

The Sum Of All Our Scars

by shulldham

Late at night Snape is haunted by his past. Will the ghosts of his memories overwhelm him? Who will help?

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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A.N.

This was inspired by a late night conversation with my other half. It does contain reference to abuse.

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The Sum Of All Our Scars

The steam swirls and shimmers as his movement displaces its minute droplets. Each tiny mote is like a miniature sun as they catch the gleam of the flickering candle flames and turn the steam into a dancing golden haze.

He steps past the bathroom mirror, ignoring it, as is his custom. However something--a glimmer, a flash at the edge of his vision, makes him turn, and he finds himself strangely drawn to his subtly steam-altered reflection.

He gazes at himself. His eye is drawn to where the steam has kissed his skin. It has condensed into a shining golden line that follows the jagged thin scar running from his collarbone to his shoulder. The beautiful sheen of gold is an ironic counterpoint to its cause. So long ago now, that he received his first scar. He raises his hand, and with one long finger he traces the jagged path. He feels the keloid hardness beneath his finger as he wipes the mocking gold from the scar's length, and the memory takes him.

The punch had been meant for his face. It was hurled with hate and adult strength against his six-year-old self, and it was the end of an awful, familiar game his father tormented him with.

'Be still. Be quiet. Move and I'll punish you. This is for your own good. You're wicked; if you didn't do bad things, I wouldn't have to punish you. I don't enjoy this, you know.'

The words meant little to Snape, and in truth they were but the pathetic self-justifications of a sadist, but Severus knew what they portended. Fear kept him rigid. Anger fed his soul. Hope, that this time would be different, kept him alive.

A wasp landed on his thin arm and stung him. The hot stab lanced through him, but he didn't flinch. Too late, he saw the gleam of satisfaction in his father's eyes and knew

he had failed again. He saw his father's fist pull back and heard the words.

'You're not fucking normal! A normal kid would have moved. You used IT didn't you. I've told you not to, and you used IT anyway. Disobedient shit, this is for your own good.'

Time seemed to slow in that instant. As the punch closed the distance between them, something compelled him, and Severus moved. He jerked to the side at the last instant, and the punch missed his nose, but it raked across the top of his chest. The ugly, big ring his father wore ripped through his dirty tee shirt. It tore into the tender, pale flesh beneath. Enraged that his victim had moved, his father swung a hard, short jab into his son's stomach. Severus crashed to the floor and curled into a ball.

The beating that followed was one of the worst he could remember, but he had discovered a most precious thing: defiance. He had moved. In violation of his father's command, he had moved. In that instant, a part of him, dormant until then, blossomed. No matter the pain. No matter the insults. In his mind he was free. He was safe. No physical beating from his father could touch him there.

Breathing hard, Severus shifts his gaze away from the mirror only to let it fall on the inside of his right forearm.

With the honed instinct of an absolute predator, his father had felt something shift. He had felt the terrible power he held over his son diminish. The satisfaction he derived from 'correcting' Severus no longer contained the same thrill. He probed for another method of assault and changed his tactics.

His gangly, painfully thin son stood before him in the bitter cold of winter, shivering. His father saw the irritating, faraway look cross his son's face.

Severus half-listened from the sanctuary of his mind. The accusation was always the same. His mother and he had been using IT despite his father forbidding them to. His father always said 'IT,' never 'magic.' He injected such venom into the short word that Severus wondered how his father could so hate the indescribable beauty of the magic's caress as it tingled through his body. He looked at his father's distorted face. As his father wound himself further into his rage, the boy realised with absolute shock that his father would never, could never, understand because he did not have any magic in him. But something so wonderful could not be so wrong. Then Severus realised that the beatings his father inflicted upon him were not because he was an evil child, but that they came from hate and envy and the dark malice of his father's soul. His father had stopped speaking. Severus struggled to remember what he had just been asked.

'Well, shithhead, who is it going to be? Her or you?'

Ah, he remembered now, this time he was being given the choice of who would be beaten, his mother or himself. Withdrawing further into his mind, Severus said simply, 'Me... sir.'

His father grinned then. It was a wolfish sharp expression, and Severus knew another sort of trap had been sprung. His father took his time to inflict the cigarette burns on his son's forearm. He was sure to leave enough time between applying each searing mark to let the nerves regain full sensitivity. The resultant scar resembled some kind of awful flower. Each petal an agonising, flaming brand cooked into his son's skin with hateful care.

Later, swaying from the effort of remaining standing, and with the sweat streaming down his face in the bitterly cold room, his father forced him to watch as he beat his mother anyway. In that instant, Severus truly learned to hate. The psychological scar was far worse than any physical one his father could have inflicted.

Severus scrapes his hand through his hair, raking his fingers harshly across his scalp. His fingers brush against another scar, small and crescent shaped, at his temple. With desperate need, he falls towards the solace of that memory.

He inhaled the sweet scent of freshly cut grass and heard the drone of a lazy bumblebee as it buzzed its way amongst the honeysuckle. He felt the warmth of the summer's evening on his thin body. He and Lily were in the park sitting next to each other on the roundabout, as it turned slowly. They talked quietly about their wonderful secret, their magic. He could not express his delight in having found a friend, different, like him.

The harsh shout of 'Freaks!' reached them. They had been so engrossed in their conversation that they had failed to notice the pack of boys entering the park.

Jeering and spreading out, the pack moved towards them. The leader, filled with the sense of his cruel power, bent and picked up a stone. He hurled it towards them. The rest of the pack followed his lead. Severus pulled Lily to him, turning as he did so, to shield her from the stones. He was furious that they would seek to harm her. As the stones hit, he felt a sharp pain at his temple. Then, as the boys ran towards them, he and Lily fled. He heard shouts behind them but didn't look back. They reached the safety of their den ahead of the gang, and no matter how hard the boys looked they could never be found.

Lily and he sat, breathless with the adrenaline of their escape. They held each other, and in his friend's eyes he saw concern. A soft 'Oh they hurt you,' escaped her lips. She reached up to touch his wound. Severus instinctively flinched away. Determined, she held his chin in one hand whilst she cleaned the wound with a scrap of material torn from her tee shirt. Her hand was gentle and soothing, and he treasured every touch, every look, and every word.

She said, 'I didn't know they had hurt you.' He shrugged. 'But you stopped them.' He looked puzzled. 'Didn't you see? Your magic, it stopped the rest of the stones, and it threw them back. It was brilliant.'

She leant into him, and he ached with the joy of this moment, the warmth of it touching his soul.

Later, when he finally returned home, he still thrummed with sheer happiness. His father was waiting, but as he raised his fists Lily's words came back to Severus. The next thing he was aware of was his mother shouting, 'Stop! You'll kill him.'

He stopped only because she had asked it. Breathing hard, his father slumped to the floor. Severus had not touched him physically, but his magic had protected him, just as it had in the park. His father never touched him again, and Severus thrilled with the new feeling of power growing within him. He sometimes felt as if he could shake the very earth to its core.

There is another tiny star-shaped scar next to the crescent one. Snape smiles at the memory.

Lily's fingers rubbed a soothing balm into the spot, the result of a Potions explosion. The way she scolded him for his reckless experiment and warned him to be more careful made him shrug in response. Then she fixed him with those piercing green eyes of hers and made him promise to be more careful. He promised. Then she leant forward and gently kissed the burn. His body sang with her lips' touch. But that was all before their friendship had twisted and become infected somehow. Before the darkness had taken him. Before he had welcomed it into his soul.

Again his gaze shifts, to regard his left forearm. His eyes trace the faint pattern that remains. His most bitter scar, one of darkness and vengeance and hate and betrayal. It still burns sometimes. A phantom legacy like an amputee occasionally feels. Each time it does, the echo of all his self-loathing, at what he became, chokes him with its savage bile. In trying to become invulnerable to life's hurts, he became all he despised. Voldemort's brand is a constant, if muted, presence. A bitter reminder of the dreadful error he had made, and of the terrible price of jealousy and the awful, wonderful seductive allure of absolute power.

He closes his eyes against the thought. He wants to move but is held in place somehow. He opens his eyes to look at his sixth scar, his soul's due: Nagini's death kiss. The faint, trailing red lines are an exclamation on his pale skin of his redemption.

A redemption he does not think he deserved. He had not expected to live. Had not thought a future could or should be his. His sort did not deserve such beneficence.

Lost in such bleak reminiscences, his hand stills over his chest, where his last and deepest scar lies. It winds around his heart like a cage but never one of imprisonment. Rather it is a fortress, a buttress against further harms, and one from which he never wants to be liberated.

Slim, small hands slip over his, enfolding them. He feels his most precious wound's inflictor, his heart's jailer, press against his back. One of her hands moves, and she gently traces his first scar with her fingers. Brown eyes meet black in the mirror. She sees just how far between and far away from her he is this night. Slowly, she moves to stand in front of him. Gently, she kisses the path her fingers have traced along his first scar.

He remembers the first time she did this, the first time he stood before her, naked in body and soul.

She traced it then as now and had asked, 'Who?'

'My father,' he replied softly.

Then she kissed its jagged, hateful length, transforming it with her lips' touch. When their eyes met, he was fearful of finding pity in them. The fierce protective anger that burned in her eyes scorched its way straight to his heart.

'I'll never let anyone do this to you again,' she said. He was filled with wonder that she would willingly be his guardian and knew she spoke of more than just that one scar.

She has been true to her promise, and he has never lost his wonder at her love for him. She burns across his heart and soul always, and with her, he knows he has a place amongst the living.

'Come back to me, love,' Hermione says.

He pulls away from the old memories, casting away their ghosts. He smiles at her and bends to kiss his love. She claims his kiss fiercely with her own, pulling him back to her and to their life together.

True, he is the sum of all his scars, but he is no longer their hostage. She has helped set him free, and together they make a new path and find new joys for themselves in this world.

Fin.