

trembling fingers — it seemed she didn't quite know what to make of the whole situation.

And so together, they started the journey back to Hogwarts.

It was the most bizarre procession of people Harry had ever been part of, and he stared at Sirius' back as he walked through the tunnel. His godfather. The man he'd heard so much about — even when Lupin tried not to talk about him, he couldn't help it. All the stories of James Potter seemed to include Sirius Black.

Black kept glancing over his shoulder at Harry, wary and uncertain. Neither of them spoke — not until they were clear of the tunnel, and the vicious tree it lived under.

"I— Moony probably told you, Harry," Black started hesitantly, "but I'm— I'm your godfather."

"Yeah. I know." Harry bit his lip, unsure what else to say.

"Well, I mean, if I get free— that makes me your guardian. If... if you would want that." Black clearly misread the look of shock on Harry's face, as he hunched in on himself. "It's fine if you don't, I'm sure whoever you've got is great, I just—"

"Now's not the time, Sirius," Lupin cut in, covering Harry's snort of derision. Those amber eyes were sympathetic as they looked between the pair. "You can talk this over later."

They kept walking, but Harry jogged forward a half step, bumping his shoulder against his godfather's. "I'd love to live with you," he murmured, grinning slightly. "Just say the word."

Sirius looked like all his Christmases had come at once. For the first time, Harry could see in him the man from his parents' wedding photo, the charming boy from the yearbook.

"Really?"

"Definitely."

Both of them turned abruptly when Lupin choked out a quiet cry, shoulders tensing, the grey in his hair highlighted by the silvery light of the moon.

The full moon.

Snape and Sirius froze in horror, staring at each other. Ron's body hit the ground with a thud as Snape's spell ended abruptly.

"Oh no," Hermione whimpered, gaze fixed firmly on Lupin as his back began to arch.

"Your potion," Snape hissed. "Remus!"

But it was too late — the man was glassy-eyed, his mind clearly elsewhere already.

"Run," Sirius urged. "Snape, take the kids and run, *now*."