

Redemption

by Admantina

Severus Snape's mind finally breaks in his final moments as he is tortured to death. A short one-shot on his reflections and what he sees.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Anything you recognize doesn't belong to me.

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'Ah, Sseveruss... my little ssnake.' A high-pitched voice hisses coldly amid the gravestones.

'My Lord,' murmurs a man, cloaked and hooded in black, crouching at the feet of his lord.

'Severuss...my pet...were you ever aware... that a traitor lurks among uss?' The cold words hang like an executioner's axe in the air. The fitting end after all, for a traitor.

'I was not aware of it my Lord, perhaps —' A savage kick from a Death Eater silenced his smooth words. Severus Snape was afraid.

The red eyes narrowed dangerously. 'Perhapss, because you were that traitor?'

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The axe dropped.

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In a way, Severus Snape welcomed the pain. It was not unfamiliar — oh no, he was all too well acquainted with pain.

At least this time, this time would be the last.

It tore at his body, icy sharp daggers slicing at his skin. One moment he was falling through freezing needles, the next, burning in what surely must be hell. He thought he could taste his own blood in his mouth, in his nose. It occurred dimly to him that amid the Cruciatus curse, people were beating him.

At least it would be the last time.

Retreating swiftly to his mind, he found that even there, he was to have no peace. His mind, his last sanctuary had been violated. Images and people swept past him of no accord.

His mind had betrayed him at last.

From the dark crevices of his mind, faces of people stared blankly up at him. The horror reflected in their still-open eyes, their mouths open in soundless screams.

Because of him.

He saw himself — no more than a child — beaten to the edge of death and back. The child's anger and hurt twisted in a tormented face. He saw again, the flash of blinding green light and his father's lifeless body. Onyx orbs stared up at him lifelessly. Accusing, even in death, of the bastard son never meant to be.

The images reeled again. Spinning in the whirlwind of faces that of his sixteen-year-old self stared back at him.

He was dangling in the air, the shouts below malicious and scolding. Snivellus. The name echoed mockingly. Bright emerald eyes, wide with laughter — mocking. At him. A black haired youth, so much more handsome than he could ever hope to be.

Face contorted in hatred, the younger Severus slashed at an invisible enemy.

Blood.

Red washed his vision as blood filled his eyes.

Severus Snape begged for forgiveness.

None was given. None would ever be given.

As if in mockery of his plea, another image played out slowly before him.

A young boy in dark robes, face distorted in pain and bitterness, crouched at the feet of a red-eyed being. A murmured oath, a spell dredged from the netherworld, and a mark engraved forever in his flesh.

The Dark Mark hung in the air.

Severus Snape felt the images whirl uncontrollably, his mind fraying.

The end is near.

A young man, no longer a boy, kneeled before Albus Dumbledore and confessed his sins.

He'd thought he'd found protection.

A man staggering into Hogwarts, drenched in his own blood, shuddering uncontrollably.

He was wrong.

A war-hardened man, leading Death Eaters in a massacre. Manic laughter rang as fireworks of green light shot from their wands. Blank eyes narrowed accusingly.

War is cruel.

Writhing on the ground, screaming for mercy as the creature who called himself Lord Voldemort looked on mercilessly.

He refused to scream this time. He refused to let these creatures hear him beg for mercy.

The images whirled faster still, barely stopping.

Brilliant green eyes staring at him in betrayal.

Houses in ruins, the Dark Mark sentinel above.

Grimmauld Place.

The Order of the Phoenix.

The first time he locked eyes with Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived.

The images whirled, spinning him in a tornado. His head would surely burst. Break from this torture.

An Unbreakable Vow; Hogwarts invaded; Dumbledore cornered; an all too familiar blast of green light —

And suspended there.

Severus Snape felt himself trapped in a limbo, completely still for a moment, in nothingness.

Surely this is what it felt like for him. My mentor, my only friend. So dying is not so painful after all... He was right again. Perhaps he was right about forgiveness as well.

'I'm sorry.'

And then he fell.

As Severus Snape plunged into the darkness awaiting, he shed tears. The first tears in over thirty years.

Redemption.

The bottom rushed up to meet him.

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Fin