

Chapter 14

Harry's standards were fairly low, but even so, he'd never been happier in his life.

Living at Seren Du was like everything he'd dreamed of all at once. Spending his weekdays learning new spells and wizarding politics and his family history; flying whenever he wanted; swimming whenever he wanted; spending evenings curled up in the living room with some combination of his three housemates, reading or talking or playing card games. On weekends Remus always tried to take him somewhere, saying it wasn't good for him to be cooped up with just the three of them for company. Sometimes they took Sirius with them — usually as Padfoot, sometimes under a glamour in muggle areas. Every now and then, Remus bullied Snape into coming too. They went to the beach, to the cinema, to the muggle shopping centre in Cardiff. On one memorable occasion, the four of them even went to a Holyhead Harpies quidditch match. No one batted an eyelash at the big shaggy dog Remus claimed was his familiar, and thanks to Snape's disguise charms no one recognised them either. Seeing live professional quidditch was breathtaking, and it made Harry even more desperate to go to the Quidditch World Cup.

Even his Potions lessons were enjoyable, once he and Snape both realised Harry wasn't terrible at brewing if he was in the right environment.

Harry wasn't even missing his friends that much. He wasn't sure if it made him an awful person, but he quite liked his private little bubble of happiness. Sure, it got a little lonely sometimes — the three adults were often busy, and couldn't always be expected to entertain Harry's whims — but he was used to being lonely in the summer. It was nice not having to share with anyone, or make allowances for anyone, or fight for attention. At the Burrow, everything was chaos all the time, and Hogwarts was much the same. Here it was just him and his three sort-of guardians, and he was mostly left to his own devices unless he sought out company.

His birthday was slowly approaching, and for once Harry was actually looking forward to celebrating it. Sirius was up to something, the dog animagus just giving Harry a mischievous grin every time he asked about birthday plans, and Harry was dying with curiosity.

Staring up at the brand new Holyhead Harpies poster stuck to his bedroom wall, Harry glanced over at his alarm clock. It was eight in the morning on a Saturday; Ceri wouldn't have breakfast ready for another hour. Sirius always liked to sleep in on weekends, unless they were going somewhere. If he could, he'd sleep in every day, but Remus kept insisting he couldn't laze about all morning.

Harry got up with a leisurely stretch, surprised to see Artemis perched outside his window. He grinned, bounding over to let her in. There was a letter tied to her leg, and once Harry had divested her of it she hooted softly and flew away, no doubt heading to the owlery. Harry opened the envelope with eager fingers.

Harry,