

It's the Thought That Counts

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Remus and Severus don't belong to me, but I like to play with them and make them play together. If only I could make money at it...

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Remus pinched the bridge of nose as he let the door slam shut behind him. *Fuck them*, he thought bitterly. He had tried to reason with them, but the Ministry never listened. Ever since Harry had defeated Voldemort five years ago, the wizarding world was becoming increasingly paranoid about making sure they never went through another war. Unfortunately, that paranoia also fed other fears... such as the fear of werewolves. They were preparing to enact legislation that would, in effect, take away what little rights werewolves had left. They would be scarcely in a better position in society than owls or hippogriffs. He, along with Harry, Hermione, and Ron, had tried to fight this legislation, but after the meeting they'd just had with Scrimgeour, it looked like a losing battle.

With a *pop*, he Apparated outside the front door of the small house in London he shared with Severus, whom he had been with for the last three years. *Today of all days*, he thought bitterly. He froze as he walked through the front door when he heard a loud bang come from the kitchen. *Severus shouldn't be home yet. He should still be at work. Not to mention he's never entered the kitchen the two years we've lived together.*

He swiftly withdrew his wand and walked quickly, but cautiously, into the kitchen. He threw the door open, ready to hex the intruder. The sight that greeted him silenced the curses he had been about to call out.

Severus was standing in the middle of the kitchen with a white apron over his black robes, covered from head to toe in a brown, sticky substance of some sort. The two men stared at each other for a moment until Remus broke the silence. "Severus? What happened here?"

Severus shifted his feet uncomfortably and cleared his throat. Remus almost smiled at the way he tried to maintain his dignity in spite of the situation. "Well," he finally began, "you've complained that I never do anything for you, so I thought I would surprise you for your birthday. Obviously, it didn't go as planned."

Remus smiled affectionately at his lover. Severus had never tried to do something for him before. "You were trying to surprise me? Were you making me something?" Severus nodded stiffly. "Really? What did you make?"

Through gritted teeth, Severus responded, "I *attempted* to bake a cake. Mrs Weasley gave me the recipe she uses for her family's birthday cakes, and she assured me it was a simple enough recipe. However..." He paused to sniff, putting on an indignant expression. "Well, it's really your fault. This is a terrible oven. I couldn't get the blasted thing to light properly. Honestly, Lupin, we need some better amenities in this hovel you call a home."

Remus crossed his arms defensively and gazed levelly at Severus. "First of all, the oven works fine. I have never had a problem getting it to work. Second, you know why we don't have nicer appliances and things. I have to spend the small amount I get on food and other basics, and you don't make much yourself. Third, there is nothing wrong with this home. It is *not* a hovel. Fourth, a man covered in *cake mix* is hardly in a position to criticise anyone on anything. Lastly, I would appreciate being spared your sarcastic wit when I've just found out that the Ministry is adopting that horrid piece of shite they call legislation. It's my birthday, and I've just had my kitchen nearly destroyed." Remus put more bitterness into those words than he had intended, but he didn't back down or remove his gaze from Severus'.

"I know all that, Lupin," Severus spat defensively. "That's why I thought you'd appreciate my doing something nice for your birthday."

The scowl dropped from Remus' face at these words. It wasn't an apology, but it was as close to one as Severus had ever come before. ~~He~~ *he did go to quite a bit of trouble by the looks of things*, he thought. Smiling, Remus stepped towards Severus and caught a drop of the chocolate cake mix about to drip from Severus' chin. He slowly put his finger in his mouth and licked it clean, their eyes staying locked all the while.

"Mmmm," he moaned. "Delicious." Remus smirked when Severus swallowed hard and clenched his jaw in response. It didn't take much to get Severus going, but he always managed to appear unaffected by all outward appearances. Remus considered it a great feat that he was one of the few if not the only one who could detect the subtle change in his features that signified a reaction. Such as the way his eyes gleamed for a moment and then darkened to an intense ebony when he was aroused.

"Well, there's really no sense in letting some perfectly good cake go to waste, Severus, and since you *did* go to the trouble of making this, I should eat it." Remus stepped closer to Severus so that their chests were brushing. The feel of the rough fabric of Severus' robes rubbing the softer fabric of his own sent a shiver down Remus' back and all the way to his toes. He had intended on teasing Severus for a while, but after the exhausting day he'd had, he decided he was in need of a bit of instant gratification.

"Follow me upstairs. Now." Severus narrowed his eyes and clenched his jaw. Remus knew Severus *hated* it when he was bossed around. For a moment Remus thought he might protest, but the glint in Remus' eyes seemed to convince him to obey... for now. So, instead, he merely smirked in that way Remus always found incredibly sexy. Remus turned on his heel and began heading towards the door that led to their bedroom. He was confident Severus would follow.

He wasn't disappointed.

Remus turned to find he was staring at him, holding his body stiffly and not moving. When Remus said, "Undress," his eyebrow arched, and a look of annoyance passed over his face, but he acquiesced. Remus smiled as he slowly got undressed himself. All the worries of the day seemed farther away when he was with Severus. He would never have believed it could be this way, but through some miracle, they had moved past the pain and enmity of the past and made a life together.

Many things had changed for both of them with Voldemort's defeat. It had taken some time for both of them to adjust to their newfound freedom. Remus', however, hadn't lasted long. Once the celebrating was over, the Ministry had started right in on all the things that needed to change to prevent another Voldemort from rising to power. Anyone suspected of being loyal to Voldemort, including and, especially, Severus, had been thoroughly investigated. It had taken a good deal of influence from Tonks, Moody, and Arthur Weasley to keep Severus from being locked in Azkaban for not only being a Death Eater, but for the murder of Albus Dumbledore. Remus would always remember how surprised Severus had seemed at how valiantly the Order fought for his freedom. Since the day he had walked free, Severus had reigned in his surly disposition when around them. He still hated "that Potter brat," as he called him, but Remus believed that was more for appearance's sake now.

All of that had been easy, however, compared to starting a romantic relationship. Thirty-odd years of animosity had been a difficult barrier for Remus to break through. If there was one thing Remus was, though, it was persistent. Many had a difficult time adjusting to their relationship Harry most especially. Things went from bad to worse when they announced they were going to live together. Ministry law forbade them from marrying, but that didn't matter. They were perfectly content in their *hovel*, as Severus had called it.

Remus watched as Severus lowered himself onto the bed and extended a hand towards him. All previous thoughts of the Ministry and the path that had led them here fled at the smouldering gaze being leveled at him by the man lying naked on the bed. Remus slowly drank in every inch of Severus' body with his eyes. *He's aging rather well*, Remus thought idly. His stomach had rounded a bit, but his chest remained firm while his skin was smooth and white.

"Well?" Severus suddenly interjected.

Remus shook his head. "What?"

"Are you going to come over here and *fuck me*, birthday boy, or will I have to take matters into my own hands, so to speak?" Severus arched his eyebrow

"Sorry. I was just... Severus, why *did* you decide to bake that cake?"

Severus rolled his eyes and sighed. "Still on about that, are we? It was just something I wanted to try is all. I know you always enjoy Mrs Weasley's cooking, so I thought you would like it. Can we not talk about the damn cake anymore? If you hadn't noticed, there are more *urgent matters* to attend to at the moment," Severus said, staring pointedly at his erection.

"We'll take care of that in a moment," Remus assured. "But first, if it really was just 'something you wanted to try,' why were you so upset when the cake was ruined?"

"I wasn't upset."

"Severus, you nearly blew up the entire kitchen! Don't think I don't know what happened down there. You got angry when the cake didn't turn out right and started throwing hexes around. Why were you so upset?"

Severus sniffed and dropped his gaze casually to the where his hands were idly picking at the bed sheets. "I suppose I was upset because I wanted this birthday to mean something for you. And me. I just... Look, can we not talk about this right now? You got me all worked up downstairs, and I demand you do something about it *right now!*"

Remus chuckled and began heading towards the bed. "All right. You win. I think it's time I have my cake... and eat it, too." To accentuate his point, Remus slowly licked what was left of the cake mix off of Severus' face. "Mmmm... chocolate is my favourite."

Severus rolled his eyes. "Yes, I know, you idiot. That's why I chose it. Now quit stalling."

"I'm not stalling. You need to be cleaned properly. I'm going to do that for you."

For the next couple of hours, he focused all of his energy on licking every bit of cake mix from Severus' face, neck, chest, and arms. The sweet taste of the chocolate mixed with the salty taste of Severus' skin was an interesting combination, and Remus decided he rather liked it. After Severus had been "cleaned properly," he paid attention to other more pleasurable areas of Severus' body that were demanding attention. Severus, since it was Remus' birthday after all, reciprocated and, for the hundredth time, proved to Remus that his mouth could be used for more than making sarcastic remarks.

Later, as they lay next to each other in bed, Remus turned to Severus. "Severus?"

"Yes?" was the sleepy reply.

"Why made you try to bake me a cake for my birthday?"

"Why? Because I wanted to. Now, go to sleep, you nitwit."

Remus rolled his eyes at Severus' petulant tone, but he continued, undaunted. "Well, you've never *wanted* to before, so why now? We've been together three years and lived together for two, and you've never done anything like that before. In fact, last year on my birthday I tried to get you to just take me to a nice restaurant, and you wouldn't even do that. You said such 'frivolities' weren't necessary. You aren't suddenly going soft on me, are you?"

A low growl came from next to him. "No, I am *not* going 'soft,' but I *am* incredibly tired, so if you wouldn't mind *shutting up*, I'd like to get some sleep."

"Fine," Remus bit out. "I was only trying to talk to you." Rolling onto his side of the bed to face away from Severus, he mumbled, "Git."

After several minutes of silence, when Remus was sure Severus had already drifted off to sleep, a pair of arms suddenly wrapped around his waist. "Happy birthday, Remus," Severus breathed into his ear before planting a soft kiss on his neck. "I promise that no matter what the Ministry does, nothing will change between us."

Remus smiled in the dark. "Thank you, Severus, for the wonderful birthday, but could you do me one favour?"

"What?"

"*Never* try to bake anything for me again."

"Shut up!" Severus groused.

Remus swiftly turned around and grabbed onto Severus as he tried to push away from him. Through his chuckling, he pulled Severus to him for a fierce kiss. Severus relaxed into the kiss, and they wrapped their arms around each other tightly. Remus broke the kiss and then closed his eyes. The fears and worries about the Ministry and what his friends and adopted family thought were all pushed to the side for now. Tomorrow's problems could wait until tomorrow. As he drifted off to sleep, the last coherent thought he had was, *What a great birthday it's been.*

Author's Note: This was written for vaughn7272000 for the snupin_santa gift exchange at the lupin_snape LiveJournal community. I hope you enjoyed it. Feedback (and all types of reviews) are more than welcome, they are encouraged! :)