

Lily's Son

by h_vic

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Severus busied himself with pouring the tea, so that Lily would not see the uncharacteristic smile on his face. It was a defence mechanism that he abhorred in himself. He was disgusted that it had become so instinctive that he even applied it in front of Lily. She was the one person who had ever accepted him, who had not taken him at face value and had dared to delve deeper and find something in him worth befriending.

He had begun to wonder whether their friendship mattered to her anymore though. He had accepted that she had married Potter what other choice did he have? but that didn't change the fact that her friendship was important to him... or that he loved her. He knew it could never be something she would reciprocate, but he had thought he would always at least have her friendship. Recently though, he had begun to think that perhaps her husband had finally succeeded in poisoning her against him it had been so long since she had come to see him. But she was here now, and that she was here because Potter was away he could tolerate.

Resisting the impulse to suppress the smile that seeing her provoked and to conceal his emotions, as he seemed to do so frequently these days, he turned to hand her the tea. As he did so, there was a tap at the window and he looked up to see an unfamiliar barn owl perched on the sill. Severus glanced across at Lily, wondering if the owl was for her very few people, other than the one standing there in front of him, would bother to write to him, and any others who might he would not wish to hear from in her presence.

"That's Sirius' owl," Lily said, staring at the bird in confusion.

Severus felt his face tighten into a scowl he didn't want that arrogant git's owl in his kitchen, but he opened the window anyway (against his better judgement) and the owl flew in to land beside Lily. As she read the short roll of parchment, Lily grew increasingly pale and the parchment began to shake in her hand. Severus stepped towards her in concern as she slumped forwards, catching herself on the kitchen table for support, her breathing ragged. Their sudden movements startled the owl, and as Severus

reached Lily, the owl fluttered quickly away.

"Lily? What's..."

"Mary's dead!" Her voice was harsh and foreign to his ears and the words spun in his brain. He was shocked at the death of her friend, but there was something more. Something horrific lurked on the fringes of his mind, but he couldn't seem to seize it. It seemed to beg for his attention as if it were of vital importance, but then it slithered away from him, leaving him only with a vague thrill of horror and an inexplicable burning shame.

Lily turned her face up to him, eyes swimming with tears. "Can I can I stay here until Sirius finds James?" she asked softly. "It might take a while."

"Of course," Severus said quietly, wishing he could hold her and ease her grief, wishing that it was his place to do that, his momentary unease forgotten. He reached out a hand towards her, but then drew it back abruptly, the connection unmade, too afraid to lay himself open like that.

"Severus," Lily said suddenly, her voice soft and forlorn. "Would you please hold me?"

Severus nodded, surprised that she had sought the very thing that he had longed to offer, and placed an awkward arm around her shoulders, wondering what comfort or security his bony frame could offer her. She seemed to curl herself tightly against his chest. He could feel burning tears soaking his robes as she sobbed against him. He just wished there were some way he could make it hurt less for her and that his traitorous heart would not give him away by beating so erratically from the feel of her in his arms. She did feel right in his arms, even if he knew now was not the moment to acknowledge that. He could feel her hot breath on his neck, and then suddenly on his face, followed by the light brush of her lips on his.

For the first and only time in his life, Severus Snape did not think, did not question, did not scheme; he merely lived and felt and even, God forbid, followed his heart. He kissed her back with more urgency and she responded in kind.

His hands tangled in soft, red hair, as he felt the heat of her breath on his face and then the shock of cool air on his pale, exposed skin. Delicate fingers traced intricate patterns across his back, almost as if she sought to leave him some secret message, and Severus felt as if he were drowning in his passion, his urgency, a primal need for comfort, release, just to feel alive, as her body entwined with his.

Later, there was the bitter sting of hot tears again, this time on his bare chest, where she rested her head as they lay there afterwards.

"I'm sorry, Severus, I'm so sorry. This shouldn't have happened. I'm married to James love James. I'm sorry, I knew how you felt and I shouldn't have let this happen. I just I needed comfort and you were here..."

For once, Severus Snape had followed his heart, and it had betrayed him... she had betrayed him! He pulled roughly away and stood, reaching for his clothes and then drawing them on, without looking at her.

"In that case, perhaps you should leave, Mrs Potter!" he snarled coldly, feeling her rejection turn his heart to ice. When he heard no movement, he turned back to face her. She just sat there staring at him, hurt evident in her green eyes. He would not acknowledge her pain she had hurt him and he wanted to hurt her more now. "Did I forget something, since you aren't leaving?" he asked, his tone dripping with scorn.

"Perhaps I should pay you, like the whore you are?" He poured all his hurt and anger into those venomous words. He was gratified to see her shrink from them. He reached into his pocket and drew out a couple of Galleons, which he cast onto her lap as he swept past the bed on his way to the door. But the coins slid from the sheets unheeded, as inscrutable eyes watched him leave.

Severus paused in the doorway and turned back briefly, gratified to see a spark of hope flair in Lily's eyes as he did so. "I suggest you get dressed and go home to your husband," he said with icy contempt, but he found no satisfaction, much to his disgust, in seeing the hope die in her eyes.

Sadness washed over him as he left the room he had just lost his only friend. Even if he could forgive her, he knew she could not forgive him. He was not sure if he could even forgive himself. Lily did not forgive easily once the hurt had worn off and the anger set in. He had lost her friendship once before with spiteful, unintended words.

He silently cursed his stupidity as he stared out of the window at the curling red leaves on a nearby tree leaves that seemed to mock him with their resemblance to the fiery curls which had so recently spilt across his skin. What had he expected? That she would leave her husband, her life, on the back of one meaningless encounter with him? Yes, he acknowledged in the deepest recesses of his mind, that was exactly what he had let himself believe hopeless, gullible fool that he was because it hadn't been meaningless... not to him.

No, he couldn't forgive her, not just yet, not for this.

He heard the soft sound of her footsteps as she left the bedroom, but he didn't turn around. Nor did he turn as she came up behind him or as he saw from the corner of his eye graceful fingers reach towards his arm and then falter and fall away. He didn't look around, even as a trembling voice spoke his name, nor as he replied with the only words he could find, "Just go!"

Severus Snape sat up with a start in his empty bed, those hateful words echoing through his mind and his body still pounding with the heat of unspent passion.

"... hold me..."

"I'm sorry..."

"... like the whore you are..."

"Just go!"

Only those words were not the truth no, as the thrall of the moment left him, the truth found him alone in the darkness... Lily was dead and there had never been a night like that. It seemed that his guilt would not even allow him to enjoy his memories of her in his dreams; his dreams had forced him to betray or reject her in every way imaginable in the years since her death. Always, there was the briefest taste of happiness, of a connection with her that had never been his, and then the tearing grief of betrayal an exquisite torture of his own making.

Not that the truth offered him any less guilt than the dreams. Real words, spoken in anger rang through his mind, tasting as bitter as those so recently imagined had, and the image of green eyes filled with anger burnt in his memory.

"... Mudblood..."

"I'm sorry!"

"Why should I be any different?"

She had been the only one to ever care... his friend... and he had been too weak too weak, too stupid and too concerned about his own fragile pride. In many ways, it had been Lily who had turned him onto the desolate road that he now walked, when she had turned away from him and disappeared back into the Gryffindor common room after their last argument. Losing her friendship, he lost the one thing that had tethered the part of him worth preserving. Without her to believe in him, he had drifted down the dark path that he had always struggled to resist and found himself deep within the ranks of the Death Eaters. The power had been seductive and the lure of those forbidden arts had been strong, but ultimately it was a petulant, cynical need to go against everything that she was and had made him that had led him to surrender his soul.

He had loved her; he loved her still, but he knew he had no right to. She had never been his to love; she would never have given herself up to him as her dream-self had and yet, amongst the guilt and the pain, desire still burnt through him. He had loved her and he had *wanted* her and this was the only way he would ever have her, in traitorous dreams which could not give him the happy ending he so craved, because he knew he didn't deserve it... didn't deserve her. When he dreamt of her, he would hurt her with words, as he just had, or he would kill Mary MacDonald time and again the first life he had ever taken and Lily's friend only she would bear Lily's face, familiar green eyes imploring him, begging him not to raise his wand. Yet, inexorably he would utter the fateful incantation and then he would watch the life fade from her eyes before waking in an icy sweat.

He bore her blood on his hands, he knew. The stain was as indelible as if he himself had spoken the curse. It had been an unwitting betrayal, but it had been a betrayal nonetheless and it did not matter that he had not meant for her to die, because he had known that someone like her would. In truth, he had taken the lives of others like her and, in his broken soul, the recollection of every one of those deaths had become her death. He had killed her many times over, and today he would see her eyes again.

He knew that was why he was awake and lost in these dark thoughts, because today her son would come to Hogwarts. He knew that what he had done was unconscionable; he did not need a green-eyed child to remind him of it every day. He knew the sight of the child would take his guilt from difficult to unbearable; he knew every day would be a torture like he had never felt, not even in the hollow days following her death. In the child, he would see her; and worse, he would not see himself. He would be forced to face the truth that she had chosen Potter, and not him.

Severus got up with an angry sigh; there would be no more sleep for him that night guilt, grief, anger, bitterness and unquenchable desire all gnawed too deeply at him for that. He would have to find some mindless task to distract him and while away the bleak hours until dawn drove his shadows back to the dark spaces in which they belonged.

Well, the boy was undeniably Potter's son and that was the end of the matter as far as Severus Snape was concerned, or so he told himself.

His eyes followed the small boy who stood amongst the other anxious-looking first years. He resembled his father far too closely for there to be any doubt; but, the child's eyes, they were Lily's. And yet, if he were honest, there never had been any real doubt, but somehow, in those long hours until dawn had brought its quiet respite, reality and hope had blurred for Severus. He had almost expected to see himself reflected in the child.

Severus was not sure what he felt in light of this revelation, when it would never have occurred to anyone else to even question the boy's parentage when it should not have occurred to him. The turmoil irked him. It had never sat well with him not to have control of himself.

Regret? No, that would stray too close to the line. It was better this way for all concerned, and anyway, how could he feel a sense of loss for what he had never had?

Guilt? Oh yes, there was *always* guilt, but to see those eyes, so similar to hers, it just brought everything back, ripping open the old wounds. Wounds that had never closed, like a poisoned bite that would never heal.

Severus took a deep breath and dragged his eyes up from the neutral view of the table in front of him where they had taken refuge. He would not show weakness. He would not allow anyone to see the way his memories tore at him. He realised, as he returned his attention briefly to what was occurring in front of him and the first child became a Hufflepuff, that he had missed the Sorting Hat's song whilst caught in his reverie, but he doubted that it had differed much from its well-worn routine.

Back once again in the present, Severus clapped politely, as was expected of him, as 'Bulstrode, Millicent' became his first new Slytherin of the year. *What if Lily's son were to end up in his House? What would he do then?* he wondered.

Caught in his bitter flood of guilt, Severus' mind strayed to places that he normally kept locked tightly. He could almost bear the thoughts of Lily, of how he had hurt her and lost her, but not of how he had betrayed and killed her. When he had heard that twice-damned prophecy, he had thought nothing of passing it to the Dark Lord; he had thought nothing of the innocent lives he condemned...until a conversation with Lucius Malfoy, as clear in his mind as his last with Lily, turned his world upside-down.

"Severus, we have cause for celebration. It seems our Master may finally be able to act upon the prophecy that you so obliging delivered to him," Lucius Malfoy drawled.

"Really?" Severus replied with little genuine enthusiasm. He had little enthusiasm for much of anything these days. Any joy he could have found in life had fled from him when Lily had walked away. The dark arts enthralled him still, but it was a shallow, listless passion. They could never bring him any true fulfilment and his life was empty hollow and lifeless.

"Yes, he's discovered the identity of a likely child, born at the prophesied time and now he will be able to kill the boy and the parents at his leisure." A malevolent smile of anticipation graced Lucius' aristocratic features.

"Most convenient, of course. Who are the unfortunate parents?" asked Severus, not because he really cared anymore, but because he knew he was expected to ask and gloat accordingly.

Lucius' face contorted into a satisfied sneer. "That meddling fool, Potter, and his Mudblood wife. They have been a thorn in our Master's side for too long. Now their deaths will kill two birds with one stone."

Severus felt the blood freeze in his veins as Lucius laughed coldly... Lily? His Lily? Strangely, that awful word which had taunted him for so long seemed lost and meaningless now amongst the hideous import of Lucius' other words.

Lucius gave him an odd look and Severus realised the turmoil he felt must have briefly shown on his face, so he rapidly schooled his expression to the requisite disdainful joy.

"I can't think of a more deserving couple!" He forced the words out through his teeth. Lily had a child? Lily's child was the child of the prophecy? Horror unlike anything he had ever known before ripped through Severus. It took all the self-control he possessed not to collapse brokenly to his knees. As it was, he showed no outer sign of the chaos that reigned in his mind. Had he truly condemned both the only woman he had ever truly loved and her son to death?

Severus relived ten years of guilt and recrimination that stemmed from that conversation, as Lucius' son inevitably followed his father into Severus' House and the moment Severus both anticipated and dreaded grew nearer.

He had tried to warn Lily of the danger she was in, but she would not see him; she would accept nothing from him. So, Severus had gone to the only person he could, the only person who could help him Albus Dumbledore. Severus had told him everything, well almost he said nothing of how he had lost her, how he had driven her away, of those shameful words that he would always carry with him. He said only that Lily had been his friend and she had turned away from him as he fell into the Dark Lord's service, but he was honest as to how he felt.

Dumbledore had known the rest though, Severus was sure. Like the Dark Lord, Dumbledore could read people, although his methods differed. Dumbledore did not invade another's mind (or at least seek to Severus was far too accomplished an Occlumens to allow it to occur) as the Dark Lord did, although he had the power to. No, Dumbledore's methods were far more subtle and far more pervasive. Dumbledore read faces and voices, not thoughts, and there was no way Severus knew to counter what was simply a study of human nature.

Dumbledore had accepted what Severus told him at face value; he believed in letting people at least retain a delusion of having kept their secrets. He had merely assured Severus that he would do everything in his power to ensure the Potters' safety and contented himself with making clear his disdain for a Death Eater turncoat.

Everything within Dumbledore's power had not ultimately been enough though and Severus was left with Lily's blood on his hands, figuratively at least, a ruined heart, and a fear he hated to admit to about seeing her son.

Dumbledore had never offered to tell him where the child was taken after his parents' deaths. Severus had never asked, convincing himself it was better that he stayed away: better for the child (what could he possibly offer the child, after all?), better for Lily's memory not to be more associated with him than she must and perhaps most of all, being a Slytherin, better for himself.

But now, Severus felt strangely hollow as the boy who would never be his son was sorted into his true father's House.