

Red

For 2020 autumn fic prompt. Words: sweater, crimson.

TW: blood, violence, abuse

-----

Sirius remembered.

He was *good* at remembering, always had been, with an ability to recall fine detail as easily as if what he was describing were directly in front of him. It had been what allowed him to spend so much time working on extracurricular activities with his friends; no need to revise if you could just pull up the information you needed immediately. His friends had loved and hated him for it in equal measure. After, it had been what made him so useful to the Order as a scout; his reporting was frighteningly accurate, almost as though he were reading from a script of the scene. In hindsight, he realized it had made him sound really bloody suspicious. Ironic, really, given the circumstances.

Sirius remembered a lot of things.

He remembered losing his temper at the dinner table after one too many remarks about the kind of company he kept, exploding the soup tureen in Bella's sneering face, dull green liquid dripping from her nose. He'd remarked that looking like a troll bogey was quite an improvement for her. The shine of Bella's teeth in the candlelight as she'd snarled at him (*he could hear her howling with laughter nearby shrieking constant endless mindless bloody shrieking*). The crystal decanter shattering against the wall, red wine splattering like blood, staining the carpet.

He had stained the carpet too.

He remembered the fireplace in his father's study, the hot glow of the poker, the hiss of his flesh as his father pressed it hard against his collarbone. He remembered being told it was for his own good, that *this (pain fear disgust rage i fucking hate you pain rage pain)* was what awaited him if he continued disgracing the family name more than he already had. He remembered the red on his father's knuckles, and realizing it was his. He remembered the smell of whiskey and cloves, of blood and burning flesh.

He remembered playing snap with the lads, laughing as Pete tapped the tip of his wand to the cards and they exploded in his face -- in *Sirius'* face, smoke and ash and blood, and he was still laughing. Pete (the rat the *rat*) was gone and James was *gone*, and Remus was--

(*remus i'm sorry i'm so sorry forgive me please i'm sorry i'm sorry i'm sorry please*)

Mostly, now, Sirius remembered *red*.

He remembered Lily's hair as she danced at her wedding, roses and crisp falling leaves. The strawberries in the champagne. The twist of Remus' lips as he grinned at him over a coffee in the morning. The warm duvet Remus was still wrapped up in, peering out cheekily, sandy curls falling into his eyes. (*"Mornin' cariad. Sleep alright?" "Always, when I'm with you"*) Sunrise pouring in through the window. The bookmark that he'd left in his well-worn copy of Slaughterhouse Five. The burning tip of his cigarette as he took a drag. The glow of the fireplace in the common room -- fire, and blood on the pavement, screams of horror and agony and something else he couldn't place. (*Is it me?*) The tomato he'd left out on the counter; it was likely rotting now, like everything else.

He would never sleep alright again, he knew.

He remembered plucking the soft, crimson skein of yarn from the basket Effie had offered him that first summer he'd lived with them, recognizing he'd needed something to do with his hands (*he couldn't keep them still they just shook nails digging into his palms drawing blood but he couldn't feel it*). He remembered deciding that red would be his colour. How she handed him the hook and needle, and showed him how to loop the yarn around just so, over and under and *through*. He remembered watching her fingers as they worked, how shapes slowly formed beneath them, blooming, *becoming*. He remembered her fingers, pale and cold, still clutching the red coverlet, and how she'd never crochet again.

Sirius remembered choosing it because it was the color of home, and so everything he'd made had been *red*.

He'd made the scarf first. Sirius remembered wrapping it over Remus' shoulders when he'd first given it to him. How his face had lit up like the dawn when he'd seen the crooked stitches and realised it was homemade. He'd always been embarrassed whenever Sirius would buy him things -- so touchy about money. It had meant the world to him that he'd go out of his way to make something for him. The scarf had still been hanging over the back of the chair when Remus stormed out of their flat that last night they'd rowed, a scant two weeks before it all went to hell, red-faced and screaming. Sirius wondered if he'd gone back for it. Maybe it was still keeping him warm, even if just for a moment while he burned it with the rest of his things, and oh, God, how he'd earned that.

*(im sorry im sorry im sorry i love you please forgive me)*

He'd made the hat next, for Peter. It was a floppy, misshapen thing, but it had fit perfectly, and that was the important part. Pete had loved it, and Remus had stitched on a little Gryffindor patch for him (crookedly; he'd just broken his hand on Mulciber's face outside the greenhouses and hadn't told them yet. His knuckles were red and bruising fast, James casting furtive, concerned looks at him when he thought Remus wasn't looking.) Pete had worn it so proudly for over a year. He'd lost it in the forest halfway through their seventh year, somehow, and they'd never found it again. How you could lose a bright red hat was beyond him, but Sirius

remembered Peter was careless with things like that. Important things, things that meant something, that you loved, that needed to be kept safe. He wished he'd remembered that before it was too late.

*(there was so much blood pete how could you how could you what on earth is that awful sound)*

He'd made mittens for Lily, for her eighteenth birthday; they were a little big on her, but she'd loved them all the same. He remembered her using them to pack a snowball and shove it down the back of his shirt in thanks, and Sirius had sworn he'd never make her gloves again. He hadn't meant it, not really. But now he never would.

*(i found her in the nursery and her hair was fanned out beneath her like a halo of fire or a pool of blood i couldn't tell and it didn't matter anyway because she wasn't alive to tell me i was being dramatic so what the fuck was the point)*

He'd made a blanket, because he'd heard that's what you were supposed to do. The moment Harry had been born James had wrapped that tiny, squirming, brand new *person* in it and placed him in Sirius' arms. He'd fallen in love immediately, sharing teary-eyed smiles with Remus, who'd been the first person to hold him, and they'd *known*. (*"I feel like I'm gonna break him."* *"You won't, I promise. You've got him, cariad."*) They'd sworn then that they'd never let him down. They'd protect him. He hadn't banked on Harry never knowing them, but he didn't suppose that counted.

*(he left the blanket in the cot i'd thought it was blood but it wasn't he lived he lived he lived)*

He'd made a jumper for James for Christmas, slaved over the bloody thing for weeks, trying to keep the stitches neat so he could actually wear it. It wasn't perfect, but James had been overjoyed nonetheless, slipping it on with that giant grin on his face, like Sirius had just hung him the moon. It had fit him so well. He'd worn it on his first date with Lily, and declared it "lucky" after it had gone beautifully. He'd worn it again the night he'd proposed. James had been devastated when a stray curse had torn a hole in the sleeve; Lily had claimed that it was just proof the jumper really was lucky after all. (*"It would have killed you if you'd been a little to the left, you know."*) He'd been wearing it again when Sirius found him lying behind the coffee table. The last expression he'd ever worn was frozen on his face, eyes staring sightlessly off at a point just to his left. His glasses had been crooked; Sirius wanted to reach out and straighten them, but touching him would make it real.

*(he was so afraid pete god damn it why would you do this)*

If the light came through the windows just right, he could see the red on the walls from where he'd scratched his nails down the stone (*let me out let me out let me out*).

Sirius remembered a lot of things that when the dementors came again he wished he didn't -- somehow, they stained all his memories red, tilting the images, turning every kindness he'd

received to a knife between his ribs, twisting. There was no more joy in remembering; if he thought of Remus' lips, it was how they'd pulled back over his teeth in a snarl when Sirius had flung accusations at him. His eyes, darkened in anger, rimmed in red (*he'd been sobbing as he'd bellowed at me to go fuck myself and i should have stopped him then i should have died*). Lily's bright laughter, morphing into the screams and sobs he'd never heard but seen writ across her lifeless face. James cracking jokes in the dorm, waving the joint he'd snatched from Remus' fingers, taking a long pull and losing it when Remus swept his legs out from under him in retaliation; James couldn't kick Sirius in the shins for laughing at him because he was dead and Sirius didn't know how to laugh anymore. Peter was in the background of all his best memories, filling them all with the echoes of screams and the smell of death (*if I'd been a little more to the left you'd have killed me too and I wish you had*).

He wondered if they'd buried James in the jumper he'd been wearing-- the one that Sirius had made, with the hole in the sleeve -- or if they'd changed him into sterile dress robes and made him look utterly unlike himself, the way they'd done to his Uncle Alphard. He didn't think Remus would go that far, but he might pick a different outfit of James' for him to be buried in. Remus would have known how much James loved that jumper, yes, but he'd also have known how much James had loved *Sirius*, and he couldn't have known how much Sirius loved James -- loved *him*. Sirius had forgotten how to show him.

Sirius remembered a lot of things, but he'd forgotten so much more. The important things, things that meant something, that he'd loved, that needed to be kept safe.

He wished he'd remembered them before it was too late.