

The Hero They Needed

Chapter 1

In a small flat buried among the maze of streets that was Muggle London, Sirius Black sat on his couch, staring deep into the flickering flames of a dying fire. It was all Hallows Eve, and while Muggle children walked door to door with their parents all across the country in search of sweets, the dark-haired young man brooded silently with only a bottle of gin and his worries to keep him company.

All night, something had felt wrong. A feeling of impending doom hung over him like dark clouds threatening a storm. Sirius had tried for hours to put off his worry, convincing himself it was just paranoia. Now, as the clock neared ten, it became too much. Setting his half empty glass on the stand, he stood and made his way over to the fireplace. He paused to grab a handful of grey, sparkling powder from a vase on the mantle and threw it on the glowing logs. Instantly, the fire roared back to life, bright green flames licking at the entrance of the chimney.

“The rat's nest,” he called out loudly.

Dropping to his knees, Sirius closed his eyes and thrust his head into the flames. When he opened them again, he was looking around a dark, dingy living room.

“Peter!” he shouted. “Peter!”

Sirius waited several seconds for a reply but heard nothing. His heart began hammering in his chest as he pulled his head back and stood. Grabbing another handful of powder, he tossed it in carelessly.

“The rat's nest!” he yelled.

The moment the flames turned green, Sirius stepped into the fireplace, arms held tight across his chest. He started spinning as grate after grate flashed by, giving him a momentary glimpse into another witch or wizard's home. After a mental count of six, he bent his knees and prepared to land. In one smooth motion, he came to a stop, stepped forward into the living room he'd been looking at moments before, and drew his wand.

"Peter, are you here!?" Sirius shouted. "Peter!"

Making his way through the small, two-bedroom home of his childhood friend, he swiftly made his way towards one of the bedrooms, hoping to find Peter passed out on his bed. With a flick of his wand, he threw open the door with enough force that it cracked down the center and stopped in the doorway, his stomach sinking.

The room was empty. No Peter, no sheets, and no personal effects lying about. One of the wardrobe doors hung half open, revealing the inside to be as bare as the bedroom.

"No," Sirius whispered, his heart rejecting what his brain was screaming.

Spinning around, he raced back to the living room and lit his wand, peering keenly around the room. There were no signs of forced entry or a struggle. Another wave of his wand and a mumbled incantation showed the Wards Lily had cast were untouched.

Tightening his grip on his wand, he turned and sprinted towards the front door. A flick of his wand sent it flying off the hinges and into the yard. Running as fast as he could, Sirius reached the end of the driveway and twisted, his body curling in on itself until he vanished with a pop. Back in London, an identical pop sounded at the same time as he stepped out of thin air.

Barely breaking stride, Sirius sprinted to a canvas-covered lump sitting just outside his apartment building. Wrenching it off, he revealed a sleek, black motorbike underneath. He threw his leg over the seat, knocked the helmet off the handlebars, and righted the bike. A single kick made the engine roar to life. Heedless to the looks directed his way, he knocked the bike into gear and twisted the throttle.

Accelerating down the street, he turned at the first available alley, locking up the rear tires with a screech. The alley was just big enough for the bike and sidecar but it was short. Not quite long enough for a normal take-off.

“Fuck it,” Sirius growled.

Gunning the engine, he popped the clutch and shot off down the alley. Knocking the bike into second, he accelerated rapidly towards the solid brick wall. Letting out a roar that matched the sound coming from his bike, Sirius wrenched back on the handlebars and flicked a switch with his thumb. He grunted as the bike lurched into the air and slammed tire first into the wall five feet up. In complete defiance of gravity and physics, the bike drove effortlessly up the wall. Shifting into third, he raced as fast as he could toward the edge of the roof. Flicking another button just as he cleared the roof, the bike continued on and disappeared into the inky black sky.

Letting out a sigh of relief, Sirius pinned the throttle and ran through the gears as he headed North towards the village of Godric’s Hollow.

“I swear to Merlin, Peter, if anything happens to them because of you...,” he growled under his breath.

The trip, even on his magically enchanted bike, seemed to take forever. That high, the air was cold and crisp, necessitating the use of several Warming Charms. Mercifully, the village lights came into view, and he began his descent. Uncaring about the Muggles that might see him, Sirius landed his bike in the middle of the street. Driving on the wrong side of the road and looking left, his heart dropped as James and Lily’s house came into view.

A large section of wall was missing on the second floor and the front door was hanging crookedly, only the top hinge still connected. Bringing the bike to a screeching halt, Sirius leapt from the bike, his wand drawn, and through the wide-open doorway. Scanning around for threats, it took him a moment to notice the body lying crumpled at the bottom of the stairs.

“James!” Sirius yelled.

Racing forward, he slid on his knees and rolled him over. Brown eyes stared back at him blank and lifeless. A lump formed in Sirius' throat, his eyes burning as he stared at his best friend's face. Before he could drown in his grief, the sound of a baby crying had his head snapping up to look up the stairs.

"Harry," Sirius said.

Letting go of James, he took the stairs two at a time, wand held aloft. The air felt thick with magic as he peeked around through the door, ready and anxious for a fight. What he saw both shocked him and broke his heart. Lily lay in front of the crib, her green eyes just as lifeless as her husband's. The wall to the left of the crib was completely missing with bits of drywall and roofing tile littering the floor. Voldemort was nowhere to be seen but, miraculously, Harry was alive.

Sitting in his crib and crying, Harry only had a small cut on his forehead.

"It's okay, Harry, I've got you," Sirius said.

Stepping carefully around Lily, he picked Harry up and held him to his chest. Rubbing his back soothingly, Sirius glanced down mournfully.

"I'll take good care of him," he said tearfully. "I swear to you, James, Lily, I'll protect him with my life."

Wiping his face, Sirius left the room and down the stairs. He knew if he didn't get out of the house soon, he'd break. As he stepped past James' body, grief started to turn to rage. It was time to go rat hunting.

"Come on, Harry," Sirius said, pressing his godson's head to his chest so he didn't look around. "Time to go see Aunt Andy."

Stepping outside, he walked past the open gate just as a massive figure appeared out of nowhere. Drawing his wand, a deadly curse on the tip of his tongue, Sirius paused when he recognized the new arrival.

“Hagrid,” he called, lowering his wand. “What are you doing here?”

“Dumbledore sent me,” Hagrid said, his face unusually serious. “Said he felt the wards fall. I’m glad to see Harry’s alright. Where are James and Lily?”

“Gone,” Sirius said, swallowing thickly.

“Gone?” Hagrid asked, his beetle black eyes swimming with tears.

At Sirius’ nod, he sniffled, tears falling into his thick, bushy beard.

“You know what happened?” he asked, choking back a sob.

“No,” Sirius said, shaking his head. “Lily must’ve done something, though. The nursery’s a wreck and You-Know-Who wouldn’t have left Harry alive if he could help it. I hope she killed the bastard.”

“If anyone could do it, it’d be Lily,” Hagrid sniffled. “Poor Harry. Having to grow up without his parents.”

Sirius nodded but said nothing, the grief shutting him down. In looking for a change of subject, he caught on to something that bothered him.

“You said Dumbledore sent you?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Hagrid said, pulling a handkerchief out of his pocket and blowing his nose loudly.

“Did he say why he didn’t come himself?” Sirius asked, disguising the suspicion in his voice as a curiosity.

“I didn’t ask,” Hagrid admitted. “Just came to me hut and told me something had happened to the Potters. Gave me a Portkey and told me to bring Harry to ‘im.”

“Just Harry?” Sirius asked, his eyes narrowing. “I wonder how he knew he was alive.”

“Some kinda spell I s’pose,” Hagrid shrugged.

“Yeah,” Sirius said, his mind working frantically.

“Well, I better get Harry back to Dumbledore before the Aurors show up,” Hagrid said, stepping closer.

Sirius held Harry tighter and took a step back. Hagrid looked at him curiously.

“I’m his Godfather,” he said, knowing he needed to leave quickly. “I should take care of him.”

As far as the world was concerned, he had been James and Lily’s Secret Keeper. He’d never catch up to Peter if he spent Merlin knew how long being interrogated by Crouch. For a moment, he considered just giving Harry to Hagrid, but his suspicions about Dumbledore held him back. Something was wrong here.

“It’s Dumbledore’s orders,” Hagrid shrugged.

Thinking quickly, Sirius turned like he was going to hand Harry to him. Behind his back, he flicked his wand towards the house, sending one of the chairs tumbling across the kitchen loudly. Hagrid froze with his arms outstretched, his face raised to look over Sirius' head. Sirius clutched Harry tighter, wand held aloft as he backed away from the house, and from Hagrid.

"What was that?" he asked, adding a bit of panic to his voice.

"Dunno," Hagrid muttered, his eyes narrowed as he scanned the house. "Squirrel maybe?"

"Sounded too big for that," Sirius said. "I didn't check the house that well. I just grabbed Harry and got out. You mind taking a look? I don't think I can go back in there."

"I'll check it out," Hagrid said, puffing up his chest.

As he strode towards the house, Sirius backed slowly towards his bike. The moment Hagrid ducked inside, he turned and sprinted. Setting Harry in the sidecar, he waved his wand, transfiguring the seat to conform around him. Using a couple of more charms to protect him from the cold and wind, he hopped on and started the engine. Hagrid came rushing out just as he took off down the street.

"Sorry, Hagrid!" Sirius yelled.

Before the half-Giant could react, Sirius gunned the engine. A few seconds later, he took back off into the night. Glancing over at Harry, he smiled when he saw the boy waving at the passing stars overhead, his hand clenching and opening as if to catch them. Banking gently to the left, he headed for his cousin, Andromeda's house.

"Alright Harry," Sirius yelled over the sound of the wind and engine. "I'll drop you off at Aunt Andi's. You can play with Nymphadora. You remember Dora, don't you?"

Turning away from Harry, he grit his teeth and went even faster.

“Then Uncle Padfoot needs to go see an old friend,” he growled.

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It was almost midnight by the time Sirius pounded on Andi’s front door. Harry, now under a Silencing Charm, had fallen asleep halfway over Bristol.

“Who’s there?” she called. “Do you have any idea what time it is?”

“It’s me,” Sirius called back.

“Sirius?” Andi asked, undoing the locks on the door. “I swear to Merlin, if you’re drunk —”

Andromeda broke off as she opened the door and stared at the baby in his arms with wide eyes. Andi was a tall, beautiful woman with dark, gently curling hair. Her grey eyes and sharp nose spoke strongly of her Black heritage.

“Is that Harry?” Andi asked, pulling her housecoat tightly around her curvy figure.

Sirius nodded, and her face dropped.

“Come and tell me what happened,” she said, stepping to the side.

“I can’t stay,” Sirius said, walking in and heading towards the living room. “I need to find Peter before he leaves the country.”

“Peter?” Andi asked, confused.

“He betrayed us,” Sirius growled, laying Harry gently down on the couch. “He was their Secret Keeper. I went to check on him tonight and he was gone. He sold them to You-Know-Who.”

Straightening up, he turned to leave, only to find himself staring down the business end of Andi’s wand.

“Funny, last you told me, *you* were their Secret Keeper,” she said, narrowing her eyes.

“Oh, come on, Andi!” Sirius yelled. “You can’t think I would do that!”

“No, I don’t,” Andi said, her stern features unmoved. “Which is the only reason I haven’t cursed you yet. Now, explain.”

“I don’t have time for this!” Sirius shouted frustratedly. “Peter-”

“Can wait,” Andi interrupted. “Explain. Now.”

“Andi? Is everything alright?” Ted, her husband, asked as he reached the bottom of the stairs.

Ted was a short, plain-looking man with a head full of straw-colored hair. There wasn’t anything exceptional about the man, but he was nice enough.

“No,” Andi said. “James and Lily are dead, and Sirius here is just about to explain what happened.”

“Ah,” Ted said, looking between the two for a moment. “I’ll just put some tea on, shall I?”

“Thank you, dear,” Andi said, never even glancing away from Sirius.

Once Ted was in the kitchen, and Sirius realized he wouldn't be leaving without explaining, he threw his hands up in frustration.

"Fine," he barked. "Something felt off all night, so I Flooed Peter to check on him. When he didn't answer, I Flooed over and found his place empty. Peter was gone and so were all of his belongings. There was no sign of forced entry and the wards were intact."

"He had his Floo connected?" Andi asked, brow arched.

"Everyone knows if you want to hide you need to get off the Floo," Sirius sighed. "We didn't want to draw any attention to him. No one knew he was the Secret Keeper and out of the three of us, he was the least likely to be chosen."

"Not a bad idea, but risky," Andi said. "It's possible someone followed him, hoping he knew who the Secret Keeper was."

"But why take his clothes?" Sirius asked, shaking his head. "No, Peter left on his own and if You-Know-Who found James and Lily, that means he told them."

"You're probably right," Andi admitted. "What happened next?"

"I Apparated back to my place and grabbed my bike," Sirius continued. "I flew as fast as I could to Godric's Hollow."

"Why not just Apparate there?" she asked suspiciously.

"I couldn't," Sirius replied. "I made Lily obliviate the Apparition coordinates from my mind. I was supposed to be a distraction. I didn't want the Death Eaters to find them from that if I was caught. I only knew the general direction and a few landmarks to look for."

"I'm impressed," Andi said, cocking an eyebrow. "This is quite well thought out for you."

"Not well enough," Sirius growled. "That rat led him straight to them. James and Lily were already dead when I got there. The nursery was missing a wall and Harry was crying in his crib. I don't know what Lily did, but it must've been amazing. You-Know-Who wouldn't have left Harry alive. I think she might've killed him. I could practically taste the magic in the air."

Sighing, Sirius sat in a chair heavily.

"Then, as I was leaving to bring Harry here, Hagrid shows up," he said.

"Hagrid?" Andi asked, eye narrowed.

"Yeah," Sirius said, still unsure what to think himself. "He said Dumbledore sent him to pick up Harry and only Harry. Hagrid mentioned something about the wards alerting him, but it still doesn't make sense. Why send Hagrid when you know You-Know-Who might be there? Why not come himself?"

"Those are very good questions," Andi said, finally lowering her wand.

Ted came back from the kitchen, a tray of tea floating in front of him.

"Do we still have Nymphadora's old crib?" she asked, taking a cup.

"It's in the attic," Ted told her.

"We'll get it down tomorrow, then," Andi said. "I'll transfigure something for the night. Harry can stay with Nymphadora. Sirius, you can take the guest room."

“Thanks, Andi,” Sirius said, levering himself out of his chair. “But I really need to-”

His words were cut off when he was knocked back into his seat, his wand ripped from his pocket and roped snaked around his chest.

“What the hell, Andi!?” Sirius yelled.

“You’re going nowhere,” she told him sternly. “The Aurors will know what’s happened and they’ll be looking for you. If you go after Peter now, you’ll end up in Azkaban.”

“He killed them!” Sirius shouted angrily, struggling in vain to free himself.

“I know,” Andi said softly. “But you need to think about Harry. I have no legal standing with him. What happens to him when Dumbledore comes knocking and his Godfather is sitting in prison?”

Sirius opened and closed his mouth twice before slumping back in his chair.

“Fuck,” he muttered.

“Language,” Andi scolded. “Now, are you going to behave, or do I need to keep you tied up all night?”

“I’ll stay,” Sirius sighed.

“Good,” Andi said, releasing the ropes and tossing him his wand. “Now, first thing tomorrow, you need to go to the Ministry and explain everything that happened. Volunteer to take Veritaserum, that should speed things up.”

“Alright,” Sirius nodded. “Probably for the best. Maybe I can get Crouch to let me go after Peter once I explain everything.”

“I’d say you’re too close to the case, but I’ve seen that man make far worse decisions,” Andi told him.

Walking over the couch, she gently picked up Harry and cradled him to her chest.

“I’ll put Harry to bed,” she said. “Try to get some sleep, Sirius.”

“I doubt it,” Sirius muttered. “Thanks, Andi. For everything.”

“It’s what family’s for,” Andi said, giving him a smile.

Chapter 2

Sirius didn’t sleep at all that night. Whenever he closed his eyes, he saw James and Lily’s, cold and lifeless, staring back at him. He sat for hours on the couch, watching the minutes tick by as he waited for the sun to rise. Guilt and sadness ate him up on the inside, gnawing painfully at his heart.

A part of him was glad to be alone, but another part wished Andromeda had stayed. But, then again, she hadn’t known James and Lily that well. Andi had only met them a couple of times before they’d gone into hiding. Sirius wished he could call Remus, but he was still away talking with the Werewolves and wouldn’t be back for a few more days.

Unless the news reached him sooner, in which case Sirius worried he might try to kill him. He was really regretting keeping his ‘brilliant’ plan to himself. It was stupid now that he thought about it, but the thought of Voldemort getting to James and Lily was so unthinkable he hadn’t even considered it an option. In hindsight, he should have told someone, anyone, they all trusted.

“Did you get *any* sleep?”

Sirius looked up so fast that his neck popped painfully. Andi came walking down the stairs in a worn, pink bathrobe, eyeing him critically. Blinking, he glanced out of the window and was surprised to see the sun rising over the horizon. After hours of watching and waiting, the damn thing had managed to sneak up on him.

“A couple of hours,” Sirius lied.

“I’m sure,” Andi replied, unconvinced. “Well, since you’re up, you might as well come with me to the kitchen. You’re going to need to learn how to cook if you’re going to take care of Harry.”

Groaning and rolling his eyes, Sirius got to his feet and followed her into the kitchen. Grabbing a carton of eggs and a pack of sausages from the refrigerator, as well as a can of beans from the pantry, she showed him how to make a simple breakfast.

“I hope you can at least make toast,” Andi said, handing him a loaf of bread.

“I’m not that bad,” Sirius grumbled, snatching it from her hand. “I’ve been living on my own for years now, you know.”

“You live above an Indian restaurant for a reason,” she said knowingly.

“Well, they do have great takeaway,” Sirius admitted.

Laying out ten pieces of bread on the counter, he toasted one side, then flipped them with a charm to toast the other. While he was doing that, Ted ambled into the kitchen sleepily and headed straight for the coffee maker.

“Morning,” Ted yawned, kissing Andi on the cheek.

“Morning, dear,” Andi smiled. “Are the kids still asleep?”

“Yep,” he replied, smiling softly. “I checked on them before I came down. Nymphadora must’ve woken up in the night and moved her bed closer to the crib. She’s laying with her hand through the bars, and Harry’s got a death grip on her finger.”

“That girl,” Andi said, shaking her head as she moved the last of the eggs onto a platter.

“Should I go wake them?” Sirius asked.

“Oh, you poor man,” Andi said, patting his cheek. “You have so much to learn. If the kids are still asleep, eat, then wake them. Things get chaotic at the table when kids are involved, especially with Nymphadora.”

“Right,” Sirius said, looking over at Ted, who chuckled as they sat at the table.

“Nymphadora didn’t want scrambled eggs yesterday,” he said. “Her accidental magic dumped the whole bowl over Andi’s head. Took her an hour to get it all out of her hair.”

Sirius snorted but couldn’t bring himself to really laugh. It felt like doing so would somehow be disrespectful to James and Lily. Eating mechanically, he got through half his plate, never tasting what he was eating before an owl flew in with the morning paper. Ted dug a Knut out of his pocket to pay for it and took it from the impatient bird. As it flew back out the open window, he opened the paper and immediately choked on what he was eating.

“What is it?” Andi asked.

Coughing to clear his throat, Ted set the paper on the table. On the front page was a picture of James and Lily's house in Godric's Hollow, Ministry workers swarming the scene. The title of the article stood out in big, bold letters.

Boy-Who-Lived Defeats Dark Lord! Sirius Black Wanted for Kidnap and Murder!

"What!" Sirius yelled, jumping to his feet.

"It gets worse," Ted said. "The Ministry has started a nationwide search. They have orders to kill you on sight. And there's a ten thousand Galleon bounty for information leading to your capture."

"Shit!" Sirius said.

He nearly knocked over his chair as he got to his feet and began to pace back and forth in the small kitchen.

"I was their best friend," Sirius growled, running a hand through his long, dark hair. "How could they think I'd murder them and then kidnap my own Godson?"

"Because you told everyone you were the Secret Keeper," Andi pointed out. "What about Harry? Does the paper say anything about him?"

"Let's see," Ted replied, scanning the article. "They know he was alive when Sirius took him. Good Lord, they're saying Harry killed You-Know-Who in a burst of accidental magic."

"Ted," Andi said, giving him a brief glare.

"Right. Sorry, dear," he said. "Um, they believe Sirius is either going to use Harry in a ritual to bring You-Know-Who back to life or raise him to be the next Dark Lord. One that he controls so

he can take over magical Britain. Some believe Harry is already dead, and Sirius has already fled the country.”

“Alright,” Sirius barked angrily. “Okay, here’s what I’ll do. I’ll go to the Ministry and tell them what really happened. They won’t kill me until they know where Harry is, right?”

Ted and Andromeda shared a look that didn’t boost his confidence.

“Sirius, I hate to say this, but I think as soon as they have you, they’ll use Veritaserum to find out where Harry is and then have you Kissed,” Andi told him.

“They would administer the Kiss to someone just like that,” Sirius said, though the words felt like a lie even as he said them.

“They already have,” Andromeda told him, her face solemn. “Ted, tell him about those cases you’re working on.”

Sighing, Ted folded the paper and set it aside.

“My firm is working on two cases where the Ministry arrested two ‘known’ Death Eaters and had them Kissed before they could be questioned,” he said. “Neither of them had the mark, and they went missing days before they suddenly reappeared and committed heinous crimes. The families believe they were put under the Imperious Curse and forced to do those things. With the current climate, it’s been nearly impossible to find a sympathetic ear in the Wizengamot. I’ve been holding off on filing the cases. If I do it now, I have no doubt I’d lose.”

“It was Crouch, wasn’t it?” Sirius asked, his heart racing as he started to pace again. “I knew that fucker was no good.”

“If you go into the Ministry now, it’s almost certain you won’t be coming back out,” Andi told him bluntly as she shared a look with her husband. “We need to think of something else.”

“What if I grant you custody of Harry and make a public statement?” Sirius asked. “I can hide out someplace long enough for the public to hear my side of the story, and Harry will be safe here. They’d have to put me on trial just to clear things up, right?”

“Maybe,” Ted said, stroking his chin.

“It won’t work,” Andi said, shaking her head. “The Ministry lost this war, everyone knows it. It’s only because of whatever happened at the Potters last night that it’s over. They won’t allow anyone but themselves look like the hero now. Kill you, save Harry Potter, and they’re back as everyone’s savior. Not to mention, there are still Death Eaters in the Ministry that would still love to see you dead. You’d never live long enough to see a trial. Ted, I think it might be time for plan B.”

Ted stared at Andi for a long moment, his normally jovial face dropping into a frown as he finally nodded.

“What’s plan_”

Sirius was cut off by a loud knock at the door. Everyone froze, staring at each other until they knocked again.

“Just a moment!” Andi yelled, dropping her voice as she turned back to the men in the kitchen. “Ted, Take Sirius and the kids and hide. I’ll tell you when it’s safe to come out.”

“I have a better idea,” Sirius said.

Dropping down onto all fours, he transformed into a big black dog. Andi and Ted’s shocked looks lasted for only a second.

“That’ll have to work,” Andi said just as the person knocked again. “Ted, go!”

Nodding, Ted quickly and quietly made his way up the stairs. Sirius heard a murmured incantation before the house fell silent.

"Coming," Andi called.

Sirius followed her to the door so he could see who it was. When Andi opened the door, he wasn't too surprised to see Dumbledore standing there in a dark blue set of robes that sparkled in the morning sun.

"Good morning, headmaster," Andi said respectfully. "What brings you here this early?"

"Hello, Andromeda," Albus said, smiling tiredly. "I'm sorry to bother you, but I'm afraid I have grave news. Have you had a chance to read this morning's paper?"

"No, it arrived while I was making breakfast," she said, looking up at him worriedly. "What's happened?"

"Voldemort found and attacked the Potters last night," Albus told her, his face dropping. "James and Lily are dead. Miraculously, Harry survived, but Sirius removed him from the house before I arrived. I'm afraid there's evidence to suggest he was involved in giving away their location. You haven't heard from him, have you?"

"That's terrible," Andi said, her acting perfect. "No, I haven't heard from Sirius in weeks. But I can't imagine him doing anything to hurt James, Lily, or Harry."

"Until last night, I would've said the same," Albus sighed, taking off his glasses to give them a quick clean. "Please, if you hear from him, let me know immediately. It's imperative Harry is found and returned to his family."

Sirius perked up at that. James didn't have any family, and Lily's only living relative was her Muggle sister. Surely he wouldn't put Harry with that magic-hating shrew, he thought. Andromeda caught his movement out of the corner of her eye and spoke up just as Dumbledore started to turn.

"I wasn't aware James had any family left," Andi said.

"Indeed, Harry is now the last remaining Potter," Albus told her. "Fortunately, Lily's sister has agreed to take him in. It's the safest place for him. Sorry to bother you so early, Andromeda. Please let me know if you hear from Sirius."

"Of course, headmaster," Andi replied while Sirius fought back the urge to growl.

She closed the door slowly, giving them just enough time to see Dumbledore Disapparate before the latch clicked into place. Sirius instantly transformed back into his human form.

"What the hell is he thinking!?" he raged. "Petunia hates magic! She wouldn't even come to James and Lily's wedding! And how can he think I'd ever do something to hurt any of them!? That sanctimonious, self-righteous son of a--"

"Sirius!" Andi yelled, slapping his shoulder. "First of all, don't use words you don't understand. Secondly, you told everyone you were the Secret Keeper, remember? Is there anyone that knows the truth? Is it in James or Lily's wills?"

"No," Sirius grumbled. "We didn't want to chance anyone finding out the truth. We didn't even tell Remus because of how much time he spent around the other Werewolves."

"You could've told me," Andromeda told him, crossing his arms.

"I didn't want to put your family at risk," Sirius replied lamely.

“Bellatrix is my sister, and I married a Muggleborn, I’ve always been at risk,” she told him angrily before pausing to take a deep breath. “This isn’t getting us anywhere. Do you trust Dumbledore enough to tell him the truth? Do you think he’ll listen to you?”

“I don’t know,” Sirius said, running his hands through his hair. “I used to, but something changed. He’s been making really odd decisions the last few weeks. It was like he’d given up. He was really focused on James, Lily, and Harry for some reason. James told me some of what was happening, but I didn’t let him tell me everything in case I got captured. Merlin, I’m an idiot.”

“You were in a tough situation,” Andi said, giving him a hug. “If we can’t trust Dumbledore, then we have no choice but to deal with this ourselves.”

“Is this that plan B you were talking about?” Sirius asked.

“Yes,” Andi said. “Let me go get Ted and the kids, and I’ll explain.”

Patting his shoulder, she turned and made her way upstairs. Sighing tiredly, Sirius walked over to the couch and collapsed onto it heavily. He dropped his head into his hands, feeling like the whole world was collapsing around him.

“I can carry him,” Nymphadora said loudly from the top of the stairs.

“You’re not carrying him down the stairs,” Andi said annoyedly.

“You can sit with Harry on the couch, okay?” Ted asked.

“Okay!” Tonks cheered. “Thanks, Daddy.”

Sirius smiled slightly as Nymphadora came racing down the stairs, her hair bright yellow. The energetic four-year-old ran right past him and climbed up onto the other end of the couch. She

was waiting impatiently before Ted and Andi, with Harry in her arms, had even reached the bottom of the stairs.

“Ted, can you call Meredith?” Andi asked, setting Harry next to Nymphadora, who grabbed his hand and started gabbing away.

“Sure,” Ted replied.

Kissing his wife on the cheek, he made his way over to the Floo. While he was grabbing a handful of Floo powder and getting on his knees, Andi sat across from him.

“I think the best option right now, for all of us, is to get out of Britain,” Andi said.

“I can’t ask you to do that,” Sirius said, shaking his head. “I was thinking I could just take Harry and go to Black Island. I don’t want to put your family in the middle of this.”

“We’re already in the middle of this,” Andi told him. “Ted and I have been talking about this for a while. Even with You-Know-Who gone, we still have to worry about the Death Eaters in the Ministry. You know as well as I do that people that powerful aren’t going to see the inside of Azkaban. Besides, without that monster holding Bella’s leash, there’s nothing to stop her from coming here. Add to that the way our government is treating you, we think it’s time to leave. Ted has family in America. We’ve had arrangements set up for months.”

“But how do we get there?” Sirius asked. “We can’t just walk into the Ministry and ask for an International Portkey.”

“We have a Vanishing Cabinet upstairs connected to Ted’s uncle’s house in Nevada,” she replied. “I made plans to leave as soon as Bella married Lestrage. I knew it would only be a matter of time before she came after us. She’s made her opinion of Ted quite clear over the last few years. Ted’s talking to a friend of his right now. She’s a Congresswoman in MACUSA. She’ll make sure you’re given a fair trial there. You know how much the Americans like a good headline.”

"We're leaving?" Nymphadora asked, hugging Harry tightly.

"I'm afraid so, sweetheart," Andi said softly. "It's not safe for us here anymore, especially for Harry."

"He's coming with us, right?" the little girl asked, morphing her eyes to make them look slightly bigger.

"Yes, Harry and Sirius are coming with us," Andi smiled, looking at Sirius as if daring him to argue.

"Yay!" Nymphadora yelled, kissing Harry's head as he tried to squirm out of her grip.

Ted pulled his head out of the fire and sat on the arm of Andi's chair.

"We're all set. Meredith will meet us at the house with a couple of Aurors in a few hours," he told them. "They'll need to question him under Veritaserum, but it will all be public, and I'll be with you the whole time. She's also sending a Healer to take a look at Harry. Bagnold is claiming he survived the Killing Curse last night."

"That's ridiculous," Sirius scoffed. "No one can survive that curse."

"Maybe not," Andi said, drawing the incredulous stares of both men. "I checked on his cut after I laid him down for the night. Whatever caused it is some of the darkest magic I've ever seen."

"But there's no way... I mean, Harry's only a baby, right," Sirius said. "I know he showed magic early, but accidental magic can't stop a Killing Curse, can it?"

"I didn't say he did it on his own," Andi corrected him. "We all know how brilliant Lily was. I'm sure she had something to do with it, but Harry survived some powerful magic last night. Of that, there's no doubt."

"Is it hurting him?" Sirius asked, glancing over at the toddler in concern.

"No," Andi replied quickly. "Besides a cut, he's perfectly healthy. Still, it wouldn't hurt to get a second opinion."

"I hate to interrupt, but we really should get packing," Ted butted in.

"Right," Sirius said, getting to his feet. "Well, looks like I'll have to go with what I'm wearing. They'll be watching my apartment. I just need to figure out what to do with my bike."

"You rode that death trap all the way here? With Harry?" Andi asked angrily.

"I didn't have a choice," Sirius said, waving her off.

"Idiot," Andi muttered. "Where did you leave it?"

"I parked it behind the petrol station on the corner and put it under a Disillusionment Charm," he told her.

"At least you hide it well," she sighed. "If Dumbledore had seen that... Alright, Ted, you go get the bike and see if you can shrink it. I don't want Sirius going outside the house. They could be watching it. Sirius and I will start packing."

"Mummy!" Nymphadora yelled. "Harry made a stinky!"

“Correction,” Andi smirked. “I’ll start packing while Sirius changes his Godson.”

“I don’t know how to change a baby!” Sirius said, looking alarmed. “And I don’t have any diapers.”

Andi’s smirk never faltered as she summoned a piece of parchment and transfigured it into a diaper before it even reached her. Catching it, she handed him and patted the top of his head.

“Time to learn,” she told him.

Ted chuckled as he headed towards the door while Andi took Nymphadora by the hand and led her upstairs to pack. Sighing, Sirius pulled off Harry’s pants and wrinkled his nose at the smell.

“Urgh, what did you eat?” he asked.

Sirius turned his head to the side for fresh air, he tried and failed to open the diaper. Giving up, he drew his wand and vanished it.

“Shit,” he cursed.

Using a couple of more spells to clean the mess on Harry and the new one on the couch, Sirius grabbed both of the toddler’s feet gently in one hand and lifted him up. Harry giggled while Sirius grabbed the diaper and slipped it under him. Tilting his head to the side, he turned it back and forth a couple of times.

“I don’t suppose you know which part is the front, do you?” he asked.

Picking the side he thought was right, Sirius set Harry back down and folded the diaper over before realizing he didn’t know how to close it.

“How the bloody hell does this thing work?” he asked no one.

After struggling for a few more moments, he once again resorted to using his wand. Two quick Sticking Charms left the sides attached quite securely. Putting Harry’s pants on was even more of a struggle. The lad seemed to take great joy in yanking one leg free while Sirius tried to cloth the other. After several minutes of struggling, he finally managed to get them on and wiped the sweat from his brow.

“I hope you’re not always this difficult,” Sirius said, lifting Harry up and holding him to his chest. “Now that that’s done, ready to go cause some mischief in America?”