

Chapter 36

Harry woke after eight hours of restful, dreamless sleep. His body felt miles better — all his injuries from the night before had been healed, and the Cruciatus shakes had gone. But his heart still had a raw, gaping hole in it; the kind that made it hurt to breathe, hurt to think.

Sirius and Remus were still there, but they couldn't stay long. "Albus won't let us stick around much longer," Remus said sadly. "He's already been by three times this morning to see if you've woken up yet."

"Merlin forbid I have people who care about me more than the war effort," Harry replied dryly. Remus bent to kiss his forehead, right over his scar.

"Don't you forget that, cub," he breathed. "Our first priority is always you. *Always*."

Harry's heart hurt for an entirely different reason. He'd never been someone's priority before.

Sirius transformed back long enough to give Harry a hug and promise to be in touch soon. "This changes our plans, but we'll figure it out. You won't be with those muggles any longer than you have to be," he assured. "Love you, pup."

"Love you too," Harry replied, getting one last hug from both men before Sirius became a dog once more, and the pair left the Hospital Wing.

Alone for the first time since it had all happened, Harry let out a shaky breath, tucking his knees up to his chest. He wanted to call his friends back from the dorm, to surround himself with noise and people so he didn't have to try and think. He wanted to never see another human being again, not until the hole in his heart was closed over. He wanted it all to *stop*.

The door opened, and Madam Pomfrey bustled in, giving Harry a soft, knowing smile. "If there was a potion I could give you to make it all go away, Mr Potter, I would," she told him gently. "Sadly, magic can only do so much. Time will have to take care of the rest."

A wave of her wand summoned a set of pale blue pinstriped pyjamas, and she held them out to Harry. "I want to keep you until at least dinner. Go ahead and shower, it might help. I'll have breakfast waiting when you get out."

She drew back the curtains on a bed a few rows down, and Harry's eyebrows rose at the sight of the real Alastor Moody sprawled unconscious in the bed. "Is he alright?"

"He will be," Pomfrey assured. "He's had quite the year, but it's nothing permanent. Go on, off with you, get out of those awful clothes."

When he stood, Harry looked down at himself, grimacing at the dirt and blood covering his clothing. Yes, pyjamas seemed like an excellent idea.