

Part Twelve
June, 1976

Schedule for June Sixth: CAREER COUNSELING

2:30 Severus Snape

3:00 James Potter

3:30 Peter Pettigrew

4:00 Remus Lupin

4:30 Sirius Black (brace yourself)

5:00 Lily Evans

Done for the Day (at last)

James lingers outside McGonagall's door, drumming his fingers nervously against the wall. He's been out here for fifteen minutes -- he was five minutes late when he arrived, and every time he's knocked since it's been met with an infuriating "Just a moment, Mr. Potter, if you please!" He's starting to think that maybe he's somewhat resentful that someone is getting career counseling during his scheduled time, and not just because he'd really rather be back at the common room with Sirius, working on the universal tracking spell for their Map. As he's considering his options -- "just leave" is starting to look like the best choice -- the door suddenly flies open, revealing a very dark-looking Severus Snape. James twitches away automatically.

"Potions, indeed," he snarls under his breath, and barely even seems to notice James as he stalks away, muttering something about *stupid Gryffindor hags don't know what she's talking about better in Defense than those gits in her house but we'll see who gets advised to do that, huh...*

"You may come in, Mr. Potter," comes McGonagall's voice, sounding extremely weary.

James pokes his head around the door, feeling strangely as if he's entering a lion's den unarmed. This is the last month of his sixth year. In only four months' time, he's going to be top dog at Hogwarts, a promising Seventh Year with all the world at his feet and all the First Years there, too, giving his shoes a nice spit-shine. It doesn't serve that the very idea of meeting with McGonagall about his future -- and really, what can old McGoogles know about *his* future, to begin with -- makes him so nervous. Nothing should make him so nervous. He's James Potter. He's brilliant. "That looked like it was fun," he says. "Bet you he doesn't like to be told what to do or when to -- right, no commentary on other students, closing my mouth now, sitting down." At McGonagall's tight-lipped expression of extreme disapproval James feels the little happy man inside his stomach roll over and die. "Sorry," he mumbles into his chest. "Snotmyplacewe'reclearonthat."

"Excellent, Mr. Potter," McGonagall says. "You *are* a fast learner. I'm almost proud."

James coughs.

McGonagall says nothing.

James coughs again.

McGonagall lifts one slim, murderous brow.

"So," James says. "How's the family?"

"Mr. Potter, I was hoping you of all people might have something to say for yourself." James blinks. "About what *you* see yourself doing in a year's time?" James stares. "Careers," McGonagall sighs. "Your preference of profession?"

"*Oh*," James says, "*oh*, that, *right*. Well. Wait. You want to know what *I* want?"

"Not particularly, Mr. Potter." McGonagall makes a bridge with her fingers and regards James over the square rims of her eyeglasses. "However, my profession demands that I ask you regardless. Have you any idea what you would like to spend the rest of your life doing? Other than committing minor criminal acts?"

"Er," James says. He takes off his glasses and polishes them quickly on his shirt, to take up time, because really he probably should have thought about this for at least two minutes beforehand and all of a sudden "I want to do stunt flying" sounds even stupider than usual. "Well. I dunno. Something -- exciting, I suppose?"

McGonagall sighs. "Something...exciting. Thank you, Mr. Potter, that's very helpful."

Sometimes she really reminds him of Lily, in a weird, disturbing and kind of maybe a little bit sexy way. "I -- I'd like to do something...a bit athletic. That's what I'm good at."

"You are good at a great many things, Mr. Potter; which is no indication that you should choose any one of them as a future career. I have here your marks from the past six years -- obviously the results of this year's examinations are yet to arrive -- and they are really exceptionally high, as I know all too well you are aware. They clearly indicate weaknesses, however, in some fairly major areas: basic concentration, real hard work under pressure, and so on. Your Herbology, for example--"

"It's just that plants take so long to *do* anything," James mutters.

"Then nothing to do with 'plants,' I suppose," McGonagall says. She checks something off on a roll of parchment in front of her, which James leans forward to have a look at. "And this is nothing to do with *you*. Well -- it is, of course, *everything* to do with you, but not for your eyes just yet. I have written down 'No plants' and 'Something exciting,' and I promise you, that *is* all. Your head," she explains, "looked as if it were about to burst. I felt it prudent to tell you exactly what was written here as my office has only just been cleaned."

James gives her a squinty look. It's possible, if Lily weren't so intrinsically a redhead, she would grow up to be this. Strangely appealing. He chokes. "Well, all right, so you want specifics."

"Desperately," McGonagall says. The wry note in her tone is far from hidden.

James feels like a promising radish: just as talented, just as useful, and just as coherent. "I hadn't actually thought about it, you know. Not really."

"This meeting is for preparation," McGonagall explains. "I am doing my best to be patient with all of you, because the vast majority of you haven't actually thought about it, you know, not really."

"It's just that a year's a really long time," James mumbles.

"Hm," McGonagall says. "A really long time that passes very quickly. Your future *is* something to consider, however hard that may be for all of you. I hate to be the harbinger of schedules and planning and adult comprehension, Mr. Potter, but someone must make you realize Hogwarts isn't all there is."

"Well," James scoffs, "I knew *that*." Under McGonagall's terrifying stare he blanches. "I just didn't *know* it," he

adds, quieting. "You know."

"Unfortunately I do not," McGonagall says. "But perhaps you can enlighten me."

James shrugs uncomfortably. "It's just -- I know it isn't, right? But I sort of thought I could -- I could make it be. It's hard to think of the world being any other way. My parents talk about Hogwarts like their lives pretty much ended there, you know? I keep thinking -- well, even if it doesn't last forever, it's been my life. Since I was eleven. I know it won't be forever, but I can't imagine what will happen afterwards." He's just talking and he can't make his mouth stop moving and it's horrible and in a panic he jabs a quill into his thigh just to make himself shut up *please*.

"Hmm," McGonagall says.

"Yes," James says.

"What NEWT-levels are you signed up for, next year?"

"Transfiguration, obviously," James answers quickly, relieved to be on less philosophical grounds. "Defense. Er. Potions. Charms. And, er, Arithmancy."

"And of those, which can you see pursuing to a productive end?"

"Er?" James says.

McGonagall sighs again. "I can see," she says, "that this is trying for you. For all of you. But Hogwarts is a *school*, Mr. Potter, and, unless you are planning on being a professor -- which I do *not* suggest, for many reasons, the least of which being I cannot imagine considering you a coworker -- it is *not* a way of life." There is a kindly glint in her tight, wise face. James figures she's offering him something in the way of advice, but the differences between them are making it hard to parse.

"So what you're saying is," James says, inadvertently, prompting her on.

"What I'm saying is soon enough, Mr. Potter, you are going to have to start thinking for yourself. You are very *good* at very *many* things, but the question here is not *at what do you excel* but rather *what do you wish to spend the rest of your life perfecting*? Not a matter of talent, but a matter of preference. Do you understand, or must I find another way of phrasing my request?"

"I like Transfiguration," James blurts out. "*And* I'm really good at it."

"Excellent," McGonagall says. "*Now*, I think, we might actually be getting somewhere."

"Well, you know," James says, comforted by his sudden success, "I've always fancied saving the world."

"Mr. Potter," McGonagall warns.

"Not even just a little bit?" James fixes her with his Potter Eyes and some extra Potter Charm. It's fool proof, no matter what Remus says about it looking as though he has a tic.

"I'm not buying it, Mr. Potter," McGonagall says. "You look as if you've a tic."

"Those are just my long lashes," James protests. "Fluttering charmingly at you."

"I hear saving the world doesn't pay very well these days." McGonagall rubs the bridge of her nose, beneath her spectacles, and then settles them back down neatly in place. "I do believe you aren't being serious."

"But I am," James insists. "And don't you think it's very kind of me? To offer the world my services?"

"And what," McGonagall asks, "might those be?"

"Charm," James says, very seriously, warming to his subject. "Good looks. My not-inconsiderable talent for just about everything. I should very much like to be a superhero."

"Why don't you start with honing your powers of sanity, and we'll go from there?" McGonagall murmurs, but she's smiling.

"I think you'd like me in a rubber costume," James says. He winks.

McGonagall twitches involuntarily and then says, loudly, "Have you ever considered working with the Ministry?"

James narrows his eyes. "That's one of those jobs you have to wear a suit for." He imagines himself, wild hair, thicker glasses, tweed dress robes, or something with pinstripes, and a tie, and a bit of a belly, years from now, in an office. He balks. He feels a little ill. He shakes his head, emphatic, resounding no's. "The *Ministry*? Do I look like a *Ministry* man, to you?"

"Well," McGonagall attempts, "there is always the ever-popular Cursebreaker. It is like being a superhero, I suppose, though I don't presume to understand the workings of the male mind when it is stuck so persistently in the first year. The only difference is that, I believe, instead of fighting supervillains you must put your mind and your skills to the test every day on the job. However, that *is* a Ministry funded job -- so you see, Mr. Potter, the Ministry has a wealth of options available suitable to all lifestyles. Even that," she finishes, "of a superhero."

"Wow," James says. "*Cursebreaker*. It even *sounds* cool."

"And it requires no rubber whatsoever," McGonagall adds. "Though you will have to start paying attention in History of Magic."

"Well, these are the sacrifices every hero has to make," James says, trying to look noble. McGonagall twitches again. "Do you think I'd be suited to it, Professor? Despite the lack of form-fitting rubber?"

McGonagall's eyes say, clearer than words, that the only thing she thinks James is suited for is a prison cell. "Only time will tell, Mr. Potter, but you should certainly keep it in mind."

"Well." James shrugs. "All right." It is all right. It's pretty cool, cursebreaking, mummies and that, but James has something else in mind, and always has, secretly, beneath even the one about stunt flying; and if he's got the chance, then by God he's going to find out.

Or maybe he'll just sit here, trying to pretend not to be nervous. Either way.

"Very well," McGonagall says. She shuffles her papers meaningfully, no doubt, James thinks, taunting him with their secrets. They stare at each other for a few moments. "Is there something--" McGonagall starts, wearily, but James can't contain himself.

"Do you think I could be an Auror?" he bursts in. He's too excited to remember to look sheepish afterwards.

"Do you think you could handle arresting Mr. Black for petty larceny?" McGonagall counters.

James grins. "Only time will tell."

"Well." McGonagall smiles a thin smile and makes a few meaningful notes. "All right."

"Is that it?" James leads forward. "Aren't there any invasive tests? Aren't you going to slice my head open, look inside, discover the greatness within, nominate me as our future ruler of the universe?"

"I will tell the public of your penchant for form-fitting rubber," McGonagall says. "Next!"

"How is it, then?" Peter asks as James stumbles out into the light of midday, passing a hand over his bleary eyes.

"Imagine this," James says. "You're sitting in a room for a half an hour talking about life with McGonagall."

"But that's what it is," Peter whispers.

"Right," James says. "*Exactly*."

Peter considers this for a moment, and then goes very white.

"I don't suppose Sirius would like to trade times--"

"Doubtful," James says dryly. "He's still got to shave, do his hair, and nick some cologne, and I don't think he's even got a proper bouquet together yet."

"Help!" Peter whimpers.

"What did James say?" is the first thing Peter asks. McGonagall stares at him. He is pretty sure McGonagall does not like him, and to tell the whole truth he is not fond of her; she is not only terrifying, but impatient and quick to tell him off, and whenever she sees him getting help from someone she gives him a look like he's cheating -- which he *isn't!* -- and anyway he is arse at Transfigurations. If only Professor Kettleburn were doing the counseling, he might not be so nervous.

"My conversation with Mr. Potter is really of no import to your future," McGonagall says coldly. "May I ask whether you have considered any future careers for *yourself*?"

Peter looks at her sideways. "Er," he says. "Is this a trick question?"

"No." McGonagall looks down at him over the length of her pointy McGonagall nose into the depths of his pointy Peter soul. He imagines her fingers reaching into him, prodding at his innermost thoughts like jelly, and pulling back out again with a look of extreme distaste. *Mr. Pettigrew, your innermost thoughts have left a mess on my nails.* He laughs. "Is this funny, Mr. Pettigrew? Do you find the reality of your future life *humorous*?"

"No," Peter says, very quickly. "No, I find that I am very serious about it." There are times when you have to contradict yourself, Peter figures, because there are no times when you *can* explain, to McGonagall of all people, that what you find funny is actually the look of displeasure on her face at fondling little boy souls. It even sounds bad in his head. "Very, very serious," he repeats, "very--"

"Very serious, yes," McGonagall says. "There's no need to repeat it so often. There's such a thing as protesting too much."

"Er," Peter says. "All right?"

"I take it," McGonagall continues, "you have given no thought to a future career."

"My dad paints houses," Peter says helpfully. "My mum is a homemaker."

"And which one of those," McGonagall says, "would *you* like to be?"

"Well, I can't really clean," Peter says.

McGonagall looks at him as if he is something nasty pinned on a page. "Mr. Pettigrew, I have here your schedule for next year, which indicates that you are taking only two NEWT-level classes. That will raise you, of course, to a grand total of...three NEWT-levels. Can you see yourself involved in any of those three fields in future?"

"I like...Charms," Peter says, carefully. "Not big ones, but...I like some charms."

McGonagall tightens her lips. She looks, Peter thinks, like she's just fondled someone's soul right into her mouth and found that it tastes like soap. "Your marks with Professor Flitwick are acceptable, at best."

Well, it's true, but most of Peter's marks are acceptable at best and he's still got to have a *job*. "Er, yes?"

"Usually we would attempt to concentrate on a subject in which you have shown proficiency." McGonagall's eyes over her glasses burn right into Peter's skull. He flinches. "What I appear to have here is a list of subjects in which James Potter, Sirius Black and Remus Lupin have proficiency, and a record of the degree of success with which they have transferred their knowledge to you. Am I accurate in this, Mr. Pettigrew?"

"I'm not as arse in Charms," Peter says doggedly. "And...I like..." He searches frantically through his arsenal of Things That Are Fun: watching Quidditch, sleeping, mucking about with the Marauders. None of them, probably, would stop McGonagall from *devouring his soul*. "I like cooking," he says finally. "Mostly toast," he adds after a moment, honesty being the best policy.

"Well," McGonagall says. "Perhaps you will be an entrepreneur."

"Really?" Peter asks. "Do you think so? What does that entail?"

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Pettigrew," McGonagall assures him. "You can start a business based upon the fine art of toasting."

"I get it," Peter says. "You're having me on."

"Excellent deduction, yes," McGonagall murmurs. She purses her lips up so tight Peter thinks for a second they might disappear into her face. It has to mean something. Peter has never been good at reading people but he thinks, or rather knows but wishes he didn't, that McGonagall would rather be having this conversation with some form of lint. He feels like some form of lint. He's not James Potter or Sirius Black or Remus Lupin, and what does that leave in his world? That leaves lint. Drab, dull, gray-brown, wilting lint.

Peter sinks down in his chair. "I could cook in a chain restaurant," he suggests. "White Cauldron is very promising and they make excellent mince and the buns are really, uhm, fresh."

McGonagall scratches something onto the parchment in front of her. "You have high aspirations, Mr. Pettigrew. It is so refreshing to see a young man determined upon pushing himself to his farthest limits."

"I don't really know what I'm good at," Peter says. "Er. I don't really think I'm good at anything."

"Think, Mr. Pettigrew," McGonagall urges him. "*Think*."

Peter thinks. He closes his eyes and tries not to feel like a lump on McGonagall's uncomfortable chair. He gets distracted for a minute remembering her I-Smell-Something-Terrible face, and almost laughs again, but manages to stop himself. He gets distracted again by last week's Quidditch match which was, of course, *amazing*, and Sirius and James in it were *amazing*, and even Remus got excited about it. Wow, that was a good match. He opens his left eye after a long pause, hoping McGonagall will have gotten bored and left, or at least that the scary burning sensation he feels when she looks straight into his eyeballs will have faded. No such luck. "Toast," he says finally.

"You're good at toast." McGonagall sighs. "I am *so* sorry. This must be painful."

Peter considers saying, *Only your eyes*. He doesn't. "Er," he says instead. "Well, we'll figure something out."

"Certainly," McGonagall agrees.

Your eyeballs are hurting my face. "Er," Peter says again. "So. What's the plan?"

McGonagall rubs at her temple with two fingers. When she looks up again, she looks slightly kinder, although that might also be that she is staring above Peter's head instead of inside it. "Mr. Pettigrew, I think your best plan of action is to make a greater effort to rely on your own resources, rather than the goodness and ability of others. Develop skills that you have, rather than imitating skills you do not. I really believe that you have the capability, but I doubt you have ever even attempted to exercise it. Over the next year, I should like to see you try. Do you understand me?"

"Yes," says Peter, painfully relieved. "Yes! Righto. Can do. Well then, we're done! Shall I--"

"In terms of your classes," McGonagall continues, mercilessly, "I think, since you have said that you enjoy Charms, you should, as you have indicated, pursue advanced work in that field."

"Good. All right. What about the toast?" Peter says.

"Try, Mr. Pettigrew," McGonagall says, still staring fixedly at the ceiling. It is very difficult not to turn around and check whether there are holes in it. Peter fidgets and sits on his fingers. "Please: try."

I'm going to say yes now because I'm afraid of you. "Sounds like a good plan," Peter says. He gives her two thumbs up, very enthusiastically, and nearly trips over the chair trying to get out of it. He hopes his smile isn't as scary as it feels. "I like this plan, Professor McGonagall. Charms it is. No toast. Except on weekends with breakfast because that has nothing to do with career counseling and my future and just with my breakfast on weekends. I don't know what I'm talking about."

"That makes two of us," McGonagall says. "Good day."

"Are you all right?" Remus asks. How can he look so calm, Peter wonders, so calm and unperturbed? He's about to be fed, alive, to a giant McGonagall-faced beast of prey and he's brought *notes*?

"When she eats you she'll probably start with the feet," Peter says shakily, "so you'll have time to apologize for the taste as you're going down."

"I can't imagine it's that bad," Remus says. He doesn't look so sure.

"Next!" McGonagall's voice calls from within. "Mr. Lupin! Stop talking to Mr. Pettigrew about my frightening expressions or you *will be late*!"

"I think I put her in a bad mood," Peter says. "I'm really, really sorry. I'll miss you, mate."

"Thanks," Remus murmurs. He takes a deep breath, reminds himself that McGonagall is generally indifferent towards him, and gingerly enters.

McGonagall is at her desk, resting her head in her hands. She looks like a broken woman. At the sound of Remus carefully latching the door behind him, she looks up and raises her eyebrows expectantly.

"Er," Remus says, approaching the chair rather awkwardly, and then hesitating. "Should I...?"

"You may be seated, Mr. Lupin, unless you would prefer to hover nervously."

"No, thank you, I'll sit," Remus says, and does.

"Let me see." McGonagall regards a sheet in front of her, and then looks back up at Remus, quirking an eyebrow. "Your list, I am assuming, will have Librarian, Researcher, and Professor on it, in that order. And you are, yes, the only boy with a list. Congratulations."

Remus glances at his notes, goes beet-red, opens his mouth and then closes it again. "It's not so much a *list*," he starts, weakly. "More, er, a few notes on--"

"The pros and cons you have written out are no doubt more than sufficient for these purposes," says McGonagall,

Possible Career Choice

1. Librarian *
2. Researcher
3. Professor

* Alternate choice being historian - perhaps more challenging.

1. pros

- books
- all the time books

cons

- people
- money?
- Sirius will make fun of me

2. pros

- research
- books

cons

- money?
- Sirius will make fun of me

3. pros

- books
- study
- I like school

cons

- Sirius will spend his whole life making fun of me.

What about historian work? Is that financially stable? Ask Professor McGonagall!

who is either trying very hard not to laugh or not to cry. "I must say, however, that the work of a librarian entails rather too little practical application of skill to truly play to your abilities."

"I like libraries," Remus says. He doesn't look up. "There was a fourth choice, a stand-in for librarian, actually; it was 'historian' because I rather liked the idea but it didn't seem fiscally productive or even stable, and really, who's hiring historians these days, it's more sensible to be a professor, and researcher was rather too close to historian in any case. If you'd like to see the pros and cons -- well, just don't tell anyone I made a list?" He meets McGonagall's eyes at last, feeling ridiculously small. She has that effect on people. He feels his innards shrivel under her contemplative gaze. It's not that he thinks she's angry -- it's more that he doesn't know what she thinks. There are worse things than angry. For example: there's scorn, which no doubt he deserves for being the only boy to come to her prepared. What was he thinking? It isn't normal. He's a Sixth Year, he's male, he's a *Gryffindor*, and he made a list? "I should have brought *crumpets* with me, too," he mumbles. "That would have been *lovely*, don't you think?"

Silence descends.

Remus' reproductive organs run for cover.

"Er," he says.

And then McGonagall does something truly terrifying.

She throws back her head, makes a strangled sound, and begins to laugh.

"Thank you, Mr. Lupin," she says, at last getting hold of herself. "For being a sorely needed breath of fresh air. I would regale you with the stories of eager, fresh-faced, adolescent boys descending upon me with dreams of the toast industry and a lifetime making socks smell quite foul for fun *and* profit but not only is it a breach of privacy and confidence it is rather too banal a topic for the two of us."

"Er," Remus says.

"I'm complimenting you, Mr. Lupin," McGonagall says. "Complimenting you, yes, and wondering why you spend your days and nights with Mr. Black, Mr. Potter, and Mr. Toast - Pettigrew. *Pettigrew*. Please, please, forget I said that." Remus nods, utterly lost for words. "I am immensely grateful to you for coming prepared." McGonagall replaces her glasses and shakes herself, blinking. "I cannot begin to tell you what a difficult morning this has been. Really, there is very little I can add to the no-doubt exhaustive research you have done on your chosen professions."

Remus feels, strongly, that he would like to sink into the floor and vanish. "Er. Thank you?"

"You're not marked down for a NEWT-level class in History of Magic, I see?"

"Um. I was going to mark it, and then I thought perhaps Astronomy, given that, er--"

"A recommendation from Professor Binns will serve you well at any leading research institutions here or on the

continent, Mr. Lupin. You are one of the few students whose name he knows, which is to be considered a great victory. Hold on to it."

"Yes, Professor."

McGonagall regards him sharply. "Really, Mr. Lupin, you can stop looking at me like a fish. I am impressed with your forethought and clarity, and I am suggesting some changes to your schedule. That is all. I do rather wish, however," and her thin mouth quirks, as close as Remus has ever seen on her face to a real smile, "that you had brought those crumpets."

"I probably would have eaten them all on the way here had there been any, Professor." Remus attempts a smile. It holds steady like a real trooper. He's very proud of it. "It's just -- do you think I might be able to take Astronomy, as well?"

"Your friends," McGonagall says. "Am I right?"

"They *are* also taking it, yes. The -- all three of them." Remus finds his nails to be fascinating and spends a half-minute staring intently down at them. There's a bump on his right middle finger from quill writing, a stain of ink across it and on the underside of his thumb. His left forefinger has the nail he tends to chew when he's nervous. He wants to chew it very much right now, even though he's relatively sure there's nothing left to be nervous about. His mother's voice comes to him, over time, through memory. *If you chew a nail in front of one of your Professor's, I'll know.* Remus presses his left hand down into his lap with his right hand. *That's better.*

"Perhaps," McGonagall says, "and this is a revolutionary idea, I know, you might try to branch out, just a little. To work without your friends, to attend classes without your friends, to spend time without your friends, with perhaps *other* friends, as soon enough school *will* be over and you *will* find your separate ways. It seems wise to begin preparing yourself now so that it comes more easily, in the future."

Remus stares at her, horrified. "But," he says, "we'll--"

"Come now, Mr. Lupin," McGonagall chides. "I expected more from you."

"But we're not going to--"

"Mr. Lupin," McGonagall says quietly. "Put your incredible, logical mind to the task and reach a conclusion that is not swayed by any depth of great emotion or fondness, but rather by rational process of thought, and you will, I assure you, stop spluttering so."

"Professor," Remus says, trying to ignore the siren call of that damnable nail, "I don't think -- I think it's -- er. That is. I don't mean to be impertinent, it's only -- I think maybe it's good for them, Professor. To be, er. Around a Prefect. Not that -- I mean. It's good for all of us, I mean."

McGonagall regards him for a moment longer, and then finally sighs and shuffles the papers before her. "Mr. Lupin, there is only so much you -- or anyone -- can do."

"I know," Remus admits. "I don't mind, terribly."

"I strongly advise that you drop Astronomy," McGonagall says. She looks very adamant. "It has no real application to any of your choices, and it is a subject in which you have been well-versed from an early age. There is no real purpose to your pursuing it on an Advanced level, other than what we have just discussed."

"Thank you, Professor," Remus says softly.

"Other than that, I really have nothing to add. You are excused, Mr. Lupin."

"Thank you," Remus repeats, standing and rather stiffly smoothing out his robes. "I'm sorry about the crumpets."

"Next time," says McGonagall. "Oh -- and Mr. Lupin?"

"Professor?"

"May I suggest that you move 'Professor' up a few places on your list?" She's giving him that totally unreadable look again. Remus fidgets. "Since I rather suspect you're going to save it for posterity, and I feel that in the long run you may want to give that path rather more consideration."

"Er," Remus says. "All right. Professor, then. Before librarian, do you think?"

McGonagall's lips twitch. She nods, solemnly, but only once, as if she can't quite keep her face in this one position for too much longer. "I think that would be *most* wise," she confirms. "Most wise and beneficial, indeed."

"So." Sirius is lounging against the wall, hips out, body relaxed, hair mussed carefully over only one eye, and smelling, Remus is sure of it, of lavender. "How is she? Is she in prime form? Is she snappy? Is she *feisty*?"

"I think Peter tormented her with talk of toast," Remus sighs, speaking very quietly. "I wouldn't test her limits today, Sirius, I think she's a bit -- erhm -- peaked."

"I am very peaked," McGonagall calls from within her lair. "But I am not deaf."

Remus cringes. Sirius beams. "Oh, my love," he yips, "I have arrived."

"I really don't think," Remus begins.

"Ta." Sirius silences him with one hand. "I have a fair lady whose fair hand I shall fairly commence to slave over with all my love."

"Sirius," Remus asks, "have you borrowed Peter's cologne?"

"You are cruel," Sirius says, before he disappears inside.

"Finally," Sirius says dramatically, slamming the door and vaguely registering Remus' muffled yelp. "We're alone. We can't keep meeting like this, Professor. People will *talk*."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Black," McGonagall says at length. "I suppose this could not be put off forever."

Sirius slides hip first into the chair, throwing one long leg up over the arm of it, and smiles seductively at her. "Our meeting has been inevitable since the beginning of time, Professor. Such is the nature of love."

"Indeed," McGonagall mutters.

"I would have brought flowers," Sirius goes on, "but I thought that what we have is greater than such trifles would indicate. And I forgot."

"Mr. Black, your inane babble never ceases to charm and enthrall. Shall we discuss your professional future? Such as it can be?"

"Always business," Sirius says mournfully. "Very well. You can deny your feelings all you like, Professor, but one day your passions will overpower that shell of intellect within which you hide."

"Do you know, Mr. Black," McGonagall says, "if you were not my student and as such lacking very much in the way of credibility and intimidation, I would be frightened for my life, as you are obviously unhinged?"

Sirius thumps his leg against the arm of the chair. "The way you talk," he sighs, "speaks volumes of untold passion. I burn inside that our love should be so unconsummated, but our desires so vast."

"These are lovely words," McGonagall admits. "Have you been studying?"

"Every second I was not tutoring those darling little nightmares, the Slytherin first years, in that which you first instructed me, those many moons ago." Sirius presses a fluttering hand to his chest. "Ah! Be still, my heart, in this final moment of seduction -- you will have your home soon, safe within the bosom of your love--"

"Mr. Black," McGonagall cuts in, "I will allow your prattle for just as long as it can pretend to be within the boundaries of propriety, but once you step beyond the final line and into talk of my bosom, your bosom, someone else's poor, unrelated bosom, I am afraid I must bring you back to the topic at hand."

"Is that what funkies your monkey?" Sirius asks. He bats his lashes outrageously in her direction, hoping the meaning is not lost. "Is that what bloats your stoat?"

"I would prefer, Mr. Black," McGonagall insists, "that you leave my stoat out of this indecency."

"It likes it," Sirius breathes. "It *wants* to be indecent. It loathes its own innocence, your stoat. Oh, Professor, how you torment me with your honeyed promises and your cold, cold indifference."

"Mr. Black, I really must insist that--" She trails off, blinks, and sniffs the air, a frown creasing her brow. "Is that -- do you smell something odd?"

"Perhaps it's the smell of *destiny*," Sirius suggests, leaning forward and waggling his eyebrows suggestively.

"I would have said 'rotting lavender,'" McGonagall says.

Sirius shrugs. "A rose by any other name would smell of cheap aftershave."

"Have you ever had a *single* thought relating to the way you would like to spend the rest of your life?"

"Dozens," Sirius says in tones of aching melancholy. "I should like to shower you with jewels, to launder your robes, to tutor your incompetent first-years, to take you on opulent holidays in Timbuktu and Lithuania. I should like to spend a lifetime adoring you from afar, from up close, from the middle distance. I shall write odes to you that shall go down through a hundred generations. Oh," as an afterthought, "and I'd like to be a Cursebreaker."

McGonagall doesn't miss a beat, but takes a few notes. "Is Cursebreaker a career move to come before or after showering me with jewels, laundering my robes, tutoring my *very* incompetent first-years, and taking me on opulent holidays in Timbuktu and Lithuania? And let's not forget the all important adoring me from all angles and radii."

"The most important," Sirius agrees. "Think of all the angles."

"I will come when you least expect it," McGonagall adds, "and take away your moving copy of the Kama Sutra."

"Think of me when you casually flip its pages in your silky, flimsy nighttime wear." Sirius grins. "That way, we'll be even."

"I can only imagine *your* silky, flimsy nighttime wear."

"It gets very little use," Sirius mourns, "as I sleep in the nude."

"How shocking."

"I have often received looks of appreciation mingled with intense jealousy from my fellow housemates," Sirius adds. "If you wish for testimonials my good friend Mr. Lupin has often admired my rear end, and oh, that Potter bloke, he spends his days and nights extolling the virtues of both cheeks."

"Separately," McGonagall asks, her voice like ancient parchment, "or together?"

"Both!" Sirius replies cheerily. "*Pages* and *pages*, he's written."

"Which explains his History of Magic grades, certainly. Cursebreaker, you say?"

"Or love slave," Sirius says. "Or both!"

"Why, if I may ask, would you like to be a Cursebreaker? I feel I have already heard your motivations for...the other."

"The pay," Sirius says solemnly.

McGonagall arches her eyebrows. "Really, Mr. Black, I would never have thought you to be so mercenary."

"You can hardly be expected to support all the children on a teacher's salary," Sirius points out. "And I should never want you to lack anything your heart desires. If I must be mercenary to provide a comfortable lifestyle for you, so be it." He shifts a little in his chair and offers her a charming smile. "Really, it has everything I could ever want in a career. Adventure. Romance. Variety. Exotic locales. Certainly I imagine it would be difficult for you, at home, wringing your hands, constantly imagining me ripped apart by mummies or devoured by giant snakes--"

"Excruciating," McGonagall murmurs.

"--but I believe that the love we share could surmount any such obstacle. Honestly, Professor, it's the only thing I could *do*. Can you possibly imagine me doing anything else? Besides," he adds, leaning forward on the table and regarding her from under lowered lashes, "the obvious."

"Which, in your world, seems to involve stoats and monkeys." McGonagall taps her quill against her inkwell. "I believe Cursebreaker is, surprisingly, well suited to your abilities. Quick thinking. Improvisation. The propensity for scraping by trouble though all evidence indicates this time it is your rear end about to be lit on fire. I think you have, inadvertently, made a fantastic choice. Not to mention, it takes you very far away from England."

"You are a glutton for punishment, my dear." Sirius rests the back of one hand against his forehead. "I should have known that you would wish for ours to be a tragic love story, full of trials and tribulations. Besides, I thought about it last night, while a small child I was supposed to be teaching Transfiguration skills to was gnawing on my ear. I weighed the options and though Auror was very tempting I thought the pyramids and Egypt in general would just be *spiffing*, and in the end the locale tipped the scales. Plus, *mummies*. You can't argue with mummies."

"Your reasoning is quite the mechanism," McGonagall says. "I find it most unfortunate that I am beginning to comprehend it."

"It is only a matter of time, my sweet bundle of love dumplings," Sirius swoons. "Soon, you will not be able to resist the truth, which draws us constantly closer and closer, like two opposites, forever attracting."

"You are demented," McGonagall says, "but you would make a good Cursebreaker. I will give you that."

"I feel your longing," Sirius whispers. "Elope with me. We shall see the pyramids, together."

McGonagall leans close across the desk, setting her quill aside, with a look of dark intensity in her eyes. Sirius doesn't flinch, though internally he wonders what, exactly, he's done. The love of his life, naturally, McGoogles herself, at last admitting defeat? At last, letting his charm whittle her down into a McGoogles shaped love dumpling? At last, giving in to what can only be called natural? It's a little overwhelming. She crooks a finger at him to come closer, which he does, swimming in his triumph. "Sirius," she says, low and deep.

"Mm?" he murmurs. "Tell me, tell me, *tell* me."

"Our time," McGonagall tells him, "is up. We've been most productive, wouldn't you agree?"

Sirius groans enormously and collapses into his chair. "Cruel, heartless -- my heart is even more broken than usual."

"I would never have thought it possible," McGonagall says expressionlessly. "Good day, Mr. Black."

Sirius stares at her with all the pain and agony he can muster, which is considerable. "La Belle Dame Sans Merci, is it? Very well, Professor." He throws himself from the chair and gives her one final, burning look. "I would have loved to see the Sphinx with you, my reluctant Aphrodite. But you can't deny your feelings forever, and I am a man of infinite patience."

"I shall do my best," McGonagall says. "Next!"

When Lily Evans enters after a short, polite knock, Minerva McGonagall is nearing the end of her rope. The light at the end of the tunnel is, of course, that tomorrow brings a majority of young females, and far less Gryffindor boys. The tunnel has, however, been very long, very windy, and full of Gryffindor boys. "Ah," she says, relaxing visibly. "Ms. Evans. What a pleasure."

"I can go after Sirius and hex him," Lily says, "if you want. May I sit?"

"Yes, please." McGonagall gestures with one hand to the chair across from her.

"What did he do?" Lily's nose wrinkles. "I think he's the worst."

"I am not at liberty to discuss the proceedings of interviews with other students," McGonagall murmurs.

"However, I believe he propositioned me multiple times, and is, as well you know, very persistent with his propositions."

"He gets it from Potter," Lily says darkly, and gives McGonagall a meaningful look.

"My sympathies," McGonagall says dryly.

Lily shrugs, one-shouldered. "I don't think it's his fault. It's a bit like a puppy that can't stop messing the carpet. He

just needs a good kicking from someone who's got the patience to give it to him."

"Indeed," McGonagall says. She smooths her hair back into its tight knot. "Though how he will find such a saint I cannot possibly conceive."

"Mail-order, I suspect." Lily grins impishly at her.

McGonagall lets out a short bark of a laugh. "Hah! I should not be in the least surprised. Miss Evans, you have no doubt considered the materials I gave you Wednesday last?"

"Yes, Professor. Thanks. I think -- I think I might really want to go into Healing." Lily taps her fingertips together in her lap. "That is, it's what seemed to suit me best."

"I see." McGonagall nods. "And why do you think that?"

"Well, I enjoy it, to begin with," Lily replies. "And I've gotten my best grades in the NEWT levels suggested for a career in Healing. And it's not as if I want some *stupid* career based on *excitement* without actually *thinking about it first*, like all the Gryffindor boys and their Cursebreaking and Auroring and Quidditching. *You* know."

"Only too well," McGonagall says, "indeed."

"So I did give it some real thought," Lily goes on, "and honestly Healing just seemed to fit."

McGonagall is again reminded of the vast difference between teenage boys and teenage girls. It is, she muses, like dealing with two different species entirely. "I think that's a lovely idea, Ms. Evans," she says, truthfully. "One of the most refreshing decisions I've heard all week."

"Oh, good," Lily says. "Was James an Auror-er or a Quidditch-er?"

"Pardon me?"

"You know," Lily explains, "it's just, sort of a toss-up, I thought, between the two. Childish enough to pursue a lifetime of speeding around on a broomstick like a thirteen year old idiot, but self-impressed enough to want to be a hero."

"Superhero," McGonagall murmurs, "actually."

"Did he talk about his rubber suit?" Lily asks.

"Extensively," McGonagall says, and winces.

Lily shakes her head pityingly. "*Men*."

"You have no idea," McGonagall agrees.

"He once told me he wanted to 'fight things,'" Lily adds. "As a *career*."

"I am shocked that your relationship was not more lasting." A smile curls the edge of McGonagall's mouth. "If I may ask, Miss Evans, what were you *thinking*?"

Lily blinks, and looks at her hands, and then back at her Head of House, looking uncomfortable for the first time. "I -- I don't know, really. He was just trying so hard. He learned Yeats. And he's not so awful, you know, when he's not trying to impress Sirius Black." She wrinkles her nose. "Which he always is."

"Ah, yes," McGonagall says faintly, staring at the ceiling. "But then again, the constant company of Mr. Black would be enough to drive anyone to madness."

"The one I don't understand is Remus." Lily sighs and shakes her head wonderingly. "I mean, why does he do it? How can he stand it? It's completely mystifying."

"I think it is safe to say that Mr. Lupin mystifies us all," McGonagall says.

"I kissed him once," Lily confides, lowering her voice. "It was the mistletoe, of course, and I was doing it because James--Potter--was being *incorrigible*, but, do you know, it was rather nice."

McGonagall makes a face like *this is hardly appropriate, Ms. Evans* but her smile only twitches up at the corners and her eyes hold deep, warm amusement. "I take it Mr. Potter's rage was infinite?" she asks.

"I thought his eyes were going to *pop out*." Lily grins, always glad to remember that day.

"Poor Mr. Lupin," McGonagall sighs.

"He actually seems to enjoy it." Lily shakes her head. "They're so -- they're so -- they're not from the same *planet*!"

"Mr. Black and Mr. Potter are aliens? Well, now, Ms. Evans, that does explain a good many things." McGonagall's small, dancing smile is wicked. "I always suspected -- but confirmation is such an assurance."

"And just when you think they're *tolerable*," Lily mutters, then snorts. "It's not *men* who are the problem, is it? It's *boys*."

"An excellent distinction," McGonagall replies. "However, I must unfortunately inform you men are also problematic more often than not."

"Bugger," Lily says, then looks sheepish. "Er. Sorry."

McGonagall, however, appears too lost in thought to have noticed. "And the distinction is also frequently rather less clear than one might hope."

"Not at Hogwarts," Lily says definitely.

McGonagall shakes herself and regards Lily with some of her usual severity. "Hogwarts is not everything, as this meeting is actually supposed to emphasize. Thank you so much for your clarity, Miss Evans; I cannot tell you how much I appreciate it. Your schedule is, naturally, arranged already."

"Certainly, Professor." Lily rises, smoothing out her skirt. "Er -- shall I jinx Sirius Black for you before supper, then?"

"I should hate to have to deduct points from my own house," McGonagall says distantly.

"I'll be discreet," Lily promises.

"I have no idea what you are talking about, as this conversation never took place," McGonagall says, and busies herself with straightening some stray papers on her desk. "Good day, Ms. Evans."

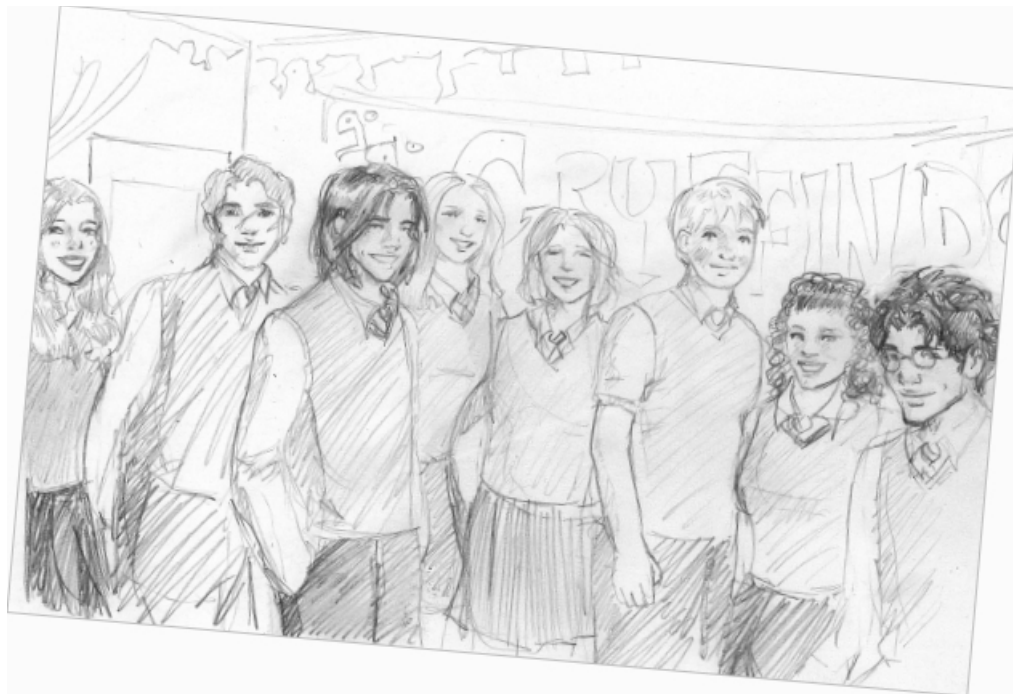
"Good day, Professor."

"Oh -- and Ms. Evans? Tea as usual this Wednesday evening."

Lily nods, a smile creeping over her face, and tucks a stray lock of hair behind her ear. "Looking forward to it."

"Very good." McGonagall eyes her sharply. "I am counting on your discretion, you know."

"I won't let you down," Lily says, and leaves to administer justice.









The end of first year, when Remus let it slip he was feeling just slightly nostalgic about their departure, the retribution was great and all-powerful. It taught him something very valuable: that no boy in the history of the universe is ever allowed to so much as acknowledge nostalgia, and especially not when school is involved, or he is expelled forever from boyhood and all its privileges. It was good to learn so quickly. Being armed with this knowledge has kept him from making the same mistake more than once, and fortunately no one has talked about the incident since. He has good friends, kind and giving and understanding in their own right. Even if Sirius still gives him a wobbly left eyebrow from time to time, and mouths the words *girl girl girl, you are a girl*, Remus likes to think his friends forgive him his trespasses.

They have to. If they don't, who's to say he'll forgive them theirs?

The end of every year, Remus still feels slightly nostalgic about their departure. He just never mentions it anymore. His stomach gnaws away at itself as he listens to James and Sirius' plans, as he hears Peter talk about his mother's freshly sterilized new washroom, as he watches the countryside roll by with rickety track rhythm. He thinks of his room and his books and the long three months, and prays for some miracle to get him to Devonshire, and has three chocolate bars by the time they arrive at Platform Nine and Three-Quarters, so that he's a bit green

in the cheek as Peter's mother arrives to whisk him away from his germ-infested peers.

James says, wisely, "That woman is a nutter."

"It goes beyond nuttery," Sirius agrees, watching Mrs. Pettigrew inflict a flurry of disinfecting spells on her red-faced son. "Imagine if she knew that every full moon her little boo-bear spends his leisure time crawling through garbage on his belly."

"He would have to be killed."

"Very probably. Hey, Prongs, is that your mum?" James whirls, a grin splitting his face, and Sirius waves, rather sheepishly. Remus turns, too, to find that it *is* James' mum: a small woman with a no-nonsense nose and wild gray hair, grinning joyfully at them all and waving very enthusiastically. James ventures toward her -- his dad has appeared now, too, looking rumpled and disoriented among the crowds and very tall -- and is engulfed immediately in an enormous hug, although her head hits somewhere around his chest.

"Erk," James says. "All *right*, mum."

"How's my *darling*?" James's mother yelps. She rumples his hair and straightens his collar as James cringes and squirms and tries to wriggle free. "And how are you, boys? Good year? My goodness, Sirius, your hair! You look like a street musician! Do your professors let you in class with that earring in? It's so wonderful to see you all! Remus, dear, are you coming up to see us this summer?"

"I'd love to try, thanks, Mrs. Potter," Remus says truthfully. Sirius steps on his foot and, when Remus glares at him, gives him an innocently injured look.

"We should give them some *alone time*," he leans over to Remus' ear to whisper. "You know, let the loving family catch up before we give them what they *really* want."

"What's that?" Remus lifts a skeptical brow.

"Me, of course," Sirius replies. He grabs Remus by the wrists and tugs him behind a stanchion, into its shadow, and sets his bags down. "Poor family, can't get enough of me, misses me all year round, so I've been told, but we can't tell James; he'd just be jealous. Where're your mum and dad?"

"Car probably broke down on the way here." Remus counts his bags for the third time since they got off the train. Two, and holding up well despite the fraying. "They always leave early just in case that happens. They should be here soon."

"Isn't that a touching sight?" Sirius points across the station, elbow resting against the marble behind him. "Mama and Papa Snivellus, come to take their precious bundle of ooze home for the summer. Doesn't he look happy? Where's the camera when you need it, eh? Truly a family moment."

"He looks miserable," Remus says. "It's not all that funny."

Sirius pauses to consider this. "Yes," he decides finally, "yes, actually, I think it is."

Remus shrugs. "Three months without him," he points out. "I hear that absence makes the heart grow fonder."

"Listen," Sirius says abruptly, angling an intense look that Remus balks under, "are you going to come this summer, or not?"

"Look," Remus says. He knows just how hopeless it is, but goes for it anyway. "I don't -- I can't promise anything. I'll ask my parents."

"Will you?" Sirius asks skeptically.

Remus sighs, folds his arms, unfolds them, and finally sits down on his bags, staring out into the crowd. "I don't know, all right? I will if they have time and they're not too bothered."

Sirius sighs. Remus doesn't have to look up to know what he's doing: fiddling with his sleeves. He always fiddles with his sleeves when he feels upset or thwarted, and Remus is pretty sure he's doing it now. "Don't ask if you don't want to. It's just -- you keep saying you will and then you don't. Peter's been three times. You've never even seen the house."

"Thanks," Remus mutters, "thanks very much for rubbing that in." He scrubs a hand over his face. "I'll try. Again."

"Well," Sirius says darkly. "I have no choice but to believe you. Don't make me come and drip on your carpet again, because I will if I have to but I think your Dad would rather I stayed away. Look, we can come get you on the bike, it needn't cost you a Knut."

"That's not the only problem," Remus explains. He knows he's trying his best to be patient, and he knows how much Sirius hates it. It's like being stuck between a rock and a Sirius, who is a very, *very* hard place, when he isn't getting his way. Relatively cheerful at all other times, but a madman about perfecting the art of sulking. "Mum gets upset, about the logistics, and if I told her I'd be riding to James' on a *flying motorcycle* driven by a *teenage boy* -- and yes, Sirius, I know that you're trustworthy, but think, for a minute, how it sounds -- she'd unhinge her jaw so the yelling was easier -- and now, I'm not going to lie to her, I don't do that. I can't." Remus pauses, licking his lips nervously. "She *knows*," he adds. "She knows *everything*. It's as if she can just see right through my ear and into my brain and I've tried lying before, once, but all it took was a squinty look and somehow she *knew*."

"You're a terrible liar, that's why," Sirius says.

"No, actually," Remus replies, voice dry, "not all that bad."

The silence that follows is uncomfortable. Remus dares to look up, all the way up, at Sirius' face, backlit and somewhat murderous. He coughs into his palm.

"I'm sorry," he says. "I am. I *am*."

"If you were that sorry you'd *come*," Sirius mutters. Remus can almost see it coming, the wobble of the eyebrow and the quirk of the lips. *Girl girl girl, you are a girl*. He cringes, bracing himself for it. "Right, well," Sirius says instead, kneeling down, "trying to talk to you is like smashing my head against rocks."

"Have you been doing that lately, then?" Remus ventures.

"Feels like it." Sirius sighs.

"You could stop," Remus suggests.

"That's been--" Sirius coughs, and winds a hand into his hair, and looks nervously off to one side, "--surprisingly difficult, actually. I've been trying."

"Well," Remus says, "just walk away, then. Find yourself somewhere where there are no rocks against which to bang your poor suffering head."

Sirius gives him a strange, soft look.

"Oi, Sirius!" comes James' voice. "We're off!"

"Yeah!" Sirius calls back, flicking up his chin in a clear dismissal. "Go on out, I'll be there in a minute -- Moony," his voice takes on an unfamiliar urgency, "there's rocks *everywhere*. We had this discussion, remember?"

"We weren't talking about their ubiquity," Remus reminds him, "we were talking about their free will, or lack thereof. I'm surprised you even remember that."

"I *do*," Sirius says.

Something niggles at the edge of Remus' mind. He looks down at Sirius, who is on his knees, with his hand on Remus' suitcase and his hair in his eyes, and says, "we aren't really talking about rocks, are we?"

"Er," Sirius begins. He puts his hand tentatively against Remus' jaw, two fingers resting against Remus' ear, and Remus wonders if maybe this is another part of the Boys' Club Dynamic that he will never in a million years understand, and if it isn't, what else it could even be. There are a few possibilities on mental file, which he runs through at lightning speed. One, Sirius is sick and dying and this is his somewhat inappropriate decision to explain everything here and now. Two, Sirius has decided he no longer wants his grammar scrutinized day in and day out and they've all decided to let Remus go. Three, Remus is asleep on the train and at any moment Sirius is going to wake him up by putting something cold and wet down the back of his shirt, and then summer will officially have started.

"Are you dying?" Remus asks.

"No," Sirius says. "What?"

"Do you hate me?"

"What? No! What are you *talking* about?"

Remus breathes in deeply. "Are you about to put something cold and wet down the back of my shirt?" It is, admittedly his favorite of the three options, because that, too, shall pass. Sirius merely stares at him.

"Nothing up my sleeves," he says finally. He's lost his odd thoughtful look and in its place is one of worrying determination. Remus knows that look. It tries to be grave but is fueled by impetuousness and caprice. It's the look that means Sirius has decided to take something he wants, having thought about taking it far more than the consequences of taking it. "No, look, just let me talk."

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize I'd interrupted."

"Moony," Sirius says. His cheeks have gotten puffy. "You give really, really excellent head massages."

"Oh," Remus says. "Well. Thank you?"

Sirius turns a funny color. Remus ponders its possible causes: sunburn, rash, gas. Anything to keep from thinking about Sirius' left hand, which is on his face, and Sirius' right hand, which is on his leg. He isn't used to being touched with purpose. Sometimes Sirius messes up his hair or James gives him a nice Boys' Club Punch In The Shoulder or Peter tries to leap over him to escape a nice Boys' Club Punch In The Shoulder and misses and lands on top of him and Remus has to go to the infirmary. None of this is being touched with purpose. Kissing Lily was being touched with purpose but even that was sort of a joke, and now he's thinking about kissing, and is *that* why Sirius has licked his lips twelve times in the past thirty seconds?

"Oh," Remus says suddenly. "I get it. I'm rocks."

Sirius makes a noise that's kind of a laugh and kind of a groan and then presses his lips against Remus' without any warning. Or with ample warning that Remus is only just now beginning to decode.

He hasn't shaved and his hands are sweaty and there are *teeth* in there, and it is not much at *all* like kissing Lily except that kisses, Remus has learned, are wet, nervous, compelling, terrifying things. He makes a sound. Sirius jerks away.

"Let's never mention this again," Sirius decides out loud, leaping to his feet, as if he's been electrocuted. "Shall we?"

"Uh," Remus says. His mouth is, ridiculously, wet. Wet! He licks his lips and then wonders whose saliva he is actually licking and says, again, even more frantically, "er." It's fine! It's just like getting licked by Padfoot. That's all it is.

But with *purpose*.



"I think I agree," he says carefully.

"Right!" Sirius says, rather shrilly, swinging his bag over his shoulder and staring everywhere except at Remus.
"Well, have a great summer!" He legs it for the exit.

"I have no idea," Remus says, "what just happened."


Unfortunately, he's lying to himself.



Cowritten by  [dorkorific](#) and  [ladyjaida](#).

 [dorkorific](#) specializes in Sirius;  [ladyjaida](#) specializes in Remus.

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Don't worry; Peter won't be stupidified. **Trust us** on that one.

We would like to take a moment to thank  [windjinn](#) for leaping down the stairs with  [ladyjaida](#)'s bra on his head.

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