

Remus Lupin Character Study Excerpt
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Disclaimer: Character study of Remus John Lupin in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling. Inspired by the video prompt "99h // Ireland" by Joshua Maciejok.

Everything about Hogwarts reminds Remus of them.

The sound of the train whistle is sharp and high and breathy, achingly familiar and the fifteenth time he's heard it. He's already in his compartment, seated and leaning against the window, but he can hear everything going on outside the train. Footsteps slap on the stone platform, his own shoes struggling to catch up to a door and hop on, his face undoubtedly red from embarrassment and exertion. There are young boys laughing, reaching out - "You can do it!" - and there is the thrill of a leap and the fear of a fall and the relief of hands the same size as his gripping him tight to hold him up. There are two dark haired young men calling out windows, grinning and waving madly as they shout, "See you later, mum and dad!" The Potters, Fleamont and Euphemia, are out there, waving back, beaming. Remus knows this in his bones, even though they have both been dead for over a decade now.

His seat is firm and comfortable enough; there is a bit of a spring to it, and he bounces on it once to match twelve year old Sirius's eager and endless bouncing. He closes his eyes and imagines the upholstery maroon, like when he was a student, not blue, like how it is now when he's a professor, and curtains on the windows, instead of a shade to draw down. It's not difficult. He draws his coat around himself as the wheels beneath him churn like an ocean, lulling him to sleep.

Remus hears low voices as he dozes off and the seat beside him dips; he recognizes a small noise as a rat squeak, and he wonders what James and Sirius plan to have Wormtail do this time. He hears his name, and James's voice, and figures he can sneak in a quick nap before they drag him awake for their next great plan. His last thought before he's completely out is of his prefect meeting: did he go already? Surely he has, there's no way he would miss it, he wouldn't be curled up here taking a nap if he hadn't already gone...

A sudden lurch wakes him. Where is he? Multiple voices speak over each other, most of them unfamiliar, but there is one he recognizes. James? No, that's not right. That wasn't James speaking, he thinks as he opens his eyes, but this *is* the Hogwarts Express, and it should never be this dark. He tells the voices to be quiet and produces a ball of flames for light, his body tense and ready for action. It's an old habit he never lost, a side-effect from fighting in a war that never quite ended for him. There is a chill in the air that shouldn't be, and as he moves forward to investigate the compartment door opens, his very blood freezing as he hears another familiar voice that he knows isn't there.

“They’re in hiding, Remus, it defeats the purpose to tell you where. Why do you want to know so badly?”

“They’re my friends, Sirius, I just - ”

“Fuck, Remus, can’t you just trust me?”

Someone collapses, and Remus steps forward to face the dementor, drawing his wand.

“None of us is hiding Sirius Black under our cloaks,” Remus says clearly, knowing this is why they’re searching the train. “Go.”

But the dementor doesn’t move, and so Remus produces a wisp of a patronus. He could have cast a corporeal one, but he doesn’t want anyone to see its form, and anyway, it’s hard to think of a happy enough memory that isn’t accompanied by pain.

The lights turn back on soon after. The sight of James laying on the floor and a redheaded girl (Lily?) shaking in the corner of his eye knocks the wind out of him, and for a second he is convinced he’s having another nightmare. First Sirius’s voice, now this...It isn’t until two of the other students, a redheaded boy and a girl with brushy brown hair, start trying to wake the boy up that Remus realizes that no, this isn’t James at all. It’s Harry.

This knowledge somehow grounds Remus, which helps when Harry at last opens his eyes and reveals them to be a very familiar bottle green. Stunned, he can only watch as Harry’s friends, including Frank and Alice Longbottom’s boy, Neville, help him back onto his seat. Their conversation snaps him out of his daze, and he quickly rummages in his suitcase for a large bar of chocolate, just one of many he had brought with him, knowing dementors would be around throughout the school year. He divides it among the students before leaving, already mentally composing an owl for McGonagall. Dumbledore had warned him that Harry had a history of trouble following him, but Remus hadn’t expected it to start so soon.

His mission to speak to the driver distracts him, but his walk back to his compartment is filled with anticipation and dread. He’s not even at Hogwarts yet, and he’s already faced two things he’s been avoiding for years. As excited as he is to get to know Harry and as grateful as he is that he was able to protect him, he also knows that this was only a taste of the memories to come.

The remainder of the ride to Hogwarts is fairly quiet, and Remus resists the urge to stare at Harry, the spitting image of a face he never thought he’d see again. He takes a separate carriage up to the castle, and it’s jarring to see the thestrals pulling them. He remembers them being horseless, though as they ride up he also recalls Sirius muttering about them at the start of their third year. James joined Sirius when they were seventeen, pointing and stroking the air. The thestrals are dark and beautiful and frightening, and Remus tries to avoid thinking about why he can see them now. Instead, he focuses on the crunching of

hooves on gravel, a stag rather than a thestral steadily making its way. This helps with the ice that has settled in his chest, a gift from the dementors guarding the castle entrance.

Remus sits with the other professors in the Great Hall, feeling like a child at the grown up table, but people have always said he was mature for his age, so he runs with it. He chats with professors he's never met before and wonders vaguely how he and the others might've pranked them, once upon a time. He nods courteously at Severus Snape, who fixes him with a loathing glare so recognizable that Remus has to look down at his robes to make sure he's not still a student. He resolves in that moment to call him Severus as a gesture as a goodwill, but also because he knows Snape will hate it.

Remus barely registers the unenthusiastic applause as he carefully scans the student body from his perch, his eyes falling briefly on James - no, Harry - seated at the Gryffindor table, looking back up at him. Nearby is the girl with shocking orange hair, and it takes Remus a breath to remember that no, Lily's hair was far more red. This was Ginny Weasley, Molly and Arthur's daughter. He had met her on the train. Harry's friend, Ron, has a rat poking its nose out of the pocket it's sitting in, adding Peter to the picture. Now the only one they're missing is Sirius, and Remus already knows Sirius is on his way.

The castle is filled to the brim with memories. It's so easy to get lost, even if he knows the castle better than nearly anyone. He is at once upset and relieved that his living quarters are so far from Gryffindor Tower; he itches to see it again, but he also knows that doing so would be a terrible idea. The halls are hard enough.

The sun rises the same: pale yellow and streaking through the window. He lays in bed a few minutes every morning he can spare it, straining his ears for Peter's snores, James's sleep-talking, Sirius's odd scruffy noises. It's always silent, every morning. He waits, body heavy and tense, practically praying for a pillow to smack him in the face or a body to bounce on his bed in an effort to wake him. He waits until his heart aches, and then he sits up, alone in his small, sparse room, the reality for most of his life, even if it's not what he remembers best.

Meals in the Great Hall can be like a dip in the pensieve, his older self watching Harry, forgetting that he's not watching James. As he sips his morning coffee at the teacher's table, he keeps expecting three more boys to burst in, the young men complaining about homework or asking about James's quidditch practice or pouring over a piece of parchment. There are long stretches of time where Remus does very well, but every now and then, he forgets the year. On those days, he's glad professors have a different entrance into the Great Hall, otherwise he might've walked straight to his old spot at the Gryffindor table.

Lesson plans are like laying out pranks, in their own funny way: know your targets, know what you can get away with, and make it as interesting as possible. Remus remembers what it was like, taking notes for hours and falling asleep during lectures, and vows that no one will ever doze off in his class if he can help it. Practical lessons are very important to him, and he makes an effort to include as many as he can; he is well-versed at what a teenager is capable of when they're given the chance to develop their magic. Simmering beneath the

surface is also an intense need to teach his students how not to be afraid. He has lived in fear of Dark magic for as long as he can remember, and it is impossible for him to get away. He knows what it is to live one's days cowering, and if he is going to teach these kids how to defend themselves against danger, he also intends to teach them how to face it with courage.

At night, his desk and floor are covered in parchment, diagrams and doodles and writing everywhere, arrows scribbled and words circled and unnecessary exclamation points that he is fairly certain he didn't write, but he's not sure. Only one of them used exclamation points with that much abandon, and Remus doesn't want to think about him. Every now and then, he swears he sees a map of Ravenclaw tower or the dungeons slipped between in his notes, but they always disappear before he can get his hands on it.