

The Lily's Tale

by SS Lupin

It is sunny in the playground. It's Lily's turn. Deathly Hallows Compliant. One-shot.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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1.

It is sunny in the playground.

Lily has to squint as she ambles through it, eyes turned toward the ground. She expects cracks in the sun-bleached tar, but it was even and well paved.

This can't be her playground. The monkey bars are painted with bold blues and yellows and reds, not like the rusted metal and splintered wood structures she climbed when she was a child.

The trees, too, are larger and greener, and Lily wants to climb them and see what the world looks like from the branches.

But Lily feels a quiver in her stomach, so she settles on the swings instead.

She chooses the one on the far end, away from the trees, and kicks off. It takes a few awkward swings until she gets her rhythm, and once she does, she yells out into the playground. Higher and faster she goes, and her fingers tighten around the metal chains, her heart pounding, her legs poised to fly

"Lily?"

She hangs limp as the swing slows to a halt.

"James?" she calls out.

"Lily!" His voice sounds farther away.

"I'm here! In the playground!"

Only now does she realize that she should not be here at all, that she was in her son's room, protecting him from a snake man in black robes.

"I don't see a playground. I'm at King's Cross," James says, and Lily's frustration rises.

"Men," she mutters and pictures her husband through closed eyes.

When she opens them, James is in front of her, and so is King's Cross. They are the only people in the station, but Lily isn't worried about that as much as ~~she~~ *they should not be here*.

James hugs her. "I thought I lost you."

Lily wraps her arms around him, hands splayed against the warm skin of his back.

She gasps from shock.

"James, we're naked."

They pull away from each other and laugh. She notices that James' skin is smooth and pale, the way it was before a skirmish left him with three curse scars on his chest and neck.

Lily looks down at herself and sees her breasts and hips are the way they were before Harry was born.

Harry.

"Our boy," Lily says, afraid. "Is he still here? With you?"

James looks down. "I thought he'd be with you."

They call for him throughout the station at every platform (except for Nine and Three Quarters, they can't pass through), at the magazine stand, in the loos.

Lily collapses onto one of the turnstiles, her voice so hoarse from screaming that she can't manage more than whispering Harry's name.

A shaky palm rests on her shoulder.

"He must still be safe."

"But our baby"

"Will fulfill the prophecy."

She looks up at James through tangled red hair. "And what do we do?"

He pulls Lily to him.

"We wait."

2.

When they close their eyes and think of home, Lily finds herself in a cottage on a cliff that overlooks the sea. She loves the way the salty sea breeze caresses her face and tousles her hair.

But she can't find James, not in the house or on the beach, so she thinks of him and finds him in the Potter estate. "Potter Palace" was what Lily used to call it when they first dated, but she stopped saying it after his parents died and the Death Eaters burned it to the ground.

He is flying in the courtyard, almost a speck in the sky as he loops and dips through the clouds.

"Lily!" The speck becomes her husband, hovering in front of her with a grin on his face. "Look! It's all back!"

"I can see that." Lily smiles, reflecting his joy.

"Want to play pick up with me? I'm sure there's a Quaffle somewhere around here."

She thinks of the old days when James would knock on the window of the girl's dormitory, mounted on his broomstick and waiting for her to join him on a midnight ride through the grounds. She steadfastly refused him for a time, but she soon broke down and would relish the air tickling her bare feet as they flew, James' back warm against the front of her nightgown, her arms clutching his chest.

She thinks of this and shakes her head.

"No, I'd rather be on the ground for now."

James frowns. "Alright then. If you need me, just call."

"I will," Lily says.

"Where were you?"

"Hmm?"

"Before. I was in the manor for almost an hour and I couldn't find you."

Lily half smiles. "Nowhere important."

3.

Lily finds the first child in the fields outside the manor.

She can't be more than three years old that would be Harry's age now and she is sitting on the ground, pulling out the grass and throwing it around her like it is confetti.

Lily sits across from the girl and pulls the grass, too, showering it over her and bringing her to giggle. Lily laughs with her and, after a moment of hesitation, scoops the naked bundle into her arms when the child looks about ready for a nap.

James looks doubtfully at Lily when she settles the girl she calls her Sprout into the room next to theirs.

"Are you sure it's safe?" he says, peering into the crib.

Lily dresses the girl into a striped romper and brushes her curly blonde hair back with her hand. "I'm sure it's fine. It's a baby, for Merlin's sake!"

James pushes up his glasses. "This isn't about substituting Harry, right?"

Lily isn't sure, but she says no anyway. "She was alone out there. I just"

James sighs. "There is plenty of room in here," he says, resting his chin on Lily's shoulder.

"Thank you." She leans back into James and wonders if Harry still looks like his father.

Lily is serving the children lunch in the servant's kitchen when a large black dog bounds in through an open window, skidding on the floor and coming to a stop at her feet.

"You always knew how to make an entrance, Padfoot." Lily sets the baby in her arms down and bends to scratch him behind his ears.

Most of the children join her, the ones that can walk and crawl, jumping on Padfoot and petting him until the dog is on his back, tongue lolling out of his mouth with his paws in the air.

"James!" Lily calls out. "We have a visitor!"

Padfoot joins her with several loud barks, and soon James is in the kitchen, his glasses askew.

"Padfoot?"

The dog barks in reply, and where there was a dog now stands a man grasping both Lily and James into a hug.

Several hours later, when the children are asleep and the sitting room is alight with candles, Sirius tells his story, and James and Lily tell theirs.

"So Harry is okay?" Lily asks excitedly.

"He's wonderful. Looks just like James, has your eyes is a bit too short for his age, but those Dursleys"

"What did Vernon do to him?" Lily's hands tighten into fists.

"From what Harry told me, that sister of yours was as bad not that they beat him, mind." Sirius pauses. "They didn't love him."

Lily turns away. Her heart hurts and her cheeks feel wet.

Warm arms surround her, and she presses her face into James' chest.

"It's not all bad, Lily. Harry's got good friends the Weasleys look after him like he's got ginger hair and freckles. And he talks to Hagrid often used to write to me all the time" Sirius breaks off again, staring off into the distance.

"I was going to take care of him. After the war was over. Finish fixing up Grimmauld Place into a proper home, help him find his place in the world, see him get married..."

Lily looks up at Sirius and remembers the way she and James set up the nursery in Godric's Hollow, imagining Harry growing up to fulfill less complicated roles than a prophecy. Playing Quidditch. Finding a nice girl. Watching his children be born and raised.

"They always told me Mum and Dad were watching over me, after they died," Lily said. "Maybe it'll be true, some day."

They sit together in silence for a long time.

4.

They fight again as Dumbledore leaves the manor, his purple robes curling around and out the door.

"No. I will not have that madman in this house ever again!" Lily spits out.

"He is only trying to help," James says.

"Help who? Certainly not Harry. The boy was supposed to destroy Voldemort"

"Don't say it!"

"It's his name, and I'll bloody well say it if I want to." Lily takes in a breath, gets her train of thought back. "How is he supposed to go off by himself to hunt those Horcrux things?"

"If that's what it requires..."

"Dumbledore should know better than to send Harry to do it. He's sixteen! How is he going to finish his schooling?"

"He'll have time for it after everything's over," James says. "Besides, it must be awful for him, sitting in Little Whinging not being able to do anything"

"So that's what it is. You think it's going to be an adventure a grand old time, dodging hexes and fighting evil. Just like the good old days, right?" she says, her voice trembling.

James shakes his head. "Of course not. I'm worried about him, too."

"Sure you are. During all those Quidditch matches with Sirius, you must be very concerned about the welfare of our boy."

James' face reddens, but his voice remains calm. "We can't do anything for him. Not anymore. All we can do is wait."

Lily knows this, remembers this, but she can't stop thinking about her boy, facing Voldemort alone.

And about her husband who doesn't seem to care.

"I believe," she says, keeping her gaze on the mantelpiece behind James' ear. "That I should go."

James looks ready to argue this, but he sighs and nods, looking up at her from under his messy fringe for a long moment before leaving the room.

Lily sags against the wall. There is nothing she needs here, she thinks, and the children should find her. They always do.

She whispers "away" and she is gone.

5.

The cottage looks the same way it did when she first saw it. After a thorough exploration of it, she finds two bedrooms, one of them bigger than the old house in Godric's Hollow, a modest bathroom, a kitchen and dining room, and living room.

She moves in immediately and takes the smaller bedroom for herself, the children joining her in time.

One morning, she wakes to an empty house. Concerned but not worried, Lily dresses and finds Sprout at the dining room table, wild curls dangling past her shoulders as she carefully pours milk into her bowl.

"Where are they?" Lily asks her.

"The playground," she says matter-of-factly.

Lily joins her at the table where another bowl faces her. "Why didn't you go with them?"

"Playgrounds are for little kids," Sprout says with all the authority her high-pitched voice can muster.

"Yes, I suppose you're right." Lily finishes her porridge and stands. "I think I'll go visit them. Will you join me?"

"I guess so," the girl says. But her smile with growing teeth betrays her indifference.

They walk to the playground, taking their time on the way. Sprout plucks dandelions from the grass and passes them to Lily. She magicks them into wreaths and necklaces for them to wear.

The playground appears without warning, and Sprout leaves her for the swings.

Lily follows her until she sees a crowd of children by the seesaw.

"What's all this?"

Foreboding comes over her, and she sinks to her knees, her vision swimming. She closes her eyes and sees herself waving goodbye to a beautiful young man with messy black hair.

The vision leaves her, and she's breathing hard and gripping her thighs. The children are gone now, revealing a figure on the ground swaddled in black robes.

Lily's stomach clenches as she turns the body over.

The lank black hair, sallow skin, and beaked nose are familiar, but nothing seems right until his eyelids flutter open, revealing dark pupils and even darker irises.

"Hello, Severus," she says, lifting a hand to his forehead.

6.

"Hungry?" Lily asks.

"You eat here?"

"Mostly out of habit," she admits, setting a plate of sandwiches on the table. "Do you want one?"

Severus shrugs and takes one. Lily sends the plate outside the house where the children are playing. They watch them run to the food, laughing all the while.

"Who are they?"

He was always full of questions, Lily thinks.

"Children," she answers.

"I can see that," he snarls. "But where do they come from?"

"The same place we come from, I suppose." Lily turns away from the window and leans against the counter.

"So why do you take care of them?" Severus presses on.

Lily smiles. "Because... I want to," she says.

Severus visits again a few days later while the children are building sandcastles on the beach and Sprout finishes burying her in the sand. He is wearing his usual scowl and black robes, and Lily can't help but tease.

"It wouldn't hurt to wear other colors, you know."

Severus' lip curls downward, but after a moment, he is wearing black shorts and a long sleeved white shirt.

Lily pats a patch of sand next to her with her free hand. "Where have you been?"

Severus sits. "Exploring."

"I see."

His head turns sharply toward her. "And you have no other burning questions?"

"I'm afraid to hear the answer."

"If when Harry comes, I'm sure you'd be the first person he'd find."

She lets out a breath. "You mean, it's over?"

He nods. "I spoke with Albus. It seems that it is over."

Lily pulls her arms out of the sand and hugs him. "Thank you," she chokes out.

"I didn't destroy the Dark Lord."

"You saved my boy." She lets go and remembers her vision. "And helped him become a man."

7.

Lily finds herself looking forward to Severus' visits more and more.

They show no pattern. Severus may stop by for lunch at the cottage or kick sand away from him as he sits beside her at the beach. Lily does notice, however, that he never comes to the playground, and he never visits at night.

Lily admonishes herself for that last thought as she helps one of the boys jump with the waves. Severus and she were just beginning to become friends again, and he was respectfully keeping his distance. Besides, the truce they have is fragile, and she doesn't want it to break again.

She decides not to ask for more as she half-wades, half-walks to shore, but then she catches the way Severus is looking at her under dark eyelashes. Feels the chill of the water dampening the front of her bathing suit.

Blushes at the heat forming between her thighs.

And she wishes again that he would stay the night.

"Why take care of them?" Severus asks while they are in the nursery.

"Why not?" Lily resumes making the little beds.

Severus uncrosses his arms and ticks his fingers up at every point. "They're not yours nor your responsibility, they would be fine on their own, some of them didn't even *come* here as children"

"Can you blame them?" Lily snaps one the sheets open and smooths it over the mattress. "Sometimes I have half a mind to shorten some and join them."

"But you don't."

Lily sighs. "I wanted to be a mother. Maybe not so early, maybe not with James, but" She glances over at Severus, catches his shocked expression. "He was a mistake. Maybe if we hadn't had the war, I would've noticed it sooner."

"I see."

"That's it? You see? I figured you'd shout 'I told you so.' Laugh hysterically."

Severus' eyes look unreadable. "We all have loved and lost." He picks up a stuffed bear from the floor and places it on the bed where it came from.

"You are impossible, Severus Snape."

He throws his head back in laughter.

When James comes to have a talk, Sirius and Remus standing by the front door, Lily knows something is about to go wrong.

It unfolds like a bad soap opera set to the soundtrack of their old school age memories, and Lily tastes bile at the back of her throat.

"Why are you shacking up with *him*, Lily? He's horrible!"

"I'm not... shacking up with anyone! He's my friend."

"Don't you remember all the things Sirius said he did to Harry?"

"I know that Severus wasn't the kindest of people, but he helped Harry when he needed it most not that Sirius can claim the same thing."

"How dare you say that?"

"The way I understand it, Sirius should have stayed at Grimmauld Place instead of leaping to the Ministry. Maybe he would have been long around to actually be a godfather to Harry."

"Snape practically led him there himself! I'm telling you, Lily, that git"

"Is what?" Severus stands at the living room's entrance, and Lily feels equal parts of relief and anger.

James sneers at the other man. "Snivellus."

Severus flinches but stands his ground. "Lily is tired, and some of the little ones are crying. It would behoove you to leave immediately."

James steps forward, and Severus pulls his wand out. "I'm not sure how far I can go with this, but I assure you it cannot be very pleasant."

"Take care of her." And James is gone.

Lily waits for some moments before she speaks. "You have no right."

"He came here to"

"I don't care why he was here!" Lily shouts. "I do care that you two were fighting over me like I was a new broom!"

"I was defending your honor!"

Lily snorts. "You were defending your pride." She heads into the nursery where Sprout is already tucking in the younger ones. Lily helps her until everyone is sleeping again.

A shadow cuts across the moonlit floor, leading to Severus standing at the doorway.

"When I joined him," he says quietly, "I thought I'd acquire... some of his shine. I thought I'd finally found a place."

"But you had one. At Hogwarts. With me."

"No, not with you."

"And whose fault was that? Hanging around with that lot, Avery and the Lestranges"

"And you," Severus said, his voice raising, "were so bloody perfect you couldn't stand to be around Snivellus any longer."

"That's not true!"

"You didn't want to soil yourself with my name. That's why you didn't want to see me again."

"I didn't want you to leave me first, okay?" she cries out.

"I didn't want to see you go either," he says, touching the ends of her hair.

Lily realizes how close they are and places her hand on his chest. "We were stupid, weren't we?"

"Mmm." Severus leans in and kisses her forehead.

"A little off the mark," she breathes.

He kisses her cheek. "Just friends," he murmurs.

"So wrong."

She takes his face and kisses him, catching his bottom lip between her own, opening up and breathing through his mouth. There is no space between them now. Lily's breasts are pressed up against Severus' chest, and his knee is spreading her legs apart as they begin to rock against each other.

"I think we should move to the bedroom," she says, her fingers making patterns at the base of his neck.

Breath warm on her cheek, he responds.

"Lead the way."

And she does.

- end.

Author's Notes: I wrote this story because, after reading DH, I felt Snape had gotten a raw deal. Upon further thinking, I realized Lily had gotten an even worse one.

The members of Potter_Place had an amazing discussion about the relationship between Lily and Snape. Without their insight, I doubt this fic could have been completed.

And many thanks to Southern_Witch_69 for beta-ing this.