

Wolf at the Door

by PlaidPooka

****Complete**** Remus Lupin's solitary habits cause him no end of trouble when his change does not take place as expected. Who will be able to help him and how shall he ever get to the help he so desperately needs?

The Sleeper Awakes

Chapter 1 of 3

****Complete**** Remus Lupin's solitary habits cause him no end of trouble when his change does not take place as expected. Who will be able to help him and how shall he ever get to the help he so desperately needs?

A/N: WatD was written for the SH Spring Faire, where it received an honorable mention. It was beta read by the fantabulous Lotm. It has implied slash, but it never gets graphic. In fact, it is one of the few fics I've written that is not rated for mature audiences only! *snicker* This was a challenge response, the criteria is below:

After the passing of the full moon, Remus Lupin is horrified to learn that he has yet to return to his human form. However, while he is still stuck as a werewolf, he is back to being Remus Lupin--in mind, if not in the flesh.

Rules:

- 1. Lupin must remain in his werewolf form after the passing of the full moon.*
- 2. Lupin must be able to think and rationalize as his human self would.*
- 3. Someone, canon character or otherwise, must find him and attempt to help him in some way.*
- 4. While Lupin is stuck in his wolf-form he cannot communicate by oral means.*

Notes:

- 1. Any other character or characters involved is up to the author.*
- 2. Where and when Lupin is found (still in his wolf-form) is up to the author.*
- 3. The how and why of the situation is up to the author's discretion.*
- 4. Whether or not Lupin is able to eventually change back is at the author's discretion.*
- 5. All standard SH rules and submission policies apply.*

"The wolf changes his coat, but not his disposition."

-Proverb

"... there was about him a suggestion of lurking ferocity, as though the Wild still lingered in him and the wolf in him merely slept."

-Jack London

When he woke, Remus was not surprised that he was curled on the floor. The wolf always curled up before the fire to sleep near dawn and Remus was used to waking there after the change. What confused Remus was that he felt surprisingly well. While he wasn't expecting any new injuries...Snape still dutifully brought him the Wolfsbane...the change itself was hell on his body. Normally, he would wake aching and sore, barely able to drag himself over to his bed to sleep the pain away. Today was different. This morning he felt amazingly well...at least until he tried to stand.

His mind still groggy from sleep, when he tried to stand up only to fall back to the floor, Remus at first thought he was simply weaker than he had been aware of. It wasn't until his sleep-crusted eyes caught sight of his hands that he became aware of the trouble. His hands...his beautiful, useful, necessary hands were still the paws of the wolf.

"Bloody hell!" Well, that's what he tried to say. When his speech came out startled yelps, the wolf lying on the hearth rug whined in fear. Dragging himself to his feet...all four of them...Remus started to head for the lavatory where he could get a good look at himself in the mirror. This is when he ran into his first hurdle.

Remus had lived at 12 Grimmauld Place since Sirius had died and left the dismal old house in Harry's possession. Remus hated the house nearly as much as Sirius had, but he constantly reminded himself that beggars can't be choosers and an often unemployed werewolf was lucky to have a house at all. Now that Voldemort had fallen and the Order disbanded, the house was quite deserted except for him. Harry had graduated Hogwarts and gone into Auror training so he rarely had time to visit. In fact, nearly the only company Remus had entertained at the house for the past twelve months was when Snape stepped through the floo to bring him his Wolfsbane every 28 days like clockwork. Always cautious about his condition, Remus had made a habit of shutting himself into his bedroom before the change. He trusted the potion just as he trusted the surly Potions Master who brought it to him, but even in this day and age there was so little known about his condition that he preferred to take particular care.

As he stood gazing up at the firmly shut door of his bedroom, Remus sincerely wished that he hadn't grown so damned paranoid about the issue. With no hands and no voice, the wand lying on his bedside table was patently useless. Giving up a wolfish sigh, Remus sat back on his haunches, staring at the door, and tried to calm down enough to think. He had problems, big problems. Never before had he failed to re-gain his human form after the full moon. He had no idea how long he would be stuck like this, but if he couldn't even manage to open the bloody door it would soon become a moot point. If he didn't get out of his bedroom, there was a good chance that the next time Severus showed up all he would find was a starved, dead, husk of a wolf. Wondering briefly if Severus would miss him, the wolf snorted as Remus decided that the pragmatic man would probably be relieved to have his brewing burden lifted. This thought had the wolf, still staring at the closed door, whining again. Remus had grown very fond of the prickly Potions Master over the years, but his every overture of friendship had been gently ignored. Oh, Severus always stayed for a drink and a chat when he brought the potion, but any time Remus suggested meeting more often, Snape seemed to have a multitude of previous engagements to attend to. To hear the man talk, one would think he was a social butterfly rather than a man who spent most of his time in the Hogwarts' dungeons.

Sitting around feeling sorry for myself isn't going to solve anything. I've no reason to think anyone will come to check on me, so I may as well quit moping and get this thrice damned door open.

Eyeing the door handle, Remus was at least thankful that the handle was a more old-fashioned lever rather than a round knob. Reaching up, he angled his head awkwardly until he could grasp it in his teeth and pulled it down until the latch disengaged. It hurt his teeth, but a careful exploration of his tongue told him he hadn't broken anything. Pleased at his small victory, Remus padded into the lavatory and propped his front paws on the edge of the basin so that he could look into the mirror. A wolf looked back at him. An ordinary grey wolf; its only distinguishing characteristic a slight graying at his ears and muzzle. There were some fools in the wizarding world that insisted they could tell a wolf from a werewolf every time. The truth of the matter was that he looked like an ordinary wolf, and only certain spells would reveal him for what he was.

Thankful that he habitually left all the drapes in the house open, Remus left the lav and padded down the stairs to head for the kitchen. He always left the drapes open; even when the full moon was weeks away he craved the sunlight. As his muggle neighbors couldn't even see the house, Remus saw no reason to block the windows. For once, his habits were helping him. Though the torches that normally lit the rooms were voice-activated, they would never recognize his voice in its present form. Reaching the kitchen, Remus decided to first slake his ravenous hunger before he made any attempt to figure out his predicament.

There wasn't much food in the house, there never was, but there was a loaf of bread on the counter and some meat and cheese in the cold pantry. The pantry door was easily nosed open and, while he wasn't capable of managing a sandwich, Remus was happy to eat meat, cheese, and the entirety of the loaf of bread separately. His frustration grew once more as he sought to slack his thirst. No matter how he tried, he could not manage to get the kitchen sink's faucet working. Finally giving in, he padded to the downstairs lav and drank out of the toilet. He wasn't happy about it, but he'd seen Sirius do it on occasion, so he guessed it couldn't be too detrimental to his health.

Hunger and thirst slated for the time being, Remus went to the study, jumped up on the sofa, and sprawled out to rest for a bit while he went over his options. They were distressingly few. If there had been more food in the house, he'd be tempted to wait it out until Severus' next visit. Unfortunately he'd eaten most of what the wolf could stomach in one meal. There was no way he could manage another twenty-seven days. As much as he hated to admit it, Remus knew that his best chance was to try and make it to Hogwarts.

In his youth, desperate for any information on his condition, Remus had studied every book he could find on both wolves and werewolves. Hogwarts was over 500 kilometers away, yet he knew the wolf could make it if he could keep out of trouble. Mundane wolves traveled between 16 and 50 kilometers a day simply looking for food and a wolf might travel more than 800 kilometers from where it was born in order to find a mate. So the journey was possible and, if all went well, shouldn't take him more than ten days. The worst part by far would be getting out of the city. Once he was in the countryside he could travel quickly at night and hunt what he needed to get by. He was briefly tempted to stay at the house a few days on the off chance that he would be discovered, but the Gryffindor balked at that idea. Used to being on his own, Remus knew that he could count on no one to help him out of this situation. He would have to help himself.

Oddly enough, despite the fact that he had just decided to take a long, dangerous journey without friend or magic, settling on a course of action calmed Remus. As the pantry wasn't going to magically sprout more food, Remus also decided that he would leave as soon as the sun set. He must get out of the city while he was strong and sharp-witted. Hoping that one night would be enough to get him to the outskirts of town, Remus closed his eyes and slept through the afternoon.

The wolf had good time sense and woke shortly before sunset. One thing the Wolfsbane potion had taught Remus was to trust the wolf's instincts. Though he retained his human mind during the change, he needed those instincts to move as the wolf's body required. Giving himself a good shake to rid himself of the last dregs of sleep, Remus padded towards the front door, thinking wryly that he would soon have more reason than usual to depend on the instincts of the wolf.

Reaching the front door, Remus struggled with it for some time before giving up on it in disgust. The knob was round and the lock was engaged. No matter how he grasped with his teeth and twisted his head Remus could not budge the blasted thing. The wolf wasn't feeling any better about being trapped than Remus was. Almost before he knew what he was doing, Remus found himself running full tilt at the nearest window and barreling through it mid-leap. Landing in a heap on the porch, Remus took a moment to assess his injuries. The thick pelt of the wolf had protected him from serious injury, but he had scratches on his nose and one ragged but shallow gash down one side. Knowing he could do nothing about his nose, Remus licked at the wound on his side until his saliva stopped the bleeding. Standing, he lifted his nose to scent the wind. It was a completely useless act. All he could smell at the moment was the blood from the scratches on his nose. He hadn't even begun his journey and he was already handicapped. Until the scratches on his nose scabbed over, he would have to try to rely on his sight and hearing alone. To be honest, it would have almost been easier if he'd been blinded. Wolves relied on their powerful sense of smell for most of their information of the world around them.

Well...no use crying over it. I'll just have to be especially alert until I get out of the city. I'd best try to keep to the less lighted alleys and smaller roads. If no one gets a close look at me, they will simply take me for a scruffy dog.

Remus couldn't have been more correct. Traveling as fast as was prudent towards the north edge of the city, Remus was occasionally spotted by the odd Muggle. Some

called to him in a friendly fashion while some yelled at him. One old drunk, sitting propped up against an alley wall, threw an empty bottle at his retreating form with enough force to bruise his flank. Muggles were the least of his worries; he was as cautious and he was quick. Even when a Muggle gave chase, Remus quickly outdistanced him and lost him in the shadowy alleys. Soon he ran into a much more difficult adversary.

If his nose had been able to smell more than the blood seeping from his muzzle, Remus might have avoided the dog altogether. A German Shepard and a stray by the looks of it; it was just Remus' luck that he ran into a breed that tended to fight much as a wolf did, remaining silent instead of giving itself away by barking like other breeds. Because of the dog's silence, Remus almost ran into the dog before its low growl alerted Remus to its presence. Normally any dog, even a Shepard, would leave a wolf alone. Though the animals were related, the wolf was stronger; the ruff of fur around its neck thicker and more protective. The wolf's jaws were evolved to snap through the legs of deer and elk and had almost three times the bite pressure of the Shepard. The wolf would be recognized as an alpha predator among most dogs and any with the sense God gave a goat would give him a wide berth. Unfortunately for Remus, he had run directly into the ragged stray's territory and Remus smelled of blood and injury. The smell excited the dog and made him brave enough to defend his home even from his wilder, stronger cousin.

The dog lunged at Remus even as he became aware of it. Letting the wolf's instincts take over, Remus leaped cleanly over the dog barreling towards him. Twisting mid-leap, Remus made an immediate counter attack, his sharp incisors raking over the dog's flank. He was rewarded by a taste of blood and the rich taste of it sent his wolf senses into high gear. Remus may have smelt of injury, but he was still strong and quick. Spinning to face him, the dog paused, weight braced on stiff, slightly splayed forelegs. Its hackles were raised and it growled, deep and loud as it bared its teeth at the wolf. Returning the growl, Remus added just a touch of wild howl to the sound which seemed to drive the dog to distraction. Hurling abruptly towards Remus, the dog got a lucky grip on Remus' throat and bit down savagely. Though his thick fur protected him from the dog's teeth, Remus was nevertheless in trouble. The vise-like grip was cutting off his air. Throwing himself backward, the wolf rolled, breaking the dog's hold by pushing hard with all four legs. Landing with a thump on his back, the dog had no time to regain his feet before the faster wolf was upon him.

Growling, Remus clamped his own muzzle over the smaller dog's throat, holding it firmly against the ground with his greater weight. When Remus bore down on his grip and gave the dog's throat a small shake...threatening to break its neck...the dog whined in submission. The blood lust that held the wolf was almost too strong; the temptation to kill the dog which attacked him was great. Using every scrap of his human compassion, Remus at last was able to withdraw from the dog. Backing away, he eyed the dog warily as it scrambled to its feet. The dog had endured enough, apparently. As it gained its feet, it gave Remus one distrustful look before it dashed away down the alley.

Making his own dash the other direction, Remus ran for some time before pausing to get his breath. Despite the fact that his breath wheezed through his bruised throat, he wanted to ensure that he was out of the dog's territory before he paused to rest and take stock of his situation. Seeking out the darkest, most dismal alley he could find, Remus hid himself amidst a pile of dilapidated dust bins and assessed his position. The fight with the dog had slowed him down; it was near dawn. He was exhausted, the cut on his side from the window stung, his hip throbbed from the drunk's thrown bottle, and his abused throat ached with each breath. His best guess was that he still had many kilometers to travel before he reached the outskirts of the city. There was nothing for it. Knowing that he would never escape the city before dawn, Remus resigned himself to resting where he was until nightfall. No matter how he wished to hurry, he knew that he mustn't risk traveling in the light of day. London was a huge city and full of odd sights, but the sight of a wolf running down the streets in broad daylight would be too strange to escape notice. With a weary sigh, Remus curled up as best he could on the cold pavement beneath the bins and went to sleep.

His ears woke him some time before sunset. Though the night had not yet arrived, the alley Remus inhabited was already dark and abandoned, aside from the scurrying which had awakened him. Lifting his head slowly, Remus was pleased that his sense of smell was returning. The wounds on his muzzle had at last scabbed over and the smell of blood was far less invading. Pricking his ears at what he now smelled, his stomach gave a low rumble of hunger. Rats were not a wolf's chosen prey; they preferred larger animals. However, Remus was too smart to let such an easy meal go unmolested. Gods knew that he needed to waste as little of his nights in hunting as possible, if he wished to get to Hogwarts with all speed. Rising slowly to his feet, Remus slunk silently out from amongst the dust bins.

Though wolves preferred larger prey, they knew the mouse pounce as well as their smaller coyote cousins did. Spotting his first victim, Remus leaped with his front legs stiff and closely held together. Coming down hard on the rat, both his front paws found their mark and snapped the small creature's spine. It was a matter of seconds before the first rat was devoured and Remus continued flushing out its fellows. By the time full dark had descended, Remus had a full stomach and was impatient to get moving. His hip was still sore, and the scratch down his side was tight and painful, but his throat was much improved. With his sense of smell more or less intact, Remus traveled out of London with no further difficulty.

The grass felt good under his paws; Remus felt much of his tension lifting when he left the roads to travel across country as he slipped into Hertfordshire. Reminding himself that he must still be wary, Remus had to turn aside often from his north-northwest heading to circle around a multitude of small towns. When the sun rose, Remus secluded himself in a dense thicket to sleep away the daylight. Having pushed himself hard during the night--along with the easy meal of rats...by the time Remus ended the second day of his journey he had made it to the outskirts of Bedfordshire. Pleased by his progress, Remus slid into sleep with hope in his heart.

The setting of the sun found Remus awake and rested but not at ease. His hip and throat were well but the shallow scratch along his side hurt worse than ever. Remus' nose told him that the seemingly harmless scratch was infected and he spent a good hour licking it clean as best he could. It was frustrating that he might grow dangerously sick from a scratch that he would normally be able to heal with a wave of his wand. Admitting that wishing things were different would get him nowhere, Remus put the wound out of his mind and resumed his trek.

Bedfordshire made for easy travel. The odd small town was easily avoided and the farmland easy to navigate. Halfway through the night, Remus gave into his rumbling stomach and stealthily approached a farmyard. His journey that night had flushed no prey and he felt the speed of an easy meal outweighed the danger of getting closer to the Muggle farm. Soon he spotted just what he hoped to find; a chicken coop lay on the outskirts of the farm buildings. Smelling the traces of a dog on the air, Remus hoped that he could get in and out with his meal before the dog became aware of his presence. For once luck was with him, he never saw hide nor hair of the farm dog and he got into the coop with little trouble. The coop may have been made with the intention of keeping predators out, but the simple latch on the coop door gave Remus no problem at all. In fact, after he had killed two of the dozing hens and carried them outside, Remus carefully re-latched the door of the pen so that the Muggles would not have to chase chickens the following day. They may end up a bit puzzled as to how two of their birds had gone missing, but at least they would have no further trouble on his account. Dragging the chickens far from the farm, Remus' teeth made short work of them before he resumed his journey.

The ache in his side slowed Remus down that night, as did his detour to the chicken coop. When dawn approached and Remus hid himself in a small copse to await the night, he had barely gotten through Bedfordshire. Nightfall found Remus rising to sore, travel-weary feet and the ache in his side had grown worse. Shocked that he had slept past sunset, he nevertheless spent the time necessary to carefully lick his infected side clean before he started that day's trek. After all, speed would not help him should he become too ill to go on. Resting a moment, Remus considered his route.

Blasted scratch! It's nothing but a blasted scratch! I can't die from one minor injury, can I? I'd give anything to see Poppy right now, or Hagrid; they'd have me fixed up in no time. I'd give anything to see Severus...oh...he'd fuss up a storm but he'd look after me. He's used to looking after me after all...at least once a month he is...but I'll never see him...any of them...if I don't get a move on. But which way now?

Remus knew very well that Hogwarts lay straight as the crow flies on the north northwest path he had traveled since leaving London. However, if he headed directly North from his current position he could travel through Lincolnshire. Covered in woods and fens, Lincolnshire would be easy traveling for the wolf and he ought to be able to flush some prey without taking any more risks at Muggle farms. It would add length to his journey, and he would have to circle west around York when he got there, but Remus decided in this case the safer route was worth the extra time. Quandary at an end, Remus gave a very human nod of his head and turned due north.

Once again Remus was blessed by an uneventful evening's travel. Though his side continued to pain him, he was lucky enough to flush a brown hare while trotting through a copse. The hare was large and more than enough to keep a wolf going for another day. Despite the ease of his travel, Remus was shocked to see how much his infected side slowed him down. When he woke on the fifth evening of his journey, Remus could tell the infected scratch was making him ill. Halfway through Lincolnshire, he was not yet halfway to Hogwarts and already his pace was slowing. Knowing that turning back to London would do him no good, Remus determined to make it to Hogwarts if he had to crawl. As he doggedly walked onward, the nights began to run together in his weary and fevered mind. Many hours he walked forward as if in a trance, only the wolf's instincts kept him away from Muggle settlements and pointed toward Hogwarts. It was fifteen days from the start of his trek before Remus entered the southernmost reaches of the forbidden forest. Almost to the crawling point, Remus was distressed that he had come so very far yet was lacking the strength to manage the last bit. Lying down on that fifteenth morning, he fell into an exhausted sleep.

The Wolf Walks In

Chapter 2 of 3

****Complete**** Remus Lupin's solitary habits cause him no end of trouble when his change does not take place as expected. Who will be able to help him and how shall he ever get to the help he so desperately needs?

"For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack"

-Rudyard Kipling

"Last night I was dreamed that I was chasing a pack of wolves, trying to belong"

-Author unknown

It was well past nightfall when Remus awoke. He was too sick to care that he had overslept. Dragging himself to his feet, Remus continued through the Forbidden Forest at a slow stagger. He was drawing closer to Hogwarts, oh so close! But at his present halting gate he wouldn't make it that night. Remus could only hope that he would be strong enough to continue on the morrow.

Only an hour into his determined if ponderous journey that night, Remus was startled to see a flickering light through the trees. Though he approached the light slowly and with all the caution he could manage, Remus couldn't help but hope that the campfire he could glimpse through the trees meant a friend was near. If it belonged to centaurs they wouldn't help him and if it were a goblin fire they would probably eat him if he gave them half a chance. However if it was Severus camped out to gather some potions ingredient, or Hagrid, out late to help some other injured beast, then he would be sure to get some help.

When Remus nosed carefully into the clearing to see Severus Snape, he could scarcely believe his eyes. There sat the Potions Master, cross-legged beside the fire, calmly pruning the leaves from several small branches of recently collected Rowan. The fact that Severus was a touchy man, an ex-spy, and presently armed with a silver knife did not even enter the weary wolf's mind. So happy was he to see his reluctant friend that he staggered straight into the clearing emitting a series of joyful barks.

With a fluid grace, Severus rose immediately to his feet. One look at the seemingly mad wolf caused him to clutch the knife in one hand while he quickly drew his wand with the other. It wasn't until Remus took note of the wand pointed at him and saw Severus open his mouth to speak a spell that Remus realized the trouble he was in. Of course Severus didn't recognize him! The Potions master had no reason to suspect that Remus was stuck in his wolf form so far from the full moon. Knowing he'd only get one chance, Remus did the only thing he could think of. Dropping down to the ground, he rolled over on his back, waved his paws in the air in a comical fashion and whined plaintively. He was the perfect picture of "aren't I the cutest doggy?"

The odd but undeniably submissive actions of the wolf before him shocked Severus enough that he didn't give voice to the spell. Staring intently at the wolf, Severus circled it warily until he could get a good look at it. He kept his wand pointed at the beast, but he didn't understand why the creature was behaving so strangely. Remus let his tongue loll out of his mouth and grinned in a friendly way. Still whining, he thumped his tail on the ground, wagging it like a dog. When Severus refrained from attacking him, he rolled carefully onto his belly and crawled around until he could face his startled friend. Staying on his belly, he smiled again, wagging his tail madly while he gave another piteous whine.

"Has no one ever informed you, you detestable, vermin-ridden beast, that wolves do not wag in that ridiculous fashion?" the irritated man snarled.

Thanking all the gods that the man standing before him was far too surly not to complain about something, Remus carefully shook his head in a very human gesture. The eyes of the man before him widened in shock for the second time that evening. Stepping slightly closer to the wolf, Severus studied his appearance more carefully. Noting the slight graying around the wolf's ears and muzzle, his tense stance relaxed slightly.

"Lupin?" he asked, his tone unbelieving.

At the sound of his name, Remus could not hold back a joyful bark as he nodded his head enthusiastically. As Severus placed his wand back in his sleeve, Remus tried to stand. The excitement at seeing a friendly...well...a familiar face had masked Remus' illness for a moment. As he tried to stand, his weakness caught up with him. Stumbling, he fell heavily onto his side. The sudden concern that flickered over the other wizard's face was an unexpected surprise to the weary werewolf.

"Remus!" Snape snapped, his voice hinting at both shock and concern. Kneeling next to the prone wolf, Severus once again drew his wand, this time to voice a simple diagnostic spell. As he gathered the information, he began to mutter to himself.

"Stupid...foolhardy...*Gryffindor*," Severus hissed through his teeth. "What in the many circles of hell have you done to yourself now? That side is infected...as I'm sure you are well aware. You're too skinny by half. Damn it Remus, your paws are bleeding...what did you try to do, walk all the way from London?"

Despite his pain, Remus was instantly cheered by the comfortably familiar grumpiness of the wizard fussing over him. Lifting his head, he gave Severus a wolfish grin and proceeded to lick the startled man's entire face. As Severus sputtered, his grin grew wider.

"For fuck's sake man! Have some damned pride, at least! That is even less dignified than tail wagging. I'll thank you to keep your disgusting tongue to yourself," he snapped.

His disgust might have been more believable if Remus hadn't caught the slight blush creeping over the pale man's face as he said it.

I must be feverish. If I didn't know better, I'd think the man cared. But that can't be true. He's talked his way out of every invitation I've extended, the stubborn git.

As Severus moved from Remus' side to put out the campfire and pack up his few belongings, Remus watched the other wizard from where he lay on the forest floor. His disgruntled friend moved quickly but with his usual grace; Remus had often thought Severus would have made a good wolf. The Potion master's silent and fluid motions were lovely to study. Giving a small sigh, Remus tried to keep his thoughts from wandering. It was true he was starved for company; he was people hungry, he realized. Remus was also well aware that he was hungry for the dark haired man in ways that the other wizard was bound to find highly inappropriate.

Well, he thought with another small sigh, Severus has made it clear during the past few years that he does not wish to spend more time in my company than absolutely necessary. I dare say I'll survive, if not happily. That is, if I'm not stuck in this blasted wolf form for the rest of my bloody life. At any rate, I expect that Severus will levitate me to the castle, foster me off on Poppy or Hagrid, and then spend as little time in my presence as necessary to find out what's gone wrong with my condition.

So sure was Lupin in his convictions that he was completely gobsmacked when Severus walked up to where he lay and lifted him easily into his arms. Even in his present form, Remus could not help but take comfort in the unexpected embrace, though he could not contain a small whine as the pressure of Severus' arms caused his side to flair in pain.

"I know it hurts," Severus said in an uncharacteristically gentle voice. "Brace up, man. We'll be at Hogwarts momentarily and get that infection squared away."

With that said, Severus Snape apparated one confused werewolf to the gate's of Hogwarts. He then proceeded to confuse the wolf further by carrying him by hand into the dungeons and straight into Severus' rooms. Once he lay Remus down on the sofa in his sitting room, Severus floo'd the Headmaster.

"I've got a...problem Albus. Would you be so kind as to gather up Poppy and Hagrid and come to my rooms?" Some habits die hard, if at all. Even though Voldemort was dead and gone, Professor Snape still refrained from getting specific when speaking on the floo. It was simply too easy for a nosy wizard to listen in.

Albus understood his young friend all too well, yet he couldn't quite ignore his own curiosity. "May I ask what the matter is, my boy?"

"I am entertaining...a sick friend," Severus replied brusquely.

"A friend who requires both Hagrid and Poppy's expertise?" asked Albus, with a sharp look at his Potions Professor.

"Indeed," was Severus' short reply.

"Odd time of the month for such a problem," Albus said, his voice heavy with innuendo.

"Indeed," Severus repeated and then continued in clipped, impatient tones, "If you are quite through satisfying your reprehensible curiosity, my...friend is in a great deal of pain. Perhaps your insufferable questions could wait until you've all arrived?"

The anger flashing in Snape's dark eyes only fueled a spark of surprised amusement in the Headmaster's. However, he replied quite calmly, "Yes...yes, you are quite right, my boy, forgive me. Tell your friend we shall arrive shortly to see to his ease."

"Insufferable *Gryffindor!*" Severus hissed as the flames lost their green sheen. Turning towards the injured wolf on his sofa, he continued. "Don't you imbeciles ever realize that there are times when words are not what are needed?" he snapped.

Intently regarding the flashing black eyes of the angry wizard staring at him, Remus calmly tucked that bit of information safely away for future reference. Stalking away, Severus passed out of sight of the wolf lying on the sofa, but Remus could still hear him...the sound of his determined steps...the opening of a slightly squeaky cabinet door...the soft clink of glass objects tapping together. In a moment, Severus returned to the sofa to kneel at Remus' side.

"I don't want to risk any healing measures until I have the chance to consult with both Hagrid and Poppy. Your condition makes healing a bit more complicated than if you were in your human form. However, there is no reason you need suffer in the meantime." Holding up the phial he clutched in one hand, Severus continued, "This is a simple pain relief potion. It's not very strong...I don't want it interfering with the diagnostics...but it should ease you somewhat. If you have no objection?" Severus finished with a questioning rise of his eyebrows.

Instead of a human nod, Remus could not resist raising up to lick Severus' chin while he uttered a soft whine. The effect this gesture had on the startled Potions Master was everything the werewolf desired. Blinking, Severus blushed lightly. When he spoke, his usual smooth tones had an odd, not-quite stuttering cadence.

"A...simple nod...would have been...sufficient. The way you behave, one would think we were..." Severus snapped his mouth shut so fast that Remus could hear the click of his teeth coming together. After giving Remus the potion, the flustered wizard rose quickly to his feet and spent the remainder of their time alone pacing restlessly, just out of sight of the bemused werewolf.

'One would think we were...' what, exactly? Friends? Or, dare I hope, lovers? I hope to Merlin that I'm not stuck like this, because if I get half a chance I'm going to find out exactly what the stubborn man meant by that. I swear it! I'm not about to let him wave off my advances with vague excuses ever again. I show him any attention...even in this wolf form...and he blushes like a school boy. I know he prefers men, but he's never given me any inkling that he might prefer me. If he does, why the hell has he been ducking my invitations?

Remus' silent if impassioned musing was interrupted by the arrival of the other wizards. Albus and Severus observed quietly while Hagrid and Poppy examined Remus and consulted together about the best line of treatment. Once that was squared away, they questioned Albus about where Remus should stay.

"A good question indeed," began Albus, a glint in his eye which belied his calm manner. "I'm sure Remus would be quite comfortable either in the infirmary or Hagrid's home, so I suppose that it depends on which you think would be more convenient."

"Nonsense!" an impatient voice interrupted. "Lupin shall stay here."

The shocked eyes of two wizards and one wolf turned to the Potions master. Albus simply regarded his young friend calmly.

"Lupin's injuries are only one of the problems we have to deal with," Severus explained in clipped tones. "Or have none of you noticed that he's a wolf despite the fact that the full moon is nearly a fortnight away?" he sneered. "I need to figure out just exactly what the trouble is...and I'll be damned if I'll waste my time traipsing all over creation to do so."

A twinkle in his eye, Albus replied in a voice that was wickedly matter of fact, "Well of course, my boy. We all know how much you care for Remus. It's perfectly understandable that you would want to keep him with you so that you can look after him."

Now it was the Potions master who was shocked. Remus was both surprised and pleased to see the same blush creep over the pale wizard's furious face. He couldn't hide a wolfish grin as he watched the object of his affection sputter in rage.

"Have you lost your mind, old man? I did not say that he...that we...that I...cared for him!"

Albus only chuckled as he said, "No, my dear boy, you most carefully did not."

In a flurry of robes, the furious Potions professor stormed from the room, slamming the door behind him. Albus was content to sit in a nearby chair while Poppy and Hagrid worked on the injured werewolf. His bruised and bleeding paws were carefully healed, as was the cut down his side. Hagrid left briefly to fetch an elixir from his hut that was effective on wolves, and he assured Remus that it would take care of the infection.

At last the work was finished and Poppy spoke to him kindly. "It wasn't as bad as it looked, Remus. The biggest problem is that you're starved and exhausted. You need to take a few more doses of that elixir of Hagrid's, and I've left written directions for Severus next to the bottle. Other than that, you only require rest and proper food. You should not need any more treatment from us, but please do call on us if you have further trouble."

Wishing he could thank the kind nurse and groundskeeper properly, Remus settled for an affectionate wagging of tail and a human nod of his canine head. Hagrid and Poppy both gave him a friendly pat before they left Snape's rooms, leaving Albus and Remus alone. Albus moved his chair closer to the where the wolf lay on the sofa and regarded him fondly.

"I doubt our angry friend will be returning very soon. I know you must be tired, Remus. I thought I would keep you company until you drop off to sleep."

Remus was indeed tired and he appreciated the kind wizard's company, but he couldn't stop himself from wishing he could speak. Exhausted as he was, he regarded the wizard sitting near him with questioning eyes.

"I see that something troubles you enough to keep you from your rest. Perhaps I can ease your puzzlement somewhat. I'm sure Severus thinks at the moment that I've done him no favors, but don't you think his reaction was a bit strong in regards to me implying little more than the two of you being friends?" Leaning toward Remus, Albus continued in a conspiratorial whisper, "I do think the man protests a bit too much, don't you?" Chuckling at the wolf's surprised expression, he continued, "Severus isn't used to such things. It's no surprise that the poor boy doesn't know how to act. I've found that my friendship with Severus has required a lot of patience over the years. I've also found that it was well worth the effort." Giving the tired werewolf a friendly pat, Albus said, "Now try to get some sleep, my boy."

Despite the thoughts whirling through his mind and the hesitant hope in his heart, Remus could no longer keep his weary eyes open. With a soft sigh, he closed his eyes and slept.

He woke once during the night, as strong yet gentle hands lifted his head to dose him with more of Hagrid's elixir. He could not stop himself from giving one of the hands a soft lick. To his surprise and pleasure, the small sign of affection did not drive the touchy man away. In fact, he felt Severus' hand give his neck a short caress before the man rose to withdraw. Whining softly, Remus wished he could tell the man not to leave. He had spent so much of his life alone and now, tired and sick, he could scarcely bear it.

"Go back to sleep, Remus," a low voice commanded. Then, in a voice so soft Remus wasn't sure he would have heard it had he not been in his wolf form, "I'll be nearby."

Raising his head enough to watch as Severus settled into the nearby chair, Remus gave a sigh of relief as he dropped back to sleep.

It was early the next afternoon when Remus at last awoke. For a moment he was disoriented by the unfamiliar room. Catching sight of Severus sitting and reading in the nearby chair, Remus remembered where he was and the events of the night before. Still groggy, he was content to lie where he was and study the other wizard. Severus was more at ease than Remus had ever seen him. The Potions master had leaned back in his chair, his dark eyes moving quickly as he read. His black boots and wool trousers were familiar to the werewolf, but this was the first time Remus had ever seen the normally over-dressed wizard in his shirt sleeves. Though the white linen shirt was buttoned clear up to the neck, Remus nevertheless found himself enjoying the unexpectedly casual sight.

Merlin's hairy arse! I miss my hands! If I had hands I'd see what I could do about loosening a few of those buttons.

Lost in his daydreams, Remus allowed his gaze to rake over the reading wizard. His eyes made a slow, deliberate journey over the man, from Severus' face with its softly intent expression of concentration to the strong, graceful hands which held Severus' book. Remus' eyes had just strayed to the man's black, trouser-covered crotch when an irritated clearing of Severus' throat brought him abruptly back to the present. Raising slightly embarrassed eyes back to Severus' face, he broke into a wolfish grin when he noted that, though Severus was scowling at him, the other wizard looked more uncomfortable than angry. His grin widened as he noted the slight blush which flickered to life over Severus' cheeks. Remus thought he was well on the way to becoming addicted to the sight of that blush.

"If you are quite finished with your inappropriate staring, the house-elves have brought you something to eat," Severus fairly snarled as he waved at two large bowls on the floor near the hearth. One sniff had Remus' mouth watering as he picked up the savory aroma of lamb stew. He was surprised at how hungry he was. However, he had one need more urgent. Unsure of what to do, he looked inquisitively at Severus and uttered a soft whine.

"If you have any other business to take care of," Severus said wryly, "I can floo you to Hagrid's hut. He's left the door there open and there is a house-elf stationed there who can return you. Later...if it is still necessary, you may take yourself outside. For the time being Hagrid and Poppy both insist you rest as much as possible."

Tumbling off the sofa and rising shakily to his feet, Remus gave Severus a friendly tail wag as he walked to the floo. With little trouble his full bladder was taken care of and he returned to his friend's sitting room. As he hungrily tucked into his lamb stew, his thoughts whirled. Would he be stuck in this blasted wolf form forever? And if he wasn't, what in the world was he going to do about the prickly wizard he had fallen in love with?

A Patient Wolf

Chapter 3 of 3

****Complete**** Remus Lupin's solitary habits cause him no end of trouble when his change does not take place as expected. Who will be able to help him and how shall he ever get to the help he so desperately needs?

"A gentleman is simply a patient wolf."

-Lana Turner

"The wolf was sick, he vowed a monk to be - But when he got well, a wolf once more was he"

-Walter Bower

Once Remus was finished with his meal, he had a very frustrating game of twenty questions with Severus. Though he was never a particularly verbose man, Remus found not being able to talk at all unbelievably frustrating. The fact that he was also distracted by the intense way Severus was studying him didn't help matters any.

"Right then," Severus said through clenched teeth, "Let's try it again and I shall make every endeavor to keep my questions simple. Was there anything different about when you changed into the wolf at the start of the full moon?"

Remus tilted his head at the Potions master for a puzzled moment. There had been a small difference, but he wasn't sure it was even important. In fact, at the time he had wondered if he's imagined it. It had seemed as if the change was slightly less painful than before. However, that might not have been more than a usual variation. Some times the change was just more difficult than others and he had never worked out why that was so. Eventually, he shook his head "no."

"Was there any difference during the full moon?"

Again, a negative shake of his head.

"Was there anything odd after the full moon...apart from the obvious?" Severus drawled with a small smirk of amusement.

Remus' only answer was an exaggerated roll of his eyes.

"Right. I'll have to run some tests and I'll need a sample of your blood...don't give me that look you great baby...you'll barely feel it. It will take me some time to test it, and do some research. Try to amuse yourself as best you can."

For the next week, it was almost as if the busy Potions master and the recovering werewolf were slowly changing places. While Remus grew steadily stronger and healthier, Severus grew tired and drawn. It was little wonder that the man was tired. Severus woke early each morning to run various tests on Remus before going out to teach all day. The man researched Remus' condition in dusty tomes and ancient scrolls during class breaks and skipped meals. The evenings were filled with either more research or the hopeful brewing of various ineffective attempts at solving the problem. By the end of the week, the usually energetic Potions professor was a shadow of his normal self. When Remus slipped back into the sitting room from a trip outside for some bladder relief, he was horrified to see the state Severus was in.

Severus sat at his desk, his head lying against the blotter, his hands fisted so tightly in his hair that Remus feared he would tear it out. Though that was shocking enough, it was nothing compared to the despair the werewolf felt when he realized the normally unflappable man was silently crying. It was more than he could take; with a strangled yelp, Remus turned and fled the dungeons. Almost senseless with heartbreak, Remus never heard his name called, never heard the booted feet chasing after him. The wolf took him over, and all he knew was he wanted to flee...to flee from the man who cried on his behalf...to flee from himself...to flee from what his life had become. Finding the stairs he climbed up, turned and climbed again. The unnoticed sound of pounding boot heels diminished as he outpaced his two legged pursuer.

Reaching the top, he could climb no more. Rushing through an open doorway, Remus skidded to a halt as he found himself suddenly outside. He was on the Astronomy Tower. As he paused to catch his panting breath, he studied its low walls. They were high enough to keep a wizard from accidentally tumbling to their death, but not so high that they would keep a determined wolf inside. His thought whirled as he studied the wall before him.

I will not live like this. I will not live a beast. Severus has practically killed himself looking for a solution...it's obvious he cannot find one. I will not let him live like this. He's better off... I'm better off...

Abruptly making a decision, Remus flew into movement before he could change his mind. Barely having started his sprint toward the wall, Remus was shocked to find himself tackled roughly from behind. The wizard and the wolf rolled, tumbling over each other as they fell to the ground. When they came to a stop, Remus found himself sprawled over a panting, exhausted Severus. Severus held him tightly, long fingered hands fisted in Remus' fur, his face buried in the soft fur of Remus' neck. Remus suddenly realized the body he was on was trembling violently, but whether it was from exhaustion or emotion he could not tell. Either way, it was painfully obvious that Severus had realized what he was about to do, and it was equally obvious how much it had upset the normally surly wizard.

Severus said not a word, he just lay there, breathing raggedly and clutching the werewolf to his chest. Though he squeezed his eyes tightly shut, silent tears slipped out, running down his pale cheeks and into the wolf's fur. Whining, Remus nosed at Severus' face, licking him softly, lapping at the salty tears, wishing he had voice to sound the multitude of things he so wanted to tell the man trembling beneath him. He continued licking at the face that was precious to him as he made soft, huffing, comforting sounds deep in his wolfish throat.

Eventually, the upset and embarrassed man found comfort in complaining, which made the wolf sprawled across his chest grin.

Drawing his head back to look Remus in the eye, Severus snapped, "For Merlin's sake, would you stop that infernal licking? Some dangerous creature of the night you've turned out to be...you're worse than Fang. I swear sometimes that you're all tongue."

All the better to lick you with. Remus took the new position of Severus' head as an opportunity to lap eagerly at the Potion Masters throat. Severus could not contain a short gasp of surprise, even as he snapped at the werewolf again to stop. Remus complied with a wolfish sigh, contenting himself with nuzzling his nose behind Severus' ear. The breathless man and wolf lay there for a while longer. Unclenching his fingers from Remus' coat, Severus' hands trailed unconsciously up and down the fur of Remus' back. At last, he wound his fingers through Remus' ruff and dragged the wolf's head back far enough that he could look him in the eye.

"If I release you, do I have your word that you will come back with me to my rooms? No more of this foolishness?"

Remus looked down at the man beneath him seriously for a moment, before giving him a deliberate nod of his head.

Shaking Remus' head roughly, Severus' continued in gruff tones, "If you try something like this again, I swear I'll follow you...do you understand?"

Nodding again, as the wizard and the wolf untangled themselves and began the long journey down to the dungeons, Remus realized he understood very well. Severus hadn't meant that he would chase him up the stairs; he'd meant he would follow him over the wall. Remus padded softly behind the Potions master with an oddly lightened heart.

That night, Remus had another surprise in store. When Severus prepared for bed and Remus made himself comfortable on the couch as was his usual habit, he was shocked when a night-shirted Severus spoke sharply to him from the doorway that led into the bedroom.

"You can't possibly think that anything short of a wizard's oath would cause me to trust you out here alone after that stunt you pulled this evening?"

Dragging his eyes off the unexpected and delectable sight of the other wizard's bare legs, Remus tilted his head at Severus in puzzlement.

Pointing into the bedroom, Severus spoke in tones that brooked no argument, "In. Now." As Remus jumped off the sofa to brush past Severus and into the bedroom, Severus continued brusquely, "I sleep on the near side of the bed, I'm not about to alter my habits for the likes of you."

Grinning at the most unfriendly invitation into a man's bed he had ever received, Remus couldn't resist a bit of a tail wag as he jumped up onto the bed and deliberately sprawled on Severus' side.

"Budge over, you vermin infested imbecile," Severus growled. "And I'll thank you to keep your disgusting tongue to yourself."

Obediently rolling over to the far side, Remus waited impatiently while Severus murmured a few soft spells, banking the fire in the hearth and dousing the torches which lit the room. When the man at last got into bed and pulled the coverlet over both man and wolf, Remus wasted no time in pressing close to the wizard's side as he prepared to rest. His last, fuzzy memory...as he drifted off to sleep...was of a warm arm banding his chest and holding him close.

The following week began very much like the week previous. There were no more tearfully touching scenes and the overworked and irritable Potions master was as rude and surly as ever. There was one marked difference. Though the stubborn man would say no word about it, each night, after the man and the wolf had climbed into bed, Severus would shamelessly throw an arm over Remus' furry chest and hold him close.

When Remus woke Wednesday morning, Severus had already arisen. Groggily clambering out of the bed, Remus stumbled toward the lav where he planned to sneak a drink from the toilet. Though he had a perfectly good dish of water next to the sitting room's hearth, Remus had been slightly mortified to find that he preferred drinking out of the toilet. Dogs had the right of it; the water there was always both fresher and colder than that in his bowl. Trotting into the lav, Remus skidded to a sudden halt, the sight before him wiping the last traces of sleep from his suddenly alert mind.

A very naked, wet, and soapy Potions master was in the shower. There was no curtain or door...Severus obviously used a spell to keep the water from splashing out into the room. A spell which did nothing to hide Severus' body from a very surprised and interested werewolf. The man wasn't pretty; he'd never be anything near what most would call handsome. But Remus had never cared that the object of his affections would never be featured in *Witch Weekly*. Remus himself thought the black-eyed man looked good, and that was all that mattered to the werewolf. Remus had been taken aback merely by the sight of Severus' legs when he wore his nightshirt; to suddenly find himself confronted with all that naked flesh was like a feast after a famine.

Dark hair, weighted with water, brushed bare shoulders. The water ran, uninterrupted, down the wizard's back, splashing over the curve of his arse, making wet trails of the black hair that covered Severus' legs...trails which Remus wanted to follow with his tongue. Severus was tall, lanky limbed, lean to the point of skinniness, and absolutely glorious to the wolf which eyed him hungrily. Then Severus turned around. Remus had a quick glimpse of a lightly haired chest, the hair growing thicker and darker as it

trailed down Severus' flat stomach to where it joined the thick nest of curls between the man's muscular thighs. With a strangled yelp, Remus whirled away. He ran through the bedroom, into the sitting room where he crawled beneath Severus' desk and hid his head under his front paws.

I'm a wolf. I'm a fucking wolf...with paws instead of hands and no reasonable way to take care of an erection so fucking hard I feel like I could drive it into the stone of this fucking floor.

Whining, Remus could not stop his hips from mindlessly humping against the floor in question for a moment, but the movement only worsened his problem while granting him no release. Briefly considering taking care of the problem with his mouth, Remus' human mind skittered away from that option--not to mention the fact that if Severus caught him at it, the sarcastic man would never let him hear the end of it. Remus' solitary torment was interrupted by the source of that torment pushing the desk chair aside so that he could peer at the werewolf with concern.

"Remus?"

Not uncovering his head, Remus growled.

"Remus, what's wrong?" Severus demanded more insistently.

Uncovering his head, Remus growled again, the look on his face could only be described as ravenous. Blanching, Severus took a stumbling step back, away from the hungry look which shown clearly from the werewolf's eyes.

"Remus?" he called again, this time in a tentative tone, as if he doubted who the creature which growled beneath his desk was.

The werewolf was far too distracted by his throbbing erection to realize that the other man was afraid he wanted to eat him...and not in a good way. The soft growl throbbed in his throat as he swept his gaze down Severus' chest to where a hastily wrapped towel covered the object of his recent fascination.

If I were myself, that towel would be off so fast...

As Remus stared at his towel covered cock, Severus belatedly realized the true source of the wolf's distraction. Skin that had blanched white with fear suddenly heated, spreading a flush which crept from his pale cheeks down the white column of his throat to disappear amongst the hairs on his chest. The tension in his body relaxed, and he was astonished to find himself weak at the knees.

"R-right then," he stammered. "I'll just...er...perhaps...I'd best go get dressed." His voice trailed off as he stumbled into the bedroom, shutting the door and leaning heavily against it until he felt steady enough to get dressed.

Both wizards later pretended the incident had never happened. Severus returned to study and students; eventually Remus' problem went away of its own accord. That night, in Severus' bed, if the Potions master held the wolf a little more tightly, no mention was ever made of it.

By Friday evening Remus was less pleasantly distracted by the nearness of the full moon. It would be full the next night and they seemed no nearer an answer than when they began. Remus had no idea how the moon would effect him in his present state. Severus had demanded that he take his Wolfsbane on schedule the week before, but neither wizard knew what to expect on the morrow. As Remus entered the open door of Severus' sitting room, the wolf was startled to see the other wizard once again collapsed over his desk. His head was on the blotter and Remus could see the man's shoulders shaking. Concerned, Remus strode over to the upset man, butting his head against Severus' side and making those soft, huffing noises deep in his throat.

When Severus lifted his head, Remus was completely gobsmacked to find that the normally dour man was laughing. Laughing harder at the all too human look of shock on the wolf's face, Severus ran a hand over his face as he tried to still his mirth long enough to speak.

"I know what happened," he finally managed. "I know what went wrong."

At Remus' insistent bark, he continued, more seriously, "It was my fault. I've been adjusting the potion, as you know. I'd already managed to make your recuperation time shorter and easier. I was trying to make the change itself less painful." With that statement, Severus burst into fresh giggles. At the wolf's look of astonishment, Severus explained his amusement. "Well, it did work! Just...er...not quite as I intended?"

Impatient with the man's amusement, Remus placed his front paws on Severus' desk, leaned toward the man, and growled gently. Severus grew immediately more serious, though he could not quite hide a relieved grin.

"Remus," he began as he looked into the wolf's eyes, "last weekend you took the normal Wolfsbane, not my new version. I don't think you will notice any difference when the moon rises tomorrow night. I am also fairly certain that when the moon sets, you will change normally, as you have always done."

Remus matched Severus' grin with one of his own as he leaned forward to lick the man's face enthusiastically. His grin widened as the man sputtered in protest.

Remus woke late Sunday morning. It took him the usual, disoriented moment to realize where he was. Turning his head, he saw that Severus was still sleeping soundly on the pillow next to him. The Potions master slept on his back, his lips slightly open as he snored gently, his hair fanned out over the pillowcase...its blackness a lovely contrast over the crisp whiteness of the cotton sheets. Unthinking, Remus reached a hand out to stroke a strand of that dark hair. His hand paused half way to its target. His hand. His beautiful, useful, human hand. With a happy grin, Remus took stock of his body, even going so far as taking a quick peek beneath the coverlet. Yes...all there and all decidedly human. Taking stock of how he felt, Remus stretched his muscles lightly. The ache of the change was there, though it was no where near as debilitating as it had once been before Severus' experiments had eased his change.

Enough self examination...I've got better things to do...

Raising up to lean over the man sleeping beside him, Remus reached a hand to slip it into the dark hair at Severus' temple. Stroking a pale cheek with the pad of his thumb, when Severus' eyes blinked open, Remus smiled down at him.

"Remus?"

"Good morning." The first words Remus had spoken in a month were low and husky. Bending down, Remus covered Severus' lips with his own. The lips beneath his own responded for the briefest of instants before Severus pushed Remus forcefully away.

"What the hell are you doing?" he sputtered in fury. "I don't want your damned gratitude!"

"Gratitude?" Remus asked blankly.

"Yes..." Severus muttered. "Stupid Gryffindor gratitude...just like all those blasted invitations." Effecting a ridiculously simpering voice, he continued, "Oh thank you Severus for helping me...won't you come out to lunch with me so that I can show you my appreciation. Well I don't want your thanks, I..." Severus' mouth snapped shut and he fell into stony silence while he continued glaring at Remus.

Bemused, Remus gathered his thoughts before he carefully spoke. "Severus, you're a Slytherin. Can you not see that my gratitude was a rather thinly veiled justification to hide the selfishness of what I truly wanted?"

"What...what did you want?" Severus said, his rage abruptly fled in the face of the tender look in the werewolf's eyes.

"You," Remus said simply as he once again began to lower his head toward Severus.

"What are you doing?" Severus said in breathless tones.

"I'm going to kiss you again," Remus replied calmly. "And I assure you that it is a completely selfish act."

"Oh...well...carry on, then."

Remus carried on.