

Codicil

by Darkrivertempest

Snape and Lupin are thrust together in an effort to raise Harry per a surprise request from Lily Potter after the end of the first war. They soon decide that nappy changing is more foul than the Dark Lord ever could be.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 2

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Written for Mabonwitch for the Snupin_Santa fic exchange on LJ. I messed with the timeline a bit. Per canon, Frank and Alice Longbottom were attacked after James and Lily died. In this fic, I place it earlier, before the death of the Potters. Keep in mind also, that Severus and Remus are only twenty-one. I believe the years in between the wars made Snape more bitter, more weary and cold, so he's just a tad more forgiving here, though still very snarky.

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Albus Dumbledore sat in a gothic, throne-like chair, fingers steepled, and listened intently to the solicitor's crisp speech.

"This is highly irregular, Mister Dumbledore. It seems that, while there were two separate wills in effect for both Potters, each had a different stipulation with regards to their child." The portly gentleman glanced between the two sheaves of parchment. "The situation is delicate, to say the least."

Reining in his irritation, Albus gave him a small smile. "Why don't you just fulfill your duties, Mister Buttermore?"

Clearing his throat, Richard Buttermore...solicitor to Muggle and wizard-folk alike...read aloud the Last Will and Testament of Lily Potter.

"I, Lily Potter, née Evans, being of sound mind and judgment this tenth day of October, in the year nineteen eighty-one, do hereby revoke all former Wills and testamentary disposition made by me under the law of England and Wales and declare that the proper law of this, my Will, shall be the law of England and Wales. I appoint my spouse, James Potter, to be the Executor and Trustee of this, my Will. In case the aforesaid shall die in my lifetime, then I appoint the firm of Buttermore, Hagerty and Blishwick to fill the vacancy in the office of Executor and Trustee hereof. If nobody with parental responsibilities survives me, I appoint Mister Severus Tobias Snape to be the guardian of Harry James Potter. This shall circumvent any efforts to place minor children with my estranged Muggle family. The time frame allotted for the transition should not exceed one month. Should these conditions fail entirely, be denied, or be declared void, let it be known that precautions have been taken to have Harry Potter removed from the Wizarding community permanently, and all contact betwixt him and said community should cease. These are my final wishes."

"Interesting," Albus drawled, scratching his chin.

Buttermore nodded. "Her husband's appendices read much the same way."

Arching a brow, the old wizard scoffed. "I highly doubt James Potter would wish for custody of his only child to go to Severus Snape."

"In that, you are correct, he didn't. That is where the irregularity comes into play."

"Go on."

Switching to the other parchment, Buttermore summed up James Potter's Will. "Well, as I said, it is practically the same, barring the guardian. He names Mister Sirius Black as Harry's guardian and promises retribution in kind, if his wishes are not met."

"A quandary, indeed."

Buttermore mopped his sweaty brow with a linen handkerchief. "I cannot guess as to her reasoning for changing her Will. A junior solicitor must have handled Mister Potter's request, as I know I myself saw Mrs. Potter during October. It is the only way I can account for such an oversight."

Dumbledore stood and paced slowly in the smallish office. "Quite." He stopped for a moment to gaze out one of the windows at the passersby on the street. "There are several factors to consider here. Barring the fact that Severus Snape and Sirius Black loathe each other, Mister Black is currently within the confines of Azkaban and very unlikely to be released."

"So they have convicted him, then?"

Glancing over his shoulder, Albus nodded. "It would seem so."

"Dumbledore," Buttermore hedged, "We may have to find an alternative to Black."

"How will that resolve this situation, Buttermore? As it stands, Harry is with his aunt at the moment. According to Lily's will, I have just twenty days to turn him over to Snape, or the boy will be taken from the Wizarding world. That cannot be allowed to happen; you *know* how precious that child is."

Lips thinned, Buttermore pointed to James' Will. "And if you don't hand him over to Black within the same timeframe, he'll be removed from the Muggle world and whisked off to Merlin knows where, with the same results." He sat back in his leather wingback chair. "Let me send someone to visit Black, to see if there is an alternative since he's incapacitated."

"Do it, then." Albus grunted and reached for his Muggle dress-coat. "The sooner that child is safe, the better I'll feel."

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Severus Snape stood rigidly before the man who had claimed that he could save Lily and yet had failed to do so. "You wished to see me, Headmaster?"

Peering over his half-moon spectacles at the thin, dark man, Dumbledore nodded. "Please sit, Severus."

Doing so hesitantly, the Slytherin lowered himself to the leather chair situated in front. "I have no news to report, sir." He hadn't...not for over a week, during which almost all traces of the Dark Lord had vanished... and Lily was gone. Biting the inside of his cheek to maintain control, he focused on the wizard behind the desk.

Dumbledore studied him intently. "I know." He laced his fingers together and placed them on the aged wooden surface. "Something that concerns you has come to my attention."

Brows raised, he gripped the armrests of his chair until his knuckles were white. "I-I haven't..."

"I know you haven't," the Headmaster reassured, waving off the other man's concerns. "I know why you stay."

Unbidden, tears clouded Snape's vision. The wound was so fresh and so very deep. Lily, the only light that had shone in his dark world, had forever been extinguished because of his recklessness. And now he would forever strive to atone for his actions. Blinking rapidly to dispel the moisture, he focused on the older man staring back at him. "You were saying, sir?"

Albus gave him a small smile. "It involves the boy."

Severus immediately stiffened. "And how would that have to do with me?"

"How, indeed," Dumbledore countered with a hint of consternation. "Though there are several details that are still being looked over, it seems that..."

Tilting his head in curiosity, Severus prompted his former professor to continue when Dumbledore lapsed into silence. "Yes?"

Unable to sit still, for he always preferred to be in motion, Albus stood and began pacing. "You must understand that this was completely unexpected and not without extreme complications."

Getting dizzy from watching the man walk, turn, and walk again, Severus closed his eyes and huffed in irritation. "It would help if you actually told me what the issue was."

The Headmaster paused, something occurring to him. "Did you and Lily Potter have a relationship once you left Hogwarts?"

A mixture of emotions flitted quickly across Snape's face before his eyes became blank. "The last communication I had with Lily was just before her wedding to *Potter*." Had he meant to spit the man's name out like that? Definitely.

"And that was?"

"My business, not yours," he answered, sneering. He would never admit that he'd humbled himself before Lily one last time in an effort to persuade her that James-bloody-Potter wasn't the man she believed him to be.

"It *is* my business!" Albus declared, heatedly. "It is very much my business when I've just come from the solicitor's office, having been told that you are to be Harry's guardian!"

There was a sudden, noticeable twitch to Severus' left eye. "Excuse me?" he whispered. He had to have misheard. The old man was raving...he had to be.

"Yes, Severus." Dumbledore leaned over his desk and gave him a pointed look. "Twenty-one days before she died, Lily Potter named you Harry's legal guardian and, should we refuse this ridiculous notion, the boy will be taken from the Wizarding world, possibly to never be seen again."

Snape paled further with every word the other wizard uttered. "Madness," was the only word he could push past his lips.

"Of course it is!" Dumbledore was practically screaming now. "So, I ask you again: what kind of contact did you have with Lily after Hogwarts, that she would willingly turn over her own flesh and blood to a man who betrayed her?"

"I didn't betray her knowingly!" Severus shouted back. Teeth clenched, he stood to match his new master in height. "Had I known that fucking prophesy concerned her, I would've gone to the grave to protect her!"

"Then why?"

"I am as astounded as you; may I remind you?" Snape folded his arms in his usual self-protective gesture. "I merely asked Lily to reconsider her choice about the man she was to marry that day, nothing more."

Giving no indication of what he was about to do, Dumbledore seized his wand. "*Legilimens!*"

Though he was skilled in Occlumency, Snape was not yet as proficient as he hoped to become, and was therefore no match for the power of the Headmaster. He tried to raise every shield and barrier he possibly could, but each one failed when faced with Dumbledore's penetrating spell.

"*Lily, please, think about what you're doing!*"

"*Why do you come to me now, of all days, Sev?*" Her head hung low. "*You shouldn't be here.*"

He touched her shoulder and even dared to grip it hard. "*You must listen to me! James Potter was, is and always will be an insolent brat, hell-bent on causing as much pain as he's legally allowed to.*"

"*Let go of me,*" she said with a hiss, moving away from him. "*I know what he is; haven't I told you all of this before?*"

Snape's look was one of enormous confusion. "*Then why are you doing this? Why are you...*"

His words died on his lips the moment she grabbed his hand and placed it on her abdomen. "*Because of this.*"

Though it was faint, Snape could feel the soft pulse of magic thrumming in Lily's womb. "*Oh, Lily...*"

"*Don't you dare pity me, Severus Snape.*" She stepped back from his touch and his forlorn look. "*Mum and Dad are gone, Tuney was in a right snit the last time I talked to her, and I don't fit in anywhere else. So, don't you even presume to care for me now.*"

"*I have always cared!*"

"*You cared for me so much that you called me a Mudblood? That you refused to stop dabbling in the Dark Arts? That you allowed your friends to torment me?*" She snorted with disdain. "*If that is your way of showing affection to those you care for, I think I'll stay with egotistical James and his toerag ways.*"

Severus' features had become more sullen with her words. "*Mark my words, Lily. Some day, the façade will crumble, and you'll know the real James Potter.*"

With one final push, Snape was able to expel Dumbledore from his mind. "You bastard!" he snarled. He snatched and trained his wand on the aging wizard before him.

"I'd reconsider that, if I were you," Albus drawled. "You are, after all, the boy's guardian."

"And if I don't want the brat?" Snape still hadn't lowered his wand.

"Irrelevant. The Will clearly stipulates if Harry is not turned over to you, he will 'disappear' from our world. You *know* that can't be allowed to happen."

Slowly lowering his wand, Snape sat in the chair, a defeated air about him. "What could she have been thinking? Me, of all people!" His brows drew together in puzzlement. "Is there a reason stated that she wished for this?"

Resuming his seat as well, Albus shook his head. "Buttermore indicated that when he spoke with her on that day, she was calm and collected, though a little reserved. He questioned her several times as to her intent to see if there were any extraneous circumstances."

That piqued Severus' attention. "Did she say anything?"

Albus stroked his beard in contemplation. "He only indicated that she was adamant that you be Harry's guardian, but nothing else."

Severus didn't know if his jaw could drop any further. "I can't believe James Potter would agree with this."

"In that, you are correct. The details are sketchy for the time being, until Buttermore explores another avenue, but it looks as if the Wills negate one another. Lily left Harry to you while James left the boy to..."

Oh, he didn't like that grimace of Dumbledore's. "Well?"

The Headmaster replied after some hesitation. "Sirius Black."

"No," Severus responded in a low tone and with deadly calm.

"You see our dilemma, then."

"Dilemma?" Snape nearly screeched. "The man's a fucking murderer!"

"Language, Severus."

"I'll say whatever the hell I want, old man!" This time, it was Snape who stood and began pacing. "Just what exactly was your plan? To allow Harry familial visits with the man responsible for his parents' death, while I wipe the child's bum and pray that I don't injure him?"

"Calm yourself," Dumbledore ordered.

This only incensed Severus. "*Calm* myself? I've just been told I am responsible for a child that the Dark Lord wanted very much dead, not to mention that I am to have contact with the foulest human on earth and...to top it off...I have no steady employment, regardless of the work I do for you!"

"Silence!" Dumbledore roared, his voice echoing off the walls in his chamber and waking a few of the slumbering portraits. Once the room was quiet again, he proceeded. "Now, if you are done lamenting the fact that you and Black were both named guardians, you will recall that I said Buttermore is seeking alternatives to James Potter's final request."

"Buttermore's a Squib," Snape spat. "Had Regulus' parents been alive, they would've vaporised him on sight. As it stands, he wouldn't even be able to handle the documents, on pain of an agonising death."

Dumbledore leaned back in his ornate chair. "One of Buttermore's associates...one whom we can trust...is a pure-blood and will visit Black to discuss alternatives."

Gripping the scrollwork on the back of the chair he'd been sitting in, Snape scoffed. "Good luck getting him to talk. How do you know he hasn't already gone mad?"

Dumbledore shrugged. "Then all the better to declare him *non compos mentis* and raise the child alone."

"And what of the boy until then?"

"Don't tell me you care for him?" Albus asked with a knowing smirk.

Severus returned the smirk, but his had a decidedly wicked edge. "If I am to be a so-called parent to the boy, I must feign interest, should I not?"

Eyes narrowed, Dumbledore leaned forward, his tone deadly. "Severus, if you harm one hair on that child's head..."

"Spare me the lecture," Snape said in a bored manner, his hand raised. "I've heard it countless times before. You do drone on so."

White shaggy eyebrows rose several notches. "Is that so?" A thought formed in his mind; one that would give the wayward man a taste of his own insolence. "Well, it just so happens I am in need of a lecturer."

"Explain."

Dumbledore stood and began pacing once more. "Since, as you say, you are in need of actual employment to support Harry and yourself..."

Snape couldn't help the derisive snort that escaped him.

"As I was saying," Albus bit out, glaring at the younger wizard, "since you will need to be able to provide for yourself and the boy, I'm extending you an offer, to teach here at Hogwarts."

Unexpected hope burned bright and constricted Severus' chest, though his outside countenance revealed nothing. Long he had coveted the Defence Against the Dark Arts position, and now it might be handed to him on a silver platter, so to speak. He supposed he could spare a modicum of gratitude to Potter for dying so spectacularly, that his own most fervent dream would come to fruition.

Albus saw that lustful gleam and mentally patted himself on the back for being able to read the man so easily. He would try not to enjoy the look of utter despair the young man would have once he was told which position he would actually be filling. "Potions, Severus."

Obsidian eyes flared for a brief moment, before fading to their usual dull, disinterested state. "Potions."

"You don't have a hearing problem, do you, Severus?"

The miserable, conniving, old schemer! "I take it Slughorn is retiring?"

"I've presented him with the option of early retirement, yes."

Severus' eyes narrowed. "Why?"

Leaning back in his chair, Dumbledore studied the young wizard before answering. "You are needed here. There is no feasible reason to keep you in my employ, without arousing suspicion from both sides; the only choice is for you to become a staff member. You excelled, even mastered, in Potions. It is a logical choice."

"But Defence Against the Dark Arts needs..."

"No!" Albus thundered. "I've told you before; must I continually repeat myself?"

Teeth clenched, Snape gritted out, "Why?"

Pinching the bridge of his nose, the Headmaster sighed heavily. "Though you came to me of your own free will, concerning your past transgressions, I feel it would be remiss of me to place you back amongst the wolves, so to speak. Allowing you to teach such a course could very well cause you to relapse. You know I can't allow that to happen."

Lips curling into a sneer, Snape looked down at him, face hard as iron. "Well, then, since you doubt my abilities in the Dark Arts, I suppose Potions it must be." Without waiting to be dismissed, he turned and left the chamber, the door slamming in his wake.

"Hades' bollocks!" Albus threw his spectacles on the desk. "Can nothing ever go smoothly with that boy?"

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Having been married into the Black family, Jim Blishwick had seen many things in his day. Too many. In fact, if the choice had been his, he would've never even gone near the inbred family, let alone to try and mate with them. But, as had always been the way of the pure-blood society, he had been auctioned off to the highest bidder. Genoa Black had had her sights set on him, and he'd therefore stood no chance against the affluent family.

That had also put him in the awkward position of visiting his estranged cousin...fourth or fifth, he couldn't remember. Having looked James Potter's Will over, he sincerely hoped Sirius Black would be an accommodating man. He didn't want to spend any more time than necessary in the visiting section of Azkaban.

Having been ushered to a dank receiving area and given a rickety chair, Blishwick sat in the bitter chill that infiltrated the room. A window near the ceiling provided the only dim source of light. He clutched his satchel to his chest, as if it would protect him from the Dementors meandering in the gaol. He nearly lost his nerve when a side door opened and a man in prison-issue clothing was shoved into the room, stumbling to land at his feet.

The filthy inmate struggled to stand, his ankles and wrists shackled with iron cuffs, and swept his lank curls to the side. "Who're you?"

"Solicitor Blishwick with the firm of Buttermore, Hagerty and Blishwick. I'm here to discuss James Potter's Last Will and Testament."

Black gave a high-pitched laugh. "Ironic, isn't it? Knowing James, he probably left me something of worth, but since I'm in here, I can't claim it. It'll keep in my vault until I'm free, then."

Blishwick arched a brow. "I highly doubt it. Other arrangements must be made. You're as good as dead, in here."

Lips thinned, Sirius made to leap at the smug man, but was thrown back against the craggy walls of the chamber. He wisely stayed in his crumpled position on the dirt floor. "What do you really want?" he panted.

Blishwick opened the leather briefcase, withdrew several documents, and handed them to Black. "You are listed as guardian to Harry James Potter, since Lily and James Potter are deceased, as you well know. Harry is a minor and therefore in need of a custodian until he reaches the age of majority."

Sirius looked over the documents, frowning. "I didn't kill them," he whispered.

"That is irrelevant at this point," Blishwick said evasively.

"No," Sirius growled and threw the papers back at the man sitting opposite him. "Harry is mine!"

Bending over, Blishwick gathered the documents and put them back in his satchel. "I'm sorry to hear that, Mister Black. We'll have the court appoint a custodian for the boy, then." He rose from his seat, prepared to leave.

"Wait!" Sirius had a decidedly panicked look about him. "I don't trust the courts."

Not bothering to return to his seat, Blishwick remained where he was. "I'm listening."

"If I name someone to be custodian until Harry becomes of age, it will be legal and binding, yes?"

Blishwick nodded. "Seeing as I am a practising solicitor and have due authority to handle the Potter's Will, I can insert a codicil that will allow the Will to be executed and remain faithful to the original intent."

Sirius stood on shaky legs. "And this custodian, he would have complete control over Harry until the boy becomes of age?"

The tricky part to answering that question would be to avoid telling him who the co-guardian would be. "Yes," Blishwick drawled. "The custodian would care for the child."

Apparently that was enough for Sirius Black. "Well then, Blishwick," the manacled wizard said with a mad grin, "The custodian shall be..."

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Dumbledore glanced at the paperwork that was presented to him. "You realise this is almost no better than Sirius Black."

Richard Buttermore narrowed his eyes and glared. "This is as good as you're going to get, for the time being."

Sighing heavily, Albus laid the parchment on Buttermore's desk. "I'll make it happen." He retrieved his cloak and left rather hurriedly. He was heading for the small village of Upper Flagley to visit none other than Remus Lupin.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 2

Snape and Lupin are thrust together in an effort to raise Harry per a surprise request from Lily Potter after the end of the first war. They soon decide that nappy changing is more foul than the Dark Lord ever could be.

Remus Lupin let the axe swing downwards in a tight arc and neatly sliced the thick log in two. Winter would be setting in soon and he wanted his parents to have enough wood to last them the entire season. He knew he could have split the logs magically, but, beyond his transformation, that was the most exercise he got, and it was a way to blow off steam from his almost constant state of irritability those past weeks.

With each drop of the axe, he imagined the wood to be the head of the Dark Lord or even that of his own ex-lover, Sirius. Though they had been separated almost a year before James and Lily's deaths, he had loved the unstable wizard even after Sirius had accused him of being a spy. Remus snorted at the idea. A spy. Him? Hardly.

When he'd heard of James' and Lily's deaths on Hallowe'en, he had been devastated. They had been his extended family, and he'd cared for them dearly. Hell, James had even taken care of him financially once they had left Hogwarts, since no one would employ a known werewolf. Once he'd learned that it had been Sirius who betrayed their location, however, he'd gone a bit mad. Of all the people in the world, he would never in a million years have guessed that their best friend would have done such a thing. Regulus, possibly, but never Sirius. Not only had there been the loss of James and Lily to think of, which left young Harry an orphan, there was poor Peter, as well. Black had truly fucked them all.

Remus hadn't known who to turn to, so he'd returned to his parents, constantly on guard and wary of strangers. Yes, he had done the odd job for Dumbledore and the Order, especially if it concerned the werewolf packs, but he could only be so much help, since he was considered an Omega...or, at the very most, a Beta...within a pack. It wasn't like he could waltz in, chat up the group and they would spill their secrets. Deep trust was involved; he couldn't gain that overnight, which meant long stints undercover. Maybe it was the long absences that had caused Sirius to stop trusting him after a time.

Another swing and another image of Sirius losing some vital part of his anatomy flashed in his mind. Remus cursed himself for a fool that he'd ever believed anything that had passed the lips of his former lover. Sirius was very good at spouting bits of excellent personal philosophy, but he didn't always live up to them. *If you want to know what a man is really like, look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals.* The werewolf snorted. Black loathed Kreacher, who was by most estimations his inferior, and had treated him with nothing but contempt. A perfect example of, 'do as I say, not as I do'.

Similarly, Sirius claimed often enough that nobody was wholly good or wholly evil; yet the way he acted towards Snape suggested that he thought there were no latent good qualities in him. Remus had not been on friendly enough terms with their greasy schoolmate, so he couldn't even hazard an opinion. When it came right down to it, Lily, James and Peter were dead, Sirius was serving a life sentence in Azkaban, Harry was with his Muggle aunt and he was aimless.

Things couldn't possibly get worse.

"Remus?"

Cringing at the sound of his name uttered by the Headmaster of Hogwarts made him rethink that idea. Panting from the exertion, Remus embedded the blade of the axe in the stump, wiped his palms on the back of his faded trousers and finally turned to see the older wizard. "Albus."

Albus scanned the stacks of wood piled against the cottage where Lupin's parents resided. They extended over the length of two sides of the house and were about two feet high. "You've been busy."

"It keeps my mind off things," Remus muttered. He began piling several logs into his arms and placing them on the stacks. Not waiting for Dumbledore to speak, he spoke preemptively. "I'm in no mood for another mission, if that's why you're here."

Waving the werewolf off, Dumbledore helped levitate a couple of logs. "No, no need at the moment."

Remus turned and studied his former professor with narrowed eyes. "Then why are you here? I told you everything I could about Sirius. You know as much as I do."

"Dear boy, such a suspicious mind," Albus admonished gently.

Remus scoffed. "In this day and age? Absolutely."

Unwilling to beat about the bush, Dumbledore spoke in a low tone and very quickly, "There is a delicate matter that must be attended to, and with great expediency."

Chuckling some logs on the pile, Remus frowned. "I thought you weren't here about a mission?"

"The matter could be construed as a mission, though it isn't the kind you've been assigned so far."

Despite his earlier misgivings, he was now highly curious. "I'm listening."

"It will be difficult to hear."

Snorting, Remus shook his head. "Doubtful. Nothing could be more difficult than these past two weeks, what with..."

"You've been named Harry's custodian," Albus cut him off.

An oppressive silence filled the air. "What?" he whispered.

Dumbledore began to pace. "Unforeseen circumstances have placed guardianship of Harry with you and one other person. If we do not comply, it is very likely the boy will disappear before we were able to prevent it."

The tawny wizard had not moved from his spot, his mouth hanging open in shock. "This is ridiculous. What person in their right mind would hand over their child to a werewolf?"

"Someone in their right mind wouldn't," Albus agreed, thinking of Sirius Black and the very real likelihood that the man was already insane. "However, it is a fact that we have to accept."

"No," Remus said vehemently with a slashing of his hand. "It's too dangerous."

Albus crossed his arms. "Perhaps you don't understand. This is non-negotiable. Harry must be protected, above all else. If that means placing him with you and Severus, then..."

"What?" the werewolf bit out harshly. He had to have heard wrong. There was no way in Merlin's name that...

"It's an unusual situation, to say the least, Remus, but we are constrained by James and Lily's wishes, as set forth in their Last Will and Testament."

Lupin shook his head, refusing to believe it. "They would never knowingly leave Harry with me...or with Snape!"

Stepping closer, Dumbledore spoke in heated tones. "We thought that as well. But three weeks before their deaths, both Potters changed their Wills, leaving the boy to separate individuals, stating that if their demands were not met, Harry would be taken from our world." He leaned in until his nose was almost touching Remus'. "I can't tell you how disastrous it would be for us, should that happen."

"Madness," the younger wizard muttered under his breath. "Utter madness."

Dumbledore straightened and stroked his beard. "Can you think of any reason that they would choose to change their Wills in such a fashion?"

Remus wracked his brain for any snippet of information, any clue as to why Lily or James would have made such a drastic change, so close to their deaths. "Was I their first choice for this dubious task?"

"No. Sirius Black was."

Nostrils flaring, Remus nearly bit through his lower lip to keep from shouting obscenities. "That makes more sense than choosing me," he admitted with a growl. "Except for the fact that he's in bloody Azkaban!"

"My point exactly." Dumbledore emphasized his agreement with a nod. "You were named by Sirius himself."

The red flush that had covered Remus' face a moment ago paled to near white. "Why in Merlin's name would he do such a thing? I've severed all ties with him."

Albus arched a brow in contemplation. "Apparently, he felt differently."

Unable to verbalize much of anything, Remus began pacing, his long strides kicking up clumps of sod. To him, it was unconscionable and irresponsible of Sirius to do such a thing, but then again, look at the source of the problem. Lupin doubted there was a sensible bone in the man's body. He wiped his sweaty face with his hands and alternated between groaning and growling, hating his ex-lover even more as the seconds passed. And what of Snape? Dear Zeus on Olympus, how was he to negotiate guardianship with a man that possibly loathed him even more than he did Sirius? He would be surprised if he and Snape survived the first five minutes in each other's company, let alone sixteen years for Harry to reach his majority. Yet, he couldn't ignore what losing Harry would mean to the magical community.

Finally stopping in front of his old professor, Remus blew out a heavy breath and mumbled, "What do I need to do?"

"You and Snape are to meet with the solicitor in three day's time. There, you'll receive the terms of your guardianship. I presume that you'll be required to share living space with Severus, but again, that will be outlined during the meeting. Any questions?"

Oh, there were several, but none that he dared to voice. Instead, Remus shook his head and made his way back to the cottage, leaving Dumbledore to stand in the cool evening air.

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Richard Buttermore had never seen two more ill-suited men sitting before him in the history of... well, history, despite having been of service to both wizards and Muggles alike. Definite opposites; one was thin and dark, with a sallow complexion and an air of disdain about him, while the other was fidgety, light-coloured and looked like he'd rather be anywhere but sitting in front of a solicitor.

To be honest, Buttermore fervently wished they were both elsewhere, as well.

The dark one, Snape, sat at least the width of the desk apart from the other one, Lupin. He'd repeatedly refused to sit closer, as a matter of fact. Something about fleas, the smell of wet fur and the high probability of death. Lupin's, not Snape's.

Constant huffs of irritation, eye rolling and clucking of the tongue came from Lupin's side of the room. All the while, the tall, lanky man's left leg bounced on the ball of his foot in a nervous fashion. Sometimes he would stop for a minute or two and remain absolutely still, as though listening for something, before returning to his antsy behaviour.

Buttermore had now developed a crick in his neck from turning his head from side to side in order to speak to the men directly, and he was quickly losing his patience with their juvenile conduct. "Gentlemen, if we could proceed?"

"Why do you think we're here? I've been waiting for twenty minutes, and I have yet to hear anything of value pass your flapping lips," Severus snapped.

Trying to smooth things over, Remus cleared his throat. "I'm sure the man has a good reason for the delay, Severus."

Snape narrowed his eyes and sneered at the werewolf. "I didn't grant you the privilege of using my given name!"

"Well, considering we're supposed to raise Harry together, I thought we could dispense with the formalities."

"You thought wrong." Severus sniffed and brushed off a piece of imaginary lint from his frock coat. "Of course, I've come to expect such behaviour from you and your little band of miscreants and..."

"They're all dead, Snape! Sirius is in Azkaban, so what more do you want?" Remus shouted, hoping to end his tirade. "My head on a silver platter?"

The dark wizard looked thoughtful for a moment. "Can that be arranged?"

"Enough!"

Both men turned their attention to Buttermore, who was fuming and had turned a horrid shade of puce.

"If you two are quite through, I will explain the particulars." He glanced between them. "Is this amenable to you?"

"The Devil's in the details," Snape said with a nasty smirk.

"Bloody hell, will you listen to the man?" Remus cried, pulling at the hair around his temples. "I believe we'll find out more if you just shut your gob!"

"Lupin..."

"I will throw you out myself, if you say one more word that doesn't pertain to the agenda at hand, Mister Snape!" Buttermore growled.

Severus sat back in his chair pursing his lips, scowl firmly in place, though he remained blessedly quiet.

"As I mentioned before," Buttermore continued after a brief period of silence, "this delicate situation must be handled with some urgency. We now have fifteen days in which to retrieve young Mister Potter from his mother's family. I fear, should we delay in doing so, the consequences would not be favourable."

"I'd still like to know how Severus and I were chosen," Remus said.

"As would I." Snape echoed Lupin's sentiment, not arguing for once.

Sighing heavily, Buttermore leaned back in his chair. "Though it may be a breach of privilege, I will tell you both that another couple had initially been named instead of you two. Then Lily Potter approached our firm to alter her Will, and I did as she wished, never questioning her decision. The same applied to James Potter. Whether they knowingly changed their Wills to each reflect a different party, we may never know; I only know that they did so." He looked at Remus. "As you know, Mister Potter had named Sirius Black, but since Mister Black is unable to fulfill his responsibility, he named you in his stead."

"That explains things," Snape groused.

Ignoring the sullen wizard to his left, Remus asked, "Who were the prior couple?"

Buttermore hesitated for a moment. "Frank and Alice Longbottom."

Unbidden, Severus and Remus glanced at each other. It had become public knowledge that the loving couple had been tortured past the point of insanity and now had permanent residence in St. Mungo's. It stood to reason that the Potters would have changed things after that tragedy.

"Why not Petunia Evans? Surely Lily's sister would care for the boy?" Snape posed the question before looking away from the werewolf.

"That's where the child is now," Buttermore replied. "Normally, I would agree with you, but one thing both Wills agreed on was that Harry was not to reside with Petunia Dursley."

"Dursley? Someone married that horse-faced hag?" Snape sniggered.

"Yes, well..." Buttermore cleared his throat, uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation. "Be that as it may, the Potters were quite adamant that she not maintain contact with the boy." He unlocked a drawer and withdrew a packet, handing it to Snape. "Mrs. Potter left you this, at your discretion."

Severus stared at the bulky envelope, finally grasping it with trembling fingers. Feeling the outline of the item inside, he determined that it was a vial of some sort. He tucked it inside his cloak, determined to look at it later, away from prying eyes.

Irritated with Snape, hungry and edgy since the full moon was in a week's time, Remus just wanted the meeting over with. "What now?"

Peering at both men, Buttermore stood and leaned over his desk. "You, gentlemen, *must* be in accord. The Wills were written in such a manner that the guardian...or, in this case, guardians...must provide the best atmosphere of safety, protection and as nurturing environment as possible. I know nothing of your past history together, but, from what I gather here today, you both make a pitiful example of said conditions."

"I take offense to that!" Remus growled.

Severus just snorted at his companion's outrage.

Buttermore pointed at them. "My point exactly. It was stipulated that you must work together, raise Harry Potter *together*. Can you not relate to each other with even a modicum of civility?"

Remus wanted to sneer, wanted to throw the chair he was currently sitting on out the diamond-paned window, wanted to throttle Snape, James and Sirius... in that order. He wanted to refuse...no, *needed* to refuse. His life was directionless, at best. How could he possibly cope with a child... and Snape? Any sane person would've said *no* the moment they knew the dour wizard was involved. He now questioned how sound his own mind was. He couldn't possibly be considering... Oh, for the love of Merlin, he was such a predictable beast.

Extending the proverbial olive branch...because he knew Severus would not, prideful buggler that he was...Remus spoke tentatively. "For Harry's sake, I will make a concentrated effort to get along." He directed his offer to Snape, who looked deep in contemplation.

Severus wanted to bite out a scathing retort about how a 'concentrated effort' might send the werewolf around the bend, but he refrained, though it nearly killed him to do so. *Lily, what have you gotten me into? Why me? Why him? You knew how dangerous my life is; I can't think you changed things inadvertently.* It was always in the forefront of his mind that the Dark Lord had been defeated a little too neatly, especially by an unknowing child. Dark and powerful magic was involved... the kind that never really disappeared. For that reason alone, Severus understood that if Harry was to survive in the future, should the Dark Lord rise again, it would take all his considerable resources to keep the boy alive.

"I agree," Snape said reluctantly. "For the sake of the child."

Buttermore blew out a breath he hadn't known he was holding. "I'm glad to hear it, gentlemen." He mopped his brow with a linen handkerchief, then handed each man a file

folder. "Here is the location of Harry Potter, along with necessary documents, such as the child's birth certificate and a court order to retrieve him. From the reports I'm getting, I daresay the Dursleys will be more than happy to turn the boy over to you."

Both wizards looked concerned. "Why?" Remus asked, alarmed.

"These are second-hand accounts, mind you, and..."

"I can guess," Severus said with a growl. "I don't imagine Petunia's personality changed that much as she grew older."

"Then we need to go now." Remus stood and slipped on his jacket.

Standing, Severus also donned his coat. "With pleasure," he drawled wickedly.

Petunia Dursley would think that the Devil himself had darkened her doorway, once Snape arrived.