

Echoes From Long Ago

by imhilien

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I own none of these characters, the admirable JK Rowling does.

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Harry regretted his initial impulse to explore Snape's Pensieve, to find out what hidden memories the Potions Master he disliked had been keen to conceal from him.

He had told himself that he would have enough time surely to glance at them what if there was information that he needed to know? He would not put it past Professor Snape to withhold information from him out of sheer spite.

Having been within a Pensieve before so to speak, he had not been unnerved to find himself as a spectator in the middle of Snape's memory, a scene that was clear and sharp-edged as if this was happening in real time. A scene that turned out to be too clear.

Harry had been puzzled at first as to why the memory of Snape's OWL's examination had been a hidden memory had Snape failed these exams and not wanted Harry to see his failure?

It had been strange watching Snape concentrating on his exam paper a thin, greasy-haired teenager who even in this memory radiated an air of defensive wariness so unlike his adult malevolence.

Harry had not believed it (but of course it would have been logical) that he had actually seen his father in the Great Hall as well. It had been one thing to see photos of his smiling father and another thing to look at him as if he was really there.

His father James whom he had never had the chance to laugh and talk with, to go with him to Quidditch matches like other boys did with their fathers.

Apart from the difference in eye colour, the lack of a scar and other minor features it had been like looking in a mirror, and Harry had longed for a moment to speak and see his father glance up at him in surprise.

It had been thrilling as well to see the other Marauders present Sirius with his casual yet assured air of Here Am I, Remus with his abstracted air. Even when Harry saw Wormtail as well (the anxious boy trying to peer at his neighbour's exam paper without being caught) it had been easy to forget for a moment that in the future he would betray his friends.

If this was truly Snape's worst memory, then so far it was nothing but delight for Harry.

He had been close enough to hear the casual conversation between the Marauders once the exam was over, to see the close friendship between them and their mannerisms that said that Hogwarts was their playground.

When he had seen Snape walk away with his exam paper in a twitchy, round-shouldered way Harry had felt uneasy for some reason. The way he walked... as if he did not want to be noticed. As if misery had resulted from being noticed.

The way that Harry had walked around the Dursley's house.

Then Harry had told himself that if Snape was a nasty git in the current time, then he probably had been just the same when he was younger... trying to ignore the memory Harry had seen previously in Snape's mind of a young, dark-haired boy weeping as his mother was yelled at by his father...

Harry had turned his attention back to the Marauders and had been relieved when teenage-Snape had unthinkingly followed them so he, Harry, could accompany them as well outside.

It had seemed that his father, like Sirius, was someone who liked to be in the public eye, to be watched and admired by others like Wormtail, but Harry had been willing to overlook that. It was more than enough to see how his father acted so that he would be able to file these images away in his memory, to bring them out when he felt lonely.

But when his father pointed Snape out to Sirius after his godfather had complained of being bored, and the two of them had turned wands and hexes upon the Slytherin, Harry's uneasiness had returned with alarm as well. Snape had not actively done anything to deserve to be pinned to the ground by a jinx, his wand flung away from his hand...

"You wait," Snape had panted to Harry's father with hate on his face. "You wait!" After taunts from Sirius, Snape had sworn impotently at him with curses and hexes, only to literally have his mouth being washed out with soap by James...

"Dad stop it!" Harry had said, the words bursting out of him even though he wouldn't be heard.

This couldn't be happening, Harry had thought, shaking slightly. Surely his father hadn't been someone who had enjoyed bullying others, even if it was Snape. Snape, who had hated his father with what Harry had thought was an unreasonable hatred on Snape's part. Harry didn't want to think that perhaps Snape had had a good reason after all.

Only the intervention of his mother by Merlin, he was actually looking at his mother as well had taken James's and Sirius's attention away from Snape before he had choked, perhaps fatally, on the soap.

In revenge, the Slytherin had turned his wand on James but in turn had been hung upside down in the air while his future parents argued, with people jeering and cheering at the humiliated Snape. Harry had started feeling sick inside he never thought he would ever empathise with Snape but he knew how it felt to be singled out by others bigger and nastier than you, to have no one to call upon for help. Was that why Snape had become an acid-tongued bully as well as a Death Eater as an adult, someone determined to have power over others at last?

Harry had turned to look at Remus, who had been deliberately ignoring what was going on while Wormtail laughed in glee. He had thought better of the gentle ex-DADA teacher than this.

"How can you stand by and not do anything?" Harry had yelled at him, feeling more agitated by the minute.

"Who wants to see me take off Snively's pants?" James had said in a loud, malicious tone.

"Oh, no... Dad, no, you didn't do that..." Harry had said in horrified despair, then he felt a hand close over his upper arm.

Snape had felt a white-hot rage come over him when he had returned to see that Potter was viewing the contents of his Pensieve. How dare he, the rotten little Gryffindor... to see his most private memories of humiliation and laugh, no doubt. He was just like his father.

As painful as it was to voluntarily go into his memories, Snape had nevertheless done so without Potter noticing at first to put the fear of the gods into him for his damnable curiosity. It was difficult to see the wretched teenager he had been on that day, who had been too tired after the OWL's exam to put up an effective counter-attack against Them. What he had not expected to see was a shaking Potter trying to tell his father to stop tormenting his younger self. Snape had frozen for a moment, his rage faltering. Potter was not laughing as he had expected it was almost as if he was horrified at what was going on. But this was impossible, surely. Potter was just like his father...

But no, he wasn't really, was he, Snape thought in realisation. James (he forced himself to say that hated name) had come from a privileged upbringing, had had the best of everything. But from the recent glimpses into Harry's memories Snape had seen his miserable existence as a child, deprived of love and rewarded with neglect, hadn't he? Just like his own childhood a voice he had ignored had whispered inside his head.

At first he had enjoyed seeing Harry being humiliated by his aunt, uncle and cousin as if he was watching James being humiliated. But now he was forced to realise that they were really two different people. Snape had always kept a watchful, narrow-eyed look on Harry at Hogwarts and admittedly he had never seen him bully or mistreat others that were weaker than him.

Harry really was horrified to see the younger Snape being treated this way... and he, the older Snape would not let him see what else happened that day.

Snape gripped Harry's thin arm and pulled him back into his study.

"So... been enjoying yourself, Potter?" he nevertheless said grimly.

Harry looked up at him with horror, his eyes a wide-eyed green in his white face as he tried to shake his arm free. "No, no, I wasn't, I didn't mean..." he gabbled, plainly expecting to be shouted at.

Out of habit, Snape sneered down at him. "Amusing man, your father, wasn't he?"

"N-no," Harry said in a shaky voice.

"I am surprised... Surely you enjoyed seeing your sainted father, Potter?"

"Not like that... How could he have done such a thing?" Harry whispered, pain and shock evident on his face, the belief that his father had been someone to look up to crumbling.

Snape released his arm and pointed to the chair. "Sit down before you fall down as you usually do in these lessons," he said abruptly then swept back around the desk to sit down in his chair, his black eyes boring into Harry.

Feeling somewhat confused, Harry did so.

His teacher's voice when he spoke was angry, yet there was an undercurrent of... was it pain?

"Let me tell you a few home truths about your father, Potter. He felt he was put at Hogwarts together with Sirius to lord it over everyone. Especially those who didn't live up to their standards. The misfits. The loners. The ones who didn't fit in."

Harry was silent for a moment. It would be easy to accuse Snape of lying to him, but Harry couldn't ignore the fact that he heard truth under Snape's words.

"I'm... sorry," he said awkwardly. "And... I didn't mean to pry into your memories."

"Yes, you did, Potter. Your curiosity will be your undoing one of these days," Snape said testily but the anger had faded somewhat from his voice.

There was a feeling of shame coming over Harry, shame for his nosiness and shame for what his father had been. Surely his father had matured once he left Hogwarts, but the fact remained that he had been a bully at one time.

"If you don't want me to come back for any more Occlumency lessons I'll understand," Harry said quietly.

The Potions master stared at him for a moment. "I have said no such thing, nor will I do so, Potter," he snapped. "In case you haven't noticed, there is a war in the making, and I will not have you unprepared. I expect to see you at our next lesson, is that clear? Now go."

Harry stood. Even though Snape's manner was as spiteful as ever he felt in some way that he had been forgiven... and his heart felt unexpectedly light.

He nodded his head towards Snape in what was genuine politeness for once.

"Yes, sir."

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