

Decisions

by sylvanawood

Severus Snape invents a new spell and a friendship ends.

One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

Severus Snape invents a new spell and a friendship ends.

Disclaimer: Nothing you recognize belongs to me. Just borrowed. Will be returned. Snape is welcome to stay, though.

A big Thank You goes to my beta, Snarkyroxy, who is encouraging, thorough and fast!

Decisions

The door to the Room of Requirement closed noiselessly as soon as Lily Evans had entered the room one rainy Saturday in the first term of her seventh year. She was looking forward to a quiet and studious afternoon with her best friend. As much as she liked to spend time with her other friends and housemates, these bi-weekly meetings were a much wanted and needed retreat. Lily was a popular girl: bright, talented, funny and pretty; well-liked by both teachers and other students. However, these meetings in the Room of Requirement gave her something that her normal surroundings didn't. Apart from interesting and stimulating discussions with someone who had the same intense drive for learning, though his thoughts ran a slightly different course from hers, it gave her leave to study the more obscure forms of magic, to do research beyond the scope of her normal coursework, to experiment with spells and to rediscover long-forgotten techniques for using magic. Above all, it gave her the opportunity to simply have a good time with her best friend, Severus Snape.

Lily and Severus had been friends ever since they were first-years at Hogwarts. However, they were sorted into different houses, and their respective housemates had nothing but disdain and sometimes even threats for their friendship. Gryffindors and Slytherins weren't supposed to get along, by default. The constant mocking and taunting had put a lot of pressure on them both, but they were far too stubborn to give up because of that.

In their second year, Severus had overheard his Head of House talking about a secret room to another teacher. Both he and Lily kept their eyes and ears open, and soon they had found out where that room was and how it operated. That's how they had created their secret retreat.

To the outside world, they acted as if their friendship had cooled down. Apart from Potions, where they were partners, they were hardly ever seen together. Over time, people completely forgot that they had ever been close. In reality, their friendship had grown. They had become study partners, companions, and best friends. They told each other their secrets, helped each other, and knew each other well ... or so Lily had thought until now. The scene before her now suggested otherwise. 'Bizarre' was too weak an expression for it. It left her speechless and rooted to the spot.

Lily had been early. Being early usually was Severus' prerogative, but today she got away from her housemates a lot faster than usual and hurried to the Room of Requirement to surprise him. And what a surprise it was ... for her. The armchairs and the worktable were pushed against one wall, and the space in the middle of the room was filled with straw bags in different stages of destruction. Straw and shreds of fabric were scattered everywhere, and in the middle of the chaos stood her friend, Severus: thin, pale, greasy-haired, and hook-nosed. He performed something like a dance and displayed a grace and elegance that contrasted sharply with the awkward jerking and twitching of his usual movements. His concentration was complete; he had neither seen nor heard her enter the room. His wand in his right hand, he took a sweeping step towards one of the few remaining bags, stretched his arm, and flicked his wrist in a smooth, circular motion a flash of light, and a gash split one of the bags,

from top to bottom.

Another step, another wand movement, and a new gash opened from bottom to top. Different movements showed different results, and she was surprised to see that at one time the spell didn't only cause one hole, but a series of gashes criss-crossing all over the bag's surface. Another flick of the wrist stopped the cutting.

Finally, when the bag was almost falling apart, Severus raised his wand again, took another graceful step, and hissed, *Sectumsempra*." The invisible blade cut so fast into the remaining fabric that the bag almost exploded. Shreds were flying left and right, and the straw filling was violently hurled out of the bag.

Lily gasped in shock. "Severus, what are you doing?"

He spun around, wand raised. "Lily?" Seeing her, he relaxed. "You're early. Let me clean up the mess, then we can start studying."

"I don't want to study, I want to know what's going on here. What is that spell? At first I thought it was *Diffindo*, but I've never seen a Severing Charm cut like that."

"It is based on *Diffindo*, and I borrowed a bit from *Rictusempra*," Severus said matter-of-factly. "I call it *Sectumsempra*, and as you can deduce from the name, it's supposed to cut constantly. However, there is quite a bit of control possible with this spell, a lot more than with a simple *Diffindo*."

"But what is it for?" Lily asked, still confused, "and why didn't you tell me you were working on it?"

"You saw what it's for, to cut." Severus said quietly, eyes glittering in a strange way.

"To cut what? I can't think of anything beneficial this spell could be used for that *Diffindo* wouldn't do with less drama." She frowned and looked at him, an icy chill running down her spine. "Except for... No! Is that why you didn't tell me? You can't mean that, can you?" She became agitated while he merely watched her with narrowed eyes.

"Mean what?" he mimicked her earlier question.

"Attacking someone or something. This spell is meant to hurt, to kill, isn't it? Severus, please tell me that this isn't what you want to do with it."

"It's meant for self-defence," Severus explained defiantly. "What's wrong with that?"

"Self-defence?" Lily considered the possibility, dismissed it, and scowled. "Don't play me for a fool, Severus. This is a spell for attacking. Even if you wanted to use it for self-defence only, others who learn about it won't. This is a predatory spell, this is Dark Magic!"

"So what if it is?" Severus mumbled. "Dark Magic isn't quite what they make us believe it is, here at Hogwarts."

"I can't believe you're saying that," she said, wide-eyed and fearful. "We need to talk about this Dark Spell."

"There is nothing to talk about. It's a spell. It's useful. It works."

"But it's Dark, Severus. It's not right!"

"Oh, spare me your Gryffindor morality," he sneered. "It's a spell meant for defence, and it won't work half as well when you want to use it for an attack. In fact, it's not far removed from those ancient defensive spells you've been working with. You know, the Blood Magic. That's rather bordering on Dark Magic, too, don't you think?" His voice was flat, his expression guarded. Lily had seen him like that with other people, but never when they were together.

"The ancient rituals are based on sacrifice, Severus. That magic draws its power from sacrifice. This doesn't, don't you see? It drains the caster and draws its power from destruction. Just look at you, all drained and exhausted," she argued passionately.

"Yes, it is exhausting," he admitted, "but it's also very efficient, especially when you're outnumbered or attacked by some vicious creature." He almost sounded pleading, as if he wanted her to understand, to condone what he was doing.

Lily frowned, a terrible suspicion rising in her mind. "You're not planning to use that against James and his friends, are you? Isn't that taking that stupid rivalry too far?"

"Is that what you think it is, stupid rivalry?" Severus' eyes flashed in anger. "You've seen the war develop between them and me from the very start, and now you call it childish rivalry? Obviously your, ah, liaison with Potter is colouring your perception."

"Stop that," Lily protested. "I have no 'liaison' with James, but he is Head Boy and I'm Head Girl and we've got to know each other better. I quite like him. Not that it's any of your business," she grumbled. "He's changed, he's less conceited and more mature now."

"Oh, that's how it is," Severus sneered. "Potter's mature and I'm the one being childish, I see..."

"If the shoe fits," Lily spat, furious now.

Severus looked at her, the angry glare in his eyes slowly clouding over until only a sad, resigned gleam remained. "You don't really know what you are talking about here, Lily," he whispered.

"Then tell me what it is about, Severus!" Lily pleaded, "Tell me what's changed you so much, what's made you so angry. What's happened? You haven't been yourself for some time..."

"I can't... I can't tell you."

"Why not? You're my best friend. We trust each other, don't we?" She was seriously hurt now. "Don't we, Severus?"

He sighed and looked at her sadly. "I'm not allowed to tell you ... to tell anyone. The Headmaster forbade it. I'll be expelled if I do. Let it go, Lily."

"Oh..." She frowned. "Why would he do that? He would have good reasons, certainly, but still, it must have been something very serious. What have you done, Severus?"

"What have I done?" Severus yelled, his anger returning with a vengeance. "I'm not allowed to talk about something so it is clear to you that I must have done something? Is that what you think of me these days? And you say that I have changed..." Angry, red splotches had appeared on his face and his teeth were bared in an angry grimace. His hands were shaking and his eyes glittered.

"I didn't mean it like that," she cried, but he turned his back to her and started to clean up the room.

"Well, it's not as if both of us have never done anything... I just meant that the Headmaster wouldn't forbid you to talk about it if you hadn't done something to deserve it, would he?" she tried to appease him.

"Oh, wouldn't he?" He laughed bitterly. "If you say so... he is the ultimate moral authority on what is right and what is good, after all, isn't he?"

"I don't know what you're getting at, Severus. I understand that you're bitter about the Headmaster's decision, but..."

"Bitter!" he barked the word out, half choking, half laughing. "Would you prefer if I called it 'surprised at the Headmaster's interpretation of justice and equality'?" He gave

her a mock bow.

Lily glared at him. "I'm not your enemy, you know," she groused, "so there's no need to be like that with me. I for one haven't seen the Headmaster make unwise or unjust decisions, at least not in the meetings we're having with him from time to time."

"Oh, yes, those elusive Head Girl and Boy meetings," he sneered. "And that, of course, makes you the ultimate expert on Dumbledore's righteousness..." His voice trailed off in disgust.

Lily shook her head impatiently. "All right, be like that, I don't care. But the important thing is that I would trust him with my life, wouldn't you? Without him, is there anyone left to rely on?" she said, compassion, worry and anger flickering over her face. "He's like a beacon in the night amidst all the horror and destruction out there..." Her voice trailed off.

Severus stared at her with an unreadable, stony expression on his face. When he started to speak, it was in an emotionless, cold, barely audible whisper. "Sometimes it has to get worse before it can get better," he stated. "Change always comes with turmoil; you know that. And change is needed, there's no denying that. The wizarding world has become static, sacrificing power and true justice for comfort and parlour tricks."

Lily blinked, speechless. She couldn't believe he had just said that. She swallowed back the tears that threatened to blind her and cleared her throat. "Change?" she croaked. "You call what's going on *change*? It's bloody murder! Pure terror!" She had started yelling at him, fists balled. "Have you forgotten who you are? Who I am? Where we come from?"

"Sometimes change must be forced," he continued in the same passionless voice. "Sometimes the establishment has to be taught the hard way..."

"Stop, stop, stop..." she screamed. "I'm a Muggle-born. A Mudblood! We are the ones who are killed. Cut the crap with 'the establishment' and shit like that." She gasped for breath and tried to calm herself. "Would you still call it 'teaching them the hard way' if it were my parents' home where the Dark Mark loomed? If my parents and my sister were killed by those murderers? If I were killed by those fanatics?" She sank down in an armchair, completely drained.

Severus looked at her, some warmth returning to his eyes. "You wouldn't be in danger, Lily, if you stayed out of it. Can't you see? A revolution is always fuelled by the fanatics, by those who get their kicks out of violence. But the ones who make the real decisions are usually the ones who know moderation. And among them, people like me and, yes, eventually, people like you, are needed."

"Are you blind, Severus?" The fury in Lily's voice had been replaced by resignation and incredulity. "It's a pureblood movement we're talking about here. They want their society pure, well rid of Muggle-borns, and I'm rather amazed to hear you talk like that. They never would accept someone like me, not in your dreams. And needless to say that I'd rather die than to associate with that rabble." She swallowed and stared at him accusingly. "And you? Have they ensnared you already? You're a half-blood, you'll be next. What makes you think that they're after change and justice? Their kind of justice, perhaps. I never thought that was the kind of justice you were after..."

"I haven't seen much justice in the society you seem to value so much. There has to be change, and the current movement, I believe, is a means to achieve that."

Lily shook her head, breathing deeply. "You've been hanging out with Malfoy and his mates again, haven't you? Don't you see what they are? They don't want change. They want to re-establish the status quo from a hundred years ago. I can't believe you'd fall for that arrogant, elitist, pure-blooded..."

"Enough," Severus interrupted. "Lucius is my friend, just like you are. He has helped me a lot over the years, and I trust his judgement. Don't judge the movement based on the actions of those hooligans, Lily. Lucius told me about their leader. He is powerful, he is charismatic, and what he says makes a lot of sense. Especially where the use of magic is concerned..."

"This from a boy who always wanted to be independent." She stared at him indignantly. "Don't tell me you think of joining them, Severus. They are murderers. Open your eyes, man! Didn't you pay attention to what happened before and during the Grindelwald war? They are of the same ilk; they want to eliminate us, all Muggle-borns. Perhaps even all Muggles, eventually. They want to take over. Not separation, *suppression*, is on their agenda."

"Nicely parroting what Dumbledore feeds you and your Gryffindor cronies, aren't you?" Severus sneered. "All this is highly exaggerated, and you should be glad that there are some people like me open enough to look at both sides, people who have your interests at heart, too."

"Glad..." Lily ground her teeth, rage slowly creeping through her system and revitalizing her. "Yes, Master, we're such happy little house-elves, aren't we? We're grateful, like the slaves who got crumbs from their masters' tables. Grateful when they were punished because they were bad children. Next thing you'll tell me that we're not able to look after ourselves, helpless little creatures that we are, Muggles and Mudbloods alike." She jumped up and started pacing.

"Sarcasm doesn't suit you, Lily, you know that it isn't like that..."

"Isn't it?" she turned towards him and screamed again. "I beg to differ. But I see what you're doing here, Severus. And that is just..." She grimaced, holding back tears once again and taking a deep breath. "It's a nice little tale of idealism you're spinning here to deceive yourself. I'd never have thought that Severus Snape subjects himself to... stoops down to use propaganda. You're smarter than that..."

"Perhaps you are giving me too much credit, then," he replied angrily. "I have to do what I think is best, and you won't stop me. You will see that it is for the best, eventually."

"Please don't do it, Severus, don't join them..." Lily pleaded, wringing her hands, tears in her eyes.

He stubbornly shook his head. "I have to. I need to, you have no idea how much I need to... and there's no going back..."

Lily cried openly now. "I will not, *cannot*, follow you in this, Severus. This is against everything I stand for, against everything I always thought you stood for, too. I can't... How do you think I... No..." she sobbed, unable to continue.

"Lily..." He looked at her with sad, glittering eyes. "Lily, then we cannot meet any more, is that what you're saying? Our friendship ends here?" He swallowed.

"My friendship for you will never end, Severus," she sobbed. "But I can't go along with this. You're right, we better stop our meetings." She had approached him and grabbed his arms, slightly shaking him, eyes shining with determination. "But when you've come to your senses again, Severus, and I know that you will, then come to me. I'll wait for you. I'll always be your friend..."

He stood there, stiff, motionless, seemingly emotionless. Lily knew that this was a mask, that he was deeply hurt and sad, but she couldn't help herself or him. She grabbed his head with both hands, briefly kissed him on both cheeks, and turned around, running out of the room. The tears had started to fall again when she closed the door silently behind her.

The End.