

Death Shall Have No Dominion

by Melenka

Follow up to Just a Little Bit and response to the comma and 'that' challenges.

Avowal

Chapter 1 of 1

Follow up to Just a Little Bit and response to the comma and 'that' challenges.

Though they go mad, they shall be sane,

Though they sink through the sea, they shall rise again,

Though lovers be lost, Love shall not.

And Death Shall Have No Dominion.

Dylan Thomas

The dust irritated his nose slightly less than the memories inflamed his nerves. It had ever been a place of sorrow. Harry's youthful optimism and belief in the possibility for justice had once kept death at bay in this room. Sirius wondered how his godson felt about the choice now. He looked down at the body and growled. This was not how it was to happen.

"Severus." The name was at once a curse and a prayer. The body chose not to respond. Being dead tended to have such effect.

"I won't let you win this way." Anger bled through his words along with something else. Betrayal. His need for Severus defied explanation. Sirius shivered at the thought. Leaving him to die made perfect sense. There would be no one to track him down. He would be unstoppable.

"And there's the rub." Sirius closed his eyes against the panoply of things he could do. Things for which Severus would surely have hunted him down.

"You promised." He had come to it at last. They had made a pact. Not even death could be allowed to stand in the way.

Sirius knelt beside the body. "Bugger me for a fool." *He could at least have had the decency to look undignified in death.* He looked regal. It would gall Severus to know he'd managed beauty and nobility at the end.

"Reason enough to bring you back." Severus was not entirely dead. Some things were beyond his strange new magic. Almost entirely dead could be managed.

He searched the body for weapons. "Not even a wand?" Sirius shook his head. The expected rant upon realization might well become a cherished memory. Some things were not changed by death or near-death. Severus' attachment to his wand was eternal. He was stalling when there was no time to delay. Perhaps he wanted his nemesis to die.

There was the girl to consider. The battle raged beyond the thin walls of this place. She must be in the thick of it. She charged in to save people without a thought to herself. He rather liked her gallant streak. He liked many things about her. He called up her scent with a thought. It was the best he could do to keep her close. Only dreams and memories brought back the way she twisted beneath him and whispered his name in protest and longing.

She had thought to love him. *A fool's errand.* Her heart had been given before they'd tangled. It had not stopped him from taking the offer. Severus might hold back out of a sense of propriety. Sirius had no such compunction.

He leaned over and placed his lips over Severus'.

"Damn you." The whisper of desired ruin was meant for them both.

Darkness. Sweet peace. The moment of satisfaction at the end of the line. He was certain he had been granted these things as a sop. They should not have been so welcome. He let himself bask in the rightness of having done what was necessary. Nothing else mattered.

It was a horrid lie. One thing mattered. He simply could not do anything about it. She would either mourn or not. There was no doubt she would go on and eventually forget. Perhaps it was for the best. Another lie.

He sighed. *Did I?* It took a moment of contemplation to be sure. The breath had been fleeting but real. Perhaps it was a last expulsion of air. The thought comforted him.

A terrible rending. Screaming pain. Light. Light. Light too bright to bear. And then...

It must be memories. He deserved to be haunted. He deserved far worse. He hadn't expected it to come in this form. The sweet kiss offered in jest was something he had put from him long ago. Yet here it was. He should not have been surprised. Hiding who and what he was had become second nature. Death had stripped away artifice and left only truth. He had loved three times. The end of life should have brought the end of longing. It was not to be.

The pain threatened to break him. He arched against a phantom of remembrance and was filled. The desire to live warred with horror over what was being done to him. Magic poured from perfect lips and flooded him. He should burst from it. He should choose to die rather than suffer this abomination. Strong fingers threaded through his hair and held him in place. Strength of will demanded he live. He stopped fighting and let the power take him. It was as intoxicating as the first time they had touched. It was as painful as their mutual agreement. It was what should never be. It was divine.

Sirius broke away with a sob. He was drained and shaking. Irony would insist Severus kill him on the spot. He hoped to have enough recovery time to put up a good fight. He chuckled. It would be a shame to bring Severus back only to disappoint him. Sirius lay back on the floor and stared at the broken ceiling until his breath returned to normal and the edge of his magic crept back in.

"You son of a bitch." The scratchy voice could have belonged to a man centuries old.

"An accurate assessment of my mother and therefore a poor insult." His own voice was fragile.

"I won't be in debt to you." Strength of will gave depth to the words. Severus had always been bolstered by his anger.

Sirius sighed. "This was not about life debt."

"What then?"

"Love." The word hung between them like the poisonous snake who had brought them to this moment.

"Fuck you." Pure vehemence. All was right with the world again.

"Pithy. Not your usual style." Sirius turned his head. Dark eyes filled with fury and pain held him as tight as an embrace. "You mistake me. You usually do. One would think I'd be used to it by now."

"Then set me straight. What was your real purpose here?"

"The one I achieved. I wanted to ensure you lived."

Severus spoke through clenched teeth. "To what end?"

"Mine." Sirius smiled. "When it's all over. They think the battle will settle everything. You and I know it's never quite so simple."

"Not simple at all." Severus looked away. "What did you do to me?"

"The same thing I did to her. I gave you what power I could pass on. I have no idea how long it will last. Perhaps forever. It will certainly last long enough for you to locate a wand." He could not suppress the smile. "And all I took for payment was the pleasure of your kiss."

Severus ignored the last bit and proceeded to indulge in an impressive string of profanity over the loss of his wand. He exhausted his expansive vocabulary and fell silent.

Sirius waited for the next revelation. This was a familiar process. Part of him ached for what Severus would learn about himself. Another part reveled in it.

"They think me dead." There was a wistful quality about the statement.

Sirius shrugged. "You were."

"I could disappear and no one would be the wiser." Severus fixed Sirius with a dark look. "Unless you tell them."

"Your secrets have always been safe with me."

"Do you expect me to believe you never once discussed..." Severus could not continue.

"Never." Sirius shifted until their arms touched. "The others knew of the prank. It was all they ever knew. The second time I kissed you was to satisfy curiosity. The third time we touched was because you asked. Don't paint me the villain for what passed between us."

"I have plenty of other reasons to vilify you."

"Entirely true. I was a right bastard in my youth."

"You haven't improved much." There was just a hint of a smile.

"On to more current affairs." Sirius grinned as Severus clenched his jaw. "Did you reveal what happened last summer?"

"Certainly not." The indignation was palpable.

"Why not? You'd little reason to protect me."

Severus glared at him. "You made sure I had every reason."

"I suppose I did. Selfish of me." The confession cost him nothing.

"I did not do it for you."

The denial was predictable. It was also a lie. Sirius let it go. "Your concern is for Hermione and the spell she wears. How very noble."

Severus closed his eyes. "I would not go so far as noble. Practical is more accurate."

"Your death put her in danger. It really was inconsiderate of you."

Severus' mouth twisted into a wry smile. "I was not given much choice."

"Then it's a good thing I came around to set things right."

"You should have left me dead." A sense of resignation and regret tinged his words. "She is better off with me out of her life and out of the world."

Sirius propped himself up on one elbow. "We'll set aside how much she loves you as a given. I won't even take you to task for breaking her heart. Again. Your self-loathing blinds you to truly important considerations."

"Such as?"

"Your willingness to shuffle off this mortal coil creates an incredibly dangerous situation. Hermione would be particularly vulnerable if you were to actually die."

"I sincerely doubt it. She is a resilient woman. I was nothing more than a school girl obsession. She will move beyond it and forget."

Sirius growled an epithet. "I sometimes forget you can be astoundingly stupid when it comes to women. Did dying make you forget the ramifications of our summer adventure?"

"I remember everything about it."

"Then consider what the spell will do if you are gone. It will find someone who loves her and put them in the third spot. Consider Ron Weasley being faced with so much power and no bloody idea what to do."

"He is more resourceful than most people think." The confession could not have been more painful if extracted during torture. Severus shook it off and continued. "I concede the point on a larger scale. You doomed her in more ways than one."

"Creating tragedy is a specialty of mine."

"So I have noticed."

Their gaze held until Sirius could no longer suppress a smile. "I do so try to make it worthwhile."

The only acknowledgment was a grunt. Severus struggled to sit up. Sirius got to his knees and assisted. Their arms stayed locked for a moment longer than truly necessary. Neither could say who pulled away first.

"I will keep to my promise to remain out of your life and hers." Sirius rose to his feet. Dust marred his black jeans. Brushing at them did little good. "You have the choice to reveal yourself to her or not. The spell will find us if we're needed."

"I am half-dead and wandless. The world I knew has ceased to exist. I have no choice but to trust to your understanding of the spell. Any other decision must wait. I need time to recover."

"You may want to hurry. She's a beautiful young woman. I'd hate to see you denied your love again."

"Spare me your concern. You know nothing of love."

"You will never believe I loved you. Inasmuch as I was capable of loving anyone." Sirius shrugged at the repercussions of a callow youth. "Having you hate me is almost as passionate and therefore satisfying in its own way. I wouldn't suggest you try it with anyone less perverse." The warning was clear. He doubted Severus would heed it.

"Go. You will need a head-start if you are to evade me." The warmth in his tone could have been anger.

Sirius grinned and walked out of the Shrieking Shack for the last time.