

And Vengeance Is Sweet...

by SisterG

Severus Snape reminisces those events so many years ago that ultimately led to his grim deed. My take on why Dorcas Meadows, a member of the original Order, had to die.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This is a part of a much longer and detailed story that lives in my head but I doubt that it never comes out quite as I wish it would. I have always been fascinated by the members of the original Order of the Phoenix and this is one sharp-toothed plot bunny that has been mercilessly nibbling my heels since the fifth book came out. A little different angle on why Snape abandoned his wicked ways.

(Or maybe I am just a romantic deep down and believe in Dumbledore too much...)

Big thank you for southern_witch_69 for corrections.

You folks know the disclaimer. He is not mine.

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"That's Dorcas Meadows. Voldemort killed her personally" - Alastor 'Mad-Eye' Moody in OotP.

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The room was dark except for few short candles that created a pool of light on the rickety desk, leaving the rest of the room into shadows. Somewhere in the house the boy was sleeping, exhausted by the events of the night. The man was alone, waiting for the summons from his Lord. His dark master would not be pleased. In fact, most likely he would be furious. The boy had failed. And he would suffer the consequences of his failure. They both would.

Severus Snape had no illusions of the situation. His deed would not grant him a place next to the Dark Lord. He would not gain his trust by disposing the greatest enemy his master had ever had. It would only increase his suspicion. Oh, he would not suspect him an apostate any longer, but far worse: a rival.

Once, all those years ago, Severus Snape had been recruited because of his skill and his intellect and his devotion to the Dark Arts. And he had gone willingly, almost fervently embracing what he with a gloomy romanticism referred as the dark side. They were promising him glory and recognition and revenge.

Revenge over all of those that had scorned him, revenge over all of those that had rejected him. Great things if he in return promised to leash his skills to the use of his dark master and vow obedience.

What an easy prey he had been to someone like Lucius Malfoy. The handsome, ruthless young man seemed to have everything he wanted. What a dupe had he been!

Blinded by his hatred. They had not offered him greatness. They had offered him a slave's collar. Foolishly he had stretched out his arm to be branded, not making a sound when the agonising pain had scorched every nerve ending in his body. Others had screamed, some had fainted, but he had been silent. To gain what you want you must suffer.

Now the skill that had once granted him the admission to the ranks of the Death Eaters was considered a threat. Voldemort did not see kindly anything that remotely hinted competition. He would suffer once again. The Dark Lord would not kill him for he was still too valuable. But punishment was unavoidable. And the only way was to punish him directly. A humourless smile crossed his lips.

There was nothing worse the Dark Lord could do to punish him than what he had done over sixteen years ago without even knowing that. By taking her life he had alienated him forever. And to get his revenge, he would do anything. Against that pain what was Cruciatius Curse? Just a trifle. And the Dark Lord could never understand what he was willing to go through to gain his vengeance. After all, Tom Riddle had never known what love meant. Sometimes, at the darkest hours of his sleepless nights Severus Snape envied him.

Briefly his thoughts drifted to the boy, now sound asleep. Despite everything, the boy was still innocent. That would change soon, and there was not much Severus Snape could do to prevent that. The revelation would have to come from within, and he wondered if Draco Malfoy had that in him. Well, no matter. He had fulfilled the promise he had made to the boy's mother. And to his aunt.

He wished he had the privilege to slumber and fall into the oblivion of sleep. His lips curled into a sneer. No, sleep would be unnecessary luxury. He suspected he wouldn't be able to sleep anyway. His insomnia had returned with a vengeance after the resurrection of the Dark Lord. He relived the events of the night nearly sixteen years ago, wallowing in his agony, relishing it, gaining strength from it.

He had wavered slightly from the path he had chosen so many years ago. For a moment he had thought he would not be strong enough. But he had made a promise on her grave, his blood sealing the oath.

Whatever it would take.

He could have died a hero tonight: rather giving his own life than harming the man he had served so many years. He would have shown his true loyalties to the world ending the malicious whispers for good. It would have been noble and righteous. Such a *Gryffindor* act to pull. And it would also have been utterly pointless, gaining absolutely nothing, leaving behind two corpses instead of just one.

He wasn't afraid to die. His own life was the price he was willing to pay. He was rather looking forward to that, actually. Maybe, just maybe, he would be able to see her face once more. He liked to think that when his time came and he would step to the clearing after walking the dark path he had chosen, she would be there waiting. He sighed. If there really was an afterlife any kind, he doubted whether he was granted the passage to the same place she had gone to.

He had promised himself to protect her, and he had failed. Too late he had learned that his master had found her and they had taken her, burning the cottage she had lived in to the ground. Even her beloved herbal garden was ashes when he had arrived.

For a brief period of time, he had allowed himself to believe that he might have been saved, those short, exhilarating months after he had spared her life, not being able to cast a curse on a defenceless witch he had caught eavesdropping.

And oh, how she had rewarded him, afterwards. How she had sought for him, for her own goals and ends and how he had taken advantage of it. How they had played the game of hide and seek and deceit until one day he had woken up into a realisation that she meant too much to him for his comfort. That he wanted to have her, needed to have her: body, soul and mind. That he himself had turned into a prey tangled into her web and could no longer escape her.

Yet, as she had told him that cold night, some risks were worth taking.

And then, ultimately, he had been reminded that anything and everything he touched always turned to dust... No! He shook his head. He would not wallow in self-pity. It was useless, it was maudlin and it was for the weak. He couldn't change the past.

Yes, you coward, you cannot change the past. She died ignorant that it was you who betrayed the prophecy.

The voice that spoke to him in the depths of his mind during his sleepless nights had returned. But he preferred it to the dreams. To the dreams where he woke up in her bed and in her arms from a nightmare only to realise she was no more than a cold and decaying corpse, her skin clammy ice and dead eyes accusing.

Would she have walked away from him in disgust if she had known his dirty secret, that he had not only told his master the prophecy but even after he had learnt who were the targets had not felt remorse? That had come later. Then, his revenge over him--and more importantly, over *her*--was seemingly complete. Or would she have understood, allowed him to make his amends? He had never had the courage to find out, and then it had been too late.

She had died defying the Dark Lord, denying him what he wanted. With foolish and headstrong bravado worthy of a Gryffindor, she had refused to give him the information he sought.

And no one stood up against his Dark Master without retribution.

And he hated her for that, almost as much as he admired that courage. She had rejected the Dark Lord's intimidation and offers of glory and recognition, a place at his ranks. She had called him 'Riddle' to his face. So he had been told, afterwards.

She had died for the boy she had sworn to guide, nurture and protect mere hours after his birth. And she had made the ultimate sacrifice that her godson could live, keeping the Secret. Dorcas Meadowes had died so that her sister Alice's son could live.

He had blamed the boy who had meant so much to her.

He had blamed first Sirius Black for betraying her and then, when he had grudgingly admitted the truth, Peter Pettigrew.

He had even blamed Sybil Trelawney for making the prophecy in the first place.

But in the end, it all fell at his feet. His and the Dark Lord's...

The hardest thing he had ever done: going back after his new Master had forbidden any retribution. For the retribution was not his to give!

His gloomy thoughts were interrupted by pain in his left forearm that made him feel like his veins were filled with melted lead. It was a sign that the Dark Lord was furious: his touch was never gentle, but now the pain was almost unbearable.

He heard faint stumbling at the stairs, and soon Draco appeared into the doorframe, his hair tousled and trying to maintain the cool and arrogant expression on his face, but letting his agony show as a tension around his eyes. Ignoring his own pain, Severus stood up from the chair he had been occupying in his shabby sitting room and took his cloak.

"It is time to go." He didn't even try to force warmth into his voice when he addressed the boy who merely nodded in response.