

## Accidental Matchmakers

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## Accidental Matchmakers

by [BunnyBopper](#)

### Summary

A cruel prank James pulls on Snape doesn't go the way he planned.

### Notes

Warning: mild homophobia

## Accidental Matchmakers

James Potter was feeling the best he'd felt in his life. He'd just come off the dance floor with Lily Evans, who was pink in the face and fanning herself with her hand due to how hard he'd been flinging her around. He stopped to admire how beautiful she looked in her emerald green dress which almost matched her eyes and made her hair look like it was on fire.

"Shall I get us some drinks?" he asked her, hand going up to his hair as it always did when he was trying to play it cool.

"I definitely need one after that performance!" she said laughing and touching his forearm with her hand, sending a jolt of electricity through him. He felt a surge of longing as she pulled away. There really was nothing cool about the way he was feeling. 'I'll be right back - I just want to go speak to Mary for a bit.' Lily turned and spent some time searching the crowd until she spied a short girl with curly hair. With a small squeal and a tiny wave she rushed over to her and disappeared among the gathered students.

James smiled to himself as he made his way over to the drinks table. He and Sirius had joked about spiking the punch fountain at this year's ball but Lily had made them swear not to. Not after last time. His smile turned into a grin when he saw a gangly black-haired boy already there, clumsily trying to carry too many drinks back to an awaiting group of Slytherins. The only thing that had made this dance better was the way Snape had been glaring at them all night.

"Here, let me help you with that Snivellus."

The boy started when he heard James call out to him and nearly dropped his burden. With a quick flick of his wand James enchanted the multiple bottles and glasses so they were floating in front of Snape's chest. He just watched James with wary disbelief.

That disbelief was shattered along with the glass at Snape's feet when James abruptly ended the spell. The boy looked down at the mixture of butterbeer and punch covering the lower half of his black dress robes. The expression on his face now was one of resigned acceptance at how things had played out.

"Whoops!" James exclaimed. "And after you were looking so nice for once."

Snape really had seemed to have made an effort this evening, James thought as he watched him attempt to dry himself off using hot air from his wand. His black hair – which was looking silky rather than greasy for a change - was tied back in a low ponytail that somehow made his strong features look distinguished rather than ugly. Not that James understood why Snape had even bothered to show up. He hadn't danced with anyone, just hung around Avery and Mulciber and his other friends who were probably all death eaters. James never missed an opportunity to take him down a peg in front of them.

"You're a first class prick, you know that Potter?" Snape said when he'd finished to the best of his ability and had transfigured the glass back together. The usual fight in his voice didn't seem to be there though. James guessed he was too depressed by his pining for Lily and the fact that she had finally said yes to one of James' many attempts at asking her out. A cruel thought came to him.

"Glad I ran in to you actually Snivellus. Evans wants to talk to you."

"Is that so?" Snape responded, voice tinged with his usual sarcasm. "Why do I doubt that

considering we haven't spoken in the best part of a year?"

"Don't ask me. Never understood what she saw in you myself. She said she'd meet you out on the balcony."

"More like Black is waiting for me with some new humiliation prepared for the evening." Snape clearly didn't trust him but there was a small spark of hope that flashed briefly in his black eyes.

"Well I can always tell her you weren't interested when I see her later..."

Snape shot him a look of pure venom as he turned and headed back to the gang of Slytherins he'd been tagging along with all evening, who seemed a little put out that he hadn't returned with their drinks order. After a few moments hesitation he strode off in the direction of the balcony. James felt an uncomfortable pang of guilt as he watched him go, but quickly pushed it down as he went to find Sirius. He soon came across him chatting up a smitten Hufflepuff girl from the year below them. When he saw his friend approach Sirius gave her a brief wiggle of his eyebrows and pointed at her indicating he would return soon.

"Sup Prongs, I'm surprised you could tear yourself away from Evans long enough to speak to me."

"Well it *was* difficult Padfoot but you're not going to want to miss this." He whispered what he'd done into the other boy's ear.

"Oh, you're a bastard," Sirius said gleefully. "C'mon let's get the others!"

It didn't take them long to find Remus and Peter chatting idly at a table in the back of the room. Peter didn't have a date and Remus apparently felt the need to keep him company all night. Sirius slammed both hands on the table in excitement.

"Guys let's go! Snivellus is about to make an arse of himself." He said still grinning. Peter's face lit up at this but Remus' darkened as usual.

"What have you done to him now?" he asked.

"Told him Lily wanted to speak to him," James said with a wicked grin.

"That's exceptionally cruel even for you. You won anyway! Why are you still so obsessed with him?"

"Because he's-" James faltered. What? An evil pureblood supremacist? If he was honest he wasn't sure if that was strictly true or if Snape had just got swept up in things. Plus there were plenty of other Slytherins who fitted that stereotype much more closely. He shook himself. "Whatever. Are you two coming?"

"I am anyway!" Peter squeaked. Of course he was. He was always up for seeing someone else humiliated. Anything to make sure he never became a target himself. Remus sighed.

"Fine. If only to stop you taking things too far as usual."

Sirius and Peter sniggered along beside James as they made their way across the room. Remus lingered behind them, an anxious expression on his face.

A member of the Black family was waiting for him when he arrived at the balcony but it wasn't the one he expected. He recognised Regulus, standing in a fine set of black dress robes with steel grey accents, hands on the stone wall and looking out into the night. Severus had been wary when he heard that Black's younger brother was to be attending Hogwarts the year after him but was relieved when he was sorted in to Slytherin.

The boy was just as handsome as his brother but in a strange, somehow otherworldly way. Severus sometimes caught himself staring at his ice blue eyes and high cheekbones across the common room where he was usually found buried in a book. Severus was also pleased to find that he did not seem to crave attention the way his brother did and usually preferred his own company.

Regulus turned at his approach and gave him a polite half smile. Severus looked around the balcony a final time to confirm Lily wasn't there. Of course she wasn't. Still he couldn't help feeling a crushing disappointment.

"Looking for someone?" Regulus asked, those intense eyes studying him.

"Er, yes have you seen a girl with red hair wearing a green dress?" The boy shook his head and shrugged. "Never mind, seems it was the hilarious prank I thought it was," Severus said, mostly to himself, as he turned to leave.

"My brother was it? Sorry about him, he's a bit of a cunt."

Severus stopped in his tracks, surprised by such strong language from the usually quiet boy. He certainly was an interesting one. Perhaps he should stay and get to know him better.

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"Ooh, not much brotherly love for you there Padfoot," James said playfully to Sirius. The four of them were standing behind a handy row of bushes and had already cast concealment charms to ensure they wouldn't be heard.

"Whatever let's just hex them both already!" Sirius growled already reaching for his wand.

"Hang on, we should see how this plays out," James said, for some reason he sensed something between the two boys. Remus just made a disapproving noise behind them. They quietened so as to hear the conversation.

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"Indeed he is," Severus said with an amused smile, "It was one of his little friends this time though."

"I don't know why you let them push you around so much. You're far too talented for that." Regulus had turned back to gaze out over the balcony.

"I'm more than capable of sticking up for myself but when it's four against one it's not always that

easy!" Severus responded defensively. Regulus just continued to look out into the night sky and let out a thoughtful 'hmm'. Severus sighed and sat down on the stone floor looking angrily back towards the dance floor which was partially obscured by curtains. After a few moments, to his surprise, Regulus sat down beside him and changed the subject.

"Lily Evans was it? The girl you were looking for?"

"I was told she was looking for me, but yes."

"Your ex-girlfriend?"

Severus snorted. "Not quite."

"But you want her to be. Your girlfriend I mean."

This boy really wasted no time being direct. Severus found he liked it. He'd never been one for small talk himself.

"Contrary to what everyone seems to believe, I don't. She's my..." he corrected himself "...she *was* my best friend. That's all."

"Well, you certainly seemed close to me...and it definitely didn't do your reputation any favours hanging around with someone like her." Regulus was looking at him in a calculating way. Severus knew that the 'like her' remark referred to her blood status and he shifted uncomfortably. He wasn't sure what side Regulus was on. He wasn't even sure what side he was on himself anymore.

"Never seen you express an interest in any other girls either," Regulus continued, still studying him. Just how much attention did this boy pay to him anyway? Severus feels a continued need to defend himself.

"Well that's because I'm..." he hesitates "...well, I'm – y'know – like you..." Severus had heard the rumours about Regulus and various other boys throughout the school. He hoped now at least some of them were true.

"Really? Well that explains it then." Regulus was running a finger over the smile that had formed on his full lips.

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"What's he talking about?" Peter asked the group in a confused tone.

"I dunno, obsessed with blood status maybe?" Remus responded sounding equally baffled.

But James was pretty sure of what they were talking about. Judging by the horrified expression on Sirius' face and the way the rest of him had gone fully tense he guessed his friend had too. James had no idea why his heart was pounding so fast.

It did make sense, Snape being gay. He really had never seen him look at another girl with any interest. James had assumed it was just devotion to Lily but apparently not. It would also have explained why Snape seemed so content to play lapdog to Malfoy for so long until the older boy graduated.

"You certainly seem to like solving puzzles," Snape was saying. He'd turned his face further towards Regulus and was smirking slightly.

"Oh yes! It's one of my favourite things to do..." Sirius' brother replied with a grin. He himself had turned his whole body so he was leaning towards Snape.

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"So I take it there was nobody here tonight you felt like 'doing'? Or did a half-naked boy take cover in those bushes the moment I stepped out here?"

"Heh, no. Nobody really sparked my interest tonight. Not until now anyway..." The other boy's face was dangerously close to his now. Severus was becoming taken in by those fiercely bright eyes. Regulus' thoughts were pushing through to him as people's sometimes did when they were having strong feelings towards him. Though the thoughts weren't usually so positive or...lustful as these ones were.

Like a true Slytherin, Regulus did not hesitate in taking what he wanted. He moved in to place his soft lips against Severus' who wasted no time responding. The kiss was as intense as Regulus himself seemed to be. The boy was on his knees, pulling the still seated Severus up towards him by the collar of his robes. He soon parted his lips and Regulus' hot tongue entered his mouth causing a moan to escape him.

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Sirius looked enraged. He'd begun to move out from the cover of the bush and started fumbling for his wand. Before he could take it out Remus' hand was grasped tight around his arm, stopping him from going anywhere.

"Leave them," Remus said with a ferocity James had never heard from him before. Not in his human form anyway.

"Moony, in case you hadn't noticed Snivellus is snogging my brother!" Sirius said shrilly.

"Yeah, and it's none of your business...also it looks to me like your brother is the one snogging him actually," Remus replied, his tone turning to one of amusement.

Peter was simply making noises indicating his disgust. James was trying to ignore the way the sight of the two boys kissing had sent a jolt into him that was not unlike the one Lily gave him earlier, though this one had gone straight to his groin.

Somehow Remus managed to hold Sirius back. James saw that Snape and Regulus had broken away from each other now, breathing hard. Snape seemed to come back to his surroundings and was frantically looking around to make sure nobody saw them. The charms must have been working though because he remained oblivious to their presence.

"Hey, what would you say to taking this somewhere more private?" Regulus said in a low voice.

He didn't look half as concerned about anybody seeing them but seemed to guess he could take things further if Snape was more comfortable.

"I-uh-yeah...sure," was all Snape appeared to be able to say in response.

Sirius' brother stood up and extended a hand to help him up. He only let go once he'd led the dazed Snape to the curtain which had concealed them from the rest of the students. Once they had gone Remus let out a wolf-like howl of laughter.

"Well James if your intention was to play matchmaker you certainly succeeded!"

"Give me the map Moony! I need to see where they've gone!" Sirius shouted at him as he unsuccessfully tried to reach in the pocket of the taller boy.

"Not a chance!" Remus said, still laughing as he dodged away from him.

"Oh man, that was gross!" Peter said turning to James, "Hey, you OK Prongs? You look really flushed."

James said nothing. He wasn't sure what Snape and Regulus had awoken in him but it was making him very uncomfortable. Whatever it was made him sulk for the rest of the night feeling a mixture of anger and jealousy that not even Lily could snap him out of. Sirius was also in too bad a mood to return to the girl he'd been wooing earlier and both she and Lily soon gave up and danced with other some of the many other willing candidates. The only ones who seemed happy were Remus and Peter.

"This is going to be so good. Wait until everyone finds out about this!" Peter was saying with glee at the thought of Snape's misery.

"Oh no. We are not telling ANYONE about this!" Sirius spat angrily at him. "That's my brother we're talking about! Do you really think I want everyone knowing he's a-" He stopped as words seemed to fail him.

"But-" Peter protested.

"No Wormtail! I mean it! Or you'll have worse things to worry about than rat poison from now on."

This seemed to get through to him.

"Fine with me!" Remus said, still grinning. He turned to James, "What about you?"

"Yeah, sure, whatever. I don't even care anyway," he said, running his fingers through his hair.

"Of course you don't." Remus smirked.

It seemed like Snape's secret was safe for the time being.

# Accidental Exhibitionism

## Chapter Summary

The night of the ball is still very much on James' mind, more so than he cares to admit.

## Chapter Notes

WARNING: Homophobic language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

James Potter was feeling the worst he'd ever felt in his life. Today should have been perfect: a date in Hogsmeade with Lily Evans, the girl he had fancied for years who had finally realised he wasn't the terrible person she always thought he was. He had been planning this day for months. Had filled it with all the things he thought Lily would like; heart-shaped chocolates from Honeydukes with warm cinnamon-spiced centres which were supposed to simulate the inner glow one felt when they were in love, a visit to the oh-so-haunted-you-better-stay-close-to-me shrieking shack, culminating in the one thing that would confirm without a doubt to all of Hogwarts that they were a couple – making googly eyes at each other over a lace-clad table in Madam Puddifoots.

It should have been perfect, but the reality was quite different. James just wasn't feeling the things he was supposed to be feeling. He should be entranced by those sparkling eyes, enthralled by the way the light danced over her hair to reveal endless hues of burning reds, he should be drinking in every part of her as if she were the deluxe hot chocolate that he should be feeding her spoonfuls of rich cream from but was instead sitting in front of him, untouched and tepid. The reason James couldn't pay much attention to Lily was that he had to put all his energy into ignoring the very people that had been driving him to distraction for months since he had the misfortune to see them with their tongues down each other's throats.

"Remind me again why we are here, Regulus?"

"I told you. This is the only place in all of Hogsmeade where you can get a good cup of coffee. I'm sick of the swill they think it's acceptable to serve us back at school."

James glared down at his steadily congealing hot chocolate and tried not to listen to their conversation. Where was that famous Mufliato charm that Snivellus liked to use so frequently? He certainly seemed to throw his usual caution to the wind whenever he was with Regulus. James had lost count of the times he'd run into them in the hallways standing far closer than it was acceptable for friends to stand or spied them stumbling out of a broom cupboard with smugly satisfied looks on their faces. It was obscene how brazen the two of them were! James had no idea why the whole

school wasn't talking about it! Sometimes, when the memory of Snape's kiss-bruised lips and dishevelled hair got too overwhelming for him, James wanted to stand up in the middle of the common room and yell about all the perverted things the two of them were getting up to right under everyone's noses. The promise of secrecy they had made to Sirius was the only thing that stopped him.

His head snapped up at the sound of Snape letting out a particularly loud burst of laughter. He'd never heard his laugh before. Not properly. Sometimes he'd notice him hide a snigger behind his hand when he and Lily used to sit together in potions, or pretend to chuckle alongside Avery and Mulciber, but never like this. Unreserved, carefree, head thrown back, eyes-squeezed-tight laughter. Lily, who had been looking increasingly bored up until now, turned her head to follow the direction of James' gaze. Her face hardened at the sight of her former friend.

"I didn't know he was friends with Sirius' brother," she said coldly.

"Oh, they are very friendly alright," James muttered, still glaring over the café tables crammed with students to the one at which the two boys sat. Snape was composing himself after his uncharacteristic show of mirth. James watched as he pushed a strand of silken hair back behind his ear with his long, pale fingers, an easy smile lingering on his face as he listened to Regulus waffle on about coffee beans and the different ways of using them in potions. Merlin, Snivellus was positively bewitched by him! He hadn't even noticed that he and Lily were seated a few tables across from them!

"What's that supposed to mean?" Lily, who had been watching James watch Snape with a quizzical look on her face for some time now, asked.

"Nothin'."

"What is with you? You've been acting weird all day!"

James just shrugged his folded arms at her.

"Urgh," she huffed and stood up from the table. "Whatever. Come find me when you snap out of it." With that she flounced out of the café, stopping only to give him one last disgusted look before the door tinkled shut.

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Severus didn't like a lot of people. Truthfully, he didn't like Mulciber or even Avery all that much. They were all Slytherins and thus shared ambition for greatness but where Severus wanted to work hard to prove just how talented he was (and how wrong everyone was about him) Mulc and Avery just wanted as much power as they could get from whoever could give it to them. They tolerated each other because it was that or being alone. A friendship based on necessity more than anything

else. Severus wasn't even sure he liked Lucius so much as the doors he could open for him. Lily. He'd liked Lily. Loved her even, as though she were family. She was funny and kind but didn't put up with anybody's shit, as Severus had found out all too well.

As much as he liked Lily even she hadn't been entirely honest with him all the time. Even if he could have ignored the uncomfortable shift in her posture every time he approached her group of friends, or the subtle smirk behind her hand when a jibe was thrown his way, he couldn't ignore what went on in her mind – that maybe, just maybe, Severus really was asking for everything he got.

But Regulus was different. As he sat there going on about the different types of coffee beans (and why the ones at Hogwarts were so inferior) Severus reflected upon how there were never any discrepancies between the things inside Regulus' head and the things that came out of his mouth. In fact, Severus couldn't remember him telling a single lie. (Highly unusual for a Slytherin indeed.) Well...there was that one time Regulus had lied about having nicked Severus' good quill but he had been so bad at it Occlumency was not required to see through him.

Severus liked Regulus. He liked him a lot.

"Do you know about the properties of coffee in potion-making?" Regulus asked him between grateful sips of his beverage

Severus narrowed his eyes at him playfully. "Why do I have the feeling that even if I say 'yes' you're still going to tell me?"

"Because you've gotten to know me pretty well by now," Regulus said before taking an extended breath to begin his speech. Severus laughed before settling down to listen in earnest.

Regulus didn't have his undivided attention for too long, however, as the juxtaposing sounds of the slam of the café door along with the merry chime of its bell made Severus turn around. His eyes widened at the sight of Potter scowling alone at him two tables away along with the bobbing head of red hair that could only belong to Lily, swiftly exiting the building. Merlin! He hadn't even realised they were there!

"Looks like the Head boy and girl are having some problems..." Regulus remarked, the scene apparently important enough to interrupt his train of thought.

"Seems that way," Severus replied, keeping his voice low. He kept his gaze fixed on Potter. The way his tormentor was glaring at him made Severus reluctant to turn his back to him again.

"I wonder what they were arguing about." Regulus did not seem as concerned about being overheard as Severus was. "Something about you I expect."

"Me?!" Severus turned back to face Regulus in surprise.

"Well, he has been staring at you since he sat down. Didn't you know?"

"No of course I didn't know!" Severus hissed. "I didn't even see them!"

"Oh. Well, now that you do know, why do you think that is?"

"How the hell should I know? He's probably thinking up some fresh plot to murder me."

Regulus ran a forefinger over his bottom lip, something he usually did when he was trying to puzzle something out. "But I thought you said he was the one that saved you last time."

"Thanks for reminding me."

By the time Severus worked up the nerve to turn around again, Potter was gone.

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James stormed all the way back to the castle without breaking his stride. His shirt was sticking to him by the time he reached his dorm room and the prickly dampness only increased his irritation. He pulled it over his head in one swift motion and screwed into a tight ball before throwing it hard on the floor.

"Date didn't go too well then?"

In his frustration, James hadn't noticed Remus sitting in the corner of the room, nose buried in a transfiguration textbook. He managed a grunt in reply as he made his way over to his bed and threw open the lid of his trunk at its feet. He could feel Remus' eyes on him as he rummaged around inside.

"Hey, listen, I don't know what's going on with you, but you've not been yourself since...well... you've been acting strange for a while and-"

"There is nothing strange about me!" James snapped at his friend. He let out an exasperated sigh, pulled his wand from the pocket of his jeans, and aimed it at the trunk's disorganised contents. "Accio towel!" He must have said the spell with a little too much force as the faded red towel hit him square in the face and whipped against his bare skin with the impact. When he had disentangled himself from it, James was met with the sight of Remus' poorly suppressed smile.

"Ok well, that's something we'll just have to disagree on," he said, unable to stop himself from laughing at the daggers James was throwing at him. "But seriously, if you want to talk about anything I-"

"I'm going for a shower." James stood up abruptly and left the room, Remus' long sigh following him out the door. Too agitated to make the long trek to the prefects' bathroom, he made do with the one next to the dorm (the one he swore never to use again since scoring the position of Head Boy). He finished undressing, stepped into the nearest cubicle, and listened to the familiar squeak of the rusty handle as he turned the shower on. As tepid water splattered over his back, James reflected that Remus was right. He had been acting strange. He'd been feeling strange. Ever since...

James cursed as the now well-rehearsed memory came flooding back to him. Snape. Face flushed, eyes closed, moaning into the mouth of another boy. And along with it came the familiar rush of heat.

Oh no.

It wasn't the first time his body had betrayed him by reacting this way whenever his mind strayed back to that night. He'd never given into it though, preferring to sacrifice hours of much-needed sleep trying to fight down his frustration. But he couldn't exactly strut back into the dorm in this state. Not with Remus still there. Fighting with himself the whole time, he let his hand wander down to his cock.

All that pent-up desire came rushing forth and James couldn't help groaning the moment he gripped himself. It wasn't anything to do with Snivellus, of course. It was just the first time he had seen anything like that, and it was natural to be curious. Wasn't it?

He tried to think about anything else. His usual go-to's. The girls' changing rooms after a quidditch match, the women on Sirius' muggle posters, heck even the fat lady could be appealing on a good day. But none of them were really doing it for him this time. He made a conscious effort to think about Lily. She was his girlfriend – that was who he should be thinking about. But as he imagined pulling her into his arms and finally kissing her, her plump lips turned into Snape's thin ones, her smooth curves became his hard edges.

"No, fuck...ungh," he breathed as his treacherous hand moved ever faster. He was not going to come thinking about Severus Snape. Anyone but Severus fucking Snape. Severus. Severus, Severus, Severus, oh god, oh fuck. Fuck.

James collapsed against the wall, leaning on one arm for support. The blissful sensation that usually came after some much-needed relief didn't last long this time.

"Fuck!" James drew back his fist and brought it down against the unforgiving tiles. Again and again. Until the pain outweighed the need.

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"He's still looking at you."

"Yes. Thank-you Regulus. I'm aware."

Severus' looked down at his barely touched plate of scrambled eggs on toast sadly. It was impossible to eat with the feeling of Potter's eyes boring into the back of his head. Although losing Lily's friendship had been the worst thing that had ever happened to him, Severus had thought that, at least now, his tormentors would leave him alone. If anything, the reverse turned out to be true. Potter never missed an opportunity to belittle and humiliate him these days, whether it was via a hex or an unoriginal insult, it stung just the same. Things were a little better now that he had Regulus (which, ironically, was all thanks to Potter) but he really didn't want that lot catching on to the nature of their relationship and making things a million times worse for both of them. Sighing, Severus put down his fork in defeat and poured himself a cup of sub-par coffee instead.

"You know," Regulus began, looking passed Severus' shoulder at what he could only assume was Potter's look of pure loathing, "I think he fancies you."

Severus snorted half the liquid up his nose. But before he could tell Regulus how ridiculous he was being, he was roped in by Mulciber to settled an argument between him and Avery over which curse was more effective: *Sectumsempra* or the *Bat-Bogey Hex*.

It being a subject he was personally invested in, Severus managed to lose himself in the debate. When he turned to Regulus for support that *Sectumsempra* was the superior, and certainly more mature curse, he was gone. That wasn't unusual in and of itself – Regulus often wandered off, absorbed in his own thoughts. Severus found it quite endearing during the times it wasn't immensely frustrating.

This time it wasn't frustrating – it was bloody panic-inducing.

Severus had eventually spotted the back of Regulus' perfectly poised frame at the Gryffindor table, seated straight across from none other than Potter himself. He felt a brief rush of awe at Regulus' fearlessness, at his ability to act as if he belonged anywhere, right before he felt like he would throw up what little food he had managed to get into his stomach from pure anxiety. What did he think he was-

"...staring at my friend?" Severus caught the tail end of Regulus' question as he scrambled over to the table adorned with red and gold.

"W-What you say?!" Potter sputtered, horrified by whatever accusation Regulus had thrown his way.

Every student within earshot - Lily included – was watching them intently. Some appeared curious, others excited, sensing the potential for an argument to unfold. Severus knew fine well just how much people enjoyed being a passive participant in other people's drama. They loved soaking up a person's suffering, safe in the knowledge that they were not the direct cause.

"I said-" Regulus repeated slowly, "-why do you keep staring at my friend?"

Potter let out a painfully forced laugh and looked to the rest of his crew for support. Black as glaring at his brother with such heated fury it was a wonder Regulus didn't spontaneously combust, Pettigrew was looking between Potter and Regulus in gleeful anticipation at what would unfold, Lupin just buried his face in his porridge like the coward he was.

But, as none of them spoke, Regulus continued. "Whatever the reason it's making me rather uncomfortable... not to mention the digestive distress it's putting him through so..."

"I-I'm n-" Potter's increasingly panic-stricken face hardened when he saw Severus approaching. His voice steadied and filled with the arrogance he had grown oh so used to. "Well, it's sort of like watching a Quidditch accident you know? So hideous you can't look away."

Laughter erupted throughout the Gryffindors, with Black and Pettigrew's being (as usual) the loudest. Severus' felt his ears grow hot with hatred and shame. What hurt the most though, was seeing Lily titter behind her hand. That really brought things home. He reached out to place a firm hand on Regulus' shoulder; a silent plea for them to get out of there. One he was apparently not going to listen to.

"I happen to quite like the way he looks." Regulus' full lips twisted into a strange smirk. "And I'm starting to think you do too."

Potter, whose eyes had been locked on the spot where Severus' hand connected with Regulus, suddenly stood up, knocking over a glass of orange juice all over Pettigrew's toast in the process. "I'm nothing like you two!" he shouted. "It's obvious you're a pair of- mmmfhfngg!" Potter's jaw had slammed shut before he could finish his sentence. Judging by his pained expression it looked like he had bitten his tongue on the way up.

Black was standing up now too, wand drawn and pointed directly at his friend's face after casting a quick Langlock his way. "Get out of here, Reg," he said harshly.

"But Siri I'm just-" Regulus stopped as Black rounded his wand on him instead. "Alright. Fine," He held both hands up in surrender but that smirk still played on his full lips. "We're going."

As the two of them exited the Great Hall, Severus couldn't help but smile at having seen one of his spells being put to such good use.

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It was later that night and James was livid. He wasn't speaking to any of the marauders after not a single one of them backed him up in the hall. He certainly wasn't speaking to Sirius. To make everything worse, Lily had had a total go at him in front of everyone in the common room for what he'd said about Snivellus. (Even though she seemed to find it pretty funny at the time...)

James had just punched his pillow for the fourth time when an idea struck him. He lunged over to his bedside cabinet and pulled out the scraggly piece of parchment. He spread the Marauders' Map on the bed in front of him and leaned over it eagerly. He soon spotted the two dots labelled 'Regulus Black' and 'Severus Snape' positioned so close together they were practically one. He sneered with disgust – both at the thought of them together, and at the excitement it still gave him to think about them together. Stuffing the map into his back pocket, he summoned the cloak, wrapped it around himself, and slipped out of the common room unseen.

In truth, James wasn't one hundred percent sure what he was doing. He just thought that, maybe, seeing them snogging again would knock some sense into him.

\*\*\*

Despite its stomach-churning start, the day had turned out to be not a bad one. In fact, it had been rather good. Everyone had been talking about Potter getting his jaw locked shut after Black leaped to their defence (not that Severus cared about school gossip but it was nice to be on the positive side of it for a change) and the resulting fight that broke out between the Gryffindor dream team meant they were far more focused on each other than tormenting him. All in all, things had turned out well.

But there was something still bothering Severus; it didn't take a Ravenclaw to work out what Potter had been about to say before his teeth connected so satisfyingly with his tongue.

"Fags?" Regulus suggested helpfully as they sat together in a quiet corner of the library.

"No, Regulus, I mean-"

"Poofers? Queers? Pansies?"

"Yes - thank you - it's not so much his potential word choice I'm concerned about."

Regulus cocked his head to one side, the fine peacock feather of his quill brushing the side of his mouth. "What then?"

"The fact that he knows about us! Obviously!"

"Oh right," Regulus said, looking down at his Potions book and making a quick note. Despite being a year younger he was almost as advanced as Severus was when it came to schoolwork. He was naturally clever, like his brother, but the added drive to study hard to fuel his ambition gave him an even greater edge.

Severus watched Regulus' flawless penmanship with increasing irritation.

"I take it that doesn't bother you?"

"Pfft, not really," Regulus replied, eyes still on his work. "He's obviously too far in the closet to do anything about it."

Severus had to bring a hand to his mouth to stifle his laughter lest Madam Pince discover their secluded spot, huddled together under the window of the advanced potions section, knees almost touching. "Somehow I doubt that," he said as the amusement faded and bitterness crept in. "He's been chasing Lily since second year."

"And he's been chasing *you* since first year."

Severus tittered again but stopped when he saw the intensity of Regulus' gaze. There was no amusement behind those ice-blue eyes. Something did flutter through behind them though: jealousy. "Oh, come on. That's ridiculous!" he exclaimed. James Potter in love with him? All that cruelty, all those hexes, just some twisted form of pigtail pulling? The thought was absurd!

Regulus set down his quill carefully alongside his book. In one fluid motion, he was upon Severus, arms either side of his body as he leaned in close. "If it's so ridiculous-" he whispered, "-then why is he watching us right now?"

Severus' head whipped around as he scanned the library for signs of his enemy but saw nothing. Everything looked the same as it had done when they had put up a Dissuading Charm over the Potions section, causing anyone who happened to enter to suddenly remember an important task they had to attend to immediately. It would keep most people away unless they were very determined; and who would be determined to take out a potions book other than the two of them?

He turned back to Regulus. Before he could even utter a bemused 'what?' Regulus pressed the warmth of his lips against his own. He felt his mouth being prised open by tongue and Severus found himself responding in kind. That couldn't be true, could it? Potter wouldn't be so interested in them that he was standing there under his invisibility cloak spying on them both? He felt a hot, perverse thrill rise up from the pit of his stomach, unrelated to Regulus sliding one well-attired leg between his thighs as he pressed himself closer.

"Seems like you find the idea rather exciting," Regulus remarked after breaking the kiss. The most devious of smiles spread over his delicate features before as he moved to whisper in Severus' ear. "Let's give him something more interesting to look at this time."

This time? Is what Severus would have said if his mouth had been able to produce anything other than a high-pitched gasp as Regulus replaced the thigh between his legs with the firm caress of his hand. Before he could utter any word of protest, Regulus captured his mouth again and pushed him so hard against the bookcase that a few tomes thudded to the floor. No. That wasn't right. It was the bookcase opposite them from which the books had fallen, which meant there was someone there, someone unseen.

Severus pushed Regulus off him just in time to see a tuft of scruffy brown hair come into view as the invisibility cloak slipped off James Potter in his haste to get away.

## Chapter End Notes

A few people wanted more of this and I was happy to re-visit it! Thanks for reading!  
One more chapter to follow.

# Accidental Confession

## Chapter Summary

James tries to process what he's just seen.

## Chapter Notes

I didn't mean to take so long on this chapter. Hope it was worth the wait!

“Oi, watch it!”

The Ravenclaw girl looked wildly about her as she hobbled to her feet after being rudely pushed to the ground by an unknown force. Finding no-one there to direct her anger to, she huffed loudly, rubbed her scrapped knees, and began to pick up the armful of books that had scattered across the hallway. Throughout her task, she muttered about Dumbledore and the fact he was 'too cheap' to fork out for a thorough exorcism of the castle's poltergeists.

James hugged the cloak tighter around himself as he sped on. He was far from the library, and the two Slytherins he had been spying on within, yet still, he ran, flying up flights of stairs two at a time. He didn't stop when he reached the common room, just carried on running, keeping his focus on the steady thump of his feet hitting the solid, stone floor, and the heavy thud of his heart pounding in his ears - anything other than what he'd just witnessed.

It was only when his lungs burned, and the pain in his side became so intense he began to worry it was something more serious than a stitch, that he finally came to a stop. He doubled over, hands on knees to take in deep breaths of air, cursing himself for neglecting his Quidditch training the past few months.

When his cardiovascular system had returned to something resembling normal, James looked up to regain his bearings. Although he should have realised where he was the instant the smell of shit hit his nose. His flight from all things homosexual had unknowingly led him to the Owlery. Without really considering what he was doing, he pushed his way through the creaky old door.

Feathers floated down towards him amongst glittering flecks dust illuminated by the beams of sunlight that squeezed their way through narrow windows. He angrily brushed a few out of his hair while trying not to breathe in the rancid air too deeply. Hundreds of birds fluttered and preened above him, many eyeing him in that haughty way only owls could.

The haughtiest of the lot, a large Great Horned, flew down to the nearest perch with an air of expectancy.

"Hey, Frolo." James smiled at the familiar bird despite himself and reached out to tickle his chin. Frolo keened at his touch before giving his hand a playful nip. He then stuck out his leg, assuming the position for James to attach a letter that didn't exist. At least...not yet.

For all of a sudden, James knew exactly why he was here and exactly what he had to do.

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“Lily, please tell me you’re joking.”

The sound of his old friend’s name carried along the corridor by Mary Mackinnon’s voice snapped Severus out of the Transfiguration textbook he was poring over and into his surroundings. Whenever he thought the last spark of hope that she would forgive him had finally died, it somehow always re-ignited itself whenever she was near. But she didn’t even notice him sitting on their favourite stone bench as the pair stopped to continue their conversation a few feet away from him.

“I wish,” Lily mumbled, glaring down at the ground and kicking it softly. “It’s so embarrassing.”

Mary’s eyebrows rose along with the pitch of her irritating voice. “I’ll bet! I mean, dumping you is one thing but to do it by owl!”

Severus’ book nearly fell from his hands as Lily grabbed her friend by the arm while placing a finger to her lips. “Shhh! Do you think I want the whole school knowing that particular detail?”

“Sorry, sorry,” Mary said, wincing under Lily’s surprisingly strong grip. “I just can’t believe it! After all that time he spent chasing you! What does it say?”

Severus watched as Lily mercifully let go of Mary’s arm and shoved a crumpled-up bit of parchment, that looked suspiciously as though it had been torn up and pieced back together with magic, into her hand. After brushing the curls from her face dramatically, Mary smoothed out the letter and began to read with obvious glee. Her freckled face morphed into exaggerated looks of disgust as her eyes flicked across the page, and she let out little cries of outrage the further down she got.

“He needs to *focus on himself* and *figure out what he wants*?” Mary clutched the letter to her chest and offered Lily an apology that would almost have sounded convincing if it hadn’t been obvious she considered this to be the most exciting thing to have happened in months.

Severus, too, was excited. That spark in his chest was rising to, well, not a full-blown blaze but at least a modest bonfire. If they had broken up maybe she would finally realise for good what an arsehole Potter was and then maybe...

Lily said nothing but snatched back the letter before marching over to the nearest rubbish bin. Which, unfortunately, was located right next to Severus. He quickly tried to lift *Beyond Porcupines and Pincushions* so that it covered his face, but he was too late.

She stopped dead when she saw him, hand curling into an impossibly tight fist around the now very abused paper. “So,” she said in a dangerous whisper, “bet you’re pretty pleased with yourself?”

“I - uh - what?”

“You fucking heard me!” Lily brought her fist back so that Severus braced himself for impact, and he wasn’t ashamed to admit to using his textbook as an impromptu shield...he knew what Lily’s right hook was like...but she simply used it to fling the letter in the bin beside him. He wasn’t sure

whether or not she intended for it to spontaneously combust or not, but the entire thing would soon be ablaze. “I know this has something to do with you.” With that she turned on her heel and left, a delighted Mary Mackinnon in tow.

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The next morning James woke up feeling, not better, but certainly a little lighter. He stayed in the warm, red cocoon the sun made for him as it beat down against his drawn curtains. The gnawing feeling in his stomach, that he had almost grown used to over the past few months, was kept at bay long enough for him to consider drifting off back to sleep. He snuggled down further under his velvet blankets and gave himself permission to lie-in. Merlin knew he needed it. It was the weekend, after all, no responsibilities and no-one to answer to.

“Have you lost your fucking mind?!”

The comforting glow became a bright white brightness that made its way straight into James’ eyes, forcing him to screw them tightly shut against the pain. As such he was unable to see the shock and outrage that was all over Sirius’ face as he flung his curtains wide apart, but he could imagine it all the same.

“Leave me alone, Pads,” he grumbled, pulling the blankets over his head to shield himself from the intrusion of both the sunlight and his friend. Sirius grabbed a corner of it and pulled, causing the two of them to begin a tug-of-war. “Fuck off! This is even more annoying when you’re human!” Sirius grinned and released his hold suddenly, causing James to fall back and whack the back of his head off the shelf above his bed.

“Good. Perhaps that’ll knock some sense into you!” he said as James let loose a string of curse words at him. “How could you even think about dumping Evans?!”

“None of your business,” James said, rubbing his head with one hand and extracting himself from the tangle of bedclothes with the other. He padded across the floor to his trunk, avoiding the joint gazes of Remus and Peter who sat together on the floor

“Actually,” Sirius gestured to the two boys looking up at him, “you made it all of our business by obsessing over her since we were thirteen. Now tell us what on earth possessed you to-”

“JUST FUCKING LEAVE IT ALRIGHT?!”

The slam of the door shook the entire room as James, still in his pyjamas, exited the dorm. There were a few beats of awkward silence before Sirius turned his best told-you-so look on Remus, who placed his head in his hands and sighed deeply.

“Okay Padfoot,” he said with defeat, “we’ll try it your way.”

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Of all the places in Hogwarts Severus had pestered his mother to tell him about as a child, the

Slytherin Common Room was the one that excited him most. He would ask her about it most nights as she tucked him into bed. Each time she would sigh loudly and whisper ‘*again?*’ as she pulled the duvet over him, but she always relented. She always had a small smile on her face when she told him about the plush armchairs, so comfortable it was almost as if they were enchanted to mould to your own body (‘*Were they mum?*’ ‘*Perhaps...*’), or the crackle of the grand fireplace that you could sit in front of and play chess with your friends (‘*Do the pieces really move by themselves?*’ ‘*Course! Nancy Hillcrest’s queen stabbed my rook right in the eye once...*’). But the most exciting, and most *magical* thing about it was that it was underwater! Severus would close his eyes and imagine the whole room being bathed in an eerily beautiful green, light dancing across every surface as it shone through the mysterious, rippling waters outside. (‘*I still don’t believe you about the Giant Squid.*’ ‘*Give your Professors cheek like that and they’ll feed you to it.*’)

When his Dad would inevitably shout at her to ‘*come downstairs and stop mollycoddling*’ him, Severus would cling on to that image as lay there alone. It sounded so homely, so *safe*. A special, secret place for him and Lily to hide away in. Back then it never even occurred to him there was a possibility they wouldn’t be together.

Everything his mother told him turned out to be true: the plump, leather chairs were the best he’d ever sat in, the giant fireplace really was decorated with the head of a hissing, stone snake and was large enough to keep the chill of the dungeons at bay, chess pieces really did mutilate one another, and there really was a Giant Squid that glided past the windows along with a host of other underwater creatures. (Although the Professors didn’t really feed students to it, not anymore at least.) But despite all of that, it wasn’t the common room Severus imagined all those years ago. That he would constantly under the judgemental, assessing gazes of his fellow Slytherins wasn’t something he had ever factored into his childhood daydreams. He hadn’t ever found the comfort he sought here, and it certainly never felt safe. Not until now.

As he lay splayed out across his favourite sofa, one leg casually draped over Regulus’ lap, Severus reflected that it was only now that he truly felt at home here. Now that he had him. It wasn’t about his status. Although being in the company of a pure blood from a well-respected family certainly didn’t go against him, being Lucius’ pet project had only ever got him so far within the Slytherin social circle, and Regulus was certainly no Malfoy. It was more that, when they were together, Severus just didn’t care about all that as much as he used to. As horribly cliché as it was, just having one person that accepted you for who you were, that was enough. Even if he really should still be rather angry with that person.

"I still can't believe you did that," Severus said, digging a toe hard into Regulus' thigh to emphasize his annoyance.

“Don’t pretend you didn’t love every moment of it.”

Severus chose not to dignify the ridiculous accusation with a response. “*And I still don’t understand how you knew he was there.*”

“That revolting aftershave is a bit of a give-away.”

“And what did you mean by ‘this time’?”

“I was referring to the first time of course,” Regulus said, rolling his eyes and slamming his book shut. “The night of the ball? Us on the balcony? Ring any bells?”

Severus went very still. It was several moments before he was able to speak and all he could manage was a croaked whisper when he did. “He was there?”

“Obviously! With my brother - joined at the hip as always. Those other two whose names I can never remember were there as well.” Regulus raised an eyebrow in the direction of Severus who was growing increasingly paler. “Honestly how could you not have noticed? Crouching behind the hydrangeas was hardly a cast-iron hiding spot...”

“So-” Severus swallowed against his dry throat, “-so you just did that to piss off your brother?”

“What? No!” Regulus said automatically, but then he stared straight ahead of himself and twisted his mouth to one side in contemplation. “...Well, maybe a bit? But I’d wanted to for ages, you know that. The fact that it would have made Siri hissing mad was just extra motivation.”

Severus didn’t know what to think. The ball had been months ago! He had always thought that if Potter ever discovered the truth about his sexuality, he and the rest of the marauders would be so overwhelmed by the wealth of new insults they now had for him (and excuses to beat him senseless) they wouldn’t know where to begin. And yet he had barely heard a peep out of any of them since that night. Severus had assumed Potter was too distracted by his budding romance with Lily to pay him the same level of attention. But now he had broken up with her?

“Wotcha dun now Snape?”

Regulus had been about to say something further when Mulciber’s voice made them both look up. He stood over the two of them with an insinuating smile on his pockmarked face. “Oh sorry... am I interruptin’ sommat?”

“What do you want Mulc?” Severus asked irritably.

“Not me,” he replied, still wearing that stupid smile. He pointed his thumb behind him towards the common room door. “Head Boy wants ta see ya.”

\*\*\*

James shifted under the scrutiny of passing Slytherins as he stood outside the bare stone wall that he knew led to their common room. He stood up a little taller and felt his hand move up to ruffle his hair. Being down in the dungeons always made him a bit uneasy. It was the only part of the castle that didn’t feel like Marauder territory and he hated every bit of it.

The wall moved and James got a glimpse of the room behind it. As he imagined, it was very green and far too snake-themed but there didn’t seem to be any shackles hanging from the walls or surfaces smattered with blood from some dark ritual. But he couldn’t be sure as his view was quickly cut off as Snape stepped out, flanked by his bodyguards, Avery and Mulciber.

At first, Snape just looked at him. Not from behind curtains of greasy hair like usual, but with his head up, chin jutted forward, the glint of challenge in his eye. He always was more confident with backup. But now that he didn’t have Lucius Malfoy to cower behind, he would-

“Shall we go somewhere more private?” Snape asked, stepping forward and away from the other boys.

James could feel the malicious smiles of the two boys behind him as he followed Snape down one of the dark corridors. The thought occurred to him that he was being led into a trap, but he didn’t care. The way he was feeling, he would have welcomed the chance to fire off some particularly

nasty curses towards any Slytherin stupid enough to jump out at him. But then Snape stopped, and James' stomach did a small lurch when he recognised where they had ended up – the Potions classroom. Running straight to his head of house? As much as he disliked Snape, James had to admit that had never been his style.

But when they entered, the classroom was empty.

“Brave enough to face me on your own then?” James said, unable to stop himself scanning the room just in case. “Gotta say I’m surprised.”

Snape wandered over to his desk (the one he used to share with Lily, but now occupied alone) and perched himself casually against it. “Well, I’ve never really had the chance to face you on your own before...it’s always been four on one hasn’t it?”

James felt a heat rise from the pit of his stomach. A retort caught in his throat and Snape was too quick for him to get it out.

“What do you want, Potter?” Snape spat out his name as if it were a vomit-flavour Bertie Botts bean, or worse.

It had always given James a thrill, to hear Snape say his name like that. To know he was able to inspire so much feeling in him. Back in their early school years, Snape had tried to ignore him as much as possible. *‘All he wants is a reaction from you. Just ignore him and he’ll go away,’* Lily would stage-whisper into his ear whenever they passed. But James didn’t go away. He would needle and prod at Snape in all the right places. When his jaw would clench with the strain of holding back angry tears, that was when James knew he was getting close. A little further and Snape would be screaming at him, swears and curses flying out of his mouth in equal measure. And James would relish the moment when all that control would come crashing down.

Part of James knew it was sick. He really did. But that part was buried deep under a mountain of justification, from both Sirius and himself, about dark wizardry, blood purism, and just generally existing.

In truth, until Snape asked, James didn't really know what he wanted or why he was there. A fit of anger had come over him during that fight with Sirius that had stayed with him all day, slowly coming to boil, and threatening to bubble over at the slightest irritation. He had looked forward to the evening's patrol duty, an unfortunate task that came with being Head Boy, for the first time since he'd been awarded the position. He had rampaged through the hallways, deducting points for the smallest of reasons from anyone he could, but especially from the Slytherins. It was chasing that catharsis that led him down to the dungeons in the first place. Then it was all about Snape. Everything always came back to Snape.

He needed to break him. One more time.

“I’ve come to tell you that I know.”

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Severus felt bile rise to the back of his throat as he fought down the urge to vomit. He told himself he had to trust Regulus. Although he seemed to be off in his own world half the time, he was probably the most observant person Severus had ever met. No quarrel among the students or illicit

trysts between Professors ever got passed him. Regulus loved puzzles and that's all most people were to him. Figuring out how to stroke someone's ego or exploit a weakness the right way was just as important as knowing which curse or hex to use.

*Must be a pureblood thing*, Severus thought. He only hoped Regulus had figured out the right answer to the puzzle that was James Potter. Otherwise what they were about to do was...

He tried repeating the words Regulus had said to him back in the common room in an effort to calm himself. *'Just remember – we have the upper hand.'*

\*\*\*

This wasn't right.

Although James thought he saw Snape grip the edge of the desk a little tighter, he didn't seem half as bothered by his words as he should have been. His face still radiated self-assurance and smugness; a look James hadn't seen on him since he slashed his cheek open. Well, it didn't last long then and it wouldn't last long now.

"You know what?"

"I know about you and Regulus! I know the two of you are-" He cut himself off, intimidated by the number of insulting words to choose from. Eventually, he settled on, "-bloody bent!"

"I mean, that much should be obvious Potter, even to someone as self-absorbed as yourself."

"See you don't even deny it!"

Snape's composure was really starting to throw him off now. He had risen from the desk with a strange smile on his face and was slowly moving towards James, who began unconsciously backing away.

"Such a shame. All that time you wasted worrying about me and Lily when really I would more likely be interested in you..."

"You're disgusting."

"Really? You didn't seem to find me so disgusting when you were watching us under that cloak of yours." Snape's eyes narrowed, almost playfully. "Just how many times have you done that anyway?"

"I just...needed proof!" James lied.

"And yet - now that you have it - instead of shouting the news from the top of Gryffindor tower, you're here with me in an empty classroom. Alone."

James realised he could back away no further as his back collided with a shelf heavily laden with ingredients. The jars tinkled threateningly as Snape took hold of him by the wrists and pinned him against it. He heard a smashing of glass, felt something skitter across the back of his hand, but those things were the least of his worries.

He could have easily pushed Snape off and got out of there (after punching him in the jaw for good

measure) but it was as though he was rooted to the spot by magic. The pull of those black eyes and the closeness of his body was too great. James inhales sharply at the feeling of Snape's hip pressed hard against his own

And then Snape's cool lips brushed against his.

"Have you been thinking about me, James?"

James' mind blanked. Well, it was more like a thousand thoughts came at once and collided against one another within his head. Like someone let off an entire set of fireworks at once. It was so bright and noisy he couldn't focus on just one.

"Yes." His voice came out so quiet and breathy it didn't sound like his. But it must have been. No-one else was there.

They were so close now, he felt, rather than saw Snape's mouth form into a wide smirk against him. James wasn't sure whether it was him or Snape that finally closed the distance between them. What started out slow and unsure quickly became something hard and desperate. James shrugged off Snape's hold of his wrists as he moved to pull him in closer, fingers digging under the bones of his shoulder blades. Hatred and desire merging into one. He forced his tongue into Snape's mouth, but it was him that couldn't contain a moan when he was met with equal enthusiasm.

Then a few things happened at once. Snape started to feel different. James thought he was imagining it at first. He suddenly found himself having to stoop a little to keep their mouths connected. He figured Snape was crouching or leaning back against something, the thought didn't occur to him that he might actually be getting *shorter*. But when James slid his hands up to the back of Snape's head his hair felt wrong. It was thick and wavy and far too short. Then there was a sudden slam as the classroom door was thrown open, causing James to hurriedly break away from Snape.

It took his brain a while to understand why the piercing blue eyes of Regulus Black were staring back at him.

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Despite his earlier effort to calm himself, it would have been evident to anyone walking by that Severus was a bundle of nerves. He paced back and forth outside the Potions classroom, alternating between wringing his hands and running them anxiously through his hair.

As much as Slughorn irritated him, Severus had to admit that sucking up to him all those times paid off. Being in the Slug Club afforded him unlimited access to his private stores, even the rarer and more... *questionable* ingredients. All with round-the-clock, unsupervised use of the Potions classroom thrown in. ( '*Just don't forget me when you hit the big time now!*' . ) They had made the Polyjuice for the challenge more than anything, but Regulus had suggested waiting before adding the hairs, who knew when it could come in handy?

Severus really hoped Regulus knew what he was doing. He had been given strict instructions to stay behind, out of sight, and under no circumstances was he to barge in on them. Easier said than done – he knew what Potter was capable of. Plus, it was his body! (Wasn't it?)

His head whipped around at the sound of shattering glass. Severus stared at the classroom door for

several moments, debating whether he should ignore Regulus and go in there to help. But then things went quiet. Thankfully though, Severus was not above listening at doors and pressed his ear to the wood. The sound was faint, but he thought he could make out some rustling of clothes and... a moan? Surely not! Merlin, he might really be sick this time.

Just as Severus was trying to decide whether he should be feeling jealous or violated a tap on the shoulder made him start.

“What are *you* doing here, Snivellus?”

Severus turned to see the rest of Potter’s motley crew standing behind him. Of course, he never went far without them after all. Black was the one who had spoken, his hands were already balled into fists and he was giving Severus his best glare. Lupin and Pettigrew were looking from a scraggly piece of parchment open in front of them to the classroom door and then back again, looking increasingly confused by what they saw.

“And why is James in there with my brother?” Black snarled again.

“Err...”

Black made a noise of disgust and shoved Severus out the way. He threw open the door so with such force it hit the hard, stone wall with a bang. As Lupin and Pettigrew rushed past him with drawn wands, Severus caught a glimpse of the scene within. Regulus was (mercifully) Regulus again, and he and Potter were sickeningly close. And with their rumpled clothes and disheveled hair, even an idiot like Pettigrew would be able to work out what they had been doing...

The door fell closed behind them and Severus was left outside to listen to the carnage unfold.

“FIRST SNIVELLUS SNOGS MY BROTHER NOW YOU?!”

“Wait! No! It’s not what it- I thought he was-”

“Let’s just calm down and hear what he has to say, Pads, I-”

Severus screwed up his eyes at the unmistakable sound of a fist hitting its target and Potter’s howl of pain. When he opened them again Regulus was standing in front of him, a triumphant grin on his face, while the shouts and scuffles could still be heard behind him.

“Let’s go,” he said, taking Severus by the hand and pulling him gleefully down the corridor.

“They’re going to be too preoccupied with each other to pay you any attention for a long time.”

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