

Harry rolled through his limited stash of happy memories, finally choosing the memory of winning the house cup the year before. He nodded. “Do it.”

The lights dimmed and the room went cold, the now-familiar rattling breath echoing through the office. Harry clenched his jaw, forcing the memory to the forefront of his mind. “Expecto Patronum! EXPECTO PATRONUM!” This time, an enormous silver shadow burst from his wand, sending the dementor reeling back several steps. Harry stood wide-eyed, and Lupin jumped in with a sharp Riddikulus, sending the boggart back into the case in the shape of a silvery orb again. Harry’s patronus vanished. The lamps re-lit, and Harry sank into the chair behind him, panting.

“I did it!” He felt like he’d run a mile, but he was beaming, and Lupin returned the expression.

“Excellent, Harry! Fantastic first start.”

“Let’s go again,” Harry urged, and the professor sighed. “Please, sir. Just one more.”

Once again, Harry managed a silver shadow big enough to cut the dementor off before the screaming started. It probably wouldn’t help against a real dementor, but it was a start. Lupin insisted that was enough for the day.

“It’s a large amount of magic, I don’t want you overdoing it,” he warned. On the contrary, Harry’s magic felt better than it had in weeks, finally able to start levelling out the extra burst from his newly-freed core. But he couldn’t say that, so he allowed himself to be herded into the chair and given a large mug of hot chocolate. “I have to say, I’m impressed. You’re picking it up far quicker than I expected.”

Harry grinned, pride growing in his chest. “Thanks.” He sipped at his hot chocolate, relaxing as the warmth slowly flooded through his body. He glanced up at the man opposite him. “I heard my dad.” Lupin frowned at him, puzzled. “When the dementor... usually I just hear Mum, screaming for Voldemort to leave me alone. This time, before I passed out... Dad was there. He said he’d hold Voldemort off so Mum could take me and run away. I’d never heard his voice before.”

Lupin’s shoulders had tensed. “James would have done anything for you and Lily,” he said eventually. “Since we were kids, he always said he’d never love another soul as much as he loved Lily Evans. Then they had you.” He met Harry’s gaze, tears shining in his eyes. “You were his whole world, you know? You and your mother. He was never so happy as he was when he was with you.”

A lump rose in Harry’s throat, and he drank more hot chocolate. “What— what was it like? When they had me?” The only experience he had of a wizarding household was the Burrow, and that was an entirely unique brand of chaos.

Lupin seemed to understand what he was asking. “At first, James was terrified. He was an only child, see, and he hadn’t had much experience with babies. It took Lily ages to convince him to hold you without her supervising — he kept insisting he’d drop you.” He chuckled softly. “After about two weeks of him putting your nappies on backwards, he started getting