for the story. It's pretty much like with the Slytherins who I have a liking for too, but used as cliché villains anyway. 
Enjoy a bit more clueless Harry!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The room was part of one of the tower-esque structures of the manor, giving one of its sides a half-moon shape and allowing for an even grander impression. Said half-moon was lined with heavy bookcases from floor to ceiling, containing a more private collection than the library. Across from this half circular structure a whole wall was dominated by a family tree, names and dates in script rolling across its surface, outlining generations upon generations of Potters, former Peverells. And right there, cast into ominous flickering shadows by the dim light of nearly burned down candles, was written a new name.

The owner of the room, one Lord Fleamont Henry Potter, had been wearily working through the last correspondence of the day when he felt suddenly compelled to get up from behind his huge desk and walk over to his family tapestry. It was an odd urge, really, especially considering the late hour and bad lighting and Lord Potter’s tired eyes. But here he was now, standing in front of the large tapestry and staring rather confounded at the name outlined in clear black letters.

Hadrian Aloysius Moore

1976

It might have been the exhaustion or maybe the sheer lack of logic in the location of the name and its connection to the rest of the family... but Fleamont found himself snorting at the initials of his newest family member. H.A.M.

It was the 27th December and they would finally, finally, finally visit Diagon Alley. Sirius had been looking forward to that trip for a while now, feeling unexplainably excited about the prospect of going there with his boyfriend. Even if it would be with escort protection courtesy of Lord Potter. By the time they all congregated in the Floo Room he was nearly vibrating on the spot.

Originally today should have been the day Lord Potter would talk to Hadrian about his Elf Owl heritage. The Potters had wanted to wait until after the actual holiday to introduce the boy to the little bits and pieces the family had collected about the creature inheritance. But with the attacks in the night before Boxing Day things had been too hectic and all around tense to sit down and discuss something so delicate. Not to mention that no one had addressed the fact Hadrian had been dreaming of said attacks as of yet. So instead they would be going out and let loose before tackling the complicated issue of Hadrian’s heritage tomorrow. Not that the elder Potters knew the actual extent of that issue.

Lady Potter was not happy about them leaving and she wasn’t holding back on making her opinion on the matter known – even now. Sirius, vibrating on the spot as he was, would have been slightly
annoyed with her continued attempts, but looking at Hadrian had him reconsidering. And just like that he found himself next to his boyfriend, making very sure his creature traits were truly hidden. He checked that all feathers vanished beneath the new warm hat and batted Hadrian’s hands away when he tried to interfere. Sirius would not risk discovery, not when it was the boy he loved on the line.

After a moment, Hadrian simply huffed and let Sirius fuss over him.

Harry eyed the fireplace warily. Magical ways of travelling, apart from flying, never sat right with him and he just knew he would end up on his bum this time, too. He was listening to Lady Potter coaxing promises of carefulness out of her husband and son while Sirius continued to pat at him. He wasn’t sure what his boyfriend was doing, but apparently it was important to Sirius. With a sigh, Harry let him fuss, his thoughts lingering on James as he remembered last night.

He had been dozing in Sirius’ arms listening to the soothing sounds of a heartbeat near his own, a low crackling fire across the room and relaxed breathing. It was utterly calming and he was about to completely drift off when the door silently swung open.

Harry only noticed because the magical signature made itself known. Had there been more people around like it was the case at Hogwarts or in crowds, Harry wouldn’t have noticed the appearance of another, but as he and Sirius were alone in the spacious suite… He felt his boyfriend react instantly, though Sirius made sure not to jostle Harry. All his muscles went taut, but then it took only a second for him to relax again as he recognised his best mate. James closed the door behind him just as silently as he had opened it and came on socked feet over to the huge bed.

“Prongs?”

Sirius’ voice was low, barely a whisper and Harry in his dozing state thought he probably didn’t want to wake Harry. Keeping his eyes shut, Harry tried to tune them out as he didn’t want to encroach on their privacy. That was until he heard a sound that wasn’t quite a sob yet. Slightly ragged breathing that didn’t originate from the chest Harry was lying on drifted over to him and he couldn’t help but notice the lack of response. Something was wrong.

“Prongs, what…?”

“The attacks,” James’ said, voice hoarse. “Dad finally got the names a-and-”

This time Harry’s mushy mind definitely identified a sob and Sirius beneath him shifted immediately. He was gently laid down on the comfortable cushions and then there was movement. Harry registered the rustling of clothes and then the ragged breathing sounded a lot more muffled.

“Who?” Sirius’ voice sounded calm and detached and Harry fought to keep motionless, not wanting to disturb what clearly was a very private moment between the two friends.

“Cole, Smith, Thompson… all M-muggleborns, but not her,” James rasped. “Pads,” he nearly gasped the nickname, “Is it wrong that I’m just so… so glad?”

“Oh Jamie,” is boyfriend said and after that Harry only heard soothing whispers. He had fallen asleep to the sounds of Sirius comforting James.

There was a thud and then a cloud of ash and dust billowed out of the fireplace at the Leaky Cauldron. Sirius stared for a moment perplexed at the crumpled coughing form of his boyfriend before his mind caught up with what he was seeing. He couldn’t help but snicker at the image his
little love was making and from the unrestrained laughter of Prongs and sudden sneezing of Lord Potter he could hear behind him, he was not the only one amused.

“That’s definitely an entrance there,” Sirius said between chuckles, reaching out to help Hadrian up.

He was met with a disgruntled stare that really only enhanced the hilarity of the scene. Hadrian had smudges of ash and soot clinging to his face and clothes, standing out against the paleness. With a smirk Sirius drew his wand and swiftly got rid of the dirt, though he didn’t let the again pristine state of his boyfriend stop him from touching his cheek. Under the pretence of clearing away a last speck of dust he stroked his thumb over Hadrian’s cheekbone, relishing in the instant light flush following his touch.

“Ready, boys?”

Lord Potter’s voice interrupted the moment and Sirius suppressed a sigh. The head of House Potter was on his best way to become as much of a cockblock as Prongs. Though, thinking back to yesterday evening, he shouldn’t be all that surprised.

Sirius’ gaze was lingering on Hadrian’s retreating form as he followed Lady Potter to the solarium, the lady of the house talking animatedly about some of the plants she had acquired lately. He was aware of the eyes on him, had been aware of them following him throughout the evening, scrutinising his every action around Hadrian. So he was not really all that surprised when Lord Potter cleared his throat, clearly expecting attention.

Sirius glanced over at Prongs who had been lounging across the couch near him and was now sitting up, obviously feeling the change in atmosphere. Lord Potter was sitting regally in one of the elaborate armchairs his feet no longer propped up in the low stool in front of him as they had been until a few minutes ago. He sat there, staring into the fire, frowning thoughtfully for long moments, the flames dancing merrily in the huge fireplace of the family room. Then, when Sirius was just about to wonder if he had misinterpreted the signs, Lord Potter looked over at them, eyes focusing mainly on him.

“I did not say anything as Hadrian did not seem aware of the meaning…,” he started before stopping to clear his throat again and his voice took on a more formal tone as he continued. “As I am sure you have been educated on the matter,” he said, intently watching Sirius with his hazel eyes so reminiscent of his son’s, “I will only ask once out of principle.” He took a deep breath, gaze shortly straying to James before returning to Sirius. “You do realise that a dagger is an often used opening gift for a courting period, yes?”

Sirius heard the small sound his best mate was making and realised Prongs had only now connected the dots. Sure, as a pureblood heir he obviously would have been educated on courting rituals and the like, but a dagger was more often than not used among darker circles as the gift that indicated one’s intentions of courting. As a matter of fact, Sirius probably should have asked James for his approval, after all it was his kid he intended to pursue. But then again, Prongs already had given him kind of permission, though his best mate probably only thought of dating rather than courting. Courting, when accepted, would either end in marriage or a blood feud. In this case, though, it was hard to determine who a blood feud would include as Hadrian’s heritage still remained unknown.

“There’s no one else I’d want to be bound to,” Sirius said sincerely into the ensuing silence, “But we all know that my …parents won’t care about my opinion on the matter.” He sighed. “As I’m no longer in their grasp I won’t even be informed until after they secure a marriage contract for me. I may be of age now, but I’m still under the jurisdiction of House Black, my father’s jurisdiction.”
said bitterly. Living with the Potters he might be, but by blood he was still a Black. And at least as of yet he had not been disowned or even stripped of the name completely. “If he decided to enter me into such a contract, there wouldn’t be anything I could do about it. But if I already were to be courting…”

He trailed off, wondering if they would think he only intended to court Hadrian to save himself from being trapped in a contract with some unknown pureblood bint. It was true, he wouldn’t be courting anyone now if it weren’t for that threat, but if Hadrian granted him the chance it would be him Sirius would be courting in a few years from now anyway. There was no one else he ever would want to be with.

“…Then Magic won’t recognise you as available to be entered into any contract intended to end in marriage,” Lord Potter finished his sentence. “I understand your situation, son, but I have to ask: Are you aware of the gravity of such a decision and the responsibility you are taking on with a courtship?”

Sirius didn’t need to think about his answer. He had done his thinking and he was sure, more than sure actually. He caught Lord Potter’s gaze with his own and nodded once. The reaction he got was a deep sigh and slow nod, James next to him not saying anything, sitting absolutely still.

“Then I have only one last question for you, Sirius.” Lord Potter actually looked uncomfortable for a moment and his gaze strayed back to the fire. He was even shifting slightly in his place, hand clenching and unclenching restlessly on his powerful thigh. “As you know, Hadrian is not completely human…”

Sirius couldn’t help the instant tensing. Of course he knew that and he also knew Lord Potter wasn’t trying to use that fact to talk him out of his decision. No, this was about something else.

“As an Elf Owl Hadrian has more than special eyesight and a few extra appendages at his disposal and…” And Sirius caught on. He couldn’t help the rush of indignant anger.

“I’m fully aware of the allure, Sir,” he bit out. “I’m aware of its effects and I’ve accepted the implications. It doesn’t matter. I’d have come to love Hadrian this way sooner or later anyway,” he inhaled deeply and added: “There was no way around it.”

To be honest, Sirius had expected some more intense watching after that conversation, but Lord Potter’s behaviour felt different from last night. As if something had changed in the few hours since their talk that made him more concerned about Hadrian than he had been before. Or, maybe not exactly more concerned, but somehow… more involved in the matter, maybe? Until now Sirius had only wooed Hadrian, but courting was way more serious, pun not intended. It was meant to culminate in marriage which in turn was meant to last a lifetime – divorce in the Wizarding World was still not the done thing, though, technically it was a possibility. Now he only needed to make sure Hadrian truly understood what he was about to do.

As they were trudging out of the Leaky Cauldron and into Diagon Alley, Harry felt Sirius’ eyes on him, or more specifically on his cloak. He was wearing the standard issue cloak Hogwarts had provided him with at the beginning of term. And he knew all too well that it was not up to his boyfriend’s expectations. Oh it was warm and capable, but that was just it: It was reasonable and purposeful, not fashionable or even made out of any extravagant material. Harry did not mind as it was more than he had had as a child. The cloak was keeping him warm, it fulfilled its purpose, and had even been new when given to him. Sadly Sirius was sure to rectify that slight to his fashion sense the moment he got a chance. And Harry was not ignorant to the equally calculating and
plotting gleam he had noticed in Lady Potter’s eyes earlier either. He just knew he was going to end up on another needless shopping spree soon.

But before any of that could happen, they would have to visit Gringott’s.

Making their way through the alley, Harry mentally compared what he saw to how he remembered it being in the future. Even though no shops were boarded up or anything along those lines, the people moving around seemed not completely at ease. Yes, there were crowds and even families and everyone seemed intent on enjoying themselves, but Harry got the distinct feeling the atmosphere was a bit... strained. And then of course there were the warning posters in some of the shops’ windows, exclaiming about precautions one should take to not fall prey to the strange rising dark forces. Not one Harry saw explicitly mentioned Tom Riddle, or rather Voldemort, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named-Because-It-Was-So-Much-Easier-To-Hyphen-Ridiculous-Word-Strings.

With a shudder Harry realised he really shouldn’t be surprised by the pensive atmosphere or the lurking fear. It had not been two whole days since those attacks on the muggleborn families, the massacres. A hand in his made him look up into Sirius’ face and he smiled weakly at the warmth he saw there.

It was a few shops away from the looming white building of the wizarding bank that Sirius noticed a sudden change in Lord Potter’s countenance. They had all been chatting pleasantly amongst their group, but now the tall lord stopped and beckoned them over into one of the smaller alleys leading away from the main shopping mile. With a frown Sirius tugged his boyfriend close and followed his best mate’s father into the shadows.

“Now,” Lord Potter spoke up when they reached a spot just out of direct view of the main alley, “I need you all to keep close to me, especially you, Hadrian.” He looked sternly down at the boy who returned the look with a confused little frown. “We are already a bit late for our scheduled meeting and I promise to explain later, but for now… James, Sirius.” His tone of voice demanded immediate focus. “Keep him between the two of you at all times inside there.” He indicated Gringott’s.

“Hadrian, please be patient with us. I will explain, I promise. Stay with me and never, under no circumstance, risk being alone with a Goblin.”

Sirius could see questions written all over Hadrian’s face and remembered the boy’s absolute lack of knowledge concerning the treatment of certain creatures in society. To be honest, he hadn’t thought about it himself, had only thought to hide Hadrian’s telling features from the wizards, but there was a very good reason to keep Hadrian away from any Goblins. The mean little buggers loved their gold and other treasures or to make it precise: They loved profit. And what better way to make some decent profit than sell rare creature properties to the highest bidder? He couldn’t help the tightening of his hand around Hadrian’s.

Harry didn’t quite get what this was all about. Why should he keep away from any Goblin?

Sure, they weren’t the most pleasant race to be around, but so were many wizards. Harry honestly couldn’t come up with a reason to distrust the creatures more than any random person he might meet on the street. Yet here he was, sandwiched between Sirius and James, one holding onto his hand with a near painful grip, the other walking so close their shoulders continuously bumped into each other, walking behind Lord Potter and up the steps to the huge white building.

He noticed it even before they entered. He had been about to nod in greeting to the two Goblin guards like he used to do when those beady eyes snapped to him. He was fixed with gleaming black eyes from both sides as the three teenagers followed Lord Potter into Gringott’s. What in Godric’s
The grand entrance hall of the wizarding bank was decently populated, though not crowded, when the four of them entered. As it always was the case, Harry admired the sheer size and atmosphere of the hall, fascinated by the sufficiency of the Goblins that made so many of the arrogant wizards cower. It was also interesting to watch people make room for their little group, although it was obviously only a simple gesture of respect for Lord Potter and had nothing to do with being intimidated or even scared.

Even so, Harry had to admit… when from one moment to the next all Goblins in the huge hall stopped in their tracks to turn and look at him, Harry definitely felt intimidated. But he refused to cower even if he had no idea what was going on. Did he piss off anyone’s pet dragon or what?

Raising his chin defiantly, Harry tried to hide his confusion and followed Lord Potter’s lead who acted as if he hadn’t noticed the sudden tense staring all around. Staring that caused the wizards and witches in the hall to frown annoyed at the lack of service until they followed the Goblins’ gawking. Murmurs and whispers swept through the crowds and Harry just barely fought down the memories of another time and place when people used to stare and point at him…

“They can smell you,” Sirius whispered into his ear, making Harry suck in a sharp breath.

Smell him? Why would he smell- oh. Right. He wasn’t your everyday human anymore. He hadn’t missed his morning shower or anything, no, he was just smelling differently from everyone around him. Harry hadn’t been aware Goblins had such sensitive noses. Although… their noses were rather huge…

They were approaching one of the free tellers and Harry felt more than a hundred eyes burn into the back of his head as he stood there. Okay, so he was obviously the source for the gawking. But why would they pay him so much attention anyway? They were creatures themselves, what did they care if he was one too? Or were Goblins at odds with other creatures? He didn’t think so.

Chapter End Notes

What say you… are we to enjoy the clichés of Gringott's with blood on parchment and all that (which I tend to really love, though I've never written such a scene before) or are there some more imaginative ways to test one's heritage you would like to see? :)
In which blood fascinates the masses

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: parts of this chapter are probably not suitable to read if you are prone to self-injury/SI - or even if you have a strong aversion to anything blood related. Watch out for the part when a certain Goblin starts leering at Harry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Lord Potter,” the teller in front of their little group grumbled with as much politeness as a Goblin was able to, said Potter nodded in greeting, and that was that. Their teller gestured to a smaller Goblin who had apparently stood by in attendance waiting for a job. “To Gornuk!”

Harry blinked. It seemed they were being expected.

It was the first time for him that visiting Gringott’s did not immediately lead to rollercoasting through underground caves on rails that looked as frail as Aunt Petunia’s upper arms. Instead they were trudging through one of the doors to the side of the main hall, following a seemingly young Goblin to meet another Goblin while hundreds of eyes tracked their retreat. Maybe Lord Potter had business to attend before they could make their withdrawals and do the dreaded shopping?

Not that Harry minded, he rather enjoyed the chance to get a look at the inner workings of the bank. He was constantly looking around and craning his neck even though they were only walking through identical, rather sparsely lit hallways that resembled tunnels… which they probably were, Harry decided after a while. He couldn’t help the small shudder at the thought of getting lost down here. After another set of turns in yet more identical hallway-tunnels he also decided they were intentionally made to look alike to lead unannounced trespassers astray.

Finally they stopped in front of one of the ornate doors that had sporadically appeared along the walls during their march into the depths of Gringott’s. The door was rather huge in comparison to the average Goblin’s height, so Harry deduced they were about to enter a room meant for meetings between the creatures and wizards (or other creatures more on the tall side). Their guide knocked once, gave a small bow directed at Lord Potter, and was gone the next second. Harry looked around, but could see him on neither side of the long hallway they were standing in. Curious. Then he was nudged carefully into the room, still sandwiched between Sirius and James, and found new things to occupy his thoughts.

“You’re late,” was the snarky greeting they encountered once the door closed behind their group with a thud that rang around them in an ominously final way.

The room was an office, or well, as much as Goblin work spaces resembled offices anyway. Sirius let his eyes wander around the cave-like room with its table seemingly built right out of the rock they were walking on while Lord Potter returned the greeting a lot more politely. Not that it wasn’t an impressive room, honestly, Goblins knew how to work with stone of any kind. Intricate carvings decorated the walls from floor to ceiling and an eerie light came from huge gem stones inlaid into the rocky ceiling. If Sirius hadn’t seen this kind of office several times before, he would have given himself a kink in the neck in an attempt to take everything in.

Speaking of which, Hadrian next to him was busy staring at the magically illuminated gems and
generally the whole room as if he hadn’t been in any of the Goblin offices ever before. He probably hadn’t, Sirius realised and filed that information away for later. Suppressing a chuckle, he led his boyfriend to one of the chairs that, as he knew from experience, were just as uncomfortable as they looked. Goblins did not support the need for comfort, be it for themselves or their clients.

“Now, Lord Potter,” the Goblin behind the desk, apparently Gornuk, started to speak and Sirius blinked at him for a second. The voice emanating from that vicious looking mouth sounded like metal scraping over the rock they were surrounded by. He could feel Hadrian next to him snap to attention at the sound. “I understand your current visit does not pertain to the accounts of House Potter yet you stated in your inquiry that it is a family matter.”

The black eyes of Gornuk, who as Sirius now knew was the Potter account manager, wandered over their group, lingering just that little uncomfortable bit longer on Hadrian. Of course, in an enclosed space like this his boyfriend’s scent must be that much more intense. He wondered what it smelled like for the Goblins… maybe he could ask Rem…

“Indeed, Master Gornuk,” Lord Potter acknowledged, voice suddenly cool and aloof. “At the moment this young man here,” he indicated Hadrian next to him without taking his eyes off of the Goblin, “Is seeking refuge with my family. I have justified reason to believe his current caretakers are not…suitable and am seeking to take over the role of guardian.”

Sirius squeezed Hadrian’s hand carefully as he felt him tense. This was taking quite another turn than any of them had expected.

“For that to happen he would have to become part of my house,” Lord Potter added after a moment of silence, his words still sounding aloof yet the determination was clearly shining through.

There was a gasp and everyone turned to the wide-eyed boy sitting in their group.

Harry was fascinated by everything around him. Since coming to the past the magical world seemed so much more… intricate. There were so many more things to do and see it seemed, he couldn’t help but wonder what he had done back in the future with all the time these new things now occupied. Now, sitting in what he thought was a Goblin office, he couldn’t even drum up more than a bit of nervous tension at the way he was being looked at by the creature across from him. It was strange to think that he had only been to Gringott’s a handful of times before, never really caring or thinking about anything beyond withdrawing some money from his trust fund to get the shopping done.

The sound of the Goblin Gornuk speaking drew Harry out of his musings, making him snap to attention and concentrate on the proceedings. For some reason he was now seated next to Lord Potter with Sirius to his left still holding his hand. But it wasn’t the Goblin that shocked Harry’s thoughts to a screeching halt. No, it was Lord Potter and his confirmation of something James had hinted at for months now but Harry had never really considered. It was just not something he actually believed would happen. Things like this just didn’t happen to him–

No, he was the one that wasn’t allowed to stay at Hogwarts during the summers, the one that had to go back to live in his personal hell before being allowed a bit of reprieve at the Weasley’s to watch how an actual family interacted. He was the one who gained a godfather who asked him on their very first meeting to live with him, away from the Dursley’s, only to be forced away again. He was the one that got said godfather, his only chance at happiness, killed…
“So,” Gornuk finally interrupted the silence, gaze lingering on Hadrian with something akin to glee barely hiding in those beady eyes, “I understand you wish for an adoption ritual to take place?”

If possible, Hadrian’s eyes became even wider.

He was staring from Lord Potter to Gornuk and back, an unreadable expression overtaking his pale features. Sirius thought it was a mixture of shock and longing. Yes, that would make sense. Hadrian might be James’ son by blood, but up until now no one else knew about that. They had made him sleep in the guest quarters, as luxurious as those were they were still meant to be inhabited by guests not family. Sirius himself had only really learned what it meant to be part of a family after he had run from his own to come live with the Potters. He could understand the feelings he imagined seeing in Hadrian’s eyes when confronted with the possibility to become part of what should by right already be his family, yet wasn’t really.

“Not quite,” Lord Potter answered, a small smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth. “It was my intention to give Hadrian the chance of that specific choice, yes,” he nodded to Hadrian, eyes softening just enough to not look as cold anymore before he turned back to face the Goblin, “But last night I was made aware of a curious fact that possibly could render such a ritual unnecessary.”

Now that was interesting. Sirius had already wondered over the change in Lord Potter’s behaviour since yesterday evening, but had put it down as a fluke after some time. But this… How could his adopted father figure come across any information that would change the way he perceived Hadrian? There couldn’t be any recorded matter on him around since he technically hadn’t been born yet. Right? His boyfriend’s hand in his had grown cold and Sirius chanced a glance over only to stop at the way the Goblin was acting. Gornuk was now openly studying Hadrian who still looked way too clueless and was blushing and shifting in place. Though… there was something in the way his chin raised just that tiny bit…

“You wish to test his heritage to see if he carries the blood of your line already,” that gravelly voice slowly said, Gornuk looking decidedly intrigued. And the hand in Sirius’ clenched around his fingers.

The Goblin was _leering_ at him, Harry was sure of it.

“A heritage test,” Gornuk said, never taking his beady eyes off of Harry as he continued to talk as if to himself. “Drawing blood with an athame, a ceremonial blade, in order to drench a quill made from a white crow’s feather in the fluid and have it write out its secrets… The blood never lies, after all.”

The voice drifted over Harry in an unpleasant way, making the small hairs along his arms stand on end and he suppressed a shiver. Something was wrong with the way the Goblin nearly caressed the words as he described what was about to happen. Wait, what? Heritage test? No. No, no, no… they could not do that!

Harry turned panicked eyes on Sirius. If this test was as accurate as the Goblin said, information would show that could not be seen by anyone. For one, it would show a different name than he had given Lord Potter and Harry didn’t want his grandfather to think him an impostor. And then he would possibly see a date of birth that hadn’t even come to pass yet! And what about… Harry’s wide eyes shifted to James, because surely a heritage test would also show his parents. And that would not only be James, as complicated as that revelation alone was sure to make this situation. He couldn’t let James see who he would marry! If he even was to marry her still considering all the changes that had come to pass with Harry being here already.

Sirius gritted his teeth. The creepy creature across from them was enjoying this too much and the way he traced every inch of Hadrian’s small figure with his calculating gaze felt like a violation in
“Yes,” Lord Potter confirmed with a nod, sounding oddly cheery all of a sudden, “We are to test if this young man has any kind of blood relation to my house that would justify him falling under my jurisdiction as head of House Potter.”

The word ‘jurisdiction’ caught Gornuk’s attention and the group was treated to a silent staring contest between the Goblin and Lord Potter whose cheery demeanour edged into feral as he held his account manager’s dark gaze.

Sirius traded a look with Prongs and realised then and there what this was really about. It was exactly what James had wanted to achieve a few months back before they even knew who Hadrian actually was. It was simple, really. If Hadrian were officially and certified a family member, he would be protected. He could be the darkest creature there was, so long as the Potters remained as influential as they were (and had been for hundreds of years) and Hadrian didn’t get tangled in some unsavoury business, he would be safe.

Okay, if Elf Owls were actually classified as dangerous dark creatures that safety would only really exist on Potter grounds and the Ministry would be likely to find reason to take him into custody, but Elf Owls were neither categorised dark nor widely known. No one had any reason to even suspect a creature inheritance anyway and the Goblins wouldn’t squeal on one of their wealthiest costumers, so this was a moot point.

Harry could feel his breath escape him in small hectic puffs of air. There was no way he could stop them from doing this test without raising suspicion and Sirius didn’t look as if he had any idea either. In fact, his boyfriend seemed way more concerned with the Goblin currently readying a scroll of parchment, a flat bowl made of some dark material and a white feather quill on his desk. Harry spared the utensils only a short glance before looking around Lord Potter at his young father. James surely realised this was not a good idea!

He was met with mischievously sparkling hazel eyes and a slight upturn of the lips. James shrugged and gave him a wink, apparently completely at ease with the possibility of being discovered. Harry tried to calm his breath, numb fingers clinging to Sirius’ hand. Maybe… maybe James was right, maybe it would be okay. They were family, no matter the generation or way of relation. So what if even more people found out? It wasn’t like he was still actively trying to get back… if he ever had at all. There really was only making the best out of the present left for him now, just like it was for everyone. Somehow he liked that thought.

Suddenly a glint of steel caught Harry’s eye and he looked over at Gornuk again, blinking a bit astonished at the wicked black dagger in his long-fingered hand. It was a beautiful masterpiece, a true Goblin work, somehow managing to look that much more vicious than Harry’s own little dagger posing as carving knife. It was the contrasting feeling of a large warm hand to his own numb coldness that drew him back to the present completely. Lord Potter had taken his free hand into his own, dwarfing Harry’s smaller appendage. Looking up, he was met with the understanding eyes of his grandfather and a gentle, soothing smile. Lord Potter seemed to misinterpret his panic, Harry vaguely thought, but couldn’t really find it in himself to care. His gaze was drawn to yet another contrast as he looked down at their entwined hands, his natural paleness standing out against the lord’s tanned complexion.

“Oh there will be no need for that,” Lord Potter’s amused voice interrupted Harry’s staring and gazing up once more, he saw his grandfather smirking at the Goblin who in turn looked decidedly disgruntled as he stowed the black dagger away again.

“Now, calm breaths, Hadrian,” his grandfather said after a moment, voice going soft and hazel eyes
warming exponentially. “I will only make a small cut along the base of your thumb.” He traced his own calloused thumb across the fleshy part of Harry’s palm, before adding: “You will then hold your hand over the ritual basin and let your blood fall until the bottom is fully covered. Alright?”

Harry nodded dazedly. There was no way around this. In a matter of minutes everyone in this room would know his secret. He watched as Lord Potter drew a smaller version of the Goblin’s dagger from the folds of his robes and felt Sirius shift next to him until his boyfriend’s form was pressed against his own from shoulder to foot. He could feel the warmth that always seemed to radiate from Sirius seep through his clothes and nearly missed the moment Lord Potter touched the blade to his palm in his unconscious comfort seeking.

The blade was cold even against his chilly skin and sharp enough that Harry didn’t really feel the cut as his grandfather drew blood as gently as possible. The dark red liquid welled up in an instant and Harry let his hand be guided over the flat bowl Gornuk had been readying before. It was an entrancing sight watching the flow as it spread over a good part of his palm before dripping down steadily. Only after he turned his hand slightly to allow the blood a more direct path did he feel the sting. It actually hurt quite a bit and Harry wondered idly why it took so long for the pain to register.

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He didn’t like it. He had to sit on his free hand to stop himself from pulling Hadrian away from the sharp dagger Lord Potter was holding. It looked way too innocent in those age and work-roughened hands and Sirius wouldn’t be fooled.

He held tightly to the small hand still in his, feeling the tension in his boyfriend’s form. He was so tense it was a wonder the blood moved at all. The blood. Oh he hated seeing the blade touch his love’s skin, cutting deep enough to draw the needed amount of the precious liquid… and Hadrian didn’t even flinch. Scowling heavily, Sirius watched Lord Potter as he led Hadrian’s hand over the basin on the desk, noting with at least a little relief how the man never left the Goblin out of his sight. Yes, they were all well aware how those beady black eyes tracked every single drop of their Bambi’s blood. After a moment Lord Potter reached out again, applying pressure on the wound with his own thumb to staunch the bleeding. This time there was a quiet gasp and a jolt went through Hadrian that made Sirius flinch in turn.

“Sirius,” Lord Potter’s authoritative voice intoned and there was no real need for the motion the lord made that indicated he should heal the wound.

As if he would let Hadrian stay injured any second longer than he had to if he could do something about it. Carefully taking Hadrian’s still bleeding hand into his own, Sirius drew his wand to banish the clinging red. He would not use a tissue that could be summoned away from him in a moment of inattention. While he soothed the wound with a numbing charm, he watched out of the corner of his eye as Lord Potter meticulously cleaned the dagger the same way before slipping it back into his robe. All the while the tension in the room felt as thick as the magic Sirius could feel building up in the basin, the Goblin’s eyes still staring transfixed at the collected blood. It made Sirius angry just witnessing it.

Harry concentrated on the feeling of Sirius’ magic as it washed over him, banishing blood, cleaning the already clean cut and sealing it. He took deep breaths to calm his racing heart, afraid to look over at the table where the bowl with his blood sat. What had Gornuk said? A quill would write with his blood… oh joy, quills using his blood were his speciality, weren’t they? Though he doubted Umbridge had used something as fancy as a white crow’s feather quill.

The Goblin was now slowly lowering said quill into the bowl, watching it soak up Harry’s blood as if he were envying the damn feather. It gave Harry a strange queasy feeling to see such a look directed at a part of him – it had come out of him, for Merlin’s sake! For the first time he really got
inkling to the danger being a rare creature posed. He wondered how far the obviously interested Goblins would go to sneak a ‘sample’ of him or even capture him… He shivered at the thought of being at anyone’s mercy, especially as an ingredients source of any kind. It felt horribly degrading just imagining it.

Harry’s morbid thoughts were interrupted when Gornuk’s clawed fingers lifted the quill out of the now empty basin (Harry felt indescribably glad that for some reason not a drop of his blood remained there) and set it in a vertical position on the parchment. There was a shimmer engulfing the parchment, and he swore he saw little sparks reminiscent of those his own feathers tended to emit come off the quill for a second, before it started writing as if held by an invisible hand.

There, in front of everyone, a name started writing itself at the bottom of the page. Lines twisted up and connected to more names, Harry briefly glimpsed that of his father, blinking slightly at the middle name unknown to him until now before a voice broke through the strained silence. Harry felt like all of his blood had been leeched away into that damn quill spilling his secrets.

“Well,” Lord Potter said in an odd tone of voice, “It looks like there is no need for adoption.”

Harry didn’t even fully comprehend the implications of that sentence, because his eyes were glued to the parchment on the table. There, written in his own blood, was a name that for all intents and purposes was apparently now his. Blood did not lie, after all.

*Hadrian Aloysius Moore-Potter.*

How was that even possible? Had he somehow stopped to be Harry Potter? And if that was the case, then how? Did that mean he no longer was James’ son? Or the bloody Boy-Who-Lived? Who was he then? No, wait, the fucking prophecy never mentioned names… still, it was… it was just so weird!

He carefully drew in a breath, not daring to look at his grandfather, and instead chanced a glance at Sirius who was still holding onto both of his hands. His boyfriend’s eyes were wide, but not worried. He actually looked a bit amused, an observation that was confirmed a moment later when Sirius snorted in an attempt to not laugh outright. Harry could hear something similar from James, but it were Lord Potter’s next words that finally gave him the strength to meet those hazel eyes again.

“I had thought about it for a while,” he was saying, sounding slightly awed. “And when we got to know you these past days… my beloved wife and I made the decision to bring you into our house, to adopt you formally, by blood, if no one claimed guardianship of you.” Lord Potter stared down at him and Harry registered nothing beyond those words. They had thought about adopting him. They wanted him! “I had intended to talk to you about it tomorrow, but then last night the family tapestry gave me another idea.” Here his grandfather chuckled. “Really, I should have known. One only has to look at that hair,” he snorted, tugging at a lock of Harry’s wild hair that had somehow escaped his hat.

“T-the,” Harry cleared his throat when his voice didn’t seem inclined to form the words for him. What came out wasn’t what he had expected, but his shocked mind was grasping at the words with the lowest emotional weight to them. “The family tapestry showed my name?”

Or the name he had apparently now taken on for some unknown reason. There was a smile on Lord Potter’s face then.

“No, Hadrian,” he said softly, freeing one of Harry’s hands from Sirius’ tight grip to encase it in his own. “It showed your first three names, Hadrian Aloysius Moore. But…” Here he glanced at the Goblin who sat scowling at the undignified display in his office. “The moment I made the decision to
welcome you into House Potter, Magic apparently took the last step and added ‘Potter’ to your name.” He cocked his head in a thoughtful gesture. “It probably shows up on the family tapestry like this now, too.”

Harry’s head was whirling with the information. He was no longer Harry Potter. Magic had accepted his choice to become someone else, yet his blood still showed him to be the son of James – which for some reason had not yet triggered any comment from his grandfather. But… but Sirius had also been accepted into House Potter, yet Harry was pretty sure he never adopted the Potter name. Was it because Harry had already been a Potter to begin with?

Someone cleared their throat and Harry blinked rapidly at the stinging sensation to his eyes. He was welcome here. Lord Potter, his grandfather, had willingly accepted him into his house even with all the secrets that now more than ever were obvious to everyone.

He had a family.

Chapter End Notes

/snicker
I was so tempted to call him Potter-Moore btw…

Sooo… My take at the beloved Gringott's cliché. We’re not quite finished with this part. I had a few more ideas for tests and rituals one could do at our favourite bank apart from the obvious cliché I used, but they wouldn't have worked at this point in the story. We'll come back eventually, maybe doing some more blood letting, potion drinking, dramatic glowing stuff and I kinda want to include a ritual chamber... but that will have to wait until the story progresses to a bit more clearly informed Marauders.
“Now that we all had our emotional moment,” the Goblin drawled and everyone sat up a bit straighter, though neither Lord Potter nor Sirius released his hand. “There are other things you might wish to test for,” Gornuk continued and Harry (Or should he now call himself Hadrian?) narrowed his eyes at him.

There was a greedy gleam to those black eyes and Harry didn’t need the low growl coming from Sirius to his left to know that this was not meant to happen.

“That won’t be necessary, Master Go-”, Lord Potter started in a politely dismissive manner, but the Goblin talked right over him, his stare fixed on Harry and his voice taking on the same somewhat dreamy tone he had used before to describe the heritage test.

“All that would be needed,” Gornuk said, “…a little bit more of your precious blood, young Mr. Moore.” Harry noted vaguely that he wasn’t being called ‘Moore-Potter’ and had a feeling Gornuk was doing it on purpose. “The blood can reveal a lot more than just your heritage, after all. It knows what talents lie hidden and can uncover possible latent abilities,” he goaded, though Harry just frowned at him.

Though it might be interesting to know if he had any hidden magical talents, he thought they would show on their own if they were meant to be used. And who would want to let even more blood in the presence of someone so openly hungering for it?

“Or say…,” Gornuk added with a sly smirk that showed way too many of his vicious teeth, “It can help determine a creature.”

The growl emanating from Sirius was now audible for even James who sat two seats down and Harry felt a slight shift from Lord Potter. The lord’s posture was still casually dignified yet Harry had the distinct feeling that his grandfather’s wand was only a flick away.

“As I was saying,” Lord Potter tried once again, voice still pointedly polite.

“Or,” Gornuk though was apparently not yet finished with his monologue, “We could just check for impurities such as unwanted potions. We would just need a gill or two…” (*)

He grinned widely and Harry just wanted to leave now. Impurities in his blood sounded too much like that blood supremacist stuff, although… maybe he should do that test for potions… No, no there was no reason for there to be any in his blood. In a moment of nostalgia he wondered if the basilisk venom and phoenix tears would still be traceable after all these years, only to be jarred from those random thoughts as Lord Potter stood up abruptly.
“Thank you for your services, Master Gornuk,” he said coldly and Sirius pulled Harry to his feet, a careful hand placed in the small of his back. “We will be taking our leave now.”

“But of course, Lord Potter,” Gornuk replied with a toothy grin that formed into an unrestrained leer as he stared with obvious want at Harry. “Always a pleasure.”

Harry gave a whole body shudder the moment they stepped out of the grand building.

“That was…” He started, unable to find the right words to describe the situation with the Goblins. Behind him, Lord Potter ushered them down the steps and back into the small alleyway they had been in just before entering the bank.

“Disconcerting?” Sirius asked flatly as he slung an arm around Harry’s waist.

“Spooky?” James asked, throwing an arm over Harry’s shoulders.

“Sinister?” Lord Potter chimed in as they reached a temporary stop.

“All that,” Harry nodded in agreement. “And bloody creepy.”

“It was bloody alright,” Sirius muttered grumpily, possessively tightening his hold on Harry, eliciting a snort from James.

“Now, that was just lame, Pads,” he snickered. “Don’t go all gloomy now, ‘tis a reason to celebrate!”

He cheered and Harry smiled slightly at his father. It made him feel all warm and fuzzy inside to see James so happy about Magic’s confirmation of their relation. He had known before that James accepted his story and even seemed alright with Harry being his son, even if it was weird at this point in time. But it was something else entirely to see it confirmed through a blood test and magic and still accept it.

“Okay, boys, listen up,” Lord Potter interrupted the banter after looking around to make sure there was no one listening in on their conversation. “We will have a talk about all this once we reach home and do not think I forgot your role mentioned on this parchment, James,” he said, narrowing his eyes at his son as he pointed the rolled up parchment at him. Said son squirmed for a moment in place before grinning up at his dad and shrugging unrepentantly.

“Right,” Lord Potter sighed, shaking his head at the three boys. “But for now…” He suddenly fixed Harry with a gentle smile and opened his arms invitingly. “Come here, Hadrian.”

Harry stared confused, his mind still scrambling with all that had happened in the last hour, until he was nudged forward into his grandfather’s arms. There he stood awkwardly, tensing for a moment when the tall man swallowed him in a huge hug. It was warm. It felt strange but not in a bad way and after breathing in his grandfather’s scent of what Harry had learned was a famous fragrance from the 1900s (Edwardian Bouquet by Floris of London, but Harry would not tell anyone anytime soon that he remembered that little tidbit of information from his grandmother’s musings), he relaxed.

“I know you already were part of my house before,” Lord Potter whispered into Harry’s winter hat, pulling him just that tiny bit deeper into his warmth, “But welcome to the family, little one.”

Fleamont had to admit this day had been quite curious so far. And that was not even regarding him gaining a new family member, but very much the reaction the Goblins had to said new family
member (A grandson! He had not thought he would see any grandchild for at least another ten years what with his son being of the adventurous sort.). There was more to it all than ‘just’ the Goblins’ ingrained treasuring of profit. No, this was something else, though of course, the thinking geared primarily towards profit-making made up a rather large part of it, too.

Allure.

As a wizard raised completely in the magical world allures were not foreign to him. He had met quite a few different kinds in his time, the most common being that of the Veela. Yet, it seemed he had underestimated Hadrian’s version of it. Never before had he seen anything having such an affect on a Goblin. And it had all only gotten worse the longer Hadrian had stayed in that office, an enclosed space, and in direct proximity to a Goblin.

Gornuk had been his account manager ever since Fleamont took on the mantle of head of house twenty years ago when his father had died. He had been nothing but reliable all this time and Fleamont didn’t expect that to change now, but even this experienced Goblin had struggled the longer he stayed near Hadrian. Goblins were generally loyal to the family they served (as long as profit was made), but first and foremost their loyalty would always belong to Gringott’s – not necessarily the Goblin nation, but the bank they worked for. It was a peculiarity that had to do with that race’s understanding of honour and property.

Anyway, it all meant Hadrian’s allure had a far stronger effect than he had thought it would and that meant he would need to make absolutely sure the child would be safe in the future to come. With the political climate as it was and what it possibly was about to develop into, it would be paramount to secure Hadrian in any way possible – and apparently now that also meant protecting him from allure- and profit-driven Goblins. Though, if needs must, that specific predicament could always be used in their favour. After all, the Potter’s were already a respected family, one of Gringott’s wealthiest costumers, and the knowledge that the Elf Owl gene had returned to the family could make the Goblins only more eager to please them. So if he had to, Lord Potter would use his name and wealth and knowledge to secure his family in the dark times to come.

On the note of the darkening political landscape Fleamont remembered the horrifying attacks only a few days ago. Things were escalating and fast. So as he left the three boys near Fortescue’s Ice Cream Parlour to meet with his associates, Fleamont was already putting together plans of action to keep his family, one little Elf Owl included, safe.

Listening to Prongs crow (cough, squeal, cough) over the fact that their Bambi was now officially part of the family, Sirius watched his boyfriend closely. Hadrian seemed to be in a kind of daze ever since that parchment had revealed his true heritage. Sirius hadn’t really seen the results bar the fact that Hadrian was listed as a son of James – though, if he was honest with himself, even if the magic of the test had revealed Hadrian had been lying to them about that, it wouldn’t have mattered much to him. Sirius loved this boy, it didn’t matter who he was in the long run.

And that little fact still caused a curious mixture of elation and fear in the Black heir.

He had never loved anyone like that before. He had had his parents who he could barely remember being something other than the looming shadows of a world he didn’t want to belong to. He had had his brother who he honestly missed but could no longer relate to. There was so much hurt connected to his blood family. Then there were the Marauders. He loved them too, and had anyone asked him before this term he would have said he loved his friends more than anything and anyone. Now though that wasn’t true anymore.

Oh he still loved his friends, he still held that smidgen of hope for his brother, and he was abundantly
grateful to the Potters for taking him in, but all of that was nothing compared to what he felt for Hadrian. The devotion, adoration, and simply ‘wholeness’ that boy invoked in him couldn’t compare to anything. And maybe that was the reason it equal parts frightened and elated Sirius.

So here they were, all part of the same family on some level. James his brother and Hadrian… Hadrian would be his fiancé as soon as Sirius found the right moment to ask for his acceptance of the courtship. It would only be official and recognised by Magic if Hadrian willingly and knowingly accepted it – sadly the same couldn’t be said for possible marriage contracts Sirius’ family was sure to force him into soon. That is if they hadn’t completely given up on him, which, as far as Sirius knew, was a possibility that hadn’t yet come to pass. He was still recognised as Heir Apparent of the House of Black, the oldest son and future Lord Black. Though, Sirius was acutely aware that he would lose that title and every little bit of inheritance that belonged to it the moment his parents were made aware of his impending courtship and (hopefully) engagement.

And not even that mattered in the face of his feelings for this slip of a boy who had just one day popped up in the Forbidden Forest. It was scary and wonderful and altogether crazy, but still felt simply right. So Sirius steered his boyfriend over to the parlour James already was at to choose what ice cream he wanted, only to stop a few paces away when his best mate turned his back to look the variety over.

“I’ve a feelin’ I won’t be able to pull the mistletoe excuse again,” he whispered into a delicate ear peeking out from the warm hat, making a split decision, “As Prongs is sure to have rid each and every sprig of all berries,” he continued.

Sirius’ hand cradled Hadrian’s face as his boyfriend turned to look at him. He could see the exact moment Hadrian caught on to what he was referring to as a dark blush started to work its way across pale skin that warmed considerably beneath his touch. For a moment Sirius was completely transfixed by the contrast of his large calloused hand, the hand of a Quidditch beater, against the fragile skin of Hadrian’s face. Then a voice, not much more than a murmur, broke through his reverie.

“Who said you’d need an excuse,” his love countered bashfully.

So Sirius kissed those impish lips.

James glanced at his friends from the corner of his eye, making a show of looking all available sorts of ice cream over to give them their moment. He was still a bit leery of the relationship, especially now that Hadrian was officially recognised as his family member and his parents knew who he really was. If that courtship went wrong, did that mean there would be a blood feud between the Potter’s and… well, probably not the Black’s as Sirius was likely to lose that support the moment his decision to court Hadrian became public.

Sirius was his brother in all but blood (and even that connection was there however diluted) and Hadrian was his son and the situation was not one James had ever thought he would find himself in. Heck, James hadn’t dared to give any thought to children as long as the only girl he would ever want continued to reject him. And wasn’t it annoying that even now, after that (literally) bloody heritage test, he still had no clue who the woman was that would deign him an acceptable catch? He would have to sneak a look later today…

Even though he was a wealthy Pureblood and heir to an Ancient House, attributes James didn’t really give a lick about, and many a girl had tried to catch his interest, he only wanted the one. And the one he wanted was of course the most elusive girl in probably the whole Wizarding World. Would he ever even get Lily Evans to agree to a date?
The thought appeared more and more ridiculous as the years went by and the end of their Hogwarts career encroached on them. But Hadrian was the proof that James had managed it, right? No, he shook his head, frowning unconsciously at the young girl behind the ice cream counter. Hadrian was only the proof that James had given in to his basic needs once more. It wasn’t like he was a desperate virgin, after all. He had dated before, but it never felt right and James had known it wouldn’t from the get go. Still, he was a teenage boy. Though he definitely was not the manwhore Sirius had become these last years… which brought him right back to being wary of the relationship between his best mate and his son.

He sighed. Really, he couldn’t do anything about it but trust in his friend. Sirius could be a right arse, but James was sure his feelings for Hadrian were honest. The problem was that Sirius had always been promiscuous ever since he entered the stage of puberty and it definitely didn’t look like Hadrian would put out any time soon…

Not that James wanted him to! Merlin, he couldn’t even think about that. Nope, no thinking along those lines any longer, he decided, pointing the ice cream out he wanted and ordering extra sprinkles. He needed to sugar-drown those images out of his mind, now.

“All right, gents!” He deliberately interrupted the snuggly couple. “Let’s get moving, we’re due meeting Moony in Muggle London in about ten minutes.” He eyed his two friends critically, taking in the blush on Hadrian’s face, but also the small smile tugging at his son’s lips. No, he really couldn’t do anything about it but hope for the best. “Order some large ice cream to go, Bambi. After all that dramatic blood-letting you’re gonna need the sugar.”

Many miles away, up in the far north, one DADA teacher cursed out loud when yet again the potion he had been repeatedly brewing for the last five hours came back with the same result. A result that didn’t make sense in the least and could only mean one thing: The samples of the little creature his spy had collected for him were useless as they weren’t of the creature at all. They couldn’t be, unless all his tells were wrong and Hadrian Moore was nothing but a normal wizard child with dormant Metamorphmagus traits. Which just was not possible.

He should have known that Pettigrew was a useless investment.

Cursing yet again, Lucian Bole cleared the cauldron and inspected the last of the hairs his spy had collected from the creature’s pillow. They were black, but now that Bole looked at them up close it was very obvious that these were not the hairs he had hoped for. So it seemed as if either his spy had betrayed him or the creature was already using its powers to whore itself out to its peers. There were after all only so many ways a stranger’s hairs could get on one’s pillow.

Chapter End Notes

(*) So I read somewhere a ‘gill’ is an antiquated unit of measurement no longer in use (except for maybe measuring alcoholic spirits on the odd occasion) and found myself funny in having the Goblin ask for gills instead of fluid ounces or millilitres or whatever else. A gill lies somewhere between 0,11 and 0,15 l if I got it right.

Also: I've been asked about the possibility of Harry's creature and mpreg. No, Harry won't get pregnant in this story since it simply wouldn't fit. But I've no problem with the general idea of Elf Owls having the ability to carry children no matter
the gender. What do you think?
As I said, Harry won't fall pregnant in this story, but the idea of giving him a sex talk because now he technically could get knocked up is rather tempting...
In which a protector is being awaited

Chapter Notes

... (and perceived roles switch)
It’s still Monday 27th December 1976 and it seems I mixed up the years. The full moon in December 1976 was actually on the 6th. Sorry about that.

TRIGGER WARNING: slight angst, unspecified attacks of the magical kind and their victims. Just treat carefully if you’re sensitive.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Cold…

He could see his breath against the backdrop of grey, numbness encroaching on him from all sides. It was so cold… so-

He wasn’t a girl, but Harry couldn’t help the heat that spread from the touch to his knuckles up his arm, painting his face with a dark blush. Okay, so maybe it was mostly the fact that Sirius had taken the opportunity to lick at his ice cream coated fingertips instead of ‘only’ placing a chaste kiss on the back of Harry’s hand. Though, really, he mused as he endured the next blush of the day (counting just made no sense on this front), he would most likely have turned himself into a walking tomato anyway at the whole gesture.

And yet he couldn’t really find it in himself to complain.

Grey eyes were blinking up at him from under thick lashes, Sirius winking flirtatiously before straightening up again. James just pretended to be completely engrossed with his ice cream next to them, which, honestly, Harry was thankful for. All this obvious affection outside of Hogwarts grounds kind of made him feel tingly all over and he wasn’t sure if it was in a good or bad way. Alright, who was he kidding, he loved it. Sirius taking such an open stance in regards to their relationship went a long way in reassuring the part of Harry that would always remember the unwanted orphan, the burden his relatives had always claimed him to be.

They were on their way to the Leaky Cauldron, only a few shops away from the passage, when Remus literally ran into them, spilling the stack of books he had been carrying on the cobblestone as he did so.

“Moony!” James exclaimed before reaching out and helping his friend up. “Weren’t you book-hunting in Muggle London?”

Harry glanced up from where he had been crouching, picking up books. Remus’ face was flushed from the cold that hadn’t seemed so intense to Harry here in the wizarding shopping district. Or maybe he hadn’t noticed because of a certain Grim Animagus… anyway, Remus looked decidedly tired, but was still beaming happily at him when Harry handed over his purchases
“Thanks, Hadrian, and hey guys,” he smiled, before hoisting the last of the books onto his stack. “Yes, ah… I floo-ed into the Cauldron and well…”

“You couldn’t resist the temptation that is Flourish and Blotts?” Sirius more stated than asked with a quirk of his eyebrow. Remus just shrugged unrepentantly.

“Actually, it was Obscurus Books, but yeah, quite,” he confessed with a broad grin and Harry took a moment to look closer at the books he had helped pick up.

He was used to the lavish covers and either extremely telling or totally confusing titles of wizarding literature, but Remus’ purchases didn’t seem to have any of that. Then the books suddenly shrank to miniature versions of themselves, leaving Harry blinking for a moment. He watched as Remus deposited the tomes in his pocket and wondered if that had been intentional. He could have shrunk them before leaving the shop after all, which would incidentally have prevented him from running headlong into their group.

“So what are you up to these days, Moony, my friend?” James asked into Harry’s thoughts, clearly relieved to no longer be alone with a touchy feely couple that included his own son.

He threw his arm around his friend’s shoulders as they started their track down the street again. As the conversation flowed easily between the friends, Harry picked up on a few things even though the Marauders made sure to never state it outright when in public: The 25th had been the full moon.

The thought made Harry feel horrible. While he had been enjoying his very first family Christmas, eating sweet treats and getting presents, Remus had gone through the horrors of his werewolf infection. He couldn’t stop himself from picturing his friend writhing through the painful change he had witnessed back in his third year, just like he had on every full moon since his time travel. Only this time there wasn’t the comforting thought of the Marauders being with Remus. No, their friend had been at his parents’ house during the change and who really knew how those treated the disease their son was suffering from? After all, Harry knew all too well what it could mean to be different from those one lived with.

It happened without any of the typical forewarning.

There was no creeping coldness, harsh breaths and slowly draining happiness. No, there was only a scream. A terrified scream that abruptly cut off and only then did Harry feel the unnatural cold and saw the encroaching ice along all surfaces, felt the numbness touch his skin and try to seep into his very bones. Harry did not need the sudden stillness of the alley, the terror that swept in one great wave over the crowds, the colour that seemed to drain from the surroundings and the biting chill clawing at all exposed skin. He knew long before the chaos erupted.

Dementors.

Life was nice when you had a luscious love attached to your side and good friends to keep you company, Sirius thought idly as they made their way towards the mystery that was Muggle London.

Really, he felt giddy at the thought of going there again. He had only been a scant few times, going adventuring with his best mate ever since he had left his ‘family’ behind. They had greatly enjoyed muggle-watching and learning all the little things that made life as a muggle so irresistibly interesting. Sirius especially had fallen in love with the moving pictures that were no photographs, ‘movies’ they called them, and mourned the fact that most muggle appliances didn’t work in the Wizarding World. Prongs for his part was enamoured with muggle sports and would question some poor vendor for
hours about every little detail on one game or another. And they both were absolutely hell-bent on visiting a theme park. One with those fascinating (and apparently wonderfully fast) rides, of course, and Sirius especially couldn’t wait for his next birthday that would see him of age in the muggle world. He wanted a motorcycle!

So as he relished the feeling of Hadrian’s slender form against his and his mates around them, Sirius failed to notice the sudden changes in their surroundings. It wasn’t until a scream cut through his happy thoughts and chaos ensued all around them, that he realised something was wrong. They were being attacked. No, Diagon Alley was under attack.

Harry caught a flicker of motion from the corner of his eye and then the sky was blocked out by the ragged cloaks of the beings of fear. They came in from all sides, swooping down into the streets, the crowds, the families… He saw people finally start to react, saw them try to shake off the shock and the overwhelming sense of despair. But Harry also saw the Dementors hiding in the dense shadows of the small alleyways that many of the people tried to escape through. They all ran into traps, right into the arms of their attackers.

And he heard the screams, the screams of the many around him and the lonely screams in his head, slowly gaining in volume and starting to overlap. He shivered violently and forced himself to look at the people around him, Sirius, James, Remus. He was not alone, he was not there in Godric’s Hollow, and he needed to get a grip on himself. Now!

With that last thought Harry caught the shock and fear in Sirius’ eyes and his resolve hardened. This was not the same situation as in third year, the horrible beings weren’t after Sirius specifically, but they were a danger to him nonetheless and seeing that fear in those eyes… He was not going to let that happen. Not again.

In a move reminiscent of Dumbledore back during the fight in the Ministry, Harry wandlessly shoved his friends, his family, back against the nearest shop, an apothecary. Out of the way of the hysterical crowds and possibly towards a hideaway inside. He took a deep breath, allowing himself that single one moment to centre himself, to block out the horrifying images right in front of him… parents frozen in panic, children crying and shrieking, trying to hide and bodies dropping, lifeless, haunted eyes…

Forcefully Harry’s mind focused on one single memory as his wand dropped into his ready hand. He let the memory cover the growing screams in his mind, let it sweep away everything but the feelings of warmth, acceptance, safety and his determination to protect the one that had evoked these feelings in him.

“EXPECTO PATRONUM!” (*)

The light of Harry’s Patronus seemed brighter than he remembered it being. It was also a lot more effortless to produce and Harry watched wide-eyed as his spirit guardian, the embodiment of all his most positive emotions, flickered through a bunch of indecipherable forms only to end up as a huge doglike creature.

A Grim.

The irony of having a death omen as his protective charm was not lost on Harry and he probably would have blushed at the implications of having Sirius’ Animagus form as his Patronus, if not for the dire need to concentrate on the task at hand. There was a wave of people running, pushing, tripping and stumbling over each other without care, all trying to reach the passage to the Leaky
Cauldron, but their way was barred by even more Dementors that emerged from between the shops. Diagon Alley had transformed into a giant death trap in a matter of seconds.

Falling into a secure fighting stance, his back to the apothecary’s outer wall, Harry directed his Patronus over to the passage to give the fleeing people at least one way out.

He had seen Hadrian in a lot of situations by now. He had seen him forlorn and confused, misplaced in time, he had seen him laughing hysterically and had seen him stubbornly pulling through hours of pain during his inheritance. Sirius had seen Hadrian in deep concentration when going through calculated stances in DADA and had seen him caught in an anxiety attack. He had seen him blushing furiously and smiling shyly. But he had never seen him like this.

There Hadrian was, moving with simple grace, never standing still as if evading spellfire. He was directing a Patronus (a Patronus!), protecting the panicking people trying to get away. There was screaming, sobbing, hysteria all around and in the midst of it all stood Hadrian, calm determination in every line of his face, in every move. The thought was inappropriate and really so not practical in a moment like this, but Hadrian taking charge like this was just… hot.

He heard Remus whimper and felt James trying to tug them all into the apothecary and out of the way of the fleeing crowds that were ruthless in their panic. But Sirius, scared shitless as he was (and more than a little in awe of his boyfriend), didn’t budge. He knew he should hide, he knew he should take the chance at cover, but Hadrian was out there! And even though Sirius didn’t know how to cast a Patronus himself, knew he was a liability in this fight, his logic was taking a back seat, rooting him in place, eyes fixed on the form of his boyfriend. He could not leave him here, he could not-

He saw a little girl, pretty winter cloak ripped at the sleeve as if someone had forcefully dragged her around by it, stumble and fall right in the middle of the street. And he saw the huge dark figure that soundlessly descended onto her fallen figure. It wasn’t exactly a decision. He simply reacted. Later he would wonder what in Merlin’s name he could have done anyway, unable to produce a Patronus as he was.

Sirius jumped into action and found himself at the struggling girl’s side that he could just make out beneath the black cloth that covered the Dementor above her. He didn’t hesitate to consider what he was about to do, didn’t think before he reached out and roughly pulled on her twitching arm. There was a gasp and pained moan from the little girl, and a strange coughing sound from the horrible creature trying to suck her soul out, and then Sirius had more leverage and pulled her into his arms. He was up and running without looking back at the Dementor he had just deprived of its meal, shuddering violently, and stumbling more than once in his attempt to just get away…

Only to be thrown against a wall by a panicked passer-by, his head viciously hitting the stone and his hold on the girl loosening enough for her to slip from his grasp. Sirius thought he saw her land on her feet, but he was too disoriented to be sure. Looking around wildly, he had lost sight of his friends, had somehow ended up at a completely different place in the alley, and he couldn’t see Hadrian anymore!

A wave of desperation washed over him and eyes going wide, Sirius felt the unnatural ice creeping along the wall he was leaning against. The little girl still clutching at him was whimpering and shivering and all Sirius could do was push her to where he thought he saw the entrance to one of the shops. It was an instinctive move, a last ditch attempt, as he heard the rattling breath of one of the wraith-like monsters in their direct proximity.

Sirius was rooted in place in sheer terror at the sight of a Dementor right in front of him, now turning into his direction. He could see the glistening, greyish, slimy-looking hand as it reached out to him and he was infinitely thankful that the girl no longer was at his side. Light was sucked from the
environment right up to the pale winter sun, which seemed to vanish or maybe it was just blocked by
the black-clad form looming over Sirius…

Empty eye sockets, covered with scabbed skin, fixed blindly on his frozen form. He numbly
registered the gaping large hole where the mouth should have been and a distant part of himself
screamed at him to move, to do something, because he should not be able to see this up close!

Sirius could feel his awareness slipping, the combination of being hit in the head and the proximity of
the horrible creature that was drawing ever closer having a truly unfortunate effect. Cold…

Visions of his mother disciplining him with nasty curses, of his father turning his back… of his
beloved little brother staring hatefully at him. Sirius shuddered helplessly as the memories threatened
to drown him, pushing, pulling, and consuming every happy thought. He could see his breath against
the backdrop of grey, numbness encroaching on him from all sides. It was so cold… so-

Light poured into his field of vision, pushing back the memories just enough for him to recognise his
surroundings again. He was not back there, in Black Manor, no, he was in Diagon Alley. The light
seemed to burn the shadows away and slowly erase the chill in his bones. The numbness was still
there, but he could nearly see the warm and positive feelings spreading from the creature of light in
front of him.

Blinking rapidly, Sirius’ eyes went wide as he looked at a silvery-white, glowing version of his own
Animagus form standing protectively in front of him.

...

Chapter End Notes

Someone once said that I’m incapable of writing suspense or action. Psh. I think, I
manage just fine.
/goes showcasing her nose to the skies/

(*) In Latin patronus means 'protector', 'guardian' or simply 'patron'.
In archaic Latin it meant 'father', interesting considering that Harry’s Patronus used to be
the same as his father's Patronus and Animagus form: a stag.
The Latin word expecto or expecto means "I look out for" or "I wait for", thus the
charm's incantation roughly translates into: "I await a protector."
what I thought nice to know for this chapter.
(translations according to Harry Potter Wikia)
In which it's never enough

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: More gruesome fates at the 'hands' of Dementors. Also angst.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Shit, shit, shit.

He was so done for. His hand clenched too tightly around his wand, slipping despite the iron grip, fingers frozen from the mass of Dementors and their effects around. There were too many, too many for Harry alone. He had seen a few witches and wizards try and summon their own Patroni, but the sheer number of the creatures overwhelmed them before they even got the chance. And even with all the magical power Harry possessed ever since his inheritance, he could not protect everyone and he felt the drain of constantly sustaining such a powerful charm.

Harry choked slightly on a gasp.

And now he was fucked even more, because in addition to the magical drain his actions had gained the attention of half a dozen Dementors. In helping the masses flee Harry had left himself unprotected and now he was about to pay the prize.

They were closing in on him as if they knew the moment he was out for the count the rest would be even easier prey. Maybe they did know, Harry wasn’t quite sure how sentient those things actually were. So there he was, Dementors blocking his sight and his Patronus far away helping to clear the path for the fleeing people. And while his back might be safely pressed against a wall, rough stone catching the fabric of his coat, it also left him no escape route. Harry rasped in a breath, feeling the unnatural cold claw at his lungs. He blinked a few times in quick succession to try and clear his slightly dimming vision, only to have the creatures much closer than they had been before. He was freezing, his limbs trembling in a mixture of cold and fear and there was a lonely scream in his head growing ever louder… slowly drowning out the rest of the chaos and noise around him…

In the corner of his eye he saw a man stare at him from his hiding place behind a vendor’s cart. The man looked deathly pale, but still coherent. Given the situation that was quite a feat and Harry felt a flicker of hope break through the mounting despair as the man raised his wand. Maybe he wasn’t as alone as he thought.

The touch to his cheek had him suck in a shocked gasp and choking on fear a second later. He hadn’t noticed just how close the Dementors were now. One was looming right over him, rotting hand touching his face and the scream of Harry’s mother becoming overwhelmingly loud in his head. No, no, no…

A weak, incorporeal Patronus shield flickered into being between Harry and the monster leaning over him. It was crude at best, but it gave Harry the moment of coherency he needed to gather his thoughts. Diagon Alley. Families at the mercy of Dementors. He gave his head a firm shake.

The shield also seemed to turn back on the noise level around him and with a jolt Harry noticed that his Patronus had diminished and the Dementors were feasting on the people he had left behind
unprotected. His stomach churned and he bit his lip, hard, to focus enough to cast again. He could not let that happen, he could not leave these people, the children, the families, to a fate worse than death.

The momentary relief was over much earlier than he would have liked, the weak shield Patronus flickering out just in time for Harry to raise his wand back up. As he cast again, his new Grim Patronus bursting into being, Harry realised with dread that he was really on his own in this fight. It was only logical. Most of these people had probably never even seen a Dementor outside a book before, let alone been in the presence (and attacked by) a whole swarm. Harry still remembered his very first meeting with such a creature back on the train at the beginning of his third year. Back then he had passed out before he even realised what the hell was going on. No, Harry could easily understand the mindless panic that had the crowds running each other over and the failing attempts to produce at least one Patronus.

But that didn’t change the fact that his strength was waning rapidly and one single Patronus was simply not enough to protect everyone.

Though… a frustrated part of him wondered silently as he chased away the ones closing in around him… when he had saved his godfather (and his past self) one single attempt had made a hundred of the damned things flee at once. But that had been different, hadn’t it? He had known beforehand that it would work, but now… now he was not only on his own, but there were also a few hundred people needing his protection that forced his Patronus to move constantly. This situation was a far cry from his third year in so many ways.

Able to breathe a bit more freely again, Harry cast a quick look around to determine where his help was needed the most. The answer was horrifying in its simplicity: everywhere. Quite a few people had managed to escape through the now again blocked passage into the Leaky Cauldron, others were hiding inside the shops, but still more were on the street, huddled in groups, running back and forth nearly incoherently, stumbling over those already fallen. The Dementors were blocking all escape routes and the moment one person fell a few steps behind they were on them. Harry could see the strength of those still coherent enough to at least try and keep moving draining away visibly by the second. The fear was palpable in the air, the cold biting maliciously and the despair hovered around them like a fog.

Too many had already fallen, too many were lying still, too many were being attacked this very moment.

Across the street, just next to the barred entrance of Madam Malkin’s, a mother was backed into a corner, curling around a small child, hiding the little one’s face from the looming figure of soul sucking monster over them. Even from his place Harry recognised the exceedingly empty look in her eyes just before the Dementor completely blocked her figure from his sight. Harry knew he would be too late, but his Patronus came already running towards him, called by the simple need to do something. The child could still be saved, he just needed-

A shouted plea for help caught his attention. It was the man behind the vendor’s cart who had saved him earlier. He was lying prone on the iced over street, fingers still scrabbling at the cobblestone… Dementor firmly attached to his mouth…

Save the child or save the man that saved you.

Harry knew the moment he did it that he was going to hate himself for it.

Remus was shuddering uncontrollably, his head filled with memories of lonely full moons, of the
pain, the abandonment, the knowledge that he would never have a normal life. He felt paralysed even though they were shielded from the chaos outside by the walls of the apothecary. He knew then and there that if it weren’t for James’ hand on his shoulder grounding him, he would lose himself to the despair.

“Moony…” His friend’s voice penetrated the swirling fog of every negative, haunting memory Remus had ever made. “Moony, please, I need you now!”

James’ voice was frantic and pleading, but with an underlying steel to it that more than anything reached Remus in his near catatonic state. With a deep, burning breath he forced himself to focus, to confront reality once more. Those haunting images were memories, they could not hurt him here and now. Sadly that realisation didn’t stop the horror from outside their hiding place to register once again.

“J-James?” He whispered, not ashamed of the hoarse quiver in his voice.

This was a situation neither of them had ever been in, in fact, it was the very first time Remus had even seen a Dementor, let alone felt its effect.

“Finally,” James huffed, but Remus could see the distress etched into every line of his drawn face. “We need to do something, Moony. Padfoot and Bambi are out there and I have no idea where Dad went, and…”

He cut himself off when he started rambling, but his eyes were boring imploringly into his friend. And Remus felt the guilt well up in him. Here he was freaking out while Sirius and Hadrian were out there, directly confronting those wretched beings. Oh Merlin, Sirius was out there and Remus knew his friend hadn’t learnt the Patronus charm yet. It wasn’t taught before seventh year and even then only to those taking the NEWT Defence class. Still, the charm never became mandatory because the fail rate was just too high, and…

“Focus, Moony!”

“Right,” he breathed, giving his head a little shake. “Dementors cannot cross through solid material which is why we are safe here from their more… more debilitating abilities…”

“I wouldn’t call being sucked dry of your soul ‘debilitating’, ” James drawled in a bout of gallows humour, “But semantics aside: What can we do without a Patronus?”

Remus managed a shaky little grin before he frowned in thought. There wasn’t much that could help against a Dementor if you discounted the guardian charm, but…

“I know that their effect on an Animagus is supposed to be lesser, though one still shouldn’t risk prolonged exposure or direct proximity, of course. ”

“Of course,” James nodded thoughtfully.

Nausea rolled in Harry’s guts as he pried the crying child from their mother’s unresponsive arms. He knew beforehand that he wouldn’t be fast enough to save her from the Dementor’s Kiss, but still… Looking into those empty eyes as he instinctively cradled the child to his chest, blocking their view from the now soulless body of what was most likely the mother… Harry swallowed heavily and made sure his Patronus stayed nearby, before he chanced a glance at the small body now clinging to him.

The child couldn’t be older than three, he supposed. A boy, at least from his little wizard robes. Wide
brown eyes beneath a shock of honey blond curls and stark wide skin, though the latter was probably from shock. Speaking of shock, the little boy was quivering madly, an expression on his face that never should be on a child’s face no matter the age. Terror was not an expression Harry ever wanted to see on that young a person again. But he couldn’t dwell on that.

“Hold on, little one,” he whispered to the boy before tucking him beneath his coat, carefully holding him up with his free hand. It would have to do, there was no where else he could safely leave the child for now.

Taking one last look at the mother, committing her features to memory so that he hopefully would be able to find the boy’s family later, Harry turned back to the chaos going on around him. With a nod his Patronus stormed off again, helping out a group of people nearby just long enough for them to get back on their feet and move, before Harry had to send his Grim Guardian in another direction.

It was carnage of another kind. No blood, only self-sustained wounds from panicking people, but countless bodies nonetheless. No, he reminded himself fiercely, they weren’t bodies, they were not dead. But they were soulless and Harry was well aware that that state was considered the ultimate penalty known to wizard kind.

He was outnumbered, he was weakening, and it wasn’t helping that his longish hair seemed to be determined to constantly fall into his eyes. Hastily swiping the black strands away yet again, Harry turned just in time to see a Dementor close in on the one person he had wanted to protect more than anyone. Sirius.

His boyfriend was backed against a shop wall down the street, colour completely drained away from his face and eyes full of fear. Harry had a sudden flashback to those exact eyes, only older, so much older in age and experience both… haunted, near empty… It didn’t take more than a thought for his Patronus to charge once more. He only dared to breathe again when he saw the glowing Grim firmly in place in front of Sirius. Only then did Harry find the strength to move more than his Patronus, only then did his suddenly numb feet carry him over to his fallen boyfriend.

Sirius was gawking wide-eyed at the Patronus and it took him a moment to focus on Harry when he finally reached him. He snapped to attention at the touch to his arm and Harry stared for a moment into those grey eyes, searching for the spark of life that just had to still be there. It had to!

Remus and James were currently making a stealthy progress in slowly, carefully levitating a vendor’s cart over to the door of the apothecary. The shop keeper had long since fled downstairs where there were no windows, not caring for the boys hiding between his potions ingredients or the people still outside. That left them with only each other, not that they cared overly much. In fact, they were rather glad about it, as Marauders always worked best on their own.

“Alright,” James whispered to his friend, keeping look-out while Moony did the levitating, “Just a little bit more to the right… No, the other right… yes, that’s it!”

Remus positioned the cart in a horizontal angle to the doorway they were currently hiding in. It would grant a bit more cover for their hastily thrown together plan. They would call to the people running by, or rather, they would try to catch them and drag them over and into the apothecary. It wasn’t an easy feat what with the freaking Dementors mostly guarding the shops’ entrances, but they were determined. They were counting on the monsters more concentrating on the high emotions of the crowds than their sneaky attempts.

“Are you sure you can manage, James?” Moony whispered back, now a lot more composed than just minutes before.
“Someone has to and I don’t really have that many bad memories,” James answered with a cheeky grin that was only slightly on the hysterical side. He was all too aware of the risk that leaving the shop to pull people to safety posed. But as he said, someone had to and the Dementors’ effect on Moony was simply too extreme for him to try. “And I can always transform, right?”

Neither mentioned the fact that openly transforming into an unregistered Animagus form was going to be a lot of trouble, especially as James wasn’t even of age yet. To learn the transformation was considered dangerous for the average wizard, but hazardous for anyone underage. Though, James was rather confident the whole thing would go unnoticed in the chaos anyway.

Harry held tightly onto Sirius for a moment before the screaming around them forced him once more to stand. He was weary, his bones ached and it was becoming harder and harder to sustain his Patronus. But there was no way he would sit back if he could do something. Shifting the weight of the little boy tucked under his coat, Harry fell back into a fighting stance, wand raised.

He was just about to direct his Patronus over to the nearest group of people, when he heard it. Apparition pops. Many of them.

Then they were there, the red of the aurors’ cloaks all Harry could see for a moment. They stood in a line crossing the whole of the street and raised their wands in unison. It was a coordinated casting of a horde of Patroni and Harry laughed aloud in his relief. Finally.

Chapter End Notes

Sooooo....... any ideas for Harry’s little, curly-haired burden?
The silence that suddenly enveloped the alley was short-lived as the aurors started to spread out, a voice barking orders. Some were ordered to keep look-out for more Dementors as the original swarm had dispersed and apparently fled. Others were dispatched into groups scouring the shops, scooping out the state of those unconscious (Harry determinedly did not think ‘soulless’) and a last group went about calming the survivors. Harry looked on just long enough to register what was about to happen, before he rather abruptly sank to the ground.

His Grim Patronus turned to face him, ethereal glow catching the attention of the aurors now roaming the street, and Harry regarded him for a moment. It really was a silvery replica of Sirius’ Animagus form and a tiny part of Harry’s still adrenaline driven brain idly wondered if it could still be considered a Grim if it wasn’t black. He watched intently as his new Patronus bowed, then vanished.

“…Bambi?”

Sirius’ voice sounded quiet and hoarse as he reached out to touch his boyfriend’s slender shoulder, barely noticing the tremor in his hand. As Harry’s eyes met grey once again, the world seemed to tip slightly. The next moment he found himself engulfed in Sirius’ arms, head tucked beneath his boyfriend’s chin and crushed against his chest. He heard Sirius mutter something repeatedly and it took Harry a moment to realise what it was.

“You’re okay. You’re not hurt. You’re okay... Thank Merlin, you’re okay…”

When the aurors came into the apothecary, it was to the sight of a mixed group of people all huddled together and two teenage boys standing guard at the door and windows, wands at the ready. James just smirked cockily at the raised eyebrows, tucking away his wand to hide the trembling of his hands in his pockets.

It was finally over. The aurors were here.

He acknowledged Moony who came over, standing uncharacteristically close to him as they watched the red-cloaked men and women assess the state of the few people they had managed to drag in from the street. James could feel the shivers wracking his friend’s frame and pressed his shoulder to Moony’s, seeking out and providing much needed warmth. Even with the Dementors gone the cold was lingering in their limbs and hearts, the dredged up dark memories still lurking in their minds.

It took long minutes before he managed to tear his gaze away from the aurors at work and realised he and Moony were still simply standing in the apothecary. Taking a deep, shuddering breath, James nudged his friend into movement, noting how the werewolf’s eyes took a long time to really focus on him. He couldn’t see his own reflection, but James was pretty sure he was just as chalk white as Remus.
“Come on, Moony,” he said lowly, throat still feeling tight, “We have to find the others.”

The others. Sirius and Hadrian and his dad. They had been out there from the beginning and James had no idea what had happened to them, if they had sought out shelter in one of the shops or… No, he was not going to think about that. It was not an option. He had seen Hadrian produce a Patronus, the little bugger, he was alright. He had to be. And where Hadrian was there was Sirius which meant his best mate also had to be okay.

The street was a mess.

Remus could not look away from the corpses as the aurors levitated everyone to one spot. No, not corpses, his mind supplied nastily, they are much worse off than that. They fell prey to the Dementors, their very souls had been sucked out, eaten, by the monsters that attacked the formerly happy little shopping district. He felt bile rise up in his throat as he saw children between those set down in the group. His ears started ringing as he stared at the scene, the disturbingly quiet sounds of the survivors no longer penetrating through the noise…

“PADFOOT!”

Remus gasped in a loud breath as James’ shout rang out. Automatically looking at his friend, he followed his line of sight to see Hadrian and Sirius sitting close together on the pavement in front of some shop farther down the street. A wave of relief hit him then, which was followed by something else immediately. He couldn’t explain it, but wasn’t too surprised as he felt the now familiar surge of protectiveness flood him as he looked at Hadrian’s small form. His wolf was practically howling with the need to check him over. It was just as ridiculous as it had been all those weeks back, but seeing that Hadrian was alright instantly calmed his agitated inner wolf. Remus was running alongside James, dodging aurors and sobbing former shoppers, before he fully registered what he was doing.

They came to a stop next to the couple and Remus couldn’t help but notice the instinctive tensing of both of them before they relaxed again. Or as much relaxed as one could be in this place and after what they had just all been through. Sirius had his arms around Hadrian, keeping him close and didn’t let him out of his reach even as they both stumbled to their feet… only to be nearly toppled over as James flung himself at both of them, enveloping them in his long arms.

“Damn, Bambi, the way you took care of those… things…,” James muttered incomprehensibly into the hug for a few moments longer, before he leaned back to stare at his son in astonishment.

Sirius could relate.

It was more than obvious that Hadrian was familiar with battle situations like the one they just had been in. And it definitely had been a battle even if there had been no actual spellfire. Dementors, he could easily acknowledge now, were the most horrifying creatures he had ever met. Sirius shook his head, tightening his hold on his boy. He was not about to let him out of his sight any time soon.

He watched as James regarded his son carefully, taking in the hard look that was still present in those big green eyes. Oh yes, Sirius could admit that he was just as surprised and in awe as James so obviously was. Hadrian had taken charge of the situation the moment it became clear no one else could, as if he had simply stepped up to a responsibility well-known, and he had done so naturally. It was both awe-inspiring and disconcerting. They had suspected before, but now that they had seen Hadrian react to a situation like this…

Even after seeing the magic his boyfriend was capable of more than once, Sirius still had underestimated Hadrian. Never would he have expected the small slip of a boy to up and go confront
a horde of Dementors, and all on his own at that! Pride and anxiousness were warring in his chest for the upper hand, his concern for his love registering the fact that Hadrian was likely to act as he had today again. He would step right in front of danger without thought. Sirius swallowed a growl at that realisation.

Harry listened only half-heartedly to the Marauders’ exclamations, James’ astonishment and glee, Remus’ open concern and Sirius’ silent protectiveness. His mind was still partly occupied with what had just happened with the Dementors while another part was scanning the features of his friends, making sure they were okay. It took him a while to finally speak up and when he did he couldn’t help the authoritative tone to his voice:

“I’m going to teach you the Patronus,” he said, his words brooking no argument as he met each of their gazes.

The Marauders were silent for a moment, looking at him in surprise, but Harry would not budge on this. Then James grinned cheekily, enthusiastically imitating a muggle salute.

“Sir, yes sir!”

Remus and Sirius were fast to join in, but even through the antics Harry could see their sincerity and acceptance, the half-hidden trembling and the too pale faces. They were trying to downplay it, but Harry knew. He knew that they were beginning to understand the reality of the war going on. Where their childhood innocence had been chipped away bit by bit before, it had lost a huge chunk today and Harry knew there was no going back now.

He felt a bit self-conscious about his presumption of teaching them, but if this day had shown one thing it was that the people of this time were woefully unprepared for the war waiting just around the corner. Voldemort was already on the move, he would not wait for them to learn how to defend themselves. And Harry was not about to let that happen if he could make a difference.

A distressed sound from Harry’s coat drew the attention of the boys and Harry became aware of the small weight he was still carrying. He hadn’t exactly forgotten about the child, but- With a gasp he registered the wetness of a tear-stained face pressed into the skin of his neck and realised the child hadn’t made a sound or even moved ever since he had picked him up in the middle of the fight. Until now, that is. Panicked, Harry looked down, trying to ascertain if his little burden was still breathing. He hadn’t misinterpreted, had he? He had managed to save the little one from the Dementor that attacked his mother, hadn’t he?

He only relaxed when he saw the small pale face slack with sleep and felt even breathing caress his skin. Harry didn’t know much about children, but thought it was likely the boy’s body had given out under the strain of the horror and stress and forced him to sleep. He had no idea how he knew, it was only a feeling, but seeing that sleeping face Harry was sure the small boy’s soul was still firmly intact.

“Who’s your stowaway?” James asked wide-eyed as Sirius blinked a bit confused at the little nappy pooper that had been clinging unnoticed to his future fiancé. It was a testament to the shock they were all still suffering from that none of them had noticed him cuddled to Harry before.

“I…,” Harry started only to have his throat close up.

Looking at the little one in his arms that even in sleep still had his hands wound tightly into Harry’s clothes had him sucking in a trembling breath. The empty look on the boy’s mother’s face was burned into his memory and was sure to haunt him more than all the other terrible images he had newly acquired for his nightmares today. It seemed the look on his face said it all as he felt his
boyfriend press closer from behind, supporting part of his weight and no one questioned him further.

“Let’s see…” Remus said softly, trying to get a better look at the boy hiding his face in Harry’s neck. “The blond doesn’t really remind me of any prominent family…,” he muttered thoughtfully, glad to see a child unscathed or at least still in possession of their soul after the attack.

“Yeah,” James chimed in, also bending down and trying to coax the little one into looking up. “It’s different from the Malfoy’s somehow, the shade I mean.”

Remus nodded and rolled his eyes simultaneously.

“It’s called honey-blond and have you ever seen a Malfoy with curls?”

Next to them Sirius took on a far away look before he suddenly shuddered slightly. Remus gave him a knowing glance and Harry felt the insane urge rise to laugh at the whole situation. It was strange to ponder over family characteristics while standing in a street full of sobbing people, crying over their lost friends and family members…

“You just imagined Lucius with that muggle style, what’s it called?” Remus accused teasingly. “A permanent wave?”

That thought had Harry choking only to snort a little hysterically as his mind dredged up an image of the Lucius Malfoy he remembered in Aunt Petunia’s bright pink curlers. Sirius just shrugged, saying: “Actually it was creepy Abraxas, not the ponce he calls his son.”

The child in question chose that moment to finally wake up. He started shifting, rubbing his little face in Harry’s neck, small fists clenching and unclenching in the fabric of his shirt. The talk about the boy’s heritage made Harry wonder though: How would the Marauders react if the little one actually had been born to a dark family? Would they care?

Looking over at his boyfriend, Harry shook his head. If they did, it would be more than a bit hypocritical and really, what did he care if the boy carried dark family magic? So did Sirius. His boyfriend’s magic was inherently dark and yet he had always fought for the Light. Harry could feel the difference between his father’s and his boyfriend’s magic easily, he could even smell it, yet those two were the best of friends. If anything, Harry’s trip to the past had taught him how very biased his future had been. He shook his wandering thoughts away and focused back on the squirming child in his arms. Why did he feel that protective anyway? The boy looked a lot more awake now, though clearly disoriented. He was sniffling, looking around wide-eyed and confused until his eyes landed on Harry. He thought, he saw recognition there.

“…um… hey there?” Harry greeted unsurely.

How did you talk to a child that small? He really had no experience in that area and how much of the situation was the boy capable of understanding anyway?

“How did you talk to a child that small? He really had no experience in that area and how much of the situation was the boy capable of understanding anyway?

“Mummy?”

Harry couldn’t help the audible intake of breath. Of course the child would ask for his mother first thing. It was probably the last he remembered and children were supposed to be fixated on their parents, right? Not that Harry could be sure about that, since he was never allowed to call anyone ‘Mummy’ as long as he could remember.

Seeing as he probably shouldn’t tell the boy what really had happened to his mother, Harry floundered a second before he simply let his instincts take over. Right now it was best to assure the little one of his safety and bring him somewhere where there were no lifeless bodies around.
Everything else could be sorted out later. He carefully adjusted his grip, trying to keep the boy close but comfortable.

“What’s your name, munchkin?” He asked softly, catching and holding the gaze of those wide brown eyes.

He was wary of letting the little one’s gaze stray, they were still in the middle of Diagon Alley after all, even if there were no Dementors around anymore. He was met with a scrunched up nose and a pout, but no actual answer was forthcoming. Well, that was probably to be expected. Harry remembered Aunt Petunia always telling Dudley not to talk to strangers, though she never bothered with Harry. With a sigh, he shifted the boy to his other hip. He seemed to be getting heavier by the minute.

“It’s okay, you don’t have to tell me,” he assured, still talking softly and focusing solely on the child. “I’m Har- … I’m Hadrian and you’re safe now. You’re safe now.”

Not really thinking about it, Harry started to rock the whimpering child in his arms slightly as he thought about what to do next. He tried not to frown as he realised he would have to find out the mother’s identity so the boy could be reunited with his family. Which meant he would have to look for her in the group the aurors had assembled in the middle of the street to be looked over and presumably to be shipped off to St. Mungo’s… not that they could be helped there or anywhere else for that matter…

A touch to the small of his back brought him out of his thoughts, and he realised with a start that the Marauders had been watching their interaction this whole time. Sirius was standing close, smiling somewhat sadly at him and Harry blushed. Right.

His musings were interrupted by the arrival of three of the previously occupied aurors, two of which Harry could actually identify. Alastor ‘Mad Eye’ Moody, even though he didn’t seem to have the name-giving madly rolling eye yet, was accompanied by who Harry thought was probably Rufus Scrimgeour and an unfamiliar, rather pinched looking man. As different an impression as the three of them were making, they were all sharing the suspicion in their features as they regarded Harry.

Sirius tried not to let his thoughts wander as he watched his boyfriend interact with the squirt. He had never really entertained thoughts of children, especially not after he had run away from his family and the connected responsibility of producing an heir as soon as he was out of school himself. But seeing Hadrian like this, with a child in his arms and that soft smile on his face… hell yeah, he suddenly was quite sure he would want children in the future if he could raise them with this young man.

That’s when the aurors made an appearance and Sirius did not like the way they were eying his Hadrian. He summoned up his Pureblood persona and closed off his face. There was no way he would let them get away with any harassment of his boyfriend. His boyfriend, who was nervously tugging at his hair. Oh. Sirius just about had a heart attack when he realised Hadrian must have lost his hat in the chaos. His dark locks were uncovered, nothing but the hair itself hiding his boyfriend’s creature features from the piercing stares of the aurors.

“Which of you cast the Patronus?” Moody barked at them, making Hadrian flinch and pull the child closer. Sirius allowed a miniscule frown to break through his mask. Was that particular auror generally this impolite or was it the situation?

“And you are?” He asked haughtily, channelling his younger brother rather perfectly down to the
raised eyebrow.

The hard, suspicious stare was turned his way, making Sirius instinctively raise his Occlumency shields as he was scrutinised. Using Legilimency on anyone without court order was technically illegal, but he wouldn’t put it past this auror to do it anyway. It wasn’t exactly provable if he only skimmed surface thoughts, after all, and Sirius was not about to let anything even remotely endangering to Hadrian happen. His thoughts, his knowledge, were not for the prying ‘eyes’ of some random auror.

“Alastor Moody, the auror in charge here, lad.” There was a challenging tone to the auror’s voice as if he wanted to force some reaction out of Sirius. He narrowed his eyes.

“That is ‘Heir Black’ to you, Auror Moody,” he said, trying to rein his temper in, but he could see the other two red-clad Ministry workers still examining Hadrian out of the corner of his eye. Maybe he was imagining things, but he did not like the disgust seemingly radiating from the pinched looking one.

“Heir Black? Orion’s boy?” Moody looked surprised for a second, his eyes skimming over their group assessingly, before coming back to rest on Sirius. “The run-away? You’re aware I could hand you over to child services this instant?”

He couldn’t help it, he bristled at those words. He was seventeen, an adult and no one would return him to those… those-

James had stayed back first, watching the confrontation and hoping his best mate would not let his possessive protectiveness of Hadrian get the better of him. He saw Sirius pull his Pureblood persona around him like a cloak and realised his friend would be playing the nobility card to avoid any in-depth questioning. Questioning, which really could turn out dangerous for their group. They were hiding two creatures after all, one of those even considered dark. He saw Remus stare determinedly at the ground, careful not to make eye contact with any of the aurors to hide his rather telling amber eyes. Your everyday wizard would not know, but this kind of shade was a sign of lycanthropy in most cases. Never good to be in the spotlight if you’re a closet werewolf. Or a werewolf in general, really.

Throwing a glance at Hadrian, James cursed inwardly. His son looked pale and unsteady on his feet, though his grip on the again completely still child was secure. He also was trying not to draw attention towards himself, but he must have noticed the aurors’ suspicion regarding his person as he was shooting nervous glances at them every now and then.

As the conversation took a turn for the worse, James stepped in. Sirius might be the influential Lord Black’s son and heir, but as Moody said, he was also a run-away and the Blacks were known for their clear dark stance. In a situation like this, where dark creatures that should have been under Ministry control, had attacked a popular place, Sirius was kind of an instant suspect.

“Auror Moody?” He asked, giving his voice a pleasantly surprised lilt as he drew the attention to himself. “The current head of the department? I remember my father talking about you, saying you were supportive of the-”

“That’s all nice and dandy,” Scrimgeour interrupted, not sounding ‘nice and dandy’ at all. “But I for one would like to know what that boy is doing with the toddler.” He made short order of pointing rudely at Hadrian who looked as if he would like to just meld into the shadows. “And it would be in your best interest to answer Head Auror Moody’s question.”

Before any of them could react, Moody had stepped forward and grabbed Hadrian by the upper arm.
It was a move that clearly said he did not trust their intentions and James managed just in time to hold Sirius back. He very much hoped the aurors did not hear the slight growling emanating from his best mate.

“If he’s not yours, lad,” Moody snarled at Hadrian, “You better had ‘im hand over now,” he said, talking as if Hadrian had made any indication that he intended to abduct the little boy, or something along those lines.

James frowned. That was way over the top even for Moody who was known to be quite paranoid.

“But I can identify his mother,” Hadrian’s soft voice answered and James watched with dread as his son looked up to stubbornly meet the suspicious glare of the auror.

He knew from experience that Hadrian’s Elf Owl eyes were very much obvious from this close a distance and- Sirius tugged himself free of James’ grasp and came to stand right next to Hadrian, slinging his arm around the small waist in a possessive gesture. James thought he heard Remus give a foreboding sounding moan.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter got away from me even though I couldn't really get into the 'flow' of things... or probably because of exactly that.
Any preferences for the little boy's first name?
An all around thank you to those of you that suggested names for the little one! Sorry that I didn’t manage to answer all of you individually, but at least I tried to note down the whole lot. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He wished he could rein it in, stop it from influencing the aurors so much. Harry didn’t know Scrimgeour and the other one all that good, but he realised even the paranoid Moody had no actual reason to react the way he was at the moment. No reason but one: Harry’s allure.

That damn creature feature was pushing the auror’s most prominent trait, his paranoia, to the forefront of his mind and Harry got the distinct impression that whatever he said would be regarded with utter suspicion. Still, he couldn’t just let them take the little one from him. The boy had stopped his whimpering the moment the aurors appeared as if sensing that any attention on Harry right now was not a good thing. Instead the child had slung his tiny arms around Harry’s neck, small fists clenching in the dark hair. He had gone completely still and seemed determined not to be dislodged.

Moody was looming over him and Harry felt a mixture of annoyance and anxiousness. The grip on his arm was harsh and sure to leave bruises, but it was the slightly unstable look in those eyes that really got to him. This was a man he had once looked at as a teacher, an ally, even if that man had been an impostor and he never really got the chance to get to know the real Moody. Maybe it was for the best, Harry thought, as he met that hostile stare.

“But I can identify his mother,” he told the auror stubbornly, not giving into the slowly growing urge to hide away.

He wasn’t going to hand over the kid to just anyone. First, the boy needed to be looked over by a healer or at least his grandfather and second, Harry knew who the boy had been with when the Dementors attacked. They should find out her identity and with that they should be able to locate any living family. Decision made, Harry raised his chin defiantly, clutching the child close to him and feeling the boy in turn hold on even tighter. Then Sirius was there, glaring at Moody and looking one step away from drawing his wand at the auror if he didn’t let go of Harry. Only Moody didn’t seem to realise or rather care.

“But you’re the one who took ‘im from her?” He accused. “Got rid of her, too, boy?”

It was that last word that got to him. That term said in such a derogatory way. He had been accused of so many things in his life already, that that particular accusation, killing the child’s mother, didn’t even really register, nor did the outrage on his behalf. But the way of address did, bringing with it countless memories of a huge, whale-like man towering over him, berating, shouting and sneering. And always that word. Boy. He had never been ‘Harry’ to his uncle, had never been an actual person in that man’s eyes. He had been a freak, unworthy of a name, hidden away in his cupboard with all the other cleaning utensils… which was essentially what he had been to the Dursley’s, wasn’t it? A tool, a thing…

Harry didn’t realise the way his breathing had started speeding up or how his magic, even though it
should have been depleted, had started crawling across his skin. He did not notice the volatile way his big Elf Owl eyes started glowing. But he did hear the sudden commotion and felt the hands pulling him aside, though it took much longer than it normally would to register and even longer to realise what was going on.

Fleamont had been drinking tea. He had been sitting there more or less comfortably in one of the stiff leather armchairs that littered the upscale establishment he and some of his associates tended to frequent for business talks. It was set up similarly to what muggles called a gentlemen’s club (The kind that prohibited women entrance. If he had ever even thought of visiting the other kind of a ‘gentlemen’s club’, his lovely Mia would have his hide. And probably some body parts.). The present gentlemen were enjoying expertly brewed tea and biscuits in one of the parlours meant for socialising. It was after all still a bit early for firewhiskey, though Fleamont honestly felt like he could do with one or two after the morning he had had.

The topic of conversation would have been politics, the over-all kind of discussion instead of anything in-depth. Such more delicate matters would never found themselves discussed in a public setting such as this. But on this late forenoon another topic dominated the talk between the associated gentlemen, or in the case of Lord Longbottom and Lord Potter, friends.

The attacks on the muggleborn students and their families.

Naturally, this was also considered a ‘delicate matter’, but as the whole Wizarding World was currently discussing these very occurrences, no one paid much attention to the assembled gentlemen and their conversation. So Lord Fleamont Henry Potter had just started explaining his suspicion of a connection between these attacks and the horrid murder of another family that happened just a few months prior, when it happened.

Even far down Horizont Alley as they were, the occupants of the gentlemen’s club could feel the Dementors. (*) Only they didn’t quite realise what they were feeling until it was too late and Diagon Alley had been completely cut off from them. It didn’t stop Fleamont from trying. The wall of fear, despair and unnatural cold felt near impenetrable and he had to lean against one of the shops around for support shortly after leaving the club. People were running in their direction, no, they were fleeing and he could understand the sentiment just fine. Never before had he felt so overwhelmed by a Dementor’s presence which, really, spoke volumes of the number they were dealing with.

Taking a deep breath to steady himself, Fleamont and his older associates started conjuring up their Patroni. Oh yes, they were capable of doing so as it used to be mandatory back when they attended Hogwarts. Why ever that had changed, Fleamont could not fathom, but it didn’t matter at the moment. His son, no, his sons where out there and his entrance was blocked by panicking crowds and the ominous, dark cloaks of the beings of fear that he could just make out around the corner. But there was no time!

He fought his own panic as soon as he realised where the attack was concentrated and what that meant for the boys. He sent a quick plea to Merlin and whichever deity was listening, before he simply threw himself into the fray. There was no way he would wait until those bloody people managed to clear the street. He had unconsciously known Harfang and the Prewett twins, Gideon and Fabian, would be following him, but he had also realised rather quickly that it would take them all too long to reach Diagon Alley.

Regardless, Fleamont fought on and thanked his height for once as he navigated through the crowds, clearing a path his friends could follow. Had he not been able to see his Patronus, he would have believed it failed as the feelings of dread and worry seamlessly moved into anxiousness and fear
and… they were out there, they were trapped by Dementors and why, oh why, had he never taken
the time to teach James the Patronus Charm?

It took too long.

The moment the drowning effect of the Dementors suddenly vanished, Fleamont thought his heart
had just stopped. There were only two reasons why the Dementors would have vacated the vicinity
and he had lost his sense of time in the panicky rush to reach his sons. Had it been long enough for
the aurors to arrive or was the reason the beings had left a much more gruesome one? After all, why
stay in an environment that would no longer sustain oneself? An environment that simply had no
souls left to sustain the horrible creatures…

The scene he finally came upon was terrible and he heard his friends stop dead in their tracks behind
him. But Fleamont moved on, desperately looking over the fallen people, the aurors and the groups
of survivors… only to find his sons engaged in what appeared to be a dispute with the Head Auror
himself.

It felt like breathing again after holding his breath for far too long.

Remus was holding onto the slight form of Hadrian who in turn was still holding the child close. He
had reacted on instinct when he felt the way Hadrian’s magic started stirring. It was still close after
the full moon, but even without its proximity Remus’ werewolf senses would have picked up on the
itching, tickling feeling of rising magic. It wasn’t as strong or chaotic as it used to be before his
newest friend had his creature inheritance, but he still recognised it. So it did not hurt him when he
touched Hadrian, but it wasn’t exactly comfortable either. Still, holding Hadrian close used to calm
the boy the last time and had the added effect that it calmed Remus or rather Moony too.

It had taken him only a second to realise that he wasn’t the only one picking up on the magic. The
auror who had grabbed Hadrian was staring right at the boy and Remus could see the exact moment
he caught the change or maybe the unconventional eyes. Whatever it was, the auror pulled back in
shock and had his wand in hand the next moment, only Remus didn’t wait that long. As Sirius
reacted to the threat and drew his own wand, Remus pulled Hadrian out of the auror’s direct line of
fire.

There was not much he could do in these few seconds so he ended up pulling Hadrian plus
stowaway close and shielding them from the suddenly raised wands. It was disturbing to feel no
actual resistance in Hadrian, but Remus had no time to check on him right then. He hastily tugged
Hadrian to the side, saw James yank at Sirius’ wand arm and the aurors pull their wands on them.
Then everyone started shouting. He dimly registered James having the most peculiar expression on
his face. All this Remus’ brain filed away until a moment when he could safely analyse it.

Who knew how this uncontrolled situation would have devolved if it had not been for the imposing
figure of one Lord Potter to arrive at the scene.

They heard him call over the loud accusations and the still lingering sobs and wails of the former
shoppers. Lord Potter parted the masses like that bloke in muggle religion (that clearly was a wizard,
if you asked Sirius) parted the red sea. Red was also the furious haze on his mind that only lifted
enough for him stop fighting Prongs who was still digging his fingernails into Sirius’ wand arm. He
felt like flaying the fucking aurors alive for threatening his Hadrian.

Foregoing any decorum, the tall lord descended upon their group, completely disregarding the
aurors, and started to look the boys over. He reached James first who didn’t so much as blink when
his father enfolded him in his arms, reaching up to touch his cheek, all the while muttering his gratitude to Merlin and Morgana and some more names Sirius couldn’t quite place. He saw the aurors hesitate as he still couldn’t tear his murderous glare away from the bastards, and watched them shake themselves with mildly confused expressions on their faces. It was then that Sirius recognised something. The sudden interruption probably helped them as much as it helped him to realise the utter idiocy of this whole situation.

What the fuck was going on?

He had just drawn his wand at an auror. He had wanted to curse him to the bottom of the Black Lack and back and if it hadn’t been for James stopping him… Sirius could only hope they would write it off to shock over the Dementor attack and not question Sirius’ and their own behaviour overly much. Still, he thought, as Lord Potter reached Rem and Hadrian where they had stepped to the side, Moody had clearly noticed something. And no, he did not mean his would-be-attack but very much the compulsion of his boyfriend’s allure.

Finally Sirius allowed his gaze to stray and he watched as Rem smiled reassuringly at the tall man in front of him who was shifting just so that he was blocking the two boys from the aurors. His sensitive hearing picked up on the words spoken between those three, though he was pretty sure none of the others around him did.

“Do I need to call a solicitor?” Lord Potter asked, voice barely audibly as he checked Rem over. “Sirius seems to have been on the verge of drawing his wand on Ministry Forces after all.”

The comment made Sirius pause. Shit. He really had done that, hadn’t he? Salazar’s potion-stained prick, he was going to be in a crap load of trouble. Remus was giving a half-shrug, deliberately looking down at Hadrian who was blinking up at them with a concerned frown on his face. The move made Sirius check on the pissy aurors again, but the men seemed to be discussing something amongst themselves, only shooting glares his direction every now and then. He knew Rem would not risk voicing the influence of a certain allure out loud in such a setting and they were still blocked from the aurors’ sight, but still, Sirius couldn’t help but tense even more.

His caution didn’t seem to be necessary, though, as Lord Potter simply gave an understanding nod that could have meant everything and nothing. He then proceeded to carefully draw Hadrian out of Rem’s arms, not batting an eye at the kid still clinging to his newly acquired grandson. Clamping down on his Grim’s urges, Sirius stayed rooted in place. This day had fast developed into a mess worthy of a rampant Erumpent. (*) Try saying that three times in a row.

Watching his dad deal with the aurors, James struggled to get his head around all the events of the day. First, Hadrian was truly revealed as his son and Godric help him, James would get a look at that damn heritage parchment. Second, they were attacked by freaking Dementors. Dementors! In Diagon Alley! And not just one either but a whole damn swarm! Third, his awesome son from the future proved to be even more special and went up against the monsters all on his lonesome. If that wasn’t an incredible feat, James didn’t know what was. Little, delicate Hadrian went and cast a Patronus and saved pretty much everyone around with a huge risk to his own soul. James wondered idly if it was okay to look up to one’s own son.

But then everything went from frying pan to… burning stake or whatever that muggle saying was. The aurors, fashionably late as they always seemed to be, turned around and accused the very person that had saved the day. If that was what one got for saving a bunch of people while simultaneously protecting a little kid, James was seriously losing faith in humanity.

Raking his hands through his hair in agitation, he looked over at his dad. Lord Potter was just finishing up cutting the aurors down, one arm protectively around Hadrian, while family friends
Longbottom and the Prewetts were helping with the situation in the alley. By now most people had deserted the street and the unlucky ones, the Dementor victims, had been portkeyed in groups to St. Mungo’s.

He tried not to look too closely at Hadrian and his dad in case someone picked up on it, but he was pretty sure he knew what was going on. From what James had looked up in the family library since the start of the holidays, he would guess his dad was suppressing Hadrian’s allure right now, forcing the aurors to see what they couldn’t before: A boy having saved a little kid. Nothing more, nothing less. It irked and frustrated James that he hadn’t thought to do so himself. But then again, he wasn’t quite sure how that suppression actually worked. He thought it had something to do with the familial connection…

Anyway, they would still need to visit St. Mungo’s if he understood the situation correctly. Hadrian had apparently taken the boy from his mother’s lifeless… soulless… arms and said mother would by now be with the people portkeyed to the hospital. And said hospital would be completely overrun at this moment. What a mess.

With a sigh, James glared at his idiotic best mate. Sirius was doing his damned best to pull up his Pureblood mask again, but James knew his friend. He could see the anger and frustration and overall concern. He had suspected a while ago that there was more to the relationship of Sirius and Hadrian than ‘just’ a fancy-developed-into-crush-evolved-into-obsession- err… love. They hadn’t exactly sat down and really talked about it all so far, but that had to end now. Just as much as Hadrian needed to learn about everything concerning his creature, the Marauders needed to learn about all those secrets that seemed to have cropped up from everywhere. They couldn’t go on like this.

Finally his father came over and the aurors did a nice impression of deflating porcupine fishes… or was that puffer fish? He was pretty sure there was a magical variant of those that actually deserved to be called blowfish as in, you know, blowing things up. Why was he thinking about piscine creatures again?

Harry was so tired. The miniscule weight of the little boy still wrapped in his arms felt like a ton of bricks, his muscles were all aching and twitching, and he had a headache that was fast developing into a migraine. He really wasn’t sure how much longer he would be able to stay on his feet.

Ever since Moody had unknowingly dragged up some of his worst memories he hadn’t been completely aware of the goings on around him. And wasn’t that simply ironic? He fought a bloody swarm of Dementors, but it was some twat calling him ‘Boy’ that finally made him cave in. If it hadn’t been for Lord Potter’s steadying arm around him, Harry wasn’t sure he would have made it through the interrogation. Well, technically it was his grandfather verbally dissecting the aurors and him only having to recount once how he had acquired his little non-dislodgeable stowaway. To say the aurors were disbelieving of his abilities was putting it nicely, but Harry couldn’t care less. He sure as hell was not going to give a demonstration or something. He was tired, drained and he hurt. The child also really should be looked over by a healer, he would probably need a mind specialist too.

When the aurors finally went to take the kid with them to the hospital, though, the little one would not budge. He wasn’t screaming or anything, but he was holding onto Harry with a surprising strength. Harry did not fancy the little fists pulling at his hair and feathers, but couldn’t very well draw anyone’s attention to his misery. It was a miracle none of the bloody aurors had said something about his appearance so far even though Harry could see the questions in Moody’s paranoid eyes.

It took his grandfather assuming responsibility to solve the awkward situation. It was decided that the little boy would come with them for now as long as Lord Potter would vouch for his safety.
Harry barely felt it when his grandfather finally lead him back to the others, but somehow managed a weak smile when he was transferred into Sirius’ arms. He wasn’t going to fight the fussing if he was struggling to keep his balance as it was. He felt his boyfriend’s arm going around his waist again, keeping him upright. There were questions asked, but Harry was too tired to concentrate on the words. The adrenaline had long since left his system, sheer stubbornness keeping him on his feet, but now that there was no threat left and he was with someone he trusted...

Then there was the hook behind his navel, the horrible tugging and whirling and his mind screaming PORTKEY like a curse... They slammed into the ground, instantly surrounded by hundreds of loud voices and pushing crowds. Harry staggered, fighting to keep the little one in his arms and his breakfast down. It was surprisingly hard to do both at the same time. He felt himself sag against Sirius, heard his boyfriend’s low grunt as he was suddenly forced to hold up not only Harry’s but also the little boy’s weight. And through it all he couldn’t get his eyes to open. When had he closed them anyway?

“Holy dragon dung, Pads,” he heard James hiss next to them. “Attacking an auror? Really?!!”

Harry wanted to be proud that he could make out at least some words now, but a hand on his forehead stopped any thought other than how incredible it felt to lean against the cold appendage. Blinking once, Harry vaguely registered the crowded front hall of St. Mungo’s and his grandfather’s concerned face looking down on him. Then his knees were giving out on him and Harry’s last coherent thought was that he hoped someone caught the child in his arms.

Chapter End Notes

(*) **Horizont Alley** in canon is supposed to be a cross street of Diagon Alley that intersects Knockturn Alley and Carkitt Market. At some point I wanna write a story with focus on one of those wizarding districts...

(*) **Erumpent**: a huge African magical beast resembling a rhinoceros. Its horn apparently injects some kind of ‘venom’ that causes its victims to explode.

ALSO!
Is it lawyer, attorney or solicitor in this context?
The cold was unbearable. It was not stopping at his skin, it was seeping right into his bones, gnawing at them until he felt them break and crush. Harry wanted to scream. But there was another scream growing in the distance, getting louder and louder until it was deafening and roaring and Harry tried to cover his ears. But his hands wouldn’t move and panic was gripping him. The scream was his mother’s, howling around him in the painful cold and yet… yet he could still hear the rattling breath of his greatest fear as the Dementor drew near.

It was just one, but Harry was helpless. It was all too much.

Staring wide-eyed as the monster reached out for him, unable to move away, Harry couldn’t think. This was it, he could not move, could not protect himself and no one was here, no one was coming to save him.

“You didn’t save me either,” a voice said, making him flinch and open eyes he hadn’t known were closed.

He was there, the man he couldn’t save. No, the man he decided not to save. The one he turned his back on to save another, but what did it matter why he did it? He left him there, let the Dementor consume his soul right after the man had helped Harry. What kind of monster was he? There was a touch to his cheek and Harry’s eyes went wide again as he looked up right into the endless depths of the Dementor’s mouth…

He could hear voices drifting around him, but it took him a moment to comprehend the words. Even then, Harry wasn’t sure his brain was completely awake yet or if it was making up some random ridiculousness.

“I could go for a ham sandwich…,” James’ voice commented rather off-handedly and Harry thought it sounded like his father was standing somewhere near but not directly in his vicinity.

“Oi!” Sirius was interrupting indignantly. “No dirty talk involving my boyfriend!”

Harry frowned in confusion at that. Dirty talk? About him? Hadn’t James just mentioned feeling hungry?

“Why, Pads dearest, will he go all porkers otherwise?” The sentence hung in the room for a second before James pulled a face or at least that was how his voice sounded when he started speaking again. “Nope, you’re right. No piggy talks around my innocent son’s ears.”

Okay, now he really was confused. What was with all those …meaty references? Sirius just snickered and Harry already knew he wasn’t quite done yet, even without seeing his boyfriend’s
“You make it sound so boar-ing,” Sirius sighed dramatically and something in his voice had Harry blushing, though he was rather sure no one noticed. “Why, I certainly can’t get enough of his sweet self.” Yes, blushing it was.

There was a groan and Harry imagined James pinching the bridge of his nose in a show of exasperation. He would need to think about this conversation again when he was more awake to really comprehend what the banter was about. Yes, later, when there was no darkness slowly luring him back down…

“You’re not gonna tell me about eating that ham all up, are you?” His father finally said. There was another beat of silence, then James added in a rush: “Please, Pads, just shut up!”

He sounded utterly mortified and Harry resolved to go back to sleep thinking about ham… H.A.M. …

Sirius traced his thumb across the pale knuckles of Hadrian’s limp hand, trying to rub some warmth into the skin. He had never told him so, knowing how much it annoyed his boyfriend, but he really liked the fact Hadrian’s hands were so much smaller than his. In fact, he quite enjoyed the height difference between them too and nope, he would not tell Hadrian that. He liked his extremities where they were, thank you very much.

Though really, if anything this day had shown how very irrelevant appearances are. Hadrian was such a small thing and yet without him the tragedy at Diagon would have been much worse. Hadrian had protected half of the people currently staying in this ward. Sirius knew from Lord Potter’s repeated conversations with the aurors that the number of actual (soulless) victims would have been double or more than it was now without Hadrian’s intervention. This slip of a boy currently half drowning in ugly hospital sheets had saved hundreds of lives all on his own. He wished his boyfriend could see that too and would stop feeling so self-conscious about his height.

St. Mungo’s was still crowded, but the silencing charms on the private room stopped any noise from penetrating the quiet around them. He was alone now, sitting vigil over the one that kinda saved the day while the others were off giving statements to the aurors and whatnot. And yet, they could not even risk leaving Hadrian alone for one minute for fear of anyone discovering his creature heritage. The thought disgusted Sirius. To think that, had it not been for Lord Potter’s influence and good connections, they would probably still be waiting for treatment. Treatment that would then either be denied as soon as Hadrian’s creature status was discovered, or would cost them a horrendous sum of galleons and would end up with Hadrian being registered with the Ministry before he even woke up. No, Sirius had never been more grateful for belonging to such an influential family and no, he did not mean the Blacks.

Sighing, he stared at Hadrian’s unresponsive features.

Why was it that he always ended up sitting at this boy’s bedside waiting for him to regain consciousness? Not that he actually wanted to be anywhere else but with Hadrian, it was just… Sirius could really imagine much more pleasurable things he and his boyfriend could do on a bed. Or on any other horizontal surface. Heck, he didn’t even need a horizontal surface, the next wall would suffice his needs just fine.

With a groan Sirius forcefully pushed those thoughts aside. They were probably rather uncalled for in this situation and yet he couldn’t deny that he always seemed to fantasize like this each time his
Hadrian ended up anywhere near a bed. Or a horizontal surface. There was just something about his boy in a bed…

That thought brought Sirius’ attention right back to the reason why his boyfriend was once again bedridden. He remembered arriving at St. Mungo’s via portkey amidst the hysterical masses. He remembered Hadrian suddenly sagging against him and he remembered Lord Potter’s concern. A second later his boyfriend had collapsed and they were not only in a completely overrun hospital, but in an overrun hospital that would not treat his creature boyfriend. Not to mention that no one could actually know that Hadrian was a creature.

Sirius’ first instinct when Hadrian became dead weight was to call for a healer. He was just glad Lord Potter had caught the squirt Hadrian had been lugging around, because Sirius had been way too occupied with stressing out over his unconscious boyfriend. It had been a long day and he had thought more than once that he had lost Hadrian to the Dementors. Seeing and feeling him going limp in his arms after everything was supposed to be over…

Agitated, Sirius pushed his hands through his hair, tangling his fingers in the tresses and pulling roughly. It didn’t help alleviate the frustrated shame he felt thinking back at what had happened in that street. He and the others had essentially been useless while Hadrian saved the day. Oh Sirius had no problem with the fact his boyfriend was so well versed in defense. That point was great. No, it was the fact that he himself had been utterly helpless and unable to protect anyone, much less Hadrian. And that would just not do.

Ever since his inheritance the Marauders had protected Hadrian. They had stood up for him, shielded him from anyone falling prey to his wayward allure and generally took care of the delicate boy lost in time. And then there was Diagon Alley and the very first real threat and what happened? They had to hide while Hadrian protected them.

Sirius growled. He couldn’t let something like that happen again. He wanted, no, had to be able to protect those he loved. Especially Hadrian. It was a good thing that Lord Potter was an accomplished duellist, he thought, falling into plotting-mode. He would be able to train them. And train they would if they ever wanted to be an effective Bambi Protection Squad. Sirius chuckled lowly. Yes, that was what they would do. The time for childish pranks was over. There was something brewing in the shadows and Sirius could no longer ignore it.

After all, what use were they if Hadrian could single-handedly knock them all out? How were they to protect him if he was busy protecting them? Somehow Sirius just knew that they would need those skills sooner rather than later.

When he next came to, Harry wondered why he was feeling so drained. There was not a sound to be heard but his own heartbeat, the air was slightly cool, and… wait. Drained? No, that didn’t really fit, or did it? He remembered a respectable dent in his magical resources for some reason… The alley! Yes, Harry thought with a shudder, his magic would be exhausted after that. But not to the extent it would have been before his inheritance, he was sure of it. After all, he had continuously cast a Patronus, a very high powered charm, and there had been a bloody big swarm of Dementors feeding on him and the other occupants of Diagon Alley. Add in all the running he had done. Yet… What he had pulled back there… The consequences should have been worse, shouldn’t they? He should have been reduced to nothing more but cramping muscles and probably unconsciousness… oh.

Well, that explained his waking up in what definitely smelled like a hospital. Harry wanted to check on himself, wanted to know how bad the drain on his magic still was or if he was otherwise hurt, but his limbs felt like lead. His eyes were too heavy to open too. He could distinctly feel the rather
scratchy quality of sheets beneath his fingertips, but said fingertips didn’t even twitch. Annoyed and trying very hard not to panic, Harry focused inward, trying to track his magic down.

Back in the alley Harry had noticed the strain on his magical resources, yes, but he had also felt like he should be able to use the power he had much more sufficiently. As if he had the power but not the knowledge to correctly use it. And there was a whole lot of power at his command ever since his inheritance. He should have been able to sustain the Patronus longer. So knowing this… maybe he just lacked the stamina. Maybe magic worked like a muscle? He had been hurting, magically and physically, but not overly much and yes, his muscles had felt weak and still did, but it was the kind of weakness that came with overtaxing.

He was untrained. His magic and his body lacked the stamina that came with regular usage. But being untrained meant he could become trained, right? He could change for the better, he could learn to wield his new power better and longer and… Did that mean he would be able to do magical feats like this without draining himself dry of magic, without risk? Well, without killing himself in the process at least, he was after all still in a hospital now. But maybe that wouldn’t have to be the case, if he found a way to train his new power correctly.

Feeling for his magic, Harry finally found it hidden in every fibre of his very being. It was just there at his disposal, much easier to find than it had ever been before his inheritance. Though, it did feel a bit subdued at the moment. He had the sudden vision of the flat surface of a calm ocean, not a ripple across the surface and yet… he had the distinct feeling the slightest nudge, the slightest stir could cause the equivalent of a tsunami. Yes, that’s how he felt. He was not drained, no, his body had simply been unable to handle the raw amount of power for an extended time period. He suddenly just knew that had he not overexerted himself that much, he would be brimming with magic that could be easily disturbed. And the slightest nudge could mean destruction for everything around him if he lost control – everything and everyone.

With that realisation Harry was much more reluctant to train. That much power was intimidating and probably needed a lot of control and… But then again, he would only be able to achieve the needed control if he regularly trained his magic. And wouldn’t a trained body help in controlling his magic too? Even if it didn’t, it would at least ensure he would not be reduced to a useless mess like now, unable to help those that suffered if his magic got loose one day.

“Never fear your own magic,” Sirius’ voice intoned in his memory once again, “As it is the one thing that will never betray you.” Well, maybe not him, but what about those around him? No, he needed to be able to control his magic.

Sirius. Where was he? Harry had the faintest memory of hearing his boyfriend’s voice nearby a while ago, but now the room he was in was completely silent. Not a single magical signature in his direct vicinity. He couldn’t even detect noise from what surely was a bustling hospital outside so there probably were silencing wards around the room. He would have liked to look around, to check on his surroundings, but his eyes still wouldn’t comply. He mentally sighed and wondered at this strange feeling of being awake and yet unable to do anything that would alert anyone outside his own head to his state. Weren’t there some medical charms on him that would react to his mental activity?

His thoughts drifted back to Sirius and the others. They had gone through so much today… or whenever the attack in the alley had been. Harry had no way of knowing how long he had been out. He couldn’t help the twinge of guilt. The Marauders would never have been at Diagon today… that day… if it wasn’t for Harry. It was because of him that they went to see the Goblins, it was most likely also because of him that Remus had visited that shop for obscure books instead of being out in Muggle London. He was after all still trying to find everything on time travel that he could get his
And it was Harry’s fault Sirius nearly got his soul sucked out, again.

Images whirled up at that, trying to swamp him from all directions. Black cloaks, cold, ice, screams, empty eyes, a small body clinging to his… He couldn’t comprehend them all at once and then there were the feelings of guilt, of shame, of… Harry retreated back into his mind, determined to wait his body out and ignore any thoughts on what had happened.

“You didn’t save me either,” a voice said, making him flinch and open eyes he hadn’t known were closed. Dead and empty eye sockets stared right back.

Waking up a second (or was that third?) time, Harry instantly knew that he was in a hospital and why. The scents were unmistakable as was the feeling of too stiff sheets beneath him. And he needed the loo.

Blinking his eyes open, Harry sighed gratefully as no bright lights burned his vision. Looked like someone had thought ahead, or maybe it was just night time? Whatever it was, no one was with him in the room and Harry took a moment to look around. It was a smallish room, scarcely furnished with the necessities and no window. Well, there was a window, but Harry could tell it was just charmed to reflect the outside. The charmed outside was dark, alright, so it probably really was night.

He sighed at his rambling thoughts – only to jerk and hastily try to get up as his bladder reminded him of his most pressing need. Harry groaned quietly as he sat up, but didn’t dare to wait any longer. His muscles were quivering uncontrollably as he pushed himself into a standing position and he tried breathing through the sudden dizzy spell. Right. He could, no, had to do this. Preferably before he embarrassed himself.

Harry made it across the room and was ridiculously glad to find that one of the two doors really led to a tiny bathroom. Relieving himself had never felt so blissful, he decided. That was of course the moment his memories came back all at once. All of them, not just the trauma of the alley: The bank, the Goblins, the heritage parchment. Being welcomed into the Potter family by his grandfather. And then the attack. Oh Merlin, the attack. It had all happened so fast, things were a blur in his memory. He knew he had cast his Patronus too often and overtaxed himself which was why he was now here, but… there was more… A child. Big brown eyes and soft, blond curls. Where was the kid?

Rushing back into the room, Harry staggered and groaned yet again. He leaned against the doorjamb, catching his breath. He could easily see himself crawling right back into bed so much had just that little trip to the bathroom exhausted him. Not that he would, though. Harry sighed. There was no way he was going to stay here a second longer than he absolutely had to. He absolutely detested hospitals. But he had to find the others and- Hearing the door open, he snapped his head up, wondering when he had closed his eyes. Damn, he really was still bloody tired, huh?

“You really are a tough young man, aren’t you?” His grandfather’s voice said softly, lowly and Harry blinked his eyes open yet again to meet Lord Potter’s gaze. “And a mysterious one at that.”

He tried to smile, but his face felt just as tired as the rest of him. How long had he been out anyway?

“I think it is time we discussed a few things, Hadrian,” his grandfather said, closing the door behind him. “Though… not quite now,” he added and came over to help Harry back to the bed, ignoring the small flinch his closeness caused. “I have made the most peculiar observation that some walls tend to grow ears.”
Sitting down heavily, Harry rubbed at his eyes and tugged at his hair until he felt awake enough to confront reality once more. Emerald eyes met hazel as his grandfather kneeled down in front of Harry, reaching very deliberately for his hands as if he was unsure whether Harry would allow the contact or not. That was new, at least from this man. The Marauders had learned fast when it came to Harry and touch and even after all this time they always made sure he saw any possible touch coming. Well, with the exception of Sirius who didn’t need to be so very careful ever since Harry’s inheritance. They had theorised that it maybe was because Sirius was the one that had mostly taken care of Harry during his ‘blind phase’. Whatever it was, it was a fact that Sirius could touch Harry without fear of eliciting a negative response.

“Do you remember what happened, little one?”

Harry looked into the gentle eyes of his grandfather as those large hands engulfed his own. He nodded, thinking Lord Potter was talking about the Dementors and the horrors they rained down on Diagon Alley. He watched as mostly greyed eyebrows drew together in a worried frown.

“You did something very honourable back there, but that is not my biggest concern at the moment.” He sighed and rubbed Harry’s hands between his own for a moment. “You are a part of my family so you should know the Potters are very… possessive of their loved ones.”

Harry blinked and felt a small chuckle break through his weariness. That he could relate to. Thinking back to what the heritage parchment had revealed, Harry snorted softly. Magic had accepted his decision or need to become someone else, but the Potter name had stubbornly clung to him nonetheless. He was now Hadrian Moore-Potter.

“Yes,” his grandfather smiled slightly at him, “It does sound amusing spoken out loud, but the sentiment remains: We Potters are possessive of our own.”

Harry thought he heard a warning in that statement and cocked his head in confusion. Maybe he was just too tired to catch on to what Lord Potter was trying to tell him.

“Hadrian,” his grandfather said, imploring hazel locking on his own confused gaze. “You are a Potter. You are one of us. And I will not have my own run headlong into danger.”

“But-”

“Yes, it was a good thing you did. You saved many people and I am proud of you,” he interrupted Harry’s tentative protest. “But you also endangered yourself thoughtlessly. Do not try to deny it,” he admonished before Harry could even get started. “I’m afraid you have been told on. I know all about your heroic actions and while they are admirable I do not wish to ever have to carry you into a hospital again.”

If it hadn’t been for the hint of fear in Lord Potter’s voice, Harry would have protested. But as he met the concerned eyes of his grandfather, he felt his shoulders slump as his defiance left him. It was such a strange feeling to be scolded for his Gryffindorish tendencies. Oh yes, he had been reprimanded before, but it had never been with this amount of open concern. Concern for him not the blasted Boy-Who-Lived, only hope of the Wizarding World. No, Harry Potter had always been encouraged to go out and play hero, getting only an indulgent smile if he hurt himself while trying to live up to the expectations. Lord Potter, his grandfather, was concerned for him, for Hadrian. He cared enough to scold him and that meant more to Harry than any praise for being the supposed hero.

“Now let’s get you dressed, little one,” his grandfather interrupted his thoughts, getting to his feet with a slight groan and muttered words of ‘old bones’. “There is another midget that needs your attention. Why, he just would not stop his wailing once he was removed from your embrace.”
Chapter End Notes

Take a deep breath for the information overload about to come...
Chapter Notes

There is SO MUCH information in this chapter… and yet I already left out certain topics because it was becoming just too much. Well, be prepared for one huge conversation and a lot of thinking, I guess. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Potter family tree was frigging huge. Countless names and dates were flowing together in an intricate pattern that covered the whole wall of Lord Potter’s big study. Harry had to admit, he liked the room and its stern yet somehow warm atmosphere. It reflected his grandfather rather nicely, but this tapestry… it was ridiculous.

There were so many names, Harry was sure to give himself a headache if he ever were to try and memorise them all, yet James seemed to be completely fine with explaining some of the more interesting ancestors. His ancestors. It hadn’t yet fully sunken in that these were also Harry’s family – just as much as they were James’. So Harry stared and stared some more while James chattered on and his grandmother made herself at home in one of the comfy looking armchairs near the book niche.

“It changed after the solstice celebration,” Lord Potter interrupted his son with a heavy hand on his shoulder. “See there at the bottom? There you are, right next to James, though…,” he stopped there for a moment, clearing his throat.

Harry could guess why as he looked at his new name on the tapestry. It read Hadrian Aloysius Moore-Potter. It was located next to James. It was coloured golden for some reason in contrast to the black of the rest of the script. The line connecting it to the family was clearly declaring him to be James’ son, even though they were located next to each other in contrast to all the other examples on the tapestry declaring father-son relations.

And the year. Well, that was probably the most strange. The only date that appeared in relation to his name was this very year, 1976, nothing else. For all intents and purposes it looked like he had just been born. Or at least to Harry it looked that way. He said as much, and Lord Potter nodded thoughtfully for a moment before speaking again.

“In a way it does, yes,” he agreed. “Before this year you were someone else and Magic knows this. It also means something else entirely, indicated by that unconventional colour.” His strong finger traced first Harry’s new name, then the line connecting Harry to James and after that the one that connected James to Fleamont himself. They were the same, proclaiming paternity.

“Time is a fickle thing,” Lady Potter’s voice suddenly sounded from behind them. “Some say it is entirely man-made as we obsess over counting every minute, every day, and yet we still come across instances that show quite clearly how very miniscule our knowledge of time really is. Instances like you being here, Hadrian, dear.”

Nodding at Harry, she smiled in her knowledgeable way for a moment before continuing on with her thought. Harry just knew that she already was aware where (or rather when) he really came from.
“We do not know how it happened, we have no idea what the consequences are to be or if there even are going to be consequences at all. No, we humans, wizards and muggles alike, tend to believe time is a linear thing, sunrise to sundown and so on. Birth to death. We like to believe time flows in just one direction and yet here you are, clearly jumped back in time and changing things.” She winked at him playfully as Harry’s gaze snapped back to the tapestry. “Does that mean that you have gone against the flow of time or does it mean the flow never really was going in only one direction? We do not know.”

So they had guessed. They knew Harry was James’ son from the tapestry and heritage parchment and they logically could tell by his age that he hadn’t just been born. Also the family tapestry showed him to be a legitimate child even though James as his father was not marked down as married. It was all very contradicting, but his grandparents obviously had made the correct assumption: time travel. So, what now?

James could guess where this was going. His father wasn’t dumb and he had seen not only this old dishcloth but also the heritage parchment. He would have caught on to the fact that Hadrian wasn’t who he said he was a long time ago, but with this evidence of family connection and time travel there really weren’t all that many possibilities. Speaking of which, where was that damn parchment? James really, really, really wanted to take a look at his future bride. Only a little peek!

Grumbling under his breath, he listened as his father confirmed his mother’s Ravenclawish ramblings. Of course she would know. She always did. And then there was the way she, his mother, looked at Hadrian. Her intelligent eyes that always seemed to reflect a secret knowledge… they looked as if the knowledge his mother had acquired about Hadrian was of the kind that better stayed unspoken. It was the kind of knowledge James and his friends had glimpsed over the past months but hoped to never see confirmed. There were some things one simply hoped to not be real and no, he didn’t mean time travel.

His parents didn’t really know about Hadrian’s issues yet. He might have mentioned something in his letters, but really, one had to see the flinching and whatnot up close to process the severity of it all. And other than the nightmare-vision thingy about the attacks on the Muggleborns’ families there had been nothing too obvious yet that would have indicated the abuse they all pretty much knew lay in Hadrian’s past. Though, really, it annoyed James a bit that he still had no concrete information on that. How was he to prevent it from happening again if he didn’t know what to look out for?

But then again… him not knowing meant his parents also had no clue. And that brought James right to the point that was tricky here: Because the reason Hadrian had even become the victim of whatever horrors happened to him in the first place was because James hadn’t been there in the future. Because James had died. Did he really want his parents to know that?

His mother knew something. But up until this very moment she hadn’t made the connection to James himself, she had just seen an abused child. Now she knew it was her grandson from the future, because the tapestry said so, and James couldn’t help but cringe when those intelligent eyes suddenly snapped to him.

Harry was feeling overwhelmed. Sure, he had known about his time travel, he had pretty much accepted the name change. But all those information on time and influencing time and family connection and … colours and lines… He wasn’t sure his brain was awake enough for all that yet.

It had been late evening on the 28th when Harry had woken up in the hospital. He had of course picked the first moment no one had been with him in the room for longer than a few seconds to do so. Every minute before there had been someone, either one of the Marauders or Lord Potter. It was actually due to the latter sassing his wife on the teens that they had finally given in and agreed to go
home and Lord Potter had just seen them off through the floo when Harry woke up. From what he had gathered Sirius hadn’t made it easy on anyone, very reluctant to leave.

If Harry hadn’t collapsed right in the middle of St. Mungo’s front hall, they would have been able to bring him back home and call in a private healer. One that would keep Harry’s creature status a secret. As it was, Harry did get a private healer, an acquaintance of Lord Potter’s that probably owed the lord a debt or something, because as of yet his ‘status’ was apparently still a secret. The nervous healer even made the small room available when there clearly should have been no room to spare in the situation, and assessed Harry’s health state without delay. He was also the one to treat him even though simple magical exhaustion that wasn’t on a terminal level didn’t normally require an actual healer. But they couldn’t risk anything about Harry getting out. If a single medi-witch/wizard cast a simple diagnostic charm on him, or even looked closely enough at him, his creature status would have been public knowledge. It was after all law to register as a creature of every kind.

He really couldn’t get used to that feeling of being something less. Or rather being regarded as something less than a wizard. He wasn’t a stranger to being the ‘freak’, his loving relatives had made sure of that, but in the Wizarding World Harry had always been a wizard just like everyone else around him. He had the same laws to abide by, he could claim the same rights. Yes, he had been a ‘special’ wizard, sometimes getting ‘special’ treatment, sometimes considered dark, or overly powerful or whatever, but he had always been a wizard. It was pretty much the only thing he ever had in common with his peers! Now he was more. Or less. He didn’t quite understand this system that put magical creatures on par with common animals with the added insult that they were also regarded as dangerous enough to be registered. If that actually was the reason. It was just all so ridiculous and confusing and oh his head hurt…

They hadn’t been able to simply go home, though. Due to Lord Potter taking responsibility of the child Harry had saved during the attack, they were required to take the little one with them as soon as he was declared fit enough to leave. His grandfather had explained to Harry that the kid had gone into shock when he collapsed and Harry’s heart had ached at the thought. The little one had clung to him as the one he deemed safe after witnessing his mother ‘die’. Seeing the same, or rather something looking very much the same, happening to his saviour hadn’t helped the fragile mental state of the small child. He didn’t need his grandfather to understand that, he could relate.

That was how they had made their way to the child care station only to find said little one screaming at the top of his lungs while a flock of medi-witches was fluttering around him trying futilely to calm him down. They seemed very glad to get rid of the wailing child the moment they noticed Harry and Lord Potter. But when the latter bravely tried to take him out of the extended arms of one of the medi-witches, the shrieking had upped another notch and the kid had actually tried to yank away from the hold. Until he spotted Harry.

That was how he found himself with an armful of sniffling toddler that had his little hands clenched snugly into his hair once again.

Getting back to Potter Manor after that was a blur. He knew his grandfather had had to practically carry him out, though Harry remembered insisting that he was perfectly able to walk on his own two feet. But since he himself had a two or three year old, sleepy boy to carry, Harry didn’t object to the strong arm around his back that supported part of his weight. Only because of the little one, of course.

Now it was early on the 29th, just after breakfast, and Harry was yawning continuously while clutching his cup of tea tightly. The light in the room was irritating his tired eyes, but he didn’t want to be rude in wearing his (Sirius’) sunglasses inside. This wasn’t Hogwarts where he could just blend with the masses, after all, and his grandparents were taking the time to educate him on family matters.
No, he would be as respectful as he could manage, but Merlin’s saggy balls... time travel was a headache inducing matter.

Listening to his father explaining Hadrian’s connection to the family, James suddenly wondered about the Marauder’s Map. Since the family tapestry and even the heritage parchment showed his son’s name as Hadrian Moore... would the map do the same now too? He knew for a fact that it had shown Hadrian as Harry the last time he had looked at it, but apparently something had changed. James was pretty sure their nifty little map wasn’t a match for something like a Gringott’s heritage test or a family tapestry imbued with family magic as old as that of the Potter’s... His father’s voice interrupted those musings and James found himself snapping to attention at once, glancing worriedly at Hadrian as the words registered.

“We have no inkling of the precise time you originate from, son,” Lord Potter said gently, looking straight into those huge Elf Owl eyes, “But know that now that you are officially a member of the House of Potter in this time, you fall under my jurisdiction. I can protect you,” he told Hadrian earnestly, never looking away, “And I will.”

If it hadn’t been for the wide-eyed look of shocked longing on Hadrian’s face, James would have snorted at the dramatic statement. But seeing that pale face light up with the words... No, there was no way James would ruin that moment for Hadrian.

“That... that’s very considerate of you, but... there is no need for that,” the small boy finally said in answer, voice suspiciously shaky but eyes full of determination.

Lord Potter frowned at the hesitant words and James didn’t need to see his son’s face to know that Hadrian only said them at all, because he thought it was the right thing to do. Hadrian very much wanted to be protected, James realised, yet for some reason did not think he deserved it or some such nonsense. He had to blink rapidly at the sudden sting to his eyes. What the fuck had happened in that thrice damned future to make his son so... so... needy for... what? A family? A place to belong? Someone to even care?

“Say...,” Lord Potter started, obviously weighing his words carefully, “Have you actively tried to use your... well... powers yet?”

The confusion on Hadrian’s face at the seemingly out-of-context question was answer enough for all present, but James couldn’t deny that he also was at a loss. What powers? The only thing that came to mind was the allure, that blasted feature that terrorised his son’s every step. It was his mother that once again spoke up and James was sure she only did it, because it gave her an opportunity to lecture once again. Damn Ravenclaws.

“Elf Owls are not very well-known nowadays,” Lady Potter spoke up softly, making everyone turn into her direction once again. “But once upon a time – and no, Dumpling, I won’t be going into historical detail right about now – they were revered as well as feared for one specific reason.”

Harry wanted to snicker at James’ unfortunate nickname, but his grandmother’s words made the amusement lodge itself in his throat. No... not again mindless reverence and demands and resentment and fear and...

“The allure of an Elf Owl is very much different from that of the better known creatures, as you most likely already know.” Her voice floated through the study and Harry let himself be swept away by the academic atmosphere. Everything to not think about what this all meant for him personally. “The fact that it reacts to, or rather influences, each and everyone differently... It makes it very
unpredictable and human nature never likes that which it cannot control or at the very least predict. But the Elf Owl allure is more than just unpredictable in its influence. The only sure fact one can always expect of this specific brand of allure is that it will force the most prominent trait of a person to the forefront.”

Fixing her audience with a look very much reminiscent of Professor McGonagall (and subsequently expertly ignoring her husband’s apparent adoration), Lady Potter continued:

“In other words, it enhances what already is there and if used deliberately it can do so to overly extreme degrees. But even if the Elf Owl in question does not deliberately use their allure, it will always reveal traits of the people influenced… and not everyone wears their strongest traits on their sleeve. People tend to hide their true selves. Having someone capable to unfailingly reveal said true self… well,” she trailed of with a sympathetic and very much worried look at Harry that broke his fixed attention on her lecture.

Did he really want to think along the line she implied? He wasn’t given a choice, though, as his grandfather added his own two pence:

“You are capable of revealing the true nature of every person with the exception of those with an Elf Owl heritage of their own, like James or myself.”

Well, that didn’t sound so bad, did it? At least he would always know if the face a person showed the world was their true face or not. Or something like that. Still, thinking over Lord Potter’s sentence, Harry’s eyes suddenly widened and switched back to the lady of the house. She just smiled gently at him, her dark blue eyes conveying better than even her following words how very unperturbed she was by his allure and its possible influence on her.

“Oh yes, love, I can feel your allure. But as I already knew that it would be there and had met another of your kind before, I am able to keep the influence to a minimum.”

“It also helps that my lovely wife’s most prominent trait isn’t anything malicious …most of the time,” a cheekily grinning Lord Potter interjected, earning a mock glare from said wife.

Harry took a deep breath, absentely noting that his tea had long since gone cold. He nearly let go of the cup as the liquid from one moment to the next heated up considerably with just the thought. Staring down at the tea in consternation, Harry nearly missed one little detail mentioned by his grandmother. Nearly.

“You… you knew someone… someone like me?” He asked, tearing his eyes away from the suspicious beverage in his hands.

“The last known Elf Owl was one of my uncles, actually,” his grandfather confirmed with a nod. “He himself only manifested what another of my uncles so aptly named ‘the Eyes’ when writing that little guide, which translates to those beautiful and very much sensitive eyes of yours.”

He raised his eyebrows suddenly as if just now noticing something, then he smiled apologetically. With a wave of his huge hand, Lord Potter made the wide panes of the windows take on a darker tint, dimming the bright sunlight streaming in. Harry couldn’t help the relieved sigh as his headache immediately seemed to recede a bit.

James, who had been listening quietly throughout the whole explanation, abruptly made a noise of recognition. As everyone turned in his direction questioningly, he waved his arms around agitatedly, doing a nice imitation of a windmill.
“Wait… wait, wait, wait! If he can do all that then people will be bloody scared shitless of him!” He exclaimed, not noticing the flinch those words elicited from Harry and ignoring his mother’s Language, James! in the background. “They will be afraid of having their not-so-fluffy personalities revealed. I mean…! Just think what would happen if Bambi here were to run across the Minister and he suddenly went all Crouch on him! That would so bust that creep’s career…”

That comment once again made Harry nearly drop his tea cup. He hadn’t thought about that. There obviously would be more people like Crouch; Harry knew all too well that not everyone was as Light as they made themselves out to be.

“While I certainly do not support Minister Minchum’s latest decisions concerning Azkaban…,” Lord Potter started, and then trailed off into mumbling, eyes going distant. “Though, now that you mentioned it, in light of the happenings in Diagon his decision to send even more of those foul creatures to guard the poor imprisoned souls is very much questionable…,” he continued muttering thoughtfully to himself until a small cough and pointed glare from his beloved Euphemia brought him back to the matter at hand.

“Right,” he cleared his throat and ran his hand through his greying hair abashedly. “As I was saying, I may not support every decision our recent Minister makes, but I fail to see any resemblance between Harold Minchum and the head of the DMLE?” (*)

“They are certainly both hard-liners…,” the lady threw in off-handedly.

“Not that Crouch,” James spat, obviously disgusted by just speaking the name. “I’m talking about the ghoul-faced pile of dragon shit that attends Hogwarts with us.”

There was a frown from Lord Potter and an exasperated huff from his wife, but Harry wasn’t going to wait for them to question what their son had just insinuated. Drawing in yet another deep, steadying breath, he straightened up.

“So they… would be afraid of me and therefore would try to… get rid of me?”

Lord Potter sighed at Harry’s words, but nodded. Great.

“I wish I could tell you differently, Hadrian, but yes. That and then there is the very possible risk of some people wanting to use you to further their own goals.”

Okay now, he really didn’t get it anymore. Harry was no stranger to people wanting to use him for ‘the greater good’ and other such rubbish, but he had always thought that was because he was Harry Potter, the Chosen One and all that rot. Apparently not. The thought was scary. At Harry’s confused look (complete with flattened feathers and head tilted slightly to the side), Lady Potter once again took over the explanation.

“People use each other, dearie,” Lady Potter sighed sympathetically, “And sadly it happens all too often that they use those who would not do so themselves.”

Chewing on his bottom lip, Harry tried to wrap his head around all the information provided. It was true, he would not deliberately use someone for his own gain, at least not that he was aware of. In fact, the thought made him feel sick, reminding him too much of his past. Lady Potter looked at him as though she would very much like to embrace him and Harry actually wanted her to do just that, but… She was sitting there in her armchair while he was standing with James and Lord Potter and Harry really had no clue how to go about seeking comfort. It felt kind of intimate to just walk over and hug her and she looked hesitant to do the same as well.
“Hadrian…,” she said with a sigh, suddenly sounding uncomfortable with her teaching-role in this conversation. “As an Elf Owl there are two risks you should always be aware of: One, the possibility of someone using your allure to for example discredit a political enemy by revealing their hidden nature. If they had a way of controlling you, maybe blackmail you, you could end up being used in such a way and with the Creature Acts as they are…”

She shrugged helplessly, sending an anxious look at her husband that suddenly looked torn between comforting either his wife or Hadrian. He settled for taking over the explanation.

“The second risk sounds more sinister and yet innocuous at the same time,” he said. “Hadrian, have you ever asked yourself where your potion ingredients originate from? Have you paid attention to what exactly you are using when brewing?”

Harry blinked. He sent a small glance at James who looked a little green as if he already knew what the lord and lady were getting at. Potion ingredients… well, there was a lot of stuff that sounded kind of icky, now that Harry thought about it. Doxy eggs, bat wings, beetle eyes… wolf teeth… the bezoar that had to be taken out of a goat’s intestines… and suddenly it hit him.

“Some of these need to be given willingly, yes,” his grandfather continued softly, treading carefully, “But not all of them. And unfortunately…” He sighed then, looking slightly pale himself. “Elf Owl properties have yet to be researched for potion usage.”

Oh.

“Meaning they will try to get whatever they can from me,” Harry whispered hoarsely. Hair, skin, blood, feathers… “So that was why you brought your own dagger to Gringott’s!”

Latchling onto the new revelation, Harry forcefully pushed the nauseating thoughts of someone using him as ingredients source away.

“Exactly,” Lord Potter nodded, looking relieved himself. “I could not risk the Goblins getting their clawed hands on anything of you, especially not blood as it is one of those ingredients that do not require to be given freely.”

And with that one sentence Harry’s mind lost its fight in trying to stay in the here and now. “Bone of the father,” a squeaky voice intoned in his memory, “unknowingly given, you will renew your son!”

Harry shuddered. “Flesh of the servant, willingly sacrificed, you will revive your master,” the voice said, the sick sound of flesh hitting liquid echoing long after Pettigrew’s shriek had abated. “Blood of the enemy,” Whimpers and quivers, “forcibly taken, you will resurrect your foe.” (*)

And with that one sentence Harry felt like retching.

The only thing on Harry’s mind was a chubby boy making nasty remarks about creatures and their possible usage in potions. How much of all this did Pettigrew know? It was a frightening thought that the traitor had such dangerous information on him. Information that would go straight to Voldemort the moment the dark lord realised who Harry was… or maybe to anyone willing to pay enough for it. If Harry was honest, he had no idea what the Pettigrew of this time was willing to do. Maybe, just maybe he wouldn’t…

“Now, little one,” the gentle voice of his grandfather broke through Harry’s hazy thoughts and he blinked rapidly, looking up. “Do you understand the need for protection?” Lord Potter asked, carefully leading a shivering Harry over to one of the armchairs his grandmother was still lounging in. “Please allow us to provide you with this kind of safe haven.”
Harry sat and looked first at his grandfather and then over to his grandmother. James was hovering near, watching him worriedly, and Harry just... He didn’t have the words. These people, his family, wanted to truly protect him. They did not expect anything, they even asked that he let them protect him. It was a foreign feeling, one Harry wasn’t sure how to react to. Finally, he settled on simply nodding.

James grinned, Lady Potter smiled gently, and his grandfather... he kneeled down in front of Harry once again, just as he had done back in the hospital, and carefully reached out for Harry. Harry let him. The hug was warm and tender and his grandfather smelled comforting. Grandfather... he wanted to thank these people, his family, but was unsure on how to address them. They hadn’t wanted him to call them by their titles and Lady Potter had said he should call her Aunt, but... now that they knew who he really was, that didn’t quite feel right.

Harry was still pondering on how to call his grandparents when in public, or even in private, when the door suddenly burst open. He couldn’t call them ‘Grandmother’ or ‘Grandfather’, could he? Anyway, Harry’s head snapped up just in time to see Sirius and Remus sail in, the latter holding a squirming child that made his displeasure known rather loudly. Harry could see Remus wincing at the volume as he held his burden awkwardly, but couldn’t stop the little chuckle breaking free. The two just looked so frazzled.

“Sorry to interrupt,” Sirius announced loudly over the wailing, “But...”

He didn’t seem to have the words to describe the situation and simply gestured tiredly at the child throwing a tantrum in the werewolf’s arms. Lady Potter was just about to get up and help when said bundle of temper spotted Harry. He wasn’t sure what to think as big brown eyes latched onto him and grabbing motions were made in his direction. He heard the elder Potters chuckle, but was focused on Remus as he walked further into the room, smiling back at him.

“He wouldn’t stop screaming without you there,” Remus said softly, carefully setting the little one down in Harry’s lap.

“No wonder considering what happened to the last person holding him...,” Harry muttered under his breath, running a careful hand through the golden locks, his free hand going around the child’s back on instinct. The little one was staring up at him with wide wet eyes, thumb in his mouth. Blessed silence.

“You know,” James talked right into the sudden intense hush, “We’ll need a cover story for you, Bambi.”

Remus was wary of looking after a child, especially one so small. But when the Potters decided that it was time to educate Hadrian on some family stuff, he couldn’t really decline. He was staying over until beginning of term and didn’t want to be a burden. And the Potters couldn’t know the reason why he was so afraid of touching the small boy. They didn’t know of his furry problem.

Sure, Sirius was there with him and if the kid had been in a better mood, those two would probably have gotten along swimmingly. But as it was, the little blond terror stopped being cute and fluffy the moment Hadrian left the room. Remus was sure the boy did it on purpose, but there was no way they could just go and get Hadrian right then. So they had tried everything to distract him, even going so far as to introduce him to Padfoot, but nope...

An hour of screaming, flying toys and dishes later, here they were in Lord Potter’s study admitting defeat. And look, the moment the little menace spotted Hadrian blessed silence ruled once again. As
James spoke up about a cover story, Remus was about to leave the room immediately. This was family matter, it was not his place to be here. Sirius didn’t seem to have the same compunctions, but then again, he was pretty much a Potter by non-official adoption.

“Well, how ‘bout a cousin? The Potters used to have a whole bunch of those, didn’t they?” Sirius piped up as if taking note of Remus’ thoughts.

“I will have to glamour the tapestry too, Hadrian,” Lord Potter added apologetically and Remus looked over at said item. “There are quite a few people that regularly come through this study and if anyone outside this family were to notice the way your name connects to the rest of the family, to James…”

He left the rest unspoken, but the words weren’t needed. It would be bad if anyone discovered Hadrian’s time travelling abilities. Remus, though, was distracted by something else the lord had just said. He said ‘anyone outside this family’ while Remus was very obviously in the room with them. He blinked, shocked. It had to be a misunderstanding, but no, Lord Potter was looking completely at ease and not the least bit unaware of Remus’ presence. Would be hard to overlook him, too, what with Remus standing right next to Hadrian and the little terror. Was it possible that he… that he actually included Remus into the family on some level? He shouldn’t dare hope, yet…

“Now, children, off you go,” Lady Potter suddenly said, interrupting any further ponderings. “Make sure to bundle the little tyke up warmly, ask Mammy for help if you are unsure.”

She made shooing motions to them and Remus wondered rather petulantly why she didn’t defer to said house-elf before. One look at the mischievous lady though cleared that up. Lady Potter enjoyed the way they struggled with the little terror. Not that he was struggling at the moment, oh no. He was happily ensconced in Hadrian’s arms, head leaning on his favourite caretaker’s shoulder trustingly.

“By the way: It’s snowing!” Sirius crowed as they left the room.

Euphemia Potter giggled softly to herself as she watched the weary teenagers trudge out of her husband’s study. Oh how she enjoyed making members of the opposite gender suffer through what often was viewed as a woman’s duty. She sighed when the door closed and silence rang once again in the grand room.

“Is it truly possible?” She asked her beloved Fleamont as he helped her to her feet. “I remember the case of Xavier Rastrick, but still…” (*)

Time travel just seemed such a far-fetched theory, yet there wasn’t much else that could explain the peculiar circumstances of young Hadrian’s appearance.

“He was the one that disappeared in front of a whole crowd while tap-dancing, right?” Fleamont asked as he poured them a drink, sensing his wife’s need for something stronger than tea.

“In 1836, yes,” she agreed. “It was one of the cases that later led to the Ministry making time-travel experiments illegal. They thought Rastrick probably vanished from existence due to some changes in the past. They even invented a word for this kind of incident.”

She silently thanked him for the tumbler of fire-whiskey he passed her. Time travel, oh yes she needed a stiff drink to settle her mind after that revelation.

“Oh I remember now,” Fleamont said, smiling proudly back at her. “They called such vanishings ‘being unborn’, did they not?”
Euphemia smiled indulgently as she confirmed his recollection of the events. Still, it was such an overwhelming idea. To think, Hadrian appearing here back in the past, too far back for any time-turner, meant he had vanished in his own timeline. He had been ‘unborn’ in his own time. Well, probably. Time and time travel were too complicated matters to think on deeply this early in the morning. They were better discussed in the evening, in front of a nice warm fire when the mind was relaxed and willing to accept the unacceptable easier.

“Mia, dearest,” Fleamont’s voice broke through her wandering thoughts as he came up behind her, enfolding her in his strong arms. “When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth,” he intoned in mock solemnity, making her laugh once again. (*) “Don’t fret, love of mine,” he soothed and she leant back into his form. “I think we should discuss putting a vault for little Hadrian in place…”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter should have answered some of the still lingering questions, buuuut… probably spawned a whole lot more. I’m not completely happy with the result, though it’s okay now after I rewrote parts and left out stuff and… you get the idea.

(*) Harold Minchum: Minister for Magic between 1975 and 1980. If you look him up, you’ll probably come across his dealings with Dementors.
(*) DMLE: the Department of Magical Law Enforcement
(*) Quote by Peter Pettigrew in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
(*) Xavier Rastrick, 1750-1836(?), wizard entertainer that vanished during one of his performances
(*) “When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” Very famous quote by Arthur Conan Doyle, you know Sherlock’s creator ;}
Snow was falling in thick wads outside and Harry found himself stopping mid-step to watch for a moment. The view through the many floor-to-ceiling windows that lined the hall was breathtaking, showing off the wide expanse of the Potter estate. He hadn’t had the time to simply sit and take in the lands surrounding the manor yet, at least not from such a vantage point. Now everything looked even more like one of those beautiful wild landscape paintings his aunt used to scoff at for their ‘apparent lack of gardening skill’, only iced in powdered-sugar. It was mesmerising.

A small giggle drew his attention back to the kid still in his arms and Harry smiled at the sight. There was no trace of the temper tantrum left. The little one was watching wide-eyed as the snowflakes drifted by, reaching out as if to touch them and cooing.

“Now he’s all cute and innocent,” Sirius snorted, making James cackle in the background at his plight. “And there I was all grimmy for him, but nope, the little prince wouldn’t deem ol’ Padfoot good enough.” He pouted for a moment, before looking at his boyfriend in front of the snowy scenery. “Although… who could compete with that,” Sirius purred, reaching over to cup Harry’s suddenly blushing cheek.

“Well, he does have taste it seems,” James declared pompously, studiously ignoring the by-play as he examined the small child curiously. “Though… what’s his name, anyway?”

Harry blinked. That was actually a really good question. They couldn’t keep calling him ‘the kid’ forever, could they? Looking down at ‘the kid’, Harry wondered if magical children matured differently from muggle children. He knew for a fact that children at two or three should be capable of talking somewhat coherently, even Dudley had done it. It was after all one of Harry’s earliest memories, Dudley screaming for specific foods. But this little one hadn’t said a word ever since he had picked him up in Diagon Alley… well, apart from ‘Mummy’. Shifting the child on his hip, he took one of the small hands in his, drawing the little boy’s attention.

“What’s your name, munchkin?”

He was met with wide brown eyes that studied him for a moment intently before the boy turned back to cooing at the snow. Harry frowned. Maybe he hadn’t worded it correctly? Some kids probably only responded to sentences they already knew.

“Hey…,” he tried again, poking the small nose gently. “I’m Hadrian, remember?” This time he received a gracious nod and found himself once again subjected to thorough scrutiny. “And you? Who are you?”

For a moment it looked as if the little boy was about to answer, but then he seemed to change his mind. Instead he turned his head and hid himself in Harry’s neck, clearly unwilling to answer. Worried he had done something wrong, Harry looked at the Marauders for help, but was only met
“Maybe he has stage fright?” James whisper-asked as he leaned around Sirius to look at the tyke again. “You know, getting all nervous in front of an audience?”

“Dunno…,” Sirius muttered, watching a bit enviously as the kid snuggled up to his boyfriend. “Do kids that age, you know, think?”

“Of course they think, Sirius,” Remus groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Just because his attention span is still short doesn’t mean he’s incapable of thought. You’re seventeen and your attention span is not much better than that of a chocolate frog,” he told Sirius… who was already cooing over his boyfriend once again. “See example A,” Remus muttered under his breath. Harry laughed.

Lounging in the cozy sitting room of the heir suite, the four of them (plus the not-so-innocent brat) were chatting amicably while simultaneously trying to come up with names for their resident little menace. Alright, so maybe Sirius was slightly miffed at the kid. But come on! Who could dislike Padfoot? He was awesome!

“…and that’s when you suddenly went all unanimated Inferius in Pads’ arms,” James was just saying, recounting the events that led to Hadrian ending up in the hospital. “How about Everett?” He asked off-handedly, looking at the toddler currently standing between Hadrian’s legs, smashing a cushion-turned-plushy against the raven’s knees in some kind of pattern.

“Unanimated Inferius?” Remus repeated incredulously, making Hadrian snort.

“Yeah,” James nodded solemnly. “You know, all limp and pale. …Benjamin? Barnaby?”

They all looked over at the brat now standing on tippy-toes to reach for the black strands of Hadrian’s hair that for some reason seemed to have a near compelling draw for the kid. Not that Sirius could fault him for that, he loved that hair too. It was all wild and untameable, yet deceivingly soft and-

“Maybe something more magical?” Remus said as no reaction was forthcoming. “Ezra? Altair? Rowan?”

“Gwaine?” Prongs threw in again, but still the tyke ignored them all, intent on reaching his prize. Hadrian for his part was smiling down at the kid, even leaning forward a little bit as if to encourage his endeavour.

“I’m proposing something with L,” Sirius finally announced after watching the by-play for a few moments. Damn, did his boyfriend even realise how bloody adorable he looked playing with the kid like that? “Leonard? …Maybe shortened Leo?” No reaction. “Logan? Err… Lolo?”

He expertly ignored his friends’ laughter at his version of a suitable nickname. How was he supposed to know what affectionate mothers called their children? His had only ever used his actual name when in public and only when she wasn’t calling him her heir like he was some sort of commodity. The names she used when in private… well, he somehow doubted this little tyke’s mother would do… had done the same considering the way Hadrian had found him.

“Alright, then maybe… Lancelot? Lance? You know, like that love-sick tin can the muggles wrote into one of Merlin’s tales?”

“Zacharias?” Hadrian softly asked, though his words were clearly directed at the toddler now half
climbing his legs. “No, that guy’s too much of a prat. Hm… maybe Algie like Neville’s uncle? I think the un-shortened version was Algernon…” he muttered more to himself.

Sirius would have loved to know who ‘Neville’ was or even the bloke his Hadrian had called a prat.

“Oh! Or Marcus, like that Chaser. Never liked him, but the name’s nice, don’t you think, munchkin?” The toddler apparently didn’t share the sentiment, evident when he made a sound akin to a raspberry that somehow sounded astoundingly disgusted. For what it’s worth, it made their Bambi snicker and Sirius loved the sight of that. “Okay, not Marcus then.”

“Chaser?” Prongs asked excitedly in the background, but was summarily ignored. “Great idea! Okay, how about Alexei? Like Alexei Levski, the new Chaser for the Vratsa Vultures. I’ve heard he’s rumoured for the Bulgarian National Quidditch team!”

“If you’re suggesting names of ancient commanders,” Remus spoke up into the rather one-sided conversation, still ignoring James’ input, “Then how about Augustus?”

That one made Hadrian grimace and Sirius couldn’t help but glare slightly at the werewolf for cutting the laughter short. He didn’t expect an answer, but at their questioning looks Hadrian said with a shudder: “Death Eater.”

Oh. Well. Not Augustus then.

“Something cuter then,” James suggested, finally catching everyone’s attention. “Maybe whoever named him was muggle or muggleborn. I got the impression, Muggles tend to name their children in a way that’s cute and all while the children are small, but kinda embarrassing when they get older.”

“Like what?” Sirius asked thoughtfully, wrecking his brain for any ‘cute’ muggle names. “He’s a boy, you know, Prongs? Not a Lily then.” He laughed at the pout his best mate sent him and dodged the levitated pillow expertly. “If you’re looking for muggle names… what’s Snivellus’ middle name?”

“Tobias.”

For a moment no one said anything, then, as one, the Marauders turned to Hadrian who didn’t seem to notice their astonishment.

“How’d you know that?”

Sirius couldn’t help the incredulity to his voice. Really, who other than a professor-in-making like Rem would make the effort to memorise Snivellus’ whole name? And maybe, only maybe, he was a little jealous over the fact that it was his boyfriend who had done just that. It brought forth memories of a secluded area in the castle and a lavatory on a train…

“Oh,” Hadrian looked up from where he had been stopping the tyke’s little hands from scalping him, “Just uh… well… he was my professor…”

The words were muttered under his breath as if Hadrian was hoping they wouldn’t hear him and move to the next topic. Not happening with a werewolf in the room.

“Really?” Remus asked, sounding confusingly happy about the idea. “Potions, I’d wager?”

Hadrian nodded, mostly unconcerned with the grimaces both Sirius and James were making at the prospect.
“But Tobias doesn’t really suit the little one, does it?” He asked instead, looking down once again at the kid and then lifting him up onto his lap. “Maybe Toby?”

He giggled a bit at the thought and somehow Sirius knew his boyfriend had just imagined the sour-faced Snivellus being called ‘Toby’. He didn’t like it.

“Snivellus really was your Potions professor?” Prongs questioned with not a small amount of sympathy.

Sirius scrunched up his nose as he tried to imagine how those lessons would have gone, but always ended up with the image of a slimy monstrosity of a bat hovering over a cauldron at the teacher’s desk amidst billowing clouds of potions vapour. Alright, so he really disliked that greasy-haired git. Hadrian shrugged, but nodded as he bounced the still nameless child on his knees. The delighted squeals his actions elicited made him smile once again and Sirius forgot his former train of thought.

“Imagine that,” James huffed, but Rem still looked way more pleased than the topic warranted.

“What’s that dreamy expression about, Moony?”

“Well, think about it,” Rem said enthusiastically, drawing Sirius’ gaze away from his boyfriend. “If he became… becomes… you know, a professor at Hogwarts, it means he won’t defect to the Dark!”

“You mean not any more than he has already,” Prongs grumbled, but Sirius decided to drop that specific topic then and there.

Letting Prongs get into his anti-Snivellus tirade would only ruin the perfectly smooth day they were enjoying. And he wanted to see his love out in the snow-blanketed gardens, probably slightly soaked after a snowball fight and utterly beautiful in the cool winter light.

“Let’s go build a snow-wizard!”

After a few minutes of rushing to and fro to assemble their winter gear (including Sirius summoning Harry’s new gloves, hat and dragonhide boots with a smug smirk) they found their way down into one of the smaller halls near the kitchens. The much simpler designed hallway led outside into a practical part of the gardens meant for growing vegetables and kitchen herbs, and Harry could smell the heavenly scents of what would most likely be their lunch waft through the air. Why they couldn’t just take the route through the solarium and out into the wide, differently themed gardens, Harry had no idea. Maybe it would be considered improper to trudge in there bundled up as they were? Not that he thought Lord and Lady Potter would care…

A surprisingly low pop stopped the small group in their tracks, just before reaching the door outside, as an older female house-elf appeared right in front of them, blocking the narrow path.

“Young Masters cannot go’s outside!” She declared in a strangely deep voice for someone of her species, at least in Harry’s experience. Even Dobby had always sounded rather high-pitched. Though, now that he thought about it, Kreacher had not. This was in hindsight probably a blessing. Imagine being called a dirty Halfblood in high-pitched squeals…

“Why’s that, Mammy?” James asked curiously, making the elf chance a glance at him, before her eyes scattered away again. (*)

“Mammy can’s not let young Masters take child outsy without proper clothes!”

Apart from the typical scrambling of speech, her accent, something thick and drawling that Harry
couldn’t place, was making it a bit hard to decipher the words. On top of that she seemed to be terrified to make eye contact, afraid of even looking at them directly, making her speak more to the floor than anything else. The behaviour reminded Harry uncomfortably of his own past with the Dursley’s.

“Hear that, Bambi?” Sirius snickered from next to him. “Even the nanny elf thinks you should be bundled up more securely.” Eyes narrowing, Harry turned to glare at his boyfriend.

“Excuse me?”

Sirius eyebrows shot up in surprise at his tone and he was back-paddling even before Remus and James started laughing at his expense. Harry just continued to glare at him.

“Uh… that is… I meant to say…,” he stuttered for a moment, eyes fixed on Harry’s face, before hastily turning back to the elf. “Mammy, was it? Would you happen to know where we could acquire proper winter clothes for the tyke then?”

“Naturally,” she drawled, snapping her fingers deftly and making a small bundle of clothes appear in Sirius’ hands. “Young Masters must make’s sure to keeps child warm,” she chided once more, before popping away.

“Er…” Sirius looked down at the tiny clothes, then carefully over at Harry who sent him another glare before setting the kid down on the floor to dress him.

“She was… different than I would have a Potter elf expected to be,” Harry finally commented softly, frowning to himself while attempting to figure out the children’s clothes. James, likely picking up on the unspoken concern, answered him.

“Other than most of the Potter elves at this point in time, Mammy wasn’t born into the family. Dad brought her with him from a business trip to southern America once, though I dunno much about that story. Just that…,” he hedged, shrugging uncomfortably, “She wasn’t… treated right,” he finally decided to put it.

Harry blinked up at his father at those words. Maybe the tendency to free or at the very least rescue abused house-elves was a family trait? He would like to think that it was his grandfather coming through when he saved Dobby from the Malfoys.

“If you say ‘southern America’,” Remus asked thoughtfully, “Are you talking the south-eastern corner of the United States?” At the ensuing silence he just shook his head, forcing himself to not go into professor-mode even if it was terribly tempting. “Never mind.”

So after bundling up both Harry and the kid that still lacked a name, they made their way out into the snow covered gardens to finally build their snow-wizard.

Considering that his werewolf traits made him more durable, Remus thought the others had to be freezing by now. But then again, Hadrian had been spared most of the flying white fuzz of doom, because: One, no one wanted a repeat of the debacle at Hogsmeade station. Two, the toddler seemed to be constantly in danger of being hit with a stray snowball if aimed at the Elf Owl in question. And Three, Hadrian was ridiculously good at avoiding the onslaught of balled up snow.

“What the heck, Bambi!” James was just shouting frustrated, untameable hair drenched and clothes half frosted over from being hit repeatedly from all sides. “Padfoot is a bloody Beater and you still manage to avoid most of his attacks!”
He huffed when, as if to prove his point, he was hit upside the head with yet another snowball aimed at him by his best mate.

“That’s because my love’s awesome like that,” Sirius cheered from where he hid away from James’ retaliation. “And he has the added cuteness factor of little Joseph there,” he shouted, before doing an impressive barrel roll to avoid James’ now Oppugno charmed snowballs. “Pretty much unbeatable that combi- OUCH!” (*)

“Oops,” Hadrian commented dryly, shaking off the remnants of his perfectly aimed snowball from his gloves before bending down to the unnamed kid to help him ball snow up in his tiny fists.

“Bambi,” Sirius whined, trying to get rid of the snow that had utterly destroyed his once impeccable hair. Remus just shook his head, deciding that standing near Hadrian might be the best option right about now.

“Well,” James said, directing his flying snowballs to follow Remus, “Ickle Isaac might be an added cuteness factor, but no one beats the dashing-ness of the Incredible Prongs!” He didn’t bat an eye as Remus simply ducked and continued on his way and redirected the attacking snow forces back to his best mate. “Beware the capitals!”

“Oh yeah?” Sirius shouted back, animating their slightly askew snow-wizard with a quick charm. “No way does anyone stand a chance against Sizzling Sirius, only second to Bewitching Bambi and his sidekick… Eli!”

An outright battle ensued after that statement, animated snow… beings running between the two combatants, launching attacks left and right, whizzing snow-projectiles blurring with magicked speed and ever more random titles and insults being thrown around. And all the while Hadrian contentedly aided the kid in his own little adventures on the sidelines. Remus had no idea how long it took the two idiots to decide on a stalemate, but couldn’t help but ask:

“Sizzling Sirius?”

He was met with a dramatic pose only slightly hindered by Sirius’ rumpled state.

“Sizzling hot, of course!”

“Of course.”

“What’s with all the biblical names though?” Hadrian asked from where he was trying to coax the unnamed child in question out of a mount of snow he had crawled into.

Sirius remained in position a second longer before pouting when it became obvious that his boyfriend wouldn’t turn his way any time soon.

“What’s biblical?” James asked back, tugging at his drenched gloves futilely while for some reason bouncing on one foot.

Remus wasn’t surprised that James had no clue, but for some reason he hadn’t expected Hadrian to even pick up on the names. He just hoped that didn’t indicate a particularly religious childhood home as such circumstances had more than once led to ‘conflicts’ in the past…

“You know, as in ‘mentioned in the bible’,” he was saying, not truly paying attention as the kid didn’t seem inclined to leave his snowy hide-away anytime soon and Hadrian was about to follow him into the mount of snow.
“What’s the bible?” Sirius asked while busying himself with poking the swaying James in the side.

They didn’t get to discuss that specific can of worms though, as their fun was interrupted rather suddenly by a house-elf popping into existence and announcing guests - that apparently were requesting their presence.

Chapter End Notes

(*) the Vratsa Vultures: A Quidditch team from Bulgaria that is regarded as one of the most thrilling teams to watch. They are also noted for giving new players the chance to prove themselves.

(*) “Mammy”: (also spelled mammie) used to be a (sometimes derogatory) US term/stereotype for a black woman working in a white family who nursed the family’s children. Someone whined at me not to use such a term, but I did so on purpose to underline the house-elf’s origin from an abusive family (that also named her). Kind of like ‘Kreacher’ and the Blacks.

(*) Oppugno Jinx: A spell that directs an object (or individual) to attack the victim. This jinx will cause conjured creatures or other moveable objects under the control of the caster to attack the target.

(information see Harry Potter Wikia)

If I forgot a name suggested for the little boy, please tell me. I’ll probably be able to write it into the conversation.
The atmosphere in the formal parlour was tense. Well, Fleamont supposed, it could be worse. His wife could be doing much worse than simply fixing the aurors in attendance with a cool stare and icy politeness that made even Alastor Moody squirm in his seat. The treatment was especially affective as his lovely Euphemia was known for being the warm-hearted and welcoming contrast to the still strong-going cliché of a Pureblood Lady. Oh she was being the picture perfect lady, but there was a distinct threat in her whole demeanour that Fleamont knew came from her instincts as a mother. She was not a mother bear, she was a mother ice bear – or a popsicle, he hadn’t quite decided yet.

Receiving a flat look from his wife, the Lord Potter knew his thoughts were not as inconspicuous as he had thought they were. Oh well. Then Auror Moody suddenly stiffened, head snapping over to one of the two entrances into the parlour, and Fleamont didn’t need to be keyed into the wards to know his sons were finally there. Looking up, he was torn between groaning in frustration and snorting in amusement.

The boys were drenched. Apparently even the infamous Potter hair submitted to a constant treatment of snowy battering, seeing as James resembled a drowned kneazle. Maybe he should revisit the Sleekeazy's Hair Potion formula… (*) Surprisingly, Hadrian still looked mostly untouched, meaning his hair was a very Potter mess, only without the snow, and his clothes were less rumpled than those of the other boys but still in slight disarray. So where James looked like a drowned kneazle, Hadrian looked like the fluffed up counterpart. It would most likely not help their case that it appeared the toddler in their care had just crawled through an avalanche, though he certainly looked like he had enjoyed himself. The child’s cheeks were rosy and he was smiling brightly up at Hadrian whose arms he was happily ensconced in.

Taking in the scene, he noticed Sirius holding a thick woollen hat in his hands that he recognised as the one Hadrian had received for Christmas. Obviously he was not happy with his… intended… taking it off in their current guests’ presence. Lord Potter was inclined to agree with that sentiment, but realised with a well-hidden jolt that it would be more suspicious if Hadrian kept the hat on.

“Boys,” his wife called, her voice shifting immediately to the warm tone she was known for, making one of the aurors twitch. “These gentlemen wish to once again question you about those dreadful happenings that occurred in Diagon Alley. Why they feel the need to continuously drag such trauma up, I cannot begin to fathom,” she trailed off for a moment, before added suspiciously sweetly: “But I am sure as upstanding citizens in the Minister’s service they only do their duty.”

And just like that his lovely wife had not only warned their children to be on guard and made her opinion on the matter known, but also threatened the aurors to not overstep their boundaries as Ministry employees. He adored that woman.
Harry was leading his little charge – because really, the kid had latched onto him much more than anyone else – inside the manor, still grinning at the soaked forms of his friends. James and Sirius had thoroughly indulged in their snow… battle and Remus hadn’t managed to completely escape either. They left their cloaks and muddy boots in the hallway near the kitchens presumably for the house-elves to take care of. He could feel Sirius being uncomfortable with Harry taking off his hat, but it was simply much too warm inside now to keep wearing it. All through the manor fires were warming the rooms as they trudged along slowly, their pace adjusted to the tiny legs of the kid with them.

The kid that still had no name. Harry wished the little one would speak.

Looking down at the tussled head of golden curls made him once again wonder, if maybe he knew this little wizard from his original time. It would be a bit… strange, he supposed, if the child turned out to maybe be a former teacher of his or just one of the adults that used to be part of his life in the Wizarding World. But then again… who did he know that had hair like that?

With a shudder Harry realised that the only wizard he could remember that would have the slightest resemblance to the curly head of blond was Lockhart and he really didn’t want to believe he was holding his future fraud of a professor’s hand. No, he had no idea when that idiot had been born, but he should have been older at this time… right? Right.

The little one could still be related though, or maybe he was the son of a Muggleborn. Really, the magical population wasn’t made up of the pureblooded lines alone that kept their distinct looks through inbreeding and whatnot. Then another thought made its icy way through Harry’s mind and he could not stop himself from halting abruptly in the middle of the hall and catching the child’s attention.

“You’re not Cedric, are you?” He whispered, barely audible, too afraid of the answer to talk any louder.

The wide brown eyes looked back at him and Harry realised something. Cedric’s eyes had not been brown. He would never forget the empty look they had after the Killing Curse hit him… the empty shell he took back to Hogwarts with him, that dead stare that still haunted him sometimes. No, Cedric’s eyes had once been a clear blue-grey. Or maybe they would be, yes, that’s right. Cedric’s eyes would be a clear blue-grey, he would be alive again from Harry’s point of view and maybe this time around-

“Bambi?” The soft question interrupted his frantic thoughts and Harry took a quivering breath.

“I’m alright,” he answered just as softly before scooping the child in his arms. He received delighted squeals for his effort that drove the heavy thoughts away once more.

“If you say so,” Sirius said, not looking convinced in the least, but aware that they were being awaited. “Ready, Marauders?” He asked the group in general, receiving nods.

Then they entered the parlour and Harry felt himself tense. Well. He should have known that the ‘guests’ didn’t mean a simple social call.

Harry watched James assess the situation and was amazed to see a cool but still somewhat friendly mask slip over his features. It was a bit disturbing to realise that his father had just switched into his role as Pureblood heir and Harry wondered what was expected of him now. A quick glance showed Sirius was pretty much the same, though his mask was quite a bit more chilly and indifferent, eyes cool and piercing, whereas Remus simply looked blandly polite. Harry bit back a sigh. He had a bad feeling about this.
Sirius listened to Lady Potter’s words closely, noticing the warning and then the not-so-veiled threat to the aurors. He allowed a small smirk to curl around his lips, but couldn’t help but notice the way both aurors – Moody again and another he couldn’t place – were focussing mostly on Hadrian. He nearly growled at that, but reined his Grim in at the last moment. Still, Moody’s eyes flickered to him for a second and Sirius could have sworn there was an amused glint there. Bastard.

“Actually, Lady Potter,” the unnamed auror spoke up slightly nervously, “We’re first and foremost here to test the child’s possible relation to a wizard that has been looking for his son ever since the attack.”

He was a bureaucratic if Sirius had ever seen one. Neatly dressed in the more subdued tones of the ‘intern’ aurors, those that rarely ever ventured out into the field and were mostly meant for organising and teaching recruits the ropes, the man gave off a …boring kind of aura. Sirius scoffed. He admired aurors, he really did, but he could never completely make his peace with their complete devotion to the Ministry. He himself favoured the Hit Wizards that were known for their slightly rogue behaviour, dismissing of rules, and always being part of the real action. They were very few, but highly trained. A special force of kind that sometimes helped the aurors out in the field, but mostly worked for themselves, either as lone wolves or in small teams. Oh yes, if anything, he would love to become one of those awesome fighters one day.

“Oh?” Lady Potter raised an elegant eyebrow, giving the boring auror a miniscule smile as if waving a bone in front of a half-starved dog. “Who might that wizard be?”

Sirius, cool mask in place, couldn’t help the possessive arm curling around Hadrian’s waist as they made their way over to the sitting area. He fought to keep his face impassive as Moody narrowed his eyes on them, especially Hadrian, and led his boyfriend to one of the loveseats. Before sitting down however, he waited for James to do the introductions as was considered proper. The Potters didn’t buy into the pureblood supremacy belief, but they were still upholding a certain image.

“Amos Diggory,” Moody grunted in answer to Lady Potter’s question, eyes now on the kid. And Sirius felt Hadrian tense.

Remus watched as James made the introductions and nodded when his name was stated, but most of his attention was on Hadrian. His wolf would always be aware of the boy when in his presence, noting him as part of the pack – as the pup of the pack, in fact. Which was in itself weird, but had been this way from the very beginning. So it wasn’t much of a surprise to Remus that he noticed the way Hadrian reacted to the mention of Amos Diggory. What was that about? Had he any bad experiences with Diggory’s in the… future or with this Amos specifically?

Remus knew the Diggory’s were a minor pureblood family that mostly dabbled in politics. Some Eldritch Diggory had been Minister for Magic during the 18th century and their family was mostly located in Devon. But that was where Remus’ knowledge ended. Now it looked like he would get to know them some more, if the kid they had entertained for the last days really turned out to be a Diggory.

“Amos?” Lord Potter asked, sounding slightly surprised. “I have to admit, I did not even consider him, though I vaguely recall the announcement of an heir a few years ago.” His gaze flickered to the tyke now sitting in Hadrian’s lap with a drowsy expression. “The child does not seem to share many characteristics with Amos…,” he trailed off, probably realising how misleading such a comment could be taken.

“Yes well,” the neat auror, who still kind of twitched every time Lady Potter would direct her
attention his way, started and then stopped to clear his throat uncomfortably. “We’re just going to do a quick test on magical familiarity and if it fits are to escort the child to the Diggory’s residence, of course.”

“Of course,” Lady Potter drawled, sipping daintily at her tea. “And I suppose your bid for my boys’ presence was merely a formality.”

The auror twitched again. Moody simply snorted, not bothering to hide the fact that he was once again scrutinising Hadrian. Remus felt his wolf shift and perk up, there was something going on with Moody, and he remembered all too well how the auror had noticed something back in the alley.

“So, lad,” Moody finally spoke up in his gruff voice, “Care to hand over?”

He nodded to the kid now practically asleep in Hadrian’s lap, voice slightly challenging and Remus felt his skin prickle. The tension seemed suddenly to thicken and he had to force himself not to step in between the boy he considered pack and that threat of an auror. As it was, Sirius looked like he was once again minutes away from drawing his wand on the Ministry forces and-

“Actually, Alastor,” Lord Potter spoke into the mounting tension, his voice uncharacteristically serious, “I think, it would be best if you let the little one rest. No need to rouse him from his perch just to test his magic. I assume you are in possession of a temporary magic sample of Amos’, yes?”

Auror Moody’s eyes switched their glare from Hadrian over to Lord Potter and for a second Remus thought he would snap something very undiplomatic at the lord. But then that slightly unstable gleam cleared and with a heavy frown the auror simply nodded. Remus’ mind whirled for a moment, taking in everyone’s actions and reactions and decided that Alastor Moody had realised an outside influence to his own behaviour. The influence of an allure. It was a possibility that he had known ever since Diagon Alley and had prepared himself, which would not only explain Lord Potter’s ability to break the compulsion without direct contact to Hadrian, but also the absence of the very obviously biased aurors from back then.

And a small, scared part of Remus hoped desperately that that was all Moody had noticed, that Hadrian was the only one discovered. He felt ashamed for that small part of his, but he couldn’t help it. Remus was terrified of being found a werewolf.

It couldn’t be. It couldn’t. It just was not possible.

Harry repeated his mantra in his head over and over while cradling the little boy to his chest and feeling Sirius’ tense arm around his waist. It was not possible. Even if this kid was out of some perverted joke kind of thing a Diggory, he couldn’t be Cedric. No.

Watching the auror procure a small, marble-sized ball filled with some… glowing light? … Harry tried calming himself down while simultaneously not showing how distressed he was. He wasn’t succeeding if Moody’s predatory gaze was anything to go by, but Harry was not about to let his fear get the better of him. So what if the child turned out to be Cedric? It would be a good thing, right? Because Harry had saved him, Cedric would live this time. …Wait. Harry had saved him. Now. In Diagon Alley, not back in that horrible graveyard during the Triwizard Tournament which meant that this couldn’t be ‘his’ Cedric at all or… or it was all a different dimension kind of thing and he had abandoned his own dimension to Voldemort an-

There was a low rumbling sound close to his head.

He thought he heard James hiss something.
Remus was sitting terribly stiffly in his seat.

And all the while Moody was staring at him with that manic, knowing gleam in his eyes.

“What’s the matter, Heir Black,” Moody suddenly questioned, drawing out the title that Sirius had so ineffectively thrust in the auror’s face back in Diagon, in an obviously mocking way. “You feelin’ the need to tell the class somethin’?”

Harry belatedly realised that the soft rumbling he heard was actually growling and it was originating from deep within Sirius’ chest. His boyfriend was growling at an auror. Harry blinked. The absurdity of this realisation pulled him from his spiralling thoughts and his head snapped up to stare at Sirius imploringly. He shifted ever so slightly into the half-embrace they shared, hoping to convey a measure of reassurance. Whatever had Sirius in a snit seemed to be related to his Grim, if that canine kind of reaction was anything to go by, and the Grim had always responded to Harry positively.

Sirius drew in a breath and for a moment Harry honestly thought he would let his more feral side take over. But instead he felt the arm around his waist tighten and then Sirius’ hostile expression smoothed over into a mask of indifference.

“I would not want to overwhelm you, Head Auror,” he drawled in such a pointedly polite tone that it took Harry a second to realise what he had actually implied. “Now, what about that Magical Familiarity Test?”

Sirius deliberately turned his attention over to the second auror, raising a questioning eyebrow and Harry was pretty sure he saw Lord Potter’s lips twitch. The auror that kinda reminded Harry of Percy Weasley, all neat and overly correct, stared at them strangely for a moment. Well, Harry mused, it was probably not every day that a teenager growled at him. Glancing over at Remus, he couldn’t help but be glad his friend had kept his own temper in check. He had witnessed first hand what could happen when Remus felt a member of his ‘pack’ was being threatened, more than one encounter with the Slytherins coming to mind. Whatever Moody would have said next was cut short when the Percy-wannabe visibly drew himself together and started the aforementioned test.

Sirius was having a very hard time not reacting to the wand now pointed at his boyfriend. Or well, the kid in his boyfriend’s lap. Semantics. He sat there completely rigid yet rubbing gentle circles in the equally tense back of Hadrian. He could practically feel the again panicky thoughts in his little love’s mind, but couldn’t for the life of him understand what Hadrian was panicking over. Yes, having a wand in your face was not a pleasant experience, but it was quite obvious that the boring bureaucrat was really just testing the kid’s magic and nothing more. Briefly Sirius wondered if Hadrian was maybe afraid of the result of said test… but why would he?

Moody was watching them again. Ugh. Really, those eyes were making his skin crawl and his Grim prowl in anger, but he couldn’t let his Animagus get the better of him. Not now, not with that man. But Merlin be damned if he didn’t loathe that auror! There was just something about the way he not only constantly baited Sirius for one reason or another, but more than anything the way he looked at Hadrian. It wasn’t exactly the disgusted revulsion he had clearly detected on the face of that unknown auror back in Diagon and also Scrimgeour to some degree. No, it was something he couldn’t quite name, but Moody knew something. And the fact that Sirius didn’t know what that something was, was driving him mad. He couldn’t stand the lack of knowledge if it could so easily pose a danger to his love.

Only, he had nothing up his sleeve that he could use against the sad excuse of a muggle pirate. Moody was watching them again. Ugh. Really, those eyes were making his skin crawl and his Grim prowl in anger, but he couldn’t let his Animagus get the better of him. Not now, not with that man. But Merlin be damned if he didn’t loathe that auror! There was just something about the way he not only constantly baited Sirius for one reason or another, but more than anything the way he looked at Hadrian. It wasn’t exactly the disgusted revulsion he had clearly detected on the face of that unknown auror back in Diagon and also Scrimgeour to some degree. No, it was something he couldn’t quite name, but Moody knew something. And the fact that Sirius didn’t know what that something was, was driving him mad. He couldn’t stand the lack of knowledge if it could so easily pose a danger to his love.

Only, he had nothing up his sleeve that he could use against the sad excuse of a muggle pirate. Moody was holding all the trumps here. The man knew Hadrian had cast the Patronus back in the alley, which in itself was nothing suspicious, or at least not if you weren’t a certain paranoid bastard with a pegleg. He also knew that something about Hadrian that was driving Sirius up the wall. He
was an auror. He was here on an official mission. He had the right to question them about the attack – at least as witnesses. He had a lot of power at his command, he could get that mauled stump of a nose of his into pretty much all information available to the Ministry, and that was dangerous. There was after all no information to be found about Hadrian as of yet.

“It’s a match,” the other auror’s voice interrupted his plotting and Sirius definitely could not miss the pained gasp escaping his boyfriend’s mouth. And what a mouth that was… nope, back to the gasp. What was that about?

“So the child is a Diggory?” Lady Potter questioned and everyone turned to look at her.

“More even,” boring-goody-two-shoes answered her rather smugly, “I can even tell that he is indeed Amos Diggory’s son. It is a perfect match for paternity.”

Which was bullshit as the result probably could just as well mean maternity, Sirius knew. It simply showed the fact that the magicks tested were that of parent and child. Okay, so it was actually Amos Diggory’s magic tested in comparison to the kid’s, but again: semantics.

“I cannot recall the name of his wife, but,” Lord Potter spoke up, sending a concerned glance at Hadrian, “As my nephew told us, she fell victim to one of the Dementors.” His voice took on an honest sombre tone, his hazel eyes reflecting the horror he imagined his acquaintance had to be going through right now. “What a devastating way to lose one’s loved one,” he said softly and smiled gratefully at his own wife as she grasped his hand in her’s.

“I didn’t get the impression it was ‘is wife he was so worried ‘bout,” Moody snorted. “Pretty obvious the guy had no problem with leaning on ‘is… mistress,” he grumbled and Sirius couldn’t make out if he was disapproving of the obvious infidelity of Amos Diggory, or if he begrudgingly envied him for said mistress.

“He will be considered a widower now,” Lady Potter added delicately, gaze turning back to Moody. “Maybe the child will gain a new mother soon.”

The visit was rather cut short after that. Lady Potter clearly was not about to let Moody get into full investigation-mode and made sure to keep the conversation away from too many details. She point blank refused to let the auror have a ‘private talk’ with any of her boys without an adult present and glared both Ministry officials into submission on the matter. They cleared up how the child, now confirmed to be one Alun Amosis Rhydderch Diggory (*), had come into Harry’s care and avouched again that it had been him that cast the Patronus. The bureaucratic looking auror seemed a bit disbelieving of that fact, but Moody for once had no problem accepting the explanation. As Lady Potter’s fierce presence kept him from questioning Harry outright, he seemed to give up on getting the answers to what he really wanted to ask. And Harry could breathe a little more freely as it finally sunk in that the little boy might be a Diggory, but not Cedric.

Saying goodbye to little Alun (that child so needed a nickname) felt wrong to him though. Not only tugged it at his heartstrings to see the kid tear up and bawl his eyes out when he was taken away from Harry, but it also made him want to kick the auror holding him so awkwardly. Moody had not bothered to keep the little one in his arms, he had simply removed him from Harry and thrust him to his partner. Not carelessly, no, but with a simple efficiency that to Harry looked like cold indifference in that moment.

If it wasn’t for the fact that he knew they would take Alun to his father, he wouldn’t have been able to let go. Maybe it was because he had been the main caretaker over this short period of time, but he
felt very protective of the tyke. Harry wanted nothing more than to go over and comfort him, but he couldn’t. He turned his face into Sirius’ shoulder to try and block the horrible feeling that he was abandoning the boy. He breathed a huge sigh of relief when Lady Potter cast a sleeping spell on the child.

“It’s okay,” Sirius whispered into his hair, holding him close despite the aurors’ intrusive stares. “He’ll be with his dad once more, he’ll be fine.”

Harry just nodded. He couldn’t believe how much this was affecting him. He barely knew that kid! Still. It had come so abruptly… just an hour ago he had been crawling into a snowdrift with him and now…

The aurors were closing up their business with the Potters and Sirius was distracted by James - something about races and chocolate frogs – when it happened. Harry hadn’t really been paying that much attention to his surroundings anymore, still feeling bereft by Alun’s sudden departure, and so Moody’s words took him by surprise. He nearly jumped a foot high when the auror appeared right next to him, reminding him without saying it out loud of his future self’s maxim CONSTANT VIGILANCE! Harry glared back stubbornly, trying very hard not to think of his future teacher, Dumbledore’s friend, as he looked at the man.

“It basically comes down to one simple question, lad,” Moody growled in that gruff voice of his. “Who are you?”

“Hadrian Moore-Potter,” he repeated stoically what he had already stated during the interrogation before. The auror’s scarred face twisted into what Harry thought was probably meant as a smile.

“A name, but no story,” he said lowly. “Don’t think I’ve forgotten that show of yours back in the alley.” Well, of course, they had just talked about the Patronus, had they not? “We’ll talk again, I’m sure.”

And for some reason that one sentence sounded more like a threat to Harry than any of the accusations from back in Diagon Alley could have.

Chapter End Notes

(*) **Sleekazy’s Hair Potion** is a potion used to tame and style hair, most particularly bushy or unruly hair and was invented by Fleamont Potter. It’s what Hermione used for the Yule Ball!

(*) **Cedric was born in September or October 1977, so him being the little boy’s younger half-brother, the child of Amos Diggory’s former mistress/then wife, fits quite nicely.**

Which is why I like the thought of Amos remarrying right away after the incident in Diagon Alley. Maybe he wasn't happy in his marriage, maybe it was arranged and now he is free to marry his mistress which will be Cedric’s mother… or something.

(*) **Alun Amosis Rhydderch Diggory:**

Alun is the Welsh form of Alan and appears in the Mabinogion, a collection of tales from Welsh myth. There are different possible meanings, but I’m going with either ‘little rock’ or ‘handsome’ in Breton.

Amosis is in honour of his father Amos. It’s the Greek form of Ahmose which in turn is a variant of an Egyptian name of the first pharaoh of the 18th dynasty. He defeated the
Hyksos and drove them from Egypt. Rhydderch (HRUDH-erkh) means ‘reddish brown’ in Welsh. It is sometimes used as a Welsh form of Roderick which in turn means ‘famous power’ from the Germanic elements *hrod* (fame) and *ric* (power).

Yeah, I kinda went all out with the name giving...
In which there is a wall of glass

Chapter Notes

I suggest reading OtakuLife121’s Omake in the comment section of chapter 110 for better understanding of the last part of this chapter. I just fooled around a bit at the end. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There was a beat of silence once the aurors were out through the Floo in the receiving room. Harry wasn’t quite sure how he felt. Moody had always been an ally, if a gruff one, until he was ousted a Death Eater in disguise and then he had been an ally yet again, the real one this time, even if Harry did not have all that much contact with him. In fact, he knew pretty much nothing about the grizzly old auror that wasn’t quite as old in this time. What he knew was what he had heard from Dumbledore and other members of the Order of the Phoenix. And all of them had been agreed on one thing: Alastor Moody was paranoid, but normally well-meaning.

But that had been when Harry had been the blasted Boy-Who-Lived, hailed the only chance to defeat Voldemort, and Dumbledore’s Golden Boy. Now he was just a strange boy that suddenly popped out of nowhere acting suspicious. And apparently that was enough to catch Moody’s interest.

Harry sighed. He lost his godfather, he fell through time, he became a creature, he met his parents and suddenly had a boyfriend, and through it all he could feel a rising dark lord lurking. The connection was still there, silent again since the attacks on the Muggleborns’ families, but unmistakably there. He painstakingly avoided reaching out to the black abyss hidden in his mind that he knew was a Horcrux, a parasite that should never have been there to begin with. It was a secret weighing heavily on his heart and one that he maybe would have to share soon. He knew the Marauders were changing, maturing in a way, and it wouldn’t be long now for them to demand more concrete answers than those he had given them so far. They knew of the prophecy, had realised the very real threat of the dark lord, and they were just the type that would step up to fight.

And that scared Harry.

It had always been him that fought. Yes, there had been his parents, his former professor, his godfather, the Order and Dumbledore. But back then they had all been adults and his friends had only been along for a scant few situations, they had been kept safe most of the time while Harry could never be kept out of it all completely. Now things seemed to be different, because he knew the Marauders would not let themselves get tucked away safely. They would want to be a part of the resistance, of the Light. They would want to fight and Harry knew from his time that that was exactly what they were going to do.

It was what killed them in the end.

His breath hitched when there was suddenly a heavy hand on his shoulder that definitely was not his boyfriend’s. Looking up, Harry was met with his grandfather’s concerned stare, but he was not the only one looking at him. The formal parlour was filled again and all of them, his grandparents, the important part of the Marauders, were watching him. It was a mixture of worry, concern, slight anxiety, and determination that met his eyes and for a moment Harry couldn’t stand it. He dropped
his gaze down to the floor, biting his lip. The hand on his shoulder squeezed momentarily and Harry heard shifting around the room.

“I have to make sure, though my wife tells me that it would not be possible,” Lord Potter’s deep voice reverberated through him, his hand not letting go of Harry’s shoulder. He could hear him take a fortifying breath and Harry suddenly realised that he could not lie to his grandfather. Whatever he was going to ask him, Harry would not be able to lie. “We established that you are from a future in which you are James’ son.” Nodding cautiously, Harry didn’t look up. “But… you are not born yet, are you?” There was a sliver of a tremble to Lord Potter’s voice, but Harry was too surprised by the actual question to really notice. “In this time, I mean. James has not yet sired you, correct?”

This time there was no missing the half-choke-half-whine kind of noise, but it wasn’t coming from Harry. He did look up then, across the room where James was standing with his mother staring at him. Looking back into those hazel eyes, Harry frowned minutely. It was a strange question and he couldn’t quite figure out…

“No,” he said slowly, chancing a glance up into his grandfather’s face. “I was born- …will be born in-”

“Don’t,” Lady Potter’s clear voice interrupted him and looking over, he could see her patting James’ back while Remus seemed to be having a rather strong hold on Sirius’ arm. “I understand your need to confide in us,” she continued. “And please believe me, we would never consciously use such knowledge against you… But it is still imperative that you keep information about the future to a minimum.”

Harry felt a little lost in that moment. So he now had a family, but he would never be allowed to be truly honest with them? Sure, he had not felt comfortable talking about his past, the future, much or in detail so far, but he had known he would have to talk about it some time and… a part of him had wanted to do just that. He wanted them to know, he wanted them to first accept him as who he was now and then he wanted them to learn about his past, who he used to be, and still accept him. But then, he was… used to be… Harry Potter. Things never were that easy for him.

“Excuse my language, Lady Potter,” Sirius suddenly spoke up, giving said lady a little bow before untangling himself from Remus and walking over to Harry. “But I for one think that’s bullshit.” He grinned unabashedly at Remus’ half-hearted admonishment and reached out to Harry instead who met his hand on reflex with his own. “Sure, sure, I see why you’d think it necessary not to know the future… think Rems there ranted about dangers of time travel enough by now to realise that… but Bambi needs someone who-” He cocked his head in thought before smirking and raising his boyfriend’s hand up to brush a soft kiss over his knuckles. “Someone who knows him, all of him.”

“And of course he had to say it in a let’s-give-everyone-a-headache-with-the-insinuation kind of way,” James muttered in the background while Harry valiantly fought his rising blush.

The little one was adorable. Fleamont was a very proud father, had always been, and thought his son, crafty mischievous kid that he was, was quite the handsome chap. But his grandson was another matter.

That boy… everything about him seemed so very fragile that it tugged at the protective instincts of whoever laid eyes upon him. He was small, probably much smaller than he ought to be, but with Fleamont’s own above average height it was hard to tell. Compared to his son and his friends, though, Hadrian definitely was on the short side. Then there was his pale complexion, a mirror of his lovely Euphemia’s as he now suspected, that made him look even more delicate than he probably was. And Hadrian had to be much stronger than he appeared to be considering what had happened these past days. His expressive eyes didn’t help the image of fragility as they seemed to dominate the
small features with their deer-like appearance. Thinking about it now, Hadrian’s overall looks could very well also be a consequence of his creature genes…

But it was his demeanour that really did Fleamont in. There was such shyness and gentleness in every word, every gesture. There was also a definite lack of a proper protection, nothing like the thick skin he would need to survive in the hostile environment the Wizarding World was turning into. And yet sometimes those eyes glowed with a strength and determination that rendered any doubts about the power Hadrian wielded nonexistent. Fleamont had not seen Hadrian’s actions in Diagon Alley, but he didn’t need to, to notice the untrained amount of sheer magical power that surrounded the child whenever he was the slightest bit upset or even at the odd times with seemingly no reason whatsoever. Though, Fleamont, as a former duelist champion, was very aware that magical power alone wasn’t always the deciding factor. More often than not in a fight it came down to craftiness and the will power of the opponents – and something told him that little Hadrian’s looks were very deceiving in that matter.

All things considered, Fleamont was constantly fighting warring urges of either wrapping the little one up and not ever letting him out of his sight again, or showing the boy how to use that power and will, train him to be stronger than the prejudices growing out of the shadows. He wasn’t sure which urge would ultimately win out in the end, but at the moment he was definitely giving in to the protectiveness.

“Meddling with time is a dangerous thing and as my beloved wife already explained, we are unable to foresee possible consequences of any interference,” he said calmly, soothingly, very aware of the vulnerable look Euphemia’s words had caused in Hadrian’s eyes. “Therefore I would normally completely agree with her to not share information about the future if it can be avoided,” he continued, forcing himself not to look away.

Instantly there was protest voiced, the other boys making their own opinion on the matter known. Curiously, Hadrian himself did not attempt to interrupt him.

“But,” Fleamont raised his voice slightly to speak over the ruckus, “I also see what Sirius in all his eloquence tried to say. You need a fixed point in this time and place that is probably rather strange to you. You need a family to support you and I already promised you that we would be that family. That is not to say Euphemia would want to deprive you of this support, of course not.” Giving the child a gentle smile, Fleamont turned to the temptress he had married. “I believe, she simply does not wish to endanger any one of us, and that includes you, little one, through knowledge which we are not supposed to have. Am I right, dearest?”

Of course he was, but Hadrian needed to hear it from his grandmother and he could see his wife’s understanding the instant he looked over at her seated form.

“Yes, of course, I apologise if my words implied any different. It is just …I know my son and his friends.” She smiled wryly at the Marauders. “If they had knowledge of for example another horrifying attack similar to the one on Diagon Alley, they would go out of their way to prevent it or otherwise meddle with what is supposed to happen.”

There was shifting and rather obvious avoidance of eye contact, but Fleamont had only eyes for the little one it all centred around. Hadrian… in a way Fleamont had a feeling this boy was much older mentally than his physical age would suggest.

“…they would go out of their way to prevent it or otherwise meddle with what is supposed to happen.”

And that was the crux of it all, wasn’t it? How were they to know what events really needed to
happen and what could be prevented without influencing the future in horrible ways? Remus had to
ask the ever torturous ‘What if’. What if they had somehow prevented the Dementor attack
completely and then some of the people that should have ‘died’ that day went and did even more
horrible things in the future? What if Hadrian being there and saving so many had already set in
motion other things that would eventually lead to… who knows, maybe the destruction of the
magical world altogether?

Alright so maybe he was being dramatic. He was spending a lot of time in Sirius’ presence after all.

Remus was clever, he knew that, had always been and recently he had put his intellect into learning
everything there was to learn about time and time travel. Which was, admittedly, not all that much.
For all the theories there were, they tended to disagree with or even contradict each other so much
that it was simply impossible to settle on one.

“But we are off track,” Lady Potter was just saying. “I believe what my husband wished to know is
if you were born a legitimate child, Hadrian?”

Remus watched as Hadrian’s eyes grew even wider and took on a hurt kind of look that made Sirius
next to him tense. He could smell the confusion in the little breeze coming from the hall and picking
up Hadrian’s scent along its way through the parlour. It was the boy’s regular heady scent of nature,
wilderness, forest and that hint of ozone now layered with various amounts of hurt, confusion,
fatigue and even a hint of annoyance… no, wait, that was Sirius.

“None of that, dear,” the lady chided gently, instantly provoking a change in the scents. “It is simply
a matter of necessity to know such, if we want to make sure your protection is as impeccable as
possible.”

Confusion was now overshadowing all the other layers and Remus blinked eyes open he hadn’t
realised were closed. Hadrian’s scent tended to do that to him.

“Now that we have decided on a cover story for you, little one,” the Lord Potter took the
conversation over again, leading Hadrian, and in addition Sirius, back over to the seating area, “The
need for proper documentation has arisen. The Goblins won’t divulge any client information to the
Ministry, but if the aurors that investigate the attack at Diagon Alley try to look into you, they will
eventually go to St. Mungo’s.”

More confusion now, though Remus couldn’t tell what the reason was this time. Where he was
sitting now, Hadrian’s scent no longer carried over to him that much, but he could still pick up on it.
It was quite the distinct fragrance after all. Considering it was Head Auror Moody that did the
investigation on the Diagon Alley attack, it was a given that Hadrian would find himself a suspect
simply for the fact that he had been there. So why was this little bit of information even more
confusing to Hadrian than all the rest?

“The magical world does not require birth certificates from those not born to main pureblood lines,”
Lord Potter was explaining and Remus thought he had probably missed some of the conversation.

“Which is wrong in more ways than just the bureaucratic nightmare it provokes….” he couldn’t help
but mutter to that statement, getting nods all around and blinking in slight embarrassment over having
interrupted what was obviously an important discussion.

“They only want birth certificates of Purebloods?” Hadrian was asking with a frown. “That’s just…”
He seemed to search for the right words, but then simply shook his head, still frowning.

“To be exact,” Lord Potter elaborated, “They only require birth certificates of the main lines,
meaning for example those that hold seats on the Wizengamot. So if you were to be born to one of
the Potter’s stray branches, there would not necessarily be a birth certificate for you and yet you were
a Potter and therefore under my jurisdiction.”

At that point a new batch of tea and biscuits appeared on the table and everyone was busying
themselves for a few minutes with preparing their cups. Remus could hear Sirius growl a bit about
‘More of that supremacy crap’ while James was uncharacteristically quiet – probably still reeling
from the comment over him siring Hadrian. Merlin, that must feel weird…

“To keep it short, Hadrian,” Lord Potter said, leaning back in his seat with his tea cradled in those
huge hands of his, “It means, it won’t be all that surprising when they won’t be able to find you in
any Ministry records, uncommon these days but not completely implausible. As this little family is all
that is left of the Potters, we can claim you to be the child of one of the more reclusive branches, and
no one will be the wiser.”

“So, why…”

“The lack of records will lead them to the hospital as the Ministry does have full authority there.” He
took a breath, turning his cup in circles. “And right now, if you as you say haven’t been born yet,
they will find no documentation for you there whatsoever, which simply will not add up with our
cover story of you being a cousin and therefore a Potter.”

“And we need you to officially be a Potter, love, in all possible ways which does include legitimacy.
If you were born out of wedlock yet claimed by your sire, it would give the Ministry an In we do not
want to chance.” Lady Potter added quietly. “It is the only way we can ensure your protection should
your creature status ever be discovered.”

It was later that day, the sun already setting and casting a haunting glow through the tall windows in
every room that Sirius found himself looking for one wayward Elf Owl. Things that day had gone
quite a bit differently than he had planned, even more so after Moody and the walking paperclip had
left.

Even now, hours later, he still felt the burning anger in his gut, the haze of rage just around the edges
of his mind, whenever his thoughts drifted back to those moments. They had been discussing
Hadrian’s cover story so he would be protected from the sodding aurors that couldn’t keep their
enormous noses out of other peoples’ business. They also planned out how to keep Bambi safe from
the growing danger that all creatures or part-creatures were facing these days. Throughout it all
Hadrian did not much contributing other than trying to stop them from investing themselves so much
in the beginning. And it wasn’t until they went into detail about the fake documentation they would
need to plant at St. Mungo’s that another puzzle piece of their Bambi’s past was revealed: No

It was then that Sirius was once again confronted with the madness that was said to be one of the
more unsavoury traits of the Blacks.

Black, the result of the absence of, or complete absorption of, light. How… fitting. In Western
muggle culture the colour black had typically been associated with evil, darkness, and funnily
enough witchcraft, but also with prestige and sophistication. Even more fitting, really. At the same
time some cultures associated it with life and prosperity. In Ancient China black was the symbol of
the element of water, which as his mother used to preach about, also corresponded to Slytherin,
the Hogwarts house of almost all members of the Black family. All respected members, that is. And
lastly in the English heraldry black represented darkness and ignorance, the perfect fit in Sirius not so
humble opinion.
That moment when Hadrian revealed this total lack of care for his wellbeing, when he wouldn’t even realise the significance of his own words, had been completely ignorant to the danger he was in just from never having received any vaccination of the magical kind… Sirius had felt close to snapping. Close to truly going Black. He might not buy into the pureblood crap, but he honestly had to wonder how it could possibly happen that the heir to an old pureblooded family as prestigious as the Potters ended up being raised by muggles. Neglectful and abusive muggles at that and it didn’t sound as if Hadrian had had any knowledge of his heritage before starting his Hogwarts education. Something like this… it was just…

Sirius doubted his Bambi had really understood the gravity of his own words. Hadrian truly had no idea of simple wizarding protocol such as the fact that the parents of muggleborn students were required to send their children to St. Mungo’s for base vaccination before they ever set a foot into Hogwarts. It was a requirement explained to them by certain messengers that were sent to the families when the child turned eleven… at least that was what Sirius had been led to believe. So even if Hadrian had been raised a muggle for some strange reason, he should have gotten his vaccinations and such as soon as he stepped foot back into the Wizarding World.

In the end it was decided that Lord Potter would write to the family healer. He would come by the manor personally before they had to leave to return to Hogwarts and from there Lord Potter would arrange for the fake documentation to be placed. Sirius briefly wondered if the Potters went about such things in the same way as the Blacks would – the threatening of lives and subtly placed curses – or if they would take a more… Malfoy-esque approach and bribe their way through.

Sirius blinked away his rather dark thoughts when he heard the voice of just the one he had been looking for. He was in the east wing, one of the upper floors. To be specific it was the third floor with the sheer glass wall that wound itself around the whole eastside of the manor, bathing said outer corridor into light even though the sun was setting. Sirius remembered a summer morning he had spent here, watching the sun rise. It was a breathtaking view with the gardens in full bloom and the maze throwing large shadows…

“…hoping you could help me with something,” Hadrian’s soft voice said and Sirius stopped just around the corner, not wanting to interrupt what sounded like a serious conversation.

Okay and maybe he wanted to know what was going on. There, in the middle of the next corridor, one of the wide ones with tall ceilings that were meant for representative purposes, was his boyfriend. The setting sun was casting its last glow over his pale skin, making Hadrian look nearly luminescent as he crouched in front of a house-elf.

“Little Master’s friend be asking?”

The elf, on closer inspection identified as the nanny elf from earlier that day, was questioning suspiciously. Sirius frowned, wondering what it was Hadrian could be asking from this specific elf now that the kid was gone.

“Um… yes, that’s… right,” he heard him mumble. “Please?”

Smiling slightly, Sirius eyebrows went up in a mix of amusement and exasperation. He hadn’t actually expected otherwise, but Hadrian obviously held some respect for the helpful little buggers.

“Mammy’ll try help you’s, but Mammy’ll not being unfaithful elf!”

Huh. Now that reaction did pique Sirius’ interest.

“Of course not!” His boyfriend was immediately back-paddling. “If… if it will get you into trouble, I
won’t expect you to do it.”

There was a pause and Sirius chanced another glance around the corner. Hadrian hadn’t stood up yet and was facing away from him. The elf, Mammy, was pursing her lips thoughtfully, before she huffed a bit exasperatedly.

“What can Mammy help you’s with?”

Even from his position Sirius could hear the relieved sigh that followed the question.

“The kid… you know, the little boy you helped care for… he’s back with his parents now, or father I guess. Could you… is there a way you could discreetly check up on him? His name is Alun Diggory, if that helps.”

He had to bite back a groan. Godric, was that boy trying to give the world that muggle tooth disease thingy with his sweetness?

“I’s cannot goes into Diggory Mansion, but I’s can try see child when outside.”

“That’s more than enough, thank you, Mammy.”

As the elf popped away, Sirius watched his boyfriend stand up from his crouched position. His eyes raked over the lithe figure, highlighted by the now meagre speck of sunlight filtering in through the glass wall. Outside the world glowed one last time in a haunting spectacle that pulled Sirius’ thoughts back to another display of equal bewitching appearance.

Standing up, Harry stretched a bit, enjoying the last rays of sunlight that streamed in through the beautiful glass wall. He watched through lidded eyes as the colours slowly faded from the vast landscape outside, the glittering highlights in the snowy shapes dimming to an otherworldly purple-blue.

Harry had felt Sirius’ magical presence for a while now. It was getting easier to actually recognise him or the other Marauders and not simply have them register as another magical signature apart from his own. It helped that he was pretty sure there was no one else around at the moment, the manor was huge like that. Still, as arms wrapped around his waist from behind, he couldn’t help but tense up. He didn’t flinch away like he would with anyone else, but he hadn’t quite expected… this.

“So, Bambi,” Sirius purred into his ear, “Your Patronus? I daresay, nice ‘shape’ there…”

His breath was ghosting hotly against Harry’s skin, the arms strong but not oppressive in their hold. It took only a moment for Harry to relax back into the embrace, another kind of tension thrumming in his muscles.

“U-um…,” he mumbled, blushing cherry red at his stutter, “It… it changed. Somehow.” He twisted a little bit, trying to look at Sirius, but was stopped as the arms around him tightened minimally. “It used to be, well… you see, it used to be dad’s…,” he stopped, hesitating a moment, before adding in a hushed whisper: “James’ Animagus form.”

There was a beat of silence, the hot breath still sending tingly shivers over his skin. Then Sirius shifted, just enough to draw Harry’s weight a tiny bit more against him, enough to shake up his balance so Harry was forced to either pull away or lean back onto Sirius.

“Prongs’ Animagus? You mean, your Patronus, that awesome glowy light that saved my arse back in the alley, used to have the form of my best mate’s animal spirit?!” Harry let his head fall back against his boyfriend’s shoulder and shrugged slightly. “You know, that’s kinda cool and strange at
the same time,” Sirius added thoughtfully.

Before Harry could say anything though, Sirius poked his side lightly, continuing: “Ah, don’t go all gloomy on me now, let your terrific fia- …boyfriend finish speaking.”

Harry huffed. Sirius cleared his throat, adopting a lecturing tone of voice.

“It’s cool ‘cause it shows your close bond to your father even if he wasn’t there for you growing up,” he paused and Harry got the impression Sirius was waiting for him to say something, add something, anything. He didn’t. “Right. And it’s strange ‘cause well… it’s Prongsi’s Animagus!” (*)

This time Harry snorted.

“Sounds like you lost track of your terrific argument,” he teased, getting poked into the rips in retaliation once again. Sirius chuckled into his ear.

“Oh yeah, right, the change,” he said, sighing dramatically, the gust of air making Harry shiver. “Well, that was definitely the awesomest awesomeness ever. A Grim. Best Patronus ever, that.”

Harry felt him nodding and couldn’t help the small laugh. Of course Sirius would love the thought of that, he just wondered if his boyfriend realised the actual meaning of such a change.

“That it is,” he agreed lightly, trying to block out his thoughts and concentrate on the moment.

Here they were in the middle of a darkened corridor in his grandparents’ huge manor discussing his Patronus. The sun had set by now, obscuring the landscape outside and Harry could see their reflection in the glass pane. Sirius standing behind him, his tall frame easily towering over Harry, dark artfully tousled hair, somewhat glowing pale skin and those large hands now stroking up and down Harry’s arms…

“Say…,” Sirius murmured, lips suddenly brushing against Harry’s neck, “I read you need to visualize a special memory to produce a Patronus…”

He hummed in agreement, momentarily rendered incapable of complete sentences. Or words. Or-

Warm hands smoothing the fabric of his clothes, lips wandering across his neck making his breath catch. Harry knew there had been something he had wanted to say just now, but… A nip to the vulnerable skin of his throat and small embarrassing gasps of his own. Screw thinking, Sirius was causing things he had never felt before!

Harry’s eyes were fixed on their reflection in the glass, tracked his own blushing face, slightly open mouth, head leaning back heavily onto Sirius’ shoulder. A large hand, so warm, was inching underneath the hem of his jumper, tracing the soft skin there and Harry wasn’t sure if it was normal to feel so hot and yet so cold all at the same time, to tremble from whatever Sirius was doing with his mouth. His heart was beating loudly in his chest, drowning everything out but his own rapid breathing, Sirius soft groans and-

“Merlin, Bambi,” Sirius’ voice rasped where his lips were pressed underneath Harry’s chin, “You smell so good…”

A spin and sudden change in position. Blinking owlishly, Harry tried to get his bearing, but was distracted immediately by a searing kiss. He felt like flying and drowning at the same time, blood rushing in his ears and everything was just Sirius, Sirius, Sirius. Sirius’ body pushing up against him, Sirius’ hands stroking his skin, Sirius’ tongue pushing into his mouth. So warm, so many impressions, somuchtoomuchnotenoughneedtobreathe! It could have been hours or seconds, he had no idea, but Harry wrenched his head away from that talented mouth to draw in much needed air.
Leaning against the cool surface of the window pane, it took Harry an embarrassingly long time to actually realise their position. The warm body pressed up against his, the hands skimming along his back under his jumper and those teasing lips now ghosting along his jaw did not help his concentration.

Sirius was in Heaven, Nirvana or whatever other great afterlife there was. His brain was spouting nonsensical, disjointed thoughts, the muggle religion references for some reason dominating. Merlin, Gods and Magic, he wanted to touch Hadrian forever. He had his love pressed against the glass wall, like some offering to the otherworldly landscape outside. Hadrian, Bambi, caged in between his body and the cool glass, burning up beneath his touch, skin so soft, so perfect-

Footsteps down the corridor.

Sirius’ keen hearing picked up the somewhat heavy footfalls and even through the mush his brain had become he realised he had to act. Pulling away from Hadrian was torture, he wanted more of that mouth, that skin, no, concentrate, Padfoot! He could see the daze and disorientation in his love’s beautiful eyes, could hear him gasp for breath and felt a wave of smugness knowing it was he, Sirius, who had done that.

Shushing Hadrian, he looked around, spotting the camouflaged door in the panelled wall across the hall. From there it was a slightly stumbly flight into the cupboard, pulling Hadrian into the darkness and closing the door just in time as the footsteps rounded the corner.

“What-”

The question was silenced with another kiss that drew a moan and GodricRowenaHelgaSalazar he did not want that sound to stop, but they would be discovered if Hadrian kept this up. Shushing his love again, he pushed close, covering the small form with his own body, back to the door and swallowed every sound his Bambi was making.

James had had a bad dream last night. Oh it had not been anything ‘dark’, but freaking acromantula shit, it had been kinda traumatizing!

There he had been in his dreamscape, enjoying dreamy stuff, when he heard it. Voices he knew, voices he loved, but words he did not want to hear. The voice of his sweet son whispering denials, the somewhat rough voice of his best mate spouting charming compliments. Gasps and moans and Merlin’s pants, why had he been dreaming about this?

“B-but… wait, j-just let's get a bed first, o-okay?”

A bed. Oh how he had wanted to castrate a dog at that moment.

“A wall is enough, isn't it?”

Oh yes, castrating it was. Slow and painful and-

“Sirius...”

“You'll like it. Just trust me. I’m gonna make you feel so good…”

“…okay. I trust you.”

The heck?! No! That's not okay! You say NO in that kind of situation! Right? Right. At least if you’re Hadrian, the sweet innocent son of James Potter and why in Godric’s name was he even dreaming
up this kind of wrong wrongness of oh-so-fucking wrong?!

James had spent the rest of that traumatizing nightmare shouting in his own mind how he was so not listening. And then he was walking the halls of his home the next day, the sun just having set, when he heard it again. For a moment James had stopped short, frozen and fighting blood thirst. The voices had been unmistakable. He should have just turned around and left them to it. Really.

But that awful dream.

So, there James was, standing indecisively in a hall, knowing what was going on not that far away from him and trying to convince himself that this was not his crazy dreamscape but reality and that Sirius would never do …whatever he had done in that nightmare. He was not even going to think it. Not listening!

But, come on! That was his son and his friend, both his friends, and technically it was kind of his duty to interrupt and annoy them. Yup. Exactly. But nope, he did not want to see that. So James took a deep breath and continued on his walk, exaggerating his steps, making sure they would be heard. He knew how sensitive Pads’ hearing was. Then he turned the corner and alright, it was not easy not to break down in (perhaps slightly hysterical) laughter when he saw the door to the hidden cupboard in the wall click shut.

Still, he so did not need to hear that.

Chapter End Notes

/snicker
A bit random at the end there, but hey...

(*) What Sirius fails to articulate there is that in archaic Latin the word ‘Patronus’ meant 'father', interesting, considering that Harry’s Patronus used to be the same as his father’s Animagus. Prongs.
It was the 31st December, the last day of the year 1976, and Harry was up early once again, sitting in the reading nook of his grandfather’s study. The date had brought back the fact that he was actually in the past and even though by now it should be ridiculous, the thought still threw Harry off somewhat. He couldn’t even place the actual reason for his restlessness, after all he was happier in the past than he had ever been in his original time. He didn’t like to call it ‘the future’ anymore, probably in hopes that the future he had known would never come to be now that he was where he was.

With a sigh, Harry stood from his perch in one of the formal yet comfortable armchairs of Lord Potter’s domain. He paced a bit between the tall bookshelves, nervously glancing at the family tapestry across the room from time to time. His chosen name, Hadrian Aloysius Moore-Potter, which had been validated by Magic herself, was still there, but shifted in place. Even though Harry (he really should start calling himself ‘Hadrian’) knew it was only a Glamour to back their cover story of him being a cousin to James, there was a twinge of hurt every time he looked at it. He knew his family had accepted him as who he was, as what he was, even if they asked him to keep the information on ‘the future’ as general as possible. Well, it wasn’t like Harry wanted to tell them of the Horcruxes anyway. But this tapestry was supposed to show the history of the Potter family and seeing himself there, but neither with his original name nor at the right place…

He had spent the night alone again, feeling equally expectant and afraid of what could happen if he went to sleep in Sirius’ bed after what they had been up to yesterday evening. It was one thing to make out in the hall (or a cupboard) and another entirely to get into the same bed afterwards. At least it was to Harry. Even if they used to share the same sleeping space more often than not, Harry couldn’t help the nervous agitation that kept him from doing so last night. Sirius had pouted, of course, but reacted quite understanding. Harry was glad he had such a patient boyfriend. Not that he had any experience in the matter, but he was pretty sure anyone else would have been expecting more by now. Sirius wasn’t exactly happy with their rather nonexistent sex life, not that he had told Harry this, but he was content to wait for him to reach the same point. That he did tell Harry. And considering his mortified, heart racing reaction to just thinking about it, Sirius was in for quite the wait still.

The heavy oak door opening interrupted Harry’s musings and he blushed slightly at his thoughts while being in his grandfather’s study waiting for said man.

“Amos has contacted me with the wish to meet you,” Lord Potter said in way of greeting, but came over immediately to kiss the top of Harry’s head lovingly.

“Amos?” Harry questioned, busy expelling his former thoughts to give his grandfather his full
attention.

He was ushered back into one of the armchairs, a tray with fresh and crusty bread rolls and a variety of breakfast dishes appearing on a small table that had not been there before. The scents were amazing. (*)

“Amos Diggory.” Lord Potter elaborated, sitting down on the armchair across from Harry. “Tea, coffee or chocolate?”

Harry blinked for a moment before deciding on coffee, having taken a liking to the brew ever since he needed to study so much more to catch up with his classes and then to keep up with the Marauders. He might not have been studying these past days, but he had been awake most of the night anyway, unable to get much sleep without Sirius there with him.

“Amos Diggory is the current head of House Diggory and little Alun’s father.” His grandfather filled a cup with the newly arrived coffee, another heavenly scent to mix with the rest, and slid it over to Harry. “Apparently the aurors explained some of what happened in Diagon Alley when they escorted Alun to him and he contacted me right after with the wish to meet you.”

Harry shifted in his seat, fixing his cup carefully the way he enjoyed his coffee most. So Cedric’s soon-to-be father, the excitable and later heartbroken man Harry had met back at the Triwizard Tournament, wanted to meet him. That is, if he even would become Cedric’s father now that his first son survived a situation he would not have come out of alive if Harry had not been there. The thought of little Alun falling victim to that Dementor that ‘killed’ his mother made Harry nauseous as did the thought of Cedric might never being born. It were thoughts like these that had kept him awake most of last night. He must have been quiet longer than he intended to, because his grandfather’s voice when he spoke up was calming in a way that sounded suspiciously like he wanted to soothe Harry.

“I will be with you the whole time, little one,” he said, giving Harry a gentle smile. “I would have liked to avoid you meeting anyone in such conditions, at least with the creature laws as they are at the moment, but if you were to deny the meeting it would most likely only further the aurors’ suspicions.”

“Such conditions?” Harry asked softly. “You mean me being… being this,” he said, gaze dropping into the swirling contents of his cup.

He couldn’t completely suppress the slightly bitter tone of his voice. Him being a creature was making life more and more difficult, so much so that it wasn’t even safe for him to meet someone as innocuous as Amos Diggory.

“No, Hadrian,” Lord Potter disagreed a bit firmer than Harry had been expecting, making him look up once more. “Such conditions as in you, me, and him without anyone else to take his attention off of you. It will enable him to get a very close look at you and yes, that is dangerous as it could very well mean him noticing your nonhuman features,” he said, taking a sip of his tea. “But it is wrong, so very wrong, that you should have to fear discovery. And,” he added a bit softer, “It is wrong that these conditions drive you to reject your gift.”

Harry was silent for a moment, dissecting the words and trying to once again come to terms with the new restrictions that had come with his inheritance. He had been sheltered, or even caged, before, and wasn’t a stranger to the feeling. Now he wasn’t outright held back, at least not as long as he wasn’t discovered. Merlin only knew what would happen then. But he had to live with the constant fear of someone just taking a closer look at him! And with how his allure kept drawing attention, of whatever kind, it really was a miracle it hadn’t happened yet. For once, Harry felt like he had a true
inkling to how Remus must have felt all these years.

Sighing, he nodded and took a too large bite of his bread roll in order to have an excuse not to talk. But his thoughts kept going in circles, adding a few memories from the day before in the mix just to be spiteful.

_They were discussing the cover story that would be his life from now on, the lie he would have to live outside his immediate family. He didn’t want them to risk themselves, but his family was relentless. He was one of them, so they would protect him. It was a kind of feeling he had never experienced before, not with his friends, not with the Weasleys and certainly not with the Dursleys. His aunt, uncle and cousin would have pinned any blame on him without batting an eye, they would never have stood up for him and definitely wouldn’t have risked their own comfortable little lives for him. The Weasleys had taken him in somewhat, but he had never been truly one of them. Sure, the children were like siblings to him and he didn’t doubt their affection, but he couldn’t remember any of them ever actively trying to keep him out of the brewing war. Yes, they cared for him and didn’t want him hurt, but they also had been raised to see him as the dark lord’s downfall, a leader, a fighter, a saviour. They had expected him to fight for them, however unconsciously in some cases._

This… these people… they simply wanted him safe and as happy as possible. Harry felt overwhelmed with the sheer amount of selfless devotion which in turn made him tired. He didn’t know how to deal with this. Hiding a yawn, he allowed himself to sag a bit more against Sirius.

“What if he were to be born abroad?” James was just suggesting. “Would be a nightmare to get to those records, wouldn’t it? If they even would go to such lengths in order to ‘investigate’ him.”

Harry thought that sounded like it could work, but Lady Potter was shaking her beautiful head again. Damn, how long had they been at this already? Harry felt like crawling into bed and hiding from the world, just for a bit. Maybe Sirius could be persuaded to hold him until he fell asleep…

“Sadly that will not work. Medical records in magical hospitals all over Europe are linked with each other, meaning they update themselves whenever the original record is updated.” Harry rubbed at his eyes as Lady Potter simply talked right over the Marauders’ protests. “And even those hospitals in any countries farther away are easily able to make contact with and acquire documentation from if necessary.”

There was a gentle nudge to his side and Harry blinked tired eyes as he realised his grandfather was talking to him.

“As you probably remember, Hadrian, growing up you would have visited the hospital on numerous occasions even if it were just for the necessary vaccinations before starting your education.” Huh? “So logically there would be at the very least records of those treatments.”

His confusion must have been visible on his face, because suddenly he felt everyone’s eyes on him. He tried to push his tiredness away and focus on his grandfather’s words. Something about that sentence had sounded like he should know what they were talking about…

“Right,” Lord Potter suddenly said, sitting up straighter. “Which leads right up to my next question: Are you up to par with the classic vaccinations, little one, or do you maybe require a fresh-up shot for Dragon Pox or anything along those lines?”

Silence. Harry had no idea what the lord was going on about. Yes, he vaguely recalled Dragon Pox, but couldn’t quite place it. Probably something like Chicken Pox, right? Not that he had been
vaccinated against those, nope, he had had to endure those devilishly itching spots as a small child. He still remembered Aunt Petunia screeching at him not to go anywhere near her precious Diddynkins and how he had spent the majority of that time locked up in his cupboard (and the whole week afterwards cleaning the house from top to bottom to get rid of his freakish germs). Thinking about it now, it was probably only due to his magic that he had no actual scars from that experience, because he certainly had scratched enough at his skin to scar himself beyond recognition. It wasn’t like anyone had told him not to. So vaccinations? The Dursleys definitely never had bothered with getting him vaccinated against anything, well, apart from the few things mandatorily done at school. But magical vaccinations? What?

“Perhaps you missed your last appointment due to the sudden… journey?”

Lord Potter’s tone of voice clued Harry in to the fact that he had been silent a long while and that his thought process had probably been rather obvious on his face.

“I…,” Harry started, clearing his throat uncomfortably.

But he had no idea what to say, really. If there were magical ways of vaccinating, which actually made a lot of sense if there were exclusively magical maladies, he could not recall ever getting them.

“You didn’t know,” Remus interrupted the tense silence. He wasn’t asking, he was stating a fact and Harry flushed in embarrassment.

“But—” James spoke up, sounding equal parts confused and desperate. “How is that even possible? You did attend Hogwarts before, right? They- I mean…”

He was floundering, eyes wide as he stared at Harry in disbelieving horror.

“It’s a standard requirement for any student,” Remus explained when James’ voice failed him. “To be accepted into Hogwarts, every student has to prove basic vaccinations. Muggleborns are normally escorted by their messenger, the one that introduces them to the magical world.”

For a moment Harry tried to imagine Hagrid escorting him to St. Mungo’s and wondered if the gentle half-giant had simply forgotten to do so. He couldn’t and wouldn’t believe that his friend would have risked Harry’s health like that on purpose. Illnesses weren’t dangerous creatures after all.

“If you do not recall visiting the hospital or a healer for these kind of things,” Lady Potter spoke up, voice carefully controlled into friendly neutrality, “It is quite likely that you received them directly at school, possibly right after first entering the grounds or at the very least the first time you went to the hospital wing.”

She looked at him expectantly and Harry tried, he really tried, to remember if that might have been the case. He had been to the hospital wing enough times, from his very first year on even.

“There were enough instances that I could have been given shots without my knowledge,” he finally voiced. It wasn’t the answer he would have liked to give, but he really couldn’t remember Madam Pomfrey ever talking to him about vaccination. It was likely she had just done it on one of the many times he had been unconscious in her care. “Pretty much every year I would wake up in the hospital wing for one reason or another, so—”

He was interrupted by the outraged and concerned exclamations of his family and for a moment he thought they were angry at him. It was what he expected happening, people blaming him for things out of his control. He was just about to shrink back into Sirius, when his boyfriend spoke up.
“Did I get that right…,” he asked, voice curiously void of much emotion. “You have no memory of ever receiving any kind of magical medical attention that was not related to injury?”

The silence was back again and Harry dropped his gaze into his lap. He decided to simply nod. Another beat of silence, then:

“What the hell, Hadrian?” The question was asked quietly, in contrast to the actual words. It seemed so much more intimidating that way, conveying an ocean of hurt Sirius felt on his behalf.

“Do you remember my question regarding your powers?” A voice asked and Harry snapped back to the present. His grandfather gave him a knowing look over the rim of his tea cup before continuing: “If you had ever deliberately used them?”

It took a moment, but Harry recalled the conversation they had had the day before in this very study. Him, his grandparents, and James talking about Elf Owls. He remembered the descriptions of his ‘powers’, however much he still couldn’t quite see them as such.

“Yes,” he answered dutifully, “I remember and no, I don’t think I ever tried using my… powers consciously.”

He hadn’t, had he? No, not that he could recall. He had actually tried the opposite, had tried to suppress the allure so everyone around him would stop acting so bloody creepy.

“I thought so,” Lord Potter said, nodding. “I believe we should talk about one specific feature that came with your inheritance specifically.” He looked at Harry for a moment, before he asked: “What do you remember about ‘the Allure’ as my uncle so aptly named it in his book? Being who and what you are you might be able to shed a bit more light on his …sketchy observations?”

Harry sighed. He didn’t want to talk about this, he would love to simply ignore that damn allure stuff, but he couldn’t very well refuse the man whose house he had so graciously been welcomed in, could he? He didn’t want to disappoint his grandfather either way. So Harry thought back to the conversation of the day before and what his grandparents had explained. It had helped understanding what was going on with him a lot better than that shitty book ever had.

“The only sure fact one can always expect of an Elf Owl allure is that it will force the most prominent trait of a person to the forefront,” he repeated his grandmother’s words nearly verbatim, wrecking his brain for what else had been said.

“It enhances what already is there and if used deliberately it can do so to overly extreme degrees. But even if the Elf Owl in question does not deliberately use their allure, it will always reveal traits of the people influenced… and not everyone wears their strongest traits on their sleeve. People tend to hide their true selves. Having someone capable of unfailingly reveal said true self…”

And his grandfather’s added words: “You are capable of revealing the true nature of every person with the exception of those with an Elf Owl heritage of their own, like James or myself.”

Harry relayed what he remembered to his carefully listening grandfather and was then treated to a repeat of the warning from the day before. How there were always two risks he should be aware of as an Elf Owl: The risk of falling prey to some sick potions ingredients collector or worse someone who wanted to study Elf Owls ‘on the subject’, and then the risk of being forced to ‘work’ for someone that wanted to use his allure for their own gain.

“And,” Lord Potter added to his warning speech, “There is something else you need to know,
something that hopefully will help you if you keep having problems controlling your allure.”

Harry flushed slightly. It was true, he didn’t see himself ever getting a good grip on that freaking creature feature. He had just no idea how since he couldn’t actually feel it himself and had no understanding of how it even was… produced.

“You might remember how I broke the aurors’ enthrallment with your power,” his grandfather continued. “It requires a bit of practice, but as an Elf Owl descendant, a blood relative even, I can free someone from your thrall. Or, better phrased, I can help you suppress your allure and that will allow the influenced individual to slip out of the thrall.”

Harry held his breath. If that was true, he had just found an out! Sure, it wasn’t ideal, but it was better than how things had looked just a minute ago. And if his grandfather could do this, then…

“James?”

“Yes,” Lord Potter agreed. “He should be able to do the same for you and that is why I wish to train the both of you. We will, of course, need a willing third participant who is already in the know and does not begrudge your influence…?”

He winked at Harry who didn’t need to think about it to know who his grandfather was talking about. Sirius definitely wouldn’t mind that. Though, now that he thought about it, Harry wondered how his boyfriend would react if he suddenly couldn’t feel Harry’s allure anymore. Would it still be the same between the two of them? Was his influence on Sirius’ feelings this strong or had it only been like that in the beginning? He wanted to believe that Sirius by now had truly reached the stage of … emotional connection Harry’s allure had forced in the beginning. His uncertainty must have shown on his face, or maybe his grandfather simply was that awesome, because his next words hit the mark pretty much head-on.

“To go by my beloved’s tendency to analyse situations and circumstance, I gathered facts to support a theory of mine regarding you, little one. Do you wish to hear it?” His hazel eyes looked at Harry and when he nodded a bit numbly, Lord Potter continued: “You settled into a relationship that even to my old-fashioned eyes seems to be much more serious, excuse the pun, than the casual… fling I believe they call it… many of your peers tend to indulge in. You do not appear to be the kind that would play a game of hearts either.”

Harry shook his head to that. No, he was not one to play around with another’s feelings, it had happened to himself too much to ever consider such a thing.

“You made contact with your family and revealed your true identity, admittedly more by chance than by choice, but still… You did not try with all your quite considerable prowess of will to hide yourself from the people in this time. So after gathering these facts, I theorise that you never truly planned, consciously or not, to return to the time you have been displaced from.”

Harry blinked.

“And therefore,” Lord Potter added with a sly smirk, “Does it really matter if Sirius has yet reached the stage your allure has drawn to the forefront? You have the knowledge, the absolute certainty, that your connection can and most likely will reach the depths it shows at the moment. You did not make him love you, you simply made him feel connected to you earlier than he would have without the allure.” The smirk softening into a smile, his grandfather added: “He loves you, Hadrian, with or without your allure.”
The dagger was an unfamiliar weight in his hand. Unfamiliar but curiously alluring. Harry wasn’t deluding himself, he was aware of the temptation, the dark lure, weapons like this could have. It was the power, the knowledge that he could hurt or possibly kill with little more than a single movement.

Harry didn’t want to kill. Or even hurt. Not when his ‘relatives’ had abused and neglected him – hateful words, never a friendly touch, so cold – not when those that should have stood by his side abandoned and belittled him, not when Voldemort tortured him – humiliation, pain, Cruciatux. Never. He had always only thrived to survive, to hold on. Always, but one time. He considered it the point of no return, the moment he kind of lost it, lost maybe the last of that stubborn childish innocence he had so desperately clung to. When his godfather died, Harry had wanted to hurt, had wanted to inflict pain, to maybe lighten this crushing sensation by letting someone else have a part in it.

But only for a moment that want had truly been directed at another, at Bellatrix. It had not lasted. Hurting another, even if it had been the one that took his godfather from him, hadn’t helped. What did help dampen the burning shame and guilt happened later that summer. He had clawed at his skin, had starved himself, had worked until his hands bled and his muscles ached too fiercely to hold himself up any longer. It had helped a little bit, but not enough, never enough.

There’s no escaping from what is already inside you, your mind, your heart and Harry had learned that lesson the summer before he turned sixteen. The summer before everything changed. Before Remus came and saved him, a reprieve that could not last. Before Harry had stumbled back in time and all that madness that was now his life had happened. And yet he couldn’t remember ever being happier. Things weren’t perfect by far, but here he was… and he thought just maybe he had been given a second chance.

So why did the weight of the dagger Sirius had gifted him for Christmas feel so very tempting in his hands? Did he want to try hurting himself some more, try relieve the pressure from inside, or was it that he wanted to turn that weapon against another?

Balancing the wickedly gleaming blade on his open palm, Harry considered it for a long moment. The winter sunlight that was streaming in through the huge windows of the empty ballroom was reflecting off of the clear surface and Harry thought he could understand why some people felt the urge to collect weapons. There was beauty in the danger.

Maybe it wasn’t about inflicting pain this time, neither on himself nor another, maybe it was about what Harry thought probably was the original purpose of weapons: To protect and provide. He could live with that, could live with the thought that he was not going to mindlessly hurt and kill, but fight for a reason. Maybe Harry could-

“Hadrian?”

The dagger clattered to the polished parquet with a loud resounding CLANK as Harry spun around at the sudden voice. For a second he just stared at Sirius and his boyfriend stared back, both slightly stunned by the reaction. Then Sirius’ gaze drifted down to the dagger now lying discarded on the dance floor and something flashed in his eyes that Harry didn’t recognise. It was gone the next moment and Sirius looked back at him with a smile.

“Sorry for startling you, Bambi,” he deliberately crooned, emphasising the nickname he knew Harry kind of disliked. Well, he always pretended to dislike it as he considered it a bit insulting to be likened to a baby deer, but secretly enjoyed the feeling of connection to the Marauders it gave him. “What are you doing here all on your lonesome?”

Something about the way Sirius intoned the last words sounded positively sinful. He walked into the
vast room with the ceilings that really had no excuse to be this high, his gait a smooth swagger that had Harry’s eyes straying. It took him a moment to answer, mind going slightly into chirping-cricket-mode as he watched his boyfriend saunter over to him.

“Oh,” Harry finally managed, forcing himself to look up and regretting it instantly as he was met with amused grey eyes. “I was just… I kinda… ah… dunno?”

Sirius chuckled and Harry imagined hearing a husky tone to the sound. It sent shivers down his spine that reminded him vividly of the feeling of those large hands on his skin, soft pants in the darkness of a cupboard…

“Well, in that case,” Sirius started saying, before reaching out for Harry’s hands and drawing him close, one hand going to Harry’s hip.

It took him a moment to realise the position they were in, but when he recognised the traditional dancing stance, Harry tensed up.

“What are you doing?” He questioned, tugging lightly to free himself from the half-embrace. Sirius only quirked an eyebrow, not letting him budge an inch.

“What does it look like?” He counter-asked. Then he leaned in, his lips only barely brushing the shell of Harry’s ear. “Better yet, what does it feel like?” He purred.

Harry couldn’t suppress the delighted shiver, but as anxious and anticipating as his body might be, his mind was shouting at the ensuing awkwardness. If Sirius really intended what he thought he did… that was bound to end in a disaster.

“I- …I don’t do dancing,” Harry finally replied, glad his voice was only slightly shaking. He cleared his throat, tugging a little more insistently at his hands. “I’m really no good at it.”

“Psh. Everyone can dance,” Sirius snorted dismissively. “Besides, it’s only you and me here. No one’s gonna see if you really do mess up.”

Harry shook his head. He was complete and utter rubbish at dancing, Yule Ball anyone? That was one humiliation he would like to not repeat any time soon, or better yet, never again. Sadly his boyfriend didn’t seem to be inclined to care about his predicament as he started leading them through a few steps… only for Harry to violently trip and nearly topple them both over.

“There,” Harry snapped, face a fiery red in embarrassment as they steadied themselves. “Happy now?”

Sirius only cocked a bit, observing Harry for a moment, before he smirked. Oh great, what now?

“No wonder we messed that up,” he airily commented, reaching for Harry again. “No music to help us keep the pace even and all that,” he added as if they even had been able to get through enough steps that an equal pace would have really mattered. Harry scowled. “So,” Sirius continued, tone dropping to a seductive drawl, “We will just have to listen to this.”

And with that he guided Harry’s left hand to his shoulder and held his right to his chest with his own, directly above his heart. Staring up into the grey eyes of his boyfriend, the blue flecks in the irises glinting back at him, Harry actually listened for a moment. If he concentrated enough, he could feel Sirius’ heartbeat beneath his fingers, could feel his own breathing align itself to Sirius’.

He was sure this was the kind of scene that would happen in one of those romantic comedy movies
his aunt secretly adored but only dared watching when neither Vernon nor Dudley were home. Probably because she deemed her own giggling and swooning over unrealistic male characters inappropriate for them to witness. Something like this wouldn’t do for the perfect wife she deemed herself to be, after all.

But Sirius was real and even though he had been highly amused at Harry’s behaviour earlier, he couldn’t see any mocking in those eyes now. Sirius honestly wanted Harry to simply go with it, to relax and let it happen. There was no one to judge, Sirius would not belittle him for his lack of dancing skill, and why had he been so troubled by it all before again?

“There,” Sirius whispered, his free hand going to Harry’s hip again and drawing him in close. “Now just let go, let me do the work. Just follow.”

It wasn’t easy for Harry to ever let his guard down, to let someone else take the reigns, to let himself be swept away by the moment. But with Sirius there, with their breathing rhythms in tune with each other and the steady heartbeat beneath his fingers… maybe he could… Harry was so concentrated on Sirius that he didn’t even notice them moving until they were already dancing in slow circles around the huge ballroom.

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't resist the dancing cliché. I simply couldn't. <3

(*) **The type of roll described** is supposed to be a ‘Kaiser roll’ or ‘Vienna roll’, the kind that’s made from white flour, yeast, malt, water and salt, and can be eaten with both savoury and sweet toppings.
In which there is a hairy problem

Chapter Notes

So finally we come to the chapter I made you vote for a while ago! Also long, and probably unneeded, insights at the end again.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Of course it couldn’t stay so calm and fairy tale-ish for long.

When their little bubble was disturbed, Harry couldn’t tell how long they had been dancing to nothing but their own breathing and heartbeats. They hadn’t distinguished between different kinds of dances, just looked at each other, and let it happen. Well, Harry had let Sirius do all the leading even going so far as to close his eyes for some time. It wasn’t like he could have taken the lead even if he had wanted to what with his absolute lack of understanding for anything dance related. Trusting Sirius like this, letting go completely of the control… It was a feeling he couldn’t compare to anything he had done so far. It made him wonder if he would one day be able to trust like this for more than just a dance. It was James that not only disturbed their little romantic bubble, but pretty much burst it with a simple sentence:

“Guys?” He called, entering the huge ballroom. “There you are! Just wanted to tell you Wormy arrived for lunch.” He eyed them closely for a moment, a strange expression crossing his face, before he huffed. “Mum wants us all down in the family dining room in five,” he added, before giving Sirius a curious look and turning to leave.

Harry blinked at the entrance before the words truly registered. Pettigrew was here. He couldn’t suppress the instant shudder, prompting Sirius to rub his upper arms comfortingly. Something about the thought of Pettigrew invading this house, his family’s ancestral home, felt wrong on a level worse than actually sleeping in the same dorm as the rat.

“Well,” Sirius purred, leaning down to brush his lips across Harry’s, “That wasn’t too bad, now was it?”

But Harry was too fixated on the sudden feeling of invasion, of the rat invading his family’s home, spoiling and tainting the goodness, the safety, the pure feeling of family that seemed to simply belong here. He didn’t want Pettigrew here. Everything inside Harry was on edge with the mere thought, no matter that Pettigrew was just a teenager at the moment. He couldn’t help it, it felt too wrong.

“Hadrian?”

Dazedly, Harry’s gaze dropped to the dagger still lying on the parquet floor. He didn’t really think as he untangled himself from his boyfriend and went across the room to pick it up, weighing the blade in his hand once again. Would he have to fight Pettigrew in the near future? Two years from now or sooner? It was a gruesome thought to have with the boy just downstairs, but if things were to play out like they did ‘before’, he would get his chance for revenge one day. He would help Sirius hunt the bastard down or better yet, he would stop him from ever revealing his parents’ hideout.

On the other hand… would he perhaps be able to actually prevent Pettigrew’s defection to the Dark and save everyone the grief? It was that question that had stopped him from confiding into anyone
about Pettigrew’s treachery in the first place. Then again… once a rat, always a rat, right?

No, the root of everything, the reason for Pettigrew’s treason and everyone’s deaths, lay somewhere else. And at this point in time, Harry was pretty sure there was only one way to stop it all. Perhaps, if he had been kicked back in time even farther, before Voldemort had started shredding his soul and made himself an emotionless… something maybe then there could have been another way. But Harry was here now, a dagger in hand and a heavy heart thudding rapidly at the acceptance. He couldn’t make undone what had happened so far, but he could cut the root.

Sirius watched the way his Hadrian was holding his first courting gift. There was something in his love’s eyes that scared and at the same time excited him, as if he was watching Hadrian accepting something very important, but also very dangerous. Danger had always lured Sirius or maybe it was more the adventure that had a draw on him. Hadrian wasn’t thinking of the courting the dagger was meant to initiate, he didn’t know about it yet, so what was it that made his beautiful green eyes glow so eerily?

“I need to fight him,” the soft voice whispered and Hadrian finally tore his gaze away from the wickedly gleaming blade in his hands. “I need to fight him now, Sirius, before he gets too powerful.”

Sirius blinked. It took him a moment to actually make the connection, his mind still muddled with the vision that was his boy in the winter sunlight with a deadly weapon, a symbol of Sirius’ devotion and intention, in hand. What a strange contradiction.

“Now?” He asked back, his voice not much more than a hoarse whisper. “Didn’t we already decide we would wait until after graduation? At least finish schooling?”

They would never be a match for someone like that dark lord roaming Britain these days. No one knew shit about the guy, just that he was insanely powerful, frighteningly talented, and very, very dangerous. Yet, of course, the Ministry mostly ignored the threat, acted dismissively, even with all those gruesome attacks that simply kept happening. No one was truly fighting the monster and Sirius had noticed the subtle change in the articles, the propaganda slowly growing more and more hostile – but not against the dark lord, but everything and everyone he targeted. Creatures. Muggleborns. Muggles. How could anyone be supportive of that monster’s goals considering the way he was going about reaching them? And Hadrian wanted to go out and confront that man without even receiving a minimum of training?

“You’re just out of the hospital,” he argued, grasping for every little straw when Hadrian didn’t back down. “Where you, might I remind you, stayed, unconscious, two whole fucking days, and now what?” His voice was rising without his permission, but he couldn’t help it. He had to make Hadrian see reason on this! “Give yourself a bloody break! Have you any idea how much you scared the shit out of us? And that was only for confronting a small part of his forces! What will happen the next time? What will happen if you-”

He nearly choked on the words as they conjured up pictures of what could happen to his Hadrian, the confrontation in the alley really had opened Sirius’ eyes. There it was. The reminder that adventures might be alluring and exciting, but only as long as they lasted. No adventure could last forever and then what? What would remain of reckless fun and thoughtless actions? Oh yes, he would enjoy it, but there would be nothing to return to afterwards. He would be aimless again, living for the kick, maybe becoming a Hit Wizard simply so he had a justified reason to get into danger. It sounded… lonely.

And how could he crave adventure and danger so much while the mere thought of Hadrian encountering any of it terrified him? He wanted his Hadrian to be safe and sound and if possible with him, Sirius. The green eyes still looked entirely too stubborn and he was sure he saw a hint of anger
“I told you how things will be in… how the situation was before I came here,” his boyfriend said, clearly reining his temper in, but not the feathers rising out of his hair threateningly. “It was horrible. It was war. The way it is now,” Hadrian made a dismissive gesture with his hand, “That’s kid’s play. They only attack select people now, but you’ve seen the Dementors, you were there.” Those forest eyes looked imploringly back at him. “This will become the norm, this will be what life turns into if I don’t stop him now. There’s no time to wait for graduation or… or auror training or whatever!”

Sirius forced himself to shut up and take those words in for a moment. Yes, Hadrian had in an abstract sort of way told them of the future he came from. He told them how the dark lord ‘Voldemort’, who had yet to introduce himself in this time, had systematically taken over the Wizarding World, had forced the terror out of the shadows into broad daylight and how no one had truly fought back. No one except for…

“Why does it have to be you though?”

Hadrian turned away to look out over the grounds of Potter Manor. It was silent in the vast room, no sound evident apart from their own breathing that long since had lost its romantic quality from the dance before.

“You know why.”

The words were whispered into the thick silence before Hadrian finally turned around to face Sirius again. There was no mistaking the sorrow in those eyes. Hadrian had not only witnessed what would become of the Wizarding World if things continued on the way they were now, he had been part of the actual fight, Sirius could clearly see that now. His throat felt parched as he took in the young man he loved. The sun was about to set and as always Hadrian’s eyes became even more ‘different’ than they always were: The deep green irises seemed to light up with an otherworldly glow, the already rather big pupils dilating even further. Looking at Hadrian near dusk definitely made it impossible to overlook his creature heritage. Even if one were unable to place the actual creature, those eyes were quite obviously not human.

Sirius adored it.

But he loathed the sorrow darkening his boyfriend’s eyes at the moment, though there was also a healthy, or maybe unhealthy, amount of determination shining through. All in all it made for a very difficult and yet intriguing staring contest that Sirius had no chance of winning. Finally giving in, he closed his eyes momentarily.

“Fine!” Sirius huffed, raking his hands through his hair. “Alright! But you better believe we’ll be with you every step of the way,” he threatened, pointing his finger at Hadrian dramatically. “And the fucking first step we’re gonna take is you teaching us the Patronus.”

He watched as his boyfriend blinked for a moment, going slightly cross-eyed at the finger still hovering near his nose. His incredibly adorable nose… focus, Sirius! And then Hadrian smiled that smile of his – the one that turned heads and burned hearts.

“Deal,” he said.

For now, Sirius had no answers for the countless questions running through his head. But one thing he was sure of: If he wanted to keep Hadrian safe, he had to become stronger. He would protect his love, and really, so far that had proven to be quite adventurous in itself. He could not risk Hadrian.
Hadrian was what gave his life a direction.

Hadrian with that fragile light…

“And it weren’t two whole days,” his boyfriend muttered petulantly, a mild stinging hex meeting Sirius’ bottom without a wand ever being drawn.

…that was so gloriously hiding behind the awing power he wielded.

“This ancient and mysterious charm conjures a magical guardian, a projection of all your most positive feelings. The Patronus Charm is difficult, and many witches and wizards are unable to produce a full, corporeal Patronus, a guardian which generally takes the shape of the animal with whom they share the deepest affinity. You may suspect, but you will never truly know what form your Patronus will take until you succeed in conjuring it.”

Harry snickered quietly at Remus reading so solemnly from the heavy tome in his hands. It was such a difference to the way adult Remus had gone about teaching Harry how to cast a Patronus. But here they were, once again in the ballroom, listening to their friend read a passage from Miranda Goshawk’s overview of the Patronus Charm. (*)

“Okay,” James said, drawing the word out uncertainly. “And how exactly does one go about conjuring a Patronus?”

Seeing James before lunch had made Harry think once again of what his grandfather had said about suppressing his allure. They would need to talk about that soon, but Harry couldn’t bring himself to simply ask James. He should be able to control his allure on his own, it wasn’t right that he had to involve others into it as well. Looking up, he realised the assembled Marauders (including Pettigrew) were all looking at him expectantly.

“Okay, right,” Harry hedged. “I’m going to talk you through the charm, but before we do that you have to understand that the Patronus is a ridiculously advanced spell.” He felt a small smile tug at his mouth as he cited the same words adult Remus had once used to calm him when Harry hadn’t been immediately able to conjure a Patronus. “As Remus just read out, many never get it at all, so don’t be disappointed if it doesn’t work out at the first try, or the first twenty.”

“He’s right,” Remus nodded. “From what I’ve read it’s an immensely complicated and extremely difficult spell. Linked to the mind arts even! Think about it, you’re trying to evoke a partially-tangible positive energy force that represents that which is hidden, unknown, but necessary within the personality.” (*)

Pettigrew was staring blankly at the werewolf and Harry thought he actually saw the moment Sirius stopped truly listening to his friend’s lecture. James, surprisingly, looked very much focused if a bit confused. Remus took one glance at the others… and simply continued talking. Either his brilliant teaching ability was a learning process in itself, or he simply found it amusing to see his friends struggle to put meaning to the words he was spewing with absolute confidence.

“When a human is confronted with inhuman evil, such as the Dementor, he must draw upon resources he or she may never have needed, and the Patronus is the awakened secret self that lies dormant until needed, but which must now be brought to light.” (*)

Harry cleared his throat.
“It’s essentially your spirit guardian and its form is supposed to reflect each individual’s personality,” he summed up, giving Remus an apologetic look. Said boy simply huffed, but nodded, resigned to the fact that his friends would probably never learn to appreciate the beauty of magical theory. “Your spirit guardian consists of positive feelings that counter the effects a Dementor has.”

This explanation got a few more assured nods and Harry decided he would disregard Pettigrew’s existence for this training as much as he could. He had wanted to give his friends the added protection of a Patronus and he would do exactly that. It wasn’t the first time he would teach someone this charm, but it was the first time he was unsure if he actually wanted everyone to be successful. Question was, though, how long his damn Gryffindor conscience would allow him to entertain such thoughts. Straightening up, Harry fell back on his experience with the DA. Pettigrew was present. Harry would just have to tackle that issue if the bloke actually struggled and none of the others decided to help him.

“What we need is a target. Right now you need something to focus your efforts on…but before we can start any of the actual casting I want you all to close your eyes.”

He waited for them to follow his instructions, getting a saucy wink from his boyfriend and a disdainful glare from the rat before every Marauder stood there with closed eyes. Harry skilfully ignored the fact that all of them peeked more than once.

“Think of the most positive memory you have,” Harry continued speaking softly, remembering his own struggles with this task. “It can be everything,” he continued, carefully watching their faces. “Maybe the feeling of your mother’s embrace,” he suggested quietly, noting with a painful twinge Sirius’ barely concealed scoff. Of course Sirius wouldn’t know that specific feeling. “Or maybe the companionship of true friends,” he added a bit hopefully, glad to see his boyfriend’s face light up some.

He watched them frown and search their memories for a few moments, before the silence was interrupted once again.

“You know,” Remus spoke up, eyes closed. “There’s this legend about the first actual account of a Patronus Charm, though the charm in itself is most likely ancient. That legend talks about what happens when a competent, but unworthy wizard attempts the spell.”

Remus peeked one eye open and then looked at his friends with a barely there mischievous glint in his eyes. He had everyone’s attention by now and Harry was pretty sure he paused only for the dramatic effect before lowering his voice and adding:

“When that ‘unworthy’ wizard of the legend cast the Patronus… maggots shot out of his wand and devoured his entire body!” (*)

Pettigrew squeaked at that ominous statement and Harry shuddered slightly. He hadn’t known that specific fact. Wow, maggots, really? And who knew Remus had such a macabre sense of humour?

“That’s kinda…” He was at a loss for words.

“Kinda counterproductive there, Moony,” James commented in his stead, eyes still closed. The others snorted.

Sirius was watching Hadrian watching them attempt the Patronus Charm. His boyfriend had easily taken the reins of teacher, but unlike Rems he didn’t try to lecture them on the theory. He gave a simple overview of what the spell was supposed to do and how to go about casting it. Then he had them stand all in one line, wands raised, and visualize their most positive memory. They weren’t
supposed to actually cast yet which under normal circumstances would have annoyed Sirius. He was the ‘just do it’ type, rather Gryffindor really, and normally he got his spells right (or at the very least an acceptable reaction) on the first one to three tries. He wasn’t used to this careful approach of first finding a memory, carefully fixing it in his mind, taking position, and then again visualising the memory.

But with Hadrian as a teacher things made so much more sense as when one of their professors went on a theory tangent. Maybe it was because he had seen his boyfriend use the spell under duress and excelling nonetheless, or maybe it was because Hadrian didn’t expect them to write a theory based essay on his lecture. Maybe it was because his Bambi in control like this was simply gorgeous.

Whatever the reason, Sirius didn’t protest as he stood there and obediently focused on the memory of his and Hadrian’s very first kiss. That day in the classroom right after they had left the headmaster’s office and Prongs had his rant about his son’s selflessly heroic tendencies. The moment Sirius had asked Hadrian if he would like to be with him… or technically the moment Hadrian had asked him if their kiss meant they were now dating. So cute!

Adjusting his position, Sirius focused on the chair they were to use as target and clearly spoke the incantation. He knew he wasn’t supposed to cast yet, but come on, he could do this. He was Sirius Bla- …Nothing. No dramatically beautiful creature of light came shooting out of his raised wand. No light show whatsoever (and luckily not a single maggot either). Well, Bambi was glaring at him.

“Whoops…,” he grinned sheepishly before he went back to visualising. The Bambi Protection Squad™ had a long way to go still, it seemed. (*)

Sirius heard the snickers of his friends and hid his relief. The atmosphere at lunch had been strained between him and Hadrian which in turn had somewhat subdued the others in attendance. While Lord and Lady Potter were doing fine, probably drawing on decades of uncomfortable social gatherings, the Marauders had been shifting in place, talking slightly stilted amongst each other. His Bambi had mostly been quiet, only speaking when spoken to and even then just enough to not come across as impolite. He thought he was sneaky about it, but Sirius had noticed his boyfriend being busy watching Wormtail beneath his lashes. And Sirius had noticed Wormtail shoot everyone suspicious glances and glaring at Hadrian when he thought no one would notice.

But Sirius did. And he did not like the implications of those glares.

He had wondered before how his love’s creature allure affected those around him, especially those that were near constantly exposed to it. He had recognised the effect on himself early on and didn’t find it to be anything uncomfortable. But that might be because for him it had drawn on his inherent protectiveness of those he loved and his typically Black possessiveness, something he had accepted about himself a long time ago. He was lucky the latter hadn’t taken over completely, though. Prongs wouldn’t be affected at all what with his own Elf Owl heritage and Rem had obviously taken his wolf’s pack mentality to a new, over-protective level. But Wormy had been kinda a blank sheet to Sirius. It had alerted him to the fact that he actually knew very little about one of his long time friends. He had no idea how the creature allure might affect Peter, what inherent trait it would draw to the surface. He even knew, or could make an educated guess, what it would do to Snivellus! That greasy-haired dungeon bat would probably become even more suspicious and defensive or even descend into paranoia with enough exposure. Or Evans! That fiery redhead was bound to become even more stubborn and vindictive. But Wormy?

To his shame Sirius had to admit that he had never really paid much attention to his friend, he had just simply always been there. So throwing Wormtail one last considering look, he decided that had to change. He needed to be able to gauge Peter’s reaction to Hadrian’s allure better and there was
nothing for it – he would have to brave the whole ‘getting to know’ thing, with someone who was supposed to be his friend already, for years no less. Probably time for one of his lists, ‘Operation get to know Wormy’ or something.

“You ready?”

Bambi’s voice brought him back to the matter at hand, and Sirius quickly re-evaluated his chosen memory, making sure he had it envisioned as best he could this time, no getting side-tracked. Right, memory… Hadrian finally accepting him, with a kiss no less. The kiss. Like crisp morning air and dewy woodland. Like running through the Forbidden Forest. Like laughing with the Marauders…

“Expecto Patronum?”

Well, that could have come out more confident, couldn’t it? But since it was his second try already, Sirius was not overly surprised to at least feel the surge of positive feelings and see his wand glow for a moment, before it died down again. Not a Patronus yet, not even an incorporeal one, but he would get the hang of it soon. There were frustrated groans all around him as his friends encountered the same problems, but Hadrian was encouraging them to try again and again, occasionally correcting wand movements, and even stopping to have a quiet chat with Rem. What those two discussed he could only guess, but a moment later their tawny haired friend reached the same stage as Sirius had on his second try.

It was quite some time later when a contemptuous voice interrupted their training.

“This is bullshit,” Wormtail snapped irritably. “You’re not even really teaching anything, you’re just standing there jabbering about memories!”

He looked at the rest of the Marauders with expectant looks and Sirius realised the rat Animagus actually expected them to agree even though Bambi clearly had explained what to do and hadn’t stopped once correcting or suggesting and whatnot.

“Bet you can’t even do it yourself,” Wormtail goaded when no agreement was forthcoming from his friends. He got incredulous looks from everyone instead.

Hm. Maybe ‘Operation Assess Wormy’ was a more fitting name, Sirius decided then. Something was not checking out with their chubby friend, that was for sure.

Harry stared at Pettigrew for a moment. He would have liked to ask the little traitor-in-making if he was being serious, but considering their current company that would probably not quite convey his feelings right. Instead he closed his eyes briefly, fighting down the urge to snap back or even draw his wand on the dimwit. That would not do though, really, it was just some petty words. But Harry simply couldn’t help how angry that bag of dragon dung was making him – him and his magic which had started to stir restlessly.

“What exactly don’t you understand?” He finally asked, carefully concealing the burning anger in his voice and ending up sounding rather indifferent.

“Well at least have the decency to give an example!” Pettigrew crowed, clearly convinced Harry would not be able to do so.

He really couldn’t be serious, could he? Judging by the looks the others were giving the rat, they were wondering the same thing. Right, Harry had been able to teach prats like Zacharias Smith, he could at least attempt to-

“Oh right,” Remus finally spoke up, still eying Pettigrew with a slightly dubious look, but making an
effort at least. “You weren’t in Diagon Alley when the Dementors attacked, were you?”

What followed could only be called a dressing down and Harry tried to stay out of it. The Marauders were making quite sure Pettigrew understood what had gone down in the alley and what had brought on this impromptu study session in the first place. They weren’t exactly attacking him, but they weren’t being overly nice either. It really went to show how much Pettigrew had grown apart from their group in the last months, or it could be his allure acting up. Whatever it was, Harry sincerely doubted the person that had ‘once’ been trusted enough to become his parents’ secret keeper would have been treated this way. Maybe there was still hope for the future.

In the end, though, Harry decided to give in – which may or may not have been for the simple pleasure of shutting the rat up. Making sure he had their attention, he made a show of going through the motions once again so even Pettigrew would know how it was supposed to look. Then, with maybe a bit too smug a flick of his wand and a clear incantation, he cast. Once again the bright light of his newly shaped Grim Patronus filled his senses. It was a magnificent animal, Harry decided. Not as imposing as the stag had looked, but decidedly threatening instead. And it escaped none of the assembled Marauders’ notice just who’s form Harry’s Patronus had taken. Blushing it was, Harry sighed inwardly, as James waggled his eyebrows at him.

“You know,” Sirius voice murmured next to him, sounding even smugger than he looked, “You should name such a glorious form.”

Swiping his free hand across his face, Harry tried to get rid of the newest strand of overgrown hair that was tickling at his nose (and maybe hide his red face while he was at it).

“Should I now?” He asked back, giving up on hiding his blush.

He sent his Patronus on a prowl through the ballroom, chancing a glance at Pettigrew’s visage. Perhaps it was wrong to feel such satisfaction at the torn expression he encountered there, but Harry made sure to commit it to memory nonetheless, unaware of the way his boyfriend was studying his own face.

A few more futile tries on the Marauders’ part and a lot of annoyed swipes of Harry’s to free his vision from the increasingly untameable hair later, and Remus had apparently enough for the day. Not overly surprising, really, what with the rat’s continued complaining and Harry’s restlessness that even seemed to reflect in the state of his hair.

“Why don’t you get it cut?”

He suggested amiably, sidling up to Harry. That one sentence was apparently all it took for the others to lose the last of their enthusiasm on mastering the Patronus that day, because Harry found himself surrounded the next second.

“We could go out muggle style and get you one of those new hair-cuts they seem to favour these days!” Sirius exclaimed happily, nearly bouncing in place at the idea. “Muggles are so inventive, you should see the way some of them wear their hair now.”

James was nodding next to him and Harry blinked a bit confused, glancing at Remus for help. Thinking back on the little bit of muggle culture he remembered, sadly most of it through a Dursley filter, Harry realised what had Sirius so excited. It was the 70s and hadn’t Remus lectured them about a famous muggle movement not so long ago?

“I think it has something to do with music,” Remus tried to explain, confusing Harry even more. “You see, there is this resistance, or should I call it an opposition, to what is deemed the apparently
bland tradition and this opposition affects pretty much every cultural aspect—"

He was interrupted by a gleefully crowing Sirius and James, chorusing a loud *Anarchy in the U.K.!* before descending into what Harry deduced was probably a famous muggle song of this time. He thought he heard something about the anti-christ, a lot of anarchy and was that something about a dog? The actual lyrics were hard to make out as Sirius and James seemed intent on either ‘singing’ above the other or interrupting a verse mid-sentence to start anew or simply join into whatever line the other was just belting out. (*)

The thought of getting a hair-cut had crossed Harry’s mind before, but as he had no money to his name, he had dismissed the idea more than once. Maybe he could simply get his hands on some scissors (he didn’t trust his ability with a wand enough to do something like this) and cut off what annoyed him the most. But then again… he had worn his hair mostly short when he had been Harry Potter. It had simply been practical and the Dursleys certainly had never taken him to a hairdresser. Shuddering at the memories of Aunt Petunia nearly shaving his head more than once in an attempt to control his messy mop, Harry decided against the self-made hair-cut. Maybe he should take Sirius up on the offer, it would be nice to free his neck somewhat and most of all, to get rid of the constant obstruction of his vision. Still, cutting his hair short again didn’t feel like him anymore…

“You know, dear,” Lady Potter’s voice interrupted their discussion, making everyone jump in surprise, “You could always grow it out long enough to plait it back, that would not only look lovely on you, but it would be very practical for sure.”

James watched from the doorway as Hadrian sat down on the little padded foot stool in front of his mother’s perch to get his hair sorted out by the Lady Potter. He was curious about that result, pretty sure it would take more than Hadrian’s request of about shoulder length to get anything even remotely into order. But he would keep his opinion on the matter to himself, fully prepared to support his son (and laugh a bit at the interim results while he was at it). He watched as Padfoot took position on a nearby chair, practically hovering and watching James’ mother like a hawk. That bloke adored his boyfriend’s hair nearly as much as he loved his own. Which considering they were talking about the ‘devilishly handsome Sirius Black’ meant a lot. Probably.

James himself liked his hair short, cropped at the sides and in the back with just a little more length on top – because hey, he really had that cool ‘windswept’ look going. He very much took after his father with the style, but James of course could pull it off that much better (which may or may not be because the Lord Potter’s hair wasn’t quite as gravity defying any more).

Pads was taking more after the old Pureblood tradition for heirs and lords to let their hair grow past the shoulders, rather like what Hadrian was trying to achieve now. Although James had the sneaking suspicion that, now that his best mate had cut ties with his blood family, he only kept the long hair for the fact that it aggravated James. The famous Potter hair was untameable, even with copious amounts of Sleek-eazy’s, whereas Sirius didn’t even have to try and still looked like some muggle hair model. How muggles did it, though, he had no idea. The photographies of hair models he had seen on his muggle-ventures had been way too flawless to be real, unless muggles were all secretly related to Veela…

Anyway, Rems on the other hand had those tawny half-curls going, but he never truly cared much for his looks. His hair was always ‘polite’, but never styled. Maybe it was a prefect thing.

James watched with a smirk as his best mate’s eyes grew impossibly large as he took in the result of Lady Potter’s work. Sure, the beautiful deep black Hadrian sported was even more eye-catching like this, but… James snorted. His mother had just finished magically lengthening his son’s hair so it
would reach his shoulders. She had even made sure to align the length of every strand and yet… It was a riot of curls growing in every which direction. No way was that mop easier tameable than the shorter version from before, but she seemed hesitant to tell Hadrian this.

Maybe for the youngest Potter the long, not just longish but really long, style would help with the inherited Potterness? He wasn’t an expert on hair, but maybe the added weight would at least make the hair fall in one way, you know, down? Though, really, with the feathers in there James wasn’t holding his breath. Still, studying the fidgeting boy sitting on the little foot stool in front of Lady Potter’s chair, James hoped for the best. Whatever came out of this – what did muggles call it? – ‘makeover’, he simply wanted for Hadrian to be happy with the results.

Okay, so honestly, James thought he really was an awesome dad.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Miranda Goshawk: (b. 1921) a celebrated author who specialised in writing Charms spellbooks, including the Standard Book of Spells collection that is used as Hogwarts textbooks through all years.

(*1+2) Mostly direct quotation from the article about the Patronus Charm on Harry Potter Wikia.

(*) The legend of Illyius is about a man that cast the Patronus Charm when his village was being attacked by the Dark wizard Raczidian and his army of Dementors. His Patronus was only a mouse, but it helped the villagers flee. Enraged, Raczidian decided to enter the fray himself, and tried to summon a Patronus to ward off Illyius' mouse – which kinda doesn’t make sense, but oh well. However, he failed to remember that only the ‘pure of heart’ can produce a Patronus, and thus for the first time in history, it was revealed what happens when a ‘competent, but unworthy’ wizard or witch attempts the spell. Maggots shot out of Raczidian’s wand and quickly devoured him as they engulfed his entire body. Yummi. (near direct quotation from Harry Potter Wikia)

(*) as always Bambi Protection Squad™ by EthanIllinoisJones

(*) The song referenced: Sex Pistols – Anarchy in the U.K. (I’m pretty sure it was released in 1976 or at the very least 1977)

Felt it was once again time for a little acknowledgement of the awesomeness that is music, what with it being 40 years of punk now and all that.
In which teenagers will be teenagers

Chapter Notes

Our beloved boys fooling around.
I think there are scenes specifically for Bell, DarkInuFan and dracodomitor, though I’m unsure if you’ll recognize them. ;)

Trigger Warning: If you’re sensitive about alcohol consumption, be careful with this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mr. Pettigrew,

As your last credit assignment for my class turned out to be below standard yet again and will therefore result in you failing the subject, I decided to grant you the chance of gaining extra points through a holiday project. You are to revise the failed work and hand in your new attempt on the first day back at school at the latest. I advise you not to waste such an opportunity of atonement.

L.Bole

Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor,

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Scissors and feathers were not a good combination, he decided. Sirius was afraid to look away from the Lady Potter and her work on his boyfriend’s hair and at the same time wished he could avert his eyes every time the ‘snip’ sound of the scissors sounded. There were feathers in the depths of those beautiful curls, feathers that did a very good job of hiding in the dark hair on a normal day, but now Hadrian’s hair was so long, it was pretty much impossible to spot them… For Merlin’s sake, did she have to do this?!

The scissors snipsnap-ed again, Sirius winced in tandem and James patted his shoulder comfortingly. Whereas Sirius was sitting there on the nearest chair, knuckles white in their tensed clench on his seat, Hadrian was still lounging on the foot stool in front of the Lady Potter, his whole body emanating relaxation. He seemed to genuinely enjoy the attention to his hair, completely oblivious to the mortal danger his Elf Owl feathers were in. Not that Sirius, or any of the other observers, wanted him to know. Really, why disturb the boy that was sitting so perfectly still in his enjoyment and risk him moving while Lady Potter wielded those scary scissors?

SNIP.

It was a nice change too, considering Hadrian’s first reaction to his knew hairstyle. To say he had not been amused would be an understatement. His Bambi had been horrified when Lady Potter finished her first attempt, having lengthened his hair to brush just past his shoulders. Well, it would have brushed past that slender frame if it had not been for the fact that Hadrian’s hair seemed to curl more the longer it got, if ‘curl’ was the correct term to describe such waywardness. Shoulder length
seemed to be just perfect for the strands to go completely haywire, curling this way and that, looking adorable, but very unkempt too. Sirius had felt reminded of that squib who became so very famous as a muggle theoretical physicist with his Arithmancy based theories on relativity. (*)

Hadrian had stared at his reflection that first time, mouth slightly agape, before he turned to Lady Potter with panicked eyes, nearly begging her to do something. Lady Potter, fair grace that she was, had dutifully ignored the amused snickers of the other boys and managed to convince Hadrian to give the long hair another chance – the really long hair. So now Bambi’s hair fell way past his shoulder blades, ends curling just above the small of his back. Yes, ends curling. Apparently additional length really was the cure for Potterness, even if none of them had expected it to take that much added length. Rem had reasoned that it was the feathers giving the already gravity defying strands even more incentive, but-

SNIP.

“There,” Lady Potter finally announced over Sirius’ latest wince, “All set to greet the New Year.”

Blinking, he took in the result of the ‘trim’ the lady had subjected his Hadrian’s thick tresses to. She called it a layered haircut meant to tame the sheer mass of hair that was even more obvious with the new length, but Sirius’ gaze zeroed in on the bangs that curled just beneath his Bambi’s chin in an adorable fashion. He was not sure his feisty boyfriend would approve of the apparent cuteness, but Sirius would thrive to make him see the advantages. He didn’t realise at that point in time, though, how much those advantages would be to his own disadvantage.

It was long dark outside, the fires crackling merrily in Potter Manor’s many hearths and the very air ripe with… well, whatever it was one feels when a year draws to a close. To Sirius it had always been a certain tension, thick as molasses and yet diffuse like some kind of fog. It felt like everything that had happened during the year accumulated in that one day, growing thicker and thicker the closer the witching hour drew, only to clear abruptly with the rise of the new sun. Like a new beginning, like a new chance to make things right. Yes, Sirius had always thought fondly of New Year’s Eve.

Right now the Marauders were up in the tower observatory of the manor, enjoying themselves while the boring adults had retreated for some peace and calm. Though, if you asked Sirius, he would bet Lord Potter was having his own personal celebration with his lovely lady right about now. Not that he wanted to think about that, or tell Prongs about his thought process. Merlin, maybe he had too much to drink already? But no… It couldn’t have been the four butterbeers, because hey – butterbeer. That simply didn’t count. No, Sirius thought, looking at his happily laughing boyfriend, if he was a bit tipsy, it was because he was steadily getting drunk on Hadrian’s laugh. Oh how very poetic… Now, where had he been?

Ah yes, the Chocolate Frog Race they were just setting up.

If you could call it a race considering the chocolate frogs were only enchanted enough for one great (or not so great) leap. It all came down to the exact moment one removed the packaging. It had to be done precisely on the starting signal and without much fumbling, so the frog could jump right out of its little case. From there it was a simple matter of whose frog had managed the longest jump and who possessed the best cheating abilities.

As Sirius sipped from his frozen butterbeer-slush, he watched Hadrian’s delighted laughter at their friends’ antics, watched him take a deep drink from his own beer and surfacing with a little foam topping on his nose. By Godric’s saggy third ball, that boy was too darn cute.
Lady Potter had pulled his newly long hair back into a high ponytail, but when his boyfriend got a
look at himself in a mirror, he immediately got rid of it. Sirius wasn’t sure, but he thought he heard
him grumble about looking way too girly. Sirius himself didn’t think so, but since it wasn’t his hair,
he decided to for once listen to his survival instinct and kept his mouth shut. His Bambi may be sexy
when angry, but some things were just not worse risking one’s bits over. And if he looked like some
kind of avenging wood spirit with the dark tresses falling around his petite figure freely… well.

Eventually Hadrian had pulled his mass of hair back in some kind of messy bun at the nape of his
neck. And no, he didn’t call it ‘messy’ as some fashion statement, but because that simply was what
it was. By now, apart from the shorter bangs, a devious lock curling defiantly atop Hadrian’s head
had escaped the hold of the leather string used to tame the hair. Sirius briefly wondered if Lady
Potter had intentionally left it at that shorter length instead of aligning it with the rest just so it would
defy gravity more. The result gave his boyfriend a kind of roguish charm with a hint of cheeky
cheerfulness. It was fairly making Sirius’ hands itch to reach out and run his hands through those
errand tresses.

Rem was just whooping for his chocolate frog that had – thanks to a well placed *Waddiwasi (* –
made a monumental leap across the room, leaving its opponents far behind. But Sirius had only eyes
for his Bambi looking flushed and enchanting with the way the warm candlelight slid across his pale
skin like a caress… Really, the house-elves had been informed that they were not to give the
‘children’ anything stronger than butterbeer for their end-of-year celebration, so Sirius was sure it had
to be his love’s charm that was making him feel so warm and fuzzy.

“Now, now my dear friends,” Prongs suddenly intoned grandly, standing up from his crouch near
the discarded chocolate frog cards. “As is tradition Pads and I went out of our way to procure the
latest muggle dalliance, and so—” With a swish and flick of his wand James made a very distinct
bottle appear. Ah, he could always trust his best mate to have some reserves. “This might not be a
muggle beverage,” he cautioned, brandishing the bottle of Ogden’s finest firewhiskey, “But the game
we’re gonna enact with it, surely is.”

“It’s a muggle game Prongsi and I picked up on, on our last adventure ‘out’,” Sirius nodded in
agreement. “We came up with a little addition though.”

Beckoned by Prongs, they gathered in a circle, seated on comfy throw pillows, the bottle and some
shot glasses in their middle. Sirius carefully watched Hadrian’s reaction to the proceedings and
decided after a moment that his boyfriend didn’t have any experience with this specific game. Now
that could simply mean he hadn’t played it before because it wasn’t as popular in the future as Sirius
and Prongs believed it to be now, or well… because of reasons. Whatever it was, Sirius somehow
got the feeling his Hadrian shouldn’t be so very curious and eager about a little drinking game
between friends. It made his heart ache for reasons he couldn’t place in his possibly, per chance,
maaaaybe slightly tipsy state.

“So it goes like this,” he explained, making himself comfortable next to his Bambi. “The first player
makes a claim starting with ‘Never have I ever’. Anyone who at some point in their lives has done
the action the first player claims must drink. And no cheating, you louts!”

“Because you see, gents,” James smirked across from him. He was just filling shot glasses with the
ominously glowing firewhiskey and added with a mischievous air: “Since we know the esteemed
Marauder-ness, we came up with this handy little honesty ward.” He waved his wand again, this
time in a short but intricate pattern, a slightly shimmering dome appearing above the group before it
settled. “As long as you’re within its perimeter, you’ll be strongly compelled to tell the truth.”

“Though,” Sirius added with a comforting pat to his suddenly nervous boyfriend’s shoulder,
“Contrary to any Ministry approved ways to ensure truthfulness, it’s only a compulsion. If you really wanted to, you’d be able to lie and of course you can always leave the circle.”

He let his hand linger as he carefully watched for Hadrian’s reaction.

Harry had never before partaken in a drinking game and he wasn’t sure he wanted to know where Sirius and James had come across this specific, apparently muggle one. Oh there had been parties in the common room after every won Quidditch game, not to mention after winning the House Cup, and yes, there had been some alcoholic beverages, but this... Had his other friends done things like that and he had just never noticed? Maybe he hadn’t been there at the times or maybe he had been too focused on Ron and Hermione? He certainly could not picture Hermione playing a drinking game and if she had anything to say on the matter, she wouldn’t let Ron join in this kind of fun either. He wasn’t too sure it actually was his cup of tea, but looking at the radiant faces of the Marauders, Harry couldn’t care less.

“All right,” Sirius crowed after everything had been set up, “Let’s start this nice and easy. So, here goes: Never have I ever… eaten the ‘vomit coloured’ bean of Bertie Bott’s.”

He leant back on his hands, throwing Pettigrew a knowing smirk. There was obviously a story behind this claim as the rat promptly downed his shot of firewhiskey – closely followed by Harry himself. He definitely remembered that not-so-pleasant experience from his very first ride on the Hogwarts Express as he coughed his way through the burning liquid. Again his thoughts drifted to his friends, wondering-

“You ate that?” His boyfriend looked slightly green at the mere thought. “Was it a dare?” He asked sympathetically, unable to conceive how anyone could eat this specific coloured bean. Harry shook his head, giving the group a slightly embarrassed half-smile.

“It was on my first ride to Hogwarts. My friend Ron and I bought some Bertie Bott’s and I didn’t know them before, so…” He shrugged sheepishly.

“You didn’t-”

“Alright, Hadrian, you’re next!” Remus interrupted before more questions could be asked.

Harry thought for a moment. What hadn’t he done before that wasn’t going to be a sign of his lack of proper childhood? Or normal teenage experiences. At the same time he didn’t want to claim something completely nonsensical either, like outflying a dragon, or something.

“I er… Never-” He looked at Sirius for help with the phrasing, smiling slightly as his boyfriend mouthed the words for him. “Never have I ever… climbed a tree in the Forbidden Forest.”

There. That was alright, wasn’t it? The forest was forbidden for a reason, after all. All four Marauders downed their shots of firewhiskey, making Harry chuckle. Why wasn’t he surprised?

Remus was next: “Never have I ever stroked a kneazle’s fur upside down.”

Or the proper way, Harry added sadly in his head. Most animals avoided werewolves on instinct, recognising the predator, a kneazle was not likely to be an exception. Then Harry drank his second glass down, remembering Crookshanks fondly. Next in their circle was James and Harry couldn’t suppress his groan at his claim.

“Never have I ever been in the Slytherin common room.”

He was going to be drunk before the questions had finished their first round. Not so surprisingly it
was Sirius who drank with him this time, winking exaggeratedly at his friends’ knowing looks. Harry already felt a bit woozy. He nearly overheard Pettigrew’s claim, whining low in his throat as the words registered:

“Never have I ever seen a dragon.”

Harry’s pitiful whine gained him a heated look from Sirius who slung a comforting arm around his shoulders as he set about drinking the firewhiskey. His throat felt singed. He heard his boyfriend hum thoughtfully, before he spoke up next.

“And here I thought we’re supposed to ask sexually themed questions,” Sirius exclaimed dramatically, earning a reproachful look from Remus.

“Not everyone is interested in your exploits, Sirius.”

“Even when playing a drinking game, Moony’s still sophisticated,” James lamented, before a wicked gleam appeared in his eyes. Harry felt Sirius absentmindedly rub his thumb along his neck.

“Never have I ever kissed another boy,” the Marauders’ leader proclaimed.

Apparently they had abandoned the order of the circle. Looking at each other, Harry and Sirius took a drink, going slightly wide-eyed when Remus did the same. Well, that was interesting. But before anyone could comment on that revelation, said werewolf smirked at James.

“Oh no, James, aren’t you forgetting something? I distinctly remember you and Sirius losing a bet to Lily last year, resulting in…” Here he gestured tellingly between the two best mates, making James splutter.

Harry looked between his father and his boyfriend with wide eyes, thinking maybe he really shouldn’t refer to James as his father when picturing those two kissing. That would just be… yeah, no. Pettigrew decided to make a claim next, speaking up with a nasty light in his beady eyes.

“Never have I ever had a grope in the changing rooms!”

There was a beat of silence before Sirius downed his firewhiskey, hand dropping from Harry’s neck. He could see the others glaring at the rat, but Harry’s mind was whirling with possible scenes of Sirius groping someone in the Gryffindor changing rooms after Quidditch. Having been on the school team himself, Harry was well aware that those times before, but especially after games, provided ample opportunities for …

“Never have I ever used my Animagus form for questionable … for adventures of the kind not mentioned in sober company,” his boyfriend suddenly stated with only slightly forced humour and Harry decided that it didn’t matter what experiences Sirius had made before they met.

“You couldn’t be more unspecific if you tried,” Remus snickered, “And I’m infinitely glad about that,” he added, eying James who was decidedly avoiding his own shot glass and not looking in Pettigrew’s direction altogether. Harry thought he saw the rat’s hand clench on his glass.

“Oh I think he was quite specific,” James grinned unabashedly.

“Do I even want to know…,” Remus groaned dramatically, succeeding in drawing chuckles from the rest of the group.

It was more than one round later that Harry in his tipsy state noticed something: The rat was staring at him contemplatively. Maybe it was just his imagination, but Harry thought Pettigrew was eying his
hair specifically. Sure it was new and all, but come on… why should he care? And anyway, the only thing his new hairstyle actually accomplished was keeping his vision free (and his nose un-tickled), because the strands were too long to fall in his face. Even those bangs Lady Potter had cut were reaching beneath his chin, so no tickling issue there either. Still, Harry was not sure he should keep his hair this way. It was really much longer than he had planned it to be. He already was smaller than average, did he really need a girly hairstyle too?

Back to the rat. Why was Pettigrew looking at him like that? There was the typical derision, contempt and even thinly veiled disgust, if one knew what to look for, but also… a calculating… something? Whatever it was, it was making Harry decidedly uneasy.

The witching hour had come and gone, accompanied by their cheers, and Sirius was lounging comfortably, looking over his closest friends. Wormy was already snoring away on his pillow after consuming way too much firewhiskey, and Rems had roped Prongs in a game of Exploding Snap, surreptitiously giving Sirius and Hadrian some much needed alone time.

The day already had had two close calls, or rather, yesterday had. First there had been their little spat in the ballroom – and that had started so nice too! Tension had been just settling between them when Wormy had to make that damn statement during their drinking game. Normally Sirius would have simply put it off as a thoughtless comment helped along by alcohol, but he was pretty sure Peter hadn’t gotten to drink his whiskey before that moment more than twice, he had not been able to second many of the claims made until then. Were two shots really enough to excuse such a comment in presence of Sirius’ current (and last, if he had any say in the matter) boyfriend?

Sighing, Sirius caught his Bambi’s hand, stroking his thumb across the surprisingly calloused skin of his palm. Those were broom-caused calluses if he had ever seen them. He had not yet seen Hadrian fly, but thought he distantly remembered him promising an excited Prongs to put that beach Quidditch pitch to use. He liked the thought of his love weaving through the air on a sleek broom… that is, if he was secure enough in the sport to do so with as little risk as possible. Then again, he was James’ son.

Hadrian was just saying something, his (always slightly bitten) lips forming the words and Sirius found his thoughts redirected raptly. He hadn’t kissed his Hadrian as much as he would have liked so far, or as intimately as he had wanted to, what with their constant audience. It was always either James, Rems or the creepy fangirls back at Hogwarts that for some reason or another were way too interested in his relationship with Hadrian and therefore interrupted or blocked their alone time. Sirius wasn’t one to share, especially not his boyfriend or any details about him. There was a reason his Grim had surged to the surface when Prongs had interrupted them that blissful one morning. Or that one time in the corridor with the glass wall… there was a pattern. Anyway, there was no way he would let anyone see his Bambi the way he had looked back in his bed, or worse, the way he had looked when Sirius had him up against that glass wall on the third floor of Potter Manor. That was a view he was not willing to share.

So no, Sirius hadn’t had much chance to really explore his boyfriend to both their satisfaction, but it had been enough to realise that Hadrian really was as inexperienced as he appeared to be. Sirius had suspected, but not known for sure. Considering that Hadrian was the James’ (Marauder supreme and decidedly not a virgin) son, it had been kind of a toss up. Bambi was shy and easily flustered, but that could have simply been the result of his insecure situation as a time travelling, newly awakened creature. Prongs was anything but shy, had dated before, but grew completely useless when it came to his true love interest. So, really, it had been hard to tell at first, but now Sirius was pretty sure Hadrian may be inexperienced, but would grow more self-assured with time. At least he hoped that
was the case, hoped there wasn’t some deeper, possibly horrible, reason why Hadrian tended to be a bit… cagey? Guarded?

Sirius’ rather embarrassing (read: ‘wet’) dreams, all starring his sweet boyfriend ever since he first accepted his feelings as such, went unsaid, but really didn’t help with his body’s reaction to all things Hadrian. So it was maybe a bit daunting to realise they would not become reality for some time yet. There was no way he would push anyone, least of all his Bambi, into anything they weren’t ready for. Not that it would stop him from gently trying… Well, at least those dreams had ensured he became very good at discrete cleansing charms, even wandless what with him sharing Bambi’s bed more often than not.

Regardless, Hadrian being woefully inexperienced meant that Sirius would be taking the leading role for a while. That was alright, he was not about to complain, but take anything that boy was willing to give. After all, Hadrian being inexperienced also meant that no other could claim anything about his boyfriend, which went a long way in soothing his Grim nature. And considering him coming from the future those that might could claim whatever weren’t likely to ever be a bother again. Though, if he was honest, Sirius really didn’t care all that much about the number of people Hadrian might have been with (or not have been with), it wouldn’t change that he had fallen for the person the boy was now. But knowing there really was no one, nobody that had claimed Hadrian before, made not only his possessive Grim feel smug. It made it easier to be patient too.

Harry couldn’t help but stare fixatedly at Sirius’ lips. Oh he was blushing at the mere thought of it and was well aware of the presence of their friends, but he simply couldn’t tear his gaze away. Those lips… and now Sirius was raising Harry’s hand, skimming his mouth across the sensitive skin of the inside of his wrist…

They weren’t normally big on kissing. Sirius liked to hold his hand or tuck Harry under his arm at every opportunity. And since he always seemed to be in the perfect position for it, Sirius also occasionally kissed Harry’s temple. There were always a lot of casual touches, now that he thought about it, as if Sirius wanted to reaffirm that he was the only one who could risk touching Harry unannounced. His boyfriend was a cuddler, too. Ever since they started… dating… Sirius made it a game to find the most ridiculous reasons why he absolutely needed to spend the night in Harry’s bed. It was hilarious and Harry hadn’t come up with a counterargument for about a month now apart from those few times at his grandparents’ house. Alright, so they both liked to cuddle.

But they weren’t big on kissing. He could count the times they had ‘made out’ on one hand and still have fingers left. Not to mention they had never really done the whole ‘casual peck on the lips’ kind of thing. Yet. That was a thing, right?

Harry thought that it maybe was because they rarely had time to themselves. Hogwarts was a huge place with lots of possible hide-outs, yet there always seemed to be someone around them. It was always either the creepy fangirls that still followed them around or one of the Marauders. Harry thought, there had been a few times Sirius had tried to get him alone before coming to the manor, to drag him into an unused classroom or some alcove. But something always came up - and no, not in the good way. Had he really just thought that?

So their kisses were few and far between, also probably because Harry wasn’t comfortable with doing anything like that in a bed (which was basically the only place they had a semblance of privacy). Well, he hadn’t been until that morning a few days back when he initiated a make-out-session that set his senses aflame. Only to be interrupted once again by James. There was a pattern. And yet he had been once again too shy about it after that encounter in front of a glass wall, continued in a cupboard, that still made him flush horrendously when he thought about it… No, they weren’t big on kissing, but looking at his boyfriend now Harry was ready to change that.
Remus was watching the exchange between his two friends from the corner of his eye, only half listening to James prattle on about something or another. Probably Quidditch. The tension between the pair had been quite palpable today, but if his senses didn’t deceive him Remus was pretty sure that slightly hostile air had changed into another kind of tension… He could smell the arousal and desire across the room even with how dulled his sense of smell was now that the full moon had passed. Blushing, Remus tried to focus back on the game. It wasn’t easy and some part of him hoped they would ‘get a room’ soon. Another part was growling protectively at the thought of sweet Hadrian going off with a sexual predator like Sirius. As much as he loved his friend, it was a fact that he was anything but unacquainted with- Right, not going down that road. And anyway, Hadrian wasn’t defenseless.

Their Bambi had changed and not just hair-wise. No, there was something in his demeanour, in the way he was holding himself, that was significantly different to only a few weeks back. Hell, it was probably even different from just days ago. There was something in the very air around that boy that had changed. Yes, there had been the wild magic, then the slightly tamer version later on and all over the sheer power that radiated off of Hadrian whenever he lost his grip on his magic. But this… it was something else. The power was still there, a silent presence that he by now simply understood as part of Hadrian. At the same time, though, there was this air of determination, of acceptance, but not resignation. Something had changed and Remus wondered if it was related to the Diagon Alley incident or if it had been coming anyway.

All in all this boy looked and felt a far cry from the frail wraith-like being they had first met that one night in the Forbidden Forest, and even from the one after the inheritance. Still, he wasn’t sure those changes were for the better.

He heard Sirius whisper a suggestion into Hadrian’s delicate ear, obviously trying to conceal the words from Remus’ werewolf hearing, or simply trying to make it even more suggestive. Apparently his friend wanted to go explore the underground cave that resided beneath Potter Manor. Remus sat up straighter. He knew it would be awkward, but his protective instincts urged him to go over there and speak up. He should make sure Sirius remembered to raise Hadrian’s body temperature after their visit to the cave, because to him it was obvious his friend would use the chance to go swimming with his love. They all knew how susceptible Hadrian was to the cold, but he couldn’t be sure Sirius would remember in his current state. He really didn’t want Hadrian to catch a cold yet again.

Sirius stared at his not-quite-furry friend blankly. He wasn’t sure what to think about what he had just heard. When Rem had called him back, beckoning him a few paces away from Hadrian, he had been confused, but complied anyway. Rems, after all, never did something without reason.

Now he wasn’t so sure anymore.

He had just been reminded of the fact that his long time friend had been bathing with his boyfriend, that Remus had seen his Hadrian naked. There were two thoughts warring in his mind for attention now: One, punching Remus into oblivion for the sheer nerve of doing something like that and Two, wanting to question Remus intensely about Hadrian’s scars. Because if the werewolf had seen Hadrian without clothes, he had seen his scars. Scars that Sirius had thought he was the only one aware of. Oh and then there was the still present jealousy rearing its ugly head at the picture his ever helpful mind supplied when Remus talked about taking a bath with Hadrian in the prefects’ bathroom. That huge pool, tiled floors, heavy steam-warmed air…

Sirius’ Grim had calmed down a lot after he had learned about the possibility of Hadrian being his ‘Animagus mate’. It had calmed even more when they had started dating. But even though he
logically knew that Remus was his friend, a really good and honest friend, and that Hadrian had never appeared to be the type to cheat…

“Just promise you will think of warming him up… afterwards,” Rem said awkwardly, scratching his neck in an uncharacteristic show of insecurity.

Sirius thought he should be thankful for the thoughtfulness of his friend, he certainly would have been too distracted to remember this, but his Grim was not as amiable about the matter. It made him growl low in his throat and he took a sadistic kind of pleasure in the widening of Remus’ eyes. He didn’t need words to convey his feelings.

“Listen,” Remus babbled, raising his hands in a kind of defensive way… or maybe he was just trying to show he meant no harm, “Hadrian’s pack. I- …I feel protective of him, yes, but… not-”

Sirius didn’t stop the half-snarl escaping, even going so far as to take a threatening step forwards- A small hand slipping into his, giving a gentle but firm squeeze.

Sirius snapped out of his Grim-induced haze, taking a minute to let the situation register. He had just been a flobberworm’s fart away from attacking one of his best friends, simply because his Animagus form was giving him much more of a hard time than was usual. He was rather sure Animagi forms weren’t actually meant to be so sentient. Staring at Remus for a long moment, Sirius fought with guilty feelings, but at the same time with the still lingering jealousy. They would need to have another of those heart-to-hearts some time soon.

“Right,” he finally said, turning to Hadrian at his side. “Let’s go.”

Chapter End Notes

You know… personally I like Harry with kinda cute overgrown, but relatively short hair. But then again, I’ve never written anything about a male character with really long hair and got curious. Then there was your voting, obviously. It’s funny, my mind continues to come up with reasons why Harry’s long hair would get stuck somewhere at every opportunity.

(*) If you hadn’t guessed, Sirius is thinking about Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Obviously a squib.  
(*) Waddiwasi: can launch small objects through the air.

Next up should be a healer’s appointment and Quidditch!
In which Harry is 'the littlest'

Chapter Notes

Surprise POV and a little wink at kendallnicola and HelloDarknessMyOldFriend!

TRIGGER WARNING: Mentions of child abuse

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Severus leaned against the peeling wallpaper covering the otherwise bare wall, listening to his father leaving the house. The door made a loud thud, reverberating ominously in the dusty and utterly empty building. He waited a moment longer, making sure the old bastard truly had left, before moving.

This Yule had been the worst and the best in some ways. A few days before the holiday he had received a letter from his mother informing him that she had left. Just like that. It wasn’t like he hadn’t seen it coming and he didn’t begrudge her that freedom in the least. Severus knew all too well that it was only him that had kept Eileen Prince, as she had decided to take her maiden name again, tied to that drunkard who sired him. And therefore he wasn’t surprised in the slightest that she had decided to finally leave, Severus would turn seventeen in just above a week after all. What his mother hadn’t taken into account, though, was that Severus couldn’t simply wait out those days at Hogwarts, but had to return ‘home’ to collect some of his most precious belongings.

With a sigh he slunk down to the basement, tapping the correct bricks in the secret order only he and his mother knew to open up the hidden potions lab. It was a wonderful piece of magic, designed after the Diagon Alley entrance, but more importantly accessible without actually using active magic – which meant Severus could enter without calling the Ministry’s attention to himself.

His mother gone, the place had fallen into some strange sense of stasis in Severus’ eyes. Without Eileen there brewing or even sporadically going through whatever her son concocted down here, the lab looked too still, too lifeless. It no longer felt like the safe haven it had been all those years of growing up, the only place his worthless muggle father could not reach them. It didn’t matter now. He would be an adult in a bit over a week, not that he would still be here by then. He would be gone for good by tomorrow.

Severus had been biding his time over the short holiday, avoiding his sire as much as possible, only daring to breathe a little bit more freely when the man left. He had taken advantage of those invaluable hours to make use of his and his mother’s lab, using up the last ingredients stored to brew some of the potions he would need to conceal what happened now daily in the dingy house at Spinner’s End. Without his mother acting as a buffer and even more anger than normal stewing inside, Tobias Snape had turned towards his son to rid himself of his frustrations. It wasn’t the first time this had happened, but before there had always been his mother and her endless supply of potions to soothe his hurts, the physical just as much as the emotional ones.

Now he was alone with that wretched brute and of course Eileen had taken her potions with her, not intending for anyone, neither herself nor her son, to ever come back. She hadn’t thought it through, or maybe she hadn’t actually believed Severus kept anything of worth inside this sorry excuse of a house whenever he escaped to Hogwarts. Not even she had known of the loose floorboard beneath his bed, the little space so mundane yet perfect in its simplicity, that held those things he could not
risk taking to a school full of bullies. Severus didn’t even want to imagine what his dorm mates would do if they ever came across the sentimental few photographs of his mother and himself, or, probably worse, those of Lily. Not to mention the ratty old plushy he had kept secretly, saved from the garbage bin when his father decided he was too old for anything cuddly.

A faint blush on his otherwise pallid skin, Severus decanted the last finished potion, this one a low rate pain reliever, before collecting whatever utensils still resided in the small lab. It would be the last time he came down here, he promised himself. He would hide everything in his trunk and tomorrow, as soon as his father kicked him out at King’s Cross, he would hide in one of the muggle loos and slather himself in the bruise balm he had finished brewing just yesterday morning. He couldn’t risk getting rid of those despicable marks before then or his father would only see fit to ‘teach him his lesson’ once again since he wouldn’t ‘look like he had learned it yet’. And with the marks gone, Tobias Snape would cease to be his father. Severus would finally be free of the muggle filth that had tainted his and his mother’s lives for too long.

Climbing the stairs up into the now mostly empty house, listening intently for any sign of the bastard having returned yet, Severus made his way into his room. He stowed everything away in his Hogwarts trunk, checked every last nook and cranny, made sure twice the hidey hole beneath the floor was truly empty, and then took one last look at the room. He would spend the night here one last time and then he would be gone, he would leave the dark terraced house, he would leave Spinner’s End and he would leave Cokeworth. No longer would he have to smell the mill and polluted river and never again would he be in any kind of vulnerable position with that revolting muggle. The next time they would see each other, if ever, Severus would have the power. He would be a mature wizard, magic, power at the tips of his fingers and Tobias Snape would grovel at his feet where he belonged. Maybe Severus could even rid himself of that muggle name?

Yes, he would be someone then, someone strong and powerful. He would have a place in the world, one earned by his prowess with potions, the same prowess that had been mocked so many times. He could have that place as soon as he turned seventeen, no matter if he finished his seventh year at school or not. The Dark Lord didn’t care for graduations, only for capable men. He had to be of age to be of use and that would happen long before his Hogwarts career would end. Soon…

A flash of green, forest green so deep and yet bright, crossed Severus’ mind.

He had thought of those eyes a lot these last days, marginally horrified when he realised it weren’t Lily’s eyes he was thinking about. Oh he thought of Lily still, especially when he was here, not far from her really, if she hadn’t been away on some trip with those …muggle relations of hers. It was hard not to think of her tinkling laughter and fiery hair when he was in this place, but those thoughts and memories were now tinged with bitterness. She would never again smile at him like that, look at him like he hung the moon the way she had done back before they first attended Hogwarts. No, Severus was thinking of another pair of gloriously green eyes, similar yet completely different.

Hadrian Moore, if that truly was his name, had taken up quite a large amount of his time whenever he wasn’t brewing. And even then Severus found himself wondering about the boy, though differently than the other times. When he wasn’t in his lab he would wonder what Moore was doing, how he spent his holidays, if he was still constantly surrounded by those imbeciles, if he was doing alright and other asinine questions Severus would never admit to even considering. When he was in his lab though, Severus wondered about the properties of the creature Moore seemed to be. He had read a lot about creature usage in potions, of course, and was proficient in the use of the more ordinary ingredients such as doxy eggs and beetle eyes and even unicorn hair. But an Elf Owl… He hadn’t been able to procure any information on this specific creature and had more than once wondered if maybe he had fallen for yet another cruel prank courtesy of the so-called Marauders.
But then he would remember those eyes and how, even when he had attacked Severus with his wild magic, he could not think of Hadrian Moore and deception in the same breath. It simply wouldn’t fit. Not to mention he didn’t believe Lily, as much as she might loathe him now, would have played along with Potter and his cronies in one of their pranks.

So he found himself going over what he already knew of the creature and then wondered if those feathers he had spied in Moore’s hair would be of any use in a potion. He had heard the feathers of Veelas had quite the interesting effects, after all. His stained fingers fairly itched with the prospect of discovering completely new uses or making some breakthrough in the potions community. But to even make any assumptions of possible usage of Elf Owl properties, he would have to know something, anything, about the creature itself. What abilities did they possess? Were those feathers signs of aerial abilities? Maybe levitation? There had to be some kind of connection, they wouldn’t simply be decorative, would they?

At those times, when his mind would wander into the depths of potion theory, he would suddenly recall those enchanting eyes again. Moore was most likely the only source of information on the matter and why in Salazar’s name would the boy tell him if Elf Owls had any use in potions? It wasn’t that Severus himself would even consider taking anything without Moore’s consent, but still, creatures lived dangerous lives these days. He would never do it though, as it was one of the basic rules in potion making that most ingredients harvested from creatures lost their worth when taken forcefully. They would either become completely useless or even spoil the potion to the extent that it could turn out volatile. That is, all properties with the exception of blood, and Severus was well aware that a lot of the different creature blood used in potions was not given willingly. The amounts used were just too high to be freely donated by some soft-hearted individual.

All that aside, though, there was the simple fact that he had no desire to ever hurt that boy whatsoever.

Snorting, faintly disgusted with the mushy turn of his thoughts, Severus observed the world outside his window for a moment. The grimy glass pane did not help the general dreary atmosphere of this part of town and yet he knew just behind the old park with those dangerously derelict swings a much nicer neighbourhood lay hidden… and there was the swaying form of his once again drunken bastard of a sire coming down the street. Quick steps across the room had his door locked and the few candles extinguished. Even with selling off most of the furniture Tobias Snape hadn’t been able to pay the bills for quite some time now and there hadn’t been electricity running at Spinner’s End the whole holiday.

Feigning sleep, Severus stared across the now dark room and out towards the overcast sky. Come tomorrow he would never return here. He would be free soon. He wondered what Hadrian Moore would think of his ambitions in the Dark Lord’s services.

When Harry woke there was a heavy weight over the small of his back. He took a moment to orient himself, last night’s festivities slowly swimming back into focus.

They had danced. For some reason that fact stood out to Harry in stark relief to the mass of blurry memories, bringing with it the smell of freshly cut grass and a hint of gunpowder, all underlined by the ever lurking scent of darkness. Sirius. He had danced with Sirius! And… there were no stubbed toes or bruised backsides. Not even his ego seemed to have taken too much of a blow. Huh.

Then there was light, a brilliant glow vying for his attention. He remembered casting a Patronus again, his new Grim Patronus. That thought made him blush. He had never spent a thought to the fact that his soul guardian could change, it had always been Prongs, his father protecting him even from the afterli-
Oh. Yeah. 1977.

To be exact it had to be January 1<sup>st</sup> 1977, the first day of a new year and tomorrow they would return to Hogwarts. He was still in the past even if it was now a few months closer to the time he probably ought to be, he was still years away from even being born. Harry snorted. It didn’t matter anymore, his grandfather was right. He had never truly tried to return and by now Magic had accepted his decision to become someone else. He was no longer Harry Potter.

The weight over his back shifted minutely, making Harry tense. There was a snuffling sound and he realised the weight was an arm – an arm tightening its hold around Harry’s waist before settling down again. Right, he had spent the night in Sirius’ bed again. A furious flush creeping up from his chest, along his neck and up, up right into his face, making his cheeks glow… and Harry didn’t dare move for a whole minute. He wasn’t sure why exactly he was so apprehensive of waking his boyfriend, they had slept in the same bed before after all. Still, something… last night. They had celebrated the New Year with a lot of ridiculous games, one of which had been a drinking game that drove the point home once again that he really hadn’t had the most normal childhood. And after that… he had been tipsy, they all had been and Sirius- The underground cave. Oh Merlin…

With that realisation Harry opened his eyes and started detangling himself from his boyfriend’s Beater built arms, which proved slightly more complicated than he had expected it to be. Again, not the first time. When he finally managed to wriggle free of Sirius’ sleepy grasp, he flinched when something unexpected brushed his arm. And his neck. And his back. What-

A curtain, no, a mop of tangled dark hair fell into Harry’s line of sight, reminding him of more activities of the day before. Lady Potter had lengthened his hair and not just the bit to the shoulders he had asked for, because apparently Potter hair was not meant to simply submit to gravity, and especially not Potter hair interlaced with feathers.

Sirius gave a snort kind of noise, drawing Harry’s attention back to the bed. Sleep-mussed bluish black hair and aristocratic jaw, long lashes on dream-coloured cheeks and morning sunlight caressing a bare back… Right, better not linger or he would still be staring at his boyfriend when lunch came around.

He padded carefully around the room, finding parts of discarded clothes and trying not to get too flustered by it. His head and limbs felt heavy and the light seemed bright enough to fray at the contours of everything, making him blink rapidly more than once. It wasn’t quite a hangover, but Harry definitely recognised the after-effects of indulging in more than one glass. Smuggling one of Sirius’ jumpers out of the (in Harry’s humble opinion) ridiculously large walk-in-closet and listlessly tugging it along with him, he finally reached the en suite. With a yawn Harry decided that maybe a shower would clear away the cotton wool in his head.

Sirius woke with a lazy smile. His mind was indulgently replaying some of the more enticing scenes of last night and he made sure to revel a bit in memories of damp naked skin sliding through eerily lit waters and splayed long tresses of drifting black hair… Yeah, his love had looked like a nymph of some kind, enchanting him with those hauntingly beautiful emerald eyes.

Sighing contently, Sirius stretched, not quite surreptitiously adjusting himself as he did so, and reaching for the warm body that had gone to sleep with him after their visit to the underground cave beneath Potter Manor. His wandering hand, though, was met with cooling sheets, not completely cold yet, but definitely devoid of Hadrian’s silky skin (Which he now knew for a fact really was as silky as it looked.) He blinked eyes open that suddenly felt slightly gritty and his head buzzed at the
movement when he looked over to confirm that yes, his boyfriend had left the bed. Ah right, they had indulged a bit more in alcohol than the elder Potters had expected them to, but really, those two should know better by now. They were dealing with the Marauders after all; a hidden stash of firewhiskey really wasn’t that far out there for them.

Sirius could hear the shower running in the en suite which brought his mind right back to the pleasant memories of what had happened last night when, both of them rather tipsy, he and Hadrian had gone swimming, or more like bathing, in the little pool-pond-basin-reservoir-whatever. Grotto? The thing in the cavern with water in it. There. Alright, back to the enticing memories…

The underground cave at Potter Manor wasn’t anything grand, but it had its own mysterious charm nonetheless. Its entrance was hidden behind a rather nondescript tapestry in one of the more remote halls of the ground floor, rough stone steps leading down, down, down likely beneath sea level, right into the rock the sharp-edged cliffs of the coast were made of.

He was currently leading his lovely Bambi down into what he should probably call a grotto… kind of thing. The hard ground was throwing the sounds of their slightly unsure steps back at the walls, echoing around them a bit ominously. Sirius found himself marvelling at how easily the always wary Hadrian followed him into the shadowy tunnel, nearly slipping on the damp stone when his gaze strayed once again to the fey-like form of his love. It was Hadrian that steadied him and Hadrian’s gaze he was caught in the moment he found his momentum again. Hadrian and his beautiful eyes, glittering in amusement and-

“WOW!” His Bambi exclaimed as he caught sight of their surroundings, momentarily distracted from Sirius.

The biggest of the shallow ponds was located slightly off-centre of the cave, steaming colourfully in the semi-darkness. The only light source came from the enchanted ground beneath the water’s surface, casting an eerily green-blue shimmer over everything and sending rippling shadows dancing along the heavy stone walls. A few other, smaller basins littered the cave, but this one was just wide enough for one or two strokes through the silent water. Sirius knew the pool-pond-basin-reservoir-thingy was fed by an underground source, a river’s water filtered through so much rock and minerals… It would have been more than just chilly if not for the spell keeping it pleasantly warm. And he had brought his love down into this secret hide-out, away from all the prying eyes, and they were going to enjoy a bath together. Yup.

“Spiffing, innit?”

Sirius recognised that they were both a bit inebriated by now, but couldn’t really find it in himself to care. He wasn’t about to let such an opportunity slide. Holding onto his boyfriend’s delicate hand, he made an inviting movement with his head, asking Hadrian to join him. As those forest eyes let him go to survey the otherworldly cave more closely, Sirius was watching Hadrian’s reactions. His love’s eyes went wide in wonder and he took a deliberate breath of the damp and heavy, yet cool air that came with spell-warmed water and steam in the otherwise cold air inside the rock.

It took a moment, but then a blush was rapidly spreading along that slender neck and up into those pale cheeks… They hadn’t even gotten into the water yet, but the mere thought of the liquid gently lapping at his boyfriend’s hips, droplets trailing down his neck and chest that would blush so prettily… It would be worth any scolding the elder Potters might dole out later.

“So...” Sirius queried softly, leadingly.

He let his hands wander to his Hadrian’s hips, resting there for a moment to make sure the other was aware of his closeness. He adored the little hitch in breath when his fingers slipped beneath the
jumper his love was wearing, stroking along the seam of perfectly tailored jeans and up over still too noticeable ribs. There was severe scar tissue on one side, but Sirius wasn’t deterred. He had seen his love naked before and tipsy or not, he would not make Hadrian even consider that those marks had even the slightest effect on his attraction. Although… Letting the tips of his fingers trail along those scars, Sirius thought they were a reason to find his love even more attractive. They marked him, yes, but not in any negative way. Those were the marks of a survivor.

He felt the tension in the muscles beneath his hands and simply waited, lips brushing along any exposed skin he could reach and body a firm presence at his boyfriend’s back. He wanted this, more than anything in this moment, but he would give Hadrian all the time he needed. It didn’t take nearly as long as he had expected. And everything past Hadrian letting him discard the jumper and turning around in his arms was a blissful blur…

Drugging kisses along a delectable neck. Little noises that went straight to his groin and gentle hands helping him out of his own clothes. There were nervous tremors in both their movements, but they managed. Then damp naked skin beneath his rough fingertips. Long black tresses spreading out on the water’s surface. His love looking like some mysterious water nymph. Hadrian grinning cheekily one moment and surging forward to kiss Sirius the next…

Smirking smugly at the memory of his Hadrian’s very naked form, looking back at him so trustingly, Sirius could admit to himself that he had done it for more than one reason. Oh yes, he had thoroughly relished in his alone time with his boyfriend, just like he always did, but there had been another not quite as honourable reason for the impromptu bath. The thought of Remus seeing Hadrian just like that, good intentions or not, had chafed at his possessiveness and Sirius simply had to… well, stake his own claim.

They had spent quite some time exploring each other with hands and lips in the shallow depths of the pond, safe in the semi-privacy of the water.

Harry had spent at least five minutes staring at the knotted mess that was impersonating his hair. It was simply ridiculous. Where before the typical Potter just-went-for-a-fly style had been, there now was… was… whatever the tangled dark mass of hair and feather was that now sprouted out of his head. No way was he going to get a brush through this.

So Harry had done the only sensible thing one could do in this situation with no scissors at hand (and a healthy amount of mistrust towards one’s abilities with a wand) – he had turned his back on the mirror and went straight for the shower. Still, a few blessed moments into his shower, he found himself stumped by the sheer weight that came with this length in hair. The black mat that resided on his head soaked up water like a sponge and lay heavily over his shoulders and back.

“It’s all nice that I can tie it out of my face now, but…,” he was muttering to himself now, great. “How in Merlin’s freaking sock draw will I ever get it washed or-”

Harry’s gaze fell on something that should not be there. He hadn’t used Sirius’ shower before so he couldn’t be too sure, but the obviously new, still sealed potion-shampoo-thingy sitting next to what he knew was Sirius’ own shampoo kinda screamed suspicious. Reaching out, Harry turned the bottle – well, as far as wizarding shampoo containers could be called ‘bottles’ – in his hand and read the inscription. He found a long list of ingredients, most of which he had never heard about, but it was the slogan that promised ‘smooth hair like Acromantula silk’ that caught his attention. That sounded actually rather promising for his current predicament. And slightly creepy.
Brought with him to Potter Manor he had the Hogwarts-issued standard hair-potion that was provided in all school bathrooms, assuming it would be okay. It was meant to be used by the students anyway, so why not take it with him over the holidays? But his little, plain vial was back in his own en suite of the guest room. He had intended to use Sirius’ (unnecessarily elaborately shaped) shampoo, but now…

Shrugging, Harry started lathering his hair – and Gods was that a mass of hair to be treated - with the new creepily promising shampoo. He had expected to need a whole lot of it, but to his delight he could already feel the knots untangle themselves at the first touch. Oh yeah, sometimes one just had to love magic.

Was there a better thing to wake up to than nice memories of a well-spent night and then the view of one’s love fresh out of the shower, dressed in Sirius’ own jumper? Well, maybe if Hadrian had chosen to forgo the jumper completely… but the sight of that long, luscious and now wet hair brought his mind right back to the cave and those blissful minutes (or was that hours?) spent with his boyfriend in the water…

“Hey.” The shy greeting snapped Sirius back to the situation (and the boy) at hand.

“Hey yourself, gorgeous,” he leered back from his lazy slouch on the bed, delighting once more in the bright blush his Hadrian sported at the words. “You know, I just have to congratulate you on your clothing choice for today,” he purred, dragging his gaze over his love’s figure in an exaggerated way, “Definite-”

He didn’t get to say more as the words dried up in his throat when Hadrian suddenly sat down right next to him, leaned over and after just a second of hesitation brushed their lips together in a gentle yet determined kiss.

“…good morning to you too,” Sirius finally managed, not in the least ashamed of the breathless sound of his voice. Yep, the day was getting better by the minute.

The shower had cleared his head. With the clarity also came the realisation that something in his and Sirius’ relationship had shifted and he was part joyous, part apprehensive about that change. Okay, make that scared.

It wasn’t like he regretted what had happened in that cave per se. It was just that… well… Harry was too aware that he probably wouldn’t have acted so boldly had he been sober. Sirius had not pressured him, he clearly remembered the question in those grey eyes before they ever stepped foot onto the narrow stairs leading down into the rock beneath the manor. No, his boyfriend had made sure Harry was okay with following him into unknown territory so to speak, and he had given Harry every opportunity to pull away when- …when he started to undress him.

Harry briefly wondered if he should be more disturbed by the fact that he had given in so easily, but decided that it had to be a positive sign. He hadn’t wanted Sirius to stop. In fact, he had been glad that someone else was taking the initiative when he had been afraid to take the next step. So why was it that he was second guessing himself now?

Sighing, Harry stepped out of the bathroom, stopping when he caught sight of the very reason for his internal debate. Sirius was slouching comfortably right where he had left him, arms lazily resting behind his head and eyes riveted onto Harry. It was a somewhat sinful view, making Harry’s heart flutter like pixie wings.
He hadn’t really allowed himself to let Sirius in, had he? He still acted as though he was unsure about his feelings – which he simply wasn’t. True, he was awkward and inexperienced, but he knew, he just knew, that Sirius was right for him. Maybe it had been the moment he saw his new name on that heritage parchment, or when his grandfather pointed out to him how he hadn’t actually tried to find a way back to the future he came from. But at one point not too long ago Harry had realised he wanted this, he wanted Sirius, and he wanted the both of them to be happy with each other. He didn’t want to leave. This meant he had to let down his guard with his boyfriend, he had to relax and trust. Determination making him square his shoulders, Harry went to kiss his love good morning.

“Littlest Master,” a squeaky voice interrupted the moment, making both Sirius and Harry jump.

An impeccably dressed house-elf was standing at the foot of the bed, looking completely unfazed by what it had popped in on. Harry blinked for a moment, before his brain caught on.

“Mammy? Is everything alright? Is Alun-?”

“Littlest Diggory beings fine but too quietsy, Littlest Master,” was delivered in that strange drawling accent that was specific to the nanny elf. “Mammy not knowing’s why, but littlest Diggory not speaks anymore.”

Harry remembered how he had wondered about the kid not speaking at all and how he had written it off to shock or to Harry simply having no real idea how children were supposed to act. But this sounded like Alun was supposed to talk or something and just wouldn’t. The thought was making Harry anxious and he was about to ask more when Mammy spoke up once again.

“Master bes sending Mammy to get Littlest Master,” she said. “Sick man beings there.”

That said, the house-elf held out her hand demandingly, clearly intending for Harry to take it and have himself popped over to wherever it was his grandfather wanted him to be right now. …‘Sick man’?

Chapter End Notes

Gah I’m sorry! I know, I promised the healer appointment AND Quidditch and… well, they’ll have to wait till next chapter. Those two just went on and on with their domestic bliss and Sev simply snug in there…
And I’m so ridiculously proud of my Severus in this chapter. :'D

ALSO: I apologise for not answering all those lovely comments of yours! I’ll try to do so as soon as I can, so if you're still waiting for an answer, please be patient with me. <3
In which Remus has another Sherlockian moment

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: mentions of (child) abuse of different kinds and the consequences of such in medical terms, mentions of war and consequences (bombs, attacks, victims etc.)

The part about Pettigrew goes to Tetractys and all those of you who want a rat to make a vital mistake. I might have watched BBC Sherlock before writing the second Remus POV...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The door stood out imposingly in front of him.

Harry knew the makeup was because this door led to Lord Potter’s study, a place meant for political posturing and impressive formality. Still, with the heavy wood and a size that would even tower over the huge form of his grandfather, it felt like some kind of anachronism in the otherwise airy and light manor. Like a snitch in a game of Quidditch that was dominated by heavy quaffles and hard bludgers, really, only that this door was as far from the delicate little golden ball as Snape was from Gilderoy Lockhart. Okay, so maybe Harry was stalling.

But standing there in the wide hallway outside his grandfather’s study, abandoned by the house-elf that brought him here, he couldn’t help but feel apprehensive. The fact that he had only been twice inside that room and never had to enter by himself when someone else was already in there, was weighing uncomfortably in his stomach. It should have been a simple matter of knocking and letting himself in, but knowing some unknown person was waiting on the other side and his grandfather had specifically requested Harry…

Taking a deep breath, he raised his hand and briskly rapped his knuckles against the wood. Any more stalling and worrying and he wouldn’t be able to bring himself to—Lord Potter’s voice called for him to enter. Squaring his shoulders, Harry did just that.

As he pushed the door open just enough to slide inside, he kept his gaze trained onto the ground. It went against all his survival instincts not to immediately scan the room for threats and escape routes, but he simply couldn’t bring himself to look up before he absolutely had to. It probably also was a by-product of knowing where he was and that this place was as safe as he could get at this point in time. He was a blood relative on Potter grounds, inside his ancestral home. Harry believed in sentient magic and his experience at Gringott’s with the heritage parchment had only reinforced that belief. He was safe here, but it didn’t change the fact that he was not one to meet new people.

Going up against a Basilisk completely unprepared? Manageable. That’s what a Phoenix buddy is for and all that.

Running headlong into a swarm of Dementors? Sure thing.

Outflying Dragons and generally doing unnecessarily dangerous stuff? Yep. That’s him.

But getting to know new people, people that probably meant something to people Harry cared for
or... getting to know people in his new role as part of House Potter when there actually was a House Potter beyond himself? It was the kind of situation Harry wasn’t sure he could wing with just his instincts. There was bound to be some protocol he wasn’t aware of and he didn’t want to embarrass or worse, disappoint his grandfather and-

Finally raising his eyes when he had closed the door and turned around, Harry blinked at the two persons watching him. There was his grandfather practically lounging in one of his severe looking yet so very comfortable armchairs and next to him... The man meeting his gaze across the room was... not what Harry had expected. Suddenly even more self-conscious, he tried to gather his still damp hair over one shoulder to at least try and appear a bit less scruffy than he felt. The unknown man looking back at him was dressed smartly and exuded refinement in a humble kind of way that left Harry feeling utterly immature in his jeans and oversized jumper.

Blinking wide eyes at the two, Harry blushed and dropped his gaze as the silence stretched and he realised he really, absolutely had no idea how to act or even what to say. Add to that the uncertainty of being confronted with a stranger when he had been taught to avoid any close attention of those unaware of his creature, and Harry thought he would be happy curling right back up in Sirius’ arms to never come out again.

“Little one,” his grandfather’s deep gentle voice finally said, prompting Harry to glance up again from where he had been fiddling with the hem of Sirius’ jumper. “Come, have a seat. This is Samuel Hahnemann, an old friend of mine. Sam, this is the currently youngest Potter, Hadrian.” (*)

Old indeed, Harry thought wryly. The man in front of him looked ancient, about as ancient as Dumbledore. Well, the Dumbledore in his original time at least. There was a flock of white fly-away hair on his head and a well-groomed, steel-grey beard framing his wrinkly face. He looked friendly enough, now that Harry was closer, but still...

“A pleasure to meet you, young man,” Mr. Hahnemann offered, voice thin from age, but for some reason Harry got the impression the feeble front was as much a façade as it was with Dumbledore. Giving the man a shy nod as he sat down on the very edge of an armchair, Harry sent his grandfather a questioning look.

“Sam here is a private healer,” Lord Potter answered the unspoken question before sighing when he noticed Harry’s immediate tensing. “Do not worry, little one. He is aware of the circumstances as I trust him with the health of my family. He is a friend.”

Harry pressed his lips together tightly, trying very hard not to comment on that statement. He had to trust his grandfather with this, but it very much looked like he was in for the obligatory prodding and poking that always came with medi-wizards and healers. Harry was not amused. Sensing his unease, Healer Hahnemann spoke up.

“As you are underage, your guardian is required to be present during any and all examinations and treatments outside of school. Also,” he added, “This way I do not have to repeat myself.” He gave Lord Potter a pointed stare and Harry found himself smothering a surprised giggle of all things when he saw his grandfather shift a bit sheepishly in place.

“Yes, well,” Lord Potter mumbled, clearing his throat. “You will be returning to Hogwarts tomorrow, Hadrian, but the investigation of the Diagon Alley attack is still underway.” He gentled his voice even more when Harry couldn’t quite hide a wince. “You drew a lot of attention to yourself that day, I am afraid, and with the climate as is...” He made a gesture that somehow managed to encompass all that could mean for Harry.

The investigation, as Lord Potter had called it, could and most likely would concentrate on things
and people that stood out the most to the victims. Well, those victims still able to give any statement. Of course it always had to be him.

“As is, Head Auror Moody already tried to get access to your medical file,” Healer Hahnemann interrupted his gloomy thoughts. “I was able to hold him off by insisting on patient confidentiality, or rather by …convincing… a mutual acquaintance to insist on it. But it will only be a matter of time until he is going to force access. He has the Ministry at his back after all.”

“Which is why we are here today, little one,” his grandfather soothed, but Harry knew what that meant.

They had talked about this during their planning of Harry’s cover. To draw up a credible medical file, they would have to examine him, or the healer would have to. Biting his lip, Harry nodded reluctantly. There really was no way around it if he didn’t want Moody digging even deeper into his person, trying to find out everything there was to know about him.

At the same time, in another part of Potter Manor, Remus Lupin rubbed yet again at his nose in an attempt to get rid of the irritating stench that seemed to cling to his olfactory nerves. The biting smell of anger, no, hatred, was burning its way into his mind, making it impossible to push away the thoughts that kept coming back whenever he looked at his friend. The smell was made even worse as it was accompanied by that of disgust, forming the aforementioned stench that made Remus curse his sensitive nose. No matter the time of month, there just was no ignoring this.

He wished he had an explanation, was still hoping for a simple answer that would clear away all his doubts and fears… but none was forthcoming as he watched Peter while James was chatting with his mother about Hadrian. The Marauder leader had been reluctant at first, but when Lady Potter had made it clear she was not condemning her son for his actions towards the boy or anything, but was honestly interested in getting to know her grandson, he had started telling the story of how they found Hadrian. An edited version of the truth, meaning time, place, and certain animal aspects had been altered, but the truth at the core nonetheless. From there he had continued with little anecdotes and stuff about his son from the future, fairly glowing as he spoke, making everyone listening smile.

Everyone but Peter, that is. Peter who sported an utterly neutral expression, but whose eyes were burning with unspoken derision and who was producing the biting stench of hatred and disgust that was hurting Remus’ heightened senses.

He was sat up on a conjured stretcher, feet dangling quite a bit above ground, and trying valiantly not to show his jittery nerves. But Fleamont could see the pale complexion and barely hidden tremor in his little grandson’s hands. He did not like how very vulnerable Hadrian looked like that, made only worse by the unsuccessful attempt at hiding how afraid he was. And the Lord Potter was rather sure that Hadrian was afraid, or downright scared, at the prospect of being seen to by a healer. He could not fathom why that would be, but the mere observation had settled like lead in his stomach, giving Fleamont an uneasy feeling of impending doom. Alright, so maybe he was being overly dramatic, but to his excuse he did spend quite some time around his son and one Sirius Black lately.

He wasn’t sure if Samuel had picked up on the atmosphere, but the healer went about business in his usual no nonsense manner, sardonic humour included.

“The hovering Lord Potter over there,” he was just saying, nodding over his shoulder without actually deeming Fleamont worthy of a glance. “Did tell me some aspects about your peculiar situation and, I am sure, left out others, but to be certain we are both on the same sheet of music, let me give you an outline of what is about to happen.”
Hadrian was giving Samuel the same cautious nod he had observed him giving when greeting the healer earlier. Had the circumstances been different, Fleamont would not have been happy with the lack of proper decorum displayed there, but considering not only the – as Sam called it – ‘peculiar situation’, but also the very obvious conclusion that his grandson had not been raised a wizard, he would overlook it for now. Still, as a member of the Potter family, an heir to the main branch even, Hadrian would need to be able to manoeuvre the dreadful pureblood societal events and later in life possibly the political stage. Even if only to navigate his position as ‘second in succession’ of the title Lord Potter. Because, let’s face it, with his grandson coming from the future back into the past and very obviously settling down, it was very unlikely Hadrian would ever inherit the title as James and he were of the same age in this time.

“…so you see there are different versions of diagnostic scans, at least two of which I will need to apply to you in order to not only gather enough information for a legit medical file, but also to assess your overall health of body and magic.”

Samuel’s words dragged Fleamont from his thoughts, wondering how much of the conversation he had missed while pondering the annoying but sadly needed question of his successor. The Potter family was dying out quite rapidly over these last decades, so ensuring his line, and therefore family magic, would be continued, was constantly weighing on Fleamont’s mind. Looking over, he watched Hadrian shifting nervously in his seat just in time to catch his grandson’s clearly unsettled gaze. He smiled reassuringly in response.

“Let’s start with the scan of your physical overall health, young one,” the feeble voice of the ancient healer spoke up and Fleamont continued his protective hovering as Hadrian was bidden to lie down on his stretcher and stay as still as possible. “I am a touch-based healer, Hadrian,” Samuel explained absently in softer tones as he stepped up to the prone form of Fleamont’s grandson.

No one missed the instant tensing nor the sudden crackle of magic in the air, and the Lord Potter could no longer simply stand by.

“Little one,” he started, not completely sure what he wanted to say, “I apologise.” Well, that definitely got such a startled reaction that Hadrian actually seemed to forget about the healer standing close by. “I should have asked beforehand if you would be fine with a touch-based healer. All I can say in my defence is that it never even crossed my mind to question it, as touch-based healers are… well, they are considered a lot more accurate in their diagnostics, but the …method of touch-healing is rarely taught anymore.”

He should have known better, Fleamont admonished himself. After all the revelations about the lack of medical care in his past, even though he apparently had spent quite a bit of time in a medi-witch’s presence, the child really had no reason to trust anyone of that profession. Add to that all the little things he had observed over the last days and the Lord Potter felt he probably deserved one of his formidable wife’s telling-offs. Yes, he really should have known better than to confront a possible abuse victim with a touch-based healer without any notice.

So. Harry was… astonished, he supposed. Here he was, fighting the urge to run away from being poked and prodded at (and most likely found wanting) and then they dropped the actual bombshell: He would have to let the healer touch him, as in a lot more than a shaking hands kind of way, or even the general wand-poking, if Harry understood correctly. And given his grandfather’s immediate apology, his assumption was quite spot on.

But what really threw Harry off was that apology in itself.
Not only was he not used to people apologising to him for anything (other than letting him down when he needed them most), but he also kept stumbling mentally over the reason for Lord Potter’s words. The man seemed to suddenly have realised he had made a decision for Harry that, even if he now was considered his guardian, would have been polite to at least inform him of. Harry was not going to think further on other things his grandfather might have realised. Yes, they had talked about the necessity of a healer appointment, and Harry had understood and agreed to it. But no one had mentioned the needed… touching. Not to mention that, whenever touching with magical beings was involved, it nearly always also involved the touch of foreign magic. Which was… kinda intimate, at least to Harry.

After spending some quiet yet informative afternoons with his grandmother, not only drinking honeied tea but also discussing a few things concerning wizarding traditions and general life style, Harry had come up with a theory: Wizards and witches raised in the magical world generally bowed and curtsied in greeting rather than shaking hands as the latter meant touch which in turn could mean possible direct contact with foreign magic. Which in itself could have a whole slew of different meanings and effects. Before coming to the past Harry had never even thought twice about the old-fashioned seeming ways of the Wizarding World, he had simply brushed it off as just one more hint that the magical world was stagnant and still mostly stuck in the Dark Ages. His grandmother had not exactly taught him anything concerning etiquette, but she had conveniently dropped things like this in their conversations.

But even putting all that aside, Harry simply did not like strangers touching him. Hell, he still struggled with the Marauders, bar Sirius, and his grandparents at times.

“If you truly feel too uncomfortable with the prospect, I may always perform the scans with my wand,” Healer Hahnemann suddenly said into Harry’s thoughts, his pale eyes studying him in a way that made Harry want to straighten up. “But I should warn you that those scans will not be as in-depth or informative as those done with touch-magic.”

Okay, so a part of him wanted to rise to the challenge and endure the damn touching, but another part of him actually rejoiced with the information just given. He did not want them to look too closely at his health, because he knew it would provoke questions. Harry long ago had accepted that his various adventures had left him with more than scar tissue, just look at his second year: One of the most potent poisons known to wizard kind nearly succeeding in killing him, only to be counteracted last minute by one of the most potent known healing agents. Talk about bipolar luck. That was wont to have some kind of influence on his health, wasn’t it? Talk about awkward explanations. But there was another part of Harry that wanted to hide, a part that could not be explained away by ridiculous magical coincidences. And Harry was desperate to hide that part.

Still, glancing over at his hovering grandfather who was still watching him with such a contrite expression, Harry realised that this was not only about him anymore. He had a family now, people that truly cared about his well-being simply for who he was. This wasn’t about Harry Potter, a weapon needed to be in top condition. This was about Hadrian, a grandson, a brother of kind, a friend, and… a boyfriend. Sighing, Harry closed his eyes and tried to relax on his stretcher.

“‘m sorry,” he mumbled into the tense silence of the study, “Please continue.”

The smell had not left him alone, had nearly forced him to pay very close attention and to keep an eye on his friend. So it came as no surprise that Remus was aware of Peter’s retreat, well, more aware than the others present. Sirius had come down to breakfast not long ago, pouting about his Bambi having been owlnapped by a house-elf. That had been curious for a moment until Lady Potter reminded them all of the needed healer appointment to create a forged medical file. Oh yeah, there
had been that.

The lady of the house hadn’t even finished her last sentence before Peter had been up and excusing himself from the room. It had taken Remus a moment to realise that the sudden retreat had nothing to do with the disgust he could clearly smell on his friend at the obvious primary topic of the morning – and that it also had nothing to do with the pretence of needing the loo. Remus hadn’t cared for explanations, just excused himself as polite as always, and followed.

He didn’t bother to take the route to the nearest bathroom and no, that had nothing to do with the fact that Peter could for the life of him not remember the way around the manor. How often had he done that since arriving yesterday? How often had he used the same excuse with no one being the wiser because no one truly paid attention to Peter? How often had he been pledging to have gotten lost on the way to and fro the loo while in reality he had been sneaking about doing… what exactly?

Following his nose once again, Remus had no problem finding his strangely acting friend. He was still hoping for an easy explanation, something that would alleviate all his worries, would clean Peter’s vest… that was until he realised it was the guest wing his nose led him to. And the door that was standing ajar in front of him was the one to Hadrian’s sleeping quarters for the holidays.

Remus closed his eyes briefly. Part of him was listening to the slight noise he could clearly hear from inside the bedroom, but another part didn’t want to be here. He did not want to admit to himself what was in front of him. None of them had suspected anything, they had even made fun of Peter’s lack of orientation in a place he had been to before so many times. He had played them expertly in true Marauder fashion and wasn’t that just a kick in the gut?

He did take the last step at some point. He did look inside the room and made sure he wasn’t noticed while doing so. Remus witnessed Peter sneaking about Hadrian’s room, going through their Bambi’s sparse belongings… witnessed the sheer violation of privacy, but he could not understand. Why was Peter doing this? What for, what was he looking for?

It wasn’t until he saw his long time friend carefully looking over the cushions on the huge bed that Remus realised that there was more being violated than privacy.

He felt vulnerable lying down on the stretcher in the middle of his grandfather’s huge study. It did not help that both men currently with him in the room were standing and generally looming over him. It was quiet, not a sound penetrating the air that felt thick with tension to Harry. Silently he watched as the healer made Lord Potter stand back a bit to ensure there would be no accidental touching between Harry and his grandfather as that would apparently mess up the diagnostic spell… thingy. And then it was time.

“A deep breath now, Hadrian,” the thin voice of Healer Hahnemann spoke from right next to him as the man stepped around until he was right at the headpiece of the stretcher. Harry blinked up at him, trying very hard not to give in to the fight-or-flight instinct tugging at him, making his heart beat rapidly in his chest. “I will not hurt you.”

A pair of wrinkly hands came into his view, descending very slowly and deliberately to hover over Harry’s head before the very tips of those papery fingers buried themselves in the dark strands at his temples. Harry had a second to hope that his grandfather was right in trusting this man with his creature status before he felt it.

A tingly sensation that seemed to grow and gather at the point of contact, making Harry clench his hands into tight fists. It didn’t hurt, but it was a very strange feeling. The touch in itself was impersonal, completely professional, but the feeling of the foreign magic that was slowly trickling
into him had Harry on edge. He barely dared to breathe. And then it suddenly rushed into him with one great pulse, away from his temples and spreading throughout his body. Harry’s eyes fluttered close at the sensation, his breath escaping him in a rush as he tried to keep track of the invading magic. He could feel it seep into him, every muscle, every vein, coiling, touching…

“Relax, young one,” the healer’s voice spoke, sounding far away. “Just let it run its course.”

There was no way to truly describe it. The feeling of another’s magic inside of him felt intrusive, waking memories of possession that he normally kept locked away tightly, but Healer Hahnemann’s magic was anything but. It was probing, questing, but it didn’t force its way and that was a good thing. Harry’s own magic was not happy with the situation, he could feel it rising to the perceived challenge, and he wasn’t sure he wanted to hold it back.

A sigh and the magic of the healer took on a soothing quality. It brushed along what felt like somewhere near his racing heart and Harry bit his lip, eyes still closed firmly. Objectively he could say that it was not an uncomfortable feeling having Healer Hahnemann’s magic mapping out his very insides, at least it did not hurt. But the part of Harry that recoiled from touch in general was tense, no, it was pulled taut like a Centaur’s bowstring. And he was not going to think of those memories. His muscles simply would not relax and Harry wasn’t sure he actually wanted them to. It would make him only more vulnerable, unable to react at a moment’s notice. He was pretty certain he would be aching when all was said and done.

“Stop fighting me, you are only going to make this unpleasant for us both.”

Fighting? If the healer thought this was Harry fighting him, he had no idea what he had gotten himself into. Harry was holding onto his magic, managing just barely, trying to stop it from lashing out while his mind was in a quandary, partly knowing he was supposed to let the intrusion happen, partly panicking over it all. He was not hurting him, it was okay, really, he could do this, no, no, he had to get it out, and this was all wrong-

“Hadrian,” his grandfather’s voice suddenly spoke into the strained silence that followed the healer’s statement. “Little one, please.”

Harry concentrated on the gentle voice he had come to associate with the care and strength that was Lord Potter, the man that had taken him in, the man that accepted the very disturbing facts of Harry’s origins no matter what.

“I know you do not have reason to trust in any kind of medical staff, but please trust me on this. Sam does not mean you any harm. Let him do his job, please, trust that I will not lead you wrong.”

He held on for a long minute after that, his own magic coiling and writhing inside, chafing against the healer’s. Then Harry breathed in deeply, made a decision and suddenly everything was over. He had no idea that he had just forced the healer, or rather the healer’s magic, into a diagnostic of his own, thoroughly evaluating the invader’s intention and worth and finally deeming it acceptable.

“Well, now, that was more draining than expected,” said healer spoke up, sounding tired.

When Harry opened his eyes, Samuel Hahnemann was just about to sit down, huffing, in one of the armchairs, but Lord Potter was rushing passed his friend without a second glance to anxiously flutter his huge hands over Harry. Not touching, but desperately wanting to. Harry pushed himself up, giving his grandfather a reassuring half-smile. Well, at least he hoped it came out right, it did feel kinda wobbly.

“I am sincerely sorry, little one,” Lord Potter told him again, still looking so contrite and seemingly
torn between wanting to sweep Harry up and into the safety of his arms and wanting to respect his grandson’s need for independent distance.

“Oh yes, be sorry for the child that nearly fried me with its sheer amount of innate magic,” came the sarcastic and slightly winded comment from the armchair.

Looking over, Harry noticed the healer was leaning heavily in his seat, a bit of sweat beading on his forehead.

“Now, now, Sam,” his grandfather soothed and as Harry glanced up he thought there was a smug glint in those hazel eyes. “Hadrian had no way of knowing what to expect. It must have been…” He trailed off at the glare his friend sent him and Harry thought about apologising, but then the healer sighed before turning back to him, no glare left in place.

Instead the pale eyes of Samuel Hahnemann held a thoughtful quality to them, something obviously having caught his attention. Harry couldn’t help the restless shifting in place.

“So,” the man suddenly said, sitting up straighter. “To my knowledge you came into a creature inheritance on your sixteenth birthday, which might reduce the list of possible creatures that could have awoken in your genes, but not enough to completely deduce the one that actually did. Even seeing you now it only is due to my … quite considerable experience-”

At this point Harry thought the sudden cough his grandfather gave sounded suspiciously like ‘age’. “Experience,” Hahnemann emphasised, “That I still remember what an Elf Owl may look like.”

Harry froze in place for a moment at that revelation. But his grandfather trusted this man, he reminded himself pushing down any burgeoning hysterics. It would be okay.

“I… I thought you already-”

“No, little one,” his grandfather interrupted, sounding amused. “I was aware that such information would be wasted on Sam. He is more than competent enough and would have figured it out anyway as soon as he got a good look at you. So I only provided him with the basic information of you having had a creature inheritance no one had expected.” He smirked over at the slightly preening healer before smiling down at Harry. “Do not worry, he will keep our little secret.”

He couldn’t very well know how much that simple sentence meant to Harry. No, not the sentence in itself, but the phrasing. Lord Potter, his grandfather, had called Harry’s creature ‘our little secret’, not Harry’s alone.

“Yes, yes,” Healer Hahnemann made a flapping motion with his hands. “Moving on.”

He drew his wand from somewhere inside his waistcoat, making Harry twitch, before giving it a flick and having a neat, shimmery writing appear in mid-air. Which, admittedly, did nothing to calm Harry down.

“Now, Hadrian, you see, your body before the inheritance was unable to contain your rapidly growing magical core. This first test showed me the continued strain your own magic was putting you under, resulting in the headaches and nosebleeds you mentioned, but also slowly damaging your inner organs – And considering these readings, those weren’t in the best of conditions to begin with.”

Harry was still staring at the hovering script, trying to blink away memories of dank caves and humongous snakes, but he still noticed the heavy frown suddenly darkening his grandfather’s features. Forcing himself to look back at the healer, Harry tuned into the report of his health.
“Am I correct in the assumption that you received nutritional treatment before and after the inheritance? Yes, yes, I thought so… You have gained sufficient weight during that time to rebuild your strength enough to function and there are signs that some of the previous damage to your organs was magically reversed.”

Harry watched as Healer Hahnemann used his wand to draw out part of the writing from the script and made it sink into a suddenly appearing parchment. Wait, some of the previous damage?

“Still, there is lingering weakness to your bones and organs that, in my humble opinion, does not result from the strain of a too fast growing core.”

The statement was delivered calmly, but the pale eyes strayed back to Harry, assessing, before flicking over to Lord Potter. Harry could feel something massive rising in the room and it took a moment for him to realise that it was the Lord Potter’s magic suddenly pressing down on them all. The healer though looked back to Harry after a second.

“I am aware that this is not an easy topic, young one, and I will not force you to recount anything to me. This is something that should be done with a person of your explicit trust.”

He trailed off for a moment, redirecting his gaze and wand to the still hovering script, and adding more of it to the parchment as though Harry’s silence had confirmed something he had already known. He probably had. Harry for his part was staring dazedly ahead, no longer aware of the heavy magic pressing down on them all or the ozone tinged scent permeating the air in the study. No, he wasn’t noticing or seeing any of it as his mind struggled to keep memories of long, strenuous days and endless nights of hunger pains locked away.

It wasn’t working.

“I assume Madam Pomfrey did the required tests when she picked up on a few things while initially treating you.” The words sounded distant, but Harry absently thought the voice had a little desperate edge to it. “She then presumably put you on a potions regimen to counteract the damage done to your health. But what you do not seem to be aware of, is the fact she only did the most basic treatment.”

Harry blinked. And blinked again. Finally his eyes found Healer Hahnemann again and he even registered the dangerously still form of Lord Potter still hovering over him.

“Now, apart from apparently not advising you to see a specialised healer, she is not truly at fault here. She helped to the best of her abilities, I am sure, and as much as she was able with the restrictions that come with being a school’s medi-witch,” the healer still continued and Harry forced himself to take it all in. “Normally she would have spoken to your guardians to ensure proper treatment that sadly is not covered by the scholarship fund and therefore only available to those with the needed monetary liquidity.” A sigh and headshake. “Yes, it is a dreadful truth that treatment such as is required to correct damage to this extent-”

There was an annoyed snort reminding Harry eerily of that of a Dragon before breathing fire and having the added effect of jolting him from the haze his mind had sunken into.

“Seriously, Sam, could you please desist speaking in medical mumbo-jumbo and simply name it as is?” His grandfather’s voice sounded unusually harsh, making Harry flinch.

He was completely unused to the gentle man even raising his voice, but now… there was something dangerous in Lord Potter’s voice that he seemed to only barely contain. Healer Hahnemann looked up from where he had been stubbornly staring at his parchment and met his old friend’s eyes steadily.
“The treatment required to completely correct the damage resulting from such prolonged lack of proper nourishment, exposure to toxic fumes and the like and what seems to be continued overexertion during vital times of development is rather expensive.”

Fleamont wasn’t a young man anymore. He might not be as…experienced… as his friend Sam, but he was…seasoned… enough to have seen and lived through quite a few horrific things, not the least of that the massacres of Grindelwald’s reign of terror. He had witnessed starving war orphans and mutilated victims of magical and muggle warfare alike. He had seen survivors of torture.

But as disturbing and heartbreaking these experiences had been, he had always had the protection of emotional distance.

Even when he went out to feed muggle orphans and cast surreptitious warming and protection charms during the winter of 1940, even when he saw the frozen bodies of two small children still holding onto each other in the bombed out streets… it had been a different kind of shock and hurt and rage. Venturing outside the Wizarding World during what the muggles called World War II had been explicitly forbidden for the coveted pure-blooded members of society. Of course that was one of the reasons Fleamont went out in the first place, completely unprepared for war ridden London. He had returned home another man, but he at least had had a place to return to, a place where everything was still whole. Grindelwald never truly touched British soil, after all. So he had been able to distance himself.

This though, this was family. And it wasn’t caused by something morally destroying as a war that might have provided some kind of vague excuse. No, this had happened to a child, a child of his family, during a time of supposed peace and he did not see Hadrian’s former guardians suffer from poverty. But then again, he had never asked, had he?

“The main issue you are suffering from - apart from the weakened bones, that is - is called a ‘Chemical Pneumonitis’ by the muggles and had you not been a wizard, your symptoms would have been more than a little uncomfortable. We are talking about a form of lung inflammation, after all (*),” Sam was just explaining to an utterly stunned looking Hadrian. No, not stunned. More… accepting? Numb. “There are different possible causes, but… well, in your case it seems to be a reaction to prolonged exposure to a kind of toxic fumes.” Wait, what?

Fleamont straightened where he had been standing rooted to the floor in an attempt to cage his raging magic, but now he was momentarily distracted by his confused curiosity. Where in Morgana’s name would a magical child be exposed to any kind of toxic fumes, outside the potions lab, that is?

“What is it you are trying to say?”

He was aware that his voice sounded strangely flat, but he could not bring himself to care. Not when all he could think about was the gas bombs muggles seemed so utterly fond of. But that was not possible, was it? The war, even that of the muggles, had ended long ago. Hadrian had not lived through any of it. Or was there a similar war in the future his little grandson came from? Had he perchance even experienced similar horrors to those Fleamont himself had witnessed?

“Well, in the muggle world a common household exposure occurs when a person mixes household ammonia with bleach.”

The words were said offhandedly, Sam obviously only mentioning the muggle variant to be precise and already gearing up to name the more likely, magical counterpart. That was when a gasp of realisation made both men turn back to Hadrian. Hadrian who was still sitting on the stretcher, looking utterly pale and fragile and very, very tense. His grandson who seemed to have made a connection that still eluded Fleamont.
“Little one?”

He turned to the child, noting once again the incredible difference in height and stature between James and Hadrian, and hoping to Merlin that there was no correlation between that and what Sam had detected during his scan. But there was, wasn’t there? The exposure to toxic fumes had had him derailed for a moment there, but Sam had also mentioned prolonged lack of proper nourishment and continued overexertion during vital times of development. It would have been so easy to explain things like that away with war. But looking at Hadrian, Fleamont knew. He had known before, really, had seen it in all the little things, reactions, and behaviour. He had known, but he had had still hope.

“They were always stored in my cu- …my room,” Hadrian said as if that explained everything, blinking a few times rapidly.

“What was?”

“Cleaning products, Henry,” Sam interjected, looking very closely at the child. “He has been exposed to the fumes of cleansers containing bleach and other chemicals in unventilated accommodations for at least a few years of his childhood.” (*)

Harry had known his childhood had been shit. Not just the ‘yeah-well-could-have-been-better’, but well and truly shit. He had not received a loving touch from the moment he had been left on a doorstep during November of all times. There were flashes of his early years, before primary school, that he remembered sometimes. Back then, he had still actively tried gaining some positive attention or even acknowledgment from his relatives that was not scorn, but even then he could not remember trying for physical closeness. He must have stopped reaching out for anyone to comfort him long before that. He only realised his stunted behaviour when he came to Hogwarts, though, when he had to live with roommates and suddenly had friends that initiated physical contact.

He had also known, at least since he had been allowed to go to primary school, that the way his relatives treated him – the lack of proper food, clothes, presents… pretty much anything, really – even though there was no money issue, was not how it was supposed to be. Growing up like that, having never known any different, he had assumed it was because of him. Because he was a freak. That and his relatives had made it a point to make sure he knew he was not wanted, only taken in from the ‘goodness of their hearts’. Yeah, right.

So, his childhood had been shit. He had thought he had accepted that.

But he had never thought about how very irresponsible it had been of his aunt to let him, or well, make him do all the cleaning with those chemical products. Had it actually been only irresponsible or had it been calculated? The idea struck him harder than he would have expected. After all these years… the thought that Aunt Petunia might actually had wanted him to be harmed like that… Harry put an abrupt stop to that train of thought. He could not afford to deal with this in his current company.

A heavy hand on his shoulder made him not only sag a little, but also flinch. The flash of hurt, and then worse, understanding, on his grandfather’s face, made him straighten up so fast it was a bit painful. He was not about to let Lord Potter see any more weakness, or hurt his grandfather with pulling away when the man clearly was trying to give Harry a bit of comfort. It was like it had been with Sirius, his godfather as well as his boyfriend. After flinching away the very first time that his godfather had pulled him into a hug, he had never done it again. Harry had made it a point to return the affection, not wanting the man to think it had anything to do with him or his status as escaped convict. It had not been completely the same with his boyfriend, and yes, Harry by now made a clear difference between the two. But it pretty much came down to the same thing: He not only allowed
the touch, but he returned it and welcomed it. And lately he even had been actively seeking it out. Sirius had always been his safe haven. And his grandfather was fast becoming another of those people he felt safe with.

“Hadrian, please do not worry,” his grandfather was saying, making Harry frown in confusion. “We will get any and all treatment you require and we will bring you back to full health.” The look in the man’s hazel eyes was steely and allowed no objection. Still, the healer had said-

“But I’m fine,” Harry managed, trying very hard not to let the scoff in the background derail him. “You don’t need to spend so much on me, I don’t even have any problems of this pneu- …pno.”

“Chemical Pneumonitis, young one, and yes, you do have health issues. The fact that you are not even aware can most likely be attributed partly to your remarkable magic and partly to you having grown accustomed to the symptoms,” Healer Hahnemann interrupted. “Now, be silent and hold still for a moment. I need to clear your lungs of any kind of contamination before the basic potion to repair the damage may be ingested.”

Next to Harry, Lord Potter let out a deep chuckle before taking back a step.

“Do as he says, little one, it is the easiest and fastest way out.” He winked at Harry, distracting him just enough that the sudden prickly feeling in his lungs came as a surprise. He had not seen the healer raise his wand again.

“Right, right,” Hahnemann muttered to himself, making more notes on the parchment. “The potion is going to make you sleepy for a while, so you had best sleep it off. It is still early anyway.” He started ruminating in a hefty looking leather bag that had not been there a moment before while continuing to talk to either Harry or just the room at large. It was hard to tell. “You will require a few more treatments like these, but I will have to brew a new stock first. These are not your general potions and, as I already said, they are considered quite expensive, which would be why the school matron did not administer any. She really should have recommended seeing a specialist though… Now, just to give you an overview: I just cleared your lungs of general contamination like dust etcetera, the basic potion will get rid of any inflammation and any follow-up potions will help build up and regrow damaged tissue. If we reach a certain level, I am positive your magic will do the rest.”

Making an ‘ah-ha!’ kind of sound, Healer Hahnemann finally emerged from his bag, holding a vicious looking potion in hand. He did not give it to Harry though.

“First things first, I need you to lie down once again. We still need to assess the health of your magic.”

Harry grimaced, but did as he was told. Easiest and fastest way out and all that. Then there were the papery fingertips at his temples again and Harry very firmly told his magic to hold still. Surprisingly, the scan-diagnostic-thingy didn’t take half as long this time and Harry had barely time to register the touch of foreign magic to his own before it was already retreating.

“Well, young one. You will be happy to know that your magical core is in good condition, astoundingly no strain whatsoever, and only very light scarring.”

That made not only Harry frown. Lord Potter came back to stand at his side and this time Harry hurried to get down from the stretcher, not intending to get trapped into another scan or similar stuff.

“Why would there be scarring at all, Sam? Is that not something only exposure to Dementors or direct attacks on his magic would cause? The attack on Diagon is still too fresh to have scarred already, if there had been damage it would be a disturbance in is magic, would it not?”
Harry tried to hide the wince, he really did. Lord Potter had made sure to question them all about Diagon Alley and if they had been in direct…proximity to any of the Dementors. Sirius had been scanned for disturbances in his magic, but Harry had somehow managed to slip past. Or maybe his scan had been done while he had been unconscious at the hospital? Either way, he was pretty sure it would not have been the Diagon Alley incident that caused the scarring to his… magic? Magical core? But he so not wanted to talk about his other experiences with the beings of fear.

“Ah yes, see…,” Healer Hahnemann made himself comfortable in one of the armchairs again, brandishing his parchment, and looking for all the world as if he was about to go on another tangent. He probably was. “With the amount of physical damage young Hadrian sustained over the years I expected a constant strain of his magic, especially considering it was still developing at the time. But these readings show a well of perfectly calm if a bit defensive magic.”

At the mention of the defensiveness of his magic Harry had the decency to blush a bit, thinking back on how he had apparently ‘nearly fried’ the healer magically during his first assessment.

“There is slight scarring to your core that hints at repeated near draining,” the healer listed. Add sharp glances from both men. “Yet the overall condition is exceedingly positive. I can only assume that the boost you received with your inheritance took care of any strain there might have been, because… honestly, child, I have not seen a magical potential reading on this scale for over a fifty years.”

Chapter End Notes

I just... I dunno? Tried to keep the abuse as close to canon as possible?

(*) Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) was a German physician, best known for creating the system of alternative medicine called ‘homeopathy’ which I thought would make sense if he was a wizard. The OC character in this chapter is supposed to be the original Hahnemann’s (great-)grandson, born around 1866, making him about 111. By way of comparison, Dumbledore was born 1881, would be 96 at this point in the story.

(*) Chemical pneumonia can develop after inhalation of toxic vapors and fumes from household products containing bleach and chlorine, gases produced during welding or smelting, solvents, gasoline, kerosene, pesticides, dust from grains, fertilizers or smoke from fires. So considering Harry’s childhood with all the cleaning and gardening and living in an unventilated cupboard…

(*) Lord Potter’s full name is Fleamont Henry Potter – at least in this story. I know his father was named Henry, so…
In which there could have been a New Year's Ball

Chapter Notes

...but then there was a moustache.

I made you wait another month so here’s another humongous chapter for you. It jumps a bit through scenes of the final day at Potter Manor, but we learn quite a lot in most of those scenes. Oh and: QUIDDITCH!

Special little something just for Koi19 hidden somewhere here…

TRIGGER WARNING:
mentions of (child) abuse of different kinds and the consequences of such in medical terms

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sensation was soft and tender, carefully coaxing him from sleep to the world of the waking. He wasn’t sure he wanted to wake just yet, he was comfortably warm, and everything was just so soothing. Like the fingers carding through his hair. Oh. Someone was stroking his hair, feathers and all.

Harry blinked large green eyes open slowly, letting them flutter to adjust to the light he expected to pour into the room and sear his overly sensitive eyes. Cool winter sunshine could be seen streaming through the far window, but it was dimmed by a magical veil of sorts. Hm…

“Good morning, cherub,” his grandmother’s voice crooned, making Harry turn his head just enough to look at her. “You look like you enjoyed that little nap of yours.” (*)

Blinking again, Harry watched her sweet smile widen as he tried to remember what had happened. His limbs felt all heavy and relaxed and he couldn’t detect any kind of injury that would warrant him waking up like this. And why was Lady Potter at his bedside?

“Do you feel quite alright, Hadrian?” She questioned, a bit of concern lacing her tone of voice. “I made sure you could rest undisturbed so the potion would have all the time it needed to work its magic.”

Potion? …Ah. Right.

Abruptly sitting up, Harry casually dislodged the hand in his hair as he looked around. He was in the guestroom they had given him at Potter Manor and as he watched, the magical veil dissolved from in front of the window, letting clear midday sunlight stream inside. He must have been out longer than Healer Hahnemann said he would be, it had been still quite early when he had given him that nasty concoction to … what was it? Some basic potion to start …errr… the healing process on his lungs or something? His lungs, damaged through the carelessness of his relatives. The thought still stung, even though he really shouldn’t be surprised. He had known the Dursleys despised him, hadn’t he? Right? But it wasn’t so simple. Even after all this time, there had still been some part of a small boy sitting in the darkness of a cupboard under the stairs in Harry holding onto the hope that maybe… one day…
The hand in his hair was back again, making Harry flinch at the unsuspected touch. His grandmother took it in stride, standing from her perch on the mattress and shooing him out of his comfortable blanket nest.

“Up now, dear, and freshen up a bit. We will have an early lunch since you missed out on breakfast and you will take a nutrient potion to counteract the missed calories. No, there is no way around that. Yes, you will eat dessert too. Now, shoo.”

And just like this she closed the door to the bathroom behind him, leaving Harry to stare a bit horrified at the image of his rumpled hair in the mirror. He went about the motions, making use of the facilities, and washing his hands and face before he even dared to tackle that hairy issue. As Harry tried to detangle some of the worst knots that somehow had developed especially near the longer feathers, his thoughts kept wandering back to the medical assessment.

He had known his treatment at the Dursleys’ hands wasn’t right, but he had accepted the consequences of a scrawny body and probably even worse eyesight than he had been predisposed to genetically. Maybe ‘accepted’ wasn’t the correct term; it had been more along the lines of resignation. But never had he thought there would be consequences like this pneumo-something. His very own blood relatives despised him enough to risk permanent damage like that to his lungs and he just couldn’t wrap his head around it. Was he really so unlovable?

The part of him that was no longer Harry Potter, but Hadrian Moore, a part that was steadily growing, reared up in defence at this. No, he was not completely unlovable! He had a family now, a real one, and they accepted him and cared for him so no, he was not going to fall back into the pattern of dismissing his own well-being. He was worth the care, he deserved to be treated like an actual human being. The Dursleys had never done that and it had been wrong. It was not because of him, it was not because of any fault of his. It was their mistake. He hadn’t deserved such treatment.

Nodding resolutely to himself, Harry continued on with his internal pep talk until he had to give up on the mat of hair sprouting from his head. He went out into the bedroom to maybe change into a fresh jumper before lunch, but was derailed by the sight that met him. There his grandmother was sat at the nice little reading nook near the big window, beckoning him towards her with a brush in her hands.

James made a wide arc-like slashing motion with his wand, going about the whole thing with a lot more vigour than was probably appropriate. He couldn’t help it though; his mind was angrily replaying a conversation he had had with his dad just this morning, making him want to try his hand at a lot more destructive magic than shielding spells. Yet, here he was, forcing himself to smile and goof around, because it was Hadrian teaching them. And right about now there probably wasn’t a thing James wouldn’t do for Hadrian.

That talk… Merlin’s scraggly beard, he couldn’t remember ever having a conversation this serious with his father – not even when discussing his future duties as Lord Potter! And to think he would never have been privy to most of those details had he not been the boy’s father in some convoluted, headache-inducing way. Frankly, the conversation he had been called to… it had made James feel sick. What their Bambi apparently had gone through… and what it implied to James’ own future! No wonder his father had wanted to talk to him after that healer appointment brought to light these… things.

He had been talking pleasantly with his mother about the very boy he would learn quite a few things that day, Padfoot lurking at the table in a grumpy half-doze and Moony chasing down Wormy, presumably to prevent him from getting lost in the manor again. He had just finished his retelling of them helping Hadrian through his inheritance when a house-elf popped in. It was one of the smaller
ones – Dippy? Dappy? …Dumpy? – calling ‘Little Master’ to ‘Master’s Study’. That had piqued Sirius’ interest, because they all knew the study was where Hadrian had been called to, to have his healer appointment. But trying to interrogate the elf had been waylaid by his mother, so James had gone along.

He still wasn’t sure how he felt about that.

The atmosphere in his father’s study was heavy when James arrived. Looking around briefly as he executed a sharp bow to the family healer, he noticed the very boy this appointment had been for wasn’t present. He didn’t have to ask though, as his dad spoke up the moment James had taken a seat in one of the armchairs that were so liberally laced with cushioning charms sitting on them made one feel like floating on fluffy clouds.

“He’s sleeping now,” his lordly dad said, face uncharacteristically pinched looking, “The potion he had to take made him sleepy, but he should be up in an hour or two.”

James inclined his head to show his understanding. His dad’s tense posture was very much at odds with his words; were this a formal occasion he would not talk about anything family related, at least not unprompted. But then again, Healer Hahnemann had been a close friend to James’ grandfather, the former Lord Potter, and his friendship had seamlessly gone over to the new Lord Potter when James’ father had taken over the mantle. Yes, that guy was really that old. Creepy, but kinda cool, if you asked James. He sometimes wondered if Healer Hahnemann would become his friend when his dad…

“Your father insisted on calling you to take part in the discussion of young Hadrian’s health, although he did not deem it important to divulge the reason behind his insistence,” said healer quipped, clearly vexed with the situation and James could not really fault him for that.

Why would his dad call him to talk about someone else’s health – especially with the aforementioned someone not present?

“Yes, well,” hid dad started, but then interrupted himself with a weary sigh. Something was so not right here, but James couldn’t for the life of him- …wait.

“It’s more than missed vaccinations, isn’t it?”

He wasn’t sure why exactly he even asked. They, the Marauders, had long ago deduced that Hadrian’s upbringing had been along the lines of Sirius’, only the muggle variant. Where his best mate had been tormented with hexes, jinxes and even curses on the odd occasion, Hadrian would have been exposed to whatever muggles, who were as …morally and emotionally stunted as Sirius’ parents, did. Moony would have probably been better at pointing out the shortcomings of Hadrian’s treatment by his former guardians, but whatever it was, it had continued on into the Wizarding World if Hadrian’s lack of knowledge of basic culture and actual medical necessities was anything to go by.

Healer Hahnemann gave a sigh of his own.

“Vaccinations as well?” He asked, giving the Lord Potter a look that James silently dubbed as ‘the stink eye’, as out of place as that sounded in relation to the elder gentleman. “And I suppose you just forgot to mention those, or no, let me guess, you would have mentioned the need for proper vaccinations as some afterthought when I would have been already all packed and ready to go, right? Seriously, Henry, sometimes…”
As hilarious it was to see his dad squirm under the healer’s indignant glare, James got the impression the two adults were actually stalling.

“That bad?” He asked quietly, suddenly very unsure if he actually wanted to know.

His shield flickered and suddenly James had the intense need to sing opera. He didn’t, though, as he recognised his best mate’s favoured hex, instead he simply glared over at Sirius unimpressed. If he even so much as opened his mouth now, he would inevitably start warbling each and every word – and James was a horrible singer, no, he really would not want to expose his friends to that. Again.

“It’s your grip,” a soft voice said and a small hand reached into his line of sight to correct said grip on his wand.

Looking down at Hadrian’s hand, James was overcome once again with the realisation how very different Hadrian’s hands were to his own. Actually, he thought, studying the pale digits now helping position his own, it wasn’t just his hands. Everything about Hadrian was so damn frail and delicate and-

The opera hex on James was broken the second the small, pale hands made skin contact. And Hadrian didn’t even have his wand out.

“Now,” Healer Hahnemann said, clearing his throat and drawing his healer persona around him like a cloak, “To put together a credible file, we need to discuss which of my findings are to make their way into said, official file as I am sure you intend to keep the ‘public’ information on your nephew limited.”

He looked at Lord Potter as he spoke, but James focused on the healer – or rather, on the parchment in his hands. Those were the results of the appointment, he knew, Healer Hahnemann had the habit of keeping his diagnostic results on a simple conjured scroll… that is, simple in the way that only the healer or the diagnosed patient could access said scroll of parchment. Of course James also knew each and every magical citizen had an official medical file, accessible for all medical staff treating one, but if you went to a private healer – one such as Healer Hahnemann – and if you just so happened to be friends with said healer… It was very well in the realm of possibilities to dictate which of the healer’s results would actually make it onto public record. There was a public file for each member of the Potter family, and then there was a private scroll of parchment residing in the hands of Healer Hahnemann that contained all results ever procured by any diagnostic spell outside of school.

“Obviously we will need to provide adequate vaccination as soon as possible,” his dad stated, still looking pinched, but keeping whatever was brewing beneath the surface well in check. “But for the sake of privacy and to avoid any questioning into his parentage, the official file will state normal, regular vaccination at the required ages.” He took a deep, calming breath and turned back to his son. “James, the things you will be privy to in a minute,” he paused, carefully tracing his son’s features with a concerned gaze. “You have always been a clever lad, which is why I know you will draw conclusions pertaining yourself when you hear about Hadrian’s health or lack thereof.”

James looked back into the identical hazel eyes of his father, realising that Lord Potter was trying to allude to his relation to Hadrian and time travel and all that without actually saying it out loud in front of Healer Hahnemann. And it hit him. Whatever he would hear in a moment, it would be bad and it would be on him, because he was Hadrian’s father, even if it had been his future self that
apparently let all this happen to Hadrian. Sure, he understood that his future self had died early, had
died when Hadrian had still been very small, but still-

“James,” his father’s quiet voice broke through his rapid thoughts, hazel eyes looking at him
knowingly. “I do not believe for one moment that any of it was your fault.”

“Yes, well, if you are quite finished talking in riddles,” a certain healer interrupted the suddenly very
emotional moment. “First of my findings: Malnutrition.”

Malnutrition resulting from prolonged starvation, most likely continuously over years, a decade or
more. In combination with apparently very low sun exposure, also over a prolonged span of time and
it all ended with brittle bones and strained inner organs. Well, the healer had had some fancy medical
term for the condition, but to James it came down to one thing: His son had been so severely
mistreated that his body had suffered what would have been permanent damage had he not been a
wizard. In fact, Hadrian’s magic had prevented him from suffering most of the common symptoms
that apparently came with such a condition.

And it didn’t end there!

Healer Hahnemann had went on to explain the damage done to Hadrian’s lungs and where it
originated from. So Hadrian now had weak bones, damaged lungs and had he not had his creature
inheritance, he would most likely have been half blind and suffering from partial numbness in his
extremities. There were more symptoms he could possibly have suffered, but as soon as James had
heard his son’s magic had prevented the worst of it and that all the damage done could eventually be
reversed, he had kind of shut down.

It was too much.

He only resurfaced when Hahnemann focused back on the actual findings of his scan and James’
interest – and horror – was piqued once again.

“Now, the heavy scar tissue does not pose a health issue, but-” Healer Hahnemann did not get to
finish his sentence as Lord Potter interrupted him abruptly.

“The what?” If James had not been equally as horrified he would have found the near squeaky tone
of his dad’s voice more than a little funny.

“Scar tissue, Henry,” the healer repeated carefully, obviously realising that his companions had not
been aware of said scars. “I can not specify the cause of most of those, I would have to look at them
individually, but they are a mixed variety of mundane and magical causes.”

James blinked. On top of all those health issues his son was also heavily scarred. He couldn’t recall
ever seeing any of those scars, but then again… oh. Yeah, now that he thought about it, Hadrian
always took care to change in the bathroom and considering the season there was no reason to
wear short sleeves… But he had worn t-shirts on occasion, the very first that day when they had
accompanied him from the hospital wing up to Gryffindor Tower. There had been no scars on his
arms. Maybe they were located someplace else? Was Hadrian in the habit of using Glamours?
James wouldn’t put it past him, he certainly had the magical strength to keep something like that
going for longer periods of time…

“His blood though…” Healer Hahnemann’s words once again pulled both Potters out of their
gloomy thoughts. “There I would have to look at it more closely as well, maybe take a sample if possible, but from my initial scan it would seem like... well...” The healer shifted in his seat, looking at his audience for a moment until focusing on Lord Potter. “It would seem as though that child has a near perfect immunity to any kind of biological poison.”

Now that was a strange one. James had still been mulling over the blood thing, even wondering if it had anything to do with Hadrian’s creature heritage, when Healer Hahnemann was already finishing up his report.

“It is likely that he will always be on the short side, the damage done in the deciding years is just too extensive to both heal and catch up to where he should be. It is either catching up in height or health and I do think the latter is preferable. Though he should gain a few inches once the treatment is complete and his body and magic can focus on developing the way they should. Then again, considering his Elf Owl heritage, it is a likely possibility that he would have been just as delicate had he always been healthy. I still remember-”

Harry flicked his wand, demonstrating the more advanced version of the shield spell the Marauders had been working on. He had been astounded when they all – well, minus Pettigrew, but Harry didn’t particularly care – had picked up on the basic shield spell much faster than his friends in the DA had last year. Really, Remus, James, and Sirius were kind of incredible. He had noticed it earlier, of course, but had been too wrapped up in his own struggles with his new situation to have it really register. Harry had been behind in class, which was only logical considering he had started a week or two late, but going through classes with the Marauders and finding study buddies in Lily and Alice had shown him how much he actually lacked in the basics outside of Defence.

The Marauders generally did not care much for the syllabus. Remus did, yes, he was studious and all, but not in a Hermione-like fashion. He only showed his sharp intellect in their written assignments and when directly asked in class to answer a question. Sirius and James could not care less for either kind of class work and still somehow held above average marks. And now Harry knew why: They were simply brilliant, picking up new spells quick and without much fuss. It was rather frustrating, especially in Transfiguration when Harry himself struggled to even understand the theory.

Watching them go at the defence spells like that... it was nostalgic in a way. Last year, when teaching the DA, his friends had all been really enthusiastic, united in the desire to one up Umbridge. But they hadn’t been as easy to teach as the Marauders. What Sirius, James, and Remus might lack in enthusiasm they made up with sheer prowess. Though they didn’t have Harry’s natural intuition for the subject, they had the background in all the other subjects to help bridge gaps. They were also definitely awesome to watch. Training with them really was like the DA all over again...

Only, Harry thought dryly, there was no way he would call it DA as in ‘Dumbledore’s Army’ ever again. He was not blindsided enough anymore to devote even that much to the old man. He would gladly take any training the headmaster was willing to provide, but he would no longer make any promises. Yes, he would most likely end up fighting No-Nose, but not in Albus Dumbledore’s name or even on the old man’s order. There was, Harry had learned, a difference between blindly following and deciding to follow.

But whatever they would end up calling this group, it was true that this generation needed as much defence training as his own, original one. Here there was no fear from a former war that might have pushed them into at least dedication. Those that had lived through Grindelwald’s reign were now either old or jaded or both, no role models for those that would evidently end up fighting Voldemort.
On top of that Grindelwald had barely touched British soil and any other dark lord or lady or even Goblin War lay too far in the past to truly influence the students Hogwarts housed at the moment. And Harry knew, it always came back to Hogwarts.

So right now whatever defence… association they could form would only be made up of the Marauders, preferably without Pettigrew, Harry added with a dirty look into the rat’s direction. But that was another can of flobberworms completely. A slightly opened can, he admitted to himself, eying Pettigrew with a frown. Something was different in the way the guy acted and not only around Harry, but he couldn’t really pinpoint what it was.

He heard James shout in delight as he managed a fully formed shield that deflected Sirius’ tickling hex and Harry’s chest ached dully as he looked over. He smiled sadly.

For the last months Harry had more or less actively avoided thinking about his friends. In the beginning the dull ache in his chest had been accompanied with a well of righteous anger, the ugly feeling of betrayal eating away at all the positive memories he had of his friends. Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Neville, Luna. They had all left him, abandoned him when he needed them the most. Not even a single letter had reached him the summer after fifth year, after his godfather died. He had been completely locked away and cut off from the Wizarding World, everyone and their kneazle. But when the isolation went on, the guilt started washing over him in waves.

It was no wonder they cut ties with him, ignored his letters even when he tried to warn the Order about the things he saw in his visions of the Dark Lord. No, it was only natural that they would leave the one that had led them into danger head on. He didn’t deserve the trust they had put into him.

So when Remus came and whisked him away and everything started to change so rapidly until Harry found himself in the past with an actual family and in lo- …and crushing hard on the very person guilt had torn him up over, he had tried not to think about it all anymore. He pushed it away and anyway there had been so much going on. Getting his head wrapped around the fact that he was friends with his parents, his <teenede> parents, and then the whole creature business… Harry had tried, consciously or not, not to think about all the hurt that came with memories of friends now far away and even more unreachable than before. It was so much easier to hold onto the anger.

But now… now that he was watching the Marauders try their hands at shield spells under his instruction, he felt his chest ache all over again.

Now, who had left who? He hadn’t even given his friends a chance to explain their behaviour over the summer, not that they ever tried. But maybe he could have found a way to finally get a reaction from them when he went and lived with Remus? Why had he not even tried, why had he never asked Remus what he knew about it all? And now he would never know, because even if he found a way ‘back to the future’, Harry knew he would not take it. He didn’t want to leave here and now. He did not want to leave the life he had found here.

“And remember, boys,” Lady Potter said once again, distractedly tugging a delicate glove over her hand and all the way up to above her elbow, “No alcohol this time, not even a butterbeer. You all had enough of that yesterday.”

Her scolding tone was softened by the warm look in her pretty dark blue eyes, but even if it hadn’t been – Harry found himself listening attentively and not minding in the least. It was a novel feeling to have someone care enough to forbid him from doing potentially harmful things and it elicited a soft warm glow in his chest. Next to him the others all made more or less agreeing noises, but the Lady Potter for some reason was now smiling at Harry as if she had read his thoughts – which he hoped she hadn’t, he really hadn’t thought about avoiding eye contact ever since coming to Potter Manor.
Well, at least not for the reason of avoiding potential Legilimency.

“Your mother and I will be back late, or rather in the early hours of the morrow,” Lord Potter added, shrugging his broad shoulders uncomfortably in the elaborate dress robes he was wearing, a matching set to the intricate gown of his wife. “I realise you cannot wait to indulge in the freedom that comes with escaping the annual New Year’s Ball, but I wish to find the manor still standing upon our return.” He eyed them sardonically. “Do make sure to keep the indulgence at a manageable level for the house-elves,” he added with a snort that clearly indicated he did not truly believe his words would be taken seriously.

And considering who he was talking to, that assumption probably was not as far fetched as it sounded. Harry watched a little wide-eyed as his grandparents left through the Floo and followed the others out into the hall, mulling over the fluttering feeling Lord Potter’s casual address and reference to his wife as their mother, not just James’ mother, had elicited. He stumbled to a halt quite literally when he ran headlong into Remus’ back and got caught around the waist by his boyfriend. Pettigrew’s snickers in the background didn’t even register.

“Ah, freedom,” Sirius lamented dramatically, drawing Harry close in a one-armed hug and gesturing widely with his free arm. “How ever shall we celebrate our escape from that re-occurring torture the unworthy old people call a New Year’s Ball?”

“Sorry, can’t sympathize, guys,” Remus answered dryly as they entered the grand entrance hall, “Never had to go there, in fact, I believe the general attendees would call me unworthy of sharing their illustrious gathering.”

He did not sound miffed by that statement and the shadows that often overcame Remus’ features when he talked about the limitations that came with being a werewolf weren’t present either… which Harry took to meaning that him never attending the New Year’s Ball had a different reason altogether.

“Of course they would,” Pettigrew stated like it was the most obvious thing in the world and Remus shouldn’t even have to speculate about it. “You’re the son of a Halfblood and a muggle,” he continued and Harry stared at him, wondering if he was the only one that registered the derisive tone he used when talking about Remus’ parentage.

There was a bout of silence which seemed to notify Pettigrew that his words had garnered more attention than he had probably expected them to. Harry thought he could actually see the rat stop and go over his own words in his head once again, before his eyes suddenly bugged out of his head in a decidedly frog-like manner.

“I- I mean… that’s what the atten-attun- …the people there would say. They’re always rich uppity Purebloods, right?”

James raised an eyebrow at his friend and for a moment Harry wondered if this was finally it. Had Pettigrew slipped up one time too often? When James whipped out his wand, Pettigrew squeaked, the Marauder leader made a complicated movement… and a moustache appeared beneath his nose. A really fat, very fake looking moustache. Harry blinked. And James turned elegantly on his heel and descended in an overly deep bow, posture all proper and very much stiff.

“My Lords and Ladies,” he intoned in a high voice, accent more posh than any Malfoy, “Welcome to the annual New Year’s Ball of Wizarding Britain’s Society for the Preservation of Magical Heritage. It is my utmost pleasure to-”

They would never know what James deemed to be his ‘utmost pleasure’ because Remus broke out
into laughter, quickly followed by a nervous sounding Pettigrew and Harry felt his own mouth twitch. James came up out of his deep bow and winked at him, before turning swiftly once again and addressing Sirius – who seemed to have expected him to do just that as he had assumed a similar posture: back straight, left arm behind his back in an almost 90 degree angle and right hand above his heart.

“How dost thou, Heir Black?” James intoned pompously, sketching a shallow bow once again.

“Ah Heir Potter, how fares?” Sirius promptly answered, giving a curt bow of his own.

Harry blinked again. James’ moustache was quivering. But it wasn’t over yet as James turned and addressed him now, doing the whole posture and bow thing again before extending his right hand, palm up.

“Young Mistress, what cheer?” (*)

Harry stared at the hand of his father for a long moment, then raised his eyes to the twinkling hazel that met his own in obvious amusement and maybe, just maybe, Harry let his magic poke a little sharply at James moustache-clad nose when he smiled back innocently.

Later they were lounging in the family room, a fire going, and different sweets wrappings strewn all around them. Sirius had his feet up on the coffee table and his boyfriend’s head in his lap. He was itching to run his hands through those black locks, but Hadrian was adamant about keeping the intricate plait Lady Potter had done his hair in. Considering that none of them, Hadrian included, was yet capable of actually doing more than brushing with hair of that length… well, Sirius could do his own hair up in a low ponytail or even a knot if he felt like it, but then again, he was a Black. His hair was perfect no matter what, he didn’t really need to know how to plait or whatever. Though, really, he adored his Hadrian’s hair just the way it was. Did that boy even realise how adorable he looked all fluffed up?

“Now, now, Honourable Heir Black,” Remus drawled from across the couch where he was lazily ensconced in one of the huge wingback chairs, “You wouldn’t compromise the young… Lady’s [enter snicker here] virtue, now would you?”

The words had Prongs’ head swivel faster than a bloodthirsty bludger and Sirius found himself staring balefully over at his furry friend. That comment was so not needed.

“What’s with all that Heir-Lady-stuff anyway?” A sleepy voice asked and Sirius blinked down at his lovely boyfriend.

Hm. Apparently Hadrian not being raised a wizard or even a Potter also meant he was completely unaware of his own status - and that of basically a third of the wizarding population which just so happened to run the government and all important businesses. If he hadn’t known better, Sirius would have thought someone had actively tried to keep Hadrian ignorant. But then again… did he actually know better than that? Chancing a glance over at his best mate (and being subsequently very much relieved that the evil eye and possible retribution of a cautious father had been averted for the moment), he decided to give Hadrian an impromptu lesson on wizarding society.

“There are quite a few wizarding titles, Bambi,” he started, going for casual and hoping his boyfriend wouldn’t close up on them again when confronted with his lack of knowledge. “The general populace wouldn’t use them ’cause they either can’t obtain them or don’t even come into contact with those who can and do.”
Bright, jewel-toned eyes looked up at him and he felt the slight tensing of his love’s form, but Hadrian nodded after a moment, beckoning him to continue.

“Well, for example, there are the inherited titles. Those the general populace can’t obtain ‘cause they are hereditary,” he continued, glancing up at his friends to see all of them following his explanation. “They are the titles of nobility such as Lord, Lady and Heir. That would be the illustrious people making up the attendees of the New Year’s Ball tonight, though probably only a certain percentage of those,” he added with a glower, not elaborating on that specific part. “Following them are the titles of achievement, those actually can be obtained by pretty much everyone who puts in the right amount of dedication.”

“And money,” Remus added, sounding a bit disdainful. “Titles of achievement are gained through achievement, obviously, but to achieve certain things in order to gain certain titles, it often takes quite the amount of money.” He shifted a bit in his seat as he fell into his lecturing mode. “If we’re talking professors or healers for example, they would need to pay a lot of tuition during their different studies before ever reaching their goal.”

“Their goal being to achieve the title of Professor or Healer?” Hadrian questioned softly, but with clear interest. Good. He was following and absorbing the information.

“Right,” Rems nodded at their Bambi. “So where you would address someone as Lord Potter if that is his inherited title, you could also address him as Healer Potter if he were one and if you were addressing him in matters of healing.”

Hadrian blinked, but still seemed to follow the explanation. Sirius noticed Peter taking on a far away look, clearly already lost to them, but he couldn’t find it in himself to care. This was about his Hadrian, if Peter had a problem… well, that was his problem.

“Then there are the titles of respect,” James injected, drawing everyone’s attention to where he was lounging, feet up on a side table. “Like ‘Madame’ or ‘Monsieur’ as French is still seen as ‘chic’ but also very proper. It’s why every pureblood heir has to suffer through learning French.”

“What Prongs is trying to tell you,” Sirius continued, “Is that you can add a title of respect to someone’s name if they don’t have either a title of nobility or a title of achievement. It’s a signal that you personally respect someone specifically.”

Hadrian seemed to mull that over, still residing comfortably with his head in Sirius’ lap. Then he turned those enchanting eyes back up and asked:

“So calling our teachers at Hogwarts ‘Professor’ is giving them a title of achievement? But they aren’t actually all professors, I mean… that one - what’s her name? – teaching Muggle Studies sure as hell has no idea what she’s talking about and… and I don’t think…” He babbled a bit to himself, clearly thinking of teachers he remembered and Sirius wondered briefly what Hogwarts was like where his love originally came from. “And what about Madam Pomfrey? Shouldn’t she be called ‘Matron Pomfrey’ or huh… is she a healer?”

Sirius chuckled at the cute confused frown marring their Bambi’s face. Yes, wizarding titles could be ridiculously complicated, there always was an exception to every rule, and some simply didn’t make sense. Remus apparently couldn’t wait to geek out and go into professor-mode again, so Sirius leaned back and made himself more comfortable, one hand resting in his love’s wild hair.

“Back in your time, Hadrian, you being the son of the then-Lord Potter you would have been ‘Heir Potter’,” Remus started out. “With the Lord… out of commission… you would have been expected, though not obligated, to claim the title of ‘Lord’ upon your fourteenth birthday. Which would
essentially have had you emancipated, because a Lord cannot maintain his role of Head of House and fulfil all the political duties that come with such a title while simultaneously being under the guardianship of another. It would undermine the Lord’s authority.”

Harry abruptly sat up, nearly colliding with Sirius’ head in the motion.

“I would have been a lord at fourteen?” He questioned, askance. “I… would have been a legal adult? Why the hell has no one ever told me so?!” That couldn’t be… someone would have…

Remus, though, was undeterred in his glorious professor-mode.

“I’d wager because there doesn’t exactly come harm with not claiming the title early,” he soothed, making Harry calm just the slightest bit. “See… while you stayed heir, all rights and properties, political or otherwise, that are connected to the title, would simply stay frozen and untouched. No one but a rightful lord can touch anything belonging to the title and I’m not only speaking material issues.” Out of the corner of his eye Harry saw Sirius raising an eyebrow at their friend, apparently surprised at the deep knowledge displayed, though Harry had no idea why he would be surprised. This was Remus lecturing. “That also goes for stuff like seats on the Wizengamot. With James… dead, the title of Lord Potter and everything connected to it would have immediately frozen itself until a time an eligible heir – you – claimed it at either fourteen or anytime up until seventeen when you would be actually required to step up to the title and take on its duties.”

There was some crackling in the background as Pettigrew unwrapped some more sweets.

“So… me not claiming the title at fourteen, even though it would have emancipated me,” Harry carefully summed up (and bloody hell, the possibilities!), “Also meant I did not have to deal with all the political stuff the title of ‘Lord Potter’ entails?”

This was probably for the best, because really, at fourteen he had had enough on his plate already. Triwizard Tournament, anyone? But then again… would he have been able to remove himself from the blasted tournament if he had been emancipated, if he had been a lord? Harry tried to remember if that had been mentioned back then, but other than the fact that the Merlin forsaken ‘Goblet of Fire’ forced a binding magical contract on any participant, disregarding willingness, he couldn’t recall anything. It had been stated that one had to be seventeen, a legal adult apparently, to actually participate, yes. But considering that Harry’s name had been added and he had been forced to go through with it, even though he had been neither early emancipated nor seventeen… the magic in the goblet very obviously didn’t give a lick.

“Correct,” Remus interrupted his brooding thoughts. “You would simply have stayed under your guardians’ rule until your seventeenth birthday upon which you would have been… well, let’s say ‘required’ to claim the title.” He put down his tea cup and sat forward, leaning his arms on his knees and considering Harry thoughtfully. “No one told you, which is deplorable because it took away your choice and any chance to actually prepare for your upcoming duties. But the only gain a potential guardian would have by keeping you heir instead of lord would be the honour of being the guardian to a Lord-Apparent of one of the noble houses. Which doesn’t make sense to me considering you said you were raised by muggles.”

Harry was still feeling slightly stunned by all the revelations, listening with half an ear to Sirius adding his own thoughts about how such a position as guardian over a future lord, especially of an ‘Ancient and Noble House’, would be one of those reasons for a title of honour. Madame XY, Guardian of Heir Potter. Was that similar to Dowager Longbottom, Neville’s gran?

“I’m sorry.”
The quiet words somehow managed to make themselves heard even over the chatter of the others and everyone turned to look at James. His father, though, was looking only at Harry, hazel eyes shadowed and hands clenched tightly in his lap. Harry stared at him confused, wondering if he had missed more of the conversation than he thought.

“With you now the same age as me, or rather you being younger than me,” James elaborated after a moment of silence, “Well, you’re no longer ‘Heir Potter’ as in ‘the first and sole heir’. And since no one can know about your true origins, you aren’t even regarded as a part of the main line of House Potter. You,” he choked slightly, seemingly disgusted with his own words, “You are now what is called… a spare heir. Or simply a ‘Spare’.”

Harry studied his dad carefully. James looked utterly devastated with his sudden insight, horrified at Harry’s loss of status and inability to even claim his immediate family as his own. He seemed disgusted with himself for what he saw as taking away what rightfully was Harry’s in his opinion. Which really… was kinda sweet.

“A spare to continue the line and take over should anything happen to you,” Harry elaborated more for himself, to make sure he truly understood. Then he straightened his shoulders, emerald eyes suddenly glinting with determination. “Which won’t happen this time around. I won’t let you die on me again.”

Silence reigned once again in the family room of Potter Manor, the only sounds coming from the crackling of the fire and the quiet whisper of the many candles that had sprung to life sometime during their conversation. It was a heavy silence as everyone present stared at Harry or James respectively, though Harry himself never looked away from his dad’s gaze. He would stand to his word, he would not let history repeat itself.

It could have been minutes before Sirius suddenly cleared his throat deliberately loudly (and slightly exaggeratedly). Blinking, Harry turned and looked at his boyfriend who had a distinctly impish look about him.

“After all this stuffy talk me thinks we need some wind in our noble scalps,” he announced, prompting everyone to look out of the huge windows and eye the darkening sky over the Potter estates.

“Well, gents,” James finally answered, shaking off any seriousness as he spoke, “We just so happen to have a perfectly intact Quidditch Pitch on our hands.”

Harry was toying with the thick plait the Lady Potter had done his hair up in, nibbling on his lip, and generally nearly bouncing in place with a mixture of anticipation and worry. They were going to fly and by the Holy Pink Pigmy Puff of Weasley Doom if he hadn’t missed flying!

Sending a rueful thought to his beloved Firebolt, now far away in a future either no longer existing or completely different than he remembered or… whatever, the thought was his Firebolt was out of reach. Considering that it had been a present from Sirius, his godfather Sirius, that maybe wasn’t so bad. He didn’t want to explain to his boyfriend Sirius where he got such a superior broom and he didn’t want to lie again. Not that that would work, Sirius had proven time and again that he seemed to simply know if Harry lied about something…

“I present to you,” James exclaimed dramatically as they reached the cliff at the edge of the beach, “Potter Cove’s Fantastically Artful Ridiculously Terrific Quidditch Pitch!”

And with an exaggerated flourish of his wand the beach beneath them was bathed in light from what
appeared to be floodlighting of the magical variant.

“…F.A.R.T.?” Harry questioned under his breath, making Sirius next to him snort with laughter while Pettigrew dutifully cheered for James, and Remus smiled indulgently at his friend.

An evening beach under magical lights was a sight worth seeing and made for an acceptable background for his love on a broom. It was official, his Hadrian was made for this. There he sat astride one of Prongs’ spare brooms, sea wind whipping his barely restrained hair about his face... a face so full of joy that everything else simply faded in comparison. It was obvious that Hadrian loved flying even while he was just hovering there.

“10 Galleons say my gorgeous Hadrian will make you see the tail end of his broom!” Sirius declared to his best mate who was playing a casual game of catch with his snitch, doing the ‘I am James Potter and I look awesome with windswept hair and oh look how casually graceful I can catch that snitch’. Okay, so maybe Sirius needed better titles for… well, everything.

“Son or not, no one’s gonna outfly James Potter!”

Hadrian was watching them, looking somewhere between bemused and excited. Oh yes, it was as obvious as a flashing paint charm that his Hadrian couldn’t wait to simply let go and fly.

“I’ll take a punt on that,” Sirius baited his friend again. “Time to back up the big words, Prongs!” And with that he was off, his lovely boyfriend right behind- whoops no, already bypassing him.

“Something wicked this way comes!” James shouted after them, but his words got lost on the salty breeze tugging at their clothing. The game was on.

When James had summoned his brooms, Harry had seen an honest-to-Merlin Oakshaft79. Yes, that model was from the 19th century, the 79 in the name actually standing for 1879. James, of course, had given it to Remus who was the least likely to actually participate in their impromptu game. Still, an Oakshaft! That kind of broom simply didn’t exist anymore in Harry’s original time. The rest of James’ brooms was made up of what Harry recognised as the probably latest Cleansweep model of this time, but was outpaced by the very first Nimbus model which Harry himself was currently flying (and nerding out over). It couldn’t compare to his Firebolt, and wasn’t even close to his first broom which just so happened to be a Nimbus too.

Doing some zig-zag motions and twirls, Harry whooped in joy. He may be riding a Nimbus 1000 right about now, worlds apart from what he was used to, but he was flying. He was free. There was a faint rushing sound, Harry’s trained ear easily recognising the sounds of another flyer over the distant sound of the waves beneath. He swerved and made a Sloth Grip Roll (hanging upside down on the broomstick) just because he could. He thought he heard someone shout.

It was James who had been rushing at him, testing his reflexes, and Sirius who was not impressed with his boyfriend doing sudden barrel rolls in the air. No matter, Harry made a sudden turn, racing his Chaser father and laughing out loud at the adrenaline surging in his blood.

He wasn’t going to count his Basilisks before they hatched, but Sirius was pretty sure his love had inherited his father’s natural talent on a broom. Watching the other blur past and around him yet again, enticing Sirius to a spiralling dance in the air, he couldn’t help the wide grin stretching across his face.
Oh yes, Hadrian just had to join the Quidditch team. Prongs sure as hell had that gleam in his eyes already, lost bet forgotten and all. What they would be able to do! They would be the Marauder Three, a Beater, a Chaser and a Seeker, marvellous.

Though, Sirius wondered, maybe it would be better for the game if they could work as two of a kind? There obviously was only one Seeker per team, but Chasers and Beaters came in pairs and he and Prongs were in tune with each other on a level no other player had been able to reach so far. Sirius had been playing Beater ever since he made the team and it had helped develop a nice stature, especially his shoulders and arms had turned out quite awesome, if he said so himself. James had more of a runner’s built, he didn’t have the stature to play Beater. But Sirius could easily change over to Chaser if he so desired. It helped that the team captain was his best mate.

But no, Sirius corrected himself, enjoying the view of his boyfriend’s laughing face, as a Chaser he would be completely concentrated on the quaffles. That would not do, how was he to look out for Hadrian like that? Talent or no, Quidditch was a damn dangerous sport. No, he was better off as a Beater. That way he could protect his little Seeker from the bludgers… He could already see all the nice chivalrous situations that would arise…

It was so easy, so very easy and natural and… there was the snitch! Harry hadn’t even noticed James letting it go, but there it was and none of the others seemed to notice. How could they not notice? It was just there, teetering on the shore, even reflecting in the water beneath it. Oh. Maybe…

Watching Sirius make some dodging moves and join James in a very coordinated team move – they were nearly synchronized! – Harry realised that no, they really couldn’t see the snitch because it was a lot darker than they were used to. None of them were Seekers, sure, but they were much more in training than Harry was. Still, floodlights or no, it was dark outside and Harry was the only one present with night vision. He had never thought he could actually enjoy his new attributes.

Laughing out loud again, Harry did a daring dive towards the ground, the shouts of his friends fading away as the wind rushed in his ears and his eyes focused solely on the flicker of gold hovering just above the water’s edge. There, just a few feet more and-

His fingers closed securely around the familiar weight of the snitch and Harry pulled his broom up out of the shallow dive. No need for drama when no one else even noticed the little ball. The Nimbus 1000 was much slower than Harry was used to, but he could adapt, he thought, as he leisurely drifted just above the shore, feet skimming the water. A second later his friends were there, congratulating and exclaiming over his skills. Harry simply loved flying.

“That Rems?”

“Didn’t notice him and Wormy chickening out on us,” James wondered out loud, already starting back to where they could still see Remus’ outline in the dark.

Well, Harry could see more than that, he could clearly see his friend standing there all alone with one broom in the grass at his feet. And where was Pettigrew anyway? He quickly scanned the sky, but he was the last one moving to land. Harry hadn’t really paid attention to the rat the moment the brooms appeared – it was an Oakshaft, after all! But here they were, all honourable members of the Marauders and Harry landing on the darkened cliffs of Potter Cove where Remus was waiting for them with no rat in sight.

“Guys,” their furry friend spoke up as they reached him, Harry skidding to a halt a moment later. “We need to talk about Peter.”
ATTENTION please: I don’t remember in which fanfiction I came across the idea of the various wizarding titles. If you know, please mention it in the comments so the rightful author can be credited here.
Wizarding etiquette lesson of doom! ’:D

(*) Lady Potter tends to call everyone ‘dear’ or ‘dearest’ in combination with another term of endearment. Her son she calls ‘Dumpling’ as you may remember. So now she has finally come up with a – in her opinion – suitable endearment for Hadrian: Cherub. Don’t know if he’s gonna be too happy about that, but she insisted.

(*) “How dost thou, Heir Black?”
“Ah Heir Potter, how fares?”
“Young Mistress, what cheer?”
They are generally just greeting each other and inquiring about well-being, pretty much the Shakespearean version of “Hi, how are you?”, for example: “What cheer” is the original version of the greeting “Wotcher/Wotcha” that Tonks likes to use.
In which James wants to be a cheerleader

Chapter Notes

With a grateful nod at rigger42.

End of winter holiday arc: 23rd December-2nd January
I was so proud of the last two chapters… now this one, I don’t really like. It’s a bit of a filler chapter to bridge the train ride and at the same time bring everyone up to par. Truths, probably overly complicated thought processes, oh and snogging. Can’t wait for them to be back at Hogwarts.

They watched. And they pulled pranks. No one escaped the wrath of the Marauders…

Maybe he should just shove that rat out the window while the train was at full speed.

The morning of the 2nd January 1977 had dawned with a lot of scolding. The mood inside Potter Manor seemed to mirror that of the weather outside where heavy snow clouds hung over a landscape occluded by thick, impenetrable looking fog. The manor’s halls were uncomfortably cold, the warmth of liberal heating charms inlaid in the floors of the many rooms not reaching out into the vast halls and corridors. But one could dress against cold weather. One could not, however, dress against exasperated and disappointed parents, a fact Harry was learning very fast.

It was the day they were supposed to travel back to Hogwarts, a Sunday and unfortunately the day after his healer appointment that had revealed the various not-so-nice conditions of his health. Harry had been completely flummoxed by the reaction of the elder Potters when they heard of the impromptu Quidditch session of the last night. He hadn’t even thought about passing the chance of flying, not a thought going to apparently brittle bones and damaged lungs. And really, Harry thought when the voices went on above his head at the breakfast table, he still couldn’t see what the problem was. He had lived like this his whole life, had played Quidditch on the house team for five- well, more like four years considering Umbridge had banned him from participating. The point being, he had gone through all his adventures and Quidditch and all with the same ‘condition’ and he was okay for it. He didn’t see why he should stop being his usual reckless self now, especially not when the potions were already healing him.

He didn’t know how to react to the disappointment of his (grand-)parents, heavily laced with concern and the anger directed at James – who apparently had been informed of Harry’s health issues. With the way things were being discussed over breakfast Sirius and Remus now knew too… and were similarly unimpressed with the two younger Potters. Luckily at least Pettigrew wasn’t up yet, a fact that might be credited to James secretly forbidding the house-elves to wake the rat. Oh yes, last night had revealed more than a few things about Pettigrew that had shaken the Marauders to the core. Not that the rat already knew he had been busted. No, that would be happening Marauder-style.

“Let me get this straight,” Lord Potter interrupted James’ latest ramble from the head of the table. “After being informed of the imminent issues with Hadrian’s health and the dangers that come with those, you got the glorious idea to go out and have a fly at night, at the beach, near the cliffs and the
ocean? Did you even consider for one moment what could have happened to his bones had he fallen?"

The lord’s voice was uncharacteristically sharp and Harry felt shame burn hot in his face as he chanced a glance at his grandfather’s face and realised the very real fear in his eyes. He couldn’t even feel indignant over the assumption he could have fallen off his broom by accident when faced with such a look. Harry might not truly understand the meaning of taking care of oneself past the ‘keeping yourself alive’ he had done all his life, but he did understand what it meant to care for another. He just lacked in understanding what it meant to be the one taken care of. But one thing he knew for sure, he never wanted to see that look in his grandfather’s or his grandmother’s eyes again.

“It was my fault,” he forced himself to speak up just enough to be heard over James’ answer – an answer that sounded too guilty for Harry’s liking. “It’s my health and I should have known better. I’m sorry,” he added, biting his lip anxiously.

There was a moment of silence that finally saw a harried looking Pettigrew stumbling into the room.

“Yes, little one,” Lord Potter finally acknowledged, “You should have known better and I can see that you are sorry, but—” He floundered a moment, his hazel eyes wandering from Harry to James and back again with a deep rooted worry, “You do not truly understand why it was wrong and that scares me more than I can put into words.”

Harry watched Lord Potter give an explosive sigh, groaning as he stretched his massive hands above his head, luxuriating in the fact that Potter Manor’s ceilings were easily high enough to accommodate even his form. The snickers of the others around them didn’t help Harry’s attempt to keep a straight face, it was just surreal to see the tall gentleman act like this. He was even pulling grimaces at the pops that could be heard from his back, but judging by the amused tilt to the lord’s lips he was well aware of his audience.

Harry was simply glad that the worry lines in his grandfather’s face seemed to have vanished with the remnants of their breakfast. Still, he was a bit apprehensive in his actions with the elder Potters now, unsure if he was still in trouble or if the scolding really was the only consequence of his apparently reckless behaviour. They had not yet officially adopted him as was part of the cover plan for Harry - even if the heritage parchment proved the relation. But that parchment was probably in the family archive, placed under blood wards, where it would stay until the day Harry turned seventeen. Then it would be up to him if he wanted to change its placement. What if the Potters changed their mind, though, what if they finally had noticed how much trouble Harry really was? Not to mention the costs his medical treatment amounted to… He hadn’t been told the actual numbers, but if even a private healer like Hahnemann, who apparently was the family healer, said it would be expensive…

“Didn’t know listening to bigoted old biddies was so damaging to one’s bones,” Sirius commented casually, earning another groan from Lord Potter for the reminder. “I s’pose that means ‘nother reason to celebrate my glorious escape.”

“Oh codswallop,” Lady Potter injected with a huff, “The ball was rather corking.” The look her husband gave her had her caving shortly after and giving in to a rather unladylike shrug. “Well, yes, it has been worse.”

They had assembled in the entrance hall, waiting for the portkey to go off and take them to King’s Cross station once more. Lady Potter would accompany them this time around, it seemed, as she was just putting on an elegant, flowing coat in a dark blue that brought out the colour of her beautiful eyes. Looking around though, Harry noticed that Pettigrew was once again missing. After the rat had
turned up when breakfast was already ending and everyone went to collect their luggage, Pettigrew had been left alone with the Lady Potter as his only company to scramble through a hasty meal. Apparently he hadn’t had finished packing either, or maybe it was the mysteriously happening ‘explosive-trunk-prank’ that kept him upstairs.

“Dad,” James suddenly spoke up, slightly hushed, “If you were to… tell us something of importance, I’d recommend doing so now.”

The Lord Potter turned to his son and regarded him for a moment with raised eyebrows. Harry watched fascinated as there seemed to be a silent conversation going on before he felt the air around them shift slightly. It took Harry a moment to realise that some kind of ward had been erected around their group and a second later he understood why. James had somehow convinced his father to not include Pettigrew into whatever he wanted to tell them now.

“Boys,” Lord Potter addressed them, making sure he had everyone’s attention. “This year has come with a lot of changes to this family.” He gave each one of them a gentle look and Harry felt his fears soothed just a bit. “Sirius, it is nothing new that you are always welcome with House Potter and even though it is not in my power to formally adopt you into the family, I wish to once again remind you that nothing will ever change the fact that you are as much a son of my heart as if you had been born a Potter.”

Harry smiled as he watched his boyfriend’s face. He had known from his godfather that Sirius had fled from the Blacks to live with the Potters the summer of his sixteenth birthday, which in this timeline would have been the holidays before Harry arrived unannounced at Hogwarts. But Harry had always thought Sirius had stayed with the Potters simply as James’ best friend. Now though it looked as if Sirius had found an actual family and he couldn’t be happier for his boyfriend. Harry was convinced that if anyone deserved a loving family, it would be Sirius.

“Remus,” Lord Potter turned slightly and addressed the startled werewolf, “Family does not always come by blood. The same sadly can be said about acceptance. But know that the Potters have always stood with and accepted those they considered family, no matter their… ailments.”

He winked at the suddenly pale Remus, his wife smiling softly next to him, before he finally turned to Harry. He couldn’t help but be anxious what his grandfather’s words for him would be. It was clear to Harry that both Sirius and Remus had just been informally accepted into the Potter family and now-

“You, little one, are already part of this family by blood, but more than that… you have become family by heart for both my lovely wife and me, son.” Taking a deep breath, Lord Potter smiled briefly at his wife as she took a hold of his hand. He stood a little straighter as he addressed the group as a whole. “So before we leave, my boys, I wish to gift each one of you with an emergency portkey.”

Harry was so caught up in being called ‘son’ that it took Remus’ astounded gasp to register the meaning of the rest of his grandfather’s words. Wait. Emergency portkey? Looking at the charms on leather strings, no, not leather… was that dragon hide? Anyway, looking at the portkeys Lord Potter was giving to each of them, Harry was shaken by a sudden influx of uncomfortable questions. If this kind of thing was possible why had no one ever given one to him? Considering all the dragon dung he tended to get in, an emergency portkey would have made a lot of things so, so much easier.

Sure, he wouldn’t have been able to use it during the Triwizard Tournament, but he could have saved Ginny and himself much faster from the Chamber of Secrets and let the trained adults go up against the damn Basilisk. Or even getting Ron and himself out of Aragog’s nest! And what about- oh. Maybe it was the same as with apparition? Most of those adventures had gone down at Hogwarts
and apparition wasn’t possible on the grounds. Maybe the same- no, the bloody trophy of the tournament had been a functioning portkey and they had very much been on Hogwarts grounds back then. Harry felt sick to the stomach as he thought about all the possibilities and implications.

“Times are no longer as save as they used to be for the last decade.” Lady Potter spoke up, taking the necklace out of Harry’s slightly numb hands to carefully put it around his neck. “I am afraid our society degenerates fast and it would make your father and I feel so much better if you had a way to escape a dire situation if needed.” She gently patted Harry’s cheek before straightening up. “Now, these won’t work on Hogwarts grounds, as the school is protected against all unauthorised travel. But should you—”

“…for whatever reason,” Lord Potter injected with a slightly raised eyebrow.

“…find yourself in danger outside the protective wards, do not hesitate to use the portkeys,” his wife finished the sentence. “But be careful, they are limited to two people tops and even then it would be safer to each use your own. The password is set as simply ‘Home’, but to activate them you will need to touch them and deliberately push a bit of your magic into the portkey.”

“What will they transport us to?” Remus questioned, sounding awed as he looked up from examining the charm that was made in form of a crest.

“The Potter townhouse in Kensington, London where Euphemia and I normally reside,” Lord Potter answered. “The portkeys will be able to go right through the wards, which is why you should never take them off. These should not get into the wrong hands.”

At this he looked once more at James, clearly communicating an unspoken question and receiving a nod in answer. The sound of hectic feet slapping down on the steps of the huge main stair had James motioning for them all to hide their portkeys beneath their closing, earning another questioning look from his parents. When Lady Potter looked up to where Pettigrew was hurrying down the steps, clumsily pulling his haphazardly packed trunk down each step with a loud thud, she had a small frown on her face. Harry couldn’t help the wince each time the rat’s trunk crashed on another step of probably priceless marble flooring.

Suddenly something dark obscured his vision and Harry flinched, but a quiet laugh in his ear had him holding still again. Sirius was leaning close and the strange something turned out to be the winter hat Remus had gifted him for Christmas, the one he had been wearing ever since to hide his creature attributes. Blinking up from beneath the fabric, Harry was met with warm grey eyes that seemed to pull him closer-

“Now, Sirius,” his grandfather turned with a rather cheeky wink, interrupting the moment, “Take a hold of your inamorato, the portkey is about to go off and I am sure none of us wants a repeat of our arrival here.”

The group had just enough time to latch onto said portkey – this time just the Daily Prophet of the day – before it went off and they were sucked through space and time and whatever else was part of that blasted way of transportation. Harry felt his boyfriend’s arm fall around his waist just as the world blurred entirely.

Platform 9 ¾ was as swallowed by fog as Cornwall had been even though London wasn’t as directly located at the coast as Potter Manor. Was Regent’s Canal big enough to cause such heavy fog? Maybe it came from the Thames? James decided he needed to take a closer look the next time he ventured into the muggle world. But something about this fog didn’t feel right, not even to someone like James who had lived his whole life in some part or another of Britain.
Perhaps, he admitted with a silent shudder, he was just imagining things after reading up on Dementors. It had been one of the first things he did after the whole Diagon Alley ordeal and one of the facts about the beings of fear (that were actually categorized as ‘non-beings’) that had burnt itself into James’ memory was their habit of producing a thick mist while breeding. Then again, the fact that they were categorized as non-beings also meant they didn’t actually breed, but had other means of reproduction. If he remembered correctly one such possible means was theorized to be ‘growth like fungi where there is decay’.

Merlin, he was starting to sound like Moony. At least he was not about to randomly spout the facts he now knew about the ‘Non-Human Spiritous Apparition’. Dementors, he meant Dementors.

Looking over their group and unconsciously fiddling with his new portkey hidden under his clothes to keep it from prying eyes, James couldn’t help but make sure everyone was okay. That damn fog was playing tricks with his mind and it didn’t help that he no longer felt it save to turn his back on his friend Peter. The thought made his chest ache strangely.

Hadrian was leaning heavily against Sirius, still very obviously disliking the feeling of a portkey. Not that James could fault him for it, but he couldn’t remember ever meeting someone that disagreed so strongly with wizarding transport. Hadrian did not get along with Floo-travel or portkeys. James had yet to see him apparatus, or rather be apparatused, but he would bet half his trust vault that his son had an aversion against all magical travel methods bar broomsticks. Maybe it was one of those Elf Owl things?

“As you remember, Hadrian,” his dad just said, making use of the fact that they were early and there were very few people milling on the platform. He gave Hadrian a look, no, a Look, that clearly said he better had remember, “You will be taking the potion for your lungs once a week for a month. Yes, you had your lungs cleared and the basic potion administered to jumpstart the healing, but it will take more than one treatment to bring you back to full health.”

He paused to take a deep breath and James watched his son scowling a bit at the reminder. He could relate. James himself was not happy with having something this personal discussed outside the safety of their home and especially in front of the newly discovered rat – oh the irony - but he supposed it was meant as a safeguard. Considering their reckless behaviour just after the appointment, they probably shouldn’t be too surprised.

“The potions will be send to you every week by Healer Hahnemann, they need to be freshly brewed each time. With them there will also be a batch of bone-strengthening-potions, and I expect you to follow the included instructions to the letter.” He pinned Hadrian with that Look again. “Do not make me sick Remus on you.”

Oh low blow. Out of the corner of his eye James could see the aforementioned werewolf stand a bit straighter. He smothered a snicker as he realised his son now would not only have to deal with an overprotective Sirius and whatever the rat would cook up, but also an honour bound Remus. Not to mention James himself. He couldn’t believe he had been so thoughtless as to let their Bambi go flying after receiving such news! It was more than just reckless, really, it was irresponsible, and they both should have known better, but damn if James didn’t feel guilty. He obviously sucked at this whole father business.

He watched his parents saying goodbye to his friends, his mother chastely kissing their cheeks and his dad being his affectionate self. His dad nearly swallowed Hadrian’s small form up as he enveloped him gently in one of his bear hugs and James could see him whispering something into the dark locks. As he hugged his dad goodbye himself, he didn’t need words to know the Lord Potter would want an explanation as to why James had suddenly wanted Peter excluded from the
emergency portkeys. Granted, James had had no idea what his dad had wanted to talk to them about, but he had had a feeling it would be something of importance. Something personal. Now he was glad he had acted in time – after yesterday there was no way he would want Peter included in family business of any kind. His chest ached again.

“Farewell, boys. Pip pip!”

He could see heavy lids drooping over large green eyes and automatically pulled his boyfriend closer. Maybe he could get him to lay down a bit, Godric knew Hadrian could use some more sleep.

“It’s okay,” he whispered into that little ear peaking out from dark hair. “I’ll keep watch. He won’t get any chance to so much as look at you wrong.”

There was no need to specify who he was talking about. Ever since last night things in their group had changed and they had changed dramatically. Looking over at the twitchy bloke sitting next to Rem (as the werewolf was the only one capable of keeping his temper in check around Wormtail right about now), Sirius wondered where they had gone wrong. If all that they had learned about Peter Pettigrew last night was true, their thought-to-be friend was a danger not to be underestimated. That bloke had more information on them all than anyone else. He had been part of their group, had been with them through all their prank-adventures, had been welcomed in their homes and listened to them rant and divulge secrets throughout all those years living in the same dorm.

“No, I’m okay,” Hadrian protested, but didn’t pull away.

“You’re looking like an anaemic Vampire or like me after the full moon, Hadrian,” Remus commented, glancing over the rim of his book with a frown. “Get some sleep while you can.”

Sometimes werewolf-hearing was kinda awesome, Sirius decided, as his disgruntled boyfriend sighed and relented. Though, it did remind him that he and Rems still needed to have some words. Hadrian shifted a bit awkwardly until Sirius pulled him to use his lap as a pillow, drawing his cloak over his boyfriend’s form in the same move. Gently petting the long dark hair, Sirius let his thoughts drift, but kept an ear out on the rat in their midst.

He had held his Hadrian close all through last night, holding him through nightmares that woke Sirius up, but failed to let his love escape. So Sirius had to wake him each and every time the memories caught up with his boyfriend, memories brought on by Hadrian telling them about the Pettigrew of the future. It was so hard to believe when looking at the nervously fidgeting boy who had been their friend ever since first year. But had he really? For how long now had he gone behind their backs and was he already part of the Dark, ready to rat them out like the rat he apparently was? Ready to condemn his own friends to death and Hadrian, lovely Hadrian, to a life in abuse?

But Sirius also thought back to the hard glint in deep green eyes, tense shoulders but lithe movements, straight back and unforgiving wand…

It happened more and more often now, the appearance of ‘the other side’ of their Bambi. The fierce, slightly intimidating warrior-side they had had only glimpsed on occasion before, unable to really pinpoint what they were witnessing. But ever since the Diagon Alley incident, the fighter his Hadrian was beneath the shy shell showed more and more. It had Sirius wonder if that was the persona his boyfriend had been forced to wear continuously in his past, if he had drawn it in the moment he got the chance to be someone else. His sweet love didn’t strike him as someone who enjoyed any kind of confrontation and yet it was clear to them (that knew what to look for) that Hadrian was not to be underestimated. Just because he disliked confrontation didn’t mean he wouldn’t stand tall if need be.
Sirius supposed this kind of defensive was to be expected to develop when one was born with their destiny already decided for them. And what a destiny that was. Oh yes, he knew. He wasn’t fooled when Hadrian avoided naming himself as the prophecy child, after all the whole story-telling back then had started with that curse scar on his boyfriend’s forehead. To think his boyfriend had survived the impossible and had walked away with nothing but that scar. Or well, not _walked_ since he had still been in nappies then. Whatever. The point being that fucking prophecy had possibly ruined his Hadrian’s whole life even after he took out the bloody dark lord.

The dark lord. That was another topic his love decidedly avoided speaking of. The thought brought back the memory of that horrible night when he had witnessed Hadrian having a vision of the current dark lord’s atrocities. Gods, Sirius didn’t even want to try and imagine what his boyfriend had seen that night. He could still remember the blank eyes staring at nothing and Hadrian’s voice whispering in the darkness about the torture and murder of families. There was a connection between Hadrian and the dark lord, that much was clear, especially after putting one and one together. A prophecy proclaiming the birth of the dark lord’s downfall, a family being slaughtered and the dark lord vanishing after trying to kill a baby. Hadrian’s scar that was clearly a curse scar and again the prophecy speaking of a mark. Hadrian seeing crimes the dark sect was committing. There was a connection and Sirius despised it.

Something told him that Hadrian hadn’t divulged everything yet.

Yes, he had told them about the prophecy and how that dark lord terrorising their world from the shadows had been eviscerated upon trying to Avada his Bambi. He pushed that specific detail from his mind hurriedly, not wanting to linger on the image of the Killing Curse anywhere close to his love. These things would happen in the future, no, they had happened in Hadrian’s past and Sirius would not allow them to happen again. He could not accept a future in which his best mate was killed off, his love was orphaned and placed somewhere that had led to all those scars marring his body and soul.

He understood that abuse by muggles was horrific on another level than what his own mother had done- yeah, not thinking about that. Obviously muggles didn’t have magic so the kind of … treatment… would be different. But then it was a fact that not all of Hadrian’s scars were mundane. Some were definitely magical, like that terrible burn scar, and Sirius wondered how that was possible if the dark lord had been truly gone in Hadrian’s original time. Had there been more people after his love? Maybe the dark lord’s followers? The thoughts were giving him a headache and making his heart clench in belated fear.

Taking a slightly shuddering breath, Sirius reminded himself that Hadrian was safe, that he was here and in Sirius’ arms. Looking over at James who was currently giving Peter clipped answers to his rather desperate attempts at conversation, Sirius turned his thoughts back to their current rodent problem. Peter Pettigrew would regret what he had done.

Remus had his nose buried in one of his heavy books, but Sirius could nearly feel the tenseness radiating off of him. Where James went about the whole Peter affair in a manner that spoke of barely controlled anger, Rems kept his calm façade and acted as a buffer between the Marauders and their former member.

Yes, former. The thought hurt and as of yet Peter didn’t know that he no longer was an actual part of their group. Curiously enough though, Sirius didn’t truly hurt over the fact that Peter was a traitor, but over the fact that someone _he_ had deemed trustworthy had gone behind his back and had actively sold one of them out. He wasn’t James who struggled with even imagining that one of his friends could do something like this. To James friendship was sacred. But Sirius was raised a Slytherin hiding a Gryffindor heart, he valued trust more than anything and gave it only to those he was
absolutely sure of. Yet he had been deceived.

And Remus? Remus was confused on a level they would never be able to understand, because to Remus it was a member of his pack that had betrayed them. And to a wolf pack was everything. Sirius wondered how his furry friend was able to keep still and not confront the traitor like Sirius so dearly wished he could. But no, they would do this the Marauder way. They would go about it with menacing precision and build it up to a huge devastating blow that would scream their wrath into the rodent’s face. At least that would be the case if it were up to Sirius, but Prongs and Moony had their own thoughts on the matter. And then there was Hadrian.

“Guys, we need to talk about Peter.”

It was decidedly cold out on the cliff, the wind tugging at their clothes in a way he had not noticed before. The heady scent of the ocean suddenly no longer felt enticing and Sirius had the sudden urge to get his Bambi inside. It had to be way too cold for him out here.

“Where’s Wormy, Rems?” He questioned his friend, looking down at the lonely broom, Wormtail must have taken the other one to go wherever he was now.

He watched as Remus shifted in place, staring out at the water and something in his face was so very wrong… Sirius had no words for it, but it was just like the suddenly icy wind and he wasn’t sure if he wanted to know what this was all about.

“What’s this about?” Prongs wondered, unknowingly voicing Sirius’ thoughts, and reaching out to their furry friend.

It was then that Sirius saw the look on his boyfriend’s face, the way he was staring at Remus. Emerald eyes were wide and his love’s skin was ghostly pale in the light of the Quidditch pitch.

“Hadrian?”

Sirius heard his own voice, but it sounded off just like this whole situation felt off. But Hadrian wasn’t looking at him, he was staring at Remus and finally Remus was looking back.

“You already know, don’t you?” The werewolf asked and if it hadn’t felt all so weird Sirius would have been annoyed and jealous that those two seemed to once again share something. But he couldn’t feel that way, not when Hadrian looked so lost and Rems looked like he wanted to cry.

“Know what?” James asked, eyes switching between Rems and Hadrian. “Bambi?” But their Bambi just shook his head, gesturing to Remus and they all turned to him.

“I don’t really know how to put it into words…,” Rems floundered. He never floundered with his words. “But I believe Peter…” He stopped, frowning, rubbing a rough hand across his face. “Peter isn’t any longer someone we can trust.”

And James went off.

“What do you mean?” He burst out and when he noticed that he was the only one reacting in such a way, he turned on Sirius. “Padfoot? What the-”

And Sirius knew. Suddenly it was all too clear, the look on Remus’ face and the anxiousness in his boyfriend’s eyes. He remembered thinking something wasn’t right with Peter, he remembered their friend’s reactions to Hadrian and he just knew.
“Prongs.”

He tried to get his best mate to calm down a moment, but James was off ranting, not understanding, or maybe not wanting to understand. James believed in friendship, he would not want to believe one of them could be anything but loyal. James was looking between them wildly, shaking his head as if trying to get rid of Remus’ words.

“Jamie,” Sirius said quietly and that got his attention.

Taking a hold of his best mate’s shoulders, his brother in all but blood, Sirius forced the words out. He knew what this was all about now and he knew Remus was right. They had all noticed it, but they had not wanted it to be true.

“Can you honestly say that you haven’t noticed the changes in Wormtail ever since Hadrian came into our life?”

The words hung between them, wind tugging at their clothing, at their hair, and Sirius could see his Hadrian shiver. It was all so very surreal as they stood there on the cliff of Potter Cove, broomsticks at their feet and the lights of the manor in the distance.

“My wolf was already suspicious for a while, but I couldn’t…,” Remus was shaking his head, amber eyes shiny, but he ploughed on. “I didn’t want to believe what my instincts were telling me. And then I followed him yesterday.”

They had not wanted to believe it, especially James had been struggling. But Remus told them what he had witnessed Wormtail do in Hadrian’s room. And then Hadrian finally, finally told them why he never stayed alone with Peter, why he never initiated any kind of contact with him. And Sirius had remembered a morning down in the Great Hall, it had seemed so long ago then. That morning when Hadrian’s magic had lashed out around him, the way he had glared so venomously at Wormtail across the table… It had been all there, but back then they had only seen the impressive magical display. Now they knew better, could understand the reaction. Because Hadrian told them then.

He explained about the Peter Pettigrew of the future while they stood there on that drafty, cold cliff. He forced the words out through numb lips and they could all see it was the truth. They all knew Hadrian was the worst liar they had ever met, he just couldn’t do it, and it all fit… They all remembered the little things they had noticed, how Peter would glare and twitch and change the subject and generally try to exclude Hadrian from their group. Sure, it could have been simple jealousy and Hadrian, their all too kind Bambi, told them maybe it was, maybe it had been jealousy in the beginning. But it was way past that now, because Peter had gone through Hadrian’s things and just in that moment he was back in the manor, using the opportunity to go through Sirius’ room too. Because he was looking for something and clever Remus had already deduced what that something was. Feathers or maybe hair or…

It was a shock. It was something not even Sirius in his most sarcastic moments could have foreseen. How could their friend, someone who had been with them for so long, sell out one of them – Sirius’ boyfriend, James’ son, Remus’ friend – over mere jealousy?

And to know it was all just the beginning of something so much more sinister.
“Fidelius Charm?” James’ voice sounded brittle, like the words chafed against his throat.

“An immensely complex spell involving the magical concealment of a secret, like for example a location, inside a single, living soul. The information is hidden inside the chosen person, or secret keeper, and is henceforth impossible to find. Unless,” Remus stopped, eyes going wide as they stared at Hadrian. “Unless, of course, the secret keeper chooses to divulge it. As long as the secret keeper refuses to speak, the secret is completely safe.”

“So he …sold us out?” Now James’ voice was barely above a whisper. “You and your- …me and my wife? Us?”

“Yes,” Hadrian answered and he looked so very lost standing there with the light from the pitch in his back, illuminating his small form. “They… you… thought Sirius would be too obvious as a secret keeper, so you switched to Pettigrew and then Voldemort-”

He choked. Words stuck and breathing uneven. Sirius couldn’t stand it.

“Shh hey,” he soothed, drawing his boyfriend into his arms “’s alright, you don’t have to say it.”

It was obvious enough. That Voldemort guy (If that was meant as a descriptive epithet, Sirius thought that dark lord rather lame. Why give yourself a name that proclaimed your greatest fear so obviously?) had come to where James and his family had hidden, had been able to see through the Fidelius because Wormtail was a traitor, and had gone about making sure the prophecy would be null and void.

“But you’re alive,” Remus stated and if it hadn’t been Remus talking Sirius would have commented on stating the obvious in an inappropriate moment. “You survived and he was gone. That’s what you said when you told us about that prophecy back on Halloween.”

“Just because Hadrian came out the other side alive doesn’t make what Wormtail did alright… what he… will do?” James had started snapping, but ended up sounding confused and just as lost as Hadrian looked.

“But that’s just the thing,” Remus said thoughtfully, “Is Peter going to do all that again or did everything change with Hadrian coming here?”

It was silent for a moment as they all digested those words, but Sirius didn’t need the stiffening of his boyfriend in his arms to realise something. He should have known, really.

“That’s why you didn’t say anything until now, isn’t it?” He groaned at the look on his Bambi’s face. Of course.

“He’s your friend,” Hadrian said softly, intently looking at the ground. “I didn’t want to take that away from you if there was a chance he might never…” He stopped himself and only Sirius could hear the mumbled words he added: “And would you even have believed me?”

And they hadn’t needed Remus to point more conclusions out to them. They all remembered Halloween perfectly, all for different yet similar reasons. To all of them it was clear that Hadrian was the prophecy child, the Chosen One.

Suddenly Sirius found himself sitting up straighter, even slightly jostling Hadrian in his lap. No… that couldn’t be… Or could it? He couldn’t stop his mind from following through with the thought: What if the prophecy had not been fulfilled that day Wormtail became a traitor and James died? What
if baby Hadrian hadn’t truly gotten rid of the dark lord? That would explain a lot about Hadrian… and it also meant his love had it all still hanging over his head and not just because he now was in a past where the dark lord was still alive. He should have realised that earlier, it had kinda been in his thoughts when he thought of the prophecy ruining Hadrian’s life yet it had not truly clicked.

So, Hadrian didn’t ‘just’ want to change the past/future he remembered, he did not ‘just’ want to stop his parents from dying. Sirius had known his boyfriend wanted to fight, he had said so himself, but now… now he finally understood why oh why Hadrian felt so very obligated to do so: Just because the prophecy child had travelled back in time didn’t mean the prophecy itself couldn’t be fulfilled in the time the child had travelled to. After all, no one knew which one of the many time travel theories Rems always ranted about was true. Maybe the prophecy had always been meant to be fulfilled in ‘the past’ from Hadrian’s original point of view.

Sirius was feeling slightly sick now and pushed that thought away. It didn’t matter, it didn’t change anything. So Hadrian would fight the dark lord because he felt obligated to do so. And Sirius would be there and protect him, he would keep Hadrian safe and together the Marauders would change the future. Yes, that’s how it was gonna be. But for now he would cuddle Hadrian close while he slept and the train travelled on to Hogwarts.

The cold was unbearable. It was not stopping at his skin, it was seeping right into his bones, gnawing at them until he felt them break and crush. Harry wanted to scream. But there was another scream growing in the distance, getting louder and louder until it was deafening and roaring and Harry tried to cover his ears. But his hands wouldn’t move and panic was gripping him. The scream was his mother’s, howling around him in the painful cold and yet… yet he could still hear the rattling breath of his greatest fear as the Dementor drew near.

It was just one, but Harry was helpless. It was all too much.

Staring wide-eyed as the monster reached out for him, unable to move away, Harry couldn’t think. This was it, he could not move, could not protect himself and no one was here, no one was coming to save him.

“You didn’t save me either,” a voice said, making him flinch and open eyes he hadn’t known were closed.

He was there, the man he couldn’t save. No, the man he decided not to save. The one he turned his back on to save another, but what did it matter why he did it? He left him there, let the Dementor consume his soul right after the man had helped Harry. What kind of monster was he?

There was a touch to his cheek and his eyes went wide again as he looked up right into the endless depths of the Dementor’s mouth…

He awoke with a gasp, blind to the world around him. His hands were trembling, his breath felt constricted in his chest and it took him a long moment to finally focus. He realised then the touch to his cheek had been that of his boyfriend’s hand, Sirius who was looking down at him with worried eyes.

“You okay?”

The question was asked softly yet with some kind of roughness to Sirius’ voice. And Harry nodded, yes, of course, it had just been a dream. He was fine. It was then that he took in their surroundings, the train compartment, James and Remus and… Pettigrew. The rat was staring at him. There was something intent in those beady eyes, a mixture of some kind of sick fascination and… anger? Panic?
It was as if Pettigrew wasn’t sure what exactly he was looking at. He didn’t look at Harry like he would look at another human being.

“Mo-…Hadrian,” a voice said and it took Harry a few seconds to realise that it had been Pettigrew who spoke. He couldn’t remember if the rat had ever directly addressed him in this time. “Do you think those feathers of yours would be useful in a potion? I mean, you being a creature and all, they’re bound to be at least of some value if nothing else…”

Harry stared. He had no idea what to say to this. That condescending tone of voice and that… that question. As if Harry really was nothing but a possible source of profit. It made his stomach churn and anger wash through his blood. He felt his hand snap up to his hair and smooth over the long plait, anxiously trying to feel if any feathers were peeking out. He shook his head at Pettigrew, trying to remember that the bloke didn’t know yet that his greedy treachery was no longer a secret. It was somewhat ridiculous how very obvious Pettigrew was in his actions.

What was that look in the rat’s eyes? What was he panicking about? Why was he so desperately trying to get at some… some sample of Harry?

Abruptly standing up, Harry moved to the door. He needed out, he couldn’t stay a second longer in Pettigrew’s presence. The way the rat looked at him, spoke to him – It made Harry think about how others would see him, regard him, if they knew what he was now. It scared him and he needed to get away from it all. He didn’t even hear his friends calling after him as he pushed out onto the corridor, the rocking motion of the train throwing him slightly off balance. He walked down the length of the train, one hand on the wall to steady himself. He walked and he forced himself to think of something, anything else.

“What the fuck was that, Pettigrew?” Sirius snarled, jumping to his feet.

But he didn’t wait to hear some blubbering excuse and instead raced out of the compartment in pursuit of his boyfriend. He couldn’t believe the gall of that rodent. That little bastard, had he done this before? Had he looked at Hadrian like that, talked to him in such a way? It was disgusting and Sirius had been so stunned that he had been staring at the door long after Hadrian had left before his searing anger brought him out of his funk. Maybe he should just shove that rat out the window while the train was at full speed. He would get lost out in the vast landscape and no one would be the wiser. But no, right now he needed to find Hadrian. Let Prongs and Moony get at the traitor while he looked for their Bambi.

Hadrian had looked so very pale when he woke up and Sirius just knew he had been dreaming again. At least he was pretty sure it had ‘only’ been a nightmare and not another vision. Still, running down the aisle and looking in each and every compartment on the way, Sirius couldn’t get that haunted look in those green eyes out of his mind. And it really didn’t help that he had some kind of déjà-vu about it all, the train, Hadrian running and …no, at least the bathroom was empty this time. Well, empty apart from a squealing Hufflepuff. No Snivellus and no Bambi.

He found him in the last carriage, used solely for luggage too big for the compartments. Sirius didn’t even glance at the covered lumps that littered the place. His eyes fixed on Hadrian who was staring out the sole window at the back. He didn’t like how despondent the small figure looked, how hunched the thin shoulders were. Hadrian had been through too much lately, Sirius couldn’t even begin to imagine how he must be feeling. Though sometimes he found himself wondering if Hadrian wasn’t better off here with them, misplaced in time or not. And no, he didn’t think it was only his possessiveness talking.
Reaching out, he embraced his boyfriend, drawing him against him, back to chest. Whatever emotional distance there still remained, he liked to believe it was getting thinner and thinner. Things were changing between them and Sirius was not complaining.

He hadn’t known how to overcome that distance his love always kept around himself. He respected his Hadrian too much to go about it the same way he had with all his other conquests, not to mention that for the first time he wanted actual commitment, feelings and all that stuff. Hadrian was not a conquest though, he was his boyfriend-soon-to-be-fiancé and Sirius had been at a loss as to how to make him more comfortable with the intimate parts of their relationship. He had tried taking everything slower than slow and still Hadrian had been awkward and distant. It was cute in a way, but it also hurt not to be able to be as close to his love as he wanted to. It wasn’t exactly rejection, but also no true acceptance.

Maybe Hadrian just didn’t see him that way? Yeah, that had been one of the more torturous questions plaguing him. It had taken some time for Sirius to realise that his boyfriend simply didn’t know how to interact when so close to anyone. It wasn’t just his lack of experience in romantic relationships, it was a lack of any kind of human interaction it seemed. That realisation, though, had only served to make Sirius even more wary of his attempts at intimacy. And angry, so very angry on his boyfriend’s behalf. What had those vile ex-guardians of his done to make Hadrian so stunted in basic human interaction?

Turning the slender form in his arms around, he descended onto those slightly bitten lips. Drawing Hadrian into a soft kiss, he set about chasing off whatever was clouding his love’s thoughts.

Sirius still remembered his own behavioural issues when he first came to Hogwarts, he had been distant and cautious, but then again, he was a Pureblood. It came kinda with the upbringing. The raucous and easygoing way of Gryffindor House and finding honest friends had helped him more than he would ever be able to put into words and Sirius had fast realised that it was okay to seek comfort through touch. And he took to it so much, became such a tactile person, that every holiday with his cold family, every forced time away from the simplest friendly touch felt like a punishment. Like withdrawal.

Hadrian apparently had not experienced anything like that even though he had been in Gryffindor as well. Sirius couldn’t believe his Hogwarts House would have changed so much in the future, so it had had to do with that prophecy shit Hadrian had told them about. It must have isolated him somehow. So it had taken Hadrian coming to some unspoken kind of decision before things changed in their relationship. That morning when his gorgeous boyfriend had walked out of the bathroom and kissed him had been like a new start… or maybe just the next step in their bond. He wouldn’t know, he had never been in a true relationship before.

A breathless gasp and the tug of gentle fingers in his hair brought Sirius back to the kiss, turning it more possessive. How could he ever let his mind wander when he was kissing Hadrian, listening to the small moans and gasps spilling from those lips? He let his hands graze along the soft cotton of a dress shirt, his boyfriend had worn his uniform for the day. He held onto the narrow hips and pulled Hadrian that much closer. Another moan, this time from Sirius’ mouth, a guttural sound of desire. He was drowning in Hadrian, tasting every inch, licking deep into that sweet mouth…

“Bambi and Padfoot,” a sing-sang voice interrupted the moment and Sirius could have cursed his best mate then and there, “S-N-O-G-G-I-N-G.”

Prongs cheered over-exaggeratedly, doing a fine impression of the muggle cheerleader he and Sirius had once been watching on one of their ventures. Sirius leant heavily against the rocking train wall, his boyfriend pulled close to his chest. He did not want James to see Hadrian like this, flushed,
panting, but James had known what he was interrupting. He had done it on purpose.

“You little blighter,” he growled, “Couldn’t help yourself, could you?”

Staring over Hadrian’s shoulder, he pierced Prongs with a dirty look. His love was standing completely still between his legs, eyes so wide and face burning with such embarrassment.

“Whatever are you on about?” His annoying best mate questioned innocently, hazel eyes mocking Sirius. “I don’t see any fungus around.” (*)

“Don’t cut yourself with that sharp wit of yours,” Sirius sighed, thumb stroking soothingly along Hadrian’s hip bone. “Now, what’s the news?”

Prongs was twirling his wand suddenly, a wicked smirk playing on his face. If Hadrian had not been standing right in front of him, unconsciously blocking any possible spell, Sirius might have been concerned for his own health. James would never attack Hadrian.

“Y’know how hard it was not to hex him right out the window?” His best mate mock-lamented suddenly, the twirling of his wand stopping and Sirius watched him levitating a bit of debris instead.

“My thoughts exactly,” he answered, still watching the debris and arching an eyebrow as it was engulfed in flames and vanished into nothing.

“And then to act as if it all was just fun…,” James muttered darkly and Sirius felt Hadrian turn around in his arms, but kept his eyes on his friend.

“Found your inner Slytherin then?” Sirius questioned, trying to lighten the mood a bit.

He did not like that dark and slightly forlorn look on his best mate’s face. It wasn’t a look that suited James, yet lately it had shadowed his features ever so often. Another reason to get rid of the rat sooner rather than later

“Now you’re just being mean,” Prongs suddenly pouted at him and there was a quiet giggle from their Bambi at the sight. He nearly sighed in relief.

“You’ve rubbed off on him,” Hadrian snickered, relaxing at their friendly banter and glancing at James mischievously.

“I’d like to rub off on you…,” Sirius couldn’t help but purr in reply, making Hadrian blush brilliantly once again. He nuzzled the back of his boyfriend’s neck, delighting in the heat of the exposed skin there - and James whining in the background:

“Oh come on…”

Chapter End Notes

Say, my most honourable readers...
...would you be able to explain to me how ‘gifts’ work on AO3?
After uploading the last chapter I noticed a story dedicated to me in the ‘gifts’ section and I was of course delighted - though I didn’t recognize the author or could fathom why that specific story would be dedicated to me. Nevertheless, I did the happy dance.
Well, since I had no idea if there are traditions or even rules pertaining gifted stories, I
resolved to write a review and thank the author. Sadly, before I had the chance to do so, the gift vanished. So I suppose the story was never meant to be dedicated to me in the first place, but that still leaves me with the general question about gifts.

(*) "You little blighter" (...) "I don't see any fungus around." - James alludes to the plant disease 'blight' especially one caused by fungi such as mildews, rusts etcetera. Herbology, guys.
In which Sirius plays fashionista

Chapter Notes

...otherwise known as the chapter in which there is "glaring, screeching crap".

This is actually the second part of the last chapter, so nothing much happens... well. A few cues are thrown around and we get some nice Sirius/Harry loving.
Also, I think there was something for RRW in here. If you find it, tell me, please. I'm kinda confused at the moment.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Riding in a carriage with a Pettigrew whose skin was still chequered pink and …puke greenish had its own charm. Spending that entire ride safely ensconced in his very territorial boyfriend’s lap, while tense silence permeated the air... well. Then there were the sporadic, barely civil barbs exchanged between the original Marauders - and Harry really had to wonder about Pettigrew’s sense of self-worth. The bloke was twitchy and sweaty from all the ribbing and yet he still beamed adoringly at James and fawned over the other two. It was nearly enough for Harry to feel sympathetic, when it wasn’t making him nauseous, that is. Seeing as the rat seemed to get more nervous the closer they got to the castle, though, Harry wondered if he simply didn’t notice his supposed friends’ behaviour. What was Pettigrew worrying over?

They entered the castle with the rest of the crush of students and this time Harry was glad for Sirius’ possessive attitude. The arm around him kept him from being pushed around by the taller students and from being accidentally touched so much. It couldn’t be completely avoided when they walked in the crowd, but Harry had learned to deal with instances like this. It was all about concentration. If he focused solely on the feel of Sirius next to and around him, he could do this. It wasn’t nearly as hard as it used to be, too.

Still, when they finally entered the Great Hall for the welcoming feast, Harry was breathing a bit shallowly and nearly fell into his seat at the Gryffindor table. He felt the presence of his friends settling in around him and took a deep, calming breath. Winter holidays had been short, but the tranquillity of Potter Manor had apparently had a slight reversing effect on Harry’s progress. He couldn’t remember how he used to cope with this in the ‘future-past’ and just hoped he would re-acclimate soon.

Feeling the slightly brawny fingers of his boyfriend lace with his own, Harry listened half-heartedly to Dumbledore’s speech. His thoughts though were on his grandfather’s words of farewell. He stopped his free hand from going to the emergency portkey, thinking that he didn’t want to undermine James’ efforts to keep them a secret from Pettigrew. His grandfather had called him ‘son’. He remembered when Arthur Weasley had sometimes used the term of endearment with him, but it had never felt like... like he actually meant it in a father-son kind of way. When Mr. Weasley called him ‘son’, it was simply an adult addressing a child. It wasn’t meant as a familial claim. This though, Lord Potter calling him his son, was different. It felt different and it made Harry feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

In time, he would be officially introduced as the Lord Potter’s nephew of a lesser line of the house and a then-adoptee into the last remaining line of House Potter. He would become the ‘Spare Heir’,
James’ replacement if anything happened to the current main heir. Which would not be the case as far as Harry was concerned. No, his dad would live and live happy this time around. The crux to that, Harry was sure, came with the thrice-damned prophecy and preventing it from either ever being made, reaching the dark lord’s scaly ears or preventing it from actually fitting James and his then-wife. But that aside, Harry would become the spare Heir Potter and that meant a barrage of political and societal lessons – learning all those different titles being only the beginning.

Leaning slightly into Sirius, Harry thought he would learn even the most ridiculous pureblood tradition if it meant his grandfather kept seeing him as a son.

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There was a dark presence lurking at the edges of his dream. Yes, Harry was very aware that he was dreaming though it didn’t make it any less frightening. He was being watched.

It had to be a dream, he reminded himself frantically as he ran through the all too familiar corridors of the Department of Mysteries. He wasn’t really here, he was at Hogwarts. And it had to be a dream, because he was in the past. A past where Voldemort had no idea he even existed, a past where he was actually happy for once… He wasn’t really in the dank and dark corridors, there wasn’t really a dangerous cold creeping its way towards him.

Right?

He tried to stop, but his feet kept running and he opened door after door and then he was there. This was not real, this hall had been destroyed during his first and last visit. There was just no way that all those prophecies could still be here and intact. But nonetheless was he walking down the aisles between the high stacked shelves with their dusty contents. Hundreds, no thousands of gleaming little globes blinking down at him and still the feeling of being watched followed his every step.

“…born as the seventh month dies…”

He shivered at the whispered words. He attempted to look around to see who was talking, but he couldn’t. His gaze remained fixed on the crossroad just down the last aisle.

“…mark him as his equal…”

His scar started itching at the words. Fucking prophecy. He wanted to wake up and go back to kissing Sirius and laughing with the Marauders. He reached the intersection between the aisles. He knew this was where the prophecy of Tom Riddle and him had been stored before he had come here last year to save his godfather. He knew what was about to happen. He didn’t need the sudden change of the hall around him or the faint sounds of spell casting and shouts and… there was the archway… the silently whispering veil and he was there.

“…but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not…,” the image of his godfather said, standing in midst the fighting Death Eaters and Order members.

He was standing completely still next to the archway and its veil was fluttering against his side. Harry’s eyes went wide. He wanted to scream, to shout for his godfather to move away from the veil, to hurry, just… please!

“… and either must die at the hand of the other…”

His godfather smiled and Harry blinked furiously against the tears in his eyes. He didn’t want anything to disturb his view of his godfather, but then suddenly it wasn’t his godfather standing there any longer. Harry couldn’t tell when exactly it happened, but from one moment to the next the Sirius standing next to the veil was the young teenager he had fallen in love with.
And this Sirius was reaching out to him.

“Remember, Hadrian. A power he knows not.” And Sirius was falling and then Harry was falling too, down, down...

Sirius abruptly woke as the curtains around his bed were thrown open wide and not only bright, evil sunlight, but also a gust of icy winter wind WOOSH-ed its way inside. Reflexively, he pulled the source of warmth resting next to him closer, registering sleepily the scent of his lovely boyfriend.

“Wakey, wakey, Pads,” James crowed, being way too cheerful for a Monday morning – Or simply enjoying the fact that he could ruin his best mate’s morning.

Sirius blinked tired eyes, glancing down at the tousled head of dark hair tucked neatly into his chest. Hadrian was awake now too, but he could feel the tenseness in his form. Something wasn’t right and it wasn’t just James catching them cuddling.

“Go drown yourself in the shower, Prongs,” he rumbled in response, his voice still rough from sleep. “But the sun is shining-” James started chirpily.

“Gla...
deaths had brought back a lot of painful memories for his Hadrian, and now that they knew about all that… Maybe now Hadrian would actually talk about it?

There was a shaky puff of breath against the skin of his neck. It would have been the skin of his chest had they still been at the manor, but alas… they were at school now, which meant sharing a dorm with Prongsi, the irksome cock-blocker of doom. Though, to be honest, as Sirius had fast realised the evening before, he had a hard time actually falling asleep in the dorm that was so familiar to him. And it was all because of the lump of lard two beds over. He didn’t trust Wormtail anymore and although he didn’t think their once-friend had the balls to be an active danger to their health, Sirius couldn’t help the anxiousness about letting his guard down around the rat. Letting his guard down around Peter meant risking his boyfriend.

It was official, Peter Pettigrew was after ‘samples’ of Hadrian. And what better time to get those when everyone else was asleep? At least, considering Wormtail’s frantic behaviour the day before, they were pretty sure that he hadn’t succeeded yet. Though the question remained: What was Peter trying to accomplish? Or rather: Who was he trying to get the ‘samples’ for? That question was one of the main reasons why they hadn’t actually confronted Wormtail yet, hoping to catch him red-handed… though they weren’t sure how to go about that, considering it would mean letting the rat get at some ‘samples’ and follow him around until he went to meet the one behind the whole farce. And then what?

Another reason, one Sirius didn’t agree with, was that James as well as Remus was still shying away from directly confronting Wormtail with what they knew. For Sirius it was as simple as that: Peter had betrayed them and all that was left was to find out who was backing him – and then revenge. There was no need to keep hiding their true feelings for the rat. But his remaining friends were more sentimental, maybe still hoping for some explanation. Hadrian shifting in his arms had Sirius kick himself mentally. As sooty lashes shaded glowing green eyes, Hadrian looked up at him. He couldn’t resist the temptation a moment longer, but contented himself with a brush of lips across his Bambi’s forehead, cute nose-

“You,” was mumbled just before Sirius could kiss those lips.

“Mh?”

“I dreamed about you… your future? My past?” Hadrian wrinkled his nose in sleepy confusion, before shrugging ever so slightly. “I dreamed about you.”

Blinking down at his boyfriend, Sirius pondered that answer for a moment. He had not really thought about the fact that Hadrian would have known him ‘in the future’. Okay, so, he had pushed the thought aside like an Acromantula on a sugar high. Seriously, he did not want to think about the fact that Hadrian had known his adult self… and had obviously not had any kind of romantic relationship with ‘adult Sirius’. It was just so weird to imagine him being all savvy grown-up and Hadrian being… a child. Merlin, he would have seen him grow up. He probably would have held baby Hadrian, he would have held Prongs’ baby son.

Sitting up and carefully laying his precious cuddle-burden down on the pillow, Sirius made sure the blankets were all tucked in around his love, before getting up. He went over to close the still open window, taking note of Remus’ and Wormtail’s missing persons and James’ Banshee impression inside the shower. The bedding of the rat was haphazardly thrown back together in some half-assed order, while Rem’s bed was its typical neat self. Sirius himself, much like James, never cared about making even an effort of keeping his sheets in order, not seeing the use when they would end up all tossed around again anyway. He started in on changing out of his sleep clothes, before scraping together the courage to ask his boyfriend about any details on his dream… nightmare… that for some
reason had featured his adult self.

“So,” he said, slipping on a pair of uniform slacks, “Was it memories?”

He hoped not, after all, Hadrian very obviously hadn’t had a nice dream. His boyfriend was sitting up now, huddled in the blanket with only his head visible, and watching him. His hair was sticking up in all directions, reminiscent of James’ bed hair, but that much more adorable. Not to mention that it was a whole damn lot more hair on his Bambi’s head, long beautiful tendrils falling down over the sheets. He could see the morning sun sending the hidden feathers into their ‘magical sparks’ that Sirius still had no explanation for.

“Yeah,” Hadrian mumbled absently, eyes taking in every movement of Sirius’ half-clad self.

Giving his watching boyfriend a sultry smile, Sirius took his time putting on his shirt, only to leave it unbuttoned. Heat was plainly rising in Hadrian’s skin, still sleep-warmed cheeks darkening even further as his eyes raked over the exposed skin of Sirius’ chest and flat stomach. He was well aware that his broad, Quidditch-toned shoulders were one of his best features, but Prongs was no slouch as captain, meaning Sirius had been slaving away on his boom for years now. Oh yeah, Sirius knew he definitely had no reason to hide his body and he had never been shy about his charms. Good looks came with the Black name just like the penchant for possible insanity. Maybe he could distract his Hadrian into giving a few answers…

Sauntering back over to the bed, green eyes following his process with rapt attention, Sirius let himself fall forward suddenly, startling Hadrian into toppling over in a tangle of sheets and long hair with a squeak. Suppressing his snickers, he leant heavily over his boyfriend’s prone form.

“And what memorable things did my future self do?” He purred, nosing along a pale neck.

He listened intently to the slight hitch in breath, hoping to get some more information on that mysterious future his love so rarely truly talked about. Sirius did not share the opinion of the Potters that they should be keeping information on that part of Hadrian’s life to a minimum.

“He,” his boyfriend’s voice sounded very distracted as Sirius started shedding the sheets from his form, “He c-came to my rescue.”

Well, that sounded about right. It did, however, not explain why his Hadrian had needed saving in the first place. Though, Sirius admitted while skimming his nose teasingly along the warm skin of an arm down to the hand, for as small as he was, the little Elf Owl beneath him seemed to be a walking trouble magnet. Coming from a Marauder Supreme, that certainly had to mean something. He made a noise to encourage Hadrian to continue and distracted as he was, or maybe just finally wanting to talk about it, he did just that.

“It… the dream… was a m-memory,” Hadrian gasped as Sirius nipped at the fingers he had just reached, “Memory about something that h-happened just before summer.”

Another gasp and Sirius smirked against the heated skin of his boyfriend’s stomach as he exposed it. This was nice, maybe he should wake his love more often like this…

“Oh?”

He rubbed the slight stubble of his jaw along Hadrian’s stomach and up, pushing the sleep shirt up as well, until he was facing him again. His love was flushed, eyes closed and fingers clenched in the tangled sheets around them. His scrutiny of the beauty beneath him was the only reason Sirius noted the sudden frown that flitted across Hadrian’s face.
“He fell… died,” he whispered. “My fault, it was all my fault.”

And just like that the building sexual tension evaporated.

Remus was feeling slightly unnerved. He was sat in the Great Hall, early enough that only a few Ravenclaws and Slytherins were there already, but it was enough to make him feel even jitterier. The reason for that was the upcoming full moon which would reach its peak on Wednesday 5th of January. Two days, and as always Remus’ senses were already sharper, his reflexes faster. Only this month something was different.

His senses weren’t ‘just’ sharper, they were going completely haywire. He could read the title of the book a fifth year Slytherin was currently absorbed in from all the way across the hall – and it was one of those plain books, too, no overly elaborate writing or big letters. He could also hear the gist of the hushed discussion Professor McGonagall was currently having with Professor Flitwick at the head table if he concentrated enough on their voices. But the worst was his sense of smell.

For example, he knew Peter had been out of bed for over an hour when Remus had woken. Their friend gone traitor had left the dorm, had gone straight through the common room and then his scent got lost between the hundreds of different lingering smells in Hogwarts halls, but he had not yet been to the Great Hall. To Remus’ chagrin his overly sensitive nose also told him that James had a nice dream last night and would wake with a certain morning problem or a need for fresh sheets respectively. Luckily Remus had left the dorm before that happened, it was bad enough that the smell of his friend’s arousal would probably still be around when he went to bed in the evening.

But what really freaked Remus out was the way females smelled to him. Oh yeah, in the week before the full moon he had always been able to scent out if a girl was particularly interested in him. But this… Let’s just say he certainly was not fond of knowing which girl currently suffered from her monthlies and he valiantly told his wolf off from pointing out those that smelled ‘fertile’. It was frankly disturbing.

For all his trouble, though, none of the information his overly sensitive senses constantly related to him answered the question that really bothered Remus: Why was this month different?

Part of him wondered if it had something to do with his wolf feeling more accepted than it ever had with Hadrian now also in the know. It had been a confusing fact from the beginning that their Bambi made his wolf not only feel protective but also helped it relax. Moony was decidedly more at ease when Hadrian was around. Still, Remus’ logical brain and his ingrained fear of discovery had made him shy away from the possibility of letting Hadrian in on his secret. Even after the boy had followed the Marauders out onto the grounds during one of the full moons, Remus had not been certain he could trust him with such delicate information. Or rather… he somehow felt like he could and should trust Hadrian, but his logical brain had argued that they didn’t really know him. His instincts hadn’t made any sense to his logical mind.

Ultimately, it had been Hadrian to solve that dilemma. Two days before the full moon of November 1976 he had come up to Remus when he had been studying in a secluded area of the library and simply outright asked him what he thought was the best course of action during Remus’ next change. Hadrian had wanted to know what he could do during that time to be there for Remus since he was unable to run with him as an Animagus. He hadn’t mentioned the full moon, nor used the term ‘werewolf’, which Remus was grateful for since they were out in a public place, but it still had been glaringly obvious that Hadrian knew about him. To say it had been a shock… well. They came to an agreement then. How he could have ever doubted the boy’s loyalty was beyond Remus. He was so sweet, always thinking of others… which reminded him and made Moony growl lowly in the back
of his mind:

There was a new fear that had replaced Remus’ anxiousness about Hadrian knowing about his furry little problem. Now there was the rat in their midst. Someone they had trusted and who now was an obvious danger to who Moony perceived the cub of his pack. Hadrian’s creature status possibly being exposed was the main issue with this, of course, but also the knowledge of his origins and then the things he had told them about the future… But wait, Peter didn’t know about Hadrian vanquishing the dark lord as a baby, did he? He had not been with them on Halloween when Hadrian told them about his scar. That meant Peter only knew of a future in which the dark lord was still an issue… or something along those lines. Not a good notion considering the future Peter’s treachery, it would only encourage their Peter’s leaning to the Dark. And wasn’t that realisation ugly.

With a start, Remus found himself wondering if maybe Peter’s treachery, his betrayal of the pack, was also a factor that somehow made this month different.

They could no longer risk bringing him into confidence. In fact, they needed to find a way to secure their secrets. Hadrian’s as much as the original Marauders’ secrets, Remus’ secret. Whoever their once-friend was reporting to now was out to get Hadrian, that much was obvious to Remus. It could mean that whoever it was, already knew about the rare creature their cub was and that meant Remus himself was at risk too. Still, he wanted to believe that Peter had not realised that he was endangering all of them. Remus wanted to believe that their once-friend had only gotten tangled up in his jealously, that his envy had blinded him. He wanted to believe that Peter was not lost.

But that hope didn’t change the fact that they needed a way to secure all their secrets until a time they knew Peter could be trusted again. If there ever came such a time. Remus knew the Marauders were currently in a quandary. Sirius wanted revenge, it was as simple as that. Peter had betrayed them and no amount of possible rationalisation would ever redeem Peter in his eyes. James was hurting. He was such a loyal soul, belief in family and friendship deep rooted in his very being. James didn’t want to accept the truth of Peter’s betrayal, but he would come to terms with it soon enough. Maybe today would already be the day James found his footing again and then he would be right up there with Sirius and planning revenge. And Remus knew revenge Marauder-style could be vicious. It would probably start out rather harmless, but the instances would increase in frequency and even if they never outright told Peter about it… he would eventually be forced to realise it.

Cutting Peter off, making it clear he no longer was part of their group, would be like throwing him to the wolves – excuse the pun. He hadn’t exactly made friends outside the Marauders, in fact, he had very likely made enemies. There was a reason they had sometimes escorted him to classes they didn’t share. Peter had thoroughly enjoyed being friends with the two most popular blokes of the years one to six and he had not done so graciously. Peter had gloated, had taken obvious enjoyment in their sometimes malicious pranks, had shown unholy glee in reaping the favours that came with being friends with someone as popular and wealthy as James and Sirius. Remus didn’t count himself, but it was also a fact that Peter had taken great advantage of the werewolf’s academic inclination.

Harry wasn’t having a good day. He liked to believe that he could deal with his nightmares, he had done so on his own all his life. But after his godfather died, things became so much worse.

One would think, with all the shit he had gone through since turning eleven, that he had more than enough fodder for nightmares and the like and one would be right. Yet, Harry never really had re-occurring dreams about his ‘adventures’. He had had night terrors about Quirrell dying beneath his hands in first year, but after a while those ebbed away. He had had nightmares about the Basilisk and horrible flashbacks about Ginny lying there in the chamber… His brain had had taken a liking to spinning those memories into different versions, version in which he wasn’t fast enough, not strong
enough. Versions in which Ginny died. But even those faded with time, only to be replaced with fears of a deranged murderer out for his blood in third year and him jumping at grim-shaped shadows, all nicely interlaced with Dementor induced horrors. Those, the Dementor induced horrors, had stuck, but everything else cleared away with time. Fourth year had of course its own slew of terrible memories and fears, all perfect for more nightmares. It didn’t help that ever since that time his connection to Voldemort had him living through terrors of another kind when witnessing what the dark lord was up to. And yet all these memories only rarely featured in his dreams.

But Sirius. His godfather. Harry wondered if the guilt would ever truly leave him.

So it was a very subdued Harry that let Sirius tug him down to breakfast and a bouncing James who seemed kind of oblivious to the atmosphere. Or maybe his dad was just compensating for his feelings about Pettigrew’s treachery. It wasn’t until they reached the entrance hall that anyone really took notice of their little group and then it was a flock of female Ravenclaws watching them. Meaning, they had been subconsciously categorized as creepy fangirls and not been paid much attention.

Harry honestly hadn’t thought about anyone else’s reaction to his new looks and so he felt his rambling brain screech to a confused halt at the sudden realisation that it would in fact garner attention. Not being labelled with some title-lugging-around-too-many-hyphens had kind of made him forget that most people felt entitled to judge others. Back in his original time he had been so used to the constant scrutiny that he had become somewhat numb to the sheer audacity that was the wizarding public when it came to anything pertaining THEIR Boy-Who-Lived. He had forgotten how it felt when others thought they had a right to know everything about you or felt you should be exactly the way they expected you to be.

“Are we now all going to tie quills in our hair?” A haughty voice questioned from the side, making them stop and really register the group of Ravenclaws. “Is this a thing or something?”

She was a tall brunette, pretty enough Harry thought, with a nice tan and gimlet eyes. Eyes, that were currently scrutinizing Harry’s newly lengthened hair, held in a messy bun-kind-of-thing at the nape of his neck (because Harry had not a Pixie fart’s idea how to style any kind of hair, much less hair of such lengths). He also wasn’t sure if the question had been aimed at him, so he just shrugged unsurely, trying to ignore his rapid heartbeat.

Quills. Feathers. She had seen his feathers! Suddenly breathing seemed to be a terribly complex ability Harry felt unable to master. He was fighting the urge to reach up and try to hide whatever she had caught sight of and-

“Didn’t you know?” Sirius’ voice was all shocked incredulity, as if the Ravenclaw really should have known better. “It’s all the rage right now. I’m surprised you weren’t aware.”

As if to prove his ridiculous claim, that he even managed to make sound condescending, Sirius flaunted his own hair-pin adorned with Harry’s feather. James simply looked down at the group in a way that could have rivalled Dumbledore’s ‘I am so very disappointed in you’-look. He even had the glasses going for him.

And just like that James and Sirius waltzed into the Great Hall, dragging Harry along with them and leaving frantically whispering girls in their wake. After all, if Sirius Black - flamboyant, wealthy, popular, Pureblood – said something was all the rage, you better believed that he knew what he was talking about. Somehow Harry thought by tomorrow there would be a shortage of quills actually still useable for their original purpose.

Chapter End Notes
If you happen to encounter my stories someplace other than on AO3 (and I really do mean any other place!), please let me know for that’d likely be a Gilderoy… err… fraud.

- AAAAAnd I think the stage is open for everyone who wants to torture Pettigrew a bit. I will try my best to not let my inner Hufflepuff get the better of me.
In which there is the lingering problem of a dark lord

Chapter Notes

Some of Sev’s thought processes go to rtalish with a wink! I think, the ‘hairy’ thoughts are going to be a thing for a while. ;)

Also: The idea of using Voldemort’s actual heritage publicly against him isn’t mine originally and I’m unsure if it is a well known cliché. I read it first in ArielSakura’s fic ‘Relief from Nightmares’. A lovely writer that. It probably won’t be much of a thing in my story, but I felt it should be mentioned anyway.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dark eyes were following his every move, burning a probably not completely imagined hole in the back of his neck. He could feel the stare, but not the intent. It wasn’t a glare, which was kinda funny considering who was staring at him.

They were currently sitting in Potions, with the Slytherins of course, because a certain headmaster apparently liked to pit those two houses against each other in the most volatile situations possible. Harry had always wondered why Potions specifically ended up being such a tense class; why not have the two rivalling houses have another class together? What about nice, calming Herbology? But no, this year it was not only Potions, a class famous for explosions, but also Defence. No further explanation necessary for the possible volatility of the latter.

It was also Monday 3rd 1977, the first day of classes after Christmas break, and the first time Harry’s new potions arrived during breakfast. Healer Hahnemann had warned him about the side-effects and not to forget to actually take his assigned potions. So he took his nutrient potion with his breakfast, washing it down with a lot of pumpkin juice, but the batch of bone-strengthening-potions was still waiting for him. If possible he was to take that one before going to sleep every night for about a month. It would make him just a little woozy and the potion taking effect would apparently make him achy all over. The healer had compared it to the growing pains one got during growth spurts, especially in the joints. Harry was not looking forward to that, really, why couldn’t it be like with all potions he remembered taking so far: disgusting taste and maybe a twinge in the stomach, but over and done with in a few seconds.

The potion for his lungs, though, was probably the one that had garnered him the attention of a certain black-eyed Slytherin. This specific remedy was the one Healer Hahnemann had said would be the most expensive, not only because of the rare ingredients, but also because it had to be brewed freshly each time. And Harry had no doubt that even as a teenager Snape was fully capable of recognising the potion as what it was. So Harry had downed that disgusting concoction as well, simply glad that its only known side-effect was a slight shortage of breath – which was why Harry was now even less fond of the many stairs in the castle. He also was explicitly forbidden from partaking in Quidditch or any other ‘rough-housing’. The note of the healer had made it sound like Harry was notorious for his brawls or something.

Sadly there was no escaping this disgusting treatment, the intent watching of his so-called friends had made that clear as the freshly fallen snow outside. James was still feeling guilty over forgetting Harry’s ‘delicate condition’ (and Merlin’s balls did Harry hate that description) and was likely to pay
extra attention. Sirius was still caught up in his territorial, possessive mindscap and very, very intent on protecting Harry – which apparently translated to making sure he drank each assigned potion down to the last drop. He even had gone so far as to make himself – not Harry – a schedule so he wouldn’t forget when Harry was meant to take which potion. Remus, honour-bound by Lord Potter as he was, had simply stared Harry down until he conceded and took the horrendous concoctions. He briefly wondered which Hogwarts House his grandfather had been in…

Which reminded him, he might better pay a bit more attention to the potion he was currently brewing. The stare on his back intensified.

With Lily’s help Harry had been able to at least catch up in Potions and Charms; she had tutored him rather vigorously in every free minute she could catch him alone before the holidays. Her Ravenclaw friend Alice (If she did buy into the whole fangirling circus at least she didn’t seem to be one of the more scary ones.) had also taken it upon herself to help out both Harry and Lily with Transfiguration. Sure, Harry could have asked James for that, but some irrational part of himself didn’t want his father to know just how much catching up Harry had needed to do. At least Lily didn’t know she was his mother, which made it somewhat okay. He hadn’t been aware how much he really lacked in basics until Lily and Alice started in on him.

Harry now was caught up with those three classes at least and had even developed mostly decent potion skills, probably due to someone actually explaining why ingredients reacted a certain way and, yeah, also the lack of scathing commentary of his every move during the lessons. Though he really should be paying more attention to what he was supposed to do right now. He was sharing a desk with Sirius today, of course, while Remus and James worked on the one in front of them, leaving Pettigrew conveniently to the wayside. Still, with the burning of dark eyes in his back it was rather hard to concentrate on a subject he would most likely never be at ease with.

Severus was staring at Moore’s hair. He couldn’t help it, the softly swinging plait with its very intricate patterns had a near hypnotizing effect on him. It was different from how the boy had worn his hair this morning, Severus had seen Lily do it up for him during lunch. Apparently Moore had not thought this insipid change in looks through, had no idea how to care for his new style of hair. Typically Gryffindor.

Severus refrained from sighing, commanding his eyes to take in the ingredients meticulously laid out on the work station he was occupying alone. He didn’t need more than a glance to know his potion was at the required state for the moment and the next steps were already prepared. He added the shredded *Alihotsy* leaves, especially careful to avoid skin contact. Considering the asinine giggles from many of the other students, most of them had not employed the needed caution when dealing with this herb. (*)

Hadrian, he noted, eyes once again fixing on the slender boy’s back, was not laughing. Severus hadn’t paid the boy much attention during previous lessons, apart from noting his uselessness for the intricate art of potion making and his astoundingly sound work in Defence. But it seemed, even sharing a table with the health hazard that was a lovesick Black, Hadrian was capable of keeping his potion… well, at least mostly intact. It wasn’t perfect by far, but still in the range that Slughorn would consider usable. Which was more than could be said for most of the Gryffindors’ potions, Lily’s exempt, of course.

And he was staring again. That plait was ridiculously long.

Luckily for Severus none of his Slytherin classmates was paying much attention to him as well or he might just have found himself in a quandary. How to explain such interest in a Gryffindor of all things, especially when he had already distanced himself very clearly from Lestrange’s embarrassing
attempts at retribution for the Wooden Bridge incident? He already had gained an ugly reputation for his friendship with Lily, he better had not risk more of that. Not that he was contemplating a friendship of all things with Black’s little pet. He was not.

Still… Moore had snatched Severus’ attention when he had received that potions package at breakfast this morning. It wasn’t easy to covertly get a good look at what the boy had been receiving and no, it definitely wasn’t because Severus had already been staring that he noticed the package at all. Seriously, that hair…

Calling his errand brain to order, he added the next needed ingredient, stirring two times counter-clockwise, and set a timer for the next step.

Right. First Severus had thought the boy was just receiving some items he had forgotten at home like many others of those uncoordinated morons. But then Moore actually opened the package right there at the table and proceeded to chuck down the contents of a potion’s vial. Yes, he definitely garnered some curious and suspicious looks with that and Severus had suddenly had even more incentive to pay attention. That bastard Potter and the rest of his cronies had been very interested in those potions as well, which coincidentally made it a lot easier for Severus to identify the different vials as they handed them back and forth across the table.

He recognised a very light nutritional potion as the one Hadrian had taken right after opening the package. Then there was a batch of pale yellow potions with a peculiar consistency he could not get a clear view of. Had he been able to look at it up close, Severus was sure he would have easily identified the potion. The last potion, though, was what truly caught his attention: It was a potion Severus had only ever read about, but recognised by the typical custom-made glass of the vial. Blackened glass to protect the contents from sunlight as the potion was to solely work on the inside of the body, the lungs to be precise. It could only unfold its true potential when kept completely in the dark and would lose rapidly in potency when exposed to light. The effectiveness of this remedy was also at its highest right after the brewing process was finished, and would spoil after just 24 hours no matter the way of storage. All this, combined with some of the needed ingredients, made it expensive on a level that was fairly disgusting.

As a budding potions master he was of course aware of the dangers of potion making, which was also why he was aware that this specific potion found its use mostly in accidents inside the lab. It was used to combat possible lung damage caused by the inhalation of potions fumes. One could clear lungs with just a charm, but to heal them required too intricate and delicate work to do so with foolish wand-waving. Just another example for the superiority of potions.

Had Moore been caught in an accident of that kind, something exploding in the lab? Considering his less than stellar record ever since his very first lesson at Hogwarts, Severus honestly thought it possible for a moment. It would also explain Moore’s sudden more careful attitude towards the subject. But. In combination with the nutritional potion, however light the dosage, Severus got the impression something else entirely was afoot. A nutritional potion and an overly expensive remedy to counter lung damage. If he had been able to get a better look at the unknown third potion, he was sure he would have solved this riddle already.

Looking up at the object of his thoughts yet again, Severus sneered at the hyperactive puppy making a fool of himself to draw a smile out of Moore. Alright, he conceded, if anyone was the pet in that disastrous combination of waste of space, it was the starry-eyed Black.

His brush made little tapping sounds on the canvas as Harry added a few darker flecks to the luminescent plumage of Hedwig. The image of his old friend brought a sad smile to his lips. He missed her. A part of him was aching for everyone, his friends he had left behind, but another, larger
part was constantly pointing out the once-in-a-lifetime chance he had here. He could not only end Voldemort long before his family and friends would ever have to suffer from his actions, he could also build his own life here without the constant attention that came with who he had been in the ‘future’. It really wasn’t anything to scoff at, but he couldn’t help the sporadic melancholy that haunted him. Still, it was so much better now than it had been only a few months back.

Muggle Arts was a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle that was the first day back at school. He was tired, his body still in holiday-mode, but he loved this class. Maybe even more than Defence… scratch that, definitely more than Defence, at least as long as they were being taught by Professor Bole. That man… something about him was just tickling at Harry’s instincts, the ones that had always warned him when something Dark was going on. He had a feeling someday soon that instinct would once again prove correct.

He let out a gusty sigh, swiping distractedly at a strand of his hair that had escaped the tight plait, smearing paint across his cheek in the process. He was glad Lily had done his hair up for him, because his attempts had just been pathetic. At least, he thought, it wasn’t as annoying as it used to be before Lady Potter went about lengthening it. Still, a part of Harry thought everything would be easier if he simply cut it short again.

Trying to ignore the high-pitched giggling of some of the girls in his class, he thought back to lunch and Lily’s reaction to his hair. He hadn’t really had a chance to greet her last night, overtired as he had been, and it wasn’t till after Transfiguration today that he got to thank her for her Christmas present. Though, that had come only after she had stopped the guys from trying to ‘help’ Harry with his wayward hair. He could still hear her scandalized voice interrupting James’ attempts at tying the mass of dark hair and feather into something remotely presentable.

“No, no, no, no… stop,” she had interrupted, hands on her hips and finely arched eyebrows drawn together in a frown. “Just stop right there.”

Apparently James had done something seriously wrong and considering the way he had tugged at Harry’s hair, making his scalp sting in the process, Harry was inclined to agree. Not that he had any idea how to do it better. Back at Potter Manor it had been his grandmother who took care of his hair, but he had completely forgotten to ask her to teach it to him in the process. He had just enjoyed it so much, sitting in his grandmother’s little cosy parlour with Sirius’ watchful gaze studying the movements of her hands as they weaved through his hair. Actually, Sirius had stared so intently back then, he really should have a better idea of what to do.

“James Fleamont Potter, don’t you dare touch that boy’s hair again,” Lily had continued when said bloke had once again reached out to Harry. He got the feeling James had done it just to get this kind of reaction from his crush. Though, the cringe at the mention of his full name was probably not intended. “Yes, I said it. Fleamont.”

There had been a sharp smirk playing at the edges of Lily’s plump lips, eyes blazing with indignant exasperation… or maybe even anger that someone would brutalize hair like that. Harry remembered Sirius looking from her to Harry and back again, realisation lighting up his whole face. He had a feeling his mother had just been identified. The thought of Sirius brought Harry back to the present and he bit back a groan, lowering his brush. That morning…

Sirius was so intense, the way he looked at Harry, the way those eyes would follow him, trace along his body. He would never say so out loud, but Harry loved the way those grey eyes made him feel. Like he was the most precious thing in the world, like there was nothing more important to Sirius than Harry. And he looked at him like Harry was desirable, as if it took Sirius considerable self-control not to constantly touch him. Harry had never felt like this before.
But then he had to go and confess something like that. Why had he blurted out what had happened to his godfather in the future? If the thoughts didn’t still hurt so much, the whole situation this morning would have been distinctly awkward. Who starts talking about their deceased godfather while making out? Okay, so most would probably not be making out with their deceased godfather’s younger self in the first place. Right. Awkward. Now, that thought just made Harry feel wrong, like he really shouldn’t be thinking of Sirius in any romantic fashion… This time Harry really did groan, annoyed with his circling thoughts.

“Say,” a simpering voice said from his right, “Does Sirius like long hair better?”

She, he couldn’t be bothered to remember her name, was flicking her own blond hair as if contemplating Sirius’ reaction to it while eying the long plait falling down Harry’s back. Harry blinked at her. What was that about?

“I mean,” she continued, “You totally did it for him, like, to hold his interest and stuff. What with your hair looking all scruffy-like, right?”

Harry blinked again, unsure how to react to… this. Then, probably annoyed with his lack of response, she was suddenly reaching out to touch his plait, making Harry tense and shy away from her hand instinctively. He was not about to let just anyone touch him, especially not his hair. She tsk-ed at him, eying the plait Lily had woven his long hair into critically. Her voice dropped the simpering tone and all at once Harry was aware of more than one other student listening in on them. Or, well, rather her.

“What did you do to make it, like, look so… you know, so much better than before? You looked like some homeless muggle before holidays and now it’s all silk-like.”

Harry thought her speech pattern was, you know, like, totally annoying. Still, maybe she would shut up when he actually answered one of her questions.

“I came across a shampoo that promised ‘smooth hair like Acromantula silk’,” he told her quietly, hoping to have satisfied her curiosity.

Though, he couldn’t remember what the shampoo was called. Sirius had packed it for him when he had tried to leave it behind at the manor, the prat.

“Well, I suppose you would need help like that,” she commented, looking him over critically and obviously finding his appearance wanting. She even flicked her own rather pretty hair again. “So what is it you’re doing to keep him coming back for more? Is it, like, something no girl would ever do for him?”

Harry gaped. She couldn’t mean… was she really alluding to that? He felt himself flush at the mere thought of anyone even contemplating the intimate parts of Sirius’ and his relationship. That was just… he wasn’t even able to think about it himself without blushing and here was some chit asking for details while half the class was listening in.

“I don’t think that’s any of your business,” he finally forced out through gritted teeth.

“Oh don’t be like that,” she waved him off with some haughty gesture Harry would never be able to pull off. “You totally should be more altruistic for the next in line, you know? It’s not like he’ll bond with you or something.”

“What?”

Harry was flummoxed. What was she going on about? He didn’t like how she was more or less
stating that Harry was just one of many for Sirius. He wasn’t. Sirius and he were... they were more than that. …Right? The chit, obviously smelling Harry’s vulnerability, let loose a sudden high-pitched giggle.

“Aw you totally thought you were special, didn’t you?”

There were titters and whispering around the classroom at that, making Harry flush angrily. But it wasn’t the condescending looks and scathing remarks he was receiving now that made his chest feel tight. He was used to stuff like that, had survived worse at just twelve when the whole school had thought him the heir of Slytherin. And then fourth year when they were all shunning him once again. No, these kids weren’t truly bothering him. It was the uncertainty that came with the blond chit’s words. He had never really questioned where Sirius and he were going with this relationship. What if…

“Who does he think he’s anyway?” Someone was just saying, not even trying to muffle their voice, “Hanging off of Sirius like that.”

There were vicious looks and whispering and Harry scrunched up his nose in disgust. Shaking away his doubts, he sighed. So this was how it would be going now. Really, he could have happily lived without so many parallels to his former life. When he had appeared in the past, the majority of Hogwarts’ students had simply ignored him. He knew he was nothing special without his Boy-Who-Wouldn’t-Die title, and it had been easy to hide in the large shadows of the Marauders. But the moment he and Sirius started to be more than friends, he had been shoved back into the limelight. Dating one of the most popular blokes of the school could do that to you, especially if you just so happened to be a bloke yourself. Sure, there were those creepy fangirl bases, but listening to the so-not-inconspicuous whispers around him now, Harry knew the atmosphere had changed. They weren’t cooing over him anymore – not that he wanted them to, but it was probably better than what they were doing now. He wondered if Sirius was experiencing the same, if they had also stopped cheering him on, or if Harry would be the only target in this.

Carefully cleaning his brushes the manual way, and of course being scoffed at for his muggle-behaviour when no one had ever mentioned it before now, Harry briefly wondered if these students felt his allure as well. If so, he wondered if it had anything to do with the sudden change in the way they perceived him. But didn’t that contradict what he had learned about this awful creature feature so far? Harry frowned in annoyance. He should know this, it was concerning him specifically, and why had he not even finished reading that damn inheritance book of the Potters? Oh right, because it was such rubbish. Even Remus said so.

But wasn’t there anything he could do to learn about what he was now? He was so sick of just finding things out through trial and error and there hadn’t really been time to sit down with Lord Potter over the holiday after the attacks happened. His grandmother couldn’t really help him either, she wasn’t a Potter by blood and had therefore very limited knowledge of the secret creature heritage. It just really drove home how very unexpected his sudden inheritance had been. Elf Owls had been thought extinct.

Wrapping his brushes lovingly, they had been a present from Sirius and Remus after all, Harry thought back to the one Christmas present he hadn’t really looked at much yet. Lily had sent him a book on creature inheritances. He remembered James catching sight of it and telling Harry to keep it hidden. He was always welcome to look through the Potter libraries, but he shouldn’t be caught with a book like this in the current political climate. If he were a Muggleborn, things would be different. People would just assume he wanted to learn about that specific topic he wouldn’t have heard of before entering the Wizarding World. But as a known member of a pureblood family he was expected to have learned the basics as a child and as long as he wasn’t expecting to inherit any
creature genes himself, there was no need for him to learn more about it. And no, you did not want to inherit such genes. It just wasn’t done, especially not now with the ever tightening regulations of creatures. Yeah, Harry could just imagine how Hermione would react to such deliberately obtuse behaviour concerning knowledge of any kind.

So he had hidden his book deep down in his trunk, wrapped up in those ridiculous breeches he had been given as part of the standard issue clothing, and not looked at it anymore. Well, that would have to change. He would go through it as soon as he had the chance, even though it was unlikely there would be much information on Elf Owls, if any. But maybe he could compare his own reactions and changes to those of other creatures?

The bell signalling the end of the lesson interrupted the whispers around and Harry carefully stowed his canvas away with those of the other students. Remus was waiting at the door for him, James and Sirius probably still down at the pitch. Seeing his friend reminded Harry that he wouldn’t have the time to look anything up this evening, they were going to have an emergency meeting the moment they could safely get away from Pettigrew without raising his suspicion. Harry was aware that the Marauders all had different ideas on what to do with the rat, but the general feeling of betrayal was the same for all three of them. Thinking of the rat, he had a rather lax schedule, hadn’t he? He wasn’t sharing Transfiguration with them and he wasn’t a Quidditch player… Harry was pretty sure Pettigrew was only taking about four classes - Potions, Charms, Defence and Herbology - though he would have to ask Remus about it. Said werewolf was at least going for six or seven NEWTS and was probably taking some extracurricular or something, while James and Sirius went with five, just like Harry, and played Quidditch. Didn’t that mean Pettigrew had an awful lot of free time on Mondays and practically no classes on Thursdays? Time no one was around, time they had no idea how the rat spent it. His instincts were niggling at him again.

At dinner Harry found himself sneaking looks at the Slytherin table.

Severus looked pale, as in even more sallow than he always did. But at the same time there was something… distinctly happy about him. And a happy Snape was a kinda disturbing sight for Harry. Not that he actually had anything against the future potions master’s happiness, as long as it didn’t include something too sinister that is, but still… it was plain weird. Oh Snape was still sneering like the expression was a constant fixture to his face and Harry thought he looked thinner than he did before the holiday. But then there was this air around him, he couldn’t really put it into words. Maybe like some kind of weight had been lifted off his narrow shoulders. And then of course there were his eyes, dark and fathomless as always, following Harry around as if trying to identify a specifically annoying little bug. Did he just think of himself as a bug?

As his eyes met those of the future potions master once again, Harry suddenly had an idea. Could he maybe ask this younger, less bitter Severus to teach him Occlumency? He wouldn’t have any reason to torture Harry this time around, right? Well… probably… Or would that be simply risking his cover, especially if he didn’t manage to stop Severus from defecting to the Dark? No, he couldn’t risk that. It would give Severus access to his mind, his memories, his knowledge of the future… Well, actually, that might not be such a bad thing if he could somehow ensure Severus wouldn’t be able to speak about it to anyone. If the Slytherin knew what would become of Voldemort, there was no way he would want to follow him, right?

“Did you see this?” Remus’ quiet voice broke through the slightly strained chatter of their group, Pettigrew was sitting with them.

Looking up, Harry caught sight of the headlines of the evening issue of the Daily Prophet. Blinking at the appearance of Voldemort’s alias, the first time Harry could remember actually seeing the
The newspaper proclaimed more disappearances, but at least no attack today. Over the past weeks he had seen Remus and his grandfather frown at the paper more than once, had actually overheard them discussing a probable pattern of the disappearances that made the paper. From what Harry had gathered, the people that vanished seemed inconsequential on first glance, but Lord Potter knew his way around the Ministry. He knew all those people disappearing were in some way or another connected to important positions inside the government. And since none of them re-appeared, they had to be replaced. Harry didn’t need to be a genius to realise that those replacements were probably strategically positioned by Voldemort.

Lounging in their dorm, snacking on sweets or starting on homework, the sixth year Gryffindors were having a quiet evening. Harry had propped his head in his boyfriend’s lap, appearing blissed out by those soothing strokes of agile fingers in his unbound hair. Internally though, he was plotting.

If Harry had learned anything from his previous encounters with Voldemort, it was that he could not beat the Dark Lord in a fight one-on-one. That man had been brilliant long before he even left Hogwarts and considering he had attended the school sometime during the 40s, it also gave him the advantage of about 30 years of experience over Harry at this point in time. Less than it had been in the future, but this Voldemort was also a lot less insane. At least, Harry thought so. His soul wasn’t split as often yet, was it? And less insane meant capable of more logical thought, right?

No, he knew he could not win in a fight like this, not yet, maybe not ever. But until he could at least attempt to take the bastard down, he could work on weakening his support. After all, even the strongest wizard was nothing on his own. Sometimes quantity did outstrip quality, though really, Harry wondered idly if he should call Riddle ‘quality’, even with all that apparent brilliance. ‘Rotten’ seemed so much more fitting…

Anyway, there was a possible tactic Harry had wondered about for a while now. Thinking back to the future and the sheer number of times the public had been used against him and in association the Light, made Harry wonder why not turn it around?

And suddenly he remembered a cold, dank cave. He remembered the carcass of a giant snake and a haughty teenager standing over him. He remembered the stillness of a Ginny Weasley near death. In his mind Harry saw writing like flames hovering in the air and a swift wand making the letters rearrange themselves. Tom Marvolo Riddle.

He had a full name and knew Riddle had attended Hogwarts once. He knew when the Chamber of Secrets had been opened the first time, which gave him a general time frame. That meant there had to be records he could look up, records of the dark lord before he became the Dark Lord. Records that proved a heritage not all that aligned with Voldemort’s pureblood agenda. And those records certainly could be easily verified by pretty much everyone.

So what would probably happen if Harry were to leak that information to the Daily Prophet?

It appeared ‘Voldemort’ had now stepped out of the proverbial shadow, his chosen name was well known, established, and Harry could undermine his painstakingly built reputation. Cut away the powerbase. How would those stuck up Purebloods react when they realised they had not only supported and backed a Halfblood, but also grovelled at his feet? Harry couldn’t stop the sinister
smirk from spreading across his face even if he had wanted to. He would like to be a fly on the wall when someone like Malfoy realised he had willingly submitted to what he abhorred the most.

“Oooh I like that look,” Sirius commented, sounding intrigued. “Hrm, vindictive Bambi,” he purred, tracing broom-calloused fingers along the side of Harry’s face, intently watching.

Harry blushed slightly, but couldn’t quite wipe the expression off his face. He had the knowledge, but did he have the means? Looking over at James, he thought that yes, there was a way. He had a family now, a family with strong political ties and influence. He could do this if only he could get Lord Potter behind his idea…

Abruptly Remus was setting his book down, drawing everyone’s attention. Well, mostly everyone’s.

“He’s out,” the werewolf said and Harry felt the hands in his hair still.

He watched as his friend got up and prodded Pettigrew, eliciting no reaction but a rather wet sounding snore. Just to be completely sure, Remus checked that the sweet wrappers around the rat were really those he had laced with some of the Dreamless Sleep he always got for the night after the full moon. Yes, the rat was out cold. It was time.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Alihotsy: Used in Laughing Potions; the leaves cause uncontrollable laughter.
- The magical adventures of a single plait.
The plait and the travel back in time.
Hypnotic mischief maker the plait.
Severus Snape, spellbound by a plait.
.  
.  
X’D
In which there is no fresh pickled toad

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes scenes specifically for Lady_Genevieve, Calmlessness and Koi19. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

James was pale, he knew he was. But really, it was just something else to see the evidence with his own eyes. Yes, he had believed Hadrian, of course he had. He could see just like everyone else that that boy, his future son, was simply incapable of lying, of manipulating. So yes, he had believed what Hadrian told them of Peter… of the Pettigrew of the future, even though it hurt to even imagine such things. And he had believed Moony when he told them about what he had observed, about what he had seen Peter, their Peter of this time, do.

But still. Now James was holding the evidence in his own hands and he couldn’t help it. It hurt. Wormtail had been his friend for so long, it was nearly unfeasible to suddenly think of him as a traitor. But what else could he do now that he could see it written out like this?

Going through their friend’s things after feeding him some Dreamless Sleep felt not at all dramatic, really. It even was kind of amusing, they had pranked each other countless times after all. Had hidden pranks in each other’s things, had doused each and every member of their group with a fun potion, or hexed themselves stupid. So it was fine, he was fine… even when they carefully pulled out Wormtail’s stuff and specifically looked for… something. It was Hadrian who started in on the schoolbooks, the only books in that trunk. James had even made a joke about the fact that Wormy would never touch those if somehow avoidable, so there would be nothing of importance between those pages. Well, or so he had thought.

Hadrian, with unerring precision, had reached for Confronting the Faceless and then he pulled the letter out. James was pale, he knew he was. But really, who could fault him?

Mr. Pettigrew,

As your last credit assignment for my class turned out to be below standard yet again and will therefore result in you failing the subject, I decided to grant you the chance of gaining extra points through a holiday project. You are to revise the failed work and hand in your new attempt on the first day back at school at the latest. I advise you not to waste such an opportunity of atonement.

L. Bole

Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor,

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Oh the wording was innocent enough on first glance. But, as Remus pointed out quietly, what the professor was ‘suggesting’ in the letter was not only against the school charter, it was also probably downright illegal. And it sounded suspiciously like blackmail. Not that James really cared if Wormtail passed his class with underhanded methods. That maybe went a bit farther than your
general Marauder-ness, but was kinda impressive all things considered. It was what was said between the lines with the knowledge of what they already knew, that got to him. Even Wormy’s behaviour on the train suddenly gained a whole new meaning. So yes, it hurt to know your long time friend, someone you considered family, was selling out your actual family… and for something as profane as ‘gaining extra points’ in class. He felt nauseous.

Harry watched Remus and James vanish into thin air beneath the invisibility cloak and with the liberal use of disillusion spells on their feet. And to think he and his friends had been able to hide beneath that thing when there were three of them… The door to the dorm opened and closed and a minute later he and Sirius followed.

Down in the common room Sirius pulled Harry into his lap in one of the plushy armchairs, starting up a distracted sort of conversation with some of his house mates around. He was making a show of kissing Harry’s temple between sentences, nosing along his jaw, touching his hair, slinging his arms around his waist possessively, even mouthing at his neck once, and generally giving a very good reason for the couple to be leaving so shortly before curfew. Especially with their dorm mates presumably still in the dorm. Harry was blushing to the roots, breath hitching and heart racing, but let his boyfriend get away with the behaviour. It was part of the plan and really, Sirius’ hands were leaving hot trails even through his clothes, his touch sending little spikes of pleasure down Harry’s spine… They were earning themselves a few wolf whistles from across the common room, but no questions were asked when after a few lingering moments they made their way out through the portrait hole, Harry being conveniently kissed against the ‘doorframe’, leaving just enough time for their invisible partners in crime to leave undetected.

Not that they got far before Sirius was all over him again. They hadn’t even left the corridor leading to the portrait of the Fat Lady before Harry found himself pressed into the nook of a window by his boyfriend intent on snogging him senseless.

“Siri-”

“You should see yourself,” was purred against his lips, before Sirius moved onto his neck, “The moonlight makes your skin glow.” Harry shuddered at the moist feeling of a hot tongue grazing along the skin of his throat, his fingers bunching the fabric of Sirius’ shirt where he was holding on for dear life. The stone was cold at his back, a sharp contrast to his boyfriend’s heat. “Your eyes…”

“Aren’t you the smooth-talker, Pads,” James’ voice commented from right next to them, making the couple jump in place and Harry reach for his wand on instinct. He had completely forgotten they weren’t actually alone in the dark.

“Am not,” Sirius finally scowled, eyes scanning the seemingly empty hallway, the hand currently not tangled in dark locks taking a hold of Harry’s wand hand absentmindedly. “Just stating facts.”

“Are too”, snickered James, this time from their other side. “Oh Bambi,” he enthused dramatically, “Your eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad.” (*)

Harry was tempted to cast some wide-spread hex, maybe taking a leaf out of Ginny’s book and do some variation of the Bat-Bogey. There was a shuffling sound and then Remus spoke up:

“Boys.” Harry thought he could actually hear him pinching the bridge of his nose.

It wasn’t much later that the four of them entered the Room of Requirement, Sirius and Harry having to take a few hidden passages to go undetected. It wouldn’t do to run into any prefect or professor...
this close to curfew. As the door closed behind them and the room materialised as some elaborate, completely round… something with an equally round table and four seats in the middle – James had been the one asking the room for what he apparently required – Remus took off the invisibility cloak. Harry watched slightly bemused as James continued on into the room, looking like he was floating as he either had forgotten to dispel the disillusionment charm on his feet or, more likely, enjoyed the eerie way it made him look.

“So, gents,” his future dad started, pivoting on his heel, and making some flourishing gesture with his arms, “Welcome to the Marauder Powwow of Justice!”

Ever the dramatic flair…

The potion was an ugly pale yellowish… something. The consistency too was already turning Harry’s stomach. Seriously, did it need to look so bogey-ish… disgusting? He really did not want to think on what the probable contents of his bone-strengthening-potion were, the snot-colour and consistency aside, it did not smell nice either.

“It’s not that bad,” Sirius tried to cajole and Harry threw him a Look. “Alright, yeah, it’s pretty damn repulsive,” he conceded under the withering green glare, but still the vial was held right in front of Harry’s face. “But no way ‘round it. Y’know it’s necessary.”

“Is it really?” Harry grumbled sullenly, but there was no real bite in his voice.

They had been over this more than once, Lord Potter had a go at the ‘We just want you to be healthy’-speech too and don’t even start him on his grandmother. With a sigh Harry gingerly took the vial, glaring at it for good measure, before chucking it back with a grimace that wasn’t even exaggerated. He gagged. Sirius backed up slightly, worried look on his face, but Harry clamped his mouth shut. He was not gonna waste the work and money Healer Hahnemann and Lord Potter had been investing in this, in him. In the background he could faintly hear Remus and James bickering and he thought it was kinda comforting that there were no wet snores from Pettigrew. Those were completely drowned out by the silencing bubble the Marauders had erected around the rat’s bed, unwilling to risk him waking now and noticing that his dorm mates were still up at this hour.

Taking a deep breath, Harry straightened, giving Sirius a weak smile as he held out the filched bottle of pumpkin juice. As he was swishing the liquid around his mouth in an attempt to get rid of the lingering feeling of the potion thickly sliding down his throat, Harry mentally steeled himself for the rest of the month. He would have to take this concoction for the whole of January with weekly check-ups by Healer Hahnemann to make sure his bone structure was coming along the way it should. It was fine, he shouldn’t be making such a fuss, it was just a potion… And then his knees turned weak and Harry stumbled against the wall. He didn’t even register the bottle slipping from his grasp.

“Bambi!”

The sudden shout of his boyfriend had the others looking over, but Harry was busy keeping himself upright. It wasn’t a bad sensation per se; he had just been surprised when he suddenly went weak-kneed and a little dizzy. Right. That would be the side-effects of the potion then.

“I’m fine,” he told a panicky Sirius who was holding him by the shoulders, trying to get a good look at Harry’s face. “Everything’s just a bit wob- …fuzzy,” he explained, noting with faint curiosity that he was actually slurring.

And it was true, the room looked a lot like the world did back when he still needed glasses, but
wasn’t wearing them for some reason. People and things seemingly shifting in place, fuzzy edges and everything somewhat duller. Yeah, it wasn’t a totally unfamiliar sensation and he had had worse, but now Harry was feeling tired as all hell. Not to mention his legs felt like so much jelly. Mhmmm… jelly… An arm wound its way around his waist and he found himself hoisted slightly up, leaning against Sirius.

“Fine doesn’t suddenly topple over, fine doesn’t lose focus for no apparent reason,” his boyfriend was grumbling and Harry couldn’t stop the small snicker from escaping. “Yeah, laugh it up, chucklehead, but fine would be able to walk by himself,” Sirius continued muttering under his breath as he unceremoniously, but oh so very gently, deposited Harry on his bed.

Smiling up lazily, Harry found his muscles and bones all felt a little achy, but not uncomfortably so. It reminded him of the feeling after a good Quidditch training, the moment when he would fall freshly showered into his bed and allow himself to just rest. Yeah, if it wasn’t for that horrid taste (and consistency, and smell, and look…) of that potion, Harry could probably even start liking it. He felt Sirius crawl under the duvet next to him and a moment later a heavy hand was rubbing circles into the achy muscles of his back. He was drifting off before he could even voice his thoughts on whether this was what a massage felt like or not. He found himself dreaming for once of nothing but memories of the day.

The next morning something else encroached on Harry’s mood apart from traitorous rats, apparently-once-again dangerous defence professors, and petty schoolgirls: At breakfast he received another note from Dumbledore, this time delivered by one of the school owls as if the headmaster were for once trying to be subtle. Harry was simply glad the messenger wasn’t a phoenix. As much as he adored Fawkes, that bird was just a tad bit flashy if you were trying to avoid even more attention. Because attention was what Harry got this not-so-nice Tuesday morning. And he loathed it.

Waking up to realise that it was a full day of only Defence lessons with the now even more ominous Professor Bole was setting him on edge on its own. But they had planned for that. Trying his best to ignore Pettigrew while still keeping an eye out for any untoward behaviour… he could do that. He had lived with ‘CONSTANT VIGILANCE’ his whole life and just because the Moody of this time wasn’t his biggest fan wouldn’t stop the ingrained caution.

What Harry had problems dealing with, however, were the many scornful sideways glances or outright sneers the moment they left Gryffindor Tower. The Gryffs weren’t exactly overly welcoming to him either, now that he actually cared to watch for any such behaviour, but they at least weren’t antagonising him. He was with Sirius and apparently a part of the infamous Marauders, and therefore they were waiting what his game would be from now on. Would he become a prankster with a fable for targeting Slytherins or would he only be a tag-along of their favoured house members? The other houses had no such incentive to keep their sudden change in attitude to themselves. Not that everyone was suddenly part of the anti-Harry brigade, but there certainly were a lot of those petty looks and hostile comments he had endured the day before from those air-brained chits. It was like dealing with a mixture of a loved-up Lavender Brown and a Parvati Patil on a gossip-high with a side of a jealous Ron. He groaned at the thought.

From what Harry had overheard so far, it seemed the romance between him and Sirius, now that it had actually happened, had lost a lot of its appeal. Especially those that had been part of that ridiculous fangirl group whose members called themselves ‘the Tragics’ were not happy with the obvious positive outcome. They wanted drama and angst and hurt feelings and all that teenage stuff. Harry simply wanted to know why the heck they were so interested in his personal life. It wasn’t like he was famous in this time, for Merlin’s sake!
Another thing was that prediction Harry had made just the morning before about an oncoming shortage of quills actually still useable for their original purpose. He had known it was coming, but Harry still goggled at the newest accessories Hogwarts’ student body sported. He spotted at least one feather (quill?) in most females’ hairdo and even in the hair of a few of the more confident males. But what actually had him turning and staring after a giggling flock of girls in a way he would have never found himself doing so before, was the apparent evolvement of the feather-quill-trend.

Crows. They had made themselves feather-crowns in a fashion that dimly reminded Harry of the flower-crowns he had seen Luna weave sometimes, only made of feathers (quills??). Well, he hoped they had been clever enough to expel any excess ink that might still cling to the former writing utensils.

Anyway, back to the newest mood-dampener.

Dear Hadrian,

On the matter of our agreement pertaining your future education, I would like to introduce you to one of your new tutors tomorrow evening. You will find that the agreed upon study sessions have been nicely fit into your schedule on Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

I hope you are enjoying your time at Hogwarts.

Yours sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore

P.S. I find myself craving a muggle sweet called ‘Skittles’ these days. (*)

Though, Harry wasn’t necessarily against actual training through Dumbledore, the whole concept still rubbed him somewhat the wrong way. Possibly because he now was very aware of the headmaster’s intention to use him in the upcoming war like nothing more than a well-trained weapon. Harry knew Dumbledore wanted to use the power that had come with his creature inheritance for the ‘Greater Good’, the man had made that very clear – just as he had subtly tried to make Harry feel indebted to him for ‘letting him stay and finish his schooling even though he was a creature’. It was the same guilt tripping he had did with Remus, that much Harry had realised by now. Still, he had willingly agreed to take the training the headmaster had offered. It was a nice change, Harry thought, to be for once allowed to actually learn how to defend himself and more. It had always grated on his nerves, his pride and not to mention his teenage angst to always be denied the so obviously needed training.

Harry had decided for himself that the change in Dumbledore’s attitude came with Harry (as Hadrian) not being any heralded prophecy child. No, now Harry was simply a powerful pawn that needed training so it could be successfully thrown against the enemy’s forces. As Harry Potter, child of prophecy, he had ‘only’ been meant to go up against Voldemort and defeat him with… yeah, whatever power the dark lord didn’t know of. Apparently that power was not something learned through defence and fighting lessons. Or even basic survival training.

“Mh,” James commented from next to him, reading the note over Harry’s shoulder, “Looks like dad already requested to meet us this weekend.”

“How do you know?” Harry blinked confused at him, there was no mention of Lord Potter in the headmaster’s note.
“Well,” James elaborated, heavily leaning his back against the Gryffindor student on his other side, who bore the weight with a grunt and a shrug, “If dad hadn’t requested to meet his son and his nephew this weekend, the headmaster would probably have taken your weekends instead of Wednesday and Thursday evenings.”

“I agree with Prongs,” Sirius said from Harry’s other side, his voice lowered to at least keep the conversation somewhat private, “He wants to train you, but Lord Potter wants to do the same thing – only on other matters. As your perceived head of house he has every right to demand your presence for family matters and then there is the fact that you need regular check-ups with Hahnemann.”

“But Dumbledore knows Lord Potter isn’t-”

“Does he?” James interrupted before Harry could actually say something too damaging out loud. “Or rather, isn’t he?”

Long seconds ticked by before Harry’s eyes widened in understanding. He had wanted to say that Dumbledore knew that Lord Potter wasn’t really Harry’s head of house even if the Lord Potter claimed him to be his nephew. Because Dumbledore knew where Harry really came from. But James was right with his veiled question. Lord Potter technically really was Harry’s head of house, because Harry was his descendant and Lord Potter was very much alive in this time. So, Harry might not actually be his nephew, but he was a part of House Potter and therefore under Lord Potter’s jurisdiction in family matters.


Someone was staring at him again and it wasn’t Severus. The stare was a lot more uncomfortable than that of his future potions professor… or maybe he should call him his possible future ally? This stare though… it gave Harry the chills. It felt wrong, even worse than he had felt back on the train when Pettigrew had scrutinised him with that greedy, desperate look of his. Professor Bole was worse, so much worse and Harry had no doubt that it was this man who was behind Pettigrew’s attempts to get ‘samples’ of Harry. The letter had just confirmed what his instincts had long since told him.

But what was there to do than avoid being alone with the guy? It wasn’t like he could go to Dumbledore and throw accusations around. Not even when he had still been Harry Potter had the headmaster listened when he had tried to tell him about his suspicions. He had tried with Quirrell and been brushed off. And that creep had had Voldemort himself on the backside of his head! So why should Dumbledore listen now that Harry was just any other student, even if it was one the headmaster wanted to exploit specifically? And Harry doubted there was any involvement of the dark lord this time around, too.

He felt his boyfriend’s warm hand brush his thigh and gave him a small smile. With Sirius at his side everything seemed more manageable. For a moment Harry tried to envision how this situation would feel if he were still in his original time. Yeah right, he shuddered. If he were Harry Potter in that time, his bloody creature status would have been front page news and the Ministry would have probably arrested him or some such crap. Biting his lip, Harry reached over and took a hesitant hold of Sirius’ hand beneath the table. He kept his look trained on the professor at the front of the room as the long fingers of the hand he had grabbed interlaced with his own, a thumb caressing along his skin tenderly.

And he could still feel Bole’s heavy gaze on him every time the professor looked out over the class.

The only good thing about today’s Defence lesson was that Pettigrew seemed to be even more
uncomfortable than Harry. Where Harry had the calming presence of the Marauders sitting all around him, the rat had been intentionally cut off from their seating arrangement. It was somewhat cruel, Harry thought, but at the same time he could see where the others were coming from. Keeping Pettigrew around for the time being to keep an eye on him, but also making sure they did not have to be in his presence more than absolutely necessary. It was subtle, the way James, Sirius, and even Remus slowly but deliberately cut down the time they spent with the former Marauder. Conveniently forgetting to find him before Potions yesterday, when they used to escort him to the class to make sure he wasn’t bullied on the way. Or similarly forgetting to wake him in the morning until they were already about to leave for breakfast so he wouldn’t sit with them. Yes, Harry couldn’t help but feel the slightest bit of sympathy for the bloke. But another part of him pointed out what the rat had been doing ever since Harry had been revealed a creature. No, he certainly was not happy with his secret being blabbed about to some creep who planned to do Merlin-only-knows what as soon as he had determined Harry’s creature. The fact that someone other than his family was in the know about it all scared him. It was dangerous.

“…and that is why it is to be assumed that there are still unaccounted for or simply forgotten creatures out in the world.”

Lingering eyes again, pale and intense in their staring. After a moment, Harry looked down at his haphazard notes, grinding his teeth. Creep.

Ever since yesterday the thought of Occlumency, and consequently Legilimency, was on his mind. If Dumbledore did it, whatever would stop any other teacher from doing the same – well, at least if they were capable of invading another’s mind. Snape had certainly made it sound like the skill was rare, or maybe he had just believed Harry to be too incompetent to ever master it. Not that he wanted to, master Legilimency that is. Between Voldemort’s visions and Snape’s battering, Harry had a completely new appreciation for one’s privacy of the mind. He couldn’t fathom doing that to someone else.

With a jolt he realised the clear difference he made in his thoughts between Professor Snape, the teacher who had repeatedly attacked his mind, and the student Severus who he was considering trusting enough to try the same. Sort of. The student that was sitting across the room, giving their Defence professor a very indifferent look and yet Harry thought there was something in those dark eyes…

“Nearly over, Bambi,” Sirius whispered next to him, his thumb still stroking soft circles into Harry’s skin. “Don’t look at him when the bell goes. We’ll try and hurry you out before he gets a chance to ask you to stay behind.”

Yes, nearly over. For today. But there were uncounted Tuesdays still to come and he wouldn’t be able to avoid that guy for forever. They were living in the same castle, after all. Something needed done about Bole, it wasn’t just Pettigrew they needed to worry about. Right now Pettigrew was only the ‘go-between’, the supposedly hidden spy that would deliver proof of Harry’s status to Bole. They could cut the rat off, could put as much distance between them as possible, but the professor would still be there, lurking. And Harry wasn’t one to hide and cower. No, something needed done, only that he had no idea how to go about that.

As the bell announced the end of class and the mad scramble for the door started, Harry was tugged up and into the crush the second his book touched the inside of his satchel. In the moments that followed, Bole did not try and call Harry back, but he saw Pettigrew slinking away once again. He was glad for tracking charms and the Marauder’s map.

Remus was chuckling at the sight of Sirius piggy-backing his boyfriend around one of the inner
courtyards, racing around like the maniac that he was, and garnering more than a few disdainful sneers from the pureblood fraction. Though, Remus also noticed a lot of fond glances as well as envious stares from the rest of the students that happened to come across the scene. Hadrian’s joyful laughter certainly helped drawing in quite a few onlookers and- ah, there was Professor McGonagall, making her way towards them with a severe look on her stern features. Still, Remus knew there would be no real consequences for the rambunctious behaviour. Apart from the fact that the Marauders were quite likely the professor’s favourite students, she certainly was also very fond of Hadrian. Just like the matron, the head of House Gryffindor reacted in a rather motherly way to the Elf Owl’s charm.

“They’re cute together,” a voice stated from next to him and Remus turned to find Lily and her friend Alice with cold-kissed faces and snow-lined cloaks. “I don’t think anyone else makes Hadrian laugh like that,” Lily added, grinning a little as she watched Professor McGonagall scold the couple.

Sirius looked wholly unrepentant, still keeping his boyfriend on his back, and their professor certainly could have been a lot less amused. But Remus’ eyebrows climbed beneath his fringe when he caught sight of the feather-pin in the red hair of James’ professed ‘love of his life’. Though, he noted with some mirth, Lily’s version of the quill-trend looked a lot like the muggle variant that had been popular just a few years back. What was it called? Roach Feather? It suited her long mane, yet Remus’ eyes were drawn to her Ravenclaw friend’s dimpled smile. Alice wasn’t wearing any feathers, but her small button nose was red from the cold and Remus couldn’t help but think how cute that looked.

“Yes,” he finally answered, tearing his gaze away from rosy skin and back to the rest of his friends. James was just coming up behind Sirius and Hadrian, laughing and slinging his long arms around their shoulders. “He’s come a long way these last months. Who would have guessed Sirius of all people to…”

“…be so empathic and patient?” Lily finished his sentence with a small smile. Next to her Alice giggled a little, nodding.

And it was a surprise, wasn’t it? That Sirius, determined ‘esprit libre’, declared non-conformist, obvious womanizer and certainly not a patient person when it came to his ‘conquests’, would fall for someone like Hadrian. Someone who needed time and care and so much patience, someone who would not just submit to Sirius’ charms, someone whose very personality challenged Sirius on a daily basis by actually forcing him to think, to empathise if he wanted to achieve anything. Yes, that relationship had come as a surprise, but at the same time Remus could see why it worked, too. In a way, Sirius and Hadrian were alike. They shared not only experiences seeing as they both came from emotionally abusive backgrounds, but they both also were fiercely trying to protect themselves from more hurt. It should have been impossible for those two reclusive souls to connect, yet at the same time there probably was no one else who could have done it. And Remus could see them both benefiting from it.

It was a little later, on their way to dinner, that Peter turned up again. When questioned, he claimed to have been to Professor McGonagall to talk about …something. No one commented on the fact that they had seen their head of house during that supposed talk down in the courtyard. It was just more proof of what they had already accepted.

Remus suppressed a sigh, shifting uncomfortably. His bones were aching in anticipation of the upcoming night, the full moon of January. It wasn’t helping that his wolf was so close to the surface this time around. Moony wanted to attack, to rip and shred Peter to pieces… and for a second Remus had to clamp down on the urge to make a grab for his former friend and punch the living daylights
out of him. A nudge in his side had him snapping out of it and he looked at James walking next to him.

“That Fortescue girl was totally giving you the goo-goo eyes,” his friend grinned, waggling his eyebrows. “And don’t think I didn’t see you check out her bust. Not as nice as my Lily’s, sure, but still a good handful,” he declared, bumping his shoulder against the werewolf’s.

“That’s disgusting, James,” Remus drawled half-heartedly, a light blush creeping up from his collar. “You shouldn’t reduce a girl to the size of her breasts. Alice-”

“Oooh so it’s Alice now,” James interrupted with a salacious wink. Remus groaned.

“Isn’t she the niece of the owner of Fortescue’s Ice Cream Parlour?” Sirius queried, arms up above his head in a stretch, eyes fixed on Hadrian’s form where the boy was walking with Lily just barely in their line of sight. “Just imagine, all that delicious ice cream for free…”

“Yes, we get that you’re hungry, Sirius,” Remus sighed. “Alright, it’s time I guess,” he added when they came level with the first floor and hospital wing.

As if he had actually been listening, even though Remus was aware that it would have been impossible given the distance, Hadrian suddenly stopped, waiting for them to catch up. Or maybe he had actually been paying attention to the date and their surroundings. Still, when they reached him and Sirius automatically tucked his boyfriend under his arm, Hadrian caught Remus’ hand in his.

“I’ll be with you for late lunch tomorrow with my Charms notes, okay?”

Slim fingers, softer now that Hadrian wasn’t regularly riding a broom anymore, gave his hand a slight squeeze before letting go and he smiled at the boy in return. That was another thing. Remus was sure his wolf would attack the moment Peter, rat Animagus or not, appeared anywhere near him. And even though he was aware of all Peter had done and perhaps would do in the future, Remus was not about to risk that. A rat would be dead the moment Moony looked at it wrong. Which was why the Marauders had decided not to keep him company tonight, it was either all of them or none at all. Also, if they left only Peter out, they could just as well forget about their plan to catch him red-handed.

Remus could only hope Moony could cope with being locked up in the Shrieking Shack without his pack. But he wouldn’t worry Hadrian. Class, Defence with Professor Bole, had been tense and his sense of smell was utterly overactive, so it really had not been hard to pick up on the scent of worry and fear on their Bambi. Or, as Moony so possessively dubbed him, their ‘Cub’. So he smiled at Hadrian and nodded, biting back a growl at Peter’s whine to hurry up. No, he might not risk becoming a murderer, but a part of him longed for the day no one would snap him out of his feral thoughts on punching a rat.

Chapter End Notes

Now, don’t get your knickers in a twist about the Marauder Powwow of Justice. We’ll get the important bits during the next chapters. ;)
I really should answer some of those awesome comments you left me. I’m sorry it takes me so long lately, but if you asked a question, I’m definitely going to answer it at one point. Please be patient with me.
(*) **Bat-Bogey**: Causes the target's bogeys to turn into large, black bats and fly out their nose. Ouch.

*His eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad,*
His hair is as dark as a blackboard.
I wish he was mine, he's truly divine,
the hero who conquered the Dark Lord.”
(Ginny’s Valentine to Harry in his second year)

(*) **Skittles** were first made commercially in 1974 by a British company.
In which there is a walking shitstain

I wasn’t feeling up to writing for a while now, but here I am back again. And would you look at that? We’ve actually reached the 100,000 mark! <3
Also: Something hiding for Darkheartkitsune in here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

For once Remus was actually glad when Madam Pomfrey left him at the Shrieking Shack, even knowing he would be alone throughout the whole night. He had a splitting headache and it had nothing to do with it being the night of the full moon. Or well, it had only indirectly to do with his wolf. Ever since yesterday his senses had been so completely haywire that getting through the day had been a chore. Every little thing seemed to vie for his attention, scents, noises, even sights. It was very tiring and his brain felt part swollen, part like mush. A big, swollen brainmush. Right. So Remus was thankful for some time alone even if it was in the derelict old shack that smelled of dust and pain and rotting wood.

Remus cocked his head in a very canine fashion.

He could actually still trace a little bit of Hadrian’s scent on the bed that miraculously always survived his change. That was somewhat soothing. He felt Moony shift, seemingly pacing in the back of his mind. His wolf was back to being volatile, at least a lot more than it had been ever since Hadrian had appeared in their lives. Probably another thing he could Peter thank for. Thinking back to that night when Moony had found Hadrian somewhere in the forest had Remus run his hands through his hair in restlessness. In his dreams he had seen slivers of memories, moments of that night… He had seen the boy through Moony’s eyes and there was no blood thirst, nothing like his usual recollection of his nights as a monster. Moony had not seen Hadrian as prey even as he lay there like the perfect take-away meal.

Snorting, Remus raised an internal eyebrow at his own thoughts. He could have sworn his wolf had just huffed in amusement, too. It was so strange this close alignment with Moony, this new understanding. And it had all started with Hadrian’s appearance, with the appearance of their… cub.

A violent ripple ran through Remus’ muscles and he hunched over with a deep groan. Soon. The moon had nearly risen and suddenly all his thoughts were focused on Hadrian and the scent of fear that had lingered on his cub after class. Moony growled.

After dinner, interrupted by a mixture of squealing girls who had noticed the ‘matching feathers’ in his and Sirius’ hair, and the reproachful looks of others who had noticed the same or were just generally not happy with them, Sirius had escorted Harry to Dumbledore’s office. He was to meet his new ‘tutors’ and his boyfriend would have ‘escorted’ him right to the headmaster’s desk if Harry had let him. As it was he somehow managed to shoo Sirius off when they reached the guarding gargoyle. He would, together with James, keep an eye on the Marauder’s Map for Pettigrew’s actions. The rat had supped with them, but had been in a bit of a rush to leave the Great Hall again. Harry supposed it had something to do with the glaring Defence professor and couldn’t really find it in himself to care. At least the creep hadn’t been staring at him again.
Climbing the revolving staircase up to the headmaster’s office, Harry tried to push his nervous thoughts down. He couldn’t help but worry about those lessons, his training, Dumbledore wanted him to take. On one hand he of course was all for learning how to fight. On the other hand… he was aware of the reason why the headmaster wanted him trained into a fighter and then there was the question about his new tutors. Who would teach him? Would he actually be able to hide his less human features from them? Or had the headmaster gone and told them about it? He wouldn’t risk it, would he? Not with the political climate as it was… right?

The realisation that Dumbledore would most likely decide on this very question without consulting Harry on it, or even considering Harry’s feelings on the matter, sank like lead into his stomach and he found himself hesitating in front of the office door.

He wondered if Pettigrew had gone back to the dorm or if he still was doing whatever it was he did whenever he vanished. Harry knew that kind of behaviour was highly unusual for the rat who used to stay as close to his Marauder friends as possible at all times. It was one of the reasons that made Harry feel slightly sympathetic for the bloke – apparently the Marauders were the only reason Pettigrew wasn’t constantly bullied. And if there was something Harry detested, it was bullying. He knew after all how that could be like, having grown up the way he had and having the public and Hogwarts’ general populace react to him the way they used to in his original time. And apparently now in this time too. Yes, now that he thought about it like this… maybe it was his inner Hufflepuff, but Harry suddenly felt awful for basically taking away Pettigrew’s only friends. But maybe everything was not lost yet when it came to Pettigrew. He wasn’t sure how that thought made him feel…

“We could have him walk into another truth circle like the one on New Year’s Eve,” James suggested, taking place of pride at the table that would house the Marauder Powwow of Justice.

Harry had a random thought about how his dad/friend managed to make it look as if he were sitting at ‘the head of the table’ even if said table happened to be completely round. Next to him Sirius was already shaking his head.

“That one’s not strong enough to be absolutely sure, Jamie,” he said, knowing how very much his best mate would like for this all to be just a big misunderstanding.

It wasn’t though, and Sirius would get that traitorous bastard that dared to not only betray their trust, but also sell out his future fiancé. The truth circle was a nice party trick, but not much more than a compulsion to be truthful when questioned.

“Well,” James started, shifting in place uncomfortably, “There’s always an Unbreakable Vow.” His words followed a moment of silence.

“Aren’t those…,” Harry started hesitantly.

“Yeah,” he nodded, already knowing what the issue was. Honestly, he wasn’t sure whether he thought such a vow over the top or not. “There are basically two versions: If you break the Vow, you’ll either lose your magic or lose your life, though to many that’s pretty much one and the same.”

There was another moment of uncomfortable silence as they all contemplated on life without magic. The part of Harry that still remembered the little boy inside a cupboard could definitely sympathize with those that thought a life without their magic not worth living. Magic had freed him from an existence he didn’t really have words for in hindsight. But magic had also come with a high price to pay, all that pain and death and pressure. The part of him that was more Hadrian than Harry could
Someone is walking in the dark. The nearby trees loom above, their branches reaching out as if to grasp the intruder. Above, the stars twinkle, casting a faint light on the scene. The sounds of nature surround them: the rustling leaves, the chirping of crickets, and the distant hoot of an owl. The air is cool and fresh. A faint whisper of wind lifts the hair on the back of their neck. They quicken their pace, eager to find shelter from the unknown. The path ahead seems to stretch forever, each step bringing them closer to their destination. They are not alone in this world, not by far. But for now, they are alone, a solitary figure on an unfamiliar path, uncertain of what lies ahead.
“And having him swear something with consequences if he does once again betray us, wouldn’t really protect the secrets. It would only punish him for already having spilled them.”

“Wait,” Remus suddenly perked up, “What if we… have him sign a contract?” (*)

He was broken out of his memories by the heavy door to the headmaster’s office suddenly creaking open ominously. Considering where he was it wasn’t exactly surprising, but Harry found himself frantically pushing away any thoughts of the Marauder Powwow of Justice. He really needed to talk to Severus about Occlumency.

“Hadrian, my boy,” Dumbledore’s voice drifted out to him and Harry squared his shoulders in preparation. “Come on in, please, and have a seat. Lemon drop?”

Harry hadn’t even completely entered the room before the question was posed, but he never got to decline the offer as his gaze landed on one Alastor ‘Not Yet Mad Eye’ Moody. The grizzled auror was standing to his left near the fireplace as if ready to just turn around and leave if whoever came through the office door wasn’t to his liking. And as Harry met that piercing glare, the same he had been met with after the Dementor attack and then again at Potter Manor, he realised that was exactly what Moody would have done if Harry had not met his standards of whatever. Moody was to be his new tutor.

Well, crap.

“Hadrian Moore-Potter,” the auror rumbled, a twisted smile on his face, “A name, but no story,” he repeated the words from what felt like ages ago, yet had only been a few days.

A glance at Dumbledore showed Harry that the others had been right, the headmaster was very much aware of and not in the least surprised by the added name. His face was just as disturbingly benign as ever, and the twinkle in those blue eyes had Harry looking away hastily, trying and probably failing to look nonchalant about it.

Sirius felt restless. It had been about half an hour since he left his Hadrian at the headmaster’s office and he hated it. Ever since he had heard Prongs’ recounting of what Dumbledore had made Hadrian agree to during their last meeting, the one during which Prongs had been around beneath his invisibility cloak, he didn’t trust the old man any longer. He just couldn’t. And ever since he started to distrust that man, he noticed more and more about him that was just questionable. Sirius’ own behaviour in their fifth year, that cruel joke when he had lured Snivellus to a furry Moony, and his subsequent treatment, were only the icing on the cake, really.

Sirius was aware that most would not think him an insightful bloke, and definitely not one to admit his own mistakes, but Sirius knew very well that for a stunt like that he should have been expelled, or at the very least excluded from lessons for the rest of term. Nothing of the sort had happened, he had just served some simple detentions, and even those were over after a week. Back then Sirius had delighted in the favouritism. But then he had seen Remus the next day, the first time after that full moon. His friend had taken longer to recover than normal and Sirius had soon learned that it was because of the shock caused by his recollection of the night. Technically caused by Sirius.

That had been the first and only time Remus had hit anyone, as far as Sirius knew, and he certainly did not fancy being on the receiving end of that punch ever again. It had made Sirius see reason in more than just one way and he had skirted the issue of Severus Snape ever since. That is, until he promised a certain feathered beauty to try and change his ways. Nevertheless, the incident was just
one of many that had finally made it through Sirius’ thick skull and made him notice the ominous ways of one Albus Dumbledore. And what were ‘Skittles’ anyway?

With a sigh, Sirius let his gaze swerve from his best mate – lounging on the floor of their dorm, back to his bed, Marauder’s Map open in front of him – out the window. The full moon was barely visible between the heavy snow clouds, but Sirius thought he could actually feel it like some mockery of what Remus was currently going through. His furry friend was alone out there and it didn’t feel right.

Though… a part of Sirius also cringed at the thought that he was neither keeping an eye on the werewolf out there nor on his boyfriend. What was it with his continued territorial behaviour around Remus? Was it just the fact that the Grim side of him didn’t like knowing Moony had been around Hadrian at his most vulnerable? Or was it as simple as another male being constantly close to his boyfriend? It was different with James, that was for sure. Though, really, James was Hadrian’s father… in some convoluted way.

He grimaced somewhat guiltily at his own thoughts and wandered back over to his best mate. Casting another glance at the Marauder’s Map, he determined that Pettigrew was still down in the kitchens, probably bullying the elves into a second dinner since he had left the Great Hall in a hurry. And hadn’t that been amusing to witness?

“Sit that tailor-clad butt of yours down, would you?” James snarked at him. “Your pacing could make a sloth nervous.”

“Sloths are actually very sensitive animals, I’ll have you know,” Sirius sniffed in response, but plonked his behind down across from his best mate.

“Yeah, yeah,” James waved him off before holding up a pack of cards, “How about it?”

As Prongs dealt the cards, Sirius watched his long, flawless fingers. There was not a single scar on his best mate as far as he was aware. If ever Prongs had been hurt badly enough during his childhood, his parents were sure to have taken measures to get rid of any possible remnants. Same went for himself. He, just like James, was the epitome of pureblood perfectionism. The fact that James was allowed his glasses, his eyes not having been cured through the somewhat obscure methods available in the magical world, was pure teenage rebellion. And of course the Potters indulged their only son.

Hadrian had many scars. By now he had been close to Hadrian more than enough to have counted more than the scars he had witnessed the day when he had surprised the boy in the shower. Back then he certainly had been a bit distracted, but he still remembered the brutal burn scar standing out vividly against the rest of Hadrian’s rather pale skin. He could also recall the jagged and inflamed ‘scratch’ along the inside of his boyfriend’s arm and he had used the rare occasion on which he woke up before Hadrian to try and get a look at the very strange scar on his hand. He hadn’t been successful in actually deciphering it, as Hadrian had a very light sleep whenever he wasn’t being plagued with nightmares, but Sirius had narrowed it down to be scarring in the form of the very script he knew to be Hadrian’s handwriting. The revelation had been slightly nauseating and left him with a clenching feeling in his chest.

Then there was the day at Potter Manor when he and his lovely boyfriend had taken a bath in the underground cave. They had both been tipsy and the light had been scarce and again he had been distracted, but he could still see the roughened skin on his Hadrian’s arm, along his ribcage and … Merlin, there were entirely too many scars on his boyfriend’s lithe body.

Not to mention the curse scar on his forehead! The one mark Hadrian used to hide behind only his longish fringe before Lady Potter lengthened his hair to the mane it now was. It seemed this
particular scar couldn’t be covered up by a Glamour, though that was not surprising. Injuries caused through dark magic were known to be resistant to magical healing, unless an equally dark counter curse existed, so it wasn’t far-fetched to think they also couldn’t be concealed by magic. It was the reason aurors like Moody tended to be ‘disfigured’ in one way or another. Healing the muggle way did not only take a lot longer, but also caused a lot more scarring than healing the magical way. Just thinking about the missing limbs, severed by dark magic, that couldn’t just be re-grown or re-attached made Sirius shudder.

Anyway, Hadrian’s curse scar was now mostly on display what with his hair being held back in a plait or something similar and the sight of it had reminded Sirius of all the other scars adorning his boyfriend’s body. They were so much a part of Hadrian that he had nearly forgotten about them. Now though… how many of these scars had James seen? He knew that Lord Potter had been present for Hadrian’s medical examination and he had called his son in to talk about it, but Prongs had been uncharacteristically tight-lipped about the whole incident.

Looking back up at his best mate, Sirius decided that there was no time like the present to even the scales.

Moody was circling him like some merchandise on display, or maybe like he was assessing what he would have to work with if he really took Harry on as a student. Whatever the reason, it had Harry moving with him, trying to keep the auror always in his line of sight, while keeping an eye out for the headmaster as well. Not that he thought it would make a difference with these two, but Harry was not about to make an even easier target out of himself than he already was.


He had to remind himself that he was not Harry Potter, Dumbledore’s Golden Boy, anymore. He couldn’t just act out, be rude or demand answers (Not that that had ever helped any), or go about ransacking the headmaster’s office without expecting consequences. But not being the favourite pawn also meant he didn’t have to hold on to his lighter than Light image. He could actually dare to have thoughts outside the picture frame of the ‘Saviour’ he had been forced into before. There was no beetle Skeeter listening in and Moody most likely couldn’t care less if Harry used more Marauder-esque methods – so long as he used them for the right cause.

“Eyes to me, Moore,” Moody suddenly barked at him.

He nearly corrected him. It still felt plain wrong to react to the name ‘Moore’, whereas ‘Hadrian’ was starting to feel just as familiar as ‘Harry’ once had. Though…

“Actually,” he dared to interrupt, fixing his gaze above Moody’s left shoulder, “I prefer Moore-Potter, …Sir,” he added for good measure, but taking care to keep track of the man’s movements while not risking eye contact.

Moody snorted and for just a second Harry fancied he saw genuine surprise on the roughened features. It was gone and replaced with a derisive sneer before Harry could be sure.

“Now that I’ve no trouble believin’,” he snorted again, eyes challenging. “Nothin’ better than a big name to hide nasty secrets behind.” Moody’s wand was in his hand before Harry could so much as blink and in response his own wand seemed to summon itself into Harry’s grip.

“Now, lad,” Moody rumbled, eyes never leaving Harry, “Don’t get ya wand in a knot and hold still.”
Harry glared, not relaxing the ready stance he had fallen into. There was no way he was going to let his guard down around this man, especially if he could no longer trust in the headmaster’s reaction. Although Harry did not think Albus Dumbledore an enemy, he was painfully aware of the man’s tendency to ‘test’ his pawns. He had been fighting through one too many ‘controlled’ tests of his abilities as the bloody Boy-Who-Lived.

And he was right to suspect as the auror did send a sudden barrage of spells at him, ranging from harmless hexes to things Harry wasn’t sure he wanted to find out about. Either way, he didn’t even try to stand his ground against a fully trained wizard like Moody, but dodged the moment the man started attacking, casting a milder version of Reducto on some trinkets near Moody. (*) He hadn’t expected to be able to actually hit the auror, but the splintering objects were just barely enough to give him a chance to find cover. Harry jumped behind the headmaster’s desk. He had been right, Dumbledore didn’t so much as raise from his comfortable seat, but graced Harry with an indulgent smile when he dove out of the way of the onslaught of curses. Harry nearly expected him to offer a lemon drop again.

“Good reflexes, that’s somethin’, I s’pose,” Moody grunted, “A’right, Albus, I’ll do it,” he finally declared, completely dismissing Harry’s presence and turning to the headmaster.

Harry scowled. Apparently his opinion once again was of no consequence to the matter and he felt his wand hand itch with the need to show Moody why exactly he shouldn’t turn his back so callously on Harry. But then a memory flashed in his mind even though he knew that specific memory had nothing to do with the real Mad Eye Moody but was actually about the impostor in his fourth year. The man wearing Moody’s face had transfigured Draco Malfoy into a ferret when he turned his wand on Harry’s unprotected back. It was sad, he thought, that the impostor had taught him more than the actual Moody ever had. Well, apparently that was about to change, if he wanted to or not.

Bartemius Crouch Junior couldn’t understand what was happening to him. He was aware enough to recognise that his behaviour was irrational, that this intense longing for the other boy couldn’t be normal. But he wasn’t impeded by any curses or potions, he had been checked over the holiday. Oh yes, that had not been a nice experience at all.

His obsession had led to that horrid prank that saw him prancing butt naked through Hogwarts, he still had nightmares about that, but the true repercussions had come afterwards. His father was still losing business partners, or rather, House Crouch was losing alliances. His father was too much of a figure of respect at the Ministry, people didn’t dare to mock him for his embarrassment of a son, but they certainly could turn their backs, some more subtly than others. Crouch Senior had not been understanding at all, making it known how much of a disgrace and disappointment he regarded his only son as.

The worst for Barty himself, though, were the repercussions inside Slytherin. Ever since that prank he was practically being shunned. He had been reduced to the laughing stock of the whole house. And still he couldn’t stop his obsession from rising again the moment he set his eyes back on that lovely little lion after the winter solstice. It was utterly confusing, but oh he wanted him…

So when he miraculously came across said pretty little lion in the abandoned halls of Hogwarts, curfew just gone and no one else around, Barty reached out to take what was so tantalisingly daydreaming right in front of him.

When Harry finally left the headmaster’s office, it was past curfew. The halls were cold, drafty and
dark, but his thoughts were elsewhere. Seeing Moody again had reminded him of the little boy, Alun Amosis Rhyderch Diggory, was it? The little Diggory that he had asked the Potter house-elf Mammy to look after. The last he’d heard Alun still didn’t talk, but seemed otherwise healthy. It worried him and even though the prospect was slightly daunting, he hoped Lord Potter remembered his promise about Lord Diggory meeting with Harry soon. He wanted to ask him in person how the little one was doing and-

He sensed it just in time to move, not sure if he had caught a shadow in the corner of his eye or if he’d heard something. Dodging the hands that had suddenly grasped at him from one of the darkened alcoves, Harry had his wand drawn and pointed before he really registered what he was doing. So maybe he was still on edge after the whole Moody debacle and look, it seemed to pay off because there he was again. Crouch.

“Don’t be like that, little lion,” said boy crooned and there was that tick with his tongue Harry remembered him doing back in his fourth year. Only now it was creeping him out. “I know you want it, I can feel you call to me,” he rambled on, his eyes roaming over Harry in that same way he had done before the holiday.

Right. Harry might have been out of sorts these last months, not really himself, and in hindsight he sometimes felt like cringing for the way he had behaved, but- He was nobody’s doormat. He might still have a load of issues with this whole creature stuff, but he had accepted the time travel. He felt at home here now, felt like he was back on his feet. He could not yet stand his ground against a trained auror like Moody, but this right here? Harry tightened his grip on his wand. He had dealt with so much worse in his last years at Hogwarts, he could deal with this little shitstain.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Reductor Curse: can be used to blast solid objects into pieces.

(*) Unbreakable Vow versus magical contract: In this story it’s not necessarily impossible to break an ‘Unbreakable Vow’, it’s just not done because no one would willingly risk the consequences of losing either life or magic. For this situation it’s also important that you cannot take such a vow unknowingly. A magical contract in this story can by contrast be signed without your knowledge. We sign so many things, even just an essay… Anyway, depending on the stipulations of the contract, magic would enforce the observance of said stipulations. It would require a conscious effort and the destruction of the contract to get out of it.

So: If the Marauders made Pettigrew sign a contract concerning their secrets, even unknowingly, the rat would not be able to blab about them anymore.
In which there are bugs

Chapter Notes

Courting thoughts for **Koi19** and a wink at **Aivy** and s. and **twilightreaderaddict**.

This last month I was mostly too ill to even get up so the more intricate stuff will have to wait till next chapter. Still some important things going on here!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When the portrait into the common room opened for Harry, he was relieved to find it mostly empty. There were some seventh years in the corner frantically going over their study notes, too feverishly concentrated on their upcoming exams to take notice of him. A pair of what he thought were fourth or maybe fifth years were busy snogging at the fireplace, no worry of being paid attention there either.

Harry was tired. And annoyed. And slightly anxious and maybe a little giddy too. But mostly he was tired, it had been a long evening. Scratch that, it had been a day so long it felt like a Basilisk on steroids. With a sigh he made his way over to the staircase, but never got to climb it as hurried voices from above stopped him in his tracks.

“… don’t care if we get caught, Prongs, HE was there with him!” Sirius snarled at what was obviously James as they thundered down the steps, the former clenching a very familiar parchment in his hand.

“I’m just saying to be a bit less obvious- …oh.”

“What are you-” Sirius half turned back to James when he heard him stop... and promptly ran right into his boyfriend. “Wow watch out!”

Having seen him coming, though, Harry didn’t mind the impact much. He was too glad to see Sirius to mind being nearly run over. So he simply slipped his arms around his boyfriend’s waist and shifted enough to stop them both from some mad tumble down the last steps. Blinking down at the feathered head of dark locks, Sirius stood still for a moment until his brain caught up with what he was seeing.

“Hadrian,” he declared dumbly, pointing down at the boy doing the spider monkey.

“You don’t say,” James commented from behind him, taking the last steps down to join them.

Harry didn’t let go, just tucked himself close, and screwed his eyes shut. He was done for today, the whole Defence debacle and then Pettigrew being Pettigrew and Remus was out there and Moody and to top it all off he had to run into Crouch again... Well, that last one might have ended on a somewhat positive note – for him, that is. Crouch would probably not agree. That thought had Harry smother a snicker into Sirius’ jumper. Oh and then there was the fact that he wouldn’t have to see Moody again this week, the man apparently had some other things to do before he could risk spending two evenings a week ‘teaching some over-estimated brat manners’. That was good, too, because Harry wanted to be prepared for those lessons and make the most of the training he was offered.
“Hey,” Sirius finally said, gently easing Harry back a bit to look into his face, “You alright?” But catching sight of Harry’s face, he amended: “Do I need to hide a body?”

Harry blinked a moment, bringing his thoughts back to the present.

“Oh no,” he finally answered with a shrug. “He was still alive when I left him.” He added another shrug for good measure, feeling remarkably at ease with his own words.

Really, if the encounter with Crouch hadn’t been so disturbing, it would have been funny what a difference it made when Harry could actually use his wand. He made to move past the two Marauders, feeling more than seeing the glance exchanged above his head.

“Right, little Bambi,” James said, reaching out to tug lightly on one of Harry’s longer feathers, earning himself a growl from Sirius for the action. “Eh, cease the menacing aura, Paddy. You’ll sprout fur if you go on like that,” he drawled, but pulled his hands back in the universal gesture for surrender – or maybe just angling the wand in his sleeve right, who knew. “Just a warning, Wormtail’s up there,” he added, voice slightly hushed.

Oh right, there was that. Maybe they should just go through with the half-assed plan they made last night, leave Pettigrew some transfigured feather to see him run to Bole with it. That sort of action definitely would snuff out any last trust and hope the Marauders held out for their friend and Harry wasn’t so sure if he actually wanted that anymore. Either way, if they went through with that plan, Bole would certainly notice the ruse, meaning he would know his spy had been discovered. They couldn’t risk that, who knew what the bloke would do then? Right now they could at least somewhat anticipate their professor’s actions.

Harry took a hot shower that evening, thinking everything through, making loose plans for his meeting with Lord Potter on the weekend and simply letting the hot water help him relax. Oh yes and using the crazy shampoo again. He had a feeling the next days would show a change in the whole Pettigrew situation and he couldn’t decide whether that was a good thing or not.

Friday was a surprisingly sunny day, freezing, but sunny all the same. So it wasn’t all that surprising when Harry found himself spending lunch outside on the lawn, a hyperactive, big black dog jumping all around him. Though, it had to be said that his boyfriend in disguise had not simply stood back as Harry went to sit in the snow. Sirius, in one of his overprotective moves, had dramatically drawn his wand, melted the snow in a space the size of a picnic blanket, dried the revealed ground, placed cushioning and warming charms and would probably even have placed his cloak there for Harry to sit on, if he hadn’t put his foot down. He was not some damsel too ‘sophisticated’ to sit on the ground.

Anyway, there he was, sitting and screwing around with charcoal, having the time of his life smudging around on paper. He had fast realised that the utensil was perfect to portrait a certain Grim which had led to his boyfriend prancing about in his Animagus form, doing all sorts of pompous (ridiculous) poses, preening under the attention of his laughing boyfriend.

James was off harassing Lily or something like that while Remus was still ensconced in the hospital wing as far as they were aware. They hadn’t gone to see him yet, knowing that he likely had had a very strenuous night and not wanting to cut his sleep short. Harry would go visit him after Charms, skipping out on Muggle Arts to see his furry friend. He had promised his notes after all.

Though, the day had not been all sunshine and prancing puppies. Remembering Potions (and ignoring the memory of waking up to the sight of a half-naked Wormtail whose pants had mysteriously found their way to his head via semi-permanent sticking charms), Harry sighed.
The classroom was filled with billowing clouds of multicoloured steam as the Gryffindors and Slytherins of Hogwarts’ sixth year 1977 went about their newest project. Advanced Potions certainly was no joke if you were fond of keeping your limbs intact and yourself free of more or less random side-effects of wrongly brewed concoctions.

Harry Potter, or Hadrian Moore-Potter if you were to ask those currently in his presence, was very much fond of his limbs as well as his general health and therefore completely focused on the potion he was making. In fact, he was so concentrated, that he didn’t think twice about summoning a missing ingredient right out of storage without even looking up. That he also forgot using his wand for said summons, though, did not go unnoticed by at least two watchers. Harry blinked and looked over at his boyfriend when he heard the sudden intake of breath.

“You alright?” He asked Sirius concernedly, giving the other a quick once-over before glancing into his cauldron. As far as he could tell, everything was as it was supposed to be. Sirius in turn was staring at him with slightly wide eyes.

“You…,” he started speaking, but didn’t seem able to finish his sentence. Harry cocked his head in confusion.

“I… what?” In answer, Sirius blinked a few times rapidly, before smiling slightly.

“Nothin’, love. Just awesome as always,” he declared, dropping a quick kiss on Harry’s mop of hair, who raised an eyebrow, but didn’t comment further.

Down the row on the other side of the classroom dark eyes watched the interaction. Severus Snape watched and filed the obvious ease with wandless magic away for later thoughts on the conundrum that was Hadrian Moore. This morning, like every other ever since their return to school, Severus had been on the look-out for another package with potions delivered to Hadrian. Knowing what to look for, Severus had again and again gone over what he remembered from that first day. Still, he only seemed to be able to determine two out of three potions and continuously found himself disgusted with his inability to identify the last one. It had simply not been manageable from such a distance. He needed to look at consistency and colour, test smell and if even that didn’t help, he would need to make an ingredients test… which meant he was left with two options:

One, get his hands on one of those vials unobtrusively the moment there was a new delivery. Hadrian hadn’t taken the unidentified potion immediately, but instead had put it into the pocket of his school robe, presumably to take it later. If he kept with that pattern, Severus would possibly be able to summon the vial or something along those lines.

Or two, he could simply ask.

Severus sneered at the mere thought of approaching the group Moore constantly surrounded himself with. It was very unlikely that he, one of the Gryffindors’ favourite targets, would even get to address the boy. Still, as a Slytherin he was all for the easiest way. If only the easiest way had also been the most self-preserving one.

It was during these contemplations that Professor Filius Flitwick hurried into the classroom, looking harried and perhaps a little amused, to whisper to his fellow professor. Unfortunately for the diminutive man his high-pitched voice was easily determined over the sudden hush of mumbled conversations.

“Horace,” Flitwick squeaked, “Your student, young Mr. Crouch, was just found. I believe it would
be prudent to go visit him immediately in the hospital wing.”

Harry felt his hand go cold on the stirring rod and he could see James and Sirius stop what they were doing as well. Oh well. He had known the pervert would be found at one point, though he didn’t quite understand what all the fuss was about. If it had been him back in his original time, he doubted they would even have bothered with the hospital wing. Harry would have probably ended up in detention himself, with luck together with his attacker. He would accept any detention the teachers dished out for his actions this time, because Harry certainly was not about to explain the kind of situation that had led to Crouch ending up like… that.

“Mr… Couch, you say?” Horace Slughorn wondered aloud, unbothered by the fact that pretty much everyone had stopped actively working on their potions to follow the newest gossip, “Why, I’m sure the lad will be fine still after lunch, yes? Whatever happened to him anyway?”

“He did not turn up for either breakfast or his morning classes and was just now found… ah, stuck spread-eagled to a wall in some mostly unused corridor on the sixth floor,” Flitwick answered, no longer trying to keep his voice down.

“Now, then,” Slughorn corralled, “He certainly will be happy to catch up on some sleep-”

“Horace, the child is hysterical,” the half-goblin interrupted. “Something about bugs on his skin, but he also seems incapable of normal speech which makes the identification of the hex quite impossible. For some reason he constantly breaks out into strange songs and Madam Pomfrey was hoping you would know the potion most likely used on him.”

By now those listening intently were mostly snickering and Harry could feel three stares bore into him. He didn’t need to turn to know that Severus was the one that currently seemed intent on casting Legilimens through the back of his head. Listening to Flitwick’s account, he couldn’t help the slight curl of unease. Maybe he had gone too far, but that bloke had creeped him out and-

“Don’t,” Sirius whispered into his ear, sending shivers down his spine. “Don’t even go there, Bambi. He deserved everything he got.”

Biting his lip to stop himself from blurtting out how he truly felt about his actions against Crouch, Harry nodded, watching Slughorn hem and haw. It was obvious the Potions Master had no idea what potions could have been used on his student, which was no surprise for Harry. As if he would have been able to create a prank potion like that! No, Harry had done what he did best, gone with his intuition and trust his magic. His magic in turn had elaborated on the ‘creepy crawling hex’ he had learned from Lily and combined it with his memory of a charm the adult versions of the last two Marauders had once shown him. True, Harry’s version of the bug-hex was far more vicious than Lily’s, but James had better watch out for that vindictive streak. Obviously that girl was fully capable of finding ways to get her revenge.

“Stuck to a wall with bugs on his skin?” Murmured James from Sirius’ other side, shuddering at the thought. “That’s my boy.”

“What songs did you curse him with?” Sirius asked, nearly bouncing in place, but somehow managing to keep his voice down. “Opera?”

“Disney, actually…” (*)

A sudden weight in his lap drew Harry out of his thoughts and he looked down at Sirius, human
once again, who was comfortably lounging with his head in his boyfriend’s lap. Those grey eyes had an unreadable look to them as they turned up to him.

Sirius had stopped prancing and snooping around as Padfoot when he noticed his love’s wandering thoughts. After assuring himself that the other was simply deep in thought, the great dog settled down for a doze in his lovely boyfriend’s lap. His own thoughts, though, had a mind of their own. Fancy that.

He had to admit it was curious that his parents had yet to make their displeasure about his latest supposed disgrace known. There was no doubt Regulus would have gone and blabbed about it the moment he stepped foot into the Black residence if he hadn’t already reported via letter before. Though, maybe his little brother really did wait for the holiday considering that scene back at King’s Cross. Sirius sighed. He wanted to believe that and not just because it gave them more time.

He could and would not hold it against Regulus if he had reported to their parents during the holiday. It was to be expected and it was his duty as part of House Black, especially considering Sirius was the Heir still, however much longer that might be the case. If he weren’t anymore, the Heir Ring would have vanished from his hand, but it was still there. And that meant he should be behaving in a certain way, it meant he should not risk any scandal, which included the chance of the existence of future bastards. He grimaced and blushed at the same time. As if he would risk doing that to his Hadrian, no matter what anyone else thought. But it was a fact that a liaison of the nature Hadrian and Sirius had could have severe consequences, after all. That is, severe to those of certain beliefs.

Sigh.

His relationship with Hadrian was obviously more than a school romance, but had neither been preceded by a courting contract negotiated by both parties’ representatives, nor had it been sanctioned by their head of houses. Sirius didn’t particularly care about all that, but considering he intended to keep hold of Hadrian for life and possibly beyond, he would need to do this right. And soon. He might not care for pureblood tradition, but if he wanted his soon-to-be-fiancé respected throughout the whole of wizarding society, he would at least need to make it official.

The problem with that was, however, that he would never receive his House’s blessing. The only chance he had to do this all in an honourable way was to denounce his family and stand on his own when he made a bid for Hadrian’s hand. He knew Lord Potter would not care personally about the lack of name and fortune, but he would have to consider the welfare of House Potter… Would, or rather could, he even allow a courtship for his ‘nephew’ if the suitor was likely to be dependent on House Potter? Because Sirius didn’t delude himself, he would definitely lose all protection and monetary assets that came with the name Black. Though, maybe he could ask his Uncle Alphard if he would help him… He groaned. He loathed all this. It was ridiculous and unnecessarily archaic in his mind, but it was how the Wizarding World worked.

“Hey, love?” Sirius suddenly asked, pulling himself from his glum thoughts, “How’s my hair later in life?” The question was a bit random, but ever since Hadrian had confessed about Sirius’ future (or lack thereof), he had been wondering about his future self. Or the future self that could have been, had Hadrian not fallen through time.

“Your… hair?”

“Well, yes,” he declared with a signature eyebrow-waggle, “You know, how much more of a devilishly handsome chap I’ll become and all that.”

The look in those green, green eyes was not what he had expected. Yes, he had known talking about this obscure future self of his had nearly pushed his love into a flashback last time around, but
really… hair? Then Hadrian turned his head away, looking out over the sloping lawn where students were trudging through the snow back and forth. There was a frown marring his features, drawing his brows together and making him press his lips into a tight line. Oh yeah, Sirius would like to kiss those lips back into the familiar pout he so adored seeing…

“I remember seeing pictures of my parents’ wedding,” Hadrian finally spoke up again, derailing Sirius’ wandering mind. “You were on them, of course, so…”

He was biting his lip now and Sirius found it hard to concentrate on the words as slim fingers softly entangled themselves in his sprawling hair. What did he care about his future looks, they would be irresistible anyway, when he had one innocently sexy Elf Owl right there?

“Back then you had had your hair cut shorter than what it’s like now,” Hadrian continued, eyes still watching the students in the distance. “But it was all glossy black silk,” he smiled slightly, “So much different from when I met you in third year.”

Yeah, that sounded about right. Not that Sirius had ever doubted he would be awesome one way or the other- …

“Third year? Wait, what?” That got his boyfriend to look at him again.

“Well, you were… away during my childhood,” he hedged, feathers flattening themselves against his head, only visible because they seemed to pull the whole of Hadrian’s hair, done once again in an Evans approved plait, down with them. “Anyway, you were still good-looking, don’t worry.”

Something wasn’t right. Yes, his future self had died rescuing Hadrian and he knew that must have scarred his boyfriend badly, but there was obviously something else going on. When Hadrian tried to pull away, Sirius abruptly sat up and grabbed a hold of the pale face.

“No, Hadrian, look at me,” he demanded, trying to catch those mesmerizing eyes. “Where was I? Tell me where I was when that lump of lard went traitor and Prongs was…,” he stopped, chest aching at the thought, but soldiered on: “Where was I when little you needed me?”

Charsms with Hufflepuff went by with Harry numbly taking notes. He distantly wondered if those would even be any good to Remus, but couldn’t seem to pull himself together. He had told Sirius about Azkaban. He had never, never wanted to tell his boyfriend about that, he had so wanted to protect him from the realisation that everyone had so easily accepted him as a traitor, a murderer. Harry had been so resolved that he would simply not let it happen again, that he would change everything so much that there was no way Sirius would ever have to endure the horrors of the wizarding prison again, even if Harry should fail in saving his family. And yet, he had told him and all just because Sirius had asked such a random question. Harry wanted to be angry at him for it, but really could only blame himself.

He somehow managed to get James and Sirius to leave him be after class, knowing they would track his movement religiously on the map anyway. The hospital wing was astoundingly quiet apart from a crying first year who did a fine job of distracting Madam Pomfrey enough for Harry to slip past and to the only bed currently curtained-off. Remus was hurt. That was the first thing registering the moment he stepped past the partition. The werewolf was pale, gauze patching up part of his face and chest and more than one empty potion vial was standing on the bedside table. His breathing sounded slightly shallow as if pained, but his eyes were open and clear when they fixed on Harry.

“Cub,” Remus hoarsely greeted, making Harry blink and blush. He hadn’t heard that endearment since his last day in the future with adult Remus.
“Rem,” he whispered, carefully sitting down on the edge of the mattress, “What happened?”

He found himself reaching out, but his hand stopped mid-air, unsure where to touch. Remus really did look quite beaten up.

“Moony missed his pack,” Remus shrugged, but he took a hold of the unsure hand, fingers enclosing Harry’s somewhat shyly. “He was also concerned for his cub.”

For some reason the werewolf seemed to be embarrassed by his own admission, but Harry found himself smiling. Remus had been the only one left back in the future and in those peaceful days back in his book-filled apartment the two of them had bonded on a level Harry had missed with the younger Remus. Maybe that would change now, maybe he could have all of his parental figures once again.

And when Saturday and with it the next Hogsmeade weekend came around, Severus Snape was seen standing and watching a group of Gryffindors leave for the village.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Harry based the hex on memories he presumably had from his own childhood when he would be able to listen to the movies Dudley watched. I assumed he would probably remember the songs more than the actual movies as he wouldn't be allowed to watch them himself.
In which Harry is not a Veela

Chapter Notes

Remus imitates Sherlock, James is a closet-cheerleader, Sirius is a fashionista and Harry is a nice piece of ham everyone wants to nibble on. Just wanted to get that out there.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“[…]
Salagadoola mechicka boola
Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo
Put them together and what have you got
Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo…”

The noise, er… singing, drifted towards them from the Great Hall just before a green-edged blur ran out of the doors and towards the dungeons. Harry stared, a little wide-eyed, guilt churning in his gut while the Marauders, Pettigrew included, were laughing their heads off.

“Salagadoola mechicka boola
Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo
It’ll do magic, believe it or not…”

The voice, now identified as Crouch’s, was still heard even though the tormented student had long since dived head first down the stairs and out of sight. Harry firmly reminded himself of the man this bloke would be, or could be, whatever, and tried to pull the image of Crouch cornering him in the owlery and later the loo to the forefront of his mind. Normally he would avoid those memories as much as he could, preferring to pretend they never happened, but right now he needed to remind himself of his reasons.

“…bidi-boo… yes, salagadoola means… booleroo”

It looked as though Madam Pomfrey had been able to get rid of the bug-hex but not of the newly dubbed Disney Curse. Crouch was obviously still prone to breaking spontaneously out into song from time to time, even more than twelve hours later. And yet, no teacher had approached Harry about the situation. That didn’t exactly make him feel any better about it.

“…does the job… Is bibbidi-bobbidi-boo […]” (8)

“You so need to explain this Disney stuff,” James snickered from where he was fastening his cloak, ready to leave. “That was wicked!”

The private room above Hogsmeade’s Brews and Stews, a place Harry had never set foot into before, was surprisingly clean and very practical in its setting. Nothing like the Hog’s Head, that was for sure. There was a round, polished table with six chairs evenly placed around it, a small oven in the corner and a window with drapes that would ensure no one would be able to get a clear look of the inside while still letting in enough sunlight to be comfortable. If he concentrated enough, he could feel the privacy wards layered over the door and window, both set into the very material, indicating they were a permanent feature of the room. He still felt better when Lord Potter cast his own wards the moment the last of their group had closed the door behind them. Only when the tall man snapped
his wand back into its sheath did he turn his attention to his sons… and the additional boy James had decided to mistrust.

“Boys,” Fleamont greeted warmly and promptly had to catch little Hadrian who had been unceremoniously shoved into his direction, the others obviously aware that the boy would not instigate the hug on his own. “Well, hello there, little one,” he greeted gently, hugging the child close. Hadrian pouted a bit, not helping his adorable looks in the least, but returned the greeting anyway.

As they settled down, Fleamont surveyed the group of teenagers carefully. There was a shift in their dynamic and even if he hadn’t been forewarned would he have caught the change. There was a distinct rift between his sons and the boy he knew as Peter Pettigrew. Though he really only had met him fleetingly a few times here and there over the years, he couldn’t say he had a particular liking for the child. There was just something not quite right in the feeling the boy gave off. But since it wasn’t anything specific he could have pointed out, Fleamont had always shrugged it off. Now though, it was clear that his sons shared his sentiment. Why then the boy had been invited to this very sensitive meeting he could not guess.

“Now, children, there were originally only two main reasons for my request of meeting you today, but my Lady has decided to add in her own two knuts,” he gave a put-upon sigh, smirking slightly as he caught James’ dramatic shudder. “As you know, Hadrian needs his check up with Healer Hahnemann to monitor his progress and then we will also start you - yes, you too, James – on learning how to control the Elf Owl Allure.”

He watched as his delicate grandson seemed to pull into himself at the mention of his creature trait and suppressed a very real sigh this time. It seemed Hadrian still carried some of his issues with his blessing by Magic. Fleamont seriously hoped this little lessons would give the child the confidence he so dearly needed; being able to control at least a small part of his life could go a long way in accepting the massive changes Hadrian’s world had undergone. After all, from the bits and pieces he by now knew, Hadrian had had his whole life turned upside-down what with time travel and creature genes, not to mention meeting a family he had been deprived of before. Though Fleamont had only met him after the child had already spent some months in what to him must be a new world, he could see that Hadrian had been holding on just so. No matter the magical strength of a person, everyone needed some fixed point in their life, something permanent and reliable.

Blinking back to the conversation around him, Fleamont realised the boys had been discussing said possible training between each other – with the notable absence of input from the Pettigrew boy. In fact, the child looked downright sullen sitting there slouched in his chair, scowling at the table top.

“Right,” he clapped his hands once to gain their attention. “The third reason for us coming together today is that my lady wife has decided her knew ‘nephew’ is in dire need of a wizarding wardrobe-”

He was interrupted by two groans, one gleeful shout, some badly concealed chuckles, and lastly some dark mutters he did not care to decipher. It seemed his first born and Hadrian were of a like mind when it came to shopping with their mother, whereas Sirius was fairly vibrating in his seat. Remus looked quite neutral on the matter, the amusement dancing in his amber eyes wholly directed at the suffering expressions of the two youngest Potters. Oh, Fleamont wondered if the child would still be so amused when his lovely Mia came upon him with her opinion on dress robes and fabrics. After all, the Lord Potter may have forgotten to mention his love’s desire to gift the young werewolf with his own sets of certain attires.

It was about an hour and a half later and the mood in the room had changed significantly. Hadrian
was currently standing near the oven, face screwed up in concentration as he was valiantly trying to suppress the Elf Owl trait he apparently loathed the most. Across from him Sirius and Remus were hovering, none of which looking anywhere near as frustrated as the small boy was, though Remus had a distinctly thoughtful look to himself as he studied his friend. James was alternating between standing right next to his… son? Cousin? …and taking a few steps away, trying to determine whether it made any difference in Hadrian’s efforts. The Pettigrew boy was just once again giving an especially annoyed sigh when Hadrian had apparently enough.

Fleamont watched as his grandson huffed, running his hand through his now quite ruffled hair in a gesture that he knew to be typically Potter. It came with the hair. But oh, those green eyes were alight with a fire that could rival his Mia’s, the very same that cowed aurors and pureblood lords alike. Only now it was very much tinged with frustration as Hadrian’s efforts seemed to be completely in vain. Then again, it was hard to tell what with the willing test subjects being so closely connected to the boy already. How were they to tell if the Elf Owl influence was active or not? Fleamont privately thought that it would be much easier to identify if the Allure was being suppressed if the sullen boy currently across from him would participate.

Harry was frustrated. This just wasn’t working. How was he to control something he had no actual awareness of? As it was, he had been futilely trying to grasp at the elusive Allure for what felt like hours and yet it didn’t seem like he was making any progress.

“Come on, Hadrian, you can do it,” James insisted enthusiastically, making his father smile indulgently in the background.

“Yeah, Bambi, try again,” Sirius added, smiling encouragingly. “You just need practice and before y’know it, it’ll work like… like errr…,” he trailed off, looking at his best mate for inspiration. They shared a very clueless look.

“Like magic?” Harry drawled and was met with smiles so bright he knew he had walked right into this one.

“Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo,” James and Sirius chorused in answer, making him twitch slightly in place.

Oh he was ready for that shopping trip now.

“You know,” Remus suddenly spoke up, catching everyone’s attention, “I've been wondering… is the Allure of an Elf Owl something physical or is it connected to the magic of the person?”

Harry blinked at him, feeling very much like calling for Hermione, but apparently Lord Potter at least was following their friend’s thought process. Standing up, the tall man came over to them, leaving Pettigrew alone at the table. Not that Harry noticed, he was too focused on following the explanations about the thing he abhorred the most about his creature inheritance.

“You mean to ask if it is produced through pheromones like that of the Veela?” Lord Potter clarified, receiving a nod. “No, I believe it is not. Though, to be honest, it is probably the least researched and studied aspect of the Elf Owls. After all, it is not anything you can actively look at or even touch. No, I believe the few old texts I was able to locate in the main family library identify the Allure as something purely magical.”

Okay, so far Harry was following along. Considering this was about what he was now, he really didn’t want to go about things the way he had until now. That was the way Harry Potter would have gone about this, mostly ignorant and trusting in his luck and daring. Hadrian Moore-Potter wanted to understand as much of his heritage as possible, disliked creature features or not, and through his understanding make the best out of it. He had an actual reason to excel now, after all.
“So,” Remus said thoughtfully, “I think we can agree on the fact that Hadrian’s magic is more connected to his emotions than that of the average wizard.”

“I think, I remember exploding loo pipes,” Sirius nodded in mock-reminiscence.

“Not to mention an awful lot of colour-coding,” James added smirking.

“Never seen the Slytherins so handsome,” Sirius agreed.

“Right,” Remus interrupted. “If the Allure is a purely magically produced trait, Hadrian should try controlling it the way he does his magic.”

As they all turned to him, Harry shuffled in place slightly uncomfortably. They seemed to forget the main issue here, though: He had never had a very good grip on his emotions and his magic had reacted to that as long as he could remember. He had been teased for his accidental magic, even after starting at Hogwarts and obtaining a wand, enough in the past to know it wasn’t completely normal. Back then it had often been put down to his famous temper, inherited from his mother (which he had no problems believing now that he actually had gotten to know Lily somewhat), or in some cases to peoples’ belief of him being especially powerful.

“Okay, let’s go shopping then,” Sirius declared, making as if to put his cloak back on. “What?” He looked from one confused face to the other. “Bambi obviously needs a familiar to help temper his excess magic… or his emotions, whichever suits you better.”

“I see,” Lord Potter said, looking back at Harry considering. “As a matter of fact, I wouldn’t be surprised if you had had bouts of accidental magic without a familiar around, even after the actual inheritance has taken place. Even if the belief that Elf Owls used to be especially magically powerful might only be a myth, I can tell just from being in your presence that you, little one, are very much a powerful magical being.”

It wasn’t long after that revelation that Healer Hahnemann made an appearance. To grand the illusion of privacy, the man had erected a ward resembling frosted glass dividing the room in half. Currently, Hadrian and the healer were on the side with the small oven while the rest of the group waited around at the table. That is until Fleamont Potter pulled his first born son aside.

“James, son,” he began, but broke off a moment later, frowning thoughtfully to himself.

James for his part had a sinking feeling that he knew what this was about. His father was a rather relaxed kind of person, always calm and focused even in the face of danger – he had to be, being a former duellist champion, not to mention a politically active member of the Wizengamot. Privately James often thought that the latter was far more dangerous than the former. Anyway, seeing his father fumble for words like this… it could only mean something had deeply unsettled him and that generally meant it had to do with his family. Seeing as he himself was fine and his father had mentioned meeting his mother later, it left only one of the others in the room. He didn’t need to be Dumbledore to figure this one out.

“Son, there… there were some comments made that alluded to some… unsavoury occurrences between Hadrian and a member of the Crouch family, I believe,” his father finally managed, making James curse inwardly. Of course. “I get the feeling something else is afoot apart from what already has come to light about your… cousin,” he added, before fixing his son with an intent look. “Would you care to enlighten your old man?”
James sighed. Glancing over at Sirius, who luckily was too busy staring at the privacy charm hiding his boyfriend, and then meeting Rem’s eyes, he made a decision. Hadrian would not be amused, but things had gotten way out of hand on the Crouch front even with their Bambi holding his own.

“It’s probably the Allure,” he told his father in a low voice, trying not to catch his best mate’s attention. There was no need for that gasket to go off now. “Crouch Jr. is… I dunno how much you know about that bloke, but he has always been a sly sort. Not just Slytherin sly, though,” he added, “But the kind of sly that gets you into the wrong circles.”

He looked up at his dad intently, willing him to catch on without James having to spell it out. Privacy charms or not, the rising dark forces seemed to have their sticky fingers in every pot around. No need to risk being overheard even mentioning them.

“Being cunning and ambitious is not a crime, son,” his father gently admonished, a frown starting to make its way over his strong brow.

“Yeah, well… only that cunning isn’t really his most prominent feature. I’m not sure exactly what is, but the effect Hadrian’s mere presence at the school has on him is quite nasty.”

He watched as the hazel eyes of his father, a mirror of his own, steadily turned darker. Still, Lord Potter kept a deceivingly relaxed posture, his face now a mask of calmness. Too bad it was that calmness that freaked James out. It rarely happened and in contrast to his mother’s biting temper that tended to be delivered with honey sweet smiles (and be all the more frightening for it) his father very rarely even lost his patience. No, Lord Potter would steadily grow more intense and strained until he blew up, quite literally in most cases. There was a reason the Potter family magic smelled of ozone, after all.

“What shades of ‘nasty’ are you implying, James?”

The question was delivered with that same calmness, but he could already feel it in the air, the rising magic. Rems was shifting in his seat, too. James breathed out a heavy sigh.

“The kind that gets stalker-ish, lurking and… handsy when given just the slightest chance,” he finally declared and abruptly took a step back as the sharp smell of ozone seemed to burn his senses somewhat.

“And why, James, has no one deemed it necessary to mention such to me? You are aware of my participation in Wizengamot meetings, yes? You are also aware that the current head of the DMLE is one Bartemius Crouch Senior, which makes it a rather improbable happenstance for me to not come across the man on a regular basis?”

Taking a deep breath, James squared his shoulders.

“I apologise, father,” he said, uncharacteristically formal and forced himself to meet Lord Potter’s gaze. “I’d have told you about it the moment Crouch put a toe out of line, but…” His gaze flitted to the privacy curtain, eyes becoming a bit pained. “Even though I feel very protective of him, Hadrian’s not used to having a family. He solves his own problems, doesn’t even think of asking for help. We had to be sneaky about keeping that bastard away from him or Hadrian would have stopped us.” A bitter smile crossed his features in remembrance. “He even protected that maggot the first time…” At the stiffening of broad shoulders, James shook his head slightly. “It wasn’t my secret to tell.”

There was a moment of silence as Lord Potter digested all the information given, the obvious as well as those hidden between his son’s words.
“Well, then,” he said, straightening up. “I respect Hadrian’s wish for privacy on the matter, but this should not include the father of that… that unfortunate student.” A feral smirk crossed the normally deceivingly friendly features of the Lord Potter.

Harry had once again found himself sat on a conjured stretcher, the ominous healer writing away in his ominous notes for a while now. Ominous. Okay, so, maybe not. But really, Harry did not like to be poked and prodded at and the thought of once again being ‘diagnosed’ via a touch-based spell… He sighed, shifting in place for the umpteenth time.

“You are safe, child,” Healer Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann suddenly spoke up, sounding exasperated. “I will not attempt to use a touch-based diagnostic on you this time, even though,” he added with a Look over the parchment he had been writing on, “Touch-based healing and diagnosing is quite superior to the wand waving that is mostly practised these days.”

Harry blinked. And nodded.

“Now, tell me, child,” the healer fixed him with those piercing eyes of his, feathered quill poised, “Did you take your potions exactly how you were supposed to?”

Harry nodded again. Even if he hadn’t thought about it himself, the Marauders, his boyfriend especially, had made sure he never forgot even one blasted vial of the concoctions. Every morning he would take the nutrition potion with his breakfast (which he still wasn’t allowed to skip), every evening just before going to bed he would take the disgusting stuff to strengthen his bones and get all woozy with it and well, he had taken the lung remedy stuff the one time he had received it in the morning post, too. That had been weird and the stairs that day had felt like climbing mountains he had been so short of breath.

“Good.” Healer Hahnemann noted something else down before vanishing the parchment to wherever his notes went. “Now, as I have already informed Henry, your uncle I mean, Head Auror Moody has succeeded in accessing your medical records.”

Harry’s eyes went wide. That… that flobberworm-bitten bleeder had gone and forced the issue even after meeting Harry and agreeing to tutor him? Was that the ‘important business’ needing to be dealt with before Moody would deign to teach Harry? Oh who was he kidding, why was he even surprised? This was Mad Eye Moody, with or without the mad eye.

“Not to worry, though,” the healer belatedly added in a much too cheerful way. “As a matter of fact this seasoned healer of course had your forged medical records placed in time to have the ruse be a success.”

Staring at Hahnemann, Harry worked through the words, getting the distinct feeling that the man enjoyed his distress far too much. Did he live for those little moments in which he could give his patients near heart attacks before he relieved them of their panic? Scowling, Harry tried to calm his heart down as the words finally sunk in. Yes, Moody had gotten his stubby fingers on his medical records, but it were the forged ones, those they had deliberately drawn up for this very possibility. His secret was still safe.

“Alright, Youngest Potter, let’s see now…”

The healer brandished his wand, Harry clamped his hands down on the stretcher, and then the magic of a diagnostic charm was washing over him. He focused on the tingling sensation, trying very hard not to lash out with his own magic. Then there was the hovering writing again and Healer
Hahnemann conjured up two different folders, one nearly thrice the size of the other.

“Right, yes,” Hahnemann muttered, wand drawing some of the writing from the air and into the thicker folder. “It seems you have been truthful in your statements as I can make out some improvement in your blood levels. Yes, yes, your calcium and phosphorus levels are quite a bit better today.” He drew some more writing out of the air and into the fat folder. “Try to eat your vegetables and fruit, child. The muggle saying about an apple a day is quite true and your vitamin D levels will be thankful, I am sure,” he rambled on, but Harry was more interested in the condition of his bones. He was tired of being treated like some china doll ever since Lord Potter had discussed his weak bones with James. “Ah and there are the beginnings of your bone density improving as well. Good, good.”

Suddenly pale eyes caught his own again and Harry tensed even further. What now?

“Do not believe you are out of the woods just yet. I expect you to continue your potions regimen, no slacking, or all my work will have been for naught.”

After a moment of staring right back, Harry nodded once again.

“I also want you to visit Madam Pomfrey for a simple check on your teeth,” the healer added to Harry’s confusion. “She should have a general strengthening solution specific for enamel issues at hand. It is quite commonly needed by Muggleborns, actually. Your magic has done a marvellous job in preserving your teeth so far, but with a history of hypocalcaemia, that is low calcium levels in your blood serum, I expect there to be weakness that can easily be quelled with just a one-time-potion.”

Blinking, Harry sighed in relief. At least he would only have to take it once and be done with it. Really, his teeth were fine, but he could just imagine Healer Hahnemann’s reaction should Harry ignore his ‘advise’. The privacy screen going down had him jolting out of his contemplations and a moment later Sirius was at his side, petting at him as if expecting the healer to have inflicted some injury. Harry gave a small smile. Apart from the medical mumbo-jumbo that had been thrown at him, he was just fine. Though, did the man even realise Harry hadn’t said a single word during the whole examination? Sirius’ hands at his waist were his only forewarning before he found himself lifted off of the stretcher and very carefully sat down on his feet as if he had been sitting at some dangerous height. Right. China doll.

“Henry, get your humongous corpus over here. As the guardian I need your explicit permission to administer any kind of vaccine to your ward,” Healer Hahnemann ordered and Harry groaned. So much for having survived the poking and prodding. “Child, detach yourself from your paramour for just a moment, would you, I need some clear patch of skin for this.”

Blushing, Harry started to detangle himself from Sirius, but should have known better. His boyfriend simply shifted behind him, arms winding around Harry’s waist and holding tight. The unspoken I’m here. It’s okay. warming his chest, Harry belatedly registered the dry papery fingers at his arm. His reflexive jerking motion didn’t stop the healer from administering the mentioned vaccine, though. A small prick, nearly unnoticeable, and the smallish tube plus wrinkly hands were already leaving his personal space. It didn’t exactly look like a syringe and there was no blood on his arm to be seen, but something along those lines must have happened, right?

“There. That was Spattergroit and Dragon Pox, the most urgent for now. Anything else will have to wait until these two have worked through your system. Not to worry, though, you will notice not a thing.” Giving a short, breathy laugh, he added: “Magic.”

Harry felt Sirius draw breath and nudged him into the side. Still, he couldn’t prevent James from intoning a certain rhyme once again. Of course Disney would come back to bite him on his arse, or
his eardrums.

“Dragon Pox…,” Lord Potter was muttering thoughtfully, eyeing the healer’s bag that had appeared out of nowhere. “Say, Sam, you wouldn’t happen to be able to squeeze in some tea tomorrow?”

“Why, yes, Henry, I will gladly refresh your Dragon Pox vaccination, you big lug.”

Chapter End Notes

Ha. So. No dying of the elder Potters because of stinky Dragon Pox. Take this, Canon! Btw, to avoid confusion: It's Fleamont Henry Potter and the healer calls him just Henry.

(*) “Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Bo” from the 1950s version of Cinderella, sung by Verna Felton as the Fairy Godmother. Songwriter were Mack David / Al Hoffman / Jerry Livingston.
In which humans are smelly

Chapter Notes

INFORMATION:
~I’m a snaaaaaaaake!~ = Parseltongue

There's something for rigger42 and Zee lazing about here!
Also some little make-out session... not so hidden in this chapter. :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Why was he here again? Ah yes, he had been following the imbeciles that were constantly strutting around Hadrian to see if maybe, just maybe, he could either get some information on the mysterious potion the boy had been taking, or… well, if he was honest, Severus wasn’t all that sure what exactly he was hoping to accomplish. Yes, he wanted to know about that potion, but he also wanted Hadrian to… wanted him to see… understand… Severus sighed.

He had really no idea what it was he wanted from Hadrian. Maybe it was that damnable allure he was sure the creature emitted. Or perhaps the real reason why Severus felt so drawn to Hadrian was those eyes, so green and deep, even greener than- …Or maybe not. So he had followed the group of Gryffindorks to Hogsmeade and had watched them enter Brews and Stews together with a huge hulk of a man he recognised as Lord Potter.

That had been two hours ago and Severus had never been more glad for warming charms. He had spent some time across the street just watching the establishment until it was obvious the group intended for a longer stay, then he had migrated to some of the shops in the vicinity. But the café/pub was located in a side alley and sub-par gift shops could only occupy him for so long.

It wasn’t normal, he knew, this fixation on one boy. Had he been unaware of the allure, Severus might have fallen prey to it much more. Like Crouch, the unfortunate embarrassment of Slytherin House. Still, there was more to this than just some creature compulsion drawing him in. Severus had questions, theories that wanted answers, and dare he say it… hopes. Looking at Hadrian, so not in line with the Dark Lord’s propaganda, yet so powerful, left Severus wondering. Wondering how much there truly was to the Dark Lord’s words and promises, if one so obviously not pure-bred could be so powerful and just so… inherently good. But more than anything, watching Hadrian, talking to him even those short little times, had given Severus a glimpse of what could be. In Hadrian’s eyes had been nothing like the disgust he was used to seeing in the other Gryffindors when they looked at him, nor any of the dismissal he was treated to from his own housemates. Hadrian’s eyes reflected his curiosity, his energy, his acceptance. No condescension, no patronizing. He was just Hadrian and he treated Severus like an equal and that was exactly what Severus had always been hoping for.

But by Salazar, it was cold outside. So it was with profound relief that Severus watched the group emerge from Brews and Stews around lunch time… only to actually groan out loud when every single member of the irksome Gryffindors vanished using a portkey.

“Shh, it’s okay, I got you,” the voice murmured into his ear, making Harry aware of his surroundings once more.
He hadn’t really noticed closing his eyes and sagging to begin with, but here he was, held up by Sirius’ arms, his forehead pressed into his boyfriend’s shoulder. The air around was noticeable less cool, though still rather chilly, which was a relief.

“This is a stronger reaction than the last, I believe,” his grandfather’s voice was heard and Harry concentrated on breathing in the familiar scent of leather and freshly cut grass that was all Sirius, something similar to gunpowder tickling his nose and making him aware of his boyfriend having been involved in yet another explosive prank.

He felt a smile tug at his lips as the faint hint of the dark and smoky family magic insisted on making itself known, wondering randomly how much of that was genetic and how much connected to acknowledged magical bonds.

“Reminds me a bit of that first time when we came home for winter hols,” James agreed and Harry decided he had leant on Sirius long enough.

Blinking a few times rapidly, he straightened up as much as his boyfriend’s arms would let him, trying very hard not to blush at his weakness. He had never liked magical travel, but this was simply ridiculous. Just like that whole cold issue. Oh. Wait.

“Perhaps it’s the combination of stress from the medical check-up, the sensitivity to cold and the portkey?” Remus suggested as if reading Harry’s thoughts. Right.

“I’m fine,” he spoke up before any more theories about his condition could be thrown around. “Sorry about that,” he added sheepishly.

Sirius let go of him only to settle one of his arms around Harry’s waist, making sure he stayed close. James and Remus grinned at them, the former waggling dramatically with his eyebrows, but Harry could feel their concern like a tangible thing. This discussion wasn’t over and he had suspicions that just like all the other things about his past it would be coming up again soon. And Harry wouldn’t be able to wriggle his way out of that conversation.

“Can we go now? I’m hungry!” Pettigrew whined and the arm around Harry’s waist tensed.

He could see his grandfather subtly shifting, one massive hand curling in a way that had Harry wondering if Lord Potter was forcing himself not to react to the boy in some… unfavourable way.

“Of course,” the tall man said instead, pointedly looking over all their heads and up the street, “I believe my lady wife awaits us at Crossroads for lunch.” That said he started leading the way, making Harry aware of the fact he had no idea where they actually were. He blinked. This was neither Hogsmeade nor Diagon Alley. Before he could comment, though, Remus nudged his shoulder and pointed out a street sign reading Horizont Alley. (*) Huh. He couldn’t remember ever coming here, but he had a very vague memory of seeing the street sign once or twice when he was hurried through Diagon for his school supplies. It made him wonder why he had never explored farther during that glorious summer of third year. It wasn’t as if anyone had been keeping tabs on him back then… or had they? The thought reminded him of the last time they had all been out in Diagon Alley and he was suddenly glad the elder Potters had chosen another place. Though, Harry thought, Diagon Alley would probably now be safer than any other wizarding location, considering it had just been attacked. Why go for the same place twice and so shortly in succession?

Then again, he couldn’t help but be a tiny bit curious about this other shopping district. Everything looked a lot more upscale and some shops he certainly would never enter simply because they
looked as if they wouldn’t deem someone like him worthy. Still, there were a few shops Harry wouldn’t mind taking a peek into… hidden between the countless stores obviously dedicated to various different clothing fashions. Apparently wizards needed different shops for each possible style.

Crossroads was conveniently located at an intersection and took up at least two stories of which the whole upper one appeared to be sheer glass. It definitely was a lot more posh than any of the wizarding places Harry had seen so far, not that he had seen all that many. Yet, while certainly giving off an air of elegance, the restaurant didn’t feel uppity or like the owner would kick you out if you weren’t dressed up like a Malfoy. No, Harry decided after a few moments, it simply felt like quality not over-indulgence or arrogance. Nonetheless he felt himself relax minutely as he remembered he was no longer wearing his cousin’s hand-me-downs. He and his friends were probably the only patrons not dressed in robes, though, and he thought he saw Remus straightening his collar out of the corner of his eye, but he didn’t catch even one of the employees looking down their nose at them. Although that might have been because of Lord Potter leading the way, sweeping up a rather grand staircase and being met by the pure presence of Lady Potter. That woman definitely exuded more refinement and power than any of the Malfoys could ever hope to – at least in Harry’s opinion.

Lunch was a pleasant affair with a little hint of hilarity and confusion added in. At one point James and Sirius started up singing again, intoning one of the more frequent Disney songs Crouch had been witness to as he had been unable to avoid mealtimes completely. Harry clearly had created a monster and he did not mean Crouch.

“You may very well be well bred/Lots of etiquette in your head,” the duo sang, throwing arms around each other to sway together to their words. “But there's always some special case, time or place/To forget etiquette.”

Lady Potter blinked in bemusement and her husband cocked his head in what looked a lot like intrigue. Harry groaned quietly. This song had especially been hilarious in combination with the Slytherins’ general reaction, but Harry privately found himself hoping the hex would wear off soon.

“Never smile at a crocodile/No, you can't get friendly with a crocodile,” they chorused, before James looked at Sirius seriously and intoned: “Don't be taken in by his welcome grin,” making Sirius nod sagely and answer back: “He's imagining how well you'd fit within his skin!”(*)

Over the course of lunch Harry got to try a few different things, simply because Sirius, Remus, and James insisted on sharing their choices with him for some reason. He wasn’t about to complain, but his blush felt a bit permanent when they finally left the restaurant.

“Now, dears,” Lady Potter spoke up with a smile that was just this side of too bright to be anything but gleeful, “We will start with undergarments, get you measured and all, followed by day robes. I believe James prefers Flashes, was it? They certainly are up and coming for young cuts and Accessorize is just next door. Oh and last we will go for some much needed dress robes at Tresses Dresses.” (*)&

Remus looked a bit pale at her declaration, probably finally having realised he would be included in the madness and not only witness it. Pettigrew was staring at Lady Potter with something in his eyes that reminded Harry uncomfortably of Dudley for some reason and James just hung his head in defeat, clearly not new to his mother’s shopping tendencies. Sirius, however, was a picture of radiance, grinning widely and patting Harry’s shoulder in mock sympathy before catching his hand in his own, tugging with the other on one of Harry’s dark locks.

“Let’s go then, love. Seamstresses are awaiting our luscious presence!”
He wanted to bang his head against the wall and was seriously considering it for a moment when he found himself alone in the changing room. Alone with a huge – hovering – pile of clothes waiting for him to try. Harry took the moment to himself and closed his eyes tiredly. They had finally reached their last stop, dress robes, and he was exhausted.

Getting measured for his wand had been a hell of a lot less mortifying than what Harry (and Remus) had gone through today at the shop dedicated to undergarments. And if Harry had thought undergarments meant only pants, he had been in for a surprise. Right, so he had vaguely known that women had a few more choices, but he hadn’t even set foot into the section for women’s clothing and still had left the store with his world slightly tilted on the axis. The saying of “Merlin’s pants” suddenly made so much more sense…

Flashes, the shop for day robes that James apparently favoured, had been actually interesting. So had been watching Sirius and James discussing latest fashions like it was Quidditch, though it left Harry feeling a bit strange. He wasn’t sure what exactly the feeling was, but he couldn’t help but wonder if he would have been like that had he grown up with his parents. Then again, he simply couldn’t picture himself versed in anything having to do with fashion. Lady Potter had let the boys decide for themselves when it came to day robes, though she reserved veto right (and used it on James’ choices more than once).

Harry had stayed close to Remus, getting a similar unsure vibe off of the werewolf, hoping no one would expect him to decide for himself what he liked. He had never been allowed to choose clothes for himself, how was he supposed to know how to dress well? Luckily his grandmother seemed to have some things already in mind, directing one of the attentive employees to get him adjusted to a set of airy black day robes with silver edging. Apparently those were a standard every young wizard was supposed to have in their wardrobe and Harry was even pretty sure the same set was available in different quality classes. He didn’t ask which he got, but obediently modelled the set given to him, letting his grandmother coo at him in delight.

After that, though, she sent him off to find colours and cuts he liked to have some robes for everyday use made for him. He was lost. And a victim of his boyfriend’s shopping mania soon after.

“Barking mad, I tell you,” had been James’ comment somewhere in-between having about ten different shades of green pinned to his person and watching Sirius throwing technical terms at confused employees.

He left the shop with the promise of having six different sets of customized robes (all different colours and apparently cut to the latest fashion, though Harry didn’t really see the difference) sent to him sometime next week.

Accessorize, the store for anything from bags to hats to shawls and whatnot, left him reeling and blinking and simply standing still while Lady Potter put different stuff on him while commenting about how it would suit so perfectly this or that set of his new robes. Sometime during that ordeal he saw his grandfather sneak away, muttering something about having an urge for a bath bun. Harry was slightly envious.

Now, though, they were at Tresses Dresses, the upscale store for dress robes Lady Potter regularly frequented. Apparently she knew the owner back from school. Not that that helped Harry any, because now here he was with an unknown number of dress robes he was to try on and model for his audience, so they could decide what cut and colour and style would suit him best before having them tailored to fit him perfectly. He eyed the patiently hovering pile of doom.

“Bollocks…,” Harry muttered before taking off his jumper for the umpteenth time that day, readying
himself for yet another session of put-this-on-no-yes-oh-how-about-this-with-that.

“Mhm,” a very familiar voice purred from behind him, “I think, I prefer this style over any other,” Sirius declared, large hands coming around Harry’s very naked waist.

“Sirius!” He did not squeak. It was a manly sound of surprise. “What are you-” The hands were pleasantly warm on his chilled skin. “Why are you in here?!?” Harry hissed, fighting down his blush. “Lady Potter is right out there!”

“Nu-uh,” his boyfriend chuckled, tipping down his head to skim lips along Harry’s neck, “She just went to wrangle Rem into his own set of dress robes. Terribly argumentative these wolves, yeah?”

Harry shuddered at the touch of a moist tongue grazing the junction of his neck and shoulder, the hands on his waist wandering just that little bit further down.

“Sirius…,” he tried once again. Strong fingers pressing down on his hip bones, pulling him back against Sirius’ broad chest.

“I had to look at you half naked, letting yourself be touched by so many different hands all day…,” he growled against Harry’s skin.

The grip on his hips turned possessive, but Harry had long since stopped his half-hearted struggle. With a sigh he relaxed back against Sirius, watching through half-lidded eyes how his abdominal muscles jumped beneath the teasing touches.

“Don’t remember those,” he muttered, tilting his head just right to give his boyfriend more access to his neck, “Was too distracted by the cloths you kept pinning on me,” he grinned, blinking eyes open he hadn’t noticed were closed.

“Well, there are simply too many shades you look fetching in,” Sirius muttered, nipping at the slender shoulder in front of him. “Not that you need any fabrics to do that.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Harry snorted, shivering as Sirius’ attentions wandered from his neck, over his shoulder and back around, kissing each vertebrae in his reach. “Y-you had better stop now or modelling those robes could be kinda… ah… difficult,” he managed to gasp.

“Whatever do you mean?” Sirius questioned in faux-innocence, long fingers stroking firmly along the waistband of Harry’s jeans.

He didn’t get a verbal answer, or rather not one that managed to form words, as Harry mewled slightly, pressing back against his boyfriend’s form. He felt hot all over, his cheeks were flushed, and-

“Mhm,” Sirius purred once more, pushing himself up against Harry, “Do that again.”

Harry couldn’t contain the moan at the feeling of a very obvious erection pressed right up against his backside. Heat was slithering through his blood, heart racing in his chest, pants escaped in an ecstatic rhythm-

“Ah- erm guys?” James’ voice called from right outside the changing room, sounding more than a little uncomfortable. “I can see mum coming this way,” he said, clearing his throat pointedly. “Just sayin’.”

Harry groaned, mortified, the excitement rushing from him so fast it left him light-headed for a second. Sirius’ clear amusement didn’t help, making Harry kick his shin as his boyfriend chuckled in
a way too relaxed manner. It earned him a yelp and sent Sirius scurrying out of the small changing room, though that might have been the threat of Lady Potter ever approaching.

“So,” Lady Potter summarised what had just been explained to her, “A close familial connection would be able to temporarily suppress the Allure, which is why James should put all his dedication into this training.” She sent her son a pointed look, a soft and warm smile blossoming as she took in the fierce determination on James’ face. “And until such a time he is proficient and for any happenstance of young Hadrian being on his own, a true familiar will be able to… curb his excess magic?”

“Yes, dearest,” Lord Potter agreed, steering the group down the road. “Though a familiar will always only be a kind of crutch, not a solution.” He sighed at Harry’s downcast look. “It is not through any fault of yours, little one,” he soothed. “You inherited the gene, yes, but it only manifested when your core matured. You do not have the years of experience the born ones of your kind used to benefit from.”

Harry nodded but still felt frustrated with his lack of progress on the whole matter. He should have started working on controlling the Allure at the very least when he had the time over the holidays. And they should have had more than just the one training session for the Marauders’ Patroni. And he needed to find out what was up with the strange objects, the Horcruxes, he had witnessed Tom creating in that horrid vision. At least now he was aware on what exactly the containers for Tom’s soul shards were: The strange clumpy looking ring, an ugly locket, an overly decorated cup, something like a tiara-crown-thingy and the diary from second year. Last was Nagini. That made seven Horcuxes if he included himself.

“Therefore, when talking about Elf Owls, one has to distinguish between born Elf Owls and inherited Elf Owls,” Remus cited under his breath, making Harry smile briefly as he forced his thoughts back to the present.

Of course Remus would have remembered what the book said on the matter, probably verbatim too. It was such a Remus thing to do, yet he still made sure not to talk too loudly. They were all taking care not to name what exactly they were talking about out in the open. It was unlikely that anyone would be able to listen in on their conversation enough to piece it together, but it was not a good time to be anything but a pure-blooded wizard. Harry sighed and leaned into Sirius’ side, glad he wasn’t alone in all this.

Sirius tightened his hold on his Bambi’s waist, glancing down at the riotous curls now once again mostly tamed through Lady Potter’s proficiency. Tonight Sirius would carefully pull those beautiful tresses free of their hold and run his fingers through them. He had learned how sensitive the feathers hidden there were, but considering the gorgeous reaction he had gotten the last time his hands so much as brushed against one such feather… Let’s just say Sirius Black is a possessive bloke. He does not share. So he would either have to hold back the urge to get his love to make all those sweet noises, or he would have to find a place they could spend some time undisturbed. It was high time they got some privacy, seriously, the changing room temptation had nearly done him in!

He bit back a groan, surreptitiously adjusting himself in his pants. He really shouldn’t have tried to rile his boyfriend up like that, it had kinda backfired, but damn if his little owlet wasn’t irresistible.

Lord Potter led them to the largest pet store Sirius knew there to be in wizarding Britain, catering not only to the common wishes of young witches and wizards, but also to the more eccentric tastes. It had the added effect that his Hadrian perked up the moment they stepped inside. He had been drooping ever since their second store, definitely not a fan of shopping. Thinking back to the way Lord Potter had sneaked off and only just reappeared, Sirius thought that might be a family trait. And
considering the sweet smell clinging to the man’s robes, he had really been for that bath bun he had been mumbling about. For some reason Sirius now really wanted to buy his Bambi sweets. Okay, that somehow sounded wrong. Reminded him somewhat of Dumbledore and the old goat’s penchant for offering everyone, especially his students, sweets…

Anyway, following the broad back of his stepfather, they entered the huge building housing various different species from mundane toads and Puffskeins, over racing rats and actual Kneazles not interbred with cats, to the newest fashions of poisonous orange snails and giant jewel-encrusted tortoises. Then there were other reptiles and Crups and of course owls, though they would probably get a wider variety of the latter at Eeylops Owl Emporium. He could hear, though not see, some ravens and birds of prey too.

“I heard pure Kneazle eyes are useful in some potion or another, same for Puffskein tongues,” Wormtail commented casually. “I guess any beast has at least some worth,” he added just as he walked passed Remus.

Peter had been particularly annoying the whole time they had ambled from store to store, or maybe Sirius was now more aware of the rat’s behaviour than before. He rather thought the behaviour was due to Peter belatedly realising he wouldn’t be treated to new robes like Remus and sweet Hadrian were. It wasn’t like he needed them, he was well enough equipped, his family not overly wealthy, but certainly able to provide him with anything he needed and then some. Remus’ family would have been the same, was the same in fact, it was just… Rem’s parents never did more than the bare minimum for their son. And even though they never said it out loud anymore, Sirius was very much aware of Lyall Lupin’s abhorrence of anything lycan. As if it wasn’t enough his son had to bear the consequences for Mr. Lupin’s actions, the man had taken to let his son know just how much exactly his condition disgusted him. Not through actions or words, no, but in-action can be just as hurtful if not worse. The Lupins had made it kind of an art to be inactive when it came to their son and his needs, no matter how mundane they might be. It wasn’t right. (*)

So watching Peter’s mood souring more and more as the day wore on and the little lump of lard realised the Potters wouldn’t be paying for his purchases… it made Sirius want to hex him until he resembled the remains of their lunch. And what a lunch it had been! But apparently being treated to a deluxe lunch in Horizont Alley’s most sought out establishment wasn’t enough for Peter if the sniping remarks were anything to go by.

A giggle drew Sirius’ attention back to his boyfriend, realising he had let himself be tugged around the store not watching where they were going. Hadrian was currently being accosted by an overly affectionate Puffskein tot, its long tongue sneaking out to tickle the boy as the purring furball snuggled close to his neck. Sirius smiled. Yeah, his boyfriend seemed to have that effect on nearly everyone… everyone that wasn’t a rat, that is. And there he went again. Nope, enough of such gloom, he decided, looking around the store to locate the rest of their group. Wormtail wasn’t far from them, but moving down to the back where it was shadier. Prongs was on the upper level admiring ravens and falcons and whatnot, the pompous prat. It was Rems he had to look for a bit longer, the elder Potters chatting away with the owner up front by the counter. Not with the rats… nor with the Kneazles… nope, no Moony… ah. Of course. He sniggered as he caught sight of his furry friend being mass cuddled by a pile of Crups.

That was when the scream went up. And maybe he didn’t think of Peter as his friend any longer, couldn’t even stand his presence most of the time, but Sirius still reacted, drawing his wand and racing into the dark back of the store where the scream had been coming from.

~Mean human…~
Snakes. Of course it would be snakes. Harry knew then and there that this would be a repeat of second year, but he couldn’t just stand by and do nothing. Not when the owner of the pet store looked terrified himself, and Pettigrew wasn’t helping matters flailing arms about like that, all the while shrieking like a Banshee. Okay, maybe having a whole nest of some kind of very smallish, possibly venomous snakes dumped on top of you wasn’t a pleasant experience, but…

He found himself shouting, addressing the panicked snakes. ~Please don’t bite him, he didn’t do it on purpose!~

Harry didn’t look at his audience, didn’t react to Sirius’ hands falling away from him as he carefully stepped closer. The snakes had mostly stopped their frantic movements and even Pettigrew had grown still, staring at him with eyes half bulging out of his skull.

~Speaker!~

~Smells like predator!~

~Just a hatchling still…~

~Speaker… speaker…~

~Speaker!~

Harry couldn’t help but smile a bit as every single little snake head turned his way, one tiny lilac coloured one stretching up on top of Pettigrew’s head to see him better.

~Yes… er… hi,~ he said, giving an awkward wave. He thought he heard a snort somewhere behind him, but didn’t dare turning. He wasn’t ready for that fallout. ~Could you please not bite my… him? I don’t know what he did, but it was probably an accident.~

One of the larger ones, though still just long enough to go around his ankle maybe, slithered down Pettigrew’s chubby leg and came towards Harry. There was movement behind him, but he still didn’t turn. The snake stopped about three feet in front of him, propping itself up as if craning its head to look at him. Harry threw Pettigrew a look.

“Don’t move,” he ordered.

Slowly, Harry went down on his knees, smiling at the snake. He listened briefly to it explaining what had happened, all the while its nestmates still staring at Harry in fascination. No one was talking as everyone was watching Harry having a hissing conversation with a snake. Finally Harry nodded, getting back up and coming over to Pettigrew. Without so much as by-your-leave he started carefully picking up snakes from where they had wound themselves into clothes and around limbs, setting them down on the floor gently. He found himself muffling laughter from time to time as he listened to the tiny snakes making remarks about the ‘smelly human’. The rat stank of sweat and what Harry thought was probably piss as well, but he didn’t move a muscle until Harry had picked up the last snake, the minuscule lilac one. It didn’t want to be set down though; instead it curled up in the palm of Harry’s hand, tail sneaking around his thumb. He was just about to talk it into following its nestmates who were actually making their way back to what was probably their intended habitat, when Pettigrew finally spoke up.
“Y-you… you FREAK!” He shrieked, scrambling away from Harry and the last snakes. Harry didn’t take note of much of what happened after.

Remus saw the fallout coming before the words had even left Peter’s mouth, but there wasn’t anything he could have done to prevent it. Still, as Hadrian’s magic suddenly skyrocketed and the smell of ozone tinged the air inside the store, he really wished he weren’t so damn sensitive to it all. Hissing as the magic surged and lapped and bit at everything, eliciting more than one yelp from the humans around, Remus retreated back towards the owner and elder Potters. Lord Potter looked torn between wanting to grab Peter and shake some much needed sense into him, and bundle up his grandson. Around them all the animals were restless, shifting, pacing, fluttering, but not a one made a sound. Still, it was Sirius who was needed right now, Remus had to make sure no one interrupted what he could see his friend doing. The Black heir had pushed Peter aside and, heedless of the magic going haywire, taken a hold of his boyfriend like so many times before. He would be able to talk Hadrian down. Well, that is what Remus thought until he caught sight of a fuzzy ball with a ridiculously big tail stuck out from it jumping up right onto Hadrian’s head.

The reaction was instantaneous. One moment magic was surging ever higher and wilder, the next it abruptly mellowed out and all that could be heard was the loud purring of… a Kneazle? Sirius was staring at his boyfriend who was blinking confusedly at the fuzzy ball pressing into his cheek.

“Well,” James commented into the silence, “That was anticlimactic.”

Chapter End Notes

Names for the little fuzz ball, anyone? Maybe Disney related? ;)

(*) Horizont Alley: Already mentioned this before, but it is supposed to be a cross street of Diagon Alley that intersects Knockturn Alley and Carkitt Market.

(*) “Never smile at a crocodile” from Peter Pan, 1953, music by Frank Churchill and lyrics by Jack Lawrence.

(*) Flashes, Accessorize and Tresses Dresses. Ain’t I fancy with my shop names?

(*) The part about the Lupins’ behaviour is not canon. I think there both parents still loved their son after being infected with lycanthropy, but tried everything to keep his condition hidden, including forbidding him from playing with other children… which kinda never made sense to me.
In which ties are cut

Chapter Notes

Last chapter there seemed to be a bit of confusion, so here we go:

**Kneazle:** a magical feline creature related to, and similar in appearance to, a cat. They have spotted, speckled or flecked fur, large ears and a lightly plumed tail, like a lion. They are thought to have separate breeds, like cats, and therefore vary in appearance.

**Puffskein:** basically a ball of soft fur that purrs when happy. Tribbles, anyone? Oh and they have extremely long tongues that they apparently like to use to eat wizards’ boogies. Hmmm nyam. They are related to Pygmy Puffs! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Fleamont Henry Potter sighed. It had been a demanding day and tomorrow was likely to become just as taxing. But to think, his grandson, that brilliant little boy, had yet another outstanding magical talent! He had to admit to feeling slightly smug about this, not that he would ever go about bragging. Though, given the Look his beloved wife was giving him, she knew exactly how dearly he wished to at least mention it in passing… per chance to the likes of that annoying uptight auror that had accompanied Head Auror Moody after the tragedy in Diagon Alley.

No, it couldn’t be done. As coveted as Parselmagic was in certain circles, just as condemned was it in others. There were rumours that the rising British dark lord was a user of these magicks, the first known since the last of the Gaunt line had been imprisoned in Azkaban. Fleamont wasn’t quite sure if Morfin Gaunt was still alive, existing inside hell on earth that was said prison. If it wasn’t for the Gaunt family’s known vein of instability and violence that flourished through the generations due to their habit of marrying their own cousins, Parselmagic would still be more coveted than condemned. Though, truth be told, the ability to talk to such mysterious and revered creatures as serpents was still very much held in high esteem outside Magical Britain’s limited cloud, especially in the eastern countries. Not to mention the ability was considered a sign of royalty in Magical Egypt as well as India. Even the Americas had certain traditions concerning serpents in their history that were still respected. Yet again a branch of magic Britain was shunning…

But he was digressing.

Hadrian was a Parselmouth and Fleamont once again found himself torn between wishing to wrap his grandson in cotton wool to hide him away from the world and training the new found talent. Although training something he himself was not able to cast or even to understand would most likely be beyond his capabilities, it would also give the child a near impenetrable defence. At least Fleamont thought so. He would need to talk with his lovely Mia about it, but he was quite sure to have once read about how magic cast in Parseltongue was only reversible through the same means. Which meant Hadrian would be able to cast whatever and no one would be able to counter it – well, no one but another Parselmouth.

Topping his firewhiskey once more, Fleamont leant back in his armchair, stretching his feet towards the merrily crackling fire. Another thing was on his mind, connected to the surprising revelations of this afternoon and yet not. To think, not even Hogwarts could keep the children safe from the
propaganda of the rising Dark…

Earlier that day

Warm hands gently wrapping around his wrists brought Harry back to the present. Blinking rapidly, he looked at Sirius standing in front of him, watching him with concern in his grey eyes. It was strange to look up at his boyfriend, because for a few seconds another view was overlapping what Harry was seeing. It took him a moment to recognise that the second view showed himself, albeit from a very strange angle.

“Bambi?” Sirius whispered, still holding onto Harry’s wrists, long fingers stroking along his pulse point. “You okay? Did you just…” He nodded at something on Harry’s shoulder and suddenly he knew whose view had been overlapping his own. “Is that Kneazle it?”

There was a small furry ball sitting on Harry’s shoulder, tiny paws kneading at the collar of his cloak, and a fuzzy tail tickling his neck. The cat-like creature looked nothing like Harry remembered of Crookshanks, Hermione’s Half-Kneazle, but at the moment he was more focused on the feeling the creature was giving him. Though, that was perhaps not the right wording…

“Y-yeah,” he finally answered his boyfriend, gaze still locked on the luminous eyes his new familiar had fixed on him. Eyes that had the exact same colour as the bluish specks that made Sirius’ grey irises sparkle in the sunlight. “That’s… what just happened?”

He wasn’t sure who he was asking, the Kneazle on his shoulder, his boyfriend or the room at large. That was when Harry remembered what had just taken place before he lost it and… got saved by a cat? He stiffened in Sirius’ hold, not daring to look back at him or anyone still standing around the menagerie. They knew. They knew what he was, what Voldemort had done to him… no, no, they didn’t. There was no way they would make that connection. Maybe being a Parselmouth wasn’t all that bad in this time?

“What’s wrong with you?” A hysterical voice shrieked into the silence, eliciting a low hiss from the fluffball still kneading at Harry’s cloak. “D’you get some sick kick out of being as abnormal as possible?! It was Pettigrew. Of course. For a moment no one was moving as they listened to the poison spewing from the rat’s mouth. “I knew the moment I saw you that you’re a greedy little slut wanting to take away my friends, but then you’d to go and turn into a filthy creature! What? Weren’t you enough of a freak already? And now this!”

Spittle was flying as he cursed at Harry, his soiled pants clinging awkwardly to his chubby frame. Not that Harry noticed. He could feel his ingrained reaction to that word and yet the panic and the memories didn’t overwhelm him. Oh they were still there, but they felt more like an undercurrent to the then and there. It was… manageable in a way it had never been before. Like something, or maybe someone, was taking the edge off.

Then there was growling – from about three different directions.

Sirius couldn’t help but be elated about Hadrian’s newest talent. Even if it was a part of his past, his blood family, he couldn’t change that he had always been fascinated by the possibility of communication with a sentient being no one else could understand. And snakes, apart from Slytherins that is, just had to be the perfect partner in crime! They could get into practically everything, were silent and if noticed most people would rather avoid them than trying to catch them.
The pranks they would be able to pull with a serpentine accomplice!

Though, that fur ball was another thing…

He knew a true familiar bond when he saw one. Which meant that Kneazle was going to be his Bambi’s constant companion for a while to come, at the very least until the bond settled. Then the catlike creature would probably behave like most pets with the added benefit of exactly knowing when its owner needed them and actually being able to help with the magical excess. Like right now. When Hadrian’s magic had gone haywire in reaction to Wormtail’s idiotic comment, Sirius had been prepared to act like his boyfriend’s grounder, to help calm him and bring him back from that nasty place his mind seemed to drown into. He had never seen anyone react to certain situations and trigger phrases like Hadrian, but considering he seemed to be remembering something when he had panic attacks, horrible situations of his past, Sirius didn’t know how to help. Other than trying to bring him back to the present and being there for him afterwards.

That Kneazle might have done the trick this time, but it didn’t mean his boyfriend wasn’t shaken by the experience. Not to mention he very obviously seemed afraid of everyone’s reaction to his Parseltongue ability. Sirius just wanted to kiss it better.

And kick Pettigrew in the nuts. The red tingeing his vision was welcomed for once as Sirius had to listen to the filth spewing from their former friend’s trap. He let his Grim make its displeasure known. He didn’t care who heard him growl or whatever, all he could think was that that bastard was hurting his mate. Oh the rat was going down… Remus would help, he could hear him from where he stood near the elder Potters, all ferocious-like, and… was that the fur ball? Well, maybe that cat would be good for more than evening the magical scales.

“The Prophet is bloody right!” Pettigrew continued on, short of hyperventilating on the spot. “You creatures are nothing but filthy beasts needing to be put down! I should notify the damn Ministry about you so they can show you your place, freak!”

A strong hand clamping down on the shrieking boy’s neck shut him up abruptly. Pettigrew was about to turn on who had him in such a grip and continue his diatribe, when he realised it was Lord Potter himself. There was no mistaking the silent fury in those hazel eyes and a glance to the side showed the face of Lady Potter as an impenetrable mask, something nearly unheard of. The beautiful sky blue eyes were glacial as she stared down her elegant nose at the unsightly child with the horrendous manners spouting off the propaganda the papers lately seemed to favour. She had thought the boy a friend of her son’s, biting her tongue more often than not when having to socialise with him, but friend or not, this association would end here and now.

“I do believe this outing has fulfilled its original purpose,” Lord Potter decided, voice deceptively low. “I will escort Mr. Pettigrew back to Hogwarts.”

The rat didn’t protest, he was completely petrified in the tall lord’s hold. There was a tense moment of silence after they had left the store until Lady Potter cleared her throat delicately.

“Now, children, I think we have a Kneazle and some equipment to pay for – No, James, you do not need another falcon,” she added with an amused tilt to her mouth. “That reminds me, Remus, dear, are you interested in that cub?” She asked, causing said boy to blink in confusion, his hostility towards Pettigrew still boiling under the surface.

Looking down he was met with one of the Crups that had swarmed him before, a cub whose forked tail stood up in two different directions.

“Ah… no, ma’am,” he assured her hastily. “I’m sure she’s lovely, but I couldn’t bring her home
what with my mother’s… heritage.”

Lady Potter blinked at him for a moment before the proverbial light bulb seemed to go off.

“Oh of course, how thoughtless of me. I had momentarily forgotten about the inbred distaste for muggles,” she said, sounding quite a bit flustered at her blunder.

While that conversation was going on, Sirius focused on his yet again silent boyfriend. Hadrian seemed to be stuck somewhere between terrified and perplexed, probably confused about the lack of reaction from everyone else. Well, the shop owner was still glancing their way every now and then, but was busying himself with getting the snake habitat all set up again. There was nothing that could be done about the information leaked to that man now, but hopefully he would keep quiet for the simple fact that he wouldn’t want to antagonise a family as influential as the Potters. And really, unless the man had specific political aspirations, there was not much he could gain from outing a member of an Ancient and Noble House as a creature. Creature inheritances might be ‘not done’ these days, but it was an open secret that all pureblood lines had at least one creature woven into their lineage.

“So, love,” Sirius spoke up in a husky voice, letting his appreciation clearly shine through, “Parselmagic?” Hadrian sputtered for a moment, a pretty blush staining his cheeks before he managed to reply.

“I… that… yes. I’m a Parselmouth, so… that’s probably what it’s called.”

Harry shrugged, uncomfortable with the topic and the apparent lack of knowledge he had on the matter. Why had he never investigated his ability further? Yeah right, because that would have been so bloody easy back in his original time. As if he could have just walked into the library looking for books on Parseltongue… or Parselmagic, apparently.

Sirius hummed, one hand letting go of Hadrian’s wrist and the jumping pulse point to reach up and stroke along his face. He smiled slightly when Hadrian leaned into the touch seemingly unconsciously. He was so freaking cute, seriously, that had to be illegal.

“Excuse me,” the shop owner spoke up, appearing right next to them, “Are you going to purchase that Kneazle?”

He sounded somewhat snooty, but Sirius got the impression the man was actually scared witless by the scene that had just taken place in his shop. It could have gone so, so very wrong if Hadrian hadn’t been there. Not that he would have mourned the damn rat.

“Yes,” Sirius stated before Hadrian could, tone of voice brooking no argument. There was a bond forming between his boyfriend and the fur ball, there was no way he would be separating them now.

“Pure Kneazles have a XXX classification,” the owner intoned, looking down his nose at Hadrian as if expecting him to back down. “They are only recommended as pets if they bond to the wizard purchasing them.” There was a slight hesitation on the term ‘wizard’ that had Sirius raising a challenging eyebrow at the man. He blinked surprised when it was Hadrian that spoke up next:

“The same goes for Niffler and I know for a fact you have no problem selling those in whole hordes,” he said, looking unimpressed. Well, at least they had been sold to Hogwarts in huge numbers during his fourth year, but the bluff was worth a shot.

“Yes, well,” the man didn’t quite meet Harry’s eyes. “Now to care for a Kneazle you will need…”

The conversation went from there. Harry left the shop with a new Kneazle familiar, enough
equipment to last him a year, and a secret stowaway. No one spoke of Pettigrew for the rest of their trip.

That evening Sirius sat behind his boyfriend, back to the headrest and long-fingered hands combing reverently through the dark tresses that were Hadrian’s hair. He delighted in caressing the sleek feathers from time to time, eliciting small shudders... trying to ignore the incessant purring a certain Kneazle was giving off. The fur ball was lounging on the bed between Hadrian’s legs, stretching luxuriously while slender fingers stroked through its fur.

He loved being so close to his love, even if he now had to share their alone time with the fur ball. He let his hands wander along Hadrian’s shoulders and down his back, subtly comparing what he felt with what he remembered seeing the few times he had actually gotten him naked. Of course he had noted the changes, even though they seemed to be very slow in coming. The potions regimen might take its time, but it worked. It was not a fast fix, but a long-lasting one and that was what truly mattered. Still, he vowed to continue keeping an eye on Hadrian’s eating habits. There was no doubt in Sirius’ mind that left to himself Hadrian would start eating like a bird again – or even go back to the unhealthy half-starving he had going when arriving here.

He smiled slightly as he stroked his fingers along his boyfriend’s ribcage, glad to feel a little more meat where before there had been basically nothing left. Having Hadrian try the different foods under the guise of getting to know new tastes had worked well enough today. At least that way his boyfriend had eaten more than he normally would have, even if it still wasn’t as much as Sirius would have wanted him to. Maybe he should ask Lord Potter to arrange for more regular outings... though, with the planned Elf Owl training that might be a redundant request.

“They need a name,” Hadrian suddenly said into the content silence. He was still lavishing attention on his new familiar, making Sirius just the tiniest bit jealous.

“That Disney stuff you used to curse the fu- ...Crouch with,” Sirius contemplated, seemingly off-topic, “It’s like a company that makes the movie thingies muggles like?” He could feel Hadrian’s amusement, but his boyfriend nodded, still petting at the Kneazle. “Well, the characters in the movies have names, don’t they? Ain’t there some you like? You could use their names for your familiar.”

Hadrian was silent for a moment before turning to look at Sirius drolly.

“I’d have thought you would know all that already what with the name you’ve come up with for me,” he said. It was phrased as a statement, but sounded like a question.

“Bambi?” Hadrian nodded. “Oh yeah, that was the first and so far only time Prongs and I managed to observe a ‘movie’,” Sirius explained with a wide grin. “That was this Disney? It was totally awesome, I tell you. There was this baby deer all cute and innocent, pretty much like you,” he added with an eyebrow-waggle, “And he became this super strong Prince of the Forest and- … what are you laughing at?”

Hadrian was snickering, Kneazle forgotten for the moment, and watching Sirius with eyes alight with mirth. It was a mesmerizing sight and before his Bambi could explain himself, Sirius leaned in and kissed him gently. That shut Hadrian up immediately, his frame melting against Sirius. This he could do forever, he decided. He should take Bambi on a holiday sometime, just the two of them maybe at a beach or perhaps a mountain resort or… He was just about to deepen the kiss when … there was a cold, wet something digging into his ear.

“WA- Merlin’s saggy third ball!” Sirius shouted, hand swatting at his ear, making his Bambi jump in surprise. The damn Kneazle just danced out of reach and insinuated itself promptly back onto
Hadrian’s lap. “Oh you sneaky, little shit,” Sirius declared, narrowing his eyes at the fur ball.

Hadrian was blinking at him in confusion before his eyes went down to the cat-creature. He was cocking his head for a moment as if listening to something, though Sirius couldn’t hear anything. And then his boyfriend laughed, snickers that developed into big belly laughs the moment he met Sirius’ incredulous gaze. He wasn’t imagining the smug air around the Kneazle.

Harry had been tense for the rest of the day after the whole incident in the menagerie. He hadn’t been thinking, just reacting on instinct once again like the Gryffindor he was, and now they all knew another one of his secrets. Though, admittedly, they had no idea what it truly meant, how he had come to have such ability in the first place. Either way, apart from Pettigrew no one had reacted even faintly similar to what had happened in Harry’s second year. Still, he couldn’t help but be tense. Pettigrew already had enough ammunition against him, knowledge that potentially could get Harry into serious trouble if the rat spilled his guts to the wrong person. The lack of negative reaction from the other Marauders and his… family, though, gave him hope. He should probably step up the talk about finding a way to make Pettigrew keep their secrets.

Coming back to the castle, being delivered by Lady Potter and hugged tightly in goodbye, Harry had dreaded the unavoidable confrontation with Pettigrew. They lived not only in the same Hogwarts House, but shared a dormitory. That was bound to be a problem if he knew the Marauders at all. They had been all shaken by their former friend’s words and not only because they were so vicious against Harry himself. A part of him ached for the lost friendship, not his own, he had never really cared for Peter Pettigrew even after spending time with him before he became the snivelling bastard he knew from the future. No, it hurt to think that without him here the Marauders would still be friends with this boy, would rely on him so much they would even entrust him with their lives in a few years from now. Nothing of the sort would ever come to happen now and Harry wondered if that was truly a good thing. If his parents would still need to go into hiding when the time came, there would be no traitor this time around. But a friendship was still lost, making him wonder what could have been had he only tried more to clear the air between Pettigrew and himself.

He shouldn’t have worried about any confrontation. The Marauders completely dismissed Pettigrew when they came across him upon their return. They didn’t curse or snark at him, no, they simply treated him like so much air. It was like Peter Pettigrew no longer existed to them.

Coming back to the present, still a little breathless from his laughing fit, Harry gently poked his Kneazle familiar on the tiny nose. It really was very small, he didn’t think he had ever seen an animal whose proportions seemed so utterly out of shape. Its body, covered in unbelievably soft grey fur (with blue spots), was about the size of a very young kitten, but its tail was huge in comparison. Tipped in black and fluffy, oh so very fluffy, it was a bit ridiculous and made Harry wonder how the little one could keep its balance.

“Maybe I should first ask you if you are a boy or a girl?” He questioned his familiar sheepishly.

Well, that was before Sirius rudely picked the cat-like creature up to simply check. It was a scratch to his boyfriend’s cheek and some theatrics later that Harry started in on all the Disney related names he could come up with, not caring if they were female or not, leaving the decision up to his Kneazle.

“Esmeralda? Jafar?” Nothing. “Oh how about Figaro?” The thought brought a smile to his face, but his new companion just started cleaning his paw. “Right… err.. Rufus?”

Sirius snorted slightly as a plumed tail was flicked at Harry’s nose in answer.
“I think the bunny was named Thumper in the movie,” Sirius put in contemplatively. He received the equivalent of a raspberry for his suggestion. Frowning down at the annoying Kneazle cockblock, he added: “Or we could just name you after the skunk.”

“How about Toulouse? I liked that one… oh well,” Harry continued on, ignoring the by-play, especially when Sirius started in on all the word-plays he could come up with for the name ‘Toulouse’, making sure to pronounce it very much like ‘too loose’. “Maleficent, Thanatos, Mufasa, Nyx, Brimstone, Artemis, Bagheera… okay, no, I get it.”

He sighed, Bagheera would have been really nice. Stroking a finger along his familiar’s tail he tried: “Fluffy?” Though, he really didn’t want to name his Kneazle after a Cerberus that had frightened the living daylights out of him and his friends. Nope. Looking at his boyfriend for help, he found Sirius still bickering with the as-of-yet unnamed Kneazle. Right.

“Raja? Skelington?” Sigh. “How about Hercules? Mushu?” He chuckled at the last one, no need for the indignant look he received in answer. “Pascal? No? I give up,” he sighed again, throwing his hands up dramatically. Maybe they would find a name tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Some of the names probably don’t make sense for Harry to know considering the movies they originate from, but who cares… I loved all your ideas! <3

ATTENTION PLEASE! Some shameless advertisement over here!
I took up a side-project for when I don’t feel like writing a new chapter for Harry’s Eyes, but can’t resist the writer’s lure: >>HarryxWeasleyTwins<<
If you’re interested, have a look at this pure self-indulgence. But beware the tags, it’s probably not everyone’s cup of tea.
In which Lord Potter swears all medieval-like

Chapter Notes

It’s Sunday, 9th of January 1977
There’s something for littlegreenfrog and FallTigerKisa in this one. <3
Oh and Koi19 if you happen to still remember a specific conversation of ours back in 2016! XD

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

He couldn’t risk catching the brat while at school, it would be too easy to link him to the creature’s disappearance. That was a risk he was not willing to take as it would completely destroy all his careful safeguarding of his own life and that of his family. If they suspected him, they would start investigating and that would most likely bring to light the nice financial buffer he had secreted away over the year through his exploiting of the school’s resources – vegetal and otherwise. No, he could not risk it while the boy was at school, but there was always Hogsmeade. After all, in a magical village such as that, in direct proximity to one of Britain’s most famous monuments, there always was an influx of tourists or travellers that simply passed through. Yes, indeed, who knew what kind of shifty person the boy had met on his little trip before he vanished? And wasn’t it oh so very convenient that for some reason the little menace that would fund the new warding for his family home seemed to have a regular schedule of doing whatever in Hogsmeade every weekend now?

“Athena?”

Hadrian’s questioning voice came from the bathroom through to the dormitory, loud enough to be heard by Remus, James, and Sirius who were all lounging around waiting on him. Oh yeah, them and a certain Kneazle whose luminous eyes were watching the closed door eerily, but gave no indication it had heard the question.

“If you’re going with Greek mythology, how about something like Dionysus?” Remus suggested as Hadrian came into the room clad only into a pair of pants and an undershirt as he had been told the Marauders would decide on his attire for the day. Oh their Bambi had not liked that. “Two of his symbols are big cats, tiger and panther, I think,” Remus added, giving the Kneazle a wink even though the little shit wasn’t giving any of them the time of day.

Not that Sirius cared, nope, definitely not. Though, he did care the moment the insufferable fur ball decided once again to come between him and his boyfriend. What? Was he not allowed to make his appreciation of Hadrian’s body known? He was walking around like a freshly showered temptation, for Godric’s sake! And yet the damn Kneazle took Hadrian’s attention the moment Sirius so much as tried getting a word (or some nice gropes) in edgewise. Currently the fur ball was pacing around Hadrian’s shoulders, nosing at his neck… and giving Sirius smug looks.

“Yeah and one of his children was called Hymen…,” Prongs commented dryly, making Remus choke slightly on the chocolate frog he had been munching on. “Why not Hermes? He was well known as a trickster, after all,” he added with a cheeky grin in Sirius’ direction.

“I’m more inclined to go with Lucifer,” Sirius muttered under his breath annoyed.
He had been reading up on that muggle religion they had talked about over the holidays and had found himself impressed with the fantastic ideas muggles had. Clearly muggles had a lot more appreciation for magic than they were taught in Muggle Studies!

Hadrian meanwhile was eying the clothes laid out for him on his bed. His new wizarding wardrobe was not yet available, so much for the shopping trip the day before, but would be sent to him sometime next week. Meaning he had to borrow clothes off of his friends for his meeting with Lord Diggory… which had begged the question whose wardrobe he would be raiding: Remus’, James’ or Sirius’? Of course the latter was all for dressing his boyfriend in his clothes. Hadrian already had a tendency to borrow his favourite jumper, after all. James had argued that Sirius’ beater shoulders were just way too broad, that Hadrian would fit in any of his clothes twice at least. One could only shrink stuff like that so much before it would simply lose shape. Well, Prongs might be onto something there, he really was well-built, wasn’t he? Remus had commented that he would gladly hand over any of his clothes, but that he didn’t believe he had anything suitable for the formal meeting looming ahead of Hadrian today. Sirius didn’t like it, but it was true. It left only James’ clothing and although his best mate certainly had the right attire (and then some) at hand, they would still need to adjust the clothes to fit Hadrian’s slender frame at least somewhat.

Harry stared down at the trousers and robes combo trying very hard to see what was so special about the cut in comparison to what he had seen around so far. It didn’t seem to be all that different to those of the future, though he had noticed some kind of slit on both sides, starting just at the hips and going all the way down to the hem. If the robe fit right, the potential tail endings would flare out and sway in a way that was apparently considered just on the right side of cheeky seductive while still staying formal enough.

He shrugged. To him it was black trousers and robes in a very dark purple. Way out of his comfort zone anyway. He would have never thought of wearing such a colour (or robes for that matter), but apparently it was what the Marauders had picked out for him. Remembering how James and Sirius had gone mad over fabrics just yesterday, Harry told himself to trust their fashion sense. Pulling on the trousers, he grimaced slightly at the fact they pooled around his ankles. Not for long, though, because in the next second he had a very attentive boyfriend on his knees in front of him, making him blush – and that was before Sirius glanced up at him from under his lashes, giving him a heated look.

“Let me take care of that,” he purred and Harry felt his heart lurch up into his throat. He hadn’t imagined the suggestive tone there at all.

Nodding dumbly, cheeks darkening, he simply watched as Sirius reached out and arranged the ends of the trouser legs for a moment before drawing his wand. It took a moment for Harry to realise he was adjusting the length, no, shrinking the whole thing, a tricky piece of magic considering Harry had already put the trousers on. He did not fancy having anything beneath that fabric shrunken, thank you very much. When Sirius stopped, the trouser legs were still too long, but not by much. With a bit luck that would change when Harry put on some shoes… hm… the dragon hide boots would take off that dressed-up feeling a little, making him more comfortable. Boots were always a good choice he had learned ever since Sirius bought him a pair. At least the wizard-made kind seemed to suit every outfit, yet to Harry they were simply the easy choice that would not only keep his feet warm, but would also enable proper footing and easy movement.

“If we want to have enough time for a decent breakfast,” James spoke up, making Harry jump from where he was still staring down into his boyfriend’s eyes, “We should get a wriggle on now. I don’t think we can squeeze in Hadrian’s visit with Pomfrey before the meeting.”

“Madam Pomfrey?” Harry tore his eyes away from Sirius to look at James in confusion. “Why do I
need to go see her? I had a medical exam just yesterday!” He did not whine, no he didn’t. James gave him a warm smile, a teasing eyebrow rising.

“And what did Healer Hahnemann instruct you to do about your teeth?” And now Harry did not pout. He did not.

“Let’s do that in the afternoon when you get back from the meeting,” Sirius said and went to stand, warm hands trailing along Harry’s legs just so… oh he was a sneaky git, but it did have the added effect of distracting Harry from the upcoming meeting with little Alun’s father. At least Lord Potter would be there as well.

With a sigh Harry reached for the robes he would have to wear, pulling them on with his boyfriend helping him figure out the slightly confusing lace up than ran along his side. That is, Sirius helped until a tiny lilac snake head poked out of a pocket, looking fetching between the deep purple fabrics. At his boyfriend’s sudden stillness, Harry looked up only to follow Sirius’ gaze down again.

~How’d you get there?~

He asked in surprise, his eyebrows rising to his hairline. And maybe that was not quite the reaction most people would have to a snake suddenly appearing in their clothing, but before the little one could answer Harry became aware of the others all tensing up. Though, looking warily into Sirius’ eyes and chancing a glance at the others, Harry could tell it wasn’t in reaction to him speaking Parseltongue but to the sudden presence of a snake. Well, sudden was probably a relative term considering the little thing must have come back from Hirzont Alley with them. And maybe Harry really was a bit desensitized when it came to the talkative reptiles, but he had the sudden urge to pet the tiny serpent now scenting the air with its equally miniscule tongue.

“Oh dear,” James finally spoke into the silence, seemingly shaking the others out of their stupor.

“Nope,” Remus answered with a slightly shaky grin. “Snake.”

Sirius only gave a dramatic groan at the bad pun, hands slowly relaxing on Harry’s shoulders, but he was quite obviously keeping his gaze locked onto the snake. “This place has gone to the dogs,” he nodded sagely.

“Still a snake,” Remus added in once again, before snorting and continuing: “And a highly venomous one at that. I think, the shop owner said the lot of them were only supposed to be temporarily stored there and that it is actually illegal to sell this kind to private costumers.”

All eyes went back to the tiny little snake that was now climbing its way up to Hadrian’s neck, giving little hissing sounds. Sirius stayed completely still as the serpent’s body crawled across his hand still lingering on his boyfriend’s shoulder, the words ‘highly venomous’ and ‘illegal’ echoing in his head.

“I know you can talk to it, but…,” Sirius was torn between looking into Hadrian’s eyes and keeping an eye on the snake. He wasn’t sure he liked how it now curled into his boyfriend’s collar. “Is it safe?”

“Mh?” Hadrian answered a little distractedly, giving Sirius the impression he had been listening more to the snake than the conversation around him. “Oh yeah, she has no intention to bite anyone. She just doesn’t like the cold in the castle… At least I think that’s what she means. Called it the ‘big, cold, drafty, loud nest’,” he chuckled before looking up, tensing slightly at the wide-eyed stares he was being given. “Um…”
“So,” Sirius started casually, letting go of Hadrian, but not retreating, “It’s a girl?”

Hadrian reached up and petted with a single finger at the lilac head as James did some ridiculous sort of dance in the background, declaring to his invisible audience that it was, indeed, a girl, diffusing the tension effectively. They listened to Hadrian hiss a bit more at the reptile before he looked up, smiling slightly unsurely, but no longer with that wary look that Sirius seriously did not like seeing in those beautiful eyes.

“Actually, it said it’s too young to have decided on ‘the whole mating matter’ and also has not been named yet, but it sounds like a female,” Hadrian shrugged a bit sheepishly.

“Oh well, we’re already looking for a name for the fuzz ball, so what’s one more?” Sirius nodded, getting back into it and remembering his enthusiasm about a serpent companion.

His plotting was interrupted by an indignant hiss and they watched the snake hide back under Hadrian’s collar without so much as by-your-leave. Considering how amused his boyfriend looked, he decided he was still safe where he stood and the snake had not suddenly decided to bite his nose off or something.

“She says the only reason she would allow a human to name her would be if she decided to bond to one. And no,” he shook his head, “She doesn’t deign me a compatible match, I’m simply warm and apparently ‘do not make a fuss’.”

“Yeah well,” James added commiserating, “A pet snake in Gryffindor Tower could perhaps-”

“Maybe,” Sirius added in.

“Possibly,” James nodded.

“Perchance?” Sirius questioned lightly.

“Yes, that,” James agreed before completing his former sentence: “-lead to some trouble and err… unrest.”

“Probably,” Remus said dryly, making Hadrian snort.

Later, after breakfast (during which the nameless snake decided to go exploring the ‘big, cold, drafty, loud nest’), Sirius walked Harry down to the gates to meet Lord Potter. By now he was a lot jitterier, the looming meeting making his light breakfast feel like lead in his stomach. He couldn’t help but wonder if Lord Diggory had an ulterior motif for wanting this meeting, it seemed too innocuous to think he simply wanted to thank Harry for saving his son. Sure, it made sense to thank the one who kept little Alun from falling victim to the Dementors, but he could have done that before school started up again or he could simply have conveyed his thanks to Lord Potter as the head of Harry’s family. Harry hadn’t yet been announced as an official part of House Potter, but the next Wizengamot meeting wasn’t far off and it was likely his grandfather had shared the ‘adoption’ of his ‘nephew’ with some people. Harry sighed. At least it was overcast so he could go without sunglasses.

The warm arm of his boyfriend snaked around his waist, pulling him closer to Sirius as the wind whipping around Hogwarts grounds picked up some more. It was cold and Harry was glad the others had insisted on him wearing his woollen hat as well as the soft gloves Remus had given him for Christmas. His heavy plait was lying over his shoulder, intricately woven out of smaller plaits running along the sides of his head. He had to hand it to Lily, she knew how to style long hair to look impressive.
The tall figure of Lord Potter was standing with the sun at his back, an impressive cloak billowing around him in the biting wind. He made quite the intimidating picture – that is until Harry and Sirius were close enough to make out his facial features. His grandfather was smiling hugely at them in greeting, reaching out to engulf both Sirius and Harry in a hug at the same time. Harry heard his boyfriend grumble a bit about the fact that even with his Quidditch toned figure and the latest growth spurt the Lord Potter was still taller and broader than him. It made Harry chuckle ending on a mournful sigh, knowing he would never be even remotely close to that height.


Lord Potter sighed slightly self-deprecatingly, running his huge hand along the fabric of the very nice dress robes peeking out from under his cloak.

“My lovely wife has an uncanny ability to always choose the perfect clothes for every opportunity,” he agreed, “Without her prowess I would be a sorry excuse of a lord, indeed.”

“I’m sure the Lady Potter’s genius has saved each and every one of us at one point or another,” Sirius snickered.

Harry nodded along, remembering his grandmother’s warm welcome and helpful little chats when he had felt overwhelmed with all the new impressions.

“Now,” Lord Potter smiled with a mischievous twinkle in his hazel eyes, “Say goodbye to your suitor, Hadrian. We do not want to be late, yes?”

As his boyfriend tugged him into his side and kissed his temple in goodbye, Harry thought he saw a blush spread over Sirius’ cheek.

Walking next to his grandfather on their way down to Hogsmeade where Lord Diggory would be meeting them, Harry’s thoughts were all over the place. He was nervous and anxious to meet Cedric’s father again, the image of the man lying across his schoolmate’s body crying for his son was still haunting him in his nightmares sometimes. He was determined not to let his past rule him anymore, especially not now that he could actively stop it from ever occurring that way again. Still, one does not simply forget an experience like that, does not forget the devastating hopelessness of being unable to save someone, the numbness that follows the death of someone even remotely close, the self-loathing of thinking to be the reason for everyone else’s suffering. Taking a deep breath, Harry concentrated back on the meeting ahead. He had other reasons to be nervous about meeting the not-yet-Cedric’s-father-Lord Diggory, he had a secret to keep not just for himself but for the safety of his family as well. And for some reason his grandfather’s words kept echoing in his head. Did he really call Sirius his ‘suitor’? And if he did, was there some hidden meaning that would explain Sirius’ sudden bashfulness?

“How have you decided on a name for your companion yet?”

Blinking, Harry looked first up (and up) at the tall man walking next to him before directing his gaze back down. His Kneazle was hiding in the pocket of his cloak, but had apparently decided to take a look around. Harry could feel that the tiny cat-like creature was not a happy kitten at the moment, he about as much liked the cold as Harry did.

“No, Sir,” he answered his grandfather, reaching out to pet the furry head. “He’s a bit picky,” Harry chuckled as he felt a tiny tooth nip slightly at his finger. A heavy hand on his shoulder startled him to
a stop.

“Little one,” Lord Potter spoke up quietly, crouching slightly to keep from looking down at Harry, “When we are with family, or just the two of us, it would mean a lot to me if you would call me some kind of familial title. I understand the situation must be confusing and bewildering to you, but you are part of this family. My family. You have always been part of it even if you were denied to know what it truly means to have a family until now.”

Harry blinked back at his grandfather, torn between feeling absolutely giddy at his words and the sentiment, and actually afraid at how much this meant to him. It was just a title, he tried to tell himself, something people did every day. But no, to Harry it was much more than that. Calling his grandfather out loud by a familial title was a claim and his grandfather allowing the title was just as much a claim in return.

“Won’t it be weird if I call you ‘grandfather’ while your son is basically the same age as me?”

Lord Potter looked thoughtful for a moment, before giving Harry another of his gentle smiles.

“I would be honoured to call you my son as well,” he said, rumbling a slight chuckle, “But I have a feeling James would take offence. He very much has his own claim on you, little one. I do not believe he wishes to share.”

Harry smiled back, blushing a bit at the thought. These last months he had gotten to know James Potter as a friend not a father and yet there always was something between the two of them that felt deeper. It was different than with Remus, though the werewolf also felt like more than ‘just’ a friend. Or maybe Harry had simply never had friends like the Marauders before. Yes, Ron and Hermione had been (were?) his friends, even with what had felt like their abandonment over the summer before his time tumble. Harry would always love them. But the Marauders… their friendship was different and Harry thought it was because they had the chance to get to know him as just Harry, or rather Hadrian, and never even heard about the whole Boy-Who-Lived crap. To them all that was some abstract story and Harry hadn’t even told them more than the basics.

“‘Granddad’ sounds like a nice start, what say you?” Lord Potter chirped next to him, urging him to continue their walk. “‘Grandfather’ may sound more distinguished, but also very much stuffy and I suffer enough of insufferably uptight levereters during Wizengamot sessions and the like.” He sighed over-dramatic, before clearing his throat slightly nervously. “Do not tell your grandmother I said as such, please.” (*)

“Yes,” Harry smiled, “Granddad.”

While their Bambi was at the meeting with Lord Diggory, something that very much had them all on edge, the Marauders held another Powwow of Justice. They were sitting in the fabulous room Hadrian had introduced them to, though this time they had gone for a less theatrical approach and were lounging on fluffy pillow mountains on the floor, currently summarising what they knew of Hadrian. Originally this meeting was meant to discuss the Pettigrew situation, but as it often did, their conversation had soon drifted to the much more pleasant topic of their favourite Elf Owl. Now, nursing on some smuggled pumpkin juice, James, Remus and Sirius were at the point of writing a list with everything they actually knew of their friend (and love), because they seriously had lost the plot and needed to even the scales.

“Let’s do this as chronological as possible,” Remus muttered, scratching away with his quill.

“Yes, Professor,” James chuckled before raising his hands in surrender at the amber glare he was
receiving. “But Moony, I don’t think chronological makes much sense when time travel’s involved.” He ducked and rolled off his pillow mountain when a certain quill suddenly shot in his direction. “Okay, okay! Grumpy much? Geez!”

“He’s right, Rem, and shouldn’t you be more chilled out? The full moon of this month is already over and you’ve got a good three weeks before the next is due,” Sirius commented from where he was lying on his back staring at the ceiling.

A huff and a groan were heard as Remus got more comfortable on his own pillows.

“Yeah, I know,” he sighed, “It’s just… I don’t like him being away from all of us,” he whined.

“You don’t say?” Sirius grumbled, but conceded the point. They all felt uneasy with Hadrian out of their sight, there simply had been too many things happening to that boy whenever he was on his own.

“So,” James spoke up again, clearing his throat, “Hadrian said he was born to me and my perfect future wife. The family then went on to go into hiding for some reason or another-”

“The prophecy,” Remus injected.

“Right, because of that whole sack of dragon dung the family went into hiding, but the dark lord… what’s he called again? Mold-something?”

“Voldemort,” Sirius said, sitting up. “Not much of a moniker, if you ask me, but it’s in the newspapers now. Or rather, it was. I think they stopped calling him that a few weeks back. Not that their new way of making sure everyone knows who they’re talking about is any better,” he said, rolling his eyes at the dramatics of the media.

“He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named,” Remus said softly. “I talked with Lord Potter about all that propaganda now going on. The newspapers seem to be hell-bent on creating this ominous dark lord, while at the same time helping his supposed ideals along between the lines.”

“Whatcha mean?”

“Lord Potter told me some of what’s going on in the Ministry, the Wizengamot. You-Know-Who has a lot of supporters in the Purebloods, especially the more conservative ones. The newspapers feed those ideals, rallying for more rights for Purebloods and more restrictions for Muggleborns while at the same time spreading fear of the person who seems to want exactly that. But…”

“You don’t buy it?”

“Yes,” Remus nodded, “Or rather no, I don’t. That man might gather supporters with the Purebloods helped along with the fear the media are creating, but….” He rubbed at his forehead roughly, clearly unhappy with the information. “He’s recruiting creatures behind the scenes.”

“The very ones the pureblood supremacists suppress the strongest,” James gasped.

“So,” Sirius summarised, “You’re saying on the outside he’s rallying for even more favouritism towards the old families, securing himself money and enough pull to make a change, while on the inside he’s recruiting those that the very same Purebloods demean and oppress every day?”

“What the hell is that bloke trying to do?” James exclaimed.

“I don’t know if the pureblood ideals are really his, but either way, he’s using the creatures just as
much as he is using the Purebloods.”

“But for what gain?” James couldn’t fathom what all that would do in the long run. “Won’t he alienate everyone if he goes on like this?”

Remus shrugged, he honestly had no idea. But something was telling him that they would soon find out. He had not much hope that they would like the development.

“Right, back to Hadrian,” Sirius declared after a moment. “So the chief of darkness comes to your house which means he’ll still be around in… what? Three or four years? If Prongs ever gets any, that is,” he added with a snicker as James made a rude gesture in his direction. “You-Know-Who breaks and enters, and…”

“Right,” James said. “We die fighting, but Hadrian survives for some reason and the dark dickhead is gone.”

“Wouldn’t that mean the prophecy was… will be… you know, already fulfilled that day?” Remus asked into the uncomfortable silence. His friends though were too focused on what came next in their chronological order of events to think on it much.

“Either way, Bambi is an orphan and gets sent to his nearest relatives. He told me the truth the other day, you know,” Sirius said lowly, gaze distant as he thought back on Hadrian telling him of his future self’s incarceration. “Little Bambi gets raised by abusive muggles because my idiotic future self runs after the traitor and gets himself imprisoned.”

“WHAT?!?”

Any other occasion and Sirius would have laughed himself silly at the identical exclamation of his friends complete with agape mouths and bulging eyes. As it was, he didn’t feel much like laughing when thinking on ending up in Azkaban for something he most likely hadn’t done. He wasn’t completely sold on the ‘he did not actually kill the rat’ part, but then again, Hadrian wasn’t exactly forthcoming with information.

“Fast forward fourteen or fifteen years, Hadrian gets somehow sent back in time,” James continued after he pulled himself together some.

“Which delays his creature inheritance,” Remus added.

“He ends up in the Forbidden Forests and gets picked up by this group of insanely handsome young gentlemen,” James said.

“And one lump of lard,” Sirius muttered before picking up the storyline. “He tries keeping his time travelling secret, but cannot resist the awesomeness of my person.” Remus huffed in the background before adding:

“Which leads to a lot of pining and finally the magical kiss of salvation and him spilling his secrets,” he said. “Some of them, anyway.”

Some of them, indeed. Their Bambi had been evading their questions long enough, now that they finally all agreed on cutting Pettigrew off, they could concentrate their efforts on changing things. Which meant getting Hadrian to talk facts. No way were they going to sit back and watch as it all happened again and if they could protect Hadrian from having to live through all that again, then that was just more incentive.

“Alright, how about we start on that magical contract?”
“Do not worry, little one, you and your secret will remain safe,” his granddad told him softly as Hogsmeade came into view and Harry felt his heartbeat accelerate, “Not to be ignoble, but if I have to I will not hesitate demanding the fulfilment of the life debt House Diggory owes you now, if that is what is needed to keep you safe.”

Harry looked back up at Lord Potter in confusion. The man sometimes talked like he had stepped right out of a Shakespearean play, as seemed to be the case for many Purebloods, but right now there was one part in particular that had Harry listening closely. So the whole situation with the Dementors had created a life debt?

“But,” Harry spoke up, scratching at his scarred hand nervously, “Not that I want him to, but isn’t Alun the one that would technically owe me?”

“Oh yes,” his granddad nodded, “As Alun is not yet of an age to make conscious decisions, the debt falls on House Diggory as a whole. Though, as you have not yet been declared an official member of House Potter, House Diggory owes the debt solely to you. That part of the situation is a bit of a grey matter and I will leave it up to you whether or not you wish to acknowledge the debt as the sole benefactor or not.”

Okay, now Harry was just confused.

“What difference would it make?”

“Well, little one,” Lord Potter smirked at him, looking decidedly Slytherin there for a moment, “That is quite the clever question. You see, if you acknowledge the debt, it will be owed solely to you, but if you allow me to acknowledge it as your head of house, the debt would be owed the whole of House Potter.”

And that would probably mean…

“Every Potter could demand fulfilment?”

That would definitely be a plus and since Lord and Lady Potter as well as he and James were the last of the Potters at this point in time, there was no danger to it either. None of them would gamble something like a life debt away, he was sure not even James would risk that. And to Harry it would mean he could pay his family back at least a bit.

“Basically, yes, though it is understood as common courtesy to make possible negotiations with the original benefactor, you in this case,” his granddad explained.

“So since Alun is still too young, all of Diggory House owes me a life debt and if I let you acknowledge the debt in my stead, all of House Potter could technically call in that debt?”

Harry knew they did not expect him to pay them back anything and would probably even be insulted if they knew of his intentions. But it was also true that they would never be able to really understand how much it meant for Harry to be accepted into their family, to actually have people he could call family. It would be a long time before Harry would be able to simply accept their care.

“After negotiating with you, yes,” his grandfather agreed, frowning slightly as he steered Harry towards a rather uppity looking hotel on the edge of the village. “Though I do hope we will not need to call it in to keep your secret from being exposed.”

Severus was not in a good mood. Then again, he rarely ever was outside of his hidden brewing place.
and he had had to leave that back at his father’s house when he left for the last time. He missed his mother. Last he had heard she was in Germany visiting a potions conference, finally able to indulge in her favourite preoccupation. He was happy for her freedom, he knew she had not meant to force him back to the disgusting muggle for the summer. She had honestly believed that Severus would have no need to return since he was seventeen and she no longer resided there. But what was done was done, he had no need to ever see that loathsome filth again and his mother was free to live her life without that man’s constant oppression of her and her magic.

Stalking down the dungeon corridor, school robes doing an impressive billow that he had yet to see anyone recreate, he was once again looking for a place to set up a private brewing space. He was tired of Slughorn and his lack of understanding for the real beauty of potions. That man would never be more than an average potioneer, unable to truly delve into the intricacies that came with complete devotion to the subject. Severus also really needed this space or he would soon, as the Gryffindorks say, be completely off his rocker. He needed a place to retreat, to be undisturbed, to simply be.

A flash of colour on the grey stone floor caught Severus’ attention, stopping him in his tracks. There, just near one of the many heavy doors to the unused classrooms down here, a miniscule snake was lying. Now, he wasn’t an expert on snakes (as in the animal, that is), but with the magical breeds the rule was generally ‘the more colours the more venom’. As a Slytherin he had basically been raised to have respect for the reptiles, his mother had even introduced him to some of the older traditions involving serpentine reverence that were still in use on the continent. The Princes were not active practitioners of those traditions, but they still introduced them to their heirs in accordance to their Slytherin-esque beliefs. As it was, Severus knew how to pick up a snake safely and knew to stay away from the most volatile breeds.

This though, was not a breed he had encountered before. The pale lilac colour indicated a venomous sort, but there was no visible pattern that he recognised, nor seemed the form of the snake’s head to make sense in combination with its colouring. Then again, considering the size it was likely not much more than a hatchling that would develop more distinguishing features as it aged.

Crouching down at a hopefully safe distance, Severus continued to examine the serpent carefully. It could not be comfortable down on the cold dungeon floor and he wondered how it had even ended up here. If it was a familiar, it shouldn’t have been allowed outside of the common room, or considering its possible venom, not even outside its habitat at all. Severus allowed a small smile as the tiny reptile turned its equally tiny head to seemingly examine him in turn. Its eyes were like black points of nothingness, swallowing the light of their surroundings. Actually, they reminded him of his own. Severus was just contemplating summoning his dragon hide gloves to try and pick up the snake, when he heard it.

He would recognise that snivelling voice anywhere.

“But that’s what they called it, Sir!” Pettigrew whined inside the unused classroom. “O-or maybe it was Pixie Owl? Definitely owl! Anyway, now that thing has turned them all against me and- and-James won’t help me get a well-paid job after school now, and how am I to get any girls without Sirius and how am I going to pay for snacks? And Remus won’t help me with my essays anymore and...!”

“Mr. Pettigrew,” the voice of Professor Bole spoke up and Severus didn’t need to see him to know the man was pinching the bridge of his nose, “I do not care for any of the miserable problems in your miserable excuse of a life.”

Severus had never particularly liked that man, in fact, after watching him interact with Hadrian these last weeks he could possibly no longer deny a certain dislike of their Defence Against the Dark Arts
teacher, but listening to him verbally flay Pettigrew had its merits.

“If you are incapable of even giving me the simplest of information, of even listening correctly to a conversation held in your presence, you are of no use to me. You didn’t even succeed in bringing me a hair or feather sample even though you live in the same dorm as the creature.”

“O-okay, I still passed the class, right? It's not my fault that freak is so... so... freaky!”

“I do believe this conversation is over, Mr. Pettigrew,” Bole snapped, before adding in a fake-thoughtful tone of voice: “Unless…”

“What? What do I need to do, Sir? I need that class, I’m already failing Potions and-”

“Unless,” the professor interrupted, clearly annoyed, “You’re able to prove your usefulness to me in another way. It is a simple task, even you should be able to follow the instructions. See that cauldron? When that potion is finished simmering, I will give you a vial and you will slip a few drops into Moore’s pumpkin juice the next chance you get. And if you fail again, Mr. Pettigrew, your grades will be your least problem. Do I make myself clear?”

Apparently more merits than he had been aware of. Did he just listen to their professor threatening a student? But more importantly, did he just witness Bole conspiring to get his hands on samples of Hadrian’s hair and feathers through all means? It was an incredibly Gryffindor move to stay, but Severus needed to know what the professor was trying to brew down here. There had to be a reason he did so hidden away in an unused classroom instead of either asking the potions professor for help, purchasing the potion or even using the potions classroom that was specifically equipped. Not to mention that he planned to slip the potion to a student. Severus very carefully not examined his emotional response to the little detail that it was Hadrian the professor planned to drug. Still, he was very much aware that he would simply have turned his back and left had this been about anyone else.

So Severus inched forward, closely listening to Bole further talking down to Pettigrew. He needed to get a look at that cauldron and… Compliance Potion. Severus didn’t need to get any closer, he recognised that potion easily by its distinctive smell that was wafting out of the slightly opened door. It was a potion he had read about in Moste Potente Potions he found in the Restricted Section of the Hogwarts library when he had managed to convince Slughorn to give him a limited pass. Severus being Severus, he had copied the instructions to quite a few potions during the time his limited pass allowed and later dared himself to try and brew them. He was very proud to say, even if only to himself, that he had yet to come across one he didn’t manage.

A quiet hiss had him startle. He had completely forgotten about the strange snake, but now there it was, inching its way up his robe-clad leg. Severus did not move a muscle. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest, pulse rushing in his ears. That snake was more than likely highly venomous and it was making its way up his leg while he was standing right outside the door of a classroom currently in use by the professor he had been eavesdropping on. He could not afford to get caught, but he definitely could not afford to get bitten by a venomous snake either!

Snake. On his leg. Near his crotch now. In his robe pocket. Wait, what?

Blinking down in a rare show of confusion, Severus watched the tiny snake make itself comfortable inside his robe pocket, clearly settling in. He could have laughed in relief. Slowly starting to move away from the door, first overly conscious of the reptile stuck in his clothes but then bit by bit relaxing as nothing happened, he made his way to the stairs. He had an Elf Owl to warn, it was the perfect opening to get in the boy’s good graces.
*gasp*
Gives the saying of a ‘trouser snake’ a whole new meaning! O:

(*) ‘Levereter’ (literally ‘liver eater’), is a nice medieval insult, originating from 1400s Ghent and basically means a corrupt person, for example a politician, depriving the world of necessary ‘nourishment’ as in lining their pockets at the expense of everybody else.
In which pudding lovers are unobservant

Chapter Notes

So it took me 6-7 months, but I finally finished weeding through all 130 chapters! :’D I went typo-hunting, tied some loose ends, and generally tried to make it a smoother read. I even expanded on some scenes, but the gist of it is: You do NOT have to re-read anything.

Of course, you can, and that would be lovely, but the main plotline remains the same and if any questions arise you can always ask me.

Also a thank you to all those who faithfully followed my excruciatingly slow progress and waited so patiently for the announcements on my profile. It meant a lot to me to know some people were still interested enough in this story to do such a thing. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Summary of the story up to this point

Summer after fifth year: While grieving for Sirius, Remus remembers an important fact about the Potter family: The Elf Owl gene to be revealed on a recipient’s 16th birthday. In order to tell Harry and prepare him for what is to come, he goes to Privet Drive. What he finds is not pretty. Guilt-ridden and full of self-loathing Harry has spent the summer after his godfather’s death not only being tormented by his ‘loving’ relatives, but also tormenting himself.

Rescue and a few peaceful days together ensue. Harry is determined to ignore the revelation of his creature heritage, but it takes only one careless moment for trouble to find him again. Being swept 20 years back into the past by some mysterious artefact, he suddenly has to confront the reality of getting to know his teenaged parents- and falling in love with the very person he has been tearing himself up over. Not to mention werewolf encounters and his creature gene lying in wait.

Sirius and his fellow Marauders find themselves to be intrigued with the new arrival and soon decide to protect the boy. After all, a Marauder loves a good mystery. It doesn't take long for all involved to realise that Sirius seriously has a thing for Harry, or rather Hadrian as he now calls himself.

But time travel is a confusing concept and creature inheritances aren’t always the most subtle thing. In order to protect a future that maybe no longer exists, Hadrian has a hard time keeping his secrets while simultaneously questioning whether it’s really necessary to go through it all on his own. All the while a war is brewing, Voldemort steps out of the proverbial shadow for the first time, and what’s with the whole prejudice against creatures?

Long story short, Hadrian has to reveal his identity to the Marauders, finds himself a family and a boyfriend, identifies a spy in their midst and generally plans to take down a dark lord before he ever reaches full power. He saves lives left and right and teaches the
1970s generation of Hogwarts some handy defence, while he himself is being trained to be the headmaster’s pawn. Only this pawn has its own agenda.

We left Hadrian on his way to Hogsmeade together with his grandfather, current Lord Potter, to meet with the father of one Alun Diggory.

‘Upscale’ was probably too nice of a description for the hotel on the edge of Hogsmeade village. It was definitely better off than the other quaint looking little shacks and houses, though Hogsmeade was a tourist spot and one could see that in the fresh paints and well-kept surfaces all around. Harry thought the only thing making the building he and Lord Potter were headed for appear more posh was the height as it towered just slightly over its neighbours. Alright, and maybe the elaborate ornamentation all around the front. Still, something about it simply screamed pretentious.

Either way, each step on the frozen ground (one for his granddad, two for Harry) brought them closer to the meeting with Lord Diggory and Harry found himself twitching in place with nervousness.

He was about to reach up to try and flatten his hair when he realised there was no need. His now endlessly long hair had been tamed and plaited by his …by Lily. The hairstyle was much too complicated for Harry to ever try to attempt on his own, but he had faith he would be able to do a simple plait soon. Probably. Well, technically he knew how to plait, but it had turned out to be much more difficult to do when it involved his own hair. And he was stalling, rambling in his own mind. This was ridiculous, his grandfather would protect him from any complications that might arise from this meeting. But who would protect his grandfather from the consequences that came with having Harry as part of the family?

“Take a deep breath now, little one,” Lord Potter’s voice broke through his thoughts. They had stopped in front of the somewhat imposing doors to the hotel and his grandfather reached out to straighten Harry’s slightly askew robes. “Be polite and do not let him unsettle you. We call, as the muggles say, all the shots here. He can not risk making an enemy out of the house he, strictly speaking, owes a life debt to.”

And yet Harry had a niggling feeling there was more to the situation than he was being told. As they entered the hall, Harry assumed a position a step behind his grandfather’s broad figure, aware of the glance he was being sent by hazel eyes. Harry had not yet had any real lessons on etiquette, but he did remember the impromptu class the Marauders had given him on titles and forms of address. It had given Harry the impression that as a member of House Potter he was to always defer to his head of house, his lord, especially in a formal setting like this. It would also, hopefully, make it clear to Diggory who the life debt was owed to without the whole topic actually needing to be raised. Purebloods were meant to be subtle like that, right?

They were led into a moderately large parlour with nice, but somewhat stiff looking armchairs, a fireplace, and nothing much more. It was impersonal but, well, nice. And getting up from one of those armchairs was a younger and less portly Lord Diggory than Harry remembered. His skin still had the slightly ruddy tone he recalled from his fourth year, but his hair was more brown than grey. The man also seemed to stand a little taller than Harry’s memory supplied as he walked, no, strutted, up to meet them halfway. All in all, he did not look like a mourning widower.

“Lord Potter,” the man exclaimed enthusiastically, awakening memories of his future self before that thrice damned tournament, “Always a pleasure,” he added grandly, reaching out to clasp Harry’s grandfather’s forearm.
Harry wasn’t sure if the two just didn’t know each other well enough or if calling each other by their titles was due to the formality of the situation. Then again, they weren’t bowing, but actually touching… maybe that was some kind of gesture only equals made? He really needed those lessons. Still, as his grandfather gave his own greetings, Harry straightened his spine and consciously stopped himself from rubbing his suddenly damp hands on his borrowed robes.

“May I introduce you to my nephew, Hadrian Moore-Potter, now a ward of my lady wife and me,” Lord Potter announced, making a flourishing gesture towards Harry that instantly drew Diggory’s attention.

“Ward?”

The man eyed Harry curiously, calculatingly, before reaching out to him with an expectant look in his eye, only to frown when Harry simply shook his hand with a polite nod. He wasn’t sure what that frown meant, hoping he hadn’t already made some social faux-pas. Maybe he should have bowed?

“Yes,” Lord Potter nodded amicably, gently clasping his huge hand on Harry’s fragile shoulder, “A blood child of mine of a slightly removed branch, I intend to officially announce his adoption into the main branch at the next Wizengamot meeting.”

“Adopted blood child?” Considering the surprise in Diggory’s voice, that title of sorts seemed to have a deeper meaning than Harry was aware of, but whatever it was, it cleared up the frown, making room for a certain understanding. Not that Harry understood much of anything at the moment. “Well, that does change a few things, does it not?”

He seemed to ask no one in particular, but Harry caught the brief amusement flitting across his grandfather’s face.

“It would seem so,” Lord Potter agreed, moving the group over to the seating arrangement. “I believe we-” His sentence was interrupted by a delighted squeal, drawing everyone’s attention, and Harry felt himself breaking out into a bright smile.

There, strapped into some kind of portable baby swing, was a small child with bouncy golden ringlets, making grabby motions towards them. No, towards Harry. It took every ounce of composure he could dredge up not to run right over and scoop the little one up into his arms. Only now did he realise how much he had worried about Alun ever since the aurors had taken him away, no matter what the house-elf Mammy had reported.

“Ah yes,” Lord Diggory spoke up with a slightly strained smile of his own. “I apologise for the inconvenience, but the healer suggested keeping my son close when possible after that dreadful…,” he trailed off, looking uncomfortable and Harry found himself pondering over the small spike of anger he had felt when Diggory called little Alun an ‘inconvenience’. “May I introduce my heir Alun Amosis Rhydderch Diggory.”

Harry nearly snorted at the pompous introduction of the squealing toddler who very much did not care for any propriety rules as he made his delight known. Right then Alun waved his chubby little arms around, eyes fixed on Harry, and was busy nearly toppling over in his excitement. He so wanted to cuddle the kid, but was unsure if it would be welcomed. Instead, he watched as his grandfather moved over and knelt down before the toddler.

“It is a pleasure to meet you again, little Alun. You have been greatly missed by my family,” he addressed the child in a soft and gentle tone that finally made Alun focus on something other than Harry.
Lord Diggory cleared his throat, shifting in place, and generally making a show of trying to politely regain Lord Potter’s attention. And Harry had just found another reason to like his grandfather as he watched him address the small child with such earnest words, not descending into baby speech but honestly including the little one into the conversation. Looking back over at Diggory, Harry got the impression the man wasn’t sure if he was comfortable with his fellow lord’s behaviour or not.

“As I was saying,” Lord Potter said after a moment as he straightened up again and took a seat, “I believe we should discuss the reason for this meeting over a cuppa, I have heard they pride themselves on catering to the slightly unorthodox tastes here. Let’s be a bit adventurous, shall we?”

Sitting down kitty corner of Diggory, taking the place next to his grandfather, Harry was not surprised at the time spent on meaningless chatter over tea. Though he was a bit startled by the sudden, seemingly dismissive attitude of Diggory towards him. Not that Harry had expected any grand gestures, but he had been under the impression this meeting was to get to know and thank the one that saved Alun. Which was Harry, who currently was listening as the two lords hashed out what would be addressed at the upcoming gathering of the Wizengamot. His grandfather looked neutrally friendly enough, but Harry thought there was a frown building the longer the small talk continued.

He found his eyes drifting back to the toddler still bouncing in his swing thingy. Alun looked a bit miffed at not being the centre of attention. Glancing between the child and the two lords, Harry wondered if that was a wizarding thing, seeing children as ‘inconvenience’, as Lord Diggory had said, in a formal meeting to the point that they were basically ignored. And it looked like Alun was not going to accept the treatment as he started to fuss in his swing. At one point Harry’s still nameless (though declared male by Sirius ; ) Kneazle poked his head out of the robe pocket he had curled up in, to get a look at the source of the slowly escalating ruckus. Harry noticed his grandfather throwing glances back, appearing as if he would like to attend the child, but maybe etiquette didn’t allow him to?

Just as Alun was obviously preparing to step up his fussing, a house-elf popped in, nipping any louder protest of the child in the bud with a well-placed dummy, startling Alun into sucking rapidly on it. It didn’t sit right with Harry. He observed for a few moments longer as little Alun, who had suddenly turned quiet, only whimpered around his dummy. The meaningless chatter of Diggory was still droning on. This didn’t make any sense. Even if Alun had been happy down there, which he obviously wasn’t, this meeting was meant to be about him, wasn’t it? It was such an adult thing to do, keeping the one this was all about out of it. Okay, maybe it was the right thing to do considering Alun’s age, but it rubbed Harry the wrong way, reminded him too much of being kept in the dark about too many things.

“Lord Diggory,” Harry couldn’t stop himself from interrupting, propriety be damned, “Is it possible to get Alun out of that swing? He seems…,” gesturing towards the by now clearly distraught child, Harry glanced at his grandfather for help.

The encouraging smile he got back soothed his frayed nerves somewhat, Lord Potter wouldn’t look so at ease if Harry had just committed some unredeemable faux-pas, right?

“Lord Diggory,” Harry couldn’t stop himself from interrupting, propriety be damned, “Is it possible to get Alun out of that swing? He seems….,” gesturing towards the by now clearly distraught child, Harry glanced at his grandfather for help.

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“My apologies, young… Mr. Potter,” Lord Diggory spoke up, sounding flustered as he seemingly became once again aware of Harry’s presence. “Where are my manners? I am Amos Eldritch Diggory, named after Eldritch Diggory, the late Minister for Magic of the years 1733 and 1740, you see.”

Harry blinked at the added information, but decided against commenting on it. There had been a brief frown flitting across his grandfather’s face as Lord Diggory addressed him that he would have
to ask about later. He wondered if Diggory’s former dismissive behaviour towards Harry was considered as rude as it felt. And was he ignoring Harry’s question?

“It’s nice to meet you, S- …Lord Diggory,” he answered politely, trying to hide his insecurity with this whole situation.

He had been taught his manners by Aunt Petunia, if one could call that teaching, but those had been manners considered polite by muggles. He had no idea if and how much wizarding standards differed. Instead, he looked expectantly back at Alun, hoping to prompt the stuffy lord into action. There was a long moment of silence, then…

“Oh fine!” The Diggory lord exclaimed before getting up with a huff. “This is really unorthodox,” he muttered under his breath, sounding slightly whiny to Harry.

They watched as Amos Diggory awkwardly got his grumpy son out of the swing and then returned with the child to their seating arrangement. There he plopped the kid on his lap, though he looked incredibly uncomfortable with the action. Not that Alun cared, he certainly enjoyed being able to see what was going on, babbling happily at them from behind his dummy. Lord Potter cleared his throat rather pointedly.

“I believe we are all aware of the true nature of this meeting, yes?”

Harry sat up straighter. This was it now. As if on cue his un-named Kneazle scrambled out of the robe pocket, taking in his surroundings with keen and clear blue eyes as he situated himself on Harry’s lap. Harry dropped his hand on the small head, fingers threading through the soft fur. It was a soothing motion to both of them.

“Yes,” Lord Diggory sighed, rearranging himself and Alun yet again, “Yes, that would be best. Again, my apologies. This meeting should have taken place right after… after my late wife departed. You see, my heir, he… Alun was not himself after that horrid day. In fact,” he looked down at the much happier toddler, “This is the most animated I have seen him since.”

That would be the lack of talking Mammy had reported about. Though, really, how much did toddlers talk anyway? Again Harry wished he knew a bit more about children in general, but small ones in particular. (*)

“How old is he?” He questioned rather abruptly, blushing a bit as both lords turned towards him.

“He turned three a few months ago,” Lord Diggory answered, looking pinched. “Which is another reason for concern as he seems to have declined in his development, ever since… But then again, that woman. She was such a church bell, yet she would never address a single word to the child. (*) How was he to learn to converse appropriately in such environment? Why, I never…,” he ranted then muttered a few moments longer, completely oblivious to his son’s attentive look.

Harry glowered at the man, neither liking the way he was bad-mouthing his deceased wife nor his obvious inattention and unwarranted disappointment towards his son. Considering the way he behaved and talked, it was easy to see the Lord Diggory had not spent a lot of time with his oh-so-important heir. Suddenly the man’s face lightened up.

“Now, my sweet powsoddy on the other hand, yes that’s a real woman. She will be a wonderful mother, not long now, no…” (*)

“Amos,” Lord Potter finally interrupted, looking a cross between embarrassed and exasperated, “The meeting.”
Well, looked like Moody’s suspicions about a mistress weren’t as far fetched as they had sounded back during the winter hols. Harry simply hoped little Alun wouldn’t have to suffer a father that would always prefer his sibling just because he had seemingly disliked his first wife. At least it didn’t look like Lord Diggory was as observant as they had feared he might be concerning certain creature features.

“Granddad?”

Harry was given a bright smile at the address that had him flushing.

“Yes, little one?”

“In the beginning, when he greeted me…,” Harry chewed nervously on his lip, glancing up at the tall man before letting his gaze drop back to the cobble stone beneath their feet. “Did I do something wrong?”

They had just left the hotel and were now leisurely making their way down Hogsmeade’s High Street. The wind was still going strong, biting at any exposed skin harshly, and Harry made sure to keep his Kneazle companion safely tucked away beneath his cloak.

“Oh, yes,” his grandfather exclaimed, making his grandson tense. “He expected you to bow over his hand as he is not only a head of house, but also a lord of the Wizengamot,” he explained before catching sight of Harry’s face. “No, no, little one, do not fret. Had you been just a ward of my family, as he presumed, it would have been the polite thing to give a formal bow, yes, but as I introduced you as an adopted blood child, it put you on the same step as James.”

At Harry’s confused expression, the lord’s huge hand gently descended onto a slender shoulder, steering him towards the edge of the village as he elaborated:

“As heir to a lord of the Wizengamot, me,” Lord Potter added with a wink, “James ranks on the same level as any common head of house, as do you now. It means outside of social or official functions you may bow to a higher ranking member of society, but are not obligated to. And really, little one, outside of such functions the different versions of bows are not necessarily expected, so you did not offend in any way.”

Breathing a sigh of relief, Harry went over the meeting they had just left in his head. In the end Lord Diggory turned out to be simply incredibly nervous about the whole matter and not necessarily dismissive or condescending towards Harry. It was, after all, a very serious issue to have your son go through traumatic events like those at Diagon Alley. Though, admittedly, that was not exactly what had Diggory so on edge. It was the whole life debt thing that rubbed the man the wrong way, as it, essentially, left him indebted and therefore vulnerable to someone who was already very powerful.

Yet, the man had at least the decency to officially and more or less publicly acknowledge the debt – that is, after he had done the whole dancing around the issue. It was the whole life debt thing that rubbed the man the wrong way, as it, essentially, left him indebted and therefore vulnerable to someone who was already very powerful.

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It was at a cart that sold freshly baked savoury pastries that a certain Kneazle made itself known once again. Clambering up Harry’s arm and huddling near his neck, the fur ball gave some clearly demanding mews before looking imploringly from the snacks on the cart back to Harry. There was
“You said your familiar still lacks a name, yes?” Lord Potter questioned, amusement bleeding into his voice as he watched Harry simply meld beneath his Kneazle’s gaze.

“Mh?” Harry looked back at his granddad distractedly, paying for a few of the tasty smelling baked goods. “Yeah, he’s quite… picky,” he added as he broke a small part off of one pastry and fed it to his furry highness. (*)

“Well then,” Lord Potter contemplated as they walked on, “Have you considered choosing a name for its meaning?”

“Well, no… not exactly,” Harry admitted, “But I had an owl once whose name I chose for its meaning in wizarding history. Hedwig,” he said with a sad smile.

The thought of Hedwig subdued him slightly, though he liked to believe she would be happy wherever she was… or would be in the future. The longer Harry had thought about the whole time travel stuff regarding less him and more the lives of his friends, the more he tended to hope the future he came from would now never come to pass. One of the theories Remus had explained to them was based on the thesis that the time traveller’s original timeline ceased to exist the moment he stepped into another. It didn’t necessarily change for example who was born, but the ripple effect would start from the moment the traveller appeared in his new time, making it impossible to return to the original as it could never be the same. All that considered, Harry liked to believe that all his friends, who would now never be his friends, or at least it wasn’t likely, would be better off without him there. After all, it would mean they never would be friends of the number one target in a war.

“I believe the muggles have a tradition of declaring a person long dead a saint,” Lord Potter suddenly spoke up seemingly off topic. “There seems to be a whole range of people declared such, most of them famous for acts considered especially noteworthy for the muggle religion this practice originates from.”

Harry looked at his granddad with a slightly perplexed frown. What had canonised people to do with anything? He wasn’t exactly religious in the muggle sense and didn’t think any of the Potter’s were. Even if the Dursley’s had ever bothered to educate him on the subject, which they hadn’t, it wouldn’t have been likely. After all, he had entered the Wizarding World as a child, which made it far from easy to connect to a muggle religion afterwards. Not to mention, he hadn’t had exactly the time or presence of mind to really try…

“Saint Domenico Savio,” his granddad declared as he watched Harry’s Kneazle lick his paw while still sending mischievous glances at their surroundings every few seconds. “I believe in this specific muggle religion he was named the Patron Saint of Teenagers in Trouble,” Lord Potter chuckled as Harry blinked at him a bit owlishly. “Though, more than that, I think ‘Savio’ would work just fine for your companion in correlation with the owl that seems to be still very dear to you, little one.” (*)

“How so?”

“Aha,” Lord Potter said enthusiastically, one finger rising in a perpetual teacher’s gesture, “Savio-”

And then the world exploded around them.

Remus was thoughtfully gazing after Alice Fortescue, watching the way the sensible skirt of her uniform swayed around her legs as she hurried across the courtyard they were currently braving the cold in. Alice wasn’t one of those long-legged tooth-picks, was actually a bit on the chubby side, but
a girl with nicely shaped proportions nonetheless. Remus found himself unconsciously comparing her looks to the decidedly feminine curves of the Ravenclaw prefect he had fancied for a while now. Strangely, the fact that Alice was not as well-endowed didn’t change his perception of her being even prettier than the blonde prefect. Even though the logically observant part of Remus’ brain could see that Alice, from a purely visual point of view, was not any prettier than the average girl at Hogwarts, to the rest of him she still clearly was a sight worth seeing. He kind of liked her dimpled, cheeky smiles and actually thought of her button nose as cute. He didn’t even find her giggles annoying the way he did with most other girls. Though, obviously, he would not say so out loud, considering-

“Dude,” Sirius drawled as he threw an arm over Remus’ shoulder, heavily leaning on his friend, “You so need to get laid.”

Remus blushed at the blunt words, but managed to raise a sarcastic eyebrow at his friend.

“Do I, now?” At Sirius’ enthusiastic nodding, he continued: “So, I suppose you’re all satisfied in that department? And of course James stands fully behind those activities, I’m sure?”

Rapid paling was his answer and Remus was tempted to poke the proverbial wound, considering he was quite sure he (or rather his nose) would know if Sirius’ and Hadrian’s relationship had progressed to that stage. Suddenly James’ voice interrupted them – making Sirius jump and looking decidedly guilty. Remus so not wanted to know what his friend had just been thinking about.

“Guys,” James spoke in low tones, causing them to turn around to where the leader of the Marauders was coming back from the restroom. Even fearless leaders need the loo sometimes, after all. “You noticed Snivellus staring at you? He’s doing the whole creepy stalking and scowling show over at the pillars,” he told them with a frown, discreetly nodding into the right direction without looking himself.

“Probably looking for Hadrian,” Sirius growled, giving a rather impressive scowl of his own. “He’s done that before. I don’t like the way he’s constantly ogling my Bambi.”

“Sirius,” Remus sighed, not even glancing into the direction of the watching Slytherin, “You promised to keep away from Severus.”

And he really hoped his friend would stick to his word, because there was no way Hadrian would stand for any bullying taking place. Not to mention what a pissed off Hadrian would mean for Sirius who adored his boyfriend so obviously. Nope, not a situation Remus wanted to come between.

“And I will,” Sirius nodded in answer, scowl lifting to give way to a look of determination. “As long as he keeps his potion stained fingers and that huge schnozzle of his away from Hadrian.”

“Right,” Remus commented with yet another sigh, knowing very well that there was no arguing with his friend when it came to Hadrian’s perceived safety. Or Sirius’ jealousy for that matter.

They didn’t get to discuss this rather redundant topic any further as in that very moment McGonagall’s magically enhanced voice sounded in every classroom, corridor and their very courtyard:

“Students of Hogwarts, please retreat immediately to your common rooms. There has been an attack on Hogsmeade, pending further information. Prefects are expected to keep their housemates in line until arrival of their head of house. I repeat, please retreat-”

Fleamont pulled his small grandson beneath his heavy cloak to protect him from the shrapnel that
seemed to rend the very air around them. His ears were still ringing from the initial explosion, his mind forcing memories of muggle bombs going off to the forefront, infiltrating his thoughts. He still remembered the haunting alarm siren that would announce yet another attack with their strange aircrafts, bringing with it aerial bombs and death, so much death…

“Granddad!” Hadrian’s voice broke through his momentary freeze and he pulled the boy along behind the nearest cart. “Granddad, we need to go back!”

This was not a bomb, though, this was spellfire and he needed to get Hadrian out of here. Yet another explosion seemed to rock the very street as the Owl Post Office went up in flames, distressed owls fleeing the scene in a wild dash of flapping wings and loud hoots. Next to him his delicate grandchild had his wand in hand and Fleamont watched in absolute rapture as advanced shielding spells left it to smother the surrounding houses. This was not the reaction one would expect from a sixteen-year-old, no, but he should have known better, Diagon should have taught him…

“Stay put, Hadrian,” Fleamont demanded as he finally cast his own shield to protect the two of them. “We cannot move until we know where the danger lies.”

People were running up and down the street, falling over each other in their haste, but there were no actual attackers to be seen. Yet, houses went up in flames at seemingly random, sending the occupants fleeing in a panic.

“No! Alun! We have to find him, we-”

Another explosion, this one deafening Fleamont enough that he couldn’t hear his grandson’s words anymore. Every bone in his body screamed to stand up and help, fight, but he had to think of Hadrian first. No matter how strong the child was, he should not be here, it was Fleamont’s first priority to protect him. And with that he grabbed Hadrian and apparated them away.

Chapter End Notes

(*) Development differs from child to child. Some talk in complete sentences at only two years, others simply don’t. Various reasons. I’m going to shout MAGIC! and run off now.

(*) ‘church bell’: A less than nice description of a very talkative woman. I’m not sure if this kind of insult is still in use, but if it is, it would likely be seen as very old-fashioned.

(*) ‘Powsoddy’: a now obsolete name for a pudding, but in the late 16th century it would also be used as a pet name, paralleling the affectionate use of the word ‘pudding’ itself today.

(*) You probably remember Lord Potter once talking about opening a trust fund for Harry, so yes, now he has some money of his own. Though, as you might notice, he’s not actually using it for himself.

(*) Domenico/Dominic Savio (1842-1857), Patron saint of choirboys, falsely accused people and juvenile delinquents. He is namesake for many institutions in different countries; in the United Kingdom, there are a few, but in this context I find the school for ‘special educational needs’ in Hambledon, Surrey the most interesting ;)

The connection to Hedwig will be explained in a later chapter. Thank you, FallTigerKisa!
In which there is hope

Chapter Notes

This chapter goes to starduchess, Aurora and charlotte1217. ;)
-
Goodbye 2018, hey there, 2019!
Let’s hope this past year was the wake-up call humanity needed; let’s hope this new year will show that being human means to have the capacity for both, bad and good, dark and light, whatever that may mean. Don’t let the fear take over. I still believe in love. Here’s to hope.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“NO!”
The anguished shout echoed around the Potter townhouse in Kensington, bringing a harried Lady Potter into the parlour her husband and grandson had just apparated into. What met her intelligent eyes was not a sight she had expected to ever see, yet some part of her acknowledged that she really didn’t know Hadrian all that well at this point in time.

“ALUN! Why did you do that?! How could you! What if he’s-”
Young Hadrian was standing in front of her tall husband, his form appearing even more petite in contrast to the hulking mountain that was her love. Her small and shy grandson was hitting at her Fleamont’s chest in obvious distress, screaming at him, magic all over the place as if desperately looking, searching for something. The sight had her rooted in place. There was so much pain in his very movements and Fleamont… well, he was simply keeping a gentle yet strong hold on the fragile spitfire, large hands splayed over narrow shoulders. He was keeping Hadrian close to let him vent his rage, but contained enough that the boy wouldn’t hurt himself. Whatever had happened, it-

“FUCK!”
The angry shout was accompanied by a huge and concentrated wave of magic that made her hair flutter but shoved her husband across the room. Only, he didn’t let go of Hadrian and she watched as the sheer power that was her grandson’s magic made them both collide with the far wall. Fleamont let out an oomph-sound as his back absorbed the impact, his grandson cradled against his chest.

For a long moment there was silence… then Hadrian’s sobs reached her ears and she met Fleamont’s gaze over the dark head full of askew hair and feather.

They were clustered in a corner of the common room, a muffling charm covering them. James was keeping look out for any news among the rest of the assembled Gryffindors while simultaneously glaring Peter into submission whenever he stepped closer to their group. Remus ruthlessly ignored the twinge in his chest each time he caught sight of one of the forlorn and distressed looks their former friend was shooting the Marauders’ way. It might not be how he had imagined them cutting Peter off, but if he hadn’t gotten the hint before… well. This was not the time.

Next to him Sirius was doing what they both, Remus and Sirius, were actually meant to be doing:
Searching a certain piece of parchment for Hadrian’s name. And possibly Lord Potter’s name too. A stray thought made itself known in the back of Remus’ brain concerning the map’s abilities and Hadrian… but a glance at Sirius’ white-knuckled grip on the edge of the table silenced that.

“Anything?”

James’ voice sounded strained. He had his back turned to them, his wand tapping against his leg in a nervous rhythm. Glancing over when Sirius didn’t react, Remus answered after a moment.

“No.”

He inhaled as if to add something, but couldn’t find the words. It wasn’t as if words would change anything as long as they weren’t the ones James wanted to hear. The words they all were hoping for. No, he didn’t have anything to say, he didn’t know where Lord Potter and Hadrian were, he had about as much information on the attack as everyone else. Though, knowing those two, he could make an educated guess, and Remus was pretty sure that was not what either James or Sirius wanted to hear.

“He’s okay,” his friend muttered next to him, causing Remus to glance over again. “He’s okay. Fine, he’s fine. I know it,” Sirius continued to mumble under his breath.

Harry wasn’t sure why he reacted the way he did. The whole situation wasn’t all that different to all his ‘adventures’ before, and it certainly hadn’t the same horror attached to it as the Diagon Alley incident. Yet, his emotions were out of whack, he felt his limbs trembling and his heart fluttering anxiously. Alun. The little lovable boy with the slightly inattentive father. Was he there still? Had he been hurt in the attack? He couldn’t help it, the mere thought of a child falling victim to terrorism like that… A macabre part of Harry noted that Alun’s pureblood-ed heritage would likely protect him from the worst. Another, probably even worse part of his mind, pointed out that that hadn’t mattered in Diagon Alley, and how were those bastards to know who the child was anyway? Would they even care? Merlin, Alun hadn’t even completely healed from the Dementor trauma…

A moist little lick against his cheek brought Harry abruptly out of his churning thoughts. His new Kneazle familiar had somehow managed to squeeze itself between Lord Potter’s broad chest and Harry, and was now staring up at him with those impossibly huge eyes. Harry took a shaky breath. The cat-like creature purred and pushed its head underneath his chin. Harry took another breath, slowly feeling himself focus on his surroundings again.

“Patron of troubled teenagers indeed…,” he mumbled, catching his grandfather’s attention as he carefully shoved the kitten away from his face.

“Are you well, little one?” The deep baritone reverberated through the chest he was still half--leaning on. “You are at our townhouse in Kensington, you are safe,” his grandfather assured, broadcasting an absurd amount of calm.

Harry stared for a moment longer. Then…

“Aurors!” He gasped, feeling like slapping himself. “We have to call the aurors!”

Shit, how long had they been here already? How much time did he waste with his pathetic display, how many-

“Shhh, Hadrian, it is fine,” Lord Potter interrupted his self-deprecating rant. “Your grandmother made the necessary call to alert the authorities, though I believe they had been made aware already. Calm, little one.”
It took embarrassingly long for the words and their meaning to sink in. Harry’s mind was stuck on the image of Alun in the wreckage Hogsmeade had been before they apparated out, and it made it hard to focus on anything else. Yet his grandfather’s words managed to soothe the raw edges, at least enough for another thought to occur.

“Granddad? C-can we call the Diggory’s?” Mortified by his stutter and his position still clutching at his grandfather, Harry got up on slightly shaky legs. “Wha?” Looking around and noting their awkward location down on the floor when they had been all the way across the room when arriving… “What happened?”

There was a giggle behind him and Harry turned to see his grandmother approach them. She looked slightly wide-eyed but otherwise fine.

“No need to worry, dear,” her lovely voice soothed, “You had a magical outburst that surprised all of us, I believe. But it seems your new companion took care of that.”

“That… I…,” Harry glanced down at Lord Potter who was in the process of slowly getting back on his feet. “I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to-”

“Ah, little one,” his grandfather smiled, groaning slightly as his back popped, “’Tis be my own fault.” He smiled and ruffled Harry’s slightly askew hair gently. “I knew what I was doing, child. Now, I think it is time for a courtesy visit to the House Diggory.”

That said Lord Potter walked over to the fireplace, muttering about old bones and whatnot.

“Come here, Cherub. Let your grandfather make his calls,” Lady Potter beckoned Harry over, sitting him down on one of the rather formal looking couches and pushing a cup of tea into his hand.

But Harry had only eyes for the fireplace and the floo call taking place.

James was pacing the length of the Gryffindor table, anxiously waiting for all the students to get their arses into the great hall. He knew his mother would be appalled with his lack of decorum in such a setting, but he couldn’t help it. Ever since that announcement about Hogsmeade he had been on edge like everyone else, yes, but he doubted all the other students had relatives down in that village. He couldn’t stop his mind from replaying what had gone down in Diagon Alley, nightmares of that day sometimes still haunting his dreams were now dragged into daylight to torment him. And constantly those question circling, always returning to ‘Where was his dad? Had he still been in Hogsmeade when the attack hit?’

But James at least knew for sure his father was an accomplished duellist. So what really got to him was when his mind questioned once again ‘Where was Hadrian?’ That boy might be awesome against Dementors, an impressive feat in itself, but those beings weren’t the same as Death Eaters. Dementors were driven by their constant hunger for positive emotions and souls, but attacking wizards… Humans could think logically, could set traps, could deceive, could be menacing in a way Dementors never would be able to. Most humans, and James supposed that also went for Death Eaters, weren’t driven only by the need to consume or kill for that matter. So it stood to reason that Hadrian would have to actively fight them with more than one charm, and no matter how awesome the Patronus was, it wouldn’t do much against wizards, and-

“James.”

“What?” He snapped, not even looking at Moony.

“Sit down.”
“No, thanks,” he snarked sarcastically, once again turning on the spot to march down the length of the table another time.

“Seriously, James, sit down now,” Moony insisted when James circled back and was about to turn once again.

“Shut up, Moony.”

“Mr. Potter, if you would take a seat,” McGonagall’s exasperated voice had him stopping in his tracks and looking up in confusion.

She was standing with the rest of the staff at the teacher’s table – or rather, she was the last one standing as everyone else had already sat down. Which, apparently, also went for all the students who were now staring at him. Staring. At him. Oh. He was keeping them all waiting, whoops. After blinking for a moment longer, James gave a cheeky salute.

“If you insist, Professor,” he answered before doing a strategical retreat to his seat with all the considerable poise available to him, ignoring the sniggers.

“Since now everyone has deemed their seating arrangement suitable,” the deputy headmistress drawled, eliciting some more laughter that sobered up with her next words, “News of the attack on Hogsmeade has reached us. The headmaster is still down in the village helping with the clean-up, so it falls to me to inform you.” She hesitated for a moment, sending James’ heart rate into overdrive. “It has been confirmed to have been an ambush of the militant nationalist group identifying themselves as ‘Death Eaters’,” she explained in an uncharacteristically roundabout way. Whispers rose up at her words, but she soon composed herself. “It is not yet known if they were specifically targeting anyone, but yes,” she took a deep breath before continuing: “I am deeply saddened to announce the loss of various local residents, tourists, and a few… as of yet not identified victims. All of them will be truly missed and personally I will include them all in my daily thoughts.”

There was a numb stillness to the great hall as everyone took in her words. Professor McGonagall patted restlessly at her robes for a few seconds before adding: “Students who have lost someone in the attack will be notified momentarily by their head of house. Please remember that you are not alone in dealing with this.” Another slightly shaky breath, then: “We are always here for you. Dismissed.”

Just as everyone was about to get up, there was an ominous creaking sound coming from the large double doors. Basically everyone present hushed and turned to look as one of those doors was pushed open barely enough for someone of rather slender stature to slip through.

If Harry had thought flooing and faceplanting into the empty headmaster’s office was a somewhat eerie thing to do… Wandering through a completely silent school, not coming across anyone anywhere, and then opening the doors to the great hall to find the whole damn populace staring at him… well, it was another thing altogether. For a moment Harry just stood there like the proverbial deer in the headlights, or like the wizarding equivalent of that saying went, like a Mooncalf in a Lumos. This was awkward.

The next thing he knew Sirius was rushing at him right across the hall. Harry stared at him a bit flabbergasted for the seconds it took his boyfriend to reach him, a flicker of uncertainty making itself known in his chest as he took in the dark look on Sirius’ face. As those large hands reached for him, a miniscule part of Harry felt like shrinking away, still clinging onto the experience of hands reaching for him never bringing anything pleasant. That was until Sirius made contact and Harry’s senses, or maybe it was his magic, truly recognised who it was that had such a sudden hold of him.
And then he was being kissed.

Right there. In front of the whole school, teachers, students, and even the bloody ghosts.

Not that Harry cared about that the moment Sirius’ lips touched his. Damn his hormones, but all thought fled his mind then, and all he could feel, see, register… hell, all he could sense with any of his faculties was Sirius, and Harry let himself happily drown in it. This was exactly what he needed after the stress and the scares of the day.

It wasn’t until someone bumped into him that he surfaced from their shared kiss, blinking owlishly up into deep grey. It took him longer than he cared to admit to realise they were no longer standing out in the open for all to see – well, they still were, only now everyone else was standing as well. It was the typical mad scramble for the doors students all around the world do whenever dismissed.

“Are you okay?” Sirius rumbled at him lowly, his hands still holding Harry close. “And Lord Potter?”

Harry nodded after a second, concentrating on his boyfriend’s face to block out the crowd around them.

“Yeah, we got out in time,” he nodded, noting James and Remus stepping up to them, he repeated himself to relieve them of the worry plainly written across their faces. “Alun and Mr. Diggory… I mean, Lord Diggory and his heir are fine too. They weren’t even there anymore when the attack hit.”

James raised an eyebrow at his deliberate phrasing, Remus just patted him on the shoulder slightly. Sirius, though, mouthed the words ‘lord’ and ‘heir’ for a moment, before nodding for them to finally leave the great hall as well. They needed to do some catching up.

It was the Room of Requirement they found themselves in at last. Though Pettigrew was aware of the location, James had proclaimed his doubt of the rat actually remembering the exact place or the way to summon it. Harry made sure to tell them how to hide the room from others while they were inside – just like the DA had done during his fifth year to escape Umbridge and her inquisitorial squad.

Making themselves comfortable on various cushy armchairs and loveseats, Harry and the Marauders filled each other in on what had transpired while they had been apart. Harry for his part told them all about the ridiculous meeting with Lord Diggory and his decision to learn proper wizarding etiquette as soon as possible. He didn’t want to risk embarrassing his new family. During that conversation he also learned that Amos Diggory apparently had aspirations to get a high position in the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. Suddenly the whole talk about possibly using a life debt if needed made a lot more sense. (*) The Marauders filled him in on their understanding of Voldemort and his strange behaviour of proclaiming pureblood ideals while specifically using creatures to further his cause, and Harry let them know what he remembered of the dark lord’s behaviour and strategy from the future.

They were just discussing how much the current way of action of the Dark might differ from that of the future, when Sirius shifted Harry onto his lap, adoring the little squeak the action got him. He was about to wrap his arms around his boyfriend’s waist under his robe when a soft crinkling sound caught his attention. Reaching into his love’s pocket, and definitely not enjoying the sudden squirming of said love, he pulled out a very precisely folded piece of parchment.

“What’s that?”
Looking down in confusion, Harry took the parchment from Sirius and unfolded it carefully. Squinting at the scrawl, not yet taking in the words, he tried placing the handwriting. It was painfully familiar, but…

“It’s a note,” Sirius spoke up from behind him, reading over his shoulder. “No, a message. A warning to be exact,” he added with a slight growl to his voice.

“Huh?” Finally taking in the words, Harry’s eyes grew a little wide.

_Moore,_

_Be aware that a certain dunderhead in your entourage is not to be trusted. I caught Pettigrew conspiring with Professor Bole to have you drugged with a Compliance Potion. Heed my warning, I will not be responsible if your imbecilic Gryffindor brain does not comprehend the danger that lies in this particular potion._

Right. Considering the phrasing Harry had no doubt who had written this message. Severus must have slipped him the note during that crush of students trying to reach the exit all at once.

“This is serious,” Remus stated, everyone turning to look at Sirius expectantly, but the Grim Animagus just raised an eyebrow in return.

“What? Even I can tell this is not the moment for serious Sirius jokes – even if they are seriously awesome, obviously,” he sniffed in mock-offence. Remus rolled his eyes.

“Who do you think it’s from?” James asked as he looked up from where he had been muttering spells at the parchment, hidden pain in his eyes. “There is no magical signature attached and I don’t recognise the handwriting.”

Harry concealed his amused snort with a cough. He really shouldn’t be this amused, he thought. Not when the whole thing clearly distressed his friends. Still, he wondered if he should tell them who had deigned to grace them with a warning…

“I’m more concerned with the potion it warns us about,” Remus added. “There are different forms of compliance potions, though considering the capitalisation in the message I suppose the author means the Compliance Potion.”

“You don’t mean-?” Sirius questioned, the growl now apparent in his voice.

“Liquid Imperius,” James whispered hoarsely.

Relaxing slightly at the name, Harry gave a half-hearted shrug.

“That’s not so bad then,” he said. Met with their incredulous stares, he added: “I can throw off the Imperius Curse, especially if I know it’s being cast.”

There was a moment of contemplation during which Harry decided the little loose threat on his robes was very interesting indeed. He had forgotten how much that ability tended to awe people. Honestly, he simply didn’t like being ordered around. It always dragged up memories of his childhood he preferred buried. The arms around his waist tightened slightly, and he glanced up to meet Sirius’ eyes.

“As impressive as that is, Bambi,” his boyfriend explained, eyes glittering with questions, “Liquid Imperius, though its professional name just states compliance, is actually worse than the Unforgivable. It is an outlawed potion for a reason, it… well… it can’t be thrown off.”
“That’s what they say about the curse too, though,” Harry frowned. He wasn’t trying to brag or something, but it was true, the Imperius Curse was widely believed to be unbreakable unless you had specific training and the necessary strength of mind.

“Yes,” Remus interrupted, “But you cannot throw something off that’s in your bloodstream. You also don’t have to be in direct proximity to a caster to be put under the liquid version, it can be easily hidden in foods with strong natural flavours. It is similar to the curse, though, in the way that only the brewer will be able to command the one who takes the potion. It doesn’t matter who administers it, just the brewer. I’m not sure why, though,” he pouted slightly at the hole in his knowledge, but James patched it over immediately.

“It’s because the brewer needs to imbue the potion with a bit of their own magic. That’s also why it’s completely idiotic for Professor Bole to hand it to Wormtail. Imagine the little twit loses the vial. Anyone who finds and identifies it, subsequently alerting the authorities, would be able to identify the brewer through the imbued magic.”

Harry gulped and leaned deeper into Sirius’ embrace. The thought of having someone else’s will running through his very blood, forcing him to comply… it was nauseating. But substances didn’t stay in the body forever, so at least the potion would run its course and fail at one point. The question was what could happen in that unknown period of time it controlled him. Remus had made it sound like the brewer would need to be close to actually give a command, but if that command was to do something, for example to go somewhere, the brewer, Bole, wouldn’t need to stay close.

“Right,” Sirius spoke into the uneasy silence. “I think we need to make some lists. It’s time we make a concrete battle plan, a strategy.” Giving a slightly sheepish grin, he added: “Also, I kinda need some organisation here, it feels like there’s a whole bunch of shit going on that we need to stay on top of.”

Chuckling at his friend, Remus pulled out parchment and poised his quill with a dramatic flourish.

“Righto, Padfoot, where to start?”

Harry stared between the Marauders for a long moment, trying to wrap his head around the fact that he had made friends like this again. It reminded him painfully of Ron and Hermione, but the pain was bittersweet. He would always cherish their memory, but he also was not alone in this anymore. James, Remus, and Sirius. Lord and Lady Potter. They were all here, all of them ready and willing to help. There was hope.

Chapter End Notes

(*) The Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures is the second largest department in the Ministry of Magic – which speaks for itself, doesn’t it? It is divided into three divisions named after the three categorisations of magical creatures: Being, Beast and Spirit. I wonder what an Elf Owl would be categorised as.

Also: At this point you most likely already realised it, but let’s just say Voldemort and his downfall aren’t exactly a major plot point of this story. ;)

In which Kneazle-fashion is en vogue

Chapter Notes

INFORMATION:
~I'm a snaaaaaaaaake!~ = Parseltongue

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

To do (urgent)

- getting potion off of Wormtail (possibly turning Bole in with the evidence)
- having Wormtail sign the contract (all means acceptable)

Training (needs must)

- learning the Patronus
- researching defensive and offensive spells (Moody’s training?)
- etiquette lessons for Hadrian
- Potter family history

Battle Plan (wicked)

- publishing information on the Dark Lord (Rita Skeeter?)
- getting Lord Potter's help for the Wizengamot (creature laws?)

The lists were charmed like the Marauder’s Map, though with a new password phrase. There was after all still Pettigrew they needed to think of, the rat that was in the know of way too many things. Harry was privately also thinking about adding the Horcruxes to his version of the list, glad that he now had an understanding of how the map worked… or at least how to do the whole ‘protected by password’ thing. He needed to get rid of the sick soul-anchors somehow, but before he could do that, he would need to find them, and… Yeah, it was all a bit much for an awkward sixteen-year-old with little to no understanding of how the world around him actually worked. But still, he would do it.

Maybe their plan of publishing information of Riddle’s heritage and pointing out the dichotomy in his behaviour to the public would give Harry some more time. If Lord Potter could make the Purebloods, especially those on the Wizengamot, more wary towards the Dark Lord’s supposed ideals, that would block many of Riddle’s possible roads. It would make taking over a whole lot more difficult for the man (He was still a ‘man’, right? Not any ENT doctor’s nightmare monster yet.). But Harry doubted those Purebloods already entrenched in Voldemort’s doctrine would be swayed easily. Who would have thought that he would one day put his money on the Purebloods’ superiority complex which certainly wouldn’t allow bowing down to a mere Halfblood.

Tucking away his list into the inner pocket of his robe, Harry followed the Marauders into their dorm. And if he didn’t even blink at Sirius throwing a swift Stunner at the snoring Pettigrew, so what. What followed was a systematical search of their sleeping space. His friends weren’t about to take any chances with that Compliance Potion Severus had warned them about, even if Harry didn’t completely understand all the fuss. Yes, the thought of the stuff in his blood was unsettling, as were the possible consequences, and even the thought that someone wanted to drug him in the first place. That it was the Defence teacher really only got a resigned sigh and shrug in response out of Harry.
But still, the way James, Sirius, and Remus reacted to the situation, the meticulous planning, and now the immediate action through their search of the dorm… it all felt over the top to the boy that was used to always looking over his shoulder, the boy that knew the feeling of always, at all times, having someone out for his blood.

And it also felt very warm and safe and somehow right.

“Where the fuck did he put it?” James groused from under Pettigrew’s bed, grunting as he hit his head on the way out.

“It’s not in his trunk either,” Remus commented, looking a bit uneasy with what he had just done. It had been decided to have Remus go through the rat’s trunk, because as messy as Pettigrew tended to be, they didn’t want to risk him noticing something out of place, and Remus was the most likely to be careful.

“It’s not in the bathroom,” Sirius announced as he stepped out, glancing curiously at where Harry was crouching and knocking at the floorboards. “What’cha doing, Bambi?”

“Loose floorboards,” Harry mumbled in response, deeply concentrated on his task. Though, so far he had as much success as the others.

Eyebrows climbing up his forehead, Sirius crouched next to his boyfriend, watching him work for a moment. He wouldn’t even have thought of possible hidey holes underneath the floor, but then again, he used to hide stuff in the walls of his suite back at his parents’ place. He huffed irritably, trying to keep the anger at someone even pondering the possibility of drugging his Hadrian at bay. It was simply wrong.

“I still don’t see why we can’t just summon the bloody thing,” he grumbled through his clenched teeth. If he had been possessive of Hadrian before, there was no way he would let him out of his sight now. He would keep his love close until this whole potion bullshit was done and over with, and possibly even after that.

Bole would need to go. And soon.

“You know why, Sirius,” Remus sighed tiredly, standing and stretching.

“It’ll kill any chance of turning the bastard in, Pads. You know that,” James nudged him in the shoulder, walking past and started turning over the spare sheets in the single shelf in their dorm.

“If we need the potion to prove Bole’s involvement, we can’t risk the vial breaking when summoned, Sirius,” Hadrian supplied once again, eyes still on the floor, hands busy tracing along the grooves.

And it was true, Sirius was well aware of their reasoning. Didn’t mean he wouldn’t delight in smashing the damn thing, but no, they needed the potion whole to get rid of the blasted teacher. So, no summoning.

“Yeah, yeah,” Sirius muttered, plopping himself down on his arse, and unceremoniously pulling his Bambi into his lap. The potion wasn’t under the floorboards, Pettigrew was too dumb to think of something like that.

“I think,” Remus started, drying suddenly damp hands on his trousers, “There’s really only one place left.” He stared at the stunned form of their former friend, avoiding everyone else’s eyes.

“You mean…”
That same night one rat lay stunned still, three Marauders tossed and turned restlessly, and one Bambi slept peacefully in his boyfriend’s arms. They had obviously underestimated Wormtail as they had not been able to find the Compliance Potion, and on top of that they were still wondering about the identity of their secret helping hand. Well, all three of them with the exception of Hadrian. Sirius couldn’t quite understand his love’s blasé attitude, but it wouldn’t derail him from doing his best to protect Hadrian. Come tomorrow all three of them would start keeping constant track of any and all foods and drinks that even came close to their Bambi. It was really all that they could do if they intended to turn both Bole and Wormtail in. Personally he would have liked to confront the rat, force him to reveal the potion, but logic in the form of Moony and reluctance in the form of Prongs had overruled him.

Sirius tucked the sleeping form of his boyfriend close, burying his nose in the dark mop of hair and feather. The potion might elude them still, but he would get that rat’s signature on the contract they had set up to protect their secrets. No matter what he needed to do to achieve it.

The next day, Monday 10th of January 1977, Harry was missing one wayward Kneazle. Savio, as he had finally decided on naming the kitten after the Hogsmeade drama, must have gotten away somewhere between the Room of Requirement and Gryffindor Tower. It was curious and a bit troubling as the Kneazle had taken to stick to Harry like spilled pumpkin juice to white shirts.

With a sigh he stepped out of the shower, reminding himself that it was completely normal for pets to roam. It was just… Savio was so small, a kitten, still so- A huge fluffy towel was dropped over his head, startling him into a yelp, before he fought his way back out from the fabric. The deep laughter of his boyfriend soothed and annoyed him in equal measures.

“Sirius!” Harry pulled his head free, holding onto the large towel to cover himself in the steamy air of the bathroom.

“Yes, my Bambi?” Sirius was close, so close, and eyes alight with mischief as he reached out for Harry’s towel.

“W-what’s with you and always disrupting my shower?” Harry spluttered, eyes going wide as he was tugged into his boyfriend’s large frame.

“You were hogging the shower, Rian,” Sirius muttered, bending slightly to nose behind Harry’s flushed ear.

“So? I would’ve been out in a minute,” he insisted trying to hold onto his indignation. But it was hard what with Sirius’ hand wandering down his towel-clad shoulders, along his arms, and into-

Loud knocking on the door interrupted their moment and both groaned in disappointment.

“Gents, get your pretty behinds out here! We’re already late, if we want to detour to the hospital wing before breakfast.”

“I swear, he does it on purpose,” Sirius groused and Harry found himself nodding along. Yes, he was rather sure James really did-

“Wait. What did he mean, hospital wing?”
A few minutes later he was being dragged down to the hospital wing yet again. Before breakfast. And he meant that quite literally as he deliberately dragged his feet and was in turn dragged along by his hand like an errand toddler.

“Healer Hahnemann said I was fine,” Harry tried yet again, and no, he wasn’t whining.

“Actually, he said you need that potion,” Sirius answered patiently.

“My teeth are just fine!”

“Sure.”

“They are!”

“Then take it as a precaution.”

“Why?”

Behind the duo James and Remus were studiously not snickering… alright, they were shamelessly laughing at Harry’s plight as they made sure he couldn’t ‘accidentally’ get lost on the way. Not that Sirius would let that happen what with that vice-like grip on Harry’s hand.

“Hadrian, I’m one repetition of this discussion away from throwing you over my shoulder like a sack of doxy eggs!” His bothersome boyfriend threatened.

“Now, that’s just rude,” Harry muttered sullenly, and no, he wasn’t pouting either.

Madam Pomfrey had been unduly happy to see him, Harry decided. Really, he actually missed her scolding attitude from the ‘past future’, his former reality, whatever, whenever he had stepped foot into her domain. This younger version of the matron was always decidedly indulgent towards him and that was simply awkward. Though she still had her slightly abrupt and stern manner going, it was so far removed from what Harry had learned to expect from Poppy Pomfrey, it really could only be his dreadful allure working.

Anyway, the matron had him sit down, bustling about him, doing a cursory diagnostic, and getting glaring at by the Marauders for it, but the actual treatment was indeed as simple as it had been promised to him. Harry had had to take a strangely white, milky potion and swish it around his mouth for a good minute. Then he only had to rinse and that was apparently all there was to it. It didn’t even taste all that awful, though no potion would ever get along with his taste buds completely.

On their way back, just off the hospital wing, a certain Kneazle made an appearance. But Savio wasn’t alone and it wasn’t the snakey scarf he was wearing that caused the most agitation.

“What do you want, Snape?” James immediately had his wand out and a hex on his tongue – only to get nothing even close to Snivellus’ usual diatribe in reaction. Instead the Slytherin only raised an eyebrow at James and then pointedly looked past him.

Sirius didn’t like that, didn’t like Snape anywhere near his Bambi, but honest to Merlin tried not to follow his best mate’s example. He had promised, after all. Didn’t mean he had to be around the Slytherin, and it also didn’t mean he had to stand by when Snape tried to weasel his way into Hadrian’s good graces again. Reaching out, he pulled his boyfriend behind himself, daring the hook-nosed bastard to try anything. The Marauders wouldn’t normally need an excuse to have a go at
Snape, but Hadrian being present changed a lot. Sirius wasn’t going to think on that fact and what it said about them too deeply.

Snape scoffed at him when his view of Hadrian was blocked, then looked down with raised eyebrows, and Sirius automatically followed his line of sight. There was the troublesome Kneazle his boyfriend had acquired as a familiar …and it was bringing company, it seemed. Sirius would recognise that certain tiny snake anywhere after finding it in his Bambi’s robe pocket just the day prior. And he supposed a Kneazle wearing a venomous snake, or any snake for that matter, like some dramatic stole should weird him out more, but… yeah, weirder things had happened ever since his Bambi arrived.

Said Kneazle gave a resounding mew, or what could be counted as a mew where Kneazles are concerned, and sat itself down right between the opposing parties. Then it started licking its paw ostentatiously. But it wasn’t the show-off cat-creature that broke the stalemate.

“Severus?”

Harry decided he had indulged the Marauders’ antics enough for the moment as he peeked around Sirius’ broad frame. Their protectiveness was sweet and all, but there was no need to protect him from Severus. (And wasn’t that peculiar considering his relationship with his former professor?) After all, the Slytherin was the one that had warned them about the potion, though, to be fair, the others didn’t know that. Yet.

“Hadrian,” said boy greeted cordially.

Sirius was suddenly growling. Harry could feel the sound reverberating through the chest still trying to block his way and it had him stopping just a moment. As he looked up at his boyfriend, he blinked at the ugly expression gracing Sirius’ face. It was a look he faintly recognised, a look he had seen before… though, not on his boyfriend, but his godfather. Then Harry scowled.

“Stop that,” he gave his own version of a growl and pushed past the overprotective jerk.

“Ha-”

“No. Don’t you dare start on the whole ‘But he’s a Slytherin’!” Harry snapped at him, evading the grasping hands that tried to pull him back.

“But he is, and I don’t want you any-”

“Yeah, tough luck,” Harry interrupted the oncoming tirade, yet again side-stepping Sirius as he tried to get a hold of him. This was ridiculous, Harry didn’t need to be protected like some damsel in distress, and the reasoning was simply so…!

“Bambi,” Sirius very nearly whined and Harry noted the wand in his hand.

It seemed this situation really didn’t sit right with his boyfriend, and glancing at James and Remus they didn’t seem to be faring much better. Though, it had to be mentioned that Remus at least wasn’t keeping anyone at wandpoint. Glancing back at Severus, who seemed to find the whole situation greatly amusing if his glittering dark eyes were anything to go by, Harry sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.

“He wrote the note,” he put it as plainly as possible, basically slapping them up the head with the information. There.

Then Harry crouched down to pet at his familiar – and to let the others deal with the fallout.
Ridiculous, the lot of them. Had he been like that, before? So prejudiced and full of preconceived notions? Running his fingers through the soft fur was soothing and Savio even deemed him interesting enough to stop his demonstrative cleaning. Reaching out to snuggle with his familiar, Harry yelped as he was suddenly pulled backwards by a rapid spell. He landed on his arse and shouting erupted around him, something about accusations and threats, but Harry only had eyes for his Kneazle’s accessory. Right. He had completely forgotten about that little one. Yeah, maybe cuddling his familiar when Savio was playing dress-up with a venomous snake wasn’t all that wise, no matter how neutral the reptile had been towards him before.

~Hi,~ he greeted the snake softly, causing the escalating situation between vengeful Marauders and one abrasive Slytherin to halt abruptly. ~Did you have a good day exploring?~

As his friends stared, still somewhat morbidly fascinated, Harry settled down to have a decent conversation with a certain snake. It was quite entertaining to listen to her account of her day in the ‘big, cold, drafty, loud nest’, but even more interesting to hear about her adventures with Severus. Apparently he was to be her chosen human, a fact that had Harry chortling in amusement. So the future head of House Slytherin, his grumpy dark bat of a professor, had been chosen by a tiny, lilac coloured snakeling. (*)

“Astounding,” Severus cool voice interrupted his conversation and Harry blinked wide-eyed at the clear awe he could hear in his tone. That was not something he was used to hear from Severus Snape.

“Figures,” James muttered, grumbling about Slytherins and their unnatural fascination with anything snake-related under his breath.

“Is it part of your inheritance? The ability to converse with serpents?” Said Slytherin went on, fearlessly stepping closer to a Harry now holding the snake in his cupped hands. Not that Harry thought Severus would have to fear her, nope. This little one clearly had decided where to put her affections.

“Um,” he blushed faintly at the attention, “Actually, it’s something I’ve always been able to do. Well, at least since before I went to Hogwarts.”

Harry felt Sirius at his back, could basically sense him glaring over his shoulder, but chose to ignore it. Sirius had to learn that Harry would not tolerate him bullying Severus any longer, and if it helped tone down the over-protectiveness as well…

“So not all that long then,” Severus frowned thoughtfully, confusing Harry. He saw Remus face-palming from the corner of his eye and mentally went over his own words again.

Oh.

Whoops.

“Not to be a prefect,” Remus conveniently drew everyone’s attention, “But did you really let a highly venomous snake slither along unsupervised inside a school full of teenagers?”

Peter was so angry. This wasn’t right. This was not how things were meant to be. He wanted them back! What had happened anyway? One moment he had been on a shopping trip with the Potter’s as was his due as a good friend of James’, then the creature had done yet another freaky thing, and everyone was just alright with it! He had been attacked and sent away like he was the one in the wrong. And when his friends and the tag-along had finally returned to the school, they had ignored him. Completely and utterly ignored Peter’s very presence. This had never happened before, and
obviously it all was the freak’s fault.

Everything had started going wrong when IT appeared. Moore had just appeared one night and latched onto his friends. Right. He would have it all back, the favours, the birds, the ready-made homework, the safety of the group. It was his right after all he had done for them.

And now he had the means. Professor Bole had provided exactly what Peter needed and even instructed him to administer the potion. The professor had never stipulated who was to be the one commanding the creature, so nothing would stop Peter from doing it… wait, no. If he wanted the creature gone, he would need to cut it off the group. Sever the ties, so to speak. This way the Marauders would not go looking for it. And since it had all started going awry with Sirius falling for that dumb slut, it would end with him as well. If he could make Sirius forget about Moore, the creature would be gone, and everything would be back to normal.

Yes, Peter thought as he watched his friends return from wherever they had gone with the freak. It wouldn’t be Moore drinking the potion.

They were doing it again. Sirius, James, and Remus had all sat around him and were doing their hovering again. Sirius had poured him tea and fixed it up perfectly to Harry’s liking. James was giving anyone daring to sit near them the evil eye, and Remus was now honest to Merlin buttering him his toast. As Harry reached out for some fruit, he found his hand caught by his boyfriend and given meaningful looks. Okay, so no fruit? He raised a questioning eyebrow back at Sirius.

“You know we need to be careful.” Sirius muttered under his breath, casting suspicious looks around and catching on Pettigrew sat at the other end of the table.

Harry sighed. The potion again. He understood it, really, he did! But all that hovering was so tedious and the whole situation was simply absurd. Pettigrew was all the way down the table, there was no way he would be able to poison Harry’s food. The Marauders were actually confused about that fact as their former friend had continuously tried to get back into their good graces or even just appear to be still part of their group since Saturday. Yet now, when they actually expected him to try and get close, he was very obviously keeping his distance. So, yeah, the hovering felt slightly over the top. Harry knew this was necessary, he understood the need for it, and he felt this glowing ball of fuzz inside his chest every time the others went out of their way to protect him. But by Godric’s saggy third ball, he was not used to this much care!

A small fruit dish was plopped down next to his plate and Harry looked up to meet his boyfriend’s gaze. Out of the corner of his eye he watched as Remus lined his normal potions up next to his tea cup, making a show of examining each vial closely before setting it down. Sirius kissed the tip of his nose, causing Harry to squint at the feeling.

“Those are clear,” Sirius said seriously, nodding to the fruits. “Please, Hadrian. Let us do this. We don’t know when he will strike, so… just…”

Harry sighed. As if he would be able to say No to Sirius’ puppy eyes.

“Yes, alright,” he gave in. “But can I get some pumpkin juice, please?”

“Of course, love,” Sirius answered with a broad smile, making Harry flush. Did he just say…? His thought process was interrupted by the headmaster standing up to address the students.

As they listened to Dumbledore announce the consequences of the attack on Hogsmeade, namely a close examination of the school’s wards over the next few days which would lead to certain
fluctuations’ – though, no one deemed it necessary to explain what those fluctuations were going to be. Another consequence would be auror patrols on the grounds every other day and night. There was lots of murmuring, but Harry was honestly surprised there were any consequences at all. What was the difference to the future he had lived? What would change that would prevent them from taking any measures then? Was it the Ministry’s interference? Or perhaps they simply stopped announcing any steps taken to protect school and students? Another thought taking up Harry’s mind as Sirius carefully cast something at the pumpkin juice, then taste-tested, before pouring his boyfriend a goblet, was Alastor Moody and the auror patrols. It was pretty obvious to Harry on which evenings there would be Ministry henchmen about.

“Hadrian!” James suddenly whispered excitedly, drawing every Marauder’s attention as he flattened a copy of the Daily Prophet. It was opened on page 9, currently featuring Wizengamot news.

Blinking down, Harry choked on the sip of pumpkin juice he had just taken. Main feature of the page was Lord Potter, his granddad, looking regal in resplendent robes. The title read ‘A new Potter – A family pulls together’ and glancing over the article Harry was surprised by how accurate and neutral, even pleased sounding, it was written. But what had him spluttering was the reason for the press: him. It was the announcement of Harry’s adoption into the Potter family, or, more accurately, into the main branch of the family as the article took up the cover story about his origin being a lesser branch. The official explanation for the adoption was the rapid fading of too many Potters in too short a time, leading to the current main branch, him now included, being the last Potters alive.

All that aside, it was now official. He had a family.

As the smile bloomed on Harry’s face, he felt the eyes on him. It was to be expected, after all the Potters were a prominent family, one of the noble houses even, but… Glancing up, Harry met black eyes across the room. Severus looked conflicted, but not necessarily surprised. After the encounter in the hallway and Harry matter-of-factly informing the Marauders who his secret protector was, they had all decided to meet up for lunch. The Slytherin had understandably been suspicious, but he apparently was already fond of the small snake and therefore willing to meet with Hadrian in order to converse with her. That there was no way Sirius and the others would let them meet alone was simply a needs must fact. But that had been before Harry had officially been claimed by the very family Severus so much despised. Harry could only hope it wouldn’t change their budding… truce.

Chapter End Notes

There will be a time jump in the next chapter, so if you think I missed any important scene, let me know, please. :) 

ALSO! Any suggestions for password phrases the ‘new Marauders’ could use on their lists?

(*) Would you prefer ‘snakeling’ or ‘snakelet’? I’m pretty sure both are right.
In which there is awkward tea

Chapter Notes

Make sure you read the last chapter as this was a faster update than the others lately!
Also: Lady_Genevieve might find something in this one <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Remus’ quill was moving so fast over the parchment, Harry wasn’t even sure he was writing at all and not just scratching random scribbles. Glancing over unobtrusively, he felt his suspicions slightly confirmed, because that short-hand could not possibly be called writing. Okay, so maybe he was a tiny bit jealous what with his constant cramps whenever he tried writing longer texts with those bloody quills.

Anyway, it was lunchtime and they had congregated in the Room of Requirement to set up the letter to Lord Potter. This was a very delicate matter as Harry had been lectured repeatedly, and not just because certain standards had to be upheld. The Potter’s had raised their son in pureblood tradition, though with an open mind for other cultures as well, so James normally wrote his letters home following the formal patterns of literary correspondence he had been taught. Yet at the same time those letters differed greatly in the tone used, depending on the situation and James’ mood. Also, it made a difference whether he wrote to his mother, who insisted on at least the minimum of polite standards, or his father who was a lot more laid back with these things. All this considered, Harry thought he really had a lot to learn if he ever wanted to live up to his family’s standards.

This specific letter, though, was something unlike any other letter James had ever written to his parents, because it would have to be written to ‘Lord Potter’ and not his Dad. Harry hadn’t quite understood why that was, probably some other pureblood etiquette stuff he had yet to learn. Sigh. So, even though it was son writing to father, it was different. Because James was petitioning Lord Potter for help against a political adversary, things had to be done formally. Right. Whatever. Point being, they, or rather Remus, were currently writing down everything they wanted to include in this very formal, very polite, very un-James letter.

As their aim was to ultimately cut off Riddle’s powerbase, they needed verifiable information out there. If everything went as planned, Lord Potter would subtly bring up the Dark Lord’s double standards on various topics without actually making a direct stand against the man. Harry had been adamant about this, he would not risk his family even if that meant Voldemort’s downfall would take longer than he had hoped it would. While Lord Potter would work on the Wizengamot, possibly with his associates helping along, the Marauders and Harry would try to get information on one Tom Riddle’s heritage out there. As reluctant as Harry was to use anyone’s heritage against them (it simply went against his morals), he was not above using the press against Voldemort. It would literally save lives if they could disenchant as many people as possible with the Dark Lord now before the absolute terror took over. Before the man had wound his claws too deeply into the Wizarding World. So they were betting on the Purebloods’ pride and bias.

Still, remembering his own experience with the press, Harry had to push down the guilt churning in his gut. It was not a nice experience to have one’s name and reputation ripped to pieces, especially not in such a public way as the wizarding media, their main source of information for the masses: The Daily Prophet.
That said, what was Rita Skeeter doing these days? He thought she must have been born around the 1950s, but…

“Oh!” James exclaimed, his fist loosely hitting the table top. Apparently Harry had spoken his last thoughts out loud. “Isn’t she that vicious author who wrote that nasty piece… whatchamacallit… about Dippet?”

“The previous headmaster,” Remus explained under his breath for Harry’s sake, though he had actually known this one. Armando Dippet had been the headmaster of Hogwarts for a long time prior to Dumbledore.

“Armando Dippet: Master or Moron?” Sirius recited with a mock-stern expression.

“That’s the one,” James agreed with a nod. “So, you sure you want to contact her? I think, she’s with the Prophet now, ever since that ‘masterpiece’ about Dippet. She doesn’t exactly appear… ah… well…”

“Professional?” Harry said with a knowing smirk that had Sirius do a double take. “Yep, I’m sure. Though, I’ll need your help first.”

Now the Marauders were intrigued, and in the case of one certain Grim just this side of aroused.

“Sure, Bambi, what for?”

Harry looked from one to the other, the smirk turning even more wicked. Sirius unobtrusively started fanning himself.

“You need to teach me the Animagus revealing spell,” Harry declared, a plan settling in his mind. Assuming that Skeeter would do what they would ask of her, and Harry would make sure she did, the next question was: How to start? How does one go about defaming a dark lord? Probably with the basics: Who was the dark lord that was currently trying to do a British version of Grindelwald? The public did know the self-styled name, but they never said it anymore, that was how deep the fear already ran. It wasn’t printed in the newspapers any longer and Harry suspected if he were to go to Diagon Alley, the warning posters all over the district would spell a bit differently. He had heard the whispers at school but more so in the streets of Hogsmeade and during their shopping trip to Horizont Alley. Everyone was talking about ‘dark forces’ and maybe even a ‘dark lord’, they used ridiculously hyphenated paraphrases. But no one said the actual name. Not anymore.

So yeah, bringing the truth out there about Tom Marvolo Riddle, whose name just so happened to be a lame anagram for a certain phrase… It would be a good start.

But it wasn’t only the letter to Lord Potter they were currently compiling. Though, in the case of a certain contract it was more proofreading and making small adjustments than anything else. They had to be absolutely sure to cover all their bases when it came to Peter – so Remus made all of them read through it carefully. He didn’t want to linger on the fact that they were basically forcing their former friend to make life altering decision… probably even without his knowledge. His wolf might be out for blood, and Remus would have to make sure to keep his alter ego far away from Peter or Wormtail for that matter, but he, his human part, was still struggling with it all. He couldn’t simply forget all these years of friendship and he supposed that was a good thing. It made him human.

Then there was a knock on the door and everyone seemed to freeze momentarily.
It wasn’t until Hadrian snorted and got up that anyone moved, James madly scrambling to hide away his letter, Remus diving for the contract that had been making the round, and Sirius, of course, shadowing his boyfriend to the door. They all knew who was supposed to meet them here and Remus could only hope his friends would behave.

Severus Snape stepped into the Room of Requirement slowly, carefully. They could clearly see him clutching his wand in his robe pocket, but at least he was making a token effort by not drawing it outright. This was not meant to be an ambush, but Severus had no reason to trust them. Remus inconspicuously rubbed at his chest as the reminder of what his furry problem had nearly caused twinged briefly.

“So, Sni-”, Sirius started, only to yelp abruptly when Hadrian stepped right onto his foot. “Bambi!” Sirius whined, but didn’t make another attempt at insulting Severus who looked more bewildered than anything else at the byplay.

“Severus!” Hadrian greeted enthusiastically, before adding: “Someone has been excited for your return.” He then nodded over to the fireplace the room had provided where his familiar and his serpentine companion were lounging.

“…Indeed,” Severus acknowledged after a pause, glancing over at the lilac snakeling before returning his attention back towards Hadrian and subsequently Sirius. “What is this place?”

Remus reached out without even looking, taking a hold of James’ upper arm, and keeping him in place. He knew this meeting was probably hardest on James what with his especially deep-rooted grudge against Severus – the one who used to hang off of his Lily. It was best to keep his friend close and sitting down, he wouldn’t be too inclined to pick a fight with Severus if he was in a vulnerable position with the other looming over him. Or so Remus hoped. Since no one else spoke up, Hadrian did the honour:

“It’s called the Room of Requirement, or the Come-and-Go Room,” he explained happily, motioning for Severus to step inside completely. “If you could close the door, I’ll make it inaccessible for anyone we don’t want here right now.”

“Like Pettigrew?” Severus guessed perceptively, doing as he was bid though keeping his back to the wall. He was eying the room in-between keeping the Marauders in his line of sight, and Remus could pretty much smell the tension in the air.

This time Hadrian nudged his boyfriend in the ribs, not even trying to be subtle about it. He had given them all a dressing down for their behaviour towards the Slytherin once they had reached the Room, and it was clear he was not about to go back on his words.

“Astute observation,” Sirius grumbled, rubbing his side moodily.

“Have a seat,” Hadrian intervened before it could get any more awkward. “Make yourself at home. The room will provide whatever you need, you only need to focus your mind on it. Only exceptions are foods, those we will have to ask the house-elves for.”

“Gamp’s Law,” Severus nodded his understanding curtly before focusing his dark gaze for a moment on one of the slouchy, over-stuffed armchairs the Marauders favoured. Seconds later they all watched it change into a high-backed wingchair, Slytherin-green in colour and edged in black.

“Of course the seating arrangements weren’t good enough for Mr. Slytherin Supreme here,” James muttered under his breath, only to receive a glare from Hadrian. “What? He’s totally doing that on purpose!” James added, decidedly not pouting.
Hadrian was just about to counter this statement when they all witnessed something completely alien to them: Severus Snape was laughing. Or, well, chuckling darkly while sitting proudly in his ominous chair, but the matter stands, the unmoving Slytherin was obviously amused.

“He’s right, you know,” said Slytherin commented towards a wide-eyed Hadrian. “It’s quite amusing to see the mighty Marauders struggle so much, straining their miniscule brains to oblige their sworn enemy.”

“Hey!” Sirius snarled. “We’re doing this for Hadrian, not you, Sni- …Snape!”

“Yet it’s me you’re so desperately trying to please, going so far as to accept me into your illustrious round, addressing me nearly properly,” Severus drawled, but this time it was him that was on the receiving end of Hadrian’s patented glare.

It followed long moments of silent staring, green into black, Marauders tensed around them, wands being caressed threateningly, before finally Severus sighed in a very put-upon manner.

“Fine. Have it your way,” he spat, though Remus thought it lacked the usual venom.

“1:0 for Hadrian,” he couldn’t help but add in his own two Knuts, earning at least some snickers. Breathing became easier then.

It was a few more or less awkward minutes later during which Harry, to the exasperated surprise of everyone else, had called a house-elf he somehow knew by name and had them bring tea and biscuits. Now everyone was sat there in a semi circle, shuffling uncomfortably, sipping tea, and generally not looking at each other – with the notable exception of Harry and Sirius. Currently the boyfriends were cuddled close on a love seat, and Harry was constantly busy batting away Sirius’ wandering hands. It was as if the Marauder had the need to prove something now that Severus was with them, and Harry had about enough.

“So, Severus,” he pointedly addressed the lonely Slytherin in their midst, “The snake told me you had taken a liking to each other?” To put it lightly. That lilac snakeling knew what it wanted.

There was a look of faint smug pleasure crossing Severus’ face before it vanished behind an indifferent façade. Harry had to suppress a grin. Somehow he was rather sure it wasn’t only the snake that had made its decision.

“It could arguably be said there is a certain amount of …goodwill, yes,” he delicately answered, though his dark eyes wandered over to the animals near the fireplace with such a look there was no doubt he really, really wanted to- …well, Harry would like to say Severus wanted to get to know the reptile, but somehow that look appeared more one of… obsession? No, it was want. Severus wanted to possess that snake. Whatever for, Harry wouldn’t question, pushing memories of Voldemort and Nagini aside roughly.

A derisive snort interrupted their conversation, and Harry glanced over at the Marauders. Though Remus was trying to look welcoming and Sirius had at least shut up for the moment, James was the picture of hostility. At that moment he looked exactly as he had in the memory Harry had once seen in the adult Severus Snape’s pensieve.

“Of course the Slytherin ponce wants the snake,” James spat, an ugly sneer disfiguring his features, “The slimy git can’t wait to show it off. I bet having the thing’s gonna give you credit with the other little Death Eater wannabes! It’s sick the way you’re all so into that dark crap.”
Though the nastiness was directed at Severus, it was Harry who flinched. He heard Remus draw in a sharp breath and then Sirius rounded on James.

“Shut it, Prongs,” he snapped, though it was clear he didn’t particularly disagree with his best mate’s words. He simply disliked them hurting his boyfriend.

Harry took a deep breath. He had known it would be a struggle. Hell, that memory James just reminded him of was still quite fresh in his mind. He remembered all too clearly how desperately disappointed he had been back then when he learned all those accusations of his father being a bully were actually true. Coming to the past had taught him that there was more to his father’s personality, but unlike with Sirius Harry hadn’t had that talk with James.

“So,” he spoke into the sudden deafening silence, “It’s okay for me to be a Parselmouth, but the moment Sev, a Slytherin, has a snake as a pet…”

“That’s not what I-,” James interrupted, but Harry could see where this would go. James honestly hadn’t meant to hurt him, it was his prejudices talking, but that didn’t make it any better.

“She likes you a lot,” Harry spoke over James, turning to Severus. “Want to go talk to her? I can translate,” he pointed out unnecessarily, rubbing the whole issue in just because he could.

James’ words had hurt and seeing as neither Sirius nor Remus were going to speak up… Standing, he led Severus over to the fireplace, completely dismissing the others. Either they got over their ridiculous prejudices, or… well, or there would be a lot of fights in their future. The Marauders didn’t stop them and Harry didn’t turn to look what they were up to as he and Severus sat down near the fire. He watched the Slytherin skilfully interact with the snake, translating when necessary, but his thoughts went wandering for a while. He never noticed Savio had sneaked into his lap until Severus addressed him again:

“Could you ask her what she thinks of the name ‘Delphinium’?” He requested surprisingly politely, a near childish joy briefly visible on his sallow face.

“Oh as in the plant?” Harry smiled as he turned towards the serpent and questioned her about her thoughts on the matter.

“Delphinium as in belonging to the family Ranunculaceae, yes,” Severus nodded, an appreciative look in his dark eyes. “All members of this genus are toxic to humans, and…,” he continued, but was interrupted by an aggravated Sirius who must have come over at one point.

“Larkspur is violet!” He exclaimed, sounding like he just really wanted to contribute to the conversation between his beloved boyfriend and the snarky git.

“What an astute observation, Black,” Severus sneered slightly as he threw Sirius’ former words back at him. “Yes, delphinium, commonly known as ‘larkspur’, varies in colour from purple and blue, to red, yellow, or white.”

Sirius glowered at him, but Harry couldn’t hide a small smile. Sirius might be horrendous at it, but at least he was trying. Maybe he was simply jealous about Harry spending time exclusively with Severus, but he wasn’t going to poke a gifted Thestral between the ribs. (*)

“It’s beautiful when it blossoms,” Harry added softly, glancing shyly at his boyfriend. He really didn’t like all this tension between them.

Sirius cracked a smile at him and Harry was about to reach out and tug him down to sit with them when Severus added:
“Larkspur may refer to all of the many subgenera of delphinium, one of which you should be at the very least aware of,” he drawled in his silky tone of voice, flat eyes staring over Sirius’ shoulder to fix on the other two.

There was something unsavoury in his voice and Harry felt like hitting him for once again antagonising the Marauders. Really, if his dad was a bully, Severus knew exactly where to poke to get this kind of reaction. It was as if they were doing it all purposefully, egging each other on. It was like… like Draco Malfoy and Harry himself, he realised with a sigh.

“What you on about now, Snape?” Sirius growled, picking up on the dangerous tone in the Slytherin’s voice.

There was a moment of silence as Severus stared at them all in disgusted disbelief.

“Well?” James snapped from where he was lounging moodily in his armchair.

“Aconitum,” Severus lectured in exasperation, pinching the bridge of his nose, “Commonly known as aconite, monkshood, devil’s helmet…,” he paused and raised his head to stare malevolently at Remus, “Wolf’s bane.” (*)

James was on him in seconds.

During the following days the situation between the five of them would not change much. Though it had to be said that the Marauders weren’t trying to go after Severus in the halls any longer, they would still be at each others’ throats the moment Harry turned his back. The Slytherin for his part seemed content ignoring James, Sirius, and Remus, and only ever truly acknowledged Harry. It was strenuous, but for some reason Severus persisted and the Marauders put up with him being there. Somewhat.

So they would all meet in the Room of Requirement on occasion, because there was still no way Sirius would let Harry meet Severus on his own. These gatherings mostly consisted of training together, because conversation wasn’t easy to make if you despised the very air the other breathed. Severus had surprised the Marauders with how vicious his offensive spellwork was, though he lacked a bit in the defensive. Harry of course had known the future potions master would one day be wicked in a fight and it was fascinating for him to watch the younger version in action. To think that he could teach Severus Snape a thing or two about Defence…

Harry’s ordered training on Wednesday and Thursday evenings turned out to be yet again delayed for another week, making him wonder what that was all about. Dumbledore had been so eager to train his newest weapon, Moody had even agreed to teach him after that episode up in the headmaster’s office, yet now they were postponing it again and again. Harry had thought the auror unhealthily interested in himself after the drama in Diagon Alley, his Patronus, and then the questioning at Potter Manor. Maybe the cover story, the forged medical records, had done their purpose so well that the man had lost all interest? Sounded suspiciously convenient to Harry, and he wasn’t sure whether such a development would make him glad or not. On the one hand he really hadn’t been looking forward to being even closer scrutinised by the paranoid Moody, but on the other hand those lessons were likely to be invaluable. The man was a very successful auror, after all, and not even retired in this time. He was bound to know a ton of things that would help Harry survive in the future to come.

But it were Bole and Pettigrew that truly marked these days. They hadn’t yet managed to trick the rat into signing the contract that would keep him from blabbing about their secrets, and James and Sirius were all for simply forcing his hand. Harry wasn’t sure how he felt about the matter, but the thought
that it wouldn’t only be him in danger if Pettigrew talked but more than anything Remus… Yeah, that was a pretty good incentive.

The very potions class after that first meeting they all got to witness Bole repeatedly trying to command Harry. Obviously he expected the potion to have already been administered. It would have been hilarious if the situation wasn’t so serious. After all, this only confirmed the man, a teacher, had conspired to drug Harry into submission. For what reason, they weren’t sure, but it probably had to do with his creature… which meant another person in the know, making them all twitchy about the danger. If they outing Bole’s machinations, and they would the moment they got their hands on the potion, what was to stop him from exposing Harry? James had tried to soothe Harry’s frayed nerves by promising the protection of House Potter, but how far did that protection truly reach? And wouldn’t affiliation with a known creature only diminish the Potter’s influence?

It didn’t really help that Harry was still smarting about his dad’s callous comments. James hadn’t tried again to rectify his words and he also hadn’t tried to apologise. The topic was summarily ignored and treated like the whole thing never happened. It angered Harry, but at the same time he knew he couldn’t expect them to change their views on things so easily. They had grown into their prejudices about ‘the Dark’ over years and basically been raised to house-related bias. He himself had been the same not so long ago. Still, it hurt.

On Friday that week they realised their concern about a certain potion had been misplaced as Sirius started to feel ill shortly after dinner.

Chapter End Notes

(*) poking a gifted Thestral between the ribs: my version of the adage ‘Never look a gift horse in the mouth.’
(*) Though the Wolfsbane Potion was invented by Damocles Belby sometime after the mid-1970s, so very close to this point in the story, Severus thinks that at least Remus should be aware of the danger the main ingredient poses to him:aconite.

End Notes

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