

The Banebrewer

by Grace has Victory

Wolfsbane Potion is illegal, but the illicit brewing continues. Ariadne Lupin can preserve the human mind of a werewolf, but can she reverse the mindset of a whole civilisation?
Part IV of "The Moon-Cursers".

Trod by the Gallant and True

Chapter 1 of 21

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Part IV of "The Moon-Cursers".

To the Alphas

ROBERT, Arch-Mage among the Hex-Wizards;

JULIA, Light of the Heart's Labyrinth;

BENJAMIN, Master-Pragmatist and Engineer

with my love.

Disclaimer

1. **J. K. Rowling** owns the Potterverse. And she has made a lot of money out of it. I don't own anything. And I haven't made any money at all.
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CHAPTER ONE

Trod by the Gallant and True

Saturday 30 June Sunday 1 July 1990

St Mungo's Hospital, London; Old Basford, Nottingham.

Oh, proudly they walk, but each Cameron knows

He may tread on the heather no more;

But boldly he follows his chief to the field,

Where his laurels were gathered before.

Scottish folk song: "The March of the Cameron Men"

Rated PG for death.

A large, gangling man stalked down the sterile corridors of St Mungo's. If he was trying to look inconspicuous, he wasn't succeeding. Although his long cloak was pulled up over his face, the thump of his enormous feet, the slouch of his shoulders and the simple fact that nobody else was wearing a cloak indoors all guaranteed that he would be noticed.

Having ignored the Welcome Witch and visitors in the reception area, he strode past a Mediwizard who was guiding a Splinch victim into a ward and spared no glance for a Healer who was trying to charm a teapot off an old lady's nose. He propelled himself up the stairs, not even pausing while he pulled his hood further over his face, and ignored the Burns Ward. He paused for as long as it took him to read the plaque "QUONG PO WARD: Outpatient Treatments" and then burst through the door. A Healer in a lime-green robe was supervising a Mediwitch as she measured a potion.

The man threw back his hood to reveal his matted grey hair and dirty face. "I've tracked you down," he rasped. "Give me my share now."

"You need to wait your turn..." began the Mediwitch. She spoke with an Irish brogue, and a badge proclaimed her name to be Madam Slaíne O'Keeffe.

"You'll have to wait for Healer Smethwyck," interrupted the Healer sharply. She was several years older than the Mediwitch, and her eyebrows now drew together in a thick, forbidding line. "He's in charge around here, and he'll need to take your details. But he's at a meeting at the moment. It will be quite a wait."

"That isn't friendly," rasped the man, poking his fingernail up his nose as he spoke. "I've travelled a long way to see you all, and you don't even know who I am. You should be more welcoming to your patients."

Madam O'Keeffe looked disconcerted, but the Healer reminded her, "Ignore him. Smethwyck will make him follow procedures, and we shall follow them too. Sir," she said to the stranger, "you can fill out this form now, but only Healer Smethwyck can authorise any treatments."

The big man chewed at his yellowing nails while he read with a furious frown on his brow. "This is none of your business!" he exclaimed. "You can give me the potion without knowing my name. Same as you can treat an unconscious emergency victim without knowing names!"

"No, we can't," said the Healer firmly. Her badge showed that her name was Althea Valentine. "We can only distribute this particular potion to patients who can prove that they really suffer from the relevant condition. Once we have your name, we can check it on the Registry."

A silvery steam began to rise from the cauldron. Madam O'Keeffe stirred it again, then ladled some into a measuring glass. "Miss Tungsten, Mr Dewar, the potion is now ready to drink."

Two patients rose from hard-backed chairs in the corner. The freckled young man in smart Muggle-style denims reached the cauldron first, but he politely stepped back in order to allow the elderly witch in mauve house-ropes to be served. Madam O'Keeffe squinted at the measure, then poured the potion into a goblet. She began to measure for Mr Dewar while Miss Tungsten took a ladylike sip.

She had taken two or three mouthfuls when suddenly she gasped in pain and clutched her throat. A wild look came into her face, and she choked out, "Don't drink, Connell! Something's ah wrong!"

Connell Dewar set down his goblet while Madam O'Keeffe grabbed at Miss Tungsten's wrist and exclaimed, "There's no pulse! Oh... there is... Healer, it's extremely slow."

"Incompetent!" jeered the man in the cloak. "Haven't a clue what you're really doing, have you?"

Ignoring him, Healer Valentine waved her wand, and a shower of blue stars raced towards a side door to give the emergency signal. Then she Summoned a heart-shaped tool from the wall and held it against Miss Tungsten's shuddering ribs.

"Her heart is racing," the Healer murmured. "Lurching all over the place. Miss Tungsten, are you in pain? Where?"

Miss Tungsten tried to indicate, but it was difficult to see where; she seemed to be having trouble making precise movements.

The side door burst open, and another Healer raced into the ward. He was about a hundred years old and neatly bearded. He took one look at Miss Tungsten and waved his wand over her. "*Animum Pulsaro!*" he commanded. "*Petrificus Emancipo!* Healer Valentine, Madam O'Keeffe whatever you do, don't allow a cardiac arrest. This is a bad case of aconite poisoning."

A young woman had followed the Head Healer into the ward. She was dressed in the rust-red cap and robes of an apothecary, and at the sight of the Healers half-carrying Miss Tungsten to the nearest bed, her face became as white as milk. The pit of her stomach froze as she watched them cast cardiac-pumping spells over the elderly patient.

"*Respiro!*" ordered the Head Healer, trying a new spell. "Healer Valentine, do everything you can to keep her breathing. Her respiratory centre is paralysed, but if you can use magic to keep her breathing, she should live. Madam O'Keeffe, you concentrate on her heartbeat. Don't stop work, whatever you do."

"Oh, so you're *killing* patients, are you?" leered the cloaked man.

The patient named Connell Dewar turned to the apothecary. "Errryednee," he said to her, "E'm thinking something went wrong today. The megic potion's hurrtrring Leckownia."

"Con, did you drink any?"

"Eh did not; Eh stopped meself in tem. Because Eh saw that Leckownia was gone rrrrong."

The apothecary drew a deep breath. "Thank goodness for that, Con."

"Trying to poison them all, were you?" sneered the stranger. "Sorry to have picked off only one of them?"

The apothecary took a long slow look at the stranger. She swept her eyes over his slouch, his dirty hands, his uncombed hair, the curl of his mouth, the furrow of his brow. She knew already that it would be a waste of time to appeal to either his reason or his compassion. Instead, she was left with the curious suspicion that this man was the root of all their problems.

"If you're wanting a potion," she told him levelly, "it's seeming that we have none today."

"You never heard me say that I wanted a potion," growled the stranger. "You weren't here when I said why I came. I should report you all to the Aurors for malpractice."

"Do so," said the apothecary coolly. "They'll probably be wishing to make your acquaintance." Then she turned back to Connell Dewar. "Con, were you here early enough to see who brewed the potion?"

"Eh did not see," he said, "because Eh was at worrrk oontil an hourr ago. End then Eh hed to go soomwherrre prrrevet to take the Porrrtkey without anywoon seein' the megic."

The apothecary moved over to the cauldron. She noted, as she sniffed at the vapour, that the Healers and the Mediwitch were still casting desperate spells over Miss Tungsten. The potion smelled the same as usual. It was the right colour and it was gently simmering at what appeared to be the correct temperature.

Nobody had ever been damaged before, not even her own husband, who had recklessly volunteered to test the potion when it had been yet at the experimental stage. And they had been brewing the potion safely now for nearly four years.

Yet Lycaonia Tungsten had been poisoned.

She scooped up a ladleful, poured it over a platter and commanded it, *Specialis Revelio!*

The liquid obligingly separated itself out into piles of powder, which in turn swirled into the shapes of various plants, visual representations of the original ingredients. The forms produced by the *Specialis Revelio* charm were not very solid or long-lasting but they were quite precise in shape and colour. She could distinguish the large purple bell of a foxglove. The tiny petals of nightshade. Leaves of cassia. A Quaker button, fruit of the poison nut. A chain of yeast presumably representing the alcohol in which the tincture had been brewed. Drops of plain water. And a small hooded flower...

Immediately she knew what had gone wrong.

She did not know how such a terrible mistake had been made. But the glowing blue petals told her the whole story.

Somebody had substituted monkshood for wolfsbane.

Hippocrates Smethwyck checked that Healer Valentine had Miss Tungsten's breathing steady and that Madam O'Keeffe was maintaining a regular heartbeat, then he Summoned a bezoar from the store-cupboard. He had to choose the moment carefully, when Miss Tungsten's bodily functions were all temporarily operational, but he found the opportunity, and plunged the bezoar down her throat.

Miss Tungsten gave a spasm that nearly tossed her in the air, then cried out in pain before lying still. Her breathing became regular and natural, and after a couple of minutes, Healer Valentine declared her pulse to be normal.

"That deals with the direct poisoning," said Healer Smethwyck. "But it's been a huge strain on the system for a woman of her age. Make sure she's warm, Madam O'Keeffe, and keep up her fluids. And now..."

"Now you're going to have to disappoint all your clients," sneered the cloaked stranger.

"Now I'm going to have to clear this ward," said Healer Smethwyck. "If you're well enough to stand up and you don't work here, it's time to leave."

Connell Dewar looked very subdued, but he obediently picked up his Portkey from the serving bench and instantly vanished. At that moment, another patient entered the ward, this one also clutching a Portkey, and Healer Valentine was left with the unpleasant task of explaining that there was no potion for tonight.

Meanwhile, Healer Smethwyck approached the stranger. "Patients may find sanctuary in a hospital," he said, "but you, sir, have neither diagnosis nor prescription. Will you leave now or will I call the Aurors to escort you out?"

The stranger snarled something but he made his choice and slouched out of the door.

"And I have twenty more of them to see off," said Healer Valentine wearily. "That's a lot of people to disappoint. What time are we expecting your husband, Madam Lupin?"

"It should be at any " began the apothecary. But she did not need to finish, for the door opened again, and it was her husband who entered the ward. He was carrying their children the little boy astride his shoulders, the baby girl in his arms and he was cheerfully explaining why Healers have to wear green.

"It's because the grass is green, and Healers make healthy things grow, just like the grass."

"But why is the grass green?"

"Because it grows under a blue sky and a yellow sun."

"But why doesn't Mummy wear green?"

"Because Mummy is an apothecary."

"But why do pock-frees ?"

There was no limit to the number of times Matthew could ask why or to his father's inventiveness in replying to the questions, but they both fell silent when Madam Lupin stepped forward. Her husband was not needing to ask whether she had had a bad day. He listened quietly, shifting their daughter to his other arm, while she explained that there would be no potion today. Healer Smethwyck walked up behind her, looking as if he were about to send her home, but she knew she could not leave without raising the all-important issue.

"Healer, who organised the supplies this month?"

"I believe Healer Valentine sent that new trainee young Mr Borage."

"We're needing to ask Mr Borage about the aconites. Somebody brought up monkshood instead of wolfsbane, and somebody else managed to add it to the potion without noticing the difference."

"Good gracious! How could anything so crass ?"

But Healer Smethwyck's pondering of the malpractice was cut short by a cry of alarm from the Mediwitch.

"Quickly! Her blood-pressure is all over the place!"

They were too late.

Healer Smethwyck's stride was long, but by the time he had reached the patient's bedside, Lycaonia Tungsten was dead.

Remus and Ariadne Lupin took their children home by Floo. Ariadne did not speak. She knew that the image of Lycaonia's face, contorted with agony, was branded into her memory forever. She did not understand how the mistake had been made, but clearly both she and the Healers had placed too much trust in their Medi wizards and suppliers. One of them should have *noticed* that the wrong flower was being pulverised. It was not so hard to tell monkshood from wolfsbane in the simplest of layman's terms, monkshood was blue and wolfsbane was yellow.

"Sweetheart," Remus reminded her, "you warned them about this again and again."

She Banished her working overalls upstairs and put on an ordinary household apron. "Evidently not often enough. Somebody today made a mistake, and nobody else was alert enough to notice."

Remus handed the baby to her and began to take vegetables out of the froster cupboard. "I'll cook; you're the one whom the children haven't seen all day. Ariadne, you weren't even in the ward when the distribution began. What was it that Smethwyck wanted to discuss with you before all this happened?"

"He was wanting to talk about my masterpiece." She savoured the irony, as she swung her baby into the air, and then sat down on a kitchen chair. "He said it's time I chose a project a respectable one that will be patented without question large enough to qualify as my masterpiece. He had three ideas, but of course a Healer's not qualified to supervise me. Healer Smethwyck's wanting to liaise with an apothecary... He was wondering if we should go to Mr Belby again."

Remus set one knife to chopping onions and another to paring carrots. "Does Belby ever supervise anyone? I thought he left such mundane tasks to menials like Jigger."

Matthew was climbing up into his mother's lap. "My turn! No more Lily-beff. Daddy, what's a meany-all?"

"A less important person who ends up doing the more important job."

"But, Remus, this is not about whether I complete a Masters or even about whether I was the person who was negligent today." She managed to balance both children on her lap, one in each arm. "It's about somebody... a man a stranger who asked for Wolfsbane Potion today, just before the accident occurred." No words could explain the revulsion that shivered through her bones at the thought of the stranger. "He was dirty and unkempt and he insulted the staff, and Healer Smethwyck had trouble making him leave. When I spoke to him, he denied wanting anything, but Slaíne O'Keeffe told me that he'd asked for the potion. A character like that... if he were a real werewolf at all... what was he really wanting?"

Remus shrugged as he placed a lump of frozen vegetable stock into the pot and then lit the stove. "Perhaps a Sylvanian who had decided to turn respectable but had forgotten the bourgeois understanding of polite manners."

"Perhaps. But he was so aggressive... and so eager to depart once Healer Smethwyck threatened to call the Aurors... that I was left feeling that I'd just met Fenrir Greyback himself." The baby whimpered. "Yes, yes, we're knowing. Elizabeth's hungry. Daddy's making soup, but it's not ready yet."

"Greyback or one of his minions; it doesn't make much difference. Plenty of werewolves have guilty secrets and plenty would resent polite society enough to demand the potion for the wrong reasons."

"But, Remus... The werewolves especially the Sylvanians are not supposed to know that the Wolfsbane Potion exists. Obviously the secret was bound to leak out one day. But does it not strike you as a steep coincidence that, on the same day as some Sylvanian finds out that we have the treatment, we also suffer our first casualty?"

Remus frowned as he poured the chopped vegetables into the pot. "I see what you mean. There's been a lot to process today... Are you suggesting that the two events are linked?"

She sighed. "I'm not knowing, dearest. I'm only saying that everything has been smooth these three years past. And now two things have gone wrong at once."

Before Remus could reply, the clock struck eight. It was time for their invariable evening ritual, the time when Veleta Vablatsky would be Locospecting them to find out whether they had any news for her. They rarely had any, but they could not let Veleta feel they had forgotten her, so once again Ariadne spoke into the empty air.

"Veleta, are you Watching us? We've had an eventful day. A patient died in hospital, and the Healers had to throw out an intruder who was disrupting procedures. But..." She swallowed painfully. This part was becoming monotonous, because she had had to say it every evening for nearly three years. "We have not learned anything new about blood magic or found any clues in our Ancient Runes texts. The book I finished reading this morning was just as unhelpful as all the others."

The silence rushed into her ears. Every evening she gave the news to Veleta. But she did not really know whether Veleta could hear her.

Remus took a step towards her and pulled Matthew off her lap. "You haven't kissed me this evening."

She obliged him.

The owl flew in through the bedroom window carrying the morning paper. Remus rolled onto his back, thinking in the moment before he opened his eyes that the bed was rather crowded. Ariadne was feeding Elizabeth, and Matthew was bouncing between them.

"Owl, Daddy. Wants money."

Remus pulled a handful of Knuts from the change dish beside the bed and gave them to the owl without actually looking at the world. He knew he would have to wake up soon because Ariadne had to go to work again. The brewing week that is, the week of the waxing gibbous moon was like that; Ariadne worked long hours, and he was in charge of the children.

"Read it, Daddy! Read the paper!"

"Daddy's tired," said Ariadne gently. Her tone was drowsy, as if she were in no hurry to begin the day.

Remus pushed his eyes open and accepted the newspaper. Matthew crawled into his arms and repeated, "Read it!"

The headline read: *FUDGE ELECTED MINISTER*. That was no surprise; everyone had been expecting it.

"Dat man, Daddy?"

"His name is Mr Fudge. He's our new Minister."

"Silly hat."

"Yes, it's a silly hat." Remus skimmed the predictable paragraphs about Cornelius Fudge's welcome entry to the leadership of the wizarding community. (Who would have guessed that last month the press had been begging Albus Dumbledore to take the helm?). He saw no evidence that Mr Fudge would make life easier for werewolves, and there was certainly nothing beyond the silly hat that would interest a two-year-old, or a thirty-one-year-old for that matter.

Remus turned the page. *DEATH BY MOONSHINING*, read the next headline. A cheerful photograph of Lycaonia Tungsten waved from the top of page 2, and a grave Hippocrates Smethwyck blinked from the middle.

"Dat lady, Daddy?"

"That poor lady died yesterday." He didn't know how he could translate the rest of the article into something suitable for Matthew, but he was aware that Ariadne, beside him, had raised herself on her elbow.

"What is it, Remus?"

"The press has become a little too interested." He couldn't read the article out loud in front of Matthew, but he propped it so that Ariadne could see.

An elderly patient was killed yesterday at St Mungo's.

Lycaonia Tungsten, 95, came to the Serious Bites Ward for a routine treatment. She died within minutes of drinking a wrongly-mixed potion.

"It has never happened before," protested Healer Hippocrates Smethwyck, 94. "This well-tested potion has no known side-effects. We are currently investigating the mistake."

Obviously the public will not accept such "mistakes". Miss Tungsten was a werewolf, and a St Mungo's employee has confessed: "The potion was a treatment for her lycanthropy. It enables werewolves to keep their human minds and think rationally."

Investigations with the Patent Office have indicated that no such lycanthropic treatment has ever been authorised. The potion, if it worked at all, would have been illegal.

"It is definitely illegal," confirmed Dolores Umbridge, Head of the Beast Division of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. "I am appalled to think that St Mungo's would either brew or distribute such a dangerous poison. This Department has clearly and specifically forbidden that kind of experimentation." Madam Umbridge, 59, wiped her eyes as she added, "It is so sad that a helpless old lady was sacrificed to unscientific experimentation. Given the social prejudice against werewolves, it is even possible that she was deliberately murdered."

Few wizards have shared Madam Umbridge's soft-edged approach.

"Rational werewolves are no blessing to public health," pointed out Walden Macnair of the Committee for the Disposal of Dangerous Creatures. "Are we wanting criminals like Fenrir Greyback to prey on our children in a rational state of mind?"

It is evidently time to crack down on illegal "medicines". Safety must be our highest priority.

Remus didn't see when Ariadne finished reading because she stared at the page for a long time, cuddling the baby closely. But finally she turned to stare at him. Her eyes were wide and blue and completely clear of confusion.

"So the law has caught up with me," she said. "I broke the rules. Now it's time to pay."

Storms may Rudely Blow

Chapter 2 of 21

Following the scandal at St Mungo's, Severus lets a secret slip out, and Kingsley is targeted by Madam Skeeter.

CHAPTER TWO

Storms may Rudely Blow

Sunday 1 July Monday 16 July 1990

St Mungo's, London; Old Basford, Nottingham.

Life's storms may rudely blow,

Laying hope and pleasure low:

I'd ne'er deceive thee;

I could never, never leave thee.

Ne'er till my cheek grow pale,

And my heart pulses fail,

And my last breath grieve thee.

Can I ever, ever leave thee!

Scottish folk song: "I Can Never Leave Thee".

Rated PG for scary parts.

Healer Smethwyck's office was unnaturally silent. Through the open window, Ariadne felt she could hear the chaffinches' wings flapping under the leaves of the beech trees. The blood rushing through her own veins seemed the loudest sound in the Hospital. She wished she could shut up all those noises. They were drowning out the

thick, heavy silence that wrapped itself around Hippocrates Smethwyck himself.

"Lycaonia Tungsten is dead." Her heart thudded as he broke the silence. "Only the five of us had anything to do with her treatment. Somewhere here, shared among the five of us, must be the knowledge of what went wrong."

This time the silence was so profound that Ariadne's heart forgot to beat, and her lungs forgot to breathe, until there was a pain in her chest as if she were the one suffering from aconite poisoning.

"Althea," said Healer Smethwyck, "this month I delegated the brewing of the Wolfsbane Potion to you. Tell me from the beginning what you did."

"I opened the instructions," recited Healer Valentine dully, "and I read them through. I took out my equipment and cleaned each piece with Bleecher's Purgatio. While I was doing that, I sent Mr Borage down to the garden for the ingredients."

"Thank you. Jason, remind us what you did in the garden."

Ariadne shifted uncomfortably. Nearly two years ago, when her son Matthew had started to crawl, she had reconstructed the herbiary in her back garden. She had ripped out half her plants anything that was remotely poisonous and donated them all to St Mungo's. It had broken her heart to dispense with the wolfsbane, which was so symbolic, and the monkshood, which had been a present from her cousin Severus, and the poison nut tree, which she had obtained at such trouble and expense. But obviously she could not forbid her bairn to play in his own back garden. She had moved the safe plants into half the original space, and Remus had Transfigured a pile of old lumber into swings and a climbing frame for the other half. She had never regretted the reconstruction. Healer Smethwyck had ensured that her aconites were cherished, and having them on the Hospital premises meant that he never had to spend Hospital funding on wolfsbane supplies. It had kept their brewing very secret.

"I picked the Quaker buttons first," said Jason Borage. "Then I went to the store-room for yeast, and while I was there I brought out atropine and digitalin too. Then I went back to the garden for the wolfsbane. I brought it up "

"In your hands, Jason?"

"In a basket, sir. I wouldn't touch herbs with my bare hands; I was wearing dragon-hide gloves the whole time. By the time I arrived back upstairs, Healer Valentine had juiced the Quaker buttons and was beginning to distil them."

"And did the wolfsbane look the same as usual?"

"This was the first time I'd brought up herbs from the hospital garden, sir, and I'd never seen wolfsbane before. But I checked the picture in Spore, and it looked exactly the same."

"Exactly the same? Did you match the colour?"

"The illustration was in black and white," Jason protested. "But the text said that aconites come in all colours white, pink, purple, yellow and that blue is the most common. So I brought up the blue ones."

"Thank you, Jason. Althea, did you notice anything unusual about the aconites?"

Ariadne's heart thumped as she saw that Healer Valentine still did not understand the nature of the mistake.

"No. They were just beginning to flower, which is the ideal time to use them. They have to be very fresh, so I taught Mr Borage how to shred them and to make the infusion." Healer Valentine drew her brows together. "Really, he only watched. I did the work myself."

"Slaine, what were you doing all this time?"

"Nothing!" interrupted Healer Valentine. "That is to say... Madam O'Keeffe was attending to patients in the Dai Llewellyn Ward. She hasn't ever assisted with brewing the Wolfsbane Potion; she only distributes the doses."

Madam O'Keeffe was nodding. Healer Smethwyck quietly laid down his clipboard. "Slaine and Jason, you may take a tea break. But please understand that I don't want you to mention any of this to anyone. All queries are to be referred to me."

Madam O'Keeffe and Mr Borage still looked bewildered, but they agreed and stood up to leave. Healer Valentine also looked bewildered as she glanced from Ariadne to Healer Smethwyck. But the Healer-in-Charge looked quite unconfused. As the door closed behind the Medistaff, he commanded, "*Accio*, Spore!" A huge book sailed off an upper shelf and into his hands. He laid it on the table and opened it towards the beginning. Ariadne leaned in, and saw a perfect black-and-white line drawing of a flowering monkshood.

"Aconite." Healer Valentine hardly realised that she was reading out loud. "'Also known as blue rocket, friar's cap, helmet-flower, monkshood, old wife's hood or wolfsbane. A flowering plant of the Ranunculaceae family. Has dark green palmate leaves; flowers most commonly blue, but can also be purple, pink, white or yellow. A hardy perennial found in damp alpine areas of Europe and Asia, though not native to the British Isles. Highly poisonous, to be avoided.' And that's all... Madam Spore has nothing else to say about the plant."

Ariadne darted a glance at Healer Smethwyck, who was yet calm. He gave no sign that he had solved the puzzle, although Healer Valentine was watching them both questioningly. He took the book back in his hands and said, "You need a tea break too, Althea. But I still have a few things to say to Madam Lupin."

It was typical that Healer Smethwyck's first words alone with Ariadne were: "It's all my fault. It never crossed my mind to check in Spore. She isn't often wrong."

Ariadne wondered how she could have taken Phyllida Spore's *One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungito* school for seven years without ever noticing such a glaring error. "She's a British expert. She's maybe less interested in foreign plants."

Smethwyck smiled grimly. "Ariadne, it's safe to say that if Madam Spore was commissioned to write the standard Hogwarts textbook, she would have grown her own personal samples of every plant in her compendium. And herbologists have been bringing aconites to Britain since the tenth century. So I hesitate to claim that Phyllida Spore doesn't make the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane; she doesn't directly state that they are the same thing. She just writes in a way that leaves the casual reader believing that they would be."

"And nobody... in all the years that the book has been in print... has noticed?" But Ariadne knew they had not. Aconites were rare in Britain and until four years ago they had served no useful purpose. The only kind of person who cared about such fine distinctions as the different species of aconite was the specialist who no longer read school textbooks.

"So it would seem." Healer Smethwyck sighed heavily. "Healer Valentine and Mr Borage are simply among the multitudes who have never needed to know the difference. I assumed Healer Valentine was competent to supervise Mr Borage because she had brewed the potion so many times before. I never stopped to think that she had never before brought up the supplies usually you do that. I certainly assumed that she would double-check anything of which she was unsure."

Ariadne shared his bitter smile. A check *had* been made, but the source-book had been misleading. "Now I'm thinking clearly," she admitted, "aconites were not part of the Hogwarts syllabus when I was at school. I learned about them from my mother." And Lycaonia Tungsten had died because Ariadne had never thought to discuss the Potion ingredients with Althea Valentine.

"Now I force myself to remember," agreed Healer Smethwyck, "everything I ever learned about aconites I learned from your grandmother."

Ariadne wondered for the thousandth time why her grandmother had married Cuthbert Macnair when it was so obvious that she had also had an option on marrying Hippocrates Smethwyck. Such speculations involved hypothesising her own non-existence, as well as that of Mamma, Morag, Severus and Aunt Keindrech. What if the wiping out of all those people nevertheless made no difference to the world because a happier and longer-lived Grandmamma would in any case have discovered the Wolfsbane Potion?

Healer Smethwyck interrupted her thoughts. "Ariadne. My negligence has caused a death. This is a very serious issue, and we need to contain the damage. First, we need to keep brewing the Wolfsbane Potion. It means the patients will be weakly dosed this month, and we shall have to watch over their Transformations more carefully than usual... but missing the first day of the dosage isn't as serious as missing the last. Ariadne, I want you to be the one who supervises every aspect of the brewing for the rest of this week. Second, we need to explain to Althea and Slaine and Jason exactly where the misunderstanding lay and be very certain that they can never make any such mistake again. Third, I'll need to write a report of this incident, and you'll all be helping me. Fourth, I must caution all of you to silence. The press has already become too interested in this case, and it'll be a race against the clock to have any kind of report ready before the Aurors arrive. I want a very firm understanding that I am the only person with whom outsiders may discuss the matter. Ariadne, do I have your solemn word on that?"

His tone frightened her. "Healer, you've never tried to extract a promise from me before. Why are you... binding... me now?"

"Because this business hasn't room for any more interaction of errors. From now on, any mistakes must be made personally by me. So I can't allow any of you the luxury of independent judgment. Will you give me your word?"

He looked so stern that she murmured, "I will." It was a very foolish thing to sacrifice her own freedom of conscience, but she had always trusted Healer Smethwyck in the past. So she agreed to play his game.

But she was already aware that her promise would cost somebody dearly.

* * * * *

RETURN OF THE HOWLING

by Rita Skeeter

The air was unmistakably filled with canine keening. Low growls gathered pitch, rose in crescendo, and reached the long, slow, climactic screech. The first voice was joined by a second, then a third, and then a cacophony so disordered that I had no way of counting how many beasts were in the pack.

Was I in the Tundra of Russia or Canada? No, this was the heart of London.

I shivered as I walked through Holborn, although it was one of the warmest nights of the year. Since wolves have been extinct from England for nearly six hundred years, why could I hear them so clearly? Was this some kind of noise simulation for the theatre or a fancy dress party?

Then I saw. A huge pair of yellow eyes was gleaming from a first-floor window of St Mungo's Hospital. The full moon was shining overhead. By the time the next chorus of howling swelled, I knew that I was hearing werewolves.

Ariadne lowered the newspaper. She had spent the night of the full moon at St Mungo's monitoring the werewolves, and she knew that they had not howled. They had no need to howl while they were thinking with human minds.

But some journalist had nevertheless noticed that they were there. Somebody, presumably tipped off by Lycania's death, had loitered on Hospital premises to find out whether the Healers would still dare to brew the Wolfsbane Potion after their cover was blown. Or else somebody had merely guessed.

"It becomes worse," said Remus. He was jiggling Elizabeth on his knee as if she were the only person in his world.

Why have Britain's werewolves forsaken the forest glades in favour of the anti-septic hospital? Since the Daily Prophet never withholds the important news from its readers, I was soon flying up the stairs of St Mungo's without a thought for my own welfare, determined to reassure myself that this treatment or research was being conducted in safety.

The blood-curdling howls quickly led me to their source: the bright lights of the Quong Po Ward. The noise was deafening, but one glance around the ward dispelled any lingering hope that it was artificially produced...

"I notice Madam Skeeter does not say *how* she saw into the ward," said Ariadne. "Nobody could have entered, not even in an invisibility cloak, and places like St Mungo's are usually resistant to *Transparens* charms." Perhaps the story was fantasy, but the journalist clearly wished to give the impression that she had conducted a full-scale interview.

... for lined up and down the ward were wolves of all colours and sizes. I saw an old red one with broken teeth, a gigantic black shaggy one, a yellow pup who was almost cute. I counted twenty-four in all.

Oh. Ariadne met Remus's eye.

"She counted. She was somehow *knowing*... She lied about the howling, but she certainly made some kind of investigation."

"She lies about Healer Smethwyck, too," said Remus. "He certainly never spoke to a reporter that night or to anyone except the werewolves and his staff."

"Healer Smethwyck," I beseeched the person in charge, "how can you invite all these Dark creatures to prowl about among the invalids at St Mungo's? You aren't still brewing that illegal werewolf potion, are you?"

The Healer looked embarrassed to be caught out, but he ignored me and carried on giving orders to a Mediwitch.

A wolf near me snarled, saliva dripping unhygienically from his filthy teeth. Was this Fenrir Greyback himself? I didn't wait to find out. I fled the hospital premises, wondering how anyone would ever again feel safe there.

Ariadne leafed through the pages, too sickened to read any more. It was full of editorial columns and celebrity opinions, but the gist was clear. Healer Smethwyck had been abusing his powers as physician to train werewolves to attack society. He belonged in Azkaban.

And she had promised to keep silent.

Remus stood up to go to work, so Ariadne folded the paper and asked Matthew if he had finished his breakfast. She was in no hurry, as she was not going to work until the afternoon she rarely worked more than fifteen hours a week unless it was the brewing week. It was Remus who had to appear at work on time, clean-shaven and with briefcase impressively bulging, for Remus's job was currently insecure.

"I've ironed your shirt, dearest," she said. "Are you wanting a sandwich?"

"No, I'll eat a school dinner." He picked the ironed shirt out of the basket and began to button it on. "But I do have to bring in that hamster." The class hamster had escaped through a hole in its cage last week, and, after catching the renegade rodent, Remus had promised his tearful pupils to repair the cage. He had done so using magic, and now he had to carry it back to school, balanced on top of the newly-marked science projects. Obviously he could not Apparate into a Muggle building and, unlike the Muggle teachers, he did not drive a car.

"You cannot carry the cage all that way," said Ariadne. "I'll bring it in for you later this morning."

He nodded without protesting that it was too much work for her, which meant that he really was worried about his job. His original contract with Willowgate Primary School had been for only one year. The year had grown into two and then into three, but the headmaster had no real control over his staffing: he had informed Remus that it would not be possible to renew the contract for next year. With only two weeks of the academic term left to run, Remus was close to unemployment.

After he had gone, Ariadne bathed the children and cleared the breakfast table. She had just begun to wash nappies in Cloacina Solution when the fireplace rattled.

Matthew looked up from his model Hogwarts Express to tell her, "Mummy, Floo!" He took it for granted that she would not notice the arrival of a caller unless he informed her.

Ariadne lifted the heavy bucket into the sink, covered it with a lid, and washed her hands. Green flames were flaring in the hearth, and by the time she was able to pay attention to the visitor, her own mother was stepping out into the living room.

"Mamma, how are you? What's wrong?"

"Oh, my darling!" Mamma, who was not usually demonstrative, enfolded her in a tight embrace. "My poor, poor sweetheart! If only we'd known... What a terrible, terrible prison for you!"

"Mamma?" Ariadne managed to loose her mother's hold. "Mamma, it's all right. I did it with my eyes open, and if I'm arrested... But it's not happened yet."

"Hush, everything will be all right now. You will not be arrested; everybody will understand. Is *is*te at home?"

The venom with which Mamma referred to Remus alerted Ariadne that they might be talking at cross-purposes. Despite the lurid newspaper report, it was possible that Mamma *had* forgotten that Ariadne had first discovered the Wolfsbane Potion, and that she was here for a different purpose entirely.

"Remus is at work," she said. "Mamma, what's wrong?"

"Those poor wee Muggle bairns!" Mamma almost spat the words. "He *would* choose that kind of job, would he not? The Muggles will never guess, so he'll be free to wreak what chaos he might on defenceless innocents!"

"Mamma." Ariadne struggled to hold her mother at elbow's length. "I'd prefer that... you'd not speak of my husband like that. He's very good at his job, and the Muggles are very happy with his work."

Her mother relinquished her hold, sighed and sat down. "Dear, you've been so hugely, hugely brave. But there's no need to pretend any more. After those sensational pieces in the newspaper, we Flooed dear Severus to ask him if such a thing as that werewolf potion were possible. He told us *everything*."

Ariadne's stomach turned over, as she realised what Severus might have seen fit to include in "everything". She picked up Elizabeth and said: "This has to be a great shock to you, Mamma. But it's all right."

"But, *mo chridhe*, how could you *endure*... that vicious, vicious brute... in your house... living off your money... eating your food... *breathing* on you... and worse... And you've been so brave, so loyal, so determined to protect his mean-spirited interests... We never *dreamed*. Not until we read the newspaper this morning and decided to ask Severus about it half an hour ago. He told us that our daughter should be knowing the full story. 'After all, you already know that her husband's one of them,' he said. But we *were not* knowing; that was our first inkling!"

Severus promised Professor Dumbledore that he would not not speak of it But of course she had never seriously trusted Severus to keep his promise. He had only needed sufficient provocation.

Her disapproval must have shown on her face, for her mother found it necessary to defend her cousin. "Dear, Severus did not do it deliberately; he was most apologetic and told us that he'd assumed we already knew. It all makes sense now. Those illnesses so regularly spaced... his inability to hold a job... the simple fact that dear Severus never could *stand* him... How could we not have realised? I've been crying ever since, thinking of how terrible it must have been for you, that first month after you were married... realising that his quaint manners were all for show and that you were shackled to a Dark creature when you ought to have been yet on your honeymoon..."

"Mamma. You're not needing to cry any more. You're maybe surprised, but it's nowhere near as bad as you were fearing. Remus has an illness, that's all; and he told me all about it long before he asked me to marry him."

"Oh, my poor, poor darling!"

Ariadne gave up trying to reason, but she found herself clutching Matthew's hand as she waited for Mamma to run out of words. Her mother was deaf to everything except the voices in her own head.

"But never mind," she said, rising. "You can tell me afterwards how he forced you into it. The important thing is, the nightmare is over now. Pack your things, dear, and you can tell us everything after we get the bairns to Kincarden. Your father is looking up the divorce laws. We're nearly certain that you can divorce a werewolf instantly without citing reasons. And once we have you home, we'll block the Floo so that he cannot come looking for you. Would you like me to take the bairns now, and you can follow with the luggage?"

This time an answer was required. Ariadne felt her voice drop several decibels, not troubling to hide the anger that her soft tone betrayed. "Mamma, it's not as you're thinking. Remus is not dangerous. He and I are very happy together. Today is a bad day for us to visit Kincarden because I have to work this afternoon. But if you're wishing to invite us for the weekend, then Remus will be coming too."

Her mother recoiled. "Dear," she gasped, "you're taking this too far! I'm unable to help you if you will not admit to having a problem."

"We're wanting no help, Mamma. If... if you're not wishing to think kindly of Remus, you should maybe leave his house."

Mamma flushed with more vivid anger than Ariadne had ever seen. She actually looked as if she would like to raise her voice. Instead, of course, she spoke very softly. "To think," she almost hissed, "that you married that person at a time when Claud Greengrass, Mahavir Chandak, George Twilfit, your cousins Linus and Steadfast even your cousin Severus too were all still single! Or we could have asked Lucius to help you find a husband. Had you *no* aspiration to happiness in marriage? Ariadne, you may bring the bairns to visit Kincarden as soon as you're ready to apologise."

As Mamma disappeared in a swirl of green fire, Ariadne found herself on the verge of laughter as well as tears. Matchmaking by Cousin Lucius? He had encouraged Lavinia to marry Valerian Crabbe, who had punched her up more than once. He had pressured Lucretia to marry Gordius Goyle, who had already drunk away half her fortune. He had been pleased to have Letitia marry Claud Greengrass, who had had seven adulterous affairs in five years. He had approved of Linus's choice of Hazel Parkinson, although Hazel spent half her life groaning on the sofa with imaginary illnesses while Linus devoted such long hours to Quidditch and cards that he was rarely home while their daughters were awake.

As Ariadne began to load Matthew, Elizabeth and the hamster cage into the pram, she found herself laughing again at the reminder of her own good fortune.

* * * * *

It was another full week before Hippocrates Smethwyck was arrested, a week in which everything pretended to be normal. Remus looked for a job; Ariadne studied Ancient Runes; when neither of them could be home, the children played at Madam Alma's Sunny House in Diagon Alley. Ariadne's parents said no more, but it was a fair surmise that unlike Severus they experienced no temptation to broadcast the news of a skeleton in the family closet.

When the arrest was finally made, Madam Skeeter scooped both the headlines and the centrefold of the *Daily Prophet*.

WOLF-DOCTOR FINALLY RESTRAINED

After many years of brewing the illegal Wolfsbane Potion, Hippocrates Smethwyck has finally fallen under the long arm of the law.

In direct defiance of the Ministry Patents Office, Healer Smethwyck was feeding werewolves a potion that allowed them to keep their human minds despite having Transformed bodies. As many as twenty-four werewolves are thought to have accepted the lethal medicine each month.

"It's a panacea for werewolves," said Minister Cornelius Fudge, speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Magic, "but it's a deadly threat to the rest of us. It's just inviting the wolves to plan out their attacks." While there has not yet been a documented case of a werewolf making a deliberate bite under the influence of Wolfsbane Potion, this is sheer luck. "It's very likely to occur in the future," warned the Minister.

Healer Smethwyck, 94, was unrepentant. Speaking from his cell at Azkaban, he said, "I'll tell you everything at my trial, but I won't say anything without my lawyer present."

Despite nearly an hour of interrogation, we could not make him understand his duty of exposure to the community. We can only surmise that the poisonous Wolfsbane Potion serves no useful purpose.

One member of Smethwyck's medical team admitted: "I was only doing my job. I didn't really understand what Healer Smethwyck was telling us to do." Jason Borage, 19, a Trainee Mediwizard at St Mungo's, has not yet abandoned his career ambitions. "I applied for Mediwizard training because I wanted to help people," he said. "It didn't occur to me that medicine can also be abused to set monsters loose. I'm less naïve now."

We wonder how many St Mungo's staff were involved in this scam, which was costing the wizarding taxpayer an estimated ten thousand Galleons a year.

"There is definitely no need to lose faith in the whole medical profession," Mr Borage assured us. "There were just the five of us two Healers, two Medistaff and an apothecary."

Although your intrepid reporters from the *Daily Prophet* quickly identified the whole miscreant team, its other members have guiltily closed ranks. Healer Althea Valentine, 49, would not meet our eyes as she insisted, "I have nothing to say about this." The Mediwitch, *Slaine O'Keeffe*, 31, was on leave with her family in Cork. The apothecary, *Ariadne Lupin*, 23, claimed, "This story is not mine to tell."

With refreshing frankness, young Mr Borage confided, "Healer Valentine and Madam O'Keeffe are both very nice people, but they keep their working lives professional. They wouldn't question an order from a senior Healer like Hippocrates Smethwyck. I think Madam Lupin joined the team out of some kind of personal interest. I'm fairly sure she once mentioned that she has a friend who's a werewolf."

Mr Borage couldn't remember the names of the numerous werewolf patients who lined up each month to drink the deadly Wolfsbane brew. However, society beauty *Letitia Greengrass* was Madam Lupin's classmate at Hogwarts. (See page 5 of this edition for Mrs Greengrass's stunning entry to the Ministry St Swithin's Ball.) She suggested that the werewolf in question might be none other than *Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt*.

"*Ariadne [Lupin]* was very close to *Shacklebolt*," confirmed Mrs Greengrass, 24, "and he's very good-looking. At school they denied being a couple, but I did wonder. They certainly went away together on an unsupervised holiday in the summer after sixth year. It's all clear now. Ariadne couldn't bring herself to commit to a wild animal, so she married someone else. But she was fond enough of *Shacklebolt* to fool around with that potion.

"*Ariadne* has always been soft and impulsive. She wouldn't have stopped to consider that if *Shacklebolt* kept an *Auror's* mind inside that wolf's body, it would be ten times easier for him to slaughter all of us."

Leave a Man to his Fate

Chapter 3 of 21

Healer Smethwyck lays three tasks on Ariadne, while Kingsley outwits Rita Skeeter.

Leave a Man to his Fate

Wednesday 8 August 1990

Nairn, Inverness-shire; Azkaban Fortress (unplottable, but certainly in the North Sea); Old Basford, Nottingham.

Wha would be a traitor knave?

Wha would fill a coward's grave?

Wha sae base as be a slave?

Let him turn and flee!

By oppression's woes and pains,

By your sons in servile chains,

We will drain our dearest veins

But they shall be free.

Lay the proud usurpers low

Tyrants fall in ev'ry foe,

Liberty's in every blow

Let us do or dee!

Robert Burns: "Scots wha hae"

Rated PG for the real horrors and the fakes.

Even the gatekeeper's house was freezing. Ariadne was shivering almost before she stepped out of the public Floo in Nairn ~~the~~ only Floo in Nairn, since the gatekeeper was the only wizard within a fifteen-mile radius. The room was dim and unfurnished, for receiving the public through the Floo was its only function. A steely sky glared through the gatekeeper's window, showing that his cottage was nested in the river-bank, where Muggles would hardly notice it. It also showed that the leafy alders and red-sandstone banks were strangely grey-toned, and Ariadne found her limbs stiffening against the chill.

The gatekeeper ambled towards her. His black hat was pulled so far down his brow that it completely shaded his face, and he spoke in a deadly monotone.

"Are you visiting Azkaban?"

"I am."

"My name is Charon. I shall take you."

He shouldered open his front door, and did not bother to lock it after she had followed him out. Had it really been summer in Nottingham? It was winter here. A boat lay in the six feet of sand that separated the cottage from the river, far enough inland to be considered aground, yet too close to the water to be avoid being washed away on the next current. Since it was not tethered, it must have been held in position by magic. Ariadne felt Mr Charon glance at her, presumably to check that both her feet were in the boat, before he raised both arms and exclaimed, "*Decedo!*"

The little boat shot out into the water and skimmed down the river. Ariadne saw that it left no slipstream: it was not sailing at all, but was flying an inch above the surface. Then she realised that her limbs were paralysed, not merely stiffened against the plummeting cold of the wind, but every muscle completely locked into immobility. She fought off the panic with the reminder: *This has to be how they prevent prisoners from escaping on the way to Azkaban.*

The boat sped out of the River Nairn and into the grey expanse of the North Sea. The waves did not seem to reach the boat, so she was dry, but the frozen air was like a knife; she should have brought her cloak. But no cloak could have protected her from the sombre gloom of Mr Charon. He sat opposite her, his head turned down towards the waves so that she still could not see his face under his hat. He seemed not to be doing anything she could not see a rudder, and he was not holding a wand but she supposed he was making the boat move. If she had not heard him speak earlier, she would have assumed that he could not, for there was no evidence that he had any interest in social interaction. Was that what working amongst Dementors did to a person? Mr Charon apparently did not distinguish among the different types of people whom he ferried to Azkaban the accused, the convicted, the visiting for his lack of interest in her was nothing personal; it was simply his usual attitude to anyone who shivered in his boat.

Time and space stood still for as long as Ariadne was held captive in the cold stern. Then a jetty suddenly appeared to her right, and a huge grey-garbed figure motioned to her to alight from the boat. Her limbs were released at the moment of its gesture, and she managed to climb the slimy steps without needing the assistance of its outstretched scabby hand. Mr Charon followed behind her, and she saw that the pathway from the jetty led in only one direction: to the portcullis of a towering grey fortress.

This was it. She had arrived at Azkaban.

For a moment her heart plummeted; she was not wanting to enter. More Dementors were waiting at the entrance, and it defied all rules of common sense to approach them. But she moved one foot forward, remembering why she had come, and soon found herself walking under the raised portcullis into the gloomy hall.

For a moment sickening memories flashed through her head Veleta dead, Remus abandoning her, her betrayal of Veleta but she reminded herself that this was a business trip, and wondered how she should introduce her business to the Dementors standing sentry.

"Visitor." Mr Charon, still a pace behind, was speaking for her.

The nearest Dementor wheezed out a great rattling breath and handed her a white ball. It was, she realised, the ticket that would allow her to leave the fortress when her business was completed. A second Dementor held out a tray covered with small squares. Most were black, but a few were grey, and all were marked with a name. She saw a grey one marked HIPPOCRATES SMETHWYCK, and picked it out of the tray.

The Dementor did not incline its head anywhere in her direction she remembered now that they could not see anyway but it apparently knew by sense of touch which tablet she had taken, because it laid the tray on an occasional table and began to glide towards a staircase. As she followed, she was disconcerted to realise that Mr Charon was remaining in the doorway. He might not be a very comfortable person, but she had not envisioned being left alone with a Dementor.

They are under Ministry control, she reminded herself. They only attack when instructed. Or when annoyed. She hoped she knew how to avoid annoying a Dementor.

They climbed two flights before entering a gloomy hall striped on three sides with iron bars. It took her a moment to recognise that the bars were the fourth wall of the prisoners' cells, like beasts' cages at an old-fashioned zoo. The Dementor kept moving, then stopped outside one cell. It raised both arms, rattled out some sound that was just possibly the equivalent of a spell, and then stood back as a door flew open.

Hippocrates Smethwyck was sitting behind the bars. Ariadne stepped through the narrow opening and, before she could speak a word of greeting, heard it clang shut behind her. A great ticking sound filled her ears. Startled, she looked around for the metronome.

"You can't see it," said Hippocrates Smethwyck. "It's just to remind you that you have only half an hour."

She could hear that he was valiantly trying to tell a joke, but this was not the kind of place where humour flourished. The air felt almost too heavy to breathe and, although a glass outlet in the stone ceiling cast a white-hot point of light over Healer Smethwyck's desk, outside that point everything was dusky and indistinct. The cell was perhaps ten feet square, and it contained a bed, a desk and two chairs. Ariadne sat cautiously on the spare one.

"So is the goal to maximise the psychological irritations?" she asked.

He stopped himself mid-nod, and tried to reassure her, "It isn't too bad at the moment. I have light and a bathroom " he indicated a door in the solid wall to her left, " and a bed with blankets. The food isn't too bad either, and my wife was allowed to bring me books and a gramophone. The worst thing is the way they mess with our minds."

"Taking away your happy thoughts," she said soberly.

"Well, they aren't supposed to do that yet. The Dementors are supposed to keep their distance from those of us who are not yet condemned. The Ministry doesn't want us going mad before our trials." But, almost unconsciously, he brought out a block of chocolate and offered it to her.

She took only one square, knowing that he would have to make the rest last until his wife's next visit.

"They are supposed to bring food and usher in visitors and otherwise leave us alone. But some of them bend the rules a little hovering just around the corner, hoping to pounce on our loudest emotions. And there are the other prisoners. The man below me keeps groaning, 'I am innocent, I am innocent.' He sounds so pathetic so guileless that I found myself wondering if he really had been wrongly incarcerated, and whether I should try to help. So I asked my wife to find out more about his case."

Ariadne felt a little warmth from the chocolate spread through her chest down to her fingers. She wondered what Healer Smethwyck did whenever his ration of chocolate was depleted.

"Well, Clarissa found out all right! The man below me is the mass-murderer, Sirius Black. Yet I was almost ready to argue his case. I'd been letting his mad ramblings about being framed overtake the known empirical evidence. Ariadne, I don't know how much longer I'll be able to think clearly, so I need to tell you everything today."

He brought out a parchment from the pile on his desk.

"Make a *Zerocso* of this and take it away with you. If anyone ever asks, that is your original contract of employment with me. Destroy any older copies you may have my wife has already destroyed those at St Mungo's."

She knew he was asking her to cheat, but the contract looked exactly the same as it had on the day she signed it. That was certainly her own signature at the bottom. While she was frowning, his index finger brushed almost casually against the date.

Then she realised. Surely, she had originally accepted the contract in June 1987? But it was now dated Tuesday 1 September. That was indeed the approximate time when she had begun *working* at St Mungo's. Why was Healer Smethwyck wanting to pretend that they had not had an agreement any earlier?

"You've already asked me to keep silence," she said, "and you've been arrested. Healer, why...?"

"Because it's the best thing to do."

She looked up at him, not following.

"Ariadne, let me tell you a story. Do you know anything about the circumstances under which Ankarad Murray married Cuthbert Macnair?"

She shook her head.

"The Muggles were at war, and Dark wizards were running amok. Young Miss Murray was famous as the greatest brewster seen in Europe for several generations. Probably more than one man had his eye on her, but she was engaged to be married. To me."

He spoke calmly. Ariadne reminded herself that this had happened a very, very long time ago.

"When Cuthbert Macnair also proposed, she laughed and told him she wasn't interested. When he asked her again, she became angry, and told him to leave her alone. Macnair persisted, and she resisted. But in the end, he found out her weak spot. He told her that if she did not marry him, he would kill me. In the chaos of those times, he could have easily made it look like an accident, or the work of the Walpurgians. Ankarad was frightened into obeying him."

"So she sacrificed her life...?"

"Exactly. I don't believe she gave way to panic. I believe she was rationally afraid for my safety and that she saved my life in the only way she knew how. In peace time, she might have been able to report Macnair to the Aurors, but in wartime they didn't have the resources to intervene in a personal tragedy. And the war dragged on for another two years, while her husband kept her as a virtual prisoner in his house." A tired smile crossed his face. "But Ankarad did manage to contain the damage that Cuthbert Macnair was trying to wreak. I think she promised herself never to bring into the world Macnair sons who might grow up to be like their father. It is probably no accident that the greatest brewster in Scotland gave birth only to daughters."

Something clicked in Ariadne's mind, but she was not sure what, and it did not seem important. "I'm not surprised that my grandmother knew of such potions," she agreed. "Yet, in all my research, I've never met any such recipe."

"Oh, it would unquestionably be illegal for obvious ethical reasons and Professor Jigger would have had better sense than to teach any such formula to an apprentice. But a Potions Master of his age has certainly learned how to brew one. Now, on the subject of breaking the law... that is what I want to tell you, Ariadne. Your grandmother did not randomly sacrifice her life; she gave it up willingly so that I might live. I would like to think that I made good use of her sacrifice. Although it was ten years before I could love another woman, I have even been happy."

She nodded, still not following his train of thought.

"But my turn has come. If our work among the werewolves is to stand any chance of continuing if we entertain any hope of keeping most of our team outside Azkaban at least one person will have to risk sacrificing himself. And common sense dictates that that person should be me."

"Why you? I was the one who broke the law by discovering the Wolfsbane Potion!"

"But I broke it too, when I agreed to supervise the brewing. And I have already benefited from someone else's sacrifice, so I should be the first to volunteer. You have a young family, while my children are long since grown. You have the expertise to take the research into wolfsbane to the next step, which would be quite beyond my own capabilities. And I am the person who has been arrested and is currently in the public eye, while no-one as yet suspects you. Ariadne, let's be practical. There is no reason to have *more* than one person in Azkaban over this."

"I'm sure my guilt will be exposed at your trial," she said. She had tried not to think about this, but she had assumed that it would happen.

"Not necessarily. I have already shown my lawyer *this*, and admitted to forging it. I just didn't admit...*when* I forged it."

The second parchment was dated May 1987.

THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC PATENT OFFICE

WOLFSBANE POTION

This invention relates to a potion to treat the symptoms of lycanthropy.

Persons suffering from lycanthropy turn into wolves under the full moon. This constitutes a danger to society. Even when the lycanthropes are restrained, they still pose significant dangers to themselves.

The Wolfsbane Potion, when imbibed in the correct dosage by a lycanthrope, causes the afflicted person to retain a human mind even when the full moon is risen...

"A patent that you admit is a fake? Who is supposed to be fooled by it, Healer?"

"You are, of course. And Healer Valentine. Neither of you would have agreed to brew a potion that you believed to be illegal, would you? So I must have told you that the Patent Office had changed its mind, and you both must have believed me. I didn't bother trying to deceive Madam O'Keeffe, of course. She just did as she was told."

Ariadne leafed ahead to the signature. The fake patent was signed *Dolores J. Umbridge*. The handwriting looked suspiciously like Healer Smethwyck's own, but Ariadne could not remember any more whether she had ever seen Madam Umbridge's real signature.

"So I was fooled... what else do I have to remember?"

"Nothing much. You swallowed my ridiculous story that the Patent Office had changed its mind and you signed the contract in September because this job seemed as good as any. When I was arrested for illicit brewing, you naturally wanted nothing more to do with the Wolfsbane project, although you continued your job at St Mungo's because some of the other projects were interesting. That's what you say if anyone asks. But they probably won't ask, because I shall convince them that you have nothing new to tell. Certainly you are not to attend my trial."

She sat up straight. The invisible metronome was ticking loudly over their heads. Healer Smethwyck seemed absolutely earnest.

"You were completely ignorant that you were doing anything wrong," he repeated, "and now that you know better, you are completely dissociated. You have no interest in watching my condemnation. You have nothing to say on the subject. But if you play it smartly, neither the law nor the press will even bother to interview you, for I'm the villain of the piece. Ariadne, I will do everything I can to have myself acquitted. But I may not succeed. If I am sentenced to stay here," he could not suppress a shudder "don't let that be the end of our research."

Logically, she could see how much sense his proposal made. But it was *sawrong* that she should enjoy freedom and comfort while he paid the whole price alone.

"I am laying three tasks on you," he continued. "First, to find ways of continuing to brew Wolfsbane Potion in secret, of course. Second, to do all you can to make the potion legal and socially acceptable. If I *am* condemned, that will be my only hope of pardon. And third, of course, you must try to research an outright cure. That might yet be several decades away. But Wolfsbane Potion in its present form never was more than an interim treatment."

She nodded dumbly.

"And now, I have something for you. I think you were at one time interested in Blood Magic."

She had forgotten mentioning it to him, but of course he was right.

"I've just finished reading this. My wife is a Genetiwitch, and she recommends it highly. It may offer more answers than you were expecting."

He handed over a leather-backed tome. It was called *It's in Your Blood: a Wizard's Genetic Primer*, and she had never heard of the author, one Phoebe Constellis. It seemed not to be about blood *magic* at all and the text was half a century out of date.

Yet at the moment when he was about to be consigned to the Dementors when he playing an elaborate gambit to keep herself and Althea Valentine out of trouble Hippocrates Smethwyck was still finding a way to give her a gift. So she thanked him tearfully, and choked out a promise to fulfil his commissions.

* * * * *

When Ariadne, after another cold trip in Mr Charon's boat, stepped out into her own hearth, she saw that Remus had taken the bairns to Honeyduke's. Matthew had apparently indulged in *three* Chocolate Frogs or perhaps Remus had eaten one, but Matthew was certainly playing with two Agrippa cards and a Dumbledore. There was an uneaten pile on the end table beside the sofa. Ariadne reminded herself that the Dementors had gone now, but she could not help being glad when Remus guided her to the sofa and handed her a Frog. She pulled Elizabeth onto her lap and hoped she would not have to talk.

"I have a job," said Remus.

She smiled weakly, reminding herself how delighted she would have been to hear the same news this morning.

"It's at Carlton Junior School, where I did that teaching round a few years back." He sat down beside her and gave her another Chocolate Frog. "You'll be pleased, when you remember which school that was. Oh, and have you seen the newspaper? Kingsley has managed to outsmart the *Daily Prophet*."

She leaned against him and read the article on page four.

by Rita Skeeter, Special Correspondent

"Reporters are cowards," Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt has claimed. "The Daily Prophet prints that I'm a werewolf. But how many reporters can provide proof for the readers? Would they dare visit me under the full moon?"

Well, Auror Shacklebolt, not all reporters are cowards. So I've agreed to interview him on the evening of the Grain Moon.

I am punctual to our half-past eight appointment in a narrow back-alley in Stockport. The sun is setting behind the dirty garage roofs. My heart hammers helplessly as I wonder why I have let a vicious werewolf lure me out here. I just hope I can Disapparate faster than a wolf can pounce.

"I'm doing this for the readers," I remind myself. But what am I doing? The red sun hangs low in the west, and Auror Shacklebolt is late. Will he even turn up?

Just as dusk begins to blur the gravel beneath my stilettos, a dark shadow looms out from a roll-top door. I clutch my clipboard as a sinewy limb stretches towards me. Should I Disapparate now? A deep-throated chuckle assails my ears. The voice is still human, but that is because the moon has not quite risen.

"Auror Shacklebolt?" I am proud that my voice rings out firmly and clearly.

"Good evening, Madam Skeeter." A well-toned young man emerges into the dying light, his voice teasing me. "Have you come to meet a werewolf?"

"But you said you weren't one," I challenge. "Were you lying?"

The Auror shakes hands, his strong and virile grasp sending electric tingles all up my arm. He wears jeans and a black leather jacket, with a gold ring winking in one ear, and he's as bald as an egg. We look at one another for a full minute, while the moon slowly lifts above the eastern horizon. There is not a flicker of a transformation in his lean yet solid physique. By the time the moon is a bright yellow disc in the black sky, Auror Shacklebolt still couldn't look more human.

"Shall I howl?" he jokes. With a dexterity that no beast would even attempt, he Conjures a white café-style table and two chairs, at odds with the dingy brickwork around us, and a lantern glowing with pink fire. And we sit down to talk.

How did it feel, I ask, when a former classmate treacherously denounced him as a werewolf?

"Idiots will always be out there," he grins. "My accuser obviously hadn't bothered to check with the Werewolf Registry." The firelight makes glowing pink shadows dance on his shiny bare head.

I ask why a supposed friend would spread such malicious lies. Shacklebolt shrugs without really responding, and half-changes the subject. "One part of the story was true. Ariadne Lupin does know a werewolf."

Ariadne lowered the paper. She was not surprised that Kingsley apparently knew about Remus, for he was no fool; but surely he would not betray their secrets to some journalist?

But the fact that she could feel the indignation proved that the effects of the Dementors were wearing off.

"Keep reading," said Remus. "She gets better."

I almost forget to take notes as I lean inwards to gaze into his guileless chestnut eyes.

"Ariadne and I never went on an unsupervised holiday together," he stresses firmly. "There were seven adults present when we went hiking. But it was while this group of us was on that holiday that we met the werewolf."

A shiver of apprehension runs up my spine as Shacklebolt smiles valiantly. He's obviously trying not to re-live the terror of his experience. And I'm fervently hoping that this werewolf won't turn out to be some familiar person whom I've blindly trusted for years.

"He was a Muggle." Auror Shacklebolt takes my hand confidently. He has such a firm, warm grasp; I find myself unprofessionally wondering if I might take him out to dinner one evening some time soon. "And he was quite normal, of course, once the moon had set. We all felt sorry for the poor young man. It was an experience that would inspire anyone to try to help werewolves."

Such old-fashioned tenderness is rare today. I wonder if Mr Shacklebolt is truly in touch with the dangers of modern Dark Creatures. I want to ask him what he would do if his werewolf-friend decided to attack. But before we can explore this line, a siren blasts from a gadget that hangs on his well-muscled chest.

"Salazar, that's my boss! I'm on call, Madam Skeeter, and I have to go to work. It was nice meeting you!"

Yes, it was. "Wait," I plead, "the readers will want to know if you have a girlfriend."

"You guess!" And with another teasing grin, he Disapparates.

Auror Shacklebolt, 24, was born in Manchester, is not married, and expects to be promoted soon.

Adieu to all Judges and Juries

Chapter 4 of 21

Hippocrates Smethwyck goes on trial.

CHAPTER FOUR

Adieu to all Judges and Juries

Thursday 23 August 1990

Courtroom Ten, the Ministry of Magic, London.

How hard is the place of confinement

That keeps me from my heart's delight!

Cold irons and chains all bound round me,

And a plank for my pillow at night.

English folk song: "Here's Adieu to all Judges and Juries"

Rated PG for corruption.

"... That on thirty-eight separate occasions between Saturday the fourth of July 1987 and Saturday the seventh of July 1990, he did knowingly, deliberately, and in full awareness of the illegality of his actions, cause to be brewed on the premises of St Mungo's Hospital, and then distributed to patients, the unpatented and illegal pharmaceutical known as the Wolfsbane Potion, which constitutes an offence..."

Remus found his attention drifting away even before the prosecutor paused for breath. He was sitting at the back of Courtroom Ten, hoping he wouldn't be recognised. Ariadne had promised not to attend Healer Smethwyck's trial, but he knew she wouldn't sleep at night if neither of them went. A curly-haired journalist had been swishing an acid-green quill even before the court was called to order; he could only imagine that she was describing the assembly, which meant that if he attracted any attention at all, she would describe *him*.

The Wizengamot was arrayed at the front of the courtroom. Cornelius Fudge, sitting in the middle of the front row, had pressed his pinstripe and polished his bowler hat. He had polished his smile too; this was the first sensational case to present itself since his appointment, and he was leaning forward with an interest that he would certainly never display towards petty theft or illegal Portkeys. Amelia Bones was not smiling. She looked aloof and professional, as if this case were exactly the same as the other thousand with which she had dealt in her career. Remus did not recognise the woman sitting in the shadow on the other side of Fudge.

Although Hippocrates Smethwyck was chained like a criminal to the arms of the great chair, he looked perfectly calm. His beard was neatly trimmed and his robes were clean, which meant that his wife had visited this morning. Remus tuned in again when he realised that Smethwyck was being addressed by the lawyer named Adripius Cavill.

"Have you ever brewed Wolfsbane Potion?"

"Yes."

"There you are!" exclaimed Fudge. "He admits it. Is it even worth calling in the witnesses?"

"Of course it is," said Amelia Bones. "Things are never as simple as they seem. Call in the first witness for the prosecution."

The first witness was a St Mungo's ward orderly who admitted to the name of Kate Skower.

"Since you work on the first floor, you must have frequently seen Healer Smethwyck at work."

"Yes, I often saw him with the patients."

"Did you see him distribute Wolfsbane Potion?"

Mrs Skower hesitated. "No-o. Nothing that he *said* was Wolfsbane. But there was a lot that I didn't see. Healer Smethwyck often asked me not to disturb his ward. I don't know what he was doing at those times."

Mr Cavill pounced. "Often, you say? Did these occasions coincide with the full moon?"

"I don't know. They might have. It was usually a night shift, anyway. I had to make sure no-one disturbed whatever was going on in there, so I'd keep the door locked. Healer Smethwyck obviously had *something* to hide."

"What did you think was happening?"

"Hmm." Mrs Skower was trying to be fair, but clearly this was a situation to be relished. "Let me put it this way. I'd go to clean up the next morning. And I used to find *hairs* on the floor. Coarse ones, like dog-hairs. I ask you, who'd let dogs into a hospital?"

The prosecutor looked suddenly eager. "Do you, by any chance, have a sample we could analyse?"

She bristled. "Of course not! I wouldn't leave muck like that around *ahospital*. Or anywhere. No, I cleaned it all out properly."

Healer Smethwyck looked close to smiling at her fervour. Perhaps Mr Cavill was losing faith in this witness, because he handed the floor to the defence lawyer.

Remus recognised this man: he was Ariadne's cousin, Dempster Wiggleswade. He looked almost jaunty in his very loud purple pinstripe.

"Mrs Skower, you don't actually *know* what Healer Smethwyck was doing behind those locked doors, do you?"

"No, not exactly..."

"Was Healer Smethwyck in the habit of discussing his patients' affairs with outsiders?"

"No."

"In other words, he kept their confidence, as a Healer should. Have you any reason whatever to believe that he had *any* secret, beyond the usual matter of patient confidentiality?"

Mrs Skower was startled into silence.

"Mrs Skower, when those doors were locked... did you hear any howling?"

"What howling? No. It was quiet enough in there."

The curly-haired journalist seethed, and hissed to her neighbour, "They *were* howling. I could hear them from *miles* away!" If this was the same journalist who had written the article about entering the ward and counting the wolves, Remus understood why neither lawyer had called her as a witness.

Meanwhile, Mr Cavill was calling in Jason Borage. Jason had chosen unadorned navy business-robos for his grand appearance before the Wizengamot, and he looked very young and vulnerable.

"Mr Borage, I understand that you used to work in Healer Smethwyck's department?"

Jason stared around wildly, noted the respective positions of the men wearing wigs, and exclaimed, "Am I a witness for the prosecution? I thought I was doing the defence!"

Everyone did a double-take, but it was the smooth-speaking Mr Cavill who recovered first. "Just answer the questions, Mr Borage. How long did you work in the Creature-Induced Injuries Ward?"

"Just a couple of months. For most of my first year, I was with Spell Damage. But in May they moved me to Creatures for extra experience."

"While you were working under Healer Smethwyck, did you ever see anyone in his department brewing the Wolfsbane Potion?"

Jason hesitated nervously. "Yes, I saw it all. Once in June and once in July."

"Are you sure it was Wolfsbane Potion?"

"Well, Healer Smethwyck said it was. And it certainly contained wolfsbane flowers."

"Did you know it was illegal?"

"No. I assumed it was all right, because Healer Smethwyck's an important Healer. I didn't think he he would deliberately break the law. He's always been decent to me."

"Did you help with the brewing?"

"The first time I only helped Madam O'Keeffe with the distribution. The second time I brought up herbs from the Hospital garden, but I didn't give any other help."

"Did you ever see any of the werewolf-patients transformed under the full moon?"

"Oh, yes, I saw that. They definitely turned into wolves. And back to humans when the moon set."

"Did it seem to you that the potion was working?"

"Yes, it worked all right..." Jason trailed off, and cast a panicked glance at Healer Smethwyck, who still sat calmly in the chair. "That is, the wolves didn't do anything. They just lay quietly, without howling or becoming aggressive, and it seemed to me that they understood what we said to them."

"Did you worry about what would happen if one of those clear-thinking wolves attacked someone?"

"No, because the potion worked. They weren't planning to attack."

"But, Mr Borage, if a maliciously-inclined werewolf..."

Jason looked decidedly green. "I know," he whispered. "But I didn't think of it then."

Dempster Wiggleswade moved forward again. "Mr Borage, did you ever see Healer Smethwyck refuse to treat a werewolf patient?"

Jason shook his head. "I didn't see. It wasn't my shift. But Madam O'Keeffe says... yes, a man did once come to St Mungo's asking for the potion. And they wouldn't give him any because he wouldn't say his name."

Jason wasn't able to offer any more useful information to either lawyer, and they soon dismissed him. Cavill looked almost smug with confidence as he called in Damocles Flavius Belby, but Smethwyck for the first time seemed tense. Remus had to remind himself that he *would not* let himself be noticed. But it was a blow; while he couldn't imagine what Mr Belby knew about the case, his testimony was bound to be bad for Ariadne.

"... Are you the apothecary who first discovered the Wolfsbane Potion?" Fudge was asking.

"I am." Belby swung a silver cane with dangerous exuberance, and silver spangles winked from his bright emerald robes.

"Question him, Cabal."

"Tell the court, Mr Belby. Did you discover the potion entirely on your own?"

"Oh, that never happens!" Remus was dazzled by a flash from the silver cane. "It was my brainchild, but of course I had my little team. The day-to-day trials were run by Arsenius and Belladonna Jigger. And I believe they had an apprentice to assist them for most of the time."

"And when your *brain* produced this *child*," continued Cavill, "was it your intention to feed your potion to real werewolves?"

"When is 'when'?" Belby's smile was more dazzling than his silver cane. "Plans change, you know. At first I certainly hoped to produce a medicine that would benefit real werewolves perhaps even cure lycanthropy completely. But the potion doesn't exactly work, does it? It enables werewolves to keep their human minds, but it doesn't alter the wolf's body, and it does nothing to sedate them. If they are aggressive or spiteful as humans, they remain aggressive and spiteful as wolves. As soon as I realised that, I gave up any thought of actually *using* Wolfsbane Potion as a medicine."

"Yet Healer Smethwyck admits to using it. How did he even know about it, if you did not collude with him?"

Damocles Belby gaily continued to perjure himself. "I have no idea. But the formula was published in the *Western Journal of Apothecarism*, so any unscrupulous subscriber could have stolen my idea."

Cavill faced the audience triumphantly. "Ladies and gentlemen, just one more question, which will establish the indirect but guilty relationship between the brilliant Mr Belby and the devious Healer Smethwyck. Mr Belby has mentioned an apprentice who assisted him with the development of the Wolfsbane Potion. This apprentice soon afterwards left Mr Belby's employ and went to work for Healer Smethwyck. Mr Belby, were you aware of Madam Lupin's movements?"

"No, I had no idea until I read it in the newspaper last month."

"Could this Madam Lupin have stolen your formula and made a present of it to Healer Smethwyck?"

Belby shrugged with magnificent indifference. "Certainly she *could* have. But it would be difficult to prove that she *did*, given the formula was also published in the journal."

Remus began to breathe more easily; Belby obviously had his own reasons not to draw too much attention to Madam Lupin.

Then it was Dempster's turn again; Remus hoped the Wizengamot didn't know that he was married to Ariadne's cousin. "Healer Smethwyck, it does seem a rather steep coincidence that the apothecary on your Wolfsbane team used to work for Mr Belby. Would you like to explain the situation?"

"It isn't a coincidence at all." For the first time, Smethwyck began to sound tired. "I began brewing the Wolfsbane Potion in July 1987, but it's a very complicated potion. When I heard that Madam Lupin was job-hunting I invited her onto my team at once, because I knew her presence would make the whole operation smooth and easy. She came to work for me in September."

"Did she express any disapproval of the fact that you had already been brewing an illegal potion for two months, and now wished her to become an accessory after the fact?"

"Of course she did. I had to tell her and my assistant Healer too that the Patents Office had re-assessed the potion and legalised it after all. They both believed me after I showed them a forged patent."

Dempster Wiggleswade sighed; he clearly hadn't wanted Healer Smethwyck to confess this part.

"In fact," continued Healer Smethwyck, "Mr Wiggleswade has the forged patent in his brief case."

Dempster Wiggleswade frowned very deeply, but when Amelia Bones held out her hand, he pulled out a manila folder and gave it to her.

Amelia Bones frowned too. "Healer Smethwyck, you are in chains before the Wizengamot on a charge of illegal brewing. Are you openly *admitting* to a completely separate count of forgery?"

Remus could only admire the aplomb with which Healer Smethwyck poured out his lie. "It seems necessary to confess the whole truth if I am to save innocent people from being condemned for my crime. Yes, I tricked respectable people into working for me. Yes, I had them brew an illegal potion. And I think I was justified."

A sharp gasp cut him off. The woman on Fudge's right, who had been silent until now, was rising to her feet. She was very short and thick-set, and her face was wide and flabby. Madam Bones must have passed the forged patent along for her inspection, for she was now waving it angrily.

"Healer Smethwyck," she said, "you have signed this document with *my* name!"

"I've already admitted that it's a forgery."

"Perhaps you don't know who I am," she said angrily. "You see, I used to work in the Patents Office. And you clearly do know that, for you've used my name on your fake patent. Not my handwriting, of course! A very blatant forgery! But now I've been promoted to Senior Under-Secretary to the Minister for Magic." Her angry voice suddenly dropped to cloying sweetness. "So I do advise you, Healer Smethwyck, not to take my name in vain again. It really isn't a good idea to offend *ahem* important people."

Healer Smethwyck nodded just enough to indicate that he had heard her. Perhaps the Senior Under-Secretary had expected an argument; she looked slightly deflated as she resumed her seat.

"The case is clear enough," announced Adripius Cavill. "There is a potion that enables werewolves to keep their human minds. Healer Smethwyck admits to feeding this potion to no fewer than twenty-four werewolves. And they have been congregating at St Mungo's to pass the full moons together. I ask you, what greater threat to public safety could exist? Never mind the forged patents and duped employees. Think instead of the tremendous risk to the helpless patients at St Mungo's over a period of no less than three years. Healer Smethwyck, in all your bouts of lawbreaking, did you ever consider the possibility that a thinking werewolf would deliberately harm an innocent person?"

Remus found he was breathing easily again. The Prosecution had lost interest in Ariadne.

"Yes, of course that was a consideration," said Healer Smethwyck. "That's why it was a condition of medication that the patients would spend the night of the full moon at St Mungo's. I kept the ward locked, and required them to lie quietly."

"But the werewolves took the potion in small daily doses. What would have happened, Healer Smethwyck, if a werewolf had failed to turn up for that final dose on the day of the full moon?"

"That never did happen. The patients knew that they needed that final dose for any effect to take hold. If they hadn't taken it, then the rest of the week's medication would all have been wasted."

"And we do in fact have a witness to this," broke in Dempster Wiggleswade. Confidence was surging through him again. "If there are no more witnesses for the Prosecution, I would like to call in Latona Versipella Wildclaw."

The witness for the Defence was a petite, youngish witch with appealingly large, dark eyes. Her frayed grey robes and the grey streaks in her long straggly hair lent her an air of pathos. Remus knew that she was one of the werewolves who had accepted the Wolfsbane Potion from Healer Smethwyck, but her replies were so mumbled that probably no-one else in the court understood this.

"Speak up, speak up," complained Cornelius Fudge. "If you've anything worth saying, the court needs to hear it."

Amelia Bones pointed her wand at the witness and cast a *Sonorus* Charm.

"I said that I'm Latona Wildclaw." The witness was still mumbling, but at a magnified volume that enabled the clerk to take notes. "And I'm forty-one years old. Yes, I'm a werewolf; I've been a werewolf since Fenrir Greyback bit me when I was five. My parents didn't want me any more, so I became a Sylvanian a member of Greyback's pack. I was a Sylvanian until two years ago."

"Tell them, Miss Wildclaw," prompted Dempster Wiggleswade. "Why did you leave the Sylvanians?"

"Fenrir Greyback said he would kill me if I came back."

"Keep talking," said Dempster patiently. "Why did Mr Greyback say that?"

"Because I was missing from his pack for three full moons. You can't miss so many full moons in the forest and come back." Miss Wildclaw wasn't mumbling any more; her voice was rising to a near-shout. "Greyback says that's divided loyalty, and he kills anyone who disobeys. He killed Neurius Conriocht and Dacia Garulf, and I knew he'd kill me too. I was in danger, I couldn't go anywhere near the forest even by full daylight..."

Madam Bones pointed her wand and reduced Latona Wildclaw's volume.

"What were you doing for those full moons, when you were missing from Greyback's pack?"

"I was at St Mungo's. I'd heard about Healer Smethwyck's Wolfsbane Potion... no, *can't* tell you who told me, he'd *bemurdered*... but I came, and Healer Smethwyck gave me the potion, and... um... I didn't feel like a werewolf any more. Even when the moon was full and bright, I didn't injure myself, and I didn't want to bite anyone else."

"How many other werewolves were in St Mungo's with you, Miss Wildclaw?"

"The number kept growing, but recently I've counted twenty-four."

"Were any of these twenty-four werewolves Sylvanians?"

Miss Wildclaw began to panic again. "I can't tell you! I mean, yes, some of them had been. But I can't tell you their names. Greyback would slaughter them if he found out where they were."

"And these werewolves Sylvanian or not did any of these other werewolves show any sign of violence?"

"One of them did. He used to bite himself, and he snarled at the rest of us sometimes. Healer Smethwyck had to cast Binding Spells over him, so that he couldn't move out of his square of the ward."

"Just one? What about the rest of you?"

"No, the rest of us usually just lay quietly and slept."

Adripius Cavill leapt to the front. "You say you were *asleep*, Miss Wildclaw?"

"Most of the time I was."

"Then how do you *know* what was happening around you?"

"Well... there weren't any noises. A fight would have woken us, most probably. And whenever I did wake in the night, it was always quiet. Healer Smethwyck never *said* there had been trouble in the ward, and no-one ever had wounds in the morning."

"You also say there were twenty-four werewolves on Healer Smethwyck's ward. Why have none of the others agreed to stand in the witness box?"

"We-ell." Latona Wildclaw's frightened gaze darted around the courtroom, and briefly locked eyes with Remus. *She'll point to me*, he found himself thinking, *or she'll remind them that Lycania died*. But she didn't. She looked at Adripius Cavill and told him, "I don't know. Perhaps because of Fenrir Greyback. But I'd imagine they're also afraid of normal people. It isn't good to let normal people know you're a were... a werewolf. I've just told everyone what I am, and that's going to be a bad thing for me. I don't blame the others for not wanting to."

For some reason, a deadly hush fell over the spectators. Cavill curtly thanked Miss Wildclaw, and Fudge told her that she might depart.

There were no other witnesses for the defence. *I should have been down there* Remus couldn't help thinking. *Smethwyck told me to stay away, but I should have spoken to Dempster anyway.*

"... In sum, there is only one remaining question." Cavill's droning was about to reach the relevant part. "It is the question of whether any extenuating circumstances are possible. Healer Smethwyck, have you anything to say in your own favour? *Why* did you feel the need to brew this poisonous concoction? Do you think yourself above the law?"

All eyes were fastened on the man in the chained chair. There was a moment of deadly silence, long enough to acknowledge that the prisoner had permission to speak.

"Tell them, Hippocrates," urged Dempster Wiggleswade. "What good did you think might come from feeding Wolfsbane Potion to werewolves?"

"I thought it would prevent werewolves from harming themselves and other people."

"You see," said Dempster. "That's exactly what Miss Wildclaw told us. The potion keeps everyone safe from werewolves. In thirty-eight full moons, not one medicated werewolf has caused any damage. It's the Sylvaniaans who present the only danger to society. And the Wolfsbane Potion is encouraging lycanthropes to abandon the Sylvaniaans."

"Exactly!" exclaimed Adrius Cavill. "Do we want Fenrir Greyback to abandon the Sylvaniaans in favour of dosing himself up with this mind-enhancer and prowling among our hospital patients?"

A ripple of chatter erupted. The curly-haired reporter leaned forward, while her acid-green pen flowed on without her attention.

"Order in the court!" commanded Cornelius Fudge. "No need to murmur when we can inquire openly. Mr Cadaver, have you any more questions for the accused?"

"On the subject of Fenrir Greyback," said Cavill, "I'd like to know the identity of the man who visited St Mungo's and demanded the Wolfsbane Potion from Healer Smethwyck on the first of July this year. What do you say about that, Smethwyck?"

"I say that I'd like to know too. But the man didn't tell us his name."

"Could he have been a Sylvaniaan werewolf?"

"Of course he could. Or he could have been an industrial rival, or a political spy, or a journalist, or an aspirant suicide, or simply insane. I've no way of knowing."

"Could he have been Fenrir Greyback?"

"I don't know. What does Mr Greyback look like?"

"Healer Smethwyck," chided Cornelius Fudge, "you are here to answer questions, not to ask them."

"And the question is," Madam Bones reminded them, "why Healer Smethwyck feels the community would benefit from his breaking the law. I repeat, Healer Smethwyck: do you consider yourself above the law?"

"No person is above the law, but right and wrong are above the law."

Cornelius Fudge frowned angrily. "Are you *criticising* our laws?"

Healer Smethwyck was almost shrugging although his tight chains did not leave much room to move his shoulders. "The law can be mistaken, as the Ministry of Magic has in the past acknowledged. For example, there was once a law that forbade public revelation of chocolate's effectiveness in helping Dementor-victims for fear that relatives of prisoners might try to smuggle it into Azkaban. That law was repealed as soon as the Ministry recognised its inherent wrongness."

Madam Bones wrote something down, close to nodding, but Minister Fudge was bewildered with displeasure, and his Senior Under-Secretary was hissing something in his ear.

"It seems the accused agrees with the Prosecution," said Fudge. "He doesn't believe he ought to obey the law, therefore he has broken it. The Potion exists, and Healer Smethwyck has been feeding it to werewolves. He *says* he has taken a few precautions to protect public safety, but in fact there is a constant risk of infiltration and abuse by Sylvaniaans. Does anyone wish to summarise the situation in any other way?"

"I submit," said Dempster Wiggleswade, "that Healer Smethwyck has guarded the public against abuse very carefully. He restrains the aggressive, he locks the door of the ward, he only medicates those whose history he knows, and the potion has no effect on those who might plan to omit the final dose so they can spend the full moon in the forest."

"In other words," argued Adrius Cavill, "there *are* aggressive Sylvaniaan werewolves around, and there is no guarantee that they will never imbibe the Wolfsbane Potion for their own nefarious ends. The accused has today admitted to breaking several laws. I am very disinclined to trust that, should he be acquitted, he would cease his illicit brewing, let alone that he would distribute it responsibly in the future."

Fudge stared for a moment at the prisoner, but Smethwyck shook his head to indicate that he had no more to say. So Fudge opened his mouth. "We have heard the evidence. How many are in favour of clearing the accused of all charges?"

A dozen hands were raised. Remus counted Albus Dumbledore, Griselda Marchbanks and Tiberius Ogden among Smethwyck's supporters.

"Those in favour of conviction?"

This time there was a forest of hands. The Court Scribe had to count twice before waving his wand to allow the number thirty-seven to erupt into the air.

Fudge opened his mouth again, but his Senior Under-Secretary tugged his sleeve and whispered something to him. Fudge nodded grimly and faced the court.

"Hippocrates Cheiron Smethwyck," he recited, "the Wizengamot finds you guilty of brewing and distributing an illegal potion. It therefore sentences you to a term of twenty years in Azkaban."

Remus froze, although Smethwyck remained calm even now. Twenty years? They had assumed the sentence would be five years or ten.

There was a great deal to tell Ariadne this evening.

Foes may Condemn

Remus begins his new job at a time when all the werewolves must negotiate the full moon without a legal supply of Wolfsbane Potion.

CHAPTER FIVE

Foes may Condemn

Tuesday 4 Wednesday 5 September 1990

Carlton, Nottingham; Llangollen, Vale of Clwyd.

When he who adores thee has left but the name

Of his fault and his sorrows behind,

O say wilt thou weep, when they darken the fame

Of a life that for thee was resign'd?

Yes, weep, and however my foes may condemn,

Thy tears shall efface their decree;

For Heaven can witness, though guilty to them,

I have been but too faithful to thee.

Thomas Moore (1779-1852): "When He who Adores Thee"

Rated PG for threats and drugs.

On the first day of term, Remus stood in front of his new classroom in the suburb of Carlton with a feeling that he had seen everything before. The class register had revealed that it was the same class that he had taught as a student on his third teaching round. Since the children were now in Year Six, they must be ten years old: Harry Potter's age.

Muggle teachers were supposed to start the day with maths or English, but Remus remembered how his most respected teachers had captured their classes' attention by making their first lesson unusual. Professor McGonagall had turned her desk into a pig. So he brought out a ceramic pot as soon as he had finished calling the register.

"Who can tell me what this is?"

Nothing had changed: it was Jacqueline Sutton whose hand shot into the air first. "It's an Egyptian jar. The Ancient Egyptians used that kind of pot to store embalmed body organs."

"Well done, Jacqueline. How did you know it was Egyptian?"

"It's carved with Egyptian gods. That's Horus with the bird-head, Ra with the sun and Anubis as a jackal... and that's the ankh."

After Jacqueline had explained, not quite accurately, that the ankh was a letter of the Egyptian alphabet, Jonathan Miller asked, "Did it come from the Pyramids, sir? Did you dig it up yourself?"

"Silly, teachers don't have time to go digging," said Wayne Elliott. "Mr Lupin must have bought it from the British Museum."

"Wow, it must have cost thousands and millions of pounds."

"Actually, it didn't," said Remus. "This is only a replica not a real artefact at all." If he didn't mention that he had made the pot himself, copied from a picture in a library book, by Transfiguring a milk bottle, the children might assume he had bought it at a cheap gift shop. "But the Ancient Egyptians did make pots like this one and they used them to store parts of dead bodies. Take a good look." He brought more pots out from behind his desk (the milkman must be wondering why the Lupins hadn't put out any bottles for three days) and passed them around to the children's tables.

"That's disgusting," said Jessica Glover. "It would stink."

"Imagine if they started cutting the parts out before the person was properly dead," said Katharine Phillips.

Remus circled the tables cautiously, hoping to gauge how interested the children were in fake canopic jars. Wayne Elliott's pencil box was still black and white, and he still owned a Mr Magpie key ring. Jonathan Miller still had the same old Concorde box and for good measure he was wearing a T-shirt featuring the Red Baron's triplane. Autumn Silverstone's sliding-lid cedarwood box still displayed a careful selection of healing crystals: amethyst for inner peace and contentment, jade for a harmonious negotiation with the outer world and amber for intellectual stimulation. Terry Boot, whom Remus remembered as tense and frustrated, now seemed relaxed and confident. The hologrammed image on his pencil box showed doves fluttering around a fish-outline that enclosed the Greek word ICQUS.

"This whole thing isn't right," said Mark Fletcher. "They didn't put dead people in pots; they made mummies."

"And the mummies had a curse," announced Bradley Nicholls. "People who break into pyramids always die within a year."

Remus was taken aback for a moment. The Ancient Egyptian curses laid against tomb violators were Statute-protected information; Muggles weren't supposed to believe in them. Thank goodness Bradley had a wrong idea about the exact terms of the average Pyramid Curse. It seemed a good moment to ask the children what they already knew about Ancient Egypt, and he must tread a delicate balance between protecting the Statute of Secrecy and outright lying.

"So you all know something," he said. "Let's write up what we already know about Ancient Egypt." He divided the whiteboard into sections, and the children were able to contribute ideas about death, the gods, daily life and "myths".

Gershom Wallace had nothing to say but he was very taken by the image of the ankh and was copying it into his notebook. He drew six neat columns, row after row, of identical ankhs.

"Sir, Gershom isn't listening!" reported Jacqueline Sutton. "He isn't thinking about Egypt, he's just *drawing* it."

"The Egyptians liked to draw," offered Gershom, apparently unaware that he had been snubbed.

Gershom's student record now contained a psychologist's report, explaining that he suffered from Asperger's Syndrome. Remus wasn't sure what this meant, but he had always known that Gershom organised his world-view quite differently from anyone else.

"The Egyptians had some good artists," Remus confirmed. "What does anyone else know?"

Dolly Clott, harbouring some dim impression of Jacqueline's original comment, contributed that the Egyptians had played the organ.

"Dolly," hissed Jacqueline, "you are *stupid*."

Terry Boot lolled back in his chair and stroked his pencil case, apparently relaxed, but there was a guarded look on his face.

The student records had already informed Remus that Dolly Clott still couldn't read. However, unlike Gershom, Dolly *did* know when she was being snubbed. She flushed crimson but she could not tear her eyes away from Jacqueline Sutton's frown. She opened her mouth, closed it silently, then opened it again.

"And... uh... they kept their water in pots?"

Jacqueline clapped her hands over her mouth in contrived merriment. The other girls, taking their cue, also tittered. Dolly's eyes filled with tears, while Terry's narrowed dangerously.

Remus lunged forward and grabbed the fake canopic jar before it toppled onto the floor.

Terry Boot was still prone to bouts of accidental magic.

* * * * *

They indulged in the history project all day, but Remus left high piles of maths and English sheets for tomorrow, for tonight, as luck would have it, was the full moon. He feigned a headache even before the school day ended to give the other teachers time to advise him to go home immediately while they called in a relief teacher.

But he did not go home, for his house would be empty tonight. As soon as he was alone in the corridor, he Disapparated to a white stone cottage in the Vale of Clwyd. His knock on the front door was opened by Hestia Jones, who was carrying his daughter Elizabeth in her arms.

"Come in, Remus. Most of them are here already. I'm keeping the children in the front with me, but Ariadne's hard at work in the kitchen. I expect she'd like some help."

He must ask Ariadne whether Hestia was being tactful or just naïve; he still hadn't worked out whether she knew about his lycanthropy. It couldn't remain a secret for much longer, however; the werewolf community was now utterly dependent on Ariadne's personal friends to maintain its connection with the Wolfsbane Potion.

Last month they had Flooed to Kingsley Shacklebolt's house, and Ariadne had set up her brewing station in his kitchen. Kingsley had spent most of that week at work, politely pretending not to know the identities of any of his guests. On the night of the full moon, Kingsley had gone out to decoy that tabloid journalist while fourteen of the werewolves had spread themselves out to sleep in his lounge and spare bedroom.

"But it's not ideal," said Ariadne. "None of the Muggle werewolves is connected to the Floo, and several of the former Sylvaniaans are missing."

Hestia's kitchen ran the full width of the back half of her cottage. As he entered, Remus saw that it was full of milling bodies; they had managed a better turn-out this month. Cinnamon-scented steam was rising from the iron cauldron that dominated Hestia's huge, old-fashioned hearth. Ariadne did not attempt to speak above the chatter of their companions, but she poured him his dose and marked him off on her record sheet.

Remus gulped the medicine. Ariadne had worked hard on its taste: after much trial and error, she had discovered last year that a simple infusion of peppermint greatly improved the flavour without disturbing the active ingredients. This improved version of the Wolfsbane Potion tasted fairly pleasant.

"Rrrremus!" shouted Connell Dewar. "You'rre hoom frrrom worrruk!"

"I'm glad you managed to come too, Con. Have you had to take a bus all the way from Perthshire every day this week?"

"Eh hev not. What are frrriends forr? Noo, Eh took the boos to Katrrrina Varrrg's house in Glesgoo, and Eh've been bidin' with herrr. We've been takin' the Floo togetherrr everry day."

Remus counted the guests. "It looks as if everyone's here. That's twenty-three... I make twenty-four of us."

"Last moonth was verrry bed, without the medicine." Connell drank from a glass of ordinary orange juice. "We'rre needin' to fehnd a way to brrring all the werrrawoluves to Errryednee everry moonth, even if Healerrr Smetheck *is* in prrrison. Oos Mooggle werrrawoluves hev been askin' ourr megickel frrriends to help oos, but soom of the wizarrds also lev in houses without Floo."

Almost unconsciously, Connell's glance strayed to Latona Wildclaw, who was sitting quietly at the kitchen table. Remus greeted her.

"Thank you very much for speaking up for Healer Smethwyck at his trial, Latona."

Latona tried to smile. "It didn't do much good, did it? He's been convicted."

"For now. Convictions can be overturned." Remus hoped he sounded more optimistic than he felt. "You risked your life to tell the truth. We are grateful to you for that. Where is Tala this evening?"

Latona jerked her head across the room. "My sister isn't speaking to me. She says I was careless with all our lives. Our leaving the Sylvaniaans hasn't been as easy as Tala hoped, Remus. Greyback will kill us if we go back to him, but we aren't popular with respectable people either. It isn't quite illegal to be a Sylvaniaan, but the Ministry of Magic has already given us an official warning about our 'past suspicious activities'. Our parents won't take us back, and people on the Werewolf Registry can't find work among wizards, so we have to live like Muggles. Tala sells baby clothes at that Muggle shop Smarks and Parks and I deliver newspapers. She says I should work longer hours, but I can't find work easily. I can't even read."

"I can teach you to read," said Remus automatically. "Well... perhaps not tonight. How did you and Tala manage to come here this week? Do you have Floo in your house?"

"No, but we're quite good at Apparating. Greyback taught us that. Is it true that you need a licence to Apparate? I don't suppose the Ministry would grant one to a werewolf."

They were interrupted by an explosion from the other end of the table. Ivor was playing Snap with three excited child-werewolves. Bran, Veretica and Alvin were among Greyback's most recent victims; they had all been bitten after Healer Smethwyck had taken over the brewing of the Wolfsbane Potion. There had never been any question of sending these children to the Sylvaniaans; their families had been glad to take advantage of the new medication.

Of course, it was only a matter of time before Greyback realised that he was losing his victims. Remus knew that Greyback must eventually find out about the potion that would destroy his life's work.

Ivor looked up from the table. "Have you had your medicine, Remus?"

So Ivor *did* know. "Yes. Thanks for letting all these people use your house, Ivor."

Ivor led Remus over to the Welsh dresser, away from the noisy chatter, and Conjured spindle-backed chairs for both of them. "Our pleasure. You wouldn't have been doing anyone any favours by offering your own house, since Ariadne's already too heavily implicated in the whole business it's the first place where the spies will come looking. Hestia's keeping Matthew and Elizabeth with her so that they won't see anything too alarming. We'll take dinner out to them. But, Remus, I do need to ask you... How much longer do you think we can carry on like this?"

Remus had been asking himself the same question. "How long can how many of our friends tolerate this hotel game? Sarah and Richard have both volunteered for next month. But Richard is Dempster Wiggleswade's brother-in-law, and Sarah's flat is in Diagon Alley, right at the hub of all magical activity. Neither of them is a particularly safe choice if there's any chance that the Ministry is keeping tabs on this situation."

"I haven't managed to find out whether the Ministry is tracking werewolves," said Ivor. "It's been difficult to enquire without seeming too interested. But if tracking is already happening, then there isn't a safe place anywhere in Britain. Floo usage can be monitored, and if it's seen that twenty-four werewolves are all converging on the same house at full moon... that will look suspicious no matter whose house it is."

"Had you thought of that when you offered to help us?" Remus asked.

"Of course we had. Remus, I don't think there's any doubt that one of us will be arrested eventually." Bast jumped up onto Ivor's lap. He stroked her, and continued speaking very calmly. "Smethwyck has managed to deflect suspicion from Ariadne for the time being, but once someone works out that she's married to a werewolf, neither of you will be safe. Hestia knows that I'm the next in line for scapegoating, since I work with goblins and I've had a bad report from the Macnair family. I'm expecting to see the inside of Azkaban within twelve months."

"So you've counted the cost." That seemed very inadequate. "Ivor, we do hope to improve the situation, both for Healer Smethwyck and for werewolves, but we're rather stumped for inspiration. An outright cure for lycanthropy is probably twenty years away. If we're to have Wolfsbane Potion legal before then, we'll need to make it socially respectable. That isn't looking very likely at present. There are at least forty-six werewolves still running around the forests with Fenrir Greyback, which isn't exactly a good advertisement for the potion as a cure for terrorism."

"How many former Sylvanians are sitting in this kitchen?"

"Ten. The rest of us either weren't Greyback victims or else we chose not to join him. In fact, you're currently entertaining every non-Sylvanian werewolf in the British Isles."

"So the Wolfsbane Potion has enticed ten Sylvanians to leave the forest."

Remus had already turned this over in his mind a hundred times. "It's kind of you to see it that way, but I doubt the Ministry would accept that all ten were truly reformed."

"They certainly don't look bourgeois," Ivor conceded. "Clothes, grooming, speech, manners, employment... lack of... and family connections... ditto..." Dressed in business robes and Gringotts name tag and seated in front of Hestia's antique plates, Ivor looked by far the most conventional person in the room. "I agree; if you want to make Wolfsbane Potion appear safe and respectable to the Wizengamot, I don't think you can count on our friends here to make a good impression."

"So what do you have in mind?"

Ivor shook his head. "It's one thing to hide werewolves in my house. It's quite another to change society so that werewolves won't need to be hidden. The only thing I really know about society is that it runs on money. The more of it you have, the more people you can influence. If I had a trillion Galleons, I might be able to buy out the Wizengamot and change the law by the power of corruption."

Remus knew when Ivor was joking, but he still had nothing to say.

"Seriously, Remus. Most people assume that what is legal is socially acceptable, and what is socially acceptable is morally right."

"Doesn't it ever happen in the other direction? What is right can change social attitudes, and what society demands, the law will feel obliged to provide."

"It certainly ought to happen in that direction, but it's much more difficult to drive. And it usually takes even more money to underwrite."

Since Ivor didn't have enough money to corrupt anyone, Remus had nothing to say to that either.

"Did Smethwyck give you any ideas?" Ivor asked. "He must have given some thought to how he plans to get himself out of Azkaban."

"Ariadne is reading some book that Smethwyck gave her," said Remus. "But it doesn't seem to have much to do with werewolves or with the law. Apparently Smethwyck hinted that it might hold the key to helping her friend Veleta."

Ivor commiserated for a while on the problem of idealistic people who celebrated the shattering of their own world by adopting yet another hopeless cause. He had the tact to exit his kitchen before the moon rose.

* * * * *

"Daddy! I'm want Daddy!"

Remus jolted awake. Afternoon sunshine was streaming into the Joneses' kitchen, and someone had Conjured a sleeping bag around him. He forced himself into a sitting position; his muscles were very stiff, probably because his human mind had continued to worry inside the wolf's body. Half a dozen other werewolves were still sleeping, but the rest, it appeared, were awake and active. No wonder Matthew was demanding that Remus should join them.

"Daddy can't keep on sleeping. I'm want him!"

It hurt to stand up, but after that Remus made his way to the door easily. Matthew was standing in the hall, arguing his case with Ariadne, who was sitting on the stairs to feed Elizabeth. Since she had no spare arms to restrain their son, Matthew was close to winning the argument.

"I'm going! I'm want Daddy!"

"Oh, you want to disturb the sleeping dogs, do you?" Remus lifted Matthew from behind and swung him up into the air. "Did you know that there are six people still quietly sleeping in the kitchen?"

"Daddy!"

"Yes, Daddy's woken up, but those other people need quiet."

"Ivor's gone to work," said Ariadne, "but Hestia's yet taking annual leave so she can help us tidy up. Dearest, you've had a difficult Transformation, have you not? What's worrying you?"

"I wasn't able to shut up the endless mental nagging that it wouldn't take much provocation for the Ministry to become very interested in us... that we've led all our friends into danger."

"And not only the Ministry," said Ariadne soberly. "I was talking to Tiwaz Longpelt over lunch, and he told me... something that we're all needing to know."

Remus couldn't remember much about Tiwaz, who had only been taking the Wolfsbane Potion since June. "Wasn't he a Sylvanian?"

"He was. And I've always felt that he was... completely sincere about wishing to leave the forest, but perhaps... not wise to his own best interests. Today I asked him about how he was settling back into urban life, and he told me he was biding with an uncle. It came out in the conversation that Tiwaz Longpelt is a cousin of Jason Borage."

Remus sat down on the floor. He held Matthew aloft, positioned like a flying bird, and said, "You're a phoenix. You're flying all the way up the chimney and over the tree-tops to Hogwarts. Ariadne, what are you saying about Tiwaz being Jason's cousin?"

"Tiwaz was quite open about it. Apparently Jason sought him out in the forest last May... the day after he began working for Healer Smethwyck. He told Tiwaz about the Wolfsbane Potion and urged him to leave the Sylvanians. Tiwaz was glad enough to go, but he tried to persuade a friend to leave with him. The other man wanted to bide in the forest and he threatened to report the defection to Fenrir Greyback. Tiwaz says he did not wait to hear the outcome of that discussion; he just ran. He reached his uncle's house safely but he's been living in terror that Greyback will come looking for him."

"Is there any evidence that Greyback has been trying to track down the defectors?"

"I'm thinking there is." Ariadne fastened her robe and began to burp Elizabeth. "I asked Tiwaz what Mr Greyback looks like and the description he gave... a large and gangling man, matted grey hair and moustache, broken nose, rasping voice... it exactly fitted the stranger who came to St Mungo's in July to ask for Wolfsbane Potion. That man had to be Fenrir Greyback."

"So we always suspected," said Remus. "Do you think, then, that Greyback didn't really want the Wolfsbane Potion at all? Could his real aim have been to find apostate Sylvanians and punish them?"

"He maybe hoped for both," said Ariadne. "Taking the potion would have made it easy for him to attack whomever he chose. Tiwaz says that Greyback has been suspecting for many months that somebody has been enticing his werewolves away from him, but it was difficult for those in the forest to learn exactly what was happening. Once a Sylvanian defects, he does not return to the forest or even leave an indication that he's yet living. Greyback had to wait for a werewolf to refuse the invitation to defect as Tiwaz's friend did before he could know that the challenge to his authority is a potion."

"Do you think Greyback is still hoping to obtain the potion?"

"Most probably. He did not work out where we are this month, but he will not give up the hunt easily." Her arms were involuntarily tightening around her baby. "I'm thinking it's inevitable that Mr Greyback will arrive on our doorstep one day."

Remus tried to put the pieces together. "You said weeks ago that there was an unsavoury coincidence in this. The month when Greyback asks for Wolfsbane Potion is the same month when a mistake is made and Lycaonia dies."

"It's seeming that Jason Borage is the link between the two events. He was not knowing enough about herbs to bring up the right ingredient for the potion, and he was not knowing enough about human nature to be wise in the way he invited his cousin to join us. And Tiwaz Longpelt is no wiser. Neither of them is intending to hurt anybody but they're not knowing... when to stop talking. Too much has perhaps been said already."

"Or listened to," said Remus. "It sounds as if both cousins are too trusting. An old packmate has only to say that he's left the Sylvanians and wants medication, and our friends will feel morally obliged to introduce him to you. Once a spy has learned about our operations, he can pass the whole story back to Greyback days before the full moon actually rises."

She nodded. "Hestia's understanding that, Remus. She was knowing most of the risks when she agreed to help us. The only mystery is whether it will be Fenrir Greyback or the Ministry of Magic that discovers our guilty secret first. But never mind. We've been safe for this month. By next month, our research will maybe have progressed."

He was glad she managed to be so serene about it. From now on, they would truly be surviving from month to month.

To Range these Fields

Chapter 6 of 21

A vital clue to the Macnairs' secrets leads to a clue about the secret of lycanthropy.

CHAPTER SIX

To Range these Fields

Thursday 4 Wednesday 10 October 1990

Old Basford, Nottingham; Diagon Alley, London.

I think too bold you are,

To range these fields so fair,

In danger everywhere,

Thou charming maiden.

English folk song: "Good Morning, Pretty Maid"

Rated PG-13 for references to the Dark Arts.

At first Ariadne made slow progress in reading the book from Hippocrates Smethwyck. She had good intentions; she dutifully opened it on the evening after her visit to Azkaban and she read a page every evening for the next week. But by the time she finished a page, her eyes were always glazing over. She had no expertise in genetics

and she did not understand how this fifty-year-old text was supposed to be relevant.

Reading time was precious. In addition to being the mother of two children, Ariadne still worked twenty hours a week at St Mungo's. One third of her free time was devoted to brewing an illegal potion, co-ordinating its secret distribution, and monitoring and hiding the movements of twenty-four werewolves. She wanted to invest her reading time in information that relieved the stresses that their situation laid on them.

However, after the October full moon had passed uneventfully, Ariadne had to accept that the situation was never going to be less stressful than it already was. All the werewolves had found ways to transport themselves to whichever location she nominated for distributing the Wolfsbane Potion in this case, her friend Richard's house in Reading. Richard may or may not have guessed that Remus was a werewolf, but he played along with the line that Remus "helped with distribution" and he made a point of never being in the kitchen for long enough to see exactly who was drinking the potion. Richard had married Ariadne's cousin Felicity, who had staunchly declared that she "was not frightened of werewolves by daylight." Felicity was very clearly ignorant of Remus's status in the werewolf community ("Would you like to come out to dinner with Richard and me at full moon so that we'll all be out of Ariadne's way?") but she accepted Remus's excuse that someone who wasn't watching over two dozen wolves needed to babysit. Richard kept Felicity out of the kitchen too.

When Remus and Ariadne returned to Nottingham, their neighbour Mrs Ponderator mentioned that a "shaggy" man who sounded suspiciously like Fenrir Greyback had been hanging around their house but that he had gone away when she had questioned him. It was bad if inevitable that Greyback had worked out where they lived, but if he had been in Nottingham, he obviously did not know that his prey had been in Reading.

The following Saturday afternoon, Ariadne reminded herself that she could not dishonour Healer Smethwyck's wishes by failing to read his book. Remus was marking a pile of grammar drills, and both children were asleep at the same time. Ariadne had nothing to do but drink a cup of wit-sharpener and settle herself on the sofa with *It's in Your Blood* open at the first page.

You are controlled by your blood.

Your genes are in every cell of your blood. They are in all your other cells too, but don't worry about those. Whatever is true of your blood will be true about the rest of you. When you know what's in your blood, you know exactly what is controlling you.

These genes determine your height and colouring, the degree of your intelligence and magical power, and what illnesses you will suffer. When we say a person has "bad blood", we mean he has bad genes in his blood (and in all his other cells too).

You inherit half your blood from your father and half from your mother. This is a very important fact. It means the same blood is running through each family member. When we say, "The Squizchortles are all very stupid that family has bad blood," we are telling the literal truth. It is indeed the badness in their shared blood that makes the Squizchortles stupid.

This much seemed hardly worth stating. But just when Ariadne wondered why she was bothering with it, the text jumped to complicated new ideas. Suddenly it was all about chromosome codes and dominant alleles, and Ariadne wondered if she understood it at all. She was distracted by full-colour illustrations of children with dark hair and fair, enticingly captioned, "The secret to the colour of their hair lies in their blood." It was a very deep secret, for it was followed by the question: "If Gaius marries Sylvia, can you calculate how many of their children will have red hair?" The only answer that Ariadne could give to this question was, "I cannot."

Ariadne had to re-read the second and third chapters and pause to memorise the new vocabulary, but she found that she did understand Phoebe Constellis's explanations. The fourth chapter was called "Inheriting Magic".

Magical talent is coded on the seventh chromosome. That means your magical powers are in your blood. If you lost all your blood, you would lose all your magic.

There was a great deal about recessive genes and magical enzymes. The fifth chapter was called "Bad Blood".

Some people have bad blood. This is because their genes have been damaged.

Since the power of good is stronger than the power of evil, good blood is stronger than bad blood. So you will not suffer any handicap if you have inherited bad blood from only one parent. In other words, a healthy person can have bad blood without knowing about it.

However, if both parents gave you bad blood, you have problems. Your exact problem depends on which gene was damaged. If both parents gave you a damaged Magical gene, you are a Squib.

If you are a Squib (or suffer from any other form of bad blood), you will pass on the bad blood to your children. But if only half of your blood is bad, you will pass on the badness to only half of your children.

If you and your spouse both have hidden bad blood, you will each pass on bad blood to half your children. A quarter of your children will inherit only bad blood and hence they will be Squibs (or other problem). If you are both Squibs, neither of you has any good blood, so all your children will be Squibs too. You need not worry about this problem if you have no children.

On the other hand, Muggle-born wizards always have good blood. This is because their magical powers come from the blood of both parents; if they had inherited any bad blood from either parent, they could not be magical at all. So Muggle-born wizards pass on good blood to all their children. It is impossible for a Muggle-born witch or wizard to have Squib children.

Once Ariadne had disentangled this idea, she found herself hoping that Madam Constellis was right. People like her Malfoy cousins might be kinder to Muggle-borns if they knew about it.

She was becoming interested after all; perhaps she would owl Clarissa Smethwyck and ask how exactly this information was supposed to help the incarcerated Healer.

The tenth chapter was called "Recessive Talents".

Some magical abilities cannot be learned. No teacher can instruct even the most powerful wizard on how to become a Prophet, a Metamorphmagus or a Parselmouth. These abilities are carried only in the blood.

These abilities are separate from magical power. They are latent in the blood of many Muggles. However, no Muggle has ever practised Prophecy, Metamorphmagic or Parseltongue, for these gifts only become active in the presence of magical power. This means that the magical power in the blood ignites certain other abilities and makes active what would otherwise be latent. Don't worry if you don't understand this part. It just means that Muggles can't do magic.

These abilities are all recessive (see chapter three). You can only be a Prophet if you inherited prophetic blood from both your father and your mother, as well as magical power from at least one of them (see chapter four). If only half your blood is prophetic, that will not be enough to make a Prophet of you.

This is why Prophets, Metamorphmagi, Parselmouths, etc. are very rare. People with prophetic blood are quite rare. The chance that they would marry another of those rare people with prophetic blood is slim. And even when this does happen, only one quarter of their children will actually be Prophets.

It is hardly surprising that, according to the best estimates of our experts, there are only two Prophets alive in the British Isles today. Both Cassandra Vablatsky and Sybill Trelawney carry the prophetic blood of their great-great-grandmother, the famous Cassandra Trelawney.

The genealogy overleaf shows how Cassandra Trelawney transmitted her prophetic blood to her descendants. Notice that Cassandra Vablatsky and Sybill Trelawney are cousins twice over: all four of their parents were great-grandchildren of Cassandra Trelawney.

When cousins marry, they increase the chances of passing on both blood-talents and bad blood. If you are contemplating marriage with a cousin, be sure to know exactly what kind of blood is flowing through your family.

Something shimmered, but it was only clarified in the following chapter.

Sometimes your blood can mutate. That means a talent changes its form: what was round becomes square, or what was triangular becomes a star. The talent does not disappear (as it would if the blood were damaged) but it looks different.

For example, there is a mutation of Prophecy called Locospection. Locospectors are only found in families where there has first been Prophecy. As Prophets can see across time, so Locospectors can see across space...

Ariadne closed the book and rested it on a cushion.

"Learning something?" asked Remus, who had just marked the final drill.

"Perhaps. I'm just not seeing how all this fits together."

Remus put the kettle on. Ariadne went upstairs, but the bairns were still sleeping, so she returned to the sofa and re-opened the book. She had not marked her page, so she had to leaf through several chapters... and suddenly a heading leapt out to greet her.

Chapter Nineteen: Blood Magic.

Blood magic?

She had wasted the whole afternoon... the whole of the last several weeks.

Healer Smethwyck had not been trying to teach her the laws of heredity at all; it was simply that his wife's profession as a Genetiwitch had brought the book into their possession. He had passed it on to her because it covered all aspects of blood, including blood magic. And here were magical concepts that had never entered the Hogwarts curriculum or had even begun to cross her mind.

Do not allow Dark Wizards to obtain a sample of your blood. They can use it to hurt your whole family.

Because families share the same blood, certain spells cast over a sample of blood can bind every member of the family, not just the person from whom the blood was originally taken. This principle is similar to that of the Protean Charm, with the blood being the object to be modified. Blood is so powerful a magical agent that these spells can even bind people who have not yet been born.

These Blood Spells were introduced to Britain by Viking wizards in the ninth century. That is why they are usually in Elder Futhark. You cannot cast most of them unless you know your Ancient Runes.

In the Middle Ages this kind of Blood Spell was very popular among Dark wizards. It gave them power over weaker people, which all Dark wizards enjoy. Some of them also enjoyed the violent process of casting these spells.

There were four or five examples of famous mediaeval wizards who had cast Blood Spells, usually to kill their enemies or keep control of their subordinates. What Phoebe Constellis did not provide was details of how these spells were cast. Ariadne understood why she would not advertise the evil incantations, but there was no clue about the rituals or even of in what manner blood was involved.

I cannot write an example here. It's all far too nasty for a respectable book like this one.

The Wizengamot bitterly opposed all Protean-type Blood spells. In 1490 it commissioned Felix Summerbee to research everything that was known about them. His investigations were very successful; the counter-spells were widely published and they were taught at Hogwarts throughout the sixteenth century. The Blood Spells became useless once every qualified wizard knew how to counteract them and so they fell from favour.

Blood Magic requires expertise in Charms, Potions and Ancient Runes. That is another reason why not much of it happens any more. Most people are too stupid to be good at all these things at once. Only a few specialist researchers (and perhaps a few criminals) still know these spells. So watch out for the criminals because they won't be telling you the counter-spells in a hurry.

The specialists won't be telling you either the spells or the counter-spells because people like Grindelwald might abuse the information. Felix Summerbee's research is no longer in print and it never was written in English anyway.

This abrupt conclusion ended the chapter. The next ten chapters were all about vampires, and then came sections on "Medical Applications" and the merits of various types of blood-replenishing potions. It all might come in useful one day, but there was nothing that seemed immediately helpful to Healer Smethwyck's predicament and nothing else that seemed pertinent to Veleta.

"... Have you found something?" Remus had brought both children downstairs.

"I did," she said. "Here, read this..."

"Read to me!" said Matthew. "Read *Nigel the Knight Bus*!"

Ariadne fetched Matthew's book while Remus read the chapter on Blood Magic. It usually took a long time to read *Nigel the Knight Bus* because Matthew liked to read each volume three times over and there were four episodes to a volume. By the time Ariadne had completed three readings (twelve stories) of *Nigel's Night Out*, Remus had digested more about Blood Magic than she had.

"There's something I'm not understanding," she said. "Did the Macnairs cast some kind of Blood Spell to make their castle invisible?"

"You can't make a castle out of blood," said Matthew. "Blood is wet like water. You have to use bricks or stones to make a castle."

"You see, Matthew understands it," said Remus. "I doubt that the castle's peculiar visibility habits have anything to do with Blood Magic. That's likely to be a completely separate spell and a relatively simple one too. I could certainly make this house invisible and I could probably set a boundary to limit the extent of the invisibility."

"Will you, Daddy? Are you going to make our house invisible?"

"Not today, son. It might upset the Muggle neighbours if our house suddenly vanished. They might think we'd all been stolen, and Mrs Ponderator might even report us to the police. Ariadne, do you think Smethwyck was really suggesting that we try to annul a powerful and complex Blood Spell that has been in force for over five hundred years?"

"The suggestion maybe took his mind off his own problems," said Ariadne. "But where would we find the Counter-Spell? Summerbee's book is out of print, and information of that kind even if it were in a language we understood would not be lent over the counter in Cato's Reading Room."

"It sounds more like a Knockturn Alley product," Remus agreed. Suspicion suddenly crossed his face. "Ariadne, *I didn't mean it* You didn't hear what I just said. Don't start thinking... "

But Ariadne had already thought. The idea was lodged very solidly in the centre of her mind.

* * * * *

She paid Madam Alma for an hour of childcare at the Sunny House, then turned the corner into Liber Alley, where the white pillars of Cato's Reading Room stood between Hedon's Gymnasium and the Plum Tree restaurant. Sittybus Cato was used to seeing her among his stacks and he must have noticed, over the last three years, that she was endlessly borrowing works on blood or Ancient Runes. Today he told her that Felix Summerbee's work on Cheering Charms was available in the fifth aisle but that anything else Master Summerbee might have written would be in the locked stacks, and he could Summon it for her if she knew the title.

"I've no idea of titles. Can we not look up Summerbee in the catalogue?"

Mr Cato Summoned the S catalogue and very quickly ascertained that the only other works of Summerbee to be archived in this library were two more codices on Cheering Charms, both in Latin.

"Then could you perhaps Summon the theme catalogue and look up 'Blood Magic'?"

"That would fall under Medical Applications of Potions unless you mean something along the Genetics line. But... it doesn't sound much like Summerbee."

"I'm not thinking of that, Mr Cato." Ariadne tried to think of Veleta instead of her parents. "I'm knowing now what kind of Blood Magic I'm seeking. I'm wishing to research Blood Charms of the Protean type. Probably in Elder Futhark or perhaps in Latin."

Sittybus Cato nearly exploded. "Madam, I can assure you, I do not run *that* kind of a library! You won't find anything remotely of that genre within these walls. The door is that way and don't come back!"

Ariadne fled down Liber Alley, past Lothar Hildebrand's Toys for Boys, past Madam Primpernelle's erotically-charged salon on the corner (it was not as if Liber Alley was the bastion of wizarding conservatism), back into Diagon Alley proper, past Gringotts, and across the cobbled street to the gaping entrance of Knockturn Alley.

The light really was poorer in Knockturn Alley because the shops had been built too high and deep for the width of the lane, and the magical vibrations *felt* malicious. Ariadne reminded herself that there is a first time for every necessary task and stepped into the forbidden street.

Had she thought daft Madam Primpernelle's shop "erotic"? The first establishment to her right was decorated with a full-length poster of Aphrodite sporting a salacious grin and a few strips of seaweed for clothing; to judge from the libation that she was pouring over the sea-shells, she was selling love-potions without any pretence at subtlety. The second displayed an eclectic selection of foul-smelling candles, hideous face masks and mobiles of dead Doxies, apparently all promising minor hexes. The next shop was some kind of menagerie with glass tanks of giant spiders, vipers and billywigs and cramped cages of miserable (and unidentifiable) furry creatures. The fourth seemed to specialise entirely in fungi. Jammed between Toxica Veneficus's Apothecary (it looked so ordinary, but Ariadne paused to wonder what was really inside the Erlenmeyer flasks in the grubby bay window) and the brash gilt signage of Borgin and Burke's was a tiny bookshop. The lighting was dim, but she could see through the single window that a shopkeeper was sitting at the cash desk reading a dog-eared paperback, so she pushed open the front door.

The shopkeeper dropped his book at the jangling of the bell and asked, "What would Madam like today?"

Ariadne was chilled by his over-eager smile and by the way his eyes bored into her, but she made herself say, "I'm looking for the works of Felix Summerbee."

"I haven't heard of him, Madam, but perhaps you'd care to elaborate?"

"He was a Charms expert in the fifteenth century, and most of his work would be out of print. But I'm wondering if you have... anything... by Renaissance Spellcrafters."

His eyes lit up. "We do have a Mediaeval section with rare manuscripts; you can always buy here what's unobtainable elsewhere." He led her down to the back of the shop. "Potions here, Curses there, biographies over that way."

He seemed surprised when she stopped at the Curses section, but he certainly had no intention of leaving her to browse alone. She scanned the authors: there was no Summerbee, and most of the volumes were indeed in Latin. She should have brought Remus; his Latin was better than hers. But if Remus knew she were here at all That thought was cut off unfinished by a title at the end of the fifth shelf, Runic characters spelling:

BLODHRIKI

She Summoned the book, too excited to remember that her Charm-work was clumsy, and opened it to the Contents page. The chapters were arranged according to spell-type, and there were spells for protection, destruction, attraction, revenge, invisibility, transportation, obedience, healing, fertility and even control of the fish in one's neighbour's pond. She held her breath at the promise of "location-binding" spells did that include counter-spells? She flipped through and saw that the incantations were actually written out. Before she had time to check that the spell she required was detailed, the shopkeeper was speaking.

"Does Madam wish to buy that codex?"

Her hour was running out, so she would have to acquiesce to his lust for a quick sale. Twenty-five Galleons! That would be difficult to explain to Remus unless the book proved to be very helpful.

"I will wrap the book, since my patrons rarely wish to admit to having visited me."

She thanked the bookseller despite a strong feeling that he had cheated her over the price and stepped out of his shop with the brown paper parcel under her arm. The door had hardly closed behind her before an indignant voice exclaimed:

"Ariadne! What are *you* doing here?"

"Buying a book," she said, more calmly than she felt, for she understood exactly how her presence here *must* bok. "Why are *you* here, Dreadnought?"

Ariadne's cousin Dreadnought Macmillan was now nineteen years old. In the three months since he had left Hogwarts he had styled his shocking red hair in a spiked Mohawk and had pierced an amber stud through his nostril (Ariadne dreaded to think what Aunt Macmillan had said about that!). Today he had three cameras slung across denim robes that were almost Muggle in cut.

"I'm at work," said Dreadnought, "but what's your excuse? You're wanting to be careful, or you'll have the whole family talking about you."

Ariadne wondered how they would know if Dreadnought did not tell them, but she began to thread her way through the street-hawkers of Knockturn Alley, leaving him free to follow or not.

"I work for the *Daily Prophet* now," said Dreadnought. "If you're really wanting to know, they commissioned me to take pictures of that pawnshop they say it's time for an exposé. I can't wait to see what Madam Skeeter writes about all the stuff I've captured. But on to the next job. I also have to cover the book-launch over at Flourish and Blott's."

"Oh, what's the book?"

"Gilderoy Lockhart's latest you know, the adventurer who travels the world to battle Dark creatures. He'll start signing in ten minutes. I'm not wanting to be late because he's very photogenic, and I can take some great mug-shots."

Ariadne had time to collect the children from Madam Alma's before accompanying Dreadnought to Diagon Alley's largest and most respectable bookshop. Behind a wide mahogany desk in the centre of the foyer sat a grinning blond wizard holding a huge peacock quill. Mr Blott was stacking a pile of hardbacks on the front of the desk, and

Gilderoy Lockhart was saying, "Just a little more to the right... forward... no, back a little... perhaps make the stack a little higher? We don't want to look as if we don't believe we can sell them, do we? No, just two volumes; that third is hiding my face, and of course the readers want to see the author clearly."

Dreadnought shouldered his way inside. "I'm the press can you let me in?"

"Welcome, welcome, you're just in time for a preliminary portrait," said the writer. "I expect you'd like to shoot it off now before the crowds thicken." He lifted his chin and smiled rakishly. Dreadnought's camera flashed.

"Did that man write *Nigel the Knight Bus*?" asked Matthew.

"Oh, the little man has his priorities right," said Mr Lockhart. "He likes to meet famous people and especially famous writers. I didn't write *Nigel*, little boy, but I did write this fine thick book. It's a very exciting read. Perhaps a little scary for someone of your age? But you'll grow into it. Tell your mother to invest in a copy now."

"It's not Nigel," said Matthew dispassionately, "or anyfink with wheels."

Mr Lockhart did not hear this, for he was already signing a fly-leaf and instructing Dreadnought to keep photographing while he did it. "Here, Mr Camera-man why don't I give the very first copy to you? Hot off the press, and a ten percent discount too."

Of course, Dreadnought was too busy to lug a heavy book around the shop, so as soon as Mr Lockhart looked away (distracted by the glint of his own reflection in the shop window), he shoved the volume into Ariadne's arm.

"Here, take this. It's not the kind of thing I read anyway but Mercy and Felicity are both daft about him, so it'll maybe amuse you."

Ariadne staggered for a moment, swayed by the weight of Elizabeth on her right arm and now two heavy books on her left. Then she noticed the title that declared the nature of the famous writer's adventures, and suddenly her heart leapt to a gallop.

Wanderings with Werewolves.

Blood in the Hall

Chapter 7 of 21

Ariadne discovers the evil deeds of her Macnair kin, which are the reason for this story's R rating. PLEASE DO NOT READ THIS CHAPTER IF THIS KIND OF THING OFFENDS YOU.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Blood in the Hall

Wednesday 10 October Tuesday 18 December 1990

Old Basford, Nottingham; Diagon Alley, London.

Here's blood in the kitchen,

Here's blood in the hall,

Here's blood in the parlour,

Where the Lady did fall.

English folk song: "False Lamkin"

Rated R for describing the Dark Arts.

Remus did not say a word of reproach, but he would not let Ariadne touch *Blodhriki* until he had checked it for hexes. After he had found an Echolalia Jinx and a Blood-Curdler, she agreed that he had a point.

"Didn't it occur to you that, written content aside, the book itself could hurt you?"

"Of course it did. But we were already knowing that breaking a centuries-old curse would involve danger."

"Well, just read your other book until I've finished stripping this one down."

Lockhart's account of his adventures with werewolves was a very easy and thrilling read. His writing style was vivid and fast-paced, and Ariadne was fascinated by the colourful pen-portraits of the scores of interesting people who had met Lockhart on his travels. The first section, *Whistling for Wolves*, gave a series of short episodes in which Lockhart had Stunned or imprisoned or outwitted some werewolf and held the danger at bay until moonset. In the morning the werewolf was always tearful and penitent, and the family or friends were tearful and grateful.

The only character who did not engage her sympathy was Gilderoy Lockhart himself.

This came as something of a surprise because she knew that Lockhart was the favourite writer of several of her friends: Hestia Jones, Mercy Wiggleswade, Felicity Campion even Aunt Macmillan herself. Sarah Webster did not read, but she swooned over Lockhart's good looks and style ("He just *drips* pheromones! And the tailored fit of his taffeta dress-robess!"). Yet Ariadne found herself wondering how they had managed to ignore such passages as:

I wanted no payment for completing this dangerous deed.

"Remember only," I told the village chief, "that Gilderoy Lockhart has enabled your children to sleep soundly every night without fearing the full moon."

His eyes filled with tears as he begged me in his broken English to remain as a permanent guest in his house. "We hef nevair had friend lak you," he said. "Is hard to mak friend, den lose him again so soon."

"But other places also suffer from wild beasts and demons," I reminded him. "It isn't fair that you should enjoy my company safely while they face the horrors alone. It is my duty and destiny to share my talents with the whole world equally."

At this logic, he let me go. So another village will remember me forever as the hero who delivered them from the monthly terror of werewolf attacks.

Could other readers not see that the man was frankly conceited? If his perception of himself was so distorted, Ariadne had to ask herself how much of the rest was equally exaggerated. She turned to the copyright page, half expecting to find a disclaimer that the work was really only fiction and that the "Gilderoy Lockhart" on the page was an imaginary character not intended to resemble the real-life author. But what the disclaimer actually stated was:

The names of a few characters and places have been changed to protect their privacy. In all other particulars, this work is absolutely true. No character is imaginary and no event has been exaggerated.

So Mr Lockhart intended his readers to believe his stories. Ariadne hoped he would become more convincing in the second section, which was all about the Wagga Wagga werewolf. This incident happened several years later, after Mr Lockhart had studied under several learned Charm Masters (though it was interesting that he specified no names) and had discovered a more efficient approach to werewolves. One chapter was devoted to the perils and paperwork of travelling to and through Australia, and a couple more to the heart-rending distress of the inhabitants of Wagga Wagga as some unidentified werewolf rampaged through the town and attacked their cattle.

"Show a little compassion," I urged. "Of course the werewolf won't declare his identity as long as he fears your severity."

The aldermen blinked, as if the strategy of showing kindness had never occurred to them.

"But never fear," I continued. "Now that I am here, you will have no need to punish your werewolf, for I shall cure him for once and for all."

For once and for all?

She suppressed a surge of hope. His claim might be false. After all, if an Englishman could "cure" a werewolf in Australia, why were there still sixty-nine werewolves in the British Isles? Now Ariadne came to think of it, every one of Lockhart's werewolf encounters so far had been outside of Britain. And he had not even attributed a name to the Mayor of Wagga Wagga, a simple fact that any determined person could verify.

But half an hour later, she was picking up her skirts and fairly racing up the stairs to Remus's study. He was Transfiguring his Egyptian pots into models of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. He held out one arm to her and asked, "Did you read something interesting?"

She leaned against him and nuzzled her cheek against the top of his head while she re-opened the book. "It's here... Remus, what is the Homorphus Charm?"

"I've never heard of it. Does it... er... make a man change shape?"

"According to Mr Lockhart, it cures lycanthropy." She pointed to the chapter. "He's claiming that he cast it on the Wagga Wagga werewolf... But I'm not sure that I'm believing..."

Remus ran his eye down the next three pages silently. Lockhart had been wordy in his account of the physical battle against the wolf but surprisingly vague about the actual process of casting the spell.

"It does seem odd," he finally offered, "that none of the lycanthropy experts whom my parents consulted ever suggested any such thing. If some kind of cure has been discovered since, why wasn't it front-page headlines in the *Daily Prophet*?"

Her heart missed a beat, even though she had been thinking the same thing. "So you're thinking that the story is maybe a fantasy?"

"I think I'd like to ask Gilderoy Lockhart a few questions." He ran his hand down her cheek and kissed her. "Don't look so sad; if the Charm turns out to be a fraud, we're no worse off than before."

"But what if lycanthropy *can* be cured with a charm? That would mean that we're wasting our time on the Wolfsbane Potion... that Healer Smethwyck should have known about the Homorphus Charm and has no excuses before the law... that he has no hope of mercy." She swallowed. "I'm supposing... that we're not helping Healer Smethwyck *or* the werewolves if we ignore the facts. Either way, we're needing to know the truth."

* * * * *

Letitia Greengrass's platinum head appeared in their fireplace at Hallowe'en.

"Thank Merlin I've finally caught you at home, Ariadne! Let me in, my dear; this fireplace is too draughty."

Ariadne spoke the charm, and Letitia stepped out onto their hearth, complaining, "I've tried five times to catch you. Where do you spend your time?"

"How annoying for you," conceded Ariadne. Obviously she could not tell Letitia that it was brewing week and she had been spending most of it at Sarah Webster's flat.

Letitia picked critically at the fraying cloth of their sofa. "Your husband isn't exactly keeping you in style, is he? Why do you stay married to him?"

"Is Claud misbehaving again?"

"To put it mildly!" Letitia accepted a mug of tea with a frown. "My dear, let me un-chip this cup for you *Reparo!* Yes, Claud... His current mistress is a Muggle hairdresser... someone he can throw back into the gutter on a Memory Charm as soon as he becomes bored with her. I half-believe that if I sent my divorce lawyer in first, she'd give me all the evidence I needed of her own free will."

Letitia did not sound quite confident, so Ariadne prompted, "Are you wanting a divorce?"

She hesitated, pretending to sip at the tea; but Ariadne did not keep Earl Grey in her larder, and Letitia's distaste showed. "Claud might be a social parasite, but I'm a Malfoy, and we stand for traditional wizarding values. Ariadne, you know what the tabloid press is like; it doesn't allow a Malfoy to do anything in private. If I initiated a divorce, I'd have my good name plastered all over the front page of the *Quibbler*, and being innocent wouldn't save me from being tarred with the scandal. I'm sure you know why I couldn't do that to Lucius."

Recognising the element of real distress underlying all the fables, Ariadne made a sympathetic noise.

"Claud doesn't deserve to be married to a Malfoy. I'm the one who brought the money into this marriage, but he's never shown a shred of gratitude. I'm just virtuous, I suppose. Can you tell me one other reason why I would stay with him?"

The reasons were obvious to Ariadne. Claud made a very presentable escort to bring into high society. Claud, as Sarah would say, "dripped pheromones". And Claud would provide a respectable front should Letitia ever choose to have an affair of her own. However, it seemed unwise to spell this out to Letitia's face, so Ariadne allowed her cousin to continue emoting for the next hour about the traumas of living with an unfaithful husband.

After Letitia had talked out, she said, "By the way, Ariadne, a most *peculiar* character has knocked on my door to enquire after you. She was dressed in positive *rags*, hair all tangled, and she was covered in twigs and leaves as if she'd been sleeping with Bowtruckles. The old woman claimed to be a friend of yours, but she wouldn't give her name; she said she knew that I was a friend too, and expected me on the strength of that to tell her where you were this week. She wanted to know all about your other friends too, names and all. Have you any idea who this might have been?"

She sounded all too much like a Sylvanian spy, so Ariadne could truthfully say, "I've no friends of that kind. I'd... I'd not be wishing such a person to know my whereabouts."

"So I imagined," sniffed Letitia. "Don't worry, I didn't give the Truckle-woman your address, and it seems you haven't been home anyway. If she comes again, I'll call the Aurors. You bring it on yourself, you know; it's the company you keep. First you married that half-blood, then you went to work for that werewolf-doctor. But I did think you ought to know that disreputable types have been looking for you."

* * * * *

Sarah always looked dazzling. Tonight, with her golden hair elaborately draped over her ears and her designer robes elaborately draped over her figure, she looked ready to attend a reception as guest of honour rather than to remain at home all evening with a pack of werewolves. But nothing would have drawn Sarah out of her home on the night of the full moon. She was fascinated by the ordinary-looking people who lived with such dark secrets flooding into her living room. She had learned most of their names over the past week and she had flirted outrageously with Tiwaz Longpelt.

Fortunately she accepted Ariadne's word that everybody had now been medicated, so it was time to withdraw from the living room. Matthew and Elizabeth were already asleep in a Conjured cot in Sarah's room, so Sarah took Ariadne and Joe to sit in her office. This was the room that had once been Ariadne's and had later been Richard's. After Richard had left to marry Felicity, Sarah declared that it was too much trouble to find decent tenants, so she had turned the vacated room into her office. Joe still lived in the third bedroom, and any boyfriend of Sarah's who could not understand that situation did not last long as a boyfriend.

"So tell me about Gilderoy Lockhart," said Sarah.

"He did not really reply to my letter," said Ariadne. "He just sent me this."

Sarah held the winking, waving photograph of Lockhart almost reverently. "Stunning! If you don't want it, may I keep it?" She took far less interest in the letter, which didn't matter, because all it said was:

Dear Ariadne,

I'm so glad that you enjoyed Wanderings with Werewolves. *I think it showed my skills to great advantage, don't you?*

I have enclosed a signed photograph of myself in the hopes of making your heart beat a little faster when you glance at your mantelpiece.

Very warm wishes from your friend,

Gilderoy Lockhart.

"But, really, if you want to meet the man, Ariadne, you're going about it the wrong way. He probably has a secretary who answers his fan-mail in bulk. Why should he take any notice of one more adoring sycophant? No, if you want to meet him, you have to give *him* the desire to meet *you*."

That was easy for Sarah to say; men were always wanting to meet her. "What are you advising?"

"I'd exploit something that I knew interested him and use it to lure him out to some place where I'd be. Then I'd make sure he wanted to meet me again... Listen, don't bother. *I'll see to it. Accio!*"

A pamphlet sailed out of one of Sarah's drawers, apparently an invitation to some Muggle fashion show. Sarah slid it into an envelope, addressed it to Gilderoy Lockhart and tied it to Thangalaathil's claw. "There, take it to Mr Lockhart, but don't wait around for a reply." She turned back to her friend. "Those Muggle evening gowns aren't so different from wizards' robes, Ariadne, and the tailors are used to... well... men with *unusual* tastes in clothes. You don't want to know. Suffice that, if Lockhart should decide to order from one of them a dress that I've modelled, they won't bat an eyelid. Don't worry about it I'll make sure you meet the great man."

For the merest fraction of a second, Ariadne caught Joe's eye. He almost looked as if he too would like to spend an evening with Gilderoy Lockhart. She could not imagine why.

* * * * *

"Veleta, we've discovered something very interesting." Ariadne did not know whether Veleta still Watched her in the evenings. Veleta had contacted her only twice in the last three years, and the most recent time had been eighteen months ago. If Ariadne had important news, she usually delivered it every evening for a month and just hoped that Veleta found out eventually. Indeed, she hoped that Veleta was still alive.

"We've been reading a book on Blood Magic. It's taking us some time because our Runes are a little rusty and we have to keep referring to the dictionary. By the way, the reason you know the Futhark alphabet is that you once studied two terms of Ancient Runes yourself. Anyway, this book is in Elder Futhark and it's all about Blood Magic, which is apparently a very Dark Art. Once I knew I was looking for something from the Renaissance that would only be sold in Knockturn Alley, I found it easily enough. I'm not yet convinced we have a perfect translation, but I was thinking I'd read this part out loud to you. It explains a great deal."

She lifted up the book so that Veleta, if she were listening, could see the cover, then began to read in English from the parchment that she had inserted next to the Elder Futhark chapter on "Famous Examples from the Fifteenth Century".

Our hero Donald Macnair cast a spectacular Blood Spell in 1430. He despised his daughter Rinalda for being a Squib and was overcome with rage when she abandoned her father's roof to marry a local Muggle laird named William Cardney. This then incited the furious father to cast three Blood Spells that would prevent any similar disgrace befalling the Macnair family in future. These are the conditions to which the Macnair blood magically binds its carriers.

1. They are invisible to every non-Macnair who stands outside the boundary of Macnair Castle.
2. They cannot leave the boundaries of Macnair Castle without a Releasing Charm from the Spellmaster (a power that is inherited by each of Donald Macnair's heirs). Permanent Releasing Charms were generally granted to Macnair daughters at the time of their (condoned) marriage or to younger sons who (with their father's permission) sought their fortunes elsewhere so that they and their descendants were not confined to the Castle walls. Temporary Releases might be granted under other circumstances, for example, to attend Hogwarts or to fight in a war.
3. They cannot die by means of any spell or artefact originating inside Macnair Castle.

This spell was binding on every individual who would ever be born in Macnair Castle bearing the Macnair name, and on all their descendants born outside the castle for three generations.

There was only one flaw in Donald Macnair's incantation, which we highlight as a warning. His spells failed to bind Rinalda Cardney because she was no longer named Macnair at the time they were cast. However, the Blood Spell bound all her siblings and it has continued to bind future Macnair daughters even after they were married, up to this very day.

"'Up to this day' means 1506," Ariadne explained. "This book is anonymous, but it's seeming it was written in reaction to the Wizengamot inquiries of the 1490s. Whoever commissioned this book was wanting a record of the secrets of Blood Magic in case they would ever again become useful in the future. Anyway, we've no reason to believe that Donald Macnair's Blood Spell was ever revoked. Aunt Keindrech told me how Macnairs cannot be harmed by any object in the castle; you've mentioned the invisibility yourself; and it's certainly true that I could see your children from across the boundary when Remus and Kingsley could not. It's reasonable to assume that the whole spell is yet in force. I have to say, I have not found anything in the book about the Banning of Macnair enemies; that's maybe a separate spell. Remus..." She hoped Veleta would not think her rude to address Remus but, however vividly she managed to picture her friend, in the end, she always became aware that she was speaking to empty space. "If I'm subject to the Blood Curse, should I not be invisible once I cross the Macnair boundary?"

"To non-Macnairs outside the boundary, yes, you should."

"Then why was I not invisible, that summer we first saw the castle, when I crossed the boundary ahead of you?"

"I think you were," said Remus. "It's hard to tell, because I was only one second behind you and once I'd crossed the boundary too, you'd have become visible again. But I do remember not being able to see you for a moment."

"You did not mention it."

"We had quite a number of other things on our minds and it was only for a moment. I didn't think anything of it because it was such a bright day that I assumed it was just a trick of the light." He took the heavy book from her, and she remembered that Veleta might still be watching them.

"Veleta, if this is right, it explains why your bairns are bound to Macnair territory. They carry the Macnair blood and they cannot leave the boundary without Walden Macnair's permission. Anyway, we've been reading how the spell was cast. The details are... not pleasant... but this is the basic idea."

Ariadne felt slightly nauseated, and not only because she was pregnant again. Even though she could tell Veleta a sanitised version of the spell, she could not completely forget the details she had read in *Blodhriki*.

"First you carve your incantation into a yew rod. All the incantations in this book are in Elder Futhark, but it's probably not mattering which language you use. Place your rod in a cauldron. Then you take a knife of solid silver and... release the blood. You have to be positioned so the blood will drip into the cauldron and soak into the carving. Once the rod is covered, lift it out with silver tongs and burn it with purpurata fire. The blood remaining in the cauldron is poured into a crystal phial and sealed with an Unbreakable Charm. The spell takes effect as soon as the yew is completely burned, and it will remain in force as long as the blood exists."

She handed the book to Remus.

"That's maybe enough for now. Because this book used Donald Macnair as an example, we're close to certain that that's what he did. He soaked a carved stick in blood, burned it in purpurata fire, and then stored the blood in a crystal phial. Since the spell is still active, the crystal phial has to exist yet. We have not yet finished reading about the Counter-Spells, but what makes sense to us is that we'd have to destroy the blood in the phial. So first we'd have to look for the phial, but we're not knowing how much more we'd have to do after we'd found it or how dangerous it would be to know about it. I've no idea where to start looking... But you're a Locospector, so can you find it?"

That was enough information for anybody to digest, so Ariadne moved into the kitchen and began to boil up an infusion of yamwurzel and spearmint. There had been no need to tell Veleta that the amount of blood required was in proportion to the strength of the spell. The blood of a rabbit or squirrel would do for a simple spell, such as finding a lost handkerchief or keeping fish fresh. If the spell-caster wished to remain in control of the results, however if the lost handkerchief or the decaying fish was required as his own exclusive possession then he needed to add some of his own blood. The translation that she had made for Veleta had omitted this sentence:

To cast these spells, Donald Macnair slashed his breast with a silver dirk, and bled a pint of his own blood into his cauldron.

Most certainly, there had been no need to dwell on the fact that a spell powerful enough to bind the entire Macnair family for all time required three gallons of human blood, all of it from members of the Macnair family. Because one of the three spells had power over life and death, it necessarily required that somebody should die. There was a whole paragraph that Ariadne had no interest in showing to Veleta; she only hoped that no similar activity would be required in order to break the spell.

He had a young nephew and an old aunt who were both Squibs. Using his authority as the family Spellmaster, he now required the old lady to remove all her clothes and stand in the cauldron while the boy stood watching. Donald Macnair took the silver dirk and slashed the old lady's skin into ribbons. Since the blood gathers strength if it is acquired with pain, he kept slashing at her until she had no skin left and she collapsed into the cauldron with all her blood spent. He then threw out her corpse and did the same thing to the boy.

In case she was in any doubt about the accuracy of this account, the chronicler continued:

After hiding the crystal phial securely, Donald Macnair boasted in detail to his steward of what he had done and dared the man to report his crime to the Wizengamot. But the steward was terrified and did not breathe a word to anybody for more than sixty years, after which he confided the whole to me.

The author apparently specialised in extracting such confidences from proud practitioners and terrified lackeys he was probably a Truth Potion expert. The stories seemed to agree with the few surviving accounts in fourteenth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts, so Ariadne could only assume they were correct.

* * * * *

Ariadne managed to recite the sanitised account of Donald Macnair's Blood Spell dispassionately for every night of the month. Matthew learned to tie his shoelaces, and Elizabeth learned to walk. In December the werewolves camped at Sturgis Podmore's house. Mrs Ponderator reported two "burglars" loitering outside the Lupins', but it seemed that the Wolfsbane clients were, for now, yet a step ahead of the Sylvanians.

A week before Christmas, Sarah announced that they were going out to dinner with Gilderoy Lockhart. "Leave the children with Hestia and meet me in The Plum Tree."

"Sarah, how did you persuade Mr Lockhart to meet you?"

Sarah indulged in a superior smile. "He came to that fashion show we were displaying exactly his kind of robe. I made eye contact with him in the audience, and by the time I'd paraded the catwalk three times, he was already planning to meet me. Ariadne, he's a *man*. If he's at all heterosexual, he'll be panting to meet a glamorous blonde who's been eyeing him off. So at the reception afterwards I made sure to ignore him until he had shoved aside two important photographers and a top designer, and then I gave him a distant smile, as if I was perfectly friendly but had forgotten who he was. We hadn't spoken more than three sentences before he invited me to dinner. We've now had dinner five times, and he's tried to seduce me twice. No, it's all right, I deflected his Persuasion Charm, and he very gallantly told me that he didn't duel with ladies. So Gilderoy's about ready to meet my oldest and dearest friends. Have your list of questions ready and start asking them quickly I've a feeling I may need to break up with him before the evening's over."

"What? You have him thinking you're his girlfriend?"

Sarah shrugged. "In a manner of speaking. It's no real hardship; I stand by my original assessment that the man drips pheromones - and a great deal else too. And I haven't yet exhausted my amusement at his conversation; I can cope with one evening more. But I defy any woman to fall as much in love with him as he is with himself."

She lifted her chin until her nose was pointing almost straight up at the ceiling. Her hands mimicked Gilderoy Lockhart's flamboyant gestures. Her voice became suavely baritone.

"I can tell you admire my robe. Fifi Couture designed it with a few hints from me, I must admit. She's very deferent to my advice. If I tell Madame Couture that you're a special friend of mine, she'll give you preferential service and perhaps even make up a set of dress-ropes according to my own personal design. Not that I was wearing robes like these when I tamed those trolls in Scandinavia oh, no, it took more than exquisite tailoring to wrestle *them* to the ground! I'll tell you all about that when we dine at The Plum Tree. I'm a special favourite of the Li family because I taught them the *only* way to roll out a won ton pastry!"

The Guiltless to Pursue

Remus and Ariadne learn the truth about the Macnairs and some lies about Gilderoy Lockhart.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Guiltless to Pursue

Friday 21 December 1990 Wednesday 6 February 1991

The Plum Tree Restaurant, Diagon Alley, London; Old Basford, Nottingham; Oxford; Carlton, Nottingham.

O Gilderoy! bethought we then

So soon, so sad to part,

When first in Roslin's lovely glen

You triumph'd o'er my heart?

Your locks they glitter'd to the sheen,

Your hunter garb was trim;

And graceful was the ribbon green,

That bound your many limb!

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844): "Gilderoy"

Rated PG for forgery and persecution.

"Huan, bring us some of your House Special spring rolls." Gilderoy Lockhart lowered his voice to a stage whisper and informed Remus, "I taught Mr Li how to make them. They contain mung beans, lime and my own secret ingredient."

"They sound delicious." Remus studied the smirking face across the table. Women found Lockhart very handsome; Remus wondered what appealed to the average woman. The man obviously took trouble with his hair, and his smile seemed to be glued into his jaw, but was he really more attractive than, say, James Potter had been?

He felt Ariadne's hand slide into his as she said, "You're a person with many talents, Mr Lockhart."

Lockhart did not notice the blandness of the compliment. "Arianwen, my travels have taken me to the kitchens of many famous chefs," he began. "When I was in Lhasa on the trail of the Abominable Snowman I learned a recipe for scallion dumplings..." His account of how he had exchanged his newly-acquired expertise in scallion dumplings for vital information about the Yeti's private habits lasted until Mr Li brought the spring rolls.

Remus reminded himself that there was no point in hurrying the man who might hold the secret to defeating lycanthropy; they had all evening. On his left, Sarah was staring at Lockhart with an expression of rapt fascination, murmuring things like: "What, really?... No, you *didn't*... oh, goodness, you *did*!... Tell me again, were its feet *huge*...?"

On his right, Ariadne whispered, "I'm thinking the 'secret ingredient' is lettuce."

A girl with almond eyes brought a bamboo basket to their table. She must have been too young to go to Hogwarts, for she made no attempt to use magic to set three blue and white porcelain dishes onto their table. The girl explained, in a distinctly Cockney accent, that the first dish was beef in black bean sauce, the second was orange-and-ginger-glazed duck, and the third was snow peas and asparagus in honey.

"Now, Romulus, let me show you how they actually serve the food in Guangzhou," said Lockhart.

His demonstration of the only correct serving ritual distracted his attention from the Yeti for long enough for Remus to risk changing the subject. "We're very interested in werewolves," he said.

"You sounded so brave when you confronted that werewolf in Armenia," said Ariadne. "When those red eyes leered up out of the dark... were you not terrified?"

"Werewolves actually have yellow eyes, Arianna," said Lockhart as he spooned black bean sauce over his rice.

He avoided that little trap, thought Remus. He didn't quite understand why Ariadne was feigning ignorance, but she obviously had some kind of strategy.

"But, oh yes, my heart was thumping like a bass drum! Any ordinary person would have been shaking too much to draw a wand. But I did not turn away from the Bandon Banshee, or the Trondheim Troll, or the Memphis Mummy do you think I played the coward at one more life-threatening peril? All I could think about was those poor terrified villagers who had lost all their sheep and half their children, so I raced towards the ferocious wolf..."

Sarah's expression of rapture had become so fixed that even Remus could tell it was forced, and he was surprised that Lockhart didn't notice. But Ariadne's attention seemed absolutely genuine. Her chopsticks lay untouched beside her porcelain bowl, as her eyes, her ears, the very hairs on her head, strained to attend to Lockhart. Lockhart wasn't eating either, for his description of his battle with the deadly Armenian werewolf required expansive arm-movements and head-gestures to tell correctly. After a while he began to use a chopstick as a substitute for a wand (or was it a sword?) that he thrust towards and around the imaginary beast. By the time he rose to his feet, most of the restaurant's other patrons were also watching, and Lockhart played to his audience, showing the steps of the skirmish with a ritual that almost made a dance of it.

"... and there he lay. Unconscious at my feet!"

The diners clapped. Lockhart bowed. "All the details are in my book, you know," he announced. "Flourish and Blotts would be open late for Christmas shopping tonight, so if you'd care to dash out to buy a copy of *Wanderings with Werewolves*, I'd be glad to autograph it for you. My friends and I will be here for a while, and I'm sure they'd be pleased to share my company with all of you."

Lockhart seemed slightly deflated when this announcement was not followed by a stampede towards the door (although two middle-aged witches did excuse themselves to their patiently-sighing husbands), but he resumed his seat and began to attack the glazed duck with a fork. Remus looked at Ariadne, and then at Sarah. Had they really learned anything yet?

Mr Li set a tureen of oyster soup on the table, while his daughter removed the empty dishes. Remus would have liked to ask her whether she had helped with the cooking

too, and whether she expected her Hogwarts letter this year, but he did not dare avert his attention from Gilderoy Lockhart. As it was, Lockhart seemed ready to discuss something other than werewolves.

"The five-petalled flower on the porcelain is a traditional plum-blossom design," he was happily telling them. "That's because the name Li means 'plum tree' their tableware is an antique family treasure from Guangzhou. It was a disaster when a careless customer smashed a bowl. Huan was extremely grateful when I was able to buy him a replacement. It happened when I was travelling in Canton on the trail of an untamed Chinese Fireball... Sarah, I think I must certainly write a book about my adventures with dragons one day..."

This was the first time that Remus had actually caught Lockhart out in a direct lie. He happened to know that the "antique porcelain" at the Plum Tree Restaurant had been cheaply made two years ago by Ariadne's cousin, Scholastica Macmillan, who worked as a Transfigurationist for Crocker's Kiln. However, knowing that Lockhart sometimes fabricated did not help Remus untangle how much of the werewolf saga was reliable. And Lockhart was now in full flow on the subject of dragon-taming.

"... a burn all up my arm, and my robes absolutely *smoking*..."

Miss Li reappeared at their table, set down another bamboo basket of boiled rice, then stood aside as three more samples of Crocker's ceramics sailed onto the table, presumably at a command from her father's wand. "This is stir-fried broccoli with corn ears and celery; here we have prawns in garlic sauce; and this is our House Special, pork in plum sauce."

Remus was disconcerted; he had not expected another showing of main courses, and he was already comfortably full. However, the interruption from the waiters gave Sarah the chance to insert a word edgways.

"Which would you say was *more* terrifying, Gilderoy the dragons or the werewolves?"

"That's rather academic, since either could kill me." He puffed out his chest and Sarah managed to look admiring. "The werewolf could inflict more permanent non-fatal damage, so of course he's the more terrifying long-term prospect. But dragons are peculiarly resistant to the usual spell-work very difficult to Stun."

"Your book makes it sound as if werewolves are quite resistant, too," said Ariadne. "Is the Homorphus Charm the only spell that works on them?"

"I never say 'the only one', Adrienne, because one never knows what new expertise might turn up. But it's certainly true that the werewolf is a resistant species."

"So what class of spell-work is the Homorphus Charm? How do you cast it?"

"Now, now, Annabel, you can't expect me to part with classified information like that." He tapped his nose conspiratorially. "This is about safety, and you aren't exactly at immediate risk of having a werewolf pin you to your bed tonight. Charms like the Homorphus could be quite dangerous to try out at home. In fact, may I caution you not to attempt any kind of personal contact with a werewolf. Unless your charmwork is as refined and intricate as mine, the werewolf may win the fight!"

"Ariadne always was hopeless at Charms," said Sarah. "She definitely won't be trying anything. So the Homorphus Charm is intricate, is it? Is it... er... cast in stages?"

"Of course it is. And every stage has to be laid correctly, but you won't know whether or not you've made a mistake at any stage until the very last second, when the whole spell springs into action. Or doesn't. If you've made a mistake, the werewolf just pounces and bites. But for a *correctly* laid Homorphus Charm, the correct intentions, the correct incantations, the correct wand movements, the correct aim now that's dramatic. You see the wolf morph back into a human before your very eyes."

"Where did you learn the spell, Mr Lockhart?" tried Remus. "Was it invented by a British wizard?"

"To be honest, Rufus, I myself played a fair part in developing it," said Lockhart, scraping the last of the prawns from the plum-blossom dish. "But I can't take the whole credit, I'm afraid. The original concept was developed by an old warlock from Jarnitz, whose trade secrets I swore to protect when he shared them with me. And that by itself is an interesting story. I came to visit because I heard that the village had been oppressed by a vampire..."

Remus chanced a frustrated glance at Ariadne. To his surprise, she was quite relaxed, although she shook her head at him slightly and kept her eyes on Lockhart. She didn't seem at all worried by the complexities of the vampire story, and she even managed to gasp and sigh in the right places. He hoped she knew what she was doing; it was purely from his own lack of a better strategy that he kept his mouth shut. He might as well keep it shut, since he was too full to eat any more.

"But enough about me," said Lockhart, as the waiters approached their table again. A bowl of almond jelly and cherries was floating in front of the girl, and Mrs Li, emerging from the kitchen for the first time that evening, was carrying a large teapot. "Let's hear about Sarah's day. Have you tried out that coconut shampoo, my dazzler?"

Remus resigned himself to hearing the great trade secret that the coconut shampoo was in fact a humectant-balanced formula that Gilderoy Lockhart had developed himself...

* * * * *

"Have we wasted our time?" he asked Ariadne that night.

"We have not, for we learned all we were needing to know."

"All I learned is that Flourish and Blott's is open for late-night shopping and that Sarah is willing to risk her hair for you." Remus sat down on the sofa, deflated. "Was I supposed to accuse Lockhart to his face of lying about the Li family's tableware?"

"You were *not!*" Ariadne looked horrified. "Remus, he's a dangerous man."

"Dangerous? A fool, perhaps, but..."

"Dangerous," she repeated. "He's not caring about other people. If he realised we could expose his fantasies... if we angered him... there's no limit to the harm he'd commit to save his face. We're not needing to inform him that we've discovered his fraudulence."

"I don't know that we have. I couldn't begin to work out which parts of his story to believe."

"Could you not recognise which parts he was inventing? He was lying about the Homorphus Charm."

Remus knew better than to ask Ariadne how she knew when a person was lying; while she could never explain it, she was never wrong. "Which part of it was the lie?"

"All of it. Remus, there is no such spell. There was no old warlock in Jarnitz, and Mr Lockhart gave no help in developing any spell. He did not confront any werewolf in Armenia, and if he met one in Wagga Wagga, he did not use any kind of charm on it. He's not knowing of any spell that forces a transformed werewolf back into human shape, nor has he ever met any real person who claimed to know one. His entire story about using spell-work on werewolves is a fiction."

"So we've wasted our time."

"That we have not." Ariadne ran her hand down his cheek so that he was forced to turn and look at her. "We've learned that spell-work cannot help you. The only thing that has ever helped werewolves is what we're already possessing Wolfsbane Potion. We've learned that the only way forward is to keep on developing the Wolfsbane Potion and to campaign to make it legal. We've also learned that we have hope for Healer Smethwyck's release. He'll be vindicated when the potion is which would probably never happen if a charm really could do the same job."

"Ariadne, why do I have the feeling that you're going to plunge straight into something else dangerous?"

"I've no such feeling. I'm not knowing what I'm going to do. Wait..." His heart sank as he watched the inspiration cross her face. "Remus, I have after all learned something from Mr Lockhart. One reason it's so difficult to prove him a liar is that he sets all his adventure stories outside of Britain. People cannot track what he's really doing once he's travelling abroad, so they believe whatever he's claiming."

"So you *are* courting danger."

"Not this week. I'm just thinking that... sooner rather than later... we'll be needing to travel abroad. Wolfsbane Potion has been rejected in the British Isles, but perhaps conditions are different in other countries. If we took it elsewhere... If we found places where it was acceptable... If the British Patents Office saw it causing no harm in those places... Do we not owe it to the werewolf community here, as well as to Healer Smethwyck, to make the attempt?"

It was difficult to contradict her so late at night.

* * * * *

In the last week of the year, Mercy and Dempster Wiggleswade offered their house in Oxford as a base for Wolfsbane operations. Remus knew it was a risky choice, since the lawyer who had defended Healer Smethwyck at his trial was bound to be of interest to the spies. It must look very suspicious that Mercy and Dempster weren't even at home for the "New Year's Eve party" that they claimed to be hosting. While the Wiggleswades Flooed up to Glasgow to celebrate Hogmanay with the Macmillans, the werewolves made themselves comfortable under the Blue Moon at Oxford.

"Enough time has passed," said Mercy. "It will be all right!"

Remus knew he ought to warn her that it might not be all right, but the werewolves had nowhere else to go, so he accepted her hospitality gratefully.

For the first week of the so-called spring term, Remus had to walk to school through three miles of snow, but he cast discreet Thermal Charms in his socks and gloves. It was after he entered the classroom that he encountered a chill that no magic could charm away. The boys paid attention to filtration and evaporation, but the girls sat in rigid silence, unable to answer a single question. They apparently found democracy in Ancient Greece a subject for giggling and whispering, but certainly not for class discussion. Why had attitudes changed over a mere two weeks of Christmas holidays?

At milk time on the third Tuesday, Jessica Glover brought a handful of pale pink envelopes out of her bag and waved them significantly.

"Are you having a birthday party?" Jacqueline Sutton took the envelopes from Jessica and began to leaf through them. "Oh, *look*. This is a mistake. You can't invite Katharine Phillips. She never was a friend of ours."

"I don't *want* to invite her," said Jessica quickly, "but my Mum said I had to invite the whole class."

"Your Mum won't want Katharine Phillips in her house. All she talks about is sex and toilets and digestion. But I've been meaning to tell you you can't invite Natalie Palmer."

Remus's mind lighted on a painful memory of a teenaged James Potter talking about Snape. He began to wipe the whiteboard so that it would look as if he weren't paying attention, while Jessica asked, "What's Natalie done?"

"Last week Natalie borrowed Autumn Silverstone's book on ghosts and U.F.O.s and she brought it back with a torn page. I became worried about a book that I'd lent her, but when I asked her about it, she claimed she'd already returned it. She hadn't, of course. She *finally* brought it back yesterday, with the spine cracked and dog-ears on two pages. And now she's trying to borrow a book from Rachel Jackson! We can't include Natalie in anything for the next couple of weeks. It's for her own good; she has to learn." Jacqueline pulled out the two offending envelopes. "I'll rip up these for you. Oh, Jessica, *really*. I'll take this one, too. You *know* we don't ever invite Dolly Clott!"

"My Mum doesn't know..." faltered Jessica.

"Fine, don't try to explain it. Just tell her that Dolly, Katharine and Natalie can't make it. It will be all right to invite Bashira Raheem because her parents won't let her come anyway, and I happen to know that Sophie Williams will be on holiday that weekend. So that will make seven of us that can come a very nice size for a birthday party."

"What are we going to say to Natalie?"

"We'll confront her in the playground about those books. If she claims it was all a mistake, tell her she's making feeble excuses."

Remus still didn't know what exactly had happened over the holidays, but it had clearly involved a massive advance in peer hostilities. He decided not to continue their discussion of burning and its hazards after lunch. Instead, he used *Tipografia* and *Zerocso* Charms to construct a hasty survey.

"This is an opinion survey, Charlotte, so it's no good copying from Jacqueline. I want *your* opinion. Never mind the ink blots, Tim; I can still read your writing."

Some of the children huffed in annoyance at having to fill out their opinions, but in the end it only took twenty minutes. While they worked at Long Multiplication (with the exception of Dolly Clott, who was writing random numbers on her maths sheet), Remus read through the surveys.

Which of the following behaviours counts as bullying? Tick Yes, No or Sometimes.

1. Deliberately kicking someone who took your ball.
2. Deliberately pushing someone out of the way.
3. Calling someone a rude name, such as "Stinky".
4. Telling your friends not to play with one classmate.
5. Telling your friends untrue stories about a classmate's bad behaviour...

There were fifteen similar questions, then:

16. Have you ever been bullied?

17. Have you ever bullied anyone else?

The only student who had replied "yes" to that last question was Terry Boot. But he had only indicated nine bullying behaviours; apparently he didn't believe it was bullying to "do nothing while someone else calls your friend names" or "tell a former friend's secrets to other people". Most of the other children had only ticked the items concerned with physical violence, although Gershom Wallace had designed a pattern of selecting "sometimes" for the odd numbers and both "yes" and "no" for the even ones.

It was obviously time to deal with the moral re-education of his pupils. A discussion of power abuse in Carlton seemed far more relevant than a discussion of democracy in Ancient Athens.

* * * * *

Two weeks later, Remus arrived home from work to find a fold of parchment on the kitchen table.

"It's from Veleta," said Ariadne. She paused from charming the frost on the back windows into teddy-bear shapes for Elizabeth, and he saw that she was radiant. "I've no idea how much longer it will yet take, but Veleta has finally made some progress."

My dear Ariadne,

Thank you for making so much effort to communicate with me. I am sorry I have been so much less efficient in speaking to you. Privately-owned delivery owls do not cooperate with strangers, and it is difficult to intercept even a Post Office owl without the Macnairs seeing me.

Today I have been lucky. I am nursing Regelinda as she sleeps off a moderately severe bout of Scrofungulus. It can safely be assumed that her family will keep away until she is well. A Post Office owl has just arrived with a letter from her boyfriend; since her father disapproves of this man, who is Muggle-born, his owls are always instructed to behave quietly around the castle. I have asked the owl to wait while I write this and have stolen parchment from Regelinda's desk.

I received your message last November about Donald Macnair's Blood Curse on his descendants. It was very helpful information, although I suspect we shall need to do more than simply destroy a phial of blood if we are to break such a powerful spell.

However, I used Locospection to find the phial. It is locked inside the secret chamber on the top floor of the castle. This chamber is above the Great Hall and almost as large, but neither the family nor the house-elves are permitted to enter. Its only door is directly opposite Walden Macnair's study. I could not Locospect any key to it so I presumed it was locked by a charm.

Over the following weeks I Locospected Walden Macnair whenever he was on the top floor. He does not enter the secret chamber often, but I managed to catch him in the act twice and so I learned the Unlocking Charm.

After that I was impeded by not having a wand. I had to wait until the family next abandoned Humphrey. Usually they put him to bed when he drinks, but sometimes they just leave him in the hall. Three weeks ago I found a night when every one of them left him alone and oblivious with his Firewhisky. I was able to creep up behind him and borrow his wand and a few empty bottles. I had no real trouble unlocking the chamber door, and the crystal phial of Macnair blood was standing on a small table, exactly as I had seen it (although it was larger than I had realised as large as my son Robert). However, it was much more difficult than I had expected to Transfigure the Firewhisky bottles into a replica of the phial, perhaps because I was using Humphrey's wand.

Then I discovered that I could not touch the phial of blood. There was some kind of barrier around it, and I could not bring my hand within a foot of it. I could, however, touch it with the tip of Humphrey's wand, and in the end I realised that this, too, had something to do with the Macnair blood. Probably one has to be a Macnair to touch the phial.

I knew any member of the family could awaken at any moment, and Toady the bailiff spies on me at all hours. But they all seemed to be soundly asleep, and Walden Macnair himself was spending the night in London, so in the end I decided to take a chance. I woke my daughter Mary and brought her up to the secret chamber. Mary is ten years old now. I like to think of her as all mine (she is certainly a Locospector), but in truth she is a Macnair.

Mary was able to lift the crystal phial, although it was painfully heavy for her, and then I had no trouble replacing it with the replica. I filled the replica with ordinary water, coloured red, using charms I had no memory of ever learning. It won't fool anyone who inspects it closely, but it might fool Walden Macnair as long as he has no reason to suspect.

It took Mary and me nearly an hour to transport the phial downstairs to our rooms. I was able to use the wand to muffle our sounds and to use some kind of Hover Charm, but only Mary could bring any part of her body anywhere near the phial. She was exhausted by the time we had engineered it into our wardrobe. No-one looks in there as a rule, but of course I don't expect I can hide it there forever. Humphrey Macnair was none the wiser: he was profoundly unconscious when I replaced his wand in his sodden sleeve.

So I have the blood, and perhaps I can hide it, but I have no idea how to destroy it. Can you make any suggestions?

I have four children so far. Peter is seven, Andrew is four, and Robert is nearly two. After his birthday, they will make me have another baby. I see no evidence that any of the boys is a Locospector. I worry about what the Macnair family will do if my children disappoint their expectations.

Regelinda remains asleep, but I can't keep trusting my luck, so I shall dispatch the owl now. I'm sorry I must ask you to pay postage. Thank you for all your assistance so far.

Yours sincerely,

Veleta Vablatsky.

Remus read the letter twice without understanding why he was surprised before he turned to the immediate practical need.

"Veleta, are you Watching? Do you know how to do a Shrinking Charm?" He hoped she would be Watching soon; since Veleta lived without privacy, she couldn't hide an object the size of a two-year-old child for many days. "You need to borrow Humphrey's wand again and use it to shrink the crystal phial to a size that you can shut away in a drawer. The incantation is *Extenuo*. Try an arm movement like this..." He drew his arms from wide to narrow, thinking how difficult it was to teach even a simple spell when there was no chance of making eye contact with the pupil.

He could only trust that Veleta would give it her best effort. For so many years, he had thought of her as a helpless victim, yet given a task, she had pursued it with drive and inventiveness. Her letter had finally given him a tantalising vision of the intelligent, resourceful woman who had once been Ariadne's dearest friend.

Combat for Freedom

Chapter 9 of 21

Remus and Ariadne make a desperate effort to break the Blodhriki curse.

CHAPTER NINE

Combat for Freedom

Wednesday 6 February Saturday 6 April 1991

Old Basford, Nottingham; Gifford, Glasgow; the Peat Bog, Galway; Ecclesall, Sheffield; Foss, Perthshire.

Could the chain for an instant be riven,

Which Tyranny flung round us then,

No, 'tis not in Man, nor in Heaven,

To let Tyranny bind it again!

Thomas Moore (1779-1852): "Forget Not the Field"

Rated PG for mild violence and less mild threats of worse.

Ariadne gave her autographed copy of *Wanderings with Werewolves* to the delighted Hestia Jones, but she kept *Blodhriki*. Sickening though the contents were, they did not spare any details, and before long she had memorised every step of the Protean Blood Magic Counter-Spell.

The werewolves had spent the January full moon in Glasgow with Steadfast and Scholastica Macmillan, who frankly admitted, "If the Ministry were looking for you, it would have found you by now, and if Greyback is looking for you, it's wise that you are hiding out in as many different locations as you can."

The problem was, they were running out of locations. In February Ariadne received an unexpected owl from Ireland.

Dear Madam Lupin,

The cards indicate that you need my help. Perhaps you'd like to bring some friends to my house next week and to borrow my kitchen without having to explain what you're all doing.

If this message means anything to you, feel free to visit. I can arrange open-ended Portkeys with the Dublin office, where they owe me too many favours to ask any questions.

Kind regards,

Cassandra Vablatsky.

Professor Vablatsky asked no questions about the score of strangers who littered her house for the week. When she wasn't shopping in Dublin or writing her latest book, she wanted only to talk about Veleta.

"We're knowing now how to break the spell," said Ariadne. "But we're needing a day when the Macnairs are out and when Veleta can inform us that they're out. Perhaps next week or perhaps next year." It was no good asking Professor Vablatsky to forecast a lucky date. She had never been able to prophesy anything about Veleta.

"It's interesting that Veleta's daughter is a Locospector," said Professor Vablatsky. "Gifts like prophecy and Locospection have to be inherited from ~~both~~ both parents, and there is certainly no history of any such thing among the Macnairs."

"But the Macnairs do regularly produce Squibs," said Ariadne. "Madam Constellis writes that the Squib gene damages the other genes lying near it, making them all recessive." She had to explain this concept, but Professor Vablatsky grasped it with surprising speed. "Mary cannot have inherited Locospection from the Macnairs, but the gene that would normally block Locospection would have been damaged if the Macnairs gave her a Squib gene. Perhaps Mary inherited her talents *only* from Veleta." She frowned. "Then why is Veleta a Locospector? Her mother was a Muggle-born; it's seeming a very great coincidence that she should have carried the prophetic talent."

"Oh, is that what Veleta told you?" Professor Vablatsky poured out another cup of chamomile tea. "Not quite right. Jane's father was an ordinary Muggle, but her mother was a Squib. I should know I met the poor girl at all the wizarding parties, and the Rookwoods and Montmorencys used to tease her mercilessly. That means what? that Veleta inherited her Locospection from my son Pythios, and that it dominated the damaged Squib genes that she inherited from her mother."

Ariadne shivered violently. That meant that Veleta had only half as many Locospection genes as the Macnairs were assuming and that she had Squib genes on which they were probably not calculating at all. But Ariadne could do the sum. Veleta might give birth to more Locospectors, but there was a higher chance that she would produce Squibs. Ariadne didn't want to contemplate what the Macnairs might do to a Squib bairn.

Emmeline Vance took her grandmother to Capri for the Easter holidays, and they authorised the Lupins enter to their house in Sheffield for that period. Matthew liked the Plumptons' house because there were five Nigel the Knight Bus toys of various sizes and a model railway in which a Hogwarts Express with seventeen carriages ran up and down a map of the British Isles, all of which had once been the property of Emmeline's Grand-Uncle Roderick Plumpton. It bothered Remus that the model train could not distinguish land from water, so it crossed rivers without needing bridges and even travelled from Edinburgh to Dublin without becoming wet. But Ariadne said that toys need not imitate life. Elizabeth liked the house too because there was a Wendy house with a stove range and a mangle and dolls in a cradle. Ariadne spent half the morning showing her how to crank the mangle, which had really been designed for a larger child, so that the dolls' clothes emerged fresh and flat. Elizabeth wanted to wash them in real water and gained excellent domestic training thereby over the holiday.

Remus liked the house because of its large study, which allowed him to plan next term's projects about light and mirrors and the lives of famous Muggles without disrupting the endless flow of werewolves who flooded in and out of the Plumptons' drawing room. This immaculate room, with its showcase of Quidditch trophies, its Gainsborough originals and its mahogany harpsichord, was completely separate from the semi-basement kitchen, where the array of stove-ranges and the vintage collection of cauldrons allowed Ariadne to keep her family cooking, her Wolfsbane brewing and her home remedies for minor ailments completely separate.

Remus was finally able to keep his promise to Latona Wildclaw to teach her to read. Of course, there was never just one pupil. Most of the former Sylvaniaans were illiterate, and Matthew, with all the linguistic confidence of his three years, learned to put the letters together faster than any of the mere adults.

"I can write BED! And RED! Look, Daddy, I've writed SED!"

"Is GED a word?" asked Tiwaz Longpelt. "Never mind, I know LED is."

"Fenrir Greyback!" shrieked Latona Wildclaw suddenly. "He's there outside the front window!"

Tiwaz Longpelt froze half way through placing the letter L in front of ED. Latona sobbed as the door bell rang. Caleb Oldfang, without a moment of conference with the others, walked out into the hall and opened the front door.

"I don't know if your friends are here," they heard Caleb say in a tone that indicated he wasn't going to be particularly cooperative with either the visitor or the Wolfsbane community. "Who are you, and who are your friends?"

Remus arrived a second too late to distinguish whatever Greyback was snarling at Oldfang, and Ariadne emerged from the kitchen door at the same moment.

"If you can't name your friends, I can't tell you whether they're here," snapped Oldfang, who was obviously spoiling for a fight.

His belligerence gave Greyback the time to step into the Plumptons' hall. Remus was face to face with the origin of all his problems.

"Perhaps you're Mr Plumpton," rasped Greyback. "Do you have any werewolves in your house? Better still, do you have Madam Lupin?"

Ariadne stepped forward, white with either terror or fury. "I am Madam Lupin," she said, calmly enough. "You have not been invited into this house."

"Recognise you," said Greyback. "You were the apothecary at St Mungo's, that time the Healers wouldn't give me any medicine. In jail now, aren't they? So just be nice, and give me the Wolfsbane Potion, and then I won't have to report you to the Ministry for illegal brewing."

"It is not for you," said Ariadne steadily. "You are trespassing, and we are going to call the Aurors."

"You haven't become any friendlier, have you? You steal my friends away from me... You give Wolfsbane Potion to all these werewolves... But you won't give anything to me because you don't like the look of me. If I combed my hair, would you give me some? Whatever happened to treating all patients equally, without passing judgment on whether they deserve the medicine?"

Greyback might have logic on his side, but Ariadne had better sense than to argue. "I will not give you any," she said.

"*Abigo!*" shouted Remus.

Greyback, who had his mouth open to argue with Ariadne again, found himself flying backwards over the doorstep. Remus slammed it closed, trying to ignore Greyback's howls of, "I'll set the Aurors on you! I'll make an anonymous report that you're distributing illegal poisons!"

"Dearest, are you all right?" His wife's hand was clasping his arm.

Remus realised he was rigid. "I'm fine. It's just that we'll have to close up *shoptoday*. We can't risk leaving anything for the Aurors to find."

* * * * *

They had nowhere to go except back home to Nottingham. They cleaned up their equipment, then hustled all the werewolves through the Floo. They found out later that they had departed with only five minutes to spare the Aurors *did* come to Sheffield.

"When they found no evidence," said Kingsley Shacklebolt, "they concluded it had been a crank call. But, Ariadne, it will only take one more tip-off for the Aurors to investigate you more seriously. They'll soon work out that all the locations are your friends' houses; while Fenrir Greyback doesn't know who your friends are, the Auror Division can work it out from old Hogwarts records."

"I don't know where we can go next month anyway," said Remus. "It's too dangerous to go to the same place twice, and we've already imposed on just about every person whom we trust enough to ask at all."

"Perhaps..." said Ariadne. "Oh, you will not like this idea either... But perhaps I should do something completely different next month. We've said we should try to market the Wolfsbane Potion abroad. If there's really no more we can do in Britain, perhaps the time has come to visit Europe."

"Teachers can't take random leave," he reminded her. "I'll have to wait until the summer holidays."

"But the baby's due then... and we cannot sit around doing nothing for the next three months... Oh, I'm supposing there will never be a very good time to travel."

Remus privately agreed. He had no idea how they would set about contacting foreign werewolf communities, and even if they discovered these communities to be friendly, their Ministries were likely to be hostile. They didn't speak any useful languages, they didn't have enough money to visit more than one country in comfort, and they had their responsibilities to their children.

They also had their explicit promise to Healer Smethwyck, and their implied promise to the British werewolf community.

Three days after Easter, Sarah Webster stepped through their Floo, and breezily announced that she could solve all their problems.

"You obviously *can't* brew the Wolfsbane Potion next month, Ariadne; it's far too dangerous. Never mind, why don't you take a holiday to France instead? I have a modelling assignment in Paris next week, so I can take you without any trouble."

To Sarah, as usual, it was all very simple. The company always paid for her to take a companion on her assignments, and as she was currently between boyfriends, she had no reason *not* to take Ariadne. If she were there to take care of Ariadne and the children, there would be no need for Remus to go at all, so he could devote himself to his job. Sarah spoke fluent French, so she would be more useful than Remus anyway. And Fenrir Greyback was probably going to set the Aurors on Ariadne's trail again, so it would be helpful if they could manufacture irrefutable proof that Ariadne was innocent this month.

Just as Remus was grasping that Sarah had swept them into accepting her offer, an owl flew down their chimney. The letter was from Macnair Castle.

Dear Mr and Madam Lupin,

The Macnair family has decided to take a weekend trip to Cornwall. They will not be at Foss from Friday evening until Monday afternoon. They are all going, even some of the house-elves, although Toady will be left behind to watch us.

My mother asks if you will be able to come on Saturday to break that spell.

Please do not reply to this owl. I am not Unsearchable, but the Macnairs still watch me in the ordinary way, and they would ask too many questions if an owl arrived for me. I will have to be very careful about catching an owl to deliver this message, but we think the castle owls will obey me, because I have Macnair blood.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Vablatsky.

This was clearly not the kind of week when they would be counting how many dangers they had to face at once. Remus did not need to consult with Ariadne this time.

"Yes, Miss Vablatsky," he said to the fireplace, "we are coming."

* * * * *

"Promise you'll let me go first," said Remus.

"That's not logical," Ariadne protested. "If you accidentally hit the Macnairs' barrier, you'll die. If I do, I'll only have to spend a week in hospital. If Veleta's not there to guide us, I'm thinking I should go first."

"But I'm much more experienced than you are in recognising landmarks. I'm far more likely than you are to recognise the point where the barrier begins and be able to stop safely."

"I'll stop well back," Ariadne pleaded. "If Veleta's not there, there'll be no point in proceeding anyway."

In the end they agreed that they would Apparate to the far bank of the River Tummel, where they knew the barrier did not reach, and reassess the situation if Veleta was not awaiting them there. Uncertainty about whether she had received their message was only one of the hazards of today's task. For a start, it was technically forbidden to Apparate to a public space, in case there should happen to be Muggles in the vicinity; they had to take a chance that nobody would see them in such an isolated spot. Then there was all the equipment that they had to bring; Remus had shrunk it to a portable size, and packed it into a rucksack (made from Transfiguring his suitcase). That was a large piling-up of spells, especially as they would have to use Side-Along Apparition (Ariadne still didn't have her Apparition licence), and they just hoped nothing would be lost in transition.

And deep within Ariadne's mind was the lurking fear that not all the Macnairs would be in Cornwall. Veleta believed them unsuspecting, but was it all a trap?

They landed on the river-bank early in the afternoon. Ariadne, her head still spinning, ought to have been reassured not to see any surprised Muggles; the only person in sight was the happily beckoning figure of Veleta. But Ariadne was trembling with disquiet; there was so much that could go wrong.

They waved back. Veleta threw herself sideways until she stopped falling, as if to indicate: *Here is the barrier*. Remus drew his arm around Ariadne, and they Apparated to the other side of the river, rather dangerously close to where Veleta was standing.

"Thank you for coming," said Veleta. "The Macnairs have gone, but we still have to watch for house-elves. What has to be done this afternoon?"

"Veleta, we're knowing how to break the spell," said Ariadne, "but it's complicated. First a counter-spell has to be carved in yew. Remus has done that." She glossed over how long they had spent composing the poem and translating it into Elder Futhark. Remus had borrowed a silver knife from Sturgis Podmore and carved the runes into a yew plank bought from the lumberyard. "The original spell was drenched in blood, so the counter-spell has to be drenched in Purpurata Fire, yet not consumed."

Veleta frowned. Remus began to take items out of the rucksack and restore them to their natural sizes.

"It's all right, Veleta. That's something I learned at Hogwarts: Purpurata Fire will not burn anything that has been covered with Inardesco Potion. Remus knows how to make Purpurata Fire, and I've brewed some Inardesco look." A ladybird-sized dot had just blown up to a cup-sized bottle, and Ariadne displayed it for her.

Veleta was still looking dubious.

"It has to feel strange... after so long... to be thinking this might work," said Ariadne. "But that is the easy part. After the fire, we have to dismember the blood by pouring it into a Dissipation Potion. But the blood will re-coalesce unless the Potion is scattered on running water within an hour of first being brewed. We'll have to work smartly. However, we have the river, and I've brought my cauldron... Can you bring us the blood?"

"I can't, but Mary can. I did as Mr Lupin suggested and used the *Extenuo* to shrink the phial. But you'll need to move all your equipment a long, long way back."

"Why?" Ariadne could see that Remus's mind was working very fast, but it was still a mystery to her.

"Your friend Mr Campion gave me the clue. Do you remember his discovery that the castle's barrier of invisibility is spherical, as high as the grounds are wide? I've had four years to think about it, and I suspect the barrier is set at a fixed radius from a certain point inside the castle. I've a nasty suspicion that the point in question is the phial of blood. If I move that, I'll move the barrier, and perhaps kill you."

"What?" Ariadne's heart thudded to a halt. "So you cannot... Are you meaning that Remus and I, being Banned, are forced to remain outside the circumference of the sphere, while the phial is always at its centre? That we will not *by definition* be able to touch the phial?" She began to understand why Veleta had been sceptical.

"Not necessarily," said Remus. "The Blood Spell draws a circle that does three things to Macnairs within its radius: protects them from death, constrains them to the area and makes them invisible to outsiders. But it doesn't have anything to do with the Banning Curse, or with making the castle invisible. I believe that both of those spells were cast separately and quite a long time later."

Ariadne and Veleta spoke in unison. "But they use the same barrier!"

"That was probably a matter of convenience," said Remus. "Why draw a second boundary line when the existing one lies in a perfectly suitable position? Today we're breaking the Blood Spell, but I'm expecting the castle to remain invisible and the Banning Curse to remain intact."

"There's still a danger," insisted Veleta, anticipating Ariadne by a heartbeat. "The Banning Curse might be actually lying on top of the Blood Spell. If it is, then moving the centre-point of the Blood Spell will also move the barrier that marks the Banning Curse."

"A fair point," said Remus. "We shall take care to move our operations outside the limits of the barrier. Since you and your children are not Banned, you'll be able to walk through it as soon as we've broken the Blood Spell."

"But how will you manage to pour the blood into the potion?"

"It isn't so difficult," said Remus calmly. "What are Banishing Charms for? We'll send you the cauldron, and Mary can pour in the potion."

"Mr Lupin, can you really Banish an object to a precise point seventy or eighty yards away?"

"Of course I can. Miss Vablatsky, how sure are you of the dimensions of this castle?"

"Those are readily available to anyone who cares to read the Macnairs' boring books of their own bloodthirsty history. The radius is probably only seventy yards, but I'd like you to move eighty yards from the walls in order to be completely safe. And I... What is the plan, after I've brought out the phial?"

"Once the blood has been dismembered in the Dissipation Potion and thrown into the river, the spell will be broken, and it cannot be re-cast as long as we preserve the counter-spell." Ariadne indicated the carved yew plank. "So you will be able to walk over to us, and Remus will make Portkeys to carry the children away. It's a pity about the weather..." The rain was still drizzling down, and the temperature was little above freezing point.

"But perhaps we should be ready to depart quickly," finished Veleta. "Since Mary is able to move the phial, I have to bring her out here. So I'll bring the boys out too."

Ariadne helped Remus pack their equipment back into the rucksack. She was shaking as he guided her back along the river bank. Once he stopped and threw a Measuring Charm at the castle wall.

"Only sixty yards. Keep walking."

"Remus, what if the Banning Hex had thrown that charm back at you?"

"A *measuring* spell? Sweetheart, that couldn't have hurt anyone. Spells can be traced to wands but not to wand-wielders; that blind barrier couldn't have made the connection between a stray Charm and the Banned person who cast it."

"I'm hoping you're right."

"If you'd paid more attention to magical theory, you'd know that I am. We'll face enough real dangers this afternoon, so let's not worry about imaginary ones. Here, this distance should be safe." He threw the Measuring Charm again, and this time they were standing at a safe eighty yards from the castle walls.

Remus cast a *Declino* arch around them, so that their equipment would be sheltered from the rain, then once again patiently restored each piece to its natural size. After they had laid it all out in front of them, there was nothing to do but wait. Ariadne could only imagine Veleta's agonising caution as she dressed up her children one by one, then had Mary carry out the phial, then ushered them quietly through the castle, avoiding spies at every turn. What possible excuse could anybody have for taking bairns for a walk in the freezing rain? If a house-elf spotted them, Veleta wouldn't have a plausible story.

It must have been half an hour before Veleta emerged from under the portcullis. She was carrying one child, and the rest were walking closely beside her. The tallest of the children raised an arm, as if to indicate that she was carrying something, and it was time to begin the brewing.

That was the one part of the process about which Ariadne hadn't worried, yet it was the first time that Remus became nervous. He was trying hard not to look, but his hands were clenching and unclenching around the carved yew plank.

"It's not such a difficult potion," she reassured him, as she sprinkled dried colewort and woody nightshade into the cauldron. "I'd never used gamboge gum before, but nothing went wrong in the trial run at home. Finding a supplier was harder work than actually using it. And it would never have occurred to me to use Plimpy bones in a potion, but Professor Jigger had plenty in stock." She remembered that, although she could only see Veleta at a distance, Veleta was probably Watching her with avid attention, so she added, "It'll be ready when it returns to the boil. There should be a pale green steam."

"Meanwhile, Miss Vablatsky," said Remus, "it's probably better if you restore the phial to its natural size. Tell Mary to place it on the ground, then stand back while I send a *Finite Incantatem*."

That was a daring attempt; there were altogether too many spells charging around the area. Nor could they see whether the spell had worked, although Veleta waved in a manner that might have been intended as reassuring.

Five minutes later, the pale green steam arose from the cauldron, and Ariadne moved aside for Remus.

"Miss Vablatsky, are you ready? I'm now going to send the cauldron your way. Don't let the children touch it, but try to concentrate on what I'm doing. As soon as I've finished the incantation, Mary needs to pour the blood into the cauldron. Do take care. That *Finite Incantatem* probably also destroyed the Unbreakable Charm on the phial."

Ariadne had no time to worry about the painful level of magical precision they were requiring from a lass with whose magical powers they were quite unfamiliar. Remus commanded, "*Abigo!*" and the cauldron flew across the plain for eighty yards, stopping neatly at Veleta's feet. Ariadne couldn't help noticing that the pewter remained dry, while the rain danced around it. Remus had sent the *Declino* arch with the cauldron.

She handed him the bottle of Inardesco Potion that she had brewed at home last week, and he poured it over the yew plank. Then he Conjured the Purpurata Fire, and it sprang to life with purple flames. Remus began to recite the spell they had composed. Their English original had been:

No more constrained to Macnair Castle
are the descendants of Macnair.
The barrier that restrained them within
is hereby destroyed forever.
Macnair's descendants are free
to depart the castle without permission.

Ariadne hoped they hadn't committed a gross grammatical error that would change the whole meaning of their spell. It was all very well for Professor Babbling to assure them that the intention and emotion behind the spell had more force than the literal meanings of the words. The words had to contribute some of the spell's power, since Donald Macnair had *intended* his curse to bind his daughter, yet it had failed on a technicality because she no longer bore the Macnair name.

Remus finished reciting, and he did not need to signal. They could see one of the blurry figures by the castle wall heaving some bulky object. Mary was pouring the blood into the Dissipation Potion.

"Stir it seven times widdershins," said Ariadne. "When the green steam turns red, the blood has been Dismembered, so it should be safe to send the cauldron back to us... Remus, is it really safe?"

"Yes, the Blood Spell breaks at the moment when the blood is completely Dismembered. Even if the Banning Curse was originally linked to the Blood Spell, the blood no longer exists, so moving the discomposed blood can't move the Banning barrier. Just be certain, Miss Vablatsky, that the steam really is green. If it's orange or yellow, the blood is not quite discomposed."

Ariadne hoped Remus was right. She held her breath while Veleta appeared to attend to the cauldron. It was a surprisingly short time before Veleta stood up and once again waved at them.

"*Accio*, cauldron!" said Remus. He was calmly putting on Ariadne's oven gloves.

Ariadne released her breath. The cauldron was skidding back towards them, and no barrier of death was crashing down around their ears. There was nothing but the cauldron, still emitting a gentle red steam, and the *Declino* arch that was still warding off the icy rain. Veleta was following after the cauldron, slowed down because she had to guide one child by the hand and hold another on her arm, while her head was craned to check that the other two were following.

Remus extinguished the Purpurata Fire, then staggered over to the river bearing the heavy cauldron. Perhaps he should have Charmed it weightless, but yet another spell could have upset the magical balance of a potion that was already delicate. It was better to throw it into the river in its natural state. He was a second from doing so it when Ariadne heard Veleta scream.

"Regelinda!" Veleta and her children skidded stock-still in their tracks. "Ariadne, it's Regelinda! She's here, she's detected intruders, and she's charging around the corner with her wand drawn. She'll *kill* you!"

Remus hurled the contents of the cauldron into the River Tummel. The Dissipation Potion and the discomposed Macnair blood were swept downstream in the churning waters, carrying the Macnair curse away forever.

"Wait," said Remus. "I'll make the Portkeys it'll just take me a couple of minutes to set them exactly right "

"You don't *have* two minutes!" wailed Veleta. "She's here *now!*"

She was still speaking when a dazzling figure blazed through the portcullis and out into the open. Ariadne saw that Regelinda was dazzling because she was throwing hexes with savage fury. Random Stunners and Blasters were flying in all directions.

"Veleeeeta!" screeched Regelinda. "What are you doing out in the rain? Toady warned me you were talking to intruders*who are those people?*"

Regelinda swept her wand in Ariadne's direction, and red and blue lights danced towards them. Regelinda was too angry to aim carefully, but she looked as if she were on the verge of a more calculated assault.

Remus panicked.

He threw his arm around Ariadne's waist.

Heavy air pressed in from all directions, squeezing her into an unlit inch-wide tunnel, and the dizzy nausea in her throat told her that they had Disappeared.

Or Else to Flee

Chapter 10 of 21

Ariadne begins her journey; Remus stands up to the school bullies; and someone pays the price of defying the Macnairs.

CHAPTER TEN

Or Else to Flee

Saturday 6 April Thursday 30 May 1991

Old Basford, Nottingham; Ministry of Magic, London; Carlton, Nottingham; Llangollen, Vale of Clwyd.

It standeth so: a deed is do

Whereof great harm shall grow.

My destiny is for to die

A shameful death, I trow,

Or else to flee. The t' one must be.

None other way I know

But to withdraw as an outlaw

And take me to my bow.

Wherefore adieu, mine own heart true!

None other rede I can:

For I must to the greenwood go,

Alone, a banished man.

Old English ballad: "The Nut-Brown Maid"

Rated PG for violence both physical and psychological.

Hestia looked up from the Lupins' sofa as they landed. "Ariadne, what went wrong?"

Remus was bracing himself for Ariadne's anger, but she only displayed an overwhelming sadness. "Another minute," she said. "Could you not have made three or four Portkeys in a minute?"

"It takes concentration to make accurate Portkeys, and we didn't have a minute. Regelinda could have turned an Unforgivable on you in only a second."

Hestia closed *Nigel the Knight Bus* with relief, Remus suspected and handed Elizabeth back to Ariadne. "Tell me quickly," she said. "Is Veleta safe?"

Ariadne was shaking her head, but Remus had cleared his head enough to assess the situation. "The Macnairs won't do permanent damage to Veleta or her children if they can help it," he said. "They want to use them alive, remember? But Regelinda isn't always rational she really might have done permanent damage to Ariadne."

"Or to you," Ariadne reminded him. "You're right, she was in a killing mood."

"Had you started the counter-spell when Regelinda arrived?" asked Ivor. He waved his wand at Matthew's bricks, and they rearranged themselves from a steam locomotive to a turreted castle. "That's the important thing, Remus. Did you leave behind any evidence of what you'd been doing?"

"We had completed the spell," said Remus wearily. "I had time to pick up this " He showed the carved yew plank. "We left Ariadne's cauldron behind, but I'd already cast a *Scourgify*, so they won't know what she was brewing. We had already packed the spare potion ingredients in the rucksack, and the milk bottles that I brought to make Portkeys were just ordinary milk bottles. What worries me is the crystal phial that contained the blood. Regelinda won't necessarily know what it is, but it's large, and she'll report it to her father..."

"That's gone," interrupted Ariadne. "I saw that just before we left. Some of Regelinda's spells hit it, and it was destroyed I'm thinking she threw *reducto*."

"So we just have to wait!" exclaimed Hestia gladly. "You destroyed the Blood Magic, and the Macnairs don't know what you were doing. Now we can choose our moment and take Portkeys to Veleta after all."

Ivor had the opposite reaction. "The Macnairs may not know precisely what you were doing in Foss, but they won't have any trouble tracing the cauldron to Ariadne. I imagine that will put them in a vengeful mood. Remus, Ariadne isn't safe. I think you need to speak to your friend Madam Bones *today*."

"The Macnairs *will* find out what we did," said Ariadne. "Even if Veleta manages to keep silence, they will find out that the spell is broken. It will not be long before something originating in the castle harms a Macnair."

Suddenly Remus saw a glimmer of hope. "Wait a minute. We didn't break *that* part of the spell."

They stared at him.

"Our counter-spell was about the restraining curse; it didn't mention the safety charm. More importantly, the safety charm required murders in order to be cast, and the fact of murder would be a more powerful component than the preservation of the victims' blood. I think there's a good chance that we couldn't break the safety charm without doing something equally dramatic another murder, or perhaps a birth. What the Macnairs are more likely to notice is that Regelinda can suddenly take long walks outside the castle and that she's become visible to strangers."

"Perhaps they won't notice for a while," said Hestia. "If we try to meet Veleta soon..."

"We can try," said Ivor, "if they're giving her any freedom at all to move outside the castle. I imagine we've just given them good reasons to tighten their security."

"Perhaps someone could meet her *inside*," said Hestia. "A Portkey is powerful, and if we chose our moment well..."

It was only at this moment that Ariadne burst into tears. "But there is nobody!" she said. "Do you not see? Everybody who was ever known to be Veleta's friend has been Banned, and nobody else is believing she should be rescued. If any of us tried to pass through the barrier, we would die in the attempt."

* * * * *

Remus did not have to worry about Ariadne's safety for long, because the following evening they Flooed to the Ministry of Magic, where Sarah and Joe were waiting for them in the Portkey Office.

"Goodness, Ariadne, did you bring only one suitcase for yourself and two children? Hide that label when we reach Paris no Muggle woman is addressed as 'Madam'. Matthew darling, you need to let Auntie Sarah look after your toy bus; put it in my bag so it won't be lost on the way. Well, Remus, are you ready to let go of your family?"

Of course he wasn't. In the last six years, he and Ariadne had scarcely spent twenty-four hours apart. Now he had to place her under Sarah's dubious protection so that she could meet dangerous strangers in a foreign culture. However, he doubted the Macnairs would bother following her to France, so it was easier than he had expected to concede the point.

"One family Portkey to Paris authorised," said the clerk.

Ariadne threw her arms around his neck. He clutched her tightly against him, breathing raggedly into the depths of her hair. Empires rose and fell as her heart beat against his ribs.

"We'll be all right," she whispered in his ear.

He settled his mouth on hers, and her fingers threaded through his hair, constricting on his scalp. She pressed against him, while planets collided and new stellar systems were born. When he finally had to gasp for breath, she strained him closer, and galaxies formed from chaos. It would be frivolous to beg her to stay.

"Have a safe and profitable journey," he said.

"Be wise with the school bullies," she replied.

He kissed the children, then stood back while the porter arranged them so that each luggage handle was correctly looped over a hook of the Portkey, which bristled like a hedgehog with all its appendages. Sarah helped Matthew to grasp one corner, while Ariadne shifted Elizabeth in her arm. Then Ariadne, the children, Sarah and the luggage all vanished.

Remus was left alone in the Portkey Office, staring at Joe. "I suppose we should Floo back to my house," he said, feeling deflated. They had agreed that Joe would stay with Remus while the women were abroad.

Joe followed him to the hearth. Remus didn't know how Joe managed to manipulate the Floo network non-verbally, but it was evidently possible, because Joe was soon stepping into his living room, carrying a canvas bag that was perhaps large enough for one change of robes.

Did Joe really require company? And would he provide any? Already, the house without Ariadne felt very empty. Remus found himself thinking that he must put the children to bed by himself, when he remembered that they had gone too. He had no-one to consider but Joe, who didn't exactly require consideration.

Joe was pulling a flat box out of his bag. An hour later, Remus had discovered that there was one thing that Joe could do better than Ariadne. He was capable of playing a very smart game of chess.

* * * * *

"Remus, I'd like to hear your side of the story," said the Headmaster. "What exactly did you say to Jacqueline Sutton yesterday afternoon?"

Remus knew Mr Cecil was angry with him, but he couldn't imagine the nature of his crime. "I took her aside when the other children had gone out for the break and told her that I was concerned about the classroom atmosphere. I told her that this kind of note-passing wasn't acceptable." He displayed a slip of floral writing paper. The header, in Jacqueline's handwriting, read:

Sign here if you agree that Terry Boot (a) stinks (b) needs to go to Wait Watchers (c) kisses Dolly Clott.

It had been signed by Charlotte, Jessica, Rachel, Natalie, Lauren and Autumn before Remus had intercepted it. "Jacqueline didn't seem to understand what I was saying," he explained, "so I told her that next time she deliberately set out to make a classmate feel bad, I would have to hold a conference with her parents."

Harold Cecil scribbled something on his notepad. "That was unwise of you for a start. But continue."

"Jacqueline sneered, and said, 'My parents wouldn't come, because I've already told them you're a rubbish teacher.' I ignored the rudeness and told her quietly that if the situation reached the stage where we had to involve the Headmaster, her parents might not have a choice about attending meetings or about the kind of action you might decide to take."

Mr Cecil scribbled again, stabbed his pad, and sighed. "I wish you had consulted me before throwing my name around. Let me tell you now, I *will not* be initiating any conference with the Sutton family, and I certainly have no intention of expelling their children from this school."

Remus reeled, wishing that he too were taking notes on this meeting. He hadn't mentioned expulsion, either now or to Jacqueline how had the subject arisen?

"I presume that is what you were implying," said Mr Cecil curtly, "since it is the *only* form of disciplinary action that a headteacher may take without the cooperation of the parents. That aside... While Jacqueline's words about your teaching skills were inappropriate, we have to allow that she only said them after you had threatened her."

Remus knew now that he had committed some major gaffe. Keeping silent was the only way of discovering what kind of gaffe it had been, so he sat still and tried to look intelligent.

"Remus, it doesn't speak well for your competence as a teacher that you threatened to involve a child's parents in an ordinary classroom management situation that you ought to have been able to handle by yourself."

Oh. "Mr Cecil, if you have some suggestions about how I should handle it, I'd be glad to hear them. I have been reasoning with Jacqueline Sutton all year, and it has had no effect."

The Headmaster's eyes narrowed. "Are you admitting this, Remus? Have you been on a continuous campaign of rebuking one child, even though that campaign has been ineffective? Then it isn't surprising she doesn't like you."

Remus resisted the temptation to sit silently again. He knew he would never establish an accurate perspective on the situation unless he spoke out now. "Jacqueline Sutton has been continuously bullying the other children. This isn't just my own observation; over the last six years, several other teachers have witnessed it too. They have tried reasoning with her, keeping her in at break, removing stars from charts, separating her from her friends and all the rest, but nothing has resulted in a long-term improvement in her behaviour. It's a situation I can't allow."

"I think you're taking it altogether too seriously." Mr Cecil leaned forward with an air that was clearly intended to be friendlier. "We clamp down on playground violence at this school, but that isn't the issue here, is it? Jacqueline doesn't attack her peers physically. She may be inconsistent in her friendships; she may tell exaggerated tales; at worst, she teases other pupils verbally. But she doesn't do anything that amounts to breaking a school rule, and we can't make it our job to correct every flaw in every child's character. We adults have a few flaws ourselves, you know."

Remus had a sickening memory of himself pretending to cram for his exam, trying to ignore that James Potter was suspending Severus Snape upside down and undressing him while Peter Pettigrew was laughing hysterically beside them. Of course he knew that he had flaws.

"A deliberate campaign to humiliate another student is not a *small* flaw," he said. "I won't tolerate it in my classroom. If you can show me how to stop the teasing gently, I'll be glad to take your advice. But at this stage, I intend to find an effective strategy, even if that means hurting Jacqueline Sutton's feelings."

Harold Cecil snapped off the friendliness. "Remus, I don't want to lose a good teacher, but I don't want to lose a good family either. If you called the Suttons in discuss Jacqueline's 'misbehaviour', I think they would be devastated; it would damage their helpful attitude to the school and they might even remove their children altogether. Think how harmful that would be to Carlton Primary's reputation, to say nothing of its financial health. The Suttons have been very generous: the building fund, the library, the gymnasium, musical instruments... They've supported all our drives. Just consider how little we'd gain in exchange: Jacqueline, however she behaves, is in her final term, and we've never had any complaints about the conduct of her two younger sisters. Remus, it just isn't worth upsetting this family about this relatively trivial issue. Ask yourself instead why Terry Boot has become a target."

"He does stand up to Jacqueline more than most, but the truth is that she has targeted nearly every classmate "

"Rubbish. Terry has been a difficult child since Year Three, when he had some kind of religious conversion. Even his parents have been annoyed no end it isn't surprising that his classmates can't stand it. Remus, if Terry makes such counter-cultural choices and then can't learn to ignore a little teasing, don't you think he comes close to deserving it?"

Remus gulped. The firmest way he could state his case without starting an argument was to ask, "Are you recommending that I take no further action?"

"Absolutely." Mr Cecil stood up to open the door. "Perhaps you didn't know that Justine Kidd, who taught this class in Year Four, was obliged to resign her post because she couldn't stop interfering in the children's private affairs. If you like working here, Remus, I suggest you concentrate on teaching maths and English."

* * * * *

"It's going well," repeated Ariadne through the Floo. "We're knowing where the werewolves live, and we're knowing where to buy wolfsbane. I'm only sorry that I will not be able to brew for you this month."

"Brewing for a whole new community is more important than brewing for just one person," said Remus, hoping he meant it. Ariadne's absence had left gaping, yawning holes all over his life. Joe's quietness threw loud silences over his evenings. By night he tossed and turned in the too-large bed. After a week of exhaustion had taught him to sleep alone again, he found that he missed Ariadne's comments about his work. He hadn't realised how much he brought his work home with him: Ariadne asked after all his students by name, and being able to talk about them helped him plan everything from grammar drills to parent interviews. He missed the children too: bath time, story time, Saturday excursions to the duck pond, Elizabeth's growing list of new words, Matthew's endless chatter about buses. And, however self-centred it might be, he was going to miss his dose of Wolfsbane Potion.

"I'll take good care to lock myself up properly," he said. "Are you quite sure you'll be safe from those French werewolves?"

"We'll have a French apothecary with us," said Ariadne. "Sarah says well, I'll explain when I write."

Long-distance Floo calls cost a great deal of powder, so they could not protract the conversation. After Ariadne had disappeared from the hearth, the silence of the house threatened to engulf him. It seemed wrong to speak to Joe, who was staring at the rain with a closed book in front of him, so Remus switched on the Wireless in time for the evening news.

"... There are still no clues about the mysterious death of a Gringotts employee. Aurors were called to Gringotts Park at half-past eight this morning to examine a corpse. It is not clear whether the man died in the park or whether his body was dumped there after death. There are no overt signs of violence, but details of any suspicious magical activity are being withheld. The man has been identified as Mr Ivor Cadwallader Jones, aged twenty-five, of Llangollen, Denbighshire "

Remus froze in his seat. Joe looked up from the window and for the merest second, there was a hint of an intelligent reaction in his face.

"The Department of Magical Law Enforcement urges anyone who may know anything about this to step forward..."

Remus did not even switch off the Wireless. He stood up, and Joe stood with him. Without a word, they Apparated straight to Llangollen.

* * * * *

Kingsley Shacklebolt had arrived ahead of them, possibly in an official capacity, and he let them into the parlour, where Hestia was sitting white-faced on a lipwork armchair beneath her collection of lovespoons. Simba was purring in her lap, but Bast was mewing beside a cauldron full of daffodils.

"Everything was exactly as usual this morning," Hestia was saying. "We know Ivor was in good health, because he had a Healer check-up just last week. He was in a good mood, too, because young Mr Weasley had just broken a major Pyramid Curse in Egypt, so he knew that gold would be entering Gringotts soon. There was no reason for... what they say..."

She waved Remus and Joe over to the settee. Kingsley glanced at her expressionless face, then explained, "The Aurors were trying to talk Hestia into a suggestion that Ivor committed suicide."

It was at this moment that Remus really absorbed the information. *Ivor was dead.*

"But he couldn't have," said Hestia. "To turn an *Avada Kedavra* on himself... That might be possible in theory, but no normal person could hate himself enough to do it."

Remus felt his jaw drop. Had Ivor died by *Avada Kedavra*?

"There was no mark of illness or injury on his body," said Kingsley, "but the last spell cast by his wand was a Killing Curse on himself. Some of the Aurors gave Hestia a hard time, trying to dredge up reasons why Ivor might have felt suicidal. When she suggested that someone else might have Stunned him and then stolen his wand, that obliged them to ask her if Ivor had had any enemies. They wanted to talk about his goblin connections; as soon as Hestia spoke the name of Macnair, they conveniently decided that they had troubled her enough and would save the rest of the questions for another day."

So we guessed wrongly. Remus was carried away on waves of shame. He had fussed and worried about Ariadne's safety, even though she was protected by her Macnair blood, by Madam Bones and by a web of other pure-blood connections. It had never crossed his mind that the Macnairs would target anyone else, although Ivor had been the first of Veleta's friends to be Banned, and the Macnairs were perfectly capable of shooting him down as a deterrent to Ariadne.

Ivor had guessed wrongly too. He had expected to be punished for helping werewolves. But the Ministry had no reason to resort to murder when they had grounds for arresting him, and this murder certainly didn't look like the work of Fenrir Greyback, who enjoyed cruder methods than wand-work. Remus agreed with Hestia's assessment that this had nothing to do with the werewolf connection; it was a message from the Macnairs.

Suddenly Hestia crumpled. "They killed him, Kingsley!" The next moment, Kingsley had caught her in his arms, and Hestia was weeping dry, retching sobs onto his shoulder. "Ivor is dead, *and we never had any children*"

* * * * *

"Terry, it isn't your job to set the whole world right."

It was five past four, but Terry Boot was still sitting at his table, stabbing at a scrap of paper with a blunt pencil. "My Mum says that," he said, "but Jacqueline never learns. This week she wants everyone to hate Rachel."

Terry was obviously angry. Remus drew out the opposite chair cautiously and sat down. "What exactly did Jacqueline do?"

"She called Rachel smelly; I told Rachel that she could be my partner for the geography project; so Jacqueline called Dolly a freak. That's her way of punishing me she's nasty to someone else. Every day she makes someone cry, and the choice she gives me is either to ignore it or else to let her hurt someone else even worse." Terry scrawled a crude fish on his paper. "You're the teacher, Mr Lupin. Can't *you* make her behave properly?"

"Terry, I don't think any one of us *can make* another person do anything. Did Jacqueline say anything to you?"

"Nah, not this time. She doesn't usually bother with the boys; it's the girls who care what she thinks of them. She had Dolly *and* Rachel crying today, and yesterday it was Katharine." Terry drew a long cross, harpoon-style, through his fish. "I try not to get angry... try not to lose control... But one of these days, I really might end up punishing her badly."

Remus remembered how Terry had once punished Jacqueline enough to send her to hospital. "Do you still worry about what happened with Silly Sammy?"

"I know that God forgave me for that time. But what if it happens again? What if I actually kill her? It's as the Bible says, Mr Lupin what you're thinking on the inside controls what you end up doing."

Remus didn't have enough knowledge of the Bible to argue this point. "You can't kill anyone with mag I mean, with all these odd happenings unless you seriously intend to. Terry, I know you don't wish to kill anyone. Your accident with Silly Sammy taught you to keep it all under control, and you'll never again make anything so dangerous happen."

"How can you be sure?"

"Because that's the way it works. You might think you want to hurt Jacqueline, but all you really want is for her to stop hurting other people. You might have a few more accidents, but you won't do any serious damage, just because you're the kind of person who doesn't want to. Besides, it won't be for much longer. You won't be going to Jacqueline's secondary school."

"We'll both be going to Carlton Comprehensive, like everyone else here," said Terry.

"Terry..." Recklessly, Remus decided to anticipate the fact by two months. "I don't think you'll be going to Carlton Comprehensive. This summer, I think you'll receive a letter about your education. It might seem a rather odd letter, but I can only urge you to take it seriously. You'll meet your sort of people soon enough." *Harry Potter*, he thought. And Morag MacDougal, Ernie Macmillan, Stephen Cornfoot, Padma and Parvati Patil... Oh, yes, Terry would certainly meet his natural peer group. "Terry, you're always relaxed around the boys. The only thing that makes you angry is injustice. Control your frustrations for a few weeks more, then I think you'll soon be making some very good friends."

Terry laughed and scribbled the chai-rho emblem. "I can't promise. Cruelty makes me *ferocious*. But thanks for knowing about how I *don't* kill people."

* * * * *

For the first week after Ivor's death, the *Daily Prophet* headlines were full of the sensational mystery. Then, quite abruptly, the subject was no longer mentioned, not even in the back columns. Hestia was on tenterhooks because the Aurors wouldn't tell her anything. It was another fortnight before a column on page five was headed, "Jones

Mystery Shelved".

Aurors have now closed the case on Gringotts employee Ivor Jones, who was found dead in Gringotts Park on 19 April. Tests showed that he had died from an Avada Kedavra cast by his own wand.

"It is very unlikely to have been a suicide," said Head of Auror Division Rufus Scrimgeour. "We believe some other person Stunned Mr Jones, then stole his wand in order to cast the Killing Curse.

"However, there are no clues to implicate any particular person. We have no witnesses, no fingerprints and no magical traces. We are not even aware that Mr Jones had any enemies, although there are many unstable people who might bear a grudge against a banker. Whoever committed this murder was clever enough to cover his tracks."

Verdict: Murder by person or persons unknown.

Remus tried not to dwell on the fact that Auror Scrimgeour was Walden Macnair's brother-in-law. This case was unlike Veleta's: there really wasn't any evidence.

Whoever had killed Ivor was going to get away with it.

A/N. Remus was just one year ahead of his time. After 1992 there was a widespread movement to reduce bullying in British schools. A report on the effectiveness of the school bullying policies is now part of OFSTED inspections, and schools can be sued for failing to protect their students against bullies. While it remains very difficult to take effective action to prevent medium-intensity psychological bullying, a modern headmaster would not get away with openly expressing the attitude of Mr Cecil. Nor, for that matter, would Dumbledore escape uncensored for his failure to check the Marauders' behaviour to Snape, or Snape's to his students.

No Fame can be Gained

Chapter 11 of 21

Ariadne meets the French werewolves and demonstrates what the Wolfsbane Potion can do.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

No Fame can be Gained

Monday 8 April Friday 12 July 1991

Paris, France; Bisclavret (unplottable, but averred to be in Auvergne).

Though hurricanes rise, though rise ev'ry wind,

No tempest can equal the storm in my mind;

Though loudest of thunders, on louder waves roar,

There's nothing like leaving my love on the shore.

To leave thee behind me, my heart is sore pained;

But by ease that's inglorious no fame can be gained;

And beauty and love's the reward of the brave;

And I must deserve it before I can crave.

Allan Ramsay (1686-1757): "Though Hurricanes Rise"

Rated PG for tragedy.

"...*Et une tisane de menthe pour mon amie*" Sarah finished her breakfast order. "Ariadne, I have to be at work for ten o' clock, but if we're quick, we can be at the Ministère de la Magie by eight. Our best bet is to request an audience at the Département des Jeux et des Sports Magiques."

Ariadne did not understand this term, but it did not sound like anything that would deal with werewolves. She had already realised how helpless she was in a country where she did not speak the language. Would the French wizards understand her limited Latin?

"Jean-Philippe Beaumont works there," Sarah explained, "and I think he'll agree to see us without appointment. Perhaps you remember him, Ariadne an old boyfriend of mine?"

Ariadne recognised Jean-Philippe when she met him. Although he now wore a wedding ring, that did not deter Sarah from batting her eyelashes and lowering her voice. Monsieur Beaumont evidently understood that the flirtation was designed to non-amorous ends, since he neither became angry nor flirted back, but the result was that he agreed to help them.

"He says there isn't any Werewolf Registry in France," Sarah translated. "They don't need one, because their security measures are very, very efficient. All the werewolves are enclosed in one place, an Unplottable village in Auvergne. It isn't a place where they usually send tourists, but if we genuinely have business there, Jean-Philippe will organise a permit."

"Why doesn't Jonfileep know how to talk properly?" asked Matthew.

Jean-Philippe Summoned several documents, which Sarah signed, and there was a great deal more incomprehensible talk, as well as a great deal more eyelid-batting, before Sarah had a conclusion she could share with Ariadne.

"Jean-Philippe knows a Master Apothecary who might be willing to help us, a Salvus Remédien, and he's writing now to ask him to accompany you to the werewolves' village one day soon. We'll tell him that Wolfsbane Potion is a new medicine that has already been used effectively in Britain, and omit the part about the patent being refused."

"He'll check that part for himself if he has any professional integrity."

"Then we'll show him the published journal article before he thinks of doing it. You did bring your copy with you, didn't you? Jean-Philippe can arrange for a translation. Listen. Jean-Philippe has written you a Ministry Permit for the visit, but he'll have to withdraw it if the werewolves have any objection. Assuming they don't, it's an open-ended permit that will allow you to return as many times as you like, but you won't be allowed to spend the night there you'll have to be out well before nightfall. As for today and tomorrow... well, since I have to work every day this week, there are several zoos, the Tuileries Gardens have puppet shows and donkey rides, and if it rains, there's the Cité des Sciences. Oh, and the Magicobus will transport you faster than the Muggle vehicles."

* * * * *

On Wednesday Maitre Remédien arrived in the lobby of the Muggle hotel dressed in the rust-red international uniform of an apothecary. Ariadne had not worried that she was wearing robes in Paris because her robes looked positively inconspicuous next to most of the garments worn by Sarah's fashion-industry friends, but she suddenly wondered how conspicuous they would look in the provinces. Maitre Remédien's limited English meant that she could not ask him about such abstractions; she tried: "Are there many people in Auvergne?"

"Not many." That did not answer her real question, but she picked up Elizabeth and followed him into a deserted corridor.

"I carry your boy," he said. "We all two take this key and it let not fall."

"Where's the key?" asked Matthew, not looking at the copper kettle that Maitre Remédien held out to them.

"It's a Portkey. We took a Portkey to come to Paris, remember?"

After a last glance to check that no Muggles had followed them into the corridor, Ariadne held onto the handle of the kettle, and a jerk through her navel told her that the Portkey had been activated.

They landed on a wooded hill, where the sudden drop in atmospheric pressure and the scent of wildflowers in the clean air powerfully evoked her Highland home. She saw mile upon mile of hilly green landscape spreading out at their feet, but Maitre Remédien placed the Portkey in his bag, and pointed in the opposite direction. "The village of werewolves."

The village was a walled cluster of red, gable-roofed buildings, less than a furlong from where they were standing. Ariadne hoisted Elizabeth higher in her arms and began to walk a narrow path that sloped gently towards the red wall. "Why did the Portkey not take us all the way to the village?" she asked. "Can it not enter?"

"Yes, a Key... Portkey... can enter," said Maitre Remédien, "but the Ministère this permits not. If the Ministre see that our Portkey enter the village, he is very angry to us... uh... we pay to him big money. The Ministère wants we give to a werewolf our permit, and the werewolf... to us... permits to enter."

"What happens if a Muggle finds the village?"

"A Muggle cannot find the village. There is a barrier. Only the Portkey can enter, no other magic. A wizard enters the barrier if the werewolf permits, and not enters if the werewolf says no..."

Maitre Remédien was struggling painfully to express himself in English, so Ariadne asked only one more question. "What is the name of the village?"

"Bisclavret."

The path ended at the foot of the wall, and Ariadne saw that there was no gate. There was only a rope, which, when Maitre Remédien pulled it, caused a bell on the other side of the wall to clang. Above the ringing of the bell, they heard footsteps running, and an incantation, and then the bricks moved aside to form an arch, much as they did in the entry to Diagon Alley. Several people were standing beyond the arch, all staring cautiously at Ariadne and the children, but their faces cleared when they saw Maitre Remédien's uniform robes.

"*Ah bonjour, Monsieur l'apothicaire.*"

Maitre Remédien spoke to them in French. It was startling how fluent and eloquent he sounded in his own language. He brought out a wad of paperwork and showed the Ministère's authorisation. He indicated Ariadne and apparently had great deal to say about her. The villagers looked surprised but not unhappy. Eventually the leader tapped his wand against the side of the arch and said, "*Entrez.*"

Ariadne, Elizabeth and Matthew walked forward and found they could enter the village of Bisclavret. As Maitre Remédien followed them, the brickwork clacked, and the wall sealed itself smoothly against the world.

An elderly man wearing black robes and with long scars on his face tapped his chest to introduce himself.

"Pierre Gandillon."

"Ariadne Lupin," she reciprocated.

After another exchange between Maitre Remédien and Gandillon, Maitre Remédien informed her, "Werewolves speak not English. All speak French."

"Oh dear, we were needing to bring Sarah. Monsieur Gandillon, I have brought medicine... can you explain that, Maitre Remédien?"

Maitre Remédien struggled, and eventually reported, "Monsieur Gandillon likes medicine. Now he shows to you the village."

It was as good a way as any of making friends, so Ariadne followed Pierre Gandillon as he showed them the watermill, the school tower, the Romanesque kirk, the centuries-old red houses along cobbled streets, and neat gardens of gentians and cornflowers.

Monsieur Gandillon invited Ariadne to visit them again, so Jean-Philippe Beaumont set her Portkey to carry her to the walls of Bisclavret at nine o' clock every morning and to return to Paris at six. It was Sunday before Sarah had the day off and could accompany her. By this time, the Bisclavret werewolves had almost as many questions for Ariadne as she had for them. So they sat in Pierre Gandillon's garden, eating blue cheese and brioche, while Sarah played interpreter.

"He says werewolves rampaged through this region of France in the sixteenth century. The Muggles were so terrified that they accused innocent people of lycanthropy and burned them at stake. In the end the Ministère de la Magie rounded up the werewolves and brought them here to Bisclavret. The barrier does not permit the werewolves to leave the village, and it is left to the discretion of the werewolves whom they allow to enter. But all visitors must leave before nightfall, so that there is no risk of their being bitten under the full moon. By the time of the International Statute of Secrecy... I should have listened to Professor Binns, Ariadne; I've forgotten when that was!... Anyway, by that time, there were no werewolves left in France, except here in Bisclavret."

"Ask Monsieur Gandillon if outsiders are friendly towards them."

Gandillon seemed to find this a difficult question. Sarah finally summarised his reply as, "Muggles neither believe in werewolves nor know about this village. The Ministère de la Magie sends food or medicine if the werewolves request it, but few wizards take any real interest, and visitors are rare. Because the werewolves have been isolated for three hundred years, they have no friends in the outside community."

"Ask him if everybody here is a werewolf."

"He says yes, everyone is bitten in the end. They try to protect their children's lives, but he has never heard of a villager who reached the age of seventeen having escaped the bite."

This surprised Ariadne, who had assumed that female werewolves could not have babies. She felt it was too early to ask about it, but Sarah's curiosity was not to be curbed.

"He says that most pregnancies fail, but there are always some children who are robust enough to survive. And... he didn't say this... but I imagine they don't have access to contraception. That would explain how they manage to replace their population."

Wanting to change the subject before Monsieur Gandillon guessed what they were saying, Ariadne suggested, "Ask him whether everybody here is a wizard." She felt she ought to know the answer to this question, but there is nothing like empirical evidence for testing out a theory.

"He says that in the days when the werewolves were first brought to Bisclavret, many of them were Muggles, but after ten generations of having only each other to marry, the magical blood has completely dominated. Every villager is a wizard."

For a moment it seemed that she might be wasting her time here. This was a closed community, posing no threat to outsiders, and so adapted to living with its curse that any insider who happened to remain wolf-free would not enjoy any real advantage. Why would they be interested in the Wolfsbane Potion? But she reminded herself of the plight of the British werewolves and her debt to Healer Smethwyck, and asked Sarah to raise the question.

Sarah, who had a vocabulary of several thousand words in both English and French to describe textiles and tailoring, had some difficulty in finding the technical terminology to describe the effects of Wolfsbane Potion. Monsieur Gandillon leaned forward, politely trying to grasp what she was telling him.

Suddenly understanding struck.

Pierre Gandillon burst into tears.

The horror that he was sobbing out was so unspeakable that Ariadne broke off the enquiry. Something had happened to him that was far worse than anything that had happened to Remus, worse even than the prank that Sirius Black had nearly forced him to play on Severus.

"Why is that man crying, Mummy?"

"He's had a very sad life," she said. "I'm thinking Auntie Sarah should look after him for a while. Let's go out into the field and feed the last baguette to the pigeons."

It was only ten minutes later that Sarah and Monsieur Gandillon followed them outside. Gandillon was composed again.

"Bad things sometimes happen to the people of Bisclavret," Sarah paraphrased, with a sidelong glance at Matthew. "They try to be careful under the full moon, but sometimes they escape and... do things they wouldn't do if they had their own minds. Monsieur Gandillon once woke up and found that... a child was dead. Things like that have happened to nearly all of them."

Ariadne found herself clutching at Elizabeth. She did not need to be told that it had been Monsieur Gandillon's own child.

Pierre Gandillon told Sarah Webster that the werewolves of Bisclavret would like to give a trial to the Wolfsbane Potion.

As Sarah went back to work in Paris, Ariadne had to give thought to how she would find enough herbs to brew Wolfsbane Potion for three hundred people.

"Wolfsbane's an Alpine plant, isn't it?" asked Sarah carelessly. "Can't you buy it in the Alps?"

"I can, but it'll be harder to find enough barakol, and it'll be difficult to justify to any normal apothecary why I'm wanting so much strychnine."

"What are friends for? I'm sure Salvus Remédien can authorise your supplies."

"Will he maybe give credit to a penniless foreigner?" The cost of the ingredients was worrying her too.

"No credit. I'm your financial backer, aren't I? It'll all be cash on delivery. That's right, Matthew, tell your Mummy. What are friends for?"

Two days later, Ariadne was piling her supplies and equipment in Pierre Gandillon's house. The wizards of Bisclavret had no skills in brewing. They had passed too many generations without education to know more than basic cheese-making and wart cures. They did not even have Pepper-up. When Ariadne came to set up her brewing station they politely showed her to an empty barn with a cauldron in the centre. Sarah made them understand that she needed a table, and Pierre Gandillon Transfigured a crude one out of firewood.

When the Portkey brought them back to Paris on Saturday, Ariadne found Sarah alone in their hotel room, white-faced with fury.

"Sarah, what's happened?" Sarah should not have been home so early; Ariadne expected a tirade about a supplier or a design or the manager or a new boyfriend. Actually, the last two were the same thing, although Sarah was still a few days short of recognising that her manager was her boyfriend.

Sarah tossed over the *Daily Prophet* without a word.

Ariadne saw the headline and sank down onto the bed. "This cannot be right..." she began. But she read the report slowly, and it still said the same thing.

Ivor was dead.

"We have to go home," she said.

"What, you'll abandon the werewolves?" asked Sarah.

"This is Hestia!"

"And it's the Macnairs," said Sarah. "Whatever rubbish they're publishing about goblins, we all know who *ireally* was who wanted Ivor out of the way. It's the same people who've always been after you and are likely to come hunting you down next!"

"Even if they do, we still cannot abandon Hestia."

To Ariadne's surprise, Remus said the same thing as Sarah. "Sweetheart, nothing you do now can bring Ivor back. But it's a bad time to abandon the Bisclavret werewolves, and I think you'll put yourself and the children at risk from the Macnairs if you try it."

"But this is *Ivor*. He is certainly having a funeral next week, while we've no certainty that anybody else is at immediate risk. Should I exchange the certain good for the uncertain evil?"

"You should exchange the certain minor good for the possible massive evil, especially as you have work to do in Bisclavret."

"Just for the funeral. If we arrange it smartly we can be there and back in one day. But, Remus I'm grieving too! I'm wanting to see Hestia and say good bye to Ivor!"

"I certainly think you should Floo Hestia," was the only compromise Remus would offer. For the first time in their marriage, Ariadne felt he was on the verge of giving her an order.

Hestia was pale and taut was she never able to cry? "I wish you could be here too, Ariadne," she said, "but of course you can't. These are the same people who killed Caradoc. Now they've killed Ivor, because he knew they had given Veleta a fate arguably worse than death. You know at least as much about their guilty secrets as Ivor did of course it's you next."

"Or you," said Ariadne soberly. "Or Kingsley really, it could be any of us, or none." She reflected how extraordinary it was that they all knew why Ivor had died, yet the Department of Magical Law Enforcement maintained its position of ignorance, mystery, and refusal to acknowledge a potential risk to anybody else.

Pierre Gandillon's sister Antoinette came armed with a butcher's knife to act as Ariadne's assistant. His daughter Pernette was carrying a tray of wooden toys, and she indicated that she would take the children outside to play. Matthew understood her gestures immediately, and soon followed her out, chattering in a language that sounded remarkably like French.

"He speaks good," commented Maitre Remédien. "The child's learn always fast."

Sarah was able to translate Ariadne's first instructions, but she had to go to work at ten. Fortunately, Maitre Remédien did seem to grasp what they had been saying, and when two more villagers came to help Antoinette, he was able to direct them without help from Ariadne. Finally the strychnine was ground, the digitalin was crystallised, the wolfsbane flowers were shredded, and there was nothing for Ariadne to do but begin the distilling. The Bisclavret werewolves watched with interest. She smiled at them, touched that they did not find her linguistic deficiencies unfriendly or stupid, but very aware of the gulf of silence that separated them. Without being able to talk to her clients, she was now alone with her thoughts.

Ivor is dead. That thought had been hammering at her brain all yesterday, and now it had no interruptions *Ivor has been murdered, and Hestia is alone in Wales, while Sarah and I are in France.* She had always expected Ivor and Hestia to walk into their sunset years hand in hand. If ever a couple had seemed destined to celebrate their hundredth wedding anniversary surrounded by a tribe of adoring great-grandchildren, it was the Joneses, who had belonged to each other so completely ever since they were eleven. The idea of Hestia moving into the future alone was unthinkable.

And it happened because we failed Veleta. Just one more minute... The thought had haunted her dreams... Just one more minute to make Portkeys, and Veleta's bairns would have been safe. Then Veleta could have told her story to Madam Bones, and the Macnairs would have been arrested before they had time to kill Ivor.

Now she must face the repugnant truth. Veleta's situation was horrific, but it was not life-threatening. They could not risk more lives for Veleta's sake.

This might be the end of all attempts at rescue.

Late that afternoon, the venerable Monsieur Remédien was seated on a wooden crate in a shaded barn. Ariadne lit the candles even though it was still full light outside. The Wolfsbane Potion was steaming and the villagers were queuing for their final dose. There was time to put the children to bed in Antoinette Gandillon's house before the moon rose. Ariadne did not like to leave them without any adult in the house (she had assumed Sarah would bide!), but they were safer alone than in the company of their new friends.

Out in the fields, the villagers were staring patiently at the horizon. Ariadne could see that the Master Apothecary was apprehensive. She wondered why she was not, then realised that she did not really, not truly, believe that all these people were werewolves. There were nearly three hundred of them that was too many. When, at the identical moment, they all transformed into wolves, she found herself taken aback, and poor Maitre Remédien was trying to hide his shock. But it was almost more dramatic when they all lay down in one movement.

"*Alors, ils se couchent tranquillement...*" muttered Maitre Remédien to himself.

She was not sure what he had said, but she walked up to the Master and sat down beside him so that he would see that she was not afraid of the wolves.

"Maitre Remédien is saying that the case is clear," Sarah translated as she waved the menu. "... Listen, we have to discuss this quickly, because Nick Diamond's joining us at eight. *C'est un Moldu,*" she explained to the Apothecary. "*Il ignore toujours la magie.* Anyway, Monsieur Remédien says that your potion obviously works, but that it isn't science until the phenomenon is replicated."

This concept was evidently news to Sarah. A waiter approached their table, and Sarah indicated a line of the menu without really reading what she had ordered.

"So next month you'll need to call Maitre Remédien up again. Yes, yes, he has the time, he's semi-retired. What's that? Oh, he was just saying that it's a fascinating potion, and he is honoured to participate in the process. But he needs to watch the werewolves three times... that is, the brewing, the effects under the full moon, *and* the recovery period for the werewolves."

Ariadne nodded, hoping that Sarah was not finding the educational process too painful.

"After Maitre Remédien has witnessed three trials, he says he'll make a report to the Ministère de la Magie, and they will grant a patent. At least..." The next part was obviously *not* a translation of any sentiment expressed by Monsieur Remédien, "... let's *hope* the French are more reasonable than the British in the medicines they're willing to authorise."

"What medicines?" Nick Diamond, Sarah's Muggle manager, had entered the restaurant ten minutes early. "Darling, who is your friend? His outfit would certainly turn heads on the catwalk."

"His name is Salvus Remédien. He's Ariadne's boss."

* * * * *

"It's a good thing you *didn't* come home," said Remus gravely. "The Macnairs haven't had an idle moment since you left. I had a strictly unofficial Floo call from Madam Bones, saying that some unnamed person 'knew for a fact' that you were brewing illegal potions just before the Full Moon."

Ariadne frowned at the fireplace. "But it's not illegal in France."

"So Madam Bones explained, when your anonymous accusers suggested you be extradited. The point is, the Macnairs aren't going to abandon the battlefield just because they lost that particular bout. I don't know if you've been reading the *Daily Prophet*, but the Aurors have closed Ivor's case. There isn't enough evidence to make an arrest, and it's all been written off as a tragic misfortune."

"We did read about that. Sarah's yet fuming."

"But it becomes worse. I tried to speak to Madam Bones again, and her secretary at the Ministry told me that she's gone on a six months' sabbatical to South America she'll be Unsearchable for that whole time. So you've lost your surest protector. Ariadne, in all seriousness... don't come home."

"What?"

"You said that your French apothecary wants you to spend another two months in France. Do as he suggests; stay for a while. I'll join you when I can..."

She hung her head; she knew that would not be before his school term ended. It was a long time to wait to be together again, and now was the wrong moment to plead how much she had been missing him.

"... I'll join you," he repeated, "and we'll go somewhere else. Germany or Italy or wherever there are werewolves. Returning to Britain won't be an option before Madam Bones is home, and perhaps not even then. It depends on what else happens here."

"Remus, will *you* be safe?"

"Yes," he replied thoughtlessly. She knew he had no guarantees, and she saw that he knew she knew. "I don't know," he amended. "I'll try to stay out of trouble, and I'll leave Britain at the first hint of danger even if it means abandoning my job."

"I'm knowing you'd prefer not to do that. But it would be better than than having you as the next target."

After the fireplace flickered to empty, Ariadne had to move herself away from the public Floo in the bistro. She was surrounded by a swirling crowd of French wizards, chattering in French as they laughed and drank, and she was entirely alone.

Remus was possibly in danger. Veleta was definitely in danger. Healer Smethwyck was in Azkaban. Ivor was already dead. There were altogether too many people exposed to peril while she walked safe and free.

She did not want to talk to Remus through a public Floo. She was wanting him to be here, with his arms around her.

And she understood exactly why he could not be.

Remus was in England while she brewed the Wolfsbane Potion, under Maitre Remédien's careful observation, for the Flower Moon.

Remus was in England when Sarah, having finished her Paris assignment, announced that she was taking a holiday, and would stay with Ariadne and the children in a hired cottage in Auvergne. Despite the fact that it was officially a holiday, Nick Diamond drove down to see them every evening, and in the end he took a holiday too, in order to save himself the cost of the petrol.

Remus was in England when Pierre Gandillon asked Matthew, who was by now able to translate as competently as Sarah, whether there was anything that the villagers of Bisclavret could do for his mother. Ariadne handed Monsieur Gandillon the yew plank on which Remus had carved the counter-spell against the Macnair family, and explained that this must be preserved for all time in order to ward off an evil curse. The Gandillon family assured her that nobody ever came to Bisclavret, so the plank would be safe in an ancient chest kept in the vestry of their kirk.

Remus was in England while Ariadne brewed the Wolfsbane Potion for the Rose Moon.

Remus was in England while Salvus Remédien wrote up his observations as a proposal to the Bureau des Brevets in the Ministère de la Magie.

Remus was in England when Ariadne went into labour and gave birth to their third child, a son who was named David Ivor Lupin.

Remus was yet in England even when the Bureau des Brevets issued a patent for Wolfsbane Potion, to be brewed only by a competent apothecary as a treatment for lycanthropy.

Remus was not present when the Ministre pour la Règlementation des Créatures magiques shook Ariadne by the hand, and in carefully rehearsed English thanked all British apothecaries for their research into "preventing self-harm in werewolves". He promised her that Salvus Remédien or his delegate would henceforth be paid to visit Bisclavret every month and brew for the werewolves. He recommended that she visit Germany, and promised to write a personal letter of recommendation to his equivalent officer in the Zaubereiministerium.

Not One Footprint

Chapter 12 of 21

While Remus allows morals to overrule common sense, Ariadne penetrates the mysteries of the Black Forest.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Not One Footprint

Friday 28 June Saturday 27 July 1991

Carlton, Old Basford and Old Market Square, Nottingham; Karlsruhe, Germany; Bad Herrenalb, Enzklösterle, Sasbachwalden, Schiltach, Kappelrodeck, Appenweier, Oberwolfach and Altwolfach, the Black Forest, Germany.

Yet no trace of them is seen,

When morning rays are glancing,

Not one footprint on the green

Shows where the elves were dancing:

Oh! where are they abiding?

In what lone valley hiding?

Come next with me and we will see

The fairies homewards gliding.

Welsh folk song: "Under Yonder Oaken Tree"

Rated PG for malice, materialism and things that go bump in the night.

"Mr Lupin, how did you scratch your face?" asked Jonathan Miller. "Did you go hang-gliding and fall off?"

"Silly, teachers aren't paid enough to afford to go hang-gliding," said Wayne Elliott. "Do you have a cat, Mr Lupin?"

"It was actually a dog," said Remus, hoping this didn't count as a lie. "But it belongs to... er... a friend. It doesn't usually live with me." After a third full moon without Wolfsbane Potion, Remus was champing at the bit to be reunited with Ariadne. He had become soft; he had had nearly five years in which to forget that the wolf was a beast. Now he was forced to live through it again. Joe had carefully locked him up in the garage each moonrise, and had let him out again each moonset. Each moonset he had found himself stiff, bruised and bloodied. This morning, a long scratch against his chest would start bleeding again if he carelessly knocked it.

Fortunately he didn't have to explain himself any further to his students, because they were cut off by a wail from Autumn Silverstone. "He's de-e-e-ad! Cricket's dead!"

All the children rushed to crowd around the hamster cage, where Cricket the hamster was frozen rigid in his nest. Natalie Palmer and Sophie Williams began to cry.

Gershon Wallace remarked, "You can tell whether he's really dead from whether he's hard or soft when you poke him. But he probably is, because he was nearly three years old. That's like being ninety for a human."

Jacqueline Sutton announced, "It's Charlotte Merriman's fault. She's the one who was supposed to feed him."

"His food bowl and water bottle are nearly full," corrected Remus, "and his cage is clean. So we know that Cricket was well looked after right up to the very last minute."

"Charlotte was supposed to feed Cricket," persisted Jacqueline. "And she forgot, because she's too stupid to take responsibility for pets."

Terry Boot did not stand up, but he turned his head towards Jacqueline quite casually. "I watched Charlotte feeding Cricket twice," he remarked. "She changed his water too."

"Jacqueline," warned Remus, "I think you owe Charlotte an apology."

Jacqueline ignored Remus. "Terry Boot, you can mind your own business! Charlotte Merriman, you nearly dropped Cricket yesterday. I bet that ~~scared~~ scared him to death."

"Jacqueline, I want you to say sorry to Charlotte. Otherwise I will telephone your mother ~~now~~ and ask her to come and talk to me ~~today~~." He knew he shouldn't have said this in front of the whole class, but he also knew that the threat would lose impact if he waited. He added, "You have as long as it takes me to look up the number."

Jacqueline glared at everyone while Remus walked over to the class telephone. Charlotte was tearful. Terry was frowning at his own fists, clearly trying to control his temper. Feeling in slow motion, Remus opened the address book and picked up the receiver. He had already dialled the first digit when Jacqueline finally began to speak.

"Charlotte, I'm sorry you're so incompetent and untrustworthy. It's very regrettable because it caused Cricket's death. I'm sorry about what the R.S.P.C.A. will do to you when they find out that you murdered a hamster. I'm sorry you're such a criminal because it means that if Hinduism is true, you'll be reincarnated as a cockroach. If Islam is true, I'm even sorrier, because you're certain to go to Hell. I am very sorry indeed to have scum like you in this class."

Remus telephoned Mrs Sutton.

* * * * *

After that Remus wasn't surprised when the Headmaster informed him that it would not be possible to renew his contract next year. Some of the other teachers commiserated ("I wish I'd had your courage four years ago!" said Shannon Reid), but Remus found he didn't care. He was able to laugh his way through the final three weeks of the academic year without sparing a thought for the impression he was creating on Harold Cecil or the parents. He had already been sacked, so he could do what he liked.

How had it happened that he had come to care more about his pupils than his job? Didn't it bother him that he was once again left without the means to support his family?

Apparently not. When he wasn't actually teaching, all he could think about was seeing Ariadne and the children again. He would face them penniless, but his mind refused to take a responsible attitude to this reality. After all, when had a lack of money ever bothered Ariadne?

The summer term ended one week before a full moon. Remus resisted the impulse to charge across to Germany and imbibe the full dose of Wolfsbane Potion.

"Let's just remind ourselves of the situation," he said to the immobile Joe. "Once I've rejoined Ariadne, I'll be considered accessory after the fact to whatever illegal activities she needs to perform. We don't know how long it will be before we can safely return to Britain, but it might be years. We'll be on the move and we don't speak the languages, so we'll have difficulty finding work, but we won't be entitled to benefits. We have enough savings to keep us for twelve months, but if we have to spend half of it on travel expenses and potions ingredients, it will be gone by Christmas. We really don't know what we're doing in Europe, but we don't have any other options."

Joe's silence might have been a reproach, but perhaps it was only his own conscience needling him.

"Yes, I know: I could look for another teaching job, and send money to support Ariadne wherever she goes. But Sarah will be leaving her soon, and then she'll be alone and unprotected in Europe unless I join her. Surely she'd rather have me there with her, even if it means financial hardship? We might be heading in an unwise direction, but really it's the only direction we have."

Remus allowed himself five days to put his affairs in order. Joe seemed to understand that he was to remain in their house and take care of it. Remus paid all the bills, tidied the garden (which he had neglected since Ariadne left), packed his suitcase and put his collection of borrowed milk bottles out on the doorstep for the milkman to collect. He wrote to Madam Bones, under cover to Kingsley, explaining exactly what they were doing and, as an afterthought, he wrote to Ariadne's parents. It was possible, after all, that they regretted their rejecting attitude to their only daughter.

On Wednesday he went to Smith's in the Victoria Centre. While he was browsing a selection of Muggle maps and tourist guides, a familiar voice behind him exclaimed, "Mr Lupin! Mr Lupin, you were right it happened!"

He turned around. There stood Terry Boot, balancing a heavy armload of his sister's books, his mousy hair dishevelled. He looked radiant and relaxed, not at all in the mood to campaign for justice.

"Did your letter come?" Remus asked.

"It came yesterday Mr Lupin, it explained everything! My parents thought it was a joke, but my sister said that after eleven years of living with my 'accidents', they ought to know it was likely to be real. Some lady with a Scottish name is going to visit us tomorrow to prove it isn't a joke. Mr Lupin, do you think she'll manage to convince them?"

"Professor McGonagall convinces most people," he said. "I went to school with a girl just like you she had parents who thought the letter was a joke and a sister who knew it wasn't. After their parents had met Professor McGonagall, they were completely happy and supportive about their daughter's education."

Terry beamed. "Even if they don't believe your Professor, it's good enough for me," he said. "I know now that there are other people like me in the world. Where is your friend now? Can I meet her?"

That was an unlucky question, because Remus had to admit, "She died a long time ago. But she had a son, a boy named Harry Potter, whom you'll certainly be meeting." He tore off half his shopping list and wrote down some names. "Listen, my wife has a niece, a girl named Morag MacDougal, who I think will be in your class. And there's a boy called Ernie Macmillan, who's their cousin, and another named Stephen Cornfoot. Tell those people that you're new to... to all this... and they'll show you around."

A few hours later Remus was stepping out of the public Floo in Karlsruhe, walking past two tables of beer-drinking Swabians and exiting to a Muggle street where Audis and Mercedes were flashing past at a far higher speed than was legal in Nottingham. A metallic-red Jaguar was parked two doors down, and a curly-haired man in a leather jacket was sitting in the driver's seat, apparently waiting for someone. Remus approached tentatively, established that the Jaguar-driver was indeed Nick Diamond, loaded his suitcase into the back seat and boarded. He was glad he was only a passenger in this contraption; it was soon racing through the Black Forest highways at a velocity that would have given his grandparents a heart-attack.

If his apprehension showed on his face, Mr Diamond misread his expression. "Nice, isn't it? Pity it's only hired; I wouldn't mind owning one of these. But Sarah wants a Bentley."

The speed meant that the drive was mercifully brief; quite abruptly, the pine trees cleared, a signpost indicated that they were welcome in Bad Herrenalb, and the Jaguar landed in front of a half-timbered cottage that might have been built from gingerbread. Remus was still unloading his suitcase when a voice behind him shouted.

"Daddy!"

Elizabeth hadn't forgotten him.

She wriggled in his arms and told him something very important. "Daddy, baby, baby!"

"Yes, we've had a baby."

"Baby!"

Someone else was hugging his knees and, with a hint of disdain, informed him, "Babies are not as much incheating as Elizabeff finks."

"What interests you, Matthew?"

"Nigel the Knight Bus."

While he was juggling both children, Nick Diamond kindly carried his case, and Ariadne emerged from the cottage door. She was carrying the baby in question.

Ariadne still had the bluest eyes in the world.

David looked like Remus's father.

Ariadne had one arm free. Remus had no arms free. Matthew seemed to have at least five arms free. But somehow Remus managed to embrace all of them at once.

"Let's eat dinner," Sarah interrupted.

Something smelling of wild herbs and mushrooms was standing on a round table laid for six. Remus was disconcerted. He was grateful to Sarah for taking care of Ariadne and the children for so long, sacrificing her career and taking only half a day to attend Ivor's funeral, yet somehow he hadn't imagined her being there on their first night. He certainly hadn't given a thought to Nick Diamond, who, as a Muggle, presumably didn't know anything about their real business in the Black Forest.

"Nick and I have theatre tickets in Baden for eight o' clock," said Sarah, "so we'd appreciate an early dinner."

"I'm wanting to sit on Daddy's lap," said Matthew.

Remus pulled him up, only to find that Elizabeth wanted to sit on his lap too. Balancing both children gave him no spare hands for eating, so Ariadne had to cut his food and spoon it into his mouth. Remus wondered how it looked to Nick Diamond, and decided he didn't care.

"Do it this way, Daddy," said Matthew. "Charm your fork to feed you!" Matthew snapped his fingers in what was obviously an attempt to charm the fork. Instead, all the food on the plate flew up into the air, whirled around in a cyclone formation, then flapped out of the window like a butterfly.

Nick Diamond stared.

"Matthew is a wizard," said Sarah matter-of-factly. "Remus is a very powerful wizard, but Ariadne's witchcraft has *depth* rather than power."

Nick Diamond laid down his knife.

"Nick, I haven't been using magic on you," she said. "If you want to marry me, you'll have to get used to magic. If you don't, I'll have your memory Obliviated so that you don't remember anything about it."

Nick put down his fork. "Perhaps we can discuss this on the way to Baden?"

"No," said Sarah, but more to Ariadne than to Nick. "This is something I have to explain before we go out. When I marry Nick, I'm going to sell my flat in Diagon Alley." She paused. "And... with my Muggle husband, Muggle house and Muggle job... I don't think I'll have much more to do with the wizarding world."

Remus knew he was gaping, but Ariadne didn't look surprised. She said, "So that's what you have not been telling me these two months past."

"It's a well-considered decision," said Sarah. "I'll still respect the Statute of Secrecy. I'm keeping my wand too it'll be useful for housework. But otherwise... I really don't have many ties to the wizarding world."

"Ivor's death was a great shock to us all," said Ariadne, leaving Remus wondering if he's just missed ten minutes' conversation.

"And their failure to catch the murderer was the last straw," said Sarah. "They didn't even try. But there are other irritations too. They've done nothing for Veleta... They ostracise werewolves and then they reject the Wolfsbane Potion too... They simply can't see beyond their own closed community, when they could be using magic to end world famine or the Greenhouse Effect. I'm tired of fighting their corruption. Beyond your family, Joe, Hestia, Kingsley and Richard, I really don't have any attachments in this community. Ariadne, you're invited to the wedding if you can enter Britain with any hope of safety! but after that I won't be coming back."

When they waved Sarah and Nick off to Baden-Baden, Remus finally had his family to himself. He was very sure he would rather own the new Nimbus 2000 than a Jaguar. He helped Ariadne to bathe Matthew and Elizabeth, then he washed the dishes while she washed nappies. Finally he turned to meet her eye... and found that he was to be sharing the bed with baby David.

She smiled half-apologetically. "He'll sleep after I've fed him," she promised softly. "There is room for three, since one of us is so small."

Much later that night, when David lay asleep between them, Remus asked Ariadne, "Have you really been here for twelve days without meeting any werewolves?"

"It's been a busy month," she murmured, nestling up to him, "and the werewolves are not much wanting to meet me."

"Why ever not?"

"They are... distrustful... of other people. They are outcasts in the magical community... much as they are in Britain... They have nowhere to go except the Black Forest. According to the German Werewolf Registry, they are all Sylvanian."

Suddenly Remus was wide awake. "All? Ariadne, how anti-social are these people? Are we dealing with criminals like Fenrir Greyback?"

"The Fabelwesenminister says not. He claims they have no leader and are not in any way an orderly society. They are just... existing... wild... in the forest."

"How were you able to discuss all this with the Farb with the man you said?"

"He speaks very good English. It's seeming that all the German officials speak better English than the French and they are more welcoming to visitors. But Germans are more frightened of werewolves because they have not thought to lock them safely away in one village. The officials were less friendly to me after they were knowing my purpose. They have not introduced me to German apothecaries, or issued permits or Portkeys. They just coldly informed me that, as Germany is a free country, nobody can prevent my visiting any citizen."

Remus relaxed a little, and asked, "Do you know where the werewolves live?"

"We met some wizards in the drinking-house in Karlsruhe, and they told us there are werewolves in Ortenaukreis. But they were wanting to tell werewolf stories; once they realised I was intending to shake hands with real werewolves, they became unfriendly, and pretended not to understand English."

"How many German werewolves are there?"

"According to the Registry, twenty-eight. Well, three of them are Austrian, but they were all tidied away to the Black Forest after being bitten. However, I've passed ten days here without meeting any; they are perhaps believing that I'm their enemy because they've heard that I visited the Zaubereiministerium first. They probably do not speak English, so now I'm needing to find an interpreter... and I'm needing you."

As she outlined her plan for making contact with the German werewolves, Remus reminded himself that no problem could be truly insurmountable for the woman who had brewed the first successful Wolfsbane Potion.

* * * * *

Remus sat in a village coffee shop, wondering which of the local Muggles spoke English. He knew they would be more talkative in a pub, but he couldn't take his children into a pub and he wasn't yet ready to leave them behind. He was fast discovering that people politely ignored a young family who seemed absorbed in one another. If he had been alone, they would have been more willing to approach him.

"How do we *start* talking when we don't know the language?" he asked.

"I can start," said Ariadne. "Try to look like a researcher!"

He pulled a notebook and two pens out of his wallet, while Ariadne glanced at a waitress for some reason, Ariadne's glances were usually enough to bring waiters running. This one was garbed in impossibly gaudy red bonnet, presumably the traditional costume of the district, and she was brandishing a huge menu.

"Excuse me," said Ariadne, a note of touching sadness in her voice, "but we cannot speak German..."

"Obadias!" called the waitress. "*Noch'ne amerikanische Touristin!*"

Remus felt that the waitress had perhaps not quite grasped the situation; but soon she was joined by a waiter in leather knee-breeches.

"Do you vant cahffee?" asked Obadias. Unless he had recently been travelling in the New World, he had been taught English by an American.

"Tea, please, two glasses of milk and one chamomile tea. We are also wanting cake... What do you recommend?"

"Our house spetsi-al is the Black Forest cake."

"Good, we are interested in the local culture. Is Black Forest cake what real German families eat at home?"

Remus didn't want cake, but Matthew evidently did, and Remus began to divine the method behind Ariadne's madness. Obadias the waiter explained that German families had no need to eat cake at home, since they could visit his establishment, where they baked the only genuine Black Forest cake in the whole region. Ariadne asked what else was typical of Black Forest culture, and before long Obadias had delegated their order to the junior waitress and was completely drawn in to discussing local mores with Ariadne.

"... You must certain visit the cuckoo clock in Schonach. It is the largest in the world."

By the time the cake arrived, Obadiah was so comfortable that Ariadne was able to confide, "My husband is researching German legends. We're wanting to know all the the fairy stories you can tell us about the area."

Obadiah the waiter took a chair beside Remus and, still looking at Ariadne, launched into a tirade about the Brothers Grimm. Remus pretended to take notes, but he felt it would take a long time to arrive at the point.

"I'm not wanting any more cake," said Matthew. "It had too much cream."

Elizabeth, after eating one cherry, had finished her milk without taking any more interest in the food, and now all three children were becoming restless. Just as Remus was wondering whether he should take them outside and leave Ariadne to interrogate the locals, Obadiah arrived at the point.

"I want to think it was here in Bad Herrenalb that Little Redcap met the wolf."

Ariadne was swift. "The Brothers Grimm collected a great many stories about wolves. Are there real wolves in the Black Forest?"

"Not many now," said Obadiah. "But there were, before men hunted them down. It was the fear of the wolf that led to all the little stories about wolfs."

"What about werewolves? You must have many legends about them too."

"Mummy, I'm wanting to play outside!"

If Ariadne were exasperated, she hid it like an angel. "As I said, it's my husband who is wanting to collect the legends. Can you please tell him everything you know about werewolves, while I take the bairns out?"

Half an hour later, thanks to the unwitting Muggle, Remus had five pages of notes.

* * * * *

With about thirty hours left until the full moon rose, Remus had to work fast. Obadiah the Waiter had been vague about locations, but the name "Enzklösterle" had arisen more than once, so Remus bought a postcard of the village, memorised the view of a scenic forest clearing that might, on a lucky day, be isolated, and Apparated there.

When he returned to Ariadne in the evening he had found the werewolves.

"The story from Enzklösterle was a false lead," he reported. "It was probably true, but the werewolf died about three hundred years ago. The story about Sasbachwalden was fake; what actually happened was that a group of Muggles went there twenty years ago to shoot a film about a werewolf, and the so-called 'local legend' was the plot of the film."

"What animal were those Muggles shooting?"

Remus explained briefly about the cinema. "So then I went to Schiltach, where every story I heard from Obadiah was not only repeated by the locals, but attributed to Schiltach itself, together with a solemn assurance that it was less than a century since there had been people naïve enough to believe the truth of every single tale. I couldn't find anyone to talk to me in Kappelrodeck or Appenweiler, but before I gave up completely, I went to Oberwolfach, and there were... different people there."

"How different?"

"Younger, and speaking much better English. They believed my story about doing research and they told me a werewolf story that was 'doing the rounds', one that was always reported as true, even though everyone knew that of course it was only a joke or a fable. According to this legend, a Muggle teenager was taking a moonlit hike in Altwolfach. When he heard a howling, he thought at first it came from his transistor that's a kind of portable Wireless but after he switched it off, he realised it came from the ruined castle on the hill. He went up to investigate and found a dozen wolves with their snouts pointing towards the full moon. Taking fright, he ran to report it to the police. By the time they returned with him to the castle, the moon had set, and all the police saw was a dozen vagabonds. The boy stuck to his wolf story despite the annoyance of the police and the absence of any corroborating reports of wolves loose in the area. In subsequent months several unnamed people have claimed to hear the howling."

"Why do the Muggle police not return to investigate by night?"

"The story claims that they have tried to, but that something always gets in their way. A storm blows up, or they hear a woman screaming in the opposite direction. That alerted me that this story might not be pure fiction. Invisible barriers aren't a usual feature of werewolf stories, but erecting a Muggle-repeller is exactly the kind of thing real werewolves might do. Since the story didn't seem to be more than five years old, and we do know that Altwolfach is in the right general location, I thought it was worth going there."

He showed her a postcard of Altwolfach.

"Here is the ruined castle where the Muggles heard the howling. I Apparated into the centre and I found crude magical traces around the hill. As far as I could tell, it was just a simple Muggle-repeller that could be activated or deactivated at a word. I checked the castle walls pretty thoroughly for ordinary Muggle security because there was certainly no magical provision for keeping dangerous beasts in."

"Do not say that..."

"Ariadne, I *am* a beast when the moon is full. Anyway, this castle is a safely enclosed space, probably the best place for me to Transform tomorrow night regardless of anything else."

* * * * *

Remus forced his eyes open as soon as he was aware of light behind them. He must resist the temptation to sleep off his Transformation all day. If he thought hard, he would remember the reason he had to be alert early this morning.

He was not at all comfortable, for he was lying on jagged stones, and dishevelled people of all ages were lying haphazardly around him. The tall stone walls that surrounded them all reminded him that they were in the ruins of Altwolfach Castle, and he needed to meet these werewolves before they slunk back to the depths of the Black Forest.

"Good morning," he said. "Does anyone here speak English?"

He was greeted by blank stares, but a middle-aged man covered with matted hair began to approach.

"*Wie ist Ihr Name, Fremder?*" The Sylvania's scowl might have been aggressive but possibly it was only cautious. *Woher kommen Sie?*

Remus held out his hand in what he hoped was a friendly greeting. "I am Remus Lupin," he enunciated clearly. "I am a werewolf."

*A/N. **CornedBee** has a busy personal life but he is never too busy to help a friend. I'm sure he had a very good laugh at my original draft of this chapter; but I thank him very much for correcting my German and so saving me from being laughed at by anyone else.*

Over the Lea

Chapter 13 of 21

The Lupins conclude their business in Germany and begin to chart the unknown territory further east.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Over the Lea

Saturday 27 July Friday 1 November 1991

All over Germany, including Altwolfach and Bad Herrenalb in the Black Forest; Freiburg, Leipzig, Cologne, Frankfurt, Munich and Hanover; and the Zaubereiministerium, Berlin. Also the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium, Budapest, Hungary, and from Budapest to Oradea.

There chanced to be a Pedlar bold,

A Pedlar bold there chanced to be;

He put his pack all on his back,

And so merrily trudged over the lea.

"O Pedlar, Pedlar, what is in thy pack?

Come speedily and tell to me."

"I've several suits of the gay green silks,

And silken bowstrings by two or three."

"If you have several suits of the gay green silk,

And silken bowstrings two or three,

Then, by my body," cries little John,

"One half of your pack shall belong to me."

English Ballad: "The Bold Pedlar and Robin Hood"

Rated PG for the (false) accusation of a truly terrible crime.

The advancing werewolf scowled again. He asked Remus a question, then shouted something about 'bin *Engländer*' to his companions and tried again in English.

"Who has bited you?"

"Fenrir Greyback."

"I know dis Fenrir not. Is he English? Vy are you in Chermamy?"

"I have a potion... medicine... for werewolves. It makes my life better. I have come to ask if German werewolves would like to try it."

The dishevelled wizard did not relax his scowl. Remus saw that he had a skull tattooed on his hairy arm. "Stops de meditsin to turn a man to a wolf?"

"No, not exactly. It stops the transforming of the mind..." He wasn't explaining this well; the tattooed German probably couldn't understand him. But he didn't know how to make it any clearer so he pressed on. "Of the thoughts. Your body is a wolf but your mind can think like a human."

A dozen German werewolves were now surrounding him, and none of them seemed at all impressed by his description, even assuming they understood enough English to grasp any of his story.

The tattooed one stabbed his thumb to his chest. "I am Peter Stubbe." This was presumably an announcement that he was in charge around here. "Sent you to us the Zaubereiministerium?"

"No, I came with my wife, who makes the medicine. The Zaubereiministerium would not help her."

This was his first statement that seemed acceptable to his new companions. Up until now, they had been wary, leaving all the talking to Peter Stubbe. Now a young woman with yin-yang earrings snorted and informed him, "The Ministerium is never helping any vairwolf. Never!"

Remus felt that her English might be better than Herr Stubbe's, so he addressed her directly. "If the Zaubereiministerium throws an idea away, perhaps it's a good idea. The British Ministry doesn't want to help werewolves either. But British werewolves like this medicine. So do the French."

The yin-yang girl said something in German; Remus hoped it was a translation. Peter Stubbe was still scowling, but he didn't try to interrupt.

"If you would like to try the medicine too..." Remus continued helplessly. "Are there any other werewolves in Germany? Is there any other wizard in Germany who is friendly to werewolves? How do I meet your friends?"

Finally Peter Stubbe relaxed his suspicion, but it was the yin-yang girl who replied.

"Only von who is not vairwolf listens to a idea to help a vairwolf. Only von who is not vorking at the Ministerium can sometimes make the Ministers listen to him. If you want to

improve Chermany, ve must take you to Johann Weyer."

Johann Weyer lived on the outskirts of Freiburg in a red-plastered half-timbered cottage so gabled and shuttered and shingled that Remus decided that it was probably here and not in Bad Herrenalb that Hansel and Gretel had strayed into the hag's clutches. Johann Weyer himself was dressed in rose-pink robes decorated with blood-red hammers and sickles, and his shoulder-length hair was also dyed pink.

"Velcome!" he said. "I shpeak Englisch very good and I can help you. Look!" He waved at his sitting-room walls, which were covered with posters of giants, goblins, house-elves and vampires and slogans in both German and Latin. "I vant to help vervolfs, and you vant to help dem too. So ve can vork togedder, yes? Vat is your plan?"

Haltingly, Remus explained about the Wolfsbane Potion.

Johann Weyer shook his head. "Your wife made big mistake. She vent to de Zaubereiministerium, and nobody dere helps outlanders. She should haf come first to me, and I can have helped her good. Listen, Remus. Tell your clever wife to make dis medicine. I vill tell all the vervolfs to come to my house and trink it. I vill also find apotakes to vatch and write reports. Ve vill write everything dat ve see and hear so ve have factual evidence and many vitnesses from inside Chermany. Denn ve vill take it all back to de Zaubereiministerium, and de Ministers vill make new laws for vervolf rights."

It sounded too simple. "Will the Ministerium listen to you?" asked Remus.

Johann Weyer tossed his pink hair. "Venn I vas a young man, it did not always listen. I told de Ministers dat house-elfs should be paid... dat chy-ants should be educated... dat ve should be friendlier to goblins... dat ve should be more respectful to tsentaurs... and de Ministerium laughed. But I am very smart to make people notice me. I can write owls all day long or make hundreds of people to march to de Ministry or let myself have interview in de newspaper or on de vireless. De Ministers quvick realised dat it is faster to listen to me immediate dan to send me avay. So now dey listen as soon as I say I vant to shpeak to dem. De Übersekretärin to de Innenminister, Waltraut Rechtspflege, is shpet-si-al good. She has made many new laws because of me."

Remus wondered what Johann Weyer had that Hippocrates Smethwyck had not.

"Of course, I never come to de Ministerium vis *abad* idea," Johann reminded him. "Always good. Dat means, always vis de facts and figures. So ve cannot go today or even next veek. Your wife must test her new medicine for t'ree full moons. In August, September and October, she vill boil de potion, and de apotakes vill write reports. End October, ve vill go to visit Frau Minister Rechtspflege."

Before the day was over, Remus found that Johann Weyer had organised their lives more thoroughly than Sarah Webster ever did. The visas in their Muggle passports were magically modified to permit them an indefinite sojourn in Germany. The Muggle receptionist at their hotel presented Remus with a bill for three months' advance rental, which brought their funds to a painful low. Boxes of fresh wolfsbane and dried digitalin piled up in Johann Weyer's house again, at Remus's expense and half a dozen apothecaries from all over Germany arrived in Bad Herrenalb to shake Ariadne's hand and frown over the Wolfsbane Potion formula. Johann Weyer called them over to his house nearly every day so they could meet werewolves and explain the function of the potion, while Johann lounged across his sofa, dictating copious notes to a blood-red Quick Quotes Quill.

And so they lived for over three months.

Every werewolf in Germany was dosed with Wolfsbane Potion. Having transformed, every one was subjected to a battery of tests by the German apothecaries who had trekked out to Altwolfach to observe them. Every werewolf slept quietly through the August full moon without a single case of self-harm.

Remus found himself a part-time job teaching English in a Muggle adult education centre.

Ariadne balanced brewing Wolfsbane Potion and listening to the life-histories of werewolves with caring for their children.

Matthew learned to count to one thousand.

Elizabeth learned to talk in both English and German without understanding that she was speaking two languages.

David learned to sleep through the night.

The whole procedure was repeated in September. By October, it was clear that the potion worked, and the werewolves did not bother to congregate at Altwolfach. They dismantled their Muggle-repelling barrier and spent the night draped over the living quarters of the delighted Johann Weyer.

"It vill be brilliant!" promised Johann Weyer. "I vill tell clear everything to de Übersekretärin, and she vill make de Innenminister to grant a patent. I vill ask interview today. Come vis!" He threw Floo powder into the hearth and, with a whirl of his pink hair and a swirl of the green flames, dived into the Floo network.

It took Remus and Ariadne a little longer to hold their children steadily as they negotiated their way through the foreign network. In the grand foyer of the Zaubereiministerium, Johann Weyer was almost dancing a Schuhplattler as he tapped out his impatience.

"Dere you are, Remus! De Übersekretärin already says ve can go to her office immediate."

Johann was so confident; Remus did not dare meet Ariadne's eye. They both meekly followed the flowing pink robes across the hall and into a lift, listened to a polite voice instructing them in German and allowed Johann Weyer to instruct, "*Fünfter!*" The lift zoomed upwards, and by the time it stopped on the fifth floor, a witch in black and gold robes was waiting to meet them.

"*Guten Tag, Herr Weyer. Worum geht es heute?*"

Johann Weyer explained something in very rapid German, several times sweeping out his pink-swathed arm to indicate Remus and Ariadne.

The black-and-gold witch turned towards them. She had protuberant and penetrating blue eyes that stared through gold-framed spectacles. "I am Waltraut Rechtspflege, Senior Secretary to the Minister for Interior Affairs. Herr Weyer says that you are involved with his latest petition." Her English was very good. "He says you have a treatment for werewolves, a treatment that is legal in France but forbidden in Britain. Now, he says, it should be legal in Germany, and he has a petition from the German werewolves to request it. Tell me, Frau Magister Lupin: was this medicine ever described in a peer-reviewed journal?"

Ariadne brought out a copy of the article and handed it over.

Frau Minister Rechtspflege swept her eye over it. "It is remarkable," she commented, "that I never noticed this before."

"Remarkable," breathed Ariadne. She did not explain how the article had been ripped from every copy of the *Western Journal of Apothecarism* within hours of its publication.

"Herr Weyer, you know that I have work to do today. Take your friends to see the sights and return in two days. After I have read all the documents I shall have more to say."

As the lift swept back down to the foyer, Remus asked Johann, "Is this how Frau Minister Rechtspflege always dismisses you?"

"That was not dismissing," said Ariadne. "She really is going to examine the proposal."

Johann Weyer's idea of seeing the sights was to dash through the Floo network or leap onto the Zauberbuss, shout the name of some destination, then race to the head of any queue that might be waiting for admission to the attraction and magically distract the Muggle clerk at the exact moment a ticket needed to be purchased. "Leipzig! Köln! Frankfurt! München! Come, we are visiting next Hannover!"

Since Remus had three children and their baggage in his care, and since he felt obliged to underwrite Johann's entry tickets as well as pay for their own, he always found himself following at a slower pace. Once he nearly handed over a Galleon to a surprised curator; he began to worry that his small collection of marks would not last until their next visit to the Berlin branch of Gringotts.

Fortunately Johann took Waltraut Rechtspflege's timeline of two days literally. Exactly forty-eight hours after their first visit, they were back in the Zaubereiministerium, and Waltraut Rechtspflege was immediately ready to speak to them.

"Congratulations," she said. "It's a very clever discovery. I had to work hard for the last two days. First I spoke to your Herr Magister Belby. He said the potion is harmless to werewolves but it is forbidden in Britain because of the dangers to the public. Then I spoke to the British Patents Office but I found there a new person, not the one who first refused the patent. He told me the same, that the potion is good but not safe for the public. Then I spoke to the Bureau des Brevets in France, and the Minister there told me that the potion is a success in France, where the werewolves are no danger to public safety because they are all contained in one village. Then I read the reports written by members of our Apothekervereinigung and I also spoke to them. They agree that they have seen our German werewolves be tamed by drinking the Wolfsbane Potion. They have also studied the formula, and they are confident that it should be effective and not poisonous when correctly taken."

She paused from the catalogue of her busy deeds, leaving Remus to wonder what the catch would be.

"Therefore I will recommend to the Innenminister that the Ministerium should grant a patent. A competent apothecary should supervise the distribution of Wolfsbane Potion in St Hildegard's Hospital every month. We should require the werewolves to accept the treatment and to spend the night of the full moon in the hospital. In Germany we cannot force werewolves to leave the forest to drink medicine, but if they deliberately refuse to do this much, we can hold them guilty of any crimes they commit. I think the Ministerium is likely to approve new werewolf legislation, and we can perhaps foresee the time when lycanthropy is no longer a social problem."

Ariadne was faintly frowning, so Remus knew that she didn't feel comfortable either. However, it was difficult to pinpoint exactly what was wrong with the Übersekretärin's proposition. Wasn't this exactly what they had hoped and failed to achieve in Britain?

"Where will you take Herr Magister Belby's potion next?" she asked.

Remus opened his mouth to correct her assumption about Belby, but Johann Weyer was quicker.

"Swisser!" he exclaimed. "Italy! Poland! Czechia! Every place vere dere are verevolfs under oppressing!"

"Not Switzerland, then," corrected Frau Minister Rechtspflege. "There have been no werewolves in Switzerland for five hundred years. There are some in Italy, but I do not recommend that you waste your time there. If it is your desire to make a better life for werewolves all over the world, it will be best to go to the capital city of lycanthropy, where the problem began, where the werewolves are the greatest public danger and where the world's highest proportion of werewolves still lives. Go to Hungary."

Afterwards, Remus asked, "Frau Minister Rechtspflege was reasonable... wasn't she?"

"She was fair," conceded Ariadne, "but she was not kind."

"Why do you say that? Don't you wish Fudge had granted the same concession to British werewolves?"

"I am wishing it. Frau Minister Rechtspflege was better than Mr Fudge. But, Remus, she's more interested in public order than in the problems of real werewolves... or in any other problem that Johann Weyer might present. She's wanting to force werewolves to... well, to do exactly what they did voluntarily for Healer Smethwyck. Once the German law has changed, she can make it very difficult for any werewolf who fails to comply. Remus, I'm not knowing if we've really made it better for these people. Additional regulations and publicity and penalties will perhaps make it all worse."

"Sweetheart, you surely know by now that whenever one person does good in the world, some other person will find a way to abuse it. Fenrir Greyback would have abused Wolfsbane Potion by drinking it, and government officials might use it as an excuse to discriminate against werewolves. But I promise you, it's still a blessing to the ordinary werewolf in the street, and in the end you'll do the most good by taking the formula to as many of us as possible."

"So... are you wanting to go to Hungary?"

"We can't go back to Britain," he reminded her.

Ariadne packed their bags, while Remus settled their bills in Bad Herrenalb and exchanged their tiny pile of Galleons for forints. Waltraut Rechtspflege, perhaps glad to shunt Johann Weyer's latest protégés out of Germany, wrote letters of recommendation to the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium in Budapest. She arranged to have the original journal article and the reports of the French and German apothecaries translated into Hungarian. She had Hungarian visas stamped into their passports in case any Muggle officials were watching. She directed them to the Transportbüro, where their Portkey was set for the Érkezési Kiköto in Budapest.

They landed on a marble floor, facing a wall of trefoil arches. A voice behind them demanded, *Ütleveléket, kérem!* As Remus turned to guess what was required next, Matthew asked, "Do these people have another different way of talking?"

The new voice belonged to an elderly wizard whose loose robes red and white stripes with an elaborate green trim were obviously some kind of uniform. He was holding out his hand, so Remus handed over their Portkey. The official waved a wand over it, seemed satisfied by a brief flash of blue light that it was deactivated, and placed it in a box full of similar items. Then he held out his hand again.

Not knowing what else to do, Remus handed over their papers.

The official shuffled through them until he found one in Hungarian, which he read. *Angolul,* he commented. "You want the Lényfelügyeleti Miniszter. Ilonka will take you. Go!"

Ilonka was a young woman wearing an identical uniform. They followed her meekly through the trefoil arch, across a wide marble hall, into a lift, down three storeys, along a marble corridor and through another trefoil arch. She waved her red and white arm at another uniform sitting in the office beyond and then withdrew.

The new uniform presumably the Lényfelügyeleti Miniszter waved them onto a carved wooden bench to wait while he read their documents. He read with a furious frown. Ariadne stared at the floor, trying to play quietly with the babies; Remus knew she didn't dare say out loud whatever she was thinking.

Finally the Lényfelügyeleti Miniszter looked up. He spoke to them quite softly. "Welcome, I hope you will enjoy Hungary. Your friends write that you have medicine for werewolves. You have come, I think, to meet Hungarian werewolves and to help them. That is very admirable. But, alas, we cannot help you here, for you are fifty years too late. There are no more werewolves in Hungary."

Remus felt his stomach lurch. No werewolves? Waltraut Rechtspflege might be misinformed about a few details in foreign countries, but surely a minister in her position wouldn't be five decades out of date?

"There was disorder in the days of Grindelwald," the Lényfelügyeleti Miniszter explained. "Muggles were terrified, and many people were persecuted. Werewolves made a convenient... scapegoat among wizards. And so they were slaughtered. By the time of Grindelwald's defeat, every last werewolf in Hungary was slain."

"That is a tragedy," said Ariadne softly.

"It was a terrible thing. The death of Grindelwald brought no peace to the Muggles, for they have been suffering ever since. Even today, when the world has newly changed and life is better, the Muggles are insecure. It takes all the efforts of the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium to keep wizards safe and to improve life for the Muggles without being seen. It will be, I think, ten years before our country can return to normal function. Before that time, we shall have no spare energy to assist foreigners with their projects."

The Lényfelügyeleti Miniszter stood up. "So I am sorry that we cannot help you, *kedves Lupinné*. But enjoy your visit to Hungary."

Deflated, Remus began to walk away, although he had no idea where he would go. They were at the door of the lift before Ariadne spoke.

"He was lying."

"What?"

"What he said last about having no spare energy for extra projects was the truth. It was the reason he's wanting us to think there are no werewolves in Hungary. But he was lying about that."

"Yes a lie," broke in a new voice.

The employee named Ilonka was waiting for them in the lift. She spoke in swift, low German as the lift sped upwards, and Matthew translated.

"The lady says her brother is a werewolf and there are lots of werewolves in Hungary. She says more than in any other country in the world. But they are not in Budapest because they were all sent away to Transylvania. If we're wanting to meet werewolves, that's where we have to go."

* * * * *

Outside the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium, a cool wind was blowing. "Can we Floo to Transylvania?" asked Ariadne.

"We can if we know the names of the grates," said Remus reasonably. "What is the major wizarding street for the province? For that matter, do you know the name of its capital city?"

She did not. "Budapest is on the River Danube," she began. "But provincial towns... Oh, this is daft. A tourist bureau even a Muggle one would be able to help us with basic information like that."

"It would if we spoke Hungarian or even German. But I don't think ordinary Hungarian Muggles speak much English. If it comes to that, ~~where~~ do we want to go? Do you think the Transylvanian werewolves live in the middle of large Muggle cities?"

She stared back at him. They had no idea what they were doing.

"Sylvania." Matthew was tugging at Ariadne's arm. "I'm want to go to Transylvania."

"I suppose that is one idea," said Remus. "Board some public vehicle, ask to go to the province and hope the conductor will suggest a sensible destination." He held out his right arm.

Nothing happened.

Remus frowned. After all, there was a Magicobus in France and a Zauberbuss in Germany. He held out his arm again, concentrating harder.

But he might as well have been a Muggle. It appeared that no vehicle equivalent to the Knight Bus operated in Hungary.

"There's maybe a Muggle bus that will take us to Transylvania," suggested Ariadne.

"More likely a train," said Remus.

"No! I'm want to ride a *buss*!" protested Matthew.

"Are we knowing the Hungarian word for a railway station?" asked Ariadne.

Fortunately, there were Hungarian Muggles who spoke at least as much German as Matthew did, and an hour later they had found their way to Keleti Railway Station. The diagrams of train routes were bewildering, but eventually Ariadne recognised the word "Oradea", which she was nearly certain was a city in Transylvania. While they waited in the ticket queue, she explained the family's plan carefully to Matthew, then lifted him up to the counter. Matthew, faithfully interpreting the situation in the way that made sense to him, waved a fistful of Hungarian bank notes and asked in German for five tickets to Oradea. The vendor replied in what might have been the same language.

"She says we have to come back tomorrow," Matthew reported. "If you're going to Oradea, you have to buy the ticket for tomorrow, never for today."

Apparently their booking was accepted for, on examining the pieces of cardboard that Matthew passed over for safekeeping, Remus discovered that they had paid for five full-fare first-class return tickets.

Matthew's explanation for his extravagant outlay was a rational, "We're a five family."

Remus couldn't begin to explain why the ticket-seller might have been persuaded to perceive the situation differently. Instead, he turned his mind to the next problem. "How do we ask in Hungarian or even in German for a hotel?"

Matthew looked scornful. "That's easy. *Wir suchen ein Hotel!*"

Twenty-four hours later, they were on the train. Matthew bounced on the red plush seat and said, "This is nearly as good as a bus!" He stopped bouncing for long enough to listen the German tourists sitting opposite, then reported loudly, "Franz and Sabine don't like this train, Daddy. They say Hungarian trains aren't never comfortable because the chairs are too low and the lights don't work and the compartment isn't clean. Sabine just said she didn't like the wallpaper either."

Remus hoped the solid middle-aged couple, who were beaming benevolently at Matthew while they unpacked a bag of snacks, did not understand English. They seemed amused by the frank admiration with which Matthew stared at their collection of hams and cheeses.

He held out his hand and politely requested, "*Geben Sie mir bitte ein Butterbrot!*"

Sabine laughed and asked Ariadne a question. After a second, she repeated herself in English. "Can I give your son a bread? He is a very polite little boy and also very clever. Can I give von your daughter too?"

Franz began to place slices of black sausage on pumpernickel bread and handed the first piece to Matthew, the second to Elizabeth and then to Remus's embarrassment

a third to Ariadne. The morning snack for this well-fed German couple was a lush picnic that would have sustained the Lupin family for three days; Remus hoped these Muggles weren't assuming that they starved their children, for the sandwich bag could not have contained more food if it had been actually enchanted to produce an endless supply.

Matthew happily bounced and ate and was soon telling his new friends his life-story.

"He knows you're going to Transylvania," translated Sabine. "Do you think that you will see vampires, young man?"

"No," said Matthew seriously. "We're going to visit werewolves. Vampires are bad because they bite you on purpose. But werewolves only have an animal-brain so they can't help it if they bite you, and you should feel sorry for them."

Franz chuckled, and said, "Your boy has a strong forpicturing. Or did you perhaps read him a story about a vervolf?"

Remus couldn't remember at what speed Muggle trains usually travelled, but this one did seem to be slow. After they had rattled through the plains for about five hours, the train wheezed to a halt, and a uniformed official marched into their carriage demanding, "*Aratati-mi pasapoartele voastre!*" Remus assumed he knew what this instruction meant, but in case other passengers were in doubt, the official clarified, "*Útlevél-ellenőrzés!*"

Elizabeth chose this moment to screw up her face and prepare to bawl.

"She's feeling sick," said Ariadne. "I'll take her to the washroom. You have our documents, Remus, have you not?"

Remus began sorting through the pouch of their rucksack actually Aunt Macmillan's suitcase, today Transfigured into a more portable shape as Ariadne rose to her feet. It was the wrong moment, for she caught her balance on the swaying floor exactly as the official was advancing to face her. He pointed at her severely and commanded, "*Arata-mi pasaportul tau.*"

Ariadne gestured to Remus as she explained, "My husband has our documents." But she was paying more attention to Elizabeth, who definitely needed to be taken out of the public compartment.

"*Ha!*" The official snapped to attention; he had decided which passenger's possessions were to be scrutinised today. "You are you Eng-lish?"

"I am not," said Ariadne. "I'm..."

"*Arata-mi pasaportul tau! Show passport, please!*"

Remus handed over their faked Muggle passports, hoping he had forged the watermarks accurately.

The official compared the photographs, then pounced. "Ha! Liar! You are Eng-lish, Lady."

"I'm not English," repeated Ariadne, apparently unaware of *why* this was the wrong answer.

"*Nu ai viza necesara pentru a intra în România!*" he exclaimed triumphantly. "You Lady Loopin you have no visa!"

Remus tried to peer into the passport. He *had* put visas in; the wizards at the Zaubereiministerium had set a Protean Charm on a Muggle original, so the visa stamp was one detail that *must* be correct.

Elizabeth was sick all over Ariadne's shoulder.

Ignoring the mess, the official commanded, "Follow me."

Remus picked up David in one arm and the two rucksacks in the other and began to follow. Matthew bid a polite good bye to Franz and Sabine and trotted after them. The angry official led them off the train, across a courtyard and into the station-house. Remus still did not consider the possibility that they were really in trouble; after all, the man was a Muggle, so they could repair any difficulties with magic as soon as he was looking the other way. They could clean Ariadne's shoulder too.

"Give me bags." Remus handed them over, but the official, interested in Ariadne's "lie", did not look at him. "Is this your bag or your man's?"

"Mine."

"Open it."

Ariadne stooped to unlatch the clasp one-handed, then lifted the flap to display her tightly-packed jars and bottles.

The official grabbed one and poured the contents over the table. It was only barakol powder, but of course no Muggle, even a qualified chemist, would recognise it in its present state, compressed to one tenth of its original mass and frozen to preserve its freshness. Almost crowing with exultation, the official tried another box, and Remus realised how lucky they were that he didn't recognise this compressed white powder for what it was the poison digitalin.

What was certain was that the official thought he understood the situation. With a delighted cry of, "*Esti o traficanta de droguri!*" an accusation that Remus almost understood he jabbed his finger at each of them.

"*Esti arestata!* You *Domnule* you go back to Budapest. You Lady you stay here!"

Two more officials had arrived behind them; one of these swept up Matthew, while the other hooked an arm around Remus's elbow. Remus was too frozen to the spot to register that he was supposed to move. He was almost dragged backwards through the station-house door while, with lurching heart, he saw that the first official was gripping Ariadne's arm and hustling her and Elizabeth forward through the opposite door, to the inner room of the station-house.

A/N. Let's be honest. I don't speak Hungarian. The words of the Magyars were written by St. Row-a-Check. And I don't speak Romanian either. All the Romanian parts were written by Ana Christina. It's rather embarrassing to admit that I used to speak German, because I don't any more, and I wouldn't have been able to write the German parts without CornedBee holding his red pen over my shoulder. I am so grateful to them all for taking time with my story and lending it this air of authenticity.

Withered Away

Ariadne discovers something worth knowing.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Withered Away

Friday 1 November 1991

Oradea, Transylvania.

I've seen the forest

Adorned the foremost,

With flowers of the fairest,

Both pleasant and gay.

So bonnie was their blooming,

Their scent the air perfuming,

But now they are withered away.

Catherine Cockburn: "Flowers of the Forest"

Rated PG for drugs, politics and possibly justifiable violence.

Ariadne came quietly, but Elizabeth did not. Worn out by travelling on an unsettled stomach, and frightened by the angry official, she howled, "Daddeeee! Daaaddeeee!" all the way into the interrogation room inside the station. What most bothered Ariadne, as she tried to soothe her distraught daughter, was that David was with Remus. If the Muggles were planning to spend a long time accusing her, the family might not be reunited before David needed to be fed.

The border official pointed to Ariadne's rucksack and accused, "You have drogs."

She supposed that was one way of stating the case. "Medicine," she agreed. It did not really matter what she said since she could not possibly state her real business to a Muggle. "Hush, darling, we'll see Daddy in a few minutes."

"You must bring no drogs in Romania!"

Romania? She began to have the first inkling of why he had fussed about her visa. Had she crossed a national border? She thought her atlas had shown Oradea in Hungary, but what if the border was not where she had assumed...?

"Look!" He thrust her passport under her nose. "You are British!"

"I am," she agreed, realising as she spoke that, "Are you English?" had probably meant, "Are you British?"

"You telled a lie, you have no visa, and you have drogs."

It really did not seem worthwhile to explain herself to such an angry Muggle, so she sat on the lone wooden bench and waited quietly. After a while, he became tired of repeating himself, and the interrogation petered out. Elizabeth was whimpering, and Ariadne wondered how much longer she would have to wait before she could clean up her reeking shoulder.

It was probably only ten minutes before two Muggles wearing blue coats and visored caps entered the room. They had no need to speak; one jerked his head at Ariadne, and she knew she was required to follow. She squashed the worrying thoughts that were beginning to demand her attention. Remus would not know where they were taking her so meeting up again would be difficult. It looked as if the border official intended to keep hold of her rucksack, which contained her complete inventory of herbs. And Elizabeth was needing to have her nappy changed.

The ideal time to give these Muggles the slip was now. But the two policemen were leading her through a busy street so there was no opportunity; and since it was not a life-threatening situation, she could not use magic in front of them. Her best bet was to lull them into assuming her compliance.

They took her across the road to a large and ugly building. It certainly was not one of Transylvania's architectural gems; it had the grimly unimaginative contours of a strictly utilitarian construction. It took a while for whoever was inside to undo a complicated system of locks and bolts; Ariadne could not help thinking how quickly those locks could be blasted with a *Reducto* charm. Eventually the policemen were able to hustle her through the doors into an unlit corridor and they explained something to another official who apparently worked there. She knew this place was some kind of detention centre, but only when a brutal-faced woman propelled them into a square room and locked the door did she realise it was actually a prison not merely a place to await trial, but also a place for convicted Muggles to serve their sentences.

"*Dezbraca-te!*" ordered her new guard.

Not understanding the instruction, but sensing that this woman would never show any compassion because she had never received any, Ariadne smiled politely and cuddled Elizabeth, who was too tired to emit more than a whimper.

Angry at this misdirection of Ariadne's attention, the guard insisted, "*Esti prea proasta ca sa întelegi Româna de baza? Da-mi fetita, si apoi dezbraca-te!*"

Her glare was directed so pointedly to the child that Ariadne could not misunderstand. They were going to separate her from Elizabeth. Once her daughter was out of her sight, she would not know where to start looking for her. Life-threatening or not, it was time to stop complying with these people and take action.

The guard stalked up to them and grabbed at Elizabeth with one hand and at Ariadne's robe with another.

Ariadne was quicker. As the cloth ripped and Elizabeth shrieked, Ariadne had her wand in her hand.

"*Confundo!*"

The Muggle woman staggered backwards, her eyes suddenly glazed and unfocused, and her face as relaxed as released elastic. Ariadne took advantage of her confusion to perform a *Scourgify* on her shoulder.

"You were going to show me the way out," she cajoled.

This ploy might have worked if the woman had understood English; like most people recovering from a Confundus Charm, she was clutching for any guidance the environment might offer. But the guard really did not understand a word of English; Ariadne's soft tones did not tell her what to do, but they reminded her that Ariadne was the person to whom she was supposed to be paying attention. She snapped into automatic gear and shunted Ariadne towards the door.

Ariadne considered using a second Confundus Charm and making a break for the front door, but the corridor was lined with guards, most of them large men. It would be wiser to wait until nobody was looking at her, even if that meant waiting until dark. So she allowed herself to be led through several passages and up the stairs and to watch while her captor brought out a huge bunch of keys and unlock one of several identical iron doors.

The woman shoved her forcefully into the tiny room; having recovered her wits, she was determined to assert her dominance.

"*lata o noua prizoniera,*" she announced. "*Este o traficanta de droguri*"

The door slammed shut and the locks clunked back into their usual position.

The cell was lit only by a high barred window. Ariadne estimated that it would be dark in about half an hour and it stank of the chamber pot. It was about eight feet square and was furnished with a pair of narrow bunk beds and a rough wooden bench. An ageing prisoner, dressed in a peasant's headscarf and embroidered bodice over a billowing blouse, was sitting on the bench, while a younger woman wearing leather fashion-boots was lounging on the lower bunk. This woman pulled herself upwards to stare as Ariadne moved over to the bench. Elizabeth had finally fallen asleep; since nightfall would be the earliest time she could think about breaking out of this place, Ariadne gave her attention to her new companions.

"*De ce te-au acuzat?*" asked the woman on the bunk. "*Chiar esti traficanta de droguri?*"

The woman's smart boots and jacket suggested that she was educated enough to speak more than one language, so Ariadne tried to summon the meagre smattering of German that she had learned in the Black Forest. While she was thinking about it, the woman spoke again.

"*Miért hoztak be? Tényleg kábítószkerkereskedo vagy?*"

It sounded like the same question in a different language. Neither language had been either French or German, but Ariadne had gathered her words.

"*Entschuldigen. Ich habe nicht verstand.*" She knew this was not correct, but fortunately the stranger was willing to switch again.

"*Sind Sie Deutschländerin?*"

"*Nein. Ich bin Schottin.*"

Another switch. "I speak English. I learned at school for ten years. Beside Romanian and German and French. I often had to read in foreign languages when I was at Bucharest University."

"That's a lot." Ariadne did not disguise her admiration, even though the woman was showing off. "Did you read for a degree in foreign languages?"

"No, I read history and politics. My name is Kurucz Reményke and this is Szántó Zsuzsanna."

Szántó Zsuzsanna winced, as if this introduction were somehow tactless, and spoke for the first time. "*Ma cheama Crina Taranu cît timp stau aici.*"

"That's right, Zsuzsanna co-operates with the tyrants so that they would treat her better. She says she wants you to use her Romanian name Crina in front of the guards. But her real name is Zsuzsanna, and I am always Reményke."

"I am Ariadne Lupin, and this is Elizabeth." Ariadne was conscious that Crina could not understand much of their conversation, but she also knew that Reményke might be her only chance of learning about this place, so however rude it appeared, she had to keep her talking. "Why did you go to university in Romania? Are the standards there higher than in Hungary?"

"Of course not!" Reményke nearly spat. "Of course I would have liked to go to Budapest University! Everyone would! But it was too difficult to leave Romania. If you British people understand anything about Communist politics, you should know that Hungarian nationals were never allowed out of Romania not until two years ago."

The picture began to slide into place. "Is this not Transylvania? Are we... in Romania?"

Reményke tossed her head contemptuously, and translated this question for Crina before replying to Ariadne. "Of course we are in Transylvania, which has been Hungarian ever since Hungary became a nation! During the Turkish oppression, Transylvania was Hungary. But obviously you have not studied modern history. For seventy years now Transylvania Erdély has been in the hands of the Romanian tyrants, and they want us to believe that only Romanians have ever lived here. You might think that the end of Communism would inspire the new regime to restore justice to transfer Erdély back to Hungarian rule but Stolojan is no better than his predecessors. He has no interest at all in the rights of ordinary Hungarians."

"So Transylvania is now in Romania..." That explained why her visa had been wrong. "But are you Hungarian, Reményke?"

"Of course. So is Crina, if you want to know. *Mondd el neki, Zsuzsa. Te egy osi magyar családból származol, ugye?*"

"Igen."

Obviously the Hungarian wizards would not be willing to restructure their Ministry, laws, school, Floo connections and language just because a group of Muggle politicians announced a border change that even some of them expected might not be permanent; it made sense that the Hungarian Ministry would keep hold of Transylvania, and that the Romanian Ministry would raise no objection. Now that Ariadne came to think of it, the British Muggles had, at roughly the same time, sliced off most of Ireland and now considered it a separate country, no longer part of their United Kingdom; although the Northern part of Ireland remained mysteriously British. Trying to grasp this sudden update of seventy years of Muggle history, she asked, "So is Transylvania legally Romanian... while its inhabitants are actually Hungarian?"

Reményke snorted. "It might have been so! We were seventy years ago. Since then, we have been deported to Wallachia... our villages have been bulldozed to the ground... the best land has been overrun by Vlachs... we've been sent to dig the mines and build the dam until we dropped dead from exhaustion... we've been murdered for no reason at all. Now President Stolojan can turn around and state accurately that most Erdélyi Transylvanians are Romanian so there is no reason for Transylvania to be separated from Romania. And when I published a clear statement of the history of Hungary about the need for reparation for past wrongs the state's debt to the surviving Hungarians... Well, that's why I'm here in prison."

Ariadne wondered what part of her story Reményke had omitted. Was the publishing of a written statement her only crime? However, this was not the moment to ask alienating questions. "So this Stolojan is not permitting freedom of speech in Romania."

"Not for Hungarians."

Ariadne looked at Crina Taranu, who did not look at all like a revolutionary, and wondered what she had done to annoy the Romanian Muggle government.

"Crina is accused of cheating on her tax," Reményke replied to her glance. "She didn't understand the new regulations so she answered a question wrongly, and the government decided to make an example of her. They might acquit her if she can convince them that she really didn't understand the question. Or they might not.

Reméled, hogy nemsokára hazaengednek, ugye, Zsuzsa?

Crina nodded, then remarked to Ariadne, "*El fogják venni a gyermeked. Meg kell mondanod a családodnak, hogy vigyék haza, nehogy a kormány elvegye toled, mert akkor lehet, hogy nem is látod többé.*"

"She says that children are not allowed in prison," translated Reményke. "You're lucky that they did not take your baby away as soon as you arrived. But they will only need a few days to remember about her. Crina says you need to contact your family and have them take your little girl home before the government would steal her.... Of course, you might not even be here very long. You just need to contact the British government, and they'll bring you home even if you really brought those drugs in."

Ariadne had no idea whether the British Muggle government acknowledged her existence, but she was fairly sure that the Ministry for Magic would not raise a wand for her. It was lucky that she was not depending on either body to rescue her. In fact, it was time to work out exactly how she was going to escape. The window opened onto an internal courtyard, so the only exit would be through the cell door. That meant betraying the Statute of Secrecy to Reményke and Crina; now she came to think it through, it actually meant she would be taking them with her. That was all right. Crina was certainly innocent, and Reményke was not guilty of anything worse than a mild breach of the peace.

She must win their complete confidence before she tried anything, so she asked, "Where is your home, Crina?"

Reményke translated, and Crina smiled as she replied, "*Bethlenben. A Hargitán.*"

"Have you a family there?"

Crina's smile broadened as she described her husband, parents, children, grandchildren, siblings and nephews. Ariadne found her entire attention fixed on the ageing peasant detailing the people she loved, hardly aware of Reményke's patient translating behind her.

"She says they took her husband to prison too, and she doesn't know where he is. She worries that her elderly father and young grandchild won't be able to take care of the sheep without her supervision, but perhaps her daughter or her cousin no, sorry, nephew will go to help. However, they have their own farms, too, so they might not have time. She knows the family is worrying about her and her husband, but she cannot send a message and doesn't know exactly when her trial will be. She says they might forget to feed the... *nem, nem értettem a végét, Zsuzsa...*"

"*Az édesapám öreg,*" Crina faithfully repeated. "*Lehet, hogy elfelejti megetetni a vérfarkasokat.*"

Reményke shrugged apologetically. "She is superstitious. Székely peasants are usually superstitious. The literal meaning of what Crina said is, 'My father might forget to feed the werewolves.'"

Ariadne felt her stomach drop away inside her. She was sure that Crina was a Muggle. She pressed the older woman's hands reassuringly and managed to say to Reményke, "I am interested in the folklore of all countries. Ask her for the story about the werewolves."

"All right. But she's rambling; she always confuses these folk stories with information about her own family *Mi van a vérfarkasokkal, Zsuzsanna?*"

Elizabeth stirred. When she awoke, she would be hungry, and she did not smell good. Ariadne was once more aware of the revolting odour of the cell, and the temptation to perform a Vanishing spell on the chamber pot suddenly overwhelmed her. She fought off the instinct; whatever she was about to learn was more important than a quick escape.

"Crina says that if the werewolves are already full, they won't eat the sheep. It's important to leave out food for them so that they would be friendly to the local families. These are not ordinary wolves, she repeats, but werewolves, who will take revenge under the full moon if her family annoys them in their human form."

"Are there many werewolves in your village, Crina?"

"She says there are so many werewolves in Harghita that every family has one. They chased away the real wolves long ago, and every full moon a new werewolf is made. She says some bite deliberately, and others escape their homes by accident... Yes, really, Ariadne, that's what she said... that they run wild... Do they have *homes*? She says some families keep their werewolves locked up... In her family her niece and one cousin are werewolves... But others throw a werewolf out of the house and send him to live in the forest. These forest werewolves can be dangerous, but they do not attack Crina's home, because she always carefully leaves out fresh meat for them. Not much of a story, if you ask me. I'd like to know what really happened to her niece and cousin."

"I liked that story," said Ariadne softly. "It has to be hard for your family, Crina, to sacrifice so much meat, only because other families will not take proper care of their werewolves. I'm thinking you love your niece and your cousin very much."

Crina's eyes grew large and moist, and she squeezed Ariadne's free hand urgently.

"She's saying that you are the first city person who hasn't laughed. Usually city people don't believe in werewolves or vampires or wizards, while she *claims* these are all common in Harghita."

"Have you a wizard in your family, Crina?"

Reményke laughed as she translated this exchange. "She says there are no wizards in the village of Bethlen. Villages with wizards have less trouble with vampires, but wizards cannot give any help with werewolves."

Ariadne did not understand why the Statute of Secrecy was being so blatantly broken in the wilds of Transylvania or why vampires should seem less frightening than werewolves, but there was clearly a great deal about Hungary that she did not understand.

"I would like to meet the werewolves in Harghita," she said.

Crina recoiled a little.

"She says you cannot do that. The werewolves are frightened of strangers. *Hogy mondtad?* Oh, she says that bad wizards killed a lot of werewolves during the Second World War, and that's why they now hide from strangers."

"That is a very good story," said Ariadne, more for Reményke's benefit than Crina's. "Will you tell her that I have medicine for werewolves? I can brew a potion..." Reményke looked blank at this terminology. "... There is a flower, and I can use it to make a medicine to help werewolves."

"*Nem! Ne, ne!*" Crina's face crumpled with terror at this news, and Ariadne wondered if all her work was undone as the older woman began to moan.

"She says 'not the flower'," reported Reményke. "I don't know what legend this is, but apparently the 'werewolf flower' is bad. Crina believes these legends, Ariadne, so you should be careful not to discuss the distressing ones."

"This is maybe a different flower," Ariadne soothed. "I'm not knowing the bad one. Tell me about the bad flower, Crina."

"The... *jaj nekem...* Crina says there is a moon flower I don't know the English word for this plant, Ariadne; perhaps it only exists in legend. She says it is an orange flower with ugly black spots and it is poisonous to sheep. But if you pick it under the full moon... *igen, bizonyára csak monda!*... this flower is white and shining and sweet to taste. It used to grow in Harghita, and whoever ate it became a werewolf."

"Used to grow? Crina, has that bad flower died out now?" Ariadne ignored Reményke's contempt at the question.

"*Igen*," said Crina, who had apparently recovered her confidence with her trust in Ariadne's ignorance.

"She says that the moon flowers were destroyed hundreds of years ago." This information had safely restored Reményke's scepticism. "Vlad the Impaler... Perhaps you have heard of him, Ariadne? He lived in the fifteenth century and he was the most famous of all Romania's tyrants. Crina says that Vlad the Impaler destroyed Transylvania's stock of moon flowers, but he took a few cuttings home for himself to Wallachia because he wanted the only werewolves in the region to be those under his own control. It is said that the only moon flowers left in the world are growing in Vlad the Impaler's castle."

The bread and sour lettuce soup that the guards brought at six o' clock were not too bad, although Reményke complained that Hungarian food was better. Ariadne fed most of hers to Elizabeth, who kept asking for her father and was obviously becoming very uncomfortable. She wondered how long they should wait; the guards were presumably on duty around the clock, but perhaps they were less active at night, when the prisoners were supposed to be asleep.

"Where do the guards stand at night?" she asked.

Reményke shrugged. "We don't see through walls how could we know? But I suppose they are never far away. To speak of tonight, Crina says you should take her bed because you have the baby."

When was the right time to explain to her cell-mates that none of them would be using a bed tonight? Ariadne waited until Reményke's Swiss quartz watch showed nine o' clock and Elizabeth was nearly asleep again before approaching the door and instructing, "*Transparens!*" She hoped this was the correct incantation for one-way transparency; she was well aware that her charmwork had degenerated to a fairly basic level.

When the cell door suddenly gave a complete view of the dimly-lit corridor, Reményke shook herself, evidently not believing her own eyes, and did not bother to translate Crina's exclamation, "*Ezért hittél nekem boszorkány vagy!*"

Their situation was immediately apparent. There were indeed a couple of guards patrolling this corridor. There was probably another by the stairs and several more in the downstairs passages that led to the front door. That meant she would have to use some spells of attack. She could not remember ever doing that before, and the prospect was so distasteful that, for a moment, she almost changed her mind about wanting to escape.

That was nonsense. Ariadne cast a Silencing Charm on Elizabeth. Unfortunately, this kind of charm was designed to silence voices what she needed was something that would mute the sound of footsteps. Remus probably knew the charm for that; but there was no time to speculate now. She took a coarse blanket from the lower bunk and began to tie it into a sling so that she could carry Elizabeth with her hands free. Crina helped her, and Reményke was still too disoriented to object.

A *Reducto* curse would let them out quickly, but it might damage the building and other prisoners in unpredictable ways. *Alohomora* only worked on magical locks. Ariadne settled for a simple *Fragmens*, with her wand directly contacting the great lock. It burst with a bang, and she quickly aimed two more through the crack of the door to shatter the external bolts. By the time Crina pulled the door open, of course, the noise had brought the guards running.

"*Stupefy!*" Ariadne had not cast such an aggressive spell since her Defence Against the Dark Arts O.W.L. exam, but these Muggles were not expecting to meet magic. Ariadne had the advantage of surprise. "*Stupefy! Stupefy!*"

"They will wake up naturally in about an hour." She felt obliged to explain this to her companions. There was no need to tell them that they had to be quiet.

Ariadne, Reményke and Crina stepped across the guards' bodies, along the corridor, down the stairs and through the network of ground-floor passages, with Ariadne stunning every guard who entered her line of vision. Feeling crazily evil, she noted that the reception desk was closed but that there were two men standing by the great front door; they were only doing their job and they were only defenceless Muggles. However, Muggle cruelty could be just as evil as the magical variety, and it was certainly evil to hold people in prison before trial.

She repeated to herself that they were Muggles. Even if they saw her, they could not reach her before she stunned them both.

"*Stupefy! Stupefy! Frangens, frangens, frangens!*"

One minute later, Ariadne, Reményke and Crina stepped outside into the chilly night.

A/N 1. I am very, very grateful to St. Row-a-Check and to Ana Christina for lending me their expertise in their native languages completely free of charge and with a great deal of cultural insight added. I also thank the Sugar Quill for setting up the Babelfish service and Story645 for putting me in contact with Ana Christina. Magical Babelfish are not really required by people who are lucky enough to have friends!

A/N 2. Just in case you forgot to read the Romanian newspapers this morning... Please don't assume that Kurucz Reményke has an accurate and unbiased view of the history of Transylvania. What she says seems true to her, but an equally fanatical Romanian would give a completely different summary of the same situation. What an accurate, well-informed and completely objective historian would say about Transylvania, we have no way of knowing. No such history, either wizarding or Muggle, has ever been written.

An Herb All Blue

Chapter 15 of 21

Remus tracks down the first cause of all his problems, and Ariadne volunteers to solve them.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

An Herb all Blue

Friday 1 Wednesday 13 November 1991

Budapest, Oradea and Czíkszdereda, in Wizarding Hungary; Bucharest, Curtea de Arges and Poienari Castle, in Wizarding Romania.

Then round the meadow did she walk,

Catching each flower by the stalk,

Such flowers as in the meadow grew,

The Dead Man's Thumb, an herb all blue...

Robert Johnson (1560-1634): "As I Walked Forth"

Rated PG for violence.

Remus was too angry to care much about the Statute of Secrecy. He allowed the Muggles to load him onto the train back to Budapest, then took one son in each arm, marched into the toilets and Apparated back to Oradea Station.

He was too late.

Plenty of people were boarding and alighting from trains so many that they didn't even notice his sudden appearance out of nowhere but Ariadne and Elizabeth were no longer in the station-house. The Muggles had already taken them off somewhere.

"When are we going to see Mummy again?" asked Matthew. "I'm want her to be on the train with us."

"She'll be with us soon," said Remus, trying to sound convincing. He had no idea where to begin looking for Ariadne, and she presumably wouldn't know where to look for him even if, despite her weak charm-work, she managed to escape the Muggles. Neither of them spoke the language; their tickets to Oradea had cost them the last of their money; and it seemed they had lost their Wolfsbane supplies, which were their whole reason for being here at all.

He didn't know how Hungarian wizards set about dealing with awkward Muggles, but the obvious place to ask was at the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium in Budapest, so he gathered his strength and Apparated back there.

The Minisztérium was just closing, but Remus caught the Beérkezési Miniszter on his way out.

"*Entschuldigung, ich habe ein Problem...*" began Remus helplessly.

"*A Minisztérium zárva van.*"

"*Wir haben aber doch ein Problem!*" protested Matthew.

"*A Minisztérium*" repeated the Beérkezési Miniszter, then broke off. *Ez a gyerek bűdös!* Why came you back? We telled you that we cannot help with your problem."

"This is a new problem," said Remus. "The Muggles have arrested my wife."

"And? You are a wizard. You can manage a few Muggle."

Remus was close to losing patience. "There is an International Statute of Secrecy. Because I obeyed that law, I didn't see where the Muggles took my wife. And even if I do find out, I might not be able to rescue her without breaking the Statute. What is the procedure in Hungary when this kind of thing happens?"

When the Beérkezési Miniszter continued to look gormless, Remus reminded him, "Your Minisztérium welcomed our family to Hungary. You advised us to change our plans, but you didn't order us to leave your country, and we thought we were still welcome here. You knew we were strangers, but you didn't give any warning that the Muggles would be hostile. Now that they have arrested my wife and daughter, will you please tell me how Hungarian wizards usually proceed under these circumstances?"

Remus knew he had raised his voice, but the Beérkezési Miniszter could shout more loudly still, and soon Remus found himself surrounded by a crowd of red-and-white striped uniforms. There was a buzz of incomprehensible chatter (which gave Remus time to reflect that Professor Binns had misinformed him it was *not* true that Hungarians conducted their official affairs in Latin), David made it volubly clear that he wanted his mother, and finally someone reached a conclusion.

"The Minisztérium is closed," said a uniform who spoke decent English, "but Hungarians are always hospitable to distressed travellers. I am the Kviddics Miniszterhelyettes. Sit down, show me your papers and tell me what happened."

As he handed over their papers, Remus took the trouble to notice that the uniform belonged to a mature-aged woman with kindly dark eyes. "We took the Muggle train to Oradea," he said, "and the Muggle official who inspected our passports said our visas were wrong. He searched my wife's bag, and he thought her potion supplies were illegal drugs. I don't know where they took her, but he sent me back to Budapest."

The Miniszterhelyettes frowned at his passport. "You had this visa, yet you took a Muggle train to Nagyvárad. *Értem*. The Beérkezési Miniszter did not know that you were planning to live like a Muggle. If you had told him, he would have warned you of the danger. Seventy years ago, the Muggle politicians ended one of their wars by slicing off half of Hungary and they now consider Transylvania to belong to Romania. If you knew that Nagyvárad is renamed Oradea, why did you not understand that you were entering Muggle Romania and would need a different visa?"

Remus felt too ignorant to begin an answer to this question. He realised now that he had never read the word "Oradea" in any wizarding atlas; he supposed Ariadne must have found it on one of those topographical maps that show no political boundaries. Yet, through all his stupidity, he felt dimly cheated. The Lényfelügyeleti Miniszter had tried to halt their magical mission and he had given them no magical assistance, yet he had told them to "enjoy Hungary". Hadn't he worked out that if he was sending them to mingle with Muggles, they would need to know the Muggle rules? Or had the man been prejudiced against them because they had mentioned werewolves?

The Kviddics Miniszterhelyettes apparently did not know that Remus had come to stir up trouble among dangerous beasts. She said only, "We can help you with the Muggles."

After that, the Hungarians were very helpful. They apologised most profusely that a British guest to Budapest had not been warned about this simple matter of Muggle politicians. They brought a thick beef and potato soup for Remus and Matthew, and a bottle of artificial milk and a bucket of Cloacina Solution for David. They stamped their passports with visas to Romania, and also to Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Macedonia, Slovenia, The Ukraine and Yugoslavia, just in case Remus changed his mind about where he wanted to go. They made them a sheaf of Muggle train tickets, complete with re-charmable dates, for every railway system in Eastern Europe. They lent him an owl so that he could write to Ariadne, cheerfully informing him that if she were still in Oradea, it would take the owl about six hours to find her and another six to bring back any reply. They even admitted that the Minisztérium officially closed all night had a few rooms with hot showers and blanketed beds, so Remus and his sons could spend the night as Minisztérium guests.

But they also warned him that Transylvania was a "wild" place. Not only were the Muggles addicted to their insane politics of Romanisation, but most of the wizards were quite mad. It had proved impossible to enforce the Statute of Secrecy in rural Transylvania, with the result that "dangerous situations" were always erupting and spilling over to the cities. If Remus remained determined to spend his holiday in Transylvania, he should be aware that the Miniszterium might not be able to help him with the "wild perils" that awaited him there. Significantly, however, no-one was willing to give precise details of exactly what kind of "perils" these were.

"You should bring your wife back to Budapest," was all the Miniszterhelyettes would tell him. "Visit the museums and theatres. She will have more fun here."

* * * * *

Dearest,

We are at a Muggle house, Strada Refugiului, nr. 33, Bl. L12, Ap. 7, Oradea (also known as Menekültek ut. 33-12-7, Nagyvárad) and we are among friends. But our friends will not be safe here for long.

A & E

Ariadne's owl arrived at about six in the morning. Remus had to wait until nine, when the Beérkezési Miniszter set a Portkey to transport them to the address in Oradea. They landed in a Muggle living room, where a group of Muggles was looking harassed. Evidently they were in the middle of some very complicated situation, for they seemed quite unfazed by the sudden appearance of three strangers in the middle of their house.

Ariadne seized David with indecent desperation and explained as she fed him about her adventures among the Muggles. "Their policemen have already been here twice to look for Reményke," she finished. "I sent them away on a Confundus Charm, but that's not a good long-term solution."

Remus's spirits lifted here was a situation where he could help. "Reményke could go to Hungary," he suggested.

"I'm *in* Hungary," Reményke reminded him resentfully.

"I mean, you could go to Budapest," Remus corrected himself. "Pack your luggage, while I make you a passport."

He spent the next hour forging a British passport for Reményke (she would have preferred a Hungarian one, but he had no prototype from which to work) and copying visas into it. He copied visas into Ariadne's and Elizabeth's passports too. Ariadne had to deal with the Muggle policemen again while he was working, but they were gone by the time the passports were finished.

"Put it in your pocket," he instructed, "and hold your suitcase in one hand. With the other, take this " he indicated the Minisztérium Portkey, " and it will take you to the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium in Budapest. If you explain your situation, they will help you."

"If magic is real," said Reményke, "why do wizards not use it to overthrow the Romanian tyrants and restore Transylvania?"

The question reminded Remus that the Minisztérium employees would not be particularly glad to see Reményke; wizards were not supposed to use magic to solve Muggle problems. He assumed that all they would do would be to wipe Reményke's memory and send her on her way (she would probably think of something to do in Budapest), but they would certainly record an official minute of annoyance against Remus Lupin.

If they ever did run into trouble in Transylvania, they could certainly not appeal to the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium.

* * * * *

Remus thanked Reményke's parents for looking after his family and for the bag of food that they pressed on Ariadne in gratitude for rescuing their daughter, then wiped their memories of the past twelve hours a second before they closed their front door on him. The Lupins escorted Crina back to Oradea Station throwing Distraction Charms at any Muggles who might be looking their way and settled her onto a train to Harghita with one of the Minisztérium's forged tickets.

"If Harghita is where the werewolves are," Remus said to Ariadne, "why aren't we going with her?"

"We're needing to go to Romania first," said Ariadne. "I'm not knowing where, exactly... We should maybe start from Bucharest. Remus, do you know anything about Vlad the Impaler?"

Remus was fairly sure he had read this name in a Muggle history book. "Wasn't he Count of Wallachia in the fifteenth century? Known in his own language as 'Vlad Tepes'."

Ariadne frowned in concentration. "Tepes? We once had a Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher called Sangera Tepes. She was Romanian... That's right: she said her home was in Arges. Was that perhaps where this Vlad Tepes lived?"

"Perhaps. It shouldn't be difficult to find out.... Tell me, how did this particular Defence teacher lose the post?"

"She attacked a student. The school gossip claimed she was a vampire."

Suddenly Remus remembered who Vlad the Impaler had been. In Vlad's own lifetime and in Professor Binns' classes he had been known as Dracula.

They took the overnight train from Oradea to Bucharest.

"It's always trains," said Matthew. "When can we take a bus?"

"We don't have tickets for a bus," said Remus. He hadn't told Ariadne that his collection of rail tickets was a magical forgery because he knew she would refuse to travel on the Muggle trains if she realised that the Muggles hadn't been paid.

"Why can't you make a bus ticket? You made a passport for Reményke."

Before Remus had time to point out that he couldn't forge a ticket without a genuine original to copy, Ariadne swiftly interrupted, "But, Matthew, that would be *stealing*."

"I'm want to be stealing. So we can ride a bus."

"Train," said Elizabeth quietly.

They took another Muggle train to Curtea de Arges.

"Her mother was a Muggle," said Ariadne dubiously, "so they *might* be in the telephone directory."

Not knowing how else to proceed, Remus walked into a Muggle telephone box, opened the directory and looked up the name Tepes. It appeared there were five Tepes families in the area, none owning to the initial S, but Remus wrote down all the addresses. He also took a *Zerocso* of a local map that appeared on the wall of the booth.

The first door they tried revealed kindly people who didn't speak a word of English.

"People here understand *French*," objected Matthew. "I heard them on the train." At the second door, he took charge. *Excusez-moi, nous cherchons une dame.* Communication apparently occurred, because he reported, "This is the wrong house. This lady is your friend's auntie. She says Sangera lives in Strada Coltului."

It wasn't one of the addresses that Remus had listed, but Matthew apparently understood the direction, and ten minutes later Sangera Tepes was opening her door to them. Her dark eyes were startling in her pale face, but she wasn't as colourless or as old as Ariadne had led him to believe.

"Professor..." began Ariadne.

The white-faced woman glared sharply at them. "You're an old student from Hogwarts, aren't you? Something MacDougal."

"That's right; I'm Ariadne MacDougal. May we come in?"

Professor Tepes indicated her acquiescence by opening the door a little wider. "Wanting to know about Dracula, yes? That's what British tourists are always wanting. Five of my old students have already come to visit, and all they were wanting to know was the way to Drrracula's Castle."

Remus was relieved to realise they had solved their language problem; Professor Tepes had once spoken English well enough to teach at Hogwarts, and any deterioration in her fluency was negligible.

"You're looking very well, Professor," said Ariadne.

"Can call me Sangera. The reason I'm feeling well is that here in Arges I have the corrrrect medication for my ah condition. Your Professor Slughorn tried hard with the blood-replenishing solutions, but they don't work properly unless you're stirring in powdered chamois horn. Sluggy had to substitute angorra, and it wasn't the same. I wouldn't have finished in trouble for nearly biting a student if Sluggy had had access to chamois. Sit down. You've produced a family since we last met, Ariadne. So what are you wanting to know about Drrracula?"

Haltingly, Ariadne explained that she was an apothecary who needed to know about Dracula's alleged botanical interests and described the properties of the flower she could not name.

"Suppose you're meaning the lupluna," said Sangera Tepes, sounding bored. "It's said to be extinct; that's why people outside Rrromania haven't heard of it. But you're right. If any are left, they are in Drrracula's Castle. Yes, I'll take you there. Tomorrrow."

* * * * *

Remus was surprised how visible the castle was. Perched at the apex of the cliff, with towers pointing to the sky, Dracula's stronghold was not only open to Muggle tourists, but a staircase had been built to invite access. Although the castle was in ruins, the Romanian wizards had not cared either to repair the crumbled walls or to keep the Muggles away. Did this mean that there was nothing of importance to be found there?

"Will we climb up to the top?" asked Matthew.

Remus supposed they must. The steps were white with morning frost so they climbed carefully, counting the steps as they went. They counted to one thousand, four hundred and twenty-five before they reached the top.

"We can see the whole world!" Matthew shouted.

Sangera Tepes surveyed the vast frosted forests with silent disdain. Even armed with the information that she did not require human blood, Remus didn't feel comfortable in her presence. Was this, he wondered, how ordinary people felt about him?

Ariadne looked slightly sick from her glimpse of "the whole world," and was backing away from the edge. She had never been a good flier, and he supposed she must find her view of a hundred-fathom drop unnerving. He held out his free arm to steady her before he realised that she wasn't looking at the live map of Romania that spread out before their feet. Her eyes were fixed sadly on the red-brick towers that punctuated the rugged red-brick keep.

They had come to look for a flower. And it was clear that nothing at all grew here.

Remus opened his mouth to say that it had been worth coming just for the view when Sangera moved off towards the opposite tower. While she still wasn't displaying any obvious enthusiasm for their project, she apparently remembered why they had come.

"Probably find it this way, if it's here at all."

Matthew raced after her. "Does Jackuler still live here, Daddy? Will he suck our blood out if he catches us?"

"Dracula's been dead for..." began Ariadne, then trailed off. Sangera had stepped onto a wooden bridge that apparently led away from the castle, off into the mountains.

"Could it be... hidden?" she was asking.

Remus doubted it. There was nothing obvious on the other side of the bridge, just more of the mountain-side, and there was certainly no sign of any kind of magical barrier. The best that could be said was that the bridge seemed sound enough not to splinter under Sangera's weight. He picked up Elizabeth and followed her across, while Ariadne and the boys brought up the rear.

The other side opened onto a forest clearing that was overgrown with all kinds of herbs. If this were Dracula's private garden, if it were hiding anything of importance, wouldn't someone, magical or Muggle, have made some kind of effort to hide it better?

"The plants are probably taking care of themselves," said Sangera cryptically, then closed her mouth with a snap. The plants were certainly growing well.

Remus did not recognise most of the plants but he suspected they were Romanian rather than rare. He could identify tarragon and dill, and Ariadne pointed out alihotsy and gurdyroot. Two more steps... Then suddenly Ariadne swept down to her knees.

They had almost overlooked a patch of wildflowers sprouting from the mud near a small pond.

The petals were a flaming orange with ugly, protuberant black spots. The leaves were almost blue, as stiff with prickles as thistles.

"This is probably the lupluna," said Sangera. "It's smaller than I was imagining."

Ariadne looked at Remus, and Remus looked at Ariadne.

It was the moment of truth. Would they steal the flower? If not, whose permission should they ask? If that question could not be answered from whom were they stealing?

"Flower," said Elizabeth. She reached out her chubby fist and, before they could stop her, she yanked at the stalk. "Ooowww... www!"

Ariadne tried to uncurl Elizabeth's fingers, but they were stuck to the bristling stalk. And the plant was not moving out of the soft mud, but was rooted like iron.

"Prrrotects itself," repeated Sangera Tepes. She reached out her hand and pulled up an easy fistful without looking at her booty. "See. Only a vampirre can pluck them. And most vampirres are living in Trrransylvania, while the only surrviving samples of lupluna are here in Rrromania. So Drrracula had complete control of who would become a werrewolf. Probably had other ways of contrrrolling whom the werewolves were allowed to bite afterwards." She removed the lupluna from Elizabeth's hand with surprising gentleness, then tugged at a bunch of thyme. It clung stubbornly to the ground. "That won't move. I think all the dinner-herbs were enchanted to yield only to Drrracula's cook."

She held out the lupluna to Ariadne, who was too busy comforting Elizabeth to take much notice, and then to Remus.

Gingerly, he took it.

This grotesque little flower, no larger than a pansy, was apparently the first cause of all his problems. The first werewolf had been made, not by a wizard's curse, nor by a pact with the Devil, but through the eating of this unremarkable flower.

Ariadne had said that the flower was only dangerous under the full moon, when its orange petals became a shining bluish-white. She believed that if she could analyse the changes in its chemical composition at that time, she might be able to calculate an antidote. Whatever proved to be the opposite of the lupluna flower would probably be the formula that cured lycanthropy.

But how were they to analyse any plant while they were out in the wilds of Romania without having so much as a cauldron in their possession?

"Should we send some back to Britain?" he asked.

"A cutting would not survive the journey," said Ariadne. "I'm needing to keep them alive."

"I can rre-pot some for you," said Sangera. "An eagle owl can carry a dozen six-inch pots to London in twenty-four hours. Ask a frriend with a grreenhouse to take care of them until you return. Prrrobably that frriend must be a vampire if you're hoping to grow large quantities."

They didn't know any British vampires but, fortunately, Ariadne did not insist on trying to begin the work immediately and on the spot. She agreed to send the samples to her cousin, Mercy Wiggleswade, who had recently qualified as a Healer at St Mungo's. While Mercy wasn't trained to analyse a plant's chemical constitution herself, she probably knew someone who was and she was certainly competent in basic herbological routines.

* * * * *

Sangera Tepes, whom Ariadne remembered as lethargic and uninterested in anything, owled twelve pots of lupluna to St Mungo's before escorting the Lupins through the Floo to the Ministerul Magiei. There she patiently played translator while explaining their affairs to the Romanian officials.

"They are saying there are no werewolves in Romania," was her conclusion. "The Communists killed all who did not escape to Trrransylvania." (Ariadne later remarked that she did not think it was the *Communists* who had killed the werewolves after all, those people had been Muggles.) "They are thinking it very odd that British tourists are wanting to spend winter in Székelyföld, and are hoping you are understanding how cold it is up in the mountains. But are willing to do you a Portkey to Czíkszereda, where the wizarding community is big and friendly." (Ariadne later confided that she felt this to be a very loose translation; the original conversation had almost certainly involved Sangera Tepes agreeing to pay for the International Portkey.)

But they couldn't return to Britain; the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium had no sympathy for their werewolf mission; the Romanian Muggle police considered Ariadne a criminal; and they had no money. A fast passage to a provincial town in the heart of Transylvania was their only real option.

"Nice to see you again," said Professor Tepes, still without smiling, as they grasped the Portkey

Remus found the lack of warmth or interest in her expression disconcerting; he had to remind himself that she had been extremely supportive in her actions.

The Portkey brought them to a row of a dozen white shops with triangular red roofs in a cobbled back-street. Remus identified a robe-shop, a bakery and a magical equipment supplier before Ariadne pushed on another door and led them into the apothecarium. It was comforting to see that, even in Transylvania, apothecaries wore the international rust-red uniform.

Unsure how to greet the elderly wizard who was decanting some bubbling green potion behind the counter, Remus began with an uncertain, *Salve*.

"*Bonjour. Grüss Gott. Jó reggelt. Buna.* Good morning," added Matthew for good measure.

The Transylvanian apothecary spoke Latin rather better than Remus did and he explained that they had arrived at the wizarding quarter of town. Remus wasn't able to make him understand exactly what they were doing there, but when he showed Ariadne's certificate of journeyship, their new friend smiled and directed them to the wizarding inn, six doors down the street.

They were allowed to book a week's accommodation with a view to paying later.

Remus found himself part-time work giving private English lessons to Muggles (and one wizard).

Ariadne found an evening job washing dishes at a Muggle café.

They exchanged their lei for Sickles in time for Ariadne to begin the month's brewing. She asked the apothecary in Latin for atropine, barakol, digitalin, strychnine, sugar and yeast (he redirected her to the baker for the last two), but there was no wolfsbane to be had locally, so she had to write to her cousin Mercy to beg for a cutting from the St Mungo's garden. Mercy sent an interesting reply.

Dear Ariadne,

Potted wolfsbane is enclosed. We are glad to hear that you're finding useful work in Hungary, but you're seeming terribly far away. We're all missing you dreadfully here.

You are right to live abroad, however. The current climate of opinion is not at all friendly to werewolves see the attached newspaper clipping.

Felicity's baby was born at Hallowe'en. She is beautiful; they have named her Rosalba. I heard on the grapevine that Hazel Malfoy has had another one too. Dempster and I want to wait a few years before having bairns, something that Felicity just will not understand!

Very much love,

Mercy.

The clipping was a front-page headline from the *Daily Prophet*, dated 24 October.

FUDGE FAMILY'S WEREWOLF HORROR

by Barnabas Cuffe

Cornelius Fudge, our Minister for Magic, was in a state of horrified shock yesterday as his nephew's life hung in the balance.

Rufus Fudge, 20, was savagely attacked by a ferocious werewolf on Tuesday evening.

"Rufus just stepped out for a minute to place the day's kitchen scraps in the dustbin," reports the white-faced Minister. "Of course he knew it was full moon, but you don't expect to meet werewolves in the fashionable end of London. I suppose the beast pounced on him from behind."

Rufus's parents were too distressed to make any comment, but his uncle was furious. "My brother and his wife raced out with wands drawn and they managed to Stun the monster before calling the Medi wizards. By the time the Aurors arrived, however, the werewolf had revived and run off. So the brute has escaped justice."

Auror Gawain Robards comments, "This crime looks like the work of Fenrir Greyback. But Greyback usually targets children, so we are stumped."

Further anguish awaited the Fudges at St Mungo's, where the Healer-in-Charge of the Dangerous Bites ward was mysteriously absent. Abandoned to the care of second-rate staff, courageous Rufus battled unaided against the Grim Reaper.

He regained consciousness at three o'clock in the afternoon and asked for a breakfast of bacon and mushrooms.

Originally born into a life of opportunity and privilege, Rufus Fudge now faces a nightmare future as a social outcast and werewolf.

*A/N 1. Continued thanks to my wonderful multi-lingual betas. **St. Row-a-Check** has now written an entire history of magic in Hungary, complete with a very cool Magyar wizarding school do ask her about it. And **Ana Christina** must be a world expert on how the parallels between the Romanian language and the Scottish accent are related to the parallel oppressions of the Dacians and the Celts, and on why the correct understanding of this subject can only be possessed by a vampire. You never know how erudite your friends are until you start asking them the right questions.*

*A/N 2. Thanks also to my husband, **Peter**, whose suggestion about Rufus's accident has greatly strengthened the plot. Rufus Fudge is a canon character. You can read about his sole canon appearance at http://www.hp-lexicon.org/about/sources/source_dp.html#feb-8, an incident that I perceive as occurring about eighteen months before his encounter with Greyback.*

Away to Yonder Mountain

Remus and Ariadne venture deeper into Transylvania and arrive at the perilous heart of werewolf country.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Away to Yonder Mountain

Wednesday 8 January Monday 16 March 1992

Czíksszereda and surrounding villages in Transylvania, wizarding Hungary.

So farewell, lads, and farewell, lasses,

Now I think about my choice:

I will away to yonder mountain,

Where I think I hear his voice.

And if he calls, then I will follow

Through the world, though 'tis so wide,

For my heart is with him altogether,

Though I live not where I love.

William Parry: "I Live not where I Love"

Rated PG because no unguided child could speak as many languages as this chapter requires.

"Cold," said Elizabeth as they stepped onto the cobbled street.

She was right; last night the quicksilver in Mr Celsius's thermometer had plunged to twenty-eight degrees below zero. The sun was now shining, but it would be a long time before the snow melted.

"Super cold," said Matthew, as he counted the doors. "Three, four, five, six. *Jó napot, Fűvessy uram!*" And he burst into Fűvessy uram's apothecarium.

Fűvessy uram, the Czíksszereda apothecary, did not really need an assistant in his shop, but he allowed Ariadne to bring the bairns for a couple of hours a day. In return for some basic mixing and tidying, he was teaching her how to discuss her work with ordinary Hungarians.

"*Szervusz, Matthew,*" he greeted them. "*Ma mire tanítsuk édesanyádat?*"

Ariadne knew that Fűvessy uram was commenting on her progress in the Hungarian language, for she and Remus had no hope of learning as fast as Matthew did.

"*Ez micsoda?*" Fűvessy uram prompted, pointing to the shrivelfig.

"*Aszúfüge.*"

"*Ez?*"

"*Bikorn szarv,*" she said bicorn horn.

"*Bikornis szarv,*" he corrected her. "*Most tessék elmagyarázni...*"

"Mummy, he's wanting you to tell a new person who you are and what job you do."

"*Oh... Az én nevem Ariadne Lupin. Vagyok patikus Britanniából. Van nekem orvosság a vérfarkasoknak*"

"*Nem, nem, nem!*" broke in Fűvessy uram. "*Ne mondja meg idegeneknek, hogy vérfarkasokon akar segíteni! Várja ki, hogy megismerkedjenek, összebarátkozzanak. Különben egy szavára sem fognak hallgatni.*"

"Mummy, I'm think he's saying that you shouldn't talk to people about wolves. Strangers will be angry if you tell them too soon. Mummy, my Daddy's a werewolf, isn't he?"

"He is, darling, Daddy has the werewolf illness."

"But he won't bite ever if he drinks his medicine, will he?"

"He will not; not if he drinks his medicine. And we're bringing the medicine here for other werewolves."

That, she reflected, was the plan. Fűvessy uram had been nervous when she had first made him understand what the Wolfsbane Potion did. But in December she had taught him to brew it, and four Transylvanian werewolves had Flooed into Fűvessy uram's shop to drink it. She knew he was much happier about brewing it again in January. The problem, however, was bringing the werewolves to Czíksszereda.

"*A legtöbb vérfarkas elszigetelten él...*" Fűvessy uram tried to explain the situation in words that Matthew could translate for his parents.

"He says werewolves have no friends. There's nobody to tell them to come into this house for medicine. Mummy, why can't we go to the werewolves' houses and tell them ourselves?"

It had never been explained to Matthew's satisfaction that they could not go wandering all over the mountains in the middle of winter in order to ask random strangers whose language they did not speak whether they were werewolves. Remus and Ariadne had very quickly understood that they must spend the winter in Czíksszereda, learning to speak Hungarian and training Fűvessy uram to be an expert in Wolfsbane Potion.

"Owl," said Elizabeth, pointing to the fire.

The owl swept down the chimney and settled in front of Ariadne, who, now that her friends knew she was in Transylvania, received mail nearly every day. This one was

from Madam Patil.

My dear Madam Lupin,

I have heard that you are in Hungary. I wonder if I could trouble you to send me some knightscrop? Galleons are enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

Manjula Patil.

Knightscrop? This headily sweet blue flower, which had once flourished in every English garden, was fatally poisonous in infusions stronger than four drams to a cup. It had long since been lost from Britain, and was now found only in Transylvania. She had no idea what Hungarians called it. "*Laetitia virilia*," she explained to Fűvessy uram.

He frowned.

"I'm knowing... *rossz növény*," she said. A bad plant.

"*Méreg*," he supplied. Poison.

Dear Madam Patil,

Knightscrop will be in stock three days hence. Meanwhile, might I trouble you to explain why you are requiring it and what proportions you are intending to use? I would feel more comfortable if I knew your intentions for a dangerous substance like knightscrop.

Kind regards,

Ariadne Lupin.

The next day her correspondent was Professor Jigger.

Dear Mrs Flowers,

Since you are in Hungary, I expect you can easily procure pheasant's eye, toadflax, goosefoot and fly agaric extract. Please send by return owl as much of each as the enclosed will purchase.

Yours sincerely,

Arsenius Jigger.

Fly agaric extract had no medicinal purpose; it was a poison that caused hallucinations and madness before a painful death. What was going on?

Dear Professor Jigger,

Here are pheasant's eye, toadflax and goosefoot. We have no fly agaric extract in stock this week. May I trouble you to explain why you are requesting such a dangerous poison?

Yours sincerely,

Ariadne Lupin.

Late on the next day, Ariadne received a reply from Madam Patil.

My dear Madam Lupin,

I don't blame you for asking. I know that many people would consider my work immoral, so if you feel you cannot help me, I shall look elsewhere.

Although I have lived in Birmingham since I was six, I have maintained many contacts with Muggle communities in rural India. I often hear of desperate women whose husbands discard them because they gave birth only to daughters. Divorced women often starve and they rarely see their children again. So I give them a little help in producing male offspring.

Arsenius Jigger used to brew the Gender Bender Potion for me. However, I stopped patronising his shop after learning of his activities with aphrodisiacs, hallucinogens and other poisons. But I don't feel I can stop sending the Gender Bender to India it's a matter of life and death for these mothers. Dittany Teazole visited my house to teach me to brew the potion for myself but she then washed her hands of the matter in order to preserve the reputation of her shop (Bobbin's at 126 Diagon Alley). Madam Teazole recommends an infusion of one dram of knightscrop to a cup.

Knightscrop is not to be had anywhere in Diagon Alley this winter, but I know of three different women who desperately need to drink the Gender Bender Potion within a month so I do hope you can help.

Yours sincerely,

Manjula Patil.

Aphrodisiacs, hallucinogens and other poisons? As she packed the knightscrop, Ariadne wondered where Madam Patil found her information. Professor Jigger was good at not being caught by anybody who mattered, even if his next message was less than subtle.

Dear Mrs Flowers,

It's none of your business why I need fly agaric extract. You know it's a distillation with multiple uses. I was your teacher. You owe me a few favours. Your own activities haven't been entirely above the law and beyond reproach. I could report you but it would be better if you just sent me the fly agaric extract.

Arsenius Jigger.

Ariadne was tempted to do no more than throw this message into the fire, but she knew that leaving the situation ambiguous now might create complications later, so she tied a brief reply to the owl's foot.

Dear Professor Jigger,

I cannot supply you with fly agaric extract.

Yours sincerely,

Ariadne Lupin.

Only five Transylvanian werewolves came to drink Wolfsbane Potion in January and only six in February. It was clear that they were too isolated to spread the word among

themselves, which meant that if Ariadne advertised in writing, the message would be more likely to reach the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium before it reached the werewolves.

When spring came, they would have to walk through the Carpathian Mountains, village by village, and meet every werewolf in person.

* * * * *

David always awoke as the sunrise hit his eyes. He could crawl now, and by the time he had crawled into his parents' bed to be fed, the whole family was awake. Ariadne was always shocked by the cold of the early morning air. Every evening Remus Conjured blanket after blanket for each of them, and that first moment when the blankets were thrown off always bit like a knife.

"*Thermo!*" Remus could produce some warm air for long enough for them to dress themselves, but it never lasted much longer. Deep in the Transylvanian forest, they usually spent the night in a fairly crude shelter that Remus would construct out of Transfigured timbers. In the morning he could Charm in some artificial warmth, but never for long enough to disguise the fact that it was cold outside.

He could produce hot water too. At first he used the snow on the ground. When the last of it was melted, he would Conjure two buckets and fetch some from the river usually with chunks of ice floating on the surface. The Thermal Charm was designed to boil water, and the heat lasted as long as they needed it, long enough to give a sponge-bath to each child, long enough for Ariadne to pour in soap and hand-laundry yesterday's clothes, long enough for her to add the Cloacina Solution and soak David's nappies.

It was more difficult to scavenge enough food. There was always bread, and usually they could buy milk and eggs, but the vegetable displays in every shop were bedraggled and stale, there was no fruit, and meat was invariably at a price that advised them to save their lei. Twice already Remus had resorted to comforting the family by Conjuring food which, of course, was an illusion, since Conjured food has no nutritional value, and it vanishes from the stomach within two hours. Every morning Matthew, Elizabeth and David ate rusk after rusk of buttered bread, without ever complaining about the coarse texture or the bland sameness of their diet. Ariadne was worried that the bairns were being fed without being nourished.

She rinsed the clothes, and then the nappies, in the second bucket, squeezed out the water, and threw a Torreo Charm at each garment. One morning she was distracted by the children's chatter, and the Conjured buckets disappeared before she had finished; that taught her to finish all the laundry within the hour. Then Remus reduced the size of their plate and linen so that it could all be packed among Ariadne's Potions supplies in the rucksack that had once been Aunt Macmillan's suitcase. Fűvessy uram had sold Ariadne all the ingredients she needed at wholesale prices, but he could not afford to give her anything for free.

"Where are we going, Daddy? Are we visiting werewolves today?"

"We hope so."

Remus Transfigured their second travelling bag into a kind of pouch so that Ariadne could carry Elizabeth on her back. Then he picked up their only non-Conjured blanket and Transfigured it into a smaller pouch so that Ariadne could carry David in front of her. He slid the rucksack of supplies over his arms, then hoisted Matthew onto his shoulders. With a wave of his wand, the crude hut that had sheltered them last night was restored to its original form of timbers lying on the forest floor. A sharp breeze whistled through their hair as he checked the map and instructed his wand to point north.

Then the Lupin family turned away from their camp and began to walk.

They walked through the forested slopes every day. They did not remember any more how many days it was because all the days seemed alike. The waning and waxing of the moon marked the only calendar that mattered to them. Sometimes they walked through broad plains for hours at a time, with wide carpets of wildflowers stretching on either side of them. Ariadne counted endless meadows of gold-of-pleasure, motherwort, celandine, elecampane, sainfoin, ox-eye daisies, charterhouse pinks, soldier orchids, hairy flax, nodding sage and all manner of others that were rare or extinct in Britain.

At other times they walked through forests of oak and beech, sometimes without any path at all, and only the point of Remus's wand to suggest that they were heading in the right direction. Once Matthew, from his vantage point on Remus's shoulders, shrieked out loud.

"The bus! A crashed bus!"

That seemed unlikely in the middle of the Carpathians, but a few paces further on, Ariadne saw what he meant. A gigantic bus was lying on its side injured not merely crashed in a road accident, but almost bleeding in the agony of its buckled fender and shattered lights literally smashed through the beech trees, which were still growing out of its windows. This was no grief-stricken tourist vehicle, for the contortions of its anthropomorphic face were the familiar features of Nigel the Knight Bus.

Remus pointed his wand firmly. "*Riddikulus!*"

There was a tremendous crack, and the huge bus vanished, leaving wisps of white smoke to rise through the densely clustered trees.

"Nigel!" sobbed Matthew.

"It's all right, Matthew. That wasn't Nigel. That was a Boggart."

"Nigel was hurt!"

Ariadne fumbled through Remus's rucksack to bring out the only toy that had survived their journey. "Look, Nigel is right here. He's safe." Remus blew it up to its natural size, and Matthew clutched at it convulsively. "The big Nigel was not real. It was just a Boggart pretending to be Nigel."

Later that day or it might have been another day Ariadne rounded a corner first, then stood still to wait for Remus. David was asleep, but Elizabeth suddenly gave a shriek of laughter and pointed over her shoulder.

"Look, Mummy!"

Ariadne looked as Remus drew level, and they all laughed.

Elizabeth was pointing at a curious blob of fleshy whiteness, one side rounded, the other flat, with a lone antenna at one end. Although apparently still alive, it looked like a giant slug that had been sagittally sliced in half.

In fact, it was. It was half of a flesh-eating slug.

"It's another Boggart," said Ariadne. "Elizabeth met a real flesh-eating slug in the last village, and it terrified her. But... why only half?"

"The Boggart must have detected both of you at the same time," said Remus. "Its other half is still trying to decide how to frighten you."

Since an artificial half-slug was not remotely frightening, they stepped around this Boggart without bothering to confront it.

When it rained, Remus Conjured umbrellas. Occasionally the rain lasted until the Conjured umbrellas vanished. Then the undergrowth burst with scarlet toadstools; if Professor Jigger had troubled to travel to the Carpathians, he could have easily stocked up on a decade's supply of fly agaric extract. There were cooking mushrooms too; Ariadne taught Remus how to recognise the edible species. Even in the middle of the day, it was so dark between the hornbeam trees that they had to light up their wands.

Perhaps the darkness provoked gloom, for while they were picking mushrooms, all three children suddenly set up a wail at once. Ariadne could smell decay some dead

animal? as she moved to quieten them, then suddenly an avalanche of oppression smashed into her mind.

Once again, she seemed to hold in her hands the letter in which Remus told her that he was leaving because he had never really loved her. The ghost of Aunt Keindrech was relentlessly prattling about what the Macnairs had done to Veleta. Her own voice was screeching out of an imaginary Wireless, betraying Veleta to the whole world, and Humphrey Macnair was boasting of how he had tortured Veleta into telling him everything.

She stood up as her brother's drone was citing Remus's unfitnes to be an uncle, and suddenly saw... The huge black cloak gliding between the hornbeam trees was not imaginary; something not quite solid and not quite human, but unquestionably *real*, was approaching them.

Horror was crossing Remus's face too, but he apparently knew what to do with stray Dementors, for he stepped towards the deadly presence and commanded, "*Expecto Patronum!*"

An incandescent white cloud swooped out of his wand and took shape. They were flowers, five-petalled Wolfsbane flowers, branches and then whole bushes of them, ten times the natural size. The flowers spread warmth as they charged through the gloom, and the children stopped wailing. They even began to laugh as the silvery light illuminated the whole forest and flew at the dark, hooded figure.

The Dementor was terrified of the luminous Wolfsbane flowers. It retreated and fled.

"Odd," remarked Remus. "My Patronus has changed."

* * * * *

They arrived at a village, with the spire of its fortified kirk rising above the red roofs, and the procedure began. It was always the same. They met a carter on a wooden wagon or cotters hoeing the green wheat or elderly couples sitting on their doorsteps with their wood-carving and embroidery, and Ariadne would strike up a conversation in her halting Hungarian.

"*Jó napot. Én vagyok Ariadne Lupin, britanniai patikus.*"

There was no point in hiding their magical status, for the Statute of Secrecy had never penetrated these far reaches of Székelyföld. Many of the peasants asked her right out whether she were a magical apothecary or an ordinary Muggle pharmacist. She was usually surrounded in a matter of minutes by a crowd of Székely peasants who wanted treatment for their eye infections or rheumatism. The Lupins were always invited to dinner, and their hosts always heaped up their plates with second helpings of pickled cabbages and fried vegetables while, she was guiltily aware, their own plates remained bare.

She brewed up several batches of Eyebright Infusion or Eazyjoint Salve before asking her audience whether Transylvania was a dangerous country. "*Vannak nektek medvék a hegyekben?*"

Yes, they had bears in the mountains, and wolves too.

"*Vannak nektek vámpírok?*"

Yes, they had vampires. But they were no longer afraid of vampires, because the local wizards could mix a blood-replenishing potion, so the vampires had lost their craving for human blood. If any vampire were so wicked as to bite somebody despite this, the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium would arrest him and lock him away forever.

"*Vannak nektek vérfarkasok?*"

Oh yes, they had werewolves. Werewolves were terrifying, ferocious beasts whenever the moon was full. There was no escape from werewolves. They had to be locked away, but sometimes people were careless, and the werewolves burst their locks. Farkas József and Erdei Rozália were werewolves (occasionally varied to names like Ion Căinescu and Maria Dintascu among Romanian-speakers). They were not allowed in the village at full moon.

"*Meg szabad ismerkednem velük?*"

Why on earth would she want to meet people like that? Yes, the villagers could bring them here, but Farkas József and Maria Dintascu were very unfriendly people and rather dirty too. There was no actual danger by daylight, but *Patikus asszony* ("Madam Apothecary") must not be surprised if the werewolves were rude to her.

Invariably, it would turn out that Ion Căinescu and Erdei Rozália were only "dirty" because they lived in tumbledown huts without running water, and they were hurt and suspicious rather than anti-social. They were usually Muggles, as these tough mountain peasants were robust enough to survive the wrenching monthly transformation.

Whenever Ariadne shook hands with a Transylvanian werewolf, she confided, "*Az én férjem vérfarkas.*"

At these words, the werewolf always welcomed Remus as a fellow-sufferer, and Ariadne could give the message, "*Van nekünk orvosság vérfarkasoknak.*" They had medicine.

That did not end the difficulties in distribution. Ariadne could nominate the village where she would be brewing the Wolfsbane Potion, and invite the werewolves to Floo there. But often they were too suspicious of the *idegenek* ("foreigners") in the neighbouring villages to accept such an invitation. It was Ariadne who spent most of the week before the full moon whirling through the local Floo network, carrying her measuring ladle and a covered cauldron of Wolfsbane Potion to the werewolf contacts that she had made over the previous month.

The only way to distribute the potion would be to make a personal visit to every village in Transylvania, to teach every Transylvanian witch and wizard how to brew the potion, and to shake the hand of every individual werewolf.

"How long will that take?" Remus wanted to know.

"How long have we?" asked Ariadne. It was a good question; Madam Bones had probably returned from her long-service leave by now, and Matthew had to start school next September. Strictly speaking, they should set a time limit on their sojourn.

But there did not seem to be any point when all the useful work was here in Transylvania.

Ariadne's cousin Mercy wrote:

I hope they appreciate all your efforts. Healer Valentine is full of outraged fury that you're having to do this the hard way. We'll keep on sending you all the wolfsbane you're needing we're yet thinking of the St Mungo's plants as yours. Distribution in Britain collapsed when you left see attached.

The attachment was a cutting from the *Daily Prophet*.

Rufus Fudge, 20, was admitted to St Mungo's Hospital on Good Friday with hideous scars all over his body.

This was not the work of some criminal. The injuries were self-inflicted.

It is well known that young Mr Fudge suffers from the terrible curse of lycanthropy. In the body of the wolf, he bites and scratches himself wounds that remain when he reverts to his human shape.

"I'm surprised that people are so unsympathetic," sobs his mother. "Rufus is a sweet, lovely boy with an impish sense of humour for 29 days of the month. For just one night a month he turns into this horrible monster. Since we lock him away in the garage, he can't hurt anyone else. He only hurts himself."

After one night as a wolf, Rufus usually spends three or four days in agony, recovering from the new set of injuries.

"All this could be prevented," points out Rufus's father, Pollius Fudge, "if only Wolfsbane Potion were legal in Britain. That medication is a marvel at keeping werewolves safe from themselves and at keeping the rest of us safe from werewolves."

Your intrepid Daily Prophet reporters contacted the inventor of the Wolfsbane Potion, Damocles Belby, but he refused to be drawn into the discussion.

"It was the plight of people like Rufus Fudge that inspired me to experiment with wolfsbane," he told us. "But the behaviour of people like Fenrir Greyback was one reason why the Ministry refused to patent the medicine. I have never tried to push my discovery forward because my field is science, not law. Should the Wolfsbane Potion be made legal? Well, it's really up to the Ministry to decide whether or not the benefits outweigh the risks."

Since Pollius Fudge is the brother of the Minister for Magic, it is somewhat surprising that he cannot influence the development of the law.

"Wolfsbane Potion is legal in France; it's legal in Germany; I've even heard rumours that it's being distributed in Hungary," he laments. "Why is Britain so far behind the rest of the civilised world in Defence Against the Dark Arts?"

"Flying men," said Elizabeth, pointing to the sky.

She was right; four mounted broomsticks were sweeping southwards with a fine disregard for any Muggles who might be watching. Here in Transylvania they often saw an odd broomstick swooping over a village in broad daylight. These four were flying in convoy with some kind of chest hanging from them, slung so that each of the four brooms was taking the weight equally.

"Could that be a delivery for the Durmstrang School?" wondered Ariadne.

"Durmstrang is further east," said Remus. "More likely it's for the dragon reserve on the Romanian side of these mountains."

While Matthew interrogated Remus about the dragons, Ariadne returned to the barn, where she was brewing Wolfsbane Potion. There were perhaps twenty werewolves who knew to meet her here today. Another ten might go to Czikszereda. That made thirty. These thirty seemed truly grateful, but of course they would remain cautious of other people for a long time to come; they were a long way from being ready to discuss the Wolfsbane Potion with strangers from other provinces. Fűvessy uram estimated that there were at least a thousand werewolves in Transylvania; a thousand lycanthropic humans who did not know that their condition could be treated.

Distribution here in the village of Szirtes had begun yesterday, but today there was a new face. It was the round, weather-beaten face of a woman who had once been pretty once, before life had inflicted its scars.

"*Adjon abból a bájitalból!*" she commanded.

The harshness of her tone stiffened the hairs on Ariadne's neck. She asked, *Magát hogy hívják?* and learned that her new client was Bosszu Hajnalka. What Ariadne really needed next was testimony from the neighbours that this woman was indeed a werewolf, but instinct told her that Bosszu Hajnalka had no friends.

I'm not liking this woman. Ariadne despised herself for thinking it, but Bosszu kisasszony's eyes glinted with a malice that could not be explained by a mere lifetime of hardship. She made Ariadne think of Uncle Macnair, of Cousin Lucius, of Professor Viridian, of Madam Umbridge from the Patents Office, of Fenrir Greyback himself.

Ariadne knew the rules; she had to treat all patients equally, asking no questions about whether they "deserved" the medicine! *refused Fenrir Greyback* she reminded herself. But the two situations were not logically comparable. She had known Greyback's history, and he had a certain record of abusing his powers; about Bosszu Hajnalka she had only an intuition. In Britain, all Wolfsbane distribution had been illicit; in Hungary, it was only *pre-legal*, and she was trying to win the favour of the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium by impressing people with her efficient, unbiased, ethical behaviour.

"*Maga nem akar nekem segíteni!*" spat out Bosszu kisasszony. It was a literal spit. If only she had spat into the cauldron! Then Ariadne would have had a legitimate reason for refusing her. Ariadne knew she was being manipulated, but she also knew she must not give this woman any valid reason to complain of her unhelpfulness.

So she said that the Potion was ready now and asked Bosszu kisasszony to step on the scales. Fifteen stone! She would need well over a cup five jackpots, in fact.

"I'm not knowing what to do," Ariadne confided in Remus later. "I can tell the clients that they're yet needing to be locked up, but I cannot force them to be locked if they're not wishing it. If Bosszu kisasszony refuses to be confined... or deceives us about her real intentions... she'll be dangerous."

"Then I'll spend the full moon in her village," said Remus. "She lives in Tárvajtód, which is on the Floo network. You and the children can go elsewhere... perhaps to Czíksszereda."

"But, Remus, what could you do? If anything went wrong... she'd be a bigger wolf than you are."

She expected him to argue, but he nodded. "I won't go alone. Perhaps Fűvessy uram will understand the situation."

Fűvessy uram's week had also been full of brewing and dispensing Wolfsbane Potion, but he was surprisingly amenable to supporting Remus. He said they could not risk a tragedy, especially because to discredit the Wolfsbane Potion at this stage would be to create a tragedy with more than one victim. At eight o' clock, while the sun was yet setting, he accompanied Remus through the Floo to Tárvajtód. Ariadne forced herself to sit still until they had gone, but as soon as the green flames had died, she sprang to her feet.

"I wanted to go too!" said Matthew. "Daddy never takes me anywhere exciting."

"It might be very exciting tonight," Ariadne agreed. "Are you wanting a Nigel story before you go to bed?" Ariadne had long since memorised the stories, and Matthew policed her retellings severely she was not permitted to change a single word.

From moonrise to moonset will be more than nine hours. A great deal of disaster can occur in that time. Five hundred and forty-nine minutes. And it only takes about three seconds for a wolf to spring and bite. Thirty-two thousand, nine hundred and forty seconds... that's ten thousand, nine hundred and eighty separate opportunities to...

She shook herself. No matter what the disaster, worrying would not help. But *wha*should she do, if the moon set, and Remus did not yet return to the inn? Dark fantasies of violent struggles loomed out of the inner recesses of her mind; she found herself contemplating a barren, severed future in which Remus never came home again...

She did not sleep. By midnight she gave up trying; she dressed again, and began to stir a batch of Eyebright Infusion. It did not stop her thinking about Remus, but it did reassure her that her time was not completely wasted.

At five minutes to six, somebody chapped on her door, and she flew to open it.

It was Fűvessy uram. Alone.

*A/N 1. Continued thanks to **St. Row-a-Check** for rescuing me from my Indogermanic ignorance and helping so very much with the Székely characters and Hungarian language. And also to **Ana Christina** for the names Ion Căinescu and Maria Dintascu because I would never have thought of them for myself.*

A/N 2. Just in case you were wondering... There is no such plant as knightscrop. I made it up.

High are their Hopes

Chapter 17 of 21

The world is turned upside down, and no danger is in the place where Remus had thought it was.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

High are their Hopes

Saturday 16 May Friday 26 June 1992

Random villages in the Carpathian Mountains, Transylvania; Czíksszereda, Transylvania; Old Basford, Nottingham, England.

The moon has arisen, it shines on the path

Now trod by the gallant and true.

High, high are their hopes, for their chieftain has said

That whatever men dare, they can do.

Scottish folk song: "The March of the Cameron Men"

PG for violence.

Remus and Fűvessy uram stepped out of the Floo network into the middle of the forest. The grate that served Tárvajtód was not sheltered by even a crude attempt at a building it was simply planted between two hornbeams. The two wizards Apparated towards the cluster of houses, confident that no Muggle in these surroundings would bat an eyelid. They had no way of knowing which house belonged to Bosszu Hajnalka, but she was presumably outdoors; if she intended to spend the night at home, then Ariadne had misjudged, and there was no danger anyway.

"*Ott!*" Remus spotted her. Since Bosszu kisasszony might recognise him, he stood back in Fűvessy uram's shadow. But he need not have worried. Bosszu kisasszony was completely focused on whatever her own business was; she was walking towards the sunset without a thought for any outsiders.

She stopped on the edge of the forest and stood still, as if waiting for something to happen presumably the moonrise. She was interested in the sky, but Remus was interested in her, so it was a shock when the first moonbeam struck him. His muscles contorted sharply; while Ariadne's potions reduced the pain considerably, they did not eliminate the discomfort completely. He dropped to all fours almost before he was aware that he was now four-legged, and breathed in the odour of the she-wolf ahead of him.

Her scent was unpleasant, unquestionably wolf, but stale and sour. Remus knew she could not avoid smelling him eventually, but the wind was in his favour, and she was

racing ahead with a deliberation that suggested she knew her destination. He followed at a distance, while Fűvessy uram tracked them both through a series of short Apparitions.

Inevitably, her destination was another village, green fields surrounding red roofs surrounding a fortified kirk, just like Tárvajtód and Szirtes. The full moon gave the only light by the time she sprang into the village; Fűvessy uram waited until she had disappeared between two cottages and then Apparated after her.

She must have known that there was another wolf behind her on the cobbled streets, but she didn't seem to care. She stopped outside a blue-painted door, paused, and then hurled herself against the wood.

Remus raced across the cobbles to slam himself against her. He had no idea why she was attacking this household, but if these people were unwilling to open their door to her, then an assault it certainly was. Hajnalka was, as Ariadne had predicted, a larger wolf than himself, and she was soon holding him to the ground, her fangs piercing his flesh at painful angles. However, his presence had distracted her from her original intention, and she would be unlikely to resume her assault on the Muggles' door before she had dealt with him.

"*Stupefy!*" Hajnalka slumped in surprise she hadn't reckoned with Fűvessy uram. It took three Stunners to knock her out completely, and even then it was slow work for Remus to edge himself out from underneath her dead weight.

Fűvessy uram placed some repairing and reinforcing spells on the door, then sat down on the street beside Remus. He suggested, in careful Latin, that they wait for Hajnalka to awaken before attempting anything else.

She was out cold for over an hour, so that Remus was almost tempted to go to sleep. They could just keep her Stunned until morning, but then she would simply launch a fresh attack next month. Since they could not spend the rest of their lives tracking her, they needed to goad her into betraying her real intentions tonight preferably in front of witnesses so that they had a valid reason for never giving her Wolfsbane Potion again.

When Hajnalka finally stirred, she almost immediately released the scent of malice. Remus backed away and then leaped into the main street as he smelled, rather than heard, that she was bounding after him. Whatever her original goal, she had decided to fight him off first. If he could maintain the chase all night, he could keep her away from the Muggles altogether.

So he sprinted through the forest, not knowing where he himself was going, unaware of whether Fűvessy uram was managing to keep pace, but very aware that he was nowhere near losing Hajnalka. He didn't need to keep her on his trail; he couldn't have lost her had he wished to, for she was larger, stronger and swifter, and she had the advantage of knowing the forest.

Hardly aware of why he was doing it, Remus lured her back to Szirtes. He knew that seven or eight other werewolves had planned to spend the night there, as if the sight of Ariadne's cauldron provided a comforting landmark. They would witness... what? As Szirtes loomed into sight, Remus only hoped that the werewolves had kept to their plan. He bounded towards the barn, with Hajnalka still giving chase, and skidded to a halt outside the doorway. He wasn't sure what to do next, but he saw through the open door that the other wolves were inside and most of them were awake.

Hajnalka did not hesitate. She pounced onto Remus and once again knocked him to the ground, through the doorway, and onto the floor of the barn. He fell heavily onto another wolf's tail. He remembered not to howl; to awaken the villagers would be to call down doom on the Wolfsbane Potion. But Hajnalka was biting into his shoulder again, into the same muscle as last time, and her own yelps were making quite enough noise. Through the searing pain, he had a moment of doubt: would his witnesses manage to rescue him in time?

Then the other wolves charged Hajnalka. She was larger than all of them, but she was only one, and it seemed she had no allies among her fellow werewolves. They too were trying to be quiet, but there were thumps and shoves and more than one bite. Remus felt Hajnalka's jaws ripping into his flesh... and then she was roughly shoved aside. It was really only a matter of minutes before the others had her pinned to the ground.

Red light flashed, and Hajnalka slumped to the barn floor. Fűvessy uram had arrived.

And so began a very long wait, with every werewolf alert, except Hajnalka, whom Fűvessy uram patiently re-Stunned every time she stirred. He made a light and checked each of them for injuries, but there was really nothing he could do; no-one was dying, and in the time it would take him to fetch his first aid box from Czíkszereada, Hajnalka might recover her senses and bound off to continue her attack on the Muggles. Remus lay in the dark, stiff and sore, not daring to indicate the damage to his shoulder.

As the sun rose, the werewolves sat up in their human forms. Fűvessy uram noticed the gash on Remus's shoulder, said he would fetch Ariadne immediately, and Disapparated.

Bosszu Hajnalka glowered at Remus. "*Mindent elrontottál,*" she accused him. She began shouting her story to anyone who might be disposed to listen.

As far as Remus could make out, some boyfriend had rejected her twenty years ago, soon after she became a werewolf. Last night, finally in possession of both a wolf's body and a human mind, she had planned her grand revenge. And Remus had sabotaged her life-goals by his officious interference in her business.

* * * * *

Ariadne arrived with the first aid box and began to dress Remus's shoulder with yarrow lotion. Hajnalka transferred her glower to Ariadne and continued to speak her mind. Even with his limited Hungarian, Remus didn't think he would ever wipe from his memory the vulgar accusations that Bosszu Hajnalka heaped upon Ariadne.

Ariadne looked around the barn for her supplies and her face fell. "Oh, dear..." She indicated a trail of powdered herbs that had burst over the floor. "How will we convince the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium that Wolfsbane Potion produces calm, civilised behaviour?" She picked up a strip of leather.

Remus realised that it was part of their rucksack, which had once been Aunt Macmillan's suitcase. In last night's scuffle, the leather had been savaged. Or perhaps Bosszu Hajnalka had done it deliberately, angry with the ingredients composing a potion that had failed to address her own requirements.

Fűvessy uram Conjured a broom and swept the herbs out into the field. Remus helped Ariadne to gather the remains of the suitcase. He was too weak to Apparate, but Ariadne and Fűvessy uram helped him through the Floo to the inn at Czíkszereada. They stumbled into their room, thanked Fűvessy asszony for watching their children, and collapsed onto the bed.

"That is one client to whom I'll never again serve Wolfsbane Potion," said Ariadne.

Remus had no need to voice his thoughts. They both knew what might have happened last night if Fűvessy uram hadn't been there. Usually a werewolf had to be left free to commit the whole crime to abuse the Wolfsbane Potion before he could be deemed unworthy of it. Unless, of course, the Potion were legal and under the control of qualified medical staff.

Ariadne began to peel his robe back from his shoulder. "You're needing to see a Healer about this."

"Tomorrow. Today I'm too tired."

"It might be septic tomorrow. There's maybe a hospital in Budapest. Fűvessy uram can give us the grate address."

Remus wanted to close his eyes against the world and keep Ariadne near him. But the children were awakening, with threats of bringing the world right into his bed, so Ariadne went away to look after them.

When he awoke again, it was mid-afternoon, and the world had changed. Ariadne was sitting by the window, looking ecstatic as she read something. She, or perhaps

Füvessy uram, had tried to repair the suitcase. It was now definitely a suitcase and not a rucksack, but it had been patched together very awkwardly, and the black lettering was peeling off, and the clasp didn't seem to work at all. There was no sign of spare herbs or clothes lying around the rented room, but the suitcase was bulging. Ariadne must have packed; were they returning to the mountains already? He groaned, and reached out in hope of finding a glass of water.

Ariadne immediately brought him one. "How is your shoulder?"

"Better," he lied. It was still weeping, and Ariadne began to dress it with more yarrow. "We don't have to leave here already, do we?"

"We're not *needing* to. But while you were sleeping... two things happened."

He fell back on his pillows, letting her out of focus so that her eyes became two blue pools. "Will I regret asking you about them?"

"You will not." She sat on the edge of the bed. "The first thing is, your adventure with Hajnalka became the talk of Szirtes. People have been Flooing all over Transylvania all day to tell one another the story of the wicked werewolf who deliberately abused the new medicine from Czikszereda in order to take revenge on her rejecting lover. It's seeming... nobody is interested in a new medicine on its own account. But if we can add romance and violence to the story, it's suddenly newsworthy. The story finishes with the naming of the seven werewolves who stood up for human decency by restraining Hajnalka. So now every Székely is knowing about the potion, and believing it would make them safer from werewolves, provided the distribution were monitored well enough to restrain those with criminal intent. People from all over the province have been visiting Füvessy uram to ask him why he never brought it to the werewolves in *their* families."

"What?... The gossipmongers have done our work for us?"

"Füvessy uram is saying that this is a good time to enlist the support of the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium. He already has ninety-four signatures on a petition. If he reminds them that werewolves should be both dosed *and* restrained, they might grant a patent in time to authorise next month's brew."

Remus lay back, once again feeling that he had missed half the story. Between closing his eyes and opening them, a whole country had reversed its age-old policy. Finally he asked, "What was the other thing that happened?"

Ariadne's face burst with the smile of the seraphs. "I had an owl from Hestia. And then from Mercy... and Kingsley... and the Champions... and Emmeline. They all sent exactly the same cutting from yesterday's *Daily Prophet*." She unfolded the page that she had been reading earlier. "Can you read?"

"Read it to me."

PIONEERING HEALER PARDONED

The Ministry of Magic yesterday granted a free pardon to Hippocrates Smethwyck, the Healer who pioneered the distribution of the Wolfsbane Potion.

Healer Smethwyck, 96, devoted three years to succouring Britain's most desperate werewolves by secretly brewing Wolfsbane Potion on the premises of St Mungo's Hospital. This enabled the werewolves to keep their human minds throughout the full moon period, despite having the bodies of wolves. Since the potion was illegal at the time, Healer Smethwyck paid the price of all visionaries and was sentenced to a term in Azkaban.

"The Wolfsbane Potion represented our safety," says Mediwizard Jason Borage, 21, who used to assist Healer Smethwyck in distributing the potion. "Under its influence, the werewolves were as safe as pet dogs. Healer Smethwyck used to insist that they spend the night in a locked ward at St Mungo's. They had no chance of abusing the potion, because the only person available to bite was Healer Smethwyck himself."

After being bereft of the Wolfsbane Potion, the werewolves could not help reverting to their former savage instincts. For instance, Cornelius Fudge's own nephew recently suffered the tragedy of a werewolf attack.

"Failure to patent this important medicine was just an oversight," confirms the Minister for Magic. "Healer Smethwyck was convicted on a technicality. He was legally wrong, but of course he was morally right." It is expected that the patent for Wolfsbane Potion will be issued before the June full moon.

"I am delighted," says Damocles Belby, 46, the apothecary who originally discovered this magical medicine. "I believe in working within the law, and I still say Hippocrates was rash to jump the gun. However, I am delighted that the moral dilemma will soon cease to exist."

Other experts are more guarded in their commendation. "A thinking werewolf will prove even more dangerous than a mindless one," warns Dolores Umbridge, 61, Senior Undersecretary to the Minister for Magic. "This medicine is a stimulant, not a sedative. It does not tame werewolves; it only encourages them to focus their assaults."

Healer Smethwyck was unavailable for comment. His wife, Clarissa, 84, says only that he has returned to their Berkshire home, where he is recovering from his ordeal in Azkaban.

The next day the Lupin family took the Floo to the Mágiaügyi Minisztérium, an International Portkey to the Ministry of Magic, and the Floo back to their own house in Nottingham. It was full, warm spring, with the blossoms on the pear trees giving way to bright green leaves, and crimson and gold tulips bordering every front lawn. The Lupins' lawns were evenly-mowed emerald blankets, because Joe had tended their gardens consistently throughout their absence.

Remus tossed their surviving suitcase into the tiny box-room under the eaves without giving it much thought. He knew he should look at that broken catch, but there was

too much else to do, and he didn't intend to go travelling again for a very long time. Most immediately, he had to think about how he was to support his family. It was a good time of year to look for vacancies (he sent his résumé to every primary school in Nottingham), but it was a bad time to begin a new job, since all teaching posts began in September. He registered with the L.E.A. as a supply teacher, but of course that only brought in very part-time work.

"I should maybe work," said Ariadne. She contacted St Mungo's the day after their return, but there wasn't a vacancy. "Healer Smethwyck would probably make a space for me," she said, "but Madam Smethwyck says he will not be fit to work for several weeks yet. I'll apply at the Most Extraordinary Society of Potioneers."

Remus wanted to say that there was no need, since Ariadne was already working. Whenever she wasn't busy with the children, she was studying her lupluna pots. But neither of them could evade the reality that they were currently trying to feed six people on what Joe brought home from the Butterbeer factory. While Joe didn't seem to mind sharing, Remus was disturbed by the thought of allowing the situation to continue into next week. Besides, Ariadne ought to be awarded a Mastership in the near future, but it wouldn't happen unless she appeared in the workforce.

"To speak of the self-vaunting Society," he said, "have you reminded them that you are the real author of the Wolfsbane Potion? If you don't claim copyright soon, you'll find history attributing the credit to Damocles Belby."

It hadn't occurred to her. "If I create a complication now, it'll probably delay the granting of the patent. And it's not mattering, since the Wolfsbane Potion is only an interim measure. Once I've finished the lupluna analysis, nobody will care any more about the Wolfsbane."

"How are you managing to do anything with the lupluna? Aren't they stuck in their pots until some vampire pulls them out?"

"Mercy found a Mr Sanguini to uproot the original batch, but I've no trouble doing anything with the cuttings. The real problem is that it's such a complex plant. It will take me months to isolate and extract that component that causes lycanthropy, and then I'll have to work out its empirical formula. What's more, its chemistry probably changes under the full moon. Even after I'm knowing the formula, it'll take years to calculate exactly how it affects the human metabolism, and more years to construct an antidote. Remus... do not expect any miracle medicines at any time soon."

He hadn't had any timeline in mind, nor was he expecting any more miracles in his life. Ariadne herself was as great a miracle as any man could desire, her love for him apparently still as sweet and intense as on their wedding day, despite seven years of trials. It seemed unfair that she should lose home and friends and professional status that she should have been almost a vagabond in Transylvania because she had married a werewolf, and that, even now, she was not to be rewarded for her labours.

When would she start feeling that the price had been too high?

She stroked his cheek. "Do not worry about it, Remus. One of us will find a job soon, and I'll be able to deconstruct the lupluna eventually. Did I tell you that my mother Flooded while you were at the library? She's coming to visit tomorrow, and I'm certain she's understanding that she has to be accepting towards you if she's wanting to see her grandchildren. Everything will be all right."

And so they lived. Remus was able to teach two or three days most weeks. Hestia often dropped in on her way home from work: she was putting in long hours of upholstery and French-polishing at Chippendale and Hepplewhite. Ariadne's mother and cousins would invite themselves to morning coffee or afternoon tea (ironically named, since Ariadne never drank either); since her mother had the farm, Mercy worked irregular shifts at St Mungo's, Felicity had a baby, and Letitia never did any work of any kind, they were available at all hours. Joe had stocked them up on Arabica coffee and Earl Grey tea.

Mrs MacDougal was polite to Remus and utterly doting over the children. She brought them gifts of fresh fruit and alphabet books and took all the credit for teaching David to walk. She chattered endlessly about the family: how surprised they were that Morag had been sorted into Ravenclaw, how Aidan had fed alihotsy to Papa's chronically depressed prize bull, how Humphrey Macnair recommended Ogden's new barley-malt blend of Firewhisky. As far as Remus was aware, she had never apologised to Ariadne for the two years of refusing all communication; an outsider would never have guessed. Indeed, Letitia Greengrass remarked, "You're lucky to have a mother, Ariadne."

Letitia took no notice of Remus or the children, but she would monopolise Ariadne for an hour at a time. Strictly speaking, Lucius did not allow her to speak to Ariadne at all, but he was unlikely ever to find out. "It's so strange," she sniffed into her Earl Grey, "that you're the only one left of my old friends, Ariadne. I wouldn't have believed it ten years ago. You were such a goody two-shoes, always finishing your homework on time, and then sneaking off to hobnob with Muggle-borns. Yet you're the only friend who has lasted."

Remus found himself staring at the newspaper. He knew that Ariadne had never considered Letitia *a friend*.

"Well, I can't avoid Hazel, seeing as she's my sister-in-law, but *I wish* I could. All she ever talks about is her aches and pains, and every time I see her snotty-nosed, grizzly little brats, I remember why I intend never to have any of my own. Then Galena Borgin is too busy with that shop down in Knockturn Alley to issue social invitations, and Morgause Lufkin hasn't sent so much as a Christmas card since she swanned off to America." Letitia set down her cup, with an aside that Ariadne's tea-brewing skills had improved. "I do feel sorry for Regelinda Macnair, though. Her father keeps her an absolute prisoner in that dilapidated old castle. It's *his* fault that our friendship hasn't lasted. Still, I've heard a hint... I won't say too much now, Ariadne... but I think Regelinda's circumstances may improve quite soon."

Ariadne showed a disappointing lack of interest in begging her cousin to breach this confidence. But after Letitia had gone, she asked Remus, "Are you thinking... Could Regelinda have taken an experimental walk in the castle grounds... and discovered that she could walk all the way to Foss... that she's no longer magically constrained to the castle?"

"It was inevitable that one of them would find out sooner or later. It's been over a year, Ariadne."

A week later Remus came downstairs from putting Matthew to bed to find Ariadne frowning over a letter. He thought he detected an owl winging into the horizon, but before he could ask her about it, a second owl swooped in through the window. It landed in Ariadne's lap and swept her first letter onto the floor with a flap of its wing before extending its leg. As Ariadne read her second letter, all colour drained from her face.

"Bad news?" he asked.

She pressed the letter into his hand. "Veleta." Her mouth made the word, but it was soundless.

My dear Ariadne,

We are desperate. I implore you to help us, if it is the last thing you ever do.

They are going to kill my baby! Susan was born last January. Gertrude Macnair gives all my children genetic tests at birth, and Susan is a Squib. They tossed her back to me at the time, but now they say they need her blood. Literally.

Walden Macnair has just found out that constraining spell the one that confines Macnair descendants to the radius of Macnair Castle has been broken. This

is because Regelinda eloped with Harold Skiveley last week. She shouldn't have been able to do this, for her father has been keeping her as almost a prisoner inside the castle ever since he found out that Mr Skiveley is a Muggle-born. Since Regelinda is now safely married in London, all the Macnairs know that their spell has broken.

They don't know who broke it or how, and they don't much care. They just want to re-cast it as fast as they can, before anyone else escapes.

You didn't mention all the details of the Blood Spell, but Macnair Castle also has a copy of *Blodhrikj and I know the parts you tried to spare me*. Since this is not a life-and-death spell, it shouldn't be necessary to commit murder to re-cast it. Simply spilling some blood should be enough. But Walden Macnair says they will kill Susan anyway. If someone actually dies, "meddlers" will have almost no chance of sabotaging the new spell later.

Please, Ariadne, if this is the last thing you ever do for us don't let them hurt my baby. There must be someone out there whom the Macnairs have never Banned. Please, please, find that person, and beg him or her to bring my children a Portkey.

Mary will try to capture a Macnair owl to deliver this message. If the Macnairs waylay her before the owl departs, I don't know what we shall do. But I think they will cast the spell tomorrow, as soon as they can borrow a silver knife free from Macnair possession.

Susan is only a baby. Don't let her die!

Veleta Vablatsky.

"This is what Veleta should have done years ago," said Remus. "Put her situation in writing and signed it. Now we finally have evidence that the Auror Division will take seriously."

Ariadne did not notice that he was giving the letter back to her, and it fluttered helplessly to the carpet. "Are they not closed for the day? We'll take it to them first thing tomorrow, then, and we can hope we are yet in time... I'm just hoping they will not waste time collecting permits and interviewing the Macnairs first. Oh, it will be so slow! Remus, can you not make a Portkey for me tonight?"

"For you? Of course not. You'd be knocked cold as you passed the Barrier, and that wouldn't save Susan. I could set a Portkey, but we'd need a different courier... someone whom we are quite certain the Macnairs have never thought to Ban. If you can think of anyone, sweetheart... *any* person whom you know but the Macnairs don't..."

"For an emergency like this, Remus, could we not appeal to Professor Dumbledore? Even if he cannot go himself, he's knowing everybody."

Remus thought desperately. "We could if it were not summer," he agreed, "but Hogwarts is closed, and Dumbledore is probably Unsearchable while he's on holiday."

"My cousin Severus? Professor McGonagall? Madam Bones...? Joe, do not tear that letter!"

Remus grabbed for it a second too late; Joe had already ripped it asunder and tossed the two pieces in opposite directions. Then he hurled himself upwards from the sofa and stalked out of the room. He obviously *did* understand a fair part of the situation.

Remus tapped a *Reparo* on the letter and reminded Ariadne, "Severus would have been Banned on the day he denounced the Death Eaters. McGonagall is at a Transfiguration Conference in Egypt; she wouldn't be able to return to Britain in time. And Madam Bones has been too closely involved with Veleta all along; I think it's quite likely that she's a Banned person too."

"Then there's... oh, *think*. Remus, would Kingsley not know somebody...?"

Remus tried not to let the terrifying images of what the Macnairs were intending to do to a baby block out rational thought. It wasn't a question of who would take the problem seriously. He needed to think of someone who *might* accept enough of their story to be willing to invade private property on an illegal Portkey in order to investigate. But the only names that were crossing his mind were those of people who were already Banned.

Suddenly it seemed altogether too quiet.

"Ariadne," he said suddenly, "do you think Joe's all right?"

Ariadne listened too. Since the children were asleep upstairs, there were only the two of them, and the silence was deafening.

They looked at each other, then Remus ran for the stairs. Ariadne ran after him, up two flights, past the open bathroom doors, to Joe's room. Remus flung open Joe's door, while Ariadne checked her laboratory opposite. Joe was not at home.

Then they heard an almighty thump downstairs in the lounge.

A/N. Thank you to **St. Row-a-Check** for continued guidance on all things Magyar.

By Love's Light

Chapter 18 of 21

Joe faces down trouble, Ariadne faces up to corruption, and Remus faces reality.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

By Love's Light

Friday 26 June Friday 10 July 1992

Old Basford, Nottingham.

Thou'rt the music of my heart,

Harp of joy, o cruit mo chruidh,

Moon of guidance by night

Strength and light thou'rt to me.

Scottish Folk Song: "Eriskay Love Lilt"

Rated PG-13 for sexual references, both criminal and conjugal.

There was another crash as they raced back down the stairs. David started wailing in the nursery, and Ariadne went in to comfort him.

"Stay there," Remus told her, "and keep your wand drawn. I hope it's just Joe having an accident... But if we have intruders..."

David did not quieten easily; Ariadne tried to relax, but she knew that he was responding to her own taut nerves. Remus must have reached the lounge by now, and he was being greeted by a third crash, and by the high-pitched voices of strangers.

"Mummy, what's happening?" Elizabeth was sitting up in bed.

"Hush, Daddy's looking after it." Ariadne tried to sound convincing as she tucked in Elizabeth's blankets, but all her instincts were to lock the bairns in their room and then race to assist Remus with whatever was happening downstairs. There was a fourth crash and a babble of voices, Remus's among them. Ariadne realised that Remus did not sound at all angry or even wary, and she cautiously allowed herself to breathe again. Some strange man had certainly broken into their house, but it sounded as if Remus was in control of the situation.

After another minute, David had calmed down, Elizabeth had been convinced to lie down, and Remus was again climbing the stairs.

"It's all right," he said. "You can come down now."

"Remus, what's happening?"

"We have visitors. Come and see."

She followed him back downstairs. Joe was standing by the fireplace, surrounded by a swarming mass of children, and seated on their sofa...

Ariadne's heart thudded to a full stop as her world crashed like a broomstick that shatters in full flight.

"Veleta!"

Ariadne was glad to have the sofa to take her weight and glad of the strong Charm-work with which Remus had repaired it over the years. She knew the people around her were speaking but she did not register what they said or what was so odd about it. The woman sitting at hugging distance from her, holding a brown-eyed baby in her lap and looking even more astonished than Ariadne herself, was unquestionably Veleta, and quite as large as life. Time was frozen for a long minute as Ariadne recognised that she had no idea what should happen next. How had Veleta escaped? Would the Macnairs come here to hunt her down? Why... how was Joe talking?

Finally Ariadne found her voice and said, "Welcome home, Veleta."

Veleta launched herself rather cautiously into Ariadne's embrace, as if she had not been entirely certain of her welcome here. Ariadne knew at once that the woman whom Veleta was hugging was not really herself. Veleta had no memory of the Ariadne whom she had known at Hogwarts.

A little boy with huge chocolate-brown eyes was about to grab at a wooden quoit, one of a set that had somehow become scattered about the carpet. Remus sprang after the boy and swept him off his feet. Suddenly Ariadne found herself thinking clearly and realised far too fast what the child had nearly done. That was a two-way Portkey, set to transport the unwary straight back to Macnair Castle.

Joe tapped at the quoits with his wand and whispered, *'Finite Incantatem.'* He did it five times, once for each quoit.

"Joe," said Ariadne, "you can speak."

"Yes," said Veleta, "he has been speaking ever since he brought us the Portkeys."

It seemed the wrong time to ask for explanations, but Veleta's daughter Mary was very happy to do the explaining. "Your friend Sarah used to keep the co-ordinates to our room in Foss written down on her desk, so of course Joe knew them. This evening he turned his quoits into two-way Portkeys and brought them to us. He saw that we had house-elves guarding us, but he just Stunned them, and he gave the first Portkey to me and the second to Peter and the third to Andrew... Yes, of course I kept on

Locospecting my mother after I arrived here. I had to *know* if something happened to her! Then Joe stopped to pick up something on the table... What was it, Joe?"

Joe brought out a small Runic dictionary that once nearly seven years ago Remus had tried to use as a Portkey to transport Veleta's children.

"And then Mum wouldn't take the next Portkey."

"Of course not," said Veleta. "I didn't want to leave Robert in Foss, not even with Joe. That's when Joe started talking, explaining that Robert was too young to travel alone because he might drop the Portkey in transit so he would bring Robert after Susan and I were safely on our way. While he was arguing about this, Toady appeared in the room, breathing threats and murder, so we knew that Walden Macnair was on his way. Joe almost shoved me onto the fourth Portkey, and I had arrived here before I had time to think about leaving Robert behind. But Joe brought him before I really had time to worry about it."

It would not take Uncle Macnair long to work out where his captives had fled. Ariadne was not wanting to mention in front of the bairns that nobody was safe yet.

Before she could arrange her thoughts, Remus said, "We'll have to call in the Aurors."

"No," said Veleta. "Please... I don't want..."

"Veleta," said Remus gently, "the Macnairs will guess that you've come here. They could Apparate to our front gate at any minute. We need to prevent a counter-kidnap."

Veleta shuddered visibly.

Suddenly Ariadne was inspired. "Veleta, are the Macnairs knowing where your grandmother lives?"

"My...? They've never asked me anything about her, but I suppose everyone knows where to find the famous Professor Vablatsky."

"Not everybody," said Ariadne. "It's not widely known that she sold her house in Guildford. She's living in Galway now, and her house there is Unplottable."

"C-co-ordinates?" asked Joe. His voice sounded very strange, far deeper than Ariadne remembered.

"She told us," said Remus, and he began to re-set the Portkeys.

Mary took the first one without asking any questions, although it was obvious she was suppressing a thousand. Peter took the second with only a moment of hesitation, and Remus took Andrew on the third. As Joe picked up Robert to travel on the fourth, Ariadne happened to glance out of the window; she saw in the shadow of the oak tree a face that looked suspiciously like Humphrey Macnair's.

Veleta saw it too. She froze for a moment, then clutched baby Susan more closely and grabbed for the last Portkey.

Ariadne did not look out of the window again; giving the smallest encouragement to Cousin Humphrey's attention would be a bad move. She ignored the hammering at her front door. She ignored it until a strange and very south-of-England voice shouted, "Open up! This is the law!"

She threw a *Transparens* at the door first to make sure it really was an Auror outside.

"Cassius Proudfoot," the Auror introduced himself. "We've traced several unauthorised Portkeys to this address..."

She let him in. Auror Proudfoot was still taking the details of Ariadne's statement when Remus and Joe returned. He took separate statements from each of them, remarking, "You've certainly worked hard at agreeing on your story."

Joe ignored this. "Must we go to trial?" he asked.

"Miss Vablatsky has suffered a very long ordeal," Remus finished Joe's thought. "She can't be expected to stand up in court and make detailed statements about her tormenters, only to have her every word torn apart by the defending barrister."

"No, she doesn't have to do that," agreed Auror Proudfoot. "But if she chooses not to testify, we don't have a case. The people whom you are accusing very respectable people, I might add would have to be left unrestrained."

"Safety," protested Remus. "We don't believe the Vablatsky family is safe or our family, either as long as the Macnair family is free."

"The Aurors can help you set up securities around your property. We can also take a general statement from Miss Vablatsky that she does not wish to live in the Macnair household or to associate with the Macnair family. In the light of other allegations made by Miss Vablatsky's friends, that would be moderately convincing evidence. We can even issue a warning to the Macnair family that they fall under immediate suspicion if any accident befalls any of the Vablatskys. But, in the long term, the only protection for any of you lies in a formal prosecution."

To be fair, Auror Proudfoot spent the next hour making himself useful. He helped Remus mark out a hedge of protective charms around their house, together with intruder alarms and some mild repelling hexes. He showed them how to authorise access to their personal friends and to certain people whose names they did not know, such as the postman and the milkman (as if Remus had not already known all that!). They let him show them in all the intricate detail, because the longer he spent helping them defend themselves, the better it would be impressed on his mind that they were being presented with a real threat.

It was fully dark by the time Auror Proudfoot left them alone to explain to each other.

"That man t-tries to be helpful," said Joe. "He's the same Auror who... when my brother was murdered... had to be there, and tried to help us. But he said he couldn't p-prosecute... the murderer... because they needed more definite evidence."

"Oh... are you knowing who killed Benjy?" asked Ariadne.

"Titus Nott."

Somehow, Ariadne was not at all surprised to learn that respectable Mr Nott had been a Death Eater. Hoping to coax Joe into talking, she prompted, "Then that's why you've had such a hard time because you were knowing, yet nobody listened to you."

"Yes, at first," said Joe. "I was, um, shocked... when Benjy d-died. In the summer holidays I became... a little better... but very angry. The Aurors wouldn't p-punish Mr Nott, so I'd d-do it myself. So I went up to him..."

"What, you tried to tackle a Death Eater by yourself!" exclaimed Remus.

"I thought I c-could... I was fifteen..." Suddenly Joe had no trouble finding his words. With the memory blazed all over his face, he launched into full narrative. "I burst into his office at Gringotts and tried to put the Cruciatus on him. It didn't work, of course. He just laughed and put his own curse on me. I found that I *could not* speak. The hex affected my memory too, and everything around me seemed like a d-dream."

"So it was all a spell," said Ariadne. "But why did nobody guess that you were hexed?"

"It looked too similar to my ordinary trauma symptoms, I suppose," said Joe. "Mr Nott was clever. But the hex wore off after seven years. After that, I was just... I think the word is... malingering. That was partly for survival; if Titus Nott knew I had recovered, he'd hex me again or perhaps kill me. But I also realised there were advantages to

being a person whom everyone ignored. The Macnairs had no idea who I was and they never bothered to Ban me."

Remus frowned. "But weren't you in Regelinda's Potions class for five years?"

Joe broke into a rare grin. "Yes, I was. But the Macnairs don't recognise people who can't be useful to them. I used to pass Regelinda her Potions ingredients at Hogwarts, and she never seemed to know my name. Soon after we left school, she stopped me in Diagon Alley to ask the time that must have been before her family knew about her boyfriend and kept her confined to the castle. Anyway, I indicated that I couldn't speak and showed her my watch, but she still didn't connect me with the mute boy from Hogwarts she didn't recognise me at all. It never crossed her mind that I knew Veleta. When I regained my senses, I had to keep it that way... which meant never letting Veleta Locospect anything that would be worth reporting to the Macnairs... which meant never letting my guard down even among my closest friends."

"Joe... how stalwart... to maintain that charade for such a very long time..."

"As I've said, it was a matter of life and death. Even now, I'd rather not place myself in front of Mr Nott's attention. The most frightening time was when I had to take a delivery of Butterbeer right into Macnair Castle. Humphrey Macnair authorised me to bring it in by Floo, and I came to no harm at all. So I knew for sure that they had forgotten to Ban me."

"So if you were knowing that you could enter safely... why did you not take a Portkey to Veleta a year ago, when we first broke the constraining spell?"

"I'd like to ask you the same question," said Joe. "Ariadne, why didn't you *tell* me that you had broken the spell? I've wasted fifteen months thinking that the children couldn't be Portkeyed. If I had known that you had already done the difficult part, that all you needed was someone who hadn't been Banned to take them a Portkey..."

Ariadne exchanged a glance with Remus. If only they *had* known that Joe could make a difference... If only they had bothered to keep his information up to date...

"I'd probably have told you about our trip to Foss if I'd not had to leave Britain the next day," she said. "I've been suspecting for three or four years that your silence was not... quite what it was seeming to be. But, Joe, I'd no way of knowing what game you were really playing or how much you were really capable of helping; and I was believing you Banned."

Joe looked slightly nonplussed. "I didn't pretend *that* well, did I? I thought I gave you a clue, Remus. I did beat you at chess. When the hex really was controlling me, I always lost."

Remus replaced his long-lost dictionary in the bookcase. "There's something else I don't understand," he said. "Why did Veleta have a crystal ball in her room? She wasn't a Seer, was she?"

"That was all for show," said Joe. "The Macnairs wanted outsiders to *think* she was some kind of Diviner... to hide that she was really a Locospector, I suppose. Mary told me that the crystal was actually broken."

* * * * *

The intruder alarm blasted through their house twice over the next week, indicating that an unauthorised person had tried to open the front gate, and once Ariadne thought she caught a glimpse of Uncle Macnair standing by their hedge. After that, there was no sign of any Macnairs anywhere near 24, Spurge Street. Auror Proudfoot, or perhaps Madam Bones, must have given them due warning.

Veleta needed to make the complicated Floo journey across the Irish Sea to St Mungo's three or four times a week so that the Healers could begin the delicate work of restoring her memory. Joe always accompanied her. After the first week, he flitted from the Lupins' house to live with the Vablatskys.

"He's been very kind," Veleta told Ariadne through the Floo. "The children think he's brilliant. Yesterday he bought half a dozen second-hand Comets and he's teaching us all to fly them. Almost everyone has been kinder than the Macnair family. Granny has been wonderful. I just wish... I remembered her as my grandmother. I have so many new friends, and from my point of view no old ones at all."

"It has to be very disorienting for you," Ariadne agreed.

"The most disorienting thing of all," said Veleta, "is to feel safe. To wake in the morning in a strange place, yet to find my children *are* still here with me. To walk through the house and know that it isn't booby-trapped. To walk through the village and know that the Muggles around me aren't interested in reporting my every movement to an enemy. To go to bed at night confident that I'll be alone in the bed until morning. It's so strange to feel that we've arrived at the place where the Macnairs cannot follow us."

It was disorienting for Ariadne too. She had not known what a crippling burden was weighing down her life until the day it had lifted. She no longer had to push away dark thoughts of what might be happening to Veleta, and it was astonishing how much energy those terrors had absorbed; her step was lighter, and she found herself smiling or even singing for no reason.

"Mummy 'appy now," said Elizabeth.

"You're seeming more contented nowadays," commented Mamma. "I'm thinking you're glad that Remus has finally found a job."

It was not worth mentioning to Mamma that the "job" was only a week of supply teaching. Remus had an interview appointment on Saturday, so perhaps he would be fully employed by September. Healer Smethwyck had returned to work this week, so perhaps there would soon be a part-time job for herself as well.

"What are you brewing?" asked her mother. "It's smelling very aromatic."

"It's Wolfsbane Potion, but it's smelling a great deal better than it's tasting. I had to modify the original formula to make the flavour even tolerable."

"To speak of your Wolfsbane formula," said Mamma, who was never comfortable discussing werewolves directly, "it's just been published again. It really confused poor Severus. He Flooed me yesterday to ask why the formula would state, 'Do not substitute monkshood for wolfsbane.' When I began to explain that they are not *at all* the same thing, he was very surprised, for he'd always thought they were synonyms. He said he'd consult with Professor Sprout about that. But we're knowing what she'll tell him..."

* * * * *

On Friday evening Ariadne doused the fire under the cauldron and measured Remus's dose of Wolfsbane Potion into a goblet. It only had to last until Tuesday, so she had over-catered; it seemed strange to be brewing for only one person. She carried the goblet to the sofa, where Remus was waiting.

"Ariadne," he said, "is this really the life you want?"

The question surprised her. "Of course it is. What are you wishing different?"

"I don't know." He drank without meeting her eye. "You've had a difficult year, first hounded out of Britain, then returning to find your professional life in ruins and the Macnairs still on the warpath. I sometimes wonder if I'll ever be able to give you the kind of life that... that someone like you ought to have. You deserve a *normal* life."

It was extraordinary that, after so long, he could yet suggest *that* was her liability. "A life with a few problems is a normal life," she said, taking the empty goblet out of his hands. "But being married to you has helped."

"What?"

"If it were not for you, the Macnairs *would* have killed me by now, and Veleta would be yet in their clutches. I'd not have survived on the Continent without you and perhaps not even distributed Wolfsbane Potion in Britain." She turned his question around. "Are *you* not wishing for a normal life? Living with me has brought you one danger after another."

This was obviously a new idea to him. "You? Do you think *you* bring danger to *me*?"

"Of course I do. Werewolves and Aurors and Macnairs and angry Muggle officials and even my cousin Severus... You've hardly had a minute of security since the day you promised to support my ridiculous idealism." She leaned against him. His arms wrapped automatically around her without his noticing, but she was very aware of his body heat.

"I didn't notice the extra dangers," he said. "I always have so many of my own that I don't pay any attention to a few more."

"So we're both dangerous people."

"So we're..." He stopped, and stared at her full in the face. "Have you manipulated this conversation? We were supposed to be talking about how we could make *your* life more normal... more like what you would have with a safe and normal husband."

She returned his gaze steadily. "Are you asking whether we should be more cautious in future? I'm expecting that would be a very boring life. Normal husbands have nothing interesting to talk about; Hazel and Letitia are completely disenchanted with theirs. And Mercy and Felicity tell me that their husbands are... protective. Men like that would never let me chase werewolves all over Europe; they'd maybe not even let me brew poisons like the Wolfsbane Potion. But Ivor was always willing to do whatever was needing to be done. I know he ended up dead, but Hestia never *regretted* having married him. Remus, would you rather I were less dangerous... less idealistic... less of a scientist?"

"No, of course not." He paused to kiss her for a while.

He was making her too comfortable and his touch was too dizzying; if he had any more serious questions, she would not be able to think clearly to answer.

"But something is bothering you," he said. "The evening Veleta came home... I saw you frowning over some letter. I meant to ask you about it, but we became busy."

"Compared with having Veleta home again, it cannot have been anything very important." She cast her mind back. "That's right, several small annoyances arose on that day. Then Veleta came home, and I remembered again what counts as a *real* problem."

"So are you going to tell me about your small annoyances?"

She was about to say that they were trivial, but it seemed churlish to cheat Remus of the opportunity to play the White Knight and solve one or two of her problems, so she relented and told him. "This one will test your sense of humour, Remus. I'm knowing it's very bad timing... but... I received a job offer... which I refused."

"What was it, working in the Butterbeer factory?"

She settled her head back on his shoulder. "It was for Professor Jigger. He's wanting me to scrub and measure for him again and he promised me a Mastership within twelve months into the bargain."

"I'm glad you refused. Our children definitely do not need a mother who works for Professor Jigger."

"What bothered me was the feeling that... that Professor Jigger was trying to *buy* me."

His hand on her hair stopped in mid-stroke. She pulled away to look at him, and discovered he had been pulling out her pins.

"I'm knowing that he asked me for fly agaric extract, and Madam Patil has told me... worse. Between us we have evidence that he... well, that some people are dying because of what Professor Jigger is willing to sell to other people. If I were knowing this much about a stranger, I'd be asking the Aurors to conduct an investigation. But it's seeming spiteful to create trouble for my old mentor... the man to whom I owe my journeyship, to say nothing of the first publication of the Wolfsbane formula."

"He's very successfully created your feeling of obligation to him," said Remus dryly.

"He has. I'm knowing he's manipulating me... but he has a point. I'd *not* be an apothecary but for him. I am knowing, really, that it's my duty to expose him, before he assists in a murder."

"Of course it's a distasteful task," said Remus. "I'll help you with it. We'll Floo Madam Patil tomorrow and collect together all the evidence, and then ask Kingsley what we should all do next."

She sighed. "You're right, of course. Right about what we have to do and right about its being distasteful. Veleta gave me the excuse to procrastinate, but now... Anyway, on the same day, Severus Flooed to ask me about aconites. It came up in the conversation that Harry Potter has been ill..."

Remus stiffened beside her.

"... I'm sorry; I was meaning to tell you. I've heard since that Harry is out of the hospital wing and safely home with his family. But that was another worry for that day. Anyway, directly connected with Harry's accident, Severus also told me... well, it's in the *Daily Prophet*, and I've been meaning to show you ever since... *Accio*..."

A paper in the bookcase flapped feebly, then lay still.

"*Accio*, newspaper," said Remus, and the page sailed across the room into his hand. Ariadne pointed to the advertisement.

Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher for noted secondary school. Send résumé and cover owl to A. Dumbledore, Headmaster, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Equal Being Opportunity Employer.

"I'm knowing it appears every year... but... Did you ever think of applying?"

It was clear from the look on his face that he never had thought of it.

"I'm knowing it's a risk... that there's some kind of jinx on the Defence post; unless we can discover how to break the curse, the job will only last a year..."

"A year of full employment? That strikes me as a rather good bargain compared with the two-day contracts that I've been working lately. But, Ariadne..." His fingers combed

gently through her hair; he did not seem to know that he was once more pulling out her pins. "... Would *you* be willing to pack up our lives again so soon and make a new home on the other side of the country?"

She laughed. "Of course I would! Are you asking *me* if I'm wishing to live in Scotland?"

"I didn't know you had any feelings at all on the subject. Are you really homesick for Scotland?"

"Sometimes." It was a feeling that had crept up on her during their travels. She had not realised until the day they returned to Nottingham that she thought of England as the *second*-best place in the world.

He pulled out the last pin, and her hair tumbled down her back. "Then I'll apply, and if Professor Dumbledore invites us to Hogwarts, we'll break the curse together."

"That was also the day when I found out that... I was not pregnant."

He was puzzled. "You haven't been pregnant for twelve months."

"That is maybe why it bothered me. Matthew is twenty months older than Elizabeth, who is twenty months older than David, so when we reached David's first birthday... and there was no baby... I let myself become more upset than I should. Then Veleta came home, and I remembered again how small a problem it really was."

"Do you want to have *another* baby?"

"I've always thought we'd have four children. It's seeming a good number... except on the daft days when I'm wanting twelve. I do know that it's terrible timing, when we've no Galleons in Gringotts. I have not grown up, have I? I'm the same age now that you were when we were married and I'm yet assuming that everything can be done without money. Anyway, I'm just saying that that's what was bothering me that day."

"If you want a baby..." His fingers combed through her hair again, then came to rest on her cheek. Although his touch was light, her heartbeat quickened. "We haven't wasted much time. But it usually requires two of us."

The light in his eyes brought her blood rushing warmly to her cheeks. "If it's to happen this month, it's needing to be tonight."

"I've no other plans for tonight," he said, and kissed her again.

The Final Kiss

Chapter 19 of 21

Those who align themselves with outcasts are doomed never to prosper.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Final Kiss

Saturday 11 July 1992

Old Basford, Nottingham; the Ministry of Magic, London.

Fare-thee-weel, thou first and fairest!

Fare-thee-weel, thou best and dearest!

Thine be ilka joy and treasure,

Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure!

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!

Ae farewell, alas, for ever!

Robert Burns: "Ae Fond Kiss"

Rated PG-13 for violence.

"Mummy!"

Elizabeth was standing outside the bedroom door.

"Mummy, David's wanting to get up!"

"We'll be up in a moment, darling." Ariadne began to edge herself out gently from under Remus's arm. His muscles tightened around her for a moment, then relaxed, and she pulled herself away from the warmth of the rumpled bed. She buttoned her dressing-gown as she opened the door, then swung Elizabeth up into her arms.

"Mummy, David's awake."

Ariadne carried Elizabeth across the landing. David had hauled himself to his feet and was rattling at the bars of the cot. He stopped rattling when they entered and smiled at them. Ariadne put Elizabeth down so that she could lift David out, and sat down to feed him. She knew she ought to wean him if she were serious about having another baby, but they were down to twice a day, and David was just not ready to give up altogether.

"Reading time, Mummy." Elizabeth pushed Beatrix Bloxam's *The Tale of Benjamin Bowtruckle* into her mother's hand. David slurped loudly, while Ariadne began to read.

"One morning a little Bowtruckle sat on a branch.

"He wiggled his twiggy ears and listened to the swish-swish-swish of an Aethonon's wings.

"A chariot was flying through the forest; it was driven by Warlock Thurkell, and beside him sat Madam Thurkell in her best bonnet.

"As soon as they had passed, little Benjamin Bowtruckle hopped across to the next tree, and skipped off through the forest track to call upon his relations, who lived in the tree at the back of Warlock Thurkell's garden."

"That's boring." Matthew had walked in, carrying a pile of his own books in his arms. "I want to read *Nigel the Knight Bus*."

"Oho!" Remus grabbed at Matthew from behind and twisted him upside-down. "Aren't you satisfied with the standard of entertainment in this circus?"

Matthew shrieked with laughter. "No stop she's liking bo-o-o-o-oring sto-o-o-ories! I'm stop! wanting Nigel *do not put me down!*"

"Do that to me!" shouted Elizabeth.

"I'm going to run the bath," said Remus. He was pretending to be serious, but he was grinning from ear to ear. "People who are clean can eat toast, and people who have finished their toast can choose any story they like."

"I'm choosing *Nigel the Knight Bus!*" said Matthew, racing towards the bathroom door.

"*Benjamin Bowtruckle,*" murmured Elizabeth, nestling near Ariadne again.

When everybody was clean, clothed and fed, Ariadne began the laundry, while Remus made coloured lights spark from his wand. David giggled.

"You promised! I've brought Nigel!"

"I'm wanting *Madam Curlyknarl!*"

When Ariadne returned from scouring the bathroom, Remus was finishing the same two chapters of *Nigel the Knight Bus* that they had read last night. Matthew was listening in rapt attention as if he had never heard the story before, and David was listening in rapt attention even though he could not have understood a word. But Elizabeth was frowning a protest.

"I know! I know what we have to read next!" Remus turned Elizabeth upside down, then sat her on his lap. *Accio, Madam Curlyknarl!*

The book sailed into his hand from upstairs, and Remus began to read.

"Once upon a time there was a little girl called Lycoris, who lived at a farm called Hufflemere. She was a good little girl only she was always losing her gloves!

"One day little Lycoris came into the farm-yard crying oh, she did cry so! 'I've lost my gloves! Three pairs of gloves and a scarf! Have you seen them, Stripy Kneazle?'"

Ariadne sat down on the floor beside them, pulled David into her lap, and leaned her head against Remus's shoulder. They read all the way through *The Tale of Madam Curlyknarl* and all the way through *The Tale of Puffskein Chestil*.

"... And to this day, if you meet Chestil up a tree and ask him a riddle, he will throw hexes at you, and thrust out his tongue and scold, and shout 'Puff-puff-puff-pu-u-u-puff-f-f!'"

Remus closed the book and said, "I should leave."

"Where are you going, Daddy? Can I come?"

"I have a job interview."

"Daddy, I like it better when you don't have a job."

"But we're running out of money. We won't have any money unless I find a job."

Remus kissed each child in turn. He pecked Ariadne on the cheek, then a light sprang into his eye as if he were a naughty teenager. He flung his arms around her waist, and pressed his mouth against hers. Breathless, she kissed him back, crushing him against her until she was flushed with suffocation, and a plaintive voice instructed:

"Stop kissing!"

They broke apart, laughing, and the look on his face promised that she would be kissed again soon. Remus picked up his briefcase and went out to his job interview.

"Now you have to read *Nigel the Knight Bus!*" Matthew thrust the book into Ariadne's hands.

"Two Bad Fairies! Two Bad Fairies!" pleaded Elizabeth.

"It's my turn to choose the story," said Ariadne. "And I'm choosing *The Dragon who came to Dinner*." She took it out of the bookshelf, and sat down on the sofa with David on her lap.

"Once there was a little girl called Sacharissa, and she was having dinner with her mummy, in the kitchen.

"Suddenly there was a ring at the door.

"Sacharissa's mummy said, 'I wonder who that can be. It can't be the Daily Prophet delivery owl because it came this morning. And it can't be the wizard from Spencer's Alimentation because this isn't the day he comes. And it can't be Daddy because he uses Alohomora. We'd better open the door and see.'

"Sacharissa opened the door, and there was a big, shiny, scaly dragon.."

They heard Sacharissa's adventures with the dragon three times before Matthew became restless, and Ariadne allowed masculine fantasy to triumph.

"Nigel was a Knight Bus who lived in a Big Depot"

A tremendous crash in their hall interrupted her reading, as if the front door had exploded. Ariadne put down the book and carried David out to look at the disturbance.

The front door had indeed vanished, and a short, squat, middle-aged witch was pushing her way into their house. She wore a wide mauve ribbon in her mousy curls, and her wide mouth was set in a deathly smile.

"Good morning, Madam Lupin." Her voice raised all the hairs on Ariadne's neck.

"*Expelliarmus!*" Ariadne had not known what she was going to say, but as the intruder staggered backwards, she knew that there would be no second chances today. She managed to catch the expelled wand; but the toad-woman arrested her fall by catching onto the door-jamb, and while she was struggling back to her feet, Ariadne heard the rattling breath of what was standing behind her.

A Dementor.

Its grey cloak was half-hidden in the shadow of the nearest oak tree, but it was clearly only awaiting instructions.

"Well now, that wasn't very friendly," gasped Madam Umbridge. "I've come..."

"*Protego. Protego.*" Ariadne's voice was drowned out by David's wails, but she knew the Shield Charm had worked, because something seemed to bounce off it perhaps some wandless magic born of her opponent's frustration. The toad-woman was on her feet again now. Ariadne focused every desperate thought on the Banishing Charm: *Abigo*.

Nothing happened. Ariadne's wand-work had never been good, and the visitor seemed not to be struggling at all, as if entering the house were no longer her objective. Ariadne tried another Shield Charm, but Madam Umbridge neither cast a spell nor spoke to Ariadne. Instead, she said something to the Dementor.

As the putrid odour wafted into her home, and David howled into her shoulder, Ariadne felt the chilling certainty that she was doomed to lose this battle. Even armed as she was with two wands, what hope had she against a Dementor? *Remus will be home soon*, she desperately reminded herself, *and I have Madam Umbridge's wand. I have to keep my mind clear until Remus arrives...* But his image was barely steady in her mind before she felt it flying outwards, as if it had been sucked from her.

In that moment she remembered. Happy thoughts were required to Conjure a Patronus. But that was very advanced magic. She'd not be able to Conjure one. Never, never, never...

Without the aid of a Patronus, her only defence against the Dementor was to focus on a thought that *it could not* take from her. Sad memories were rushing in reading Remus's good-bye letter, hearing of Veleta's death, Mamma telling her that Remus was unfit to be her husband, being told that Wolfsbane Potion would never be legalised but with a gigantic effort of will she pushed them all away and forced her mind onto something neutral.

Two twos are four, three twos are six, four twos are eight...

David was wailing dismally, but Madam Umbridge looked disconcerted, as if she had not expected Ariadne to defy the Dementor like that. Hope stirred and fluttered against Ariadne's ribs, then a dark memory swirled in.

"Come with me to uncover the tortuous web of mysteries that envelop the life of Veleta Vablatsky..." *Stop, stop, it's all my fault!*

Veleta is safe now. Her mind formed the happy words before she could stop herself.

A clammy finger touched her shoulder, and the memory of a sneering voice rang in her ear. "... *make your friend Veleta spill everything but you betrayed her... betrayed her... betrayed her...*"

She turned away from the sound so that the Dementor could not touch David and found that she needed to speak out loud to drown out the buzzing memory of Humphrey Macnair's sneer. "Kenneth MacAlpin, eight-forty-three; Donald the First, eight-fifty-eight; Constantine the First, eight-sixty-two..." That cleared her head enough to remind her that she must unfreeze and start moving, and she made a rush towards the lounge door.

"Mummy, what's happening?" Matthew's face was peering around the doorway.

"Matthew," she gasped, "we're needing to Floo. Take Elizabeth to the hearth..." She wanted to tell him to take David too, but he would not be able to carry the baby safely.

"Ha!" With a snort of triumph, Madam Umbridge had taken advantage of the interruption to stride across the hall.

"*Protego!*" Ariadne pointed both wands at her, and this time the Shield Charm was strong enough to stop the intruder in her tracks. This gave Ariadne time to sweep herself and Matthew through the doorway and slam it shut.

"*Clavis!*" she gasped, just an instant before Madam Umbridge's heavy frame slammed itself onto the wood. The Locking Charm had worked; Madam Umbridge no longer had a wand; and Ariadne did not *think* Dementors could penetrate solid walls. She heaved a cautious breath and tried to soothe David.

"Mummy, who is that angry lady?"

Ariadne put an arm around him without replying. She had three children. And only two arms. And she had to move them away. Elizabeth was sitting on the sofa, still reading *Nigel the Knight Bus*. Ariadne reached the sofa in three steps, but by holding Elizabeth and Matthew with her right arm, she did not have a firm grip on either of them or on the two wands that she held in her palm. While David had calmed down, Matthew was now terrified, and Elizabeth, after one glance at him, burst into tears.

"*Novem-novem-novem,*" she whispered, but she had no wrist-movement control, and the sparks that spluttered out of her wand were miserable. She doubted that the emergency appeal would reach the Aurors.

"We have to Floo," she repeated. "Quickly." She urged them towards the fireplace, but Matthew was too frightened to move properly, and Madam Umbridge was banging at the locked door.

Lift Elizabeth over to the hearth. Leave her there. Lift Matthew. Set him down. Close your ears to the senseless banging at the door. Reach for the Floo-powder jar. Raise the lid and scoop out a handful... Ariadne dropped the lid, which shattered over the hearth. Matthew immediately stooped to pick up the pieces.

"Leave it, it's not mattering! Matthew, bide in the " In the process of grasping the Floo powder and reasoning with Matthew, Ariadne managed to drop both wands. Now Elizabeth darted forward to pick them up.

And in that moment, the lounge door exploded, and Madam Umbridge charged in.

She swept Elizabeth out of her path with a callous blow, grabbed for a wand, and screamed out a spell.

Ariadne saw the red light.

Dolores Jane Umbridge had a successful morning.

It nearly backfired. She did not expect the little apothecary to be so defensive *sounfriendly*. But, really, what chance had a feeble witch, made clumsy by the presence of three children, against a powerful witch, made adept by the presence of a Dementor?

All the hard work of the last two months had been worth it.

From the moment when the Wolfsbane Potion had been legalised, Dolores kept her eye on those troublesome Lupins. She guessed that they would return to Britain, and she required a daily report on international Portkeys until they arrived. Then she instructed the Office of Improper Use of Magic to watch number 24, Spurge Street. They set up a roster of house-elves to monitor around the clock all the spells cast in that household. The spellometers did not record anything actually illegal, but over the last couple of weeks there had been interesting spikes of complex spell-work around the perimeter of the property. House-elves hidden under Invisibility Cloaks brought back trace-samples, and Dolores personally analysed them, with the result that she acquired a pretty accurate idea of exactly which defensive charms had been laid to protect the property. She worked out the sequence in which she must neutralise each one of them several days before she actually visited the house. After all, there was no need to act before anyone definitively and unquestionably overstepped the line.

But of course Madam Lupin inevitably would overstep that line. Dolores knew she wouldn't have to wait long. The line was finally, irreversibly overstepped yesterday evening, when a house-elf dressed in an invisibility cloak returned from duty early.

"Dilly has news for Madam Umbridge! The neighbour knocked on the werewolf's door to borrow sugar, and Dilly was able to sneak right into the house. Dilly looked and listened, and she saw that Madam Lupin is growing very strange plants."

"What plants, Dilly? Do you mean wolfsbane flowers?"

"No, Madam! This is a new flower the apothecary brought it back from Romania. Dilly read Madam Lupin's notes, and it's a flower that turns people into werewolves. The apothecary is using this flower to invent a new potion, one that will stop werewolves transforming even when the moon is full."

"How much progress, Dilly dear? Has Madam Lupin completed her analysis?"

Dilly hung her head. "Dilly's not knowing that much, Madam. The werewolf's brat entered the room before Dilly had finished reading, so Dilly Disappeared here at once."

"Well done, Dilly dear you've achieved enough."

That despicable little Madam Lupin! She might try to look respectable... but what if her real plan, pure and simple, was to trick people into eating this foreign flower so that they became werewolves? Or suppose she did manage to develop some kind of antidote? That meant that werewolves would no longer even *look* like wolves, but would be indistinguishable from normal people. Dolores shuddered with compassionate horror. Imagine what would become of innocent children when people like Fenrir Greyback could wander around at the full moon, fully conscious and looking normal, yet still internally contaminated, still able to transmit their Bite of Death to any passing stranger!

It was time to act. Dolores regretted that she couldn't confront the whole family at once, but of course she wasn't so foolish as to tackle a werewolf single-handedly. She could deal with the werewolves yes, every werewolf in the British Isles after she had eliminated their noxious medicines. She took the house-elves off the spellometer roster and set them instead to guard the front gate of 24, Spurge Street. And the elf returned half-past nine this morning.

"Madam Umbridge, the werewolf has gone out. Madam Lupin and her children is being alone in their house, and the werewolf was telling them he'd not be home until lunch time."

Excitement surged in Dolores' chest so intoxicatingly that she could hardly dismiss the elf. But she contained herself while she summoned a Dementor, then Apparated to Spurge Street wearing an Invisibility Cloak. It took her all of five minutes to neutralise the protective charms surrounding Number 24 that werewolf was certainly cunning, a real nuisance to society then to shed the cloak and cast the *Reducto* on the front door.

She did not expect to be Disarmed on the spot. Fancy Disarming a guest before one even knew the purpose of the visit! Really, it proved how distrustful that renegade apothecary was, how unwilling to give others the benefit of the doubt, how unfriendly a member of their society. It redoubled Dolores's conviction that Madam Lupin's research was a danger that needed to be stopped.

But it all worked out for the best. Dolores was rightfully so furious about the woman's aggression that she managed to explode the lounge door without needing a wand. The apothecary was so astonished at being outsmarted that she lost her advantage. And the wand that Dolores grabbed off the floor was actually Madam Lupin's. Yes, it was

the little apothecary's own wand that finally Stunned her.

The little brats set up a furious caterwaul, of course. Dolores had not planned to silence them, but, really, what if their screeching brought the neighbours around? It was the work of seconds to Stun each child too. Dolores left the Dementor to stand guard while she went searching for those poisonous plants.

There was unlikely to be anything downstairs, so she marched up to the first floor. By magically opening the doors she avoided leaving fingerprints; she counted off bedroom, bathroom, nursery and the werewolf's study before climbing up an unexpected second flight of stairs. The first door at the head of those stairs opened onto some kind of laboratory, with bench, cauldron, desk, bookcases, storage shelves and potted plants. Truly her lucky day! The desk was laid out with piles of neatly-written notes, with words like "lupluna" and "aconite" and "lycanthropy" continually recurring. She was no expert on Herbology, but she did not need to read much to recognise that this was the centre of the deadly research. She wiped all the notes clean with a quick *Expungeo* charm. Now every page on the desk was delightfully blank and white. The little apothecary's theory and calculations had vanished from the record.

Dolores then moved over to the collection of plants that were being nurtured by a lamp shining through a pane of glass obviously an improvised greenhouse. She recognised several of them even before she noticed that they were systematically labelled. And, yes, that new word "lupluna" clearly indicated a dozen cuttings of some hideous orange flower. There was no need to smash the greenhouse: a well-aimed *Desiccato* spell could penetrate the glass and dry out each plant in the collection. It took exactly one second for every lupluna flower to wilt and die. Dolores tapped a *Thermo* onto the lamp, so that the brightness shot to maximum, and the demise of the poisonous flowers looked like the apothecary's own mistake.

She paused to wonder whether it was possible to cast an *Obliviate* on a person who was unconscious, or whether she should risk reviving the apothecary before modifying her memory. It certainly wouldn't do to have Madam Lupin complain about an intruder in her house. Dolores mentally rehearsed Plan B and Plan C, but she felt there were not many variations on what might happen; after all, she was the only person in the house who had a wand.

She Apparated back downstairs, and saw at once that she would not need her contingent plans. The Dementor, probably bored with merely standing guard, had already feasted.

So Dolores sent it back to Azkaban. She repaired the blasted doors, wiped her fingerprints from the borrowed wand, and replaced it beside the apothecary's right hand, just as if she had dropped it while falling. Then she Apparated to the front gate, picked up the Invisibility Cloak, and Apparated back to her office.

Dolores must have spent an hour gloating over that magical sequence. It was hard to believe that such a satisfying morning had been achieved so quickly she had Apparated back to her office less than twenty minutes after departing. Plenty of employees spent longer than that on a coffee break.

No-one would ever know that she had been away.

There was more to do, of course, but a dedicated employee like herself one who worked evenings and weekends in order to ensure the safety of the wizarding population would not shirk her workload when she was so close to the final victory. She would begin drafting her proposal for Anti-Werewolf Legislation at once. The writing itself would be easy enough. The hard part would be convincing Fudge of the need for tougher measures; he was sensible enough about werewolves in general, but so cowardly about doing anything that might disadvantage that nephew of his. He just didn't understand that Rufus had now joined the ranks of the enemy.

But Dolores could afford to take her time. It might take a year, or two, or ten, but in the end *Fudge would* see sense. Rufus would bite someone, or he would give Wolfsbane Potion to a member of Greyback's pack, or he would break some other law... in fact, it was only a couple of years since Rufus had been rather heavily implicated in vanishing some Muggle train. The Improper Use of Magic Office had been called in, and it had all been terribly embarrassing for Cornelius. Rufus only had to break one more law... it wouldn't even need to be anything werewolf-related... and he would certainly forfeit Cornelius's support.

When that strategic moment arrived and not one day earlier Dolores would have her legislation proposal ready to hand.

She picked up a quill and hummed softly as she began to write.

All Through the Night

Chapter 20 of 21

The ship is sunk, and the story finally falls into line with canon.

CHAPTER TWENTY

All Through the Night

Saturday 11 July Friday 30 October 1992

Old Basford, Nottingham; St Mungo's Hospital, London.

Love's young dream, alas, is over,

Yet my song of love shall hover

Near the presence of my lover,

All through the night.

Welsh folk song: "All Through the Night"

Rated PG-13 for violence.

Before he even opened the gate, Remus knew that something had happened at home. The vibrations felt wrong, as if his spell-work had been disturbed. And as he opened the front door, the whole house was too silent. Yet they were indoors, sitting quietly on the sofa.

"Ariadne ?"

Her head moved very slightly, yet she wasn't responding to his voice. Wondering if the children were asleep, he walked over to sit down with them, and looked her full in the face.

He knew instantly that what looked back at him was not Ariadne.

The large blue eyes were completely empty of expression. They seemed to see him, yet they were devoid of interest. The body seated on the sofa was still breathing, yet the pale face was blank and motionless. Despite himself, he seized her hand, which was limp and cool, neither resisting nor acknowledging his presence. Her mouth smelled wrong, like something putrid and decaying; he dropped the hand quickly.

The children were not asleep; their wide eyes were gazing blankly into space. They were ignoring their mother, ignoring each other, ignoring their surroundings and ignoring him. None of them seemed to experience any urge to act; they just sat.

He fought off the knowledge that crowded the edge of his brain. "Ariadne," he began helplessly, "tell me what happened. After I went out..." But his voice died. Although a faint movement across her face indicated that she could still hear, it was obvious that she no longer understood English.

His panicked mind flew over wild fantasies. This was a new form of eyes-open Stupefaction, but there was some simple re-energisation spell... It was an efficient memory Charm, but the Healers would know what to do about it... His family had been kidnapped, and these creatures on the sofa were Transfigured animals or artificially animated dummies... Whatever the explanation, an enemy had somehow penetrated their home. He tried to push back his fears while he sent the emergency signal to St Mungo's, but before he could raise his wand to signal the Aurors, his dark suspicion had forced itself into a certainty.

Four sentient bodies were stationed on his sofa. But Ariadne, Matthew, Elizabeth and David no longer existed.

After three very long minutes, in which everyone breathed and no-one interacted, there was a disturbance outside in the street. Remus walked out to find that a uniformed Mediwizard was performing a Memory Charm on Mrs Ponderator. He remembered as he reached the gate that of course they couldn't enter his house because he had barricaded it against strangers. Dully, he set to work to neutralise his charms, while four Medi wizards patiently waited

"You can come in now," said a voice that might have been his own. "My wife's had an accident."

The four Medi wizards followed him into the lounge, and then stopped still in a deadly unison. He saw their knowing glances, then the formal way one of them stepped forward directly in front of Ariadne not to investigate, but simply to confirm.

The Medi wizard cast a few diagnostic spells, spoke directly to her, felt her pulse, then Conjured an overhead light while he pulled at the flesh of her eyelids and forced open her jaw to examine inside her mouth. It was horribly intrusive, and a squeal of protest shot out of Ariadne's mouth, but she didn't raise her hands, or make any real effort to fight him off. The Aurors arrived just as he was finishing.

"Mr Lupin." The Medi wizard spoke with the professional gentleness of doom. "I think you'd better sit down."

Remus didn't think so at all. He thought he should be up and *active* doing something about whatever this was. But he knew he would not be given any information unless he obeyed, so he sat.

"Mr Lupin, your wife has been Kissed by a Dementor."

The junior Auror stepped forward; it was Kingsley Shacklebolt. "Are you certain of that? Could it be some kind of Memory Charm?"

"No. Memory Charms damage the mind, but the essential soul always remains in there, underneath the damage. But this patient did not respond to any of the spells that call to the soul. Her soul has been completely removed from her body."

"Don't touch that child!" cut in the other Auror. His badge stated that he was Senior Auror G. T. Robards.

A Mediwitch shuffled guiltily, and tried to look as if she hadn't been about to examine David.

"You all need to understand that this is a crime," explained the Auror. "We can't disturb the scene of crime until we have finished searching for clues. Since no medical treatment is possible, there is no immediate need to move the victims."

Remus saw the despair on Kingsley's face before Auror Robards began to fire the questions. He didn't really hear the words; the day had taken on a grey-edged, dreamlike quality, and he found himself answering mechanically, almost at random.

"You mean you had a hedge of defensive charms around your property, but you stripped them down again ten minutes ago?"

"Yes, because I had to let the Medi wizards in. I... I don't suppose I'll be needing those charms any more."

Auror Robards groaned out loud. "You *disturbed* the scene. If you had left the charms intact, we could have analysed exactly how they were breached, and perhaps even traced the wand that breached them. That's an important clue gone."

Kingsley was scowling ferociously, as if he'd like to tell his superior to shut up or go to Azkaban, but of course he couldn't say anything.

"We'll have to examine the wands, of course. Your wand, please, Mr Lupin."

Remus handed it over without comprehending why he had been asked.

"*Prior Incantato!*"

Out of his wand-tip floated a grey image of his own head, grinning ludicrously (he had cast a Cheering Charm just before he entered the interview); then the two books that he had read to Elizabeth; the series of coloured lights that he had Conjured to entertain David; a procession of cups and plates, because he had helped with the washing up; the teapot and a jar of marmalade; the bubbles that he had put in the children's bath, and a cloud of steam, because he still used a *Thermo* charm in preference to the Muggle immersion heater; his dressing-gown; Ariadne's underwear...

That shocked him out of his stupor. *They have no right to know about that.* Apparently Kingsley thought so too, because he turned his head away in distaste, while the wand regurgitated the newspaper cutting that Remus had Summoned last night. Remus moved over to sit beside Ariadne again, because she deserved to be protected from this type of intrusion whether she understood it or not.

"*Deleterius,*" announced Auror Robards abruptly. "It's obvious that Mr Lupin hasn't cast an aggressive spell at any time since his wife was last known to be alive. I'll do her wand next. *Prior Incantato!*"

A shadowy image of a door arose from Ariadne's wand on the floor. As a second door followed the first, and then an image of David, a wild hope surged in Remus's chest, for he knew that shades of spells cast on people were imbued with some of the person's spirit and awareness. Remus trusted that Ariadne's shade would explain exactly what had happened and how the spell might be reversed.

The real Matthew turned his face to watch Elizabeth's shade rising, but he was not really interested. He looked away again before he saw his own image follow. The shades of the three children hovered in the air, and then Ariadne's form arose after them, solemn, dignified, aloof...

Sick with disappointment, he realised that Ariadne's shade was as blind and deaf and frozen as a statue.

It was followed by a wispy, indistinct shape, as if a spell had failed, then another door, and three shields, one after the other. That meant that Ariadne, left alone with her mediocre spell-work, had tried to defend herself. The next image was of a wand, as if she had used the Disarming Charm, but it was followed by a toilet, a wash basin and bath, then a whole string of clothes, and even a few nappies... they very obviously represented the housework that Ariadne had done this morning. Auror Robards abruptly called a halt.

Ariadne had not used any spells of attack.

There was no image of the unknown enemy.

"It's clear enough," said Robards, as if he had just solved the whole mystery. "Madam Lupin was attacked by her own wand. But not by her own hand the shades show that someone took her out first and the children afterwards. Madam Lupin, can you tell us... no, I suppose not. These shades won't be revealing any secrets. Once a Dementor has destroyed the original, there's nothing left to animate any copies."

This time Remus did want to sit down. Auror Robards' cool summary of the situation had torn away all his evasions.

His soulmate no longer had a soul.

The Andros the Invincible Ward on the first floor of St Mungo's was small and poorly lit. A spider had taken up long-term residence in one corner of the ceiling, and the Mediwitch on duty had her nose buried in Fifi Lafolle's latest novel.

"Who's in charge here?" asked Remus.

"I am," said Hippocrates Smethwyck. "Although there isn't much of which to be in charge. These patients are no danger to themselves or anyone else." He didn't even seem annoyed at the Mediwitch's negligence; for most of the time, he explained, there wasn't much for her to do.

In addition to the beds, there was a table surrounded by dining chairs and an arrangement of sofas. Three patients one very old, the others middle-aged were sitting on the sofas, all staring at the whitewashed wall. Remus wanted to scream his protest as the Mediwitch helped Ariadne to sit with them, then arranged David on her lap and Matthew and Elizabeth on each side of her.

"Is that what they do all day? Just sit?"

"Sometimes one of them takes a wander around the room. And in fine weather we give them a few hours in the Hospital gardens. But they never notice the difference." Healer Smethwyck spoke clinically, but there was a catch to his voice. "I'm convinced in my own mind that they aren't... aren't unhappy, or even bored."

It took all Remus's courage to ask the next question. "How long do they live after losing their souls?"

"That depends on the health of their bodies." Healer Smethwyck indicated the aged man. "That is Patrick Ryan, whom the Dementors Kissed when he was sixteen. It happened at the time of the Muggle Queen's Golden Jubilee. The other two were victims of the Voldemort war."

Remus's insides dropped to the floor. "And in all that time... over a century... has there been any effort to cure Mr Ryan?"

"Endless research," said Healer Smethwyck. "But it always comes to the same thing. The soul isn't simply *inside* the Dementor an object that could be extracted if only we could discover a powerful enough Summoning Spell. It's been *digested*. Whatever a soul is made of, its component energies are broken down inside the Dementor. It no longer exists. And even if for the sake of argument all the energies could be extracted from the Dementor, they still couldn't be reconstituted in a way that would reconstruct the soul."

"Why not? Perhaps it's too complicated in practice, but in theory..."

Smethwyck sighed. "That question is like asking why we can't bring the dead back from beyond the Veil. Some operations are *intrinsically* impossible to reverse."

Beyond the Veil... It was a question that Remus had always avoided asking himself. On the days when he believed in an afterlife, he doubted that he qualified for it. Ariadne, of course, would inevitably qualify for whatever eternal bliss might be on offer... but in her case it was no longer an issue of qualifying. It was souls that participated in whatever happened beyond the Veil, and Ariadne's soul had been demolished.

Of course he had to deal with the Aurors' investigation.

"Have you any idea who it was, Mr Lupin?" They asked him again and again. "Did your wife have any enemies?"

He told them every detail he remembered about Ariadne's relationship with the Macnair family. How Ariadne had exposed their crimes. How they had spied on her, manipulated the community against her, and attacked her person. How they would inevitably blame Ariadne for the escape of their prisoners.

"Amelia Bones has already instructed us to investigate the Macnairs," said Robards. "But they all have an alibi for Saturday. Walden was at a Ministry committee meeting; Gertrude was visiting the Scrimgeours; Humphrey was sloshed in the Leaky Cauldron; Coira was at a Quidditch match. Even the mad old lady was renewing a prescription here at St Mungo's, and Humphrey's children had been farmed out to various friends' houses. Mrs Skiveley, of course, is still on her honeymoon in the Bahamas, and Mrs Gibbon was shopping in Knockturn Alley. Every single one of them has at least three objective witnesses. Mr Lupin, did your wife have any *other* enemies?"

Cursing the shrewdness with which the Macnairs had covered their tracks, Remus reviewed their acquaintances. Had Fenrir Greyback given up biting in favour of subtle attacks? Had Lucius Malfoy decided that Ariadne's werewolf association was too much of an embarrassment to the family? Had Damocles Belby been overtaken by a fit of professional jealousy? Surely not. Had Baldwin Macnair escaped from Azkaban and brought a Dementor with him?

"It can't really be a Dementor," said Auror Dawlish. "Whatever it looks like... that's absurd. All the Dementors are under the control of a very few Ministry officials. All Dementor-related tasks are carefully recorded. But we checked the records, and there is no record that any Dementor was summoned or used on the date in question. Therefore there *wasn't* any Dementor in Nottingham."

"It was a Dementor," shouted a furious Healer Smethwyck.

"No. You've misdiagnosed." Auror Dawlish snapped his notebook shut.

And so the inquiry ended with no verdict on the cause of injury, and no suspects for the role of perpetrator.

Remus sat in the Andros the Invincible Ward, day after day, hoping desperately that one of his family would focus on some object for longer than five seconds, existing through the knowledge that they could not distinguish between him and the chairs on which they sat. They sat so endlessly, never becoming bored, because they had no

memory of what they had been doing a moment earlier.

By daylight the nightmare never ended. In sleep Remus occasionally found respite. He might see Ariadne sitting in the sunshine among her aconites, reading to the children (for some reason, there were four children), and they all looked up at his approach and smiled at him. But he always awoke from these intervals before the moment when he actually touched them, awoke to the consciousness that he would never touch any of them again.

The fourth night was the full moon. "Sleep in my office," said Healer Smethwyck, knowing without being told that Remus didn't want to spend the night among other werewolves. Remus didn't sleep, of course. He lay awake and conscious inside his wolf's body, slowly churning over the reality that Ariadne and the children were forever unconscious inside their human bodies. Hippocrates Smethwyck sat in his winged armchair, keeping vigil over some private torment of his own. He didn't speak a word until nearly midnight.

"This is too gloomy," he said then. "*Expecto Patronum!*"

A silvery light exploded from the Healer's wand, swirled around the room, and gathered shape. It was a tree—a huge, wide plane tree that continued to grow right up to the ceiling. Remus moved his wolf's nose closer to the shining trunk. A couple of leaves—yes, every separate leaf was detailed—fluttered down towards him, and for a moment all his sadness receded. In the shade of the plane tree he was happy and confident, fearless to face his solitary future.

But the leaves vanished on touch; the Patronus might contain a powerful magic, but it wasn't solid.

He had a bad recovery the next day; he had to spend the whole time being nursed in a hospital bed. The day after that, he returned to visit the Andros the Invincible Ward. Mercy Wiggleswade met him at the door with tears in her eyes.

"David died in the night," she said. "Children do not last long in this condition; their bodies are too fragile to continue without a soul. I'm thinking his heart simply forgot to beat."

It seemed quite natural to Remus; he didn't know how his own heart remembered to beat, when his soul was so shredded.

"But you are quite well in body," the Healers told him. "You can't spend the rest of your life at St Mungo's—you need to start going home."

Still too stunned to be anything other than obedient, Remus went home every evening, and pretended to sleep in his own bed. Sometimes he had nightmares—Dementors were chasing his family, and he couldn't cast a Patronus in time. But even the nightmares were comforting, for Ariadne was usually screaming or running or casting spells or doing something that indicated she was still aware of the world. Every morning he returned to St Mungo's.

He watched as Mercy instructed a Mediwitch on how to strap Elizabeth to a mysterious machine that pumped sustaining potions into her veins.

"It's the only way to feed her," Mercy half-apologised. "She's forgotten how to swallow."

Remus could see that Elizabeth had shrunk to the size of an elderly monkey; even the potions-pump would not help her for long. And it left ugly gashes down her inner arms, although this did not bother her. Elizabeth only outlived David by a week. She died while she was sitting on Remus's lap; she was wide awake, but she simply stopped breathing.

"Matthew has a better chance," said Mercy. "He has already survived the most delicate period of childhood."

Remus could still spoon mush into Matthew's mouth three times a day. Occasionally he lifted the child and tried to play with him, but he was a dead weight who could not play; Matthew might turn his head, but he never looked at his father.

Could Matthew really continue to exist for another century, breathing yet not living, like Patrick Ryan?

As it happened, Matthew only lasted another fortnight. A bad case of dragon pox was admitted to St Mungo's, and a trainee Mediwitch passed it all around the two lower floors before she realised she was ill. Patrick Ryan ("he had become so frail that we knew the next virus would finish him off") and Matthew Lupin both died before they even showed a rash.

* * * * *

Remus sat beside Ariadne on a bench in the hospital garden. It was a wet, windy day, but he cast an Impervius Charm around them both, just as he had on their honeymoon stroll through Sherwood Forest.

"How am I to tell you," he addressed her empty shell, "that you are now childless?"

Ariadne's body sat, briefly watching a ladybird climb over a dahlia, and taking no notice of him.

"Oh, but she's not childless," said Mercy Wiggleswade, her voice lighter than it had been for a month. "I was suspicious this morning, when the Mediwitch reported that Ariadne had been nauseous, so I ran the tests. She is definitely pregnant."

Remus stared at Mercy. "Can she still...?"

"We're not knowing," said Mercy honestly. "There are no case histories on this kind of pregnancy, because there have been so few Kiss victims outside of Azkaban. But I'm *thinking* Ariadne can still gestate normally. And the baby, of course, will be ensouled. I brewed the testing potion this morning, so with your permission..."

He nodded, and Mercy brought a flask out of her lime-green pocket. She slid one arm around Ariadne's shoulders and patiently hovered over her, coaxing her to drink. Then, at a wave of her wand, an enormously complex array of coloured lights sprang into the air, danced for a moment, and then collapsed onto Mercy's writing tablet.

"*Computo!*"

Remus couldn't make any sense of the mathematical symbols that arranged themselves on the tablet, but they must have meant something to Mercy.

"You have a daughter. A healthy, perfect lassie, who's not carrying the Squib mutation, and who will have blue eyes and dark hair exactly like Ariadne."

The searing pain receded a little. "Did you hear that?" Remus asked the statue beside him. "Your final wish has been granted. We have a daughter. We'll name her Abigail. I'll teach her to read, and to fly, and to play chess, and we'll take care of your herbiary together..."

Ariadne moved her head away from him and instead watched a blackbird that was winging up to a beech tree.

Remus forced down the tightening in his throat, and finished grimly, "... and I shall teach her to cast a Patronus. Abigail will have so many happy memories that she'll be producing a corporeal Patronus before her Hogwarts letter arrives."

Remus forced himself to be practical. *Ariadne has gone, but she loved me. And the final mercy is that I shall still have a family after all* And on this thought he was able to raise his wand and order, "*Expecto Patronum!*"

Huge branches of silvery wolfsbane flowers bloomed out of the tip of his wand. Not just one bush, but plant after plant shot into the air and created a warm, bright shield around the three of them. Remus found himself visualising his daughter Abigail without any sense of his other losses; and Mercy was smiling at them too.

Ariadne obviously saw the white light, for she turned her head, and her blue eyes flickered blankly at the movement. But she did not smile.

He knew that, in his own mind, Ariadne was already dead.

Remus began to stay at home for long enough to tidy the house. He paid the bills that the Muggle postman brought. He opened the weeks-old letter that informed him that he hadn't been awarded the job at the Muggle school. He cleared away all the waste paper, noting in the process that he never had owed the application for the job at Hogwarts. It was too late now, of course.

He knew that the Muggle Government made some kind of payment to single parents, and he supposed he should claim it. But it didn't seem right to live that way long-term; he must find some kind of work to support himself and Abigail. He went back to day-labouring in the orchards for a few weeks, but the fruit season was drawing to a close, and he had no idea what he could do when he would also have to care for a baby.

Even now, he had to gulp back his immediate instinct to consult Ariadne about the problem.

Once he saw Veleta Vablatsky in the St Mungo's tea-room. She was sitting with Joe Fenwick, whose bulk was blocking the aisle side of their table, as if to ward off curious strangers. However, he waved to Remus to join them, while Veleta nervously stirred her tea. She looked very fragile, as if she had been crying.

It would be stupid to exchange deceitful pleasantries about everyone's very good health, so Remus asked, "A bad day for all of us?"

Joe and Veleta both nodded.

"The Healers are doing a competent job," Joe amended. "They think Veleta will recover all her memories in another six months. But recovering lost memories... it's bad."

"I remembered my mother last month," said Veleta. "I already knew she was dead, of course... but last month I remembered *who* had died."

"And you grieved as if she had died that day," said Remus.

Veleta nodded tearfully. "And today... Remus, I remembered Ariadne. I mean, not the person who spent the last nine years trying to get me out of Foss... I remembered the Ariadne who was my best friend at school. I remembered Hogwarts, and all my friends and teachers, but most I remembered how Ariadne and I did everything together, and how close we were. It made so much sense of why she worked to hard to rescue me. I can't believe that she... that now... that just when I'm home... just when we could have been close again..." She wiped her eyes. "I'm sorry, Remus. It can't be as bad for me as it is for you. But she's only just become real to me... and she's already gone..."

* * * * *

Ariadne did well throughout the hazardous first trimester of her pregnancy. She seemed to be doing equally well during the easy second trimester. In the eighteenth week, her face looked slightly swollen, and Remus thought she had pain in her abdomen. But it was difficult to tell, because even something as simple as a continuous pain was outside of Ariadne's consciousness.

"She was fine this morning," said Healer Smethwyck. "But we should monitor her carefully." He brought out his wand to begin testing her blood pressure.

Before he could speak the spell, Ariadne collapsed back onto the sofa, this time with unmistakable agony crossing her face.

"*Enervate!*"

But Ariadne lay still.

The seizure, Healer Smethwyck later explained, was one of the hazards of pregnancy. Usually a Healer could recognise the symptoms in time to treat it. Usually it was not life-threatening. But Ariadne had died instantly, because a body without its soul had no chance against eclampsia. It seemed that pregnancy even a normal pregnancy was by itself a serious threat to a woman who had no soul.

Even in the act of dying, Ariadne had made a contribution to medical research.

Remus went home to grieve for Abigail.

The house was very empty.

He knew he must never again try to have a family.

High Road to Hogwarts

Chapter 21 of 21

This epilogue takes Remus on a straight northwards line to resolution, hope and canon compliancy.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

High Road to Hogwarts

1 September 1993

Old Basford, Nottingham; from the Leaky Cauldron to King's Cross Station, London.

Oh, you'll take the High Road and I'll take the Low Road,

And I'll be in Scotland before you.

But I and my true love will never meet again

On the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond.

Scottish folk song: "Loch Lomond"

Rated PG because everyone has to grow up.

Dear Mr Lupin,

We are pleased to offer you the post of Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, beginning 1 September 1993. Salary will be G3,550 per annum, with full board and lodging included.

Please find attached an outline of the required syllabus for each of the seven year-levels. Any books and equipment that you need to purchase can be charged to the Hogwarts Library account at Gringotts.

You may be aware that Sirius Black, having escaped from Azkaban, is believed to be in the vicinity of Hogwarts. We have reason to suspect that his particular target is Harry Potter, who is currently in third year. Hogwarts is unfortunately being patrolled by Dementors, and we are trusting you to place every effort into controlling the Dementors, protecting the students, and using any expertise or inside knowledge you might possess to assist in recapturing Black.

Our Potions master, Professor Severus Snape, has agreed to brew Wolfsbane Potion for you every month. He has expressed hesitation about the unpatented (and apparently un-trialled) revision to the formula, so we have agreed that it would be safer if he brewed according to the original and well-established recipe.

We note that the next full moon falls on 31 August, and therefore suggest that you may find it most convenient to travel to Hogsmeade on the Hogwarts Express, which departs from Kings Cross Station, London, at 11:00 a.m. Your ticket is enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore,

Headmaster.

No arrangement was particularly convenient on the morning after a full moon. When Remus staggered out of the garage, it was already nine o' clock. Even so, he had trouble unlocking the door, and he didn't have the magical energy to repair the damage to his suitcase. It looked decidedly battered, as if it belonged to a hundred-year-old Muggle who was too poor to repair or replace it. He had to pack his robes and books by hand, and then, after fiddling with the locks and helplessly waving his wand, he eventually tied up the trunk with string.

As he locked the doors and windows (by hand), he tried to tell himself that he might never see this house again. It was his only home; it should matter that he was leaving the building that had sheltered his parents, siblings, wife and children. But he was too stiff and weak from last night's Transformation to feel anything more than a sharp twinge in his muscles... and a vague, faint lifting of his spirits, as if Hogwarts were now his real home.

He supposed he could take the Floo all the way to Hogsmeade, but then he would have to lug the suitcase on foot to Hogwarts, and they might set him to work right away. He badly needed to sleep, and his train ticket provided that opportunity. He threw a handful of Floo powder into the hearth, and gasped, "Diagon Alley!" The wolf must have howled last night, for he had no voice. He clutched at the battered trunk, nearly buffeted to the ground by the motion of the Floo, until he could step out at the Leaky Cauldron.

"Move along, move along!" exclaimed Tom the landlord. "Hundreds more will be coming through today... Hey, you look as if you need a nice pick-me-up, sir. Will you have a Firewhisky at the bar, or will you settle for hot chocolate?"

Remus shook his head, but the mention of chocolate reminded him of the army of Dementors congregating at Hogwarts. He detoured into Mellitus Zacharin to buy a two-pound slab of milk chocolate before pushing his way out through Muggle London towards King's Cross Station, and finally through the invisible barrier to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters.

He was here. Standing in his patched robes and holding his battered suitcase, he even felt a tremor of excitement. He was about to begin his new life. It was time, he supposed. He had had eleven years as a child with his parents, and eleven years as a Marauder with his friends, and ten years with Ariadne... he wouldn't think too hard about the year of grieving that had flanked each end of the Ariadne-period. The next ten or eleven years perhaps forever were about to begin, this time as a teacher at Hogwarts.

* * * * *

"Defence teachers don't seem to last very long," he had said to Dumbledore.

"Oh, there's no question that the post is jinxed," the Headmaster had replied calmly. "But the jinx seems to take advantage of people's moral flaws. Viridian and Quirrell were servants of Voldemort who failed in the tasks that Voldemort had set them. Then we had Spleen undone by his temper, Honeysmooch by her sensuality, Goldstein by his avarice and Confabulus by her taste for gossip. I believe the key to keeping the job is simply to perform it competently, without giving in to temptation."

"But, Professor, I can't last a year I can't last a day in a state of moral perfection!"

"None of us is perfect," said Dumbledore. "But I think you are as likely as anyone to fight off everyday temptations, to admit honestly to your failures, and to keep your mind

focused on your teaching. If anyone has the moral fibre to keep the job, you are that man."

Remus had stared at Dumbledore's head in his fireplace, trying to explain how very weak and deceitful he had been as a teenager, how his day-to-day competence would falter as the waxing moon attacked his health, how utterly he would crumble as a teacher when pitted against a Dark Master-Mage like Sirius Black... But Dumbledore was talking briskly about escaped convicts and Dementors and Harry Potter, and long before Remus found his voice, he discovered he had accepted the job.

* * * * *

One year, ten, a hundred he was a teacher for now. Ariadne would have so happily returned to Hogwarts with him. Even though he had to return alone, he knew he was as happy as he could ever be without her.

And Ariadne was standing right in front of him.

He closed his jaw and forced himself to breathe normally. *Of course it isn't Ariadne*, he reminded himself. The dark-haired girl with Gaelic eyes, deep in conversation with one of the Patil children, had not even recognised him. Morag MacDougal would probably remember in due course that she had once called him "uncle", but they had not met for six years, and certainly he had gained some grey hairs since then. It shouldn't matter that a girl who happened to look like Ariadne had ignored him on a crowded platform.

Ariadne's blood flowed on, in the veins of her innumerable wizarding kin. He braced himself for the reality that there would be many familiar faces in the crowd, and that few of them would belong to people who were familiar with him. Before he had completed the thought, he noticed that William Stebbins was running after an escaped owl, that two Gideon Prewetts were dropping dung bombs on a girl with a very Bones look, and that a pubescent Lucius Malfoy was whining, "But why *can't* I have a Firebolt? It isn't as if Nimbus will maintain its cutting edge for *another* year, and if I'm to make it to team captain by my fourth year..."

Exhausted by his trek through the London crowds, Remus leaned against a litterbin. The Malfoy boy was flanked by his cousins, a large youth with gorilla-arms and an even larger one with a pudding-bowl haircut. Remus reminded himself that he would meet a score of students who were connected with Ariadne. In fact, another of her cousins was already walking up to him, a freckled young man wearing a shiny P badge.

"Cousin Remus?"

He forced his eyes open and shook the boy's extended hand. "Good morning, Clement. It's very nice to see you again."

"You too, sir. Are you seeing somebody onto the Express?"

"Only myself." He indicated his embarrassingly battered trunk before he remembered that it had been a present from Clement's parents only a few years ago.

"Oh... are you *teaching* us? Cousin... Professor... you're not looking very well. Let me help you find a carriage."

Clement Macmillan stowed the dilapidated trunk under his arm and strode off towards the back of the train. Remus followed, but even without a trunk to carry, his progress was slow. This time he was deliberately scanning the crowds. He was disappointed three times before he realised that he was looking for a particular face.

It wasn't Terry Boot, although he was there, happily chattering to a skull-capped stranger clutching a statistics manual and a lanky boy carrying a Cleansweep Seven. Remus would speak to him later, and Terry would tell him that everything had turned out right and that now they were both in the place where they belonged.

It wasn't Mary Vablatsky, her chocolate-brown eyes widening in welcome as a group of second-year Hufflepuffs ran up to ask after her summer holidays. She did not look troubled, either by her past traumas or by her personal gifts (although Remus noted for future reference that her trunk was labelled "Miss M. Fenwick"). As Mary opened a paper bag of mint humbugs for her friends, she looked blissfully ordinary.

It wasn't Pradeep Patil, who lifted his nose from a book for long enough to shout over the crowd: "Has anyone lost a toad? I nearly stood on this one." Pradeep held the toad carefully aloft until it was claimed by a round-faced boy who bore a heartbreaking resemblance to Alice Longbottom. Then Pradeep used his foot to push his trunk into a carriage, while the boy who must be Neville pelted off in the opposite direction.

Ariadne was represented all over the crowd; his parents lived on in his own person; he was now looking for his friends. But not even Neville Longbottom was the real object of his search.

"Here you are, sir." Clement Macmillan, having found a deserted compartment in the final carriage, lifted the battered trunk into the luggage rack. "Oh... it's not empty after all. Somebody's already stowed an owl here."

"And a cat, by the looks of it," Remus agreed. "Never mind, only half the space is taken. I'm very grateful to you, Clement."

"It was no trouble, Professor. I'm looking forward to your lessons at Hogwarts. See you!"

The well-bred young man leapt back onto the platform to collect his own luggage, while Remus sat down in a corner seat. The Macmillans were so staunch, so resistant to the smallest temptation from the Dark Side - clement, zealous, earnest, gracious! that he wondered for a moment what he would manage to teach them. Then he remembered James Potter, an honourable and heroic friend if ever there had been one, yet so blatantly misguided when he was certain of his own rightness. Even the stables and best-intending teenager needed some guidance, and even a mediocre adult might be able to offer the experience born of his own mistakes.

As the milling crowds began to swarm aboard the train, Remus closed his eyes. There were Ariadne's Macmillan cousins to be encouraged as they stepped out firmly onto the right path. There were her first cousins once removed - Draco Malfoy, Vincent Crabbe, Gregory Goyle - to be enticed and entreated, or else deterred and averted, away from their terrifying slide down to ruin. There was her niece Morag, and Morag's Cornfoot cousins, to be inspired or shaken out of a half-life of bland mediocrity. There was Mary Fenwick - her friend's child, but, as it happened, Ariadne's second cousin once removed - who had survived ordeals of which the post-war generation never dreamed, to be tenderly nurtured and protected from anyone who might abuse her gift. There was Terry Boot to be acclimatised to the peculiarities of the wizarding culture, just as Remus's own parents once had been, and there were the Patil siblings to be sensitised to the needs of the Muggle community all around them.

He must have fallen asleep before the train even began to move. He had no idea how long he slept, but he was less stiff when a soft bump penetrated his awareness, and the plush seat was steadily rattling beneath him.

A boy with a faint West Country burr was protesting: "Get out of it!"

"Ron, don't!" snapped a young lady.

Remus almost opened his eyes, but he remembered in time that a group of teenagers wouldn't want some teacher spying on their private moments. He was still exhausted, so it was easy to drop his head down against the back of the seat. Waves of drowsiness were already sweeping over him when a third voice spoke, a voice that made all his nerves stand up on end.

"It's all right, Ron, I'm holding the cat."

It was James Potter's voice.

"He's nowhere near Scabbers. If he jumps, Hermione or I can grab him in time."

Remus did not need to look. He knew now who was sharing his compartment.

There would always be somebody else to love.

ENTER, STAGE RIGHT.