

The Secret Papers of Regulus Black

by Vorona

After a costly defeat of Lord Voldemort, Harry returns to number twelve, Grimmauld Place, where he discovers some disturbing information about Severus Snape's role in the first war with Voldemort.

(one shot)

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's Note: Canon Compliant to Half-Blood Prince; Veritaserum works slightly differently than in the books for added drama and tension.

Many thanks go to my beta-reader, I Love Severus Snape.

Disclaimer: Nothing belongs to me besides the speculative plot. I am making no money from my efforts.

It was a beautiful July day. The Dark wizard known as Voldemort had finally been defeated, and the wizarding world was in full celebration. In fact, it would probably be safe to say that the only wizard who wasn't celebrating was the very person who caused Voldemort's downfall. Instead of cheering, Harry Potter was in a very dismal mood. Sure, he had defeated Voldemort, and he'd even managed to get rid of his nemesis, Snape, on the way, but the price was too high. Ginny and Neville had both died in the conflict, and Ron and Hermione were both in serious condition at St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. Luna was still alive, but she had made the spectacularly stupid decision to marry Draco Malfoy. Whatever Draco may have done for the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore's Army, he was still a prat.

Harry kicked a stone on the street he was walking down. He was on foot because he wasn't really in the mood to use magic. He had thought magic would take him away from the dismal reality of his life with the Dursleys, but in the end, it had only provided him with more pain. That was why he was walking to number twelve, Grimmauld Place. His home now. At least there, he'd be somewhat alone, and maybe he could even find something in the house that would distract him from his pain.

As soon as he entered the house, he realized that coming here had been a mistake. The house's atmosphere of gloom and darkness only accentuated his own. Quickly, he eliminated his godfather's room, as well as that of his parents, as places to seek out distraction. This left the common areas and Regulus' room. He decided that Regulus was the least likely to have left any traces of Harry's own painful memories. And... hadn't he managed to find and hide one of Voldemort's Horcruxes? While he hadn't actually destroyed it, he'd at least done something interesting and useful. Harry tiptoed quietly up the stairs to avoid having Mrs. Black scream at him. He pushed open the door to Regulus' room and stepped inside.

The room was an epitome of dust-covered chaos. It was obvious that no one had been here to clean it in ages. Still, Harry figured he might find something with which to distract himself. He looked at the various books Regulus had lying about. He seemed to like Arithmancy more than anything, and unfortunately, Harry didn't think he'd be able to get into a book on that. If Hermione ... he did not let himself finish the thought. She'd be okay, and so would Ron. They had to be.

He looked around some more and finally, under a small desk, spotted a very old, very dusty black box with a brass lock. Harry picked it up, dusted it off, and set it on the

bed. He then sat on the bed himself, pointed his wand at the box, and said, "Alohomora!" The box opened. Peering inside, Harry discovered a roll of several sheets of parchment tied with a green ribbon. Exactly the sort of thing he was looking for! He untied the green ribbon and unrolled the pages. Then he began to read.

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### *My Last Confession*

"Confession?" Harry wondered aloud. What would Regulus have to confess? He'd died after stealing the locket-Horcrux. Surely that was enough to overcome the Death Eater thing. Harry picked up the parchment and began to read more.

*Before I, Regulus Black, die, I wish to make known the truth about certain events that happened in the year 1980.*

"That was the year I was born," Harry muttered to himself, and continued reading.

*However, I know too well that if this information were made public at this time, it would be a disaster. Too many people's lives depend on this being kept secret ... for now. In time, however, I hope it will be read, so that my actions and those of others may be fully understood in their proper context. This, of course, requires that the Dark Lord, he who calls himself Voldemort, be gone for good. I have done my part in his downfall, but I did not act alone. It is my wish, therefore, that this is read only once he is gone, so that he does not suspect the other people who have helped me.*

*It is my wish also that this be read by my brother, Sirius. We never got along well, but he is my brother, and despite all our fights, I never stopped loving him. I suspect that he never stopped loving me, either, though he never did understand my motivations in becoming a Death Eater, nor my friendship with Severus Snape. He was right about the one, and utterly wrong about the other, but I shall get to that in turn.*

*Finally, I wish to give my gratitude and my remorse to Severus. I did what I could to keep you alive, but I know that my actions did not help win you any friends. You once sacrificed yourself for me, and I now do the same for you, but your life will still be unpleasant, and I am sorry for that. I know that nothing that can happen now can redeem you in the eyes of those who only see your dark side.*

*These pages, then, are a gift to the two people I loved most in my life: my brother and my best friend. I know they could never resolve their enmity, and I am truly sorry for the part I played in that. Hopefully, by now you realize you are both on the same side, both fighting the same evil.*

Harry put the letter down in anger. Even Regulus had been blind to Snape's treachery. He simply did not understand how so many people could take him at his word! Sirius had been right about him. Hadn't he proven that by killing Dumbledore? Yet here was Regulus, expecting everyone to think Snape was the greatest thing on Earth. Harry's hand shook as he turned the page. Despite his anger, he couldn't help wanting to know how Regulus would try to justify this trust.

*It began with Mother, and I know now how hard it must have been for Sirius to go against his own mother. I, however, was proud of my heritage, proud to be a pure-blooded Black. I was sorted quickly into Slytherin at Hogwarts, and I saw the way my brother treated one of the Slytherins his own age. I decided, very deliberately, to try to make friends with this boy, even though he was older than me. He didn't seem to have many friends, and I figured it would be yet another way to get at Sirius. These motivations seem silly now, but they made sense at the time. And so, I became friends with Severus Snape, who taught me all sorts of hexes. I'll admit, at first, it was clearly a ploy. I used him to get under my brother's skin. But as time went on, I began to actually enjoy his company. I'll admit, also, that I baited my brother about Severus, and told Severus about how awful Sirius was. This was the role I played in their rivalry, and for that I am very regretful. Perhaps if we had not gotten involved with Voldemort, I would have matured and been able to mend things, but by the time I understood what it was I felt, it was much too late. I truly wish there was a way for me to make up for it, but I know that there is none. Not now.*

*At this point, many people are going to assume that it was Severus who incited me to join the Death Eaters, but he was always more hesitant about it than I was. I was persuaded not by him, but by my older cousin, Bellatrix. She convinced me, and I convinced Severus: yet another thing I must add to my regrets. At first, it seemed not only harmless, but a good idea. Ah, how I scoff at my younger self, so taken with fervour and bitterness. Yes, of course, we all thought that if the Muggle-borns continued to flourish, eventually all magic would die out. There was also the problem of respect and accolades. Recipe for success? Be a Gryffindor Quidditch hero! Slytherin brains were clearly evil and not to be trusted. It didn't take much to convince us that that attitude needed to be changed. In an ironic twist of fate, Severus was accused of practising Dark magic, yet when my brother or his friend, James Potter, performed the same spells, they were considered funny. Of course, James was a Quidditch champion, and Sirius was cool in his own right, so clearly, what they did must be good. I'm still bitter about that, because it really wasn't fair. Now, I'm not saying that Severus didn't have faults. He could be a right bastard at times, holding onto grudges far longer than he had any reason to. But I understand his bitterness, too. He didn't have an easy time of it. We were ripe pickings for the likes of Voldemort, and I'm sorry to say that we fell in, without really thinking about it.*

*Well, Severus got out first. It was a matter of pride, really, which is another of his faults, but in this case, it saved us both. At the time, I didn't know why, and in fact, I didn't know much at all. It turned out to be because he hated being a servant, especially to one such as the Dark Lord, who openly flaunted his domination and exalted in the use of the Cruciatus Curse. Severus began turning in the names of Death Eaters he knew to Dumbledore. As I said, I didn't know what was going on; I was lost in my own little world. I had a girlfriend at that time, one of the Death Eaters, named Alec. I stopped spending as much time with Severus as I had, in order to spend time with her. This turned out to be a mistake, for he was learning Occlumency and wanted me to learn it as well. I was too busy, and it was too difficult, so I never really learned. I'd probably not be about to die if I had. There's no way I could keep my betrayal away from Voldemort at this point in time. He'd look in my eyes once and know everything, including Severus' part in his downfall, which is why I cannot be found and my mind cannot be discovered. Death is the only answer. But first I must write the truth, so that some day, it will be discovered by the right people.*

*So, Severus became a double agent without even me knowing about it, and I was, at the time, his closest friend. He had learned Occlumency, so Voldemort did not know of this either. Finally, when we were alone, he confessed his change of allegiance to me. It was a risky move, for I could have denounced him at once. Even if I hadn't done so deliberately, Voldemort could have found out through Legilimency. As I said, I've never learned Occlumency. My mind, as I noted above, would have been easy for the Dark Lord to break into. But Severus was worried about me. He knew that he had passed information to Voldemort on Dumbledore's request (something about a prophecy) and that there was likely to be carelessness on Voldemort's part.*

Again, Harry felt rage overcome him. Dumbledore's request? Dumbledore hadn't expected Snape to come in and spy on his interview with Trelawney! Yet he had clearly given this lie to Regulus, who, it appeared, had bought it. Regulus sounded about as smart as Goyle, and that was being nice. No wonder Snape had been able to spin him tales!

*Plus, the Aurors were becoming increasingly problematic. He wanted me to be protected, and encouraged me to switch sides.*

*It was a hard decision, but my trust in Severus and my lack of Occlumency made up my mind. I could not go back to Voldemort now, not without betraying my friend. Eventually, he would find out. Before I did, I was almost caught. We were talking in the Leaky Cauldron when Crouch and his Aurors came in. We fled to Diagon Alley, but they caught up. Finally, Severus told me he'd give them a diversion so I could escape, and to my shame, I let him. Severus was caught and tried, and it was only through the interception of Albus Dumbledore that he was not sent to Azkaban. Being vouched for by Dumbledore would have been disastrous for him had he not already convinced Voldemort to allow him to "spy" on Dumbledore. Voldemort was convinced that Severus was still on his side, and that he had managed to gain Dumbledore's trust. Voldemort always did underestimate Dumbledore; he believed that Dumbledore's greatest weakness was in trusting too easily. This is not the case. Dumbledore knew exactly what he was doing. Voldemort was easily duped, especially since he, unlike Dumbledore, never knew about Severus' ability in Occlumency. Severus was lucky: he had Dumbledore's protection and Voldemort's trust. He was lucky, I say. He could have been sent to Azkaban for life: all on my behalf. I will never forget that. It*

was this action of his that made me realize exactly where my loyalties stood. They were his, and he was Dumbledore's man. I left the Death Eaters.

Then came the matter of the Horcrux. It was not as I had stated in my letter to Voldemort. I am not the one who figured out the secret. I am the one who stole his Horcrux and hid it in my house, yes, but I was not the one who figured it out. That was Severus. Why he never told Dumbledore, I do not know. I realize he should have because Dumbledore could have helped immensely. But Severus was proud, and he felt he hadn't done enough on his own. He didn't want to bother him with this, saying that Dumbledore would have more important things to do. I hope that was not a mistake. We knew about the orphanage, about the cave. We went there, but it was immediately obvious that two adult wizards could not get across in the boat. It could, however, be done by a wizard and a house-elf. I could do it with Kreacher. I told Severus that I wanted to make up for his sacrifice with the Aurors. I was firm and stubborn, and finally he agreed. He was not happy about it, but he agreed. He'll be even less happy when I end up dead, but what else is there for me to do?

So, I went, but again, there was a problem: the potion. I didn't know what it would do, but I decided that a good idea would be to change it to something very deadly, something without a clear antidote. Again, I turned to Severus. He was always brilliant at potions, and indeed, as I write this, he has already decided to apply to Hogwarts as Potions master. Voldemort wants him to teach Defence Against the Dark Arts, but Dumbledore explained that the position is cursed. So, they plan to have Severus continually apply and be declined. This will give added proof to Voldemort that Severus is still on his side, since it will appear that Dumbledore doesn't really trust him. Right now, though, Slughorn is still teaching, so it is arranged for the beginning of the spring term, at which point Snape and Slughorn will share the work. But I am getting on a tangent here.

I had brought some of the original potion with me from the cave. Obviously for a fake potion to be made it would have to look, smell, and taste exactly like the original. I brought it to Severus, and he agreed to attempt it. In a few days, he gave me the poison, explaining that he had created an extremely complex blended poison, and that not even a bezoar would be able to cure a person of this. He said it had the added effect of causing extreme emotions of guilt and despair and that the death caused by it would be long and painful. He seemed to regard Voldemort with even more hatred than he felt for Sirius, which, let me tell you, is saying something. With Voldemort's Horcrux gone, if he drank the potion, he would die forever. This was our plan.

Again, I took Kreacher to the cave. Kreacher drank the original potion, which made him somewhat crazy and not able to think clearly. He couldn't remember why he was there and wanted to go swimming in the lake. I knew that would be disastrous, so I forbade him from doing so. I took the locket. I sent Kreacher back to get another locket, one to replace this one, and while he was gone, I wrote a note. In it, I took full credit for the action because I already knew my life was essentially over. I hadn't been present at the last Death Eater gathering, and I knew they were after me. If there was any chance that Severus would survive until Voldemort found the fake, and if somehow Voldemort managed to survive the potion, I didn't want any blame to fall on Severus. He wasn't a suspect to the Dark Lord, and I wanted to keep it that way. I placed the fake locket and the letter where the original had been, and then I filled the glasses with the poison.

I tried to destroy the locket-Horcrux, but I wasn't able to. I can't figure out what needs to be done, but nothing I've thought of will work. I have decided to hide it and to make it impossible to open. Maybe then, Voldemort will be stuck within it. I'm aware that it's not as good of an option as destroying it, but I don't know how to do that. I've left it in my house in the hopes that it will be found by Severus. He knows about the Horcrux. Perhaps he will be able to destroy it. Unfortunately, I cannot afford to contact him. He cannot be seen with me, nor can any message I send be found with him or Voldemort will surely know of his betrayal. I'm already dead. He does not have to die, too. The other option would be to take it to Dumbledore or contact him in some way. Unfortunately, this too is overly risky. I could be caught and questioned. This cannot happen with my low skill at Occlumency. I must write this letter and then take my life. It's the only way. I only wish I had managed to destroy the Horcrux first.

So, this letter is an explanation, and I hope that it is clear now that Dumbledore is right in trusting Snape. If things go as I expect, and he is still working at Hogwarts, I am sure that he has not made himself popular. It is likely that people will assume he is a traitor to Dumbledore. This is false. He is Dumbledore's man, until the end, and has risked his life on several occasions in the fight against Voldemort. He is also the most loyal and courageous man I know, despite his wicked temper and awful tendency of keeping grudges.

Yours,

Regulus Black

Harry put down the last sheet of parchment. He wished now more than ever that Dumbledore were still alive. He wanted to know what to think. His mind was confused. If Snape were Dumbledore's man, as Regulus suggested, why would he have killed him? It was false. He was false in the end. It had to be so. Harry felt tears welling up, tears of anger and pain. Snape had killed Dumbledore. He'd said the words "Avada Kedavra!" and killed him just as Voldemort had killed Harry's parents. And Harry had finally gotten him for it. Not the way he wanted, exactly, but Snape was paying for his crime.

Maybe he had really been good at one point, maybe he was responsible for the locket, but he'd turned out bad in the end. And that made everything much worse. That he'd had a heart once, and then chose to ignore it. The thought that Snape was still "Dumbledore's man, until the end" was patently denied by the murder. Still, Harry wanted someone to talk to about it. Sirius, obviously, but he was dead. Or Dumbledore. Also dead. Or Hermione and Ron, but they weren't conscious. Why had he come here? Why had he read this? And why had Snape killed Dumbledore?

His mind flashed back to the last time he had seen the former teacher. Harry had managed to disarm him with a nonverbal "Expelliarmus".

"Finally!" Snape had sneered. "But it won't be "

"Crucio!" It had been his plan from the beginning. He'd practiced trying to call up the "right" feelings, and learned how to make it work, so long as he could get past Snape's defences. Snape curled up in pain, twitching on the ground.

"Why did you do it?" he yelled. "Why did you kill him? He trusted you!"

"I " Snape could hardly get the words out. "Dumbledore "

"Go on, tell me what a coward you are!"

"Draco " He took a breath and looked around briefly. It appeared the spell was wearing out, and he was about to give him another dose, but before he did, Snape managed, "His orders, I had to, had to "

At that moment, Neville showed up, looking pale. "Harry!" he cried. "Stop it! You aren't... you aren't like that. Don't..."

Of all the people, it would be Neville to cause a problem. "How can you say that?" he demanded. "After everything he's done..."

"Leave me," said Snape, clearly back to his senses. "Let's see what kind of a Dark wizard young Potter makes, shall we? He's certainly got a handle on the Unforgivable Curses. I think even Bellatrix would be impressed. Don't bother trying to save me, Longbottom, you'll just screw it up like you do everything else!"

"No! I'm not going to let him do that! Not even to you! It's not right," said Neville. Then he turned to Harry. "We'll take him to the Aurors." Neville pointed his wand at Snape and bound him. Snape's eyes burned in furious rage.

Harry was angry. He was trying to get answers, but he knew now that Snape would be able to slither out of his responsibilities as he always had, and Neville was going to let it happen. But there was nothing he could do about it. He turned his back on them. One day, he vowed...

In the end, Snape had been sent to Azkaban for Dumbledore's murder, partly on Harry's evidence, but also because the *Priori Incantatem* spell revealed the use of *Avada Kedavra*. That had been enough to send Snape to Azkaban even without Harry's testimony. But Azkaban these days was much tamer than what Harry hoped Snape would have to suffer. If anyone deserved being surrounded by dementors, it was the former Potions instructor. Plus, it would have been so much better if he could have...

Could have done what? Blast it all, why did he still have no one he could talk to? Something in all of this didn't make sense, but he couldn't figure out what it was. And then he realized what he had to do. Stuffing the documents in his robes, he left the house. He got his broom and headed first to Hogwarts. He knew that Professor Slughorn would be happy to do him a favour. For once in his life, he did not find the situation repugnant. The Slug Club had its uses after all.

He was greeted by Professor McGonagall, and she was shocked that he wanted to see Professor Slughorn, but waved him on with, "I don't know why you want to see him, but he's in the dungeons. You're lucky he has a break right now."

Harry found Slughorn looking over some cauldrons. "Harry, my boy! I didn't expect to see you back so soon!"

"I've come to ask you a favour," Harry began. "Could I... could you give me some Veritaserum?"

"You know there are restrictions on that," Slughorn cautioned.

"Yes, I know. But I really need it. There's something I have to find out, and I think that's the only way, short of the Imperius Curse, and well, that's an Unforgivable Curse."

"Well, if you're willing to chance it..." He left the cauldrons and returned with a small bottle. "This should last about fifteen minutes. I'm not going to give you any more, and if anyone asks "

"Don't worry. I'm not asking you to lie for me. It's important. Just don't go advertising it."

"I won't, Harry. You can count on me."

Harry went next to the Ministry of Magic. He went down to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. "Excuse me," he said to the receptionist. "I was wondering about visiting Azkaban."

"To see the prison itself, or to visit one of the prisoners?"

"A prisoner," Harry said.

"You'll need to fill out this form stating your name, the name of the prisoner you're visiting, and whether you want the prisoner to be guarded or if you want a private meeting." Harry thought that having Snape guarded would be a pleasure, but he didn't want anyone to know about the Veritaserum, so he merely noted that he wanted Snape to be heavily restrained. The receptionist called an assistant to take the form down to the Ministry's Owlery and told Harry to have a seat.

He was there for maybe a half-hour when the assistant returned with an Azkaban Visitor's pass. "If you'll follow me," the assistant said, guiding Harry back to the entrance. Two wizards in identical robes, bearing the words "Azkaban, the Wizard's Prison", stood beside an old shoe.

"This is the Portkey to Azkaban," one of them said. "While we're getting there, other guards will be making up the visitation room and escorting the prisoner to that place."

Harry nodded, feeling relieved that the dementors had left Azkaban, and that the 'other guards' were going to be just other wizards. While he was thinking about that, the other man gestured for him to take hold of the shoe. "One, two, three..."

They were pulled through the air until they landed inside a very dark and gloomy room. There was a large desk and several doors leading off in different directions. It unsettled Harry to see all those doors. It reminded him of the Department of Mysteries. These doors, however, had signs posted on them. The men led Harry to the desk. "You'll need to sign in, and state the time of your visit."

Harry wrote his name and the time. They gestured to the door with the sign stating "Private Visit". Harry went through it and the door closed behind him. Snape was sitting in a chair like the one in Courtroom 10. Chains bound him to it, and a look of fury was evident in his eyes.

"Potter!" he spat when he saw who had entered. "I should have known it would be you. Going to finish what you started? Drive me insane the way Bellatrix did to the Longbottoms? Oh yes," he said, apparently noticing Harry's expression of surprise, "I know all about that. In any case, I daresay I'll be a tougher cookie to crack."

"Don't be stupid. Even if I did think I'd get away with that here, I have a more useful solution," said Harry, bringing out the bottle. "Having the Hogwarts Potions master on one's side comes in handy for matters like these."

Snape's eyes widened. "Is that what I think it is, Potter?"

"It's Veritaserum, yes," said Harry.

Snape laughed then, and Harry realized that it was the first time he'd ever heard laughter from Snape. "What?" he asked.

"I'm not afraid of that potion, Potter. After all, I'm the one who made it. But how do you suppose I'm going to drink it?"

"Actually, I figured I'd just pour it down your throat."

"Very well," Snape snapped. "Get on with it, then."

"Well, first I want you to read something. I don't know how much you need to tell me, and I only have fifteen minutes worth of potion."

"And how do you expect me to turn pages?"

"I can do that, as long as you tell me when you're done. Can you do that? I think you'll want to read it anyway, seeing as how the writer seemed to think you were his best friend."

"Regulus?" Snape asked, this time obviously surprised. Harry took out the sheets of parchment and laid them before Snape. Snape read them intently, and Harry noticed at times that Snape got pale and other times, he noticed Snape's hand begin to twitch in the chains. And, startlingly, for the first time ever, Harry saw Snape give a smile that was neither a smirk, nor a smug grin. When Snape reached the end, he said, "So then, you know."

"Know what?" Harry asked. Then, suddenly remembering the Veritaserum, he said, "Wait, drink this first." He poured the liquid down Snape's open mouth and repeated the question.

"Why I had to kill Dumbledore."

"Why *did* you kill him?"

"There were several reasons as to why I killed him, actually, but there was only one reason I had to kill him."

"And what's that?" Harry asked.

"Come on, Potter, surely even *you* aren't that dense!" yelled Snape. "You would have done the same, and in fact, you did do the same, you just don't want to admit it."

"You're not answering the question." Harry was shaking. Had he? What was Snape talking about?

"Right. Well, then, I'll put it in small words so that you are sure to understand. As Regulus writes here, I made him a poison, a very deadly poison, and a very painful poison; one whose antidote was extremely complex. It was put in a cave guarding a locket-Horcrux made by the Dark Lord. At the time, we thought there was only the one. I more recently found out about the others, but I never knew that Regulus had been successful. In fact, I thought he had probably been killed. I still didn't tell Dumbledore, but I should have. In any case, when I finally did tell him, he had already figured it out and was determined to find out for himself. I urged him to wait, to go for the ring first, which he did, and which nearly killed him. And then Narcissa and Bellatrix showed up at my house asking me to do the Unbreakable Vow on Draco's behalf. I convinced them I knew the "Plan", but I was bluffing. I took the vow, well aware that I was getting myself into something and worried that it might be something bad. When I found out what it was..." He paused.

"Go on," Harry said firmly.

"I went to Dumbledore immediately. He told me I had to do it, ordered me to do it, in fact. He told me he was old and I was young, that my role in things was more important than his. But I don't think I could have done it, even then."

Harry checked his watch. Had the potion worn off already? No, it had only been a few minutes. "And then Draco managed it. Against all the odds, and despite all my efforts to stall him so that no one would have to do it, he managed the trick with the Vanishing Cabinets. When I arrived, there was Dumbledore, disarmed and clearly weakened. I saw your broomstick and his, and I reached the conclusion that he had drunk the potion. Dumbledore was dying. He wouldn't make it another half hour, and the antidote takes months. I knew what the poison would do; I knew how painful and agonizing that death would be. After all, I made that potion myself. I knew he didn't want Draco to become a killer. I hated him then. Yes, I'll admit it. I hated that he didn't care if I became a killer, I hated that he wanted me to be the one to destroy him, I hated too, selfishly, that no one would ever trust me again, as no one ever had before, that I had to sacrifice the one person who had ever stood up for me. And I hated that he pleaded with me, that he called me Severus..."

"So you killed him out of hatred, did you?"

"Are you listening to anything I've said? I can't lie, you know. I killed him because he would have died a much worse death otherwise - a death from a potion that you let him drink. So don't tell me that what I did was easy. Was it easy for you? I'm sure he didn't want to drink all of it. How did you make him, Potter? Did you promise it wouldn't hurt? That it would help?" Snape's eyes met Harry's in a gaze of intense fury. Harry felt as memories came forward. Dumbledore's face swam to the surface, moaning, "Make it stop, make it stop," and Harry's response, "Yes... yes, this'll make it stop." Finally, it was over. Harry was shaking as he faced Snape, infuriated that Snape had stolen those memories. How could he have known what the potion was? Besides, Dumbledore himself had made him promise.

"I didn't know what it was!" Harry protested. "He made me promise "

"Well, good, he made you promise!" Snape's voice was filled with scorn and derision. "He made me promise, too, so now you know what it's been for me. Only no one knows your part in his death. And no one ever will. Now get out. You have your answers."

"Is it really true? He really ordered you to "

"Yes, for the last time! And then he pleaded with me, and then we communicated through Legilimency. He was pleading for his death, Harry, not for his life. Because the death you gave him was too terrible, even for him. Now, as I said, get out!"

"If it was that terrible," Harry shot back, "then who made it in the first place? Oh, and you can keep the memoirs. I don't want them."

Harry flung open the door and stormed out. But right before the door closed behind him, he heard Snape's last words, spoken very softly. "Thank you."

The door slammed shut behind him. He left, and never looked back.

Fin.

Author's Note: I am having some trouble with how I intend Harry to come across in this, so perhaps it needs more revising. In any case, I never intended to make him out to be a villain. When the story starts, he is desperate and in agony. He lost everyone he cared about in the war (at least, he believes -- he thinks Ron and Hermione will die), which he had spent the last several years blaming on Snape. He blamed Sirius' death on Snape. He blamed his parents' death on Snape. This is canon. He's at his breaking point... he simply cannot take anymore. And then he learns... what? That *he* is to blame, at least partly, for Dumbledore's death. He can't handle it. And so he runs. If things had been different between himself and Snape, if Snape had ever been fair or understanding to him, he may have been able to return, but instead, he occasionally feels a pricking of his conscience... and then buries it. This isn't a cold-hearted decision on Harry's part, it's a desperate need for solidity and familiarity... and when he's safe again, the damage is already done and it's too late to repair it.

I'm including this Author's Note since I'd say over 75% of my reviews on this story (it's archived elsewhere, as well) go something like, "Harry is such a prat! He should be (insert punishment) for what he did to Severus (or Dumbledore)!" While I agree that his action is wrong, and that it is unfair for Severus to have been punished for this, I don't think it means that Harry is a prat or that he deserves to be punished, either. I'm trying to portray a lose-lose situation here. In fact, I think that Severus fares slightly better than Harry. At least his psyche is still intact.