

Pleasure and Pain

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Lily is ready to move on with her life, but can she let go of the past?

Ghosts of the Past

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Sadly, I did not create the world or the characters. I simply play with the creations of the great JKR.

Thanks to the amazing kizzy7. She made this worthy of being read.

In contrast to the cold, grey skies and the icy sleet falling outside, the little cottage was warm and bright inside. Music from the Muggle radio drifted up the stairs from the lounge. Lily sang along as she put away the tiny shirts and gowns. She moved in time to the lively music, swaying from the cupboard to the basket nestled in the little rocking chair. Her movements were the external manifestation of internal joy and contentment.

Had anyone told her...say, three years earlier...that she'd happily give up her career in the Department of Mysteries to prepare her home for the new arrival, she'd have thought they were daft. Her work had been fascinating, stimulating...exactly the kind of intellectual pursuit she'd always relished. The Healer had told her and James that her pre-term labour pains were caused by an overabundance of stress and exhaustion. She'd stunned the both of them by proclaiming that she would quit. She had volunteered to focus on rest and preparations for "little-what's-his-name."

James had worried that she'd go stir-crazy, but she'd been happy and peaceful for more than a month now. He still worried over her. She found it flattering as well as irritating. He had promised to keep her company with as many visits as he could manage. True to his word, at least two afternoons a week, he slipped away for an hour or two in the afternoon. After the first day, however, he'd started to knock on the door. He'd entered unannounced and startled her, resulting in Lily nearly hexing his bollocks off.

The sound of a sharp knock floated to her ears, above the music. She smiled as she skipped down the stairs and flung the door open. She was about to kiss her visitor full on the lips when she came to a screeching halt. Frozen and wide-eyed on the doorstep, Lily could hardly believe her eyes.

"I'll take that as an invitation, Evans." The man strode past her, stopping in the lounge door.

"As I've told you, the name is Potter now." Lily had regained at least a bit of composure. She closed the front door and turned to face him.

"To what do I owe this very great honour, Severus?" she asked. She still held the doorknob nervously.

S Snape smirked at her. His black eyes bore into hers, and he held her gaze. After a moment, Lily shook off the connection, looking away. They stood awkwardly in the entry, not looking at each other. As she could think of nothing else to do, Lily flicked her wand at the radio, silencing the so-called 'Swedish Super-Group.'

"No invitation to tea? Manners, *Evans*. Must be the company you keep." He had stressed her old surname.

Not knowing how to respond, Lily headed to the kitchen and began to lay the table for a simple tea.

Severus followed her. He was eyeing her, and she knew it. She was both frightened and relieved to see him. She'd missed him more than she could admit to anyone, but there had been terrible rumours about who and what he'd become.

If she were to be honest, with herself, she was thrilled to see him, though that thrill carried with it a surge of guilt. James would be terribly hurt by her elation at seeing Severus. Her husband could not understand, as he'd only ever loved one person; Lily had not been so lucky. She fought the urge to run to Severus and throw her arms around his neck.

She shook herself; those impulses were no longer appropriate. Even if she wasn't married. Even if she wasn't carrying another man's child. Even if he really was a... Merlin, she couldn't even bear to think it. None of it mattered. Whatever might have existed between them had died a long time ago. She only needed to accept it.

When the tea and biscuits were ready, she found herself seated opposite him, pouring out. He seemed taller than she remembered, and thinner too. His face looked more pained, and a few faint lines creased his brow.

He accepted his cup with a nod of thanks. She knew how he took his tea. This seemed to please the pale, nearly gaunt figure.

Occasional pangs of guilt hit Lily as she sipped from her own cup. James believed all that had ever been said of Severus. Nearly everyone she knew had been convinced of the very worst; only Dumbledore seemed to hold out hope that her old confidant was anything other than a monster. And she could sit across from him, thrilled just to be with him again.

"How are things for you? It's been so long since we've seen one another." She fought to keep control of her shaking voice and tried to look casual, sipping her tea.

Severus gave her an appraising look before he answered. "My present affairs have been greatly successful."

For the first time, Lily felt scared. She'd heard what he was up to. To think that there was pride in his voice whilst talking of such things was disturbing.

"I trust you are well?" he asked. The words were casual, but the tone was one better suited to appalling obscenities.

Lily could see no point in delaying the inevitable. "You've heard then?"

"You must forgive me if I do not offer my congratulations, of course." He wore the expression of one who had a particularly foul odour under his nose.

She chose to ignore his remark. "We really are thrilled. Couldn't be more pleased. And James especially, talks nothing but Quidditch training and..." Lily trailed off. The dark eyes were flashing menacingly at her.

"Did you assume that my son would not take after his *father*?" she spat. She had emphasised the last word, and it gone through Severus Snape like a bolt of lightning.

At once, a terrible change overtook him. His face contorted with nearly inhuman anguish and rage. Slamming his cup on the table, he rose and stood with his back to her. His long, white fingers gripped the windowsill, and she could see from the rise and fall of his shoulders that he was breathing heavily.

She sat quietly, waiting. She knew that it would not be long before the outburst came. Her hand went instinctively to the inner pocket of her robes, where she tightly grasped the thin strip of willow. She felt a stab of guilt for it and hoped he would not notice. She felt shame for her desire to protect herself and her child from her old friend, her former lover.

A low grumble escaped his throat. "How could you... with him, Lily? It sickens me. His unworthy hands on you..." Something like a sob choked him into silence for a moment. When he found his voice, it was barely a whisper. "He doesn't deserve to touch you. Not fit to look at you, let alone..."

"You are speaking about my husband," she said evenly, cutting him off. Her guilt was mounting. Her external responses were those of a proper wife, but her heart screamed a different message.

He snorted disdainfully. After a moment, he again turned to face her. His face was no longer contorted with rage, but sagging under the weight of terrible sadness.

He crossed the kitchen and knelt in front of her, his arms slowly sliding around her middle. "Oh Merlin. What have I done, Lily? How has this happened?" His head lowered until his face was hidden from her view, resting against her robe-clad thighs.

A voice in her head said that this was wrong. Severus was not her husband, and she should maintain a polite distance. She should push him away, really she should. It was wrong for Lily to feel such longing and comfort from her proximity to her old friend.

How many times? How many times had they sat just like this? Out of habit, she leaned forward to circle his head with her arms, her face coming to rest between his shoulder blades. She inhaled his scent and smiled. This was the posture of comfort that the two had shared time and again since the age of nine. First, for beatings from his father; then, following attacks from other students. This was so natural to her, and it felt so right. A peace stole over both of them. Lily relaxed into it for only a moment. She suddenly remembered all that had passed between them.

"I think you know exactly how and why this happened." There were obvious tears in her voice. "You changed it all. I offered everything to you, everything, and you could think of nothing but besting James."

She took a shaky, deep breath. She could feel his tears soaking her thigh. Very slowly, she forced him to meet her gaze. She wanted him to see her, see that it had not been easy for her either.

Tears poured from the onyx eyes she knew so well. She had stared into them since she was a child. For so long, they'd been her best source of comfort. She'd never imagined that it would come to this. Onyx and emerald met and melded. She felt the probing, and she opened herself to him. She had never been one to hide from him; she had never wanted to hide from him. His mind had been the first part of him that had been sheathed within her, and it was still the most arousing, most fulfilling union she'd ever experienced.

At her invitation, Severus entered her mind, moaning as he did so. He deftly avoided all the thoughts and dreams concerning Potter. He was on a mission, and her trivial dreams of an egotistical tosspot were of no use to him. The two were sitting rather close together, and he'd feared she'd find it off-putting if he were to vomit on her. He continued to sift through dreams and memories. He felt her fear and tried to soothe her, but he kept looking. He had to check if it was still there.

His heart nearly stopped in his chest when he picked up traces of himself. This particular memory was hidden, but also treasured. He felt an elation, a fire stir within him. She still kept the memory of their first night together. He heard his present self groan aloud with pleasure; in the memory, she clung to his hand. Her voice had been soft, her eyes molten. She had pulled him along the corridor of the seventh floor. She had paced and then backed through a door, beckoning him to follow.

Severus pushed his own pleasurable recollections of that night into her mind. He relived it through her eyes and with her sensations. He had always hoped, though never dared to suspect, that her feelings for him were so deep, so passionate. Severus was both overwhelmed and terrified at the love contained within her recollection. As the memory ended, he could see that it was almost entirely clouded by sadness. It now made her weep to think of them together.

When it was over, he slipped back out of her mind. Each refocused their gaze on the other. Her emerald eyes were full of tears, as were his own.

"You hold onto that still?" His choked voice held such hope and more than a little pain.

Lily laughed softly, bitterly through her tears. "Always. Severus, you didn't look carefully enough. I've held onto all of it. Every second we've ever spent together. Every word. Every touch. Every kiss. I can't let go. I'll never be able to let go." When she'd finished, her voice was barely a whisper.

"Lily," he groaned. He felt a tremor pass over her body. She knew; she felt it; she was still holding on. Though he knew it was selfish, he was glad that there was still a place in her heart for him. All he wanted to do was kiss her, but fear of rejection held him back. What was more, he knew that even if she did grant him one last moment with her, it could never be enough.

He tightened his hold on her to bury his face against her, breathe her in. His arms closed around her, and she relaxed against him this time. Severus felt his heart lift not only at her acquiescence but also at the increased contact between their bodies. Just as he was losing himself in her embrace, he noticed the difference. A slight, but still noticeable, swelling of her mid-section that proved she was no longer his. He threw himself from her to sit on the floor, his face in his hands.

"Severus," she began, but she was cut off short.

"It should be mine," he growled to the floor. Meeting her gaze, he said in a much stronger voice, "You should both be mine."

Lily was just beginning to feel remorse when he continued. His voice had a dark, brittle edge that she'd not heard before. *I hate your child!* never thought I would be the sort to hate an innocent child, but I fear that I will. I will always lay blame on his shoulders. I could pretend that you might have one day left James for me, but you'd never leave your child. Listen to what a twisted bastard I've become. Ironic, isn't it? I've been party to murder and torture and still been able to maintain some shred of my humanity. But your son will finally turn me into my father." His laugh was hollow.

This time, it was Lily who flew into a rage. She stood up so quickly that her chair toppled over. Her face was going red. "That's lovely, Severus. Blame an innocent child because of who his father is. If you recall, there was another option. It might have gone another... You *know* why that's not so. As I recall, you had several chances to reverse the situation, but **YOU DID NOTHING!**" She pointed her finger at him accusingly and began to pace.

"No, Severus. You couldn't let it be about me then, and it isn't about me now, either. It's about your precious status within the De..."

At once he stood and clasped a hand over her mouth. "Do not even speak it." His eyes darted about, as though expecting they would suddenly have an audience. When she'd relaxed somewhat, he removed his hand. Without thinking or even caring what the outcome might be this time, he kissed her.

His kiss. Lily felt the response spread throughout her entire body like fingers of flame. As if by instinct, her arms reached up to circle his neck, and her hips pushed against his. She was lost in bliss for a mere moment, until suddenly, James' face appeared in her mind. At once, her arms lowered. She found her feet and stood up straight. Though she did not push him away from her, she no longer responded. After a moment, Severus realised it too. He had no words for her as he took a measured step backward.

"This time, it has to end here. I'm sorry, Severus. I am married to James. I carry his child." Her voice was pleading, but there were no tears. He stared at her left hand splayed over her middle, the light caught the stone of her wedding ring. The kitchen seemed to echo with emptiness. "The child is not yours, nor am I your wife."

"It could be..."

"No, Severus, it couldn't. We both know there is no way." His face held an expression appropriate for one being subjected to the most cruel torture.

In an instant, the vulnerable sincerity was replaced by a mask of cold detachment. "I offer my most sincere apologies, *Mrs. Potter*."

Before either of them knew what had happened, Lily's hand had made contact with his cheek. "Blow it out your pompous, self-martyring arse!"

Once again, he closed in on her. For a split second, she thought he would strike her. But he didn't. He stood over her, but did not touch her. "I love you," he finally said.

"You don't know what love is, Severus. If you loved me, you wouldn't have called me your 'victory.' You'd have left with me the night before my wedding. Death Eaters and Voldemort be hanged. You wouldn't care about *them*. You would have taken me away. And now I'm lost to you." She was shaking with her sobs. Lily put her face in her hands, but she could not stop crying.

Severus roughly grasped her upper arms and shook her slightly. "Dammit, woman! You still don't understand. When the Dark Lord wants to find someone, he will. There is no hiding; there is no escape. He would have found us and killed me. You would most likely not have been so lucky. Tell me, would you fancy spending the rest of your life as a plaything for Lucius Malfoy?"

There was fear in his eyes, and in her eyes, there was revulsion, but he had to keep going. This was his last chance to say everything he'd kept inside for years. He had to take it. "Listen to me. I only joined them when I thought that you were lost to me. By the time I realised you still loved me, there was nothing I could do. I can't turn *this in*," he said as he raised the left sleeve of his robes, baring the skull and serpent burned in black upon his flesh, "and resign. Don't you see? It's no use."

Lily pulled away from him sharply. "It's my fault that you'll never do anything good with your life? Get out!"

"No."

"Get out, or I swear, I'll call James!" Her hand plunged into her robes, and a split second later, her wand was trained on his heart.

"If you think I'd be afraid of that puffed-up, gormless wanker, you are sadly mistaken, Madam Potter." Somehow, here married name sounded like a terrible curse on his lips. And she cringed not only at the sound but also at the expression that came over his features as he said it. She did not want this to end badly.

"Severus, I don't want it to be like this..."

He cut across her sharply, laughing coldly. "You are foolish indeed. Do you think it would be anything short of agony to see you with *this* child? I can barely look at you now." He paused and choked back a sob as tears began to flow freely over his sunken face. "I feel as though every touch of his erases a touch of mine. Gods, Lily, he was inside you, and he has been many times. That was meant for me, for me only." He was breathing heavily, anger and despair battling for supremacy in his voice.

"And now, now, you carry his child. I never... couldn't manage to..." He breathed heavily several times and then advanced on her and took her in his arms roughly. "But Merlin knows, I tried. That first night and every time after... I prayed that it would happen. I had even thought of brewing a potion... to make sure... so there would be a child. A child to bind us forever... I... never... if you'd found out..." He could say nothing else as the sobbing overtook him, and he nearly collapsed against her. Her arms circled around him; she was torn, as always. She did not want to betray James, but she could not help but try to comfort her first love.

Very slowly, still entwined, they slid down the wall to the floor. His terrible, racking sobs and her soft gasping seemed magnified in the otherwise silent house. Covered in each other's tears, they sat for sometime, each stroking the face and hair of the other.

At last, Severus broke the silence. "Will you tell me one last time?" He did not look up. He could not.

Lily felt the familiar swelling in her chest. It had begun when she was just fourteen, the first time she'd told him. It had happened every time after. She always thought of it as the power of her love for him. But now, instead of joy, it brought her painful shame.

The hard bump in her belly seemed to block the expansion of the familiar warm glow. Her tears flowed thickly over her face. She could not lie, but she was tormented by the truth. With effort, Lily steadied herself to give the true answer. She owed at that much to both Severus and herself. She gently forced him to meet her gaze. When their eyes melded, she sat, enjoying the connection for what felt like an eternity.

"I love you, Severus."

He was overcome with emotion. He slowly brought his face toward hers, but she stopped him. Once again, their eyes met, and Lily found her resolve crumbling. A weak voice in her mind began to chant: *What about James? You're his wife now, remember?*

Their lips met again, and this time, it was kiss of fire and kindling, burning and all consuming. Lily found herself arching her back so that her hips and breasts were flattened against the tense, muscular body of her first love. Lightning bolts ran throughout her body, sizzling and tingling everything in their path.

The years had not dampened her desire for him, just like her marriage to James had done nothing to quench the thirst for Severus that seemed to originate from her very soul. His hands felt right. He needed no prompting, no hints. Severus knew her, all of her, and he savoured his knowledge.

Severus was lost to the dark tidal wave of his long, pent-up emotions. Practically the first pleasant thing he could remember was the primal pull he'd felt toward Lily. As a young boy, he'd had no concept of what it might mean, and he'd become hopelessly addicted to that feeling almost instantly.

His hands found her breasts, and without hesitation, he began to stimulate her nipples until they were poking pleasantly through her robes. While his left hand continued its ministrations, his right began a subtle trip towards her hip. He knew what he wanted and what would make her most readily come undone. However, he reasoned that in her present *condition*, it would be best to proceed with caution.

Lily's breath hitched, and she began to pull at his robes. In her heightened state of urgency, the simple workings of buttons seemed to have escaped her. Her fevered brain had lost all impulses, save the one that seemed to draw her straight to Severus. *I want him. Gods, I have to have him. Yes, oh yes... It's been so long... so... yes, just there... long.*

Lily had spent the last two years reasoning the issue with herself, and she had come to the conclusion that James was just not as capable a lover as Severus. James tried so hard to please her. He was attentive and gentle and so... not Severus. Her greatest fear was that James would discover that not only had he not been the first, he wasn't even the best. She hadn't lied; he'd just never asked her if she'd been with anyone else. James made her feel safe and wanted and treasured. It was more than most women could hope for in a lover, let alone a husband.

But Severus, yes. Every fibre of her being seemed to sing at the slightest touch. She fit in his arms; her body was perfectly proportioned to his. There was an intangible darkness emanating from him, like a forbidden nectar. The taste and fell of his mouth were so delicious that it frightened her.

Suddenly, she pulled away from him and stood. Her robes were almost completely unbuttoned, exposing her rather insubstantial undergarments to his eyes. She stood for a moment, wide-eyed and breathing heavily, anxious in the heat of his appraising stare. "Plump is not really the best look, is it?"

Severus actually licked his lips. "To me you are perfect."

Lily smiled. "Not here. Come with me." It was a command, a plea and a gift of the Gods all rolled into one.

Severus stood with some difficulty, based on the intensity of his arousal. He blushed and nearly grinned at her. But the heat that he found radiating from her eyes drove away all amusement and embarrassment from his mind. Her hands grasped on of his and pulled him along. He was giddy with the unexpectedness of this scenario. He made it to the foot of the stairs in his euphoria before a loathsome reality crashed over him.

"I'm not going to *his* bed." He stopped in his tracks. Lily stared at him through the incomprehension of passion and desire. He reached out to her and, stroking her cheek, said, "Lily, I will take you. I will make you mine again, but I cannot give and take as completely as you deserve. I won't be able to fulfil as you expect in a place where I know someone else..."

His deep, sultry voice of molten silver was cut short by her crushing, needy kiss. She did not release him until they were both light-headed with the intensity between them. "I'm sorry... I didn't think. With a bit of Transfiguration on the sofa, I think that the lounge would suit?"

For an answer, he kissed her and swept her into his arms. In three strides, they were in the centre of the small lounge. Severus set her down and walked to the window, conjuring heavy drapes. When he'd shut out the outside world, he turned and realised that Lily had not only lit candles but also stood before him wearing only a thin brassiere and the tiniest pair of knickers he'd ever dared to imagine.

His breath caught in his throat as he raised trembling hands to the buttons of his robes. He kept eye contact with her as he removed them. A quick swipe of his wand, and the rove on the floor became a rather wide and decadent looking Roman-style settee. Lily raised an eyebrow; in approval or derision, he couldn't tell.

"You're so beautiful. Let me see you." His voice was the silkiest of seductive whispers. Lily complied, raising trembling hands to the clasp at her back. Her green gaze focused on him as she slowly lowered the garment to fully reveal her breasts. His low rumble of approval sent a shiver through her body. His own hands went to the buttons at the placket of his trousers as he sat on the newly Transfigured settee.

She moved to stand in front of him just as he leaned down to remove his own boots and socks. As he righted himself, his nose just grazed a nipple. Her hands glided over his shoulders and into his hair. Severus hoped he wouldn't pass out from lack of blood to the brain, as ever more of his body's supply seemed to be headed south.

His tongue teased and flicked the nipple of one breast as his left hand attended to the other. Lily was moaning and arching her body into his mouth. His right hand wandered down her lower back to teasingly caress the fabric of her knickers. Between the workings of his mouth and wanderings of his hands, Lily felt drunk on passion. She had kept her hands in his hair, but was gradually overtaken with the need to do a bit of her own exploring. Her hands stroked over his chest and flicked at his nipples. At this, Severus pulled away from her just long enough to let out a hiss of appreciation. She wanted more of a reaction from him. Flushing, she remembered his intensity and how she'd revelled in it. There was something powerfully erotic about making the normally stoic, controlled man whimper and moan with passion. She pulled away from him, and he scowled at her for a moment before sharply drawing in his breath. She smirked as her hand found its way into his opened trouser front. As her hand disappeared, she sank to her knees in front of him.

His eyes went wide as she pushed between his knees, and her hand wrapped softly around his shaft. She stroked him gently, excruciatingly slowly. His eyes drifted closed, and his head dropped back. The feeling of her slender fingers sliding up and down his length was going to be his undoing.

"Lily..." he breathed. "...Ahhh... I won't last... Please, not like this... don't... want..."

The emerald eyes blazed and widened as she looked up at him and leaned forward. Severus leaned down to catch her in a kiss, but at the last possible moment, she ducked and wrapped the smooth head of his penis in her warm, welcoming mouth.

From a lifetime of strict self-control and measured reactions to shouting in primal pleasure... oh, how the mighty can fall. "Gods, Lily! So... good. You... yes, just like that. Just. Like. That!" A tightness just below his navel warned him that he was close to his climax. As wonderful as the prospect of coming in her mouth might be, he needed her to reach her peak first.

In one swift, fluid movement, he'd pulled her mouth off of his now painfully erect penis and deposited her in the centre of the settee. She landed on her back, her knees bent. She pushed up on her elbows to look at him. He stood over her, breathing heavily, his onyx eyes full of black fire.

Lily blushed furiously. "I'm sorry. I thought you'd like me to..."

In a flash, Severus was lying next to her, cradling her in his well-muscled arms. "No, no, my darling. No, I only want to make sure that you are fully satisfied. He leaned closer and breathed into her ear. "Please don't deny me the intense pleasure of spilling my seed inside you."

At these words, his fingers slid along the already damp crotch of her knickers. She shivered at the touch and opened her thighs wider for him. He began to stroke her, ever so delicately. The thin, now sodden, fabric served to make the sensation more erotic for the both of them. Her hips bucked and pushed against him a delightfully

encouraging manner.

Severus had thought that he couldn't be wound any tighter, but at her wanton reactions, he found he'd been quite mistaken. He wordlessly vanished her knickers and delved his fingers into her extremely slick folds, seeking her centre.

Lily could not believe how stimulating she found his manipulations. She'd tried to convince herself that her memories were exaggerated and glossed over. How wrong she'd been; this was beyond delight and pleasure, such that it nearly bordered on pain.

Lily raised her head to look at him between ragged breaths. Sounding as though she were choking back sobs, Lily gasped, "I forgot how amazing... ahhhh... you are. I need to feel you... Oh, please, Gods, Severus...fuck me!"

Shaken as he was by her request, Severus gave no outward sign. He smirked and shifted his weight slightly. "Lily, there is much you've forgotten. Haven't I always put your pleasure first?" With that, he slid down to position himself between her thighs.

She let out a half sigh, half wail. Severus smiled and leaned in to explore her sweet, pink crux. Lily's eyes rolled back in her head. His tongue moved over her clit, then circled, and finally delved into her. He repeated the pattern again and again. Lily was sure she would black out from the pleasure.

His mouth moved away from her suddenly, causing her to raise her head and look at him blearily. His black eyes burned with a near-frightening intensity. "Tell me, Lily. Talk to me. I want to know your pleasure.... Please, let me hear you."

His lips and talented tongue returned to their former delights, and the overwhelming tide of dark pleasure once again swept her away. Her brain was lost to the hot fog of ecstasy, though she found she could produce words. "Yesssss, yes, oh, it's so good. It's so hot when you lick me like that. Fuck me with your tongue."

As he obeyed her command, she threw her head back to moan. She seemed to regain the ability to form words again more quickly this time. "Make me come. Oh, Gods, I need it so bad. I want to come in your mouth! Do you want me to?"

"Yes! Come for me, my love," he whispered in between licking her clit. "I want to taste you. Come for me, and then you can taste your own sweetness on my lips and tongue."

That was all it took to send Lily soaring over the edge, and then over again. She was coming in waves, not fully over one orgasm before she was powerfully hit by the next. Only Severus could ever bring her this far. It was not something she thought much about, or even acknowledged, but it was true. She had dreams sometimes that took her back to her time with him, remembering the pleasure. But the best was yet to come.

Her whole body was taken over in tremors; her guttural moans and thrashing were becoming more erratic. Severus was close to his own climax from the feel, the taste and, most of all, the beautiful sight of Lily in the throes of her passion. It was an image he wanted to fix in his mind for eternity.

"Please, please now. Your cock... your mind... I need them both in me... please. Now!"

Severus required no further persuasion from her. At once, she found they were positioned in the middle of the settee, Severus poised at her entrance. He kissed her as promised, and she greedily took the combined flavour of his natural taste and her pleasure. He pulled slightly away, and as if on cue, Lily's eyes sprang open.

"Yes, now, Severus," she cried as he simultaneously sheathed his length within her silken depths and entered her mind fully. Each could feel the pleasure of the other, as well as their own. They communicated without words. All thoughts and feelings were shared and laid bare. Each was entirely open, humbled and connected to the other.

No words can adequately describe the pleasure of a union, so complete. Locked together, in body and mind, physical strokes accompanied by mental caresses. It was beyond comprehension and time. It was more than love; it was naked, primitive and pure.

I only feel like my true self like this, with you.

Severus.

Please, my love, please... I need to know....

There was no need for Lily to ask what he was referring to; she knew instantly. Mind to mind as they were, she couldn't even try to hide the truth from him.

I will never love anyone the way that I love you.

Lily felt Severus climax within her just as she was hit with another powerful orgasm.

This is true marriage. The thought escaped her, seemingly of its own volition. The truth caused both of them to freeze. After a moment, Lily broke down. Her sobs drowned her thoughts. An entirely different kind of involuntary spasms overtook her body. Tears clouded her vision and tightened her throat. Her hands covered her face, wanting to hide as much as she'd longed, only moments before, to be completely open to him.

To Severus, her withdraw was a bucket of ice water straight to the face. Instinctively, he cradled her protectively while stroking her gently. He'd rolled slightly to one side so that she wouldn't be crushed under his weight. Severus waited patiently, determined to offer what little comfort he could.

"Lily, I'm sorry. I know I'm asking for more than you can give. I've no wish to hurt you more than I already have," he said softly, his voice strained with regret.

"Don't you understand? It's not you. Well, it isn't only you. I love you. You love me. We can't ever be together. Ever. I'm being hunted by your boss.... My husband would kill you on sight. I am going to have a child, another man's child. Look at me, look what I've done. I'm in bed with a man who is not the father of my child.... A man who should, by his job description, kill me on sight."

"I don't know what to say. You're right. We can't be together. We can't," he whispered, his voice breaking. Severus took a moment, gathering his composure. "But you have no reason to feel guilty...."

"Of course you'd say that. You hate James, always have," she interrupted. A look of panic came across her face. "Please, Severus, tell me this isn't about him.... Tell me this is about only you and me?"

He gently stroked her cheek, a pained look coming over his face. "Lily, I love you. I will not lie; there is no love lost between Potter and myself. But believe me when I say that you are everything to me. You always have been. It is not your fault that two men love you with all the passion they can muster. You are not to blame for two fools' lack of restraint."

Severus reached out to gently squeeze her hand, every fibre of his being pleading with her. In spite of all she knew about his powers of persuasion, and all she knew that he had done, Lily believed that in this moment, he was more himself than he'd been in years.

"Whatever claim any other person has on you, I loved you first. I can't change now. No one else has ever loved me, and I was such a small boy when first I came under your spell. I can't stop now. You know me well enough to know that I have only one way of doing things. Loving you is all I know...." His voice drifted softly away.

Lily sat up and pulled him to join her. Face to face they sat; no words were spoken for the space of an eternity. She reached out to touch his cheek with her delicate fingertips. She smiled sadly for all that could have been, and for all that could never be.

"I love you, Severus. I am married to James; I will have his child. But you are the only person in the world who knows everything about me. From the very best, to the very worst, I have no secrets from you." Lily looked at him with the most beautiful humility. "I'm not sorry for what's happened between us. I'm sorry for James. He truly deserves a wife who can love him with her whole heart. I love you, Severus."

It was just like the dream that Severus had dreamed a million times. He was back with Lily, and they were in love. He could forget that there was another man coming home for her. He could pretend the small bump in her belly had been his doing.

"I love James, too," Lily continued unsteadily.

His warm elation left him to be replaced by chilling emptiness. A groan threatened to escape him. Biting his lip, Severus managed to hold it in. He could not stand to add to her pain; he would not burden her with guilt for him.

"I love you both. You don't want to hear it, but that's the truth. And I love you too much not to give you the truth. My love for him has no effect on my love for you."

Severus could see the light in her eyes and nodded, though he found little comfort in it. Try as he might, he couldn't help but ask, "Will you be sharing this same truth with your *husband*?" He really was trying to make the word 'husband' sound less like the word 'bastard,' but it wasn't easy for him.

This time, she was the one to look away. He could barely hear her voice when she said, "No."

Tucking a finger under her chin, he tilted her head so that he could engage her eyes once more. He stared at her in silence, and when he felt he had sufficient control of himself, he asked, "Why?" He used his most silken, deepest voice.

Shame crept over her beautiful face as a single tear trailed down her cheek. "He could never understand me like you do. He could not stand the truth." Her voice was the most delicate of whispers.

Severus was stunned for a moment, and then a wave of triumph washed over him. It would seem silly that after so many denials and losses, this one small victory would thrill him. But it did. He'd finally gotten his revenge. Lily had admitted that he, Severus, understood her better than *James Bloody Potter*. His heart swelled. She would never be his wife, never bear his child, but Potter would never have this.

He could have shouted in joy, but he noticed that she did not share in his jubilation. She looked as though she were in intense pain; at once, his delight was gone. His pleasure meant nothing if Lily was in pain.