

Never The Same

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A companion piece to 'Ever The Same' but should be read first. Both fics were
inspired by the lyrics to Rob Thomas' song, 'Ever The Same'.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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

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He was angry, angrier than he'd ever been in his life.

Sirius had been taunting him in the common room, making more than passing comments that James and Lily were doing "Head things" together. Remus was on edge, uncomfortable, and anxious. The full moon would soon rise and he was late. He needed to get to the Shrieking Shack.

'Shut it, Padfoot.'

Remus' voice was harsh, and Sirius tried to look contrite. The look didn't suit him.

'Come on now, Moony, ease up. You know I'll come with you. James has... "Head stuff" to do.'

Sirius snorted with laughter, but Remus found nothing funny in either the connotation or in the words.

'I'm going. See you tomorrow.'

'No, Moony. Wait for me. I'll go with you.'

'Sirius, the moon doesn't wait.'

Remus couldn't pinpoint exactly why he didn't want company during this month's transformation, but he felt agitated and uncomfortable. He just didn't want company. He wanted to escape into the animalistic oblivion that was his transformation and simply disappear. He didn't want Sirius to see him like that anymore. He wanted desperately to be normal, to be whole, and to NOT be an animal. Sirius couldn't understand that: he'd never understand what it meant to have this *disease*. Sirius would never

understand how Remus felt.

'I'm leaving.'

'Come on, Moony, let's just check out Sandra Knox for a moment. I'm sure she's got something for you.'

Crass. That was Sirius sometimes, just plain crass. Remus couldn't hide his exasperation any longer, and his anger bubbled to the surface.

'Dammit, Sirius, leave me alone.'

Furious, he walked quickly through the portrait hole and hurried down the staircases to the Entrance Hall, trying not to hear Sirius' footfalls some distance behind him.

Remus ran at full pelt down the Hall, bolted through the doors at the front of the Hall and turned as Sirius pushed open the large oak doors.

'Leave me, Padfoot, I mean it. For Merlin's sake, can't you just *leave me alone*?'

Remus was shouting now, screaming at one of his best friends, but he couldn't care, wouldn't care. All he wanted was respite from the feelings that swirled in his heart and the knowledge that he could never have what he wanted.

Sirius said nothing as he stood in the doorway and cocked his head in a way that reminded Remus of Padfoot.

'Okay, I didn't mean what I said about Sandra Knox. She's no good for you anyway, not smart enough.'

Sirius had misunderstood him. He didn't mean girls, for Remus wasn't interested in girls. Remus was interested in...

He didn't want to think of it as being gay, but rather as being selectively interested in two people who happened to be male. He saw James as everything that he wasn't. Well built, not lean, lanky, and almost too thin. Healthily coloured from days of Quidditch play, not pale and scarred from thirteen transformations every year since he was five. James was adored by Sirius, and they were practically joined at the hip since their first year. He was an Animagus, able to change his form whenever he wanted and not by the pull of the lunar schedule.

Yes, James was everything he wasn't, but Sirius was everything he wanted. Sirius could never know that Remus dreamed of him some nights, hoping desperately that he wouldn't moan his name in his sleep. Sirius, the Dog Star, burning bright in Remus' universe and the only person who could truly make him happy. The crass, uncouth, brazen, idiotic, loyal, fun loving, and desperately good looking Sirius Black.

Remus was in a quandary.

Remus' name was first on their map. 'You're the respectable one', they'd said, but really, the map was Sirius' idea. He and James were the true ringleaders and had done most of the work while he tried to keep them out of trouble. Padfoot and Prongs. Padfoot and Prongs. Even on the map, they were together: Padfoot and Prongs. On days like this, on the cusp of his transformation, he always felt a bit edgy by the pull of the moon; it's fullness striking a chord somewhere deep inside him and awakening an animal which obliterated every shred of his humanity. Yet, in spite of that, in spite of his 'furry little problem' as James liked to call it, James and Sirius were Remus' friends. Despite everything they'd stuck by him all these years.

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Remus had reached the Whomping Willow and, in his musings, had forgotten that Sirius trailed him. The hissing of his friend's breath behind him almost made him hex Sirius as he stood mere feet away. Damn it, why won't this boy LISTEN?

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

Remus' voice shook with anger, and he could feel the anger welling up inside him, exciting the animal within.

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

Sirius could be so *infuriating*!

'No, Padfoot, not this time,' Remus was truly angry now and his eyes blazed.

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

'NO!'

Remus could finally stand it no longer and lunged at Sirius, trying desperately to make himself understood while hoping desperately that he'd not hurt the one person who made him feel anything other than incomplete.

For a moment Remus lost his conscious thoughts as the animal flared within him. The moon was close, too close, and the stirrings of the animal were very powerful tonight, exacerbated by his heightened stress and agitated state. This was not a good way to begin a transformation, but he had to make Sirius leave.

Remus pushed Sirius away from him and pressed the knot on the Whomping Willow, hastening through the tunnel and almost running into the Shrieking Shack. His body trembled with the force of his impending change, and he quickly removed his clothes, folding them and placing them on the chair as was his habit.

He felt a presence behind him and turned to see Sirius leaning up against the door frame. His face was relaxed with perhaps a hint of something else, something almost predatory. Remus felt ashamed of his body, ashamed of the scars that defined his disease, ashamed of being thin and pale and weak, but Sirius' gaze didn't seem centred on that.

The beast within him moved and the anger rose again. Remus pushed Sirius away once more, wishing that he'd leave but hoping that he'd stay. Remus hated conflict, all the more so when the conflict was within his own mind.

Sirius stepped backwards, and they both stumbled and fell to the floor, Sirius on his back and Remus lying across Sirius' body as his friend held him.

'Happy to see me, Remus?'

Why did Sirius' laughter always come so easily? Remus wished that he could be carefree for once in his life, just for one day. Wished he could be with Sirius.

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

The beast rose again as did his anger. Sirius simply wouldn't understand that this had *nothing* to do with James and everything to do *with*him.

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

Sirius raised one eyebrow, and he sat back on his heels as Remus paced back and forth in the small room. He was anxious, agitated and he felt backed into a corner. He couldn't make Sirius understand.

'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 Remus realized that Sirius' words were true. He *did* want to help Remus. He seemed sincere.

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

'What?'

Suddenly, Sirius' full attention was on Remus, and he felt oddly exposed. He didn't want to do this now, not so close to the moon.

'Nobody wants...' Remus' voice finally broke and his voice faded. He just couldn't bring himself to say it, to open himself up to possible ridicule.

'Nobody wants what, Moony?'

Remus hesitated, but his mind began to slip. The beast was waking and soon there would be no other time to say it. He knew that he'd probably never have this conversation with Sirius again.

'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?'

There it was. He'd said the words, and now it was out in the open for them both to see. He felt horribly vulnerable, as though he were perched at the edge of a steep precipice with nothing to hold onto. The beast grew stronger and he grew angrier. There was no more time for this conversation.

Sirius' voice was quiet.

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

The beast rose.

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

Sirius was shouting, but Remus could barely understand his words.

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

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

Remus felt his blood flow faster as his heartbeat elevated. He felt it within him and groaned as the first vestiges of his change began. He was beyond help, beyond saving. His body exploded in pain, and he collapsed on the floor, lost to the animal within.

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Remus was dimly aware of coming into consciousness mainly by the pain that wracked his body. He tried to move and whimpered as waves of pain flowed over him. He tried to remember what happened, but his brain was still too fuzzy to understand anything, and he didn't know where he was. He felt warm arms around him, and then he was half sitting half lying on a soft warm body. The movement caused him pain, and he tried to catch his breath as he heard murmured words just inside his consciousness.

Sirius.

Remus latched onto Sirius' voice, his tone low and soothing, and his words unintelligible. Sirius was stroking Remus' hair and holding him close against his body, but still Remus shivered in the cold of the room. He felt Sirius' arms around his shoulders, and his words brought back memories of their happier times. Images of the lake flashed through his mind and of their laughing faces as they sat together, leaning up against the trees or lying on the grass. Sirius was an integral part of his happy memories, and Remus nodded to himself.

Remus was badly shaken by the violence of this transformation, and he knew that his anger had only made things worse. In addition, he had admitted his feelings about Sirius to himself, if not to Sirius. He felt drained, physically and emotionally, and he despaired that he would ever find anyone who could love him the way he loved Sirius. Someone who would want him the thought of a lifetime like this threatened to break him.

'Who will want this, Pads?'

His voice was soft and shook with all the emotion and exhaustion that he tried desperately to hide. He wanted so much to be strong like James, to be wild and carefree like Sirius, but in the end, he was only Remus. Weak, tired, scared.

Alone.

'I will, Moony. I'll always be here for you. We're Marauders forever.'

Sirius' quiet tone was unusual, and Remus felt his tenuous control slipping. Something in the way Sirius held him, soothed him, *saved him* made all his walls come down, and once more he was lost.

Remus' body shook, and he held onto Sirius with a desperation he didn't know he possessed as his tears flowed, washing some of his sorrow, fear and hurt along with them. Remus cried for everything that he'd lost because of his affliction, and for all the possibilities that Sirius was offering him.

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He was angry with Sirius. Angry with Sirius for leaving him.

For his world would never be the same.

Never.

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

~fin~