

Ever The Same

by HogwartsHoney

Sirius Black remembers a moment that changed his relationship with Remus Lupin forever.

A companion piece to 'Never The Same' but should be read first. Inspired by the lyrics to Rob Thomas' 'Ever The Same'.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Jo Rowling owns the Potterverse. I just play in the shadows of her greatness.

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Sirius Black stood in his bedroom at Grimmauld Place and remembered a particular transformation that changed his relationship with Remus.

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We were drawn from the weeds,

We were brave like soldiers

Falling down under the pale moonlight

You were holding to me like someone broken

And I couldn't tell you but I'm telling you now~ Rob Thomas

Remus was angry, angrier than Sirius could ever remember him being. Unusual really for such a level-headed prefect, but tonight, Moony was definitely different.

Perhaps it was James, Sirius thought. Perhaps now that James and Lily were an item and growing stronger together every day, perhaps Remus was feeling left out and alone. He shouldn't, Sirius reasoned, he really shouldn't because he still had Sirius, and it's not as though James had left them. He was just ... Well, he had divided loyalties now. That was to be expected with a steady girlfriend, Sirius imagined, but Remus still had *him*.

They still had each other, and they were still Marauders.

Sirius focused on Remus' back as his friend stalked across the deepening darkness of the grounds towards the Whomping Willow. Remus hadn't spoken a word to him since they'd exited the main doors of the castle, and Sirius hadn't made too much effort to hide as he'd followed Remus.

Remus wanted to be alone. Sirius knew that, but he also sensed something else in his friend, sadness, anger, and a quiet desperation that hadn't been there before. Of course, Moony always got a little squirrely this close to the full moon, but this time it was different. This time, it was more.

Sirius loped along the grass as they approached the enormous tree, hoping to catch up with Remus and talk to him before he walked through the tunnel to the Shrieking Shack. He waited until he was close enough to speak quietly and then hissed his friend's name. Sirius was not prepared for his reaction.

Remus spun around viciously, his wand outstretched and his eyes blazed fiercely.

'Go, Padfoot. I mean it, leave me alone.'

Sirius was surprised at Moony's tone, but, again, dismissed it as pride.

'Come now, Remus. I'll stay with you tonight. It'll be okay, you'll see. We'll play Exploding Snap.'

'No, Padfoot, not this time,' Remus hissed, his eyes blazing.

'Seriously, I'll even let you win ...'

'NO!'

Sirius didn't even have time to complete his thought, let alone his sentence before Remus had grabbed his collar, furious, his wand against Sirius' neck. Sirius felt a momentary flicker of something not unlike concern, especially with the tip of Remus' wand digging into his jugular, and he hastened to reassure his friend.

'Look, Moony, I know you're angry with James ...'

Remus threw Sirius from him and pressed the knot on the Whomping Willow. The branches ceased their movements and Remus proceeded through the tunnel. Sirius considered his options briefly but knew that Remus could not be allowed to transform alone. They had always been there with him, the Marauders, his brothers. One of them was always there to keep him safe. That was their agreement, and tonight would be no different, whether Remus wanted it or not.

You may need me there to carry all your weight

But you're no burden I assure.

With barely a thought, Sirius repeated Remus' actions at the Willow and ran along the corridor into the shack. He ran upstairs and found Remus in the room in which he preferred to transform. Remus had taken off his shirt and trousers and was folding them neatly on a chair in the corner. His pre-transformation routine was well practiced at this point, and Sirius stood quietly for a moment in the doorway as he once again ran his eyes over his friend's body.

Remus had always been thin, but puberty had made him taller and thinner, with a wiry build so different from him and James. The skin on Remus' back was pale and mostly smooth, except for a few scars from previous transformations that hadn't healed properly. The scars were darker than the surrounding skin with irregular, sometimes slightly raised edges that reflected the tearing and ripping of Remus' skin that occurred with every full moon. Sirius shivered and felt a sudden wash of sympathy for his friend. He, James, and Peter elected to become Animagi, but Remus never had a choice. The evil that was Fenir Greyback saw to it that Remus would never have that choice.

Remus stiffened as he turned and his eyes fell on Sirius lounging against the doorframe. With an angry hiss he crossed the room and once again pushed Sirius away. As Sirius stumbled backwards, he grabbed Remus, pulling him down as they both tumbled to the ground. Remus landed across Sirius' body, and Sirius wanted to hold him there in his strong arms until his anger ebbed away.

'Happy to see me, Remus?'

Sirius' bark of laughter was cut short by Remus' dark expression.

'What's *with* you, Moony? Come on, I'm here, okay? Not James, me. You won't be alone, so relax.'

As soon as the words were out of Sirius' mouth, he knew he'd made a mistake, but it was too late.

'It's not about Prongs, okay, Sirius?' Remus virtually spat the words. 'It's nothing to do with him.'

Remus' voice was unusually harsh and Sirius raised one eyebrow as he sat back on his heels waiting for his friend to continue. His eyes followed Remus' movements as he paced back and forth in the small room, clearly agitated, but when nothing further was said, Sirius upped the ante.

'Look, I know he's been busy lately, but, Remus, it doesn't mean he doesn't care. Besides, you've got me and Peter.'

'I don't want anybody around me okay, Sirius? Just leave me alone, let me deal with this myself.'

'Why should you deal with it yourself? We want to help you. I want to help you, okay?'

Suddenly Sirius realized that his words were true. He *did* want to help Remus, any way he could.

'You can't help me Sirius. Nobody can. Nobody will...'

'What?' That one got Sirius' attention.

'Nobody wants ...' Remus' voice finally broke and his voice faded.

'Nobody wants what, Moony?'

'Nobody wants me. James has Lily. You have ... well, you have all those girls, you can have anybody you want because they all want *you*. Who will want me, Pads?'

Sirius could only stare at his friend as the true meaning of Remus' question hung in the air between them, and his heart protested at the anguish on his friend's face.

Who *would* want the werewolf? Whether or not he was a wonderful human being, what woman would willingly put herself in harm's way every month as her husband transformed? Who could Remus trust his secret with?

'But you have us, Remus. We...'

Remus' face was once again contorted in anger.

'I don't have anyone, Sirius. There's a bloody war brewing and everyone will eventually choose sides. Nobody will choose the WEREWOLF!'

Sirius shouted to be heard over Remus' words.

'REMUS JOHN LUPIN, WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS AND WE'LL MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE SAFE.'

Sirius noticed the first telltale signs of transformation in Remus' eyes. They changed from their gentle brown to something much darker, and Remus groaned as the first twinges of his change began.

'NOBODY CAN KEEP ME SAFE, SIRIUS! NOT MY PARENTS, NOT DUMBLEDORE, NOT YOU, NOT ANYBODY. I'M NOT SAFE TO BE AROUuuuuuuuuuu...'

Sirius stared as a powerful wave rippled through Remus and he collapsed, writhing as his bones lengthened and his skin ripped to accommodate his new form. Sirius wished that Remus hadn't been so agitated just before he changed, since he knew that the emotions of the human carried over into the werewolf after transformation. Remus would be one angry animal when he'd finished the process.

Deciding to err on the side of caution Sirius transformed into Padfoot, and not a moment too soon, because as soon as Moony was able to move, he continued with the fight. Sirius knew that Remus was no longer in control, and that the snarling, growling fighting werewolf before him was little more than that, an animal. Padfoot growled back just as fiercely as he dodged the werewolf's attacks, pushing him away and snarling in defence. Moony didn't attempt to bite Padfoot, but he clawed at him repeatedly, and Padfoot simply pushed him back every time he attacked. Eventually the werewolf quietened, and the two of them sat at opposite ends of the small room as the werewolf hung his head, licking his wounds, dejected and exhausted.

Padfoot remained on guard.

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Now it's cold and we're scared, and we've both been shaken

Hey, look at us, man, this doesn't need to be the end.

Many hours later, Padfoot stirred as the werewolf began whimpering. He crawled on his belly closer to the mass of fur and bones in the corner and watched through his canine eyes as Remus once more began to transform. Once the fur and fangs of the werewolf had gone, he changed back to human form and gathered his limp friend in his arms.

He knew that Remus always felt disoriented after his transformations and often sick to his stomach. This was what Remus hated them seeing, his weakness. Sirius never saw it as weakness, and he was pretty certain that neither James nor Peter viewed it that way either. The weakness was Remus' demon and something that he fought with, and they suffered through for him.

Because they were his friends.

Because they loved him.

Because *he* loved him.

Sirius realized with a start that he did love his friend. As outgoing as he was, and as many times as he'd tease Remus for being the 'perfect prefect', Remus was still his sounding board, his ground. James could always be counted on to act the ass with him, but Remus somehow avoided becoming involved in too many of their pranks and hexes. Instead, Remus was the steadying hand that Sirius openly ridiculed and secretly craved. James might have been the ringleader, but Remus was the glue that held them all together.

Remus groaned and stirred, almost conscious, and Sirius gently pulled his friend onto his lap, careful not to cause further harm to Remus' bleeding flesh. He checked the wounds carefully, but none appeared to be too deep this time, and for that he was grateful. He listened carefully to Remus' laboured breathing and stroked his hair, talking to him and whispering soothing words that he hoped would help.

'Moony, Moony, it's alright, you're alright, everything's okay. Don't worry about anything, Moony, just relax.'

Remus was now almost fully human and lay naked and shivering in Sirius' lap. The room was cold, and Sirius wrapped his arms around Remus' thin frame, pulling him closer as Remus laid his head against his friend's shoulder.

'Everything's okay, Remus, just breathe. Remember our times lying by the lake, you, me, and James, relaxing in the sun, breathing in the air? Breathe with me okay, Moony, just nice deep breaths. Remember the sunlight and the feel of the wind against our faces?'

Sirius felt Remus' nod against his shoulder and knew that his friend was almost back with him. He had to admit to himself that they were both shaken by the events of this transformation, but he was still convinced that it was possible for Moony to get through it with the help of his friends. With *his* help.

'Who will want this, Pads?'

Remus' voice was soft and shook with emotion and exhaustion.

'I will, Moony.' Sirius' voice was quiet, but his meaning was clear. 'I'll always be here for you. We're Marauders forever.'

Just let me hold you while you're falling apart

Just let me hold you and we'll both fall down.

Remus' body shook, and Sirius held Remus to him as his friend finally, painfully, came undone. Remus held onto him desperately as his tears flowed, and Sirius finally saw lycanthropy's true damage to the boy huddled in his lap. It wasn't the physical transformations every month that bore the greatest hurt for his friend; it was the knowledge of what he was and the fear that he would never find anyone to accept him.

Forever it's you, forever in me, ever the same

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Remus Lupin stands in Sirius' empty room at Grimmauld Place and remembers the one night that changed their relationship.

Forever.

Forever with you, forever in me, ever the same.

~ fin ~

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A/N: I have a very special place in my heart for the 'puppies', as Remus and Sirius are often referred to.