

Where Rain And Smoke Mingle

by Jenwryn

Remus/Sirius. Set in 1979. A very damp, melancholic piece. "It doesn't matter if they've disowned you, they're still your family. It doesn't matter how often you walk away, it still hurts..."

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Chapter 1 of 1

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[1979]

It was early November and the rain pelted down. Not the miserly, tedious, hateful little rain that had been torturing them ceaselessly since October's close – the life-sucking, wet monotony that had started to send him pathological as he paced the flat while Remus just sat, serene, reading book after book. No, this was a real, full-blooded, truly torrential rain that poured down out of the slate-grey sky to set the world adrift in a mess of streams and a thousand dirty little middies of ratty leaves and cigarette butts. It was a drowning rain. It stomped down on the headstones of the family plot; it stomped down on the mourners, who stood huddled pitifully beneath their black umbrellas and dispersing charms; it stomped down on the pile of earth that had been heaped up when the hole was dug, but which now ran and slipped and seeped across grass and gravel, and over shoes, and back down into the hole. The coffin was already in it, so Sirius didn't suppose it mattered if the whole damn heap slopped with a damp smack back down from whence it came, back down to join the newest member of the fastest growing branch of the oh-so-illustrious family Black: its dead.

The rain stomped down on the dead one's son, and unlike the mourners, Sirius let it. It streamed into his eyes and made them smart; it seeped into his ostentatiously Muggle clothes and made the dark shades bleed; it plastered his hair to his forehead in long, raven-coloured strands. He had one fist thrust deep into the pocket of his jacket. The other hand held a cigarette, pale and slender in the overcast half-light, clearly charmed, unlike himself, because when he put it to his lips it flared hot crimson, and when he took it away again he breathed out fine trails of blue whiteness to be beaten down by the slick, grey rain. He smoked silently as he stood there and listened to a wizened old wizard speak meaningless words about a man the wizard had probably never met in person. Oh-illustrious Orion was this, oh-illustrious Orion was that, and the words turned like the worm will turn and knotted themselves into gnarled little fists at the back of Sirius's ears until it made him sick and he couldn't take any more. So he shut them out, and shifted his boots in the slippery, streaming mud, and inhaled, and exhaled, and gazed across the grave at the woman who'd borne him. Watched her as she stood there shrouded in her veils of black lace like a Spanish *mantilla*, like something off cheap a bullring postcard, like the ones he'd seen when he'd taken Remus to Barcelona. Barcelona, where they'd spent a week in that awful room above that awful bar, drinking lousy *sangria* and making fine love. There'd been bed bugs, and they'd both come up in small hard lumps that itched for weeks, especially Remus, because he was softer, and because it seemed that the arthropod world agreed that he tasted delicious.

A lump of lust, and unexpected shame, rose up in Sirius's throat and spread its fingers, making it difficult to breathe. He swallowed it down and observed the mourners through his haze of blue, and the haze of wet, and wondered if any of them had the Legilimency to see inside the rooms of his mind and find a bed-tousled Remus there. Even here, even now, at his own damn father's funeral; Remus in his head. Remus, who stood just out of reach behind him, coat collar turned up around the coppery little half-curls at the base of his neck. Remus, who had refused to come any closer because he wasn't family, to which Sirius had replied forcefully that he fucking well was, more so than any of them over there, and besides *I'm not family any more either, am I?* But Remus could be stubborn when he wanted and had simply stayed there, back turned slightly, and one of his scuffed shoes half splayed across the edge of Regulus's stretch of soil.

It was Remus who'd insisted that Sirius attend.

It was Remus who'd brought them flowers, both of them – Regulus and the dead wizard in the hole in the ground that gazed up at the inky sky like an eyeless socket. Flowers, he'd brought them, even though the one had resented him, and the other had never met him.

Sirius didn't understand why he'd done it.

Across the other side of the hole, gaping maw of the earth that it was, his mother had stopped sobbing. He watched as she scooped soil from a box that some witch, dressed in dusky grey, had passed her. He watched as she let it fall from her thin, white fingers, spiralling downwards like a tumbling galaxy of dust come adrift from the universe. He watched as she spoke words that he could not hear above the rain, but which he didn't need to hear because he'd heard them all before.

And then she looked at him.

Her grey eyes carved a swathe through space and smoke and sheets of stomping rain to fix upon his and sink deep. Oh, Merlin. He'd been right. He shouldn't have come.

Sirius threw his cigarette to the ground, and it landed in the mud with a small, spitting hiss. He stared at it like a blind man and then turned, turned away from her face beneath her lace, turned and walked away from it, away from her, away from the hole, and away from the dead, walked away; and walked to Remus. He halted there and Remus looked at him. Sirius thrust his hand out and caught up the other's. Remus bit his lower lip, gnawing at it, devouring it in his anxiety, glancing down at their fingers entwined and at the water streaming across their joined skin, then glancing back at the mourners, and at the hunched figure in the black lace fallen to her knees in the mud and swirling leaves.

But Sirius didn't glance back. He just clung to Remus's hand until he heard the bones creak, and led them away, and let the rain stream down across his hair, and his eyes, and his cheeks, and tried not to taste the salt water that it carried to rest upon his lips.