

Order of Merlin

by Electra Avalon

"Tell me it wasn't you, Peter. Tell me that they didn't use you, that they used somebody, anybody else."

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Run

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: All text marked with * is quoted from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, UK edition by JK Rowling. Thanks to JacksonRobles over at HPFF for the prompt: Write a one-shot on how Peter Pettigrew became Scabbers.

He ran. There was nothing left for him to do now but run. It was all over and soon the world would know. He ran. What he needed was a plan; a plan that would keep him hidden; a plan that would keep him safe; a plan that would save his life and leave him in a position to strike. He continued to run through the streets of the Muggle village, rain starting to fall. He stopped. Panting heavily, he looked up at the November sky, dark not only with rain but also sorrow, sorrow for what had been lost the night before.

He had kept so many secrets in his lifetime, and yet none of them really, truly mattered at a time like this. All except one. One secret that would get him out of this Merlin forsaken predicament.

A loud crack some way in the distance alerted him to the appearance of another. A foe. Everyone was now an enemy, and so he did the only thing that he could. He ran. He ran through the pouring rain; ran through the streets filled with Muggles; ran for his life until one word made him stop.

"Wormtail!"

Only five people knew of that name, and three of them were now gone. He turned slowly around to face the newcomer, discreetly drawing his wand, gripping it behind his back. The Muggles seemed to part as a man with shaggy hair and aristocratic features came bounding towards him. He tucked the polished handle of his wand in to the waistband of his trousers.

"Padfoot," he greeted noncommittally.

He noted how drawn Sirius' face was, how ill he appeared to have become and how he had slept little, if at all. Sirius grabbed him by the shoulders, his grip like a vice. Grey eyes met blue.

"Tell me it wasn't you, Peter. Tell me that they didn't use you, that they used somebody, anybody else."

He couldn't. He had told so many lies and half-truths in the last twelve months that he had lost count. Yet this was one lie that he could not tell, could not even begin to utter. After all, what excuse could there be, could he even give for this, the ultimate betrayal? The truth? Even he wasn't sure what the truth was anymore.

It had started as a way to save his life, to guarantee that no matter what, he was on the winning side. But somewhere along the way, amongst the myriad of lies and deceit, he had come to believe, believe in wizarding supremacy over Muggles and Mudbloods. They caused nothing but pain. Hadn't Lily been nothing but a form of torture and pain to James for years? They were nothing. They were like rats scavenging amongst the waste of the sewers to survive.

And it all suddenly fell in to place. He could and would get out of this.

He pushed Sirius away roughly before shouting out in a distressed voice, "Lily and James, Sirius! How could you!"

Sirius looked as if he had been slapped hard about the face. His features then contorted in to hatred as he drew his wand. He was too slow. The other man had withdrawn his wand from his waistband and held it behind him, his hand shaking. He thought with all his might and mind on one word, positioning the tip of his wand at the base of his index finger.

Reducto

It all happened before any of the Muggle onlookers could comprehend. The magic expelled from his wand, severing his finger in the process. And yet, what was the loss of a lowly finger in comparison to his life? He felt the familiar shortening of his limbs and elongation of his nose as his body transformed. The street was deafened by the force of the spell. The paving and asphalt were obliterated, leaving a small crater in their place, right down to the inner workings of the village. Pipes for water, gas and the sewers were bared for all to see. The vicinity was strewn with lifeless bodies staring at the thunderous sky, their blood mixing with the rain and washing away with him in to the sewers below. Silence. The rain continued to fall, falling upon the heap of bloody clothes he had left behind. Then two sounds pierced the stillness. Muggles were screaming all around, horrified not only by the sight before them and what they had witnessed, but also the sound coming from a solitary figure with shaggy black hair. Laughter.

He had fled in to the sewers below the village amongst hundreds of other rats. He had nowhere to go, and yet that was the least of his worries. He had blasted off his finger, and now the adrenalin and magic that had been coursing through his body was depleting. Pain. All he could feel was the sharp throbbing of pain emanating from the stump that now remained, blood flowing freely.

He needed somewhere to go with humans. They could take care of the injury, yet he had no idea where to go. He refused to leave the magical world behind, and yet he knew of nobody there that would administer to him, let alone was close enough to the Muggle village for him to scurry to.

Prewett. That lone name gave him hope as he saw a pair of identical rats jump in to the flowing sewage. They reminded him of the antics of Gideon and Fabian. They too were dead because of him. He almost felt remorseful for his actions at that moment until a new thought entered his mind. He knew that they had a sister with a brood of children living near Ottery St. Catchpole.

He ran as fast as he could, through the blinding pain, weaving in between the rats that had made the sewers their homes. He would get out of the tunnels and make for the outskirts of the village. Yet again he ran.

Upon reaching the end of the labyrinth of tunnels, he leaped on to a grassy bank, digging in his remaining claws to prevent from sliding in to the murky stream. The last thing that he needed was to be washed away.

Slowly, inch by inch he made to the top of the bank and collapsed, panting heavily. He had become light headed *Who knew that so much blood could be lost from the loss of one finger?* he thought.

He glanced around to get his bearings. Not far in the distance he could see a misshapen house. It was large and garish to the eye and yet looked strangely homely. He made his way towards it, praying to whichever deity might exist that it was the right place.

He reached then a low row of bushes that were clearly the boundary to a garden of some sort. He pushed his way through, catching and snaring his fur on some of the lowest protruding branches. Yet he did not feel any pain from his fur being ripped out. He felt numb all over as he made his way through in to the garden beyond.

The rain stopped. He collapsed. A lone beam of sun broke through the clouds and surrounded him, warming him from the chills of not only the rain but also what he had just done. How many others had he just killed so that he alone could live?

The back door of The Burrow opened, and a boy of five with flaming hair and glasses stepped out, his coat done up neatly and trousers tucked in to royal blue Wellingtons. He made his way up the path and stopped suddenly when he saw him. The boy bent down and gently stroked him. He shivered.

"Hello Mr. Rat," the boy said happily.

He squeaked, unable to do much more.

"You don't look very well, Mr. Rat. I'll take you in, and Mummy can fix you all up."

He was scooped up and carried in to the loving warmth of the house. He was gently placed by the boy on a counter. The boy took off his Wellingtons and coat before calling out for his mother.

Mrs. Weasley bustled in to the kitchen and smiled at her son. "What's the matter, Percy?" she asked.

Percy pointed to him and replied, "I found a sick rat in the garden mummy. Can you make him all better?"

Mrs. Weasley frowned. Percy noticed this and immediately hugged her, saying in his saddest voice, "Pleeeeeease."

She nodded and walked up to the counter. He was breathing shallowly, barely conscious. Mrs. Weasley muttered under her breath, and he immediately felt the open wound begin to knit itself closed.

She turned to Percy. "He's going to need a lot of rest and looking after but he should be okay."

Percy beamed, "Thank you, Mummy. Can I keep him? Bill has an owl and Charlie has a toad..."

Mrs. Weasley smiled. "Of course you can, Pumpkin."

Percy turned back to him and looked at him very closely. "You look a little patchy and hurt, so I think I'll call you, Scabbers."

Scabbers. That was what he would be now, what he would become. As far as the world was concerned Peter Pettigrew was dead. He was merely Scabbers, and when the

time came, he would do what he had done all his life. He would run.