

know the Bones' are okay." He pulled back, though one long arm stayed around Harry's shoulders, guiding him towards the door. "You're still my first priority, pup. Charlie doesn't change that. Hell, he'd leave me in a heartbeat if he thought I was putting him over you," he added with a flicker of a smile. "I know we didn't really talk about what it means, me and him, not concerning us. And right now isn't really the best time for it. But you're still my kid, yeah? So let me take care of you."

And that made Harry lose the fight against tears, his heart lurching as Sirius' grey eyes fixed on him. "You silly bugger," he sighed, kissing Harry's forehead. "You didn't think I'd stop being an overbearing fusspot just because I've got a hot redhead waiting up for me, did you?"

The noise Harry made was a cross between a laugh and a sound of disgust, wet with tears, and it made Sirius grin. "You're top of the list, kiddo. For me and Moony both. Only reason he's not up with us is I told Ceri not to wake him; sounded like Snape had a rough meeting. But I can get both of them, if you want?"

"No, no, it's fine," Harry insisted, wiping at his cheeks. "Like you said, nothing we can do. I — should we get a message to Kingsley?" Amelia might need back-up.

Before Sirius could answer, the corridor filled with pale light; a silver badger bounded towards them, stopping in front of Harry and raising its head. "We are safe," it said, in Amelia's voice. "It was a close call. Letter to follow shortly. Thank you, Harry."

Then it dissolved, and with it went the tension in Harry's shoulders.

"Thank Merlin," Sirius breathed. "That's... that's good to hear." Harry nodded emphatically. "Let's go put some tea on. I know neither of us is going to be able to relax until that letter arrives."

As they headed for the stairs, the door to Sirius' room creaked open, and Charlie stuck his head out. "Everything alright?" He was shirtless, but his wand was in his hand, clearly prepared for the worst.

"We're fine, love," Sirius assured. "Just waiting on a letter. Going downstairs for a bit." He stepped away from Harry, cupping Charlie's cheek. "Go back to sleep, you've got work in the morning."

Charlie leaned into the touch, eyes falling half shut. "You sure? Don't need to muster the cavalry?"

A fond chuckle escaped Sirius' lips. "No cavalry necessary," he assured, pressing a kiss to Charlie's mouth. "Go to bed. It'll do you no good to be half-asleep dealing with that new Welsh Green arriving."

Charlie didn't take any more convincing than that, and Sirius shut the door behind him, turning back to Harry. In the dim light, Harry could see him blush faintly, realising they'd had an audience for the whole exchange.

"You really care about him, don't you?" he asked quietly, continuing towards the stairs.