

Sin and Virtue

by Pearle

Sin and virtue: can one exist without the other? And to what end do they determine our final outcome? Severus ponders these very questions as he tries to determine exactly where he's ended up. Is love really the answer? (Rating is for language, one word really)

New Chapter Four: What's Love Got To Do With It?

Now complete in four chapters!

Reality Is Just A State of Mind

Chapter 1 of 4

Sin and virtue: can one exist without the other? And to what end do they determine our final outcome? Severus ponders these very questions as he tries to determine exactly where he's ended up. Is love really the answer? (Rating is for language, one word really)

New Chapter Four: What's Love Got To Do With It?

Now complete in four chapters!

Summary: Sin and virtue: can one exist without the other? And to what end do they determine our final outcome? Severus ponders these very questions as he tries to determine exactly where he's ended up. Is love really the answer?

Disclaimer: The characters, settings, etc. of the Harry Potter series are not mine; they belong to J.K. Rowling and Co. I promise to return them when I am through. Well, most of them anyway.

.xx.

Chapter One: Reality Is Just A State of Mind

Despite the muck clinging to the remains of his clothing and the sorry state of the body housing the spirit within, the form kneeling before the altar was easily recognized as that of a man.

The dark man kept his head bowed, the curtain of his hair hiding his face, his wand nowhere to be seen. His robes hung in shreds, mud and the blood of so many staining what was left of the once pristine fabric. Broken and bleeding skin was easily visible through the tears in the cloth, deep cuts that would do far more to scar the soul of the man than to physically damage his body.

Sudden awareness of his surroundings flooded his mind. *Where the bloody hell am I? And who the fuck is that?* Severus wondered. The last thing he remembered was a blinding green light heading for him as Potter finally vanquished the Dark Lord. It had been a hard fight, but it seemed as if the ruddy Boy Who Lived would finally fulfill the prophecy and destroy the Dark Lord forever. He'd heard Weasley's sudden yell as the Disillusionment Charm he'd cast on himself faltered. It had taken all his powers of

concentration to break the shield around the Dark Lord, knowing what both sides would do to him when the charm hiding him failed, but not caring if it meant the end of the Dark Lord once and for all.

And true to his thoughts, he'd heard Weasley casting the curse that should have ended his life, even as he rejoiced in watching Potter destroy the last of the Dark Lord. He'd lived long enough, and while his regrets had been many, he welcomed death as a final penance for all he'd done. *She* was his greatest regret, but that she never knew of his feelings was also his greatest virtue. In the end, that was enough.

Severus stole a furtive glance at the figure before him. A man of indeterminable age, powerful in build, and draped in an odd toga-like garment was pacing before him, mumbling to himself. Unsure as to where he was, and just who his new enemy was, Severus held still, waiting to see what would happen next.

"What to do with you?" The man sat heavily in the throne-like chair on the dais he'd paced, the only piece of furniture visible in the room. "It wasn't supposed to end this way. Why do humans insist on using free will? It was never meant for this purpose to begin with."

Sweat trickled down the side of his face, stinging the cuts and sores on his cheek, and still he held still. The position Severus found himself in did little for his circulation, his legs cramping as he knelt on the hard floor, and still he did not move.

The man suddenly seemed to notice Severus, a smile lighting his face. "Ah, I see your spirit has finally joined your corporeal form. You need not fear me, well not in the normal sense. Perhaps we should attend to your physical needs before we discuss why you're here."

"And if I may ask," his voice, rough from screaming during the battle, did not waiver, a true credit to the will of steel he possessed. "Where is here?"

The man's sudden laughter caught him off guard. "That is a question theologians have debated for centuries. I doubt I could come up with a suitable answer if I were to ponder your question for the rest of eternity. For now, let's just say you're a guest in my home, and leave it at that."

Severus stared at the man, fear creeping into his bones. Something was obviously wrong with this scenario. He should have been dead. Was this Hell? But the man didn't look like the devil. Was this Heaven? What had he ever done to deserve Heaven? What in the hell kind of spell had Weasley hit him with anyway?

"Theresa? Where is that girl? Honestly, good help is getting harder and harder to find. It used to be so easy. Ah, well, I suppose some of that might be my fault. Come, stand up. You can't be comfortable in that position." Stepping down off the dais, the stranger offered Severus his hand.

"Who are you?" The dark man had little choice but to take the help that was offered him, stiffness and injuries hindering his movement. He heard the click of a latch as a hidden door to his left opened.

"Katherine? Why are you here? I called for Theresa."

"I'm sorry, but a new group arrived that required assistance. I sent Theresa to help out. Honestly, I don't remember receiving so many worthy candidates, all at once, in the last hundred years." The woman's eyes seemed to soften as she looked at Severus. "Oh, good, you're finally cognizant."

"I believe we should tend to the man's needs." The strange man gently admonished the woman. "New clothing, some food, perhaps a feather bed to rest his weary spirit?"

"Yes, of course. I should have thought of that myself. We just have so few visitors that stay with us as guests. I'll have a room readied immediately." Turning to Severus, she asked, "Do you have any preference as to a meal?"

"Katherine, his file? You'll find whatever information you need there."

"You're right. I should have thought of that. The Elysian room will be ready in just a moment."

"Thank you." A nod of the man's head dismissed the flustered woman. "She's a lovely woman. Best assistant I've had in centuries. Let's get you some food and a hot bath. A few hours of sleep and you'll feel reborn. Come, your room is just down the hall."

"Am I dead?"

The stranger stopped, an odd look crossing his face. "That, my friend, is the crux of the problem. You should be, but it seems your spirit has refused to die."

-To be continued-

A/N: I was working on Dances when I took a break and saw a comment about the seven deadly sins versus the seven heavenly virtues. This short story popped into my head and refused to leave. Should be complete in four chapters total.

Chapter One: Reality Is Just A State of Mind

Chapter Two: The Seven Deadly Sins

Chapter Three: The Seven Heavenly Virtues

Chapter Four: What's Love Got To Do With It?

A grateful thank you to the wonderful Southern_Witch_69 for betaing this for me. The mistakes are all mine.

Pearle

The Seven Deadly Sins

Chapter 2 of 4

Sin and virtue: can one exist without the other? And to what end do they determine our final outcome? Severus ponders these very questions as he tries to determine exactly where he's ended up. Is love really the answer? (Rating is for language, one word really)

New Chapter Four: What's Love Got To Do With It?

Now complete in four chapters!

Summary: Sin and virtue: can one exist without the other? And to what end do they determine our final outcome? Severus ponders these very questions as he tries to determine exactly where he's ended up. Is love really the answer?

Disclaimer: The characters, settings, etc. of the Harry Potter series are not mine; they belong to J.K. Rowling and Co. I promise to return them when I am through. Well, most of them anyway.

[illegible]

Chapter Two: The Seven Deadly Sins

His first thought upon waking, and feeling the soft bed beneath him, was that he must have avoided Azkaban somehow. He lay still, trying to determine if he were alone or not. Years of spying had taught him the virtue of caution. It had saved his life on more than one occasion in the past.

When he was sure he was alone, he cautiously opened his eyes and took in the sights around him. The events of the previous evening came rushing back. He was still in the Elysium room, wherever that was. Had it been only last night he'd arrived here? He couldn't be sure; time seemed to pass differently in this reality.

He wondered what enchantment had confounded him so much that he'd actually bathed, ate, and lay down in the bed without so much as a thought to his surrounding and how to escape them. While he had to admit he did feel refreshed, none of his questions had been answered, leaving him to wonder what to do next.

A note on the nightstand, his given name printed in old English on the front, caught his eye.

Fresh robes can be found in the wardrobe. Please join me in my study after you've dressed and had breakfast. There is much we need to discuss.

A quiet snort escaped the dark man. Much we need to discuss...I'll say. Who are you, and where the hell am I? And more importantly, how do I get out of here?

His stomach rumbled. The dinner last night had been heavenly, but that had been... Well, he wasn't sure how long ago he'd eaten, but his body seemed to think it had been quite a while ago. The smell of kippers and eggs reached his nose as his stomach growled again. Severus shrugged. He might as well eat. If the man had wanted to do him harm, he would have done so by now.

After breakfast and a fast shower, Severus opened the wardrobe; the inside could have been a duplicate of his own wardrobe. The same cut, tailoring, and color of his favored robes, right down to the buttons at the cuff, hung inside next to freshly pressed shirts and a new frock coat. He dressed with care, strangely pleased to have his usual attire made available to him.

A final glance at the note left him with a new question. Where was the stranger's study, and how did he get there from here?

Exiting the room, he looked up and down the corridor. There appeared to be only one room adjacent to his on the right, but to his left were at least a dozen or more doorways. *Were these here last night?* he wondered. He couldn't seem to remember. The corridor looked different with bright sunlight streaming in through skylights in the ceiling. He could see a door open at the end of the corridor. With no other plan in mind, he walked toward the open doorway.

[illegible]

Severus stood in the hall, observing the room and the stranger seated behind the desk. The room was warm and inviting. Books lined the walls, a cheery fire burned in the grate; a massive desk covered in manila files dominated the room.

"Good morning, Severus. I see you received my note." The stranger gestured to a chair in front of his desk. "Come in and sit down. I trust you slept well?"

"Fine, thank you." The silence spun out between them as Severus watched the man shuffle the pages of a thick manila file marked, "SNAPE, Severus Case #09011959-4-878-697-007"; curiosity gnawed at him as he wondered what information was in that file.

"Well, it seems we have a bit of a problem. Your sins and virtues seem to balance each other out. Now, normally, we would error on the side of good and go from there, but your spirit refuses to accept the finality of events. Well, that coupled with those mourning your loss. One in particular actually, but we'll get to that in a minute."

On closer examination, Severus could see the tabs on several of the other files on the desk, names he knew well: McGONAGALL, Minerva; WEASLEY, Arthur; GRANGER, Hermione; POTTER, Har... The last file was partially covered by another DUMBLEDO... An uneasy feeling settled into his stomach as he looked at that last one. Albus, his friend and mentor, no matter what the circumstances, it still tore at him to know what had transpired.

The stranger watched the rare play of emotions that crossed the dark man's face. It was short work to follow Severus' gaze and know the cause of his distress. He restacked the pile of files, hiding Dumbledore's from sight. Clearing his throat, he spoke softly, "Severus, it never helps to dwell on that which we cannot change. You have atoned for your past sins. It's time to accept all that has passed and move on."

Severus shook his head. The sight of Albus' death still haunted his nightmares. "No, I haven't atoned for that one, never for that one. Just send me on to Hell, and let's be done with it, shall we? I'm tired of living with it...with all of it." He laughed softly. Just what he needed, he could feel a headache coming on. His head snapped up suddenly. He'd seen him die, but he had to be sure. "The Dark Lord *is* dead, isn't he? Please don't tell me Potter screwed that up, too."

"Yes, yes, he's gone for good this time. Haven't you looked at your forearm?"

Severus had looked at his left forearm, had stared at it for quite a while: his clear, unblemished forearm. No trace of the Dark Mark, the Mark he'd carried for more than twenty years, remained. He assumed it was just one more trick to lull him in complacency for whatever was to come.

The stranger smiled. "It's gone, Severus. It's really gone this time." His manner turned brisk as he regarded the file in front of him. "Now, to the matter at hand...what to do with you."

"Who are you?"

"That's not really important at the moment."

"Mr Snape, I hope breakfast was to your liking? Would you like a cuppa?"

Severus turned, Katherine, the woman from the previous evening, stood in the doorway. Who were these people? Why was everyone so nice to him? Where was the fire and brimstone he'd heard about? "Yes, thank you." He turned back around to the stranger. "Fine. So now what...what do I call you?"

"I suppose you need a name. Humans are never satisfied unless everything and everyone has a name." The stranger sighed, shaking his head. "I suppose you can call me 'Al.' It's as good a name as any."

Severus' stomach had dropped. Al! He'd almost thought the man was going to say Albus. "Those files on your desk are all those people... Are they...?"

"Dead? No, we maintain files on everyone who exists, on all planes of existence. These were pulled since some of the information in them is pertinent to yours."

"Good." Severus breathed a sigh of relief. At least *she* was safe. "So, *Al*, what happens next?"

Al studied the page before him. Severus could see through the top portion of the page, the light making the paper semi-transparent.

SNAPE, Severus Case #09011959-4-878-697-007

~~~~~ **SINS** ~~~~~

### **Pride**

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has been guilty of the sin of *Pride* on hundreds of occasions during his lifetime. A particular case in point is his speech to his students, innocent beings in his care who he is to mold into useful and accomplished individuals, whereas he states, "*(sic) ... I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death...if you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach.*"

Excessive pride in his abilities is evident throughout his lifetime from a very young age.

Snape is guilty of placing his pride in his abilities above the feelings of others, even at the expense of their feelings.

*Case in point:* While both a colleague and fellow Order member, Remus Lupin has had to rely on Snape's brewing ability to provide him with a much needed potion, the Wolfsbane Potion. Snape is quick to put Lupin down and consistently remind him that he is one of few Potion Masters able to brew the delicate potion.

*Case in point:* Suspected one of his students, a young witch (Hermione Granger), had brewed a difficult potion (Polyjuice) and later having that fact confirmed when circumstances rebound on the poor girl. Snape was quick to berate the witch rather than praise her for her efforts, his pride not allowing him to recognize her brilliance since he himself was not able to brew said potion until his fifteenth birthday, and she did so just after her thirteenth birthday.

*Case in point:* Snape is unable to commend any student that is not of his own house, regardless of the ability of the student.

*Case in point:* His inability to befriend a young witch, who has had trouble making friends, much as he did when he was a student ...

*(Additional case points are located in Severus Sec. DS1, page 193.)*

### **Envy**

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has been guilty of the sin of *Envy* throughout his lifetime, never more evident during both his school years and the years he taught Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, and Hermione Granger, envious of the bond between the three and feeding on his hate for the young man (Potter) who is an offspring of a hated rival (James Potter). (See **Anger** for further clarification.)

*Case in point:* Snape envied a group of students known as "the Marauders." Their friendship was of particular annoyance to him, so much to the fact that he used this envy, this hate, as a tool against the offspring of one of the group and, thus, against the friends of this child. Charges he had sworn to protect. ("Noted: "The Marauders'" actions against Severus Snape were of a mean-spirited nature, creating a reasonable doubt as to the extent the envy and later rage can be measured, but in no way sanctifies these sins.)

*Case in point:* It was his envy of one (Lucius Malfoy) that led Snape to join a group known as "Death Eaters." He later recanted his decision by going to Albus Dumbledore and worked diligently to correct this transgression and the multitude of others that resulted from this association.

*Case in point:* Upon witnessing a moment between two individuals (later identified as Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley) in a local village one week ago, Snape cast a Canary Transfiguration Hex on the young man. To Snape's credit, he did not seal the spell, thus allowing it to fade after the young man molted, but not before the young woman stood laughing at the young man, thus embarrassing him profusely.

*(Additional case points are located in Snape Sec. DS2, page 256.)*

---

Severus remembered that last incident quite well. It had been a week before the final battle; he'd been traveling through Hogsmeade after meeting with Minerva at the Hog's Head Inn, using a glamour to disguise himself, when he happened upon the pair. It had been his understanding that they were no longer a couple, not that it should have mattered to him, but there was Weasley, in the most annoying voice possible, trying to persuade Granger to have one more go around with him.

It was all he could do not to cast the Killing Curse on the brat. He never understood what Granger had seen in the boy anyway. Pity, perhaps? He managed to silently cast a Canary Transfiguration Hex, smiling to himself when the lad turned into a giant yellow canary. The yellow feathers were a vast improvement over the red hair and freckles in his opinion. He was pleased when he heard Granger's laughing comment, "I don't think so, Ron. Not even if you turn yourself into a cuddly teddy bear. Why don't you find Luna and see if that line will work on her?"

"Can I turn to the next page, or haven't you finished reading yet?" Al's voice held a note of amusement as he watched Severus.

Severus coloured slightly. "I was, uh, interested in the type of information you gather there."

"Yes, I see. We list outstanding incidents in your life. Those that have the ability to shape who you are. Would you like to have a look at the next page?"

"May I?"

"Well, I don't see why not; after all, it's your life. You lived these moments. Here." Al pulled the next page loose from its binding and handed it to Severus. "I have a few notes to add on the next page. Let me know when you're finished."

Severus nodded as he looked down at the page, the top entry bringing forth emotions he hadn't experienced in years.

---

SNAPE, Severus Case #09011959-4-878-697-007

~~~~~ **SINS** ~~~~~

Gluttony

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has not engaged in the sin of *gluttony* to excess during his adult life. As a child he would eat to the point of overeating, but it is felt this was due to fear of his father (and the sporadic nature of when the meals were served) more than the actual act of gluttony.

Case in point (one of many during his childhood years) At twelve years old, Severus Snape ate half a chicken, hording the remainder and using a stasis charm to maintain freshness under the assumption his father would not provide another meal within a reasonable timeframe. The next meal was not made available to him for eighteen hours.

The above incident is but one of many that occurred during his childhood. The practice of hording food and overeating stopped when he reached maturity and was no longer subject to the whims of his father.

Lust

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has been guilty of the sin of *Lust* throughout his lifetime, though indulgence of this sin has been of both a solitary nature and an indulgence of the flesh. He is guilty of committing this sin on both a physical level (the human pleasures of the body) and on a more spiritual level (the lust for power and recognition as outlined in more detail in the section **Greed**).

Case in point: In order to satisfy his carnal desires, Severus Snape has been known to frequent various establishments located in a section known as Knockturn Alley. These encounters were sought for purely physical release and contain no desire to propagate his species.

Case in point: Severus Snape has been known, throughout his early years of schooling, to lust after a young witch, Lily Evans, who befriended him, and was later to become the mother of the child (Harry Potter) he took great pleasure in derogating. (*Noted: Let it be known that upon seeking redemption, Severus Snape did willfully attempt to save said witch, but his action were still viewed as that of a self-serving nature due to his desire to sacrifice the witch's partner. The witch's life was terminated as a result of actions beyond his control.)

Severus groaned, running a shaky hand through his hair. Lily. He knew his feelings for her, coupled with his hate for Potter, would continue to haunt him. He'd never realized just how despicable his actions were until it was presented here in black and white. Al had mentioned a page containing his virtues. A page most likely blank if his sins were any indication. With a deep sigh, he continued to read; sure his life was at an all time low.

Case in point: Severus Snape, throughout his professional career and in the privacy of his quarters, was known to lust after the wives of fellow Death Eaters as well as the women he met. While never pursuing these women, they composed various scenarios he was fond of mentally reviewing.

Case in point: In the past year, Severus Snape has centered his feeling of lust in the direction of one witch, a former student (Hermione Granger), of majority age, that has not been made aware of his feelings. While lusting after the witch continues to play a role in his mental process, the progression of feeling and emotion toward said witch (who it should be noted was a prime target for his anger during his professional career) has shifted from those he had previous felt. Some of these new emotions do indeed contain the desire to continue his line.

(Additional case points are located in Snape Sec. DS4, page 309.)

Severus shook his head, Hermione. He did have feelings for the witch, feelings she would never know about. It was just as well. He was almost twenty years her senior and a pariah as far as the wizarding world was concerned. Better to let her live her life with someone who could make her happy and not taint her with his presence.

Silently, Al slipped the next page in front of him.

SNAPE, Severus Case #09011959-4-878-697-007

~~~~~ SINS ~~~~~

## Anger

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has been guilty of the sin of *Anger* in the excess throughout his life. Indeed, it has been anger that has led to some of the most unfortunate decisions in his life. He has felt anger toward his father (who it should be noted was known to be a cruel and unfeeling human), anger at his peers (not associating well with those he was in school with), anger at his colleagues, anger at his students, and anger at life in general. While Severus Snape holds a tight reign on this emotion, his cutting words and petty actions have caused countless students and others to feel the wrath of his emotion.

*Case in point:* Created several spells with no other purpose but to inflict harm on others.

*Case in point:* Joined the Death Eaters in an effort to "even the score" with others of his association. (\*Noted: Greed and the desire for power are closely related to this notation.)

*Case in point:* Experienced extreme anger when confronted with one of his previous school peers (previously mentioned as part of a group and listed here separately...Sirius Black) who was on the run from the authorities.

*Case in point:* Focused a great deal of anger and hate toward previously mentioned offspring (Harry Potter) of a hated peer (James Potter) and a student in his charge over the six years the wizard attended school, refusing to allow reason, or fact, to temper his excessive emotions. (\*Noted: Should be stated that while he continuously harassed the wizard, he continued to save his life and worked toward protecting him from outside hazards at the same time. A true dichotomy of actions.)

(Additional case points are located in Snape Sec. DS5, page 481 and subsection Snape DS5a.)

## Greed

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has been guilty of the sin of *Greed* in an excess amount throughout his life. During his formative years, he coveted the possessions and material wealth of those around him, one Lucius Malfoy in particular. It was this consuming desire to acquire untold wealth and power that led to the unfortunate joining of the group known as "Death Eaters" with a promise of fulfilling these desires. (\*Noted: This culmination of desire did not come to fruition as the group was led by a megalomaniac [Lord Voldemort, A.K.A. Tom Riddle] that ruled by fear and destruction.)

*Case in point:* Severus Snape's desire for material wealth continued throughout his professional career, often jeering and belittling those in his charge whom he felt lived a more palatial lifestyle than he did.

*Case in point:* Severus Snape refused to acknowledge that the desire for excessive amounts of material wealth outweighed any spiritual gain he might have received from denying this sin.

Case in point: Severus Snape's many attempts to brew illicit potions for previously mentioned megalomaniac (Lord Voldemort, A.K.A. Tom Riddle) was to result in increased power within the circle of the group known as "Death Eaters" (who should be noted as followers of Lord Voldemort, A.K.A. Tom Riddle). When realization of this power did not come to pass, Severus Snape's fury was unmatched and resulted in increased harassment of those around him until events, as yet detailed, finally led him to seek redemption for his actions.

(Additional case points are located in *Snape Sec. DS6, page 733.*)

---

"It seems fairly obvious from the brief bits I've read that there should be no question as to where my 'soul' or 'spirit,' as you keep calling it, should end up. Thank you for the tea and your hospitality. I'll be on my way now if you'll just point me in the correct direction." Severus straightened his cuffs as he stood, wondering just how hot Hell was and thinking it might be a good idea to shed his frock coat before he arrived there, *if* he was given the chance.

"Sit down, Severus. We're not through yet. There is one more sin to consider before we examine your virtues."

"You must be joking. Virtues? As if I actually have any. After reading all that, I can only assume you're planning on showing me a blank page."

"Actually, you were more virtuous than you realize, though you may have thought your sins outweighed any good you've ever done. In any event, we're not through yet."

Al placed another page before him. As Severus watched him bind the last page back into his folder, he noticed the opposite side grow thick with a full sheaf of pages, most likely the subsections referred to at the end of each section. He looked around for a thin folder, that which should contain his virtues.

"Severus? The page?"

"Right, sorry." He looked down at the last listing of his sins.

---

SNAPE, Severus Case #09011959-4-878-697-007

~~~~~ **SINS** ~~~~~

Sloth

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has been guilty of the sin of *Sloth* in moderate amounts throughout his lifetime. While not following any organized spiritual group, Severus Snape has been known to recognize a higher power (outside the realm of humanity) and respect that power as need be.

Case in point: Severus Snape has been known to shirk his duties where extreme physical labor has been required, luring some other individual to do his part instead.

Case in point: While taking up with the group the "Death Eaters" and one, Lord Voldemort, Severus Snape did hereby renounce any and all spiritual affiliation and pledged his belief in Lord Voldemort. It was upon forsaking this allegiance that he asked for, and was granted, spiritual absolution, thus bringing him back to spiritual balance once again.

~~~ The remainder of this page has intentionally been left blank. ~~~

---

Severus turned the page over. "That's it?"

Al chuckled. "You're spirituality was never in question. Let's get you some lunch, and then we can review your virtues."

Severus glared at Al. "I can hardly wait."

-To be continued-

A/N: I was working on Dances when I took a break and saw a comment about the seven deadly sins versus the seven heavenly virtues. This short story popped into my head and refused to leave. Should be complete in four chapters total.

Chapter One: Reality Is Just A State of Mind

Chapter Two: The Seven Deadly Sins

Chapter Three: The Seven Heavenly Virtues

Chapter Four: What's Love Got To Do With It?

A grateful thank you to the wonderful Southern\_Witch\_69 for betaing this for me. The mistakes, however, are all mine.

Pearle

## The Seven Heavenly Virtues

Chapter 3 of 4

Sin and virtue: can one exist without the other? And to what end do they determine our final outcome? Severus ponders these very questions as he tries to determine exactly where he's ended up. Is love really the answer? (Rating is for language, one word really)

## \*\*\*New\*\*\* Chapter Four: What's Love Got To Do With It?

Now complete in four chapters!

Summary: Sin and virtue: can one exist without the other? And to what end do they determine our final outcome? Severus ponders these very questions as he tries to determine exactly where he's ended up. Is love really the answer?

Disclaimer: The characters, settings, etc. of the Harry Potter series are not mine; they belong to J.K. Rowling and Co. I promise to return them when I am through. Well, most of them anyway.

.XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

## Sin and Virtue by Pearle

## Chapter Three: The Seven Heavenly Virtues

Lunch turned out to be a fairly elaborate affair in an open-air solarium off the main hallway. The room was lined with flowerbeds over-flowing with brilliantly coloured flowers, both rare and exotic in nature, growing in the same space. A small waterfall in the far corner emptied into a pond stocked with Koi.

A large, round, elaborately carved wooden table, capable of setting at least twenty or more, stood in the middle of the lush garden. Sunlight from the overhead skylight glinted off crystal goblets gracing the two table settings on the table.

Al poured himself wine from a richly carved carafe. "Would you like wine with your meal, Severus?"

"Yes, thank you." Severus felt totally out of his element in the opulent surroundings of the solarium. "It would seem you're used to entertaining quite a few more people than just one."

"Not really. I'm not normally in the habit of entertaining guests in my home. This table is an... artifact, if you will, from a bygone era." Distractedly, Al stroked the gleaming tabletop before continuing. "Everyone equal. It was an interesting theory, doomed to failure from the beginning when you consider he didn't take into account human nature and the inability of humans to put others before themselves. Still, a noble undertaking and probably one of the best arguments for free will since it was solely Arthur's idea and not one of my original concepts."

Severus stared at AI in confusion. Who was equal? Arthur? Arthur who? He looked around the table lest he missed something. Around the table. A round table. His eyes widened as the connection hit him. "King Arthur's round table? I thought that was purely fiction."

"So are wizards and magic if you ask a Muggle," Al said smiling.

Katherine appeared, bearing a large silver tray laden with mouthwatering delights. Behind her was a young woman carrying a second tray. The feast they lay before him was fit for a king.

Carefully, Severus filled his plate from the serving platters, the rich aroma of epicurean delights making his mouth water. Never good at small talk, he was lost as to what to say to a man he suspected to be a deity.

"I must thank you for the interruption. While your spirit refusing to accept the inevitable has certainly put an unusual slant on normal procedures, the circumstances have reminded me why humans are so admirable in the first place. This morning has proved to be most interesting. I think we did a remarkable job cataloguing your sins, don't you?"

Right. So much for small talk. "So, what happens now?"

Al topped off their wine glasses. "We still have your virtues to review, and then... well, we'll have to see what transpires. By all rights you should have moved on already."

"Why haven't I?" He had no desire to *shuffle off this mortal coil* as the great Bard so aptly put it, but he was aware he couldn't stay here forever. Once again, he wondered how long he'd actually been wherever "here" was, only partially conscious of the uneven passage of time in this place.

"As I said before, your spirit refuses to cooperate."

"And you can't just override it?"

Al sighed. "You're not the only one involved."

"I beg your pardon? I don't see anyone else here. What are you talking about?"

"Another person. Her spirit is... dying without your presence. Her light is fading, even as we speak. She's integral to the fabric of future unfolding events. While I could shift circumstances to exclude her, she refuses to accept your passing, something about regrets and lost chances." Al shook his head; this wasn't supposed to happen. "I have to tell you that the fates have never conspired against destiny like this before."

"She who?"

"Are you finished? Would you like dessert?"

"She who?"

Al eyed the angry man. "We'll get to that eventually. But before we discuss any possible outcomes, we really should review your virtues. If you're finished?"

Severus stood, momentarily towering over the strange man. "Fine. Let's get this over with. I can be in Hell by dinner time."

Al chuckled, his odd eyes twinkling. "I believe Hell closes at five. You may have to suffer through dinner with me instead. Come. Shall we review the rest of your file?"

.XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Once again Severus settled himself in the chair in front of the massive desk, wishing he could be anywhere but here. He watched as Al retrieved a thick folder from the top of a stack to his left. This folder was labeled much as the other had been: "SNAPE, Severus Case #09011959-4-878-697-007." He watched Al scan the first page before handing it to him.

---

SNAPE, Severus Case #09011959-4-878-697-007

~~~~~ **VIRTUES** ~~~~~

Severus Snape's virtues are not as easily catalogued as his sins. While as numerous in count, they are at times an unshakeable feeling or belief rather than a direct action and are not as easily stated. Too, virtues may be combined in thought and action with each other, thereby making them more difficult to catalogue properly.

It should be noted that as Snape embraced each virtue, they remained strong and constant, never wavering within his spirit, until his demise. The surge in virtues exhibited and embraced by Severus Snape is directly tied to his epiphany regarding his membership in the group "Death Eaters" and his confession to Headmaster Albus Dumbledore as well as his joining the group "the Order of the Phoenix."

Faith

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape did not fully embrace the virtue of *Faith* until agreeing to help Headmaster Albus Dumbledore just before his twentieth birthday. His hard fast belief that aiding a group named "the Order of the Phoenix" (hereafter referred to as "the Order" for brevity's sake) would bring about the end of a megalomaniac known as Lord Voldemort, A.K.A. Tom Riddle, continued unbridled until his death at the hands of said psychotic when his work for "the side of the light" was revealed, and continues to this time.

Case in point: While Snape believes he may not have been treated fairly during his student years, he was still willing to confess to Headmaster Dumbledore the horrors he knows would transpire in the belief that Dumbledore could stop the deaths of the Potters (See multiple mentions of said individuals in the **Sins** folder, most notably those set forth in the section marked **Anger**) without thought of redemption for himself with only the hope that right would triumph.

Case in point: Severus Snape's faith is routinely put to the test during the twenty years he spied on the group known as "Death Eaters," knowing it would be easier to side with their cause than fight against them.

Case in point: Snape believes unquestioningly in Headmaster Albus Dumbledore's ability to end Lord Voldemort's evil reign, insomuch as he agrees to act as a spy for "the Order" to bring about this action.

(Additional case points are located in Snape Sec. DS11, page 173.)

Hope

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has exhibited the virtue of *Hope* continuously and without doubt from the time he renounced the group known as "Death Eaters" through to the present without thought for his own future. While this virtue is felt more keenly as an emotion, it can be expressed as an action in existential situations.

Case in point: Severus Snape's attempt to mentor the students placed in his care (i.e. as head of a division of the school where he taught) whose parents were part of Voldemort's following.

Case in point: Snape's attendance at meetings of the group "the Order" to relay information regarding Death Eater activities in the hope that he can prevent these events (i.e. raids, deaths of innocents, attacks on Muggles [See subsection *Severus Sec. DS21* a complete explanation of this term as it relates to wizards], and other violent acts).

Case in point: The mere fact that Snape returns to Hogwarts, year after year, knowing that he will have to continue spying, an action that carries a death sentence if discovered, alludes to the hope he must have to believe what he is doing is right and that good will out.

(Additional case points are located in Snape Sec. DS21, page 384.)

Charity

09-01-1959 to the present

The virtue of true *Charity* lies not in financial remuneration, but in giving freely of yourself though the act of helping others, as evidenced by Severus Snape's actions. Throughout his tenure as a professor, and more specifically his interactions with Harry Potter (only surviving child of his childhood nemesis James Potter and friend Lily Evans) whom, in an act of true *Charity*, he has sworn to protect. Snape's actions have been at cross points to his words. While belittling and berating Potter and his friends time and time again, Snape has moved to save their lives continuously when the child and his friends were under his care, a direct contradiction to his words.

Case in point: Snape went to Headmaster Albus Dumbledore when he learned that James and Lily Potter were marked for death in the hope that he could prevent the event.

Case in point: Snape attempted numerous times to stop the Death Eaters from raids against various Muggles by alerting "the Order" of their activities.

Case in point: Severus Snape makes a difficult potion, even though it is extremely time consuming, for a fellow "Order" member and colleague on a monthly basis without thought to personal gain.

Case in point: During Harry Potter's first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Snape rushes to the assistance of Potter and his friends when a troll is discovered loose in the school. Snape prevented another instructor, possessed by the being Voldemort, from killing the child during a Quidditch match when he hexed the broom Potter was flying (*Note: See Appendix B at the end of Snape Sec. DS31 for rules and information regarding Quidditch). He insisted on refereeing a later match to reduce the distance between himself and his charge. Snape helped set up a difficult riddle to prevent theft of a magical object in addition to setting and strengthening wards on the object.

This pattern of aiding Potter and his friends, as well as his colleagues and other students, prevails throughout the rest of Snape's life, right up to the present

time. These incidents are too numerous to mention here, but are detailed in *Snape Sec. DS31* pages 447 through 525 (including Appendix A).

(Additional case points are located in *Snape Sec. DS31*, page 420.)

Severus sat back in his chair. He never would have considered any of his actions toward Potter or his friends as an act of virtue. He had merely acted upon the life debt he owed the boy's father and his own vow to Albus to watch over him, tiresome as that proved to be. His actions had not been those of a virtuous man; they had been the actions of a man desperate for redemption.

"Even a man truly sorry for his actions cannot embrace the good within him if it did not exist in the first place."

Al's quiet comment cut through Severus' thoughts. "Yes, but you present these actions as if it had been my intention to care for Potter in the first place," he said crossly.

"Wasn't that the case?"

"No, I only did what I had to do. Nothing more."

"What you had to do to save the child and prevent the further existence of evil sounds like selfless acts if you ask me," Al said with a smile.

Severus scowled and reached for the next piece of paper. The sooner he went through his file the sooner he could... Well, he didn't know what would happen, but reading about his so called "virtuous side" was making his teeth ache.

Fortitude

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape embraced the virtue of *Fortitude* from the time he sought redemption to the present. Each time he was "hexed" and injured while spying, Snape continued to return to the group known as "Death Eaters" to gather further intelligence, regardless of continued injury to his person and the constant threat of death upon discovery.

Again, the list of Snape's acts of fortitude (an estimated one hundred and twelve incidents) are too numerous to mention here but are detailed in *Snape Sec. DS41*. Most relate to Death Eater meetings and continued "punishments" meted out by Lord Voldemort.

Case in point: After acting on orders from Headmaster Dumbledore (which included the man's own death) that labeled him a traitor, Severus Snape did continue, at great personal risk, to pass information on to Minerva McGonagall regarding Death Eater activities and the locations of magical objects known as Horcruxes.

Case in point: After being secretly cleared of charges against him, Snape braved possible personal injury by returning to "the Order" to work out a final plan of attack against the megalomaniac Lord Voldemort (*Note: This action also embraces the virtues *faith, hope, and charity*).

(Additional case points are located in *Snape Sec. DS41*, page 581.)

Severus pinched the bridge of his nose, a headache threatening to make the afternoon that much more enjoyable. He remembered the last incident well; sure that Potter and company would have hexed him to Hell and back if Minerva and Granger had not intervened.

Minerva had been Albus' Secret-Keeper. After months of spying for "the Order," even after being labeled a traitor, Minerva had been able to convince the others that the Unbreakable Vow he'd been forced to take, not once but twice, had forced him into his actions. The first vow with Narcissa protected Draco; the second at the Headmaster's insistence to spur Potter into action.

He fully expected Potter to Avada him on sight when he Apparated to number twelve, Grimmauld Place, regardless of his so called "innocence." And while Potter didn't disappoint him, it was Granger who'd truly surprised him. It had been Granger who cast a Full-Body bind on the lad, angry with Potter for not accepting Minerva's explanation and the facts laid out before them. The rest of "the Order" begrudgingly accepted him back into their ranks after witnessing a Pensieve Dumbledore had left detailing the events leading up to his death, but it had been Granger who had offered to work with him when he broached the idea of a potion that would fortify Potter's powers, drawing directly off of Voldemort's, in an effort to weaken the Dark Lord.

He suspected that might have been the start of his feelings for the young woman. In any event, it was just as well that she would never know to what degree she had earned his respect, or his heart, if he still had one. In the end, her friendship had been enough. With a heavy sigh, Severus returned to the stack of papers in front of him.

Al watched as Severus seemed to stare off into space; lines of melancholy etched around the dark man's eyes. He could read the emotions the man felt, even if he hadn't known what was unfolding on the battlefield Severus had left.

Justice

09-01-1959 to the present

Severus Snape has embraced the virtue of *Justice* with far less frequency than any of the other virtues. While attempting to mentor his house, he did not act fairly to others around him as part of a 'cover' he was forced to assume showing that was a 'faithful' follower of the psychotic known as Lord Voldemort and favoured the other Death Eater's children. While this action might be excused as stated, it should be noted that Snape performed this task with much zeal leading one to believe that the action might be embraced as true at some point.

Case in point: While Snape can be cruel to his most vulnerable students, he is respected by, and respects, his colleagues and their abilities.

Case in point: After returning to "the Order," Snape treats a young witch (i.e. Hermione Granger) with fairness and equity when he is forced to accept her help in creating a potion.

Case in point: Begrudgingly treats former classmate Remus Lupin with respect due him as a member of "the Order" and one time colleague, regardless of past association that shows Lupin was less than fair with Snape by multiple acts of omission (See file LUPIN, Remus Case #10031959-4-012-123-665 subsection *Sloth* for details).

(Additional case points are located in *Snape Sec. DS51*, page 796.)

"Go back? You mean now, after the Dark Lord's defeat? Or earlier, before everything went terribly wrong with my life?"

XX

"How could you? After all he's done! After all McGonagall told us about him," Hermione screamed as sobs wracked her weary body.

"Professor, wake up. Please wake up." But her plea went unanswered. Her tears cut a shining path through the muck and blood on her face. "He can't be dead. After all he went through. It's just not right."

"Let go of me," she screamed. Pulling back, her cries turned into a soft mummer of regret. "There wasn't time. I never told you. You've got to come back to me. It can't end like this. I should have said something. I know that now. Please..."

XX

Severus sat back. Hermione was mourning him? "How can that be?" he whispered.

"How can that be going on now? I've been here almost two days. That looks like it happened about ten minutes after I... ten minutes ago."

Severus smiled, knowing the answer was obvious but not willing to leave anything to chance. "Hogwarts. I want to go back to Hogwarts... and Hermione."

[illegible]

"I tried, Pro..."

"I think we should take her straight to St Mungo's. Snape must've cast some kind of lust spell on her thinking he'd survive the battle." Privately, Ron was convinced his friend had lost her mind. Her recent insistence that there was more to Snape than anyone knew was proof enough for him, even before this display of misplaced grief.

"Mr Weasley..."

"Professor?" Hermione's eyes widened in disbelief as she felt the body in her arms shift; a slow, torturous rattle of air escaped as Severus tried to draw a deeper breath.

"He was dead!" Shocked, Harry watched as Severus struggled to breathe. "You were dead."

"Oh, God, I'm sorry." Hermione's voice broke, tears once again running down her face. "You're alive. I can't believe you're alive."

"You died. I saw Ron curse you."

"I... You... You're a traitor! You killed Dumbledore." Fear blanched his complexion, his freckles standing out in stark contrast to his pale skin. "Harry, you said it, too. Snape's a traitor. I just..."

"Don't be ridiculous. The facts speak for themselves. You were put under the Unbreakable Vow not once, but twice. You only did what was required of you, and how the

Headmaster could have put you in that position is beyond me. Didn't even think about what might happen to you, evidence or no evidence. Terrible, just terrible." She stroked the side of his face, thrilled to have leave to touch him. "Are you hungry? You haven't eaten in hours."

He nodded, allowing Hermione to fuss over him. "I could do with a bit of tea and toast."

The sound of footsteps and a door opening brought the outside world crashing in on them. Hastily Hermione moved off the cot and back to her chair. Madam Pomfrey, followed closely by Minerva, came into view.

Poppy glanced from her patient to his visitor, noting the slight flush to the witch's cheeks. "Well, it looks like you're feeling better. Lie back and let me have a look at you."

"I'll go order your tea." Hermione quietly left the room, giving the others privacy to sort things out. She floated out the door on a cloud, still shocked but pleased that Severus had returned her feelings.

Minerva sat heavily in the recently vacated chair, weariness warring with relief as she smiled at him. "I was sure we'd lost you. I still can't believe it's finally over." A look passed between the two. He and Minerva had talked long into the night the first time he'd contacted her after Dumbledore's death. Albus had bound him to the Unbreakable Vow, requiring him to end the Headmaster's life, instructing him to wait two weeks before contacting her after his death. While he had doubts to his safety the first time they'd met, Severus had followed his orders as instructed. At the time, he'd secretly wished Minerva had cursed him, desperately wanting to end his wretched existence. Now he was more than grateful for the gift of life he'd been given.

"When were you thinking of moving back into the dungeon? There's quite a bit of damage to repair, a few spells that refuse to reverse. We'll have to move fast if we're to be ready for the school to open in August."

"Move back into the dungeon?"

"I've never heard of broken ribs affecting one's hearing before. Yes, move back into the dungeon and get back to work."

"What makes you think I'm coming back?" Severus settled back into the cot and looked smugly at the Headmistress. They'd moved back to familiar ground with barely an inch being lost.

"I've several qualified applicants waiting to hear from me. I wouldn't tarry too long to decide if you want the job or not if I were you." Minerva smiled. "Besides, Hogwarts is your home, and what do you expect me to do without my new deputy Headmaster?"

"Minerva..."

"You have nothing to worry about. Tomorrow Arthur and I will present Dumbledore's Pensieve to the Wizengamot. After they question me with Veritaserum, they will have no choice but to find you innocent."

Severus closed his eyes; he didn't deserve this treatment. By rights he should be dead. He heard Hermione's footsteps as she returned with his tea and toast.

Poppy pocketed her wand and plumped the pillows around him. "Well, you seem to be doing fine. A good night's rest and you should be good as new."

"And there's my new apprentice now. Perhaps you can convince the old bat to stay. We could certainly use him to get the castle back in order."

"You're Minerva's apprentice?"

Hermione blushed. "I've always been good at Transfiguration."

"Yes, I see."

"Well, I've a mountain of paperwork to get through." Minerva's hand rested on his shoulder. "It's good to have you back."

Poppy gestured to the bedside table. "Why don't you put the tray there, dear? And you..." She turned back to the dark man. "Nothing strenuous. Let those ribs heal. At least for tonight."

Severus closed his eyes and shook his head. "Go."

They could hear the two laughing as the hospital wing door swung shut.

"Do you want to try and sit up?"

"Mhm, but not for tea. Where were we when those two interrupted us?" Severus pulled Hermione to him, his lips finding hers once again. Their kiss was warm, passionate and held the promise of things to come.

The future was here, in his arms; tomorrow would take care of itself.

~~~ Fini ~~~

A/N: And so we come to the end. While the ending might have been a bit fluffy, I figure Severus deserves any break he can get since his future hangs in the balance in Real Life.

I am working on the next chapter of Dances in addition to working too much. RL bites. I really need to win the lottery so I can stay home and indulge my addiction to fanfiction.

A grateful thank you to my beta, the wonderful Southern\_Witch\_69. Any mistakes, however, are all mine.

Pearle