

To Heal a Soul

by *BlazenPaths2*

Snape, who has fled the Wizarding world a damaged man after the final battle, is on a journey that will show him how to heal his soul, and luckily, he'll have help along the way from a certain know-it-all. Written for Potter_Place's Alternate Universe Challenge (2010). Winner of Best WIP and Most Interesting Premise.

Chapter One -

Chapter 1 of 3

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Chapter One – “Slow Spinning Redemption”

19/11/2012

People don't expect me to act the way I do anymore. They think that since I made it out of the War that I must be able to move on from my ways. I did not leave the Hogwarts grounds unscathed. I left only part of a man, half of the partial person I used to be. I cannot speak any longer; I cannot see much out of my right eye on even my better days. I cannot have children, even if I had the ability to find a woman who would bear them. I owe my life to three people who made my life a hell for seven long years, but it is a life I'd rather not have on most days.

I turn my back on others now, without the words I wish I could. My glare has not lost its touch but instead has become more of a monster's haunt. There is no pounding at my door by women who want a man who has won a glorious battle, risked his life. There is no “hurrah” for me these days. I was awarded a low class Order of Merlin for my work, no ceremony to produce it. It does not hang proudly above my mantle nor sit in a frame beside my most prized *Most Potente Potions*.

If I am to be honest, truthful in this missive, I must retract an earlier statement. People expect I died the way I lived. My Order of Merlin was awarded posthumously. I have never seen it, only heard of it in passing. I haven't been around another witch or wizard in nearly eleven years.

22/11/2012

I have lived in a small hovel of a place outside an even smaller village than Spinner's End for the past decade. It is too small to have even a Muggle grocer or a doctor within its limits. It suits me. I know the name of every Muggle within the village and the names of most of its meager visitors. With the exception of one young man, I am the youngest in the village by nearly thirty years.

I am also the only without family. I am *alone*. In a world of teaching and treachery, being alone is difficult. In a world of family and companionship, of love and affection, I am ever more aware of how lonely and painful a life apart can be. My solitude was once my shield, but is now my bitter affliction.

I cannot say that I regret my past actions as a whole, though some I wish erased. My actions saved the child of the woman I was closest to, and despite the catastrophe of a man he had as a father, I am content in knowing that.

28/11/2012

I have never been a nice man. Since childhood I have lived my life apart. Only one soul ever cared to inspire me to live my life closer to the rest of the world, but in the end her fate was not with me. The final battle was a harsh one, one I don't like to think about. It started on the top of the Astronomy Tower at the end of the Spring Term of 1997 when by my hands my patriarchal puppet-master took his final breath.

He wasn't sick, wasn't dying. I know the official party line. "A Horcrux stole his strength and withered his arm."

The truth of the matter is that Albus Dumbledore was not the man he pretended to be. I know many expect that. They have read that insipid woman's horrendous biography and seen many of the terrible facets of Dumbledore's visage. Everything that woman had penned was true, but she had not known the most important pieces; she had never finished his story.

I won't get in to every piece of the man's past, but one important missing piece affected more than just me.

When Tom Riddle was in his fifth year, Minerva McGonagall was in her sixth. The events that occurred were never spoken of, but the sixth year gave up her daughter in order to return to school at all, and Albus never told her of the infant's fate.

I had learned of Minerva's plight one night after the Dark Lord had fallen for the first time. I had begun to think of a life in potions research when she spoke to me of it. We hadn't yet formed any sort of bond, pseudo-friendship or otherwise. I didn't understand the significance until Harry Potter entered Hogwarts and my mark, once again, began to burn.

I had chosen to remain a professor, stay within the confines that remained, for me, closest to home.

But without meaning to I stayed under the thumb of my patriarchal puppet-master.

She had tried to warn me, to convince me to leave. Her story did not make sense to me until that very moment, almost fifteen years later when I was charged with the task of killing Albus Dumbledore at the risk of my very soul.

17/01/2013

I have not written in this journal in almost two months. The pain has been intense. The village elder offered me a handful of something called Vioxx, but the Potions master in me refuses to take a concoction made by a Muggle without knowing what is contained within.

My hands were ruined by a curse that had been designed to destroy my ability to cast a spell. A fallen Portkey, a small round marble that had at some point rolled to my nearly unconscious body, brought me to the entrance hall of Black's decrepit house minutes before I would have passed on. The sudden landing tripped an aging curse that Mad-Eye had placed before his death. A second curse expelled me from the property and into the street. If not for some concerned Muggle calling a hospital, I would have died on a street. I would have died the way I lived—totally alone.

I have been writing, putting the thoughts I never before wanted to string together, in order to calm the violent quivering in my hands. I wish nothing more than to brew a potion again, even if it be the last thing I do. I don't have any other purpose in life. I have nothing more to *live* for. Except for the potion I always wanted to brew, to create, to bring to life. *Sano a animus*. To heal a soul.

Prompts used:

18. Write a story with Snape as he is in canon. He has lived through the final battle and played a big part in it. What part did he play? What does he do with his life now that he's free?

2. A canon character discovers something important about himself.

Hope Dangling on a String

Chapter 2 of 3

I loathed teaching. Snot-nosed brats were still brats when they learned to wipe their noses.

Chapter Two – "Hope Dangling on a String"

19/01/2013

I loathed teaching. Snot-nosed brats were still brats when they learned to wipe their noses. Longbottom was not the first insolent student to melt a cauldron, not even the worst. I have no doubt another Longbottom will come along in a few years to make another Potion master's life a living hell for a few hours a week. I could have handled the little devils for years more.

Politics. I loathed teaching. The House system only bred discontent. The staff, for the majority, hated one another.

The closest person I had to a friend knew very little about me. For the most part, it had been by my choice. And when it would have mattered, when I needed the companionship of a friend who knew the whole of me more than I ever had before, she was gone.

She fled the day she learned my Dark Mark was returning to mar the surface of my skin.

I could have told the world about the child torn away from her. I could have told Albus I knew what he did to her when she was bound to keep it secret. I have not a doubt in my mind that she expected me to.

I could not. Whatever foolish sliver of affection borne of our handful of talks and myriad of silent nights in front of a fire stopped me. I did not love her, do not love her. She reminded me, in ways, of my mother before I was accepted into Hogwarts. Stern, yet affection shone quietly in her actions.

I might have hurt her more by keeping the secret of her daughter to myself in the long run.

Lily had been a half of me for so many long years. And yet, years before Minerva had tried to cut ties, she had done the same. The reason she had given me was borne of a threat.

Like Minerva, there was a man at the root of it all.

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore-meddling old fool, patriarchal puppet-master.

He had never been a father, never been an uncle. Why was it so easy to see him for what he pretended to be? I hated the man and yet followed his rules and orders exactly as he asked. Loyalty brought on by a twisted combination of fear and the belief that one would be taken care of.

"It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to your enemies, but a great deal more to stand up to your friends." Dumbledore was not a friend. Not exactly an enemy. Either way, I had not the bravery needed to stand up to him.

What reason had he to tear my grounding away? Was he trying to mold me into his perfect spy? Had it always been his dark intention?

I was but a child.

But now? Now, I am a man with a broken soul.

23/1/2013

Two weeks ago, my fifty-third birthday came and went like all others since I was a sixth year—quietly and without mention. I did not receive anything special. I opened no cards or gifts.

The village elder waved at me when I went to procure a bottle of whiskey from the young man at the other end of the village. It is the one and only acknowledgement of the anniversary of my birth that I have received since I began my residence here. Like the brief wave, the bottle of whiskey is my recognition of aging.

This year, I have not drunk myself into a stupor as I usually do. The young man looked much like a student I had once upon a time, and I found myself unable to drink it for thoughts of the world I abandoned when it had first abandoned me.

Has the green-eyed child of Lily Evans married? Have he and the Weasley chit produced a vat of the children he always wanted? Did Granger apprentice and become something of herself? Did Draco Malfoy survive past the trials?

It has not been much of a thought in more than eleven years, what happened after the war was truly over. It did not matter to me. All that mattered was surviving long enough to create my final potion. Now that I have begun to write, to put wayward thoughts together, my mind has wandered to the place I lived before.

And to the little girl separated from her mother.

06/04/2013

I find that I can help in the planting. The village has put me up for long enough with no payment other than a few menial tasks. I cannot do much these days. Sometimes, they will come to talk. They will not look at me, do not expect an answer.

They talk for the sake of someone to only listen. For the first time, more than one person needed only my ear.

13/06/2013

I have been unable to write much for a while. The digging and planting eased my hands at first, but left them aching and painful for a long time after. Therapy, I believe some books called it. I need physical therapy to regain the full use of my hands.

Today I received a visit from the young man. He brought whiskey in an unmarked and half-empty bottle and walked with a limp I'd never noticed before. His hair was a violent slash, likely the result of the first half of the whiskey or a bottle before. His eyes, a dark brown, were bloodshot and more than a little cloudy. Perhaps I cannot write it as well as it happened, but it remains so vivid I feel I must attempt, if only to remember this moment.

Despite the agony I must write.

"Tobias... You know what?" he had asked me. It seems so insignificant now, I surmise, but then it seemed so important.

"In a couple days is the anniversary of the day my family disappeared." I could not, would not focus on his words. Why would he tell such a broken man, one who would not, even if he'd the ability to, comfort his sorrowing heart? A bitter tinge hit me in the one spot that children for decades said had dried up.

"I went to visit them. They were gone. Neighbors said the house had been empty for a decade. Couldn't be true, I lived there four years before. Why weren't they remembered? If they moved, why was I not told? It's been almost sixteen bloody years, and I still don't know."

Sixteen years. Sixteen years ago.

Sixteen years ago on this day, I killed Albus Dumbledore.

Why is it now that I recall this? It seems like the day one of the puppet-masters pulling harshly at your fraying strings dies should be a momentous one in memory, not a wishfully forgotten one.

All I recall is a dark bitterness. All I recall is harrowing sadness. Empty. Death would have been accepted then, a fitting albeit unwelcome end to an even more unwelcome life.

"Tobias. You know you're the closest person I have anymore? Ha. What a sad way to end a life." To end a life? I remember being pulled from my errant musings at his words. The way my hands clenched.

No one as young as he should be at death. It is my life that should be at its end.

"I have two days. Heh. Joining my family seems fitting. I only wish I could see them once more.

My little baby sister Hermione would be turning thirty-four this year. We'd finally be closer. Thirty-four and forty-nine are rather close."

Hermione.

Thirty four.

Sixteen years.

Hermione.

Thirty four.

Sixteen years.

Oh how fate has seen to make my life turn again.

In a rather dark twisting indeed.

06/15/2013

Today is the day that Hermione Granger's brother said he would die. He has not been back in my hovel since the day he told me. The elder has asked me what the boy told me, but I refuse to write the words, even for the man who has shown me such kindness as to shelter me.

Nathan is his name. I lived near him for more than a decade without knowing that it ended in Granger.

Forty-nine. Still a child. How much difference between the way we are. I am only four years his senior. He still feels as a child to me.

Is it the War? Does that truly age us? Fighting and living in fear, every day battle to survive. While men such as he lived their lives the same that they always had. How I wished for that mundane life, to just be and not spy and lie and pretend that my life truly mattered.

I must stop idly waiting for the moment that my hands stop shaking violently. I need to end this.

I leave in the morning to procure belladonna ash for the potion I always wanted to brew, to create, to bring to life. Sano a animus. To heal a soul.

Winding In, Winding Out.

Chapter 3 of 3

"It is fear that drives the incessant muttering of a thousand voices from beyond the Veil."

Chapter Three – "Winding In, Winding Out."

16/06/2013

Belladonna ash cannot be found in a Muggle occult shop. No Wiccan girls sell it. They will sell belladonna in dried form, but dried and ashen are different.

I must return to the Wizarding World. I find myself unable to enter the pub across the street.

The dead whisper my name. *Severus Snape*.

Why is it that I find myself unable to enter a doorway I'd entered thousands of times? Why is it that I find myself unable to enter the gates into where I truly belong?

The dead whisper my name. *Severus Snape*.

It is ironic, I fear, that perhaps some decades after I was at the brink of insanity, it is now it comes.

Belladonna ash. *Severus Snape*. The dead whisper my name.

I know that it is all in my head. I know that the dead cannot speak. It is fear that drives the incessant muttering of a thousand voices from beyond the Veil.

The Veil.

The shroud of the dead, the bane of the living.

Belladonna ash. *Severus Snape*. The dead whisper my name. The Veil.

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It has been a few days since I last wrote. I cannot recall the date. I woke up in Nathan Granger's bed two days ago, and I don't know what led to it. All I remember is the pounding of angry voices in my head and the beat of the rain pouring down.

Nathan Granger is alive. I do not understand why it should surprise me. Have I gotten so separated from society that I have forgotten a person's ability to lie? No. If I know anything, it is that people lie.

Albus Dumbledore was a liar; the biggest one I've ever known. He told Harry Potter that finding the Horcruxes and destroying them would end Voldemort's life.

They were never real. Voldemort's soul was indeed unstable, very much so. Every death, every torture, every cast of Imperio, Crucio, Avada Kedavra, tainted his soul to the extreme depths of darkness. Mementos of his kills were all they were. Dumbledore knew; he always had. He also knew he had to gain the trust of Harry Potter and what better way to do that than to reveal his plans for the War?

Six drops belladonna essence, two leaves of premature conium. All the ingredients I've collected for this beginning attempt – two singular ingredients that on their own could be fatal. The belladonna ash became the essence, but the conium grew near the hovel I've been living in. I live a poisonous life, the safest point in my existence.

"Tobias." The words are whispered, raspy. I know they are. It hurts me to no end to feel the air escape my lips.

The Elder. Tobias.

Why had Nathan called me Tobias? My father and I were not one in the same.

The Elder.

I haven't spoken a word since the last time I spoke to Harry Potter more than a decade ago. Not since I thought I was dying.