

A Healer's Touch

by Angel420

Severus wakes up, his last memory is bleeding out in the Shrieking Shack. He is startled to find himself in his family home under the care of a beautiful witch he has never met, or has he?

Who Are You?

Chapter 1 of 5

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Disclaimer: As much as I wish it, I do not own Harry Potter.

Black eyes flickered open. The familiar surroundings of his home registered. His hand rose slowly as if weighted down, to the bandage wound tightly around his throat. His mind drifted back to the last thing he remembered – the final moments of his life. He was sure of that before he surrendered to blood loss, losing consciousness. He was bitten by the blasted snake, a boon for his loyalty from his master. Potter was there as he lay on the dusty floor of the Shrieking Shack, bleeding out helplessly. He had succeeded in his mission though and delivered his memories to Potter. Staring into the green eyes of Lily Evans that were set into the face of his school time tormentor, he was sure he had taken his last breath. He was ready to die.

So then how it was that he was here alive, he had no idea. Stirred from his thoughts by the sound of approaching footsteps, Severus readied himself. Unsure as to whether a friend or foe would enter, he felt the keen loss of his wand. The sight that greeted him was one he, however, was not expecting. A witch, young and beautiful, with black silky hair that fell to her waist and a warm smile, entered. She had deep blue eyes that lit with excitement upon seeing him awake.

"Thank God you're awake, sir. We've been really worried." The voice was not familiar, but kind. The words of concern seemed genuine.

"What happened?" he rasped, as he struggled to use a voice that had been silent for weeks. Struggling to sit up, he tensed when he felt her arms wind around his body.

"Let me help you." She spoke quietly, her arms wrapped around him until she felt the tension drain from his body.

"Who are you?" His eyes swept over her. And although she was not familiar in appearance or sound, there was something about her that screamed out at him.

"I am a friend... well, I would like to be. I've been caring for you; you were injured quite severely... we almost lost you a few times. As soon as Harry saw your memories and knew you were faithful to the Order well... we had to return for you." She risked a glance at his face. He wore a mask of indifference, as if she were merely discussing the weather. "As for your other question, Voldemort is dead."

His eyes closed at the mention of his former master's name. "Potter?"

"Alive and relatively well, grieving for those we lost and feeling relief from a burden he carried for seven years."

The boy lived, Lily's son lived! He hadn't failed. Taking a deep breath, his eyes focused in the woman standing beside him. "Who are you?"

"Trust me. It is better if you never know. As soon as you are healed, I will go. For now your injuries require care, and while the ministry has pardoned you quietly, there are

still many wizards and witches who wouldn't hesitate in harming you. I am not one of those people. I only wish to help you, as you have helped so many of us."

Turning she walked through the doorway, pausing briefly to toss a shy smile at the taciturn man sitting in the bed. "I really am glad you are okay, sir."

His head burrowed back into the soft pillows as he considered the circumstances he found himself in. It would only be a matter of time before he uncovered her identity. He knew that without a doubt. Whoever she was, she had exceptional healing skills. Discarded potions vials littered the bedside table, evidence of skills in Potions. The rather disastrous condition of his room was a testament to her efforts to keep him planted securely in the land of the living. With thoughts of the fair-skinned witch and her unfamiliar blue eyes, Severus Snape fell into a deep and restful sleep.

A small hand smoothed the sweat-soaked hair from his brow. "Severus." His name escaped her lips in a worried sigh. "Shhh, I'll take care of you."

A moment later a potion was being coaxed down his throat, the pain that gripped him so suddenly in the night faded away. Reaching out, he grasped her hand. "Tell me who you are," he whispered, searching her face.

"I'm sorry, I can't tell you." And as quickly as she appeared, she was gone, leaving him alone with his thoughts once again focused on discovering who this witch really was.

Visitors & Settling In

Chapter 2 of 5

Two weeks together. How are things at Spinner's End?

In search of a beta.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter.

"I can never say thank you enough, or apologize in a meaningful way for all the ways I complicated things." Harry Potter's green eyes searched the face of his former nemesis. His expression lay bare and open.

An awkward silence settled thickly in the air between them. Of all the scenarios Severus had pictured in his mind, this was not one of them. Not only was the boy thanking him, he was apologizing. His eyes shut as he worked to control the emotions rising from within him. Didn't Potter know? He was the reason his parents were slaughtered in the first place.

"You owe me no apologies or thanks," he said, swallowing the lump of emotions that surfaced.

"All the same, if there is ever anything you need, I am in your debt." His hand stretched out expectantly towards Severus.

Their hands met in a firm handshake cementing their fledgling truce. Potter's visit was the most recent of many in the past few days. Almost all of the surviving members of the order that were privy to the location of Spinner's End had come by with well wishes. It was a far cry from the cold, damp cell of Azkaban he was sure would be reserved for him. The past two weeks had been surprising to say the least. His unknown healer was turning out to be quite the surprise as well. Each time there was a visitor, his mysterious nurse maid disappeared. She was without a doubt a most infuriating puzzle. If the members of the Order knew her identity, they never let on. He had taken to addressing her simply as wench. Which to his dismay failed in garnering a response from her, she did not yell or storm. She smiled. His temperament seemingly had no effect on her.

In the last two weeks she had left his home three times, today being the third. Her absences never lasted longer than three hours at a time. The wench was infuriating. She was intelligent, that was a given. She had a strong knowledge in Potions, and her spell work was simply stunning. The ease in which she wielded her magic captivated him. Before he had first awoken she worked tirelessly healing him. Sleeping on a transfigured cot in his bedroom, she barely left his side. At least that is what he had been told when he questioned Minerva about the witch. Despite all the answers he received in regards to the witch tending to him, none of them led to her identity.

Reaching into his pocket he removed a charmed galleon that had been given to him. Grasping it in his hand, he focused on the word he wanted to appear on the coin, 'Wench.' A few minutes later she appeared in his doorway.

"Is there something you need?" She smiled sweetly.

"Your name would be a start."

"Addressing me as wench has served you quite well. It's not so different from the many names you have called me in the past." Her blue eyes shone with mirth. "Besides it is fun to finally know something you don't."

"Fine, you will not give me your name then I ask this... Give me a chance to get to know you. I will allow the same, for you to know me. If you still believe me to be the man you knew before, then I will leave you in peace and never again question your name."

The chance to know Severus Snape was almost too much to pass up. True she had plenty of experience with the dour man, but that was in a student- teacher context. This, while not exactly equal footing, was probably the closest she would ever get.

"Alright, I accept. Now would it be alright if I checked your bandages? The healers from St. Mungo's say as long as you continue to improve they see no reason for you to be as restricted."

She smiled warmly at his look of utter relief. Her hands worked gently cleansing the wound. "Easing your way back into your routine is best. As long as you don't push yourself too much, you may begin brewing again."

His neck began to throb with the pain of healing. The pain that was once sharp and unbearable was now a dull, achy throb. He released a breath of relief when she applied a numbing cream to his throat. She wrapped his neck in a sterile bandage carefully, attentive in the care she bestowed upon him. Her fingers trailed along his jawline fleetingly. Tearing her hand away, she was startled to find her wrist gently enclosed in his grasp. The look he wore upon his face was one she had never seen from this man before. He looked vulnerable and open, his inky eyes communicating to her an unspoken trust that had formed between them.

"Thank you. I have never been cared for before... never with such tenderness." The pad of his thumb trailed lightly over the soft skin of her hand in imitation of the soft caresses she granted him.

Releasing her hand, he snatched a potions journal from the table. Flipping it open, he settled himself comfortably in the chair. Pretending to be engrossed in his reading, he made no further indication of interest in her. His mind however was filled with thoughts of her; he knew that she changed her appearance with charms. More specifically though he could tell which features she changed. Her eyes were undoubtedly not blue. The shape of her nose and her hair were altered. Surprisingly though, she had not altered her body. The soft curves he saw belonged to her.

"It's time to get dinner started. Perhaps while we eat we could talk a little." She looked to him anxiously awaiting his reaction.

"I would like that. For the sake of our... arrangement, you should think of a name I may use to address you." His eyes shone full of mirth. "As much as I thoroughly enjoy wench, it seems prudent to come up with something less offensive."

"I'll think on that, sir."

"I remember you using my given name last night. You have earned that right."

A moment of disbelief flashed over her features. "Severus," she whispered. Her voice caressed the syllables of his name in a manner wholly unfamiliar to him. The sound of his name from her lips echoed through him long after she left, resonating deeply within him.

Reviews are welcome!

Beauty and the Beast

Chapter 3 of 5

Our pair begin to bond.

Dinner that night was slightly awkward with each of them fumbling their way around the other as they settled into the new terms of their arrangement. Conversation was lagging with long stretches of silence between them. With the dinner finished they cleared the table. The dishes were dispensed with quickly, and a final glance around the kitchen showed all was in its proper place. Their eyes caught each other, and a small smile curled upon her lips.

"Well, I'll be in the parlour watching a movie," she said and hesitated before adding, "If you are interested, you are more than welcome to join me."

He nodded his approval and lingered a bit longer in the kitchen. The television she brought sat precariously atop a small table. Grabbing the remote, she flicked the power on and grabbed a small box from her belongings. Opening the box, she removed a small disk and inserted it into the DVD player.

Her small frame bounced excitedly onto the couch, curling her legs beneath her. He entered the room as the opening credits of the film filled the screen, a hot cup of tea in each hand.

"I made some tea for us," he said as he handed hers over carefully.

"Thank you, Severus."

They sat back, and Severus raised a skeptical brow.

"What in the world are we watching?"

"Beauty and the Beast," she responded sheepishly. "It is my favourite fairytale."

He scoffed lightly. "Indeed, it's a rather far-fetched story."

"Well, of course it is. It is an American Muggle fairytale, full of magic and obstacles, which of course, leads the way to love."

"A beauty would never love a beast," he stated bluntly.

"Says who?" she challenged.

A silence stretched between them, neither one knowing how to bridge the gap that had seemingly emerged between them.

"I'll be right back."

She was out of the room before he could respond. A few moments later, she returned her hands full with a large bowl of buttered popcorn and two beers. She sat down, handing him one of the beers and shifting to sit closely by his side. He reached out and accepted the beer from her, his eyebrow raised speculatively. He took a tentative sip, tasting the bitter beverage, and found the taste quite palatable. His hand dove forward into the bowl, grasping a handful of popcorn, and popping it into his mouth.

"What is it about this particular film that makes it your favorite?" he asked, his eyes absorbing the obvious delight displayed upon her features.

"When I was younger, I lived with my nose in a book. It didn't matter what it was, I would read whatever I could get my hands on. I loved them all, but especially fairytales. When I started at Hogwarts, I found myself immersed in text books and focused solely on learning about the magical world. Now I rarely have the time to read something for simple enjoyment, and although I love all books, I miss losing myself in a great story. Belle, I always thought, had the same passion for reading as I."

"Well, you are certainly as kind-hearted as she," he added, his voice soft. "Perhaps, I should call you Belle."

She smiled beatifically, and their eyes met. She reveled in the unfamiliar warmth that emanated from the depths of his inky eyes. The intensity of his gaze caused her cheeks to flush brightly. She looked away, focusing her attention towards the television, trying to control the mass of butterflies fluttering in the pit of her stomach.

Conflicting emotions warred within her as she contemplated the enigma of Severus Snape and his sudden ability to invoke such feelings in her. He had been true to his word and shown her a side of himself she was quite sure very few had ever experienced. Shame flooded through her at her failing Gryffindor courage. The battle over when to disclose her identity warred within her. She was equal parts excited and terrified at the prospect of coming clean. How would Severus Snape react if he knew that she was the Know-It-All who tormented him with endless questions for six long years? If anything, she was sure that the knowledge would toss him back into the bastard Potions master mode she was familiar with.

The movie ended and she stood, stretching the kinks from her body. "That was enjoyable, Severus. Tomorrow, I'll be going out in the morning. Leave a list on the table of anything you may need."

"Thank you. Are you going anywhere particular?" he inquired.

"No, I have to meet someone." She bit her lip nervously. Her discomfort over the subject was apparent. She turned and walked tiredly from the room, stopping just as she crossed the threshold. "Goodnight, Severus."

"Goodnight," he replied softly.

For over an hour Severus sat in the quiet dark of the parlour... his thoughts drifting over the circumstances he found himself in. One month since the final battle. Two weeks in a coma, another two weeks awake regaining his strength. He felt better each day as the pain faded. The only real reminder now was the appalling scars that littered the side of his neck. The inflamed red of the scars contrasted prominently with his alabaster skin, making them appear even more horrid. It amazed him each time 'Belle' tended to him for she never grimaced or turned away in disgust. She accepted his scars and, for some reason, her quiet acceptance of his scars, and his sacrifice, warmed his soul. With those last lingering thoughts, he turned in for the night.

The next day dawned brightly. A note left on the kitchen table caught Severus' attention.

Severus,

I should return around 1:00 p.m. for lunch. If there is anything you need, use the Galleon.

His dark eyes scanned the kitchen, his gaze shifting over the various foods stored in the refrigerator and pantry. Selecting his ingredients and setting them along the counter, Severus began preparing the chicken he selected for roasting. Once the chicken was seasoned and prepared, he set it aside and moved onto prepping the potatoes and carrots. He cast a stasis spell on the items and stepped outside into his gardens. He had a little over forty-five minutes before he needed to start cooking the chicken so that by the time she arrived home from her meeting, lunch would be ready.

The clock ticked slowly towards one o'clock. Twenty minutes before she would be returning home, the lunch was finished, and Severus found he was anxious for her return. He remembered from the previous evening that she was not particularly looking forward to her meeting. He wondered briefly if it had turned out the way she desired. He stood when he heard the front door slam close and an angry march of footsteps approach. The footsteps reached the kitchen doorway, and the smile faded from his face as he observed the witch. Emotions radiated off of her as she stood trembling. Hesitantly he approached her, her tear-stained face turning up towards him.

"Come here," he said, his arms opening up to her.

She closed the short distance between them, burrowing her head into his chest as his arms wrapped around her tightly.

He rubbed her back soothingly until she could cry no more. "Come and sit. We shall eat, and if you would like to talk about it. I am here to listen."

One arm remained wrapped about her small waist as he led her into the kitchen. "Severus, this is amazing," she gasped. The table was set with two plates of roast chicken, mashed potato and carrots. "I love roasted chicken."

She settled herself at the table while Severus poured them each a glass of wine before placing the bottle on the table. Both seated, they ate their lunch quietly. She was undeniably upset, and more than anything he found himself wanting to reach out to her again. Her eyes were red-rimmed and wet from the obvious tears she had shed.

"What happened to get you so upset?" His quietly spoken question elicited a fresh batch of tears to well up in her eyes.

"My boyfriend and I broke up, and it's not that really. Before we dated he was one of my very best friends. All of our friends are shared. Everyone we knew expected us to be together." Tears fell from her eyes. "After all the loss, the hurt and pain of the war... I just don't want to lose any one else. Especially my best friends now that we survived."

Shifting his chair closer to her, Severus reached out, slowly cupping the side of her face in his warm, calloused hand. His thumb gently wiped away her tears. "If your friends walk away from you over this, then they never deserved your friendship. As far as your boyfriend is concerned, he is a fool."

He removed his hand and stood, clearing away his plate and glass. Taking one final look at the distraught witch, he turned and waved his wand wordlessly over one of the panels. A door appeared. Twisting the handle, he descended down the basement stairs. The door remained open in a silent invitation, calling to her insatiable curiosity. Standing up, she shook off her depressive thoughts and turned her attention into finally entering the sanctity of Severus' private lab.

Review please!

Thanks to Mel for the wonderful beta work!

Arguments and Picnics

Chapter 4 of 5

A little drama and a picnic.

A routine was set from that night forward. Every evening they dined together, each of them contributing to the meal. After dinner they would sit in the parlor. Whether it was reading quietly or partaking in a film or show, their time together was pleasant. While Severus was still private and guarded most of the time, she noticed that he was peeling back the layers of himself for her; it overwhelmed her at times over these past three weeks. This man was truly different from the persona he had portrayed for so long, and it made her wonder how many people truly knew Severus Snape.

Hermione found herself endlessly debating how to tell him who she was. Regardless of his recent behavior, she wondered what his reaction would be. The Gryffindor Know-It-All that had plagued his classroom with incessant questions for six years was the one residing in his home caring for him. If anything could snap him back into the dreaded Potions master he once was, she was sure that would be it.

She was drawn from her thoughts by the sound of his footsteps ascending lightly up the stairs. A moment later the door flew open and his footsteps stalked down the short distance of the hall, into her view. He was dirty, covered in sweat and grime from standing over a cauldron all afternoon. He was tired, and for a moment she considered

taking him to task for pushing himself too hard. Instead she felt warmth spread through her chest as she realized she found the sight of him quite endearing.

"Go clean up," she said wrinkling her nose teasingly. "We'll go out for lunch, if that's agreeable with you?"

He acknowledged her with a grunt and then made his way towards his room. A few moments later she heard the rush of water through the old pipes signaling the start of his shower. She went to her own room to change her clothes. Grabbing a pair of jeans and a green shirt, she dressed quickly. She cast her eyes to the mirror, frowning at the unfamiliar reflection. She was beautiful with long, silky black hair that was entirely different from the riotous bush of brown that normally adorned her head. Startlingly blue eyes and a slight alteration to the shape of her face, with her new hair and she was a vision. A vision of lies, and she wondered where her Gryffindor courage disappeared to. She released a shuddering breath when she caught sight of him standing in the door.

"All set?" she asked, her eyes sweeping over his form appraisingly. The dark trousers that fit snugly around his backside were almost as unbelievable as the dark blue shirt he wore. Gone were the billowing black robes she was sure he would never part with. His hair was still damp, but tied back at the nape of his neck, allowing her the full view of his sharp features.

An incline of his head gestured that he was ready. "Do you have anywhere particular in mind?" he asked.

"This is your first time out in over a month. You choose."

He considered her for a moment, standing there, her hands on her hips in a familiar stance that he knew meant she would not compromise.

"Very well," he drawled as he walked towards her, offering his arm.

"Where are we going?"

"I suppose you will have to wait and see," he teased as he walked them towards the large fireplace. He grasped a handful of Floo Powder, tossed it into the fire, and stated their destination: "The Burrow."

A moment later they were stumbling out into the Weasleys' living room. Severus immediately noticed that his young healer had tensed upon their arrival. While he was shaking the excess powder from his person, she stood frozen.

"Why are we here?" she asked. Her voice held a frantic intonation he never would have associated with his brash healer.

"To arrange a Portkey. Arthur is a friend of mine, and with his connections to the Ministry there is no need to wait."

She released the breath she didn't know she was holding and cast a nervous glance around the unusual quiet that encased The Burrow. It had never been this quiet.

"This way, I believe Arthur is out the back." He began moving towards the back entrance when a resounding slam was heard from the front of the house.

Ron Weasley stalked into the kitchen, seemingly oblivious to the two guests standing in the living room. Severus cleared his throat, startling Ron, who spun around, wand drawn. His eyes narrowed as he registered the identity of the intruders.

"What are you doing here?" Ron spat angrily. His gaze directed not at Severus, but at the young healer standing with him.

"I'm sorry. I will go," she choked out as tears welled up behind blinking eyes. She cast her gaze to the floor, brushing past Severus in her rush to get to the nearest exit.

"What was that?" Severus seethed, his anger barely contained at the scene he was witness too.

Ron's cold eyes met Severus'. "Ask her." And with that he stormed up the stairs.

Severus turned quickly, following the path his companion took while fleeing. He found her in the yard sitting with her back against a tree for support as sobs shook through her body. Her eyes shot upward when his shadow cast over her. Her tear-stained face tipped upwards, and his heart clenched at the obvious pain that shadowed her eyes. His hand reached out and grasped hers firmly, lifting her off the ground and into his arms.

"Let's go," he said, guiding her towards the garage. He disappeared for a brief moment and returned clutching a broomstick.

An involuntary shudder wracked through her body at the sight of the broomstick. "I'm not terribly fond of flying."

"Do you trust me?"

Her eyes locked with his, and she knew that she trusted him. She knew without doubt that he would never let harm come to her.

"Yes," she whispered, her eyes shying away from the intensity of his stare. He mounted the broom and beckoned her towards it.

She mounted the broom so that she was sitting between his legs, and his arms wrapped around her to grasp the handle.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes," she replied, nearly breathless from the hot puffs of his breath across her neck.

He kicked upwards, and the broom lifted effortlessly off the ground. They rose into the air and took off. A startled squeal left her lips as they flew faster and higher. The treetops passed under their feet, and soon they descended into a clearing, landing softly. She looked around as she dismounted from the broom. A small path twisted out ahead of them, and Severus inclined his head for her to follow it. They walked a few moments in silence, entering into a forest and weaving along the path between the copses of trees. They emerged to find a small pond and patch of grass. Severus stopped and withdrew an object from his pocket. A flick of his wand and the object enlarged. In his hand, Severus held a large picnic basket and blanket. He worked silently, laying the blanket down and emptying the contents of the basket out. He gestured for her to be seated as well.

"This is wonderful, Severus. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

They ate silently, each lost in their own thoughts until Severus finally broke through the silence that settled over them. "You are the closest thing I have to a friend, and yet, I don't know who you are. I need you to trust me. I need you to see me. I know that you have been through a lot today, and so, I don't expect you to tell me now, but you must understand... I need to know who you are."

Thanks to eternal lily for beta reading this!

My Soul I Bare

Chapter 5 of 5

Some revelations from Severus.

Severus arrived back to his house on Spinner's End. Without her chatter the once comforting silence had twisted into something eerie and discomfiting. He paced the length of hall, his tongue running along the inside of his cheek, tracing the swollen flesh he bit to keep her name from tumbling from his lips.

"Hermione," he whispered into the quiet. He indulged in stating her name aloud, it felt wondrous. What he had told her before leaving was all true. He did consider her a friend, cared about her. He knew that the six years as her professor left its mark, but the brave girl he remembered surely had more courage than she was currently displaying. How could he show her how much he admired her, had always admired her brilliance -- even when he couldn't show it?

All at once the answer arose in his mind. His journal, the one place he ever expressed the truth of his thoughts. Every year he kept record of his experiences in a journal, heavily warded and hidden. Each new year brought a new journal. While no other had ever been privy to his innermost thoughts for her, he was willing to make an exception. Sweeping over to the desk, he removed his wand, a soft incantation and swishing movement opened the top of the desk. Lying neatly stacked sat several slim journals, each displaying a number on the spine. He reached forward and grasped the one marked with a seven. The book slim and light felt weighed down with the nightmare documented within its bindings. Still he knew without a doubt that if anyone could understand him, it was her.

Re-warding the desk, he sat in the leather wing-backed chair, staring at the leather journal that contained his secrets, his thoughts, his desires. His mind resolute he stood, summoning a bit of parchment and quill. Severus' spiky handwriting scratched upon the bit of parchment quickly. Arranging the note so that it lay over the journal, Severus stepped back towards the fireplace, grasping a handful of Floo Powder. With a last glance around the room, he stepped determinedly into the Floo. Releasing the powder and commanding, "Hogwarts Headmistress' Office," Severus disappeared with a flash of green.

It was hours later when Hermione returned to Spinner's End. She entered quietly, unsure where Severus had gone to brood. A cursory glance around the darkened house offered no hint of his location, so it was with a sullen sigh she set off in search of her wayward friend. She checked upstairs and found it untouched with the beds made, no sign he had ventured upstairs if he had returned home at all. Making her way downstairs, she entered the kitchen. Grasping the tea kettle, Hermione filled it with water and set it upon the stove. Her eyes drifted towards the doorway to the parlour. She moved hesitantly towards the desk, flicking her wand at the fireplace igniting a fire.

Her eyes shifted towards the parchment lying awkwardly on his otherwise tidy desk. Lifting the parchment, her eyes widened as she read the words Severus left her.

I have thought endlessly to find a way to reach you, to make you understand. This is what I have to offer. The book lying on my desk is the journal I kept during my tenure as Headmaster. Inside you will find my thoughts, secrets and desires. There is no one in this world other than you that I would share this with. I ask that regardless of what you may decide at its conclusion to keep its contents private.

Yours,

Severus

Her hands trembled slightly as she lifted the slim journal from its resting place atop the desk. She settled herself into the chair, the kettle all but forgotten as she settled in to read.

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In all my time here at Hogwarts, through all the difficult tasks that were set ahead of me I always held onto some hope. I always felt this place was my home. Now as I sit here in the Headmaster's Office, my office, I am struck with how little comfort I feel here. A place that before brought refuge and kindness, without him I fear it is empty and filling with such darkness. I often times find myself fighting back the bile that arises so suddenly. The Carrows are amongst my staff now, and the others all hate me with every fiber of their being. If only they understood. I wish I could tell them how proud I am of their resilient defense of our students and school.

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They are on the run. I think of you endlessly now. The thoughts of you are the only thing that keeps me sane, keeps me treading along this narrowing path. For all these years I have loved you, grieved you, and watched over your son, though difficult the latter may have been. I have done them all for you. I am doing all I can to ensure he has the upper hand, that he is prepared for what lies ahead of him. Even at the expense of my own life.

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I've finally received word on them. Granger, the ever Know-It-All had been prepared. They are traveling together, and doing well. If it took me this long to track them, then Granger is doing something right. I have no doubt in my mind that girl will keep them safe and moving towards their goal. The tension around the castle is overwhelming at times. Longbottom has seemed to grow into himself. The young man that stands before me these days is a far cry from the absentminded first year. He has grown into a leader, gathering his Gryffindor cohorts against the Carrows. It's proving more difficult to guarantee his safety; already under my watch the children have been harmed. They are right to revile me.

~~

They are smarter than I gave them credit for. I decided to check on them myself and carefully cloaking myself I set about my task. They are camping, traveling through the forests and scarcely populated places. I could feel the wards set along their perimeter, set to conceal themselves from anyone harboring ill-intent towards them. From the scraps of information I am able to garner from Headmaster Black's portrait, they have been on the whole healthy aside from a few minor incidents, the most recent being the departure of the youngest red-headed menace. Thank Merlin, I can count on Granger. She is your son's best friend, and loyal to a fault. She is the most brilliant student I have ever taught, and in six years I have never once acknowledged that fact.

~~

I had a startling thought this evening during dinner. With the Carrows seated on either side of me, ranting on against Muggles and their foulness, I was suddenly struck with the most ludicrous thought ever. I had a sudden and almost inexplicable yearning to engage Minerva in conversation. All the times I had sat at this very table wishing to escape a chatty Minerva. Now I fought the urge to turn to her. If it stopped there, I may have been wholly unaffected, but as dinner wore on I realized it was not only Minerva whom I had begrudgingly admitted I missed, but also other members of The Order. People I never would have imagined wishing to see, Arthur and Molly rise to my mind and their unwavering generosity of spirit. It would be utterly vile to admit that even the werewolf crosses my mind; I've heard he has started a family. Something I know resolutely I will never have.

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I was called away for a meeting tonight. After the obligatory hem-kissing and meeting, I was forced to once again take my present. Narcissa has been gifted to me, openly and publicly declared to be my whore. Lucius shakes and trembles with barely restrained wrath while I make his wife moan and beg like a whore for the audience of Death Eaters. That alone provides it satisfactory. I pulled out of her as she was begging for me to fill her, instead choosing to release all over her. I returned her to Lucius still covered in my release. The sex while physically satisfying does little for my spirit. I've never once made love to a woman. Placing my mouth upon a woman has been one of the lines I have refused to cross, fearing that if I allowed a kiss of any kind an attachment may form. The last woman I kissed was you. The only woman I ever wanted to love, to release myself so deeply inside of you, only you. Perhaps that's why I have reserved those two acts as too intimate to share with anyone else.

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Things are progressing as they should, and soon I shall be leaving to bring something to your son--something to help him in his endeavor. I know the end is approaching, I can feel it in my bones. Our Lord grows more anxious by the day; his ranks are readying themselves for the battle that lies ahead. With any luck I will be with you soon, Lily love.

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The outing was a success. I bestowed upon your son a great weapon, and remained out of view. I used your doe, and just as I expected he followed without hesitation. He almost drowned attempting to retrieve the item, luckily enough his fool of a friend, Weasley, finally proved his worth. With two of the three in my sight and caught up in their reunion and work, I crept towards their campsite. My intent was only to establish that all three were in good health, if not slightly worse for wear. I found a small opening on one side of their tent, warded luckily enough against only those bearing ill intent. I peered inside seeking a glimpse of her, enough to know that all was well with the trio. What I found instead was a beautiful young woman, lying naked upon her bed. Her fingers worked feverishly upon her slickened flesh, rubbing and thrusting into herself wild and utterly untamed. Her mouth was open in a silent scream muffled by the strong Silencing Charm set around her. Her face flushed with such passion, a look of utter rapture upon her face. I was ashamedly aroused, and rock hard before I could fully register what I was witnessing. In that moment she was no longer the swotty, Know-It-All, bookworm. She was a Goddess. I returned back to the school as ill-tempered as ever. I deducted the remaining house points from Gryffindor and threw myself into the coldest shower I could handle. When that failed, I instead focused upon you, your face and body. My elaborate fantasy unfolded before my mind's eye, and soon I was wrapped up in a vision of you flushed on top, riding my cock to oblivion. I stroked myself, all the while imagining I was burying myself inside of you. When my climax approached, it shook me to the core. At the moment of release, the woman in my fantasy was no longer you: it was her, and I was releasing myself into her so deeply I screamed. As soon as I finished I was disgusted with myself, with my lack of control and to my ever most shame my attraction to a student.

Reviews, please! So sorry for the long wait between chapters.