

The Talk

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In Harry's fifth year, Sirius decides it's time to sit him down for a frank talk about the facts of life and love.

When 15-year-old Harry Potter got the owl post from his godfather Sirius Black, he didn't think it foreshadowed anything unusual, not even when Sirius asked him to bring some food so they could have lunch...and talk. Neither was this unusual in itself, since their talks were usually about what he was doing in school, things like that. They had not covered sex education in school yet, strangely enough, and with a part of him Harry wondered why. He and his peers were certainly old enough to have questions on the subject ... among other things.

He had considered asking Dumbledore for advice but, at the same time, hesitated to ask the myriad questions in his mind because he preferred to speak with someone closer to his own age...but also someone who knew the subject ... like Sirius. Not Ron, that was for sure! He'd blushed scarlet at the mere mention the one time Harry had tried. What's more, he had as many questions, if not more, than Harry did.

And even as smart as Hermione was, asking her was out of the question. For one thing, she was a girl...one of the things he needed answers to! Besides, he needed answers from a male point of view. If Sirius didn't bring up the subject soon, Harry knew he would have to, even as difficult as the asking would surely be.

Harry returned Sirius's post in his usual manner, also promising to bring food. However, they agreed to meet in a more private place this time. If this meant what Harry thought it did, then great. Otherwise, he would have to at least try to bring it up himself, although he didn't see how he'd ever do it without blushing seventeen shades of red. If it came to that, however, all he could do was give it his best shot.

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Harry didn't say anything specific to his friends about where he was going other than the fact he was going to see Sirius and that he'd told him to come alone this time. He usually told them what they talked about (that is, if they didn't accompany him), but if the subject of this talk was what he suspected ...

Just the same, he considered it a good omen that the day in question dawned warm and beautiful. Not really surprising, since it was mid-May of his fifth year. He dressed in a royal blue Quidditch T-shirt, a blue-grey sweatshirt jacket and his favorite jeans, not to mention his favourite clunky black shoes.

Harry was enjoying the day so much that he barely managed to make the transport to Hogsmeade, but once there, knew just where he was going. Upon arrival at the agreed-upon spot, he looked around but didn't see Sirius anywhere, either in his human or animal form. (Sirius Black was an Animagus, a wizard who also had the power to transform into an animal at will ... in this case, a dog.)

"Sirius? It's Harry. I'm here. I brought food."

For a moment there was no response; then a great black dog reminiscent of a Labrador Retriever came into view, hurried over to Harry and licked his hands upon getting close enough. Harry then got down on his knees and hugged the dog's neck, soon feeling a warm, wet tongue lick his face affectionately.

"I missed you too, Sirius," Harry assured him. "You can change back now."

A short time later, a tall, slender man in his late thirties with long hair and a beard stood before Harry. This was Sirius Black...pureblood wizard, one-time (unjustly convicted) felon, prison escapee and Animagus ... but most importantly, best friend to the late, lamented James and Lily Potter ... and godfather to their only son, Harry James.

This was when Harry felt a rush of love for his godfather and all but threw himself into his arms. Sirius hugged his godson tightly and held him a long time.

"So good to see you again, Harry. I've missed you. You said you brought food?"

Harry lifted the large basket he was carrying and showed him. "Right here."

"Wonderful. Let's get to it."

Soon a blanket (red and gold, the Gryffindor colours), an extra one from the large cupboard in the fifth-year boys' dorm, which customarily held such things as extra pillows, sheets and blankets, had been spread on the grass-covered ground. Once they were situated and the food distributed, Harry asked Sirius why they were in a more private spot than usual.

"I need to talk to you about something very important, Harry ... but at the same time, very personal. You're ... what, fifteen-sixteen now?"

"Fifteen and ten months, to be exact," Harry replied just before taking a bite of a chicken sandwich and swig of butterbeer, a kilo of which he'd bought from the Three Broomsticks pub. "Why?"

"Just confirming," Sirius returned enigmatically. "May I assume you've started to notice girls by now?"

"Yes."

"And they've started noticing you?"

"Yes."

"Are there any types of girls you particularly like? That is, have you any specific preferences in that area? Such as do you like girls with blue or brown eyes as opposed to girls with green eyes, like your mother had?"

"Well, at least one girl I like has brown eyes ..." Harry all but mumbled his answer, taking a swig of butterbeer so he wouldn't have to look overlong into Sirius's eyes, which seemed to literally read his mind. "As for other attributes ..." The red-gold of Ginny Weasley's hair came to mind, as did the raven-black of Cho Chang's. "I find I like both red hair and black hair ... especially if it's long."

"Most young men like long hair on girls, Harry. What about other things?"

"Such as?"

"Body build, height, personality," Sirius elaborated before tearing into a chicken leg and washing it down with a swig of butterbeer.

"Well, I like girls who dress nice and as feminine as possible, smell nice ..." His voice trailed off, thinking of Ginny's honeysuckle perfume and Cho's exotic, most likely Asian-type floral fragrance. "I also like a girl to be shorter than I am. Not too heavy, not too slender ... in short, simply a friendly, approachable, yet attractive girl."

"Are either of the girls you like best as you describe?" Sirius took another bite of the chicken leg and another swig of butterbeer.

"Well ... one is," Harry admitted, once again thinking of Ginny, whom he had only recently begun thinking of in more than a friendly, brotherly way, yet he had been unable to tell her so as of yet. The main reason being the fact that she was Ron's sister and he wasn't sure how his friend would react if he knew that Harry was having such ... unusual thoughts about Ginny. Best mate or not, if Ron got the wrong idea and Harry wasn't able to set him straight, he was likely to get taken apart piece by piece first and asked questions later.

Just the same, he couldn't help wondering what it would be like to hold her hand, put his arm around her, kiss her, stroke her hair...or even ... make love to her. Harry closed his eyes tightly and shook his head to banish the erotic thoughts, hoping Sirius hadn't seen him do it.

"Which one do you like better?"

"I can't say I like either one ... better, as you put it. They're ... equally nice, as far as I'm concerned."

"Have you asked either one out yet?"

"I asked one to the Yule Ball in fourth year, but she ... turned me down, said she'd already accepted a date with ... someone else." Someone else, indeed. Cedric Diggory, a seventh-year Hufflepuff. A tall, handsome rugby (or Quidditch) hero type. And what's more, they'd continued the relationship even after the Ball, rankling Harry no end, particularly since he'd had to endure seeing them either walking hand-in-hand in the school halls or snogging in unexpected places. It had only ended because of Cedric's death...or more accurately, murder...at Voldemort's hands.

"That happens, Harry. Don't take it personally. Which reminds me ... was...the other girl available to ask after the first turned you down?" Sirius inquired.

"No. She ... already had a date too."

"So what did you end up doing?"

"There are a ... pair of twin girls from India in my year. One is in Gryffindor, the other in Ravenclaw. I went with the latter. The other was Ron's date."

"Did you ... have a good time?"

"Let's just say that it was an experience I wouldn't care to repeat any time soon."

"Why? Weren't the girls pretty?"

"Well ... Yeah. It wasn't that she wasn't pretty. She just ... wasn't the one I wanted to go with...and I'm afraid ... it showed, because I only danced with her once the whole evening. She left when someone else asked her to dance ... and stayed away." Harry could still recall that Parvati had been the one to lead their dance and basically told him what to do, how to move, because he hadn't known the first thing about dancing...particularly not waltzing.

"Life sure is complicated sometimes, isn't it, Harry?"

"Girls are complicated," he declared, finishing off his current glass of butterbeer, then refilling it.

"But at the same time, most delightful, wouldn't you agree?" Sirius asked with a smile and wink.

Harry nodded, unable to speak for a while, then said, "When did you start to notice girls, Sirius?"

"Me? I'd have to say I was about thirteen. Why?"

"Just curious. Do you remember your first serious girlfriend?"

"One never forgets their first love, Harry." There was a note in Sirius's voice Harry had never heard before, and he was curious as to just why, but couldn't bring himself to come out and ask. At least not yet.

"When did it happen for you?"

"As I recall, just before I started seventh year. That summer, in fact. I was staying with James and your grandparents. One day he had a date with Lily and asked her to bring along a friend of hers for me ..." Sirius's voice trailed off, then he resumed speaking. "Her name was Rose. She was sixteen, a sixth-year Ravenclaw, every bit as beautiful and fragrant as her name. Petite and slender, too, with golden, cornsilk hair down to her waist and soft brown eyes.

"She had the sweetest smile, the most beautiful, musical voice. She also wore a ... distinctive floral perfume. Roses combined with something else; can't say just what. All I knew was that it was intoxicating just to be near her. Truly the loveliest girl I'd ever seen, not to mention an excellent Quidditch player. She left me and James in the dust. Only Remus could beat her. I can still recall the taste of her lipstick, in fact ... like strawberries ... and after the first time we kissed, I knew I was in love."

Sirius then closed his eyes and bowed his head, not speaking for a long time, seeming to forget that Harry was even there. Finally he reached out and touched Sirius's nearest arm.

"Sirius? You all right? You haven't said word one for the past ten minutes."

Sirius visibly jumped at the contact. "Oh, Harry. Sorry. Got ... carried away. Well, to continue...we were a steady thing for about six months. James and Remus never missed a chance to tease me about her. I retaliated by teasing James about Lily. Let me tell you, that shut him up but quick!" Sirius laughed at the memory, then sobered again.

"Then Rose got transferred to a school of magic in America. We had a ... very emotional good- bye. We even wrote for a while. The last time I heard from her, though, she said she was seeing someone else, but claimed she'd cared a lot for me and would never forget me. I ... never saw her again."

Harry noticed that Sirius had bowed his head again, his eyes closed in pain. Did he still love Rose despite their parting so long ago? In that case, was there any way of renewing contact with her?

As if reading Harry's mind, Sirius said, "She's happily married with three children now, Harry. But even if she wasn't, even if I thought she'd still have me now, I couldn't ... approach her again."

"Why not?"

"Isn't it obvious? I'm an escaped criminal, constantly on the run, with a ten-thousand-Galleon price on my head. What woman in her right mind would want someone with that kind of baggage?" Sirius sighed sadly.

"Was this Rose ... also the first girl you ... had sex with?"

"Making love, Harry. That's what it's called when you love ... but yes, I suppose you could say that Rose was my ... first lover." And my last, he finished in his mind, so Harry didn't hear. "Which reminds me. We came here to talk about you, not me. Don't you wonder what it's like to ... kiss a girl, what it's like to hold one in your arms, what it's like to ... make love to one?"

Harry was too embarrassed to speak, so Sirius went on. "Has your ... voice changed? Ever become sexually aroused ... or compared the size of your equipment with those of the other boys in the bathroom or showers? I can recall James, Remus and I doing it once ..." His voice again trailed off; then he waited for Harry to speak. When he didn't, Sirius gently prodded him. "Harry, aren't you going to answer me?"

"I'm sorry, Sirius. I ... can't. At least not just now." Harry tried his best not to blush, but at the same time, found his face flushing hot with embarrassment at the thoughts Sirius's words had prompted.

"It's all right, Harry. No need to be embarrassed, though. It happens to every young man at one time or another."

They sat in companionable silence for roughly the next twenty minutes or so until Harry made himself speak. "Sirius, about what you said ... Yes, I've thought many times about what it would be like to hold a girl, kiss her, or ... make love to her, as you say. And yes, my voice has changed. Last year, in fact. And I usually become ... aroused after I think ... such things. There was also one time I saw some sixth and ... seventh years compare themselves with others. I've never ... done it myself, though." Harry could just imagine how Ron would react if he even suggested their doing it, much less comparing themselves to say, Neville or Seamus. "And there's something else, Sirius."

"Yes?" Sirius picked up his glass of butterbeer and drank again after finishing off an egg sandwich he had been eating as Harry spoke.

"I've ... also wondered what it would be like to ... see a girl without clothes ... and wonder if the special place between ... her ... legs has the same colour hair as on her head." Harry had had to literally force these words past his lips, much less make them audible. Never had anything been so difficult to speak, even as much as he loved and trusted Sirius. Without these two things, he wouldn't have even tried.

"Thank you for telling me that, Harry. I know how difficult it must have been for you." He put a comforting hand on Harry's shoulder. "You don't have to say anything more if you don't want to. We can talk more later on. No rush. Let's just talk of more general things now, okay?" Harry made himself nod; Sirius smiled reassuringly. "So ... how are things at school?"

"A nightmare. A total and complete nightmare."

"Why do you say that?"

That was what prompted Harry to tell Sirius everything, leaving nothing out, every sordid, horrendous detail. Once he finished, he was positively trembling with a mixture of outrage and the almost irresistible desire to start crying and never stop. Once he finished, Sirius wore an expression of mixed horror and sympathy.

"I'm so sorry, Harry. I wish I could do something to help you ... but you must be strong. Stick to your guns, no matter what. You know you're right, and sooner or later the Ministry's going to have to admit that, stop being ostriches and burying their heads in the sand. With luck, you'll even be able to get rid of that ... evil old biddy and get Dumbledore back."

"One can but hope," Harry returned softly.

A moment later Sirius once again drew his godson into his arms and held him, as if sensing how much Harry needed to be held right now. Harry had no memory of ever being held like this before by a grown-up male relative, like a father...or uncle, which Sirius could have been had he and James actually been brothers. As it was, he was simply the closest thing to a brother that James had ever had. Harry found that he needed this closeness so much that he didn't even try to extricate himself.

It felt alien ... but at the same time, incredibly wonderful to literally feel the love and concern for him emanating from Sirius, the gentle strength of his embrace and the

sound of his heart beating under Harry's ear as the latter rested his head on his godfather's chest. After a time Harry slid his arms around Sirius's waist, then tightened his embrace when Sirius did not object.

"It's all right, Harry. I'll hold you as long as you like...and you can hold me. That's what I'm here for. Just the same, it's...so bloody ... horrible that James cannot be here to do this! Bloody hell! Why did You-Know-Who have to kill him, kill my best friend? You ... need him right now, not me...but I'm all you've got, so we'll just have to make the best of it."

His arms tightened further around Harry, as did Harry's around him. Sirius's eyes filled at the thought of his lost friends and the terrible injustice which had been forced upon Harry because of this, having to grow up alone without the love of his parents to sustain him, having been both physically and emotionally abused by those horrid Dursleys. If he'd had the chance, he'd have hexed them all into the middle of the next century for what they'd done to Harry...and what they'd denied him his entire life. They were evil, truly evil; Sirius was convinced of that. Yet he was the one considered a criminal. There was simply no justice in the world. None at all!

He found it almost impossible to believe that they could have been any relation whatsoever to Lily, who had been one of the sweetest girls he had ever known. How very much he wished that he could take Harry away from all that, take him away to live with him until he came of age...but it was simply impossible, especially under the present circumstances. Perhaps one day, once his name was cleared ... until then, the status quo had to be maintained, however hard it was on Harry.

All he could do was provide his godson with a place to run to when he needed to unload, needed to be held and comforted, especially when his friends were unavailable to do so. Sirius also truly hoped that Harry would soon find a steady girlfriend who would be able to assist in doing such things. Maybe that little red-headed girl, Ron's sister ... such a pretty little thing she was. But he'd have to wait and see on that one. That choice was Harry's to make, not his...although there was no law that prevented him from giving the boy a gentle push in the right direction. He would start in his very next post, in fact.

For a long time, however, they simply held each other and didn't speak, having no sense of time passing. And no words were necessary; the touch and contact was sufficient. Harry had no idea how long this would last or even whether or not it would ever happen again, so he told himself to simply enjoy it while it lasted. It was late afternoon and had turned cold by the time the two released each other. When they looked at each other again, both noted that the other's face was wet, although Harry had had no idea that he had cried until Sirius brushed his tears away with a gentle, understanding hand. Then they stood up and Harry made himself speak.

"Thank you, Sirius. I ... needed that."

"As did I, Harry. And I want you to know that if you ever need it again, I'll ... do my best to give it to you."

"Thank you again. I'll keep it in mind ... and remember your advice. But it's getting late. I'd better get back to the castle now...but I'll be waiting for your next owl."

"Just as I'll be waiting for any other questions you might have pertaining to life, love ... or me." They hugged fiercely one last time. "I love you, Harry. Never forget that."

"Never, Sirius ... and I love you too. Take care of yourself...and I hope to ... see you again soon."

Tears once again filled the older man's eyes before he made himself turn away and morph into the dog again. Harry watched him leave until he could no longer see him, then repacked the picnic basket and folded up the blanket to head for the transport back to the castle. The last one left at six-thirty; if he hurried he'd just make it ... which he did, barely. Once on the transport, Harry could allow himself to take the time to catch his breath, having run virtually all the way back to the transport area, and think about his godfather and all they had shared today.

All the confidences, all the good food and fellowship...but most of all, all the love. A love which had remained unspoken between them up to this point, but which was always strongly implied. Now that it had been spoken and demonstrated by both, however, neither could ever deny it again, even if they'd wanted to.

But even as much as he loved and trusted his friends, Harry knew that it would be a long time before he could bring himself to share even part of what had happened between himself and Sirius with them. And even then, he wouldn't be able to share everything. The full story of what had happened on this day would forever remain a secret between Harry and Sirius...and they alone. A day Harry was sure that neither of them would ever forget, not for as long as they lived.

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Neither Ron nor Hermione had any idea just what had transpired between Harry and Sirius; all they could tell for sure was that a lot of the weight Harry was carrying, the weight of who and what he was, as well as all the emotional baggage he had accumulated over his lifetime, seemed to be gone from his shoulders.

Not to mention the fact that they saw tears still drying on his cheeks when he entered the common room. What could he possibly have cried about? Hopefully they would find out one day...but until then, they would not pressure Harry for information. If he chose to share it, fine; they would listen. Until then, they would keep a respectful distance as good friends should, even while remaining concerned and ever watchful ... for now and all time.