

# The Wolf and his Bane

*by HogwartsHoney*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

## One

*Chapter 1 of 9*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

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A/N: This story has been almost a year in the making, inspired by my trip to the Grand Canyon last July and by a drabble by islandsmoke. I don't think I've ever felt more comfortably insignificant than I did while standing at the edge of that great chasm, and I hope that some of the feeling comes through in this work of fiction. All photographs are real and all places described are also real, although perhaps I've taken a bit of creative license with their actual uses. Thanks to my Trifecta Beta Team of JaneAverage, charmed310 and snapeophile for helping to see this vision through to reality.

*"When I am alone in the half-light of the canyon, all existence fades to a being with my soul and memories..." Normal Naclean A River Runs Through It*

Remus Lupin sighed, a deep, satisfied sound that came from his core. In this place, for the first time in a long time, perhaps since he'd been a young child, he felt at peace. So much of his life had been spent hiding, protecting himself from others and others from him. Too often, people had judged the boy, then the man, based on the disease...on the werewolf, on the animal. Too many people refused to see him for who he was, or hated him over something that he could not control.

The time for hatred was over. The time for hiding and worrying and *hurting* was over. Remus had faced his situation and realized that what his life needed was change, the type of change that had nothing to do with a lunar schedule and everything to do with maintaining his sanity.

Emotionally, his soul had been torn from fighting for what he wanted, both with the Order and then later with those who would reject him. He was worn down, physically and mentally a broken man, unable and unwilling to continue the fight, so he had left England, left everyone and everything in his past and simply walked away.

Some had called it cowardice; others had said that he was simply giving up.

Remus had called it his surrender to sanity.

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Severus Snape walked along the paved trail, covered in reddish-brown dust from the collar of his black shirt to the hems of his black trousers. His boots scrunched the rocks and stones under foot and the sun shone down with a vengeance that he'd never before encountered. England simply didn't have sun like this.

Arizona in July.

*Why the hell am I really here?*

He should be at Spinner's End, relaxing during the summer away from Hogwarts. If not, then he should be at Hogwarts, preparing his stores and planning his lessons for the coming academic year. Failing both of those options, he should be in Hogsmeade, spending quiet nights in a room over the Hog's Head, taking his drinks at the bar and glowering at any who dared approach.

Certainly, he should not be here.

Not in Arizona in the middle of July.

Perhaps he had lost his mind *and* his soul, or perhaps the pull that had finally brought him to this place meant that he was here to find them.

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The canyon stretched out before Remus, mile upon mile of ancient rock carved into patterns by the passage of time. Standing at the precipice, his moccasin-clad feet merely inches from the edge, his lone body silhouetted against the vast landscape, he was suddenly and forcefully aware of his own insignificance.

Every month when he transformed into the wolf, he felt the powerful pull of the moon and of the animal within him, but even that power, the absolute rawness of it, was dwarfed by this feeling of humbleness. The feeling brought with it peace, and Remus finally understood and accepted his place in the world. As he closed his eyes and gave thanks to the ancient forces, he felt their magic wash over him, cleansing him, soothing him.

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Severus squinted in the insistent glare of the sun as it continued its westward trek across the sky, and he paused for a moment to note the ever-changing colours of the canyon walls. He was not a man who searched out beauty, but the savage roughness of the landscape and the sheer power that must have been employed to create this natural wonder was something that would speak to anyone.

It silently screamed to be noticed.

His eyes followed the rim of the canyon towards the west, skipping casually over the various groups of Muggles with their cameras, posing for souvenir shots of themselves against the greatness of the vast chasm. Severus snorted in derision as he considered how limited their appreciation of the landscape was, for Muggles could never feel the magic that was present here – ancient magic, centuries upon centuries of it, old but still powerful. The magic surrounded him, called him, calmed him, and he found his thoughts straying once more to the one person he'd travelled so many miles to find.

Lupin.

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Remus enjoyed sunset.

The lengthening shadows on the canyon walls combining with the ever-changing colours of the rocks and strata touched him in a way nothing else could. To him, the constancy of the canyon represented what he desired most in his life – stability – whereas the changing shadows represented the ever-changing qualities of life. He often thought that if he could freeze a moment...if he could stop the shadows from moving along the walls...if he could do that just once, then he would feel complete.

A group of giggling Muggles interrupted his reverie and he glanced over at them. This was a common sight, and Remus had become used to the end-of-day rush to the canyon's edge, as amateur and professional Muggle photographers alike tried to get 'the' photograph of the canyon.

He wished he could tell them that no Muggle photograph could ever hope to capture the magic of the canyon and that without the magic, the rocks were merely rocks. The ancient magic was essential to the canyon, forged over thousands of years as the very earth shifted and moved with the changing landscape. Muggles would never, *could never*, understand.

His eyes travelled across the groups of Muggle tourists with their excited voices and clicking cameras, groups upon groups of them all jostling for position. At a break in the sea of humanity, a lone figure stood, clad in black, a reverse-silhouette illuminated by the dying light of the day.

Remus' heart faltered.

*Severus.*

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Severus noticed that Lupin stood close to the edge of the precipice, and his stomach tightened. He didn't have to use Legilimency to realize that Lupin was very tranquil, but his proximity to the edge caused Severus a fleeting moment of concern that Lupin's peace might have more to do with ending his life than accepting it. He could almost feel Lupin's surprise, despite the considerable distance between them, and he could sense that the man's peace had been interrupted by the disquiet that now clearly ran through him.

Severus sighed.

He watched as Lupin took a careful step backwards from the edge, and his own tension ebbed slightly. The shock on the man's face was understandable and unmistakable, but Severus was unable to ascertain the other emotions that flashed across his features. While Lupin had never been good at hiding emotions from him in the past, he had the distinct impression that the man at the canyon's rim was now closed to him in more ways than just emotional.

He remembered the last time he'd seen Lupin, how the man's eyes had been haunted, his body stooped and wracked with pain. His still-hoarse voice had shaken with barely-restrained emotion as they'd argued horribly, and Severus had thrown angry words at Lupin – bitter, hateful, cruel words that had battered the already-beaten man.

Lupin had left quietly that night, walking through the door of Spinner's End with a barely audible 'Goodbye.' His voice had borne no emotion and his eyes were empty, bare, bereft.

Severus had done that to him.

Severus Snape had killed his spirit.

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Remus fought to keep his emotions buried deep within him as he stepped back from the canyon's edge. The sense of peace and of *belonging* that he'd enjoyed just moments before vanished with the last of the sun's rays as his turbulent past walked towards him; a dark shadow in the waning brightness.

Remus had tried to put his past behind him and had yearned for the peace that would only come once he'd faced his demons. He had been able to do all of it, so he'd thought, putting aside James and Lily's deaths, Peter's betrayal, his own belief of Sirius' guilt and the subsequent years that his friend spent in Azkaban. He had come to terms with the countless deaths suffered in the final battle...Albus, his mentor; Sirius, his wonderful Sirius; his former students and his friends. He had even tried to accept Harry's insanity after Voldemort's demise. Harry had been on the edge for so long – so much had been asked of him, so much pressure had been placed upon those young shoulders, and all that Remus could see was another young life gone, wasted, and destroyed by evil.

Severus had fought with the Death Eaters, supposedly doing the Dark Lord's bidding, but he had turned against his master at the last moment, killing those closest to him

and clearing a path for Harry. Remus remembered the scene. Harry had snapped, screaming aloud his parents' names, Cedric's, Sirius', Albus', Ginny's... a litany of the dead, each name striking Voldemort with an almost physical blow until Harry was finally able to whisper the Killing Curse. None who stood on the battlefield that night would ever forget Harry's crazed expression. It was as though he poured himself into the curse and could not, *would* not be saved.

Now Severus Snape walked towards him, darkness itself, staring at him with eyes that pierced into his very soul. Remus shuddered at their intensity. The man had never appeared more like Death than he did today, but not for the reasons that most would think.

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Severus noticed Lupin's furtive glances and read his unease in his body language. He slowed his steps as he neared the cautious man, not wanting to cause him any undue concern. He was sure that Lupin's mind was whirling with an untold number of thoughts, and he doubted whether any of them were positive.

'Lupin,' he said quietly.

The silence stretched between them as the shadows lengthened in the canyon and the air grew chill. Severus looked into the shadowed brown eyes of the man he used to know and waited. To use Legilimency would be unfair and unwise. Lupin was much smarter than that.

After what seemed like an eternity, a lifetime, Lupin finally found the voice to acknowledge him.

'Severus.'

The word sounded like he'd just drank down a bottle of bitter-tasting medicine, something unpleasant but necessary, and for once, Severus was unsure of how to proceed. He looked away, out over the darkening canyon, searching the rocky terrain for something to break the solid chill between them. He reached out to the swirling magic, asked the spirits for assistance, and entreated them with his cause.

The spirits answered with gentle warmth, and Severus felt the tingling on his skin. He looked again at Lupin, studying the man as best he could in the fading light. The lycanthrope appeared evasive, almost a hunted thing, as though he would revert to the animal within if only he could call it up at will. Severus had not been grateful for many things in his life, but Lupin's lunar schedule was, thankfully, very predictable, and Severus knew that he had just under two weeks before the next full moon.

He hoped that it would be enough.

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Remus had never wanted to see Severus again.

The wounds he'd caused went too deep. They were cut sharply and effectively by his words and his actions. Remus had doubted that any amount of magic, ancient or otherwise, would be able to cleanse his wounds, heal his hurts, and mend his scars.

Two years earlier he had sought out the Grand Canyon as his refuge because he knew of the magic of the ancient Hopi people. He had packed his few belongings into a single travel bag, Apparated to a remote part of the canyon and followed his instincts. He had felt almost a tangible difference as he stood at the rim of the canyon and opened himself to the power. The magic that exists in that part of the canyon had mixed with his and had, over time, helped to heal his wounds, both the physical and the emotional.

He had set up a small home under the Kolb Studio on the South Rim, Disillusioned and accessible only to him. It wasn't fancy, little more than an open space with a bedroom to one side, but with the magical help of the Hopi spirits, he was able to expand it to be quite comfortable.

He had asked for nothing but to be left in peace, and the Hopi spirits were more than willing to let him be. They seemed to understand that he needed time to come to terms with himself and his humanity.

Severus Snape apparently knew no such thing.

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Severus tried again, carefully. 'Lupin.'

'What do you want, Severus? What could you *possibly* want, and why are you here?'

Lupin's voice was quiet and shook with barely-contained emotion, but Severus didn't move. He knew that Lupin's emotions were close to the surface, and although he couldn't read him at the moment, he knew this man. Well, he knew the man he *used* to be, but Severus was uncomfortably aware that this person who stood before him, whose body was coiled and prepared for fight or flight, was someone almost entirely different.

'I... I don't know exactly, Lupin. I thought perhaps we could talk.'

'Talk?' Lupin almost spat the word back at Severus. 'Talk. Two years later, and you want to TALK?'

Severus had to admit that it was a pretty lame start, but a start had to be made, and at least there was dialogue. The spirits urged him on. 'Look, Lupin, I realize that our parting was on less than good terms...' Severus wasn't able to continue as the man lunged towards him, eyes fierce, his face a mask of anger, hurt, and resentment.

'You fucking bastard, you just... you *realized*...'

Severus hastily cast a Disillusionment Charm around them, closely followed by a Silencing Charm. The Muggles had all but disappeared, but he thought it better to err on the side of caution. He felt a change, a prickling of the canyon's magic, and realized that he should not antagonize Lupin any further than necessary. The spirits seemed highly protective of the werewolf.

'Look, can we just go somewhere and talk?'

'Talk!' Lupin responded with a strangled cry.

Severus could see the man struggling with himself and his emotions, and he took the opportunity to move to Lupin's side in what he hoped was a non-threatening manner. He dropped the timbre of his voice so that he would not be overheard. 'We cannot speak here, Lupin.'

Severus assumed that there was some sort of accommodation nearby, and he was not disappointed when Lupin turned angrily and walked down a path through a small gate set inside an archway outlined with stones.



They followed the path down the side of the hill for a short while and came upon the lower level of the Studio. He watched closely as Lupin waved his hands over what seemed to be solid rock, and then a wooden door appeared. Lupin dismantled his wards and opened the door, stepping aside to allow Severus entrance.

## Two

### *Chapter 2 of 9*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

A/N: Standard disclaimer applies. Thanks to my Trifecta Beta Team, JaneAverage, charmed310 and snapeophile for the encouragement

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Remus couldn't remember a time when his emotions had swung so violently. Less than an hour earlier he was on the rim of the canyon, standing on his favourite spot and he had felt secure, peaceful, and humble. His world had managed to stop turning upside down, and for one brief moment, time had settled.

Snape's arrival had shattered that moment.

Remus truly didn't know what to make of the emotions that had coursed through his body at the sight of the tall, pale man, whose dark clothing accentuated the sleek lines of his body. The waning light of the sun and the reflected warm tones of the canyon's rocks had cast a favourable light upon Severus' face, making him seem less pale, more human somehow, but he had pushed those thoughts away. Severus Snape was no more human today than he'd been two years prior when he'd destroyed everything that Remus had tried to build, when he'd destroyed Remus' spirit and left him bereft. Now he had allowed Severus Snape into his sanctuary, his respite from the world, both magical and Muggle. Oddly enough, he was unafraid, for he had already been hurt so deeply that there was nothing left of him for Severus to take.

Remus watched as Severus entered his home with sure-footed, graceful steps. He felt a sudden pang, a fleeting image of a time when they were on the same side of the battle, when their relationship had been a carefully guarded secret just between the two of them. He struggled to meet Severus' eyes, unwilling to see the death that lay there, the death of so many, the death of their own relationship, and the death of Remus' hopes for their future.

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Severus stood in the middle of Lupin's small home and realized that although he stood mere feet from him, the distance between them was so great that he might have been sitting on the other side of the great chasm in the earth. This man he once knew so intimately was closed off, lost to him. He was not willing to accept that, however, and tried to think of a way to begin.

'Lupin, how long have you been here?'

He could hear the other man's derisive snort, almost animal-like in quality. 'Why should it matter, Severus? What I do and where I go are of absolutely no concern to you or to anyone else.'

Defensive. Angry. Bitter. Yes, Severus would admit that Lupin had every right to feel as he did, but he didn't know everything. Lupin had never known the *real* reason for what happened. 'Lupin, you don't understand...'

Severus' words were cut short by the angry roar of the furious werewolf. 'I don't understand? Bollocks! I understand perfectly. You wanted nothing to do with me, you selfish bastard. I was willing to sacrifice everything, *everything* for you and you just destroyed it.'

Lupin's heaving chest and flaring nostrils betrayed the raw anger within him, and Severus couldn't remember a time when he'd seen the man like this. On that fateful night when they'd argued and Severus had flayed Lupin bare with his words and his self-loathing, Severus had expected anger from the man, had *wanted* him to be angry, had needed the release that would come from their fighting and their fucking, but Lupin had walked away. He had given up and walked away.

Severus couldn't blame Lupin for his anger; for if he were to be fair, he had been the one to destroy their relationship. He had been under incredible physical and mental stress during the final battle when the Dark Lord was destroyed, enduring several bouts of Cruciatus even as he struggled to keep his alliances straight and his sanity intact.

In retrospect, he had been unwise to engage Lupin in any conversation that night, as emotionally and physically battered as he'd been, but Severus had felt the customary pull, the need to be in his presence. Ultimately they had both paid the price for his weakness.

Over the past two years, he had tried to forget the knowledge of the hurt he'd caused and tried to deny it, but yet here he stood, compelled by the same ~~need~~ that had been his undoing the first time.

He needed to be with Lupin.

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Remus tried desperately to control his anger, but its intensity shook him to his core. His heart thundered in his ears as he struggled to be reasonable.

*Reasonable. Now there's a word.*

Remus had always been the reasonable one, the steady one, the respectful one. Remus had never entertained flights of fancy or illusions of grandeur. He had spent his life trying desperately to fit in with a world of hatred, and to have the man he loved heap hatred upon him had been entirely too much. Now that very man had the audacity to stand in his home and tell him that he didn't *understand*!

He noticed that Severus had taken a step backwards as he'd advanced in his anger, and for a moment the wolf stirred within him. He could feel it, the latent power buried deep but still a part of him, and for a fleeting moment he wished that he could transform at will, that he could turn into the animal and sink into the oblivion that came with it. Remus sank onto a chair and held his head in his shaking hands. No, he must not allow himself to be a danger to himself or anyone else, even if that someone else was Severus.

He hated that he couldn't refer to the man as Snape, or 'That Bastard, Snape.' Ever since their days at Hogwarts students, he had called him by his first name, although Severus had never called him anything other than 'Lupin.' Most often it was said with derision or even downright hostility, but in their times together as lovers, Lupin found that his name took on an almost musical and reverent quality on the lips of Severus Snape. Perhaps it was the lips of Severus Snape that had the reverent quality to them Remus couldn't be sure.

'Lupin, I need to explain.'

Remus closed his eyes and told himself over and over again that he was no longer interested in anything to do with his old life, but if Severus wanted to ~~explain~~, then he would let him. He would let him speak and then he would dig within himself and try to find the strength to turn him away and send him back to where he could do no more harm.

'Explain then, Severus. Go ahead, explain everything, and then leave me alone.'

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Severus felt his gut wrench at the flat quality of Lupin's voice. Emotionless. Devoid of anger, hate, fear, jealousy, love. Devoid of everything. He shuddered as he fought to find the right words. If Lupin only gave him this one moment to make a difference, then he would have to use it to maximum effect.

'I want to tell you what happened that night.'

Lupin didn't raise his head, nor did his voice change. 'Go on then, tell me.'

Severus once more embraced the magic of the canyon and reached out to the spirits that surrounded the area. Again they answered, warming his skin with a tingling that was unmistakable. 'I was wrong that night. I was angry that I'd been used, both by Dumbledore and by V-Voldemort. I was broken, Lupin, as broken as I'd ever thought I could be, and I needed you then.'

Severus clenched his hands into fists as he struggled to say the words he knew he must and struggled with his own pride to admit that he was less than strong, less than capable, less than whole. He gritted his teeth and forced himself to continue. 'I needed your strength, and I hated myself because I had never needed anyone before, had never been that weak before. I took out that anger on you, the one person who could save me from my own self-loathing, and that was unconscionable.'

Lupin had not moved, but Severus could feel a change in the atmosphere of the small room.

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Remus resigned himself to listening to Severus. Truth be told, it was a habit long ingrained in him. He had always loved the sound of Severus' voice, whether he was reciting potions ingredients or discussing textbooks, songs, or prose, and Remus realized that his mistake had been falling in love with Severus and his voice. He'd known of the danger of carousing with a spy, but desperate times had called for desperate measures and in the way of all soldiers in times of war, they had taken their comforts where they could find them. As unlikely as their pairing had been on the surface, they had fit extremely well together, both intellectually and physically.

Remus had never before felt pleasure like Severus gave him. He had allowed himself to surrender completely to the man and to their acts of passion, and Severus had responded with unexpected tenderness and a level of skill that had sent Remus screaming over the edge of rapture time and time again. Their trysts had left him breathless in every sense of the word, and for much too brief a time, Remus had been happy. They had never spoken of their relationship with any degree of seriousness or with thoughts of a future. They hadn't been sure that there would *be* a future after the war, and any talk of commitment or of building a life together had been swept under the rug to be aired out someday.

'Someday' would never come, or so Remus had been led to believe, but as he listened to Severus' words and felt the familiar tingling warmth of the canyon's magic as it washed over him, he began to wonder. He realized that Severus was trying to apologise as best he could, which was a difficult proposition for the proud man. While he sounded as though he was trying to keep his temper firmly in check, Remus knew him enough to realize that he was serious.

He felt a distinct shift as the tension of the room changed.

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Severus stood perfectly still as he felt the magic's change and waited for Lupin's response, realising that he had allowed himself to come dangerously close to losing control, and now he was flayed open and rendered almost defenceless by his own admissions, his life once more held in the hands of another. He knew that he was taking a huge risk, but life was rarely without risk, and the benefits far outweighed any dangers. He'd wondered whether Lupin would believe him, and whether any of his words would make a difference. He didn't expect miracles, nor did he expect to be forgiven, ever, but he merely hoped that he could make Lupin see reason, or at least make him listen. Lupin still hadn't looked at him, but he hadn't thrown him out, either. Severus fought against a rising tide of fear and forced himself to breathe deeply, calming his tortured mind and steadying his racing heartbeat as he waited.

The seconds stretched into minutes. Severus wanted to shake the werewolf and force his forgiveness by sheer will alone, but he knew that it would be useless. Remus Lupin possessed an incredible strength of character, and his Gryffindor sensibilities would never react well to being forced.

After what seemed like several lifetimes, Lupin raised his head. His face was expressionless as his brown eyes searched Severus' black ones, and again, Severus had to fight against his instinct to use Legilimency. He felt the magic around him prickle at just the thought and he waited, meeting Lupin's gaze as steadily as he could.

Finally, Lupin broke their eye contact and walked over to where Severus stood in the middle of the room. As Severus' eyes searched the man before him, still a bit thin even after all these years, Lupin cleared his throat. 'So, what now, Severus? You have found me; you've apologised and assuaged your guilt. What now? What more do you want from me?'

Severus felt tingles run along his spine, and he dared hope for a moment that Lupin might let him speak again before throwing him out. The warmth of the magic around him encouraged him, bolstered him, and urged him to continue. 'I... Lupin, I just want to spend some time with you, make sure you're all right.' Severus' voice dropped again, low and quiet. 'I just want to be with you, if you'll let me.'

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Remus was both surprised by and apprehensive at Severus' words. Were he to allow himself to believe the man again and he doubted whether he really could then he would only be opening himself up to further hurt. Everything he had once wanted was now standing in front of him, asking to spend time with him, but Remus could still only think of the pain, the hurt. How could he ever get over that?

'Severus, I just... I don't know. I'm not like you; I can't put everything aside as if it never happened.'

'I'm not asking you to. I'm simply asking you to give me some time.'

Reluctantly, Remus acknowledged the warming tingle of the canyon's magic which had never steered him wrong before. 'I'll think about it, but I need to rest now.' He thought he saw something akin to relief flash across Severus' face, but he chose to dismiss it, as he was tired and his body and mind needed sleep. It suddenly occurred to him that Severus probably didn't have anywhere to stay, and he picked up the neatly folded woven blanket from the back of the couch and placed it on the cushions.

'You can sleep on the couch if you want, Severus, or you can go... wherever you were going to go.'

Remus felt Severus' eyes heavy on him as he turned and walked into his bedroom and softly closed the door. He slept fitfully that night, his thoughts on the dark-haired man who lay on his couch as he tried to convince himself that he didn't care.

He almost succeeded.

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Severus felt a wash of relief at Lupin's words. Although he was not a man who put too much store in 'hope,' the fact that he was still in Lupin's house was a good sign. He watched as Lupin turned and walked into his bedroom, pointedly shutting the door behind him. Severus didn't try to fool himself into thinking that anything was forgiven, but at least he had a chance.

He slept uneasily that night. The couch was uncomfortable, but it wasn't the worst place he'd ever spent a night. What kept him awake were his thoughts of Lupin in the next room and his memories of their times together. Severus had been happy then, as happy as he thought he could be, and although he'd never acknowledged it to Lupin, he'd assumed that the werewolf had felt the same way. Even when he slept, he dreamt of Lupin and himself together, sweat-slicked bodies entwined, flashes of Lupin's face, his hands grasping, his mouth open and moaning in pleasure, muscles straining... but as always, Severus was awakened by Lupin's face, broken, hurt, and inconsolable.

Those images had haunted him almost every day for the past two years. Why should tonight be any different?

TBC

## Three

### *Chapter 3 of 9*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

A/N: Standard disclaimer applies.

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The first rays of light over the canyon shimmered through the early morning haze, bathing the area around the studio with a golden light. Severus opened one eye and could almost see the waves of magic as they danced around his body in the sun's rays that penetrated the small room. He stood and stretched, wincing as the muscles in his back protested his sudden movements.

The door to Lupin's bedroom swung open and the yawning man emerged clad in a pair of pyjama bottoms. Severus was reminded of that body warm against his in the bed they had once shared, and of the countless mornings that Lupin had emerged naked from the bedroom at Spinner's End, rumpled in a just-shagged way with a wolfish grin on his face.

Lupin didn't smile this morning however, and his cagey demeanour only served to remind Severus that they were indeed starting over.

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'Morning.'

Remus was surprised at Severus' greeting, but he supposed that the ex-spy wouldn't have survived for long if he'd not been constantly vigilant. He growled his reply in a voice still roughened by sleep and grabbed the blanket off the couch, wrapping it around himself as he shuffled across to the kitchen counter. Severus' scent on the blanket evoked too many memories that Remus was trying desperately to forget, and he gazed out his window as he tried to distract himself with the softly shimmering light on the canyon walls. With a few waves of his wand the water was boiling, and shortly thereafter the two men sat on opposite sides of the small table, clutching cups of black coffee and picking at slices of toast. Not a word had been said, and Remus wondered just what he'd set himself up for.

Failure, probably. Sorrow, definitely. He could only hope that Severus would quickly accomplish whatever it was he'd set out to do so that Remus could once more be left in peace. He'd found that peace here, and he knew that he could recapture it, if only Severus would leave him to his uncomplicated life.

He had the nagging feeling that Severus intended no such thing. The man had *apologised* the night before, and Remus couldn't begin to imagine what had driven the normally taciturn man to such extremes. He hardly dared think that it was because Severus *missed* him or really wanted him back.

Remus turned his thoughts back to the day's mission. He had woken early in order to journey to the bottom of the canyon. The temperatures during the day often rose to 115° in the summertime, but the full moon was approaching and he needed certain plants for his potion. There was no substitute for Wolfsbane, and he certainly didn't

possess the knowledge or the skill to even attempt to brew it, but he had devised a reasonable alternative. His potion didn't do much to lessen the pain of his transformations but it did keep the wolf calm throughout the night. It was as much as he could hope for.

He chanced a look at Severus, whose long, slender fingers wrapped around his cup as his black eyes mirrored the dark coffee within it. Severus looked up quickly, their eyes catching, and Remus felt tingles up his spine at the incredible power of that gaze.

'I'll be going down to the bottom of the canyon today, Severus. There is something I need there.'

He noticed the flicker of interest in Severus' eyes and wondered whether he should have bothered to say anything.

'Will you be Apparating there?' Severus' voice was calm, his words precise. Remus nodded it would take him several hours just to descend to the bottom using the Muggle trails.

'May I join you?'

Remus was genuinely surprised at Severus' deferential tone and nodded again without thinking.

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Severus breathed an inward sigh of relief that Lupin had agreed. Although he was never someone who enjoyed the outdoors, the Canyon possessed a unique quality that was unmistakable, and he welcomed the opportunity to visit her depths in the hopes that he could break through the chill and begin to close the distance between him and Lupin.

Less than an hour later, they stood just inside the front door, Silencing Charms in effect. Severus had showered quickly and was now wearing a pair of Lupin's jeans and his own shirt that he had transfigured into one with short sleeves. Lupin was dressed in lighter fabrics: cotton trousers, a lightweight shirt and moccasins. Gone were the signature cardigans that Severus remembered.

Lupin would have to Apparate them both to the canyon floor, and Severus was more than a little concerned. He hoped that the man had his head together enough and wouldn't Splinch them both, but he had to go on faith. To Severus Snape, faith was something very hard to come by, but he had vowed to give Lupin time and to show him understanding. There was too much to lose, and he held his breath as Lupin's arms wrapped around his torso.

Everything about him was so familiar his warmth, his smell, the wiry strength of his body against Severus' and for a fraction of a moment, Severus was thankful that he wasn't the one in charge of the Apparation. For another fraction of a moment he was disturbed that he could be so affected by this man, and then he felt the familiar squeeze as they moved through space.

They landed on the uneven canyon floor, and Severus stumbled slightly, temporarily disoriented by the sudden change in altitude. He should have expected it, and Lupin's strong arms tightened for a moment as he held Severus steadily against his chest. Severus shook his head and took a couple of deep breaths, then, just as suddenly as they'd arrived, Lupin's arms disappeared from around him and a reed basket was thrust into his hands.

Severus looked up at the canyon walls towering thousands of feet above him. They had Apparated to the banks of the river that cut a path through the rocks at the bottom, and its cool, almost cheerful rippling movements helped to ground Severus in a way he'd not thought possible. The ancient magic was as powerful here as it had been at the canyon's rim and he felt its welcoming presence all around him. He could only hope that it was a favourable sign.

He looked around for Lupin and noticed that the lycanthrope had made his way to a small inlet in the river and was standing in a thicket at the river's edge. Severus wondered how the man had ever found the secluded spot, but acknowledged that both Lupin's animal instincts and the area's magical guidance probably led him straight to it. He joined Lupin and watched him place some tiny seeds into the basket. Severus recognised the smooth, reddish-brown bark on the slender branches of the large, shrub-like tamarisk plant. From what he knew of the weed, it was highly noxious.

Lupin ignored him and moved further upstream, stopping next to a small thicket of some sort of willow. All that Severus could remember of willows was that they produced a pain-relieving substance called salicin which had been used for centuries to treat toothaches and other intestinal pain. He arched his eyebrow and watched closely as Lupin placed some of the trimmed bark into the basket as well, but was surprised when he began speaking.

'The bark makes a soothing tea. It helps.'

Severus knew he meant after transformation and filed that information away as Lupin walked towards him once more. The stifling heat of the day was settling into the canyon and Severus began to feel rivulets of sweat run down his back.

'We just need one more thing, Severus. It's getting late, so I'll need to Apparate us there.'

Severus was gratified to hear the 'we' and 'us' in Lupin's words, and that almost made up for the indignity of Side-Along Apparation.

Less than an hour later they were back in Lupin's home, the results of their trip laid out on the table before them. Lupin had harvested some flowers and the sap from the western honey mesquite plant. Severus had known that the blossoms could be used for tea, but Lupin quietly informed him that the sap could be used as a wash for wounds and the leaves were also beneficial in a medicinal tea.

Severus noticed that whereas Lupin had been moderately communicative, his tone held a quiet, almost resigned quality that Severus didn't feel comfortable with. He wondered whether Lupin was in fact able or even willing to make the effort that they'd both need in order to salvage anything of their relationship.

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Remus was thankful that his gathering of plant materials had been successful. He had both anticipated and dreaded Side-Along Apparation with Severus as he found that the man's proximity disturbed him in all-too-familiar ways. When Remus had wrapped his arms around Severus, the tension had been obvious, and for a brief moment Remus had flashes of their lives several years prior. He had always loved the feel of Severus against him and had revelled in the power of his presence. Whether they were sitting reading, standing and arguing, or sliding against each other in passion, Severus Snape was sheer power. Nothing had changed in that regard, but Remus was wary of the effects that Severus' power could have on him. He wasn't the same man Severus had known, the disheartened and weak werewolf of the second war. Remus had come into his own here; his soul and heart had been tended and mended by the magic of the ancients. He had grown strong, capable and confident in his abilities.

For all that, his only weakness was Severus.

He refused to think about that as he set about preparing an early dinner for himself and Severus. A glance at the table confirmed that Severus had not moved from his position where he'd been separating the leaves from the stems, and Remus had thanked him for his efforts. Now, as Remus skinned the desert hare he'd caught in the canyon, he heard the scrape of a chair against the wooden floor. He didn't have to turn around to know that Severus was approaching; he could *feel* him.

Remus' hands stilled as Severus stood beside him, and they both stared out the window and across the canyon's considerable breadth. Remus was proud of his view as it took in the vista of the canyon below and the North Rim several miles away. He had often stood here over the years and pondered his life, eventually finding the peace that had eluded him everywhere else. How perfectly ironic it was that his peace should be shattered here as well.

Severus cleared his throat and Remus held his breath in anticipation.

'Let me help you?'

*That voice!*

Severus' tone was questioning and Remus strove to keep his voice level and his hands from shaking. He could feel the soothing and gentling waves of the Hopi's magical forces and knew that he wasn't alone. The canyon had always protected him.

'It's only a hare and some vegetables, Severus nothing fancy, I'm afraid.'

'Still, I'd like to help you.'

Severus' quiet tone told Remus more than the mere words could. He was trying to make amends the best way he knew how.

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Severus wondered whether Lupin would in fact let him in; let him help in whatever small way he could. He needed an opening, an opportunity to get them talking again, to connect again.

They used to talk. They would have deep philosophical discussions over dinner or discuss books in front of the fireplace. Sometimes they would speak of their fears in hushed tones as they lay in bed after sex, and as guarded as Severus had to be in his life, those rare moments with Lupin afforded him the opportunity to expose his underbelly without fear of being eviscerated. He hadn't realized just how valuable that had been, and by the time he had understood his mistake, it was too late.

Lupin finally met his eyes, and Severus noted again the man's golden glow, so different from the pale, thin man he'd known. They were so close that he could almost count the flecks of gold in Lupin's eyes, and he shivered slightly. Lupin handed him the hare and, with effort, Severus focused his attention on the animal. He noticed that it had been deftly gutted and skinned, so he proceeded to concentrate on the task at hand as he broke apart the various pieces and scored the meat with his wand. Lupin filled a small cauldron with water, and soon the potatoes and onions were simmering. As Severus rolled the rabbit pieces in a mixture of flour, salt and pepper, he handed them to Lupin who browned them slightly in another pan with some butter before adding them to the boiling mixture. Severus felt an almost electric shock every time their fingers met, and he hoped that his elevated heart rate was audible only to himself. He felt the definite tingles of attraction along his spine, made more acute by the magic that encompassed them, and the very thought of Lupin's skin on his made him twitchy with desire.

Lupin added some herbs and various leaves from a small basket, then covered the cauldron and lowered the fire. They moved well together in the kitchen, efficiently getting the job done, and then they cleared up after themselves and stood as a slightly awkward silence stretched around them.

'Thanks.'

Severus was grateful that Lupin had broken the silence, and although the werewolf's eyes hadn't met his own, Severus knew that his opportunity had come.

'Tell me about the magic here.' He sat on the couch and tried to make it sound like a request rather than a command.

Lupin glanced through the window into the wide expanse of canyon and took a deep breath.

'Hopi magic predominantly, I believe, very ancient, many centuries old, and very powerful. They consider this place to be spiritually significant as their legendary Sipapu, or 'place of emergency,' is located about thirty miles northeast along the river. I felt their strength and power the moment I arrived...' Lupin's voice trailed off as he met Severus' eyes, and for a moment Severus saw the haunting shadow of the man the night he left two years prior.

'But how did you find this place?

'I knew about it from my years of travelling. I'd researched it a bit and it seemed to be right somehow.'

'Well, it's about as different from England as one could hope to get.'

Lupin's eyes narrowed. 'Exactly. I wanted nothing of my former life, Severus. No hatred, no prejudice, no war, no death, no pain. I just wanted to be left alone, and to find some sort of peace.'

'And have you found it?' Severus' heart leapt at his question, both needing and fearing Lupin's answer.

Lupin gave a rueful grin.

'I thought I had, yes, in the moments just before you arrived.'

'And now?'

'Now I'm not entirely sure. I've certainly enjoyed my solitude, Severus. I live as I want without answering to anyone.'

Severus considered that pointed remark and wondered whether he'd do Lupin any good by coming back into his life.

'What about the Wolfsbane? What do you do for that?'

'I've managed to find something that works, certainly not as well as *your* potion, but I've made do.'

Severus noticed the firm set of Lupin's jaw and realized that the two years spent apart seemed to have greatly improved Lupin's sense of self. Living on his own like he did after the first war, once again having to rely solely on his wits and his knowledge had turned the former mild-mannered Order member into so much more. Lupin had become as strong a wizard in his own right as Severus was. A ripple of appreciation and understanding flowed through him, accompanied by a tingle of excitement. Lupin was now a more-than-worthy adversary and someone who would be a strong and equal partner in a relationship. Severus would have to make damned sure that this more self-assured Lupin wanted him.

TBC

## Four

*Chapter 4 of 9*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.



A/N: Standard disclaimer applies. Thanks to my beta team of JaneAverage, charmed310 and snapeophile.

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Remus had been grateful when Severus had offered to help with the meal and had, despite his best intentions, enjoyed working together with him on the stew. He had been surprised at Severus' relatively gentle manner and his questions afterward.

Severus would never understand how their final argument had shaken Remus to his core, how Severus' words had shattered the very belief system upon which he'd based their relationship. He'd assumed that Severus wanted him, needed him as much as he'd needed Severus. He'd realized painfully that he'd been wrong.

That part of his healing had been the hardest. His physical wounds had healed quickly enough, aided by the Hopi magic and his own knowledge of poultices and other healing aids. His mental anguish had been slower to overcome, but he'd spent months of quiet contemplation seated on the rocks of the canyon, Disillusioned to avoid prying Muggle eyes, and he had welcomed his solitude.

Now, by his presence alone, Severus had once more shattered Remus' carefully built life, and although a very small part of the lycanthrope wanted the comfort of Severus' arms around him and the smell that was uniquely his, the knowledge that so much had changed in two years was enough to keep his yearnings at bay. Remus knew that Severus wanted to resume some sort of a relationship, but really, was there anything to salvage? After two years, was there anything that they still had in common?

Were he true to himself, Remus knew that there was, at least on his part. Severus had proclaimed his desire to be together, and he seemed sincere. Despite all the years spent as a double agent, where lies and half-truths were daily occurrences, despite all that, shouldn't Remus try to believe Severus and allow him an opportunity to prove himself?

The spirits swirled around him and he realized that he would. Despite his reservations, he knew that he could only truly be healed if he allowed Severus the opportunity to finish what he'd started. Remus steeled himself against the possibility of being hurt again and turned to the dark man on his couch. His heart beat with vulnerability, but he had to know. If Severus only answered one question, let it be this.

'Severus, we both know this isn't about Wolfsbane. I want to know why you've waited until now to find me.'

He saw Severus' jaw clench when the man realized that the pointed question could not be ignored. There would be no dancing around the issue, no silky voice changing the subject. Tonight, Severus Snape would have to explain, and Remus would try to listen.

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Severus was surprised at the directness of Lupin's question, more so because it was delivered with quiet assurance. He sensed fear but couldn't truthfully ascertain whether it was Lupin's or his own.

He considered giving Lupin a version of the truth, but ultimately knew that it would simply put them in a worse position than they were before he arrived. Lupin no longer trusted him, and Severus had to find that trust again. Without it, they would have nothing. His stomach roiled as he gathered his thoughts, and he hoped that by answering Lupin truthfully he could somehow set them free.

'That night, after you left, I Occluded everything. I was angry, and it was better that way. I was in hiding from that night on: only Minerva knew where I was. There was still a price on my head...'

He looked at Lupin to see whether he was paying attention, but he should have known better than to doubt that Lupin wouldn't be attentive. The man was listening, and Severus felt that Lupin wanted to believe him. The warmth of the spirits washed over him, and a gentle tingling on his skin encouraged him to continue.

'One night, a few months after you'd left, I was at a low point. I'd been drinking too much and the images wouldn't go away, couldn't be Occluded any longer. That was a dark period then, in some ways as dark as the path I'd followed before, but this time the only master I served was myself. I travelled far and wide, hoping to escape, but how can a person escape themselves?

'I took out the memory of that night and viewed it in my Pensieve. I shouldn't have; I was still angry, Lupin, the anger and bitterness were still so close to the surface and seeing the memory again really just made it worse. I noticed something that I'd not seen before. As I watched the memory of myself when I stormed into the house, and the torment that was wrapped all around me, I was able to see you, your eyes, your face... differently from my first memory of that night. I realized that you were in pain also, but you'd tried to hide it.'

He noticed that Lupin's eyes flickered slightly as he shifted, but Severus pushed on. The time for truth was at hand and Severus was determined to have everything out in the open, to bare all surfaces of the truth so that it could be examined, analyzed, and proved to be correct.

'I hated reliving the fear and the angry words, hated myself for succumbing to weakness, but I hated myself more for doing unthinkable things, and I pulled away before the memory played itself out. I took back that memory and smashed the Pensieve in a fit of rage.'

Severus took a moment to remember the following morning and his screams of horror when he realized what he'd done. Without the Pensieve he wouldn't be able to properly review the memory, wouldn't be able to figure out exactly what the difference was between what he remembered and what actually occurred. There was no way to simply Transfigure another one the magic of a Pensieve came from its creation, the objects themselves handed down through generations of wizards. His hands still shook under his robes at the thought of how easily he could have destroyed everything permanently.

'Only after the funerals and all the trials were over was I cleared of the charges. Everything took a long time, and more than a year after the Final Battle, Hogwarts was still in disarray. Minerva called upon me to help and I lost myself in the enormity of the restoration task, busied myself with schedules and teaching. I hid from you, Lupin; I hid from the memory of you... and of us.'

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Remus was shocked into silence by Severus' words. He'd never thought that their parting argument would have mattered to anyone but himself. He sat on the couch beside Severus and looked closely at the darker man, and although Severus' eyes were slightly hooded, Remus could see that there was still more to be said.

'Go on.'

He'd hoped that the answer to his question would have been a quick one, but he'd long since known that the answer, just like the man before him, was layered and intricate and difficult and complex. Still, Severus was willing to explain and Remus could feel the gentle presence of the canyon's magic all around him. He deferred to its greater understanding and opened his mind to Severus' words.

'One day I received a delivery. Dumbledore's Pensieve arrived, carefully wrapped with a note from Harry.'

Remus was genuinely shocked. He remembered that Dumbledore had bequeathed it to Harry and he doubted whether Harry would have known anything or recognised anyone in his condition.

Severus nodded. 'I see that you remember Harry as he was after the battle. It was a terrible thing he went through, but the mind is incredibly resilient. With the aid of the Healers at St Mungo's, the help of his friends and some potions, apart from some memory loss, Harry is virtually himself again. The insufferable boy used Legilimency on me during a particularly inebriated night and realized that I no longer had a Pensieve. Not two days later I received the package from him.'

Severus stood and began pacing across the room. Remus was stunned not only had Harry survived the days following the war, but he had made an almost total recovery.

'I sat for weeks with the Pensieve on my desk, reluctant and perhaps a little afraid to see what I knew I must. Finally I withdrew the memory and plunged myself into the basin from which so much had been learned with Dumbledore. I was sober that night, eyes open and finally willing to face the event and see the truth.

'You were hurt. I knew that you had been in pain and I had assumed it was from your transformation, but I realized that the full moon wasn't for several days. Your pain was from injuries during the final battle. I didn't know that you were there, Lupin, I never saw you.

'In the Pensieve, your eyes were haunted and I was able to see that the emotional and physical stress had beaten you down further than any full moon ever could. I had since been told that you'd been the one to bring Harry back to Headquarters. You had been with him when he'd killed Voldemort, after I'd gone in search of Lucius and the others. You had refused to be healed until everyone had been seen to. Why, Lupin?'

Remus' blood had run cold as Severus began recounting the events of the final battle, and he hated that it was once again before him, the blood, the death, his feeling of helplessness as a teenaged boy took on the most powerful wizard in centuries.

'I... needed Harry to live, Severus.' Remus was surprised at how difficult that was to admit, both to himself and to Severus, when it shouldn't have been difficult at all. 'He was my last link to...'

He was also surprised at Severus' reaction.

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Severus felt an acute stab of resentment and, dare he say it, jealousy?

'Your last link to what exactly, Lupin? Your youth and your happy teenaged years with your band of brothers? I was there too, in your youth, don't you remember?'

*Damn him!*

Lupin growled like the animal within him, throwing words back at him like weapons. 'You had disappeared, you said so yourself. I had one thing to do, one person to protect, ONE LIFE to save, Severus, and I'll be damned if you'll make me feel badly about it!'

'I didn't merely disappear, Lupin, I was completing my task. The Death Eaters had to be stopped, and by Merlin's beard, I would be the one to stop them. Do you know how many I killed, Lupin? *DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW MANY?*'

Severus' voice had reached a roar and he had risen to his feet, his hands clenched into fists. He was angry and wanted to strike out, to somehow rid himself of the horror and the guilt and hate and death, and he felt an uncomfortably disturbing sense of his skin crawling. Damn the Canyon and its magic; would it always protect the werewolf over the wizard?

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Severus was even paler than normal and his skin appeared slightly clammy. Remus could see that the man was fighting with something, fighting *against* something, and he realized belatedly that the canyon must be protecting him from Severus' anger. Remus remembered the times when he'd thought to do himself bodily harm, even to throw himself off a cliff and into the river thousands of feet below. The canyon's magic had fought him then, as much as he'd fought against his life, and the crawling, burning, unwelcome feeling on his skin had been the only deterrent necessary. He hypothesized that Severus was feeling the effects of the canyon's disapproval, and he sighed in resignation.

'No, Severus, I don't want to know.'

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Lupin's voice was quiet and controlled and that very change stopped Severus in his tracks. The Lupin he had known would have tried to calm the angry man, would have coaxed and cajoled him into a less irate state of mind. This Lupin merely stated his position clearly and succinctly and, with effort, Severus pulled himself back from his anger and schooled himself to calm once more. Despite himself, he still wanted to know what Lupin meant about Harry, even though he doubted that he would be pleased with the answer. Taking a deep breath he once more broached the subject.

'Your last link to what, Lupin?'

Skeptical brown eyes met his for a moment before Lupin relented.

'My last link to love, if you must know,' he said softly. 'When you disappeared, I assumed you'd gone to battle against Lucius and whoever else was still around. I-I didn't expect you to return, although in my heart I hoped that you would. Scarred, injured, near death it didn't matter, as long as you'd return. Time went by, hours passed, and we rounded up the dead and the dying, but Harry... Harry was my last link to his parents. Yes, Severus, to James and Lily who cared for me and loved me for *who* I was, despite what I was. They were the only people who ever did that.'

Severus felt his gut wrench at those words and felt his heart sink as the full meaning sank in. Lupin thought that Severus had never loved him.

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Remus felt as though a huge weight had been lifted from his heart. The words had been a long time coming, but the actual thought process had only just connected in his mind. Perhaps he had simply needed to voice the thoughts out loud, to say them to just one other person for them to become validated.

He closed his eyes for a moment to savour his freedom from guilt, and he was bathed in the radiance of the canyon's magical flow. He'd felt this before, every time he'd had an epiphany or a moment of self-realization, and he realized that the magic around him adjusted and approved. His sharpened hearing caught Severus' exhalation of breath and he opened his eyes to view the man before him. What he saw shook him to his very core.

Severus stood with his walls down and all his defenses shattered, and for a fleeting moment Remus saw the eleven-year-old boy that Severus had once been. In that one moment Remus understood that his words had hit home, and although he hadn't meant them to sound accusatory, they apparently had been received that way. His heart went out to the shadow of the young boy who even now was disappearing behind the cloak as the walls were carefully reconstructed and the defences fortified once more. Remus felt a pull at his heart as the Potions master materialized before his eyes, closed off and unreachable.

'I don't think I'm very hungry tonight, Lupin. I believe I shall go for a walk.'

Severus' words were clipped and his face inscrutable as he turned and left. Remus wondered whether he'd be back.

# Five - Mooney Falls

## Chapter 5 of 9

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

A/N: Standard disclaimer applies

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Severus stalked along the canyon's rim as he tried to calm himself into reason. Snapes in general, and Severus Snape in particular, did not beg. They coerced, cajoled, pressured, manoeuvred and, when necessary, manipulated people into doing what was required. He could not and would not beg Lupin for anything. He had taken the first steps in rebuilding their relationship by just showing up in the arid desert, he had come all this way to get Lupin back, to save him from his lonely existence. Suddenly, Severus stopped and the dust from his boots swirled around him like his thoughts.

*...save him from his lonely existence...*

As he pondered the past two years spent without Lupin and the final impetus that had led him to the decision to find his ex-lover, he grudgingly considered that the lonely existence might just be his own, and that perhaps, just perhaps, *he* was the one who needed saving.

No! Snapes didn't get saved he was too proud for such a thing to happen. No, Severus was there to rescue Lupin from his pitiful existence and take him back to England where he could at least be protected from the glaring looks and harsh words of a society which was still prejudiced by Greyback's influence on the war. Severus would keep Lupin safe at Spinner's End, far away from the prying eyes of the misinformed and malcontented wizarding world.

He knew that Lupin hadn't meant to hurt him and belatedly realized that the man had experienced an epiphany, but still, the knowledge did little to salve his hurt pride and quash his anger.

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*'Yessssssssss, oh gods, yes Lupin, like that. Come on, fuck me harder, fuck me like you mean it.'*

*'Oh, I mean it, you bastard, I fucking mean it!'*

*Remus growled and panted as Severus arched his back, angling his hips upwards and pushing against him. Moonlight illuminated the interplay of muscles along Severus' shoulders and back as he braced against the wall, and Remus could hear the man's gasping, grunting, breathless words coming up from the ground. The smell of sweat and dirt and sex and Severus mingled in his nostrils and fuelled his anger as the wolf inside fought to be free. Too close to the moon, too bloody fucking close, the wolf was too strong and he shouldn't be doing this, but he thrust further and harder into the willing body beneath him as every gasp, moan and grunt fuelled the primal beast within.*

*'SweetMerlinfock!' Severus panted, and Remus gripped Severus' hips harder as he drove into the tight heat while the animal inside him wanted to rut, and fuck, and dominate, and rip and tear and rend and BITE...*

*He could feel Severus' body tense as his cries became more erratic and less coherent, and he felt his own orgasm curling and building inside. His legs strained to support them both as Severus spread his legs even wider and bucked against him.*

*'Oh fuck...wolf...gods...'*

*Rage exploded within Remus and he thrust hard into the man as he howled his release. He emptied himself into the heated body and roared again as Severus came with a shattered groan, his body convulsing as his muscles clenched around Remus' cock, milking him dry.*

*He pulled out and shoved Severus to the side as they both gasped for breath.*

*'Who the fuck are you?'*

*'I don't know, Lupin. I just don't know any more.'*

Remus awoke bathed in sweat. His heart pounded in his chest and his sheets were sticky with the evidence of his dream. A dream! Remus took huge gulping breaths as he tried to put the images out of his mind. He had dreamed of fucking Severus the night before the full moon as part of a brutally hot sexual fantasy. Still only a dream, thank goodness. Remus knew that he could never allow such a thing to happen and didn't even want to wonder what the dream meant. He cast a hasty Cleaning Charm over himself and his sheets and tried once more to get to sleep, but it was many hours before he drifted off.

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A week had passed since their argument, seven days of polite conversation and walking cautiously around each other. Remus could sense that Severus was still uncertain as to where they stood, and he truly didn't know himself, but having Severus in his daily life was oddly comforting. They had developed something of a routine. In the mornings they would eat breakfast together, and then Remus would show Severus the different trails in the area that lead to various parts of the canyon. Although it was truly vast, they only ventured into the areas that Remus knew firsthand. The Hopi spirits enjoyed their company and encouraged them to explore, but it wouldn't do to anger them by trespassing on sacred ground. In the evenings, one or the other of them would cook and then they would share a quiet meal together, after which they would clean up, read or just rest until it was time to sleep. Severus still slept on the couch, and Remus had made it more comfortable with an enlargement spell after he realized that Severus was too stubborn to do it himself.

They had exhausted the trails around the rim of the canyon and even spent a little time among the Muggles, walking around the tourist area and exploring the various bookstores. Severus was particularly fond of the bookstore that lay not far from Remus' house, and he spent many hours perusing the books and posters therein. Finally, Remus suggested that they visit Mooney Falls, grimacing slightly as he thought of the name for the beautiful waterfall. Despite all his time at the canyon, he had only visited the waterfall once but still vividly remembered the first time he'd seen the falls, how he'd been mesmerised by the rush of the water as it hurtled past him and dashed against the rocks at its base. He had felt the Hopi magic very powerfully that day, and after making his way cautiously through the small tunnels and down the steep path to the bottom of the falls, he had bathed in the cool, sparkling waters and felt refreshed.

Reborn.

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Severus had agreed to accompany Lupin to the waterfall and was secretly amused at its name. It seemed that, no matter how hard the werewolf tried, he could never escape his past, but Severus had vowed to make one more concerted effort to get Lupin to see reason.

That turned out to be no easy task, as they had not been on the best of speaking terms since their most recent argument. They weren't exactly angry with each other, but most of their conversations had been minimal at best. Still, breakfast that morning had been surprisingly pleasant, and after they had each showered, they had dressed in light short-sleeved shirts and trousers. Severus had even foregone his customary black garb for less severe navy and he had felt Lupin's eyes on him, although the man made no comment. He silently waited until the wards were lowered, and they stepped through onto the balcony, then he watched as Lupin re-warded his home. Their eyes met briefly before Lupin averted his gaze and blushed slightly as he wrapped his strong arms around Severus' torso.

Severus felt the frisson of magical energy that surged between them and, without thinking of the consequences, he encircled his long arms around Lupin and held him to his chest, earnestly hoping that they wouldn't be Splinched.

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Remus was thankful that, despite Severus' unexpected but welcome gesture, he had managed to Apparate them successfully a short distance from the falls, and his heart thrummed as he released Severus, the smell of him still swimming in Remus' senses. He wanted his visitor to have the full impact of the spectacular scenery, and as they approached the rim of the falls, they were greeted by the roar of the water as they walked along the trail. They stopped at the top of the waterfall and gazed down to the aquamarine waters in the pool below. The sheer drop of the water still made Remus slightly dizzy as he considered the two hundred foot drop of the water before it churned the surface of the pool at the foot of the falls. The roar of the water as it rushed past them caused the ground beneath their feet to shake with the power of its flow, and Remus again remembered the first time he'd ever seen these falls.

When he first arrived at the canyon, he had stayed close to his home, unwilling to do more than wallow in his hurt and despair. After a few weeks, the spirits had helped him enough that he was able to think with a clearer head, but he still felt a certain emptiness inside. He had resigned himself to the feeling and instead had turned his thoughts and his focus to exploring his surroundings. It was during one of those trips that he had walked into the bookstore that lay a short distance from his home. He entered it a bit nervously, but was soon warmed by the friendly smiles of the staff and customers. Impressed by the vast array of books and souvenir cards, he had browsed for several minutes before his hand came to rest on a folded map detailing the waterfalls in the area. He scanned the names and his stomach had twisted slightly at the name: Mooney Falls. Without hesitation, he had purchased the map and taken it home, where he opened it out on his table and just stared at it. The map was designed for tourists and hikers in particular and listed the different stages of the hike to the waterfall as well as a brief history of the place. Remus read and re-read the map and had fallen asleep at the table that night. When he awoke the following morning, he had known as surely as he knew his own name that a trip to the falls was necessary.

Transfiguring the required equipment had been surprisingly easy, as everything was detailed in one of the guide books from the store and Remus was able to observe hikers as they made their way past him. He had cast a Notice-Me-Not charm on himself and accompanied a small group of hikers to the falls. Initially, he had been very nervous of the sheer size of the descent and especially the rickety-looking chains and ladders, but the others had made their way down with few problems and he had steeled himself. Taking the example set by the others, he had slowly descended the chains facing the rock, and there was a part where he had to lower himself by the chains to get to the next foot hold. Many times during his harrowing journey, his heart had felt as though it was about to leap out of his throat, until finally he made his way down the wooden ladder at the very end of the hike. He'd stood on the sandy ground at the bottom and had tried to stop his body from shaking, but the adrenaline continued to pump through his system for a while longer. He smiled to himself at the screams and hollers of the group as they congratulated each other on a successful descent, and then he had walked away from them, content to explore the area alone.

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Severus had not travelled to many places during his life, and he'd certainly never been anywhere like this. He stretched his arm out into the swirling mist, and the droplets caressed his skin with gentle touches of welcome. Lupin merely looked at him, but Severus almost couldn't formulate the words to describe the feeling of being here, surrounded by the evidence of the power of nature and the ever-present sense of the ancient forces.

'How did you find the falls?'

'I found a map at the bookstore. The falls seem to be quite popular with visitors.' Lupin's eyes glowed golden in the sun's rays, and Severus' stomach twisted as he realized just how much he'd missed simple conversations with this man.

'I never thought of you as the hiking type,' he snorted sardonically, still unable to stop himself from being...*him*, the sarcastic bastard that had caused the fracture of their relationship so long ago.

Remus grinned self-deprecatingly. 'Surely you don't think that with a name like Mooney Falls I wouldn't take at least one look.'

'Do you come here often?'

Lupin shook his head. 'Only once,' he replied noncommittally.

'Why?'

'Only needed it once.'

*Needed.* Severus mulled over Lupin's choice of the word and wondered why he had needed it and just what he had found. Then again, everybody needed something at some point in their lives. Why would the werewolf be any different?

He looked back at the falls and the swirling mists danced before him, enticingly beckoning him into the depths, and he felt the ancient magic very strongly here, almost fluid in its form as it washed over him, urging him gently onward.

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Remus started down the uneven path, walking slowly over the moist and slippery ground and gripping the chains for support. Severus grumbled softly behind and he chuckled, knowing how completely out of his element the man was. They made their way across small ledges and through the first of two narrow tunnels which felt very claustrophobic and uncomfortable, and even Severus' mutterings were swallowed by the stone walls. Eventually they emerged from the second tunnel and stood side by side as they glanced over the edge of a sheer cliff. The noise of the water was much louder now, roaring past their ears with an eager *rush*, almost pulling them forward and down, urging them towards the crisp blue waters. Remus looked on as Severus carefully inspected the chains in the rock and the steep descent and tried to hide his smile at the incredulous look on the man's face.

'Surely we're not going any further, Lupin. You can't be serious.'

Remus looked into Severus' squinting eyes and laughed despite himself. 'I'm afraid so. Please, allow me.' He watched Severus carefully for any signs of resistance as he turned and took hold of him, ensured that his grip was properly secure, and then concentrated on the ground around the base of the waterfall and Disapparated.

The two men arrived moments later on the rocks at the edge of the pool, and Remus smiled as he released Severus, regarding him amusedly as the normally taciturn man looked with thinly disguised interest at the mist that swirled around them. They spent a while admiring the long column of water, and Remus relished the mist as it slowly caressed his face and body, soothing him with its cooling touch until his clothes and skin were drenched. He noticed that the thin fabric of Severus' clothing clung to his chest and legs, and the prowling beast inside Remus stirred, his eyes flickering over the tall, lean body before him as he licked his lips expectantly.

~ ~ ~

Severus enjoyed the fine mist of the falls that dusted their hair and eyelashes, but he was soon soaked to the skin, as was Lupin. He glanced around and was surprised at their total privacy, although he surmised that it was still rather early for visitors, and he was surprised when Lupin began to disrobe, laying his shirt out on the rocks that were already bathed in sunlight. He quirked an eyebrow in disbelief as the man sat on the stones and removed his shoes and trousers, then, completely naked, Lupin

eased his sinewy body into the shimmering water at the waterfall's end. Severus shivered as a ripple of arousal ran through his body and watched, mesmerised, as Lupin ducked his head under the water repeatedly before disappearing beneath the surface, only to appear moments later at the pool's edge closest to where Severus stood.

'Come on, Severus, join me.'

Purely out of habit, Severus was about to drop a sarcastic remark but realized that he didn't really want to. It would almost seem out of place with the roaring of the waterfall, and he felt at peace here, surrounded by water and enshrined by the floating mists. The only feeling remotely comparable to this was during the final battle when Albus' phoenix had circled the area and his song had lent a moment of peace and a feeling of wellbeing in the midst of the horror and fighting. Severus had felt a swelling of hope then, safety and purpose in a way he'd never experienced before. This felt similar, comforting, *right*.

Severus quickly disrobed and lowered himself gingerly into the pool, taking a moment to allow his heated body to adjust to the cool water. He noticed that Lupin's gaze never wavered as he followed Severus' every movement with his eyes, even as they stood together under the falls, allowing the water beat down upon them in sweet punishment for untold sins.

They enjoyed the pool for several minutes before beginning their climb over exposed rocks as they explored one of the caves made by the water. Severus became increasingly aroused as Lupin's taut, thin body moved through the wilderness, giving the impression of an animal in its natural habitat. He was unable to hide his erection and didn't want to; the Hopi magic surged around him and he growled deep in his throat, causing Lupin to turn around in surprise. Severus quickly closed the distance between them and backed him up gently against the smooth rock where the water had rubbed away the roughness. Lupin's eyes were bright and dilated and his breaths shallow, his skin flushed despite the coolness of the water, and Severus knew that the time was right, the moment was now, and he pressed his body against Lupin's, leaning against the warm, hairy chest as he kissed him deeply.

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Remus was surprised, but he responded willingly. He had felt Severus' sexual tension since earlier that morning, and he suspected that the native magic was encouraging it, in fact, he was sure of it. The wolf was closer to the surface in the days approaching the full moon, but still, he couldn't only blame the moon for the sensations and feelings that shivered through his body as his former lover reminded him of everything that had been good in their relationship. Severus' tongue was hot in his mouth, searching, caressing, his lips insistent against Remus' neck, chin, ears and his hands were everywhere, touching, feeling, leaving burning trails of fire along his skin wherever they passed. He shifted against Severus' wet skin and moaned into his mouth at the delicious slide of their cocks against each other, running his hands down Severus' back and grasping his hips. He rocked their bodies together and received an answering groan from the mouth that by then was sucking on his neck. Gods! Remus' body virtually vibrated with his need; he was on fire and the burn was strong and sweet. He was powerless against the magic that was taking over and sweeping them both along on the current of its power.

From the fringes of his consciousness, Remus heard sounds filtering through the roar of the water and they broke apart, his body wanting only Severus' touch. He dragged his mind together with effort and looked up to see a group of hikers about to begin their descent. At the same time, a blanket of grey clouds enshrouded the pool and the temperature dropped rapidly. Remus shivered and noticed that both his and Severus' skin had erupted in goose bumps. Not far off, thunder rolled and a stout breeze washed through the area, carrying with it a strong shower of rain. The hikers stopped at the cliff and waited, and Remus could clearly hear them shouting and laughing in the deluge. Severus moved away from him as their moment dissipated and hurriedly cast drying and Impervius Charms on both of them as well as their clothes. Remus sighed softly as Severus looked at him and he shivered at the memory of the heat in his gaze.

'Let me.' The words weren't spoken as a question, and Severus' tone was full of meaning. Stomach fluttering dangerously, Remus slowly nodded, and the strong arms enveloped him.

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TBC

## Six

### *Chapter 6 of 9*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

A/N: Standard disclaimer applies. Thanks to my betas JaneAverage, charmed310 and Snapeophile for all their hard work.

Remus gritted his teeth as he scrubbed the shampoo through his hair and ducked his head under the running water. He knew better than to be so aggressive he always felt everything more acutely the closer it got to the full moon when the animal's instincts rose to the surface. Smells became sharper, sounds were louder, and his skin was much more sensitive than usual. His mind focused on the sensations as it followed the stream of bubbles and water as it ran down his skin and felt each rivulet as it travelled down his body, mapping its way like the tributaries of the Colorado River below. He opened his eyes and looked at the bubbly mass as it ran down the drain, wishing that he could wash his tension away that easily.

He shook his head as he stepped out of the shower and grabbed a towel, running it hastily over his legs and lower body before he pulled on a soft pair of blue jeans. As he left his bedroom, he reached for his wand and tucked it into a special side pocket that he'd added to all his clothes, running the towel over his chest and back as he walked into the living area where Severus sat on the couch. He dried his hair roughly but peered out from under the towel when he heard Severus clear his throat. He noticed that, although Severus held a book in his lap, the dark eyes flickered over Remus' half-naked body, and for a moment, his flesh reacted as goose bumps broke out over his skin at the memory of what that look used to mean. There was a time when they both would have taken advantage of that interest, but he was edgy and irritable today, and Severus' attention felt unwanted.

'Any more plans for today?' Severus' tone was neutral but even that annoyed Remus.

'No, I thought I'd stay in and prepare.'

'Prepare?' The sarcasm dripped from every syllable, and Remus gritted his teeth as he took a deep breath through his nostrils and forced himself to relax.

Although he had become rather accustomed to Severus' presence in his home, as the night of the full moon approached, Remus almost wished that he would leave, even if only for a few days, so that he could build back his strength in order to handle the complications of their relationship. Remus hated his monthly transformations, but at least when he lived alone, he had no audience. After their short but intense tryst at Mooney Falls, nothing further had happened, even though he had certainly wanted more. Perhaps the mood had only been a product of the magic and the falls, or maybe their journey back home, albeit short, had been enough to rock Severus back into reality. Whatever it was, the man had become silent and a bit withdrawn. Remus had been surprised and dismayed by Severus' sudden mood change, but his gentle

questions had been met with polite but firm answers. In the days that followed, there was little if any change, although they conversed as they had before. Remus felt wary once more, and as each day passed and the moon rose stronger each night, he felt that they were at a stalemate, with neither of them willing to make the next move. Stubborn that word fit Severus Snape perfectly.

'The moon rises full tomorrow, Severus, and I'm already late making my brew.'

'You have a Potions master in your very house, and you bother yourself with herbal concoctions?' True to form, the man just wouldn't give the matter a rest.

'I've managed fine for years without you, *Potions master*,' Remus sniped as he savagely tucked the towel into the waistband of his jeans and stalked across to the counter by the window to begin his preparations. He hardly dared think of them as "potions," but they certainly helped, both to keep him calm during the transformation and with the pain afterwards. He decided to start with the wound-cleaning and soothing solution by chopping and then crushing the bark of the willow tree that he'd harvested at the base of the canyon. He placed the pieces into the bubbling pot then added some of the sap from the mesquite plant and lowered the fire, carefully adding drops of lavender and honey and allowing the mixture to simmer as he stirred it occasionally. Fifteen minutes later he removed the pot from the heat and carefully decanted the cooling yellow liquid into several glass bottles. He was so engrossed in his work that he almost didn't hear Severus' words.

'What would it take for you come back, Lupin?'

'Severus, I've told you before, I'm not going back.' Remus felt the muscles in his neck and back tense as they began the argument all over again. His tone was slightly harsh and he knew it, but he was on edge.

'There must be something. The Ministry has re-written the laws so you have nothing to fear. You can teach or help me research a cure.'

'It's got nothing to do with fear, so leave it, all right?'

'I'm serious. Come back with me.'

'Look, I'm not going back. Now *LEAVE* it,' Remus growled.

An uneasy silence hung in the empty space between them, and Remus concentrated on washing and drying his hands instead of clenching them into fists.

'Would you come back for this?' Something in Severus' tone belied his casual statement, and Remus turned, his gaze falling on the bottle of murky brown liquid that Severus held in his hand. Carelessly, the Potions master turned the bottle this way and that, and Remus shivered as the rays of the sunlight glinted off the glass.

Wolfsbane.

Remus had not touched the potion in almost two years. At first, he had almost been driven insane, both by the knowledge that he would lose himself to the wolf every month and by the horror when he saw what he had done. Fortunately, he had only killed small animals, but still, the danger was too great. Not long afterwards, he had gathered what ingredients he could and set about making potions of his own. None of them had ever been the equal of Wolfsbane, but through trial and error, they had enabled him to remain unconscious or at the very least passive through most of the transformation in his warded and Disillusioned home.

Even now, the primal pull of the wolf strained inside Remus, and he knew that he should be somewhere else. He was angry, and he felt the animal dangerously fighting for its freedom, but he tried desperately to quell the beating of that savage heart. His eyelids flickered for a moment the temptation was there but still, Wolfsbane could no more solve his dilemma than it could bring his loved ones back from the dead. He twisted the towel brutally in his hands and swallowed, but his throat was dry and his voice was little more than a rasp.

'No, Severus, not even for that.'

Remus could see the fury as it flashed to life in Severus' eyes and saw it reflected in his harsh features.

'What in the hell are you hiding from, Lupin? Are you waiting for something? Or someone? Who, Lupin? Who are you waiting for? Waiting for Padfoot and Prongs to come frolic in the moonlight with y '

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Severus was furious at Lupin's stubborn refusal to consider the options that he was presenting. No sooner did his anger translate into words than they were cut off as Lupin flung the towel aside and lunged towards him. With his animal strength, he slammed Severus into the wall and drove his full body weight into Severus' chest, pinning him to the wall with his forearm. Severus winced as his head slammed against the hard wood, and he felt Lupin's growling breaths, hot against his neck. The man was shaking, his rage palpable, and Severus could almost see the reflection of the moon in Lupin's eyes. He was a fool, such a fool! The moon was barely a day away, but he could almost feel its rise he knew that he should never anger the man this close to the full.

Severus' heart beat a frantic tattoo in his chest as he fought to catch his breath, and for the first time in entirely too long, he was truly afraid. Not only afraid of what Lupin was capable of he himself had spent decades researching werewolves and their habits but afraid that he wouldn't recognise anyone or anything without the Wolfsbane. Lupin growled and, despite himself, Severus shivered, but he was still unable to break free of the man's iron grip.

'You will *never* speak of them again, do you understand me? Never talk about them as if you knew them, because you will *NEVER* understand the bond we shared. Now get out, *Snape*, and get out of my life.'

Severus tried to speak but was unable to do anything more than brace himself as Lupin threw him out of the open door and slammed it shut behind him. Severus landed hard on the ground outside the cottage and gasped as the wind was knocked out of his lungs. His face and hands burned from where they had scraped against the rocks on the path, and he hastily got to his feet as he looked around for any sign that he had been noticed.

Fucking werewolf. Fucking canyon. Fucking *fuck!*

Severus roared in his frustration, but suddenly it was difficult to breathe and his skin was crawling, not just the surface but all of it, every layer and every cell. He clawed at himself in an effort to make it stop, ripping his clothes and his skin as his insides turned first to fire, then to ice. His breaths were coming in gasps now, harsh, laboured puffs of air that seared his lungs and barely sustained his consciousness. His mind shrieked in a silent scream as he collapsed against Lupin's door, clawing and scratching the wood until his fingernails were split and bleeding. He fought against the growing darkness and desperately hoped that he would not die before...

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Remus felt the power of the wolf surge inside him as he slammed the door. His chest burned with the rage that Severus could too easily pull from him, and he paced back and forth in front of the fireplace as he sought to calm himself. He heard scratching on his door and tried to ignore it, but the unpleasant tingling on his skin prompted him to answer the frightened and somehow frantic sounds. He flung the door wide, prepared for another screaming match with Severus.

He was not prepared for the sight at his feet.

Severus' face was ghostly pale, his eyes wide and staring as he silently gasped for breath. His fingers were clawed as they still grabbed at nothing, his fingernails ripped and bloodied where he had used them on Remus' door. There were deep, bleeding scratches on his skin and his face, and his clothes were little more than shreds of fabric that hung on him in tattered scraps. Remus knew that the canyon's magic was extremely displeased with Severus and was now exacting its punishment. His stomach lurched sickeningly as he realized that Severus' life was in grave danger, and he wrapped his arms around the panicking man as he Apparated them both.

The confluence point where the Little Colorado River met the Colorado was the Hopi Indians' sacred place. Remus had been there once before during his early explorations and knew from his research that this was where their magic was strongest. A naturally-occurring outcropping of rock in that part of the river with a smooth, flat surface resembled an altar of sorts, and it was at this spot that Remus and Severus arrived.

Remus ripped the remnants of the clothes from Severus' body and cast a Cushioning Charm on the rock, laying the injured man on the flat surface as he moaned weakly in pain. He looked around wildly as he searched the silent canyon walls for a way to call out to the spirits and ask for their help. He knew that Severus could very well die, as the angered spirits were too strong for one man to battle, and he felt that he should make some sort of sacrifice. Searching his deepest heart, he opened his soul to the spirits.

'Mighty Spirits of the canyon, spare this man. Take me. I willingly sacrifice my own life so that he may live. I have found happiness here, but please, allow him to live and be happy. Take me in his stead.'

He began to feel the telltale tingling on his own skin and suspected that the canyon's magic was displeased with him also. He didn't understand why he had meant every word of his plea. Remus *had* found his peace here, but Severus still had to make his own way to salvation. The tingling of his skin got worse which was unusual, yet he continued to ask the spirits for help. Perhaps he had assumed wrongly. Perhaps the spirits didn't want Severus to die; they had made their wishes known that day at Mooney Falls, but both he and Severus had been too stubborn to notice. Now they were at the confluence point of two rivers, in a place where the two separate bodies flowed into one and became whole.

Remus knelt over Severus' barely moving body and checked his breathing, which was shallow. His pale skin shone with sweat, and his limbs were limp. Suddenly, a wave of realization washed over Remus, and he knew what to do. He searched Severus' clothes for his wand and felt a spike of electricity through his body as he ran the tip of the wand over his wrist. He winced as his hot blood spurted out from the wound onto Severus and the rock beneath them, and he hoped desperately that his blood would not contaminate the man. Hastily, Remus healed the cut and leaned over Severus as he held his pale wrist.

'Trust me,' he whispered, even though he knew that the man probably couldn't hear him. He withdrew his own wand from its place in his jeans and sliced into Severus' unresisting flesh, fresh blood flowing and joining his on the rock, pooling and running into the crevasses like a miniature river. He quickly healed Severus' wound and knelt beside him, turning his own face towards the heavens and silently imploring the magic of the canyon to release them both. There was no response from Severus and Remus was terrified to think that he was too late. Without conscious thought, the animal in him vied for supremacy as it fought to protect its mate.

'NO!' he yelled, his voice a howl of anguish. 'NO! He is MINE! Leave him, he's MINE!'

He frantically flung his body over Severus', spreading out and shielding him, protecting him from the sun, from the elements and from the magic that sought to exact its revenge. His weight must have been crushing Severus, but he didn't care as his body moulded to the flesh beneath him, and he held the man against him, his heart feeling as though it would burst as he wept.

Eventually, his sobs quietened, and he nearly jumped backwards as Severus groaned beneath him. In a heartbeat, he had climbed off him and wrapped his arms around Severus, hugging him to his chest as his own body shook with relief.

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Severus was used to pain, but this was completely different from the Cruciatius. The crawling of his flesh and the burning of his body sapped his magic in a way he'd never experienced before. He felt weak, tired, and he knew that the spirits were truly angered by him. Once more, he had lost: lost the fight, lost Lupin, lost his soul. He was tired of loss, so bloody tired...

He was vaguely aware of a voice coming from what seemed like miles away, and the voice called to him. He felt rather than heard anger and inarticulate screams, then suddenly there was a weight on his chest, large, soft, comforting, and he relaxed. The weight would take him, then, would eventually crush him, and he would be no more, and there would be no more loss. His only regret was that he wouldn't be able to tell Lupin how sorry he was.

He felt a presence growing stronger, closer, more powerful, and much more insistent. His dawning consciousness brought with it the distinct impression that he was lying naked on a hard surface and that Remus Lupin was lying on top of him. Although his body still hurt, Lupin's weight upon his chest was pleasant and brought back even more pleasant memories. He groaned as he tried to move, and strong arms enveloped him as Lupin held him to his chest. Severus inhaled the scent of the man and weakly wrapped his own arms around the scarred torso, and they sat together for many minutes until Lupin's shaking gradually subsided.

Severus looked around them warily and noticed the drying blood on the stone as well as the splashes on his own skin and Lupin's. He felt weak and completely sapped of magical energy as he leaned back and surveyed the scene. His wand lay on a pile of clothes, and the maddening crawling of his skin had stopped. His body ached horribly everywhere and every movement only aggravated his condition. He surmised that the blood covering both himself and Lupin must have been his own, and he noted the fresh pink scar on his wrist just below the faded Mark. Severus was beyond exhaustion, but once more, he felt the canyon's gentle and harmonious magic as it washed over them. He began to feel light-headed and struggled to meet Lupin's gaze.

'What have you done?' he whispered as his world greyed out.

TBC...

## Seven

*Chapter 7 of 9*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

Disclaimer: Standard stuff. Jo owns, I don't. Don't sue. Not worth it.

A/N: Thanks to my kick-arse beta team of JaneAverage, charmed310 and snapeophile for helping the boys along their way, with a special wink to Jane for a bit of this chapter. Enjoy

Chapter 7

Remus felt as though he was unable to let go of Severus. He had been almost out of his mind with worry that he might lose the man who he now held to his chest so tightly, and his stomach roiled and his heart hurt at the thought of Severus' limp body lying on the rocks. *What if I hadn't been able to save him? What if...*

Remus didn't want to think "what if." He knew that they had both hurt each other, but he realized that the canyon's magic wanted them together as a whole, a single entity. He inhaled Severus' unique scent and closed his eyes as he surrendered to the knowledge that he completely and utterly loved the man in his arms. The canyon had tried to show him, had tried to tell him, that first night when he saw Severus on the canyon's rim, the day at Mooney Falls, just last night... but he had been fighting against himself, against his pride, against all the negatives of their history. It was a losing battle.

The Hopi magic bathed him in its benevolence, almost as though he was being christened anew and welcomed into the world of the living. He felt Severus shift in his arms and released him slightly as he leaned backwards and looked around.

'What have you done?' Severus' voice was unsteady as their eyes met for a moment.

Remus' body erupted in goose bumps at Severus' words, and he gently lowered the injured man back onto the rocks. 'Saved your life, you foolish man,' he murmured as he bundled Severus' trousers into a rough pillow and placed it under his head. Remus realized that Severus had slipped back into unconsciousness but was still bleeding from his wounds. He was definitely in no condition to be moved, and Remus searched his mind feverishly for a solution to their problem. They were thirty miles from his home, Severus was very weak and his own magic was barely enough to do basic spells. He had to do something to heal Severus, and quickly.

His potions!

He remembered that he had finished making the wound-washing solution just that morning, and it seemed like years ago with all that had transpired since. Remus withdrew his wand as he fixed the image of the three bottles clearly in his mind; he saw them with crystal clarity, the pale yellow liquid gleaming in the sunlight through the window. Taking a deep breath, he concentrated and delved deep into himself, searching for and harnessing his magical power, then he exhaled and pointed his wand in the direction of home.

*'Accio bottles!'*

He felt the magic pour out of him, almost like a funnel, from his stomach through his chest and out his arm into his wand, helped along by the spirits of the Hopi Indians. He hoped that it would be enough.

Shortly afterwards he felt rather than saw the bottles whizzing towards him, and he caught them reflexively with shaky hands. He quickly tore the remnants of Severus' shirt into strips and conjured a shallow bowl into which he gathered some water from the river's edge. He opened one of the bottles and poured it into the bowl, then cast a Warming Charm on the liquid before he dipped the cloth into it.

Remus started with Severus' hands. Slowly, gently he ran the cloth over the battered and split fingernails, then along the thin, delicate fingers and pale wrists. He wet the cloth again and washed Severus' forearms, moving gently across the wounds there before continuing up his arms to his shoulders. Severus murmured, and Remus knew that the healing properties of the willow bark were doing their job. Somehow, the warm, gentling presence of the Hopi spirits helped, and Remus suspected that their magic combined with his in order to heal the injured flesh.

He continued washing Severus' skin, tracing the sharp angles of his face and the lines of every scar, both fresh and old, re-learning the man's body. Severus shifted slightly in his sleep and sighed as Remus ran the warm cloth along his collarbones and across his chest, then along his breastbone and down his stomach. Remus caressed Severus' body with his gaze as his hands soothed the wounds, and the fluid flowed like a river over the inert body and across the large rock, slowly washing away the blood and the dirt until all that remained was pale, shining skin.

Remus continued his ministrations along Severus' lower body, gently parting his legs and running the cloth down the insides of his thighs. He noticed that Severus' cock was slightly erect; no doubt a physiological response to the attention to his groin area. Even mostly flaccid, Severus' penis was still impressive, and Remus licked his lips at the memories of the past. He tried to control his body's interest and continued along Severus' strong, thin legs, remembering how they had felt when they wrapped around his own body in passion. He knelt at Severus' feet and washed first one, then the other, slowly and lovingly. Finally satisfied, he cast first a Drying Spell on Severus and then another Warming Charm before he replenished the water in the bowl and hastily washed their blood from his own body.

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Severus knew that he was dreaming because the delightful feeling of warm water and gentle cloth on his body could only come from dreams. He floated, awash in the healing sensations of hands and water combined with the gentle scent of honey and lavender. Slowly the pain began to fade, and his aches became inconsequential, yet the gentle roughness of the cloth on his skin and the individual paths that the water took as it flowed over his body sent shivers of delight in their wake. The warmth of the water continued, first on his chest, then down his body. He was dimly aware of a stirring in his loins as the warmth spread down his legs and to his feet, and images of Lupin's hands on his body danced through his consciousness. He heard a murmured charm and he was once more dry and warm, but then the hands were gone.

Severus opened his eyes and squinted into the sunlight as he tried to find his bearings. The towering canyon walls offered him no information, and he looked around just in time to see Lupin remove his jeans. His eyes narrowed as he concentrated on the interplay of muscles along the scarred back and legs. Lupin had never looked so... good! Perhaps it was Severus' most recent brush with death, or perhaps it was the influence of the bloody canyon's magic, but he noticed with appreciation that even though Lupin's manhood was only half-erect, Severus was mesmerised by the way it bobbed up and down as the man moved. He couldn't prevent the shiver of desire that ran up his spine as he ogled Lupin washing himself clean, and watched as the water flowed red, then pink, and finally clear as it ran across their rock and into the river.

He jumped a little in surprise when Lupin turned and fixed golden-brown eyes on him and bathed him with that familiar wolfish grin. Severus attempted to sit up, but Lupin was beside him in a flash, his face creased with concern, and Severus' skin tingled wherever the warm hands touched him. He felt decidedly off-balance, both physically and emotionally, and moderately concerned that his naked body betrayed his interest.

'Welcome back, Severus.' The concern in Lupin's voice belied his jovial words.

'Where are we? How did I get here?'

'That's a long story, one which I'm certain you'll enjoy once I get us home.'

'Us' and 'home.' The words caused Severus' heart to clench so tightly that he feared he might not survive.

'Not yet. I'm not ready yet,' he rasped, licking his dry lips.

'We must get back, Severus. The sun will be setting soon and the temperatures will drop very quickly.'

'Please, a few more minutes.'

'Are you certain that you're all right?' Lupin moved closer to Severus, his eyebrows creased in worry as he sat beside him and conjured a cup with water. Severus drank slowly, and the cooling liquid helped to settle him somewhat. Murmuring his thanks, he leaned against the strong, warm body and let his head fall back, placing his forehead against the underside of Lupin's jaw. Lupin started to move, but Severus didn't want to break their contact. It had been too long since they were together this way, unguarded, and he turned, burying his face in Lupin's neck and inhaling the warm scent of his skin. As Severus breathed in the very essence of him, he felt an inexplicable need, that indefinable *pull* that always occurred with Lupin and nobody else. He ran his fingers along the sharp angles of Lupin's collarbone and revelled in the feel of his skin and the way the man's body reacted. Severus followed the path again with his tongue, relishing the taste of Lupin's skin. A shuddering intake of breath told Severus all he needed to know.

Lupin wanted him too.

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Remus felt as though he had been lost forever, and to hold Severus against him, skin touching skin, and to feel their hearts beat in unison was something of his dreams. To feel Severus' tongue on his neck and on his lips, sucking and licking as he asked for entrance was pure bliss. He heard Severus' moan as their tongues met and entwined, sending a shiver and a burning need throughout his body. He cradled Severus' face in his hands and kissed him again, longer this time, pouring all his longing and want and need into it, hoping that Severus would understand.

Severus answered with all the passion of their early days as lovers. He thrust his tongue into Remus' mouth again, tasting, sucking, wanting, yearning, and a shiver caressed Remus' body. The sheer force of everything that was Severus felt as though it was brought to bear in his kiss, and Remus moaned as Severus chased wet, hot kisses down his neck and chest while his hands roamed over his body. Remus couldn't help but picture those slim fingers, strong yet somehow almost delicate as they chopped ingredients or when they smoothed along his own skin, bringing pleasure in their wake.

Thankful for the cushioning charm that still held, Remus twisted his body and, without breaking their kiss, laid Severus back down on the rock. He had made a request of the Hopi spirits and they had seen it fit to allow Severus his life, and Remus felt the urge no, the *compulsion* to reaffirm their relationship and explore every inch of the man. He ran his hands along the skin of Severus' torso, carefully tracing over the still-fresh scars and smiling softly as Severus shuddered and breathed out in what could almost be a moan. Somehow, loud noises seemed out of place here, but worship seemed to be a necessity, so Remus would worship Severus' body.

Remus stretched out beside the man and ran his fingers along the many sharp planes of his body, kissing any bits of skin he could find near his lips. He ran his fingertips down the mid line of Severus' chest and stomach, before making a circuit of the base of his cock which stood out of the mass of curls. He didn't touch the erect penis but instead pulled gently on the hairs he found there.

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Severus' stomach muscles quivered as Lupin drew maddening lines and circles on his flesh. Gods, he was so impossibly hard, almost as though his body needed to assure itself that he was still alive. Every pore seemed to be open, every nerve-ending seemed alive with pleasure and magic and *life!* He tensed expectantly as Lupin's fingers took a path past his navel and down towards his cock, and then hissed softly in frustration or anticipation when the werewolf merely traced around his straining length and pulled on the hairs instead. Oddly, the almost-pain sensation only heightened Severus' arousal, and he could feel himself vibrating, perhaps spurred on by the magic, perhaps only by his own need for the man and pleasure, but whatever it was, Lupin responded with only a low chuckle.

'Patience, Severus. This feast isn't something to be rushed.'

Severus flung one arm over his face, ostensibly to hide his face from the sun but really to try to keep his hands off of Lupin as he continued his exploration past Severus' groin and down his left thigh. He felt the little pin-pricks of pulled hairs as Lupin continued to tease, but finally he couldn't stand it any longer he had to touch something! He reached out and slid his hand up Lupin's back, content for the moment with the sun-warmed skin he found there.

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Remus smiled to himself as he finally allowed his mouth to follow the path of his fingertips as they wound their way down Severus' thigh and calf. The soft breeze that blew around them cooled the line of moisture. He slowly made his way up the right calf and thigh before brushing his face softly against the tip of Severus' erect and very hard penis, smearing a line of slick fluid along his cheek. He lowered his face alongside Severus' and positioned his mouth next to the man's ear.

'Lick it off,' he whispered, turning his head to the side and offering his cheek.

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Severus shuddered with a kind of pleasure and moaned as the sound of Lupin's husky voice next to his ear, the soft puff of breath and the *meaning* of those words went straight to his cock. He parted his lips and ran the flat of his tongue slowly along the flesh from the corner of Lupin's mouth towards his ear, following the glistening line of his own precome and tasting himself against the backdrop of Lupin's skin. He nuzzled softly against Lupin's ear for a moment until Lupin turned his head and met Severus' lips in an open-mouthed kiss, wet and messy with pure desire. The kiss only lasted a few seconds before Lupin's mouth was on him again, his neck, his chest, a kiss above his navel and then... a warm moist heat enveloped his cock and Severus cried out with the pure agony of the pleasure. He spread his legs instinctively, not even knowing who he was anymore as Lupin's hands were everywhere, along his chest and abdomen, spreading out flat and running his palms along Severus' groin before sliding along his inner thigh and hooking one leg over his shoulder.

Severus opened himself up to Lupin, as much as he physically could, but he gave over complete control to whatever the man wanted to do with him. He was awash with sensations he couldn't even name let alone acknowledge, but everything was good, powerful, *right*.

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Remus chuckled softly at Severus' reaction and eased himself down further between his legs, enjoying the weight of Severus' leg over his shoulder. He felt the pressure as Severus' heel dug into his back, urging him closer, forward, more... and he slid one hand under him and shifted his body a bit closer, lifting Severus' leg and gently parting his cheeks, allowing himself a bit more room as he sucked on Severus' cock. Remus aligned one of his fingers along the length of Severus' cock and sucked on them both for a few moments. After slicking his digit copiously with saliva, he continued the attention to Severus' rigid member while he pressed his finger against the man's puckered opening. The throaty groans echoed through the canyon and spurred his own desire and need on to greater heights, and he increased the suction while gently pressing further until his finger slipped through the tight ring of muscle.

'Lupin. Gods. Just...'

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Severus thought he would come just from the suction on his cock and the feel of Lupin's body between his legs and the skin beneath his hand, but when Lupin's finger slid inside him he thought he would literally explode. The swirling sensations inside his body intensified and he began to writhe, wanting to grind himself down onto that finger and thrust himself up into that mouth, and as the suction increased and the finger began to slide in and out of him, he began to shudder, gripping Lupin more firmly with his leg over the man's shoulder and wanting, needing it more, faster, more, oh, gods but it was so, so good, everything, every single thing funnelled down into this one moment as the barrage of sensation carried him closer to the brink, and then Lupin twisted the finger inside Severus, crooking it and rubbing against what could only be his prostate, and Severus exploded.

He felt a rush of energy or sensation or something from deep within his core as it coalesced and burst out from him. His orgasm seemed to go on forever, and pulse after pulse wracked his body as Lupin continued to suck him, swallow him down even as he fucked him with his finger and pressed against the gland, and Severus thought he might die.

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Remus loved the feel of Severus as he approached climax the way his legs trembled and the taste of him was different, but when he felt Severus begin to tense he knew he was close. He crooked his finger just so and rubbed against his prostate as he increased the suction, feeling the magical forces wash against them both and *knowing* that this was right, that it was perfectly and absolutely right, and then Severus came, his exhalation a long moan of pleasure, and Remus swallowed, taking every drop of the man's come, sucking him even as he continued to writhe and moan. He was awash with benevolence and light, and he felt the oft-comforting presence of the canyon's magic as he kissed his way back up Severus' body to gaze into his heavily hooded eyes.

'Fuck, Lupin,' Severus said shakily, and Remus smiled at the way Severus was still spread out on display for him, thoroughly sated and utterly debauched. His cock throbbed at just the thought of what else he could do to Severus right here, right now, but the light was beginning to fade and Remus would rather continue their tryst in his own home.

'Yes, definitely, but now it's time to get you back home.'

Severus swallowed and gestured towards him. 'What about you?'

Remus followed Severus' gaze to his own cock, still hard and almost painful, and he smiled.

'What would you suggest, Severus?' he asked, even as the magic and his own body exulted in the possibilities. Severus' eyes narrowed, and he flushed even more with desire as he opened his legs wider.

'I want to see you bring yourself off.'

Remus' cock couldn't have become any harder, could it? But he was so aroused that he felt as though he was almost bursting. He grasped his cock and closed his eyes as he moaned with pleasure, sinking down slowly to his knees between Severus' ankles. He spread his legs slightly as he ran the palm of his hand over the tip of his cock, gathering the fluid there and using it as lubrication. He heard Severus' breath hissing through his clenched teeth as the man raised himself up on his elbows to watch, and Remus felt as though he couldn't get much higher. He was already so close that it didn't take long for him to reach his trembling climax, and as he came, spurting over his hand, Severus' legs and the rock upon which they lay, he locked eyes with Severus, the magic swirled around them, and he understood. The look in Severus' eyes suggested that he understood too. The Hopi magic had accepted them here in this most sacred of places and had given them its blessing.

Shakily Remus moved forward on his hands and knees as he crawled up Severus' body to kiss him thoroughly and deeply. After many minutes Remus gently pulled away and laid his forehead on Severus' shoulder.

'Home?' Severus asked, his voice rough with renewed desire.

'Home.'

Finally, Remus rose to his feet and performed Cleaning Charms over them both. He gathered the few items around them, including their wands, and he felt the weight of Severus' gaze upon him until he wrapped the man in his arms and Apparated them home.

TBC

## Eight

### *Chapter 8 of 9*

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

A/N: Standard disclaimer applies. Thanks to JaneAverage, charmed310 and snapeophile for all their work on this fic. Any mistakes are mine.

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Severus had initially brought the Wolfsbane to coerce Remus into returning to England. He knew that to be without it was tantamount to insanity, and before his own name had been cleared by the Wizengamot and the Ministry, he'd been brewing the potion for Bill and the others. His prowess as a Potions master had been proved time and time again in his servitude to the Dark Lord but this... this was different.

No more darkness. The Ministry had seen to it that he was given everything he required to brew and bottle the Wolfsbane and also paid him handsomely for his efforts. He had made a few modifications to the formula, and only one dose was required in order to be effective. After intensive research, he had also managed to incorporate a Stasis Charm within the potion that would enable it to have a longer shelf-life than previous versions. That allowed him to make larger batches that would last six months and still allow him enough time for his research. It had also enabled him to carry the bottles of Wolfsbane with him on his quest to find Lupin.

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'Take this, Lupin.'

'Severus, don't.'

'I will not beg.'

'Then tell me why. What is this about?'

'It's something I need to... do, Lupin. Something I need to see.'

In all their lives together, as students and later as professors and then lovers, Severus had never been with Lupin when he transformed. The only time Severus had actually seen the werewolf was that fateful night when they were teenagers at Hogwarts, and Black had sent him down to the Shrieking Shack. There was no Wolfsbane back then, and the werewolf had almost killed Severus, and would have, had it not been for Potter's quick intervention.

Truth be told, that encounter had left Severus scarred for life in ways much worse than any of the physical scars that marred his body. He had feared for his young life in a very tangible and visceral way as he stood, transfixed and staring into the eyes of the animal bearing down on him, and had *known* both that he was going to die and that he desperately wanted to live. The absolute fear and inexplicable horror that he had felt that day had only been made worse when he was rescued by Potter. Severus hated that his fear had led to the weakness he had shown, if only to himself, and had vowed never to let himself be weak again.

~~~

Remus looked into the dark eyes of the man he had known most of his life and wondered at yet another facet that he'd only just discovered. Severus hated weakness, both in himself and in others, but that was common knowledge. Remus surmised that Severus was trying to exorcise his own demons, one of which was the werewolf, and as he felt the inevitability of the lunar pull within his body, he knew without needing to consult a calendar that tonight was full. He always felt twitchy in the days leading up to the full moon, and their activities over the past twenty-four hours hadn't distracted him enough. He felt the moon's rise in every cell of his body and looked again at the bottle of Wolfsbane on the table where Severus had left it, sitting between them like a bargaining chip.

Perhaps it was.

Remus' transformations were never pretty he knew that without having to be told. Every month when his bones lengthened and his skin ripped painfully, the torment had been the same. A part of him was thankful for the peaceful oblivion that his own concoctions provided when he would simply go to sleep and wake up after it was all over, but there was always the danger of taking too much or too late. He could hardly remember what it felt like with Wolfsbane in his blood, but a cruel side effect of the potion was that by enabling him to retain his human consciousness during his transformations, he also knew exactly what was happening and was cognisant of every rip and tear as his body mutated. That was his old life, and now Severus was asking him to relive those horrors again and bare his soul as he transformed. Despite how intimate they had been in the past, he still doubted whether he could give Severus what he wanted.

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Severus sat back in his chair and waited as Lupin stared warily at the bottle of brown liquid on the table. He had set it there purposely so that it would be in sight at all times and in the forefront of both their minds because the Wolfsbane represented the cornerstone of their future. Tonight was less about Lupin's taking of the potion and more about Severus being there to deal with the results. Severus wanted this man in his life, no longer willing to hide that fact or to live a double life. He wanted Lupin to be as upfront with him as he'd tried to be, and having bared his own soul to the man, he only hoped that Lupin would in turn bare himself. Lupin's nervousness was painfully obvious despite the man's attempts to conceal it, and Severus knew that it was due to his presence as well as the pull of the moon. He had brought enough Wolfsbane for this month's transformation, but he was prepared to brew a lifetime's supply if that was what it took to gain Lupin's trust once more.

'What do you need to see, Severus?'

'I need to see you, all of you, every part of you, Lupin.'

'You have seen me.' Lupin's voice was hushed, but they both knew that so much more was intimated in that simple statement. Severus kept his voice even and his tone carefully meted.

'I... want to see the... animal as well as the man. They are the two halves of you, Lupin, and I want to know you as a whole.'

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Remus' gut wrenched and he felt sick physically ill and he leaned against the counter for support. Surely Severus could not want to see him as the basest of all creatures, as the loathsome and hated werewolf, as the beast? How could that in any way make things better, and how could Severus presume to then 'know the whole'? Remus felt his heartbeat quicken as his anxiety stirred the power within him, and he looked through the open window onto the rocks of the canyon, reflecting the deep russet hues of the setting sun.

*In a few hours Severus will need to get away,* he thought, almost desperately. *He'll need to find somewhere safe, somewhere that I can't hurt him.* Fear rose in him, and he felt the fine beads of sweat on his forehead as his heart thudded loudly in his chest. 'Severus, I...I just can't. Please, don't ask me to do this.'

The tall man rose from the chair and walked over to where Remus stood and grasped his shoulders comfortingly as he kissed him on the lips, softly, quickly, sighing deeply as he closed his eyes and brought his forehead to rest on Remus' left shoulder.

'It's all right, Lupin, forget it,' came the muffled reply.

But Remus couldn't forget it. He glanced at the reddened rocks outside and felt the stirring of the ancients within his own magic. Instinctively, he realized that, for whatever reason, Severus needed this, and his Gryffindor courage bolstered him. He placed his hand on the bowed head and whispered into his ear. 'No, Severus, wait. I...I'll ... I'll try. I'll take the Wolfsbane.'

He felt the tension in Severus' body at his words and hoped that he'd done the right thing. If Severus wanted it, surely he was man enough to give him what he needed?

'Lupin...'

'Severus, I'll do it.'

'Only if you're certain...'

'I'm not certain of anything, but I'll do what you ask of me.'

Severus' silence spoke more to Remus than any words ever could, and in one swift movement he picked up the bottle of Wolfsbane and downed it in one gulp.

Disgusting, as always.

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Severus shuddered as Lupin upended the potion, swallowing the entire thing quickly and grimaced at the taste. *Merlin, what have I done? Do I really want to go through this?* he asked himself as his heart pounded in his chest, all the while knowing that, yes, he *did* want to, because he completely and unequivocally loved the man. In order to face all his fears, and in particular, Lupin's transformation, he had to see it and understand all that it entailed before he would be able to truly commit to a relationship with both wizard and wolf. Severus sensed tension and anxiety, although whether it came from him or from Lupin he couldn't be sure, but he concentrated on breathing through his nose, keeping it slow and steady, partly to reassure himself and partly to maintain his outer calm. It wouldn't do to have Lupin realize just how unsettling the memories of the werewolf were, how much they had shaped Severus' life since that incident, and how many emotions were tied together by that one night.

Fear the most obvious one. He had been terrified, of that there was no doubt. Loss of life was of secondary importance and much more preferable to *survival*. He had feared the werewolf's bite even as he imagined the sharp teeth sinking into his flesh, the breath hot and angry as tainted blood flowed through his veins, turning him into an even more hated thing. Bad enough that he was misunderstood and reviled by his classmates who thought he knew too much of the Dark Arts, but to *become* a Dark Creature...

Anger he was furious with Potter, not for saving his wretched life, but for inflicting a life debt between them, bound by magic and unbreakable. He had cursed Black and Potter and, damn him, Lupin, for years, convinced that it was an elaborate prank, convinced that the werewolf had been at the forefront of the plan and that their only goal was to destroy him. Potter had been angry with Black and it had stretched for days, but the cur managed to whine his way back into Saint Potter's good graces. Lupin had been thin and pale, his face pinched and worried, but Severus had barely cared, although he had tried not to take notice of the fact that Lupin and Black seemed at an impasse for several weeks. No, he had tried not to notice that.

Shame that came later, years later, after he had thrown hateful words at Lupin, and instead of retaliation, Lupin had let him look into his mind and let Severus *see* proof of his innocence. If possible, Severus' hatred of Potter and Black had intensified then, but the shame still burned within him, quashed and relegated to a dark and private corner of his mind, buried, but still there.

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Predictably, the change happened slowly at first, but that didn't stop the anxiety and lifelong dread that Remus felt. Even now, he could feel his body's agitation as the moon got ready to rise above the horizon. The animal prowled within him, sniffing and scratching to be released, and Remus couldn't sit still. The power was too great, the feelings too intense. He paced the room like a caged thing, grunting and breathing through his mouth as his eyesight began to change. Severus sat in a chair in a corner of the room and looked at him warily, and Remus' increasing animal senses detected the waves of fear emanating from the former Death Eater.

The first wave of pain wracked his body, and he groaned. The pain intensified, more acute this time as his bones began to stretch and lengthen, his muscles tightened and

his jaw cracked and changed. His breath came in pants now, and he could barely look into Severus' eyes, could barely stand to see the horror and revulsion that was sure to be there. Remus howled as his spine morphed and then realigned and his hips locked into their lupine position. He struggled to his feet and shook himself, looking around warily for signs of Severus. Even with his altered eyesight, Moony could see that his mate now sat on the couch. He could smell the fear on Severus as he stalked towards the man, the cloying musky scent of it from his armpits and his genitals, but he could also smell the familiar scent of the man.

*His man. His mate.*

~ ~ ~

Severus remained motionless as the animal sniffed him. The fear he remembered had returned with almost full force, and it was all he could do not to run, but he had vowed to face his fears, to put the past behind him and, above all, to trust the man inside the wolf.

The wolf circled him again, sniffing, and Severus jumped when he felt a wet, rough tongue on his hand. Lupin (it was impossible to think of him as Moony) growled, a low rumble deep in his throat, and Severus froze as the wolf took his hand into its mouth and walked backwards, pulling ever so slightly with his teeth. He moved slowly out of his seat, following the wolf's lead as the animal sat in front of the fireplace, forcing him to crouch lower, and as the wolf stretched out on the ground, Severus was forced to sit beside him.

Severus' stomach lurched as the wolf rose again, and he watched Lupin warily as the wolf once more started pacing around. Finally, the animal stopped in front of Severus and looked him in the eyes. He was disconcerted at first to be under such careful and steady scrutiny but then noticed that the wolf had the same flecks of gold in its eyes that Lupin did. Then again, why wouldn't it? They were one and the same, this wolf and the man.

He looked more closely at the animal and recalled the folklore he'd read about such creatures. Lupin looked like a wolf, but slightly bigger, and the only difference was the slightly longer canine teeth and the eyes. Severus still felt nauseous, but he knew that the adrenaline pumping through his bloodstream was the cause. It occurred to him, rather ridiculously, that this was the first time in all his years as a Potions master that he would actually be there to test the Wolfsbane.

~ ~ ~

*Oh, gods, do you see? Do you see what I become?*

Remus' thoughts echoed in his own head, but he knew that Severus could no more hear him than he could speak Mermish. He had been afraid of this transformation, not for the pain which was always terrible and would always pass, but for how Severus would see him. Inevitably, after tonight, Severus wouldn't be able to turn away from the truth of Remus' disease, and the werewolf was unclear in his own mind just how he would handle the expected result.

Severus would leave.

It was inevitable.

He would try to make excuses, of course, and say that their lives were just so different now, but Remus knew that the underlying reason would always be that the animal living inside him was untameable and impossible to remove, and no one but he could live with that. Still, he loved Severus and had admitted it, not only to himself, but to the Hopi Indians and the magic forces of the canyon. It had taken far greater strength than Remus knew he possessed for him to do that, to pull Severus back from the brink of death, but his instincts had taken over, and his heart had done what it had to do. The spirits had understood. Perhaps Severus felt that he had to reciprocate, to make some sort of grand gesture. Standing unarmed during a werewolf's transformation at the full of the moon was about as grand a gesture as anyone could make.

The wolf's eyes looked over the man, and Remus longed to touch him, to taste him with his heightened senses that already basked in the scent of him. He moved closer and licked Severus' hand and *oh!* the taste of his skin exploded in the wolf's mind. *Mine!* Remus growled and scented fear again he took Severus' hand in his mouth and led him gently to the ground. The animal instinct of the wolf wanted to be near his mate, to lie with him, curled inside his warmth, even if only for one more night. He circled the impromptu sleeping area and then, satisfied, returned to staring at Severus. The smell of fear was almost gone, but Remus could still see the stiff way that his mate sat, and he nuzzled Severus' legs, torso and neck, making soft, gentle sounds as he slowly and carefully licked the pale, salty skin there. He felt the shudders as Severus responded, but whether in fear or something else, Remus did not know.

After many minutes, gently, ever so softly he felt Severus' shaking hand in his coat. As his mate stroked his head and neck, Remus was in bliss and licked harder, at first nudging Severus' shirt apart where it opened at the neck, then biting and tearing the fabric when it didn't afford him enough touch.

Touch.

So important to animals, so important to lovers, and they were both.

Remus pricked up his ears as Severus chuckled, the low sound reverberating in his chest as he removed his shirt and the rest of his clothes. He waited as the man conjured a thin mattress, cast a Cushioning Charm for good measure and spread out his ripped shirt beneath him, then stretched out on the makeshift bed. After a moment's thought, he Summoned the blanket from the couch and spread it over him. The wolf once more encircled their nest and found it acceptable, and then he grabbed hold of the blanket with his teeth and stepped back, removing the covering and exposing the bare flesh. He saw his mate shiver, perhaps from the cold, perhaps from fear, and he proceeded to steadfastly clean his mate properly, his tongue laving and tasting every inch of him and committing his scent to memory. Severus squirmed a bit initially but eventually succumbed to Remus' attentions, and when the wolf was finished, he lay down against Severus' side and placed his head on the scarred chest. He wished that, just once, the man would use Legilimency on him to see what was inside his mind, but somehow, he thought that this might be enough.

~ ~ ~

Severus tried to calm the frantic beating of his heart. He had been desperately afraid when the wolf had begun licking his neck, so afraid that, for a moment, he was once more that fifteen-year-old boy in the Shrieking Shack, pissing his pants as the werewolf barrelled down the tunnel towards him. Still, his rational mind told him that it was Lupin, he had to remember, Lupin with his full mental faculties, not the crazed animal. Not anymore.

The wolf's hot breath and warm tongue somehow soothed his mind, yet he shuddered as a sudden understanding flowed through him. He was Lupin's mate. He desperately hoped that the wolf wouldn't harbour any amorous thoughts towards him tonight, but he soon realized that Lupin merely wanted to be near him. Tentatively, Severus reached for the furry head and neck and was surprised at the soft pelt his hand encountered. He petted Lupin gently, marvelling in the touch of the animal next to him and was amused at his insistence for more flesh.

*Not so different from the man, really,* Severus thought, and he chuckled at the memory.

When the wolf began to lick his exposed flesh, Severus had second thoughts about the amorous intentions, but Lupin concentrated on the task and Severus was eventually lulled by the gentle rasp of the tongue against his flesh. Finally the warm pelt pressed against him, and the soft muzzle rested on his chest. They lay together like that, he and the wolf, and as odd as it might appear on the surface of it, he felt as though he was home. Despite the uncomfortable floor, Severus was slowly lulled to sleep by the wolf's steady breathing.

TBC

# Nine

## Chapter 9 of 9

Remus had disappeared after the Final Battle. Two years later, Severus needs to find him.

Disclaimer: Standard disclaimer applies.

A/N: Thanks to the Trifecta Beta team of JaneAverage, charmed310 and snapeophile, who helped this fic along so very nicely. And now, the final chapter.

*Moony ran through the field, faster, faster, scenting his prey as he saw a flash of white rabbit tail ahead in the moonlight. The black wolf galloped beside him as they stretched out, skimming across the ground, their fur brushing against the short, damp grasses that parted before them and rustled in their wake. The night dew from the blades of grass clung to their coats, flattening their fur into a smooth, slick surface. His breath was loud in his ears, the scent of the kill close at hand, and the animal excitement of his mate crackled in concert with his as they lunged forward in the final attack, but a biting pain ripped through his body, unseen, unbearable, and he stumbled, falling and tumbling on the ground as he howled his anguish...*

Moony woke as the first pain coursed through him and he howled...*Pain, pain, hurt, hurt, hurt* He panted, barely able to breathe, but even that movement hurt as his snout retracted into his normal features, and he was light-headed from all the pain, certain that if he wasn't already lying down he would collapse. In the distance, just on the edges of his frantic consciousness, there was a steady, soothing, deep drone, a low hum that somehow struck a chord in him. He latched on to it, his mind holding tight to the sound despite the all-encompassing pain. *Why must it be so fucking bad?* and he stretched towards the source with questing fingers.

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Severus awoke to the howling and thrashing of the werewolf as the first rays of sun broke through the darkness of night. Lupin was transforming again, and Severus was unable to do anything but hold him and murmur nonsense words of false comfort. There was no time for potions, and this close to moonset, none could help the werewolf or the man through the pain of transformation. Although he understood that the change into human was less painful than that of the wolf, Lupin was still clearly in distress. He stroked the shortening fur of the panting creature as it slowly morphed before his eyes into the shivering body of his lover with eyes still wild and body wracked by shudders. Severus held Lupin as he finally curled into his arms, but it was a long time before the trembling ceased and his body relaxed in exhausted slumber.

Severus moved his shoulders and shifted uncomfortably as he realized that his Cushioning Charm had worn off and the thin mattress did nothing to soften the solid wood floors of Lupin's home. He glanced cautiously at the sleeping man in his arms and gradually slid away from him until he was able to stand and stretch his own groaning limbs. Now that Lupin's transformation was complete it would be as well to put the man in his own bed somewhere comfortable for him to recover. He swung the wooden door open and peered inside the dimly lit room. Although the pale morning sunlight filtered into the house through the window by the sink, the rays barely penetrated the darkness of Lupin's bedroom, which was set against the wall of the canyon itself. To the left of the door was Lupin's bed, modest but fairly large, with a simple wooden side table. A wardrobe stood in the opposite corner of the room, and on his right there was a door to the bathroom.

Severus pulled back the blanket and sheets on the bed and cast an Impervius Charm just to be safe. Walking softly, he cast a Feather-Light Charm on Lupin and carefully picked up the sleeping man, cradling him gently in his arms as he carried him into the bedroom and set him softly on the bed.

Lupin shifted slightly and his arms tightened reflexively around Severus' neck for an instant, but he soon returned to slumber. Severus carefully disengaged himself from the sleeping man and leaned back for a moment as he took in every inch of Lupin's body in the early-morning light that now streamed through the open door. Rising slowly, he returned to the outer room and picked up his trousers from the floor, searching the pockets and eventually withdrawing a small vial that glinted pale yellow as he emptied the contents into a shallow bowl. A muttered spell later and the warm solution steamed in the cool air of the room. Severus Summoned two of his pristinely-laundered, soft, white shirts, and without a second's hesitation, he sliced them into large pieces with a non-verbal Severing Charm. Ordinarily, Severus preferred to heal with his wand; a clean, quick and rather impersonal method of healing, but with Lupin...

He sat back for a moment, thinking. Yes, *with Lupin, things are definitely different.* He once again entered the bedroom and surveyed the sleeping man, more critically this time, itemizing every wound where the skin had torn, leaving bloody streaks and ragged flesh. Although the rapid metabolism and healing properties of the werewolf would soon make quick work of healing the injuries, Severus felt a compulsion to do more, a feeling enhanced by the swirling, circling magic of the canyon. He turned his attention once more to the abused flesh before him and traced his wand slowly along the deepest wounds, whispering the healing spell and then covering the fresh scars with essence of Murtlap. Lupin groaned as the flesh of his wounds knit, but Severus passed his hand over Lupin's face gently, skin barely touching skin, and the touch seemed to quiet the man.

The wounds were most noticeable on Lupin's chest, where the ribcage had expanded to accommodate the animal's shape, and on his hands, where the claws pushed their way cruelly through the pale fingers. Severus gently traced over the open fissures, the tip of his wand urging the flesh closed, and the cloth bringing with it soothing relief. Finally, the worst of the damage had been repaired, and Severus skilfully turned the sleeping man over, his magic bolstered by the gentle hands of the ancient forces that seemed to reach out and encompass him, encouraging his actions and understanding his heart.

The scars on Lupin's back were equally as fierce, and Severus made quick work of his healing. The warm, moist cloth gently sloughed away the worst of the damage and blood, and he allowed his hands to linger a little longer than necessary as they passed over the small of Lupin's back and the swell of his buttocks. Muttering softly to himself, Severus once more dipped the piece of shirt in the solution and, wringing out the excess, laid the material flat against Lupin's skin. He placed his hand palm down on the fabric and couldn't help but feel the *heat* from Lupin's body as he slowly moved the cloth along the full length of his spine. The sleeping man stirred slightly and Severus stopped his ministrations, waiting patiently and silently until soft, snuffling sounds confirmed that his patient was once more asleep. Severus discarded the cloth, and then placed his hands on Lupin's shoulders, kneading the still-tense muscles gently before moving slowly and carefully down past the shoulder blades to his back. He worked down either side of Lupin's spine, pressing firmly but gently on the muscles there and encouraging them to release.

He continued the gentle compressions, pressing with his body weight onto his palms, methodically working his way down onto Lupin's pelvis and hips, then further down onto the meaty flesh of his buttocks. After a minute or two he progressed down first one leg, and then the other, his open palm providing ample coverage as he leaned his weight into Lupin's body. Severus moved further down onto the calves, thin, but for all that, not too thin and finally, his feet. A near-violent twitching ensued as Severus' hands and fingers touched the soles of Lupin's feet, and almost immediately, Lupin came fully awake, twisting and rolling his body to get away from the sensation.

Severus moved back slightly at the wild look in the golden-brown eyes, and he cleared his throat cautiously.

'I had forgotten that you were ticklish there.'

Lupin lay panting, his legs twisted in the sheets and his chest heaving as he breathed rapidly, his eyes alert but no longer wary. It did not escape Severus' notice that the lycanthrope wore absolutely nothing at all, and that his cock was more than a little interested in the proceedings. He tried to look away but only managed to get as far as Lupin's face, where he saw the want and need shining in his eyes.

'Severus.'

The voice was low and gravelly and shot straight to Severus' groin in a delicious, almost electric way that seemed to ~~pull~~ everything from his chest sharply downwards.

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The steady pressure on Remus' back felt inexplicably wonderful as his muscles gradually released their tension. He still felt pain underneath it all, but this was the welcome pain of healing. His still-acute sense of smell detected Murtlap essence, and slowly his situation dawned on him. Severus. He remembered scraps of the previous night when the wolf had tasted the flesh of the man and how completely he had felt his presence. Even now he felt him as Severus' hands were firm along his spine, and Remus sighed a little in contentment as the pressure moved lower across his buttocks and legs. Although his transformations were always painful, the muscle pain in the days following the full was usually the worst, and Severus' ministrations were helping to ease the stiffness there. He closed his eyes and gave himself over to the sensations. 'Oh, that's so good,' he murmured, exhaling the pent-up energy and tension away as Severus' capable hands moved lower along his legs and calves. The rolling and rocking movements of his body caused delicious sensations in his groin and he felt himself growing harder, but the steady pressure along his muscles was almost enough to take his mind off of his burgeoning erection. Remus floated in a sea of blissful stimulation until he felt fingers against the soles of his feet and jerked reflexively at the unbearable sensation. Adrenaline shot through his body and he came fully awake as he found himself on his back with Severus kneeling naked at his feet, an image so unbearably *erotic* that his half-engaged libido kicked into overdrive almost immediately.

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Severus felt the rise of something inside him, something almost animalistic in the sheer force of its desire, and he latched onto Lupin's mouth, sucking and biting and licking, much like the animal had done to him only a few hours prior. Random thoughts swirled in his head but he pushed them all aside, wanting only to taste the man and feast on his flesh. He sucked and bit down Lupin's heaving chest and torso until he lay between his legs and the smell of arousal set his own alight. 'Mmmm,' he murmured as he buried his face in the light-brown thatch of hair that framed the thick base of Lupin's erect penis, and the lycanthrope bucked and writhed, moaning wantonly as his hands twisted in Severus' hair, trying to encourage more contact. Severus placed his hands on Lupin's hips and held them down as he ran the flat of his tongue along the underside of the penis from base to tip before taking the entire length into his mouth. The sounds Lupin made, the grunting, groaning, whimpering, moaning, begging sounds only urged Severus on, and Lupin bucked beneath him as Severus growled his desire and began sucking, a series of short but intense movements where he sucked the base *hard* and then gradually released the pressure as he suckled along to the tip, then down again, more suction, still harder, and Lupin slowly began to come undone. Severus gripped the base of Lupin's cock with his fingers and pressed against the vein on the underside, his lips curling upward as Lupin swore, then he swirled his tongue around the ridge for a moment as he looked up at Lupin, who was lying back on the pillows, his eyes heavily lidded and his breath shallow with desire. The tip of his turgid manhood glistened, spit-shiny as it jutted out from his body, dark red from all the attention, and Severus felt his own cock harden even more at the sight.

He straddled Lupin's thighs and leaned over to kiss him, harder this time and more demanding as the desire swelled within him. Lupin's warm hands slid up his back, gently pulling him forward, urging him on. Severus needed everything about this man and wouldn't be denied anymore. The canyon's magic was all around them, inside him, through him and he could feel the pounding of Lupin's heart echoing his own. Lupin's hands tangled in Severus' hair as he deepened the kiss, and Severus ground their erections together, pressing himself down onto the other man's groin and rubbing their bollocks together in a delicious friction. He knew that Lupin was in no condition to be taken, not with his muscles still sore and his body mending, but Severus wanted to be filled by him, and he moved his body forward for another kiss, tongues sliding hot and wet against each other. Raising his hips slightly until he felt the tip of Lupin's erection against the skin behind his balls, he rocked backward slightly and pushed down gently, feeling the heat of the cock head against his puckered entrance. Lupin's sudden hiss of breath showed that the movement wasn't altogether expected, but welcomed.

Severus shuddered with long-denied pleasure, and he leaned back slightly, allowing Lupin's cock to push more firmly against him as he moaned slightly into his mouth. Lupin pulled away from the kiss, his body trembling and the *heat* in his eyes so fierce that for a moment, Severus saw the wolf's untamed nature.

'Do it,' he hissed, his hands clutching convulsively at Severus' hips. 'Gods, Severus, *please*...'

Severus moaned with pleasure as he kissed Lupin again, forcefully, bruising, biting and sucking his tongue, mouth, lips, feasting on the flesh as he wordlessly performed the necessary charms and slowly sank onto Lupin's cock. He controlled the pace, at first teasing himself with the tip, and then pressing himself down onto it slightly as he rotated his hips. Lupin growled his frustration and leaned forward as he sank his teeth into Severus' shoulder, biting him hard enough to cause pain, and the sudden movement forced Severus' body down onto the heated, hard flesh. He cried out as the head of Lupin's cock pushed past his tight ring of muscle and he took the man's length inside him, forcing himself to breathe and relax into the deliciously painful stretch, sinking lower and lower into that slick heat until he was fully seated on Lupin's thighs, the entire length inside him.

Despite himself, he groaned as the pain radiated up his back, through his pelvis and hips into his gut, but Lupin's callused hands rubbed his lower back in slow, gentle and soothing circles that helped to centre him even as he shuddered in pained pleasure.

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Remus' world became one singular, hot funnel of pleasure as Severus' body encased his cock with tight, slick heat. Years, it had been years, and yet the sensations were so perfect, so *right*. His body shook with the effort of remaining still, of letting Severus stretch to accommodate him and the expression on the pale features before him was breathtaking. Remus wanted nothing more than to lift Severus and slam him down onto his cock, repeatedly, thrusting and pushing and grinding him down onto his erection, but he forced himself to grit his teeth and wait. In the past, he had felt that Severus had never let himself go completely in their lovemaking, almost as though he hadn't been able to find it within himself to trust anyone that much. That knowledge had hurt then, but years apart and too many deaths had changed the realities of both men, and Remus sensed that the canyon's spirits had helped the normally taciturn man to come to terms with himself and his demons, for the man who now straddled his thighs was not holding back anything.

Just as Remus thought he wouldn't be able to hold still a moment longer, his entire body wanting to thrust upwards almost brutally, Severus began to move, slowly, agonisingly slowly, rising up just enough for the smallest slide of friction along Remus' shaft, and then he sank down once more until he had taken Remus balls-deep inside him. He rose up again; further this time and Remus felt the coolness of the air in the room around his shaft for a split second before Severus again lowered his body, twisting his hips and seeming to grind even further down than before. Remus clutched Severus' waist, wordlessly urging him to move faster, to do more, to get him deeper, and Severus obliged, increasing his pace. Remus stared at the sight of his cock as it appeared and disappeared into Severus' body, over and over, his shaft SO HARD, so painfully hard as it slid in and out of the binding, sucking, squeezing moist heat, and the sounds of Severus' skin on his, the soft slap of sweaty skin against his own and the sight of the writhing body astride his was almost too much. He felt the pressure building behind his bollocks, the tightening of his own sphincter and the trembling of his legs that heralded his own orgasm. He ripped his gaze from his own cock and focused on Severus': hard, red and leaking as it jutted out of the thatch of dark curls, arching away from the pale body and bobbing with every movement. Remus' mouth was dry and he licked his lips, longing to taste it, feel the slide of that cock on his tongue and enclose his lips around it as he sucked and sucked. He tried to move his hands from Severus' hip to circle the tip with his fingers and thumb, but the man was doing such a fine job of working Remus into a frenzy that he doubted whether he could concentrate enough to toss him off.

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Severus wouldn't last long like this, couldn't, and he felt it building inside him, the tiny sparks that indicated his orgasm was close. The muscles of his legs burned and started tensing in anticipation as he clasped his hands behind Lupin's neck and drove down onto him, leaning back and using his body weight to augment the grinding against Lupin's pelvis on the down stroke. Lupin's hands were on Severus' hips, pulling him down hard against him as he rocked up to meet him, and as Severus canted his hips forward, Lupin's cock brushed over his prostate gland, over and over again in a dizzying flood of sensation. He felt the gathering as his body began shaking, every nerve ending poised on the edge of ecstasy, funnelling everything inward. 'S-soon, soon, yes, ah, almost...oh, oh...' Once, twice, and Severus saw stars as his orgasm ripped through him. 'Nnnnggggaaaahh!' he roared incoherently as he groaned his pleasure, his body tensing in a shuddering arc from the force of his ejaculation as hot fluid coated his stomach and Lupin's chest.

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Remus was fascinated and unspeakably aroused as he watched Severus twist and thrash on top of him like a wild thing finally unleashed. Sweat glistened on the pale skin

and mingled with his own, creating deliciously slick lubrication, and Remus distractedly wondered how Severus had known that this was just what he needed, as the sight of his own cock sheathed by Severus' body over and over again, every plunge, every thrust and twist of hips stirred the sensations in him and sent jolts of fire through him. He gripped the thin hips tightly and pulled Severus' body down hard, impaling his lover on his cock, and the friction, the sweet, heated slide of flesh inside flesh sparked explosions of sensation and desire in his body. Their magic crashed around them as Severus' orgasm broke over Remus, and both the guttural roar and the clenching muscles around his cock spurred his own orgasm seconds later as the contractions hurled him over the edge of his own pleasure.

Remus' cock pulsed and pulsed, emptying all of himself deep inside the heated body and Severus' body seemed frozen in an impossible arc above him. Remus couldn't stop shaking his body vibrated with pleasure in the aftermath of his release and he could barely catch his breath, so great was the force of the emotion that swelled in his chest. Severus still held him tightly even though he was panting heavily, and Remus slid his arms up and around Severus' back as he buried his face in the heaving chest. They stayed like that until Remus felt his softening prick begin to slide out, and he concentrated briefly before he silently performed a cleaning charm on them both. Severus jumped and shifted, groaning as blood flow returned to his legs, and Remus chuckled softly as the pale, thin man lay down carefully beside him. He turned towards Severus and once more nuzzled against his chest, certain that he was glowing with warmth as the long arms encircled him. He sighed contentedly as he slid a leg between Severus' thighs and pulled the man's upper leg over his own hip, shifting forward until their bodies were pressed against each other.

'Gods, Lupin, must you *burrow* so?' Remus faintly heard Severus' half-hearted snark, but couldn't respond with more than a muffled 'Hmmm' as sleep enveloped them both.

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## EPILOGUE

'Severus.'

'Mmm?'

'What did the note say?'

Severus shifted slightly and opened one sleepy eye, blinking in the mid-morning sunlight. 'What note?' His voice was gravelly with sleep, and even though he feigned ignorance, Remus knew that Severus knew damn well what note. In the few days since the full moon they had been together almost constantly, skin touching skin whenever possible, lips and tongues mapping out each other's body time and time again. Remus wanted to draw out their togetherness this morning too, but Severus' offhanded mention of the note weeks ago had sat in the back of his mind, glowing like an ember that wouldn't be put out until the question had been answered.

'The one from Harry that came with the Pensieve.'

He heard Severus groan. Ever since their explosive argument on the second night, neither man had mentioned the Pensieve, and it was obvious that Severus didn't want to broach the subject now. In lieu of an answer, he grunted and stretched expansively, rolling onto his back and pulling Remus onto his chest. 'Lupin, *must* we do this?'

Remus sighed and leaned down to nuzzle against the smattering of dark hair around Severus' nipple. Much as he loved the scent of him and the pale expanse of flesh beckoned that him to taste and smell further, he needed an answer to his question.

'Severus. Harry's note; what did it say?'

Oil-dark eyes flickered slightly for a moment before he Summoned his clothes. Puzzled, Remus watched as he reached into the breast pocket and withdrew a small piece of parchment, well worn and carefully folded. Without a word he handed it to Remus, who opened it with shaking hands and read the words written in Harry's small but distinct scrawl.

*Use it, Professor, and then find him.*

*Harry*

Remus felt as though his heart constricted, that his emotions were somehow too much for the one organ to handle, and that it would now, finally, cease to function, just when he needed it the most. He inhaled deeply, fighting the feeling of sinking into quicksand, forcing himself to stay afloat in the sea of emotions that threatened to bring him under.

Harry knew.

Harry *knew*, and he had wanted Severus to find him.

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Severus hoped that he'd not made a mistake by letting him read Harry's missive. He watched Lupin carefully, trying to judge his reaction while steeling himself for another argument of why it had taken him so long to actually search for Lupin, or why he had let him leave in the first place instead of following him and making him return. Yes, he knew that those were all valid questions and more than likely ones that Lupin would ask.

Lupin's hands shook slightly, and Severus could see that the lycanthrope was very deeply affected. Truth be told, he had been also, the day he had received that note with the Pensieve, but his hesitancy to find Lupin had stemmed more from a lack of faith in himself rather than a lack of interest. He roused himself from the sated relaxation of being together and braced for the expected backlash, but he was not prepared for the reaction that came.

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Remus smiled softly. 'He's become quite perceptive.'

Severus blinked, and his surprised expression was really worth Galleons. Still, Remus looked over at him reprovingly. 'You hadn't had *that* much to drink, surely?'

Severus' lips became a thin line, but there was no true anger behind it. 'The splendour and scope of my hangover the following morning would attest to just how much I had indulged; well, that and the quantity of bottles upon bottles of Firewhisky that were scattered around the couch.'

Remus sat up and regarded Severus for a moment as a smile played at the corners of his mouth.

'Missed me, did you?'

Severus huffed and shifted. 'Perhaps a bit.'

Laughing, Remus stretched out on his side next to Severus and ran his fingertips along the pale flesh, criss-crossed with scars, but still beautiful to him.

'Me too,' he admitted softly, and Severus' answering kiss was all he needed.

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The sun proceeded along its inevitable march towards the west, and the shadows lengthened across the canyon floor many thousands of feet below. Severus looked out over the ever-changing vista that was the Grand Canyon and realized that the Hopi magic knew what they had both tried to resist. They were meant to be together. He had

begun his journey to Arizona to find Remus, hoping that he would be able to convince the man to return to England, but as they sat on the sun-warmed rocks next to each other, shoulders touching and feet dangling over the edge, Severus began to realize that geography wasn't the most important thing in their relationship togetherness was.

*And if I told you that I loved you*

*You'd maybe think there's something wrong*

*I'm not a man of too many faces*

*The mask I wear is one. - Sting*

~ fin ~