

even though I've known this was going to happen since I finished Book 6, I was still devastated.

"Look at me." The voice was weak, gasping and gurgling through the puncture wounds in his neck, but he had no choice but to obey.

Snape's eyes were just as dark as he had always remembered them, beetle-black and impenetrable, emotionless and cold...

Only this time they weren't. When he looked into them, he saw them roiling with emotion loneliness, regret fear and underneath all of that, love. Harry couldn't look away, and he couldn't block the gentle probe into his mind as Snape slipped past his defences for one last time.

"You have her eyes," Snape whispered in his head. "I never wanted to see...you are so much like your mother. Do you think she'll ever forgive me? Lily..."

"Forgive you?" Harry was confused, his response sharp, but Snape didn't answer and Harry realized with a start the dour man wasn't in his head anymore. A quick glance confirmed what Harry already knew Snape, the man who had been his nemesis since age 11, who had been responsible for the death of his parents, who had *murdered* Dumbledore, was dead. Harry thought he would be happier about it, but instead all he felt inside was hollow and empty. Glancing down at his hand, he realized he still held the small bottle holding Snape's memories firmly in his grasp.

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He had always tried to ignore how very much like his mother Potter really was. For all his brashness and the bold Gryffindor ways of his father, it wasn't only the eyes Harry had in common with his mother.

On his weaker days, Snape would allow himself to ignore the most obvious aspect of Potter's heritage, and focus instead on the parts of him that were Lily the eyes, the intelligence, his inherent championing of the underdog...and his smile. When it was true, it marked him very much his mother's son.

It was easy to avoid looking directly at Lily's eyes, staring out at him from the face of the man who had stolen her away. He had hated James Potter with a burning passion, but Lily...how could he ever hate her? She had been his only friend, and he had loved her for it. And even after she had turned away from him, he had still loved her and longed for her and regretted her absence from his life something that he blamed James Potter for entirely. It had been James' fault to a certain extent, but if Snape were to be totally honest with himself something he tried to avoid he knew that the majority of the blame lay with him. He had been the one to push her away. It was his fault she was dead and hadn't been there to raise her son to manhood; his own fault that he had never had enough time to mend the friendship he had so callously thrown away with his angry words and bitter hatred of Potter and his gang.

Now, at the end, as he felt his life slipping from him, he was oddly relieved that Harry was here with him, and that he wouldn't die alone.

"Look at me." The command was weak, but unmistakable. The young man beside him had no choice but to obey, and Snape allowed himself to fall weakly and willingly into his mind.

"You have her eyes," Snape whispered to the boy. "I never wanted to see...you are so much like your mother. Do you think she'll ever forgive me? Lily..."

He felt like his heart was bursting. His body felt heavy and cumbersome around him and his lungs seemed filled with mud. He didn't know if the boy responded to him or not, and was positive he wouldn't have heard him even if he had. Snape was pretty sure he was dead.

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The playground was just as he remembered it, the swings still dwarfed by the huge chimney in the background. He could hear the lazy drone of bees as they buzzed in the bits of clover that managed to grow through the hard packed dirt. For some reason, he wasn't wearing his shoes, and his feet were bare and dirty against the ground.

He looked at them in surprise for a moment, before he realized he was no longer wearing his long black cloak either and that his white linen shirt was rolled up at the elbows and unbuttoned at the neck, and that a refreshing breeze was blowing gently around him. The swings were swaying slightly, the chains creaking and battling the noise of the bees for dominance.

With a sigh, he walked towards the empty swing set and sat down, feeling the canvas strap of the seat moulding against his buttocks. Listlessly, he gave himself a slight push and wondered why he was here.

"I think you know," a gentle voice replied.

"Lily," his voice shook, and he didn't need to look up to know that she was really there. He could feel her presence all around him.

"Lily, I'm so sorry..." he managed to say again, before his voice broke. He couldn't remember the last time he cried and wondered if this even really counted, but there was no denying the tears running down his hooked nose and dripping, unchecked, into his lap.

"I know, Severus, I know." She was crying too, he could hear it in her voice. "I'm sorry to. I was so stupid, and I didn't understand...it wasn't fair to you or to me. I just I would have forgiven you, eventually..."

"Maybe," he agreed bitterly, "If I hadn't killed you first. It's my fault, all of it. And now I've gone and killed Harry, too. The only thing left of you in the world."

He felt her fingers trace against his face and turned his cheek into her palm as she lifted his head, closing his eyes against the sight of her, sure it would break him again.

"He's not dead," she replied. "You didn't kill him. You protected him; kept him safe. I've been watching."

"Then you know," Snape murmured. "You know what I did how many ways I hurt him. I killed everyone he ever loved you, James, Sirius..." he managed to choke out, "...Dumbledore."

"If I had forgiven you when you asked me to, none of this would have happened. There's plenty of blame to go around."

Snape did look at her then, caught in the gaze of the green eyes he had dreamed about and remembered with painful regret for seventeen long years. She was smiling at him like she had when they were children.

"Where...I'm dead, I know I'm dead, so where??"

"You're with me, right where you belong," Lily responded. "You've worked so hard, Severus, and done so much. I know it's been so very hard. And I've missed you so much I've missed my best friend."

"Lily -" Snape blinked against the sudden happy ache in his chest, catching his breath as a sudden feeling of joy rushed into him. He could feel himself changing, almost as if time was turning backwards and taking him to the child he had once been. "Lily, I love you!"

"And I love you, Severus." Her voice was high-pitched and giggling and he realized that Lily his Lily was young again, the age she had been when they had first met.

He stared at her in amazement, and she laughed. "Do you know where you are now?"

"Yes," he nodded, laughing with her, boyish and carefree and young as he had never been when he was alive. Grabbing her around the waist he pulled her onto his lap

and started swinging. "I've died and somehow made it to heaven."

~fin~

BLACKBIRD

The Beatles

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these sunken eyes and learn to see

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to be free.

Blackbird fly, Blackbird fly

Into the light of the dark black night.

Blackbird fly, Blackbird fly

Into the light of the dark black night.

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

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