

Original Sin

by Deathofme

AU. Adaptation of a greek myth. Murder. Sex. Betrayal. Albus Dumbledore decides to test the all-powerful nature of the Order of the Phoenix and Severus takes the fall as collateral damage.

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Chapter 1 of 4

AU. Adaptation of a greek myth. Murder. Sex. Betrayal. Albus Dumbledore decides to test the all-powerful nature of the Order of the Phoenix and Severus takes the fall as collateral damage.

A/N The obligatory author's note. This fic is a Major AU as it is a reworking of a Greek myth using the cast of the Potter-verse. Relations, roles and the world itself has been changed around, but my aim is to keep everyone as IC as possible to their essence. The myth I'm following is the House of Atreus, beginning with Tantalus and following through to Orestes (an undertaking of, shall we say, epic proportions?). This is part one of what should be a continuing series.

But you don't need to know the myth to follow along. Murder. Sex. Betrayal. Please heed all genre warnings, and have fun!

Biggest thanks to Duniazade, my beta and springboard. All remaining mistakes are my fault.

ORIGINAL SIN

"Severus?"

Severus looked up from peeling and chopping roots to see Lily standing in the doorway. He couldn't help but grin from ear to ear. She had her hair tied up nicely and was wearing the gown that Father had bought her especially for the occasion.

"You're a vision."

"Hmm, seems I've finally taught you to speak sweetly."

Severus grinned, pecking her lightly on the cheek. He began to finish his errand with more vigour and speed, hoping to finish and still have time with her before their father needed the ingredients he was preparing.

"You still haven't changed."

"No I haven't, *mother*." He grinned wickedly even as she poked him in the side with her wand.

"Ugh, I'm not that old!"

"But you nag me just the same as one."

Lily sniffed, playing offended and dignified. "Well, *someone* had to ensure you had a woman's influence in your education. We can't have too many brutes populating the world."

Severus sighed. "Not according to Father."

Lily touched his arm gently, smiling gently and trying to shake him from his glum thoughts. "He has other uses for you, you know that. You don't need to be like those other trophy boys, always dueling and chasing magical creatures fools, the lot of them."

Severus grinned. He loved hearing Lily speak up for him and talk disdainfully of the other young men they knew. She was the only one who would do or say such things for him. Finally finishing with the last bunch of dandelion roots, Severus quickly wiped his hands on his apron and then wrapped his arms around her waist.

"There, there, now," she chuckled, "always the affectionate one. And no one really knows, do they?"

"You know."

"I do."

She let Severus kiss her several times over, fleeting touches of their lips, before cradling his head against her neck. Their secret kissing games had continued since they were young children. Always innocent, she thought, although she wondered how wise it was to allow it to continue now. He already shaved dark growth from his face. He was almost a man now, even if he still came to her meek and wounded, curling up against her wanting to be held. She would dab murtlap essence on his bruises or hear his tear-choked, angry tirades of the stupidity of the world that could not understand him.

He was still very much a child in that way, she thought. She had perhaps given him too many allowances for too long so that he always came to her and only to her. But she also knew how his peers, the other households and even their father treated him, and could never refuse him her shoulder to cry on, and could never rebuke his anger or tears. Even if he was too dependent on her, she was the only person he had to know kindness.

He stood there, bent awkwardly so that he could rest his head against her shoulder although he was a head taller than her, when the silvery phoenix floated into the lower kitchens.

"Father wants me."

Severus sighed, releasing Lily and going back to his roots. They had to be placed in a specific order on the serving platter. "Tell him these are all done."

Lily pecked him quickly on the cheek before rushing off to the upper kitchens, where their father was working on the special dinner. She gathered her skirts by her sides, the gown was a shimmering green, and bounded up the stairs.

"You called, Father?"

Albus turned around and immediately his face warmed into a smile when he saw his daughter. She was his pride, his first-born, and the child who received the bulk of his love. Beautiful, intelligent and bold enough to attract the attention of the entire magical community. He opened his arms and kissed her on both cheeks before returning to his cauldron.

"The guests will be arriving shortly."

"Yes, Father."

"I would like you to greet them at the door and show them to the dining hall."

"Of course."

Albus then gave her a sly smile, his blue eyes twinkling. "This is a very special dinner of course."

Lily laughed. "We *have* been preparing for over a month."

"Hmm, and you know that an opportunity like this comes very rarely."

Lily knew. It was impossible to remain ignorant of the fact, not only because it had been all Albus had talked of for the entire month but also because of the legendary guest list they were hosting. It wasn't unusual for her uncle Aberforth to visit their house and eat at their table, he usually came every other Christmas and on their birthdays, but for him to bring all the governing masters with him was astonishing. They would have the entire Order of Merlin at their table!

"We will have the most powerful and revered witches sitting at our dinner, Lily. You do understand what this could mean for you as well as my own humble profession?"

"No... I'm not sure I understand what you mean, Father."

Albus smiled warmly, the same sly twinkle in his eye. He took her hand in his, squeezing it fondly, before attending to his cauldron, stirring it thrice counter-clockwise.

"Many of our esteemed governors have sons and daughters around your age. And they know of other families with children as well. You can make friends, build connections."

Lily smiled humouringly, "Those aren't large concerns."

"Still, you will have an honoured place at the table."

Lily's eyes lit up in awe. "I'll be eating with them?"

Albus nodded, delighted that she seemed pleased by the idea.

"And Severus too?"

Albus' face darkened slightly, his brow furrowing and his eyes narrowing in thought. Lily's face fell and she sighed wearily.

"You've always been short-sighted when it comes to Severus, Father. He needs someone to be patient with him."

"And you've been more than patient enough for the both of us. You coddle him and it does no good."

Lily drew herself to her full height, still much shorter than her father, but not allowing herself to be intimidated by his stormy change of heart.

"I do *not* coddle him."

"The boy's always been too sensitive... too withdrawn."

"He isn't around me. You should really see what he's like when he's on his own, Father. He's a different person."

"Yes, *alone*, and that's the problem isn't it? No one can live and only show their merits to an empty room." Albus said disdainfully, pushing his half-moon spectacles farther up the bridge of his nose. Lily was afraid they would get into a full-blown fight, a frequent if harmless occurrence between them, but then saw him deflate.

"But, you have no need to worry, Lily. Severus will have a special place at our dinner table as well."

Instantly, she beamed, her face glowing radiantly. "Thank you, Father."

"He's not harmless, you know." Albus looked at her with a mixture of naked concern but wariness as well, as if he were also appraising the threat she posed to him. "He has many child-like habits you like to feed, and it's unnatural. He'll do you no good in the end. You must be careful, Lily."

"He's my brother, Father, and I'm not afraid of him."

Albus frowned slightly, "Yes... and that's just the problem. No, no, we have no time to argue over this now. Send that brother of yours down here. He's had quite enough time to peel a few vegetables."

Albus then smiled again, all the warmth flooding back into his face, and he kissed her forehead in blessing.

"Everything I'm doing tonight, I'm doing for the better of your future."

Lily smiled. "I know." Then she disappeared down the hallway, the folds of her gown floating about her on the currents of air she created in her swift gait.

Albus turned back to his workstation, gently stirring his cauldron. The water in it was at boiling point now, everything was going perfectly. He took his large kitchen knife, the one for quartering and breaking down his cuts of lamb, and began to sharpen it.

Not soon after, he heard the timid tread of footsteps to the upper kitchens. He could sense Severus behind him, hovering about the doorway, watching him, before finally working up the nerve to announce himself.

"I brought the roots and herbs."

"Into the cauldron," Albus brusquely said, wiping the shavings off his newly sharpened blade with a damp cloth.

Severus carefully placed the different vegetables, roots, and herb leaves into the cauldron in the order Albus had specified. It was a broth they always used to cook their finest cuts of meat in, and it was as delicate to make as any potion. Albus preached precision in all things. Severus could feel a thin film of sweat form on his face and neck from the rising steam of the cauldron.

He then noticed his father had been staring at him... considering him. Appraising him and almost calculating to see whether he fit some secret requirement. Severus shifted uncomfortably under his gaze.

"I was just going to change into my good clothes..."

"The people coming to visit us this evening are the pinnacle of witchcraft and wizardry of our day and age, Severus. They are wise, powerful and shape the currents of how our magical world operates."

Severus cringed. It was not the first time he had tasted the bitterness of having disappointed his father. He was sure this pointed lecture was another underhanded way of letting him know he had fallen short of Albus' expectations.

"They have *so much* power... and sometimes, they must be checked."

Severus looked up, puzzled. What did that mean?

"Father?"

"Sometimes, they must be tested and evaluated just like any other man..."

Albus suddenly gripped Severus' arm and pulled him closer. Though Severus was a tall youth, his father still towered over him, their noses pressed against each other.

"I cannot understand how they are allowed the liberty of never being judged."

"Father, please, you're hurting my arm..."

"Come here, my lamb."

The knife swung suddenly, from above Albus' head and Severus noticed it only when it flashed in front of his eyes and buried itself just above his heart.

He screamed, writhing, and before he could cry out again, the knife swung once more and this time the handle struck his right temple and he reeled, disoriented. Severus' world had suddenly turned dark and blurry. He felt the world tip and turn around him and then felt himself fall into scalding water. He opened his mouth to scream, and his lungs filled with boiling water instead. The last thing he could remember was the feeling of something moving across his throat. Then everything was black.

Albus watched the cauldron carefully, the sudden dark plumes unfurling in the water. The body was not resurfacing, and he knew it was done. A part of him sobbed inwardly. No matter how much he saw a failure in the boy, he did not want to bring about the ending with his own hand. But the matter of importance here was nothing so pitiful and trivial as individual life. He had to do this for the grander scheme. For all of wizard kind.

For there simply could not be gods among men, like the Order had been for thousands of years. And gods, certainly, could not be tricked. Could they?

Albus took his ladle and dipped it into the cauldron. Blowing on the hot, dark broth, he took an experimental sip.

TBC

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AU. Adaptation of a greek myth. Murder. Sex. Betrayal. Albus Dumbledore decides to test the all-powerful nature of the Order of the Phoenix and Severus takes the fall as collateral damage.

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In which we meet the Order members and discover the most powerful wizards and witches can't always get along...

PART 2

Molly's thumb smoothed the curve of the small quail's egg in her hand. Her thumb would glide across its surface once, twice, three times, and on the fourth stroke it would curve and pierce through the vulnerable shell. Pieces would crack and inside the small, barely formed bird would make a sad, squeaky noise as it expired, and then her thumb would roll over the surface a fifth time and the egg would be whole again. She repeated this cycle over and over tirelessly, a dangerous glint in her eyes. It was making the other people in the coach nervous.

Aberforth, especially, had no idea how to deal with Molly. She had been moody and unreasonable ever since her daughter's engagement, and by the set of her jaw and the high-strung anxiety eating away at her countenance, the slightest thing anyone said could have her breaking their neck.

Minerva looked kindly at Molly, sympathetic if unable to truly understand the witch's predicament.

"If Albus has not had the foresight already to arrange tactful seating, I will be happy to accommodate you in any way."

"Thank you, Minerva." It sounded more like a declaration of war than thanks.

Aberforth sighed wearily; they had been walking on eggshells around Molly for months now. "As much as you dislike him, Molly, he is someone you must be courteous to."

"I don't understand why he's in the Order."

"Yes, you do," Aberforth patiently said. "He plays one of the most important roles in our society and within our group. Just because it is distasteful to you does not make it less important."

"*I know that,*" Molly said waspishly.

"I just cannot understand why you would be so unhappy over such *awonderful* union..."

"*Aberforth.*" Andromeda shot him a warning look but it was too late. To his dismay, Molly burst into angry tears, her face a splotchy red and her voice choked with rage.

"My daughter! My *only* daughter!"

"Walden isn't a bad man, Molly..."

"*Aberforth!*" Andromeda made a slashing hand motion across her throat, desperately trying to shut him up. Any words of consolation he attempted to give Molly always ended up upsetting her more.

"My only daughter to live in a dark hole and to never know lightness or happiness again!"

"You can't say she won't be happy." Aberforth pointedly ignored Andromeda and Minerva's urgings for him to let the matter drop. "He can provide her with anything she wishes."

"*If that filthy beast thinks he's going to touch her...*"

"*Molly.* Like it or not he's your son-in-law to be, a colleague, and you shouldn't speak rudely of him. And it's not as if the wedding is tomorrow. She's even continuing to live with you until she's of age; that gives the both of you plenty of time to say your goodbyes. And it's not as if Walden will keep her from you when they're married as well. It's a done matter, and there's nothing more to argue. You should learn to accept the new addition to your family and move on. It should be something to celebrate, not mourn... you daft old woman..."

Molly looked at him with furious, tear-stained eyes. "Daft old woman? This is *allyour* fault. *You* sanctioned this marriage; *you* condemned my daughter to a life of death and darkness!"

Aberforth had finally heard enough abuse from Molly and was quite over trying to console her. He glared back, his light blue eyes hardened.

"It was her choice to seek an apprenticeship in his trade. And even you can't deny that he's besotted with her. Even in his own cold, quiet manner, he's very taken with her, and you know he'll treat her every bit the queen. It'll do him good. It'll do Ginevra good as well, to have that kind of responsibility. I didn't hear any protests from her about this marriage."

"*Turn my own daughter against me...*"

There was no more to be said after that. Aberforth finally gave up, leaving Andromeda and Minerva to try and calm Molly and dry her tears. Her emotions had been volatile since the day MacNair had come to her doorstep with a black jasper ring, asking her for Ginny's hand. When she refused him, he merely stood there, quiet and stony as he always was. He stood there for hours, unmoving, until Ginny finally came out herself to accept the ring, and it was in that moment that Molly's heart broke. Aberforth, a bit tactless as always, had come to celebrate the engagement with bottles of champagne, miffed to realize upon arriving that he would have to be the one to bless the marriage.

The coach finally jerked to a halt outside Albus' modest estate. There was no more time for fighting or tears now. Molly blew into her hanky, and though her voice was muffled, Aberforth could hear, "better not have brought that bloody axe of his..." and chuckled.

The other coaches had arrived at the same time as they. The coach with the splendid white horses was definitely Lucius. He was already standing beside the coach, helping Narcissa to the ground. With them was Regulus, the three chatting amiably. That coach seemed to be the one with the liveliest and friendliest atmosphere. The third coach was gloomy and dark. The twins Alecto and Amycus were ensconced within along with the silent MacNair.

Molly glared at the black coach, spitting on the ground before promptly ignoring it. If MacNair had noticed, he made no sign of it. Thankfully, Aberforth thought, Walden had paid heed to his request to not bring his work to the casual dinner, and his beloved axe was not to be seen on his belt.

"Dumbledore."

Aberforth turned to see who had addressed him.

"Lucius."

The sleek, handsome man sniffed discerningly at his surroundings, pulling on a pair of soft, dragonhide gloves. Aberforth could see some genuine concern written on Lucius' face, however, so he knew this was something with more gravity than the usual disdainful gossip Lucius preferred to indulge in.

"Is this merely a social call?"

"What do you mean?"

Lucius frowned, his delicate lips pursing slightly as he thought. "Isn't it unlike your brother to host dinner parties? He always seemed... reclusive, to me."

"You think Albus has a hidden agenda."

Lucius tapped the ground, annoyed, with the butt of his cane.

"I was *trying* to be subtle."

Aberforth shrugged, turning his eyes to the large house instead. It was something that had been troubling him ever since he saw the grand, fancy invitations by owl. Unless the special occasion was a surprise, there was no holiday, no birthday and no special reason for the Dumbledore brothers to see each other. Let alone Aberforth and his elite circle.

"I've been thinking of it too. Whatever Albus' good intentions are... I hope he has picked humble means of executing them."

Lily had searched for Severus all over the house but had been unable to find him. Concerned, she had even resorted to calling out his name, checking under tables and searching through all the closets that even he wasn't scrawny enough to hide himself into. Could he have left the house to go for a ride? Could he have gone wandering into the woods by himself? Lily sighed, frustrated. In his desire for solitude he always did stupid things.

As she made her way across the grounds, she saw the coaches in the estate driveway and silently cursed to herself. The guests had already arrived! And, as she ran back to the house, she realized she had mud splashed up all along the hem of her gown. Merlin. Casting quick cleaning charms, she tried to banish as much dirt and mud as possible while she quickly made her way to the front entrance.

The Order guests were already waiting in the foyer when she finally arrived, slightly out of breath and a warm blush across her cheeks from her short excursion. Regulus, the youngest member allowed to attend the dinner, had a look of pleasant surprise on his face when he saw how lovely the daughter of the Dumbledore household was. She noticed his youth and handsome face as well and smiled shyly at him before looking to Aberforth.

"Uncle!"

He smiled warmly, the smile never quite reaching his eyes and twinkling within the sparkling blue depths like it did Albus'. It formed in the creases around his eyes instead, making him seem much more earthy and old.

"Lily, it is lovely to see you, my child."

"Father bids everyone to go to the dining room. He'll join everyone shortly once he's finished with dinner preparations."

"Of course, come here, come here tell me what you've been doing lately."

Aberforth put a kind arm around her shoulders as they walked towards the modest dining hall. Lily loved seeing her uncle, and as an impressive as he was to others being the chief wizard of the Order of Merlin, to her he was just uncle. It was the other members that intrigued her instead, and she stole glances over her shoulder to look at them.

She knew who they all were, of course, they were the stuff made of legends. There were certain townships and even church-like groups that paid special allegiance to one Order member or the other. To see them all in her house was somewhat overwhelming!

She saw Andromeda, who could have been rightly called the second-in-command. She was known quite famously for being solitary and hating any sort of public light or recognition, but it was her tireless political mind that Aberforth frequently consulted with, and had toppled corrupt monarchies and diffused wars in the past. She strode, quite regally in her own right, alone and with no one by her side.

Following her was Molly and Minerva, the latter murmuring soothingly to the former. Molly had red hair just like her! Lily grinned at the thought. Of course, this was something she already knew, but to see it for herself was pleasantly amusing. Molly looked quite angry for some reason, which she couldn't discern, and hoped that it didn't mean she was displeased with their house.

Molly was known to be the favourite Order member among agricultural townships and people. It was her knack for nurturing, increasing fertility and procuring life that they often called on her to help them with their crops. It was several of the spells and potions she had created that were used throughout the country to aid with the harvest. She was also frequently called to the noble and more aristocratic houses to aid with the birth of heirs.

Minerva, now patting Molly's shoulder, was an incredibly severe looking woman. Lily knew that Minerva was not very old, much younger than uncle, but she had lines around her face that made her look very tired and very old. All the major schools had been created in her name, all of the important libraries. But she was more popularly known for having once brought the Scottish Isles to arms and commanding an army of farmers and laypeople in one of the bloodiest wizarding battles in recent memory. It was the only time so far that she had ever placed her hand in war, but it was in her name that people created talismans or charms to aid them in any sort of conflict.

After the three women, Lily was not as familiar the rest of the members. They were somewhat foreign to her, except perhaps the young Regulus who caught her eye and winked at her.

The tall, blonde gentleman must be Lucius, the shipmaster. She thought he looked rather haughty and a bit silly. For all of the finery and wealth draped over his shoulders, he carried himself vainly and reminded her of a fat peacock she had to drive away from her flower garden. The woman on his arm had to be Narcissa, the most beguiling witch of the age. Lily had to admit that she looked quite beautiful, if a bit icy, and understood then why they said she could topple kingdoms run by men.

And even further past them were the twins, Alecto and Amycus. They resembled each other, with unpleasant faces and straw-like hair. Both had scars on their hands and Alecto had a few on her face. Lily was not sure what they did. What sort of business did they deal with that they would receive such injuries?

And finally, trailing at the very end was MacNair. He sent a chill down Lily's spine, and she quickly looked away. If the whole procession of the Order was a spectrum of lighter to darker, then he most deservedly held the end as the black. The executioner. He was the chief warden of Azkaban, guarding every prisoner, devising every punishment, and carrying out every execution by hand. He looked blankly ahead, as if the world around him held nothing to capture his attention. One eye was covered by a black patch, scars trailing out from underneath the dark fabric to spill over his cheeks in a spider web's design.

"Hmmp, your brother's late as always."

Lily was shaken out of her morbid musings, pulled suddenly back into the present. Aberforth scanned the dining hall critically, a disapproving look on his face.

"He's been helping father prepare dinner."

"Has he?"

Lily sighed, tugging her uncle's arm playfully. Aberforth was much more patient and understanding with Severus than their father was, but he never came frequently enough or showed unreserved warmth to warrant their having a close relationship. Even Lily, despite loving when her uncle came to visit, always sensed a certain distance in their relationship.

"Well, he should come down soon. I brought him a book from the Chinese merchants."

Lily beamed. "He'd love that. I'll try looking for him again."

"Has he gone into hiding?"

Lily shrugged playfully before running off. Aberforth watched her leave for a moment before looking to the table. There were no place cards, so everyone had begun to seat themselves to their liking. He sat down beside Minerva, creating a larger buffer between Molly and MacNair, who stared gloomily into his empty goblet. It filled magically with red wine on its own, and he sipped quietly.

Molly had finally stopped fiddling with her egg, her eyes looked less red and puffy, and Aberforth hoped this meant a peaceful dinner. If only they could get through that.

Then Molly's shoulders began to shake again, her hands clenching the table, and Aberforth sighed, defeated. This was not going to be a peaceful evening at all.

TBC

Original Sin

Chapter 3 of 4

AU. Adaptation of a Greek myth. Murder. Sex. Betrayal. Albus Dumbledore decides to test the all-powerful nature of the Order of the Phoenix and Severus takes the fall as collateral damage.

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In which the Order discovers a foul plot afoot...

PART 3

"Severus?"

Lily sighed, finally fed up. Where *had* that boy gotten to? She had even resorted to looking under tables, knocking on all the bathroom doors and peeping into closets only he was scrawny enough to fit into. But it wasn't like him to play hide-and-seek anymore.

Albus' silvery phoenix Patronus had followed her all throughout the house as she searched for her brother, summoning her to the table. She had tried to ignore it, loath to anger her father but even more determined to arrive with her brother. Finally, as she checked the library for the third time, the phoenix Patronus screeched angrily and she knew she could ignore it no longer. Resigned, she trailed obediently behind it as it led her to the upper kitchens.

"Where have you been?" Albus thundered, already on edge from the pressures of trying to make everything perfect. Lily said nothing, meekly staring at the floor. This was not the best time to demonstrate any of the lip or bold qualities her father usually liked in her.

"Hurry now, seat yourself at the table. They've been *waiting*."

"I can't find Severus."

Albus gave a contemptuous sneer. "Has he gone hiding again? When will that boy ever grow a spine? Go sit. If he doesn't show up to dinner, then he just won't eat tonight."

Lily bit back on what she wanted to say and dutifully went to the dining hall. She secretly thought to herself that she would have to make sure to take some leftovers to Severus once he decided to show himself again.

The Order members paid her little attention when she sat back down at the table. Even Regulus was busy chatting with the twins. What they were gossiping about so enthusiastically, she couldn't tell. Instead, she looked glumly down at her plate, wondering if Severus and Father had fought. Perhaps that was why Severus would forego an opportunity to see their uncle and the Order members he so admired.

Finally Albus arrived, sweeping into the room with majestic airs. He had on his finest set of robes, and the intricate golden stitch work glittered impressively in the candlelight.

"Thank you all for attending my most humble dinner this evening. Welcome to my house."

Albus sat down, and immediately food appeared on the empty plates. Tureens of different sauces and creamed vegetables appeared along the center of the table, and each plate had an array of small starters.

"I bid you eat, and I hope the fare is to everyone's liking."

The Order members seemed more pleased at the fine alcohol that appeared on the tables and in their glasses. The table immediately buzzed with friendly chatter as everyone poured each other drinks and slowly began to start with the different breads and salads.

Regulus slipped Lily a wink, reaching across the table to pour some wine into her glass.

"Old enough for such fine things, now, aren't you?"

She blushed, taking the glass from him and delicately sipping at the wine. She wasn't used to drinking it so only tasted it in front of him to be polite.

"And what is it that you do?"

Regulus smirked. "Some would say it's rude to ask."

Lily merely blinked, unshakeable, and Regulus' grin broadened even further.

"I'm the correspondent. I travel all over the world, bearing any sort of message you could imagine. Diplomatic treaties, ultimatums, almanacs, annual reports of trade... love letters between royalty..."

He winked, obviously enjoying their little flirtation. "I've been everywhere, Lily. You'd be amazed at what's just at England's doorstep. I've learned so many languages and dined with so many different peoples. Perhaps I'll take you someday."

"I doubt that." Lily smiled wryly, wiser than Regulus thought. She knew their flirting was merely that, and once he left her house she would be just another pretty face in the background of his adventure-filled life. But she was determined to enjoy the good-looking man's company while she was still the center of his attention.

"I see Borgin has neglected to honour his invitation... again."

Narcissa quirked an eyebrow at Lucius, delicately spearing a tomato slice to her fork.

"You know how busy my husband is. I'm very proud of him. He lives to make beautiful things."

Lucius smirked, fondling her thigh underneath the table. "And to serve beautiful things... you certainly knew to pick one without any sort of spine, didn't you?"

Narcissa smirked, playing disdain. "He worships me."

Lucius grinned, his hand reaching further up her leg.

"We make beautiful things too."

Narcissa playfully slapped his hand under the table, stabbing her fork into the untouched food on his plate meaningfully.

"*Thing*. I've only one son."

"With golden hair just like mine. And what colour is Borgin's hair? Oh, is it a plain brown?"

Narcissa ruffled a hand through her luxurious blonde hair, fanning it out and letting it shine in the candlelight.

"He has *my* hair. He has my blonde hair."

Lucius leaned in close enough that his lips tickled her ear and whispered, "But he has *my* nose."

Albus stared intently at the dinner party around him. Chatting, drinking, and all generally having a good time. None particularly concerned with satisfying their hunger at the moment, all more occupied with enjoying each other's company. Albus inwardly chanted to himself to be calm, to be patient, that it would only be a little longer.

"Lily," he said suddenly, "why aren't you eating?"

She looked up, startled.

"Oh... I, um, I'm just waiting, Father."

Albus sighed in disgust. "Then you'll wait so long you'll starve yourself, my dear."

Lily looked away, properly chastised and pushed her fork around her plate.

Aberforth's palate had finally been properly warmed up with the servings of good wine and delicate starters. The leftover crumbs and bits of food on their plates disappeared and were immediately replaced by the main courses. The tables were magically laden with cured sausages, roasted fowl, a meaty stew and a centerpiece of a still steaming roast. Aberforth's nose twitched at the aroma and he felt his mouth beginning to water. It smelled wonderful.

"Could I tempt anyone with a cut of my prize game?" Albus offered, picking up the serving knife and already beginning to carve into the pink, dripping meat.

Molly was the first to nod towards Albus, indicating that she would like a portion. It was soon followed by a similar gesture from MacNair, who solemnly stared ahead and ignored the dark look Molly flashed his way. Albus just hummed cheerfully as he placed hot, mouthwatering slices on their plates.

Apart from the small moment of tension between Molly and the brooding executioner, everyone else seemed eager to begin eating. As he spooned a hearty portion of the meat stew into his bowl, Aberforth noticed the silent executioner out of the corner of his eye and immediately sensed something was wrong.

MacNair, normally silent and cool, still enjoyed his meals. Hunting frequently himself, he had a great appreciation for the different game meats, butchery and finer cuts. Tonight, however, instead of quietly slicing away and savouring the delicious looking food, he was staring at it. Intently.

Everyone around the table noticed Aberforth hadn't touched his food either and followed his gaze to look at MacNair. The dark, gloomy man took his knife and pushed the flat of the blade against the center of the cut. The pink meat slowly released a small pool of blood onto his plate. He stared at it for a moment longer, pushing other parts of the meat, and then finally set down his knife and sat back in his chair. He picked up his goblet and drank his wine instead, completely ignoring the meat on his plate.

The others knew MacNair's fine tastes and that he never did anything without good reason. He was almost like their silent alarm detector, and they looked uneasily at their plates.

Molly, who had been watching just as interestedly at everyone else, scowled and looked to her plate. Insufferable man, she thought, and began to cut up her portion. Aberforth watched her begin to eat the juicy meat more in defiance than in relish or hunger.

Aberforth then noticed that his brother had been watching the proceedings with an intense mixture of alarm and triumph glittering in his eyes. Alarm bells immediately began ringing in his head.

Even before Aberforth could tell Molly to stop, she had already set down her knife and looked suspiciously at what she was eating. It resembled nothing she had tasted before, although she had originally thought it to be lamb or venison.

"What is it, Albus?"

He merely looked at his brother, infuriatingly quiet and calm, with his hands folded underneath his chin. Aberforth's hand began to tremble as the intensity of their locked

gazes grew.

"What *is* it, brother?"

"Boy."

A pregnant pause filled the room as everyone was caught off guard by the cryptic answer.

Lily stared at her plate, deathly pale and with horror mounting in her eyes. Finally, her mouth working itself into a frenzy of tics, hands clenching the table, she pushed herself out of her chair, backpedaling away from the morbid feast.

"Severus. Where is he? *Where is he?*"

Molly made a gagging noise and the table erupted into an explosion of noise. Aberforth leapt up to his feet and Albus rose to challenge him.

"What have you done?"

"Not so *wise*, not so *all-knowing* as you think, brother!"

"What is the meaning of all this?"

"For too long you've been allowed to run around unchecked, no one questioning your authority or power. It is the very seeds that birth tyranny, Aberforth, and you've been irresponsible in allowing it to continue for so long."

Aberforth angrily faced his brother, wands already pointed at each other's throats.

"And you think *you* know any better?"

"You obviously do not. You are not the infallible leader the world meekly accepts you as you are not fit to wield the unquestioned power you do!"

"You killed your son to prove a point to me?"

Albus looked grimly at him. "You've no ears for listening to me."

Aberforth finally released his older brother, backing away slowly in horror himself.

"You are not a perfect organization. Your Order is fickle and prey to the same humanly whims as the most common person, and yet you condescend to rule them as gods. How many have been lured into your promises of miracles and so blindly followed you to their life's detriment? How many go hungry, sick, and die, all in the fervent delusion that everything you do is for the best?"

Aberforth pointed his wand to Albus' chest again, hexes and curses running through his mind. His brother had gone insane and he had to be stopped. Yet, Aberforth stowed his wand away, unable to strike his brother.

"Whatever you accuse me of, you've made a fine example of it yourself in your perverted sense of pragmatism."

He spun on his heel and made his way over to the Order members. They had crowded around Molly, and Aberforth shooed them away, the anger at his brother directed into brusque commands.

"Everyone to the kitchens. Walden, keep an eye on him."

The group left, half-running, half-walking, to try and make it to the kitchens on time. Regulus, the fastest member, had already dashed off ahead of them. They could hear Lily's screams reverberating against the house walls.

In the dining hall, Molly had sunk to her knees on the floor. Albus had seated himself placidly back into his chair, content to quietly observe his surroundings. MacNair, surprisingly, paid him no attention and instead, slowly lowered himself to Molly's level.

"Go... 'way..." she choked through her sobs.

MacNair merely looked at her with those gloomy eyes of his. He moved slowly, being so tall and his hands clumsy and big. He produced a bowl that had held their bread rolls, now empty, and placed it in front of Molly. He then gave her a glass which he upended an entire shaker of salt into and some warm water.

"Here, mother, you must drink this."

She looked up at him, astonished. "What did you call me?"

He merely pushed the glass insistently into her hands. Trembling, she took it and, screwing up her face, tried to knock it back in one gulp. Immediately, she felt her stomach protest and she began to retch. MacNair held her shoulders gently as she retched into the bowl, finally bringing up the foul meat she had eaten to spite him.

When she was finally done, MacNair brought her a new glass, this time of wine, to wash the taste out of her mouth. She swilled the red vintage around in her mouth before spitting it into the bowl. She banished the contents once she was done and looked at the dark, silent man kneeling in front of her. It was the first time she felt compelled to think of him as something other than death and ruin.

"Her life will be so *dark*," Molly whispered.

MacNair considered that, thoughtfully running his fingers along the strap of his eye patch.

"I'll build her a garden."

He offered his hand to Molly, and she let him help her to her feet and walk her out of the room. They paused by the doorway as MacNair turned to consider Albus.

Albus merely waved his hand at them. "I'm not going anywhere."

MacNair shrugged. "All the same."

He raised his wand and cast wards on the room and wards on Albus' own person, which he would not be able to break without great difficulty and alerting the other Order members. Then, dutifully attending to Molly as before, he walked her slowly to the kitchens, the broken bonds between them finally beginning to mend.

TBC

Original Sin

Chapter 4 of 4

AU. Adaptation of a greek myth. Murder. Sex. Betrayal. Albus Dumbledore decides to test the all-powerful nature of the Order of the Phoenix, and Severus takes the fall as collateral damage.

A/N Thanks to my beta Duniazade. All remaining mistakes are my fault. All warnings still in effect.

In which we wake the dead...

PART 4

They had found Lily sobbing brokenheartedly on the kitchen floor, crying over and over again, "My brother, my brother."

Grimly, Aberforth looked into the cauldron that smelled of the meat they had at their table. The soup was dark and murky, but Aberforth could see the small, pale form of his nephew, curled up inside the cauldron. He shut his eyes, suppressing his horror, and then rolled up his sleeves and brought out his wand.

"He's dead, he's dead..." Lily continuously moaned.

Aberforth cast a diagnostic charm over the cauldron, and the Order members held their breath as they waited. The blue mist hovering over the cauldron was completely still, and Aberforth almost gave his nephew up for lost, until the mist began to pulse faintly.

"We have to act quickly," Aberforth muttered and then looked into the cauldron. He tapped it experimentally and looked at the herbs and roots that were inside.

"It has a stasis charm on it... Albus must have forgotten. And the combination of herbs and roots in here while meant only to enhance flavour, are also enhancing the charm. Damn fool never thinks things through, lucky for us."

Andromeda peered into the cauldron before quickly looking away. "What does that mean, Aberforth?"

Minerva answered for him, looking grimly at the cooking station. "It means Severus' body has been preserved by the magnified stasis charm and prevented him from dying when he should have. What little blood still left in him has been magically stopped from leaving."

She then sighed in frustration, massaging her temples and furiously trying to come up with a solution.

Aberforth had already overturned the kitchen cupboards and was throwing certain potions ingredients into the cauldron. They were ingredients used in powerful healing potions. It was too dangerous for them to move Severus out of the cauldron at the present moment.

He carefully reached into the cauldron and brought Severus' head out of the water. It lolled grotesquely, the throat open and gaping. Aberforth's upper lip curled in disgust, and he re-positioned the head as Minerva stepped in to cast charms so the flesh would knit back together. It left an ugly, mangled scar but they were pressed for time. A few more taps of her wand and the water inside Severus' lungs and throat expelled out of his nose and mouth.

"Girl, get up from the floor."

Lily looked up, barely registering anything in her misery.

"All the blood restorative draughts you have in the house, fetch them *now*!"

It took Lily a moment to understand what her uncle had said to her, but then her eyes widened and she dashed out of the room.

Once Minerva saw that Lily was out of earshot, she looked worriedly at Aberforth.

"Aberforth, we don't even really have a boy in there anymore, we have *ahusk*. A preserved body. He hasn't even been breathing these past couple hours. He's technically dead."

Aberforth looked at her significantly, and she looked horrified.

"You can't *possibly* be considering that!"

Aberforth merely poked his wand into the cauldron's contents once more, critically examining the strange soup.

"Albus has cut off his arm. We'll have to find something to replace it. For now, help me seal the wound. The blood restoratives will do nothing if they leak out of his arm socket."

Sighing in resignation, Minerva brought out her wand and helped Aberforth perform sealing charms to knit together muscle and tissue and hopefully seal the gaping hole they found on Severus' left side. Andromeda and Lucius stepped in to help them as well, and finally they were left with an ugly, but closed crater.

Lily came stumbling back into the kitchens, a box of small bottles in her arms. She gave them to Aberforth, and he set them down on the kitchen counter. It was then that Molly and MacNair entered the kitchens, Molly looking somewhat worse for wear.

"Walden, come take a look at the boy."

MacNair handed Molly off to Narcissa, with a slightly concerned expression on his face as if to make sure she was comfortable, before striding over to where Aberforth was. He looked into the cauldron and was the only one to do so with no reaction. He considered it with the same silent solemnity he did everything.

"Unicorn's blood," he finally declared.

Lily gasped, some of the Order members shooting worried looks at each other. Aberforth and Minerva looked defeated. They knew it would have to come to that before even asking Walden.

Aberforth then looked carefully at Lily, holding her hand and speaking to her as gently as possible. This decision would make her life the most difficult out of any of them. It was hers to make.

"Lily, your brother... he is not alive. There are only enough parts of his body that have miraculously been maintained for them to function on only the slightest level. Technically, he is a very fresh corpse."

The tears began to roll down her face, and she shook her head from side to side. "You must save him."

"There is only one way we can bring him back. You do know what unicorn's blood will do, don't you?"

Lily nodded slowly.

"He will live a cursed life. Often in such cases, it is better to let the good die in peace."

"He must live."

"Lily, think of what you are asking. Your brother may not be the same person you know if he is revived by such a means."

Lily shook her head more violently, sobs erupting from her throat. "No, he won't change, *know* him. You can't let him die, uncle, please, you must save him or else/won't be able to live."

Grimly, Aberforth nodded, wiping the tears from her face.

"Stop crying, now, it is done."

He went to the cauldron and grasped Severus firmly by the chin. He tilted the boy's head back and gently pushed the tongue to the side so it wouldn't block his airway. MacNair produced a small vial from the inner pocket of his coat. It contained something silver and bright. Uncorking the vial, he tipped the viscous, shimmering silver substance down Severus' throat. It glowed as it left the vial, slipping away from its glass cage at an agonizingly glacial pace.

Colour slowly began to form on Severus' cheeks, then disappeared back into a sallow complexion. Narcissa produced a small hand mirror from her robe sleeve and placed it under Severus' nose. She gasped, holding it up to show everyone the quickly evaporating mist on its surface.

"He's breathing again."

Lily cried out, making to rush over to him but Molly held her back.

"He's very weak, dear. We can't touch him."

Severus' throat began to move gently, his mouth slowly moving. They saw his chest gently rise and fall, but his breathing was still light and shallow.

"Lily, go bring all the healing potions in this house. We've no time to make any ourselves. Regulus, go with her and bring blankets."

The Order kept a nervous vigil over their newly re-awakened charge. Severus still had his eyes closed, still unmoving. He was breathing and he was alive, but only just.

When Lily came with all the medical supplies they had in the house, Aberforth searched through the potions stores and took all the strengthening potions he could find. These, he gave to Severus first, gently massaging the boy's throat to ease their passage downwards.

"Walden, help me bring him out."

Andromeda had laid out blankets on one of the long kitchen tables. MacNair and Aberforth jointly placed their arms under Severus' body and lifted him as gently out of the concoction as they could. He hung limply in their arms. They laid him out on the table and quickly performed drying spells and warming charms.

Lily had been watching the proceedings, heart pounding wildly the whole while. She desperately wanted to go to her brother, touch him, really see that he was alive, but Molly had her arms around her and bade her wait.

In her maelstrom of emotions, Lily noticed the twins standing a distance apart. They had been curiously quiet and distant from the entire event, and then she noticed them snickering to themselves, engaged in some private conversation. She suddenly saw red, her ears burning.

"Something amuse you?"

They looked at her, at first curious and then contemptuous. They looked at her as if they hadn't even expected someone of her mean background to even think to speak to them. Instead of dignifying her with an answer, they continued to whisper to each other, only this time staring at her as they did so. Their behaviour disturbed her, so she looked away, hoping to forget the bizarre encounter. Hatred curdled in her breast as she fought to ignore them and she seethed silently.

The different potions that promoted healing in the muscles and restored depleted energy sources were rubbed into his skin and anointed in specific places like his eyes, temples and hand. He began to stir, his head tossing from side to side, and Aberforth fed him a half-measure of Dreamless Sleep.

"No need for him to wake now, he must rest."

They then wrapped him in the warmed blankets and then levitated him out of the kitchens. It was an odd procession that walked down the hallway, following the floating body, and Lily led them to the parlour where they had a fireplace. Lucius lit it into a crackling blaze with a fancy twirl of his wand, and they laid Severus on the chaise longue.

Finally, Lily was allowed to sit beside him and hold his hand. She cried fresh tears, some from a delirious happiness that he was alive, and some at the sight of his mutilated form. Severus was left-handed... he'd be devastated when he discovered he could no longer write or do things normally.

The Order members settled themselves into chairs or on the floor, preparing themselves for a very long wait. Only MacNair left the room, and this was to go see after Albus and baby-sit his charge. The eldest Dumbledore was entirely signed over to MacNair's hands now.

Molly couldn't look away from Severus' sleeping form. She felt partly responsible for the horrible mutilation he had undergone. A part of her knew this was irrational to think, but her mouth could remember what he had tasted like. Her nose could remember what he had smelled like. The small shallow dip in the blanket where his arm no longer existed was a hypnotic spot she could not look away from.

It was hours into the night and everyone had fallen asleep except for Lucius and Aberforth. They sat silently by the fire watching everyone else sleeping gently in their chairs. Lily had her head resting by Severus' chest, still kneeling on the floor. Her legs wouldn't thank her for such treatment when she woke.

MacNair strode into the room just as the sun began to peek over the horizon. He showed no signs of fatigue and brought a decanter of mead and a few glasses. The glasses were shared among the three men, and MacNair poured them healthy measures of the vintage.

"Has he gone to Azkaban?" Aberforth asked quietly.

MacNair nodded.

"Did he make a fuss?"

MacNair shook his head.

"We'll have to set his trial date as soon as possible."

MacNair shrugged and took a sip of his mead. "He doesn't want a trial."

"That's preposterous."

"He insisted."

Aberforth looked into his glass, troubled. He truly couldn't understand his brother anymore. He remembered that once they had been close. He wasn't sure what had created the distance between them. Perhaps they had just grown up.

"Well, that's still unlawful. We'll give him a trial at the soonest possible time whether he wishes it or not."

"He'll plead guilty either way," Lucius mused, "it seems he wishes to be punished. Bizarre man."

It was the first time Lucius had said anything that evening since the trouble had started. He looked as unruffled as ever, although a certain gravity had crossed his face.

"I do wonder how those children could have ever grown up normally. A part of me suspects they didn't."

Aberforth looked worriedly over at his niece and nephew, as if any signs of troubled childhoods could show as visible as their skin. "Lily, at least, seems perfectly normal."

"Time will tell. We know for certain Severus could not have grown up in a healthy way."

"A part of me thinks I've done him no good by saving his life." Aberforth shot a quick glance to MacNair, as if waiting for the executioner to reassure him that he had done well. The silent man merely quirked him a rare smile instead, as if to say that it was amusing to consider him an authority on bringing life.

Finally when morning came, and everyone had woken again, they waited only a few more hours before Severus stirred awake.

TBC