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ALL THE YOUNG DUDES



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All the Young Dudes

by [MsKingBean89](#)

Summary

LONG fic charting the marauders' time at Hogwarts (and beyond) from Remus' PoV - diversion from canon in that Remus's father died and he was raised in a children's home, and is a bit rough around the edges. Otherwise canon-compliant.

1971 - 1995

This IS a wolfstar fic, but incredibly slow burn. Literally years. Long build up but worth it I promise!

PLEASE DO NOT COPY TO WATTPAD. SERIOUSLY, WHY??

Spotify playlist:

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(Compiled by amazing reader, JustAnotherPerson)

DISCLAIMER: I do not support JK Rowling's disgusting transphobic views.

WINNER of two 2018 Marauders Medals Awards:

- Best Characterisation of Remus
- Best Characterisation of James

2017 Marauders Medal Awards:

- Best Work in Progress

Notes

Traduzione

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NOTE: I am no longer replying to comments on this fic, but I read every single one! Thank you so much for all your support, writing this was a wonderful experience.

Translations very welcome! Get in touch with me by commenting on the fic, or on Tumblr: @lobsterbang

(If you want to contact me about something else via Tumblr, please read the FAQ first!)

Summer, 1971: St Edmund's

Saturday 7th August, 1971

He woke up in the dark. It was too hot in the little room they'd put him in, being early August. Though he supposed that could be the fever. He always had a high temperature, the morning after. They used to put him in a room with a window, but a few months ago he'd been able to smash one of them, and if it hadn't had bars anyway then he'd have escaped. He'd heard them talking about restraining him as he got older. He tried not to think about it.

He remembered the feeling of hunger, so intense it transformed into rage. He remembered howling and keening for hours, circling the cell over and over again. Perhaps they'd let him off lessons today, and he could sleep. It was the summer holiday's anyway, and not fair that he had to do lessons when all the other boys were allowed to spend all day dossing about, playing football or watching telly. Sitting up, he stretched carefully, paying attention to every ache and pop of his joints. There was a fresh claw mark behind his left ear, and a deep bite in his right thigh.

He rubbed his hand over his scalp, where his hair was shaved very close to his head and bristled against his fingers. He hated it, but every boy at the children's home had the same severe buzz cut. It meant that when they were allowed out in town on weekends everyone knew they were St. Edmund's boys – which was probably the point. The shopkeepers knew who to look out for. Not that the boys themselves did anything to subvert expectations. They had been told so often that they were the dregs of society; left behind and unwanted – so why not cause a little havoc?

Remus heard footsteps at the end of the hall. It was Matron; he could smell her, hear her heartbeat. His senses were always amplified after one of his episodes. He stood up, pulling a blanket around himself despite the heat, and padded towards the door to listen harder. She was not alone, there was a man with her. He smelled old and somehow... different. A thick, iron scent which reminded Remus vaguely of his father. It was magic.

“Are you sure it’s worth your time?” Matron was asking the stranger, “He’s really one of our worst cases.”

“Oh yes,” The old man replied. His voice was rich and warm like chocolate. “We’re very sure. Is this where you keep him during...?”

“His episodes.” The matron finished in her clipped, nasal voice. “For his own safety. He’s started biting, since his last birthday.”

“I see.” The man replied, sounding thoughtful, rather than concerned. “May I ask, madam, what it is you know about the young man’s affliction?”

“Everything I need to know.” Matron replied, coldly. “He’s been here since he was five. And he’s always been trouble – not just because he’s one of your sort.”

“My sort?” The man replied, calm and unperturbed. Matron lowered her voice almost to a whisper, but Remus could still hear.

“My brother was one. Haven’t seen him in years of course, but he occasionally asks me favours. St Edmund’s is a very special institution. We’re equipped for problem cases.” Remus heard the jangle of keys, “Now, you must let me see him first. He often needs patching up. I don’t know why you wanted to see him after a full moon in the first place, if you already knew.”

The old man did not reply, and Matron walked towards Remus' room, her patent leather heels clicking on the stone floor. She knocked on the door three times.

"Lupin? Are you awake?"

"Yeah." He replied, pulling his blanket tighter. They took his clothes off him to stop them getting torn.

"Yes, Matron." Matron corrected him, through the door.

"Yes, Matron." Remus muttered, as the key turned in the lock and creaked open. The door was plain wood, and he knew he could easily smash it during an episode, but it had been fitted with silver plating after the window incident. Just the smell of it made him feel queasy and headachy. The door opened. Light poured in like water and he blinked wildly. As Matron entered the room he automatically took a step back.

She was a birdlike, pointy sort of woman, with a long thin nose and dark beady eyes. She regarded him warily.

"Need any bandages, this time?"

He showed her his wounds. They weren't bleeding any more, he'd noticed that the injuries he inflicted upon himself, though deep, healed faster than any other cuts and scrapes; he never even needed stitches. The scars never faded, however, and left silvery slash marks across his body. Matron knelt before him, dabbing him with antiseptic and wrapping him in itchy gauze. This done, she handed him his clothes and he dressed quickly in front of her.

"You've a visitor." She said, finally, as he pulled his t-shirt over his head. It was grey, like all of their clothes.

“Who?” He asked, looking her in the eye because he knew she didn’t like it.

“A teacher. He’s here to talk to you about school.”

“Don’t want to.” He replied. He hated school. “Tell him to get lost.”

Matron clipped him around the ear. He’d expected it, and didn’t flinch.

“Less of the lip.” She snapped. “You’ll do as you’re told or I’ll leave you in here for the rest of the day. Come on, now.” She grabbed his arms and pulled him forward.

He scowled, thought about fighting her off, but there was no point. She really might lock in him again, and he was curious about the stranger now. Especially as the scent of magic grew stronger as they moved down the shadowy corridor.

The man waiting for them was quite tall and dressed in the strangest suit Remus has ever seen. It was velvet, a deep maroon colour with elaborate gold embroidery at the cuffs and lapels. His tie was midnight blue. He must have been very old indeed – his hair was white as snow, and he had an incredible long beard which must have reached his navel. Strange as he looked, Remus didn’t feel intimidated, as he did with most grownups. The man had kind eyes, and smiled at Remus from behind half-moon spectacles as they approached. He extended a hand,

“Mr Lupin,” The old man said, warmly, “A pleasure to meet you.”

Remus stared, entranced. No one had ever addressed him with such respect before. He felt almost embarrassed. He shook the man’s hand, feeling a an electric burn as he did so, like battery acid.

“Hi.” He replied, staring.

“I am Professor Dumbledore. I wonder if you would join me in a turn about the grounds? It’s such a lovely day out.”

Remus glanced up at Matron, who nodded. This in itself was worth having to talk about school with an oddly dressed stranger – she never let him outside during a full moon, not even with supervision.

They carried on down a few more corridors, just the two of them. Remus was sure he’d never seen Dumbledore at St Edmund’s before, but he certainly seemed to know his way around. Once they were finally outside, Remus breathed deeply, the warm summer sunlight washing over him. The ‘grounds’, as Dumbledore had called them, were not extensive. A patch of yellowing grass the boys used for football and a small patio terrace with weeds growing up through the cracks in the crazy paving.

“How are you feeling, Mr Lupin?” The old man asked. Remus shrugged. He felt the same way he always did afterwards. Sore and restless. Dumbledore didn’t snap at him for insolence, merely continued to smile down at him as they walked slowly around the perimeter fence.

“What d’you want?” Remus finally asked, kicking a stone out of his way.

“I suspect you already have some idea,” Dumbledore replied. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a brown paper bag. Remus could smell sherbet lemon, and sure enough, Dumbledore offered him a sweet. He took it and sucked.

“You’re magic.” He said, plainly. “Like my dad.”

“Do you remember your father, Remus?”

He shrugged again. He didn't very well. All his memory could ever drag up was the shape of a tall, skinny man wearing a long cloak, looming over him, crying. He assumed that had been the night he was bitten. He remembered that, well enough.

"He was magic." Remus said. "He could make stuff happen. Mum was normal."

Dumbledore smiled at him, kindly.

"Is that what your Matron has told you?"

"Some of it. Some of it I knew. He's dead, anyway, topped himself."

Dumbledore looked slightly taken aback by this, which pleased Remus. It was a point of pride, having a tragic backstory. He didn't think about his father often, other than to consider whether he would have killed himself if Remus hadn't been bitten. He carried on.

"Mum's not dead though. Just didn't want me. So I'm here." He looked around. Dumbledore had stopped walking. They were at the furthest edge of the grounds now, by the tall back fence. There was a loose board there which no one knew about. Remus could slip through it if he wanted to, and get onto the main road into town. He never really went anywhere in particular; just wandered around waiting for the police to pick him up and bring him back. It was better than doing nothing.

"Do you like it here?" Dumbledore was asking. Remus snorted,

"Course I bloody don't." He side-eyed Dumbledore, but didn't get in trouble for swearing.

“No, I didn’t think so.” The old man observed, “I hear you’re something of a troublemaker, is that right?”

“Ain’t any worse than the others.” Remus said. “We’re ‘troubled boys’.”

“Yes, I see.” Dumbledore stroked his beard as if Remus has said something of extreme significance.

“Got another sweet?” Remus held out a hand expectantly. Dumbledore handed him the bag and he couldn’t believe his luck. The old fool was a complete pushover. He chewed the lozenge this time, feeling it crunch like glass between his teeth, sherbet exploding on his tongue like fireworks.

“I run a school, you know. The same school your father went to.”

That threw Remus for a loop. He swallowed the sweet and scratched his head. Dumbledore continued.

“It’s a very special sort of school. For wizards, like me. And like you. Would you like to learn magic, Remus?”

Remus shook his head, fervently.

“I’m too thick.” He said, firmly, “I won’t get in.”

“I’m sure that’s not true at all.”

“Ask her,” Remus jerked his head back towards the tall grey building where Matron lay in wait. “Can’t hardly read, even. I’m stupid.”

Dumbledore looked at him for a very long time.

“You haven’t had a very easy start in life, Mr Lupin, and I’m sorry about that. I knew your father – only a little – and I’m sure he wouldn’t have wanted... anyway. I am here to offer you something different. A place among your own kind. Perhaps even a way to channel all of this anger you have.”

Remus stared at him. What difference did it make, if he was in one home or another? Matron never gave him sweets, and didn’t smell like magic. The kids at Dumbledore’s school couldn’t be worse than the St Edmund’s boys, and if they were then at least he could hold his own in a fight, now. But. There was always a ‘but’.

“What about my episodes?” He asked, folding his arms. “I’m dangerous, y’know.”

“Yes, Remus, I know,” Dumbledore replied, sadly. He placed a hand on Remus’ shoulder, very gently. “We’ll see what we can come up with. Leave it with me.”

Remus shook him off and chewed on another sherbet lemon. They walked back to the building in silence, both satisfied that they understood each other now.

First Year: The Hogwarts Express

Chapter Summary

Remus meets the Marauders.

Remus rubbed his scalp again, then his nose, which kept running. It had been bothering him since dinner the evening before, when another boy had punched him. To be fair, Remus had kicked him first. But the boy – Malcolm White – was fourteen and twice the size of eleven-year-old Remus. Malcolm had made some crack about Remus going to a special school for backwards kids, and he'd had to retaliate. He had a black eye now, which he regretted. Everyone at the new school would think he was a yob. But then, he supposed he was a yob.

Matron slapped his hand away from his head and he scowled up at her. They stood in the huge ticket hall at King's Cross staring at two platform numbers. There was number nine, then number ten. Matron looked at the letter in her hand again.

"For goodness sake." She muttered.

"We have to run at the barriers." Remus said, "I told you."

"Don't be ridiculous." Matron said, "I'm not running at anything."

"I'll go, then. Leave me here."

Remus had only half believed Dumbledore when he'd explained how to access platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. But then packages had started arriving for him,

delivered by owls and containing strange books and weird clothes and all sorts of oddments like quills and parchment. Dumbledore had been unfailingly generous over the past month. He'd presented Remus with a list of things he would need for his new school, and promised to send him as much of it as he could from the second hand supplies at Hogwarts. Now Remus was willing to believe almost anything the old man said.

He'd never owned so many possessions before, and was actually glad when Matron had locked everything in her office so it wouldn't get pinched by the other boys. Now it had all been crammed into a battered old charity shop suitcase which he had to hold in a very particular way so it didn't fall apart.

"I'm not leaving you anywhere, Lupin. Just wait there while I find a guard." Matron clipped off towards the ticket office, her big backside wobbling as she went. Remus glanced about furtively, then licked his lips. It might be his only chance.

He ran at the barrier at full pelt, squeezing his eyes shut tight as he approached the metal turnstiles. But he didn't hit anything. The atmosphere changed, and he opened his eyes to find himself standing on a completely different platform, surrounded by people. Not people. Wizards.

The train itself was huge, gorgeous and old fashioned. 'The Hogwarts Express'. He clutched his suitcase with both hands, biting his lip. There were lots of other children, his own age and older, but they were all with their families, some of them crying as they were hugged and kissed by protective mothers. He felt very small and very alone, and thought it best to just hurry up and get on the train.

Inside he couldn't reach the luggage rack to stow away his things, so he chose an empty carriage and sat the suitcase on the seat beside him. He watched the people on the platform through the window, pressing his

forehead against the cold glass. He wondered if they all came from wizard families too. He wondered if any of them had episodes like he did. He didn't think so – none of them seemed to have scars. A lot of them were wearing normal clothes, like he was (albeit with fewer holes and patches), but some were wearing long dark robes and tall pointed hats. Lots of the other kids had owls, or cats carried in baskets. He even saw one girl with a tiny lizard perched on her shoulder.

Remus was starting to feel even more nervous, his stomach roiling as he realised that despite everything Dumbledore had said about being among his 'own kind', he would be just as out of place at Hogwarts as he was everywhere else.

Just then, he realised that someone was staring back at him from the platform. It was another boy, his own age. He was tall and slim, but not skinny like Remus. He had dark hair, much longer than any other boy he'd ever seen, curling gracefully to his shoulders. He had fine high cheekbones, a full mouth and startling blue eyes. Seeing Remus staring, the other boy arched one perfect eyebrow in a gesture that clearly said: 'and what are *you* looking at?'

Remus stuck his tongue under his bottom lip so that his chin bulged, pulling an ugly face. The other boy smirked, slightly, then threw up two fingers at him. Remus almost laughed.

"Sirius, what do you think you are *doing*?! Come here at once." A rather severe looking witch with the same angular eyebrows as the boy stepped into view, yanking her son away from the window. The boy rolled his eyes but obeyed, and they disappeared further up the platform.

Remus sat back in the beaten leather seat and sighed. He was getting hungry, he hoped the journey wasn't too long. Matron had packed him two

dry cheese and pickle sandwiches and an apple, but he didn't fancy them much.

After a few more minutes, the door to his compartment burst open, and a girl came rushing in. She ignored Remus, flying to the window, pressing her hands against the glass and waving frantically at her family standing on the platform. She was small and pale, with bright red hair pulled back in a tight plait. Her face was blotchy from crying.

She kept waving as the train drew away, and her parents waved back, blowing kisses. A sour faced girl stood beside them, her arms folded. Once the train had completely left the station, the red haired girl sat down opposite Remus, sighing deeply. She looked at him with huge green eyes, glistening with tears.

"It's so horrid saying goodbye, isn't it?" She had a high, middle class accent.

"Uh, yeah, I s'pose." Remus nodded, self-conscious. He didn't really like girls. St Eddy's was single -sex, and the only contact he had with women was the Matron and the school nurse – they were both mean old bitches. The girl was looking at him curiously.

"Are you from a muggle family, too? My name's Lily."

"Remus," he replied, awkwardly, "My dad was a wizard, but I didn't know him... well I grew up with muggles."

"I couldn't believe it when I got my letter," she smiled, warmly, cheering up, "But I can't wait to see what it's like, can you?"

Remus couldn't think how to answer her – but he didn't have to. The door slid open once more and a boy poked his head in. He had long black hair,

like the boy Remus had pulled faces at, but it was poker straight. He had a long nose and wore a deep frown.

“There you are, Lily, I’ve been looking ages.” He said, giving Remus a dirty look, the sort Remus was quite used to.

“Sev!” Lily jumped out of her seat and threw her arms around the other boy, “I’m so glad to see you!”

He patted her shoulder, shyly, his cheeks slightly pink.

“Come and sit in my carriage, there’s plenty of room.”

“Oh...” Lily looked back, “Can Remus come? He’s all by himself.”

“I’m not sure,” The other boy, Sev, looked Remus up and down, taking him in piece by piece. The thuggish haircut, the fraying jeans, the worn out t-shirt, the second hand suitcase. “There might not be *that* much room.”

Remus slouched down in his seat, propping his feet up on the bench opposite.

“Get lost then. I don’t want to go to your stupid carriage.” He looked out of the window, purposefully.

Lily and the other boy left. Remus let his feet drop back to the floor. He sighed. It was noisy, outside his little compartment. He could hear shrieking and laughter and owls hooting and a few younger students still crying. Once again, he found himself locked away from everyone else. He was starting to wonder if that was just his lot in life. Perhaps once he got to this Hogwarts place they’d force him to sleep in a cell all by himself too.

There was a sudden rap at the door – a short, cheerful tune – and it opened once more. Remus slouched even further down in his seat, as a friendly faced boy with a mess of dark hair and large round glasses entered, grinning.

“Hiya,” He held out a hand to Remus, “First year? Me too, I’m James.” He nodded his head back to a short boy who had followed him in. “This is Peter.”

Remus shook James’ hand. It felt easy and comfortable. For the first time, the tight coil in his stomach began to unwind.

“Remus.”

“Can we sit here? Everywhere else is full and Peter’s getting train sick.”

“Am not.” Peter murmured, taking a seat opposite Remus, eyeing him warily. He did look a bit green. He rubbed his hands together in his lap and stared at the floor.

“Know what house you’ll be in?” James asked Remus, directly. Remus shook his head. He didn’t know anything about houses. Was that where they’d be sleeping? “What were your parents in?” James persisted. “Did they go to Hogwarts?”

Remus nodded, slowly,

“My dad did. I dunno what house though. My mum didn’t. She was nor—a muggle.”

Peter looked up suddenly,

“You’re a half blood?”

Remus shrugged helplessly.

“Shut up, Pettigrew,” James chastised the boy next to him, “As if it even matters.”

Remus was just about to ask what a half blood was, when the door opened yet again. It was the good looking boy who’d sworn at him in the station. He glanced about, furtively,

“None of you are related to me, are you?” He drawled. He had the same high, upper class accent that Peter and James had. Remus disliked them all at once, knowing that they’d think he was common – and a half blood, whatever that was.

“Don’t think so.” James replied, grinning, “James Potter.” He held out a hand again. The other boy shook it, easily,

“Oh good, a Potter. Dad told me not to talk to you.” He sat down next to Remus, grinning, “Sirius Black.”

First Year: The Sorting

Remus was fairly sure he was dreaming. Or he'd drowned getting over that awful lake and this was just his brain making things up before he died. He was standing in an enormous stone hall, the size of a cathedral. It was full of students, all dressed in identical black robes – apart from their ties – and lit by candles. Not just any candles – these candles were actually floating. He might have been able to live with that; it could be a clever trick of the light, something to do with wires. But when he looked up he almost yelled. There was no ceiling – just the vast night sky hanging above them, pendulous grey clouds and glittering stars.

No one else seemed interested, save for the red haired girl – Lily – and a few other kids Remus assumed must have muggle parents too. Remus had on his uniform now, and felt a little better to be dressed the same as everyone else. All of the other students sat on long banquet tables, under their house banners. James had excitedly explained the differences between each house, much to the chagrin of Sirius and Peter, both of whom were convinced they'd end up in the wrong place. Remus didn't know whether to be nervous or not. He couldn't see how much it would matter to him; he'd probably get kicked out after his first lesson anyway. The more time Remus spent among wizards the more he convinced himself that he couldn't actually be one.

Professor McGonagall, a thin, stern faced witch who had led all of the first years into the hall was now standing beside a stool, holding a mangy old brown hat. This was the test James had told them about. They had to put on the hat, then somehow they would each be sorted into one of the houses. Remus looked up at each of the banners. He already knew he wouldn't end up in Ravenclaw; not if you had to be clever. He didn't think much of the one with the badger – they weren't exactly exciting animals, especially compared

to snakes. He liked the colour green, too, if it came down to picking a tie. But then, James and Peter had both been keen on Gryffindor, and seeing as they were the only people who'd been very friendly so far, he wouldn't mind going with them.

A boy called Simon Arnold was the first to be called forward. The hat was placed on his head, covering the top half of his face. Remus wondered if it smelled as bad as it looked. Matron was always maniacal about head lice, and he hoped none of the kids who went before him had them. Simon was promptly sorted into Hufflepuff, the badger house, to tumultuous applause.

Sirius Black was the first of their group to go, and he looked positively queasy as he approached the stool. There was some catcalling from the Slytherin table – some of the older students were calling out to him. Two young women with masses of dark curls and the same high cheekbones and full lips at Sirius, who was now trembling on the stool. The hall was quiet for a few moments as the hat came to rest on Black's head. Then the hat screeched,

“Gryffindor!”

A few moments of stunned silence before the clapping came this time. McGonagall gently lifted the hat from Sirius' head and gave him a small, rare smile. He looked completely horrified, casting a desperate look at the Slytherin table, where the two girls heckling him were hissing, eyes narrowed. He got up and walked slowly over to the Gryffindors, where he was the first new student to take his place under the red and gold banners.

The sorting continued. Lily was also placed in Gryffindor, and sat grinning next to a very miserable looking Sirius. When it was finally his turn, Remus still couldn't see what all the fuss was about. He didn't much like having everyone's eyes on him as he pushed to the front, but he did his best to

ignore it. He would have shoved his hands in his jeans and slouched, normally, but in his weird new uniform it wouldn't have had the same effect.

He sat on the school, McGonagall looking down her nose at him. She reminded him a bit of Matron, and disgust rose in his throat. She lowered the hat over his eyes. Everything went dark. It didn't smell at all, and the peace and quiet was actually a bit of a relief.

"Hmmm," A soft voice spoke in his ear. It was the hat. Remus tried not to cringe as it purred quietly, "You're an odd one, aren't you? What *shall* we do with you... perhaps Ravenclaw? There's a good brain in here."

Remus flinched, feeling as if someone was playing a joke on him. Not bloody likely.

"But then," the hat considered, "You might go further... much further, if we put you in... GRYFFINDOR!"

Remus ripped the hat from his head as soon as it had sorted him, not waiting for McGonagall to remove it. He hurried over to the Gryffindor table, barely registering the cheering and clapping as he passed. He sat opposite Lily and Sirius. Lily shot him a pleased smile, but he just looked at his empty plate.

By the time the 'P's' came around, Remus had somewhat recovered and was able to watch with some interest as Peter, a small, pudgy looking boy hurried towards the sorting hat. Peter was the sort of boy who wouldn't last five minutes at St Eddy's. He had a perpetually nervous, twitchy look that other boys always singled out. Remus was surprised that James – who was the polar opposite of Peter; relaxed and self-assured, brimming with confidence – was being so kind to someone so obviously inferior.

The hat took a very long time over Peter. Even the teachers seemed to be getting nervous, as the minutes ticked by. Finally, he was sorted into Gryffindor, and much more quickly so was James, who strode over to the table with a huge grin on his face.

“How great is that!” He addressed the three other boys, “We all made it!”

Sirius groaned, his head in his arms on the table.

“Speak for yourself,” He replied, slightly muffled, “My Father’s going to kill me.”

“I can’t believe it.” Peter kept saying, eyes wide. Though he’d clearly got what he wanted, he kept wringing his hands and shooting looks over his shoulder as if someone might come over at any moment and ask him to try again.

McGonagall did come over, but she placed a bony hand on Remus’ shoulder.

“Mr Lupin,” she said, quietly, but not so quietly that the other boys couldn’t hear, “If you would come to my office after dinner? It’s next to the Gryffindor common room, one of the prefects can show you.”

Remus nodded, mute, and she left.

“What was that about?” James asked, “McGonagall wants to see you already?”

Even Sirius looked up now, curious. Remus shrugged, as if he didn’t care either way. He knew what they were thinking – the rough kid was already in trouble. Sirius was looking at his black eye again. Fortunately, the food had appeared, distracting everyone. And it really had ‘appeared’ – the previously empty places were suddenly laden with an actual feast. Golden roasted

chickens, piles of crispy roast potatoes, plates of steaming carrots, peas swimming in butter, and an enormous jug of rich dark gravy. If the food was going to be like this all the time, then Remus wondered if he could ignore talking hats and snobbish house mates.

He paid very close attention as one of the Gryffindor prefects, who introduced himself as Frank Longbottom, led the first years to their common room in one of the towers. Remus hated getting lost, and tried hard to cement the journey into his mind as they went. He made a mental note of the size and shape of every door they entered, each portrait they passed, and which staircases moved. He was so tired and full of good food that the moving portraits and staircases no longer seemed out of place.

Once they reached the right corridor, Remus saw McGonagall's office, marked with a neat brass plaque, and decided to get the meeting over with. He paused outside the door and was just about to knock when James appeared,

"Want us to wait for you, mate?"

"Why?" Remus asked, eyeing the dark haired boy suspiciously. James shrugged,

"So you don't end up on your own."

Remus stared at him for a moment, before slowly shaking his head,

"No. I'm fine." He knocked.

"Enter." A voice came from within. Remus pushed open the door. The office was small, with a neat little fireplace and rows of books against one wall. McGonagall sat behind an immaculately tidy desk. She smiled thinly and

motioned for Remus to sit down in the chair opposite. He did, sniffing and rubbing his nose.

“I’m pleased to meet you, Mr Lupin.” The teacher said in a reedy Scottish accent. Her hair was grey, pulled back in a severe bun, and she wore deep green robes secured with a golden clasp shaped like a lion’s head. “I’m even more pleased to have you in Gryffindor house – of which I am the head.”

Remus didn’t say anything.

“Your father was in Ravenclaw, you know.”

Remus shrugged. McGonagall pursed her lips.

“I thought it best to speak with you as soon as possible about your... condition.” She said, quietly, “Dumbledore has explained that you have had minimal interaction with the wizarding world so far, and I feel it is my duty to let you know that people with your particular problem face a huge amount of stigma. Do you know what ‘stigma’ means?”

Remus nodded. He couldn’t spell it, but he knew the word well enough.

“I want you to know that as long as you are in my house, I will not tolerate anyone treating you differently or unkindly. This applies to all of the students under my care. However,” She cleared her throat, “It may be prudent for you to exercise caution.”

“I wasn’t going to tell anyone.” Remus replied, “As if I want anyone knowing.”

“Well, quite.” McGonagall nodded, looking at him curiously. “That brings me to my next point. Arrangements have been made for the full moon – which

next occurs this Sunday, I believe. If you could report to me after dinner, I shall show you where to go. Perhaps you could tell your friends that you're visiting someone at home?"

Remus snorted. He rubbed the back of his head,

"Can I go now?"

The professor nodded, frowning slightly.

Outside, Remus found James still standing there, alone, waiting for him.

"Told you I'd be ok." Remus said, annoyed. James just smiled,

"Yeah, but you missed Longbottom giving us the password. Didn't want you stuck out here all night. C'mon."

James led him to the end of the corridor, where hung a large painting of a voluptuous woman wearing pink.

"Widdershins." James said, and the portrait moved away, swinging out like a door. They entered the common room.

There had been a rec room at St Edmund's Boys Reformatory, but it was nothing like this. That room had been sparsely decorated, containing a black and white, too small TV and a few board games. The decks of cards were always incomplete, and most of the chairs were broken or damaged.

The Gryffindor common room was warm, comfortable and cosy. There were huge squashy looking sofas and armchairs, a thick maroon rug in front of the blazing fire, and even more paintings adorning the walls.

“We’re up here,” James said, leading Remus to a winding staircase in one corner. At the top, there was another door which opened into a bedroom. Again, this was nothing like the facilities at St Edmunds. There were four beds, all enormous, hung with thick red velvet curtains with gold trim tassels. There was another fireplace, and each boy had a heavy mahogany trunk and set of shelves by their beds. Remus saw his sad little suitcase propped up against one of the trunks. He moved over, assuming that was his bed.

Peter was rifling through his own things, pulling out clothes and magazines and books, making a terrible mess.

“I can’t find my wand,” he wailed. “Mum made me pack it so I wouldn’t lose it on the train, but it’s not here!”

“Pete,” James grinned, “Your mum asked me to look after it, remember?”

James and Peter, Remus had learnt since the train, had grown up as neighbours and knew each other quite well. Though two boys couldn’t be any more different, and Remus still didn’t understand why James didn’t want to beat the shit out of Peter.

Sirius was sitting on his bed, his trunk still packed.

“Cheer up, mate,” James said, going to sit next to him, “You didn’t want to be in Slytherin anyway, did you?”

“Five hundred years.” Sirius replied, stonily, “Every Black at Hogwarts has been sorted into Slytherin for five hundred years.”

“Well, it’s about time someone tried to be different, eh?” James slapped him on the back jovially.

Remus opened his trunk. Inside there was a large pewter cauldron – another item Dumbledore had scrounged up from the second hand bin, he imagined. There was also a long thin box at the bottom, with a note on top.

He unfolded the note and stared at the elaborate swirly script for a long time, trying to make sense of it. He only recognised the word ‘father’, and guessed that it was also from Dumbledore, but had belonged to his father. Opening it eagerly, he found a long, polished stick. It was a wand. He hadn’t thought about wands yet, but he took it in his hand and squeezed the wood firmly. It was warm to the touch, like his own flesh, and felt supple as he turned it in his hands. It felt good.

Sirius had finally started to unpack, pulling book after book out of his trunk. Those that didn’t fit on his shelf he stacked beside his bed. James stared, having just finished pinning a poster next to his own bed. It showed a lot of little people zooming about on broomsticks, throwing balls to each other. Remus thought it looked only mildly more interesting than football, which he hated.

“You know,” James said to Sirius, still stacking books, “There is a library here.”

Sirius smirked,

“I know, but these are mostly muggle books. My Uncle Alphard left them to me, and mum would set them all on fire if I left them at home.”

Remus’ ears pricked at that. What was wrong with muggle books? Not that he had any with him. He hated reading more than anything in the world. He didn’t think about it for long, though, because now Sirius was lifting an actual record player out of his trunk, followed by a box of brand new looking records in shining bright sleeves. He went over to look straight away,

“Is that Abbey Road?!” He asked, peering into the box of vinyl.

“Yeah,” Sirius grinned, handing it to him. Remus wiped his hands carefully on his robes before taking it from him, handling it carefully. “You must be muggle born.” Sirius said, “Never met a wizard who knows the Beatles – except my cousin, Andromeda. She bought them for me.”

Remus nodded, forgetting himself for a moment,

“I love The Beatles, one of the boys in my room at home’s got at least ten singles, but he never lets me touch them.”

“Boys at home?” Sirius arched an eyebrow. Remus thought he seemed very grown up, “You mean your brother?”

“No,” Remus shook his head, handing back the record and shrinking away, “I live in a children’s home.”

“Like an orphanage?” Peter asked, wide-eyed. Remus felt anger rising, his ears growing hot.

“No.” He spat. He felt all of the boys’ eyes slide towards his bruise again and turned around to unpack the rest of his things in silence.

Eventually Potter and Black started up a conversation about something called *quidditch*, which soon became a very heated argument. Remus climbed onto his bed and drew back the curtains, relishing the privacy. It was dark, but Remus was used to the dark.

“You’d think he’d try harder to make friends,” Peter whispered loudly to the other two boys. “Especially if he’s muggle born.”

“Are you sure the hat wasn’t supposed to put *you* in Slytherin?” Sirius drawled. Peter was quiet after that.

First Year: Full Moon

Chapter Summary

CW - homophobic slur towards the end of the chapter.

Sunday, 5th September 1971

Remus got through the rest of the week by ignoring the other boys as much as he could. This was a technique he'd picked up at St Edmund's – it was better not to be noticed, and best if no one knew anything about you at all. (He still got the odd dead-arm or his head shoved in the bogs, but on the whole no one ever made an effort to bother him.) James, Sirius and Peter were not at all like St Eddy's boys, of course. They were what Matron would call 'well-bred'.

Sirius and James especially seemed to come from money, he could tell from the way they talked about their homes, as well as the way they spoke – every vowel and consonant clearly pronounced. Remus listened carefully and resolved to stop dropping his 'H's'.

It wasn't just their accents, but *what* they said. Remus had grown up with adults constantly telling him to 'be quiet!', and with boys who picked on you for being a swot if you said any more words than necessary. James and Sirius spoke like characters in a novel; their language full of descriptive metaphor and scathing sarcasm. Their rapid fire wit was much more intimidating than a punch in the face, Remus thought – at least that was over quickly.

He'd so far avoided the other boys by going for walks around the castle. At St Edmund's he'd had very little personal liberty, and spent much of his time locked in rooms. At Hogwarts it seemed there was nowhere you couldn't go, and Remus was determined to investigate every inch of the bizarre landscape.

They'd been provided with maps to help them find their classrooms, but Remus found his sorely lacking and overly simplified. It did not list, for example, a secret passageway he had found which led from the dungeons to the first floor girl's loos. He had no idea why on earth anyone would need to get between the two, and the first time he used it he was accosted by a particularly irritating ghost who squirted him with hand soap. It would also have been helpful, Remus reasoned, to animate the map in the same way the paintings were – then at least you could keep track of the ridiculous moving staircases. He was sure one of the rooms moved as well, it never seemed to be in quite the same place.

By the time Sunday afternoon rolled around Remus was dreading Monday, which would not only be the first day after the full moon, but the first day of lessons. After dinner – which Remus spent alone, a few seats away from Sirius, James and Peter – he made his way quickly to McGonagall's office. She was waiting for him, along with the school nurse, who he'd been introduced to already. She was a kind, pleasant sort of woman; if a little fussy.

“Good evening, Mr Lupin,” McGonagall smiled, “Thank you for being so prompt. Come along.”

To Remus' surprise, the two women led him not to the dungeons, as he'd thought they might, but outside the castle, towards a very large twisted tree. The whomping willow was a recent addition to the grounds – Dumbledore had explained in his speech at the beginning of the year that it had been donated by an ex-pupil. Remus thought that whoever had donated it must have really hated the school, because the tree was not only terrifying in aspect, but mindlessly violent.

As they approached, Professor McGonagall did something so incredible that Remus almost cried out in shock. She seemed to vanish – shrinking down

suddenly, until she was no longer there at all. In her place was a sleek yellow eyed tabby cat. Madam Pomfrey gave no sign that she was surprised, as the cat ran forward towards the tree, which was flailing its branches like a child having a tantrum. The cat was able to run right up to the trunk of the tree, escaping injury, and pressed a paw against one of the knots in the bark. The tree fell instantly still. Remus and Madam Pomfrey continued on, walking into a hollow beneath the tree which Remus had never noticed before. Inside, McGonagall was waiting for them, a witch again.

The passageway was dimly lit by torches giving off a greenish glow, and at the very end was a door. This opened into a small cottage, which looked long abandoned. The windows were boarded up and the doors bolted.

“Here we are.” McGonagall tried to sound pleasant, though it seemed a very grim place. “Now I hope you understand that we cannot stay with you, but if you would like Madam Pomfrey to wait outside until the... transformation is complete?”

Remus shrugged.

“I’ll be ok. How do I get back in the morning?”

“I’ll pop by as soon as the sun rises,” Madam Pomfrey assured him. “Patch you up and have you off to your lessons before anyone even notices you’re gone.” She smiled, but her eyes looked sad. It made Remus uncomfortable. But then, it was getting to that point in the evening when everything made him uncomfortable, his hair itched, his skin felt too tight, his temperature rose.

“You’d better go.” He said, quickly, retreating into the bare room. There was a little cot against one wall with clean sheets. It looked as though it had been put there for him.

The two women left, locking the door heavily behind him. He heard McGonagall muttering again and wondered what sort of spells she was placing on the house. Whatever they were, it was better than that awful silver plating.

He sat on the bed for a moment, then got up again, restless. He paced the room. Sometimes it felt as though the wolf crept into his mind before it got hold of his body, and as darkness fell outside his senses became sharper, the hot swell of hunger beginning in his belly. Remus removed his clothes quickly, not wanting to rip them. A dull throb started up in his joints and he lay down on the bed. This was the worst part. His heartbeat was thudding in his ears, and he could swear he heard his tendons creaking as they stretched, his bones and teeth grinding against each other as they elongated, his skull splitting and reshaping.

He groaned and hissed until the pain grew too much, then he screamed. He could only hope that he was far enough from the school that no one could hear him. All in all, it took about twenty minutes – though he'd never actually timed it. Things became foggy afterwards, he couldn't always remember what happened once he became the wolf. That first night at Hogwarts was a blur, and he woke up with less injuries than usual. He suspected that he had sniffed around the unfamiliar territory, testing its boundaries. He must have tried to throw himself at the doors or windows at some point, because he had a patchwork of bruises down his left side for days afterwards.

Transforming back was just as unpleasant – a crushing, tightening feeling all over which left him breathless and aching. He wiped the tears from his eyes and crawled into the cot, grateful for a quiet hour of sleep before the sun rose completely.

Madam Pomfrey returned, as promised. Speaking in soothing tones, she lay her cool hands on his fevered brow.

“I don’t like the look of you,” she said, as he opened his sleepy eyes, “It’s madness, thinking you can start a full school day like this. You’re exhausted!”

No one had ever expressed such concern for him before, and it struck him uneasily. He pushed her away, pulling on his clothes,

“I’m fine. I want to go.”

She made him drink something before letting him get up – it tasted cold and metallic, but he did feel better afterwards. He hurried up to Gryffindor tower to get his uniform on as fast as possible – he didn’t want to miss breakfast, he was famished.

“Where were you?!” James accosted him as soon as he burst into their room. The three other boys were all up and dressed, looking immaculate – apart from James’ hair, which always stuck up at the back.

“Nowhere.” Remus pushed past to get to his things.

“Are you ok?” Sirius asked, glancing away from the mirror where he was smoothing down his own hair.

“Yeah,” James added, watching Remus carefully, “You look a bit weird.”

Remus scowled at them,

“Piss off.”

“We’re just being nice.” Peter said, hands on his hips. The three of them stared at Remus, who was about to remove his t-shirt when he remembered his bruises.

“What?!” He growled at them, “You all gonna watch me get dressed? You posh boys are all a bunch of poofs.” He marched into the bathroom with his clothes and slammed the door. After a few moments he heard Peter whining that he was hungry and they all left.

First Year: Potions

Chapter Summary

Remus has a run in with Snape.

Friday 10th September 1971

By the end of his first week of lessons, Remus had lost ten house points, learnt one spell, and gained another bruise; this time on his chin.

The first few lessons were ok – they were introductory, and while Lily Evans spent each class furiously scribbling down pages and pages of notes, nobody else seemed too bothered. They were set a few simple pieces of homework, but Remus made a plan to pretend he'd forgotten to make a note of it if anyone asked.

Charms was the most exciting – the tiny professor enchanted a pile of pinecones to whiz around the room, to everyone's delight. After a few goes at the spell themselves, Lily had levitated her pinecone at least three feet in the air, and Sirius got his to spin like a top – until it got out of control and smashed a window. James, Peter and Remus had less luck, but Remus was sure his had jumped once or twice.

Transfiguration was just as interesting, but much more serious, as it was led by Professor McGonagall. There would be no practical work at all during the first week, she explained, but she would be setting lots of homework in order to gauge their ability levels.

History of magic was absolutely dire, and the less said about it the better. Remus struggled not to fall asleep as the ghostly Professor Binns floated up and down the aisles, reeling off dates and names of battles. He too set homework – two chapters of reading from the set text. Sirius rolled his eyes at this and muttered to James,

“*Surely* everyone’s already finished ‘A History of Magic’? It’s kids stuff.” James nodded, yawning. Remus felt sick. He hadn’t opened even one of the books in his trunk yet, except to rip the first page from ‘Level One Potions’ to spit his chewing gum into.

He’d actually been looking forward to Potions, hoping to at least see something blow up, like in chemistry. But that turned out to involve a huge amount of reading too, and even worse, they had to share the class with the Slytherin first years. The Professor leading Potions was annoyingly cheerful and took almost half an hour just to read the register.

“Black, Sirius – aha, there you are! Quite surprised at the sorting my boy, quite surprised! I’ve had every one of the Blacks in my house since I started teaching! Shan’t take it personally, young Sirius, but I shall be expecting great things!”

Sirius looked like he wanted the ground to swallow him up. Slughorn continued calling out names,

“A Potter *and* a Pettigrew, eh? Well, well, along with Mr Black here this class has quite the pedigree, eh? Let me see... Lupin! I knew your father; not one of mine, but a damn good dualist. Nasty business...”

Remus blinked. He wondered if Slughorn knew he was a werewolf. The whole class was looking at him – they knew by now that he had been raised in a children’s home, and that his father was magical (Remus suspected that

Peter had told them), but no one had dared ask him much more. There seemed to be another rumour going around that he was violent and possibly in a gang. He was sure that James and Sirius were encouraging it, too, though he found he didn't mind too much.

Fortunately, Slughorn wanted to get them started on practical work as soon as possible,

“Best thing is to just get stuck in!” He smiled, “Now, if we all work four to a cauldron, you can all take it in turns to follow the steps...”

Everyone clamoured to pair up – James, Sirius and Peter immediately claimed the cauldron at the very back of the room, and were joined by Nathaniel Quince, a Slytherin boy who knew Potter and Pettigrew from home. Remus decided he would just wait until everyone had grouped off then see if he could get away with just hovering at the back for the rest of the lesson.

No such luck.

“Remus! You can join us!” Lily's grabbed his wrist and pulled him over to a cauldron she was sharing with Severus Snape – her long-nosed friend Remus had met on the train – and Garrick Mulciber, a brutish, snub nosed boy who Remus was a bit afraid of.

Lily was already chattering away, laying out all of the ingredients and heating up the cauldron carefully. She was looking at Severus' book, which already had notes scribbled all over the margins.

“Here're the desiccated snail-eye stems.” Lily shook a tiny jar. “I think we need quarter of an ounce...”

“You can be fairly liberal with them, Lily, they don’t add much overall.” Severus drawled, sounding bored.

Lily measured them out anyway and tipped them into the bubbling brew. Mulciber then took the book and stirred for five minutes, taking instruction from Severus on how fast to go and in which direction. Then it was Remus’ turn. Lily gave him the book. He stared at the page. He could see that they were instructions, he could make out maybe half of the words. But every time he thought he had a grasp on it, the letters seemed to shift on the page and he was lost all over again. His cheeks grew hot and he felt slightly sick. He shrugged, looking away,

“Oh hurry *up*,” Severus snapped, “It’s not as if it’s difficult.”

“Leave him alone, Sev,” Lily chided. “The book’s covered in your notes, no wonder he can’t find his place. Here, Remus,” she flicked open her own, brand new potions book. But it was no good. Remus shrugged,

“Why don’t you do it, if you’re so clever.” He spat at Severus.

“Oh Merlin,” Severus’ lips curled, “You can *read*, can’t you? I mean, even muggle schools teach that, surely?”

“Severus!” Lily gasped, but the smug dark haired boy didn’t have a chance to say anything else – Remus threw himself over the desk and into Severus, fists flying. He only had the element of surprise going for him – Mulciber grabbed his collar and yanked him back, punching him square in the face in three seconds flat.

“Stop!” Slughorn boomed. Everyone froze. The portly potions master stormed over, “Get up, both of you!” He shouted at the two boys on the floor. Snape and Remus climbed to their feet, chests heaving. Snape looked worse

off by far, his hair ruffled and blood oozing from his nose. Remus had a rather sore chin where Mulciber had hit him, but other than a rumpled uniform he was fine.

“Explain yourselves!” Slughorn shouted. They both looked at their feet. Mulciber was grinning. Lily was crying. “Very well,” the teacher said, crossly, “Detention for both of you, two weeks. Ten points from Gryffindor and ten from Slytherin.”

“That’s not fair!” James said, suddenly from the back, “Should be twice as many from Slytherin, it was two against one!”

“From where I was standing it was Mr Lupin who started it,” Slughorn replied, but shook his head anyway, “Still, you are quite right – Mulciber, five points for punching Remus. Violence does not solve violence, you know, as I’ve told your eldest brother on a number of occasions. Miss Evans, please take Mr Snape to the hospital wing. Lupin, you can clean up the mess you’ve made.”

Remus didn’t know any cleaning spells, so he had to mop up by hand. Slughorn even made him clean Snape’s blood off the flagstones. Unfortunately, it being so soon after a full moon, the rich, iron smell of it made his stomach growl. James, Sirius and Peter were waiting for Remus outside after the lesson was finished.

“Bloody brilliant, mate,” James punched Remus lightly on the arm, “The way you just went for him!”

“Mulciber was out here bragging afterwards, told everyone what Snape said.” Sirius added, “You were right to do it – what a prat.”

“Told... *everyone*?” Remus moaned.

“Don’t worry, they’re all on your side.” James said, “Well, except the Slytherins.”

“Yeah, and who gives a toss about the Slytherins?” Sirius grinned, “C’mon, it’s dinner soon – hungry?”

“Starving,” Remus grinned back.

First Year: Revenge

“So.” James said on Sunday evening, “How are we going to get them back?”

“Get who back?” Peter asked without looking up, searching through his notes for something.

They were in the Gryffindor common room, trying to do their homework for McGonagall. Fourteen inches on the basic laws of transfiguration. Sirius and James had finished theirs, Peter was at least six inches in, and Remus hadn’t started.

“The Slytherins.” James hissed, “Keep up, Pete.”

“Not *all* of the Slytherins,” Peter asked, sounding worried, “Only Snape and Mulciber, right?”

“All of them.” Sirius confirmed. He had just appeared from under the desk they were sharing, and presented a piece of parchment, “This what you were looking for?”

“Thanks!” Peter grabbed it, relieved, “I’ve nearly finished...”

“Have you done it, Lupin?” Sirius looked over. Remus had opened his book, but hadn’t so much as looked at it. He’d considered cloistering himself away in the library one evening and trying to read it properly – he *could* read if he really, really focussed. But the opportunity hadn’t presented, and if he was honest; he just didn’t want to. Ever since the Potions lesson the four of them had become real friends, and Remus didn’t want to miss out.

“Nah,” He shrugged in response to Sirius. “Can’t be bothered.”

“Let us know if you need help.”

“You can copy mine if you want.” James pushed his across the desk. Remus pushed it back, gritting his teeth.

“I’m fine. I’m not stupid.”

“No one said you were.” James replied, casually. Sirius was looking at him, though. Remus wanted to hit him, but he was trying not to lash out so much – James and Sirius sometimes play wrestled, but they never actually tried to hurt each other, like he had with Snape. Forcing himself to swallow his temper, Remus opted instead to change the subject.

“We could put itching powder in their beds.” He offered. Someone had done that to him once. He had a rash for a full week, and on the night of the full moon had torn at his skin more than usual. “Or on their clothes... if we could figure out who does the laundry, anyway.”

This had been a matter of great concern to Remus – their dirty laundry appeared to just vanish and then resurface, cleaned and folded in their trunks. He’d never caught anyone else in their room, and couldn’t understand it at all.

“I like it.” James replied, chewing his quill, “Anyone got any itching powder, though?”

The three boys shook their heads.

“Could order some from Zonko’s.” Sirius put in. “If you let me borrow your owl, James, Mum confiscated mine after the sorting.”

“I s’pose,” James replied. “Wish we could do it sooner, though. You know, strike while the iron is hot.”

“Don’t need to buy itching powder,” Remus said, suddenly, having a brainwave, “Do you reckon they have rose hips in the greenhouse?”

“Yep,” Peter spoke, head still bowed over his homework, “For healing potions – arthritis, I think.”

“The hairs inside make you itch, really badly.” Remus explained, excited, “Matron – the woman who runs the children’s home – she grows them, and if you get in trouble she makes you seed them without gloves on.” His fingertips itched just thinking about it.

“That’s awful.” James said.

“Good idea, though!” Sirius grinned. “Next break, we’ll go and get a load of them. Then we can seed them – with gloves on – and put them in the Slytherin’s bedsheets. Excellent!”

“How are we going to get into the Slytherin dorms?” Peter asked, finally finishing his work.

“Leave that to me,” James smirked, mercurially.

* * *

Getting the rose hips was easy. They sent Peter, who was the only one of them who hadn’t been given a detention yet, and was therefore under the least observation. Peter was small and good at going unseen; he crept into the green house unnoticed during morning break and returned red faced and gleeful, with a jar full of rose hips under his cloak.

Then they'd all locked themselves away in their shared bathroom to seed all of the buds. Under Remus' close instruction, they all wore their heavy dragon hide gloves to do this, taking extra care not to touch the seeds or fine little hairs.

"I can't wait to see the looks on their faces." Sirius was grinning, sitting cross legged on the floor next to James.

Remus watched, sitting on the edge of the bath tub, James and Sirius' two dark heads bowed over the work. He was a little bit jealous of their friendship. They had so much in common – being raised into magic, both growing up wealthy, both completely mad about quidditch. In addition, it was clear that after only three weeks James and Sirius had managed to secure a reputation as joint kings of the first years. Everyone listened to them when they spoke. Everyone laughed when they were funny. No one even got annoyed if they lost house points.

"I still don't know how we're going to get into the Slytherin dorms – even Peter isn't that sneaky." Sirius glanced at James. He'd been trying to get him to reveal his plan ever since the bespectacled boy had mentioned it.

"Let me worry about that," was all James said.

The seeds and hairs were then decanted into another jar, while the boys ended up eating the leftover rosehips over the course of the week.

It was Tuesday evening when they finally had their chance. James decided that they would have to do it before everyone went to bed. He also decided that they ought to go to the Slytherin dorms separately, to avoid being seen together and discovered. Remus personally thought this was overkill, but went along with it, not wanting to ruin the other boy's fun.

They ate dinner much more quickly than usual that evening, before getting up from the table one at a time and leaving the hall. Peter looked so nervous Remus thought he might panic at the last minute and give them all away. He made sure to stay close to the smaller boy, just in case he had to cover his mouth or pull him back at some point.

Sirius and James went first, of course, heading towards the girl's loo's on the second floor which Remus had told them led to the dungeons. He'd thought about keeping that particular passageway to himself, but as he'd already found a few other good hiding places by then he reasoned that letting them know about this one wouldn't hurt. After all, how often would he want to get to the dungeons?

The ghost who lived in the toilets was fortunately in a quiet mood, though Remus could hear her sobbing softly in the last stall.

"Lead the way then, Lupin," James gestured grandly, once Remus and Peter arrived. Sirius grabbed his arm,

"Wait, show us what you're planning, first."

James smirked that annoying grin he'd been sporting since Sunday.

"Oh... ok then, here, hold this," he thrust the jar of rosehip seeds into Sirius' hands, pulling back his robes.

He produced a very long, voluminous cloak, woven from the strangest looking fabric Remus had ever seen – silvery grey and shimmery.

"No." Sirius gaped, "You haven't, Potter, you bloody haven't..."

James was grinning so broadly now that Remus thought his face might split in two. The gangly boy winked at them all, then, with a flourish, swept the cloak over his head, so that it covered him top to toe. He vanished.

“You jammy bastard!” Sirius whooped, “How come you never told me?!”

“You never told me, either!” Peter squeaked, “And I’ve known you forever. Where did you get it?”

James pulled the hood of the cloak down, so that his head appeared to float in mid-air. It made Remus feel a bit queasy.

“Been in the family for years.” He said, triumphantly, “Dad let me bring it, as long as I don’t tell mum.”

“Lucky git.” Sirius said, grabbing for some of the invisible material and rubbing it between his fingers, “My parents would do *anything* for an invisibility cloak.”

“I reckon we can all fit under it,” James demonstrated, pulling it apart and raising his arms like a bat, “C’mon, let’s all get nice and cosy...”

They all shuffled underneath the cloak, then tried waddling up and down the room a few times until they were able to walk comfortably together. Finally, trying not to giggle or whisper too much, the four invisible boys made their way to the dungeons. Remus showed them which tiles to tap in order for the floor to open up in the third stall from the left.

“How’d you find this, Remus?” James whispered, “It’s genius.”

“You come out behind one of them rugs they hang on the walls, in the dungeons,” Remus replied, “I just looked behind it.”

“Do you mean a tapestry?” Peter asked,

“Um... s’pose so?” Remus was glad none of them could see his face.

“Shut up, Pettigrew.” Sirius snapped. Remus felt a sharp kick hit the back of his ankle,

“Oi,” he hissed, kicking back twice as hard “Bugger off.”

“Sorry!” Sirius yelped, “Meant to get Pete, not you.”

“Be quiet, all of you,” James snapped, “We’re almost there.”

They waited quietly on their side of the tapestry, listening for footsteps in the corridor outside. Once James was satisfied that it was quiet, they all clambered out of the passage. The dungeons were cool, dimly lit and cavernous. There was a strange dripping sound coming from somewhere – perhaps the pipes.

“Where’s the entrance?” Sirius murmured.

“Behind that wall,” Remus pointed, hoping they could see where he was aiming. It was a plain brick wall.

“How’d you know?”

“I’ve seen them go in before,” Remus said, hurriedly. He wasn’t going to tell them that he knew there were two hundred Slytherins on the other side because the scent of their blood and their magic so strongly he could almost taste it.

“D’you know the password?”

“Nope.”

“Damn.”

“It’s not curfew yet, let’s just wait.”

So they did, rather uncomfortably. Though the corridor was dank, it was unnecessarily warm underneath the cloak, especially with all four of them so close together. Fortunately, two seventh years came hurrying through in the next few minutes. Unfortunately, Sirius knew them.

“Let’s see the ring again, Bella!” Narcissa Black pleaded with her elder sister. Remus felt Sirius stiffen, pressing himself backwards into the wall.

Bellatrix preened, extending a long, ivory arm. On her bony finger was an enormous, ugly silver and emerald engagement ring, which she’d been flashing about since the start of term. Everyone in the school knew that she would be marrying Rodolphus Lestrange, some wizard politician, as soon as she completed her NEWTs. Sirius had to go to the wedding.

Narcissa squealed when she saw it, though she’d probably seen it more than anyone else.

“Gorgeous!” She gushed, “Oh, I can’t wait to get married...”

“Wait your turn,” Bellatrix replied, with a voice like nails on a chalkboard. “Once Lucius has a better position with the ministry I’m sure Mummy and Daddy will agree to the match.”

The two young women were standing before the brick wall now. Bellatrix was the taller of the two, but they looked very alike. They had long, black

curly hair – much like Sirius himself, and that same perfect Black family bone structure.

“*Mundus sanguine*,” Bellatrix announced. The wall slid aside to let them in, and the four boys hurried after, as fast as possible before it closed.

For the first time since he had been at Hogwarts, Remus was truly glad he had been placed in Gryffindor. The differences between their warm, comfortable common room and that of the Slytherin’s was stark. It was built like an enormous banquet hall, rather than a sitting room. The walls were richly decorated with yet more elegant tapestries, the fireplace was huge and ornately carved, and a ghoulish green pallor hung over everything. More than that, the place *felt* somehow wicked. Remus tried not to shudder.

The other boys seemed as uneasy as he was, and they all froze still until James prodded them forward, up a flight of stairs which they all hoped led to the boy’s dormitories. On their way they passed Severus, sitting alone in a corner, hunched over his potions textbook. At the top of the stairs, they entered the first open door which was, thankfully, a bedroom.

James threw off the cloak,

“Keep a look out, eh Petey?” He said, hurrying into the room, “Reckon one of these is Snape’s bed?”

“This one might be,” Sirius pointed, “Sheets look greasy enough.” All four boys snickered.

“Quick then, lads, gloves on,” James whispered, unscrewing the jar. Remus and Sirius pulled on a dragon hide glove each, grabbed a handful of seeds and began scattering them underneath the bedclothes.

“They’ll see them!” James said, sounding disappointed. It was true, the bright red little seeds stood out clearly against the white sheets, even in the dark.

“Well... they’ll still get it on them trying to brush them out,” Sirius offered.

“Hang on...” Remus had a sudden idea. He didn’t know how it had occurred to him, or why, but somehow he was just sure it would work. He pulled out his wand, bit his lip and waved it gingerly over the bed he had just scattered with seeds. “*Obfuscate*.” He whispered.

And just like that, the seeds were gone. Well, he knew they were still there; but no one would be able to see them now.

“Blimey!” James stared, “How’d you do that? Flitwick hasn’t taught us that charm yet, has he? Was it in the reading?”

“Nah,” Remus shrugged, “I saw some of the fifth years doing it yesterday to some sweets they bought in the village. S’not hard to copy.”

Sirius and James immediately attempted it themselves, over the seeds they had just scattered. It didn’t work the first time – or the second, but after the third, James had managed to vanish most of his.

“You’d better do it, Lupin, or we’ll be here all night.” He decided.

“Yes, please hurry up!” Peter hissed from the doorway, white with fear.

Sirius tried a few more times before giving up and letting Remus take over.

“You’re going to show me exactly how to do that as soon as we’re back on neutral territory.” He said. Remus nodded, though he wasn’t sure how to

explain it. He really had just done it because he thought he probably could.

“Next room,” James announced, pulling them back to the entranceway.

“Do we have to?” Peter asked, hopping from foot to foot, “Isn’t that enough?”

“Not even close!” Sirius replied with a laugh, tossing his head, “What if we haven’t even got Snape’s bed yet? We have to get them *all*, Pete. Are you with us or not?”

“All the boys, anyway,” James said, as they entered the next bedroom, “I don’t fancy our chances getting into the girl’s – remember what happened to Dirk Creswell last week?”

They worked quickly and managed to get every single boys room. Even the last one, which had three sleeping students in it – sixth years. Even Sirius had begged off going in there, but Remus was giddy with the excitement of the prank now, and threw on the invisibility cloak to go in himself. He even scattered the rosehips over the pillows of the sleeping boys.

By the time they had finished, it was getting late and more and more Slytherin’s were heading upstairs for bed. Barely able to contain their glee, the four Gryffindor’s hid under the cloak and slowly crept back down the stairs, flattening themselves against the wall anytime someone was coming, then through the enormous stately common room and out through the wall they’d come in.

As James had instructed, they all kept as quiet as possible until they were within spitting distance of Gryffindor tower, and it was finally safe to remove the cloak once more.

“Widdershins!” They all chanted at the fat lady, who swung open for them.

It was bliss to be back in the warm, bright Gryffindor common room, and they all threw themselves into the nearest available sofa, grinning inanely at each other. Frank Longbottom called to them from his desk, where he was tidying up revision notes,

“Cutting it fine, lads, been somewhere interesting?”

Peter looked uncertain, but James just waved a hand,

“Library, obviously.”

Frank shook his head, though he was smiling,

“I’m sure I’ll hear about it soon enough.”

“I wish I could be there when it all kicks off!” Sirius whispered, his eyes shining with joy, “And I wish even more we could have got my cousins.”

“It’s just the beginning, Sirius mate,” James replied, slapping the other boy’s knee, “Between the four of us I reckon we could go even *bigger* next time. Excellent first mission, men!”

Peter whimpered,

“*First* mission?!”

First Year: Marauders

Wednesday 15th September 1971

The next morning James and Sirius could barely contain their excitement and hurried their dorm mates down to breakfast before any of the other Gryffindors. They were the first students to reach the great hall, other than a few Ravenclaws bent over their NEWT revision books with huge mugs of black coffee.

“Perfect,” Sirius beamed at the empty benches, “Front row seats!”

“Bet no one shows up for hours.” Peter groaned, half asleep, propped up on his elbows.

“Oh cheer up,” James poured them all large mugs of tea, “Don’t want to see the fruits of our labour?”

“Not at six in the morning.” Peter replied, slurping his tea. Sirius winced at the sound and pushed a plate towards him,

“Have some toast and stop whinging.”

Remus took some toast too and cut it into four pieces. He spread marmalade onto one quarter, jam onto another, butter on the third and lemon curd on the last. He ignored the look of amusement Sirius was giving him. Remus had never had so much choice before, and was determined to make the most of every meal.

Fortunately, they did not have to wait too long before the other students began to trickle in for breakfast. The first Slytherins arrived just as Remus was finishing his toast. Three boys and two girls; third years. They walked over to their table, quite unaware of the four eager Gryffindors watching them intently. For a few moments it was as if nothing was different. Sirius sighed with disappointment. But then. The tallest boy shuffled slightly in his seat, rubbing his arm. Another seemed to be looking for something in his pocket, but from Remus' viewpoint he was clearly scratching his leg furiously. The third kept using his wand to rub behind his ear.

"It worked!" James whispered, breathless with excitement. Even Peter looked cheerful now.

As more and more Slytherins filtered in, their problem became more obvious – and more hilarious. By seven o'clock the Slytherin table was full of squirming, writhing, scratching boys, and horrified looking girls. Amycus Carrow, a burley sixth year, eventually ripped off his robes, his school jumper and even his tie to claw at his chest which Remus could see was already red raw. He almost felt sorry for them.

But then Snape came in. Whether it was karma or sheer luck, Severus seemed to have reacted particularly badly to the rosehip seeds. He walked in with his head bowed, hair falling over his face, but his nose was still visible and clearly bright red.

"Oh Merlin!" Sirius wheezed, laughing so hard he was holding his stomach. "Tell me we got his face!"

"Oi, Snivellus!" James yelled out, suddenly, to get the other boy's attention.

Snape spun around, looking up; his hair parted. The left side of his face was covered in an angry red rash, from his temples all the way down to his neck,

disappearing under his uniform. His left eye was red too, the lid swollen and irritated.

“Looking good!” Sirius crowed, and all four boys dissolved into giggles as Snape stormed out of the room.

By the time breakfast was over, the entire castle was buzzing with rumours about what exactly had come over the Slytherin boys. Sirius and James looked as though all of their Christmases had come at once, and even Peter had cheered up remarkably – reminding them all that *he* had kept lookout, after all, making the entire venture possible.

“It was all Lupin’s idea, though,” Sirius returned, slapping Remus heartily on the back, “What shall we do to celebrate, eh? Exploding snap? Raid the kitchens?”

Remus shook Sirius off, smiling politely.

“Well, whatever you do, you’re doing it without me,” he replied, “I’ve got double detention.”

“From Slughorn?”

“Yeah, and McGonagall. And Flitwick, but that’s tomorrow. Then my Herbology detention is over the weekend.”

“Bloody hell mate,” James frowned, “You going for a record or something?”

Remus shrugged. He was always being punished at St. Edmund’s – all the boys were. Detention didn’t bother him. Though exploding snap did sound like a lot of fun.

“Maybe you’d better start doing your homework?” Sirius said, gently. Remus rolled his eyes, getting up from the table.

“C’mon,” he said, “It’s Defence Against the Dark Arts first, thought you two loved that.”

* * *

Later that day, Remus was on his way to his detention with Slughorn, when he ran into Lily Evans. He was perfectly happy to keep walking, but she smiled and fell into step with him.

“Hiya Remus,”

“Hi.”

“Are you going to the dungeons?”

He nodded.

“Me too. I have to tell Slughorn that Severus can’t make his detention.”

“Oh, right.”

“Did you hear what happened to the Slytherins?”

“Yeah.” Everyone had heard – it was all they’d been talking about all day, even during lessons. Fortunately no one had a clue yet who’d done it. It had been a good idea, attacking the entire house at once. Who could guess who the target had been?

“Crazy, isn’t it?” Lily continued, “Poor Sev was allergic to whatever they used. Madam Pomfrey gave him a sleeping draught while the swelling goes down.”

Remus sniggered, without thinking. He glanced at Lily, who was looking back at him with reproachful green eyes. She shook her head.

“Look, I know he wasn’t very nice to you. The other day in Potions *or* on the train. He’s... well he’s a bit of a snob, ok?”

Remus snorted.

“But I wanted to say sorry.” Lily pressed on, “I need to stand up to him more. Shouldn’t let him get away with it. He’s actually a really nice person when you get to know him.”

“If you say so.” Remus stopped walking. They were outside Slughorn’s office now. The door was closed, and there were raised voices on the other side.

“Horace, whoever it was, they must have been a Slytherin!” It was Professor McGonagall, “Who else has the password?”

“Why would a Slytherin attack their own house, Minerva?!” The Potions master sounded very frustrated.

“You did say it was only the boys dorms affected. Perhaps it was one of the girls.”

“Really!”

“Well, who else? Peeves? He never enters the common rooms – doesn’t enter the dungeons, either, come to that – too frightened of the bloody baron.”

“We ought to place a ban on all Zonko’s products.”

“From what Poppy says it *wasn’t* a Zonko’s product. Rosehip, from the greenhouses.”

Lupin felt as trickle of fear run down his spine. If they knew that much, would they be able to find out who’d done it?

“Rosehip eh? Very clever.” Slughorn actually sounded impressed. McGonagall sighed,

“I suppose you’d like to blame the Ravenclaws now?”

“I just wish I knew who’d done it!” He sighed, heavily. “Perhaps the truth will out. I suppose it does seem more likely that it was one of the Slytherin girls than...”

“Than a gang of marauders creeping into the dungeons under the cloak of night with malicious intent?”

Remus could hear Slughorn’s chuckle at that.

“Yes, quite.”

“Now, I must be going.” McGonagall was saying, her footsteps approaching the door. “You will let me know if you catch the culprit?” The door swung open. Remus and Lily stepped back, guiltily. McGonagall looked down at them through her spectacles, “What are two Gryffindors doing so far from their tower?”

“Please, Professor, Remus and I were only—“

“Ah!” Slughorn cut off Lily’s nervous rambling, “Lupin, my boy – and Miss Evans! Come to offer Snape’s apologies, eh? No need, dear girl, no need. With everything going on today I think we can cancel the boy’s detentions, for now.” He came to the door and looked down at Remus severely, “If it is understood that there will be no more fighting in my classes? Or any classes, for that matter, hm?”

“Yes, Professor.” Remus nodded, solemnly, trying not to look too pleased.

“Excellent.” Slughorn beamed, locking the door to his office, “Then if you’ll excuse me, I’ve some enquiries to make.”

Remus and Lily had almost made it to the end of the hall when McGonagall suddenly called out,

“Mr Lupin?”

Remus’ heart sank.

“Yes, Professor McGonagall?”

“That isn’t to say that your detention with *me* has been cancelled. Come along now, we’ll get an early start.”

* * *

McGonagall had him doing lines for an hour – not too bad, considering he was used to canings at St Edmund’s. He didn’t mind copying and repetition; it was soothing. *I will complete all assignments set.* Perhaps he’d swallow his pride next time and copy James’ homework. Or Peter’s, if he didn’t want to look too suspicious. But he knew that James would eventually want to know *why* Remus never read the set text. And if he told him, then he was

equally sure that James and Sirius would try to get him to explain to McGonagall – both boys had unerring faith in the teachers of Hogwarts. Remus, however, had never met an adult he trusted. She'd have him sent back to St Edmund's at once. What good was an illiterate wizard to anyone?

Once his detention was finished, he climbed through the portrait hole and into the common room to find his three roommates waiting for him. Peter and James were engaged in a very serious looking game of chess (*of course the pieces are moving*. Remus thought to himself, *everything has to bloody move in this castle*.) while Sirius was listening to one of his records through a very posh looking set of brand new headphones. Remus was dying to have a listen, but he hadn't worked up the courage to ask yet.

He sat down next to Sirius quietly. The long haired boy pulled his headphones off at once,

"That was quick!"

"Only had to do one in the end," Remus explained, "Slughorn let me off, too busy trying to sort out the itching powder thing."

Sirius grinned broadly, leaning back on the couch with his arms folded under his head,

"That prank is just the gift that keeps on giving."

"Snape was allergic and everything," Remus said, smirking, "That ginger girl said he's been in the hospital wing all day."

Sirius laughed even louder. His eyes grew bright when he laughed, Remus had never seen anyone exhibit such pure joy. It made you want to punch him and be his friend all at the same time.

“Which ginger girl?” James looked up suddenly,

“Check MATE!” Peter cried.

“You know, the annoying one. Evans.”

“I don’t think she’s annoying.”

“Ok.” Remus shrugged.

“Let’s not talk about girls.” Sirius rolled his eyes, “This might be the most important day of our lives! This is the day we became legends; the day our friendship was forged in the fire of itching powder!”

“They don’t know it was us, do they?” Peter asked, nervously, tidying away his chess set. Remus shook his head.

“Slughorn reckons it was a Slytherin girl. Or a gang of marauders.”

“Marauders!” Sirius sat up, suddenly, “That’s it! Raise your glasses, boys!”

“We don’t have glasses.” James replied, amused.

“Well, just pretend.” Sirius shook his head, irritably, “From this day forward, we are *The Marauders!*”

He said this with such a dramatic flourish that it could only be followed by stunned silence. James was grinning, Peter glancing at him for direction, not quite understanding what was going on. Remus burst out laughing.

“What sort of poncey gang name is that?!”

First Year: Secrets

Tuesday, 5th October 1971

The next full moon passed much as the first had. This time the wolf had clearly grown restless, because Remus awoke with a number of deep scratches.

“They heal fast with a bit of antiseptic.” He advised Madam Pomfrey, who fussed over him in the chill morning light.

“And faster still with magic,” she smiled, with a flourish of her wand. The cuts closed up almost instantly, Remus stared, amazed.

“Can you get rid of the scars, too?” He asked, eagerly. She shook her head sadly,

“No, Remus, not these ones, I’m sorry.”

“S’ok.” He sighed, dressing for school. This time he’d brought his change of clothes with him and left them in the tunnel just outside the shack to avoid having to go back to the tower this time. He’d meet the other boys in their first lesson, and let them wonder where he’d been.

“You don’t have to go to school today,” Madam Pomfrey was saying, “Not if you’re too tired. I can write you a note.”

“I want to go.” He replied, “It’s not that bad, honestly.”

Pomfrey looked at him with serious eyes,

“Not that bad for now. I’m afraid the transformations may start to take their toll as you grow up.”

“Have you looked after other kids like me, then?” He’d been wanting to ask for ages, but wasn’t sure how.

“No, dear, you’re the first Hogwarts student that I know of who’s been...”

“Bitten?”

“Who’s been bitten.” She accepted, gratefully, “But I promise I know what I’m doing. I’ve done plenty of reading on the subject.”

“You mean there are books? About people like me?”

“Well, yes.” She sounded surprised. She sat down on the bed as he finished dressing. “You could borrow one of them, if you like?”

He thought about it, then shook his head.

* * *

They had Transfiguration first thing, but McGonagall didn’t give him detention for not bringing his homework – she had obviously decided to be more lenient around the full moon. She did make him promise to bring it with him next time, and he agreed, hoping he sounded sincere. James, Sirius and Peter spent half of the lesson trying to get his attention, but he steadfastly ignored them until McGonagall threatened to separate all four of them.

In the halls on their way to Charms, Remus knew there was no escape. It was a good five minute walk.

“So? Where were you?!” Sirius blurted out, walking on his left hand side.

“Nowhere.” He replied, trying to hurry on,

“Oh, go on,” James pleaded, coming up on his right side, “Tell us! Was it the same place you went last month?”

“Maybe.”

“Were you in detention again?” Asked Peter, struggling to keep up. Remus cursed himself for not having thought of that – detention would have been the perfect cover.

“Nope.”

“Then where—“

“Watch it, half-blood!”

Remus had been too busy evading questions to look where he was going, and had run smack into Snape, who was coming around the corner. Already wound up, Remus squared his shoulders and attempted to push past, roughly,

“Watch yourself, *Snivellus*.”

Snape didn’t move, and pushed him instead, Mulciber appearing at his left shoulder, looming menacingly over the smaller boys.

“I know it was you that broke into our dorms the other night.” He hissed, “*All* of you.”

“Yeah? Prove it.” James smirked, folding his arms.

Snape’s lips curled,

“I can’t, yet. But I will. I’ll get you back too, I promise.”

“We’re *quaking* in our boots,” Sirius replied, leaning against the wall as if he was bored. “Now would you kindly move it?”

“Your idea, was it, Black?” Snape drawled, “Or yours, Potter? Had to have been one of you. Pettigrew doesn’t have the guts and dear Lupin here clearly hasn’t got the brains...”

Remus clenched his fists. He could see Snape’s hand on his wand – Severus probably knew all sorts of curses and hexes. James had taught Remus one or two, but he was too blind with rage to remember any of them now.

“Move along now, gentlemen.” A sharp voice suddenly rang out over the corridor. It was Professor Flitwick, stepping out of his classroom to see what the holdup was. “Severus, you’re clogging up the halls, and you four are supposed to be in my class. Come along.”

Remus felt overheated and agitated for the rest of Charms, which was usually his favourite lesson. It relied more on practical work with his wand than reading or writing, and he often did better than even James and Sirius. Finding it difficult to calm down, he kept shooting his cushions across the room like missiles rather than guiding them carefully through the hoops Flitwick had hung from the ceiling.

They’d been working on levitation charms for a few weeks now, and Peter was the only one still struggling. In Remus’ opinion, Peter’s problem was a lack of imagination. James and Sirius were both unerringly confident; and

he'd found that confidence was all you needed to complete most basic spells. Remus himself generally felt able to complete any task if it looked simple enough. Peter, on the other hand, *worried* about everything. He read and re-read his textbooks, trying to copy the complicated diagrams there rather than just copy what Flitwick showed them.

"I expect you all to be able to levitate this book by the end of the week," Flitwick said at the end of the lesson. The book was enormous, about half the size of the tiny professor, and looked as though a fully-grown man might have trouble carrying it very far. "So come prepared for a quick test of your abilities."

Peter groaned as they collected their things to leave.

Remus had managed to calm down by lunch time, but still had trouble controlling his magic later in the afternoon and was glad they only had Herbology and History of Magic. He wondered whether it was his temper – which had always been short – or whether it was the full moon. He always had a lot of energy after a transformation, even before he knew he could do magic. Now his wand buzzed in his hand like the static in a TV aerial. He tried a quick '*Lumos*', hiding in a toilet cubicle between lessons, and nearly burnt his retinas out.

Perhaps the book Madam Pomfrey had mentioned might tell him more about it, but he'd never know now. There might be other books in the library, but he hadn't checked. He knew the word, well enough, and could spell it out if he concentrated hard. But he didn't dare. Remus lived in fear that if he wrote it down, or said it out loud, then somehow everyone would find out his secret. And it was just better to keep stuff like that in your head.

* * *

Thursday 7th October 1971

It was especially important to keep his secrets to himself now, because Remus was being watched. By McGonagall, who still raised an eyebrow when she saw he wasn't taking notes, by Madam Pomfrey, who was always trying to get to him stop by the hospital wing for a quick check over, and by Snape, who was still furious that he couldn't figure out how the itching powder incident had happened. Remus might have been able to bear all of these interferences, if it wasn't for a fourth person observing him.

This stalker was much subtler, much less direct in his surveillance, but noticeable nonetheless. Sirius. At first Remus had thought the other boy was just nosy – part of that entitlement he and James shared. They had to know everything about everybody. They were constantly telling Remus and Peter other people's business – so-and-so's father was turned down for a promotion at the ministry years ago, and that's why they have that chip on their shoulder; Miranda Thrup's great-aunt was once under investigation for the illegal use of a love potion, and now no one ever drank tea at the Thrup's house; Professor Slughorn knew more about the dark arts than he let on, and the Slug Club was notorious for turning out dark wizards with influence.

Of course, neither of them knew anything at all about Remus, and in the beginning, he assumed that this was why Sirius was so watchful. But he never asked any direct questions, and if he was curious about Lupin's family or upbringing then it was a private interest that James did not share. James rarely watched other people, Remus had noticed – he preferred other people to be watching him.

No one else seemed to notice, thankfully. Sirius was sly in that respect. Only very occasionally, Remus managed to catch him unawares, staring intently with those deep blue eyes. He didn't even have the shame to look away when

he was caught – only softened his gaze into a friendly smile, which Remus was obliged to return.

That Thursday they were finishing their homework in Gryffindor common room – well, James was finishing Remus' homework, having completed his own. He'd offered to do it in return for Remus teaching him the '*Obfuscate*' spell, and despite his pride Remus had acquiesced. He really didn't want another detention with McGonagall, and James was good at imitating other peoples' handwriting.

Sirius was completing his own essay, and had already written three inches extra on the uses of lacewing flies in transformative draughts – plus diagrams. There were books strewn all over the table they'd claimed for themselves, along with inkwells and scrunched up rolls of parchment. Peter was trying to levitate an apple and get it into a waste paper basket four feet away. So far he could get it up in the air, but then it wobbled and fell back down again.

Frazzled, Peter ran his fingers through his hair again and consulted his text.

"You'll get it, Pete, don't worry." James murmured, not looking up from Remus' paper. "Keep at it."

"I'm *trying*," Peter whined, "I'm sure it's the movement I'm getting wrong... the book says to use a 'smooth, serpentine action', but I'm not sure..." he swirled his wand in the air. Remus tutted,

"It's not like that." He said, bluntly. "It's like an S shape on its side. Look." He performed the spell, effortlessly lifting the apple into the air and sending it sailing into the bin neatly.

“An S shape, are you sure?” Peter frowned. He aimed his own wand at a crumpled-up ball of paper from the table, “*Wingardium Leviosa!*” He chanted, waving his wand in the same way Lupin had. Sure enough, the paper flew shakily upwards then flew with slightly less grace into the bin, bouncing off the sides as it fell to the bottom and landed beside the apple. Peter stared wide-eyed, “I did it!” He gasped, “An ‘S’ shape, why didn’t it just say that in the book?!”

“Well done, Pete.” James said, looking up and smiling. He took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes, “You should be a teacher, Remus.”

Lupin snorted, looking away bashfully. James continued,

“I’m nearly done with this, just need to check something – can you pass me *Magical Theory*? The Waffling book?”

Remus felt a cold shiver run down his spine. Trying not to panic, he looked down at the pile of books James was pointing at. One of them was definitely about potions – it had a cauldron on the cover. The others; it was anyone’s guess. The gold and silver lettering on each cover seemed to shift and swirl before his eyes. Was it better to just pick one up, even if it was the wrong one? He looked back at James, desperately, who was reading over what he’d written. Peter was too busy levitating more balls of paper to notice Remus’ turmoil. He looked down again, biting his lip.

Sirius cleared his throat quietly and leaned across the desk. He silently tapped one of the books with his forefinger, without looking at Remus. It was a big black leather-bound tome which Remus recognised vaguely. Gratefully, he snatched it up and handed it to James.

“Cheers mate.” James said, absentmindedly, returning to his work. Sirius carried on as if nothing had happened. Remus felt his cheeks burning.

First Year: Scars

Chapter Notes

Mention of child abuse towards the end of this chapter.

Friday 15th October 1971

Remus had to spend the next few days avoiding Sirius – or at least avoiding being alone with him. This wasn't easy, the boys spent all their time together, especially on the weekends. They all got through the Friday Charms lesson with no trouble; even Peter. Flitwick was thrilled that the entire class had mastered levitation so early in the year that he let them all out early for lunch.

Sirius made himself unavoidable the very next week, during their flying lesson. If Remus hadn't hated History of Magic so much, then Flying would have been his least favourite subject. Twenty minutes into their very first lesson with Madam Hooch he had learnt that he was afraid of heights, and the rest of the classes had been miserable for him.

James was the star of the class, of course, and even the other Marauders found him insufferable as he flitted around the quidditch pitch, throwing loops and feints as if he was born on a broom. Sirius was excellent too, and most of the other kids in the class had grown up playing on broomsticks; even Peter was competent.

It had rained the night before, and the ground was soft and muddy. They'd changed out of their usual lace up shoes and into thick boots and scarlet flying kits before squelching out onto the pitch. They picked up their brooms

and awaited instruction. The brooms were provided by the school. First years weren't allowed to bring their own, but James would tell anyone who stopped long enough to listen that he had a top of the line model at home.

"Right, mount your brooms please, ladies and gentlemen," Hooch bellowed at the group, "Nice strong wind today, so I want you all to take good care. Potter, no showing off!"

Remus clambered onto his broom, swallowing hard. If he could manage not to be sick then it would be a victory.

"I'd like five clean laps around the pitch, then a good landing back here from each of you. Mind the puddle and remember to lean into the wind where possible. Use it to your advantage. Five points to whoever's back first." And with barely any warning, the silver haired witch blew her whistle hard.

Remus and Lily, the only two muggleborns in the class, were the last off the ground. Once the redhead was in the air, however, she streaked ahead with ease.

"Bit higher, Lupin! Come on now!" Hooch boomed from below, shouting through a megaphone. He wanted to ignore her, but there was no escape – at least back at St Edmund's when they made you do cross country you could hide around the corner and skive off in town for the afternoon.

He pushed himself higher, trying to look ahead and not down; trying to think about anything other than the empty space between himself and the ground. He could see Lily's bright red plait flashing ahead like a fox's tail, Peter's shining blond hair somewhere towards the middle of the group. Though he couldn't see that far ahead, he knew that James and Sirius were almost neck and neck. Remus just ploughed on grimly, not wanting to go any faster. Who cared if he was last, if he didn't break his neck getting there. As he rounded a

corner at the end of the pitch, the wind really hit him and he tried not to slow down too much, leaning forward. It was so cold, and the grey morning air battered his face.

The second lap was as bad as the first. By the third, he noticed that James had taken to circling each of the towers in the empty spectator stands, despite Madam Hooch's admonishments. On the fourth lap, Remus had company.

"Having fun?" Sirius grinned, cruising along beside him. He looked so comfortable, as if he could raise both hands over his head, spin upside down and fly backwards without any trouble at all.

"What are you doing?" Remus frowned, trying to ignore him. "Trying to lose?"

"James is gonna win," Sirius shrugged, "Might as well let him have his moment. Thought I'd hang out with you."

"Why?!" Remus replied, through gritted teeth.

"Thought you might want the company," Remus didn't need to look at him to know that he was grinning that irritating Sirius Black grin. "Plus we're about to land, and I know you hate landing."

"Piss off."

"No."

"I'm warning you, Black..."

“You can’t punch me up here, Lupin, unless you want to let go of your broom.”

“God, you’re annoying.”

“Yep.” Sirius flew up in front of him, then all the way around, a perfect orbit.

“Piss *off*.” Remus tried to dodge him, wobbling dangerously.

“Time to land... remember to stick your legs out and lean back... then bend your knees as you hit the—oi!”

Remus had grabbed the tail of Sirius’ broom and given it a hard yank. Laughing, Sirius righted himself, then flew back to Remus’ side and gave him a hard shove back. Remus shook, but held on tight, making his descent. It was much smoother than before, he leaned back, then twisted quickly to push Sirius again.

“Out of my way!” He yelled, going faster, “You can be the last down for once!”

“Oh no you don’t!” Sirius now grabbed Remus’ broom tail, laughing, tugging him backwards. This was perhaps a step too far, as they were both quite close to the ground now. The two wrestling boys tumbled towards earth, brooms flying out from beneath them they both crash landed into a huge muddy puddle, skidding and rolling forwards, soaking their robes in the process.

“Black! Lupin!” Madam Hooch marched over to the two boys sprawled in the mud.

The other Gryffindors gathered around, giggling and pointing. Sirius leapt to his feet with all of the grace his nobility blessed him with, and pulled Lupin up roughly by the hand. They both looked up at the teacher, blinking water droplets from their eyes.

“What did I say about minding the puddle?” Madam Hooch raised an amused eyebrow. She usually saw the fun in things. “A point each from Gryffindor. You’d better go and wash off in the showers. Off you go.”

They both waddled towards the quidditch changing rooms, holding out their heavy, waterlogged robes.

“Bloody ridiculous kit.” Remus grumbled as they stepped into the squat littler stone building. “How we ever going to dry it?”

“The house elves will take care of that.” Sirius replied, shaking his off and dumping it in a pile in the corner.

Remus couldn’t be bothered to ask what on earth house elves were. He pulled his own robes off and kicked away his boots, then entered a shower cubical to continue undressing. There were towels laid out already, and the water was deliciously warm. He leaned forward into the stream, letting it warm his blood, watching the mud and rogue blades of grass swirl down the drain. At least he’d got out of forty more minutes flying.

He scrubbed his hands roughly over his hair. Without Matron’s monthly haircuts his hair was getting longer and softer, sticking straight up most of the time, as messy as James’. He could finally see the colour of it, but was disappointed – it appeared to be a bland mousy brown.

Remus finished in the shower before Sirius and got out, looking around for his uniform quickly. He was half dressed once Sirius finally emerged, his

long hair swept back, wet and shining like oil. He was already fully dressed and looked impossibly cool and grown up, while Remus had realised he'd missed a button on his shirt and had to begin all over again.

"What's *that*?!" Sirius said, suddenly. Remus looked up, then back down. Sirius was pointing at a long silver stripe which stretched from the left half of his collar bone down diagonally across his chest to his right nipple. He fumbled with his buttons, trying to close the shirt faster.

"A scar." He muttered. There was no point saying anything else now. He barely noticed them anymore. They were just there, as much a part of him as his freckles, or the fine hairs on his arms.

"It's... did it happen to you at the home? Where you grew up?"

There was something odd in Sirius' voice. Remus found he couldn't speak, so he just nodded. Sirius nodded too. "I've got scars." He said, so quietly that Remus thought he'd misheard at first.

Sirius bent down, and pulled up his trouser leg, turning his ankle to show Remus the marks there. His scars weren't like Remus' – which were big and rough and jagged, full of rage and hunger. The silver stripes on the backs of Sirius' legs were thin and straight; uniform in their cruelty. Remus stared for a few seconds, before Sirius dropped the edge of the fabric and straightened up.

They stared each other down for a full minute. Remus feeling very hot, Sirius' eyes cool and calm. Then it broke.

"Shall we go and watch James making a prat of himself?" Sirius asked.

Remus nodded again, and they both stepped back out into the cold autumn air. They took their seats on the hard benches in the spectator's stands and watched the rest of the class flitting back and forth across the pitch, red robes fluttering behind them. Lily, though lacking James' formal technique, was giving him a run for his money when it came to speed, beating him in two out of three races between goal posts.

"Remus?" Sirius said, suddenly, as their classmates came in for their final landing.

"Yeah?"

"You can't read, can you?"

Remus sighed. He had enough secrets to keep as it was. And Sirius had shared one of his.

"Nah."

"I won't tell anyone."

"Cheers."

That Sirius Black grin.

First Year: History

Saturday 23rd October 1971

“Did you just never get taught?”

Remus shrugged, tired and frustrated. It was a week after the flying lesson, and Sirius had caught him on his own again. He'd been sitting quite happily on his bed, flicking through one of James' quidditch magazines – he liked the moving pictures, even if he still didn't understand the rules, and it was the closest thing to telly they had at Hogwarts.

“I got taught.” He replied, turning the page, hoping Sirius would take the hint and get lost. He didn't. Remus closed the magazine. “I got taught.” He repeated. “Just didn't learn properly. When I look at the words, I don't think I see what everyone else does. It doesn't make any sense; all the letters keep jumping around and changing. Teachers said I was just thick.”

No one had made much of a fuss about his problems with schoolwork at St Edmund's. They'd barely had any homework, since no one did it anyway. Lots of the boys had problems; either they couldn't or wouldn't be taught. It wasn't as if anyone expected much either way.

“But how have you been *doing* it?” Sirius was like a dog with a bone.

“Doing *what*?!”

“Well... everything! All your work, here, at Hogwarts.”

Remus looked at him as if he was the one who was stupid,

“Sirius, I *haven’t* been doing it. In case you haven’t noticed, I’m in detention every night.”

“Well, yeah, obviously,” Sirius waved a hand, “But the other day, in Potions, I saw you – you didn’t take any notes, didn’t even look at the book, *or* the blackboard, and you still prepared all of the ingredients for the cure for boils perfectly – Slughorn gave you five points!”

Remus felt himself blush at the memory. He wasn’t used to getting praise from teachers.

“Oh, that was easy,” He shook his head, “Sluggy told us how to do it in the lesson before, I just remembered it.”

“Bloody hell, you must have a brilliant memory, then.”

Remus shrugged. He supposed that was true. His teachers at St Edmund’s had remarked more than once that he knew an awful lot of words for somebody so dim witted.

Sirius was staring into space now, clearly deep in thought – Remus could practically see the cogs working in his mind. Sometimes Sirius was an entirely closed book. Other times he was so easy to read it was almost funny.

“If you could read, you’d be as good as me and James. Better, probably.”

Remus snorted,

“So modest, Black.”

“Well, you would!” Sirius missed the sarcasm completely, still looking thoughtful, “Your wandwork is much more natural, and if your memory is as

good as you say it is..." He chewed his lip, "I bet there's a spell for it."

Remus laughed,

"You're going to cure me with a spell?"

"Why not?"

Remus had thought about it already; of course he had. But he was more aware of the limitations of magic than anyone. After all, he had scars which would not heal and a monthly nightmare which nobody could prevent.

"Magic can't fix stuff like that." He replied bluntly. "Why else does James wear glasses?"

"I think there *are* spells for eyesight." Sirius said, "Maybe they're just not worth the effort, or too dangerous, or complicated or something."

"It's not just the reading," Remus countered, "My writing's crap too; I'm too slow, and it comes out all messy."

"There are *definitely* spells for that." Sirius said, confidently, "You can bewitch your quill, I've seen my father do it on official documents. His handwriting's really scratchy, normally."

Remus was at a loss. Sirius clearly wasn't going to give up. He chewed his lip.

"Why are you so interested, anyway?"

"You're my fellow Marauder! We can't have you in detention every day, what if the Slytherins strike back? We'll need your evil mind for pranks." His eyes

glittered. “Speaking of, I’m assuming you haven’t done your history homework yet?”

“Nope.”

“Ok then, let’s get started.” Sirius jumped off the bed and began rooting around in his trunk.

“No. You’re not doing my homework for me.” Remus protested, standing up himself, folding his arms.

“Too bloody right, I’m not,” Sirius replied, withdrawing a heavy book. It was *A History of Magic*; Remus recognised the size and shape. “I just fancied refreshing my memory, that’s all. So, I’m going to sit here and read it aloud – because that helps me study – and if *you* happened to retain some of it in that enormous brain of yours, then there’s not much I can do about it.”

Remus huffed,

“Haven’t you got something better to do? Where’s James, anyway?”

“Watching the Gryffindor quidditch practice,” Sirius settled down on his bed, opening the book. “Reckons he’ll get on the team next year, so he’s trying to pick up some tips. Peter’s followed him, obviously. Now, be quiet please, I’m trying to work.” He cleared his throat, “*A history of magic, by Bathilda Bagshot. Chapter one, Ancient Egypt; the rights and rituals of Imhotep...*”

And on he went. And on, and on. Remus stayed standing for a while, trying to decide whether or not to just walk out of the room and slam the door. But he found that he really wasn’t that angry – it was difficult to stay angry with Sirius, no matter how annoying he was. So Remus sat down, and listened. It turned out that history wasn’t that boring after all, not when you understood

the basics. Plus Sirius was considerably more animated than Professor Binns.

His voice was clear and steady, never stumbling over the more complicated words or phrases, as if he had read the book a hundred times. Remus had once heard him tell James that he was fluent in Latin and Greek – the Black family apparently took pride in that sort of thing.

On he ploughed, chapter after chapter, from the gory Egyptian resurrection charms to cryptic Greek oracles, to magical Mesopotamian priestesses. The ancient world opened up in Remus' mind, and he found himself lying back on his bed, arms behind his head with his eyes closed, letting Sirius lead him through time.

Eventually, the other boy's voice was almost hoarse, and he spoke just above a whisper. Evening had closed around them, and the common room was bathed in a golden orange glow as the sun set. Halfway through '*chapter five; Tiberius and the advancements of Roman battle magic*,' Sirius let out a quiet cough, and put down the book.

"I don't think I can study any more today," he croaked.

Remus' eyes snapped open. He sat up, blinking.

"That's ok," He said, quietly. "It's dinner now, I'm starving."

They both got up, stretched, and headed downstairs.

James and Peter were waiting for them at the Gryffindor table in their usual seats.

“How was practice?” Sirius asked, after draining a goblet of pumpkin juice. His voice had almost returned to normal, only sounding slightly strained.

“Cracking.” James replied cheerfully, spearing a sausage on the end of his fork and using it to scoop up some mashed potato, “How come you didn’t come?”

“Homework.” Sirius replied, pouring gravy over his own mash.

As they finished their dinner, James regaled them with a blow by blow account of the quidditch practice, listing every player on the team, their strengths and faults, their techniques and what he would do to improve them. Peter interjected occasionally with his own opinions, which barely differed from James’.

Pudding was millionaire shortbread, which neither Sirius or James liked. Remus thought they were mad, and took their distaste as evidence of their snobbery. He’d have eaten theirs too, but Peter got there first, scoffing the lot.

“I’ve got some sweets,” the smaller boy offered, digging in his robe pockets and withdrawing a bulging brown bag, “Mum sent them, help yourself.”

“Cheers Pete!” They dug in, munching their way through fizzing whizzbees, chocolate frogs and flavour changing gobstoppers happily. Remus helped himself to a few as well, until they all felt quite sick.

“What homework were you doing?” James asked, scratching his chin, distractedly, “I thought we’d finished everything for this week.”

“Yeah, um, I was behind on history. Had to go back and check something.” Sirius was scratching too, near his collar bone.

Watching them made Remus start to itch. The back of his hand tickled as if a small insect was crawling over him. He suddenly thought of the itching powder and looked down.

He nearly screamed. The back of his hand was growing thick dark hair, at an alarming rate. He was transforming! It wasn't anywhere near a full moon – how could this be happening? He stood up so suddenly he nearly fell over backwards. He had to get out of there – fast!

“What’s up, Lupin?” James stared at him, startled.

Remus looked back at him, then at Sirius. *They* were both growing hair too – dark curls sprouted from their faces, their hands and arms – every bit of exposed skin. He gaped, speechless. He ran his tongue over his teeth – they weren't getting any longer.

“Oh bloody hell...” James said, looking down at himself, then at the other two boys, “What’s going on?!”

“Peter,” Sirius growled, his face now almost covered in hair, “Are you *sure* your mum sent those sweets?”

Peter, who hadn't had any sweets yet, stared at them both, and turned red, spluttering,

“Well, I mean... I *thought* they were from her... they arrived this morning...”

“Pete!” James roared. People were looking at them, now, turning and nudging each other. Soon, the entire dining hall was whispering and pointing at the three incredibly hairy boys at the Gryffindor table.

Plenty of people were giggling, too, but of course no one was laughing louder than Severus Snape, over at the Slytherin benches.

“Come on,” Sirius stood up, sticking his furry nose up with an air of aristocratic dignity that was nothing short of hilarious, “Let’s get to the hospital wing. We can plot our revenge later.”

As they left to howls of laughter from the rest of the great hall, Remus cringed in shame, covering his face with his hands. Every inch of him was now covered in the same glossy black hair. He didn’t find it as funny as James and Sirius seemed to.

“Told you they’d strike back,” Sirius muttered.

First Year: Birthdays, books and The Beatles

Fortunately, Madam Pomfrey was able to undo the hex with a few flicks of her wand. She still lectured all of them on misuse of dangerous magic.

“As if we all wanted to look like bigfoot!” James complained as they left the hospital wing, skin still tinging from the hair growth.

“It had to be Severus. He coated the sweets in one of his potions, I know it.” Sirius seethed.

“Yeah, we all know it, mate.” James replied, “Don’t worry, we’ll get him back.”

“I’m so sorry!” Peter wailed, for about the hundredth time. “I really thought they were from my mum!”

“It’s fine, Peter,” James patted his shoulder, “Just wish you’d given them to us first thing on a Monday – then we could have at least bunked off Transfiguration.”

“I demand retribution!” Sirius shouted, raising his wand dramatically. Remus laughed, James did too,

“And you shall have it!” He replied, pushing his glasses back on his nose, “Patience is a virtue, Black. Vengeance like this takes time. Don’t suppose you’ve got any other brilliant ideas, Remus?”

“Sorry,” Remus shook his head. His heart was still pounding from the terror of it. If he had seen Snape at that moment he would have throttled him;

never mind pranking him.

“I’ll help you, James,” Peter piped up, “I’ll do *anything*, I won’t be scared this time, I’ll...”

They were just turning the corner which led to Gryffindor tower when somebody behind them called out,

“Sirius.”

All four boys turned. Sirius made a small shocked noise. It was Bellatrix Black.

“Whaddyou want?” He asked, looking down and scuffing his shoes on the flagstone floor. It was the most un-Sirius posture imaginable, Remus thought. He also noticed that James stepped forward, standing shoulder to shoulder with his friend.

“Come here and address me properly.” The seventh-year witch snapped in response.

Sirius didn’t move. Bellatrix withdrew her wand – Remus was shocked, and for the first time since he’d been at Hogwarts, he felt frightened.

“Come here,” she said, in a low voice, “Or I’ll make you. And it won’t be a childish little hair growth charm, I promise.”

Sirius walked forward, shaking his head at James, who tried to follow. They all watched the cousins speaking in quiet voices at the end of the hallway for long, uncomfortable minutes. Sirius barely looked up from the ground the whole time. Finally, she patted him on the head, then turned on her heel and left. They all exhaled, relieved. Sirius walked back to them shakily.

In silence they all entered the portrait hole and sat down at their usual sofa.

“Alright, Sirius?” James asked, first.

“Yeah.” He nodded, looking paler than usual, “She um... she wanted to invite me for tea. On my birthday. I think my mother must have made her, probably held a family conference. Try to bring me back into the fold.”

“Just because you’re in a different house?”

“And the company I’m keeping,” he smirked at them all.

“So when’s your birthday?”

“Two weeks. The third. I have to go to this tea, though, Bella’s not joking about knowing some really vile curses.”

“We’ll do something afterwards, then. Something good, yeah?”

Peter and Remus nodded enthusiastically, but in the back of Remus’ mind he remembered that the third was the night of the full moon.

* * *

Sirius turned twelve and Remus wasn’t there to celebrate it, though he didn’t think anyone minded. James was Sirius’ best friend, after all, and Peter still liked to think that James belonged to him a little bit, too. So Remus would have been the odd one out, even if he hadn’t been locked away in a shack trying to tear himself apart. Madam Pomfrey tried him with a sleeping draught this time, before the moon rose, but it apparently had no effect. What was worse, he managed to give himself his biggest scar yet – right across his back.

Pomfrey made him stay in the hospital wing all day afterwards, which was actually fortuitous – it meant he could just tell his friends he'd been suddenly taken ill. They were still a bit confused as to why he hadn't told them anything about feeling sick beforehand, but went along with it. They probably already thought he was fairly odd, and by now accepted mostly anything he told them.

He wouldn't have enjoyed the birthday. James talked to Madam Hooch and arranged a lunch time flying session for the three of them. After dinner, before Sirius had to go and change for tea with his cousins, James and Peter led the Gryffindor table in a round of 'Happy Birthday', followed by 'For he's a jolly good fellow'. According to the students Remus heard from afterwards, they had sung 'and so say all of us!' over and over, getting louder each time until Professor McGonagall had to threaten them with detention if they didn't stop.

As November marched on, the days grew shorter and the castle darker. They spent less of their time outside, and more of it huddled by the fire in the common room, playing card games and plotting revenge against Snape. The first term was drawing to a close, and the teachers seemed to be piling on more homework than ever.

Whenever Sirius and Remus were away from Peter and James (usually when the other two were in the library), Sirius was reading to him. They finished *A History of Magic* in just under two weeks, and then alternated between *A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration* and *Magical Drafts and Potions* for the rest of the term. When the marauders worked on their homework as a group, he even took to reading aloud, as if to himself, claiming it helped him think. This was very much to James' annoyance, who preferred silence.

Though they couldn't possibly cover the entire syllabus in such a short time, to everyone's amazement (including his own) Remus' marks were improving

at an astonishing rate. Sirius had apparently had the right idea; Remus' ability to retain and recall information was remarkable, and he found himself raising his hand in lessons for the first time in his life.

Sirius' marks, on the other hand, began to fall. He spent so much time trying to secretly assist Remus, that he apparently no longer did any of the extra reading he'd prided himself in all year. As it was, his own homework became average, passable and fell behind James' for the first time. James was oblivious, of course, and merely assumed that *he* was actually improving.

"But you spend so much time in the library!" Remus whispered to him once, after Sirius had received an 'Acceptable' mark on his Charms essay. "I thought you were studying." Remus himself had still not worked up the courage to visit the library. The thought of all of those books horrified him.

"I am studying," Sirius replied, cheerily, "Just not this stuff," he folded the essay away, "I'm looking up cognitive interpretation spells – you know, so you can read by yourself. It's really tricky, OWL level, actually, but I think I've almost got it. Don't *worry*, Lupin, it's not as if I'm failing. This is much more interesting, anyway."

Remus felt horribly guilty, of course, as well as mildly ashamed that Sirius was devoting so much time to helping him. He honestly could not remember a time in his life that anyone had ever *tried* so hard on his behalf. It made him wish he could do something – anything in return. But, other than having a difficult family, Sirius Black seemed to want for nothing at all.

In fact, there was one thing Remus could give Sirius which even James could not – but it hardly felt worth mentioning. Something Sirius called 'muggle insight'. It began when Remus finally plucked up the courage to ask about Sirius' record collection. Sirius was only too happy to share; other than his

racing broom, which was still at home, his albums were his dearest possessions.

Remus could easily see why – he had *Introducing The Beatles*, *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, as well as *Abbey Road*; *Beggars Banquet* and *Sticky Fingers* (“Mick Jagger has to be the coolest muggle I’ve ever seen,” Sirius gushed), two Led Zeppelin albums – Remus hadn’t listened to them before, but the older boys at St. Edmund’s were all obsessed – and a Simon and Garfunkle LP, hidden at the back.

Wizards, it turned out, did not generally think much of muggle music. All of Sirius’ records had been gifted to him by his cousin, Andromeda, who was apparently the first ‘black sheep’ of the Black family, having left school a few years beforehand and married a muggle.

“I hardly ever see her,” Sirius explained, “Not since the wedding, but she posts these to me every now and then. She sends them the muggle way, so mum doesn’t find out – she doesn’t understand how the post office works.”

So although he had an impressive collection by any eleven year old’s standards, Sirius’ musical passions existed almost entirely in a vacuum. He wasn’t aware of any other Beatles songs than the ones he already had, pressed into vinyl. He had never listened to the radio, or watched Top of the Pops, or even opened a copy of NME before. As such, he found Remus endlessly fascinating on the subject of music and muggle culture.

“You’ve actually *seen* them, though!” He said, awed, “You’ve *seen* them performing.”

“Not in real life, or anything,” Remus replied, uncomfortably.

“No, I know, on the *telephone*,” Sirius nodded sagely. Remus stifled laughter,

“On the *television*.” He corrected, “It’s more like those moving paintings you lot have. Only black and white. And only the Beatles – the Stones came on once and Matron made us turn it off, because of their hair.”

“What about their hair?”

“Too long,” Remus shrugged, “She said they looked dirty.”

“My hair’s much longer,” Sirius said, frowning.

“Yeah, it is. But muggle boys don’t have long hair, not normally.”

“Don’t tell him that!” Peter teased, “He’ll shave his head.” He threw a gob stone across the board on the floor – they’d been playing a lazy game off and on for the past few days, trying to teach Remus the rules. It rolled into one of Sirius’ stones and knocked it out of the ring, immediately squirting out a disgusting smelling liquid, which Sirius barely dodged in time. Peter grinned, “Ha, take that, muggle lover!”

Sirius swore, loudly, and left to change his clothes.

First Year: Christmas 1971

“Lupin, perhaps you can tell me – what are the transfigurative properties of lapis philosophorum?” McGonagall called out, towards the end of their lesson one day. She gave him a very pointed look – the last time she’d asked him a question in front of the class he had shrugged and looked away.

“Um...” Remus wracked his brain, “Well, I think that’s the one that turns stuff into gold? If you use it right... and Cleopatra the Alchemist used it to turn lead into silver, I think.”

“Correct.” McGonagall sounded as if she was trying to mask her surprise. “Five points to Gryffindor. And another five for making the connection to Cleopatra the Alchemist – she’s not mentioned in *Transfiguration for Beginners*, did you read that in your history text?”

Remus nodded, aware that everyone was looking at him.

“Well, excellent. Some of my third-year students are incapable of cross-referencing their studies like that, I’m pleased to see you taking such an interest.” She addressed the class, “And we will begin discussing alchemy after Christmas. Which reminds me – with the holidays approaching, I’d like to ask any students planning to remain at Hogwarts over the break to let me know by the end of next week. Thank you, you’re dismissed.”

The class stood up to leave. A few people patted Remus on the back as they passed.

“Mr Lupin, if you have a moment?” McGonagall said, just as he was passing her desk. His stomach dropped. He’d gone two weeks without a detention

from her; he should have known something was coming. He stood still, shoving his hands deep in his pockets and staring at his feet as the rest of the class filtered out.

Finally, the classroom empty, she walked over and shut the door (right in James' face) and turned back into the room.

"Well done today, Remus," McGonagall said, kindly, "You've really been doing well lately."

He looked up at her, startled. She laughed,

"Don't look so surprised! I'm very impressed. Professor Slughorn and Professor Flitwick have said the same. I wanted a quick word with you about Christmas. I've spoken with Mrs Orwell—"

"Who?!"

"The lady who runs St Edmund's."

"Oh, right, Matron."

"Quite. As you know, the full moon will occur twice in December – the second," (that was next week) "and the thirty-first. New Year's Eve. Mrs Orwell seems to be of the opinion that you would be better off remaining at Hogwarts over Christmas for this reason. I hope you aren't too disappointed."

Remus shrugged,

"I'm not fussed either way."

Professor McGonagall nodded, very seriously.

“I shall add your name to the list, then. I’ll see you next week, Remus.”

* * *

James invited Sirius and Remus to visit him over the break, knowing that neither of them were facing a particularly merry Christmas otherwise. Remus was forced to decline – even if he hadn’t been incredibly shy about visiting James’ home and meeting his parents, he was still legally in the care of St Edmund’s local authority, and needed written permission from Matron to leave Hogwarts.

Sirius, who would have loved the opportunity to spend two weeks mucking about with James, racing their brooms and eating chocolate, also had to refuse. His family had made it quite clear that they did not approve of him visiting the Potter family under any circumstances.

“Bellatrix, that bitch, has been feeding my parents information.” He explained, darkly, “Apparently, I’ve disgraced them enough already. If I go to yours then it’ll only get worse. Sorry, mate.”

Remus went to the edge of the grounds with the marauders all to wave them off on the last day of term.

“We’ll send you owls!” James promised, “See if you can come up with our next plan of attack on Snape!”

Remus grinned and promised he would try. He hoped that the letters James sent would not be too long. He was the only Gryffindor first year staying behind for the break, and trudged a lonely path back up to the castle.

The next day he enjoyed lying in – something they were never allowed to do at St. Edmund's. He slept until ten o'clock, when Frank Longbottom poked his head around the door,

“Come on Lupin, you'll miss breakfast at this rate!”

Remus liked Frank – he had a broad, friendly face and an easy-going manner. He seemed altogether solid and dependable, like an older brother. He understood that Remus was used to being an outsider, and tried to include him wherever possible without pushing too hard.

After breakfast Frank disappeared to the owlery and Remus sat glumly in the common room, feeling the next two weeks stretch before him, empty and lonely. He considered a walk around the grounds, but it had started to rain heavily. He played a few of Sirius' records and flipped through a stack of magazines some fourth years had left behind, just looking at the pictures. They were mostly of pretty, glamorous witches and handsome wizards – he supposed it was a fashion mag.

The next few days passed in much the same way. Frank would get him up in the morning, he'd eat all his meals with the remaining Gryffindors in the Great Hall, but otherwise he was left to his own devices.

He was so bored at one point that he even thought about doing some of the homework he'd been set. He'd been trying to improve his handwriting, but it was almost impossible with the ridiculous feather quills they were provided. No one would answer him properly when he asked why they couldn't just use biro's. Even pencil might have been better. He actually did try to read for a while, but after attempting a paragraph from his herbology text gave up in frustration. He copied out a few of the diagrams instead – Remus didn't mind drawing; he liked the freedom of it.