

through,” Sirius hastened to assure, “but he tried, and he knows I’m blocking him. He’s suspicious.”

“Do you know what he was searching for?” Severus asked intently.

“I think he was looking to see if I’d been in contact with Harry,” Sirius replied, frowning. “But honestly, it could be anything. He’s making it nigh on impossible for me to do anything, these days. He’s around here so often, I haven’t been home since he left the school.”

Remus’ heart clenched in sympathy; it couldn’t be easy for Sirius, locked up in Grimmauld all the time. “Is there anything we can do to put him at ease?” He turned helpless eyes to Severus, whose lips were pursed in thought.

“I think we may need to accept that Albus will find out the two of you are not loyal sooner rather than later,” he said eventually. Remus knew that his partner was planning on playing the triple agent for as long as physically possible. “Have you heard back from Bill at all?”

“He said the book you gave him was really helpful,” Remus relayed. “That they should be able to figure out a way to get the horcrux out by summer.”

Severus’ shoulders twitched, the tiniest betrayal of his relief. Remus wasn’t sure where the book had come from — sometimes he knew best not to ask — but he was glad Severus had found it.

“I’m worried if Dumbledore pushes my shields again he might break them,” Sirius admitted.

“He will expect you to avoid looking him in the eye, now he’s been caught out,” Severus reasoned. “It is unlikely he will try again; he may, however, find other ways of trying to question you on Potter’s movements.”

“If he does, he’ll get a reminder that this is my bloody house, and Lord Black or not I still hold the wards,” Sirius growled, eyes flashing. Remus smirked; he would quite like to see that.

“As satisfying as that would be,” Severus drawled, clearly of the same mind, “need I remind you that Potter is still stuck with that *hag* at the school, and putting him on Albus’ shit-list will not help in the slightest?”

“How bad is it there?” Sirius asked, the light in his eyes fading until he just looked weary. Remus hated that look on him, the reminder of the twelve years his friend had spent in Azkaban. It appeared less and less these days — especially with Charlie Weasley around — but when it did pop back up, it made Remus’ heart grow heavy.

“The students are united against her,” Severus supplied. “The Weasley twins are certainly making her life difficult. They’re better than you and Potter ever were,” he added with a smirk, making Sirius laugh.

“Having seen their inventions, I’ll concede to that,” he said. “Bloody brilliant, the pair of them. Glad to hear they’re keeping Umbitch on her toes.”