

The Sins of Severus Snape

by Lariope

A drabble series focusing on Snape's life through the lens of the Seven Deadly Sins.
Written for the first round of Snape_LDWS.

Release (lust)

Chapter 1 of 10

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A/N: These drabbles were written for the first round of the Snape_LDWS challenge on LJ. I've rearranged them into semi-chronological order for the series. Thank you so much to OpalJade, my tireless beta, for reading all of these, some while she was on vacation! I truly couldn't write without her.

It hits him like a hex from behind, quick as Jelly-Legs, baffling as Confundus. The tingle begins deep in the base of his spine and spreads until he is suffused with prickly warmth from hairline to fingertips. He shifts uncomfortably in his robes, but it does no good. This is a heat that *wants* friction, and it comes on so suddenly that Snape turns around and scans the faces behind him, looking for a tell-tale snicker, a shifty glance, half- convinced that he *has* been jinxed.

Which he hasn't. He knows the truth of it, knows that Gwyndolyn Marchbanks stooped not five feet in front of him to retrieve her dropped quill and... this. This is how he finds himself. Flushed and sweaty and wanting.

It feels like treachery, this desire, and he struggles to replace the unbidden image of Gwyndolyn's full lower lip disappearing beneath the head of his cock, of taking her pert arse into his hands and splitting her like a peach, plunging headlong into the sweet, wet flesh of her... with a memory of batty old Minerva McGonagall on the evening he'd tried to break into Gryffindor Tower.

But somehow, even the remembrance of that severe black bun and the unbridled indignation in the McGonagall's voice makes things worse, not better, and after a few more uncomfortable steps, Snape admits defeat and slips into the loo outside the Charms corridor, almost falling into the stall, locking it with one hand while he frantically lifts his robes with the other.

The pull and squeeze of his own hand is familiar—nothing like the delicious *other* he craves—but it does the job well enough. Snape's face is a twisted scowl of concentration as he pumps single-mindedly, violently, into his fist. The collateral pain is intended to be his punishment, but instead, it only serves to make the pleasure sweeter, more complex.

He reaches for the purity of Lily's face in his mind—Lily as she was in the Quidditch stands the weekend before, her face turned up to the sun—and the tension in him snaps, releasing a ribbon of hot shame into his palm.

It is a betrayal of her; he knows this. As is every morning he wakes cold and sticky behind the curtains of his four-poster, every daydream that breaks the monotony of History of Magic. She deserves better.

"*Evanesco*," he whispers, like an apology, as he tightens his hand into a fist. He opens it to find only his own skin, but he knows that nothing has been erased. Not really.

Enough (greed)

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"I know James Potter's an arrogant toerag," she says, and something in his chest loosens enough for him to take a breath, even to give her a wan smile.

The truth is that it is not enough, not enough for her to think poorly of Potter. In his secret heart, Snape would prefer that she not think of Potter at all, that thoughts of Snape himself should crowd out everything until there is no room left for idiotic Quidditch players, Muggle sisters, gangs of Slytherins, Mudblood friends.

The truth is, he wants it all.

Every smile, every word, every whispered secret or suppressed giggle. Every thought, every raised eyebrow, every nod of her head, for him.

He wants the nape of her neck and the flash of her eyes, her slender fingers and the white stripes at the backs of her knees. He wants her breath and her wrists and her teeth and the heat at the juncture of her thighs that makes him blush and stammer just for thinking of it.

In Snape's perfect world, there are no classes, no dormitories or house tables—nothing to keep her from him, nothing to prevent him from owning the beats of her heart from sun-up to sun-up again, like the ticking of the watch around his wrist.

"Severus?" she says, laying a hand on his arm, her fingers digging in impatiently. "Are you even listening to me?"

He nods mutely. He has eaten every word, and it will never be enough.

Marginalia (pride)

Chapter 3 of 10

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Snape sits cross-legged behind the curtains of his four-poster, the book in his lap. He writes decisively, striking through the text and inking in his corrections—an anticlockwise turn, a pinch of mint, a lacerated root.

Nothing is added until it is a certainty, until he has brewed each potion countless times, and suffered himself as the test subject. Nothing is added unless it creates perfection.

The blank pages at the back, meant to hold the potioneer's notes, he reserves for his spells, the bits of magic he creates from modified incantations and his own genius.

When he is working on the book, he is not the boy who is losing his best friend by inches, or the boy who glanced at his neighbor's notes and saw a caricature of his own profile drawn there, his hated nose made monstrous. When he is bending magic to his will, he is Merlin himself, and the elements respond to his call. They sharpen his skills and humiliate his enemies. They make him invincible.

Snape waits for the ink to dry before he closes the book. It will be weeks or even months before he has something further to add, but he doesn't mind. When it is finished, it will be the most definitive volume on Potions in the Wizarding world.

He slips it beneath his pillow. He will never show it to anyone.

Retribution (damnation)

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It seems fitting that it should be his wand arm, as if he is making a gift of every bit of magic he will ever do.

Snape has heard that it hurts, that it feels as though your very bones have turned to ice and then been struck by a shattering blow. He runs a hand over the bare flesh of his forearm. He thinks he will be able to stand it. He's had experience with pain.

He stands alone in the dark of the cemetery. Though he knows there are others, he does not see them; no robed ranks with a place for him in their number, no masks like Sickles in the moonlight. Snape has no idea how long he has waited, nor how long he will yet wait, but he keeps his eyes ahead, his hands steady.

Which is not to say that he is unafraid. To be fearless where the Dark Lord is concerned is tantamount to suicide, and Snape has no wish to die. When he needs to fortify himself, when he feels the pungent fear-sweat beading on his skin like a fever, he thinks of Potter.

Potter with his lazy, arrogant mouth; his stolen curses; his stolen... friendships. Soon, Snape will be able to touch his arm and summon the Dark Lord directly to Potter's door, make him *snivel*, make him beg. He will do more than make him pay; he will make him ~~sorry~~.

Snape closes his eyes and holds out his arm.

Origins (wrath)

Chapter 5 of 10

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Snape has waited ten years for this day.

As his eyes scan the incoming first years for a lithe, freckled, ginger-haired boy, he thinks of what is owed, of the promises he's made to Dumbledore, to himself.

Today he will begin to make it right, he thinks, and it is impossible not to remember Lily as a child, so ignorant of magic, so eager. This boy of hers has been in seclusion all these years; he will know as little about their world as she had, and Snape will teach it all to him. He will see, again, Lily's eyes raised to his in happy admiration, and perhaps, if he does his job well, if he places his own soul between the boy and the Dark Lord... perhaps, he too will begin to heal.

Snape's heart stutters when his eyes land on a gangly ginger--but no, that is just another Weasley, making the customary stopover on the road to mediocrity. The Weasley stands half in shadow, tucked behind another boy, and Snape's eyes dance over the companion's face, barely registering the unruly black hair, the glasses. The lightning-shaped scar.

There is not enough time even to think the word *no*.

As Snape looks upon James Potter's face--Lily obliterated, her legacy stolen--the last ten years crumble around him like a house with a rotten foundation. All that he has endured--the jeers of the students; the condescension of the staff; the numbing, ever-present fear that one of *them* will seek him out, punish him--has been for nothing. There is no solace, no redemption here, just seven more years to waste in trying to save another careless, arrogant, rule-breaking Potter from himself.

For a moment, Snape's vision seems to double, and he is not certain whether he is seeing the father and the son, or the boy and who he will become, but whichever it is, he watches Potter's eyes meet his own and widen before his chin lifts in defiance.

His palms burn with the urge to beat that look from Potter's face--now while he is still stronger, while he still has the advantage--but he chokes it down, feeling its arid path through his body, crisping his skin, turning his blood sluggish and heavy.

Just another Gryffindor, Snape thinks, the words black and poisoned. Before long, I will have to die *forthat*.

Spirits (gluttony)

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The first is to loosen his synapses and nimble his fingers, to dull the bitter tedium of marking.

The second is to keep himself from unleashing freshets of red ink onto the essay of a fourth year who believes, for some unfathomable reason, that the antidote to any poison is created by brewing the poison in reverse.

The third he takes in a single swallow after returning to his rooms, slamming the door behind him. It is bad enough that the Potter brat has been prowling around after hours again, spitting on Snape's every attempt to protect him. But once again, the cretin has gone unpunished.

The fourth on its heels to dull the sudden understanding that Dumbledore will not hear his concerns because he prefers the werewolf to Snape.

Fifth is to stop the fantasy of Black's throat collapsing beneath his hands from playing in an endless, insomniac loop...

What He Covets (envy)

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He sighs, his fingers brushing the intricate curls of wrought iron. He knows what an honor he has been afforded in being permitted to Apparate directly to the front gate, but he finds that he cares very little. Snape wishes he could turn and depart as quickly as he has come.

But here is Lucius in his midnight robes, the edges trimmed with silver silk. With one hand resting easily on his serpent-headed walking stick, he claps Snape's shoulder with the other, turning and steering him toward the house.

The Manor is built of the finest Goblin-mined marble, and here and there it is flecked with mica, making it wink in the dusk. The winding walk leads through what can only be described as the most complete potions garden Snape has ever seen. He glances at the golden yarrow, the ruby throats of the foxglove, whole constellations of starflower.

Once they are inside the house itself, Snape can smell the rich, savory notes of roasting beef, breathing wine. He is assaulted by the gleam of nearly every surface, a hundred reflections of his own dark eyes.

Lucius leads him to the dining room, which is alight with candleflame. Draco and Narcissa are already seated, and Narcissa's hair is threaded with pale blue flowers that match the embroidery of her gown. Draco rises briefly to acknowledge his father and head of house.

Snape fingers the teaspoon at his place. The silver is sterling—if he desired, he could easily bend it in two. But there is no need. Destroying the beauty that Lucius hordes has no appeal for him, for he wants none of it for himself; he begrudges the covetous fool nothing.

No damask cloths; no gilded frames; no Persian rugs; no pale, respectful sons. There is nothing in the entirety of it that interests Snape.

Except...

Lucius raises his glass, and as Snape follows suit, a glint of light catches his eyes and draws them to the only thing he wishes not to see.

Narcissa's gaze rests soft and proud upon her husband's face. Her lips are parted in the barest hint of a smile, just for having looked on him. Snape takes a rather larger than necessary gulp of wine and feels the vintage slide smoothly down his throat into the pit of his stomach.

Just once. Just once to be looked at like that. By anyone.

Promise (redemption)

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The fact is, he discovers, you *do* have to mean it. You have to mean every word of every promise you ever made to the man, and the sickly green that travels from his wand to Dumbledore's chest, it seems, is the physical embodiment of that promise.

When Snape was a child and had first come to Dumbledore, first fallen on his knees on that restless hill, he believed that he had offered his life in payment.

Anything, he had said, but the only thing he had imagined that *anything* could be was his own world, his own self ended.

Instead, it is this: one act of submission, of perfect compliance.

It would have been easier to give his life, to slip behind the veil in some final moment of heroics or despair. Now he has been put to use in the most desperate sense, every debt called in at once, and he will not fail Dumbledore, nor Lily, by shrinking in the face of it.

He feels the unspeakable rip inside as the curse connects, but there is no pain, only the sense that he has been cleansed by burning, the worst of his soul stripped away. Dumbledore's eyes remain fixed to his for a moment before he disappears over the battlements. There is no life in them, no reassurance, but this:

It is the only curse he has ever cast out of love. Which, as the old man would have said, is the most powerful magic of all.

His Mother's Roses (sloth)

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His mother had favored cabbage roses.

Gaudy, ridiculous things—overlarge and almost obscenely pink, though the years have faded them to rose-colored smudges on the walls, their leaves spreading out, tangling in those of their neighbors. If he looks too closely, it is easy to lose track of where one ends and the next begins.

It is not that he fails to hear the hiss of the Floo, the endless tapping of beaks at the window.

At intervals in the pattern, gnomes gambol. Not the gnomes of their world—knotty, potato-headed things—but fat little men in pointy hats that put in him in the mind of Father Christmas, of twinkly-eyed old men peering over their spectacles and taking account of all the good and evil in the world, saying—

Severus, please. It is the Malfoy boy's voice, same as it has been for days, anxious to be off, to tell the Dark Lord what they have done.

Snape shifts to his side. There are two hundred and thirty-eight roses on the north wall. This is not an absolute figure; where the armoire blocks the paper, he has to estimate. The gnomes number in the thirties, he thinks. It is hard to be sure, as they seem always to be moving, gathering up the roses in their secret pouches, dancing back to attention as soon as his eyes light on them, fixing them in place.

There is the whistle and screech of a Howler exploding.

Snape is certain that once he knows the exact number of roses in the room, the gnomes will stop dancing, and he will find it in himself to rise from this bed, from this house, from all that he has done.

Until then, he will count.

Forgive Us Our Trespasses (sin)

Chapter 10 of 10

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Sin. Filthy as mud and thick as treacle, sin is what pumps out of him, staining the dusty floorboards of the Shrieking Shack.

His hand rises to his neck, and between his fingers, he feels the hot, slippery morning in July when he'd aimed his mother's stolen wand at a baby bird and watched in horror as it grew to twice its normal size, its awful throat pulsing with veins and unuttered cries.

His heart beats on, accelerated by adrenaline and remembrance, bringing forth the clothing he'd taken from a neighbor's line and secreted deep into his schoolbag, the dual shame of putting on some other boy's life and the pain in his mother's eyes when she caught him wriggling into it behind the house before school.

Quickly now, a hundred thousand hexes, words shot to hurt, to maim, to humiliate. The feeling of the Dark Lord's hand upon his cheek, his own pale arm outstretched, his own voice saying only *yes*.

The killing now, as his mouth begins to work uncontrollably. His hand falls away, and his fingers begin their rhythmic dance against the wood. A woman clad in white cotton is screaming, a prophecy reported; he enters where he isn't wanted.

The cutting remarks trickle, almost itch. There's something stuck in his throat, something grotesque and pulsing--as if his heart is trying to escape the hopeless prison of this body--and it staunches the flow until all that can escape are rivulets of hating--hating Potter, hating Black, hating Granger and Weasley and Lupin and Lily--

The pressure builds until the sick thing, the choking thing, emerges; one last convulsive beat of his heart, and it is free: a flash of green light, a white beard disappearing over the battlements, the sound of a slamming door. It moves warm and slick over his skin on a last, whistling breath, and Snape knows that he is whole now; he is free.