

Hurt

by Fenrir

a sort of song fic for those who recognize what they've loved, lost, and done wrong.

...if I could start again...

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Completely not owning the HP universe. Utterly inspired by the Man in Black's version of NIN's Hurt.

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By A.R. Taloff/Fenrir

Severus moved through the gateway, aware that the two Death Eaters that had been following him had long since moved away. Whether due to the angelic guardians on either wall or the confusion of him entering a graveyard, he did not know, and realized, didn't care. The sky was dark, thick with clouds, angry dark grey and black. They scudded across the sky, though sun never touched the hollowed grounds. Simple plaques, dark and light, huge monoliths, epitaphs all glared at him, watching his slow march to the destination.

He rarely missed this day, rarely ignored the pain, because it was one of the few things he could feel. Pain of longing, regret. He liked that. It made him remember that he was alive, real--pain let him know he was human.

The shining grey stone waited for him, the etchings simple and yet, worthy of her. She was worthy of so much more. He knew why she'd made her choice. It would be ridiculous of him to think her a fool. Choices were made. Decisions carried out. Realizing that made him feel alive as well. Humanity and understanding so very rarely echoed inside him, but when it did, he treasured it like a child treasures a stuffed teddy bear or an imaginary friend.

He had given it all up for her. Given up his harsh desires, his wants, and his pursuits. All that he'd promised was now nearly void. Breaking oaths wasn't in his fiber, but her death had made him recognize what he should have and could have done. It reverberated deeply, shedding light on all that he had witnessed, the dark parts of his soul that he tried hard to not see.

He'd taken up a new task, a new devotion. It hurt to watch him—watch that *child* that could have been his—grow up. Severus wanted that. He wanted it as he had wanted her. He wanted the simplicity of marriage, but instead was stained by the aching hurt of not having that. She had chosen the other for reasons he still never knew. Couldn't fathom. Gods, he wanted to know why. Why had she done that? He wondered if she thought of that before she died. If she had chosen him over the other, would things have been different?

Scraping his hand down the stone, he followed her name. He'd loved her with a passion that had lived short and burned clean the darkness within. The pain he'd felt, the resentment, the hurt of childhood. Deep seated hate of bullies and the fear of them also was gone. She had brought that out of him, made him clean. It was hard to even think of that withered emotion, as it was only dust now. He'd buried it deep, but every time he came here, it was as though it woke up again, stabbing away at his insides,

letting him know his mistakes.

Everyone he'd loved came to this. He would give the world to go back, to offer his life for hers. His empire of dirt for her love and for him to know she knew of his love. He would give it to her—even knowing he could give her naught else.

But he might have made her no better a man than he'd turned into. He might've made her hurt worse than she'd felt when she'd died. He might've been a drunk. He could've beaten the child they'd had. These thoughts, broken and stained, stood as evidence to the good. They kept his darkness numbed.

All he wished, all he loved, was tied into lies by blood.

The bouquet burned scarlet red against the dulled green grass and plain stone. Twenty roses for the years they had lost.

Hearing the quash of feet against the grass and mud, he knew twenty years was all he could wait and knew that it would only hurt a while longer. The pain might drive out the rest. She would be waiting for him on the other side; he knew it.

The first clenching pains trembled through him as he curled to her gravestone, imagining that she held him back, imagining that her arms were wrapped around him and that she was murmuring sweet things to his ear. They would start again where it was fresh, and there was none of the life he'd built here.

As the breath leached out of him, Severus nestled his head against the thorny bouquet of roses, smiling at Lily's grave marker.

A/N: Yeah. Me too. Inspired by Johnny Cash's voice. That man is more beautiful than words can say.

Southern's Note: Bittersweet!