

The Deadliest Sin

by darsynia

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"Everyone else has given up on you, but I haven't." Lily Evans' greeting was as unconventional as her appearance at his place of residence.

Severus Snape sneered, wanting to shut the door on her but knowing that she was stupidly naïve enough to stand outside his apartment demanding to speak with him if he did so...and in his circle of influence, she was a wanted woman.

He gestured that she should move past him into the next room, regretting the choice he'd made two years before, the choice brought on by the stupid human desire to reach out to someone, to share one's thoughts. He and Lily had formed an uneasy friendship, mostly due to their times spent in the library. She'd been anxious and confused, falling for someone she wasn't sure she fully respected, and he'd been almost desperate to know that there was someone in the world who wanted his company for a reason other than his blood status or talent in magic.

She'd given in, in the end...and so had he; the newly branded section of his skin tingled as though aware of his uninvited guest.

"You shouldn't be here," he said shortly. Lily looked at him coolly, and he cursed the decision he'd made to be so open with her, to allow her enough knowledge to interpret his behavior as anything other than what he wished to present to the world.

She even knew him well enough not to argue.

"I'm going to marry James," she said bluntly, crossing her arms in the manner she always adopted when preparing for a fight. He wondered if that was why she had come...to persuade him that she had made the right decision to fall in love with James Potter, and in so doing, persuade herself. Severus had no intention of offering himself as a crutch to her rationalism, however.

"I hope you'll be very happy," he said without inflection, finally shutting the door to the apartment. He neither offered her a seat nor took one himself, instead standing in front of the door as though his position there would prevent any of his new colleagues from arriving to find him with a member of their opposition.

"I think you should come," Lily stated, the stiff tone of her voice warmed ever so slightly by the strength of emotion behind what she was saying. Severus ruthlessly suppressed any answering reaction he may have felt in response, instead allowing her to read on his face plainly what he thought of her suggestion.

"I think we both know how absurd an idea that is," he said, drawing on all of his hatred for her fiancé and his friends as a backdrop to his refusal. Lily didn't give up,

however. She hardly ever did.

"It might be nice to see some of the others..."

"You're having a *wedding*, not a 'Hogwarts Class of 1978' reunion party," he snapped. *Nice*, he scoffed inwardly. *With all that's happened since we've graduated, she can still refer to something as 'nice.'* Snape was almost jealous. His life since his graduation had felt like a runaway train of agonizing decisions that had finally culminated in his choice to side with the faction that understood power. Already, he was beginning to wonder if he'd misjudged *his* own understanding of power...but that was too late, now. He knew that both Lily and that prat James Potter had seen first-hand what the Dark Lord was capable of. How they'd managed to survive the experience, Severus didn't know...but both of them had been instantly marked as a threat, and worse, as possible sources of information.

Snape knew he had to get her out of his apartment, out of his life, out of his *thoughts*; she was a weakness that he would not, *could not* tolerate.

"Is it impossible to believe that I would want you there?" she demanded of him, stepping forward into his vast personal space...really, her mere ~~presence~~ presence in his apartment violated his personal space...as an implicit challenge. For the briefest of moments, Severus' eyes had pressed shut as he'd *willed* her to complete the sentence. He'd promised to rid himself of all weaknesses; hope was a deadly sin.

"Is it impossible for you to understand that I don't want you *here*?"

"I'm not leaving until I get an answer," Lily stated, moving another step closer to him, reminding him that he'd taught her what unnerved him but not what he liked; reminding him of what he found attractive and exasperating in a woman. Was it any woman, or just *her*? he wondered, trying to wither her with the force of his answering glare and hoping it would work.

"No." Snape wondered if she would be repelled by the idea that the force of emotion he was drawing on to speak with such intensity came from his desperate desire to say 'yes,' instead. Except, hers was the wrong question, and he was the wrong man.

"Well, it's an answer, at least," she noted, reaching up to adjust the clasp that held her hair at bay. He watched, captivated, as one crimson tendril caressed the line of her neck. "The wrong answer, though," she told him with a shake of her head that caused the hair clip to loosen, and a few more locks to escape.

"It's the only answer I have," he lied. Severus looked away for a short moment, needing to wipe the image of her delicate hand at her neck from his memory...but when he turned back to her, she'd moved closer again, close enough that he could smell her hair. "You need to leave," he said, telling her the truth for the first time that day. "You've gotten what you came for...an answer."

"Is that what I came for?" Lily tipped her head to the side, the jasmine scent of her perfume a tantalizing reminder of their discussions in the school library. She'd gotten much bolder since then, though whether it was from maturity or associating with Potter and his friends, he wasn't sure. Severus felt a terrible dread coupled with desperate anticipation...she hadn't left, but at any moment could come the stabbing pain in his arm, the call to Court, as it were. She wouldn't be able to mistake it...he *had* to get her to leave. *But how?*

"Lily..." To his horror, he heard the hint of yearning in his voice and knew that she couldn't fail to catch it. She took another tentative step forward, less confident than the ones before, but infinitely more dangerous. He shook his head at her, not wanting to speak but feeling the compulsion, the necessity. "It's not *safe*," he murmured. Snape looked down at the woman before him, her bright new ring shining from her hand, reflecting the life shining in her eyes...and knew that hope was the deadliest sin of all. He knew what he wanted, and what was worse, he thought she might, as well...but she belonged in the world of hope, and he belonged in the shadows where dark and dangerous men like himself destroyed themselves little by little, like rocks upon which the need for power washed across like the tide, eroding away everything but ambition.

"I haven't given up on you," Lily repeated, neither moving toward him nor stepping away, simply existing in the space before him. He could see it in her eyes...she was determined to redeem him, not realizing that she'd brought with her the news that made that impossible. *He had to get her out of there* He'd made his choice knowing that it would affect himself only, never expecting to see her again, and not quite understanding the extent of her influence on him until she'd appeared out of nowhere.

Severus Snape looked at Lily Evans and cursed himself for the knowledge that there existed one thing that could make him regret, one person for whom he would do anything...even drive her away from him forever, just to save her life.

"Then you're a fool," he snarled, his robes furling around him as he stepped forward to grasp her by her shoulders and thrust her against the door behind them. He looked directly into her eyes, their faces mere inches from each other, trying to channel all his anger, bitterness, and passion into something so frighteningly intense that she would run away without ever looking back. "I am *not* a nice man," Snape said fiercely, shaking her by her upper arms as one would shake a child who would not listen.

The rough gesture caused the silver clip that held back her hair to nearly come loose; the tangled red locks fell from it haphazardly in a way that framed her face with a disheveled look he was *sure* that James had seen many times. Her hands clutched at him, whether to push him away or pull him closer, he didn't know...all he knew was that the anger he'd so deliberately pulled to the surface was combining with a savage jealousy that was turning him into a madman.

Snape had simply intended to frighten her, but the haunting beauty of Lily's eyes and the intoxicating smell of her hair drove him over the edge. He gave a low growl as he pressed her against the wall, releasing her arms to thread a trembling hand through her hair as he bent his head and kissed her hungrily. The length of his body trapped her, the hand in her hair prevented all movement...but his most telling gesture was the gentle way that he caressed her face, even as his lips ravaged her with a mastery he didn't know he had. The silver dragon hair clasp fell to the floor with a clatter, but all he could hear was the rushing of the blood in his veins and the chanting in his head that told him to take what he could before it was too late.

Severus poured his very soul into the kiss, as though he never expected to need it again, and wanted to leave it safe in her keeping. Lily had just begun to actively return his fevered embrace when he abruptly forced himself away from her, walking across the room to place his shaking hands on the back of an armchair to steady himself. The touch of her soft hand at his neck and warm body pressed willingly to his had nearly been his undoing.

"*Get out*," he rasped, pulling on every single ounce of strength he had not to race back to where she stood and claim her for his own, and to hell with the consequences. Lily made the decision for him; he heard nothing more from her but the soft click of the door closing behind her.

Hours later, when he could finally bring himself to come close to the doorway without succumbing to his weak emotions, Severus found the silver filigree dragon that had slipped from Lily's hair. Unable to help himself, he lifted it to his nose, inhaling the bittersweet scent of jasmine.