

A Mother's Love

by LariLee

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Not mine, though I can wish it were. Thank you, Jo, for letting us play in your sandbox.

He paced when he was nervous. How he abhorred that sign of weakness, but time and time again found him at the little window overlooking the street or wearing a hole in the rug in front of the small settee.

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For a moment, he rested his head against the cool glass. He knew his weaknesses; Severus Snape was no one's fool, not even his own. Mother's love, it reminded him of his own mother and the sacrifices she made after the death of her Muggle husband, a man of whom Severus had no memory.

Pacing the small room again, Severus remembered all the times Mam had cried and begged her brother for assistance. She had given away any attempts at pride to keep her son clothed and fed; eventually, she sold her body to the ignorant, unwashed mill hands. But even before he received his letter to Hogwarts, the mill began cutting hours. With the loss of income to the mill hands, his mother's 'business' suffered as well.

Conjured food took an immense amount of effort to create, if you wanted something that would actually be filling. Eileen Prince, never the most powerful of witches, did her best to create meals that were partially Conjured and partially real. The poor nutrition showed, however, in Severus' sallow skin and gangly frame. Magic could only partially alter clothing, unless one was particularly gifted in Transfiguration. That didn't apply to Eileen, whose only claim to fame was being Gobstone captain for three years during her own days at Hogwarts.

Staring out the window again, he saw the slim figure, heavily cloaked, making its way up the dimly lit street. Severus sighed deeply. There was only one hope he could offer this woman, and the very thought of it bit into his soul.

It would be a last resort, he told himself. An absolute last resort. Surely Dumbledore would have a plan that could fix everything. After all, he was the most powerful wizard Severus knew. He turned from the window, rubbing his left arm reflexively. It wouldn't do to look as if he were waiting for her, so he opened a book and placed it on the table beside the armchair, next to a glass of wine.

There was a faint tingle from the protective charms he had placed around his property, if the rundown row house could be counted as 'property'. Taking a deep breath, he

cleared his mind and reined in his emotions.

When the knock sounded at the door, he opened it quickly, pulling her roughly into his home.

"You shouldn't come here!" he hissed as he swiftly closed the door behind them and pushed her against the wall.

"I had to come; you know that." Her tone was matter-of-fact, if a bit quiet. It betrayed none of the pain she felt from the tight grasp he had on her right wrist, her wand hand. Her eyes, however, showed the pain she felt and he stared at her for several long heartbeats. He could see her pain and despair, and if he looked just a bit closer at her, he would see...

...all her secrets.

Abruptly, he released her and, with quick strides, was back to his armchair. He sat, wearing his practiced look of bored indifference, and picked up his wine glass, pointedly not offering her a drink.

The witch watched him for a moment before she pushed back the hood of her cloak. She kept it on as she walked to the settee and seated herself. "You were more hospitable last time," she commented lightly.

"Last time," he replied mockingly, "I had no idea what you wanted; this time I do."

"Are you refusing to help me?" Her tone sharpened and became as piercing as his glare.

Severus took a larger drink of the elf-made wine than etiquette would've approved. "I should," he muttered into his glass. "I should simply refuse... break the Vow... it's probably the only way out of this mess."

"Severus, no!" she exclaimed. "You know how much we need you, how much *he* depends on you. I know, because I've seen how much *he* relies on you," she rushed to finish as he shook his head.

"Yet I still play second cauldron to people like your husband," he sneered. "But I've yet to see him step forward to protect you... or *your son*."

"You know that's not true!" she snapped. "Only... with that latest mission..." she paused to glare at him when he snorted.

"Oh, yes, failure such as that is so rarely rewarded. He was quite lucky to escape with his life," Severus observed as he swirled the wine in the glass..

Silence descended as she stared at him. Finally, she spoke. "I want to save the life of my son," she said slowly and without emotion. "I know you can help me. Please, Severus, please. Help me save my son."

"I've already told you that I will do what I can." His tone matched hers. But before he could stop himself, he growled, "Why you're coming to me, I don't understand. Your husband has trust in --"

"Because when it comes to the life of my child, I have no trust!" she cried. "I'd do anything to see my boy survive this war. Anything!"

He leaned forward slightly in his seat. "Anything?" he taunted. "I suppose coming here is akin to making a deal with the devil." He wanted her angry, wanted her to swear and throw hexes and storm off furiously. Anything to keep him from fulfilling his Vow to her. Even his death would be acceptable in those circumstances.

For a moment, his gaze raked over her trim form. "Would you sleep with me one hundred times? Take off your clothes in an erotic striptease? Leave your husband with his money and power and align yourself with me?"

Her head drooped, but he could see the sudden redness that spread across her face. In another moment, he thought she would start throwing hexes, and he tensed in preparation.

"Is that what you want?" Her reply was so low that Severus thought he imagined it until she gracefully stood and began untying her cloak.

It was a rare moment in life that found Severus Snape completely dumbfounded, but this was certainly not the reaction he had been anticipating. Not this from the proud witch before him.

"I've known you wanted me for a long time, Severus," she said softly as she shrugged out of her cloak. "So I've rather anticipated this."

He stood quickly, abruptly, a sneer twisting his features. "So you're willing to sacrifice your life for your son?"

"I would give everything to protect him, including my own life." She took a step forward and grasped his hands, her cloak fluttering to the floor. "You don't understand, Severus, but he is the child that my husband and I created together. There is no deeper or stronger love than a mother's love. And I would do anything to protect him. Anything. Don't you understand that?"

Temptation, for some, is an exercise in frustration. Others welcome the chance temptation brings, a chance to deny themselves in an act of redemption. Severus Snape was in the former group. He knew he would do what was right, but he didn't have to like it.

Disengaging her hands from his, he took a step to the closest bookcase and pulled down a tome. As far as books went, this one appeared to be unassuming, a simple black binding with the letters erased by time. He held its weight in his hand, felt the Darkness emanating from the pages. The thought crossed his mind that this would be his defining moment, everything else in life would be a result of how he reacted here. And he mentally cursed himself most viciously for being put into this position.

Turning about, he held the book upwards as if it were a treat he was childishly holding out of her reach. "Kiss me," he demanded.

Her eyes were sad, but she stepped closer and complied, skimming her hand across his cheek as she did so. There was no great passion in her kiss, but he could taste the gratitude. There was no doubt in his mind that, no matter what he asked of her at this moment, she would obey.

He pushed her way, breaking the kiss most viciously and shoved the book towards her. "Page 294," he barked. "It has a ritual for blood protection." He scooped her cloak up from the floor and thrust it upon her arm. "I wouldn't advise letting any Aurors see that book; it's been illegal since the 1600s."

She was holding the book and the cloak, staring at him mouth agape. "Sev--" she began, but he cut her off.

"You need to go now. And you cannot return. I will fulfil my Vow to watch over your son and I shall continue to do it until the day I die. I will not enjoy doing this, but as *your husband*," he sneered, "seems incapable of protecting him, I suppose I shall have to do this."

She slipped into her cloak, and he pulled the hood down low over her face with a gentleness that belied his harsh words. "You. Cannot. Return," Severus said softly. "You have my Vow and now I will give you my promise that if you resort to that ritual and if you ever invoke it, I will watch over him."

Smiling through her tears, she whispered, "Thank you, Severus. I owe you so much. And I'll make sure that one day, he will know exactly how much he owes you."

"The blood protection requires a sacrifice," he warned as he walked her to the door. "It is a last resort. Perhaps it may not work. But hide the book from your husband. I wouldn't want--"

"I know, I know. I'll make this my last resort. I know James is planning a few things. We may disappear for a while. But thank you, Severus, for this." With those words, Lily Evans Potter slipped out of the door and was once again gone from Severus' life.

Author's Note: Thanks to Jackie for the beta! This may be the only time I ever even dabble in the Severus/Lily ship as it's not my favourite, but I do think they were friends at least. And I do believe Lily would have betrayed James if it kept her child safe. I think most mothers would do anything to save their child.

You know my mantra: "Please review, if not here, then somewhere." The plot bunnies thank you.