

L.E.

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Post-Snape's Worst Memory (book 5). What happens when Lily finds the piece of parchment that James was doodling on after the DADA OWL? James/Lily FLUFF!
[Oneshot]

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Chapter 1 of 1

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There was no one else around; it was just the two of them in the library. She had to ask him.

"Hey, Potter?"

James Potter instantly looked up from the Herbology essay he was poring over, rapidly disguising his eagerness with an arrogant smirk. "Yeah, Evans?" he asked casually.

Lily Evans gritted her teeth; he annoyed her no end, but nevertheless, she ground out, "Can I borrow your Potions book?"

He looked momentarily surprised. "My Potions book?" Annoyance clouded his features, and he turned back to his essay. "Why don't you borrow Snivelly's since you're so fond of him?"

Oh, he was such an idiot! Lily glared at him. "You know full well that I despise that creep," she said angrily, "and in any case, I wouldn't be able to read the book; he scribbles all over his."

Huffing in annoyance, she turned away. "If you won't lend me yours, I'll just have to go and find..."

"No, no," he said quickly, surprising her. "Here, take it." He slid the textbook across the table to her and then once more bent over his essay.

She blinked, but then picked it up. "Thanks." She flipped through the pages trying to find the one she wanted, and a piece of parchment fluttered out. Assuming it was something he'd been using as a bookmark, she stooped to pick it up, and then froze as she saw the letters doodled on it. *L.E.* her initials. But no, why would he be writing them on a piece of parchment?

"Hey, Potter, what's this?" she asked nonchalantly.

James Potter looked up again and this time did something unexpected he blushed bright red. "Give that here!" he demanded. Lily was a little taken aback. Frowning, she asked, "Why? What does it stand for?"

"It's a Quidditch team," James invented wildly. "The... London Eagles."

"Really? I've never heard of them," said Lily.

"Yeah, they're... a small team," he said unconvincingly, "and anyway, I don't support them any more, that's why I crossed it out."

"Ri-ight," said Lily, not sure she believed him. She knew he was into Quidditch. Merlin knows, no one could be around him and his swelled head for five minutes and not know that but she couldn't believe anyone could get so het-up over a Quidditch team.

"Well, whatever you say," she said, shrugging and picking up the Potions book. "Thanks for this; I'm just going to go... do my homework in the common room..." The last part of what she said trailed off into a mumble as she hastily pocketed the piece of parchment and slung her bag over her shoulder, striding away. She'd ask her friend Gabriella about it she always had good insights into the actions of boys. And for good reason she'd had so much experience with them...

James pretended to be absorbed in his essay until he was sure she had left. He raised his head and then thumped it with his fist. What a stupid idiot he was! He should have got rid of that parchment... She'd caught him off-guard; he'd had no time to think up a decent lie, and he could tell that she was off to show one of her girlfriends the letters. He rose to his feet. He had to go after her try and explain, or at least persuade her not to tell anyone, or... Well, he wasn't really sure what he was going to do, but he couldn't leave it a second longer. He haphazardly shoved his things back into his bag and left the library with all possible speed.

Even though James practically ran all the way to the common room and took several shortcuts, Lily was nowhere in sight as he clambered through the portrait hole. Frustrated, he dragged a hand through his already-messy hair and made up his mind. There was nothing else for it; he'd have to go up to the girls' dorm and ask to have a word with her.

Tentatively, James set foot on the staircase leading to the girls' dormitory. He froze, half-expecting to get caught in the act and screamed at by some girl or other, but nothing happened. Gaining confidence, he bounded up a few more steps when he was suddenly startled by a loud wailing sound. He suddenly found himself slipping backwards as the steps underneath his feet melded together, and he hardly had time to yell out before he fell backwards onto his butt and slid down the stairs-turned-slide. Blinking dazedly, he stared up at the smooth stone slide above him. The boys' staircase didn't do that, he was sure.

"Hey, Prongs," a voice greeted him from behind, and James turned his head to see Sirius Black, his best friend. Sirius' eyes were twinkling, and his curtain of dark hair swished against his cheeks as he shook his head. "You didn't try to get up the girls' staircase, did you mate? I should've warned you about that one." He reached out a hand and James took it, allowing Sirius to haul him to his feet.

"Yeah, I did," James said, annoyed. "What the hell was that?"

Sirius shrugged. "I dunno, some kind of defensive measure. I found out about it in the third year when I tried to get up the stairs to play a prank on Alice, Longbottom's girlfriend." He grinned. "But why were you trying to get up there, anyway?" He regarded James, a knowing look on his face.

"Looking for Evans," James replied in what he hoped was an off-hand manner, hobbling over to an armchair and throwing himself into it.

"I thought so," Sirius said with a smirk, sitting down as well. "But what for?"

Before James could reply, Lily Evans slid down the stone slide and landed neatly at the bottom. She got to her feet and marched over to the boys. "I want to talk to you," she addressed James. "Now."

"He's listening," said Sirius lazily, leaning back in his armchair. Lily's eyes narrowed.

"I want to talk to him *alone*," she specified. "Which means you need to get lost."

"Temper, temper," Sirius said, grinning. "I'll leave you two alone together then."

Once Sirius had disappeared up the staircase leading to the boys' dormitory, Lily sat down in the chair he had previously been occupying and studied James with interest.

Her talk with Gabriella had been very enlightening. Gabriella hadn't considered there to be any question about what the letters stood for, for a start.

"Of course they're your initials," she had said, looking at Lily as if she were mad. "He fancies you, after all, doesn't he?"

"Does he?" Lily had responded vaguely, leaning back against the wall next to her four-poster bed.

"Yes," Gabriella said impatiently, "why do you think he's always asking you out?"

Lily shrugged. "Hadh't thought about it." She'd put it down to him wanting to look cool, wanting to have a pretty girlfriend who would simper at him and boost his ego, someone who would listen to his tales about what a great Quidditch player he was, and who would kiss him on command and not ask any more of him but for him to grace her with his presence. Which made it a mystery, she supposed, that he kept asking her out, since there were plenty of girls who'd do that for him, and Lily wasn't one of them. He had to know that.

"He acts differently around you," Gabriella told her with an air of deliberate patience. "Always trying too hard to be cool. And he looks at you differently too."

"How do you know all this stuff?" Lily had asked her curiously.

"I keep my eyes open," her blonde friend replied with a smirk. "Just because you don't notice it doesn't mean no one else does."

Now there was the question of what she was going to do next. Lily had been tempted by Gabriella's suggestion that she use the parchment and her newfound knowledge as blackmail, but instead she settled for getting him to admit that he had in fact been doodling her initials on a piece of parchment, which in itself would be a big step in getting him to put aside his considerable male pride. Lily smirked slightly at that thought. After that, she'd just have to see what happened.

"Hey," said James finally, breaking the silence. "Are you going to just keep staring at me or are you going to say something?" He was finding the attention unnerving and was unable to fight the nervous blush breaking out across his cheeks. Annoyed, he looked away. Trust Evans to get to him like this.

Lily hardly heard him, still absorbed in thought. Do I like him? she questioned herself, genuinely curious about the answer.

Of course not! He's an arrogant jerk, her mind immediately replied.

All right, well, that goes without saying. But do I think he's good-looking?

Yes, replied her mind instantly with a speed that surprised Lily. But what surprised her even more was the comment that followed it. Especially when he's blushing like that.

Lily jumped and shook herself, startled into awareness of her surroundings with that last comment *Where did that come from?*

"Finally," said James a little smugly, although, she noticed, without his usual overconfidence. "It's about time you came to, I was beginning to think you'd been Stupefied or something."

Typical, Lily thought, irritated. *Of course the process of thinking would be something alien to you since you never do it* She smirked to herself and was about to deliver the

line out loud when she mentally replayed the last thing he'd said to her and raised her eyebrows slightly. Was it just her, or had he sounded slightly... concerned?

"Were you now?" she asked him. "I'm flattered that you were so concerned about my welfare." She smiled brightly at him.

James blinked at her. Was this how she normally acted? Normally she would glare at him, tell him what an arrogant prick he was, and stalk off. But she was the one who had initiated this conversation, and now with the way she was acting... he would almost say that she was *flirting* with him. No, surely not. Frowning, he leaned forward and peered into her eyes.

Lily was a little taken aback; she'd expected him to start trying to chat her up or something. "Is something wrong?" she asked a little warily.

"I was about to ask you the same question," said James. "You're acting completely differently to normal."

Lily blinked and found her brain devoid of an appropriate comeback. "I... um... well... So are you!" she said in a desperate attempt to take his attention off the way she was acting.

James digested that 'accusation' for a moment. "No, I'm not," he replied truthfully. *The only reason you think that is because I'm always trying to show off around you. But I can't say that!* "This is me normally."

Lily considered this. "If this is the normal you, then what about the you I'm used to seeing?" she questioned. *This is a very strange conversation we're having. And yet, it still makes sense.*

James was caught out by that question. "Uh... that's..." He looked away and mumbled something inaudible.

"Sorry, I didn't quite catch that," said Lily brightly. She shifted in her chair and heard the rustle of parchment in her pocket. She'd almost forgotten her original reason for wanting to talk to him... But this was just as good.

"Never mind," James said. He needed to try and take back control of this conversation; he hated feeling off-balance like this. "Look, what was it you wanted to talk to me about, Evans?"

All right, if he was going to be businesslike and get straight to the point, then so was she.

"This," she replied, producing the parchment from her pocket. James looked startled; he'd almost forgotten about that. Damn, what was he going to say? But he didn't get a chance to respond as Lily continued,

"I know these are my initials, no matter what you say about Quidditch teams. What made you write them?"

Damn, he could feel his face heating up again. He'd hoped to avoid all this confessions stuff, and that's why he was always asking her out like that. So that maybe, she'd get that he liked her without him having to say so directly. But no...

All right, time to swallow his pride. *That's gonna take some strong throat muscles*, his mind surprised him by responding, and he grinned fleetingly. It seemed Evans' comments were rubbing off on him.

"Fine, I'll give it to you straight," he said, glancing down at his hands in his lap before fixing his eyes determinedly on her face. "I really like you, Evans Lily."

Now it was Lily's turn to blush, and to her surprise she felt thrilled and nervous at the same time. Those hazel eyes of his were fixed intently on her face, and it felt as if he were trying to read her soul. Plus, he'd used her first name for once he'd never, ever done that before.

All of a sudden James dropped his gaze. So he'd done it; he'd swallowed his pride, but what had he been expecting the same from her? He had to be nuts, she'd made it clear that she couldn't stand him earlier today. He stood up. "Well, there you have it," he said, his voice hollow. "Are you finished now?" He wasn't looking at her, but staring at the floor.

Lily looked up at him in confusion. The way he was acting was so different to just a couple of seconds ago. It was as if she had rejected him, when in fact that was the furthest thing from her mind... Again, she surprised herself, but heck, today seemed to be a day for surprises. In any case, she had to act quickly to stop James leaving. He seemed to have taken her silence as a rejection.

"Wait James," she said, catching hold of his hand without standing up. He looked down at her, startled. Lily found she liked saying his name.

"I don't dislike you," she said slowly, lacing her fingers through his one by one. "Far from it..." She trailed off and stood up, catching his other hand in hers. "In fact, I like you too," she continued firmly, and found, this time with no surprise at all, that it was true.

James stared at her as if he couldn't quite believe his eyes. A slow grin was spreading across his face, and jubilation had replaced the cold despair of a few seconds before inside him.

Lily wondered at this sudden change of heart on her part. Wasn't she dead set on the fact that he was an arrogant jerk only minutes ago? And yet she was certain that this slightly vulnerable guy who thought she'd rejected him was the real James. Didn't Gabriella say that he acted differently around her normally? He'd obviously tried to act cooler in order to get her to like him. Wow, when she looked at it that way, it was awfully sweet.

"So, uh, Ev- I mean, Lily," James said, glancing over to the common room notice board, "there's a Hogsmeade trip this weekend. Do you want to go... uh, with me?" He glanced at her hopefully, slightly distracted by the tingling in his fingers, which were still entwined with hers.

"I'd like that," Lily said happily, with a broad smile.

Concealed halfway up the staircase leading to the boys' dormitories, Sirius smirked to himself and ran up the rest of the stairs to the top, flinging wide the dormitory door. There was a loud thud as it banged into Peter Pettigrew, who had been on the other side, clearly doing his best to listen as well. Rubbing his head, he looked up from his new position on the floor and asked eagerly,

"Did it work? Did it work?"

Over on his four-poster bed, Remus Lupin was reading a book, listening whilst trying not to look too interested.

"Of course it did. I told you she was really crazy about him. Just needed a little coming round, that's all," Sirius said, grinning and dropping down onto his own bed.

"You'd best hope that James doesn't start to wonder how that piece of parchment found its way inside his Potions book," said Lupin without looking up from his book. "Oh, and," he reached under the covers of his bed with one hand and drew out a large textbook, then threw it to Sirius, "give Lily her textbook back."