

Never be Lonely Anymore

by peskipiksi

Eleven year old Remus Lupin receives a very special letter.

Oneshot

Chapter 1 of 1

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'But WHY can't I go out?'

Remus Lupin was standing in the middle of the living room, screaming at his parents. Mark and Sylvia Lupin exchanged exasperated looks. They had this little scene every month.

'You know why, darling,' his mother told him gently.

'I'll be back *ages* before dark.'

'Darling, the moon rises hours before it gets dark in the summer. Don't let's go through this again.'

'I'm BORED!' Remus yelled. 'You never let me do anything! I've got no friends; everyone thinks I'm weird. I hate my life. I wish I was dead!'

Mark Lupin strode over to his son and grasped his shoulders firmly. 'Don't say that! Don't you ever say that!'

'It's true!' Remus stood his ground. 'You've got no idea what it's like. I've had enough. I hate it. And I hate you. Both of you.'

His mother burst into tears.

'That's enough!' his father shouted.

'I do. I do! It's all your fault. You should've stopped this; you should've done something.'

'We did everything we could, darling,' his mother pleaded. 'You know we did.'

'Well, you should've tried harder. 'Cos it's me who's got to live with it, isn't it? And no-one cares about me.' And he ran from the room, slamming the door behind him. They heard him run up the stairs and slam his bedroom door too.

Sylvia collapsed, sobbing, into her husband's arms.

'Come on, love,' he whispered, stroking her hair. 'Don't let him upset you. We have this every month from him.'

'He's never said he hates me before,' Sylvia said indistinctly, her voice muffled by her tears and her husband's jumper.

'He's angry and frightened.' Mark shuddered as he remembered the mounting fear on his son's face every time he looked out of the window, watching the waxing of the moon from crescent to full. Mark and Sylvia never got a wink of sleep the week of the full moon. They lay in bed, listening to Remus' howls and screams, powerless to help. Mark would willingly have undergone a hundred thousand transformations if he could have taken away his son's suffering. 'He needed someone to blame and, as we're nearest, he lashes out at us.'

'It's true though, isn't it? We *are* to blame; we could have prevented this.'

Mark sighed. They'd been through this too, over and over again, blaming themselves, each other, the Ministry.

Seven years ago, when Remus had been four years old, his father had lobbied the Ministry to reclassify werewolves as Beasts. The werewolf community had been gathering strength at the time, rallied by Fenrir Greyback, and many wizards had been calling for stricter control by the Committee for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. Mark Lupin's petitions had led to substantial changes to Newt Scamander's 1947 Werewolf Register and brought about the creation of the Werewolf Capture Unit. Greyback had taken mortal offence and vowed revenge on all those involved. Mark felt sick when he reflected that his careful campaign would now backfire so spectacularly on his own child.

'I thought I was doing the right thing. You agreed with me. We had to stop people getting hurt.'

'People did get hurt! *Remus* got hurt! I don't care about anyone else. I just care about my little boy. I didn't know this was going to happen or I'd never have agreed to it!'

'Exactly! We didn't know this would happen! It's not our fault.'

'I know that.' Sylvia pulled away and scrubbed at her eyes with the back of her hand. 'But it doesn't stop me feeling guilty.'

Upstairs, in his room, Remus threw himself on his bed and pummelled his pillow with every ounce of strength he could muster. If he were honest, he didn't really feel well enough to go out, anyway. In the week of the full moon, he felt, quite literally, sick as a dog. Unfortunate phrase under the circumstances, but appropriate nevertheless. But the fact that he was too ill to go out didn't mean he didn't want to.

Remus hauled himself up and knelt on his bed, staring out of the window, his forehead touching the glass. A large tawny owl swooped past carrying a letter in its beak, and Remus glanced convulsively down at his watch. It must be later than he thought if owls were out already. But no, it was still only half past three. Probably another letter for his father from work. They'd have to be careful; they'd be in trouble with the Ministry if the Muggles spotted owls delivering post. He looked out of the window again, but the owl had gone.

Tony Jenkins and his gang were kicking a football up and down the road, and Remus desperately wished he could join them. He'd told his parents he was bored. The truth was he was lonely. He had always been a shy child, even before the attack, and he found it difficult enough to make friends. Those he did manage to make either got fed up of being told he couldn't come out to play, or thought *he* had got fed up with them when he stopped meeting them after three weeks. Word had got round that he was always ill, that he wasn't worth bothering with. On the few occasions he had tried to join in recently, Tony's gang had ignored him and gone to play in the next street, calling him names over their shoulders as they went.

Remus dug his nails into his palms to stop the tears that had sprung to his eyes. This was what his life had been like for as long as he could remember. He had been tiny when he was bitten, hardly more than a baby, really, and he couldn't remember what it was like to be normal.

His mother and father tried to make up for it as best they could. They took him out on trips in the weeks he was OK, his dad played football and cricket in the back garden just like he'd seen the Muggle kids do; he even took Remus to a nearby wood and taught him to fly his old broomstick when no one was around, but they couldn't take away the feeling of being different, not normal. And it was no substitute for having real friends, friends of his own age.

Remus jumped, bumping his forehead on the windowpane. His father was coming upstairs. He'd be for it now. Mark Lupin never hit his son, never even raised his voice, but his attitude of quiet disappointment was harder to bear than shouting.

'Your mother's very upset,' he would tell Remus. *'She's downstairs, crying. It makes me sad that you can speak to your mother like that.'*

"Guilt tripping", Remus called it, privately. After five minutes of this, he would happily apologise for anything if it meant he could get some peace. Once, when he was six, he had apologised for his condition, which made his mother cry even harder. *'What?'* Remus had asked, his eyes wide with innocence and confusion. *'What did I say?'* At this, his parents had burst out laughing, and his mother had hugged him and taken him to the kitchen to find an ice cream.

Remus smiled at the memory, hastily rearranging his features into an expression of contrition as the bedroom door burst open.

'Dad, I'm sorr...' Remus stopped short at the looks on his parents' faces. They weren't angry *or* disapproving. They were both beaming, their faces alight with excitement.

'Remus! Look at this, son. It's just come.' His father thrust a letter into his hands.

Remus stared at the envelope. It was made of stiff, cream paper, and their address was written in emerald green ink. He turned it over. The seal had been broken, but Remus knew what it was. He had seen the stamp before, the letter H surrounded by a lion, eagle, badger and snake, on his father's old spell books and exam certificates. Heart hammering, Remus drew out the letter and began to read.

HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY

Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore

(Order of Merlin, First Class.)

Dear Mr and Mrs Lupin,

We are pleased to inform you that Remus has a provisional place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

I would like to invite you and your son to attend a meeting with me to discuss the possibility of his attending Hogwarts in the autumn.

I have consulted the lunar chart and would suggest the sixteenth of this month as a date which might be suitable to all parties. Please let me know by return owl if this is convenient to you.

Yours sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore

Headmaster

Remus read the letter through three times and then stared up at his parents with shining eyes. *'Me, go to Hogwarts?'* he blurted out. He couldn't believe it. How many times had he wished he could go to school like everyone else? How many nights had he cried himself to sleep over the unfairness of it?

Remus had found some of his dad's old school books one day in the back of a cupboard in the utility room and had read them avidly, trying to ignore the pain in his chest as he realised he would never be able to follow in his father's footsteps. Now he was going to.

'Albus Dumbledore,' he read off the letter. 'Wasn't he your old Transfiguration teacher?'

'He must've been promoted,' Mark said. 'It was in the *Prophet* that Armando Dippet was retiring.' He smiled down at his son. 'Dumbledore's a good man. If there's a way to get you to Hogwarts, he'll find it.'

Remus bounced up and down on the bed in his excitement. Normally that would have earned him a telling off, but at the moment he seemed to be able to get away with anything.

'We can go to see him, can't we, Dad? Mum?'

'Of course we can, love,' Sylvia said, her eyes sparkling. 'I'm so proud of you, off to Hogwarts like your dad. We'll sort it all out tomorrow, promise.' She hesitated. 'Tea now, and then your dad'll take you downstairs.'

Downstairs was the Lupin family euphemism for the basement of the house, which was the only safe place for Remus' transformations. His parents hated leaving him down there, and normally Remus resisted for all he was worth, even after seven years, crying and pleading not to be left alone. Now, however, he seemed immune to the prospect, as if some inner light was sustaining him.

Remus bounded off the bed, flung his arms around his mother's waist and leant against her. 'I'm sorry I yelled at you, Mum.' He looked up into her smiling face. 'Can we have ice cream for tea?'

Dumbledore leant his elbows on the desk and steepled his fingers – a gesture Remus would come to know well in the next seven years – and gazed over his half-moon spectacles into the eager little face in front of him and at the worried expressions of the boy's parents.

'As long as we take certain precautions, I see no reason why Mr Lupin should not attend this school in the autumn. I have spoken to the staff – they are quite happy to give Remus extra tuition to make up for any lessons he may feel too ill to attend.'

'And where will he go in *those* weeks?' Mark asked anxiously. 'Surely the hospital wing won't be safe?'

'No, no, Remus will not stay in the hospital wing,' Dumbledore assured him. 'If you will come with me, I have something to show you.'

On the walk through the grounds, it was all Remus could do to stop himself hanging back to look around and to keep up with the Headmaster and his parents.

He stared at the funny little hut where his father had said the gamekeeper lived. Smoke was curling up out of the chimney and a huge black boarhound was tied up outside. The dog growled at Remus (could he sense the wolf in him, Remus wondered?), but it made no move towards him. Remus craned his neck as he passed, to try and catch a glimpse of the gamekeeper. He had never seen a giant before.

Then there was the Black Lake. Remus was sure he saw a long, tentacled leg rise up out of the water in the very middle. He longed to go and investigate, but didn't dare lose sight of his parents. There would be plenty of time for exploring when he was a student here.

They had reached the edge of the grounds now, and all three of the Lupins looked expectantly up at Dumbledore.

'Where are we going, sir?' Remus asked, boldly.

'Hogsmeade,' replied Dumbledore. 'Mr Lupin, if you could assist your wife, perhaps Remus would like to take my arm.'

Remus felt suddenly shy, but grasped the Headmaster's elbow. He normally hated Side-Along-Apparition, but this was too exciting to miss out on.

'We're *Apparating*?' his father asked, astonished.

'Couldn't we just walk?' Remus asked uncertainly, catching sight of his mother's terrified face. 'Mum's never Apparated before.'

'Ah,' Dumbledore said, stopping short. 'Well, I really would rather we were not seen entering or leaving the building we are about to visit. Apparition is not something I would normally advocate for our Muggle parents, but this is a rather special case.' He twinkled down at Mrs Lupin. 'The sensation does take some getting used to, I'm afraid. On three, then.'

Once the horrible, constricted feeling of being squeezed through a very thin tube had abated, Remus looked around, fascinated. (He caught sight of his mother's face. She looked faintly green.)

They were in a house *No*, Remus thought, *more like a hut* – a rough, wooden shack. The furniture was all broken and every single window had been smashed.

'Where are we?' Mark Lupin asked, looking thoroughly disorientated.

'Hogsmeade,' reiterated Dumbledore.

'Really? I don't remember anywhere like this in Hogsmeade.'

'No, you wouldn't,' Dumbledore said, looking rather pleased with himself. 'It has only just been built. Oh, I know that is hard to believe,' he continued, smiling at the astonished look on Remus' face as he took in the state of the furniture and windows, 'but I have just had this house built. For you, Mr Lupin.'

Remus stared.

'Yes, if you choose to take up your place at Hogwarts, this is where you will come each month. You will be safe here, away from everyone.' (The phrase "*and they will be safe from you*" hung, unsaid, in the air.) 'We are right on the outskirts of the village. No one will come up here.'

'Won't the Hogsmeade residents be curious?' Mark asked in a worried voice. 'How can you be sure they won't try to get in while Remus is here?'

'Ah, now there I had a rather brilliant idea,' Dumbledore smiled. 'I persuaded Peeves (our resident poltergeist', he explained to a confused-looking Mrs Lupin) 'to come here and, what is the current phrase? "trash the place up a bit"'. He was delighted to have an excuse to make a great deal of mess and noise. The entire village now believes the place to be haunted and I confess I have rather encouraged the rumour. I believe the villagers call it "The Shrieking Shack".'

'Of course,' Dumbledore continued, stroking his beard ruefully, 'persuading Peeves to *cease* his nocturnal demolition sessions has proved rather more problematic. I have

had to enlist the help of the Bloody Baron. I believe it is the first time Gryffindor and Slytherin have cooperated in one thousand years.'

'And how will I get here, sir? I won't have to Apparate every month, will I?' Remus asked apprehensively.

'Oh, no, Mr Lupin, do not worry.' Dumbledore laid a reassuring hand on Remus' shoulder. 'Our gamekeeper, Hagrid, has... ah... contacts who will be able to supply him with a Whomping Willow. Once it is planted in the school grounds, a tunnel will be built connecting it to this house. The tree becomes extremely violent when approached and will prevent anyone entering the tunnel without permission. Once a month our school nurse, Madam Pomfrey, will bring you down here to transform. The rest of the month, you will be free to do as you please.

Within the school rules, naturally,' he added, seeing the worried looks on Mr and Mrs Lupin's faces. 'I can assure you every care will be taken to ensure the safety of your son and others.'

Dumbledore looked down his long, crooked nose at Remus, a very kindly expression on his lined face. 'Well, Mr Lupin, would you like to take up your place at Hogwarts?'

Remus gazed up at the man in front of him, this godlike man who had the power to change his life. 'Oh, yes, sir,' he breathed, 'more than anything.'

'Very well.' Dumbledore, beaming, passed him a sheet of parchment. 'This is a list of the books and equipment you will require. I look forward to seeing you on the first of September.'

Remus knelt on his bed and gazed out of the window, his forehead touching the glass, as always. Tony's gang was playing football in the street again. One of the boys kicked the football in a wide arc across the road. If it broke one of their windows, Remus' dad would give them what for. Tony's eyes followed the trajectory of the ball anxiously, and then landed on Remus' face. Tony nudged his friends and they made grotesque "mad" faces up at the window, tapping their heads and twirling their fingers at their temples.

Remus didn't care. He turned away from the window, and, for the hundredth time since his meeting with Dumbledore, reread the Hogwarts list. Soon his parents were going to take him to Diagon Alley to buy what he needed. It would have to wait until after the next full moon now; his dad couldn't get any more time off work this month after the Hogwarts visit, but Remus didn't mind about that either. He felt he could cope with anything now, absolutely anything. Soon he would be off to Hogwarts like any other wizard. Soon he would have friends. Soon he wouldn't be lonely any more.

Disclaimer: This was originally posted on Sycophant Hex although I have made several revisions since it was posted there. The world and characters belong to JK Rowling; the plot is mine. No copyright infringement is intended and I make no money from this.

A/N: The title is from 'Chapel of Love' by Dixie Cups.

In Roman mythology Romulus and Remus' parents were the god Mars and the Vestal Virgin Rhea Silvia. HP-lexicon.com says Remus is half blood, so I chose to make his mother Muggle as his father was the one who offended Greyback.

I have cut down Dumbledore's honours as this is 20 years before Harry's letter in PS/SS.

In *Fantastic Beasts*, the notes about the author state that Newt Scamander was 'almost solely responsible for the creation of the Werewolf Register in 1947'. I have capitalised on the 'almost'.

The 'mess and noise' comment is from GoF Ch 17, although Dumbledore was talking about Gryffindor and Hufflepuff celebrating the selection of their champions.