

“Harry.” Sirius’ voice was a low growl, his hands clenched into fists on his lap. His wand was beside him, untouched.

“Potter,” Severus confirmed. “Or the Longbottom boy. The Dark Lord decided there was a good chance it could be either, so he set his followers to find both families.” The firelight flickered off of Severus’ sharp cheekbones, making him look haggard, his eyes full of grief. “As soon as I realised the Dark Lord planned to kill a child — *Lily’s* child — I went to Dumbledore and begged him for mercy, pleaded with him to protect Lily and her son. I offered my services as a spy for the light, to repent for what I had done. I hoped it would be enough. I was wrong.” He gave a twisted sort of grimace, drawing his hands away from Remus’ lap. “I am the reason Lily and James are dead. And that knowledge will haunt me for the rest of my days.”

The silence that followed was painfully thick. Remus didn’t know what to say, Severus’ words echoing in his mind, the pieces falling together. Harry was prophesised to defeat Voldemort. Voldemort knew that, which was why he went after Lily and James. Severus was the one who had given him that information.

“I was the one who convinced Lily and James to use Peter as the Secret Keeper,” Sirius said eventually. “I thought I’d be too obvious a choice. No one would suspect Peter. Not even us. Because of me, Voldemort got to them. He could’ve known about the prophecy for years and never been any the wiser if it had been me.” He looked up at Severus with hollow eyes, eyes that spoke of twelve years of Azkaban. “You’re as much to blame as I am, Snape.”

“Both of you carry around far more guilt than one man should bear,” Remus declared, staring into his teacup. “The past is the past, and we have all suffered from our mistakes. Some more than others. But what matters now is keeping Harry safe — from Voldemort and Dumbledore.” If Harry was the one destined to destroy Voldemort, and Dumbledore knew the full prophecy, Harry would be in grave danger on both sides when Voldemort returned to power.

“We have to train him. Not just with his family magic, or Occlumency,” Sirius realised. “He needs to know how to survive a war.”

“We can’t tell him why,” Remus insisted. “He’s not even fourteen yet. That’s far too large a burden to place on his shoulders, on top of everything else.”

“I think Potter has a good idea that he’s going to have to face something,” Severus pointed out. “We don’t need to tell him about the prophecy for him to know he needs to be prepared.”

From how eager Harry had been to learn from them throughout the summer, Remus had to agree.

“Fuck,” Sirius said abruptly, tugging at his hair. “Why did it have to be him? Hasn’t he been through enough?”

There was no response to that. All three of them sat silently, lost in their thoughts, their minds on the boy sleeping peacefully one floor above them. Remus reached out to grip Severus’ hand once more, needing the contact, the comfort.