

## Happy Valentine's Day

"What were you *doing*?" Sirius explodes, flapping a wet sleeve at Remus, who is by turns going pink, green, and now a sort of gratifying purply-red. With black speckles. It looks to Sirius like he might actually throw a punch, which might be the only bright spot in this utterly crap day in this utterly crap month of the utterly crap existence of Sirius Black. "Running an egg-and-spoon race with an inkwell?"

"What was *I* doing?!" Remus snaps, yanking the straps of his bag shut as if he can retroactively protect his precious books from the rain of ink that has already slightly destroyed them. "I was *rounding a corner*, you ridiculous -- what were *you* doing?!"

"Working out some tension," Snape puts in, blotting delicately at the bleeding corner of his mouth with a dirty sleeve. "Getting his feelies in where he can," he adds, at which point Sirius, who is in the mood to let his elbows do the talking, steps on his foot and knees him in the neck when he goes down, which effectively ends a conversation that was most likely going to a dead end anyway. "Gurghk," Snape says, though he no doubt means to say something else.

Remus' fingers tremble. Swinging heavy book-bags, now ruined by an overabundance of ink anyway, into the side of Sirius' head has never solved anything. But perhaps it has never solved anything because Remus has never actually tried it before. Torn between two instincts -- the pacifism to which he reverts whenever Sirius makes him livid and the little twitching in all his muscles that *lets* him know *just* how livid he is -- Remus grasps at a random third option and hopes for the best.

"Bugger -- bloody -- gerroff!" Sirius yelps. By the sheer brunt of Remus' forearms -- which have always pretended to be noodley by looking noodley but have never been anything less than unflinching man-steel -- he finds himself lifted three inches into the air and yanked most unceremoniously backwards. And away, he notes with the most regret, from Snape's *face* which it is his *supreme duty* to *kick ten times in*.

"Gurghk," Snape says again. Remus is quite sure he does *not* mean to say thank you kindly, Mr. Lupin.

"Sit," he bites out at Sirius, who, crippled by four years of being a dog, does so automatically before leaping upright again, crimson with rage and embarrassment. Snape recovers just enough to wheeze out a "good puppy," which requires Remus to launch himself at Sirius again and employ the Forearms of Iron. In fact he nearly has to employ the Tackle of Iron to stop Sirius' furious flailing, and Snape takes advantage of the temporary lull to Faff Off, though not before treading judiciously on Sirius' fingers. By the time the dust clears, Sirius is slouched against the wall of the hallway, seething with wronged innocence and sucking fiercely at his knuckles, and Remus has even more ink up his nose and is feeling extremely homicidal, perhaps even more so than the time of month requires.

For a moment they both just sit there, breathing and nursing their various wounds, and then Remus says hoarsely, "What is your problem? Do you want to go to detention for a thousand years?"

"Oh, bugger off," snaps Sirius, "you insufferable do-gooder. Snape never tells anyone, I always beat his arse up between his shoulder-blades and who'd go about advertising that! Why don't you go practice your vegetarianism, or whatever it is you do?"

They cannot get in a fight, Remus reminds himself. They cannot get in a fight because if Sirius died, James would be very upset. It might even negatively affect his elaborate Valentine's-Day plans, and then Remus would be Persona Non Grata in the Potter-Evans household forever and ever, and would never meet their adorable redheaded babies with enormous glasses and questionable diapers. They cannot get into a fight because Remus does not get into fights; Remus does not get into fights because the idea of fights makes his stomach fancy itself a gymnast; Remus does not get into fights because he does not have the constitution; though sometimes adrenaline takes over and he forgets that. That's what worries him. But they cannot get into a fight, Remus reminds himself. He has ink up his nose, his heart is beating too fast, the moon somewhere beyond the sky is pulling at his joints, and they cannot get into a fight. They can't even have a bit of a row. They can't even have words. What Remus must do is Bugger Off and Go Practice His Vegetarianism Or Whatever It Is He Does -- more along the lines of Sneeze Out Ink For A Month, Perhaps -- because they cannot get into a fight. In all their years -- even when Sirius flushed all of Remus' underthings down the toilet, even when Sirius told Snape about everything he'd promised never to tell *anyone* about, even when Sirius was at his most miserable and therefore at his most insufferable -- they have not gotten into a fight. It's been an unspoken rule, an accepted constant of life. Remus Lupin does not get into fights. Other people get into fights. Remus Lupin is a no-fight zone. Remus Lupin is neutral ground. Remus Lupin buggers off.

Except Remus Lupin feels suddenly the explosive, maddening pressure of reversion, of turning back in on himself, of crumpling like a wrapper, of being kissed and doing nothing, of watching a thousand and one fights between James and Sirius and seeing them be all right because of it and resenting how easy it is for them to do anything, everything. *Fight. Kiss.* It is easy for other people to fight. Even in this moment, with his stomach doing handstands and triple backflips and upside-down splits, Remus Lupin wants to fight about not being able to fight.


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The handwriting of Remus J. Lupin, Severus Snape and James Potter is done by  [ladvjaida](#).

The handwriting of Sirius Black, Peter Pettigrew and Lily Evans is done by  [dorkorific](#).  
Don't worry; Peter won't be stupidified. **Trust us** on that one.

We would like to take a moment to thank  [windjinn](#) for leaping down the stairs with  [ladvjaida](#)'s bra on his head.

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