

“You got me a Christmas present?” the Slytherin asked quietly, eyebrows rising. Harry nodded, keeping his eyes fixed on his hands in his lap as he shredded a scrap of wrapping paper. “I... thank you.”

There was a painfully awkward silence, until Remus cleared his throat. “These books are brilliant, Harry, thank you! Have you read them?” He started talking to Harry about the stack of Defence books in his lap, allowing Snape to open his present without all the attention on him — something that both Harry and the Potions Master appreciated.

By the end of it all, Harry had a small mountain of presents to take back to Gryffindor Tower, and Sirius was just tipsy enough to be singing Christmas carols at the top of his lungs. None of them were willing to tell him to stop — not even Snape. Sirius had been through a lot in the last decade; he deserved a bit of joy at Christmas. Harry merely joined in with the carols he knew, laughing when Sirius drew closer and closer to Remus, shaking him by the shoulders until he was singing with them as well. Even drunk, Sirius knew to leave Snape well alone, and the Slytherin looked like he was regretting many life choices.

“I think I’d best get this lush back home,” Remus said eventually, laughing. “Let you get on with the rest of your Christmas surprise, Harry.”

“There’s more?” Harry asked, eyebrows raised. Remus winked at him.

“I suggest when you’re done here, you head to the Potions classroom,” Snape told him, his face impassive. Harry’s curiosity began to burn; what could possibly be waiting for him in the classroom? Another present?

Sirius threw himself at Harry, making the boy stumble a little as he was wrapped in a tight hug. “Have fun at the Yule Ball,” the dog animagus instructed. “Dance lots, don’t give a damn about Skeeter or any of the reporters, and snog your boyfriend if you get a quiet minute.” He cackled when Harry blushed. “Seriously, kiddo. You’ve been under a lot of stress lately. Just forget it all and enjoy yourself, alright? You deserve it.” He dropped a kiss on Harry’s forehead, ruffling his hair.

“I’ll try,” Harry promised. He turned to hug Remus. “Thanks for coming. And bringing Sirius with you.”

“We couldn’t miss out on family Christmas,” Remus insisted. A lump grew in Harry’s throat. His first ever family Christmas, of a sort. “I’ll see you in the new year, cub. Behave yourself.” That was said with a lopsided smile; Remus knew better than to genuinely expect that of him. Harry grinned.

“I’ll try,” he said again.

“Not very hard, I’m sure,” Snape drawled lightly. Harry turned to the man, even more wrong-footed about him than he had been during the summer. At least there they were away from school and lessons and all the things reminding Harry of his evil Potions professor. Having Snape like this — like *family* — in the middle of the school year was weird to say the least. Just a week before, the man had been yelling at him about his stirring technique.