

“I don’t want to make any promises...” Harry stared Lupin down, determination in his face, until the man sighed. “Fine. We can work on it over Christmas, if you’re staying.”

“I am,” Harry confirmed. “I always do. The Dursleys don’t want me there unless I have to be.”

“You live with your muggle relatives in the summer, then, do you?” Lupin asked, an odd tone to his voice. Harry nodded.

“Unfortunately. I usually get to spend some of it at Ron’s house, but Dumbledore — Professor Dumbledore, sorry — says I have to be at my aunt’s house for most of the summer. I guess it’s supposed to be safer.” He grimaced, showing exactly what he thought of that. It certainly wasn’t going to be safer when he got home in July, and Uncle Vernon decided to teach him a lesson for what he did to Aunt Marge. If only the Ministry had wiped their memories, too.

“I’m sorry, Harry,” Lupin said, and he sounded like he truly meant it. “I only met Petunia a few times, and her husband just the once, but they were certainly... difficult people to get along with.”

Harry snorted. “That’s an understatement.” He paused for a moment, thinking. “Professor? If you and my parents were such good friends... why couldn’t you raise me, when they died?” Surely that would’ve been better than growing up with the Dursleys. Anything would’ve been better than that.

Lupin looked at him, a heartbroken expression in his eyes. “I wanted to,” he confessed. “But there were... circumstances. The Ministry never would’ve allowed someone like me raise a child. And Dumbledore insisted you were in the safest place you could be— not that he ever told me where that was. He said you’d be protected as long as no one magical came near you. I couldn’t even write.” His voice cracked, just a little bit. Harry wondered what it would’ve been like — in the space of twenty-four hours, to lose two of your best friends, be betrayed by the other, and then have their child taken away from you forever. His heart twisted painfully.

“I’m sorry,” he murmured, wishing there were more he could do. “For what it’s worth... I think it would’ve been pretty cool, living with you. Better than Aunt Petunia.”

The smallest smile managed to creep its way onto Lupin’s face, though the hurt still shone in his golden eyes. “Thank you, Harry. That— that means a lot, coming from you.”

Harry wondered what Lupin meant, that ‘someone like him’ wouldn’t have been allowed to raise Harry, but he didn’t dare ask. Not when Lupin looked like the wrong word would set him off crying.

“You should get going, Harry,” the professor said eventually, straightening up and releasing Harry’s shoulder. “You’ll miss lunch, at this rate.”

“Right, yeah,” Harry murmured. “I’ll see you later, Professor. And I’m glad you’re feeling better.”