Strong Enough

by DBZVegeta

Is Harry strong enough to be the man for Severus? Song by Sheryl Crow ? Strong Enough.

One-Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Strong Enough

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God, I feel like hell tonight

Tears of rage I cannot fight

I'd be the last to help you understand

Are you strong enough to be my man?

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Severus slumped into chair in front of the fire, bringing one hand up to rub at his aching head. *'God, I feel like hell tonight,'*he thought, trying to dismiss the images that threatened to overwhelm him mind.

Why, tonight of all nights, did he have to see Harry? Even from the distance across the hall, it had been too much for him. It had nearly been three years since that fateful night of Voldemort's defeat. The night that he had told Harry that he didn't care for him and nastily told him to leave, that he didn't need an immature brat to take care of and even then the sex hadn't been that good.

The rage that Harry had been in was the power he had needed to defeat Voldemort; it had been nearly at that exact moment when the alarms had sounded through the castle that he had declared his statement. Harry had stalked angrily from their rooms, tears of rage streaming down his face. He had proceeded to tear a hole through the raging storm of Death Eaters to face down Voldemort directly, his wrath so great that the forbidden curse rolled from his lips with such power that Voldemort was completely destroyed, not even a speck of dust could be found afterwards.

Upon Voldemort's destruction, the last of the Death Eaters surrendered to the Aurors that had arrived, once again too late to assist. Severus had watched the entire proceedings from the top of the castle stairs, watched as Harry turned to look at him one last time before Disapparating away from the battlefield. That had been the last anyone had seen of him in three years... until tonight.

'Damn Minerva,' he snorted angrily to himself as he dropped his hand to thump hard on the arm of the chair. His eyes watering with his suppressed emotions as pushed himself up out of his chair and began to pace back and forth, his cloak snapping behind him like a whip.

It was her fault that he had to see Harry tonight. She knew what he had been going through for the last three years. She knew the anguish it had caused him to push Harry away from him that night, to reject him so cruelly. He'd be that last person to explain to Harry why he had done what he had done, to make him understand that only his brutal rejection of his love was what was needed to release the power locked deep inside him.

To make him a strong enough man to be able to come back to him. But Harry hadn't come back to him, hadn't seen through the guise and deception.

The pounding on his door reverberated through the chamber, and he knew instantly who it was at his door. With a resigned sigh, he strode over to the door and released the wards before turning back towards the fireplace. He heard the door slam open, bouncing off the wall with the force of the movement. He didn't turn around, knowing that if he did his resolve would be tested to the utmost. He had to gather his emotions together, reining in the boiling need to turn around and sweep the other into his arms and confess his deceit.

"Snape," the voice whipped across him coldly, sending a shiver down his spine both in longing and dread.

"Potter," he replied, keeping his hands clasped behind him, knuckles turning white from the strain. He didn't dare turn around, not now.

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Nothing's true and nothing's right

So let me be alone tonight

Cause you can't change the way I am

Are you strong enough to be my man?

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"Long time since we last saw each other, isn't it?" Harry said, his voice not betraying his resentment. "Not since the night of Voldemort's defeat." He watched as Snape's shoulders twitched, a barely perceptible shiver of movement.

"That's right," Severus answered softly, a tight rein on his heaving emotions. Harry frowned at the non-confrontational tone in his voice, almost as if he hadn't a care left in the world.

"Well, I'll say I was quite surprised to see you were still employed here. I would have thought that you'd have left by now since you are so disgusted with the whelps that infest the castle," Harry snarled, throwing back some of the same words that Severus had spouted on that infamous day. He watched, his anger growing as the man in front of him barely acknowledged his words. Growling as he stalked forward, he grabbed Severus by the shoulder and spun him around intent on making him acknowledge his presence.

What he found caused him to drop his hand and take a step back, his anger dissipating completely, his concern welling. The haunted look in Severus' eyes, the pale sallow skin with deep black wells under each eye, the gaunt hollow cheeks and the robes hanging limply along a nearly skeletal frame greeted his shocked eyes.

'This can't be true; it can't be right. Snape had no reason to look this devastated. He had been the one to push me away,' Harry thought to himself, as his hand came up involuntarily to drag fingers along the dry wasted flesh of Severus' face.

Severus took a shaky step back, away from the touch the seemed to burn him to his core. He couldn't let Harry see him like this, no not like he had become, a wasted human being whose life had stopped the night Harry had left his. He took another step back and attempted to turn away, but his arm was caught in a tight grip that bruised his thin frame.

"Let me be," he croaked, pulling futility against the strong grip, knowing in the end that he wouldn't be let loose. "Why can't you just let me alone?"

"What's happened to you?" Harry asked softly, his eyes taking in even more of the devastation that was once the proud man known as Professor Severus Snape.

"What's it matter to you!" Severus said suddenly, his black eyes coming up to meet Harry's, flashing momentarily with his emotion before draining back into his haunted expression before he turned his head away. "You can't change the way I am. I let that right go a long time ago," he whispered so softly that Harry almost missed the words.

"Severus," he said, ignoring the tightening of the thin arm beneath his hand, "look at me." He shook the arm he was holding on when Severus refused to look at him, his face adverted towards the glowing fireplace. He reached out with his free hand and grasped Severus' chin and turned his face around to meet his. "Tell me what has happened to you?"

"You weren't strong enough," Severus said before he simply closed his eyes and fell limply to the floor, what little strength he had left gone.

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Lie to me

I promise I'll believe

Lie to me

But please don't leave

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It was the nightmare that finally woke him. The same nightmare that he had every night for the past three years, the same nightmare that caused him to roll over the edge of the bed and heave up what little was in his stomach.

Once his heaving stomach settled, he rolled back onto his back and draped a thin arm over his heated brow. It was the same every time, he could see the devastation in Harry's eyes when he rejected him and called him a worthless child, even though he hadn't meant a word of it. It burned in his gut that he'd had to lie to him, push him away to make him powerful.

But it wasn't that part of the dream that made him so sick; it was the dream about what could have happened after Voldemort's destruction. How Harry could have come to him and begged him to lie to him, promising that he would believe the lies just to be with him. But he would push him farther away, to sneer and reject the younger man, ignoring his pleas to not leave him. He could see the figure huddled on the ground weeping as he strode away, his black robes whipping behind him.

It was then that he would wake up, his stomach rolling at the thought that he once again had pushed away the only thing he had ever cared for in his life. He would then roll over the edge of the bed and become sick with the terrible loss.

His eyes whipped open when he felt a hand nudge away his arm and a damp cloth was draped over his forehead. He watched in disconcertment, his face a blank slate, as Harry moved about his room, cleaning up the mess that he had made.

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I have a face I cannot show

I make the rules up as I go

It's try and love me if you can

Are you strong enough to be my man?

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'He's doing it again,' Harry thought, sighing softly as he waved his wand over the mess on the floor, *'locking me out from his inner emotions.'*

"Severus," he started, ignoring the flinch that echoed over the other man's face. "What's has happened to you?" He stared at the desiccated figure lying under the covers, pushing aside his anger for the moment to try and understand what was going on. Like it or not, he still had deep feelings for the man before him.

"Just let me be," came the whispery response, so unlike the usually forceful commands that Harry was used to from him.

"No, not until to explain what is going on here and why haven't you seen Poppy," Harry said, his eyes locking with the tired black gaze.

"It wouldn't matter if I had seen Poppy. There is no hope for a cure when it is beyond my reach," Severus said cryptically, his head turning away from Harry's hopeful gaze. He couldn't do this anymore; his mask was breaking down. He couldn't let him see the extent of his emotion; it was a face he was unwilling to show.

"What do you mean that the cure is beyond your reach? I'm going to firecall Poppy right now, and we are going to settle this once and for all," Harry said, standing quickly and sweeping from the room.

Severus groaned under his breath. He knew that this confrontation was going to end it all. He was no longer going to get away with the glamours he had been using to hide his condition from everyone. He heard the commotion in the other room and with a groan rolled over away from the door.

"What have you done to yourself now, Severus?" Poppy complained as she strode in the door, Harry at her heels. Severus refused to answer.

"Come on. Severus, roll over like a good professor, and let me take a look at you," Poppy said and then frowned when he refused to move. With a swish of her wand, she quickly ran a diagnostic scan and scowled at the results. They showed that since the last physical she had given him, he had lost nearly a third of his body weight, was seriously malnourished and dehydrated. She tapped her wand against her hand a couple of times, nodding in satisfaction as the red sparks jumped from the end before she ran the diagnostic spell again, with the same results.

"Severus?" she questioned, her voice filling with concern. She moved around the bed and gasped as she saw the extent of his illness. "We need to get you to the Infirmary quickly. There has to be something that I can do for you."

"No, let me be," Severus growled and pulled the covers over his head, trying to block out her ranting.

Poppy frowned down at Severus. "You cannot continue to make up the rules as you go, Severus. You must listen to what I say and stop being a complete wanker." Harry's eyebrows shot up at Poppy's tone and words.

"Just go away. I already know what's wrong with me, and the cure isn't available to me. I refuse your assistance," came his muffled reply.

Poppy reared back, taken aback by Severus' defeated tone. "Well, we'll just see about that," she stated as she whirled about and stormed from the room.

Harry slid closer to the bed before sitting on the edge and reaching out to draw back the covers from Severus' face. "Severus, please at least drink some water," he said as he picked up a glass from the side table and held it out. But he sighed heavily as Severus turned his head away from him. He set the glass back down on the table and reached out to take one of the thin hands in his.

"Why are you doing this?" he asked softly. He had seen the diagnostics from Poppy's scans. There had been no signs of curse or hex, only self-inflicted misery. He ignored the little tugs to release the hand he was holding. "At least you can tell me this after all that you have done to me."

The tugs stopped, and he felt the hand in his go limp. He looked up to see Severus' eyes were closed, yet there appeared to be moisture gathering at the corners of each.

"Please, Severus..."

"How can you even call me by that name after what I have done to you?" came the whispered reply.

"Because try as I might against it, I still love you and will always love you," Harry said. "And if that means that I have to give you up for you to be happy, I will try to be strong and do that for you."

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When I've shown you that I just don't care

When I'm throwing punches in the air

When I'm broken down and I can't stand

Would you be man enough to be my man?

>>>>>>

Severus' eyes unwillingly opened and locked with pain-filled green eyes. He couldn't understand after three years of torment, after everything he had said to drive Harry away from him showing him the he didn't care for him, but here he was sitting beside him telling him that he still loved him. He pulled back, finally tugging his hand away from Harry's as he slowly rolled up into a sitting position.

He looked at Harry, his eyes searching his to see if what he said was true. He could see the hurt that still lingered. He could see the pain from his past actions, but yet he could see the love still hanging on the fringes. But could he believe that Harry could ever forgive him? He felt unclean from the guilt that lay inside him.

Severus swung his legs over the edge of the bed, pushing himself into a shaky stance. He shook his head as Harry started to move around the edge of the bed, straightening and walking slowly towards the bathroom. He closed the door behind him and leaned back against it.

His mind swirled with images, as he slowly began unbuttoning his robes allowing them to drop at his feet. He stepped forward and into the shower, which came on

automatically, the water hot against his cold skin.

He sagged against the wall letting the water pour over him as his mind continued to swirl with his thoughts. *'How could Harry even think of forgiving him for all the atrocities he had heaped upon him that night? The belittling words, the sneering remarks, the hateful comments.'*

He slammed his fist into the wall, ignoring the pain in his hand that failed to cover up the pain in his heart. He slowly slid down the wall, huddling at the bottom of the shower, no longer able to stand against the pain washing over him.

He didn't feel the water being turned off or the soft warm towel that dried him gently. He didn't feel the caring hands that guided him across the room and placed him between smooth sheets. He didn't feel the warmth of the body that slid in next to him and gathered him into a tender embrace. All he could feel was the overwhelming anguish that filled him body and soul.

As descended into the darkness of oblivion, he could only hear softly whispered words of, "I'm man enough to be yours, Severus."

>>>>>>

Lie to me

I promise I'll believe

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But please don't leave

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The next time he awoke, he found himself cradled against a bare, tanned muscular chest. He turned his head slightly and took in the familiar shaggy black hair and features. Harry's eyes were closed, so he took the opportunity to study the dearly familiar face closely. He could see now the lines of stress that had gathered at the corner of his eyes and mouth, something that someone as young as Harry shouldn't have. He felt instantly guilty that he had caused such pain in this young man's life.

"Stop brooding, Severus," said Harry, his mouth quirking up on one side before his eyes cracked open. "I could feel your mind turning even in my sleep."

"How can you..." Severus started, but was stopped by a finger that came up to his lips.

"I understand now why you did it. It was to protect me, noble as it was."

"Harry..."

"No more lies, Severus. I promise that I will believe in you from know on, but no more lies," Harry dropped his fingers from Severus' lips.

Severus stared up into those deep emerald green eyes, his mind whirling. This was his second chance, in a line of chances that may never happen again. And if he wanted happiness, he had to believe that Harry wasn't lying to him. He had to believe that this was the opportunity had had dreamed of for so long, yet had denied himself the belief that it could actually happen. He saw now that the pain that was in Harry's eyes was still there, muted by the love that was rekindling itself within him. He knew that this time it would be different; this time he wouldn't push Harry away.

"Yes, no more lies, but please promise me that you don't ever leave me again," Severus whispered, his voice filled with his fear and his hope.

"Never, love. I won't leave."

~The End~