

# The Crucible of Cruelty

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His worst memory.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: This all belongs to J.K. Rowling.

Warnings: depictions of bullying

Prompt: touch, hands

A/N: Written for Snape LDWS.

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The hatred was an ember in his chest. It burned him, fueled him—sometimes he thought it might be the only thing keeping him alive, this feeling of enmity. The poison seeped through his veins and no part of him was untainted by it... for as long as he could remember, he had loathed someone, and the feeling ran too deep to simply stop now. He had to learn to harness it, redirect it. That's why Severus liked the Dark Arts so much. He had been powerless against his father all those years, but he wouldn't remain weak forever. If he learned the secrets that magic had to offer, he could punish those who had wronged him. Bullies like Potter and his pack.

It was thoughts of revenge that had him distracted, seducing and lulling him with the luster of their promise. Severus was imagining all the ways that he would reign triumphant when it was he, instead, who was caught unawares.

"*Snivellus.*"

With that despicable moniker, it began. Before Severus could register anything other than the dread that was seeping through him, his wand was ripped from him, his legs rendered useless to him, his dignity stripped from him until the hate that had been a cinder burst into flame and consumed him. The jeering of the assemblage—Lily bearing witness to his shame—only steeled his resolve. He would never forgive them. Any one of them. He would have his revenge.

Potter was talking to Lily now, and Severus could feel the Impedimenta loosening its hold. He wriggled towards where his wand had fallen, forgotten, desperate to arm himself. He stretched out his hand, the long, bony fingers nearly there...

Potter, the fool, was too busy posturing in his arrogance. They never did think he was much of a threat, but he would show them that he was more than something they could denigrate and discard like so much garbage. The wand in Severus' grasp had never felt so good, and he turned to exact his vengeance. With pleasure, he took aim and fired the hex that wounded Potter, droplets of blood flying back to stain Severus' robes. The flow of magic through the wand hummed, the vibrations traveling into the hands that had created the very spell.

Severus' satisfaction was short-lived, as his whole world tipped upside-down. Lily seeing his undergarments wasn't as painful as her calling him Snivellus... or his subsequent loss of temper. He would always regret this day, and as he crawled away from his tormentors, and he knew he'd never forget.

Severus let the blackness take what was left of him. He may have looked hardened before, but it was only after today that he drew up the remains of his broken heart—a wound worse because he had helped to break it with his terribly rash words—and shield them behind a mask. After this day, he would let no one see his true feelings. After this day, he would trust no one—not even himself.