

The Best and Worst of Times

by Alison

Who does Severus talk to when the world gets too much for him?

Complete one shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Severus Snape stood in a thicket of trees. He could see a sunlit river glittering through the trunks. The shadows cast by the trees made a basin of cool, green shade. In the boughs above, a small bird warbled briefly before taking flight, its wings whirring.

He gazed down at the young woman asleep at his feet. A beam of sunshine falling through the branches above enveloped her head, and her auburn hair spread out in glorious disarray on the grass, illuminated in a halo of light.

He lay down beside her on the soft summer grass, on his side with his head pillowed on one arm. Gazing at her slumbering face, he felt himself relax, the tension leaving him like water draining out of a tipped cup. He sighed and lifted one hand. Very gently, taking care not to actually touch her, he allowed his palm to hover just above her cheek, smiling a little as he imagined her warmth bridging the tiny gap between their skin.

Letting his hand fall to the ground, his eyes never leaving her face, Severus murmured, "Dumbledore's been using me, Lils. All these years, I've spied for him, I've put myself into mortal danger for him, all to keep your son safe. But now, now he tells me he's just been raising him like a pig for slaughter –"

The sleeper shifted a little, and Severus stopped talking, watching every small movement raptly. When he was sure she had settled once more into deep sleep, he said quietly, "I'm sorry, Lils. I did the best I could for him. I've watched over him for you, kept him out of danger as much as I could; but he's headstrong, Lily, he always sets himself against me. I've – I've found it impossible to become fond of him." He smiled briefly, a small bitter smile. "He reminds me too much of James, I suppose."

"But this, what Dumbledore wants to do, it's monstrous. I always thought he was protecting the boy, just as I was. I had this idea that he had a plan worked out for the Dark Lord's destruction, but I never suspected that it would involve your son's death. When he told me, I was horrified. Apparently, Harry has a piece of the Dark Lord's soul within him. While that fragment of soul remains attached to Harry, Voldemort cannot die. Dumbledore's been keeping him alive only so that he can die at the 'right time'."

He stopped talking for a moment, letting his eyes follow the curves of Lily's face, listening to her soft breathing, and, as it always did, felt some measure of peace steal over him in her presence. The little bird had returned above them; it twittered and chirruped to itself, the twig it was perched upon swinging slightly to its movements.

"I don't know what's going to happen now," he admitted quietly. "Albus is dying. He wants me to euthanize him, again at the right time. Apparently I'll know when that time is. And then I have to somehow manage to protect the whole of Hogwarts from the Death Eaters, the Carrows in particular, once he's dead. The only way to do that is to tell the Dark Lord that I've always had an ambition to become Headmaster. Albus is confident that I'll be able to assume the mantle," and his face twisted into angry lines, "with every teacher there hating me and wishing me a painful death, with never a thought for my feelings on the subject."

He sighed again. "But that's always been the way with Albus Dumbledore," he said, his expression still bitter. "He always goes on about love, how love is the only emotion the Dark Lord can't understand. But, do you know, Lily, I don't think Albus has a clue, either. Not really. Oh, he makes a good show of caring, all that twinkling-eyed good humour that he does so well. But it's all an act. I sometimes wonder if he ever really loved anybody."

He subsided again, content to just lie there quietly next to Lily. The rays of sunshine had disappeared, and the gloom under the trees was becoming deeper when he finally sat up with a tired sigh.

"I'm sorry, Lily," he said regretfully. "I tried, I really did. But I'm only human."

Slowly, Lily opened her eyes. For a moment she looked confused, then she stretched and sat up as well. She stared across the thicket at the teenage boy who was sitting a few feet away with his back against a tree trunk. Just a moment before, this boy had been watching her with a yearning, hungry expression on his face. But as soon as Lily opened her eyes, his gaze had hurriedly returned to the book that lay open in his lap, a book which he hadn't bothered to look at since Lily had fallen asleep, unable to tear his eyes from her.

"Sev! Was I asleep? Why didn't you wake me before this?"

Young Severus Snape glanced up, as if only just realizing she was awake. "Oh. I didn't realize it'd gotten so late. I suppose we'd better get on home."

Lily stood up, brushing herself off. "Okay. How about we get some fish and chips on the way?"

Severus shrugged, getting to his feet. "Fine. We've probably missed dinner by now."

Severus Snape watched as the teenage version of himself walked with Lily Evans out of the thicket. It was his happiest memory, that summer before their fifth year at Hogwarts. He came here whenever the world outside became too much for him, whenever he felt too emotionally battered to take anymore. To talk things over with his best friend.

He sighed and closed his eyes, then dove out of the borrowed Pensieve, back out into the real world again.

The End

Author's note: If you liked this story, please have a read of my original story "Love Inhuman" at this link:

<http://www.thepetulantpoetess.com/viewstory.php?sid=11932>

Alison