

Civilised

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug, mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.
-- Wallace Stevens

Remus Lupin took an amazing number of people to his bed, all things considered.

Not that he ever slept with them. Or, with a waggle of the eyebrows, slept with them. But the house at 12 Grimmauld Place had no shortage of damaged souls who needed a gentle word, needed hands that already knew grief.

There was Harry, who had nightmares that were not of his own devising; he liked the warmth of Remus' recently-vacated bed, and the fact that the nightmares seemed less with the other man asleep in a nearby chair. Remus was not his father nor his godfather...but he was enough. Thank god, he was enough.

For a while there had been Sirius, who sometimes dreamed of Azkaban and wanted whole, untattered blankets, heaps of them, which was how Remus liked things, and so Sirius sometimes ended up, somehow, in Remus' bed. When it happened Remus paced until dawn, or made tea, or sat and read, because sleeping too many nights in the chair made him sore.

Molly Weasley, the night after the boggart attack, came to his room because he'd understood her fears and he'd vanquished the boggart that afternoon, and they spoke for hours. When she was finally asleep he fetched Arthur because, well, it wouldn't do to have a married woman sleeping in his bed without her husband's knowledge. Arthur was remarkably understanding.

Ginny still had nightmares. She liked how soft his blankets were. Tom's thoughts had been all rough edges and snagging sharp places, like unfiled, nibbled fingernails, and years later she still liked soft things -- his well-worn shirts, his blankets, his soothing touch on her forehead.

Hermione was sometimes just plain lonely, and sought the company of someone who understood what it was like to be bookish amongst extroverts. She almost never stayed to sleep, but they would sometimes talk all night, her sitting crosslegged on the foot of his bed, listening to stories of his time before he taught at Hogwarts, and telling him stories about herself and the boys.

Remus Lupin had a family to look after, and he liked it, even if it made him tired from pacing and sore from sleeping in the chair and once in a while made him cranky, because it seemed like he spent less time in his bed than anyone else did. You had to be subtle to notice that, though.

He only ever leaned on Tonks because she was strong too, and because she'd never needed his blankets and pillows. Tonks was an Auror, Tonks was young and a little rebellious and had cool pink hair. She never had nightmares, never showed weakness, and she was easier to depend on than the silent, imposing Kingsley Shacklebolt. So she saw the stiffness in his neck, the mild irritation in his eyes when Ginny and Ron shouted too loudly or Hermione was being particularly bossy, and she sent him off for a walk for a few hours, or took care of the dishes -- breaking as many as she cleaned -- or something similar.

He'd be glad when the summer was over. Then he could have his bed back. The children would be at school, and Sirius was...was gone, and those were the people he'd had to care for the most.

"Remus?"

He struggled up out of sleep and opened his eyes to a world of shadow and white. For a moment he almost started back; he used to have dreams where the moon was a woman and came to him in his sleep, and all he saw was a ghostly white --

"Ginny?" he asked sleepily. He pushed himself up on one elbow. "Are you okay?"

She gave him a shy nod, and stood, hapless, in the middle of his room. She was wearing white pyjama bottoms and, he noticed, one of his worn old shirts, probably stolen out of the drawer. The shirt was so thin as to be almost falling apart, but that made it soft, and he knew she liked the way the collars brushed her neck.

He reckoned Ginny might have a bit of a crush on him, but that was all right, some of the girls had, when he taught at Hogwarts, and he found it wore off soon enough. He sat up and pushed the covers away.

"Bad dreams?"

Another shy nod.

"Come here," he ordered, standing, and gave her a brief hug before moving away from the bed. She climbed into it, silently, and he pulled the covers up over her, deftly separating out her favourite. She rubbed her cheek against his pillow.

"I stole your shirt," she whispered.

"It's fine, I've others. Keep it," he added. "You know we could put these blankets on your bed -- all the blankets you want, Ginny."

She hunched under the blankets. "I like it here."

He picked up a book and sat down in the chair, stealing the very top blanket because the night was cold and his flannel pyjamas were wearing thin. "Ginny..."

"Yes?"

"Can I ask why?"

She closed her eyes, and for a minute he thought she'd dropped off. Then she inhaled deeply.

"Smells like you," she said, already half-gone.

He reached out and stroked her cheek, entirely fatherly, though he saw one day she was going to break hearts (probably Harry's, for a start). Why the smell of him -- which he knew was composed mainly of cheap soap, dust, and usually a little smoke from the fireplace -- why should that be so comforting?

Perhaps because she knew she was too old to crawl into her parents' bed at night, far too old; he should probably send her back to her own, but...

A thought occurred to him, and he rose, silently, donning his dressing-gown and closing the door behind him as quietly as possible. The hallway was dim, but he knew the way; he'd spent too many nights wandering towards the library not to know the path. He avoided the hall table, the banister of the stairs, and the open door to the bathroom, all potential hip-bruiseers, and pushed the big heavy library doors open just enough to slip through.

The one thing he had not allowed Sirius to throw out were the books. Every book was valuable, even the ones that were full of hate and filth, because they taught a lesson in what not to think. Remus loved the written word, and though Sirius had objected, they'd kept the books.

The Blacks had a large library on Dark creatures, mostly useless but sometimes helpful. He found what he was looking for in the second shelf from the last -- three volumes on werewolves, the seminal work. Myth, Science, and -- here he shuddered -- Solution.

Myth was merely a collection of old stories from around the world, Greek werewolves, Russian werewolves, old fragments of Muggle classics, urban myths, even a mention of one or two Muggle films -- the books had been updated in the 1980's, and this edition must have been purchased the same year Mrs. Black died, insane and bigoted to the end.

Solution was...horrifying to read, the suggestions of what ought to be done to werewolves, how they ought to be studied and controlled.

Science was, true to its name, remarkably objective (it was what made Solution all the worse). A systematic listing of everything known about werewolf biology and behaviour, in both forms. It was here he went, and to the index in the back.

Scent.

Although more empirical tests are necessary, it has been put forth as a theory that, due to the uncontrollable nature of the Changed werewolf, the Mortal werewolf may exert more self-control on a biological level than Humans. This may account for an increased consciousness of the body which lends itself to increased strength and speed so characteristic of a normal, healthy Mortal werewolf. This may also mean that a Mortal werewolf may produce calming chemicals in the blood, to make up for the inner instinct of the Changed werewolf still contained in the Mortal body.

A Mortal werewolf may produce endorphines at a higher rate than Humans, inclining them towards endorphine-producing foods such as chocolate and some forms of chile. Mortal werewolves may also exude pheromones which, like the sexual pheromones of animals, may be undetectable but effective not only in calming themselves but others as well. The presence of a Mortal werewolf may have a slight soothing effect on those around them.

Well.

A textbook case, then.

He sighed. In a madhouse like this, no wonder everyone came to him. Walking, talking aromatherapy.

"Kicked out, huh?"

He jerked up from the book and away from the bookshelf, startled. He'd been so wrapped up in the text he hadn't even noticed Tonks, leaning

against a table, backlit by the huge library windows.

"Ginny was having nightmares," he said with a smile. "What're you doing here at this hour?"

"Just got back from a mission, and Kingsley wanted to check up on everyone. He was a little surprised to find Ginny where he did. I told him it was a thing. He wanted me to make sure you were around."

"He doesn't think I'd take advantage of a fifteen-year-old girl, does he?" Remus asked.

"Not after I told him you did the same for Harry and Hermione." She smiled. "And I'm pretty sure he thinks you haven't enough energy to be seducing three teenagers."

"I haven't enough energy to be seducing anyone," he sighed, closing the book and re-shelving it. Fully awake after being startled, he began to experience the odd nausea that comes from the body knowing it ought to be asleep. "I'm going to have something to eat," he said. "Are you for home, or...?"

"It's late enough, I thought I'd stay here," she said, following him through the stacks. "Looking for a little light reading?"

"Doing some midnight research," he replied, as they left the library and descended the stairs. He heard her laugh a little, behind him. "What?"

"Is there ever a time you're not being useful?" she asked, and he turned his head to regard her when they reached the bottom of the stairs.

"If you were me, would you spend much time without something to occupy your thoughts?" he inquired. She nodded, gravely.

"Perhaps not," she said. "But I think you should at least be allowed to sleep without having to serve the Order."

"I don't mind it," he replied, pushing the kitchen door open and holding it for her. She gestured him through and followed him, and he shrugged. "They need the sleep more than I do. They're young, still growing."

"Well, if it were me I'd give them a sleeping potion and send them off to their own bed."

"Some things can't be solved with sleeping potions," he replied, taking down two plates. "Toast?"

"Please."

"Tea's herbal, won't keep you awake."

She nodded. "And these problems of the children's, they can be solved by you sacrificing your own sleep?"

He put four slices of bread in the toaster and tapped it twice with his wand, removing them before they could burn. She buttered them while he prepared the tea.

"It's a sacrifice I make willingly. It helps me feel..." he paused.

"Feel...?"

"Human."

"But you are human." She saw his look, and waved it off irritably. "You know what I mean."

"I don't define my humanity intrinsically, Tonks, I don't have that luxury."

She looked at him, baffled. "What do you mean?"

"You take for granted that you are human, with human emotions, instincts, traits. It's a natural action for one human to reach out to another -- humans are pack animals," he said, with a trace of irony in his voice, as he turned two teacups over and put teabags into them. "Werewolves are not."

"But wolves -- "

"Werewolves are not wolves," he said firmly, picking up the kettle. "So I take nothing for granted, and define myself in other ways."

"Such as?" she asked, mystified. He shrugged.

"I affirm my humanity in every act I do that is not the act of the wolf," he said, filling the kettle with water. "I didn't realise I was doing it for a long time. A Changed werewolf would bite and snarl, so even when I am sorely tried and tempted, I am...polite. A werewolf would attack himself if no other target presented, so I try..." he sighed, "to put on a good apperance. And a werewolf would never allow a stranger into their territory. So..." he tapped the kettle with his wand, and steam rose. "I take in anyone who requires it. Regardless of friendship, intimacy. I am conscious of my natural human acts," he concluded, as he poured. "They remind me what I am."

"What are you?" she asked.

"Civilised," he replied, and offered her the tea.

END