

hissed, his near-black eyes narrowed venomously and his wand digging into Remus' throat. "Swear to me you aren't helping him."

Remus went wide-eyed in horror. "Severus, I would never! I'd *never* do anything to hurt Harry. I swear it."

Severus lowered his wand and loosened his grip, but not by much. "Forgive me if I don't trust you entirely, Lupin," he said sharply. "I know what the two of you were like."

"I know what you *thought* we were like, and you've always been wrong," Remus corrected, remembering countless arguments and pointed remarks about the true nature of his relationship with Sirius Black. Back then, he'd found it amusing— sweet, even. Now... the words felt bitter on his tongue. "I would never help that traitor get in here and hurt my cub."

Severus met his gaze steadily, holding it so long Remus began to feel a little lightheaded. Eventually, he nodded, stepping back. Part of Remus wanted to follow. "It's late," he said eventually. "And Dumbledore has called off the search. I suggest you go to bed, Lupin."

Remus bit back the first three responses that tried to leap from his mouth. "You can trust me, Severus," he said eventually. Severus scowled.

"We've both been wrong about that before."

Severus turned on his heel, robes flaring out behind him as he stalked away, leaving Remus alone in the corridor. Remus let out a long, steadying breath. "You fool," he murmured quietly, unsure who he was talking to — himself, Severus, or Sirius Black.

He should go to Dumbledore. He should walk up to the headmaster's office and tell him about Sirius' animagus form, about the secret passages he could be using to get in and out of the school. If he were a better man, he'd have told him *weeks* ago.

But he wasn't a better man. He was a guilty, desperate, *lonely* man who still couldn't believe after twelve years that one of his packmates could do something so awful against another. That Sirius — happy, playful, ridiculous Sirius — could be out for the blood of the child he'd loved so dearly. He'd doted on Harry, insisting the boy was basically his since he was never going to have kids of his own. He was the perfect godfather.

Until he'd betrayed them all to Voldemort, of course.

Remus felt like his heart was being torn to pieces, his wolf howling angrily in the back of his head, demanding justice, demanding some other explanation. That just made his rage increase — if not for the wolf, Lily and James might have trusted him to begin with, might have used him as the Secret Keeper instead of Sirius. But no, despite everything, they still doubted his ability to fight against his darker side. Thought that because of the wolf, because of Severus

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No. He couldn't go down that road. Not tonight.