

“I’m a fox.” He’d gone into the experience with a handful of ideas about what his animagus form might be, and fox wasn’t anywhere on the list, but now he couldn’t imagine being anything else.

“You found it!” Sirius whooped, diving into the cushion pile to hug Harry tightly, almost knocking over the potion bowl in his enthusiasm. “A fox? Really? Blimey, I thought for sure you’d be a bird! That’s brilliant, Harry.”

“Cunning yet mischievous, bold yet quick-thinking, seen as both an omen of luck and misfortune depending on the culture and the situation,” Remus informed him, because *of course* he had random fox facts tucked up in that brain of his. “I’d say that suits rather well, for a snake in lion’s clothing. Congratulations, Harry.”

“I’ll have to buy some books, won’t I?” Harry knew the next step; studying the natural state of his animal form, learning as much about it as possible, and continuing his meditations until he knew his animal skin as confidently as he knew his own. That was the part of the process that tripped up a lot of people; refusal to own up to *all* facets of their personality, to face their flaws and acknowledge them. You couldn’t return to your own skin if you didn’t fully claim it as yours.

“I don’t think we’ve got anything on foxes in the library, but we can check,” Sirius said, shrugging. “If not, you know where the catalogue is, yeah.”

Harry’s gaze trailed over to Snape — the Slytherin hadn’t said anything yet, and part of Harry yearned for his approval as much as Sirius’ or Remus’. Finally, his dark eyes softened ever so slightly around the edges. “You’re about to become far more trouble than you’re worth, aren’t you?” he remarked. “An animal known for sneaking about, and native to Britain to boot. I should’ve known, from the legacy of the Marauders.”

“You’re part of that legacy now, Snively,” Sirius declared cheerfully. Snape glared at him.

“Let’s head down for lunch,” Remus suggested. “We can talk about the next steps while we eat. Then you can get in a bit of duelling practice before we head over for the Order meeting tonight.” The meetings were becoming all the more frequent, but Remus and Sirius assured Harry there was rarely anything of note decided during them. Harry privately suspected Dumbledore kept gathering everyone just to make sure he could keep a close eye on them.

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Harry spent almost the entire hour and a half the adults were at the Order meeting in his room in a meditative state with the aid of his wardstone, studying his fox form. The potion was only required the first time; once you’d already accessed that little corner of your magic, it was easier to find it again. Harry needed to learn exactly what the fox looked like, moved like, sounded like — he needed to know it as well as he knew himself.

Sirius had warned him that the animagus transformation was not the most thrilling bit of magic to learn. There was no flashy spell and bam, you’re an animal. There was a lot of meditation, and introspection, and a slow, gruelling process of patience and time that made