

Liquorice Allsorts, or, An Acquired Taste

by diabolica

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Liquorice Allsorts

Chapter 1 of 1

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Lily sifted through her side of the chest of drawers looking for the green top, which was nowhere to be found. Then, because her sister was off who-knows-where with her school friends and wouldn't know, she went through Tuney's side but came up empty-handed. The blue, even though it was rather plain, would have to do.

Pulling the top over her head, she felt twitchy, bubbling over with something she couldn't identify or explain.

'What is it with you and the Slytherin?'

She thought about nicking some of Mum's mascara but, unlike Petunia, Mum always knew when someone had been through her things. Lily found her strawberry lippy under Petunia's bed—typical—put it on and tried to pout. She only succeeded in making herself look ridiculous. Wiping the lippy off with the back of her hand, she decided it was a good thing she couldn't find the green top. She didn't want to look like she was trying. She wasn't trying.

'Severus? We're friends.'

'Where are you going?' Dad called from his chair as she dashed through the sitting room on her way to the door.

'Out,' she sang back, knowing he didn't really care. She pictured his smile as she considered whether she'd need a jacket. It might rain. She knew what Dad would say next.

'Well, be back for tea. And try not to break every heart in the neighbourhood, young lady.'

Lily rolled her eyes, which she would have done even if he could see her. 'Daaaa-ad!'

Mary laughed. 'Does he know that?'

And she was out the door. She ought to be working through the list of summer reading she had, and at least she'd made a start of it. But it was Saturday, and she wanted to know what was going on in the world, and Sev was the only person she knew who got the Daily Prophet at home. (Her parents kept saying they would buy a subscription, but they'd not yet got round to it.)

That was the only reason she was going to see him.

'What do you mean?'

She couldn't have said why she stopped off at Morrison's, or why her fingers skipped over the red-and-white-wrapped Spangles (her favourite) and picked up the Liquorice Allsorts (Sev's favourite) instead. They could share, and she didn't really mind liquorice after all. She was—what was the word?—developing a taste for it.

Lily smiled at Mr Morrison as she placed her coins on the counter, but she didn't stay to chat.

'Haven't you noticed?'

Sev's mum answered when she knocked, but before she could put on her most polite addressing-a-grown-up voice to ask if Severus was in please, Eileen Snape turned away.

'Severus! It's that girl.'

Lily was left standing on the doorstep, but only for a moment before Sev was out the door like he'd been shot from a cannon and they were down the street, laughing, not speaking, running with his hand warm around her wrist.

'Noticed what?'

'Hey,' he said after they caught their breath and began to walk.

'Hey, yourself.'

They walked down towards the river, a habit, an agreement she didn't remember making and wouldn't dream of changing. The water moved in lazy circles, sluggish, almost black. It didn't smell as foul as usual. Severus picked up a stone that lay on the ground and skipped it all the way to the opposite bank. Lily looked around.

'Sev, you know we aren't to use magic outside of school!'

'Who said I used magic?' By the set of his mouth, Lily could tell he was trying to suppress a grin. *'You impressed?'*

'You've honestly never noticed he's madly in love with you?'

Lily shrugged, trying to look disinterested yet cheeky, like Sharon who lived next door but one and was never nervous around boys. *'I've seen better,'* she said.

'Oh? Where, pray tell?' Sev was in a good mood, because he laughed, and they went to sit further down the bank in the shadow of the great chimney still belching the odd plume of smoke. The mill was quiet, running at half capacity most days. Lily produced the bag of liquorice like it was no big thing, and Sev pretended to agree, though he took a largish handful. Lily took a few for herself, making sure to leave him the aniseed ones.

'Right, Mary. That's just ridiculous.'

'So what's in the Prophet today?'

Sev's chest puffed out with his own importance. Voice grave, he said, *'House fire in Nottingham.'* He paused. *'It wasn't an accident. I saved the clipping for my collection.'*

'How do they know it wasn't an accident?'

'Any wizard worth his salt can extinguish a fire. Unless it's Dark. They couldn't extinguish this one.' Sev began listing the types of magical fire, ticking them off on his fingers and logically eliminating causes. Lily tried to listen and didn't tease him about how he should have been sorted into Ravenclaw with all the random facts in his head from hours of reading. But although this was why she'd come to see him, Lily couldn't concentrate. She was watching the play of sun and shadows over Sev's face. He looked different to his usual self. Better.

'I can't believe you've never noticed it.'

Sev was still talking, but Lily couldn't hear a word. He reached for more liquorice, his hand rummaging in the bag against her upturned palm, an offering. She didn't look down. She kept her eyes on his face, and some corner of her mind knew that any second he would start taking the mickey out of her for staring. But she couldn't stop. She was wondering why she had never noticed.

'It's not like that. We're not like that.'

Sev was looking back at her. He had stopped talking and only watched her, expectant. Later, she thought it couldn't have been more than a minute before his mouth turned up, more at one corner than the other. A bashful, crooked incisor emerged between his lips. When he smiled that way, it made her want to elbow him in the ribs or put her hand against his shoulder and push. That smile was hers alone, she realised. He never smiled at anyone else like that, not at school and definitely not in the neighbourhood. It was hers.

Before she could think any further, Lily leaned forward and kissed her best friend.

Mary smirked, like she knew something Lily didn't. 'Whatever you say.'

This story was written for AmyLouise, whom I treasure as a beta and as a friend and who gave me the following prompt *I have long thought that although Lily Evans chose James Potter in the end, Severus got there first. To me, that's the best explanation of why she would have found it so hard to forgive him for his 'Mudblood' insult. The less she cared, the more likely she would have been to forgive. So, any ideas of how it might have happened?*

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