

## Nerves

“Wakey-Wakey time! Wakey-Wakey time! Time to get up ol’ Moony-Woony!”

Remus groaned, and pulled the quilt over his head. It was *far* too early to get up. And that alarm clock! It was, of course, one of Fred and George’s inventions. They’d presented it to him with great glee on his fortieth birthday, and it had been the bane of his life ever since.

“Wakey-Wakey time! Wakey-Wakey time! Time to get up ol’ Moony-Woony!”

He groaned again, and threw back the quilt, jumping out of his bed quite suddenly and storming over towards the alarm clock, which stood on the chest of drawers.

“I’m up, I’m up! I swear on all that is good...!” He trailed off, realising that talking to an alarm-clock probably wasn’t the most sensible thing to do, even if this particular alarm-clock had the odd ability to talk back.

“Now, now, Moony-Woony, don’t get angry! After all, today is the day!”

Remus was suddenly hit with a bolt of horror, as he realised the clock was right. Today was the day. He swallowed heavily, and felt a rising sense of panic. Nothing was planned! It wasn’t going to work! What if everything went wrong?

He began pacing up and down the wooden floor of his bedroom. What could he do? Here he was, half dressed on the eighth of July, pacing in his bedroom. What was he thinking?

He was on the point of hyperventilation, when there was a sudden knock on the door, which surprised him so much, he fell over, knocking his knee on the end of his bed.

“Oh bloody hell bugger arse!” He said out loud, cradling his knee. What if it was her?

“Moony, are you all right?” A voice wafted through the door.

Remus sighed in relief. It was only Harry. Heaving himself up from the floor, he went and opened the bedroom door, to find Harry leaning against the doorframe, grinning.

“What were you doing in there?” Harry asked, “It sounded like a herd of elephants!”

“Erm...” He trailed off, unsure of how to explain to the twenty-year-old that he’d been panicking about the Ministry Ball that night, and had fallen over.

“Never mind,” Harry shook his head, grinning again, “look, we need to get going.”

Remus nodded, “Er, right, yes. Good,” and began to leave the room.

“Moony?” Harry raised his eyebrow, “Don’t you think it would be a good idea if you put some trousers on?”

“Right, yes, of course.”

“I’ll wait for you downstairs.” Harry said, shutting the door behind him.

Once properly attired, Remus made his way down the stairs, to find Harry sitting on the bottom step, waiting for him.

“Come on then,” Harry said, “I should have been there an hour ago.”

Remus grinned, “The guest of honour can’t be late, of course.”

Harry had finally defeated Voldemort the previous Easter, and now, three months later, the Ministry were holding a ball in his honour.

“I don’t see why I have to go to a rehearsal as well,” Harry said, “I mean, what is there to rehearse?”

“Well, collecting your Order of Merlin, I’d imagine,” Remus said.

“I don’t even want any of this!” he groaned, before grinning roguishly, “Although this ball does give you the perfect opportunity for-”

“Don’t say it!” Remus said, “I’m nervous enough as it is, I don’t want to jinx it.”

“How would saying, erm, ‘it’ jinx it?” Harry asked curiously, as they walked down the sunny pavement.

“I’m just superstitious like that,” Remus said, careful not to stand on the cracks in the pavement, then took a deep breath, “come on, let’s get to the apparition point.”

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They arrived with two loud pops at the designated apparition point, and were greeted by a flustered looking, man with an official Ministry insignia on his dark red robes.

“Hello, hello, I’m Larry Sandford. Follow me, follow me...”

Remus shot a bemused look at Harry, who shrugged, then began to follow Larry Sandford into the ballroom. Elaborate decorations hung from the ceilings over a hundred or so round tables. There was a podium on a stage at the top of the hall, with half a dozen chairs in a semi-circle behind it.

Larry led them to the podium, shuffling a stack of parchment, muttering to himself.

“Ah! Here it is!” He said, pulling a sheet of parchment from the pile, once they were standing on the stage. “Now, Mr Potter, you’ll be receiving your award at approximately eight-oh-three, making your speech at approximately eight-oh-five, and be back in your seat by eight-oh-nine, got that?”

Remus raised his eyebrows at the ever so approximate times, then awaited his

instructions from Mr Precise.

“Now, Mr Lupin, you’ll have free reign of the stage when all the official business has finished, which will be at approximately eight-twenty-three,” he paused, then frowned at Remus, “we’re doing you a big favour here, Mr Lupin. I hope you understand that.”

“Yes,” Remus replied, nodding, “I’ll say my piece and be off the stage by approximately eight-twenty-seven.”

“Good,” Larry nodded, “the Minister will be here in half an hour, and we can run through the finer details of your award presentation, Mr Potter.”

Harry nodded, and they went and sat on the chairs behind the podium to await the Minister’s arrival. Sitting still was not good for Remus. He was getting more and more nervous as each minute passed. Suddenly, surprising even himself, he sprung up and began pacing backwards and forwards across the stage.

“Calm down, Moony,” Harry said lazily, as he reclined in his chair, “it’ll all be okay.”

“But what if she-! And how about-! Oh, it doesn’t bear thinking about! I’m going to call it off...it’ll all go wrong, I can feel it!”

“Stop worrying! Look, why don’t you go home and rest? You don’t really need to stay any more. All you need to know is that you’re on stage at,” Harry affected a pompous voice, “approximately eight-twenty-three.”

Remus chuckled, glad that Harry was making light of the situation. It took his mind off what he would have to do later that night.

“All right,” he replied, “I’ll see you later. Good luck in your rehearsal.”

Harry rolled his eyes, and Remus grinned back, before making his way towards the apparition point. Remus thought that Harry was becoming more and more like James as every day passed. Since the war had ended, he’d become a lot more carefree and happy, moving into a flat with Ginny and taking time to relax – something he’d not had a chance to do in the past few years.

Remus was happy that things were beginning to work themselves out for Harry, and only hoped that tonight went well, so things would be good for him too.

He arrived home moments later, and went into the kitchen on a bacon sandwich-making mission. He’d got as far as taking the bacon out of the fridge, when he noticed someone sitting at his kitchen table.

“Dora!” He said, in shock. Panicked thoughts began to swirl around his mind. Why was she here? Did she know? Had she come to tell him it was all over between them? He felt another bout of hysteria coming on, and took several deep breaths.

“How many times, Remus? *Don’t* call me Dora! I hate it!” Tonks grinned at him, and brushed a lock of bright pink hair behind her ear.

Remus frowned. "Well what am I supposed to call you then? Tonks sounds so... impersonal." He winked at her, trying to distract himself from his previous thoughts.

"Fine then," she huffed, "you can call me Dora," she paused, "or Nym." But if you value your life, you will never call me Nymphadora, or Nymph, okay?"

"All right," he said, placing the slices of bacon in the frying pan, then, as casually as he could, "so what are you doing here anyway?"

Tonks pouted, "What, I'm not allowed to come and see my boyfriend when I want to?" She stood up and came to stand behind Remus, sliding her arms around his waist as he flipped the sizzling bacon.

"Of course you are! But..." he trailed off, then decided to change the subject, "So, are you ready for tonight?"

"Tonight?" She asked, looking confused for a moment, but then a look of understanding passed across her face. "Oh, yes, the Ministry thing." She screwed up her nose, "I'm not really sure if I'm going to go. It's not really my thing."

Remus paled and whirled around, knocking the frying pan skewiff on the hob.

"N-not going?" he asked, haltingly, "But you've got to! I mean..." He ran a hand nervously through his hair.

"What?" Tonks asked, setting the pan back onto the gas, "It'll just be a load of old Ministry snobs hob-nobbing and making dull speeches. I survived the war, I don't want to be bored to death by some old fuddy-duddy. Are you all right, Remus?" She looked at him concernedly, "You've gone all pale."

"Er...you've got to go tonight. I'll be lonely."

"Pfft! Lonely with half a dozen Weasley's? Honestly, though, I've got a bit of a headache, I think I'm just going to miss it."

Remus was panicking now. He searched in his mind for the hook, the thing that she wouldn't be able to say no to. Suddenly it came to him.

"Eureka!" He shouted, and then frowned. He hadn't meant to say that part out loud. "Erm...I mean...you ought to go tonight. Harry really wants you there to see him get his Order of Merlin."

"He does?" Tonks sounded surprised.

"He does," Remus confirmed, "he told me this morning. He said 'Moony, ol' buddy, ol' pal, if Tonks doesn't come to the ceremony tonight, I'm going to eat my hat.'" Remus cringed inwardly and hoped Tonks wouldn't question him. He'd always been a bad liar.

“He did?” Tonks looked confused, “That doesn’t sound like something Harry would say...but I guess if he wants me there that much...I’ll go.”

Remus let out a breath he didn’t know he’d been holding. “Good.”

“So, what shall we do until it’s time to get ready?” Tonks asked.

“Oh, I can think of a few things...” Remus said, grinning wolfishly, turning the gas off from underneath the frying pan, and leading Tonks out of the kitchen.

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Remus could hear a light buzz of conversation from inside the hall, as they stepped out of the apparition zone. He thought Tonks, in her pale lilac gown, looked more beautiful than he’d ever seen her, and hoped for what seemed the thousandth time that day, that everything went well.

He knew that they’d be sitting with Harry and the Weasley’s at a table near the front of the hall, and as they entered the hall, he glanced around for the inevitable conglomeration of red hair. Weaving their way through a multitude of tables and people in brightly coloured robes, they eventually found Harry and several of the Weasley’s, sitting at their table, talking animatedly.

“Moony! Tonks!” Harry stood up as they approached, and leaned over to shake his hand, before kissing Tonks on her cheek. Remus reflected once again in Harry’s change of demeanour since the end of the war. He suspected a lot of it had something to do with the pretty red-head sitting by his side. Ginny Weasley had helped Harry in more ways than she knew.

Soon after, dinner was served, and Remus ate an enjoyable, yet nerve-wracking meal of roast beef, new potatoes and Yorkshire pudding. At about ten to eight, the tables magically cleared, and the speeches began.

Remus only began to pay attention when he heard Harry’s name being called out, followed by a thunderous burst of applause. Harry made his way up to the podium, and was presented with his Order of Merlin - a framed certificate, and a golden medal. He then had to wait a full five minutes before the applause (and the odd cat-call from Fred and George) ended, so he could make his speech.

Remus grinned as he glanced at his watch. It was now almost a quarter past eight – Mr Sandford would not be happy.

Harry made a short, but heartfelt speech and hurried back to his seat, face flaming. Remus watched as Ginny proceeded to kiss him in front of the hall, which made Harry’s face burn even more.

The Minister had now moved on, presenting an award to Kingsley Shacklebolt for his contributions during the war. And then, Mr Sandford took to the stage, wiping his bald head with a spotted handkerchief.

“And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a rather unusual occurrence. Mr Remus Lupin has asked if he can say something. Mr Lupin, if you would.”

Remus stood up, legs shaking. He was convinced something would go wrong...he'd say the wrong thing, or fall off the stage. Nervously patting his pocket, he made his way towards the stage. Once he reached it, he pointed his wand at his throat and cast the sonorous charm. He saw that Tonks was watching him quizzically from her seat directly in front of the podium.

He cleared his throat.

“Erm, I expect you're all wondering what I'm doing, holding up the dancing,” he laughed nervously, “well, the Ministry have been kind enough to let me do this, so...” he trailed off, and fixed his gaze on Tonks.

“Five years ago, I fell in love with a wonderful woman. She's beautiful, strong, courageous, talented...the list goes on. Her name is Nymphadora Tonks, and she is the only person I see in my future, she's the most important person to me. I...” he trailed off, seeing tears shining in Tonks' eyes.

“I...guess what I'm trying to say, or rather, do, is...well...ask her to marry me.” His eyes never leaving those of Tonks', he stepped down from the stage and walked over to the table, before kneeling down in front of her, completely oblivious to the fact that Mrs Weasley was sobbing into her napkin, and Fred and George were grinning like idiots.

He fumbled for a moment with something in his pocket, and then pulled out a small, black velvet box.

“I love you, Dora. Will you marry me?” He opened the box to reveal a sparkling diamond ring, and looked into her eyes.

She didn't say anything for several moments, and his heart stopped. Tonks' eyes were full of unshed tears, then suddenly, she leaned forwards, wrapping her arms around his neck and burying her head into his shoulder.

“Of course I'll marry you!” Her voice was muffled, but the words clear. She pulled back, and stared into his eyes once more. Remus took the ring from the box and slipped it onto the fourth finger of her left hand. He felt so full of emotion at that moment, that he couldn't say anything, simply leaning over and kissing his wife-to-be.

“Just think,” he said, when they'd pulled apart, “when we're married, you'll *have* to get used to the name Nymphadora.”

“Why?” she asked, smiling.

“Because they won't be able to call you Tonks, will they?”