

Masks

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Follow up to *Death*. What Hermione Granger finds when she goes through Professor Snape's personal papers.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter nor do I make any money. I thank JKR for letting me play with these characters.

Hermione Granger had been given the monumental task of going through Professor Snape's papers. She was honored to perform this task. The Headmistress and the Ministry had asked her to perform this assignment, knowing that she would be the most un-biased person. She would perform her duty with swiftness and not form any judgments on Severus Snape.

As she was going through some of his personal papers, she came across the ramblings of a man who was slowly going mad:

Has the mask been in place for so long that when I take it off, no one can see or feel the difference? It appears no one wants to see the pain and hurt or the utter sense of loneliness I feel.

I thought that when the Dark Lord fell the first time, I could take the mask off and be my true self, but everyone refuses to see beyond the mask I used to wear. They would grow upset with my actually acting like a human being and not a "miserable git." I think it would have been easier to run and hide for the rest of my life, and then I couldn't be hurt anymore.

I wanted to be loved so completely that when Lily betrayed me and turned her back on our friendship, I shattered and became lost and hurt. I hurt so much that I started to inflict pain on all those around me, losing a piece of my soul every time.

My mask was firmly in place.

Why, oh why, did I go to the Dark Lord with the information I had overheard? He hunted down and destroyed my precious Lily. This has been the worst mistake of my life. Switching sides might redeem me in her eyes, I just don't know. No one trusts me enough to give me the information I need to carry on my mission. I was becoming frustrated, and I was tired of begging for chances to prove myself, to show that I understand the severity of the situation we are in.

Oh, Lily, please forgive me.

My mask was now glued on.

I had no one to confide in as to what my true feelings and alliances were. Only Dumbledore came close the night my Lily was murdered. The vow I made was not only to

her and Dumbledore but to myself as well. I will protect her son, but he will never know the man I truly am behind this mask that I wear.

My mask was now the only face I knew.

Now the Dark Lord has risen again, and I have no sense of peace. I am asked to make a horrible sacrifice and my soul will surely be lost this time. I was told that only I would know if my soul could survive this ordeal I am about to undertake. I will be taking the utter blame for it all crashing down around us.

My mask is starting to crack.

I am utterly tired and alone. I now only have a portrait to rant and rave at. My vow to Lily has fallen by the wayside, and I have no idea how to get out of this sand pit I have now found myself in. I am on thin ice; I have killed one of my masters at the request of them both. I have everything that once, long ago, I thought I wanted but not at the high price it has cost me. Someone to call me friend, even when my mask was firmly in place. Someone who accepted me for all of the darkness within me.

My mask is starting to peel off.

I have assisted Lily's son this night, and I pray that it will help. I start to hope that with the sword in his possession, he will use it wisely. The nights are so long I fear of sleeping. Lily has been coming to me in my dreams or nightmares, I cannot tell the difference at times. She tells me to keep fighting and that she forgives me, but how can I forgive myself?

My true face is starting to show through my mask.

He is here; the battle is about to begin. I am afraid, truly afraid, that this will not end well. I have lived my whole life behind a mask, and in the last year it has crumbled under stress. I have nothing left. The Dark Lord will be here soon, and Potter is in the castle. Lord save me, even if I am unsavable. I am going to hell. Well the Devil take it, if that is how it is going to end, so be it. I will meet my maker with this damnable mask on.

No one, not the Lord or Satan himself, will ever see the true face of Severus Snape.

Who am I? I don't even know anymore. Am I still the lost, little boy who craved the love and attention of his parents? The teenage boy who made one slip of the tongue and lost the best friend he ever had? Or this lonesome, hateful man that I have become?

With those final words, Hermione put the papers down and wept. She wept for the lost little boy who had so much promise, the sad teenage boy who made one stupid mistake that changed the course of his life, and most importantly, she wept for the man who didn't even know if his own soul was worth saving.

A/N: This is a companion piece to *Death* that would not let me go. Thanks to my wonderful beta, Lissa.