

he'd have to deal with the awkwardness that would follow, and probably a scolding from Hermione about his temper, when she found out.

"I think you're owed more than a few of those," Sirius retorted. "Ron was being a prick, anyway — you were right, he's old enough to do his own homework." His hand stopped moving, resting on the back of Harry's neck, a comforting weight. "But you can lock him out of here 'til dinner. And the twins and I will up our pranking game to try and keep him off your back. There's only two more weeks until school, and then you'll have all your other friends around, and it'll be easier to avoid Ron and Hermione."

There was a sadness to Sirius' voice, and Harry's heart clenched; he would get to go back to school and escape Grimmauld Place, but Sirius wouldn't. "Are you going to be alright, when I go?"

"Oh, don't worry about me, pup," Sirius replied, bravado lingering at the edge of his smile. "Once all you kids are gone it'll be easy for me to pretend to sulk in my room all day. I can have Ceri pop me home and hang out with Beaky in the sunshine. I managed alright last year, after all."

Harry remembered all the days he'd called Sirius and seen the shadows in his face. All the times Remus had stayed at Seren Du to keep him company. Sirius was doing lots better, but Azkaban's scars were still present. "I'll always worry about you," he confessed, burrowing deeper into the man's chest. Sirius held him close.

"I know, kiddo. But honestly, I'll be alright. I can survive anything after Azkaban."

Harry sighed, longing for the day that Sirius — and himself — no longer just had to *survive*, but could truly enjoy life.

"Two weeks feels like forever," he admitted softly. Even at the Dursleys, summer had never dragged on so long.

"Tell me about it," Sirius agreed with a snort. Then he grew serious. "D'you want me to ask Snape for some more Dreamless Sleep?"

It was a tempting offer, but Harry shook his head. "It won't help in the long term." It would only delay the dreams. He couldn't take the potion forever. "Just... can we hang out here for a bit?" It was nice, being in the quiet with Sirius. Almost like being back at home.

"As long as you like, kiddo," Sirius agreed without hesitation. He started to stroke Harry's hair again, playing with the messy black strands. "We don't have to leave 'til you want to. Or if you want to kick me out and get some time to yourself, that's fine too. I'll just go hex all of Ron's pants to scream at him when he gets a boner."

Harry choked, burying helpless giggles in Sirius' jumper. "Maybe in a bit," he agreed.

He couldn't deny a Marauder his fun, after all.