

Regrets

by Rose of the West

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Once a year, a dark, bitter man walks into the graveyard to leave flowers, the yellow roses of friendship and love betrayed. It is October 31. Many people celebrate this day as the day He-who-must-not-be-named was defeated. Others remember it as the day two brave souls lost their lives. This man recalls the day two years before that, when he was not given the option to become the father of Harry Potter.

It was a special night for both of them. They were finally going to make love for the first time ever. She was suitably impressed by his flat, which she thought was surprisingly homey for a man who seemed as austere as he did. The wine was just enough drink to encourage confidences and romance. The dinner was perfect. She smiled across the table at him and took his hands and he knew the moment had come.

He walked her to the bedroom and set her on the bed and proceeded to kiss her gently. They had done this and much more before, but he wanted to go slowly and enjoy the entire process. He kissed her softly until she sighed with pleasure, opening her mouth for a deeper, more searching kiss.

They had been friends half their lives by then. She had been slim perfection when he first saw her, with bouncing red curls, delicate features and ever-changing green eyes. Everything she did was better for her having done it. Her not-unattractive but much plainer sister never appreciated her. In later years he came to realize that Petunia was simply tired of being the foil for such a pretty younger sister.

After he finished mapping her mouth with his tongue, his lips explored her entire face, her forehead, her hairline, her eyes and cheeks and chin, and he started to kiss down her throat and into the collar of her robe and blouse, which she unfastened for him. As he kissed along her neck and shoulders, she unfastened his robe, too, and he tossed it off.

He remembered watching her swing in the park. Each movement had had the childish grace that she had somehow transformed into a womanly grace as she had got older. He remembered watching the one time she had jumped, from what was seemingly too high. Her hair and the edges of her clothing had fluttered as she did, and when she had landed gently on the ground, everything had fallen back into place perfectly.

He helped her take her robe and blouse off, but then hesitated. He had touched her before, but always felt that he needed permission. She smiled and removed her bra, then reached for his hands and placed them on her breasts. He sighed with pleasure and caressed her, enjoying the sight and feel of her silky skin, and the slim roundness. Very slowly and carefully, he moved to kiss the soft pink peaks, knowing it was all right when she gasped and sighed his name.

She had always guided him at school. When he would have drifted farther and farther into the Dark Arts, she pulled him away. When his friends got into evil pranks, she encouraged him to avoid those friends. He did what she asked, because he adored her and he lived to do what she asked.

Before he knew it, they were both almost completely naked and pressed together, lying among the pillows. She was touching him through his boxer shorts with experienced fingers. He knew she had done some things with the other young man she had dated for a while. She told him that she had saved her virginity, though, and would give it to him. He hoped that he would please her. If things went well, tonight, he hoped to give her his grandmother's ring. She would be a perfect wife, and they would have wonderful...suddenly a thought occurred to him.

"Hey." He stopped kissing her long enough to break into her thoughts. "We haven't discussed a child..."

"It's okay, I took care of it. I had a potion before I came over."

"You took a potion?" He sat up. "Isn't that something we should have discussed?"

"I didn't think we would need to. I'm not ready for any of that."

"What exactly do you mean by 'any of that'?"

She smiled, her green eyes twinkling. "You know, marriage, kids, that stuff." She reached into his lap.

"Hold on a minute," he said as he gently put her hands away from himself.

Half his life had been spent loving this young woman. He had admired her, loved her, done whatever she asked because she asked it. She never had asked, however, what he wanted. She never went out of her way to do things for him. Worst of all, she could get down right *bitchy* when something was the slightest bit wrong according to her specifications.

She had treated the other young man the same way. Indeed, she had only started dating him months ago because of an argument she had with the other man. Thinking back on it, he realized it was pretty trivial, too. The other man had dated her for three years, clearly more up to the punishment than he was.

A decision was made. It might not be for life, although it probably was. It certainly was for tonight. "Lily, I don't think I can do this, tonight."

"What do you mean?"

"I just don't think we're ready."

"Sure we are, Severus. I'm soaked through my knickers with desire and you--" She saw that he had gone flaccid. "No problem, I can fix it." She reached into his lap again, and again he gently removed her hands.

"It's no use, Lily. I don't think we're right for each other. I just realized we don't want the same things."

She started to see where this was going.

"Is this because I don't want to have your bastard?" she hurled at him.

"No, it's because you didn't even discuss it first. Just once you could ask my opinion instead of assuming I'll just want what you want because you want it." He had gotten out of the bed and was buttoning his shirt.

"But you always want what I want."

"Actually, I do not." One foot went into each pant leg and the trousers were quickly fastened. He put on his socks and shoes and was soon fastening his robe and reaching into the closet for his cloak. "I need some air. Please be gone when I get back."

"Severus?"

"I'm sorry, Lily. I don't think I can love you the way you need to be loved. I'm a poor man and need to have an occupation other than the constant admiration of Lily Evans. I try to be a simple man, but I have needs of my own. I would like to be admired once in a while, myself."

He left and hid in a space between nearby buildings to watch. It wasn't long before she came out of his flat, red curls escaping from the hood of her cloak. He followed her to ensure her safety and saw that she went to a pub where his nemesis was tipping a few with his friends. She and his nemesis, the man she had dated before she dated him, moved to a table near a window. He watched as the other man comforted and soothed her, and it wasn't long before they came out and went to the man's flat.

Severus was ashamed in later years to admit to himself that he stood outside, watching lights come on and go off all night while Lily gave to James Potter what she had promised to him. He was surprised at how little it actually hurt. He was not surprised when Lily came to him three weeks later, red faced, to tell him that she was pregnant and that she and James were eloping. Her potion had clearly not been meant for a whole weekend. The choice he had made was clearly the correct one if the woman who so deliberately decided not to have his child could forget all about the question in the arms of the other man.

He had been all that friendship demanded, asking after her health and wishing her happiness. Then he had gone on with his life, unexpectedly cheerful given that the love of his life was over. He met young women and reacquainted himself with others. He had plenty of opportunities to share with other women what he did not share with Lily, but held off. Some day he would meet the woman who shared many of Lily's perfections but also cared for him. He wouldn't cheapen his memory of Lily with anything less.

Severus gave himself to a master who demanded sacrifice of his followers but promised great reward. He was momentarily dazzled by the glamour this master offered. He found himself in a position of prominence when he was able to provide important information to this master. Then the world fell apart when it became clear that his master would target Lily.

A new master commanded Severus's allegiance after that, demanding that he walk a tightrope existence between the two. Severus did what he could to help, but Potter's closest friends betrayed a secret, and the Potters lost their lives. Two years after the last time Severus kissed Lily, all that was left was the child she wouldn't conceive with him.

He would work for that child, because in doing so it would alleviate the terrible burden of guilt he felt. Most who knew about the prophecy he overheard thought he felt guilty about telling what he knew of the prophecy to the Dark Lord. However, so many knew of the prophecy that the Dark Lord would have obtained it somewhere. The truth was that his guilt lay in not making love to Lily that night. In rejecting her that night, he had driven her to James Potter's bed. If Severus had accepted the terms Lily had offered, she would not have gotten pregnant at all and the prophecy would have concerned some other woman.

Severus realized as the years went on that it was all wrong. Perhaps the potion was bad and she would have had his child. She might have gone from his arms to Potter's bed and gotten pregnant anyway. The prophecy, which was made after the child was conceived, might have been different. Every time he thought of the subject, he found another circumstance that would have changed the situation entirely.

As he got further away from Lily's influence, he realized that he had made a choice that was the correct one for himself, even if others were hurt. He had not acted in malice and he could not have foreseen the circumstances that followed. He continued to help Lily's son less from guilt and more out of a sense of responsibility. After it was all over he realized that although Lily had refused to bear his child, he has been more involved in the formation of the child she did have than she or his father had been.