

about any of it being broken or stolen or thrown out. Having enough things that he couldn't fit them all in his school trunk.

Harry was about as ready as he could be, and was lying in bed listening to some quiet music on his Wireless when there was a knock on the door. He turned off the Wireless, calling for whoever it was to enter. Sirius slipped into the room, shutting the door behind him, and turned to Harry with a sad sort-of smile on his face. "Mind if I join you?"

Harry patted the mattress beside him, and Sirius clambered up onto the bed, leaning against the headboard with his shoulder bumping Harry's. "All set, then?" he asked, his gaze landing on Harry's trunk.

"I think so. Moony said he could send anything I'd forgotten over with Snape." He bit his lip. "Are you ready? For me to leave?" It was weighing on his mind, the prospect of school starting up; he would be gone, Snape would soon be gone, and Remus wouldn't want to spend all his time away from his partner.

It meant that there were times Sirius would be alone in the house. After being in Azkaban, Sirius didn't do well being alone. "Don't worry about me, Harry," he insisted. "I'll be fine. I've got Buckbeak, and Ceri. And Moony's promised me he won't be gone more than two evenings a week." He shrugged. "Gotta get used to being by myself eventually, right? Can't expect you lot to babysit me forever."

"We're not babysitting you, Sirius," Harry scolded lightly. "This has been the best summer ever."

"It has been pretty great, hasn't it?" Sirius agreed. "I'm glad I was able to give you that. I wish I could give you the world, Pup, but this is a good start." The man sighed, running a hand through his dark hair and turning to Harry. "I've been reliably informed that I can't keep you hidden away here forever, so for your old godfather's sake, *please* look after yourself in the big scary outside world?" His words were playful but his eyes were serious, and Harry chuckled.

"You're not old, Sirius, you're thirty-four."

"Thirty-five in November!" Sirius yelped. It was clear he thought that was akin to turning a hundred.

"Exactly, you're barely a quarter of the way into your life, for a wizard."

"You're missing my point," Sirius retorted, aware he'd lost that particular argument. "Be careful, okay? Voldemort isn't the only enemy you have anymore. Dumbledore wants you for his weapon — exactly how, we can only guess, but it's clear he doesn't care about you past how you factor into his grand plan. If he knows you're starting to mess with that plan, you're in deep trouble. There's going to be a lot going on at the school this year, and I need you to be safe."

"I won't go looking for trouble, Sirius," Harry said. His godfather's expression was doubtful. "I mean it! I can't promise trouble won't find me, but I'll try my best to stay away from it."