

Your Last Chance

by arondight

November 17, 1980. A rogue Death Eater pens a letter to his 'colleague'. A tale of selfish pride. AU following DH.

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Chapter 1 of 2

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Disclaimer: Potterverse belongs to JKR. No money is being made.

A/N: I wrote this tale following the release (and my subsequent devouring) of HBP, which also coincides with my discovery of the fandom. If you recognize this tale, it was once archived at ff.net under my previous penname. It is now AU after the events of DH.

Thanks go out to the wonderful Sempra, who worked with me extensively to transform this fic into what it is now. I cannot thank you enough, Sempra, for your patience.

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by Arondight

I always did know. I don't know if you ever understood that. Not many Death Eaters possess a mind of their own. Take Bella, for example. She'd willingly give her life for the Dark Lord's amusement. Not you. Not me, either, for that matter. Yes, you've always had a mind of your own. You're just better at hiding it than I am.

I knew what you were fighting for, right from the start. Even back when I was his faithful servant, I could tell. You were a traitor, and I wondered how it was that he couldn't see it. How he, supposedly the most powerful Dark wizard of all time, couldn't see that your loyalties didn't lay with him, when *I* could.

Later on, I realized how foolish I'd been. He wasn't right; he hadn't ever been right. I'd been so wrapped up in this fool's game that I just couldn't see what should have been so clear. What you'd seen from nearly the beginning.

I wish I could have hidden it as well as you. Of course, I knew you'd had help; a world of help that I would never even see. I think I was fine with that, though. I guess I knew that you had been the intelligent one, the one that had never truly given in to the Dark Lord's ways. So I used all of my own personal resources to protect, not myself, but you.

I'd gotten myself in pretty far by that time. I wasn't in the Dark Lord's inner circle, but I was the right-hand man of Bellatrix Lestrange, who I'd known only too well. Bella was proud of the Dark Lord's trust in her, always flaunting some new bit of information he'd shared with her. That was how I learned about the Horcruxes.

I'd heard about Horcruxes, of course. You don't grow up in a household such as mine without learning a thing or two about advanced Dark magic. So when Bella let it slip about a locket located in a cave, I knew what I had to do.

It would have been easy to leak the information to you. For me to just mention it in passing, not even letting on that I knew you were a double agent. I knew you'd do the right thing, that whatever had caused you to become a spy in the beginning would ensure the destruction of the Dark Lord's Horcrux. But I couldn't do it. Not because of

some misguided thirst for glory – I already tasted glory and I choked on it.

I knew I had to destroy the locket, because you were too valuable. Never before had I met a spy as efficient as you were. The Dark Lord never even suspected you. He suspected a spy, yes, but never you.

So, I did it. I crossed the lake of the Living Dead, drank the poison, and took the locket. I never had your brilliance for antidotes, but I managed to cook up the remedy for the Dark Lord's seemingly perfect untraceable poison. Somehow, I've survived this mad obstacle course and have escaped with my prize. I have even left the Dark Lord a little love note; when he realizes the locket is missing, I'll be long dead.

That's what I'm writing to tell you. That, while the Dark Lord never suspected you, he's suspected me from nearly the beginning. I don't have much time left. I'm not sure if you'll ever find this here, but I can't risk giving it to you directly. If he ever discovers you, there's a good chance that the people that are fighting for what's right will lose.

But this *is* important. The Dark Lord will be calling me any minute, and I know it's going to be the last meeting I ever attend. I'll never get another chance to tell you this, so I pray that you find this in time.

I don't have time to destroy the locket. Even if I did, I wouldn't know how. The most I can do for the moment is hide it. Somewhere no one would ever think to look. There's a house. All you have to do is seek out my brother. Explain what I've told you. He's a good man; he'll want to help.

It's your last chance.

Falling Back Into The Shadows

Chapter 2 of 2

November 17, 1980. A rogue Death Eater pens a letter to his 'colleague'. A tale of selfish pride. AU following DH.
Chapter Two: Falling Back Into The Shadows: The Reaction.

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A/N:Just a reminder, this fic is now AU after the events of DH.

Thanks go again to the Sempra for the wonderful beta job.

Chapter Two – Falling Back Into the Shadows

I don't know what made me go back there. I hadn't been there in years, hadn't even laid eyes on the place. I really try to stay away from places that hold that much power over me. Whatever damage that was inflicted upon me by Potter and his gang of idiots, it was nothing compared to the horrors I suffered at the hands of my father.

Which is why, as I stood looking up at the old, dilapidated house, I felt a tremor of terror ripple through my soul, or at least, what was left of it. It was irrational, I knew. The house on Spinner's End had stood uninhabited for over a decade.

I guess I went back to prove to myself I was no longer the person that I had been when I resided there. Back then, I was so thirsty for knowledge, the dark, forbidden fruit that seemed so unattainable, that I would stop at nothing to get it. The Dark Lord held the power to give me that knowledge - illegal potion ingredients that I had only read of in books; new, exciting Dark spells that I couldn't wait to experiment with.

Somewhere in all of that dark magic, the illegal potions, I somehow brewed myself a conscience. Suddenly I found myself questioning the Dark Lord's every word. Of course, I was smart enough to conceal the fact that I was now thinking independently. If there's one thing that the Dark Lord hates more than Mudbloods and blood traitors, it's a Death Eater with a brain. He wants us intelligent, certainly, but he doesn't want us to think too much. It's purely a survival technique, one that even now I can respect.

As I walked through the front door of my miserable childhood home, I surveyed my surroundings. The halls were as dark and gloomy as I remembered them. The tiny closet that had served as my bedroom stood off of the main hall, and, as I approached it, I was dismayed to find a note tacked to the door.

I read the contents quickly, noting the date printed on the aged parchment. November 17, 1980. I was astounded, not only because of the fact that this letter had lain here for two years, but rather because of the identity of the letter's author.

Regulus Black. I'd come across him numerous times during my tenure under the Dark Lord and hadn't given him more than just a passing thought. He wasn't important enough to the organization to be of any real use; he was merely Bellatrix's minion.

I remembered the boy from our school days and had been keen to avoid him. Anyone with even so much as a connotative association with the self-proclaimed Marauders, and I admit that I kept as wide a berth as I could. Regulus Black was very clearly the brother of Sirius Black. The boy was cut from a mould nearly identical to that of his idiot sibling, sharing the same grey eyes, short, dark, *non-greasy* hair, and sickening good looks that his brother had taunted me with not long enough ago. I was damned if I was going to spare so much as a kind glance for that family. Imagine my surprise when, after reading that letter, I realized the extent to which the stupid younger man had gone in order to circumvent the Dark Lord's plans.

Horcruxes. I should have guessed. The Dark Lord was always boasting about his quest for immortality: "*I am keeping mortality at bay relatively nicely, wouldn't you say, my dear Severus?*" The bitter cackle had chilled my very soul. It had been growing harder and harder to hide my disgust with the whole lot of them at that point.

"*My Lord*," the irritatingly high, excited voice of Bellatrix Lestrange had rung out unannounced. "*Have you located the Philosopher's Stone?*"

The Dark Lord had laughed his cold chuckle again. "*It's so much better than that, dear Bella. Your stupidity amuses me, I thank you.*"

So, Regulus Black had stolen the Dark Lord's life insurance policy. Somehow, I doubted that my dear master had uncovered this fact. The simple execution that had been Black's fate would have been much showier for the thief if he had been discovered. The theft of the Horcrux would have infuriated the Dark Lord, but he had always respected courage and wit. He would have honoured the Black boy accordingly.

There's a house. All you have to do is seek out my brother.

Seek out his brother? I sneered at the decaying parchment in my hands. I wouldn't seek out Sirius Black if we were the only two people on earth, and I was on fire. Regulus

undoubtedly remembered the relationship I shared with his moronic brother in our school days? Surely the boy couldn't have been foolish enough to believe that I would, under any circumstances, willingly walk back into that?

Or perhaps, I appear more stupid than what I really am. Yes, let's walk up to the man that tormented me from the age of eleven and embrace him like a brother! Surely he'll tell me all about the Horcrux! Undoubtedly he will have come to see the error of his ways and fall before me on bended knee!

What rubbish.

Explain what I've told you. He's a good man; he'll want to help.

Of course Sirius Black would want to destroy the Dark Lord. He was a lowly, selfish Gryffindor, always seeking glory. Yes, by all means, allow the dirty, greasy Slytherin to do the hard work. There's certainly nothing wrong with swooping in after the fact to claim the fame.

It's not as though *I've* ever wanted the bloody fame. I've never wanted the *praise*, could never stand a kind word. I've never wanted someone to *be proud* of me. By all means, allow *me* to fall back into the shadows.

Yes, Sirius Black would love to help. And I would *sonot* love to let him.

Regulus Black was a fool. Let someone else finish his hero's quest.

I crumpled the parchment under my fingers. "Thanks anyway, Regulus."

Sorry. I'm not anyone's hero.