

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.