

“Mmm, Severus?” he mumbled, blinking open hazy eyes. Severus watched as the events of the night rushed into clarity in the man’s eyes. “Harry!” he exclaimed, voice hoarse. “Oh, Merlin, is he alright? Did I hurt him? Where’s Sirius?— and— *Peter!*”

“Remus, breathe,” Severus cut through the man’s panicked ramblings, squeezing his shoulder. “Potter is fine. You didn’t hurt anyone. Pettigrew escaped, but so did Black.” He set the bundle he was carrying down on the ground, revealing a pair of soft black trousers and a thick brown cardigan. “Let’s get you back to the castle. I’ll explain everything on the way.”

It was slow going, getting Remus dressed and moving, and by the time they reached the castle doors Severus had given up letting the prideful idiot walk and just hauled him up into his arms. Remus looked up at him, grinning faintly. “I think I’m swooning,” he declared playfully, laughing when Severus scowled.

“Quiet, or I’ll leave you to crawl back to your quarters.” They both knew the threat was an empty one. Nonetheless, Remus settled down, a soft sigh escaping his lips as he rested his head against Severus’ shoulder. The Slytherin’s heart stuttered.

Finally, they were in Remus’ bedroom, and Severus deposited the man as gently as he could on the mattress. Remus closed his eyes for a long moment, then swore quietly. “Twelve years,” he murmured. “I thought my best friend was a murderer for *twelve years*. Peter, this whole time... how could I have been so wrong, Severus?”

“The evidence against Black was damning,” Severus pointed out. He perched on the edge of the mattress, his own muscles aching. His night hadn’t exactly been sunshine and roses either.

“I should’ve trusted him.”

“Why? He didn’t trust you.” Severus could still remember how it’d been back then, Remus full of anguish when he realised his friends were suspicious of him after all they’d been through, that they thought for even a *second* that he’d turn away from the Light. Severus had tried to convince him that their association wasn’t helping, but Remus refused to give him up. Foolish, idiot Gryffindor.

“If I’d pushed for a trial, this never would’ve happened. Harry never would have been raised by *her*.”

“The Ministry never would have listened to a werewolf,” Severus pointed out. “It’s all moot. What matters now is that we know the truth. Potter knows the truth.”

“But Sirius is still a criminal in the eyes of the world, and Peter’s free to take his slimy little traitorous arse back to his precious master, wherever he is,” Remus said with a scowl, wincing as it tugged on a cut on his face. Honey eyes met Severus’ dark ones, far too old to be sitting in such a young face. “Everything’s about to change, isn’t it, Severus?”

Severus glanced down to his fabric-covered left forearm, where the barely-there Dark Mark ached like it had been for the last year. Not enough to cause a problem, but enough to be