

Taste It

by mrs_nott

Remus wants to forgive Sirius after the prank. He just does not know how. SLASH
S/R Remus' POV. Sequel to "These Hard Times He Deserves"

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Beta'd by Raisinous Fiendling

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"I love you."

Remus is staring at his new pair of socks, a Christmas gift from Peter. Remus is glad he received a new pair of socks because his old ones are getting really old and they no longer serve the purpose of warming his feet on cold winter days like this one. He wonders where Peter bought the socks and if they are cheap enough for Remus to buy a couple of other pairs. The socks are pretty nice and they look warm. Perhaps he should try them on and see if the socks are as good as they seem to be.

"I love you," the voice repeats, firm and loud.

Sirius, who is sitting on Remus' bed, is leaning towards Remus. His eyes are as big as Remus has ever seen them. They are searching for something in Remus' face; they are searching for Remus' lips, and when they find them, Sirius leans even closer. Remus can smell Sirius' aftershave when he is so close. He has missed the smell of Sirius' aftershave, green apples and cool breeze. Remus has always thought it gives everything a much more peaceful air. Sirius' face is not even two inches away from Remus', and the smell gets stronger. Remus wonders what *Sirius* tastes like. He wonders if he still tastes of strong coffee, mint and cigarettes. Sirius' face is now half an inch away and makes chills run down Remus' spine. They are very close to kissing but then Remus realizes it is *Sirius*.

With a sudden jerk Remus moves away. "I heard you the first time," he says back without looking at Sirius.

As Remus quietly returns to trying on his new socks, he hears the door creak open and then shut. He turns his gaze to the door and stands up. There are twenty-two steps from his bed to the door. He walks seventeen of them before returning to his bed. He needs a nap. He can't think of kissing Sirius because that is impossible. Utterly impossible.

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Christmas holidays are over. Remus is glad they are over. It means he has to see less of Sirius, or Sirius alone. It means he can concentrate on more important things like his NEWTs. The end of Christmas holidays means the end of Sirius staring at him for so long that his eyes seem to be drilling a hole in Remus' skull. And Remus personally likes to keep his skull intact. It also means the end of bumping not-so-accidentally into Sirius and having the boy leaning toward Remus, as if he were to kiss him. Remus

does not like the idea of kissing Sirius.

Remus is not afraid of *kissing* Sirius. No, that is hardly the problem. Remus is afraid of what he might find when he does so. Remus is not afraid of letting himself get lost in the taste of Sirius and forgiving him. Remus is afraid of what he might taste in Sirius. He is not afraid of what he might savor; he is afraid of the taste he might feel. He is afraid of tasting betrayal on his tongue. He is afraid of the bitter taste of disappointment. He is afraid of the taste of loss. Remus cannot bear tasting them again. Remus cannot bear losing Sirius again. After the prank Remus lost Sirius; he did not, however, lose the memories of Sirius. As crazy as it sounds, Remus can still look back at the few kisses he shared with Sirius and smile. If he ever kissed Sirius and found he tasted of all those abominations, even the memories would be spoiled. Remus cannot bear losing Sirius twice.

This is why Remus has made it his New Year's resolution to avoid Sirius. Now, to many that may not be very different from *ignoring* Sirius. But Sirius and Remus both know it is quite different. Remus has gotten over *trying* to hate Sirius. He cannot hate Sirius. He cannot bear to be in the same room with him, either. To many it seems Remus hates Sirius even more. Remus and Sirius know Remus is coming to terms with never being able to hate Sirius. What Sirius does not know, though, is that, by coming to terms with not being able to hate Sirius, Remus has also been coming to terms with the idea of not being able to forgive Sirius entirely. Yet another reason not to kiss Sirius.

Remus may not hate Sirius, but Remus is not one to forget. It scares Remus how vividly his memories can be played in his mind over and over, not missing one single detail. He remembers acutely the night Greyback bit him. He remembers the day the Marauders found out he was a werewolf. He remembers how Peter was so frightened he was ready to ask Dumbledore to move him to another house. James was already plotting for the next moon. And Sirius, Sirius was curious and excited. His eyes were gleaming, and his mouth was twisted nervously upwards as he asked all sorts of questions. Remus remembers all of it. He also remembers the look on Sirius' face when he himself told Remus about the prank. He remembers how James stopped talking to Sirius for a week and then gave in because Remus alone was more than enough punishment for Sirius. He remembers every look that washed over Sirius' face since that day. First, the horror; then the longing followed by the sorrow; finally, the pure sadness of a broken heart. Remus remembers all the faces, expressions, words and smells. Remus is good at remembering, not forgetting.

There is only one downside to the end of the Christmas holidays. It means James and Peter are back for the full moons. They are at the next full moon with him, and Sirius is nowhere to be seen. Afterwards, they bring Remus chocolates and stay to chat with him. Sirius does not go with them. He doesn't stop by, not even to say hello. He doesn't leave chocolates or a note wishing him to recover fast. Remus goes through the full moon without Sirius because James and Peter are there for him. Part of him is glad they are there. The other part misses the peaceful charm of Sirius' aftershave.

* * *

There has been an accident. A Quidditch accident, to be more precise. The Gryffindor captain has been hit on the head with a Bludger. James Potter is currently in the hospital wing. Lily is fretting and pacing up and down outside the hospital wing because Madam Pomfrey won't even let *her*, Lily Evans, in. Peter and Remus are as used to these accidents as brushing their teeth. They wait patiently outside for Madam Pomfrey to come outside and tell them that James Potter is going to live to tell his tale. Remus tries to calm Lily down, telling her it is not unusual for a player to get injured during a game. She keeps repeating to herself she cannot understand how it happened. One minute James was flying on his broom. The other he was nearly dead on the ground. It was a terrible experience for Lily.

"I mean, aren't there supposed to be rules to prevent this? What if a player died?" she asks no one and then looks horrified because in her mind James *could* die.

"These things happen all the time. If James and Sirius sat down to count the scars they've gotten during Quidditch games, they would never stop. Right, mate?" Peter says, waiting for Sirius to say something to calm Lily down.

"Right," Sirius mutters.

If Lily is upset it is because this is one of her first, if not *the* first, games of Quidditch and she is not used to the rudeness and blood that come along with a good game. There is nothing odd about Lily pacing up and down. Sirius' attitude is another story. He leans against the wall, makes no jokes about how James is so blind he can't even spot a ball the size of his head, and on top of it all, looks extremely absent-minded. Remus thinks there is something seriously wrong with Sirius' attitude but does not dare to ask. He doesn't want Sirius to take this as an opportunity for *anything*.

* * *

Remus goes to bed late the night of the accident. Madam Pomfrey has decided to leave James in the hospital wing for the night, but has also promised he will be as good as new in two days' time. Lily, after confirming her boyfriend was, in fact, alive and that the school nurse hadn't lied to her, was able to go to her own bed. Peter, Sirius and Remus are all back in the boys' dormitory. Peter is snoring so loudly that Remus starts to wonder how they ever get enough sleep. Sirius' bed curtains are closed but Remus knows he is awake. As Remus counts sheep helplessly, he tries to suppress the need to go to Sirius' bed and ask him what is going on. He manages spectacularly well until he hears bed curtains open. And then his own bed curtains are swinging open, and Sirius' face is greeting him.

"Remus, can I talk to you?" Sirius' voice is steady and serious, but something in his demeanor tells Remus the boy is not so far from falling apart.

"What is it?" Remus tries not to sound very inviting, but he knows it is useless. He is much too worried to actually sound nonchalant. It is a good thing it is dark because he surely looks concerned as well.

As Sirius swings Remus' bed curtains shut, he whispers a silencing charm, and Remus really hopes it is because Sirius thinks Peter has a very light dream and not because they are going to fight or... or nothing, really. Sirius sits on the edge of Remus' bed, looking down at the sheets, like a child who is being scolded.

"Remus... do you... err... do you think I'm only good at causing disaster?" Sirius blurts and Remus gasps.

"Yes, *I think so*," Remus' mind is screaming at him to say. "No. You are just a little more on the side of troublemaking," he says instead.

"Now you are just lying." Sirius lifts his head and is looking straight at Remus, asking for an honest answer.

Remus shrugs, trying his best to avoid eye contact with Sirius. "Well, I think you can be pretty silly at times," he says. "But you are not nearly as useless as you think you are, Sirius."

"Pretty silly? Fuck, Remus, I almost got James killed today!" Sirius exclaims.

So, *that* is what was on Sirius' mind earlier. Remus has to try really hard not to laugh because Sirius, of all people, would know accidents *happen*, especially in Quidditch against Slytherin.

"*That* was not your fault."

"I *am* the bloody Beater! I am supposed to keep the Bludgers away from my team. I can't even get *that* right!" Sirius' voice is rising with each breath, and Remus sees the need for a silencing charm.

Remus examines Sirius' face. He has never seen Sirius look so frustrated at something, so mad at himself. Was Sirius like this the night of the prank when he told James what he had done? Or had he just been sulking? Is this frustration part of his problem with Remus? Is Sirius there to talk to Remus about *that* too? Remus does not want to discuss that. Perhaps it would be wise to throw Sirius out of his bed before it gets out of Remus' hands.

"Sirius, it was *not* your fault. End of the story. There is no need to sulk over it, and you heard Madam Pomfrey. He will *bé*ne, and you better hold yourself in one piece for

when he comes back. James will be whining endlessly, and Lily will be fretting over him, and we don't need you to be moping around over some nonsense," Remus says and catches his breath.

"You really don't want to talk to me, do you?" Sirius asks, after a pause, his voice now barely audible. "I mean, why would you want to listen ~~to~~ my complaints when you can't even bear the sight of me?"

"Don't be so dramatic, Sirius," Remus says half-heartedly, fearing the new direction the conversation is taking.

"I am not being dramatic. You won't even look at me and you avoid me all the time. If you were ignoring me because you were still mad, then that would be something. But, Remus, you are just avoiding me," Sirius accuses Remus.

"Yes, Sirius, and I believe I have a reason for it, wouldn't you agree?" Sarcasm drips all over Remus voice as he stares fiercely at Sirius.

"Look, you no longer hate me. Still, you are avoiding me, and I don't understand why," Sirius says, his voice very thin.

"It's none of your business." Remus knows trying to be nonchalant won't help his case. Sirius is known for his persistence.

"None of my business, Remus? *You* are avoiding *me*. That alone makes it *my* business as well!" Sirius says with such fierce passion in his voice, it makes it almost impossible for Remus to look straight at him.

"Don't yell at me, Sirius. I can hear perfectly well if you use your normal tone," Remus answers.

"Look at me, Remus. Tell me why you are avoiding me. Just say it. Please, Remus. I want us... I... Merlin, just tell me what is wrong!"

"I can't trust you with that," Remus says cuttingly.

"So, you just can't trust me? Remus, I've done everything I could think of for you to forgive me. I don't know what else to do!" Sirius is back to looking like a scolded child, his voice on the verge of cracking.

"The thing is, Sirius, I don't know if I can ever forgive you. I... I can't just forget what happened," Remus confesses.

"And can't we just try? You never know until you actually try it. If you don't *think* you can forgive, then how about just trying to put it behind us? Please, Remus..." Sirius' voice is starting to sound weird, and Remus hears how he tries not to sob, but there is already a lonely tear sliding down Sirius cheek. "I miss you, Remus," Sirius finally says.

"I want to keep things like this, Sirius. Please, just go."

Remus' own throat is closing and his chest feels heavy. He hates Sirius for doing this to him. It was all fine until he decided he wanted ~~to~~ talk. Remus hates talking, especially to Sirius. He has no right to make Remus feel guilty. It is all Sirius' fault. That he can't trust Sirius despite his most fierce desire to do so is Sirius' fault, not Remus'.

"What are you afraid of? Of me? Are you afraid I'll do it again? Come on, Remus, I think I have grown enough to never do anything like that again!" Sirius exclaims and grabs Remus by the shoulders.

"Let go of me, Sirius. And you can't blame me for thinking like that. You did it once. There is nothing telling me you won't do it again." Remus can feel his face getting hotter as he speaks.

"Oh, Remus, will you take another look? *I have changed!* I have changed so much, and you can't even bring yourself to take a look. How long do you intend to keep this up? Because I can't take it anymore, Remus. It pisses me off that you are being this immature," Sirius bursts out, his temper rising quickly.

"Immature? How dare *you* call *me* immature when this is all your fault? How dare you, Sirius? If it weren't for your own stupidity and superiority, we wouldn't be standing here, would we? How dare you make this my fault?" Remus makes a pause and draws a breath in. "You know, you think you are so different from those pure-blood children, but you are just like them!" Remus yells at the top of his lungs. His breathing stops as his hands cover his mouth. Remus cannot believe what he just said.

Silence is invading room, or rather the space between Sirius and Remus. It is a space where time does not move, and only Remus and Sirius exist in it. Remus wants to bring them back to reality. He wants to say he is sorry for saying something completely absurd, but there is no air around him, and his throat is far too dry to produce any sound.

"I guess that settles it, then. Goodnight, Remus. And sorry for taking up so much of your time," Sirius says, taking them both out and back into reality. Sirius' voice is not cracking; Sirius' voice is not sad or mad; Sirius' voice is pure pain, more hurt than Remus has ever heard in him.

Remus wants to grab Sirius by the arm and tell him he does not mean any of it. Tell him he doesn't think he is the same as his family. But he can't reach Sirius and lets him walk away once more. Remus lies still in his bed and goes back to counting sheep. He finds short periods of slumber only to wake up over and over. To say Remus cannot sleep would be an understatement. Remus wonders if he will ever be able to sleep after tonight. What if he becomes an insomniac? What if memories of tonight come to haunt him every night for the rest of his life? What if... No, no more 'what if's. There is no point in wondering 'what if' when he can solve everything right now. He just has to go and apologize.

Remus gets up from his bed without making the slightest noise and walks up to Sirius' bed. Sirius seems to be fast asleep, but as Remus opens the bed curtains, he finds Sirius sitting on the bed, staring at the ceiling. Entering, Remus closes the curtains behind him, and now it is his turn to whisper a silencing charm.

"I'm sorry, Sirius. I didn't mean what I said," Remus apologizes and waits for Sirius to answer.

"It sounded to me like you *did* mean it," Sirius says in a little voice Remus has never heard come from him.

It is weird, Remus thinks, to see Sirius so fragile and hurt over something Remus said. Perhaps it is because Remus really hit a button this time. Perhaps it is because Sirius *knows* he *is* a Black, and no matter what he does, he will never stop being one. Perhaps it is because Sirius is able to shove off all insults and hurtful words about his family that people may throw at him, or talk back in an equally insulting way; but to any *Marauder's* cutting insults Sirius can only do so much as to look down and walk away. It is not because he cannot say anything back, but rather because the Marauders, and especially Remus, are the only people who truly know him, the only people he truly trusts. Sirius, Remus muses, trusts them not to hurt him the way his family has, trusts them with his deepest and more obscure secrets. Sirius trusts the Marauders not to use these against him. But in anger people forget what they have been entrusted. In anger, people do not rationalize. There is so little time to think when one is enraged that things that should never be said are said before one realizes it, and then it is too late. And after, there is only one thing left to do: apologize, and hope for the apologies to be accepted, though chances are they won't be accepted until some time later, when the body has rid itself from the poison of words.

"Well, I just blurted out the first thing that came to my mind to hurt you. I felt insulted and there you have it. I'm sorry," Remus finally says, his voice sounding a little foreign to his ears.

"Okay," Sirius says.

Sirius has always surprised Remus like nobody else does. Sometimes he does it with his actions. Sometimes with his eyes, or his voice. Sometimes, like now, with his

words. It is something that scares and amazes Remus simultaneously. It scares him because he is never certain with Sirius; he is never sure where he stands, or what he is to say, or what questions are forbidden to him. Remus feels constantly insecure around Sirius, yet it is this insecurity that thrills Remus like nothing else does. It is the thrill of the unknown. It is the thrill that runs down his spine whenever he thinks he might be staring at Sirius for too long. It is the anxiety he gets whenever Sirius licks his lips in the way only Sirius can. It is the increased heartbeat he has when he thinks of taking a bite of the forbidden fruit and liking it too much for his own good. And the thrill is good, but the fear of losing it is much greater. It is a fear that has found its way under Remus' skin, and all he can do is to force the images of Sirius out of his head and resign himself to a life without Sirius.

Then, as if he has suddenly snapped back into reality, Remus realizes that Sirius *didn't* just accept the apology. He knows this because there is a hand slowly trying to reach his. Long fingers stretch as far as they can and crawl closer to his hand, making Remus' heart leap. The hand that reaches for him is shaking, and Remus wonders if Sirius will dare to touch him, or if he will suddenly drive his hand away. Sirius' hand draws closer and closer by the second. Sirius' hand is so close to his, Remus can *almost* touch it. Remus wants to touch the tempting hand. He wants to feel its calloused fingers and hold it tight, never let go of it. One more move and their hands will be touching, but Sirius hesitates. His fingers stop half-way, suspended in the air. It is a second of hesitation. But it is there and Remus wonders again if this is worth the risk. He wonders if Sirius' hesitation will eventually be their doom. It is one second, just one, but it is enough for Remus to remove his own hand entirely; it is enough time for Remus to be afraid again.

"Okay, then," Remus says quickly. "And about the, uh, other stuff, can we please just pretend those two conversations never happened and go back to normal?" he asks, nearly crossing his fingers even though he already knows Sirius won't let *his* fear get under *his* skin.

It makes Remus wonder, yet another time, *why* was he sorted in Gryffindor when he is clearly driven by his fears and is an utter coward from head to toe. Unlike Sirius, who is willing to come face to face with the things he hates the most and to confront every obstacle he finds if that will get him to what he wants. Remus is very different from Sirius. And maybe it is good thing to be so different. But this time, it isn't, because if only Remus weren't so afraid, he could, perhaps, find it in himself to forgive Sirius. He could look into Sirius' eyes. He could cup Sirius face with his hands and tell him how his heart beats so fast whenever the two of them are alone. Remus wants to do all these things, yet the fear that runs in his blood is far too thick for him to move, for him to do anything at all.

"How we are right now is far from normal, Remus," Sirius says quietly, and his hand starts shaking again. Remus looks down at the hand with worried eyes. Is Sirius going to touch him? Is he going to back out of it again? The trembling hand draws closer. A second goes by, but this time it is different. Sirius is no longer hesitating and thus leaves Remus no place to run to. In one quick movement, he gets a hold of Remus' wrist, and the action is done, and the touch of Sirius' trembling hand is burning Remus' skin. And somehow, in the midst of Remus' confusion, Sirius manages to pull Remus so close to him that their noses are almost touching. Sirius is looking deep into Remus' eyes, his gaze softening as he stares, and it is as if Sirius just knows Remus wants to be kissed so badly it hurts. "What are you afraid of, Remus? It's just me, I promise," he whispers.

Sirius tilts Remus' face with his other hand, holding him steadily. Sirius is looking at him, and Remus realizes Sirius *does* know how badly Remus wants to be kissed. But knowing this makes it even more difficult to move, because Remus does not want to make a mistake. Now, his own hands are shaking, and without noticing it he finds his limbs supporting themselves on Sirius. Remus can hear the fast drumming of their hearts, and it makes him feel dizzy, suffocated. Sirius is looking at Remus, and Remus is looking back as Sirius holds him steady in his place, not letting him go. Remus watches as Sirius closes his eyes and the distance between them. He wants to get out, he wants to scream. He curses the silencing charms and the fact that Sirius is much stronger than he is. He wants to be sick, he wants anything and everything but to be at the receiving end of Sirius' kiss. Remus wants the time to stop or someone to come into the room.

He feels Sirius kissing him and realizes he is petrified. He can't move. He can't even close his eyes. He is not moving, yet Sirius is, and he is letting go of his wrist to cup Remus' face and kiss him deeper. Remus can feel Sirius' lips moving slowly, but moving and persistent and hot and Remus can smell the faint scent of Sirius' aftershave. The sweet smell of green apples and cool breeze works on him like a charm that blazes the road before him, drawing him out of his fears, even if just for a second. It is a life-changing second and Remus thinks his mind has never been as clear, without a single cloud of doubt that would make him waver. Then he kisses Sirius back. Remus is giving into the kiss and opening his mouth, allowing Sirius' tongue to slide in, just as he does the same with his own tongue. Sirius is exploring Remus' mouth and Remus is tasting Sirius.

Sirius tastes of strong coffee and mint. Sirius tastes of hope. Sirius tastes of Sirius.

A/N: Pretty please, read and review! I really, really, like it when you review. So, I've been working on this for a long time, and I am oh so happy about how it turned out. I think this is the best piece of fanfiction I have ever written. Tell me what you think.