

Late Night Chat

by Fawkes_07

What exactly it is that the Purebloods have against the Mudbloods? According to Freud, for hate to be so powerful, the fundamental issue HAS to be sex! Hence this unexpected discussion between Harry Potter and Sirius Black, which takes place some time during OOTP.

Be warned: This fic contains nothing graphic but is chock full of slash, bisexuality, and other things that will make hair grow on your palms. Read at own risk.

1: Late

Chapter 1 of 2

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Sirius didn't actually hear the scream, but only one thing could wake him so suddenly from a sound sleep.

He launched out of bed and down the stairs in one fluid movement. He burst through the bedroom door without thought of what might be behind it; when it came to Harry, his rational side evaporated. He couldn't stop to listen, assess, or call for help any more than he could stop the Hogwarts Express by standing on the tracks.

There was nothing there that he could see, only Harry sitting up in bed with both hands against his forehead, grimacing with pain. Nonetheless, Sirius charged to his side, ready to dispatch any unseen enemy or die trying.

"It's okay, it's okay," said Harry. "Just a nightmare. Gah!" Harry pulled his hands away from his forehead and squinted at them in the moonlight, as though he expected to find blood.

Sirius slumped beside him, sighing in both relief and frustration. He pulled Harry to his chest protectively and gently rocked him. "Dammit, Harry! That son-of-a-bitch Snape has *got* to get you up to speed on Occlumency."

"Tell me about it," Harry groaned.

Sirius kneaded the back of Harry's neck, hoping to ease the pain. Every time Harry visited, the nightmares were worse; he couldn't seem to open his eyes this time, and they were watering as though filled with hot ashes. Sirius had never cared much for the magic of mind reading, but he began to wish wholeheartedly that he'd learned Occlumency, if only so he could teach Harry instead of leaving him to the mercy of that duplicitous wanker. He knew firsthand that it was difficult to learn (which was, after all, why he never took an interest), but if anyone could make the process nastier, it was Snivellus.

Harry finally opened his eyes, puffed and bloodshot, and gazed up at him with regret. "I'm sorry, Sirius. Can't you *please* just ignore it when this happens? I hate waking

you up all the time."

"Ignore it?!" said Sirius incredulously. "Bugger that, it'd be like ignoring the house on fire." He tousled Harry's mop of hair affectionately. "Hey. Do I look angry? I don't care if you wake me ten times a night, Harry. It's my job to take care of you. So don't apologize."

Harry bowed his head. "Yeah, well, I feel like an idiot every time you run in here."

Sirius shook his head with a wry smile. "Eh, a little exercise never hurt." Patting Harry on the shoulder, he asked, "You're all right then?"

Harry nodded and Sirius started to rise from the bed. Before he had both feet on the floor, however, Harry impulsively caught his forearm. "Stay with me."

Sirius rolled his eyes, but settled back onto the bed. The paternal part of this whole godfather business was the hardest for him. How was he supposed to know how to handle these things? Nightmares or no, the boy was obviously big enough to sleep by himself in his own room. Sirius's own parents would have been disgusted by screams in the night, a show of weakness, of fear; far from running to his side, they would have mocked him the next morning. Sirius knew better than to follow their example, but what in the name of Morgan le Fay was he supposed to do instead? He turned to Harry in exasperation.

One look at Harry's clenched teeth and burning gaze and Sirius realized that he had utterly, completely missed the point.

Sirius turned his head away, thinking he must be mistaken, but it was the same upon the second look, and the third. Harry hadn't moved, hadn't blinked; his gaze was so intense, so eager, so inviting. For a long moment, all Sirius could do was take it in, his gaze darting over Harry's face in the moonlight.

"Harry," Sirius said, making sure his voice held firm and steady. "No." He began to stand up again. "Don't even think of it."

"Why not?" Harry said defiantly, gripping Sirius's forearm tightly.

Sirius's eyes popped out. "Why not? Because I'm an *adult*, and you are *not!* That's why not! Heavens above, Harry, don't look at me like that!"

Harry's lip curled. "I'm fifteen, Sirius. Fine, I'm not legally an adult, but I'm no child anymore either." He drew Sirius's hands toward his waist, but Sirius pulled back vehemently and shook his head even harder.

"That's not the point! I was fifteen once too you know, I know you're perfectly capable of...*THAT*, but what you're *not* capable of is consent!" Harry opened his mouth to protest, but Sirius wouldn't hear of it. "Do you understand that would be a *crime*?!"

"A crime," scoffed Harry, then continued in a low and bitter voice. "That's funny. Really. I've got Snape raping my mind in his office twice a week, and that's not a crime. I've got that Ministry whore Umbridge making me write lines in my own *blood*, and that's not a crime. Hell, I've got Voldemort trying to kill me, when he's not just trying to drive me mad; I suppose that's a crime, but is that stopping him? Oh, no. As far as hurting me, hey! Anything goes! But it's a crime to love me. That's just fucking fantastic."

Sirius averted his gaze. He'd suspected that bastard Snape would use hardball tactics to teach Occlumency, and now it was confirmed. Umbridge was so horrid that she even managed to aggravate Albus, which was no simple feat. And Sirius could see firsthand the kind of pain and horror Voldemort inflicted on Harry. Bloody hell, the kid had a point. He was only a child, but he was already a soldier. *No. I know the difference between right and wrong. There has to be a reasonable argument.*

When he finally looked back up at Harry, Sirius impulsively placed a hand on his cheek. He knew better, knew that even such a simple gesture was a dangerous concession, but by the blood of Merlin, the kid deserved a little tenderness. "Harry, listen to me," he said evenly. "What you just said is true. It's also the reason that it would be utterly wrong for me to... be your lover right now. No, no!" he said loudly, over Harry's protests, placing his hand on Harry's lips (a gesture that made his chest feel like it would explode). "Hear me out! All those things are wrong, and those people are all shitty substitutes for human beings. I'm with you on all that." He'd found a train of thought that he could follow, and his voice softened again. "I don't want to be in the same category as those people, Harry. I'm not going to impose my will on you."

Harry glared at him. "It's *my* will, Sirius, you're not 'imposing' anything."

Sirius shook his head again. "Until you're of age, your will doesn't count, Harry. That's the *law*."

Harry's voice was low and sharp, almost menacing. "So break the law. You've already done time in Azkaban for nothing. Let me make you a *real* criminal."

Once again, Sirius had to look away. The word "no" stuck in his throat and refused to come out, but he stood up and took a step back from the bed. Though he was invisible in the shadows, he could still see Harry in the moonlight streaming from the window. *It's as though the last twenty years never happened*, he thought; James had looked just as beautiful under the moon in that same bed.

Harry's eyes suddenly narrowed. "Would you do it if I were a girl?" he said accusingly.

Fighting dirty, eh? You've been around Snivellus too long. Sirius stomped back to the bedside and seized Harry's shoulder angrily. "Fuck me. Don't even try to drag up that pureblood shit."

Sirius immediately realized something wasn't quite right. Harry's defiance disappeared and he looked utterly nonplussed, as though Sirius had spoken in a foreign language. *Oh, hell. Doesn't he know?* He let go of Harry's shoulder with a twinge of guilt. Harry looked a bit relieved and asked, "What in the name of Merlin are you talking about?"

There had been no taunt in Harry's voice, no sarcasm, and besides, the kid was a lousy liar. Sirius flattened his lips as he studied Harry, clearing his throat to mask a guilty grunt. "Harry, um, I may have, uh, been a little... remiss in my duties as a godfather."

A little. How could I be such a bloody jackass? Harry was still staring at him in confusion. Sirius flopped on the bed in resignation, leaning up against the headboard. This was going to take a while. He motioned for Harry to come closer, and Harry obediently let himself be turned and guided to settle back against Sirius's chest. "So what are you talking about?" he asked.

Sirius sighed. "I never really thought about you being raised by Muggles. Shit, Harry, I was in Azkaban the whole time you grew up; it just never connected. You're a wizard, I just assumed you... knew."

He could feel Harry's jaw clench, even though only the back of Harry's head was touching his chest. "Knew what?"

"Don't rush me." Sirius put his hands up as though signaling a halt. "I need to figure out how to say this." Pausing, he searched for a proper beginning, eventually finding one that would do.

"All right, then. You know that in the Muggle world, people pair off and fall in love based on their sex, right? Their gender?"

"Um, yeah..." Harry said rather cautiously. Sirius knew he sounded ridiculous, but he had to get the explanation started *somewhere*.

"Boys either pair up with girls or other boys, but not both? And the same for girls?"

Harry tipped his head back and regarded him quizzically, as though he thought these must be trick questions. "Yeah, for the most part. Some people go for both, I guess."

Perfect answer. "Those are Squibs, Harry--the ones that go for both. It's because of the latent magic in them." Sirius put his arms gingerly around Harry's middle, pulling him a little tighter against the cool silk of his nightshirt. Now they were getting somewhere.

"For wizards, passion stems from our *magic*, not our bodies. Well," he corrected himself with a nervous chortle, "it originates in the magic, it's just, uh, *spent* by the body. I mean, obviously, you get married and raise a *family* with someone of the opposite sex because that's the only way to make more little purebloods. But falling madly in love with someone, or madly in bed with someone--" he nuzzled Harry's head absently "--has nothing to do with mundane things like what body parts you have, or the color of your skin, or age. It's all about your magic, how it resonates with other people's magic, whether that person will enhance you or inhibit you. God, this is hard to explain!" *And he'll bring up that brilliant point you made about age again, you can bank on it.*

Harry put a hand on top of his own, nodding pensively. "I think I'm catching on, Sirius, really. That explains... quite a few things I've been noticing lately."

"I bet you have. Well, let me finish," said Sirius in a determined tone; this "little talk" was clearly long overdue, and he wanted to get it out of the way. "This is the reason for the whole pureblood/Mudblood issue! The fact that Muggle passion is based on bodies and gender really makes a fundamental difference between us. I mean, the average sorcerer wouldn't think twice about whether someone is the same sex, but Muggles make a huge fuss over it."

"So when I asked if you'd do it if I were a girl, you thought I was accusing you of being a bigot or something?" Sirius felt Harry's whole body tense up as he asked the question.

"Exactly, Harry," he said. "Only a Muggle would choose a lover because of their gender, so what you said was pretty insulting. In fact, if you really want to irritate some of your pureblood enemies... well, maybe I better not elaborate on that anymore. You can figure it out." Both of them chuckled.

"There's more you need to know, though, Harry," Sirius eventually continued. "The other side of that coin is that when a wizard takes a lover that has no magic... well, they might as well be rutting with an animal. It's just base; it's a purely physical indulgence." Sirius paused again, uncertain if he had offended Harry by speaking of such things, then continued. "Half-bloods are more or less abominations, you could say, the product of an unnatural union."

Harry sat up, turning to look him in the eye. "Sirius... are you bullshitting me?! These are all human beings you're talking about--"

Sirius spoke over him loudly. "I'm just saying, Harry! This is the pureblood party line. They all believe it, except for the blood traitors--and I *am* a blood traitor, if you recall," he added reprovingly. Harry nodded meekly and reclined against his chest.

"I understand," Sirius said, the quiet intimacy returning to his voice, "that love is just as strong a force as magic. I was brought up to think otherwise, but I've learned. I've never *done* it with a Muggle, I just... don't go for that. But who am I to judge? Eh?" He gave Harry a brief but tight squeeze, seeking reassurance that Harry was not judging *him*, then continued. "So there it is. The purebloods despise the idea of mating without magic, so they hate the half-bloods. Then there's the assumption that any sorcerer born to Muggle parents can't possibly have 'decent' magic. So they're Mudbloods--tainted wizards. It doesn't help that a lot of them are raised in the Muggle way, to choose their lovers by sex, that just makes them seem all that much more strange."

Sirius pressed his mouth tightly closed, uncertain whether he should continue. *He wants to know more about them, better to hear it from me than someone like Snape...*

"There's more I should tell you, Harry. You know your mum was... not a pureblood. Well, she only fancied men. Not that there's anything wrong with that!" he added emphatically. "She explained how she was brought up that way and it had really become ingrained into her, uh, way of being, I guess. I know a lot of the witches in our class really wanted her but she just wouldn't even consider it... she caught a lot of flak for that."

Sighing sadly at distant memories, Sirius shook his head and continued. "James was from a long and distinguished pure line, but when he paired up with your mum, boom, he became a blood traitor. It's fucking ridiculous. The true fanatics would say you're a Mudblood, too, Harry; they claim it takes seven generations for a line to become pure once it's been Muddied."

"But that's stupid! My mum was a full-fledged witch! How could anybody accuse her of having tainted magic? She stopped the Killing Curse, for Merlin's sake! Just because she only liked men, she wasn't considered good enough for the purebloods?"

"Don't ask me why, Harry, it *is* stupid. People can be really cruel when they get spurned, I don't know. But that's the way it is. Now you know." Sirius sighed in relief. "I feel like an idiot, trying to explain all this. But if not me, who, right?" Harry looked up at him once more, and Sirius felt a flood of relief that there was no anger or disgust in his eyes.

"Wow. I had no idea, Sirius." Harry's gratitude was obvious, making the whole "difficult talk" suddenly feel quite worthwhile. He gazed warmly at Harry for a moment, but his chest suddenly tightened. A little warmth might rekindle the fire that had started this conversation, and indeed, the burning focus was already returning to Harry's eyes. *In the name of Merlin, keep talking!*

"Want to hear something funny?" Sirius asked, and to his relief, Harry nodded with a rapt but innocent smile. "James was a pureblood, of course, so he was game for anything that moved, really. That was why he chose the Stag for his Animus, you know. Prongs," he said with a wistful smile, lost in memories. "Well, he once got the idea to have a go with Remus when he was a wolf! Wanted me to help, to keep him from ripping James to pieces while they went at it--" Sirius stopped abruptly, realizing that this may not have been the most appropriate topic.

Harry gave him a dubious look. "Did he...?"

"No, thank the stars!" Sirius said, his eyes sparkling. "Remus told him if he tried it and survived, he'd never let James touch his body again. He wasn't kidding, either, and James knew it. Remus is only a wolf once a month, after all; it was a numbers thing." He laughed fondly at the memory.

Harry sat up and turned to face him, and he could practically see the cogs turning in Harry's mind. Before Sirius could try to dodge the question, Harry peered deep into his eyes and asked, "What about you? And I don't mean with Lupin."

Sirius groaned, setting his jaw in frustration. *Walked right into that one, didn't I?* "Dammit, Harry, that's none of your business."

Harry raised himself up on his knees and leaned close, such that Sirius had to tip his head back to look at him. "Did you?" Harry asked softly, but urgently.

Sirius met Harry's gaze for a moment, then turned away. "Yes. James was my lover." Harry nodded, and Sirius knew what his next question would be. "We were *both* fourteen. And that has nothing to do with anything right now."

Harry didn't reply, he just raised an incredulous eyebrow and rested one hand on Sirius's throat. Magic, indeed. Sirius had loved Harry unconditionally before he was even born, a deep, selfless love born of joy and wonder. Love sent him crashing through the bedroom door every night, ready to lay down his life if it was more than a nightmare that caused Harry's scream. It burned in him so intensely that he risked his life just to spend twenty extra minutes with Harry on the way to King's Cross Station last fall. That Harry felt it, too, and desire with it... Sirius caught his breath with an audible gasp at the very thought of it.

You can't. Sirius banged his head against the bedstead and pulled Harry's hand away. "Don't do this, Harry. It won't work, and it'll just lead to bad feelings. You're too young! I *can't* respond to you the way I--you want."

Harry snorted. "Right, yes, it's a crime. I forgot."

Sirius abruptly pushed Harry backwards only to yank him again into his arms, but this time Sirius knelt and lifted Harry tightly to his chest. He spoke in a voice so urgent

and sincere that Harry's jaw fell.

"All right, listen to me! You and I both know the law has nothing to do with justice. I *don't* care what the goddamn Ministry has to say about who's allowed to touch whom. But Harry... I *vowed* to love you as my own son." He reached up to place a hand to Harry's cheek, but thought the better of it at the last minute, turning his hand over to brush Harry's jaw with the backs of his fingertips. "If I took you, it would be an insult to James's faith in me. My best friend's faith."

His voice fell, barely more than a whisper. "You're almost seventeen, Harry. When you're of age, you'll be free to make your own decisions." He gave Harry a piercing look. "I'll be free to *act* on them. If you still want me by then, that is," he added somewhat ruefully.

Harry pressed his hands firmly against his sides and slowly raised them to his shoulder blades. "Oh, I'll want you," he said. "I'm on fire for you, Sirius."

A strangled moan escaped Sirius's throat despite himself. "A lot goes on in a year and a half, Harry." He fixed Harry with his gaze again. "Know that I'll roll with whatever happens by that time. I give you my word."

"I love you, Sirius." Nothing in his voice even remotely resembled a child speaking to his godfather.

"Harry..." Sirius's eyes fell shut against his will, but he dropped his hands to his sides determinedly. "I've *got* to get back to my room. Goodnight." Harry bit his lip and nodded as Sirius took several unwilling steps backward, before turning smartly on his heel and striding from the room.

Harry slumped back in his bed, though he was sure he'd get no more sleep tonight. A year and a half. A lot *could* happen.

2: Later

Chapter 2 of 2

Two heads are often better than one. A bit of discussion leads to a novel solution to this rather winsome dilemma.

Sirius closed his bedroom door soundlessly and carefully avoided the creaky plank in the floor, but his efforts were unnecessary. As soon as he settled under the quilted down comforter, the silence broke.

"Everything all right, then?" said Remus.

"Yes, yes, just a nightmare," replied Sirius rather unconvincingly.

Remus moved for the first time, raising his head from the pillow. "You were gone a long time."

"I know. It... There was more than that." Sirius sat up, wondering why he'd even bothered to climb back in bed; now Remus wouldn't get any sleep either. *Oh, bugger that, what better time to talk, when we won't be interrupted?* Sirius scooted toward the center of the bed as Remus curled to press his warm belly against Sirius's back, pulling his pillow alongside. The upper rooms were always cold, and neither man wanted to be too far out from under the covers. When they had finally settled into a more cozy arrangement, Remus looked up at him expectantly and waited.

"Mother of Merlin, Remus. You won't believe what just happened," Sirius finally sighed. He wasn't sure how to say it without sounding like a lascivious egomaniac (a line he treaded frequently enough without even trying).

To his relief, Remus raised a single brow and nodded. "Let me guess. Harry did something a bit unexpected."

"Bit of an understatement! Good grief, he bloody propositioned me right there in my old bed!" Sirius had not said it loudly, but he lowered his voice still further. "On my life, I'm not exaggerating, Remus; this wasn't some subtle little ploy, this was a full-on--"

"I believe you, love," interrupted Remus with a wry grin. "No need for details, really. I've seen how he looks at you, Padfoot. Been expecting it for some time now."

Sirius stared down at him, aghast. "You what? Why in hell haven't you mentioned it then?"

"I might have been wrong. Besides, you would have only scoffed and accused me of a perverse imagination. I know by now when you need to find out something for yourself."

Sirius gave a short, cynical bark of laughter and relaxed further under the covers, settling onto his side to face Remus. "Guilty as charged."

"So what happened?"

"Nothing! What, it's not like anything *could* happen, can it? I told him we'd have to wait until he comes of age, and that was that."

"And the other twenty-nine minutes you were gone?" said Remus, though there was no mischief in his voice.

Sirius sighed. "We talked. I'm an idiot, Remus. I'd never explained how things... work. No one did. He's been growing up at Hogwarts, learning bits and pieces from other children who are all too shy to talk about it, and of course what little he's picked up from Lily's creepy Muggle sister. He was confused."

Remus bit his lower lip, frowning. "Morgan le Fay. I never even thought about it. His friend Hermione is Muggleborn too, and the Weasleys would never utter an unkind word about anyone's choices..."

"Exactly. So I set him straight. I think."

Remus grimaced. "Not the way your father set you straight, I hope."

"Feh! Hardly!" growled Sirius. "Polar opposite of that 'Little Talk,' thank you very much. Though I was losing the straw from my broomstick with every word... I don't think I've ever felt so ridiculous! I kept remembering how Dad sounded so foolish and behind the times, and how insulted I was, that he thought he was telling me anything I didn't know already. But I suppose it was different for Harry, he really *didn't* know, and I wasn't trying to fill his head with a load of hateful pureblood bullshit."

Remus smiled warmly. "Of course you weren't. How did he take it?"

"Better than I did," said Sirius ruefully. "He said it explained some things he'd been noticing." Sirius paused reflectively, realizing that this was a rather touching admission on Harry's part. "He's a good... lad."

"I imagine he didn't care much for being called a lad."

Sirius closed his eyes and exhaled. "He presented some rather compelling arguments against it, in fact." He let his head hang forward, stretching against the tension in his neck. "It was all I could do to leave the room, Moony," he finally blurted. "I mean, 'no' is hardly my favorite word to begin with, and he... oh, Remus, he looks..."

"I know. I know exactly what you mean. Did I ever tell you how I met him? The second time, that is, when he wasn't just a baby. I was on the Hogwarts Express." Remus's eyes lost their focus. "I rode it up, that year I taught at Hogwarts. I hadn't been doing very well when Dumbledore found me. No work and I was starving half the time... I didn't think I could Apparate that far, to tell the truth. So I got on the train, and it was so warm and clean, I just nodded right off. I heard some students join me in the compartment but I was too sleepy even to open my eyes. I didn't even dream."

"The train stopped and I woke up, and I knew there was trouble--not a light on, and the students were horsing around in sort of a nervous/courage routine. I could feel Dementors--you know how that is. One barged right into our compartment. I heard one of the children hit the floor before my Patronus would come."

Sirius clicked his tongue sadly and put a hand on his lover's cheek. If Remus couldn't summon his Patronus during an attack, he was in dire shape indeed.

Remus pressed his face tenderly against the hand, then continued. "So then a bit of chaos, and the lights came on, and *boom*, there was James Potter laid out on the floor of the train. I thought I'd died. Two children leapt to his side and started fanning him and so on, and I just stood there thinking that death wasn't bad at all, if it was just being on the Hogwarts Express with James. I thought these must be his new friends. It was only after he opened his eyes that I realized no, I was alive, and that *wasn't* James. I knew it had to be Harry, because those eyes could only come from Lily."

"I know," whispered Sirius, and both of them fell silent for a moment.

"I still miss them," Sirius finally said heavily. "I want to do right by their son. But when Harry looked at me tonight..." Sirius turned away, gritting his teeth.

Remus made a small scoffing sound and gently tugged Sirius back to look him in the eye. "I suppose I'll always be second fiddle when it comes to those Potter men," he said with a wink, but Sirius could feel the sting underneath it.

"Don't give me that. You know I love you, Remus," he said stiffly. "Besides, if the tables were turned, I know damn well you'd be tempted to give me the heave-ho in favor of Harry." Remus laughed out loud, pushing up onto his elbow for a quick kiss.

"Well, who wouldn't?" Remus said, settling back down with a twinkling eye. "To catch any young sorcerer's eye, particularly a dangerous beauty like Harry. Not that it would happen for me." Sirius steeled himself to deliver a harsh rebuttal, but Remus quickly shook his head.

"Don't misunderstand. That wasn't a 'poor little me.' I just meant that the two of you have your own set of circumstances. Harry met me when he was still young. He was almost a year older when he finally met you--a critical year, I think. I was a teacher and a mentor. You were a *friend*. You gave him gifts, and you stood up to his aunt and uncle. And you were already in love with him, for years and years. He had only to open himself up to you for all the love he'd been longing for his whole life."

"Remus." It was more of a breath than a word. Remus's expression softened; he reached up to brush away a single tear with his thumb.

"Don't be sad, love. I'm glad you could give him that. James and Lily would want it that way. They *chose* you for his guardian, instead of Petunia. They didn't want him to grow up cold and sterile; they wanted him to be loving and giving, like you."

Sirius groaned. "I don't think this is helping, Reem. Damn it! I just left him alone downstairs, when he wanted me to stay."

"Well, yes, but I agree, James wouldn't approve of you shagging his underage son, circumstances notwithstanding."

Sirius shot him a poisonous look. "Bloody hell. You always could turn a phrase, Moony."

"It's a gift," he said with a guilty shrug. "What are you going to do, Padfoot?"

"What *can* I do? If I go to him, I'll give in to it. I know it."

"But you want to go."

Sirius groaned again. "'Want' is a four-letter word, Remus."

With a wistful smile, Lupin whispered for a moment in Sirius's ear and rolled away, returning his pillow to the head of the bed and settling under the covers. Sirius bolted upright, wide-eyed and gaping, then gripped Remus's shoulders.

"Reem, are you sure? You won't mind?"

"I'm fine, Sirius. To be honest, I've been looking around a bit lately myself."

Sirius's eyes nearly burst from their sockets. "You have? Who?"

"Someone from the Order," Remus said shyly. "One of the Aurors."

Thinking quickly, Sirius broke into a broad grin. "My cousin? With the hair?" Remus nodded, and Sirius yanked him up into a rough hug, laughing. "Nice. She's a bring-home-to-Mum sort." He withdrew his arms slowly, taking one of Lupin's hands between both of his.

"Yeah, I've noticed," muttered Remus awkwardly. "She's far too young and... delicate, but with the Wolfsbane potion... Who knows?" He fixed Sirius with his gaze. "So go on. Don't fret about me. I'll see you two in the morning."

Sirius felt the rush of blood to his face, and he pushed Remus into the pillow with a sharp kiss. For the second time that night, he leapt from the bed and down the stairs.

** Epilogue **

Harry heard footsteps, then a soft knock at his door. His entire body immediately began to shake. It had to be him, it *had* to. He had to gulp a few breaths before he could answer. "Sirius?" He thanked the stars that his voice didn't crack.

The latch rose, but the door opened only an inch. What was he doing? Changing his mind? Harry held his breath until the door swung wide, but there was no one standing in the doorway.

Harry had barely registered some odd clicking sounds when a huge black mastiff came flying into his bed, practically knocking him out of it. For a moment, there was only a whirlwind of large paws and fur, then the pooch yipped, turned in a circle twice, and plopped down beside him. His tail thumped joyfully against the quilt.

Harry laughed loud and long, the sound carrying all the way up to the top floor bedroom. He settled under the covers, draping his arm over the dog with great affection. "Goodnight, Sirius."