

Reverto ut Obscurum

by Lady Whitehart

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Reverto ut Obscurum (Return to Darkness)

Chapter 1 of 2

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Disclaimer: You can tell that I'm not Rowling by my pathetically low account balance. May her legal bloodhounds chase more worthwhile prey.

A/N: For anyone who has ever wondered what happened to Snape when he was sent back to Voldemort, I've decided to toss in my two Knuts on the subject. If you are a firm believer in Good!Snape, you may hate me after reading this, so feel free to **politely** tell me I'm full of crap. So read and enjoy if you dare.

Reverto ut Obscurum (Return to Darkness)

"You know what I must ask you to do, Severus."

At Dumbledore's words, the dark-haired man felt his heart drop into the pit of his stomach. For months his Dark Mark had twinged and burned slightly, but it was not until tonight that it had flared with the intense pain that only occurred when the Dark Lord called his followers. Now both Potter and Barty Crouch, Jr. had just confirmed the Dark Lord's return.

He had known that this day would come sooner or later. The day that he would be forced to make good on his end of the bargain. A bargain that had once saved his life, but now was more likely to end it. Severus was to return to the Dark Lord's service once again.

Severus Snape strode silently to his rooms in the dungeon. His gaze fell on a small picture of him with his mother. He stared at it, remembering the boy that he had once been: a poor, despised half-blood. He had worked so hard to change that, studying doggedly, working to perfect every spell that was taught and every potion that was to be brewed. He had even taken it upon himself to write his own spells--some of which were brutal in nature--and to develop shortcuts and improvements on all of the potions Slughorn had had them learn.

He had left school hoping to make a name for himself; a name that in time should have made him nearly as feared as the Dark Lord himself. He had been so eager to follow in his footsteps, so ready to do what ever it took to help himself rise up through the ranks of the Dark Lord's followers. In no time at all, his cunning had been noticed by his new master. Perhaps the Dark Lord had taken in the similarities between the two of them. Their humble beginnings, the thirst for knowledge, the need to prove that they were every bit as intelligent as those whose blood was pure.

He opened the wardrobe, pulling a box from the back. He tapped it with his wand, releasing the enchantments that kept it from the notice of the house-elves. He lifted out the black robe, pressing it to his nose, inhaling deeply. Severus could still smell the faint, enticing fragrance of death on it. His mind swam suddenly with memories of the

numerous victims that had known suffering and slow, painful deaths at his hands. The screams of the tortured rang louder and louder, threatening to overwhelm him. Snape sank to his knees, pressing his hands to his ears, trying in vain to block out the shrieks. Nothing could silence those screams.

Innocent men, women and children, whose only crime was not being pure enough. Muggles, he had been told by his pure-blooded house mates, were barely more than animals. They had forced the magical world into hiding out of their fears. Their magical spawn were no better, and they couldn't be trusted. Only true witches and wizards deserved to live. The world should, by rights, belong to them.

Foolish ideals of an angry young man. A young man who was really not much different than the people that he had persecuted. He suddenly found himself unable to breathe under the suffocating blanket of guilt. He felt it squeezing the life out of him; a life that he had been trying to preserve for the last fifteen years. Now Dumbledore was sending him to his death.

No! He pulled himself together. One by one, he sorted through his thoughts and emotions, burying all memories that would betray him. Layer upon layer, he constructed skewed memories... memories that would please the Dark Lord and protect his life.

Severus lowered his face to his hands, sorting and sifting and changing his thoughts so that they were only slightly different from the truth in some ways. One after another, the thoughts were organized in his mind, creating a slightly older and wiser version of the young man who had knelt at the Dark Lord's feet.

A few minutes and several deep breaths later, a pale face with piercing dark eyes emerged from between oily curtains of black hair. The face was not that much different from the face he presented every day. Yet somehow there was just the slightest, most subtle shift in the man. Severus Snape, Hogwarts Potions master, had slipped away, leaving behind Severus Snape, Death Eater, loyal servant of the Dark Lord.

He drew the black robe over his head. The dark folds fell softly down over his thin frame, puddling around him as he remained kneeling on the cold stone floor of the dungeon. He could feel the seductive power of the Dark Magic flow through his veins, claiming him as its own once again. He would enjoy the privileges of being the Dark Lord's favorite servant. Once again his power would be respected.

He lifted the mask from the box. He would hide behind it, reveling in the anonymity that it afforded. Slowly, the taste of inflicted pain began to sweeten in his mouth. He would serve his one true master. He would exact revenge on the society to which he had never truly belonged.

Slowly, gracefully, Severus Snape rose to his feet. Tucking the mask up inside the long sleeve of his robe, he turned to the portrait hole that led to the outside. He was destined to be reunited with his master, to stand once again by his side. He stole silently to into the Forbidden Forest, just outside the wards, where he silently Disapparated.

He reappeared in the graveyard outside Little Hangleton. Before him stood the reborn Dark Lord. Severus lowered himself to his knees, lifting the hem of Voldemort's robe to his lips.

"Arise, Severus."

A/N: I hope you enjoy interpreting this.

Usquequaque Vestri Vernula

Chapter 2 of 2

Usquequaque Vestri Vernula... Always Your Servant... Whose side is Severus Snape on? Voldemort's? Dumbledore's?
Or does he have his own agenda?

Disclaimer: I am not JK Rowling. I am but a humble fic writer, who continually forgets to separate the male plot bunnies from the female plot bunnies. Those little buggers multiply like, well... rabbits.

A/N: In case you were wondering, the title translates into "Always Your Servant." Take it for what you will.

Much appreciation goes to Verity for sitting up with me on ICQ while I wrote this.

Please, don't make me beg for reviews; it's so undignified.

Usquequaque Vestri Vernula

"Arise, Severus," the cold high voice pierced him. Anger and frustration rolled off of the Dark Lord in waves, roiling and crashing furiously over the man before him.

Severus rose to his feet, carefully averting his eyes. He allowed the tiniest bit of fear to seep out of him. There was no use feigning a sense of courage he didn't feel. He should have returned the first instant he felt the Dark Mark burn. That was what a loyal follower would have done. Now all he could do was wait for his master to decide if he should live or die.

"I have yet to decide your fate, Severus." The long skeletal fingers traced almost lovingly down the side of Severus's face. Unexpectedly, the Dark Lord's gentle hand lashed out, his nails raking the man's cheek, leaving long scratches to slowly well over. "I am not entirely convinced of your allegiance. You have kept me waiting, and now I have doubts of your loyalties."

Severus was now looking into the fiery red eyes staring at him from the snakelike face. He could feel the touch of the other mind on his own, examining his thoughts one by one, looking for any hint of deceit. The deft touch discovered the desire for power, the thirst for blood, and the hope of acceptance. A feeling of relief that his tedious days tutoring inept children in Potions would be soon over slowly drifted to the forefront of Severus's mind. Surely his Master would find something more fitting for his most loyal and forward-thinking servant?

"Oh, I have plans for you, Severus Snape, great and glorious plans." The long fingers continued their gentle touch, mirroring the one on his thoughts. "Do I detect a flicker of fear, Severus?"

"I would be a fool not to fear you, Master." Severus forced himself to remain steady.

The Dark Lord struck without warning. The delicate fingers on Severus' thoughts turned vicious, causing physical pain. Voldemort tore at his mind with all of the savagery of a werewolf attack. Images of despair at the loss of his Master, disgust at playing Dumbledore's lapdog, dislike for the children who were the spawn of those who had defied the Dark Lord, and a desperate longing for the Dark Arts swirled about in a furious whirlwind. All gave evidence of his loyalty to the Master whom he had served so patiently and fully. Voldemort dug deeper and more brutally into the other man's mind, scouring the dark recesses of his mind, searching for any weakness or shred of disloyalty. At last the Dark Lord's lust for the truth seemed to be satisfied. He released Severus, who was no longer able to stand upright. The Potions master sank to his knees, once more bowing before the greater power before him.

"Once again, you have proved yourself worthy of my trust, Severus. Stand before me and tell me what you know."

At the command, Severus gathered his waning strength and slowly rose to his feet. He drew a deep breath, knowing that he should be grateful for the ability to do so. "Even though I knew that you would be displeased with me at first, I was forced to wait to return. That old fool was constantly at my side, monitoring my every move. I had no choice but to continue to masquerade as his one of his most loyal staff members. And Igor, in spite of my advice to Apparate to you and tell you of my delay, ran like the coward that he truly is. Had I known that he was going to flee, I would have killed him on the spot."

Severus paused, waiting for some type of reaction from the Dark Lord. When he realized that he wasn't going to be punished, he continued with his story. "My only hope was to gain any information that might be of use to you. Then the Potter boy reappeared, much to my dismay. He announced to Dumbledore that you had returned. At that moment, I knew that I had to find a way to return to you as soon as possible. My intent was to turn to Barty Crouch."

"You knew that Barty was there all along?" the Dark Lord asked. Once again Severus could feel the subtle connection between them as the Dark Lord sought out any hint that his servant was lying.

"Not at first," Severus admitted reluctantly. "I became suspicious when certain ingredients were missing from my Potion stores. All of them were ingredients for Polyjuice Potion. I wanted to find a way to be sure of his identity; however, I could not come up with a way to do so." A regretful expression clouded his pale face. "Once I learned for certain that Barty was posing as Moody, it was too late."

"Too late?"

"Barty foolishly allowed his emotions to run away with him, and he made a critical error that revealed him to Dumbledore. I had no choice but to follow along as the old man's loyal pet. Once Barty was discovered..." Severus drew a deep breath before delivering news of Barty's fate. "Fudge, that blustering idiot, ordered the Dementor's Kiss. Barty is gone, his soul sucked out. He is no more."

It was Voldemort's turn to show remorse; his most loyal servant, gone. The younger man had done the one thing that he had needed most: Barty Crouch, the younger, had managed to send the boy to him, to enable his master to return to his full power.

"There is one thing you must know, Master," Severus continued quietly. "The Ministry does not believe the boy's story. They are ignoring everything that the brat said. They have decided to conceal your return from the wizarding world. No one knows that you have returned, my Lord."

Voldemort's face became triumphant. "My return is not believed?"

"They fear you so much that they will not see what they do not want to see. As far as they are concerned, your return is nothing more than a spoiled little boy seeking attention. And by the time they realize the error, it will be too late to stop you."

A high-pitched laugh erupted from Voldemort. Great waves of elation burst forth from him, causing Severus to shudder. There was no one to oppose the Dark Lord, no possible way for him to be hindered.

"Ah, Severus, you were correct to wait, to lie low. Does the old fool suspect you?"

A cunning look crossed Severus' face. "The old man considers me to be entirely in his service. He wishes me to spy on you again. You know, of course, that I will bring you as much information as I can. He trusts in me. He believed in my remorse for everything that I had done in your service. He still believes that I grieve the death of that Mudblood, and that I will do everything in my power to keep her son alive."

"You will return to him, Severus. Tell him everything about this meeting that you think will serve to unnerve him further. I want him to fear me. While powerful he may be, he has grown old and weak, and when he is no more, there will be no one to stop me. Return to the school, Severus. I shall summon you soon."

With a deep, reverent bow, Severus kissed the hem of his master's robes a final time. Concentrating on the point just outside the wards guarding the school, he disappeared from the graveyard.

Later that night, Severus Snape sat in the presence of Albus Dumbledore. It was late, and he was exhausted beyond words, but the old man had insisted upon seeing the interview with the Dark Lord repeatedly in the Pensieve.

"He believes you to still be his loyal servant then, Severus?" the old man asked, for what seemed to be the hundredth time. He was pacing back and forth behind his vast and cluttered desk. The phoenix, sitting bright-eyed and alert, was intently observing their every move.

"He does, Headmaster. His trust in me is as complete as I could have ever hoped it to be." Severus rubbed his eyes wearily, longing for the opportunity to return to his rooms, to fall across his bed and sleep. Finally sleep.

Dumbledore ceased his pacing before turning to face the Potions master. There was a hint of triumph in those twinkling blue eyes. "You have done well. By once more being his most trusted adviser, you will have access to most of his plans. You will be able to gather information vital to his downfall."

"Bear in mind that he never tells any one of his followers, no matter how loyal or trusted, all of his plans," Severus reminded him, a touch of discontentment in his voice. "There may be a great many things I will not be privy to, sir."

"But, Severus, without you, we would know none of it at all. Anything that you can uncover for us will be helpful. There are no words to describe how much I appreciate the risks and burdens that you are so willing to take on again."

Dumbledore smiled at the younger man, who was half falling asleep in the chair before him. He remembered the distraught youth that had come to him, tearfully explaining what he had done, warning him that Lily was in grave danger, pleading with him to somehow find a way to protect her. He remembered holding that same young man as he had wept for the loss of a woman whose life had ended because of his foolishness. Severus had promised, no... had sworn, to do everything in his power to protect her son, to atone for his youthful stupidity. "Go to bed, Severus. You have done all you can for tonight. All we can do now is wait."

The younger man staggered from chair, over to the fireplace, and flooed back to his quarters. Once securely in his own room, he finally allowed his guard to relax. No one saw the twisted smile creep across his face as he stared into the darkness. No one knew of his true loyalties... No one could ever guess what really went on in the mind of the man who danced for both his masters in turn. His ambitions were his alone, and thus they would remain, until the time was right.