

Dark Side of the Veil

by phoenix

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This was written for the Sycophant Hex Sky is Falling Festival Prompt VII: Snape Resurrected. Obviously it isn't DH compliant as it was written before then.

Harry stood before the Veil. This ominous archway had claimed Sirius. At that time Harry had tried to go through the Veil, find Sirius, but he had been told that Sirius was gone, that no one returned from beyond the Veil.

Now anger, fear and excitement warred within him. He was angry that the others had lied to him, even though it had been a lie of ignorance no one seemed to care that Sirius was gone and had taken it as an absolute fact. It turned out there was a way to pass beyond the Veil and return, but it was dangerous; the slightest misstep and he would also be trapped beyond. His fear resulted from that same fact. The rules had been very clear on what he was allowed to do and how long he had. Excitement was the hardest of his emotions to control. If this worked, he could return for Sirius, Dumbledore, his parents, anyone who was lost during the war.

"Harry? Are you paying attention?" Hermione asked irately.

"Yeah," he replied as he returned his mind to the present.

"No. You weren't. This is very important. If you don't do things *exactly* right, you will be lost."

"I know that. But don't you see what this means if it works? I can bring them all back."

She sighed. "No. You can't. You've been studying the chapter... You have been studying it, haven't you?" she asked skeptically.

Deciding he might as well be honest rather than make a fool of himself, he replied, "Only the part that pertains to what I need to do once I'm beyond the Veil."

"Really, Harry. I would think you would want to know as much about this as possible. You can't bring them all back. You can only bring back people who died in the last few months, and even if you could go further back, you cannot bring back someone killed by the Avada Kedavra Curse or whose body was mutilated," she lectured.

"I can still get Sirius." His godfather never should have died and definitely not in the senseless manner he had. This was his chance to right that wrong. Surely the amount of time that had passed hadn't been too great.

"Focus on Snape. You need to focus on Snape. Without him, you will not be able to get close enough to Voldemort to finish him off. And I assume you did read the part where focusing only on the person you are looking for is vital."

This time he was the one to sigh. "I did. And I know that." If this worked he would return for Sirius. Surely Hermione would agree to help him.

"Then you have to put Sirius out of your mind. If you think about him while you are beyond the Veil, you will be lost to us."

"I know. I know." They had been over this enough times that he was quite tired of her lecturing.

"Do you have your potion?"

"Of course I do." He pulled a phial of bright purple liquid out of his pocket. "And once I take it, I have fifteen minute to return." He saw that she was opening her mouth to speak. "And time moves differently beyond the Veil. I know. I'll keep checking my watch." He stared at the phial.

The news of Snape's death came as a particularly hard blow to the Order. As McGonagall had gone through Dumbledore's papers, she had found a letter, addressed to her, which explained Snape's actions and that the headmaster had already been dying. The two of them had devised a plan for Dumbledore's death that would remove all doubt about Snape's loyalties to the Dark Lord and his minions.

For the next several months, Snape fulfilled his job as a spy to the Order and passed information about the Dark Lord's plans and major Death Eater attacks. The Order knew he was holding things back, but if he passed too much information, his brethren might begin to suspect him again.

Surprisingly, it had not been a Death Eater, or even the Dark Lord, who had killed him. A Junior Auror had stumbled upon him, and in an incredibly rare and strange mixing of curses, they had both ended up killing each other.

Without Snape, there was no way for Harry to get close to Voldemort. This time Voldemort was being careful about getting too close to Harry. He was perfectly happy to allow one of his followers to kill Potter. Harry only wished he had learned more about what had happened when Voldemort had been resurrected and why he could now touch Harry without it burning. Dumbledore had known, but had not had time to impart that knowledge to Harry.

While they were discussing their course of action and wondering if they could recruit any of the Death Eaters to replace Snape, Mad-Eye Moody had recalled something he had overheard about the Veil, launching Hermione into full research mode through Hogwarts' Restricted Section.

It had taken her several days, but she had finally stumbled upon an archaic tome that had information on the Veil. The book had clearly been long forgotten given the thick layer of dust on it. She had translated and transcribed from Latin the parts of the book about the Veil.

From the book, they had learned that first Harry would require a complex potion that would allow him to cross over the Veil and be able to return. It had taken Hermione nearly three months to complete the potion, in part because the process was so long, but also because it had taken them nearly a month to find all the ingredients.

Professor McGonagall had been skeptical about this plan. While she knew Hermione excelled at potions, this particular potion would have tested even Severus' abilities. In the end, it was the only choice they had, and she had reluctantly agreed to let them move ahead with their plan.

Hermione had assured him she was positive that she had gotten the potion correct. He knew that he should not doubt her, that she was meticulous and would not do anything to harm him, but he knew that Sirius had crossed beyond the Veil and had not returned. Knowing he had no choice, he checked his watch and downed the contents of the phial.

"Good luck," Hermione said softly as he walked through the Veil.

While he had felt nothing when he drank the potion, walking through the Veil felt like he was being impaled by thousands of frozen spikes. Forcing the pain from his mind, he concentrated on finding Snape.

From all around him he could hear voices calling. They were the same voices he heard when standing outside the Veil, but they were growing louder. Even with that, he still couldn't understand them.

When he found himself trying to decipher their words, he shook his head. He had to keep thinking of the one he was sent to find. If he faltered, he could become lost for eternity. "Snape. Snape. Snape," he chanted over and over.

Step by step, the darkness began to fade. He could see shadows moving, but he forced himself to ignore them. "Snape. Snape. Snape."

Checking his watch, five minutes had already passed. He had less than ten minutes to find his former nemesis and bring him back. Unconsciously, he rested his hand over his pocket, ensuring the second dose of potion was still there. Chanting, he continued into the void, focused on his quest.

Everything had instantly gone dark. It was not at all the reaction Snape had expected from a Body-Binding Curse. When the light returned, he found he was lying in a featureless, dark place... and he was alone. Utterly alone.

He searched for a long time, but neither the lighting nor the landscape changed. When he tried to Apparate nothing happened. His wand was missing, so there was little he could do magically, not that anything seemed to be working as it should.

After realizing that nothing he did made any difference, he sat down to contemplate his situation. The last thing he recalled was gathering ingredients for a potion when a young Auror startled him. Not wanting to hurt the young man, he cast a Body-Binding Curse. As he replayed the events in his mind, he recalled the Auror sending a spell at him, but he had no idea which it might have been, though he was positive it had not been the Avada Kedavra Curse, as it had been blue.

Perhaps he had been transported somewhere. This could be some sort of spatial illusion, that he was actually imprisoned by the Ministry and was awaiting the end of the war and trial.

Then it occurred to him that he had been here quite a while and he was neither hungry nor tired.

Is this what it was to be dead? Had someone who stumbled upon him by chance really bested him? It was such an ignominious way to meet his end if that was the case. And if this was death, what did it mean that he was in this dark place by himself?

No one knew what death was, but this... No one had ever speculated it would be like this. He had personally believed there would be nothing, that he would just cease to exist.

"Well, well. Severus Snape. Never thought I'd see you here."

Snape spun around. He recognized that smarmy voice. He loathed that voice. "Black," he spat. "Where are we?"

Sirius had a smarmy grin on his face as he moved close to Snape and whispered into his ear. "We... are dead." He then gave a chuckle that suggested his grip on sanity was loosening.

It was as Snape had suspected. But he had never expected to have to endure Sirius Black for eternity. "Than I am in Hell," he said darkly.

Sirius clutched at his heart. "You wound me. Surely my company can't be that bad."

Snape shot him an irritated glare. "Go back to whence you came. I prefer the solitude."

Sirius snorted. "You say that now. Wait a while. This is worse than being stuck in Azkaban...trust me on that one." They stared at each other in silence for a few seconds before he continued. "So, which side got you? Was it Voldemort or did you finally show your true colors and Dumbledore send you packing?"

"Not that it's any of your concern, but Albus was killed four months ago." He felt no need to go into specifics. The poison would have killed Albus in a matter of hours if he hadn't. That was why they had devised the plan in which he would kill his mentor.

"Then Voldemort got you." Black sounded almost giddy at the prospect of Snape having failed as a double agent.

It pained Snape to make the next admission. "I do not exactly understand how I died."

"Well, go on. Don't keep me in suspense. I'm dying to know what happened."

After several seconds during which Snape contemplated how to recount the moments leading to his death, he said, "Events had progressed to the point where everyone believed I was loyal to the Dark Lord, which was instrumental to my role as spy. The members of the Order were the only ones who knew where my true loyalty lay, and I continued to gather information for them to keep the Death Eaters at bay and eventually lead to the Dark Lord's defeat.

"An Auror happened upon me. I attempted to stop him with a Body-Binding Curse. At the same time, he sent a curse at me, but I do not know which. The next thing I knew, I was here. The two curses must have interacted in some manner to cause my death."

Black broke out into a hearty laugh. "Killed by accident. That's priceless. Guess you aren't the great wizard you always thought you were?"

"Laugh all you want, but without my help, the Order has very little chance of stopping the Dark Lord. He won't go near Potter, having learned his lesson. One day, one of his minions will defeat Potter. And without Potter, there is no chance to defeat him. He is no longer human and cannot be killed in the usual way."

"You really think you are that important?"

Snape tried very hard to ignore Black's skepticism and give him enough information to get him to go away. He feared that if Black stayed too long, he would soon find himself pressured to give a complete accounting of everything Potter had done since Black's death. "I am the only one who could have gotten Potter close enough to fulfill his destiny. If this truly is death, you can soon expect the others to be joining us."

"You don't give the Order or Harry enough credit."

Snape was about to retort when he suddenly felt a tugging, and his vision began to blur as he was pulled somewhere. The sensation was not unlike a Portkey. When everything returned to focus, he found himself staring at Harry Potter. The only thing missing to complete his personal Hell was James Potter, the brat's father. "So, the great Harry Potter was unable to defeat the Dark Lord and joins me in death," he said sarcastically.

"I'm not dead," Harry stated simply.

"Ha. How little you know. We are all dead here." He was contemplating whether it would be worse to remain here with Potter or return to Black he couldn't decide.

After a quick glance at his watch, Harry started speaking. "Look. I only have a couple of minutes. Yes, you are dead. You died in a freak accident, but I don't have time to explain it. I'm not dead. We found a book about the Veil kept in the Department of Mysteries, and I was able to cross through to find you. I need you to drink this potion and return with me."

He started at the phial of purple liquid Potter held out for him. Even though he was dead, he was not willing to blindly trust Potter. He was sure that this Hell could get worse, and he would be cautious not to be the one who made it worse. "That's preposterous."

Harry was exasperated. "I don't have time to dally and explain everything to you. We I need your help to defeat Voldemort. I won't let him win, but I can't do it alone. If you drink this potion and return with me, you will return to the living. It will be as if you hadn't died."

"Then why aren't you looking for your precious Sirius Black? Surely he's more valuable than I am," Snape snapped snidely.

For a moment, Harry became partially transparent. With great effort, he said, "You are the one who is important to what I have to do. Please. Drink this. I only have a minute before I have to leave, and I won't be able to return. This is your last chance."

Hearing the desperation in Potter's voice, he took the phial and stared at it more closely. "What is this?"

"You'd have to ask Hermione... after you come with me." He held out his hand, silently pleading to Snape.

Deciding that it couldn't get much worse than spending an eternity with Black, he downed the potion. Before the phial left his lips, Potter grabbed his hand and was pulling him along. He had no idea where they were going, only that Potter was in a hurry to get there.

As they ran, it got darker and he was assailed by voices, voices that he could almost understand.

"Ignore the voices," Harry chided. "Focus on the way out."

While he hated taking orders from anyone, especially Potter, he did as he was told. Obviously the young man knew more about this afterlife than he did. Suddenly it felt as though he were being poked with needles and his step faltered.

"Keep going!" urged Potter.

It was all he could do to keep going. The pain rivaled that of the Cruciatus Curse. When it subsided, he opened his eyes and looked around. They were in an auditorium, and on the stage with them was a dilapidated stone arch hung with tattered black curtains. "What? Where?" he asked as he looked around in confusion.

Hermione spoke from behind him. "You are in the Department of Mysteries. Harry went beyond the Veil to bring you back. You have returned to life."

Reaching up, he felt his pulse for confirmation and nearly collapsed at the enormity of the situation. He did fall to his knees when he realized that once again he was indebted to a Potter.

This time, he would ensure that it did not take fifteen years to repay the debt.