

noticeable. “I’m afraid you’re right.” They were on borrowed time. “This is only the beginning.”

Remus’ face twisted in resignation. He reached up to cup Severus’ jaw, hand sliding around to the back of his head. Severus couldn’t help but flinch as fingers pressed against the lump on his skull. “You’re hurt,” Remus realised. “What— was it me?”

Severus stayed silent, which was confirmation enough, and horror flooded Remus’ face. “Oh, Severus, *no*. Tell me I didn’t bite you. You said everyone was fine!”

“Hush, Remus,” Severus soothed. “You didn’t bite anyone. You merely knocked me aside when I stood between you and the children. I’ll heal.”

“You... you stood between me and the kids? After I’d transformed?” Severus nodded. In the blink of an eye, Remus was yanking him down, and suddenly there were lips pressed to his. Severus tensed, but muscle memory took over, his lips moving against Remus’ and his hand tightening on the man’s shoulder, pulling him closer. Twelve years, yet it felt like no time at all. His heart ached as Remus’ tongue snuck between his lips, a low groan dragging from deep in the man’s throat.

When Severus finally had the sense to pull away, he found himself with one leg flung over Remus’ thigh, practically straddling the man. Remus stroked his cheek gently, his eyes alive in a way Severus hadn’t seen all year. “I am so sick,” the Gryffindor breathed, “of trying to pretend I’m not absolutely mad about you, Severus Snape.” His kiss-swollen lips curved in a faint smile, his head tilting up to bare his neck slightly, the cardigan hanging off his narrow shoulders. With his mussed hair and trusting gaze, he looked like every dream Severus had never let himself have. “Stay. *Please*.”

All year, Severus had been reminding himself of all the reasons he couldn’t have Remus Lupin. Telling himself time and time again that his teenage desires were going to get one of them killed, and they were adults now, and childish love wasn’t enough.

All those reasons seemed to have fled his brain as he stared down at the man who had seen him through everything, the man he kept coming back to no matter how many times they pushed each other away.

He righted himself, sitting on the edge of the mattress once more. A whimper escaped Remus’ lips, the light in his eyes dimming.

Severus leaned down and unbuckled his boots.

He was done denying himself things. If the Dark Lord was to return, he deserved every scrap of *good* he could hold onto before it was too late.

He shrugged his teaching robe off his shoulders, letting it pool on the floor. He heard a sharp intake of breath. “*Severus*.” The only person to ever say his name so reverently. He ached, all the way down to his bones, and not just from being flung across the grass by a full-grown werewolf. He was so *tired*. Tired of being alone. Tired of so many things.