

“You have to be incredibly careful, Harry. If the wrong person should find out what you know... I don’t have to tell you how badly that could end up for you.” Lupin’s words made Harry’s stomach churn. No, he was well aware of the line he was treading.

“I don’t know what to do,” he admitted in a meek voice. “I’ve been reading up as much as I can about the old bloodlines, and what it means to be an heir, and family magic, but... I don’t know what I’m doing, and I don’t know *why* Dumbledore wants to keep it from me, and I don’t know who I can trust and if I tell the wrong person I could die!”

All of a sudden, Lupin’s arms were wrapped around his shoulders, pulling him in close. Harry couldn’t help the way he buried his face in the man’s robes, eyes squeezed shut against the tears threatening to spill forth. “Easy, cub, easy. It’s alright,” Lupin soothed, one broad hand rubbing across his shoulders. It was a hug unlike any Harry had experienced before. Lupin looked like a strong wind would blow him over, but there was wiry muscle in his arms, and it made Harry feel safe. Secure. Like... like a parent would. Not even like Mrs Weasley hugging him, where she tried to crush the life out of him. Just... warm.

“Albus Dumbledore is not going to hurt you anymore, I promise you that,” Lupin vowed fiercely, his lips pressed against Harry’s hair. “You’ve done so well, cub. You’ve been so brave. But you don’t have to do this alone anymore.”

“I’m always alone,” Harry muttered bitterly. Lupin pulled back enough to look Harry in the eye, and he could’ve sworn the man’s eyes flashed gold for a second. It was probably just the light.

“*Not anymore*,” he growled firmly. “Never again. I’ve let you down for far too long.” He seemed as reluctant to break the hug as Harry was, but they parted nonetheless, Lupin unsuccessfully smoothing Harry’s hair down. “That’s a lost cause,” he said ruefully, making Harry snort. “Just like James’.”

Stepping back, Harry took a breath. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell anyone about the map.”

“I’ll forgive you, but know in future you can come to me about anything, okay?” Lupin told him, brown eyes serious. “Absolutely anything. You can trust me, Harry.” He glanced down at the map. “You should go. Your friend Miss Granger is on her way up here, no doubt looking for you.”

“Right, yeah.” Harry had told Hermione what happened. She seemed to think it served him right to get the map confiscated. Ron was less pleased by it. “I’ll, uh, see you later, then. Thanks.”

“Have a good evening, Harry.”

Harry left the office with his hands in his pockets, his emotions so jumbled in his head he could barely make sense of them all. At least one person — one adult — knew the truth, now. One person was on his side.