Part Fifteen September, 1976

with the lace and the blue notion is my favorite so if you would just send that back I can return your shorts with the cannow on them and both have very nice times.

We had good summer time, Ou! That is good and all for w. pplie.

LONDON September 18

A startling rash of murders that have been terrorizing the English countryside are, officials from the Ministry say, not linked together. Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge told reporters this afternoon the murders "Are in no way linked to one perpetrator" and, later, "there is absolutely nothing to be worried about." Fudge also says he and his men at the Ministry are working hard to uncover the truths behind these terrible murders.

"The perpetrators have no consistent MO," said Mr. Fudge during a press conference early this morning, which was designed to dispell fears and rumors in wide circulation since the killings began. "That is how we are sure there is no ringleader, no 'head honcho,' no mastermind killer on the loose. I can assure you, you are all very safe in your beds tonight."

Not so for a few Muggles and one Muggle-born wizard, who have all died under mysterious, yet definitely magical circumstances, in the past month. Further commentary by the ministry was not forthcoming.

MURDERES! LUNATIC KILLER ON THE LOOSE MUGGLES AND MUGGLE-BORNS MADE TARGETS ARE ANY OF YOU REALLY GOING TO BE SAFE IN YOUR BEDS TONIGHT?

THAT IS THE QUESTION on all of our minds tonight after the speech by Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge regarding the rash of deranged murders in and around London!!!!

Mr. Fudge has assured us we are all 'safe in our beds' but how can we be so sure of this???

When will the Ministry officials start telling us the real truth behind this madman????????

Who is really killing the Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards in the night?????

Our most brave reporter, Eva Snitch, has the inside scoop no one wants you to know!!!!!!!!

Will we ever be safe again? Who IS that masked man? Is a cult of lunatics behind all this?

The answers will shock you in next week's edition! Found on stands September 30th!!!!!!!!!

The answer to the question 'Is Lily still mad at me,' James has discovered, is a resounding 'Yes.' Girls have this astonishing power, James will later relate to Remus and Peter and Sirius and anyone who makes the mistake of saying hello to him, to ignore all logic, reason, sense both common and uncommon, and simple human kindness, and to hold onto one tiny little mistake, milking it like a gigantic cow. James spends most of his meeting with Dumbledore and Lily boggling at her, mouth hanging open, like a dead fish. She, on the other hand, keeps her eyes coolly in front of her. It's as if he's not even there. It's as if he's not even alive. He might as well *be* a dead fish, and she's doing a fantastic job of not even acknowledging the smell. At one point, while Dumbledore is going on and on and *on* about their duties, James wants to get up and make faces directly in front of her. That'll show her, he thinks. She won't be able to ignore him *then*.

However, it may not further his assertion that he really isn't a madman.

"And as I was saying, Mr. Potter," Dumbledore continues, "the reason I have chosen you for Head Boy is for the incredible qualities of leadership exhibited earlier, when, under circumstances that cannot of course be here divulged, you saved Severus Snape's life."

Lily's eyes almost pop out of her head.

James ponders proposing to Dumbledore right here, right now, ring be damned.

"He did *what*," Lily says, in a shrill tone of voice that on anyone else would have been extremely unattractive.

"Miss Evans, I believe I made it clear that the circumstances of Mr. Potter's actions are not -- Mr. Potter, pray at least *pretend* to pay attention -- are not for public consumption. For various reasons--" he slides a glance at James over the top of his glasses, sharp but benign "of which I'm certain you are aware, Mr. Potter, it would probably be best not to divulge them. Even, perhaps, to assuage the no-doubt considerable qualms of your co-head."

Lily is staring at him now, wearing an expression that is probably quite similar to the one he's had on for the last half an hour. Good, thinks James. They make such a lovely, fishy pair. "I understand, Professor."

"Now," Dumbledore concludes, rising, "if you will both excuse me, I have some business to attend to. I trust you can see yourselves out and you, Ms. Evans, can let Mr. Potter in on all that he missed while his mind was noticeably elsewhere?"

Lily opens her mouth, then closes it, then opens it again. "Do you mean to say he saved Severus Snape's--"

"And have a wonderful day," Dumbledore says cheerfully. "Ta!"

James stands to go. He's wracked with hard choices. Should he look smug? Should he do a little dance? Should he suck it all in, be mature, and not get his arse kicked up between his shoulderblades by Lily's impeccably polished but no less lethal left shoe? Should he give up on his arse and just let it be known that he, James Potter, is king of the world, not to mention head boy, not to mention a hero, not to mention totally, completely, one hundred percent right?

"Come on," Lily mutters, grabbing him by the wrist. "Stop standing there with your mouth hanging open, you look daft."

They aren't halfway to the door before it slides open. On his perch, Fawkes -- who is looking a little ratty around the edges, and no doubt nearing spontaneous combustion -- gives a half-hearted squawk and falls silent.

"Oh my God," James says, his eyes going wide as frying pans. "Oh my God oh my God oh my God oh my God."

"Uhm," Lily says. "What is the matter with you?"

"The Prewetts," James whispers. He grabs Lily's sleeve. "Pinch me."

"All right." She does so.

"Ow! Oh my God," James says again. "I am awake and it's the Prewetts."

Lily directs her attention to the door. Two young men -- handsome, yes, but from James' sense of humor and lack of color-coordination that can't possibly be the source of his reaction -- have stepped kindly out of the way for them to leave. "Uhm," Lily says again. "What is the matter with you?"

Of course she wouldn't understand. For the first time in James Potter's entire life, he wishes that he could discreetly swap Lily with Sirius, just for this specific moment in time. In the door, looking taller and browner and brasher than ever, are the Prewett brothers. They are wearing dragonhide trousers. James is suddenly in third year again: awkward, pimply, and breathless with awe.

"That's never little Potter?" Gideon booms, ruffling a hand through his tousle of golden hair. "Why, you look just like a person! In trouble already, are we? School not even started?"

"Jolly good," Fabian adds. "Grand old Gryffindor house tradition. Carry on!" He makes a little pumped *Pride!* fist in the air.

James feels as if he may faint. "You know my *name*!" he squeaks, fortunately in a voice so tiny that only Lily hears him, and, mercifully, does nothing worse than roll her eyes.

The motion, however, is enough to attract Fabian's attention; he lifts his eyebrows and bows a little, dropping his voice several octaves. "I don't believe we've met." His hair is all shiny and swingy. James goes from feeling as if he's walking on a cloud to as if a little angel has sauntered along and punched him right in the neck. No one, James remembers, can resist Fabian Prewett's hair.

"Oh," Lily says, giggling quietly and tucking her hair behind her ears, "yes, we have, I was in third when you were in seventh, it's Lily, Lily Evans, and you're the Prewetts, aren't you?"

"Not Lily Evans?!" Gideon says, frankly astonished. "Carrotty Evans?"

"Well," Fabian says, drawing back, "I feel quite dirty and ancient. Beg your pardon, Evans. You are looking

lovely. Though I'm surprised to find you knocking about with a troublemaker like this one." He favors James with a lazy, approving grin. Never have James's emotions been so toyed with. Any minute, he thinks. The fainting. It's going to happen. He'll wake up with Fabian Prewett splashing water in his face and Gideon Prewett checking his pulse and it will, actually, be like dying and going to heaven, if only for a minute while he's still disoriented.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Potter and Miss Evans are in my office for their first meeting as Head Boy and Girl," Dumbledore says mildly. "So good to see you, Gideon, Fabian. I had thought you were arriving earlier."

"Held up, weren't we," Gideon murmurs darkly, striding to the desk and straddling a chair backwards. "Bit of a do-up near Oxford."

"You have *never* seen *anything* -- well, no, I suppose you *have* seen a lot of things like it, but the point remains, it was just -- the *scale* -- positively astronomic," Fabian explains, also sitting backwards. The seat of his dragonhide trousers is so shiny, but James really isn't trying to look.

"What he means to say is," Gideon clarifies, "is, we saw stars."

"And it was a cloudy night," Fabian finishes.

Dumbledore casts a significant look across the room at James and Lily, both frozen in place, for various, awestruck reasons of their own devising. "While I have, indeed, seen such occurrences as you are so poetically describing, I can assure you Mr. Potter and Ms. Evans have not. Thank you, Mr. Potter and Ms. Evans. That *will* be all."

James stumbles out into the hall feeling dizzy. "They are *amazing*," he mumbles. "The way they sit on their chairs, did you see that, they always used to do that, and in *dragonhide trousers*, sitting backwards on a chair in *dragonhide trousers*, they are *brilliant--*"

"And probably sterile," Lily finishes for him. "You'd think they were from Busty and Bewitched, the way you carry on about them."

"My heroes," James squeaks.

"I don't," Lily says, "I can't -- believe -- what are -- how -- argh!" She turns on her heel and storms off, leaving James to sit in the middle of the hall and recuperate.

"Padfoot!" James screeches, hurtling up the stairs completely out of breath and bursting into the dormitory, where Sirius is methodically unpacking. Of course he had to come up when James did, and of course James went up early to do Mysterious Head Boy Things, and so Sirius is now bored and alone and the best solution to this is to make the unpacking last as long as humanly possible. It reminds him of Remus, the way he separates his socks into 'nighttime socks' and 'daytime socks' which aren't actual sock categories; they just involve a higher level of organization. Sirius folds a pair of shorts and carefully color-codes them before looking up with calculated

disinterest.

"Pads," James pants, "you'll never -- never guess -- who's here -- right here, in Dumbledore's office, not one hundred feet away, *right now*--"

"Edgar Allen Poe?" Sirius guesses caustically.

"The *Prewetts*," James breathes in hushed reverence. Sirius drops the shorts.

"The Prewetts?" he whispers tremblingly, after a few worshipful moments.

"Gideon and Fabian and they're wearing dragonhide trousers and they said 'That's never little Potter' and Fabian hit on Lily only not really because he felt unclean after but Gideon called me 'Potter' and Fabian smiled at me and he said 'carry on," says James in a rush. "I was going to ask them to sign my head but I hadn't got a quill."

Sirius dives into his trunk. It takes a few moments of frantic rummaging and then he emerges, a pair of snitch-imprinted pants on his head and a small, crumpled book clutched in his hand.

"I saved it," he whispers. "Remember how we used to use it to swear on? And then after fourth year we said it was silly and a bit creepy? I didn't really throw it out."

"Did you sleep with it under your pillow?"

Sirius looks shifty.

"I would have," James says frankly.

"Good," Sirius says, breathing a deep sigh of relief. "I did. Well, only on odd days." He clasps the book close, petting it reverently. "They're here? Where are they? What are they doing? How is Fabian's hair?"

"Yes, Dumbledore's office, top secret business I think to do with stars, *incredible*," James answers.

"Dragonhide pants?" Sirius asks.

"Dragonhide pants," James affirms.

"We've got to see them. We've got to -- I know. Loiter. Casually. In the halls. Do you think we should take the book? Where do you think they'd sign me? Do you think they'd sign the book? This is creepy, isn't it, this is the sort of behavior you would endorse and everyone knows *you're* a stalker. I'm not a stalker," Sirius adds, for good luck. "These are just, you know, the Prewetts."

"I can't even hate you for saying that," James says. "You saved the book."

Sirius pets the cover again, running his fingers over the gold title. *The Secret Adventures of Gideon and Fabian Prewett, Pranksters Extraordinaire.* The Holy Grail of their childhood. Their guidebook. Their Bible. A piece of

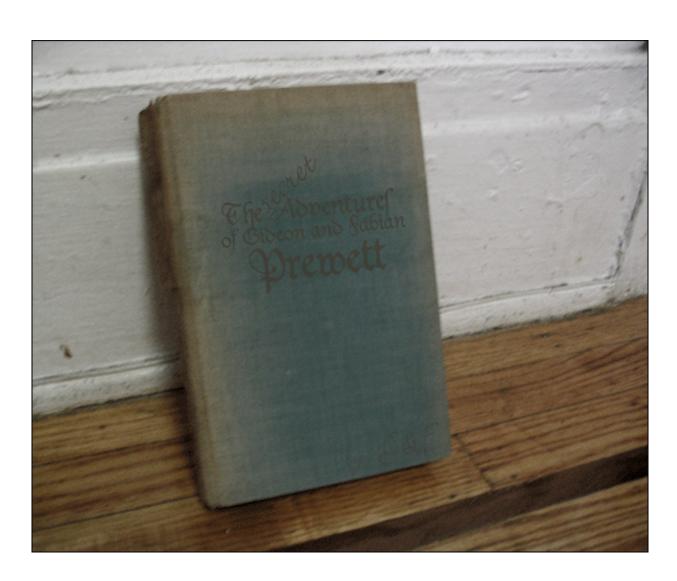
religious paraphernalia, something holy, something to swear by, something that may never, ever be profaned. "The book," Sirius echoes.

They share a necessary book moment.

"Right," Sirius says, after the silence has gone on long enough. "We're getting autographs. Don't say anything, it only makes you look like a madman when you talk to people you stalk."

"You're right," James says, starry eyes very far away. "They'll think we're scary. What should we do? Should we go back to the office? Do you think they'll be here tomorrow? Should we wait? I don't know what to *do*."

"I have to wash my hair, I look a total fright," Sirius says, and scurries into the bathroom.



The Very Secret Adventures of Gideon and Fabian Prewett

Being an Account of the Exploits of Hogwarts' Most Daring (and Handsome!) Duo

If you've found this book and you're not a Prewett you can bugger off!!

Unless you're an acolyte hoping to learn the Prewett Way, in which case, read on and be enlightened, youngster.

DAY ONE: We arrive in Hogwarts!

We arrive in Hogwarts to the cheering of the crowd and are of course immediately heralded into Gryffindor, our Home Away From Home, for the next seven years. While Fabian insists we make much ado about our arrival for posterity's sake I, GIDEON PREWETT, have the quill which means we will skip to all the good parts because I, GIDEON PREWETT, will be your favorite Prewett brother.

DAY TWO: Our first prank.

Our first prank is as all first pranks must be to any young male blazing his way in the world of mischief: held dear and close through long and prank-less nights, as the memory of your first kiss, your first woman, your first ho-ho and delicious all that, or possibly your first slice of chocolate cake. IT IS SACRED. No matter how terrible. However ours was fantastic. SINCE these are the Very Secret Adventures of the Brothers Prewett, not A Full Disclosure of All the Secrets of the Brothers Prewett, the details need not be revealed here; no doubt you have already heard them anyway, seeing as how they've probably gone down in modern myth.

A word to the wise: the stairs to the back entrance of the Hufflepuff wing are dead slippery, and should not be part of your escape route.

DAYS THREE THROUGH FORTY-SEVEN: We grow steadily more and more popular and handsomer by the day. Soon we have a cadre of swooning young ladies everywhere we set foot. It is a difficult life, being a PREWETT BROTHER, but someone's got to do it. Also, we torment many, many a Slytherin, most notably our odious archenemy, Luscious Lucius "I'm a Wanker" Malfoy. All the school supports our heroic efforts, mainly because Malfoy is a ratty little bastard and he goes orange when he gets upset. (Discovered by FABIAN PREWETT in an incident most illustriously referred to as BIG PUREBLOODED CARROT FACE. Treasure the memories. They are a man's life in reverse, and his legend while living.)

DAYS FORTY-SEVEN THROUGH END OF FIRST YEAR: We learn that our arch-nemesis, the spitty cobra to our sleek and adorable mongoose, is no match for our wit, our brilliance, our insurmountable magical prowess. We learn also that inbreeding among purebloods has at last produced a genetic horror show known as one Monsieur Crabbe (herein known as Monsieur Meat-Fist) and one Monsieur Goyle (herein known as Monsieur Hammer-Hand) who, like all mentally deficient but hulking great Slytherins, have been put to work as human pit bulls for His Holy Highness, the Emperor of Slytherin House, Goldie Locks. THUS we have introduced our friends, Messrs. Meat-Fist and Hammer-Hand, to the stairs at the back entrance of the Hufflepuff wing.

WE ARE BRILLIANT.

OUR FIRST SUMMER: We get a job in Hogsmeade. Fabian works hard. I have TWENTY-SEVEN GIRLFRIENDS. They all fight in the streets for my hand. I am in love with about twelve of them.

HAH! My brother has been crippled by a fortuitous hand cramp (even heroes are sometimes struck low by the capricious hand, haha, of fate) and so I, FABIAN PREWETT, otherwise known as The Sexy One (Gideon is, needless to say, The Overpoweringly Large One) will now proceed to set the record straight on the topic of our many unbelievably thrilling adventures.

What Gideon does not realize about his twenty-seven girlfriends was that twenty-three (23) of them were only dating him in order to see me in my underwear by wandering by the loo early in the morning; that three (3) of those remaining had severe mental deficiencies and/or physical disabilities; and that the last one (1) was actually a large, hairy man cursed with the unfortunate name of Amelia. This is the trouble with having a pen-friend girlfriend, as my brother has learned to his cost.

Anyway, the summer flies by in a whirlwind of excitement and romance, as do second year and third year and fourth year because honestly, it's really fairly formulaic: adventures, wine, women and song, and I think we should just skip straight to the daily log that we have started this year. What say you, Gideon?

I say you will never be The Sexy One. Give up! THE POWER OF THE GIDEON COMPELS YOU, dear reader. Keep in mind that of the two of us, only I can lift a gross of Acid Pops from the Honeydukes' basement over my head one-handed. Which is, of course, why they hired me. The ability to swish one's hair about and nance around wearing color-coordinated clothing is not really much of a job requirement and if girls really liked that sort of thing then more of them would date each other.

But I agree about the log.

*andyou display your funtaities white, you white, you deft bear?

1, tabian Prevett, SIETE control of the pen and guill at long last to attempt to install some sense literary brilliana in our otherwise brilliant escapades. It long last we are being heralded for our true brilliance! However with quent billiance umes great micery We are sentenced to she so much detention. Ah! Down. (To note: we have discovered many escapes fee wet page for details!

In any case I have had many a grand after in the throes of detentioning whilst my esteemed brother, FABIAN, made old dying hen noises and dug tunnels and ficked off the minutes on the walls. Ho ho! The days of yore!

A List for All Future Pranksters (A must-have guide to driving people bonkers!!)

- 1. DUNGBOMBS: the dungbomb is a beautiful invention, to proves great fun for the whole family.

 Don't know what to bring to a big party?

 DUNGBOMBS are the answer, mates to mate lettes. You of for all ages, and oh-so-smelly.
- 2. NOSE-BITING TEA CUPS: no one will ever ask you to tea again. You will have all the scones to yourself. A true triumph.
- 3. FROYSPAWN: oh how the lasses (and the lads)
 do scream at a fresh batch of
 frogspawn in their clotted cream (or
 underwear drawer). A clever and
 unique way to spice up a boring
 sunday!

- 4. Spontaneously Combusting Duills: for the goody-two-shoes in your life. The parfect yuktide gift: brings inty cheer to your friends' and enemies' faces. The stains will last for at least a month; and oh what a glorious month that will be.
- 5. Bilious Belt Buckles: the gift that beeps on giving. Steer clear of the lucky recipient; effects last 24 48 hours, and longer when it is humid.
 - 6. Big o' Brils: never be without this handy bag. We Premetts

 recall many a day when mat a loss for new and
 innovative pranking but in dire weed of some oldfashioned fun, were thrilled deep down to our
 britches to remember our handy lay of Boils.

 Bry as many as possible. These go fast, naturally.
- 7. Carniverous Cauldrons: They are always, always, always
 Hungry.
- 8. Howler Hatchery: if you sing them lullabies, they will be yours forever. No author hicity required!

 4. wild.

Composed by Girleon and falian frewitt, Being Helpful.

Gideon Prewett is having a fag. It's the fag that undoes him. It's the fag that keeps him for a minute, on school grounds, reveling in the minor triumph having a fag on school grounds brings. "You and your disgusting habits," Fabian is telling him. "One day they will be the death of us! You first-hand, and me, second."

"Do you even understand?" Gideon replies. "Look at me. I am *smoking* on school grounds." Fabian pauses to consider it. "It's a triumph," Gideon presses, with a hint of their old exclamation points. "I keep thinking Dumbledore's going to show up out of nowhere and put it out in one of those *ways*."

"I remember the buckets," Fabian sighs. "He had all these *shapes*."

"Just big enough for your head to fit in," Gideon recalls. "And yet you could never get your head out."

"Old bucket-head, they used to call you." Fabian grins. "All the birds. Fondly, of course, but with an air of sadness."

"I almost stifled myself," Gideon says, taking a long, sweet drag. "Mad old coot."

"So you should have done," Fabian returns. "That was the point. It was a lesson. You and your cancer sticks."

"Look," Gideon begins, irritably, raising the fag in warning, "we've had this discussion, and you said--"

Something in the bushes rattles.

Fabian tenses, almost imperceptibly, the sudden clutch of his muscles giving the lie to his casual expression. Gideon's hand flies instinctively to his inside pocket, curling in on the reassurance of his wand.

"It can't," Fabian whispers, so softly and with so little movement of his mouth that it's almost as if the voice is coming from somewhere else, "not on the grounds, not here--"

"On three," Gideon mouths. Fabian nods grimly, slowly uncrossing his leg, carefully measured movements. "One -- two--"

"Ow," the bush says, and then, "bugger fuck," and then two boys fall out of it with leaves in their hair. Fabian lifts a brow, relaxing. Gideon taps his chest in a way that means *I am not too old for this but it is never too early to wet yourself for no reason*. "Uhm." The boy on the bottom looks up and gives a winning grin. "Hello. How are you. Lovely weather. We do so like bushes." The boy on top nods, unable, apparently, to close his mouth. "How are you lot, then?"

"You're familiar," Gideon says.

"Put out your cigarette," Fabian hisses to him. "These are young people and you are a terrible influence."

"Oh," the boy on the bottom scoffs, "I smoke all the time. Fags. Fabulous. Smoke. All the time. You know."

"I don't," the boy on top says. "I don't smoke ever. You're my favorite," he adds, to Fabian. "Just so you know."

"Well." Fabian tosses his hair, puzzled but pleased. "Of course I am. Er. Who are you?"

"It's me," says the boy on top, who has now rolled off and is the boy on the left. "Little Potter? From today, earlier? You said." He is gazing up at Fabian with a calf-like expression, eyes wide behind his glasses, and suddenly Gideon does remember.

"Right," he says, vaguely, "Head Boy, yeah? With the redhead. What are you doing in those bushes?"

"Illegal things," says the boy on the right, who does look strangely, even painfully, familiar. Gideon strains his memory; all those third-years running around -- who was this one? Had any third-year -- any third year in the history of time -- worn a dog collar? "Extremely illegal. Go-down-among-the-heroes-of-legend sort of thing. Not sex-illegal, either, haha, we're just mates, not mating, but, you know, dungbombs. Slytherins and so on. Has either of you got a pen?"

"I know you!" Fabian exclaims suddenly, in tones that waver between horrified and amused. "Gideon, remember?"

"He knows me," the boy says, rapturously, to Potter. "Write that down."

"It's *Sirius Black*," Fabian hisses in his brother's ear -- *oh*! -- and then, turning his stony-eyed attention to the boy, who is swaggering back upright, says "You made our little sister *cry*."

Sirius Black freezes for a moment, his eyes darting back and forth in panic, and then says, very carefully, "To be fair, she punched me in the nose first."

"I punch him all the time," Potter says. "Loads."

"I don't care what she did," Gideon says, his voice like iron. "These are petty excuses. Unworthy excuses. The excuses not of a man but of a *worm*."

"Er," Sirius says. "This is really not how this part of meeting you is supposed to go."

"We know our little sister's left hook," Fabian continues. His eyes narrow into dark slits. Sirius takes a step backwards. "We taught it to her ourselves. It's really something, isn't it?"

"I had tissue up my nose for days," Sirius mumbles. "Just punishment, after all, eh?"

"Not enough," Gideon decides firmly.

"No," Fabian agrees. "Hardly enough."

"I will punch him for you," James offers. "Loads. Really. From dawn until dusk. If you will sign my arm. Will you sign my arm?"

"James," Sirius says out of the corner of his mouth, "they are going to sign your arm in my blood."

"Damn," James mutters. "That'll wash off."

"You know," Sirius attempts desperately, "your little sister was an absolutely amazing girl. Woman. Person of substance. And I was in fourth year and very stupid. Even stupider than now, I mean. Look, we play on the same Quidditch team! We're teammates! We're on fantastic terms. She's a great Seeker. I'm really, really *sorry*."

"Gideon," Fabian says, tapping a fingertip thoughtfully against his chin, "does 'sorry' cut it with us? As a matter of principle?"

"No," Gideon says shortly, rolling up his sleeves.

"I'm not just sorry, you know!" Sirius protests. He backpedals wildly into James, who has his arm stretched out and an expression of ecstasy on his face. "I am so far beyond sorry. I am a miserable worm. I am worm lint. I am toe dirt. I deserve to be eaten by hyenas. As much as it would be an honor to have the shit beaten out of me by you, at least let me try to redeem myself."

"Can't be done," Gideon says. "Come here, if you please, and take your beating like a man."

Sirius shuffles forward, staring up at Gideon with mournful, puppyish eyes. "All right," he whimpers. "But, listen, before you knock all the teeth from my mouth, there's something you should know."

"If it's about Alice--"

"--and her incredible right hook--"

"--and her equally incredible powers of deduction--"

"--we already know," Fabian finishes. "Stand up straight, old boy, stiff upper lip, et cetera. Can't face the firing squad looking like a drunken boxer on his last legs. For Hogwarts and Country."

"It isn't about Alice's right hook," Sirius says, whose eyes, dark and trembling, now appear to take up at least half of his head. "Although those are all magnificent traits which comprise an equally, if not more, magnificent young woman. It's about -- well, it's silly, but -- you know, your -- your book."

Fabian, who has delicate hands that look no less threatening, pauses in the middle of rolling up his left sleeve. He blinks. Gideon, who has hands the size of Sirius' head -- they look like mallets with fingers -- stops aiming his knuckles below the belt and presses a suddenly more gentle thumb against his lower lip. "Our book?" Fabian says quietly. "You don't mean--"

"The Secret Adventures of Gideon and Fabian Prewett," Sirius says, all in one go. "Written by Gideon and Fabian

Prewett, complete with lists for the apt pupil and those who would one day in the near future carry the banner, fight the good fight, keep up the same old, same old, the core, the very backbone, for the imaginations of the next generation!" Sirius pauses, feeling embarrassed. He is, after all, almost seventeen years old. Seventeen year olds aren't supposed to be excited about anything; it's against the law. However, this is a very special circumstance and he hopes against all hope that Gideon and Fabian Prewett will break his nose but keep his excitement a secret. "It is our bible," he finishes at last. "It is that upon which we swear."

"We live by it," James agrees. "Sirius here sleeps with it under his pillow."

"That is because I am the one who found it," Sirius mutters. "And only on odd days. I told you."

"You found the book," Fabian says. He lets out a fluttery small sigh and closes his eyes, youth and bliss chasing one another across his face.

"Oh, the memories," Gideon murmurs. The resemblance between them now is unmistakable. Something about the eyelashes. Sirius feels weak in the knees.

"The question is," Fabian continues, one eye opening, "are you worthy?"

"I am worthy," Sirius says. "I am worthy. I am so, so worthy."

Fabian takes his own chin between thumb and forefinger. "A test!" he proposes. "To see if you are, indeed, worthy as you say."

"And not toe lint," Sirius says. "Though I will always be toe lint inside for my horrendous behavior. I weep at night to make up for it."

"You've had probably ten girlfriends since," Gideon grins. "I know your type."

"You are his type," Fabian points out.

"Will you test me too?" James pleads, arm still bare and ready.

"This isn't merely a test, you know," Fabian says impatiently. "This is an assessment. An analysis. A scorching examination of your merits that tests the depths of your very soul." He regards them very meaningfully for a moment, and then says, "What happens on day forty-five of fifth year?"

"You eat two pounds of marshmallows and throw up in pink on Fabian's Divination homework," James says in a rush. "I did that too in third year but it wasn't marshmallows it was candy floss and it was really more purple and Sirius's head not his homework but I was *trying*."

"That was my question!" Sirius yelps. "Did he ask *you* that question? Sir, I *knew* that question, I can quote the whole entry, 'When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to consume a good portion of one's own weight in garishly colored sweets--' He's cheating!"

"Silence!" Fabian commands. Both boys shrink back, ashamed, and regard their feet. "A moment, if you please, I must confer with my esteemed associate." He turns his back on them, with great dignity, beckons Gideon closer, and whispers "What should we do now? Shall we have them do jumping-jacks? Send us money? Bring us our clothing and newspapers in the morning?"

"This is sick," Gideon says in an amused undertone. "You are a sick man."

"Shh," Fabian scolds. "They're rather adorable, aren't they? In a horrifying way."

"You could just carve it right in to my skin if you don't have a pen," James says helpfully, from behind them.

"We have never had minions before," Fabian adds. "Think of the possibilities. We could have whatever we wanted for breakfast in the morning. We could make them wear unitards or skirts or rollerskates or togas. We could dress them up, braid their hair. We could have *them* braid *our* hair."

"I do like sausages, but you always burn them and I never have time," Gideon muses. "Do you reckon they are any good at all at sausages?"

"They could learn," Fabian says. "They are young and supple and easily influenced."

"We can hear you whispering," Sirius calls out to them. "You know, not that we mind, just -- thought you might like to know. I am the Sausage King."

"We are hardly so slick as we once believed," Fabian murmurs. "This much is clear."

"Your proposition is that we take them in, teach them Prewett fashion, and in return have two small manslaves until the authorities catch on. Is that it?" Gideon says. "Is that what I am to take away from all this?"

"Do you think they are house trained?" Fabian thinks out loud. "What? Yes. That is indeed what I am proposing."

"It is so tempting," Gideon sighs. "I have always wanted a manslave."

"I would lick your boots clean every morning," Sirius offers. "Or if you are not one for spit on your shoes or, you know, wear sandals or something, I could always lick your feet clean."

"Oh Merlin," Gideon says. "It is going to be so hard, being mature about this."

"Now you know how it feels to be me," Fabian mutters.

They turn together, as if choreographed.

"We would willingly give up school," James whispers fervently.

"And our futures," Sirius adds. "Teach us. We are yours."

"Oh, please," Fabian says, breaking. "Can't we have them? I won't let them wet in the house and I'll feed them every day. We can dress them in little aprons."

"I look fantastic in an apron," Sirius agrees. "And James in those little pink numbers with shoulder frills."

"Unmb," James says, nodding hysterically.

"And," Fabian adds in a whisper so low only Gideon can hear it, "it might not be all bad, you know, having someone you knew you could trust in the student body. There's Alice, obviously, but it'd be all right to have the Head Boy in tow. Might come in handy for something other than sausages."

"Oh, we know we can trust them, do we?" Gideon repeats with quiet incredulity.

Fabian gives the duo a significant look. James, sleeve still rolled up, is practically drooling, hands clenched in a praying position; Sirius is making demonstrative smoothing and posing movements as if to illustrate his fitness to wear an apron. Both of them are wearing wet, pleading expressions of the sort normally seen on swooning nineteenth-century heroines on book jackets.

"Oh," Fabian says, "I think they'll do whatever we say."

"Righto," Gideon says. He nods once, decisively. "Listen up then, you young horrors, you are now Prewett apprentices. As such, we expect you to make the Prewett Lifestyle your number one priority. It is not easy or simple, being a Prewett, and we can't have other things -- girlfriends, schoolwork, so on -- mucking about with our Operation. Are we crystal?"

"No girlfriends!" James says quickly and joyfully, aglow with promise. "I've been dumped and his was only for the summer!"

"And we never spend any time on schoolwork anyway," Sirius adds, "so that's one off!"

"In addition to which," Fabian drawls, "you are to be available whenever we visit the school to spit-polish various items of our clothing, cook us sumptuous breakfasts, and dance about for our twisted amusement."

"Do you want us to choreograph our dances," Sirius asks, very seriously, "or do you prefer spontaneity and wild improvisation?"

"Both," Gideon says. He likes to think, later, that he doesn't mean it to sound so sadistic as it comes out.

"Yessir," James breathes. "Honor to serve, sir."

"This is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to me," Sirius says. He looks as if he might cry.

"It's adorable," Fabian gushes. "Look at its little face. Oh Gideon, I am so happy. Can we play with them *now*?"

"We've got an appointment," Gideon reminds him. "I think this little acquisition meeting may have gone on long

enough."

"What about my arm?" James mewls.

"Do you want to, like, brand us?" Sirius suggests. "Just so everyone would know and no one else would try to enlist us as manslaves. We are, after all, very much in demand. As you can imagine."

"I have no doubt," Gideon says, managing to make, with some effort, a Serious Face. "We're unfortunately in something of a rush--"

"Liar," Fabian hisses.

"--we're in a rush now," Gideon amends smoothly, "because of the thing, that we have to do, that isn't here. Right, Fabian?"

"Oh," Fabian says. He droops visibly, rather dispirited. "The thing. Yes, I suppose."

"You're leaving?" James moans.

"Only temporarily," Gideon consoles him, patting him manfully on the shoulder. "Stiff upper lip and keeping it, and all that. In the meantime, commit yourself to study of the Prewett Way."

"Our entire *lives* are committed to study of the Prewett Way," Sirius assures him.

"Good boy," Fabian beams. "As it should be. And he's been punched by Alice, so it's just like he's part of the family."

"Except smaller," Gideon reminds him, "and more enslaved."

"Can we get some photos?" Sirius asks perkily, producing, from nowhere, a camera.

"Can I have some of your hair?" James adds, in a very small voice.

"Yes," Fabian says.

"No," Gideon says, at the same time.

"My life is so beautiful," James murmurs, looking as if he might weep.





Remus has already eaten all his train chocolate. It isn't that his mother didn't give him breakfast in the morning; she did. It isn't that his mother didn't give him too much breakfast in the morning; she did. It's more that something about sitting, alone, on Platform Nine and Three Quarters, for a half hour because he is some mixture of early and late, requires as much chocolate to repair as possible. Also, Remus feels ill.

Two nights ago, the moon was full and unclouded in the sky. Riding back with the others on the appropriate day was out of the question; it would be him and Peter alone in the car, and if Remus passed out or started bleeding or turned around to be ill, Peter would probably faint dead away all over Remus' feet, which was hardly helpful. Mrs. Lupin was having none of it. She meant well, but staying behind for an extra day shattered Remus' careful conception of normality, scattering all the pieces to the proverbial four winds, leaving him here, on the Platform, alone, with only a dustpan and a bar of train chocolate to mend the wreckage.

It is, of course, better than the last week with the Potters. Being torn asunder by wild warthogs in the parched and barren desert is, of course, better than the last week with the Potters. Something must have gone wrong with James' mum -- too much unresolved tension floating free in the air at last breaking her -- and she baked seventeen pies in one day. That wouldn't have been terrible at all, as her pies were delicious, except Sirius had disappeared, and James was holed up somewhere reading something for Head Boy preparation, and Sophie had left earlier with a wink and a fluttering kiss to the air, which left Mr. Potter, Peter and Remus to eat seventeen pies in one evening to Mrs. Potter's repetitions of *Are they good, boys? How are they? Eat up! Have another slice*.

Again, Remus feels sick.

A slow whistle of steam signals the arrival of the Hogwarts Express on its way back from school, ready for a half-hour break before departure. Remus watches it dolefully as it slides into the station, all sleek and black and probably never ill on seventeen pies and one foolish bar of chocolate. For the first time in his life, he misses the chaos of people his age, loud and stepping on his feet and giving him awkward bruises.

"Top shape, top shape, ship-shape if you will. Excellent. Excellent. Most pleased, aren't we?"

The sound of another human voice at first confuses Remus. Perhaps he is dreaming the two men strolling casually down the platform towards him. Perhaps they are angels. Perhaps they signal the not unexpected explosion of his intestines, giving in at last to the pressure on all sides.

"Well, hallo," the lanky one with impressively shiny brown hair says. "What have we here?"

Remus' good manners kick in immediately. Harbingers of death or no, they are adults, and he ought to be polite to them or somehow, his mother will know. "Hallo," he says, standing and brushing chocolate off his thighs. *Are you here to kill me?* his brain adds. He doesn't give voice to it.

"You have chocolate on your nose," shiny-hair says. "No, no, I think it is a fantastic statement. Is it a freckle? Is it a food product? You are charming. I am Fabian Prewett, and this is my idiot Gideon, and why, exactly, are you here?"

"School," Remus manages, "going, late, to, sorry." He is bowled over by a strangely comforting, strangely frightening aura of total confidence, impossible charm, and slight interrogation. He doesn't blame them; he certainly looks suspicious, all bloated and ratty and smudged and alone.

"Hogwarts?" shiny-hair -- Fabian -- asks. "Are you a Ravenclaw?"

"Almost, actually," Remus finds himself blurting out. "But then the hat said, 'Well, where would you like to go?' and I thought, 'The nice boys I sat with on the train up who spoke to me, well, one of them is in Gryffindor, anyway, and he looks awfully angry about it, and it isn't entirely that I read *all the time*, you know, just a lot of it, but I do like books about adventure,' and I think it just said Gryffindor to make me shut up."

"My God," Fabian Prewett says, looking delighted. "Gideon, I love it. It's better than our dancing manslaves. We were in Gryffindor ourselves, not four years hence. I don't suppose we've met, Chocolate Face?"

"Er," Remus says, cursing himself for his terrible memory and inexcusable manners. "I don't know? Maybe. Remus Lupin, sorry." He sticks out a hand, which impulsive motion makes him drop the jumper rolled up under his arm. Clumsy, clumsy, *always* clumsy. He bends down to pick it up, but shiny hair waves him aside with a gallant "Allow me!" and smoothly retrieves it with the toe of his boot, tossing it up into one gloved hand.

"Thanks very much," Remus says, taking it. Fabian winks at him.

"Remus Lupin," rumbles the other man--Gideon?--who is approximately the size of a young tree and has masses of shining blond hair that make him look rather like an enormous, tattooed Apollo. "He was in third year, too, I

believe."

"Good Lord, it's an invasion," Fabian says, amused. "They are everywhere. Like rabbits. And O! how tall they are, and strapping, and so on. Gone the carefree days of boyhood. Sunrise, sunset. We've just met a few of your comrades; you realize that your class is apparently completely off its collective nut?"

"I know," Remus mutters. "Did you say 'manslaves?""

"We are not at liberty to divulge their names of yet," Fabian murmurs, "for their identities are secret and safe with us; never shall we betray them."

"Sirius Black and James Potter," Remus says, "right?"

Fabian looks to his brother. "How did he do that? I say, this chap is a good sort, what do you say we buy him a drink, Gid?"

Gideon raises a very blonde eyebrow. "If you're paying." He pauses. He grins. He has very white teeth. Remus is momentarily blinded. "*Fay*."

"Don't call me that," Fabian snaps. "Especially not in front of company. Well?" He turns on Remus, looking expectant. "Are you coming?"

"Er," Remus says.

Great hairy nancing flower-arsed poofter, Gideon mouths in Remus' direction.

"Where am I coming?" Remus clarifies, hoping he is not being addressed.

"For a nice spot of tea," Fabian explains, as if it is rather clear and Remus is rather simple. "The station shop is lacking in refreshments but it does make an excellent cup of tea, or three in our case, and you look as if you need it. That, and a napkin. Also, I believe I must put arsenic in my brother's drink, terrible affair, really, and he was so young, too, and all that. Shall we?"

Remus gets the impression of being swept under a gigantic wave of personality, drowning, like he did the first time he met Sirius. Only these people are, if only marginally, more mature, and far kinder. "Er," Remus repeats. "I can't miss my train."

"We will fly you to Hogwarts by motorbike if necessary," Fabian promises. "Though it won't be, as we are nothing if not punctual."

Great hairy nancing flower-arsed poofter, Gideon mouths again. That's what he is.

"But punctual," Fabian says, not batting an eye. "You seem an Earl Grey sort, am I right?"

"Er, yes, actually," Remus says, feeling the tips of his ears go red. Is this different from accepting candy from

strangers? Tea from strangers is something his mother has never warned him about, and either way they aren't really strangers, they've enslaved James and Sirius. Which somehow makes them...more trustworthy? It's unclear, but by the time Remus has puzzled this out, he has already been seized by the elbows and is being charmingly but determinedly steered towards the teashop by the Goateed Mountain on his left and the Shiny-Haired Wonder on his right.

"Don't worry," Gideon whispers in his ear, patting him on the shoulder. "I won't let him drug you."

"Er," Remus says. "Haha."

"I don't like this one," James says, frowning.

"Why not?" Sirius holds the shirt against his own chest, looks down at it, and looks back up at James, rather accusingly. "I think it's nice."

"It lacks something," James says. "Subtlety, I think. The shredded remainders of our dignity. Anything."

It is, Sirius has to admit, bright pink. It does say "Mrs. Fabian Prewett" across the chest in enormous black letters. On the other hand, it doesn't beat around the bush. "Well, look," he begins. "I mean, what it lacks for in subtlety it makes up for in clarity. There's no mistaking it. Besides. *I* won't have to wear it."

"I just think we're going to get," James explains, "you know. Hexed underthings. Deservedly, too."

Sirius has to admit, James does have a point. "What have we become, man," Sirius groans, flopping down against the bed. "Even Peter's left us for manlier things, like puff pastries and house elves."

"We have to snap out of it," James suggests. "We have to just -- we have to move on."

"It was their teeth," Sirius agrees. "Their teeth are so white. There must be -- hypnotic powers! That has to be the reason."

James looks at the shirt. Sirius looks at the shirt.

"Well," James says. "You might as well just fold it up and hide it. In case they, you know, ever do come back and want to see us in it."

"I really liked mine," Sirius mourns, folding. "It was clever."

"'Gideon Prewett Lets ME Touch His Biceps' isn't clever." James polishes his glasses on the edge of a sleeve. "It's sort of sad."

"You'd know all about that, wouldn't you?" Sirius begins. "I'm surprised you never made Lily Evans t-shirts and

accessories."

"Hang on a minute," James protests, and then, "Hallo, it's Moony!"

Remus sets his old suitcase down by his bed and offers a wan smile over his shoulder. Something wicked flashes in his eyes. Sirius quickly sits on the pink t-shirt. "Hullo," Remus says. "*Manslaves*."

He doesn't know. He *cannot* know. "Haha!" Sirius says airily. "Manslaves. What a creative nickname that is. Manslaves indeed. How are you? You're late."

"I'm very sorry," Remus says, sounding genuinely contrite. "I missed my train, you see, and I had to get a ride back."

"With strangers?" James exclaims, outraged. "Moony! What if they'd put you in a sack and dropped you in a river?"

"Oh, it was all right," Remus says. He carefully unlatches his suitcase and doesn't look up. "I sort of knew them, you see. Sirius, what *is* that color?"

"Fuchsia," Sirius says. "It's for my cousin. What kind of perverts gave you a ride from London to Hogwarts?"

"They graduated a few years ago," Remus says blithely. "I didn't know them all that well, but they were very friendly. They got me a cup of tea. Have you lot been making t-shirts?"

"They're for his cousin," James says. "Moony, did you say manslaves?"

"Did I?" Remus murmurs innocently.

James and Sirius exchange a half-panicked look. James fumbles with getting his glasses back up onto his nose. "So, er," he mumbles. "Who gave you the lift, then? A friendly old witch with a roomy broomstick?"

"Moony, you old dog, you," Sirius says. "Always knew you had it in you. How was she? Was she warty?"

"Let's see," Remus says. He takes out his socks and sets them all in a neat pile on one side of his bed. His underwear, on the bottom, remains packed until no one is around to see him take them out. He starts unloading his jumpers, one by one, re-folding a few that have gotten rumpled. "What were their names again? Very handsome, very suave, knew their way around. Had two motorcycles, actually, matching. Their jackets were monogrammed -- what was it?"

"Not," James says.

"It couldn't," Sirius agrees.

"Oh, *that's* right," Remus says. "Told me to call them Gid and Fay, you know, just like their friends do." Remus thinks back fondly to the tea shop and -- "Just tell them," Fabian said, "that we said for you to call us Gid and Fay

and if they piddle down their legs, won't that be a lovely sight?" -- Gideon and Fabian Prewett, Gideon drinking from a tiny teacup in a massive hand and Fabian with his pinky finger curling and occasionally his impeccably white teeth flashing. Remus doesn't mean to be so very cruel. He promises himself he'll only let it last for a little while longer. But Fabian *had* said it was *well* within his right. And Fabian was a very convincing man. Those teeth alone...!

"Gid," Sirius says.

"And Fay?" James chokes.

"I like the t-shirts," Remus says. "Very lovely color. Very unique."

"A part of me just died," James says "and it was you, Moony."

"Urgnk," Sirius moans, and then, more urgently, "urgnk."

"Gid and Fay?" James whimpers.

"Oh, yes," Remus replies, utterly unmoved.

"Ten points from Gryffindor for destroying my soul," James says.

"That's the stuff," Sirius says miserably. "Do it again. Oh, how I hate you, Remus Lupin. Gid. Fay. You rode on their *motorbike*. Speaking of which, you won't get within three feet of *my* motorbike--"

"Your motorbike hasn't got cushions," Remus points out, enjoying himself immensely. "And Gid's hardly even makes a noise. It just sort of goes rrrrrr like a happy kitten. In fact I rather liked it. None of the ups and certainly none of the downs, and the cushions on Fay's were red velvet and had little tassels."

"Don't think I won't--" James warns, raising his head from his hands.

"We are betrayed," Sirius mourns. "I'm burning the t-shirts. I'm throwing that book out a window. How is it *everyone* likes *him* so bloody much?"

"I don't stalk people," Remus says. "In which characteristic I am beginning to feel very alone."

"Psst! Sirius. Wake up. Padfoot, hey, wake up."

"Mmf. Gzzzght. What."

"The book. Where's the book? You didn't really throw it out a window, did you?"

"Mmf?"

"Wake up! Padfoot! Helloooo! The book."

"I know. God! I know. Of course I didn't. Don't be ridiculous. God, it's early."

"Where is it?"

"...I'm not telling you."

"It's under your pillow, isn't it?"

"Maybe. No. Why do you want it, anyway? We were jilted. We were abandoned. We were cruelly treated."

"Moony wasn't wearing one of his jumpers. That's why. The button-downs. We'll just have to send them photographs."

"They'll never call. They'll never write. It will be one afternoon of bliss and off they purr on their motorbikes. You know how they are. Moony *insulted my motorbike*. You heard him. She purrs. She does. It's just more of a roar sometimes."

"Padfoot."

"What, then?"

"Did you throw the book away."

"...no. Of course not."

Trying to get Sirius alone is like trying to catch a tadpole. Every time Remus thinks he's got him cornered, he disappears, or launches himself into fascinating conversation with whatever hapless student is standing close by, or puts his head down and pretends to be asleep.

"Sirius," Remus says. "Sirius, unless you are a narcoleptic with socks up your nose I really don't think you're asleep."

"Oh," Sirius says nonchalantly. "Hallo, Remus. Wonderful afternoon, isn't it? Have to be off now. Pressing engagement."

"I just wanted to apologize," Remus says, very fast, before Sirius can flee. "For all that about Gideon and Fabian Prewett. They, er -- you see, they told me to say all those things. Said it would be funny. They also said they'd be in touch so keep your ears perky. I think that's what they said. That does sound like them, doesn't it? In any case,

you can tell James, and you can stop avoiding me. Unless I smell. In which case, I don't know what to say, I bathe twice a day."

"Oh," Sirius says again. "Right. I'll tell James. And then we won't have to avoid you anymore! Haha. Jolly good. Lovely."

Remus gives him a furrowed look. "Do you have a fever? You look all flushed."

"Appointment," Sirius reminds him. "Rash. It's hot. Isn't it? Anyway, if you see James you should tell him yourself. He's been. You know. Busy with all his important Head Boy business which, by the way, is just fixing his hair for *hours* in front of the mirror so Lily will think he's strapping. Hair is all he's got, really, in the epic battle between James Potter and Kingsley Shacklebolt. We're taking bets, by the by. The odds are good on Kingsley. Everyone figures even if James *does* win, Shack's going to break both his kneecaps and stick him on top of the Astronomy Tower."

"I don't bet," Remus says, nose wrinkling familiarly.

"No," Sirius agrees. "No. Of course not. Soul of virtue."

There is a brief silence.

"Didn't you have--" Remus starts, feeling hopeless

"Appointment!" Sirius says brightly, "ta, Moony, I almost forgot!" He saunters out the door with great casualness.

Remus sighs and collapses into one of the armchairs.

Sirius pokes his head back into the doorway. "Er. Moony?"

"Are you back?" Remus asks.

"Did they really say for us to keep our ears perky?"

"Something like that. It was all very empire-builder -- all *tiffin* and *memsahib* and *spiffing*, *old boy* but I think they said that. I don't know. Is it important?"

"The *Prewetts* are thinking of *my ears*," Sirius breathes reverently. "My life is complete." He vanishes again, door clicking shut behind him. Remus has just reached for his parchment -- there's a Potions essay due already and he doesn't want to waste any time failing it -- when Sirius pops in again and says "Moony!" very loudly.

"Ngaugh!" Remus says, and drops his quill, and his inkwell, into his lap.

"D'you fancy a game of chess? You know, after...my appointment." Sirius looks innocent, quizzical, doglike, with a studied kind of nonchalance all over his face. "Andromeda's just got a new set and it's ace."

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rowling, scholastic and warner brothers.

http://www.livejournal.com/community/shoebox project

"I'll beat you," Remus reminds him. "I always beat you."

"But I'll take your Queen before you do," Sirius counters. "Which I always consider a victory."

"All right then," Remus says.

"All right," Sirius echoes, the grin becoming a little more natural. Remus turns back to his work, but finds Sirius still standing there, as if he is waiting for something.

"Appointment!" Remus reminds him, ever helpful.

"Bugger. Right!" Sirius says, and bolts.

Cowritten by Adorkorific and Aladyjaida. Adorkorific specializes in Sirius; Aladyjaida specializes in Remus.

△dorkorific is Mlle. Artiste; **△**ladyjaida is Mlle. Bits-n-bats.

The handwriting of Remus J. Lupin, Severus Snape and

James Potter is done by Ladyjaida.

The handwriting of Sirius Black, Peter Pettigrew and

Lily Evans is done by $\frac{1}{2}$ dorkorific.

Don't worry; Peter won't be stupidified. Trust us on that

We would like to take a moment to thank \(\frac{1}{2}\) windjinn for leaping down the stairs with $\frac{1}{2}$ ladyjaida's bra on his head.

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