

A Deft Hand At Charms

by Jenwryn

Lily/Severus. Set just a few days before the Fidelius Charm is betrayed and Harry becomes The Boy That Lived. In this story Lily Potter is breaking all the rules in an attempt to save the ones she loves. Characters in canon (I hope), but the plot isn't!

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Chapter 1 of 1

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(25th October 1981)

"Lily, please—"

She pushed him away with her free hand. "No, Severus. It's over. It – it never even began. There's nothing to be over." Her voice, talking words that even she didn't believe, broke through the space between them. Oh, how she hated that pleading look on his face. It clawed at her heart, and worse, it made her suspect with an oily guilt that she was to blame for what he had become. She had never treated him like she should. She'd been so young and so stupid.

"But these last years – those nights—"

Lily's eyes shut despite themselves. She could still feel the touch of his hands on her body, she could still smell the salty scent of his skin and the love that they'd shared, she could still taste his mouth warm on hers, and it made her blood pulse treacherously in her veins. It had never felt like that with anyone else. Severus had worshipped her rather than held her. The memories—

She forced her green eyes open and observed him coolly. "Were foolish mistakes, nothing more. You're a Death Eater, Severus. I can see it in your face, and I don't care if Dumbledore has given you work. You know I knew the moment you'd joined them, back when we were at Hogwarts. You're a Death Eater... and I'm married."

She shouldn't even be here. She *couldn't* be here, talking to him. If he followed her home, if she led him to their house, the Fidelius Charm would be worthless, and You-Know-Who would be able to wander in with the ease of an old family friend come for a cup of tea. Oh, being here with him was more stupid than anything else she could have dreamt up. But then, what did the Fidelius Charm matter when she stood in front of him with her baby bundled in her arms? It was her son that Voldemort wanted, and they both knew it. All Severus had to do was reach out and take him, and what could she do to prevent it?

But he wouldn't. Because he loved her. He always had.

And Lily had always taken it for granted.

He stretched a pale hand towards her in supplication. "Come away with me, Lily. I know the Dark Lord's ways; I can keep you safe."

She gathered her strength and used every ounce of the Occlumency he had taught her to keep him from her mind, to keep him from her heart. "No, Severus. I only came to tell you that it's over, to prove that there's nothing between us. And that my child isn't yours." She knew he believed Harry was his son. Severus wasn't stupid. He knew full well that just over two years ago, when Harry had been conceived, James had spent more time off fighting Voldemort than he'd spent lying in her bed. Severus knew because he'd been there instead. Oh, Merlin, the memories of him made her body ache to betray her—

Lily could see on his face that he read the lies in her eyes. But she had to make him believe her. She had to make him hate her. She knew his love for her put them all at risk. She had to end it before Voldemort could use it against him; before Severus got himself killed. So she let out a small, bitter cry between her teeth and jerked back the blankets that had hid her sleeping son's face. "Look at him, Severus! He's the spitting image of James. Whose son do you think he is?"

Severus stepped back with a jolt, as though she'd breathed fire at him, and stared at the fifteen-month-old baby. Lily could see the confidence crumbling on his face, knew that if she could just push him a fraction further he'd stop probing her mind for her secrets and they'd all be saved.

He'd been so sure, but now—

To her dismay, she could see him summoning up courage. He stepped towards her again. "Lily, I love you... you love me. I don't care whose child it is, I'll care for it anyway, I promise you, if you'll just come away with me. Please..."

What was one more lie? Her voice was harsh. "I never loved you."

The expression of pure agony on his face as he Apparated away would stay scarred upon her soul forever. She stood and stared at the place where he'd been and reached her own hand out with longing, tears brimming amongst her lashes. Then she tucked Harry's blanket back around him snugly and Apparated away herself, back to Godric's Hollow. And she returned, a heartbeat later, to the invisible, lonely security of their home.

Nobody but Severus would ever know that she'd risked so much to show her child to him.

Nobody but Severus would know that she'd been in a Death Eater's bed twenty-four months ago.

Lily Potter had pride. She'd married James, and she loved him after a fashion, and she didn't want him to know of her infidelity. Furthermore, Lily Potter had honour. She couldn't be with a Death Eater, even if the knowledge made her sting inside. And ultimately, Lily Potter was more like her sister than anyone would have dreamt: she would do anything to keep safe the ones she loved.

But unlike her sister, Lily was also deft hand at charms.

Nobody would ever know just *how* gifted she really was. She wiped the tears from her face with the corner of Harry's blanket and then studied her son, heavy in the crook of her arm.

Nobody would ever know that she'd altered his appearance irreversibly while he was still in the warmth of her womb.

Nobody would ever know whose son he really was. Nobody.

Her secret would die with her.