

“One day,” Sirius promised, holding him close. “Still two more goes after this one. Plenty of time to clear my name.”

Harry hoped they could manage it. “Are you going back to Seren Du?” He felt Sirius nod.

“Soon as the house has cleared out,” he confirmed. “Reckon I can get at least a couple of hours of sunshine. Moony’s going to tell everyone I’m sulking in my room when they get back from dropping you off.”

“Good.” Harry hated the idea of leaving him, but at least it would give him the chance to get out of the house. “I’ll get the mirror back from Draco and send it through Snape as soon as I can.”

“Sounds good. You look after yourself, alright? I’m not just talking about Dumbledore.” Sirius sighed, leaning his chin against Harry’s forehead. “I wish you didn’t have quite so much on your shoulders, pup. I hope you have a nice, quiet year, but I feel like that’s asking far too much. So all I can say is; study hard, fly well, make time for your friends, and *definitely* make time for your boyfriend.” His smile pressed to Harry’s hair. “Keep working on your animagus transformation, I bet you’ll have made loads of progress by Christmas.”

Harry had hardly had any free time to work on the magic since leaving Seren Du, and he was keen to properly get back to it. “You’ll look after yourself too, yeah? There’s enough people around that you shouldn’t be alone when the cold gets bad. As long as you tell someone,” he said pointedly, pulling back to look his godfather in the eye. “Bill, or Charlie, or even Tonks. She seems alright.”

“Yeah, she’s a good one. Course, with Andi as her mum, she wouldn’t be anything less.” Sirius was dodging the subject, and Harry narrowed his eyes until the man sighed. “Fine. I’ll tell people, if they’re around. I’m not nearly as bad as I was last year, though.”

That was true, but also he was daft if he thought Harry didn’t see how the ghosts of Azkaban could drown him some days.

“I don’t think I’ll make it through the whole school year without tipping Dumbledore off,” Harry confessed quietly. “Especially not exams. I’m not sabotaging myself on those.” His OWLs were important, and if he’d made it that far without the headmaster realising at least some of the truth, he probably wouldn’t make it much further.

“Do what you can. And remember, you’re not alone.” Sirius ruffled his hair. “You’ve got all of us here willing to help, and all your friends at school. Bill’s working on the scar situation. Dumbledore needs you, pup. Whatever his plans are, he can’t do anything to you, not if he wants to see Voldemort defeated.” His face grew serious for a moment. “And if he puts those blockers and compulsions back on you, *we will notice*, and we will fix it. I promise.”

Had his deepest fears been that transparent? A cold sweat gathered on the back of his neck every time he thought about being left to Dumbledore’s mercy, being shaped and brainwashed with magic and sent back to the ‘right path’ as a prisoner in his own body while his friends watched on, oblivious.