

“He’s right, Harry. You are so full of love, it’s unfathomable to me how you could possibly become like Voldemort. For one thing, we certainly wouldn’t let you.”

“Promise me that,” Harry begged. Snape’s words were nice, but Harry still didn’t believe him. Not when there was that dark, ugly *thing* inside him, that twisted piece of magic so intertwined with his own.

“We promise we won’t let you become a Dark Lord,” Remus vowed. “Easiest promise I’ll ever keep.” He gently tugged Harry out of Snape’s arms and into his own, stroking his hair. “Everyone in this house has struggled with darkness at some point or another, Harry. Even Sirius. Look at the family he came from. And there is nothing wrong with acknowledging that darkness within you. Dark does not necessarily mean evil. Severus is still a dark wizard, but he’s not an evil man. I’m a dark creature, but I’m not evil. Peter Pettigrew had never successfully cast a dark spell in his life before joining Voldemort, and yet I think we can all agree whatever little bit of good left in him died a long time ago. Now,” he said, glancing between Harry and Snape, “I have to leave in the morning, so I would very much like to spend my last night at home for a while in the company of two people I love dearly. Let’s have Ceri make some hot chocolate and bring it to the living room, shall we?”

Harry couldn’t help but smile; typical Remus Lupin response. Chocolate solved everything.

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The house was quiet without Remus around. Not because Harry and Snape were still at odds with each other — after Harry’s little breakdown and Snape’s uncharacteristic burst of emotion, there was no way they could continue that stalemate — but because neither of them was really prone to conversation for conversation’s sake, and without Remus around to nudge them into it, they just... didn’t.

But there was an understanding between them. Another barrier had come down. Harry resumed his training, and Snape continued to teach him about dark magic, maintaining that Harry would need to know it, and insisting he was strong enough to know when to stop. In the evenings, Harry read the book from Susan, or worked on his animagus form. He’d owl-ordered a book about foxes and their anatomy, and it was proving very helpful indeed.

“Professor?” he asked one evening, breaking the companionable silence between them. Snape looked up from his own book, raising one eyebrow. “Did you ever try to become an animagus?” It seemed like such a useful piece of magic, Harry couldn’t understand why everyone didn’t do it. Sure, it was difficult, and not everyone *could*, but why did so many people not even try?

“When I learned what the Marauders had done, I brewed the potion to discover my form,” Snape admitted. “It is a crow. The form was not suitable for what I’d hoped to use it for, and I was incredibly busy, so I never continued to learn the transformation. I only seemed to get busier as time went on.”

A faint smile tugged at Harry’s lips as he interpreted the Snape-speak — a crow couldn’t run with a werewolf on the full moon, therefore he had no interest in being an animagus. He was