

Sometimes it felt like he was as good as helping, just by not saying anything. There was no doubt in his mind that Sirius was hiding out in his animagus form. If Remus told someone about it, they'd probably catch him within the week.

But he couldn't bring himself to do it.

Deep down, in his heart, his pack instinct was screaming that Sirius would never, *could never*, hurt Harry. Even after tonight —standing over Ron Weasley with a knife, what the *hell* was Sirius thinking?? — he had to believe there was some other explanation.

Reaching for the photo album on the coffee table, Remus flicked it open to the page he'd spent more than a few nights looking at since the week before Christmas, when he'd unearthed all his old photos to find the one for Harry. This photo was from the same day.

Arms wrapped around each other and beaming smiles on their faces, the four Marauders looked up at him, all wearing festive jumpers and laughing. Merlin, they'd been so *young*. He watched as photo-Sirius ruffled photo-Remus' hair, while photo-James blew a kiss to Lily, who was the one behind the camera, and photo-Peter jumped as the cat brushed between his legs. In the corner of the photo, you could see the Moses basket where baby Harry slept peacefully, little reindeer antlers peeking over the edge. James had been so proud of himself for finding that onesie.

Remus could remember that day like it was yesterday. Lily and James' first Yule in the new house, the first — and only — with the baby. They'd thought it was the best thing ever, starting their own family traditions — the second generation of Marauders. It had driven Lily nuts to hear her son referred to as such, but she'd had a smile on her face nonetheless. James had good-naturedly pestered the rest of them about settling down and making some playmates for little Harry, insisting he couldn't carry their legacy entirely on his own back. Sirius had laughed and promised he was in no rush to have kids, but he'd treat Prongs' like his own. Peter had blushed and stuttered and made some mention of a date he was going on in the new year. Remus had pretended not to hear Lily dropping hints about a certain Slytherin; they'd had a fight a while before that Christmas. It had been months before they'd spoken again. Again, Lily's doing. No wonder he was a mess without her.

His gaze kept drawing back to those familiar grey eyes, shining with so much life and love and joy. He still didn't understand how everything could go so wrong. Maybe he never would.

"Why, Padfoot?" he murmured to the photo, a question he'd asked thousands of times in the last twelve years. "You could've had everything. *We* could've had everything." Even with Voldemort's growing power, they still had so much hope in that little family of theirs. Now, it was all gone. Except Harry. The only hope he had left, the shining light in the darkness. He couldn't believe Sirius capable of snuffing that light out.

Maybe he was fooling himself. Time would tell.

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