

## Chapter One - The Tormentors

17-year-old Michelle Matthews lay on her back in the Gryffindor common room, on the couch, her legs dangling over the arm of it. Her head was settled into a pillow, her shoulder length chocolate brown hair fluffed over the top of its fabric. Propped up on her abdomen was a Herbology textbook. She had a quill clamped sideways in her teeth as she paused and skimmed the paragraphs, looking for important topics that were likely to appear on her Herbology exam in a few days. Her hazel eyes quickly skimmed the last paragraph before she flipped over to the next page.

Her Gryffindor Prefects badge was pinned on her black robes just above the Gryffindor crest that was embroidered on it. Her grey pleated skirt hefted slightly as she dangled her legs over the arm of the chair. Her robe lay open, exposing the grey sweater vest with the scarlet and gold colors of Gryffindor etched along the V neckline. She had a scarlet and gold striped tie tucked into the sweater vest. The tips of the winged collar of the white shirt she wore under her sweater lay neatly flat and off to the sides. Her hair curled outward in layers.

Just then, the entrance to the common room flung open. She looked up. Four guys entered; three of them were laughing about something, but the fourth looked stern. She raised an eyebrow to them and removed her quill from her mouth. The one that looked stern leaned against the fireplace and folded his arms over his chest, covering his Prefect badge.

“What happened, Remus?” she asked slowly, eyeing the other three with annoyance.

“Guess,” he said.

She picked up the bitterness in his voice.

“They pulled a prank on Severus?” she answered wearily.

Remus nodded.

“Hey, Matthews,” said one of the guys, sporting untidy jet black hair, his blue eyes peering out from behind a pair of thin black-rimmed glasses. “You do realize we can see your underwear?”

Out of the corner of Michelle’s eyes, she saw Remus blushing.

Michelle swung her legs over the arm of the chair and sat properly on the couch, crossing her legs.

“Potter, do realize that if your ego got any bigger, they’d have to make the door frames wider?” said Michelle sarcastically.

She saw Remus stifle a chuckle, quickly turning it into a cough.

“Hey, babe, lighten up,” Sirius said, taking a seat next to her and draping his arm around her shoulders. “You know you want to be with me.”

Michelle regarded him with disgust. “I’d rather chew off my foot!”

She pulled his arm off her shoulder as though it were diseased, then got up and walked over to where Remus was standing.

“Matthews, where’s your inflatable guy?” James asked. “Or did you use him so much that he exploded?”

The other two guys burst out laughing. Michelle’s hazel eyes flashed dangerously.

“Well,” she said stiffly. “At least he GOT used, which is more than what I can say for you!”

A low chorus of ‘Oohs’ went around.

Michelle was actually best friends with Remus Lupin and Lily Evans, but for some reason, the others, known as the Marauders, loved picking on her and tormenting her. Their names were James Potter, Sirius Black, and Peter Pettigrew. She didn’t know why they hated her so much. She didn’t care of course, but the tormenting was starting to get monotonous. They called her by her last name, so she called them by their last name. The only two she was on a first name basis with were Remus and Lily.

James came over and stood directly in Michelle’s face. Remus stood by watching warily and intently.

“Watch it, Matthews,” James said smirking. “You never know what can happen.”

“Is that a threat?” Michelle demanded not backing down.

“James,” Remus said in a stern tone, cutting in, as he must’ve sensed the tension in the air. “Leave her alone, alright? What has she ever done to you?”

“She’s just like Snivellus,” James replied. “She’s breathing.”

“Oh, Moony’s standing up for his girlfriend,” Sirius jeered.

“She’s not my girlfriend!” Remus snapped at Sirius. “But I want you to leave her alone all the same!”

Michelle kept her defiant glare at James, who, thankfully, listened to Remus and headed off toward the boys’ dorm. After James had gone, she sighed and felt her body relax. Both she and Remus had been appointed Prefects this year. She had become best friends with him during their first year. It was during their second year that she’d been introduced to James, Sirius, and Peter. Things were fine up until their fourth year. That was when they started teasing her, and now, it was like this.

“I don’t understand them!” Michelle cried angrily, kicking at the edge of the fireplace. “What did I ever do to them? And what did Severus ever do to them?”

Remus was the same age as Michelle. He was tall, thin, and lean with light brown hair the color of wheat, and he had green eyes. His features were sharp, but worn as well. Michelle thought he was handsome. But for some reason, he didn’t talk much to girls, even though all the girls had crushes on him.

It was Remus’ turn to sigh.

“They’re just miscreants,” he replied. “They get off on making fun of others, even if the people are completely innocent.”

“Well, Severus isn’t exactly ‘innocent,’” said Michelle. “He’s done a few things, too.”

“Out of self defense,” Remus explained patiently. “But those lot just love egging him on.”

Michelle flopped back down on the couch and tucked her Herbology textbook back into her bag.

Remus sat down beside her. He couldn’t understand why Michelle didn’t have a boyfriend. She was cute, very cute, really, and he thought she had a great personality.

He reached out and put his hand on Michelle’s hand.

“Don’t worry,” he said reassuringly. “I’ll make them stop.”

“You can’t make them stop if they don’t want to,” Michelle said dejectedly. “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make them drink.”

Remus’ lip twitched.

“Well, we’ll see about that,” he said firmly. “Did you finish Professor Dawes’ essay on werewolves?”

Michelle shook her head.

“No,” she said. “I’m having a bit of trouble with the identification between a regular wolf and the werewolf.”

Michelle didn’t see Remus’ smirk. He hadn’t told her that he was a werewolf, yet. He was waiting for the right time, because he was scared that she’d abandon him if he told her, and he didn’t want to lose her as a best friend.

“Come on,” Remus said. “Let’s head to the library.”

Michelle nodded.

They got up and headed out of the common room, heading off to the library.

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Once in the library, they found a table near an open window. A cool gust of wind blew in, ruffling Michelle's hair and several pages of the opened textbook that lie open on the table in front of her. She had a piece of parchment beside the textbook and began taking notes from the textbook to work into the essay. All that could be heard was the scratching of the quill over the parchment. The library was oddly quiet at this time; probably most of the students were outside enjoying the weather. It was nearing April, so she knew April Fools Day was coming up shortly, and she dreaded it. She knew that the others would certainly play a prank on her. They did it last year, and the year before that...and well, you get the picture.

Only last year did the pranks become really mean. They had snuck into the girls' dorm and super glued her to the bed sheets. When she had woken up, she was unable to get out of bed and ended up being late for her classes. She was screaming in anger and frustration at them. It wasn't until Remus sensed something was wrong that he went looking for her and managed to unglue her from the sheet. Michelle heard James, Sirius, and Peter laughing hysterically about it at the Gryffindor house table the next morning. Remus scolded them, but Michelle knew that they loved every minute of it.

Remus sensed Michelle was thinking of the pranks, because he closed his textbook.

"I told them that they'd better not do anything malicious this year," he said to her. "Cause if they do, I won't hesitate to turn them into Professor Dumbledore. You know Dumbledore doesn't tolerate those kinds of things."

Michelle smiled dryly.

"Either way," she said. "They'll do SOMETHING, or at least try to do something that they think they can get away with."

Remus sighed.

He and Michelle both shared the same interests. Perhaps that's why they 'clicked' so easily during their first year. They loved reading, writing, and Potions class. They also had the same kind of personality...easygoing, compassionate, kind, caring, and both of them had a good sense of humor.

"I don't think so," Remus said earnestly. "Cause I threatened to hex them into oblivion as well. I think that scared them."

Michelle snorted.

"If they can actually be scared."

At that moment, Severus Snape entered the library. Remus looked up and so did Michelle. Michelle felt a pang of sympathy toward Severus, knowing what it felt like to be on the receiving end of James and Sirius' pranks and jokes.

"Would you mind if Severus joined us?" Michelle whispered to Remus, leaning forward slightly.

Remus looked a little startled and shocked that she had asked that, but he shook his head none-the-less.

"Severus," Michelle called. "Come and sit here with us."

Severus paused by the bookcases, momentarily startled that one of the Gryffindor had called to him to join them.

His shoulder length greasy black hair hung around his shoulders, framing his dark eyes. He was wearing the Slytherin robes and uniforms. He had heard how Potter and Black had been tormenting the girl sitting with Lupin. He briefly felt his face flush with color. He thought the girl was rather cute, considering that she was a pureblood. He didn't really have anything against Lupin, as Lupin never really gave Severus trouble, but he wondered why Remus never said anything to stop them from tormenting him.

He headed over to them and took a seat next to Remus, across from Michelle.

Michelle gave Severus a smile.

"How are you?" she asked pleasantly.

Severus wasn't used to being spoken to so nicely, so he cleared his throat.

"I'm fine," he replied.

Michelle nodded. She knew of the horrible and even MEANER things James and Sirius had done to him.

Michelle felt Remus' eyes on her for some reason.

*She really is cute,* Remus thought, but then froze. *Where on earth is this coming from?* He shook his head to clear his mind.

Just then, James and Sirius entered the library. Peter wasn't with them.

"Aw, shit," Michelle muttered. "Look who's coming...it's the Constipated Twins."

She caught sight of Severus' lip twitching and Remus' stern look toward them.

"Well," James cooed. "Look at this! It's Snivellus and Matthews!"

Sirius came around to the back of Michelle's chair and crossed his arms on top of the back of it, speaking into Michelle's ear.

"Are we on a study date?" he asked mockingly. "Should we leave the lovebirds alone?"

Michelle scowled.

"Why don't you go screw yourself?" Michelle demanded angrily.

Sirius fingered her hair and Michelle elbowed him right in the gut. He was now bent over, gasping for air.

"Don't ever touch me again!" she spat vehemently at him.

"Now look what you've done," James said as he came over. "You've hurt his pride. He was just teasing."

Michelle stood up, fingering her wand in her robe.

"Teasing, my ass!" she snapped. "Leave me alone and leave Severus alone, too!"

"He's your boyfriend now, is he?" James asked grinning. "What happened? Did Remus not give you enough, so now you're sleeping with Snivellus? I'm shocked that you didn't get any kind of disease from him."

Severus' face glowed from anger and he stood up, his hand closing around his wand in his pocket.

"Shut up!" Michelle snapped.

"James, I'm warning you two!" Remus said in a tone Michelle never heard before. "I want you two to stop picking on them!"

"Moony, relax. We're just having fun with your girlfriend," Sirius wheezed, finally catching his breath.

"She's not my girlfriend!" Remus said shortly. "And knock it off you two! I mean it!"

Suddenly, Sirius grabbed Michelle from behind, pinning her arms at her sides. Michelle screamed and tried to break free of his grip.

"Let her go!" Remus shouted, now taking his wand out himself and aiming it at Sirius.

Severus also took out his wand, but James had his wand out, and with a flick of it, he flipped Severus over so that his robe dangled over his head just barely touching the floor of the library.

“Snivellus, you definitely need to wash your hair!” James said mockingly. “This might be a good way, yeah? We can just dunk you in the lake.”

Sirius was still holding onto Michelle.

“Let me GO!” Michelle yelled, thrashing around.

Sirius was backing up against the table, and from Michelle’s thrashing, he was losing his balance.

“LET ME GO!” Michelle screamed again, violently thrashing against Sirius’ grip.

James was tormenting Severus, while Michelle finally broke free of Sirius’ grip, but from the force, she lost her balance and fell, cracking the back of her head on the edge of the table. Michelle fell forward, her right cheek pressing against the cold floor of the library. A small pool of blood began pooling around her head and collecting on the floor. She wasn’t moving.

“Oh, God!” James said, as he seemed to have forgotten about Severus and lowered him to his feet.

Severus angrily pulled at his robe and scowled at James before turning his eyes onto Michelle’s unmoving form lying on the floor.

“Nice going, Sirius!” Remus snapped at him and quickly headed over to Michelle. He crouched down beside her and gently turned her over onto her back. Her hair was sticking to her lips and her eyes were closed. Her arm was lying against her abdomen.

“Is she...?” Severus began, with genuine concern.

Remus felt Michelle’s neck for a pulse.

“No,” Remus said, breathing a sigh of relief. “She’s alive. But, I have to get her to the hospital wing, ASAP.”

Severus scowled at Sirius as Remus picked up Michelle and carried her to the hospital wing; one of Remus’ arms was under her kneecaps so that her legs dangled over his arm, and his other arm was behind her neck, supporting it. He could feel an open wound at the base of her head.

“We should go, too,” Sirius said to James.

“Why?” James asked.

“Because, she’s hurt,” Sirius said. “I was just having fun with her. I didn’t want to HURT her.”

Sirius left without even letting James reply. Severus scowled at James before he too left.

