

Which Alters When it Alteration Finds

by Saffron Snape

It is April of 1980. Lily and Snape have been out of school for three years and out of touch for five. Their falling out haunts Lily, though she does her utmost to live in happiness, whereas Severus lives a life of suffering. His only hope of redemption lies in rekindling the severed ties of their friendship.

Chocolate Ice Cream

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Notes: This was originally written for the LiveJournal Snape/Lily exchange, for blindsabre. It should be duly noted that any recognizable characters or settings are not mine. Kudos for those who know where the title comes from. Thanks to esmestrella for the help.

What must it be like?

How does he live with himself, believing that there is no one there to care for him?

You are only as good as your talent and intellect. That is what he used to tell me, when we were growing ever more distant.

It is not for anyone else that you learn and grow.

Does he honestly believe that now?

The only person who cares about you is yourself.

It had not always been this way. There was a time, years ago now, when he had believed that there was someone he could come to and could cherish, could talk of nothing and everything with.

But I am long dead and gone.

And now, he is lost.

Lily couldn't help but sigh in dejection. Walking about the house did little to alleviate her gloomy resentment. There was only so much she could clean before it became

anal-retentive. And it wasn't as though she had too many possessions. Lily was not a very materialistic woman. It had certainly taken a while to get James to see eye-to-eye on that score, considering his distinctly wealthy, pureblood upbringing. Although, she supposed, her simplistic taste would most likely change soon, what with the baby and all. She figured the house would soon be full of rattles, pacifiers, stuffed bears, and all other sorts of baby essentials.

Lily frowned and ran a hand over her swollen belly. Stupid common sense; it was always getting in the way when deciding arguments. Her Gryffindor stubbornness remained prevalent throughout the day, even after she had debated with James whether she could go on duty for the Order. It was her week, after all! She continued to withhold logical judgment on the matter. So what if she was nearing her third trimester? She simply did not want to be seen as worthless in the eyes of the Order.

"There's no telling what sort of danger there is at this point in the war, sweetheart," James had protested. "I don't want you to get hurt."

"I can take care of myself," Lily had retorted. "I'm just as good, if not better, at Defense than you are."

"Lily, please think about the baby. You can't be overexerting yourself by flouncing without a second thought into whatever you think might or might not be dangerous...not this late in the pregnancy."

Her face had darkened significantly at that. "Are you saying that just because I've got a baby to make, I'm not competent to fend for myself?"

His hesitation set her off, and she'd gone on quite a tirade about how stupid men were, her superior skills with a wand, how the baby was his idea too, that no, she was not being unreasonable, how stupid that cowl on the back of his head made him look, and the fact that she was perfectly calm and controlled in the face of dire situations. Once she'd finished, she had promptly burst into tears.

It was a good thing that James gave good hugs.

"I know you're a brilliant witch, love. I've known that from our first day at Hogwarts. It's just that your magic has been... sporadic as of late. It has nothing to do with the competency of your skills, it's just..."

"...because of my hormones," she finished, "I know." Lily sniffled and wiped her eyes, breaking the hug. "Fine," she acquiesced grudgingly, "I won't go. But only because of the baby! I don't care about Voldemort's goons...I could take whatever they'd throw at me...but who knows who else I'd take down with me, right?" She chuckled and hiccupped.

"Of course, darling. Thank you for seeing reason." He flashed her a cheeky smile; she glared. "I'll see you later tonight."

James kissed her lightly and tucked a lock of stray fire behind her ear, his boyish grin stretched wide. "Make dinner, will you? Molly's cooking is great and all, but I'm in the mood for your delectable dishes." He winked and kissed her again.

Lily grimaced against his lips. "If you mean macaroni and overcooked broccoli, then great."

James's laughter was buoyant, and she couldn't hold back the accompanying smile that crept onto her freckled face. He laughed as though he hadn't a care in the world. There might not have been such thing as a power-bent Dark Lord, or Death Eaters, or an incompetent Ministry; no taxes, no bills to pay, no late nights at work. It was moments like these when her heart swelled and she could smile without worry. The lines of distress that seemed to invariably enslave their faces disappeared. It was in these moments that she felt wholly comforted and loved. James praised her with his hazel eyes, looked at her as if there was truly no one else in the world.

What dulled the feeling was the reality that he was not the first to make her feel this way.

Lily lightly pushed James toward the door, admonishing him playfully that he'd be late and what would Albus say if his best Auror wasn't there to show off?

"You promise you'll make macaroni?" he asked, leaning an arm against the doorframe outside.

"Well..."

He gave his best puppy-dog look, even stooping so low as to pout his lower lip.

Lily quirked an eyebrow. "Work on it," she drawled. "Sirius is way better than you."

James rolled his eyes. "Aw, gee, Lil, I wonder why?"

She swatted his arm. "Go, already!"

James smirked and kissed her, hesitated for a moment, then stooped down and kissed her protruding belly through her over-sized shirt. "Bye, little man. Guard the house while I'm out."

Lily gave James a withering look. "It could be a girl, you know."

He smiled that boyish grin again. "It's a boy, I know it." He tapped his head with his forefinger because that, of course, proved it.

Lily shook her head and shoed him away. James mouthed, "I love you." Lily beamed.

He turned on the spot, and when Lily closed the door with a sigh, she could still hear the ringing crack from her husband's Apparation.

And now, hours later, there she stood in the living room, with insistent kicks from her belly as her only company. "Feed me!" they seemed to whine. She supposed it wasn't surprising that her own stomach chose that moment to growl indignantly.

Lily frowned. She knew it wouldn't be safe to go out and eat, and she really didn't want to cook anything now. It was shameful enough that she had to that evening. Lily shook her head. She just couldn't understand how James thought her horrific cooking to be at all comparable to Molly Weasley's. But that was James Potter for you, she mused.

She wasn't in the mood for leftovers or any sort of savory anything. So, after half-heartedly checking the pantry for something that might appease both her and the baby and affirming that indeed there was nothing, she dashed to the icebox and searched fervently for the perfect mood lifter.

Aha! A devilish grin unfurled on her lips. Feeling far too pleased with herself, she took out a vat of chocolate ice cream.

A quick Summoning Charm later found her equipped with a large soup spoon, her wand safely stowed in the pocket of her bathrobe. As swiftly as she was able...which, admittedly, did not quite qualify as "swift"...she was situating herself in her chair, squirming to attain the perfect position. She was soon scooping a very substantial amount of the rich dessert onto her awaiting spoon.

Lily stared at the ice cream, reveling in the anticipation of tasting. There had to be some sort of miracle properties in chocolate, and she was positive that every woman on the planet would agree with her. Slowly, deliberately, she took the bite.

Oh, but this was euphoria.

The way the chocolate utterly melted on her palate, how the rich, sophisticated cream seemed to glide through her mouth, eliciting such contentment, such pleasure. Not to mention the brisk smell of it, which delighted her senses as a fickle wind through an autumn tree. The cool of the ice cream sent thrilling chills through her achy body like an

errant spill of milk.

Lily couldn't help but smile drunkenly. She scooped and took another bite. There were new flavors now, of winter nights and blood-red sunsets. She tasted happiness, tantalizing roses, and lazy Sunday mornings.

She took another bite. She tasted his voice. That silky velvet of animated discussion, and that rich distinguishable flavor, as when he whispered in her ear. The warmth of the melting chocolate tantalized her and reminded her of the hours on end that they had simply talked. Another bite. She tasted him again. Tasted his glittering eyes as he laughed, his stern-set mouth and frowning brow.

She was losing herself.

She tasted his full cheeks that had so hollowed over the years, and his overbearing nose. She took another bite, as if it were her last on the earth, and she tasted his laugh, his wit, and his warmth when he held her close.

The spoon again at her lips, Lily froze. There was suddenly something large and burning pressing against her throat. She swallowed with difficulty, but it did not quell the acid flame that had ignited deep within her.

She stared at the spoon, but it seemed only to mock her. She stared and stared, trying to banish the buried feelings that were threatening to resurface, those that she had sworn she would not relive.

She stared until she could do so no longer, until her guilt threatened to envelop her. She hastily Vanished the container of unbidden memories and went to the sink to rinse out her mouth. Her face burned with shame even as the icy water streamed through her parted lips and down her chin.

Wash away, she willed. Please, go away.

She hastily wiped her mouth and turned off the tap. Her cheeks were pink from the cold and it should have felt refreshing, but still the taste of him lingered. It was driving her into hysterics. Desperately, she searched for something, anything that might help.

When nothing lent itself to her as a possibility and Lily had begun to feel all the more frantic, she pulled out her wand and acted on instinct. *Scourgify!* she cried, her voice wavering and scared. The sickening tang of soap invaded her mouth like a plague.

The taste seemed to act as a catalyst, and the barriers she'd been trying desperately to hold in place crumbled utterly and tears began to flow hot and fast down her cheeks.

Lily coughed and spluttered, fumbling to turn on the tap once more. Scrabbling as though blind, she washed out her mouth and the suds choking her. How could she have been so stupid?

When she was confident that she could breathe normally again, she leaned against the sink and shuddered heavily. Lily felt even her ears flush in humiliation, and ~~she~~ didn't have a crowd of onlookers jeering at her.

Her eyes widened and her hand went to her mouth. The scene from five years ago replayed as though sped up, until she recalled that terrible utterance: "Mudblood."

The word seemed to echo around her, an ethereal slur.

Lily stared unseeing at the counter top, the sink still on and flowing from the faucet.

Merlin.

How would her life have been different if not for that day? Her hand drifted to her swollen belly, wondering...

Damn it! What was she, sixteen again? She couldn't afford to linger on the happenings of years ago. How could she possibly feel remorse for him? He had changed. When he called her that unforgivable word, he had already been swept too much into the stupid ideology of the Dark Lord. She had done the right thing by pushing him out of her life, hadn't she?

And yet... Could she have found a way to salvage their friendship? What if his sniveling apologies had not been an act as she had so proclaimed and had indeed been his desperate plea for forgiveness?

No, she could not have condoned his actions. Perhaps he had been aggravated and in the moment, but that height of bigotry did not simply slip out. She had thought she knew him, but that word had opened her eyes to realize that he was no longer the little boy she had befriended at the park. So why had pushing him away been so painful?

Lily ran an aggravated hand through her hair and let out a frustrated sigh, anxious to rid herself of these corrupting thoughts. What would James say if he knew she was contemplating the likes of Severus Snape?

And the question she desperately did not want to consider crept cruelly up: What would Severus say?

She bit her lip hard to keep calm. Yet, even so, she could feel a new wave of tears fast approaching. How could she be so selfish? She had others to worry about now, and that was not to mention that she'd soon be a mother. James and she would raise a healthy, happy baby, one who would grow up to be damn good at everything.

God damn everything.

And Lily wept.

Through her tears, she fumbled to turn off the sink and thereafter stumbled to the couch.

And she wept.

And when she could weep no more, she slipped into welcome, unconscious bliss.