

“Well, we can’t have that,” she teased. “Perhaps your visitor might liven you up a bit.”

All three boys stared at her. “Visitor?” Sirius asked, confused. “It’s not Pete, is it? He’s supposed to be in Germany.”

“No, it’s not Peter.”

Euphemia stepped aside, and Harry gasped; there was Lily Evans, green eyes shining so like Harry’s own, a few flakes of snow melting on the shoulders of her dark blue jumper. She waved shyly, then laughed as James pitched head-first into the chair leg in his hurry to stand up.

“Lily Flower!” He rushed over to her, taking her by the hands. “I thought you were with your family?”

“I had a fight with my sister,” Lily replied, her voice sending shivers down Harry’s spine — still as Brummie as she had been as a child, but softer; more like the woman he would hear in his dreams, begging for his life to be spared. “She’s brought her *fiancé* over for Christmas and he’s just the *worst*, I couldn’t stand being there any longer. So I told Mum I was going out for a bit, and... you did say I could visit, if I had the chance. I’m sorry I didn’t give you any warning.”

Suddenly, James was sweeping her up into his arms, spinning her around with a shout of joy. “Best surprise *ever*,” he declared, kissing the tip of her nose. “Lily can stay for dinner, right, Mum?”

“Of course, dear,” Euphemia agreed. “Lily, you’re always welcome here. It’s no trouble to set the table for one other; the elves cook for an army just to feed Sirius!”

“I’m a growing boy!” Sirius protested indignantly, while Lily giggled.

“Yes, and I wish you’d stop; you’re taller than Monty now,” Euphemia teased. “Any more and we’ll have to make the fireplace bigger so you don’t crack your head flooing home.”

Harry saw the way Sirius’ cheeks flushed, just a little, like he still wasn’t used to thinking of the Pottery as home. Harry knew the feeling.

James slung an arm around Lily’s waist, then froze. “Lils,” he said slowly, “is that snow on your jumper?”

“Yeah? Did you not notice it’s chucking down outside?” the redhead asked, bemused. James’ brown eyes went round behind his glasses.

“Really? How long’s it been snowing, Mum?”

“Look for yourself.”

Harry followed his father to the window, looking out into the darkening garden to see nothing but a blanket of white. James yelped excitedly. “Why didn’t you tell us!”