

the hang of it. Always said he was no good — told me the cat was actually watching you, he was just helping. But he doted on you, Harry. Every second since you were born. Even when times got dark, and things were difficult, there was so much love in that house.”

Harry’s heart ached when he tried to imagine it. “We had a cat?” he said eventually, not wanting to dwell too much on the thought of being loved. Of being happy.

“Sergeant Pepper,” Lupin told him, lips curling in a smile. “Lily’s cat, from when we were in school. He didn’t like James at first. Warmed up to him eventually. We knew Lily had finally given in to her feelings when Pep started leaving dead mice on James’ pillow. Well, once we realised it wasn’t Sirius doing it as a joke,” he added with a snort. A flash of pain crossed his features when he realised what he’d said. “No one found Pep when... after Voldemort. The house was in quite a state, we never knew if he’d run for it or...”

Harry hoped the cat had run. Hoped he’d found a new home, with a new family who loved him. That would make one of them, at least.

“So Dad wasn’t great with babies?” That made Lupin laugh.

“Not exactly, but he muddled through. Lily, on the other hand, was a natural from day one. Took to motherhood like a duck to water. She, uh, she said she wanted at least one more. Said that being an only child sounded lonely, and even an awful sibling was better than none at all.” Lupin set his mug down. “Sirius said the same, and he hated his brother. The rest of us were only children. Severus didn’t understand it, not after— well. Never mind.” His cheeks flushed, and he ducked his head.

“Why did Snape never tell me he knew my parents?” Harry blurted. That was the second time now that Lupin had talked about Snape and his parents like they knew each other better than just being classmates.

“Professor Snape, Harry,” Lupin corrected automatically. “He... James and Severus never got along. I think it’s safe to say they hated each other, actually,” he said wryly. “I’ll admit, James didn’t help the matter. He was always jealous that Lily and Severus were friends, so he... well, most of the pranks he and Sirius played were on Slytherins, and Severus in particular. I tried to stay out of it, but... things happen. They were my friends.”

Lupin sighed, rubbing at a scar on the bridge of his nose. “It’s a very long story, Harry, that isn’t entirely mine to share. Perhaps one day... Suffice to say, Professor Snape has a difficult relationship with his memory of your parents, and I don’t think you make it any easier. Not that it’s your fault,” he added hastily. “He’s just working under some... mistaken assumptions.”

Harry slowly finished off his hot chocolate, pondering the man’s words. He supposed he could understand it. If Snape and his dad hated each other when they were kids, and then Harry showed up looking exactly like James Potter; no wonder Snape didn’t like him. It was hardly fair, being judged against a man he didn’t even *remember*, but he could get it.

“You loved him, didn’t you,” he murmured, watching Lupin with a knowing gaze. The man choked on his hot chocolate, going wide-eyed. “My dad, I mean. And Mum. And... Sirius