

Like The Tide

by pokeystar

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Chapter 1 of 1

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At first, even though repairs to the decrepit cottage and his damaged flying cycle kept Sirius busy during the day, nightmares drove him out into the countryside after dark. He would pad on all fours over the hill to her father's house, where she waited for him on the garden bench made of green glass bottles and Hagrid's treacle fudge, wearing Ginny's old teletubby pajamas. He'd hook his chin over her flannel covered knee, and she would trail her fingers randomly through his thick fur – so much of what she did seemed random. He would sigh and settle into sleep as she crooned songs of nonsense and laughter, acceptance and home. Melodies of love.

In his wilder dreams, Sirius Black never imagined he'd fly again, free in the sky, on his beloved motorbike. As it was, he had just begun to comprehend that he had been freed from the Veil, that he was no longer in Azkaban.

He gunned the engine, leaning to the left in a swooping dive that made his companion gasp and tighten her grip on his waist.

She had dreamily pointed out that his life was ruled by twelves. Twelve, Grimmauld Place. Twelve years old when Regulus was sorted into Slytherin and he realized his family's values were not his own. Twelve long years in Azkaban filled with guilt, anger, remorse, and grief. Twelve healing years beyond the Veil, learning to let go, move on, renewing friendships, building trust. Learning to forgive. Learning to accept. Twelve years' difference between them.

His return had been a fluke, but she believed in second chances and kismet, so he did too. She talked with her hands fluttering overhead or toying with the radishes at her ears, absently explaining his inconceivable reanimation. After the Battle, at loose ends, she created a device that sucked bits of soul out of things. It was smallish and black, made of sleek Muggle plastic. She infused it with the essence of a Dementor and kept it around, just in case. Harry jokingly referred to it as the SuckBuster. One day at work, she tried it out on the Veil, "to see what it would do." What it did was pull him back through to the Department of Mysteries, corporeal and un-aged. He had gaped in surprised shock at her dazzling smile.

"Look," she said, pointing over his shoulder. "It got the drapes clean, too!"

He barked with laughter at the memory as he felt the wind whistle through his hair – there were many good things about magic, avoiding helmet head was just one of them. She giggled, squeezing him close, always ready to share in joy, to help him bear the pain. Her breath was hot against the cool of his neck. He shivered, the hair prickling on his neck. She shivered, too. He wondered what she would look like, lying on his bed, her hair spread in a halo of moonlight, her fair skin gleaming with reflected energy. Like the tide, he felt her gravitational pull.

Severus was the son his mother had always wanted, so he sold Grimmauld to the Snapes for a pittance, then moved to a small country cottage near the Burrow and Harry's new home. Hermione told him they sealed his mother's mouth with some Muggle-made substance – he believed egg was involved – and that she liked to dance naked in the hall, tempting her workaholic husband up the stairs. Sirius looked at Severus, expecting a rebuke at this over-share. He merely smirked and commented, "It makes steam pour from Walburga's ears."

She was made of starlight and joy, moonbeams and wishes, his lovely, aptly named Luna. His personal Patronus. Being near her calmed him and banished the nightmares.

He grew happy and healthy, working on the cottage, fixing his bike. Visits to old friends became routine as he adjusted to his new life. Dinners at Grimmauld with Severus and Hermione. Lunches with Harry, Ginny, and the children. Tea with Minerva and Hagrid at Hogwarts. Sunday brunch at the Burrow.

Although the bad dreams receded, he still went to her several nights a week, reluctant to give up his moonshine girl. One night, he padded up to their bench with a sense of unease. She was fully dressed in jeans and a wooly winter coat.

"Harry tells me your bike is fixed," she explained gently in her familiar lilting tone. Her luminous eyes conveyed more meaning than her words. "May I have a ride?"

He flowed easily into his human form. "Always," he replied and held out his hand.

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Original posted to the romancing the wizard community at live journal in response to the "Bring Out Your Dead" challenge. Requirements: One (formerly) dead wizard, one assigned prompt (her dazzling smile), one original magical device.