

Love Remains

by livvy6

Lily's life doesn't end when Voldemort hexes her. Instead, she and Harry go into hiding, but are things truly any better for her?

Before

Chapter 1 of 30

Lily's life doesn't end when Voldemort hexes her. Instead, she and Harry go into hiding, but are things truly any better for her?

Chapter One - Before

It had been a relatively calm day. The Potters had a lie-in and spent the day playing with their one-year-old son, Harry. He was becoming such a little character! James spoiled him terribly with all manner of wizard toys that he got Sirius to buy for them. It wasn't safe to do anything anymore after finding out they had been marked for death. Once they had made the decision to go into hiding, they entrusted Sirius with all rights to their money and assets. He was Harry's godfather, after all.

Later that afternoon as Harry slept, Lily delicately brought up a subject that had been a source of tension between them: the changing of Sirius as their Secret-Keeper to Peter.

They sat at their kitchen table drinking tea, trying to keep their tempers in check lest they wake Harry up from his nap.

"James," she reasoned, "you know I care for Peter the same as you, it's just that he is so skittish these days! He just doesn't have the fortitude that you and Sirius have. He has never had it!"

"Lil, I trust Peter with my life!" James insisted. He gazed at her with his hazel eyes firm and unrelenting. Lily knew it was hopeless to try to talk him out of it. When James got his mind set on something, he stuck with it.

He flashed his most cocky smile, grabbed her by the waist, and pulled her onto his lap. "Lily, I will never let Voldemort hurt us. I will protect you and Harry with my life."

Lily loved how loyal James was. He had loved her so much, and after having Harry and battling Voldemort, she still wanted and desired him. She kissed her husband and he responded wholeheartedly. He took his wife there on their kitchen table. Lily loved his athletic body, so tanned and muscular. He was incredibly sexy and virile. He was also a playful and giving lover, and Lily felt she would never get enough of him.

That evening James lay sprawled out on the couch as Lily got Harry ready for bed upstairs in his bedroom.

"There's my sweet boy! Mummy loves you so much. One day you are going to be the most handsome wizard in the world. All the girls are going to love you with your black hair and green eyes! I promise, I will love whomever you marry. I'll approve as long as she loves you as much as you love her."

She loved to talk to her son about the future. Everything was so bleak having to be in hiding, once marked for death. The only thing that kept her going was knowing that Harry would have a future. She would do everything in her power to make that happen.

She finished dressing him in his little pajamas and scooped him up to take him downstairs to kiss his daddy goodnight.

"Ah! There's my boy!" James said happily as he reached out to hold his son. He kissed him on his chubby cheek and held him close.

"You go right to sleep, you hear? You might as well get in practice now. You're going to be a Seeker just like your old man and Quidditch players need their sleep!" he said affectionately.

Lily took Harry back in her arms. "James Potter!" she hissed. "Don't be a such a prat! Harry will be whatever he wants. Maybe he'll want to be a Potions master—"

"What, like Snivellus?" he jeered. He hated whenever she even remotely referred to that git!

Lily was affronted. "No, perhaps he'll take after me. I was the best at Potions, you recall! Therefore, he may be an academic sort. However, whatever he wants, he will be. Don't pressure him, James!" she warned.

"Sure, Lil, and I'm sorry I brought up the git."

Lily sighed. Whenever he mentioned Severus, he always referred to him as "the git" or "Snivellus." She hated that he was still so insecure about him. Sure, Severus had been her best friend, but that was a long time ago, and they had both moved on.

She began to walk toward the staircase when a huge explosion, erupted and the front door burst apart. Lily reflexively ran up the stairs and peeked back down over the banister to see what had happened and froze as she stared into the eyes of Lord Voldemort himself. She screamed in terror.

"It's him! Lily, take Harry and run! I'll hold him off!" James hollered.

Lily ran up to Harry's room and began to barricade the door. She had left her wand in their bedroom. She silently cursed herself for her foolishness. She held Harry tightly against her as the bedroom door burst open. She screamed as she clutched her infant son to her chest.

"Stand aside, you silly girl!" the inhuman monster hissed.

"Please! Have mercy!" Lily pleaded. "Not Harry! He's my son! I'll do anything! Not Harry! Please—I'll do anything!"

Voldemort sneered at the witch and a flash erupted from his wand. She seized up and dropped Harry as she collapsed onto the floor.

"You weak, pitiful fool!" he spat. "You are nothing but a worthless piece of Mudblood filth!"

He pointed his wand to Harry and screamed, *"Avada Kedavra!"*

In that moment, just before the Killing Curse roared from his mouth, Lily fought off the effects of being stunned and weakly placed her hand on her baby. The love she felt was so strong that when the green light flashed and hit little Harry Potter, the curse rebounded and destroyed the husk of Voldemort.

Weak and nothing more than a wisp of wind, he hurled himself out of the house in Godric's Hollow and far, far away from the Wizarding world.

Lily watched as Voldemort blew away in the wind. Then she collapsed.

This is my response to the Anything Goes Challenge Prompt #27. Voldemort decides to Stun Lily instead of killing her; does he kidnap Harry? Kill him? What happens to Lily and to Snape?

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! The passages in italics are taken directly from JKR's Deathly Hallows. Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

After

Chapter 2 of 30

Sirius rescues Lily and Harry, taking them to Hagrid's at Hogwarts. Lily is beside herself with grief.

Chapter 2 – After

As Lily lay unconscious on Harry's bedroom floor, a lone figure descended upon the destroyed home on a flying motorbike. Half of the house had been blown apart. He jumped off his bike, sprawling on the grass to get to his friends. He waded madly through the debris until he stumbled upon the lifeless body of James Potter. He closed his eyes and clenched his fists. He waited for the initial rush of pain to pass before he reopened them.

He fell to his knees, grabbed his best friend by his shirt, and held him to his chest. "James! JAMES!" he wailed. "No, NO! You can't be gone—wake up!" he pleaded. He sobbed and wailed as he rocked and cradled the head of the truest friend he had ever known in his arms.

He heard a distant wailing and came to his senses. "Harry!" he screamed as he deftly laid down James' body and ran up the half-torn out staircase that led to Harry's room. Lily was passed out on the floor, her red hair sticking to her face in a sheen of sweat, breathing shallowly. She was deathly pale. Harry was screaming from what appeared to be a head wound. He picked up his godson and tried to shush him. He didn't know what to do next. He was beside himself. James was dead, Lily was out cold, and his little godson was wounded and screaming like a banshee. He thought he might lose his mind. Then, he remembered he had a Portkey. It would take him right into Hagrid's place at Hogwarts. He grabbed Lily's hand as he activated the Portkey. They landed in a heap into Hagrid's hut.

The half-giant sputtered and spewed mead everywhere as he took in the sight before him.

"Sirius! Wha' happened?"

"Hagrid, I d-don't know! He got to them! H-he k-killed J-James!" he blurted out as he sobbed. "I found Lily like this, she's alive—I'm sure, but Harry's hurt really bad! I-I don't know what to do!"

"A'right then," Hagrid said calmly. "Where's yer bike?"

Sirius blinked and cleared his mind. "I left it there at Godric's Hollow. I had to get them out of there!" he explained.

Hagrid looked at Lily and saw she was just unconscious. She'd come to in a bit. He looked at Harry. His forehead was a right mess. He needed help.

"It's a'right, then! S'aright! Ca'm yerself, Sirius! Lily an' Harry will be needin' yer help now. Give me little Harry, now. I'll get 'im to Poppy. Stay here with Lily. She'll be a'right."

Hagrid went out with the squalling baby as Sirius began to make Lily comfortable. He picked her up and sat in Hagrid's large oversized chair, cradling her in his arms. He stroked her hair and kissed her forehead.

"Don't you worry, Lily," he said firmly. "I'll take care of you and Harry, I swear it! No one will hurt you or Harry again. I swear on James' life!" He held her tightly to him and kissed her forehead again. He felt so scared and alone in the oversized chair, like he was a little boy. Gone forever was the swaggering, handsome youth who feared nothing. He had a lot of fear now. How had everything gone so wrong? How could their plan have failed? He thought over the past month with all the changes they had made, and it all started to click into place.

Lily began to stir, and Sirius turned all his thoughts to her.

"Lily! Lily!" he called to her as he gently shook her.

She opened her eyes slowly and tried to focus.

"S-Siri-us?" she said groggily.

"Yes!" he exclaimed happily. "It's me, Sirius! Lily, what happened?"

Lily began to hoist herself upright as she sat on Sirius' lap. She was trying to remember, and then it all came rushing back. Her face turned into horror, and she started to scream unbearably.

"Sirius! He tried to kill us! He almost killed Harry!" She was screaming and crying. She was hysterical.

"Where is James?" she asked.

He lowered his head. Lily shook her head in denial. "No, he can't be. He can't!" she hollered. She cried and started to yell, "How could everything go so wrong! How did he find us? How, Sirius?"

Sirius slowly reached out and stroked Lily's hair. "I don't know, Lily. Dumbledore was to keep you safe. I don't know how this could turn out so badly!" he said in a rushed tone.

"Oh my God! We have to get Harry to a Healer!" she cried frantically.

"James? James?" she called out.

She jumped out of Sirius' arms as she dashed out to find her husband and son. Sirius grabbed her and said, "Lily, don't! Hagrid has Harry, he'll take care of him!"

"JAMES! JAMES!" she screamed as she fell to the floor in grief.

Inside the castle, a baby's wail echoed throughout the castle walls while an old wizard sat behind his desk. There was no twinkle in his eyes this night, only a single tear that slid down his old wrinkled face. Fawkes began to croon a heart-breaking song.

In the bowels of the castle, a young wizard jumped up from his sleep. He raced to dress and ran to the Headmaster's office. He burst in and found the old wizard behind his desk. All was dark and still. The old wizard waved his hand and the room brightened.

"Severus," said Dumbledore. "I have been waiting for you."

Reconciliation

Chapter 3 of 30

Lily and Harry come to seek refuge at Hogwarts. Snape desperately wants Lily to stay with him.



Artwork by beaweasley2 - thank you so much!

Chapter 3 Reconciliation

Severus Snape was pacing the floor of Dumbledore's office when the headmaster returned.

"Ah, Severus, I'm glad you took my advice and remained here. Such an unfortunate and horrible event has occurred."

Snape braced himself for the bad news.

"James Potter has been killed by Voldemort."

"What of Lily?" he asked hysterically.

Dumbledore looked at the young man angrily. All these months and he still only cared about Lily!

"Harry is at St. Mungo's. Apparently, Lily was only Stunned by Voldemort, and when he tried to murder the child, the Killing Curse rebounded onto him and destroyed his body. Voldemort is powerless now, thanks to little Harry Potter."

Snape waited patiently for news of Lily, his face showed no reaction to the news. Dumbledore sighed and said that Lily was fine, just in shock and grief.

Snape was beside himself. He needed to see her now. "Headmaster, please, I need to be with her now. She must be terribly frightened. She needs to be protected!" he pleaded.

"Severus, I have Aurors watching over Harry. Lily is resting in Minerva's rooms. Soon, they both will be living here," he replied.

Snape was ecstatic. "Lily will be living here! Here!" His eyes glazed over and Dumbledore became worried.

"Severus, Lily is a widow now. She will be in terrible grief for James." He placed deep emphasis on the dead wizard's name.

Snape came out of his reverie and sobered. Now that the bastard was dead along with the other bastard, he could be more than accommodating and even gracious.

"Of course, sir! You know my history with Potter, but he was Lily's husband, and she needs to be treated with kindness and respect. She'll need her space to come to terms with her loss," he said magnanimously.

Dumbledore smiled, but his eyes did not twinkle. He knew the young wizard better than he realized. It was a gamble keeping Lily and her son here with the man who had loved and been obsessed with her for most of his young life. He hoped now that Tom was truly dead, then Severus could live a normal life. Perhaps his desperation would ease and the friendship he once had with Lily could be restored.

The young wizard was becoming agitated. "Albus, I need to know, who is watching over Lily's son?" He had to sound like he actually cared for the little blighter if Albus would let him near her.

"I have Alastor and Kingsley on hand. If anyone can keep him safe, it would be them!" he said confidently.

"Could I please help? With all respect, Headmaster, I was a Death Eater. I know how they operate. I would not put it past any of them to try to hurt the boy. Could I please just watch out for any danger?" he begged.

Dumbledore acted as if he had not heard a word spoken. "Severus, I would appreciate it if you would go and see Lucius. With Tom gone, I am concerned about his taking control over the more renegade Death Eaters. We do not need another Dark Lord. Please report back to me as soon as you can ascertain his plans."

"Certainly, Headmaster," he muttered in disappointment. He turned swiftly on his heel and departed.

It was in the wee hours of the morning when Severus returned from Malfoy Manor. Lucius had been most subdued. He and Narcissa had seemed jumpy and terrified. When he had pressed them about their plans now that the Dark Lord was dead, all the blond wizard would do was shake his head and say, "I honestly cannot say, Severus. However, I do know one thing. I shall never be carted off to Azkaban. As far as the rest of the world will know, I was under the Imperius Curse and am more than happy the Dark Lord is no more." He had a fierce glint in his eye when he spoke, and Severus had realized that if the wizard were pushed far enough, he would do whatever it took to ensure his family's safety. After all, Lucius had to look out for his own son.

It was all Snape needed to know. He would keep Lucius' dirty little secret. He was far too powerful politically and lucratively to fight. He would just have to keep him close where he could watch him. He actually agreed with him on one point. Azkaban would be the worst possible scenario. If Lucius were to be imprisoned with the LeStrange brothers and Bellatrix, plus with all the others that would be thrown in there once the Aurors finished rounding them up and putting them away, Lucius would become an angry, volatile, and powerful wizard. No, Lucius needed to stay in his posh, elegant, comfortable manor where he could remain soft and complacent. He would make sure Dumbledore understood that need.

After breakfast, when he had finally finished with the headmaster, he left his office and began to walk down towards his dungeons.

He saw Minerva with Lily. She was holding a baby. His black eyes caught her green ones, and she shook violently.

Snape thought his chest would rip open. He could not, would not allow Lily to continue fearing him. Minerva was trying to calm her, and he slowly came to her side.

"Severus," Minerva warned him.

"It's okay, Minerva. Lily, please, you are exhausted. Let me hold Harry," he said softly.

Lily was so lost and frightened; she looked as if she would drop at any second. She reluctantly handed her son to her old friend and watched him intensely as the dark wizard held the son of his nemesis.

Severus had only offered to hold Harry in order to ingratiate himself to Lily, but as he held him, he saw the boy's eyes and his breath caught.

"Lily," he breathed. "He has your eyes."

Minerva and Lily looked at Severus Snape as if they had never met him before. He was enthralled with the little boy. He smiled as Harry grabbed his nose. Severus chuckled and kissed the offending little hand. Harry laughed and babbled at the wizard. Lily's eyes softened, and Minerva smiled broadly. Perhaps, things would be all right after all.

"Minerva, please, let's get Lily somewhere comfortable. There are more than adequate rooms adjacent to mine in the dungeons. If you would help me with some Transfiguration, I'm sure we could make a very comfortable living space for Lily and Harry," he said serenely, never taking his eyes off of little Harry Potter.

"Let's get Lily settled in my rooms for now, Severus, and we can speak with Albus about a more permanent arrangement," Minerva whispered calmly. She became very aware of how Lily was looking at Severus holding her son with such adoration, and she looked so happy, Minerva thought it might not be so bad after all to keep the two

together. After all, they had been so close during their school years.

After Lily and Harry went to sleep in Minerva's rooms, she, Dumbledore, and Severus met in the headmaster's office to discuss the future of mother and son. Dumbledore insisted they stay at Hogwarts, at least until the Aurors could round up Voldemort's Death Eaters and also until the secret behind who had betrayed them was resolved. In addition, it was imperative that no one be aware that Lily was alive. They were all in accord with the headmaster's decision. What was the utmost on Severus' mind was who had betrayed the Potters. He swore to Dumbledore he would do whatever he could to find out what had happened.

Now the decision had to be decided concerning the living situation of Lily and little Harry. Severus insisted they stay safely in the dungeons near him. Dumbledore was leery of having them so close to the Slytherin common room. Minerva suggested that perhaps Lily could live with Severus if she wished.

"After all, Albus, no one could breach the wards Severus places on his living quarters," she added shrewdly.

Dumbledore looked at Severus with a hard, piercing stare. "Severus, I took you in when you were desperate and had nowhere to turn. I can throw you to the wolves just as easily. If you harm her or seduce her..."

Snape was insulted. "I have never in all the years I have known Lily, ever tried to force my affections upon her. I love her...it's true. However, my love for her is more than physical. She is an intelligent and powerful witch. She was my best friend, and I want nothing more than to earn that friendship back. Please Albus, let me make it up to her and to Harry."

Dumbledore looked sharply at the young wizard standing before him. Something had happened to soften him towards the boy. It was genuine, and for the first time, he truly felt he could trust the dark man completely.

"Very well, Severus, if Lily agrees. Minerva shall approach her with the offer, and if she is amenable to the idea, then you have my blessing. Minerva shall work on some Transfiguration to give Lily and Harry their own space."

"You may leave now, Severus. I wish to speak with Minerva alone."

After Snape had left, Dumbledore asked Minerva about what she knew of Severus' transformation. She eagerly replayed the scene and told in her astonishment how Snape had reacted to the child and how the child had reacted to him. She said it was one of most precious moments she had ever witnessed, and Lily's face had been so serene and calm, it made her feel relaxed for the first time since the whole nightmare began.

When Minerva approached Lily with the plan to hide them away in Severus' rooms, Lily agreed without reservation. She said she had for such a long time now felt she had been too hard on Severus and her rejection of their friendship led him to seek approval with Voldemort's minions.

"I want to make things right with Severus. I want us to start over again. I just hope he can still accept that I will always love James. He is the father of my son, after all."

Minerva remained quiet. That might be the proverbial fly in the ointment. Nevertheless, it would have to be for Lily and Severus to work out.

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Restored

Chapter 4 of 30

Lily and Harry move into Severus' rooms. Sirius comes by and an argument breaks out between the three of them, forcing Lily to make a choice between the two wizards.

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Chapter 4 - Restored

Severus had never been so happy in his life. He doted on Lily and Harry incessantly. Every spare moment he had, he was with them. He thought he would never ever be able to accept Harry. After all, he did look so much like his father—but his eyes! His beautiful green eyes were so like Lily's. He could love this child. Perhaps, he could be a father to him and be an influence in his life.

Lily was in too much shock to protest or make any decisions on her own. She relied on Severus' discretion, and after a week, she began to feel warmth toward Severus that she had not felt in years for him. As she watched him bond with her son, she experienced an overwhelming need to thank him, so show him her gratitude. There was only one thing she could think to give him...

During the second week after the attack, Lily was sitting in Severus' sitting room reading a book while Harry played on the floor. She heard yelling outside the door and grew frightened. She grabbed Harry and ran for the bedroom when the door burst open and there stood Sirius Black with Severus at his heels.

"Sirius!" she chided. "How could you frighten me so? You nearly scared me to—"

She had started to say "death", but the word caught in her throat and the image of James came into her mind.

She sat back down on the sofa listlessly and laid Harry back on the floor to play.

"Lily," Sirius began with barely concealed rage, "how can you do this to James? He hated Snivellus! How can you stay here?"

Severus came around like a dark mist and whispered to Black, "You will not insult me in my own home. I only allowed you entrance out of respect for Lily and Harry. Speak with her if you wish, but never insult me again in my home."

Lily knew Severus was on the edge. She knew his temper. She was also furious with Sirius.

"How dare you!" she yelled. "How dare you come in here and judge me and Severus!" I am still marked for death, you know! I also have absolutely no idea who betrayed us. It's not safe, Sirius. Severus is the only one who can protect Harry and me. Please, you have to make peace with him—for me! You have to!" she begged.

Sirius came closer to her and put his hand on her arm. "Lily, why can't I take care of you? I'm Harry's Godfather, not him! How do you know you're safe with him, anyway? He's a Death Eater! He probably was there when James was murdered!"

"That is enough!" bellowed Snape. "I was nowhere near Potter that night. I was here in my quarters. I would never have done anything to harm Lily!"

Sirius swung around on Snape; his eyes glittered with malice. "And yet James is the one dead, isn't he?" he said accusingly.

He placed his hands on Lily's shoulders, gripping her tightly, making her wince. "I don't trust him, Lily. I don't care what Dumbledore says. Please take Harry and come with me, now!"

"Sirius, I can't!" she insisted as she pushed his hands off her. "I'm frightened! Hogwarts is the only place I feel safe right now, and Severus is the only one who can get information on anyone who could be plotting to hurt Harry and me! You can't tell anyone I'm here. Not even Peter, do you understand? Sirius?" she demanded.

"Lily, I won't do anything to hurt you. I just don't trust him!" he seethed as he glared at Snape.

"He's good to me, Sirius. He takes very good care of me, and he loves Harry. Please, he is making an effort to change. Can't you both come to an agreement of sorts? You both claim to want the same thing: to help Harry and me and to stop all of Voldemort's followers who might still want to hurt us. So, start proving it!"

Sirius blanched and walked to the door. "Lily, I will not stand in your way, nor will I reveal your secret. But know this: I still don't trust this bastard. He is a Death Eater. My door is always open if you need help, but Lily, I won't come here again. It would be an insult to James' memory, and I think it's rather shoddy for you to be shackled up in here with the man your husband hated more than anyone in this world besides Voldemort!" He walked out and slammed the door behind him.

Lily burst into tears. Snape went over and picked up Harry who was getting upset by his mother's outburst. He soothed the boy and spoke to her softly.

"Lily, it will be alright. Please don't cry."

"I can't believe he said that, Severus! I was a good wife, a faithful wife! I love James. How could he say that my being here is a betrayal?" she sobbed.

"I don't know, Lily. But we will get through this. I will keep doing my best to protect you and Harry. I promise." He looked at her with such blatant love and desire, she felt sad and happy at the same time. She took Harry from him and set her son back down to play. Then, she snuggled close to her friend on the sofa.

"I have nothing to give you, Severus. All that you have done for Harry and me, you have been so kind and good to us. I want to repay you somehow." She leaned her body into his suggestively.

"Lily, don't," he whispered as he pulled away from her.

"What?" she asked. "I know how you feel for me. It's the least I can do—"

Severus lost his temper. "I don't want you to repay me with your affections! Do you think so low of me that I'll accept it? Damn it, Lily! I'm a man with feelings. If you care for me and want to be with me, then that is something else entirely. But don't do this. I don't need you to—you know—out of obligation!" He stormed out, wishing he could curse at her, but Harry was there. She followed him into his office.

"I'm sorry, Severus. That was insensitive. I do care for you, I love how you care for Harry, how you care for me. Perhaps in time. But, Severus, I feel I owe you something!"

Snape turned and faced her. "Give me your friendship, Lily. Be my best friend again. Then if we feel the same, let me court you. You know I love you. I'm a patient man, Lily. I will wait for you. You're worth waiting a lifetime for. God, I wish I could have said those words years ago. I was just too bloody afraid!"

Lily walked over and closed the gap between them. "You have my friendship, Sev," she whispered.

"You called me Sev!" he exclaimed happily. "You haven't called me that in years!"

She hugged him then, and he held onto her until she let go.

"I need to check on Harry," she whispered as she walked out of his office.

Snape had not felt so happy as at that moment since before their friendship ended. It was as if everything from that horrible day until now had been a bad dream. Now, he was awake and she was with him as if she had never really left. He would never lose her again.

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The Birth of a Family

Chapter 5 of 30

Severus confesses all his misdeeds to Lily. They take the time to get to know one another more, and it all leads to an important milestone.

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Chapter 5 The Birth of a Family

A week later, Dumbledore Flooded into Snape's sitting room. He happily viewed the homey scene. There was Severus, holding Harry on his lap as he graded papers, talking to him about what a wonderful Potions master he was going to become.

"Don't you think that is a bit premature, Severus?" the Headmaster teased.

"No, I do not! His mother was the brightest witch in school and the most brilliant mind at Potions Hogwarts has ever seen. With her talent in his blood and my help, he'll be a natural!" he answered smugly.

Albus smiled at the young wizard. He had never seen Severus so happy. It was so apparent that he loved little Harry Potter as much as he loved Harry's mother. It was bittersweet to see the child of Severus' former nemesis receive such adoration from him.

His face grew dark. "Severus, where is Lily? I must speak with both of you. It is extremely important," he said gravely.

"What has happened, Headmaster?" Snape asked worriedly as he held Harry closer to him.

"I'll wait until we all can talk about this together. Let me take Harry to Minerva. He doesn't need to be upset."

"Headmaster..." he began.

"Trust me, Severus," he said kindly as he left with little Harry.

Lily came out from the bathroom in her robe. She had finished taking a shower.

"Sev, where is Harry?" she asked.

"Dumbledore took him to Minerva," he answered absent-mindedly. He pulled his thoughts together and said, "He needs to speak with us about something important."

"I'll get dressed then," she answered. She had a bad feeling about this.

She came out later and saw Dumbledore had returned. She sat next to Severus and he placed his arm around her. The Headmaster noted that the young widow did not mind his show of affection.

"Something has happened to Sirius and I need you to wait and let me finish before you ask your questions," he said darkly.

"Today, in Muggle London, there was an incident between Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew."

Lily gasped, but Dumbledore continued.

"According to the eye-witness, all who were Muggles, Peter confronted Sirius. It sounded as if he were accusing Sirius of working for Tom."

At this, Severus stiffened. Lily turned to look into his face, but Dumbledore did not stop.

"A duel ensued and Sirius murdered Pettigrew, along with a dozen Muggles near-by the blast. It was a horrible sight. It took many Hit Wizards to take Sirius down, and then the Magical Squad had to modify all the minds of the Muggles who'd witnessed the fight. In short, Sirius is in Azkaban awaiting trial for murder."

He sat down and waited for the questions he knew they wanted to ask.

Lily looked in pain. Tears spilled down her cheeks. "Why? He loved James! Peter's dead? Why is this happening to us? I can't take any more of this!" she screamed. She doubled over clutching her hair in her hands, sobbing. Severus gathered her into his arms and held her to him, trying to calm and soothe her.

He spoke softly to Dumbledore as he comforted the crying Lily. "Sir, I am truly shocked. You know there is no love lost between Black and I, but this is not the type of behavior that one would expect from him! I have never heard of Black even being remotely involved with the Dark Lord."

"Are you sure, Severus? Are you positive you have never heard anyone speak of Black?" the older wizard whispered.

"No. I can go speak with Lucius, he may know more. Nevertheless, I cannot fathom this, Headmaster. Black is many things, but he was always loyal to those he counted friends."

Lily lifted her head from Severus' chest. "You're going to talk to Lucius Malfoy? It's true? You are a Death Eater still?" she shrieked.

Dumbledore placed a hand on her shoulder and hushed her. "Lily, Severus has been working undercover as a spy for over a year now. He came to me shortly after Harry was born. He is no longer a true Death Eater. He's a member of the Order."

Lily relaxed in Snape's arms and embraced him. "Please, Sev, be careful. Harry and I need you," she whispered.

Snape kissed her forehead and held her tightly to him. "No one will ever harm you or Harry, I swear it! I'll kill anyone who dares to try!" He looked defiantly at the older wizard. He knew Snape was telling the truth. He gave a swift nod in agreement. Snape knew then that he had Dumbledore's permission to kill anyone who stood in his path.

He whispered to Lily his need to leave and speak to Malfoy. As he left, Lily turned to Dumbledore and said, "I want my son. Please bring Harry to me."

Dumbledore patted Lily on the cheek and went to retrieve her son from Minerva. Lily sat on the sofa with her legs tight against her chest. She was petrified. She had no one, it seemed outside these walls. It was so horrible. Oh, poor, sweet Peter...how could he be so foolish? she thought. How close had she come to following Sirius and leaving Severus? Too close. She and James had named a murderer as godfather to their son. A cold shiver ran down her back. Remus. She had to make sure Remus would be safe now. He was all that was left of happier days. However, there was one caveat: Severus would never accept Remus, there was far too much bad blood. He had never forgiven Remus for his near-death experience. Lily believed he feared Remus more than hated him, but there was Harry to consider, and she knew Severus would never allow Harry near Remus. *Strange, how Severus treats Harry like his son more and more as time passes* she thought.

She wondered if she could love Severus as she had loved James. They were so different, but they both had loved her desperately. Perhaps she could grow to love Severus in time. They could have a nice life here, she could help him with Potions, and they could raise Harry together...

She began to crawl into Severus' bed late at night when she had nightmares, which was often. Sirius' conviction and life-long sentence in Azkaban took a great deal out of her. She was depressed and scared so much of the time; she needed to understand how the people she had loved and trusted could be taken from her so violently.

He told her everything and spared nothing. He told her of his defection, how he had confessed to Dumbledore everything he had overheard about the Prophecy and then his horror when he realized he had played a part in sealing their fates.

She scrambled out of the bed and stood shaking in her nightgown.

"You asked him to spare me and to kill my husband and son?" she asked with horror.

Snape was too terrified to move. He stayed in the bed sitting, imploring her to understand. "Yes," he confessed. "I did. Later, I came to myself. I knew he wouldn't...I honestly thought he had lied to me. That was when I told Dumbledore to hide all of you, to keep ALL of you safe."

She was silent for a long time. She wrapped her arms around herself. She didn't know if she could face him.

She kept her back to him. "How could you be so cold? How could you wish for Harry to die?" she said in a whispered scream. "I can understand your hatred of James...but my baby is innocent!"

He slowly climbed out of the bed. "I know, Lily. I know. My anger and hate grew to such proportions that I hate myself for even thinking about what I asked the Dark Lord to do, let alone actually going through with it. That was what propelled me to seek out Dumbledore. I hated what I had become. Then, after Dumbledore showed me what a beastly person I was, I asked him to keep all of you safe. I didn't want the bastard to continue his blood war! Too much had already been lost...too many lives had been broken," he admitted sadly.

He took her face in his hands. "I am so sorry, Lily. It pains me to see you hurt, knowing I was the cause of it. I know you really loved him. I had no part in the betrayal that brought the Dark Lord to your door that night. I loved you enough to let you go! That's what I did! The moment I told Dumbledore to hide you and your family, I knew that was the end of my dream. I accepted that you would never be mine."

Lily wanted to say that she still would never be his, that nothing could change, but she couldn't. He needed her, and Harry needed him. It was all so complicated!

"That is incredible you can accept my love for James, Severus," she whispered.

He looked at her and sighed. "It's all in the past, Lily. I can start letting it all go: the anger, bitterness, and hatred. You and Harry have been a healing salve on my soul. Lily, I will work every day at being a man you can be proud of if you would let me stay a part of your life! Even if only ever friends," he said fiercely.

She stroked his face. "You really love me, don't you?"

"I love you and Harry," he said honestly. "I think perhaps that's why I know I can let the past go. I see James in Harry, but it doesn't bother me. I still love him."

Lily felt her eyes swell with tears. He was truly becoming the man she had always hoped he would be. For the first time, she felt a hope for them...a future. For the first time, she felt that perhaps one day she would be able to tell him she loved him and truly mean it.

They took that time together the next few nights snuggling under the covers to talk about the past. They laughed at the little experiments they had made as children, fiddling with potions. They talked about the difficult years, trying to keep their friendship alive when pressures from without and within pulled at them. They talked about that terrible day when he had called her a Mudblood, and he cried as he apologized to her over and over. She forgave him everything as long as he promised to sever all allegiances to the Death Eaters. He swore his love and loyalty to her.

"Lily, I never stopped loving you," he confessed. "I swear I will from this moment on live to destroy any remnants of the Dark Lord's following." She snuggled closer to him, her face inches from his.

"I hate that you are in so much pain," he whispered as he lost himself in her emerald eyes.

"Make me forget, Sev. Make me feel again," she begged softly as she leaned into him.

He stiffened in his embrace. "Lily, no. I don't want you to feel you need to do this. Only if you want to because you truly care for me that way," he said painfully.

She held onto him tightly. "But that's it, Sev. I do care for you!" She caressed his cheek with her hand as she brushed her lips lightly against his. "You are such a good man, you love me and Harry so much! You make me feel so safe, I want to, Sev. I want to make love to the man who has loved me nearly all my life. I want you."

She moved from his embrace, cinched up her nightgown, pulled it over her head, and returned to his arms.

"Lily," he breathed as he looked at her naked body. "You are so perfect."

"Barely!" she said derisively. "I have stretch marks and my breasts changed so much after I stopped breast feeding."

"No, Lily. You are beautiful. I never knew what beauty was until the day I saw you, and that has never changed. You will never change. You will always be beauty to me...my beauty," he whispered as he kissed her.

She saw the greed and lust in his eyes and she was a bit afraid of what she saw. He descended on her and ran his warm hands all over her creamy skin. He was almost beside himself with joy. Lily was going to be his! He had fantasized about this for years and now it was coming true: he was making love to Lily. His Lily.

He buried his face in her red hair and inhaled her scent as he massaged and teased her breasts. She was moaning as he lightly twisted her nipples.

"Tell me, Lily, what gives you the most pleasure?" he whispered in her ear. "Let me satisfy you."

She blushed. She had never said these things to anyone but James. She started to squirm, and Snape sensed her discomfort.

"Lily," he said as he looked into her eyes, "I won't lie to you. I have loved you since the moment I first saw you. I was a fool once to let you slip from my life, but now you are here, and I want to show you with my body how much I adore you. Lily, don't be ashamed to let me show you."

"Would you kiss me...down there?" she whispered shyly.

He captured her lips in a kiss. "Nothing would give me more pleasure, Lily."

He lowered himself between her legs and inhaled her scent. She was a goddess. He was gentle at first, kissing her thighs, working his way to her core, but then as her moans grew and her scent grew stronger, he lost all decorum. He wanted to taste everything of her. He paid close attention to what she liked and what drove her crazy. He began to suck on her clit, and she bucked her hips from the sensations. He teased and drew out her need for release until she was shaking and whimpering for him to make her come. It was the most precious music to his ears as he teased his tongue against her engorged nub. She held back her screams and panted softly as she climbed to the heights. Snape held her close to him and drew out her climax while she breathed his name again and again.

He rose above her as she came down from her high and kissed her neck, whispering for her to let him inside her.

"Yes," she answered huskily.

He looked passionately into her eyes and entered her slowly. He was going to eradicate the memory of James Potter from her mind forever. He may have given her a son with his face, but the only face she would ever remember with abandon would be his and only his. He took her slow and deep, groaning softly with each thrust. She was overwhelmed with his ardor. Soon, her eyes were rolling back into her head as she murmured obscenities. Snape smirked as he continued to thrust into her deeply.

"I love you, Lily," he breathed. "I will never stop loving you. I want to make love to you always for the rest of my life!"

She started to moan louder and her channel was becoming slick with her juices.

"Come for me, Lily, please," he begged into her ear.

She came with a great shudder and muffled her screams against his shoulder. She didn't want to wake Harry. Snape then began to thrust more intensely into her, whispering his love for her with each thrust. She was caught up in his desire and came again, harder and longer than before. She screamed and screamed into his chest as he rode them both into ecstasy. He came with a great shout that she muffled by clamping her hand over his mouth.

Lily fell deep into sleep, overcome with the intensity of their lovemaking. Snape stayed awake watching her sleep, thanking God, his Lily was back in his life, and if he had any say in the matter, she would become his wife as soon as possible.

Wanting

Chapter 6 of 30

Lily battles her conflicting feelings about Snape while he grows more in love with her and little Harry.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 6 Wanting

Every night Snape waited for her to come to his side and he would love her. Lily felt it was terribly one-sided, so she decided to indulge him in oral sex. He was shocked at first that she would want to do that to him, but grateful and so happy that the first time he cried. He wept tears of joy that his love was finally with him. He told her often that he wanted to raise little Harry with her and marry her. They could have more babies together and live in the castle. He would do whatever she wished. He adored her, and she drove him to distraction.

Lily tried. She did try, but she just didn't feel for Severus how she felt for James. It wasn't the sex, the sex was incredible, and to be honest, to her everlasting shame, better than sex with James ever had been. She actually said it once as she climaxed. She told him no man had ever made her feel so good. That night had been explosive. He had looked at her afterwards and said, "Am I better than James?" She had whispered "yes" and then cried like a baby. He held her and soothed her.

"How could I say that? Even if it were true...I shouldn't have said it!" she had sobbed.

Snape had been full of pride and felt a huge part of him had taken the revenge he had always wanted from James Potter.

"Lily, it's okay. It's just sex. It doesn't diminish what you had or what you felt with him," he had whispered.

"I bet you're pleased," she had retorted bitterly.

"I'm a man, Lily. Men are selfish and petty creatures when it comes down to these matters. I will never ask you anything like that again and never disparage James or your marriage. You chose him, you married him, and you bore his son. I respect that."

"And?" she had whispered.

He had then caught her mouth in a searing kiss as he gently pushed her thighs apart again for himself.

"And now you are mine and I am yours. There will only be us in our bed, Lily. I won't make room for him. I will not cheapen what you had, but neither will I hold myself back from making you completely my own now."

Lily looked at the love bites Severus had left on her from the night before. Everything she had said was true. He was more attentive, considerate, loving to a fault, but she missed James' corny jokes and how he would tease her, chase her around the house, and tickle her. James had treated her as his equal, whereas, Severus treated her like she was made of glass and placed her on a pedestal. He didn't want her to do anything that would be beneath her. He wanted them to spend as much time as they could in the Potions lab together. He said he had missed it so much.

Lily saw how much of a boy Severus still was. He was still caught in the days of Hogwarts when they were children. Oh, sure, he knew how to fuck her into a senseless, quivering mass of womanhood, but she missed her arrogant, swaggering James and his Quidditch talk. She missed his dirty clothes lying about and how she used to nag him about being tidier. Plus, every time she looked at Harry, she wanted to cry. She still loved James. She always would.

It was a joyous Christmas that year. Severus went with Hagrid on his yearly trips into the forest to cut down a tree for the Great Hall and picked out a smaller tree to put up in their sitting room.

Hagrid was very territorial about Lily, and he couldn't help himself to ask about their relationship.

"Uh, Professor Snape, I hope yer won' be offended, but I was very fond of James an' Lily. I jus' wan' ter know if things are a'right with all of you," he asked meekly.

Snape gave a genuine smile to the half-giant. "Hagrid, I can honestly say that I have never been happier in my whole life. Having Lily and Harry with me has given me such joy I cannot even describe it. However, Lily is still grieving and sometimes is sad. I try hard to lift her spirits. Harry, though, is the best medicine for her. He is the light of her life!"

Hagrid looked confused. "Yer not upse' tha' Harry looks so much like his dad?" he asked.

"No, Hagrid, it does not. The first time I held him I looked into his beautiful green eyes and I was completely done for!" He chuckled at the memory of that day.

Hagrid seemed pleased. "Well, Professor, I am happy tha' Lily and Harry have someone like yerself to watch out fer 'em," he said relieved.

"Thank you, Hagrid," the wizard replied.

Lily had been shocked at the lengths Severus had gone to make a nice Christmas for them. He got Harry a tiny little toy potions kit with a play cauldron and stirrers. He happily played with the boy, talking up a storm about Potions. Harry loved the sound of his voice. He always looked at his father figure with such joy and intensity that each time she would catch the look on Harry's face, it would take Lily's breath away. She had knitted for Severus a scarf with Slytherin colors. Severus gave her a small emerald ring. She slipped it on her right hand and asked him if he was offended.

"No, Lily. You have made it plain you want to wait the traditional year of mourning before making such decisions. I just wanted you to have it because I love you, and you are beautiful. A-A beautiful woman deserves beautiful things," he said nervously.

He played with the ring now on her finger as he spoke, and Lily was touched by his shyness and noticed he was blushing. She gave him a kiss on his lips, and he embraced her in return.

"Will you come to me again, Lily?" he asked timidly in her ear.

"Don't I always, Severus?" she replied.

"Do you mind that I want you so much? Should I not ask you every night?" he whispered shyly.

"No, Severus. I'll tell you if I am not in the mood. You make me feel good, Sev. You are a fantastic lover," she confessed as her face grew hot.

Severus was so proud he wanted to puff out his chest and shout it to the world that Lily thought him worthy. He would just have to remain patient until they could wed. She was his now. She was going to be in his bed tonight, and that was all that mattered.

He kissed her hard and passionately. "Happy Christmas, Lily."

"Happy Christmas, Sev," she replied.

When the winter had been at its height, the last of the Death Eaters had been rounded up. Even Snape had been arrested. That had been a terrible time, waiting to see if he would ever return. Lily had never been so frightened and alone in her life. It had been pure torture every minute he had been away. She realized she did not know how to function without him. Finally, Dumbledore had persuaded the Wizengamot of his innocence, and he returned to Lily's open arms. She had planned an elaborate seduction in her mind as a welcome home present, but she never got the chance. The moment he returned, he swiftly arranged for Minerva to watch Harry for the night, showered, and took Lily to bed without to much as two words spoken between them. She had stood there in the sitting room, confused, as Severus showered wondering what was going on when Severus reemerged from the bathroom clad in a towel, grabbed her forcefully into his arms, and carried her to their bed. She was able to scream her pleasure without worrying about Harry: she felt wild and free.

Hours later, the room smelling of their joined sex and sweat, she thought she could not remember ever being so thoroughly fucked in her life. She felt decadently ravished as she lay limply on their bed. She couldn't move if she had wanted to and couldn't have cared less.

Life had become routine. Lily had a comfortable life. Everything and anything she could ever want was hers for the taking. Little Harry was becoming more and more attached to Severus. It hurt her heart to know Harry would never know his father. It hurt even more that she had seemed to have replaced James so easily. She felt a terrible sense of guilt and pain. She officially moved into Severus' bed after Christmas and they lived as husband and wife. Many times, he had asked her to marry him, but she said she didn't want all the gossip and for all their reputations to be tarnished. As far as the world knew, she was dead. They couldn't marry without announcing her survival from Voldemort's attack. She didn't want her marriage to be her debut back into the Wizarding world. It seemed to appease the wizard, but in truth, Lily didn't know if she wanted to marry Severus. She had tried, she had, but she just didn't feel for Severus what she felt for James. It drove her to distraction.

She knew she should be grateful. She berated herself for her selfishness. She watched Harry and felt like she owed him to have this life. Harry shouldn't have to suffer because of her. She sat most evenings after dinner and watched Severus play with Harry. He was completely in love with him. He would patiently walk him around his lab and everything Harry pointed to he would explain. He would pick him up and swing him around until Harry laughed and laughed so hard he couldn't catch his breath. Every night he bathed him, snuggled, and read to him as Harry drank his evening milk.

One evening, Lily watched them lightly dozing in front of the fire. Severus had been reading a story to Harry, and he had fallen asleep in his lap. He moved his head slightly and kissed Harry on top of his head before leaning back and closing his eyes. Harry snuggled deeper into his chest and wrapped his little hand around Severus' neck. Her heart broke. She slipped into the bathroom and closed the door, sobbing so hard; she thought her heart would explode. She covered her mouth and whimpered. How dare she be so selfish when Harry was so loved and happy! He already had James taken from him, how could she even think of it. How could she think of taking Harry away from Severus? He adored her boy and loved her. He could give her everything: safety, security, babies, love, sex, and companionship. What was wrong with her?

"Severus," she said nervously over dinner, "I want to see Remus."

He looked at her with concern. He knew from the look on her face that it wasn't a request. He would have absolutely no say in the matter. She was going to see the werewolf, and there was nothing he could do about it. He chewed his food slowly. He swallowed and said, "Do you know where he is living now?"

She shifted her food on her plate. "I was going to ask Dumbledore," she confessed. She dropped her fork impatiently and said sadly, "Severus, Remus is all I have left."

Snape could feel the anger rising up in him. He threw his napkin down on the table and bolted upright, his chair crashing onto the floor.

"All you have left? And exactly what am I?" he demanded.

Lily covered her face with her hands. "I-I didn't mean it like that, Sev, I didn't!" she said desperately. She looked up at him, her green eyes awash with tears. "It's just that he knew James, Sirius, and Peter. I feel I have to try and see if there was something I missed."

She barked a laugh as the tears ran down her cheeks. "James always said I was too caring for my own good. I was too trusting, too open. That's so funny now, isn't it? James' own best friend and the godfather of my son!" She began to shake and cradled her head in her hands.

"I can't live with all this! I have to figure this out!" she raged.

They were both silent for a moment and in that moment Lily felt that he knew, he knew she didn't love him, that she wanted to take Harry and run far away from this world, far from all the memories. But just then, Harry started to cry from his bedroom. Lily closed her eyes. It was as if she had to remind herself of the reality of her life. Harry needed her to stay. She had to do what was best for him.

Denial

Chapter 7 of 30

Lily meets with Remus, and he confronts her with the reality of her situation.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 7 – Denial

Dumbledore had been extremely gracious in getting Lily and Remus to meet. Remus had been on the run since James' death. When Sirius killed Peter and had been sent to Azkaban, he had been terribly upset and paranoid about his own life. He went underground, only allowing Dumbledore to know his whereabouts. Now that the majority of Voldemort's Death Eaters were now safely imprisoned and the rest laying low to save their own skin, like Lucius Malfoy, he could afford to now test the waters. He came to Hagrid's hut to meet Lily and Harry. When he had found out that she was living with Severus, he had been wary, but at least he did not cause a scene as Sirius had.

The truth was that Remus Lupin had never hated Severus Snape. It had not been his idea to lure the unfortunate boy to his secret hiding place. He could not help what he became when he transformed. There was talk of a new breakthrough potion called Wolfsbane that would allow a werewolf to retain his human mind even though he still went through the physical change. Another effect of Wolfsbane was to ease some of the physical pain of transformation. Lupin knew that if he were to ever get a chance in hell at getting anyone to brew Wolfsbane for him, it would be Severus. However, the wizard would rather have him killed than help him. No matter how many times Remus had tried to make peace with Severus in the past, it had come to naught. Therefore, he told Dumbledore he would not set foot in the castle, out of respect for the Potions master's feelings. He also asked that Severus not know when or where their meeting was to take place. From what he heard Minerva and Dumbledore tell, Severus had grown to care for little Harry as if he were his own flesh and blood. Remus knew how possessive and protective the wizard was, and he wasn't going to take any chances on having a confrontation.

The plan was formed by Dumbledore. Lily and Harry would go for their weekly visit to Hagrid's and Remus would join them all there to visit.

Severus was not in the least suspicious or worried when Lily left the castle to see Hagrid. He was deeply indebted to the half-giant and felt he had saved Harry's life the night Sirius had Portkeyed them to his hut. His insistence on taking Harry from Sirius to Madam Pomfrey had most likely stopped the bastard from killing him! He still hated the thought that Sirius had been left alone with Lily while she was unconscious, but he had not harmed her. He always thought that to be odd. However, the day he stormed in their home and demanded Lily leave with him, Severus believed that Sirius desired Lily for himself. That made him hate the wizard more than ever. He was glad Sirius was in Azkaban.

Remus was a far different story. Severus feared the werewolf. He wished he were dead as well and could not understand why Lily would want to see him! Why would she want to be reminded of those days knowing what she knew now? How did she know that Lupin had not been in league with Sirius? He didn't put anything past him. It was almost ironic that he and Potter would have anything in common now, but they did. Lily was too trusting for her own good.

Although he had his reservations about it, he was powerless to stop her. She wanted to see Remus, she wanted to find answers, and she wanted to know if he was all right. He just had to bite his tongue and let her do it. They'd had a terrible row over her taking Harry, but she'd told him plainly that Harry was her child and she was more than able to make decisions about his welfare.

She had been so hurt and affronted that Snape had bit his tongue and relented. He was afraid of losing her; he would do whatever she asked. He had lain in their bed that night, afraid she would not join him, but she had, and he'd made love to her desperately, as if he needed to be reassured that she was still his.

Lily was growing increasingly depressed as the days passed. There was no real threat anymore. She and Harry could go and live a normal life, but Severus pleaded with her to stay. He was terrified of her being out there alone. He wanted to protect her and he wanted to marry her, but she remained firm in her decision to wait at least a year before considering marriage out of respect for James. Sometimes he badly wanted to throw it in her face that she was just as much his wife as any other married woman. All they lacked was the certificate. She lived in his rooms, ate at his table, allowed him to be a father to her son, and shared her body with him—willingly!

But he had told her he was a patient man. He would wait for her.

Lily knocked on Hagrid's door with Harry in tow. The door opened and she squealed as she saw her dear friend Remus sitting quietly in the corner. She handed Harry to Hagrid and launched herself on Remus, crying and laughing at the same time. When she pulled back, she saw how haggard and old he looked. She had seen him not more than six months ago, and he looked as if he had aged ten years.

"Remus," she said softly as she ran her hand through his hair. "What has happened to you?"

"Lily," he laughed. "Life has happened to me. Real life. I've been on the run since—" He stopped speaking. He was too choked up.

"Remus," she said sadly. She held him to her and kissed his cheek. He grew red as a beet and tried to avoid her eyes.

"So, Harry! He is getting to be quite the little lad!" he said with a forced lightness in his voice.

Hagrid handed him over and he held him in his lap.

"I take it that all is still well with you and Severus?" he asked delicately.

"Yes," she answered. "Severus is very good to me. He loves Harry—"

"He loves you, Lily," he said pointedly. "He loves you and therefore he loves Harry."

"Don't you judge me, Remus," she warned angrily.

"No, Lily," he answered sadly, "I am the last person to judge you. You have had your life ripped from you."

"Then would you mind not insulting me by challenging Severus' motives?" she bit back at him.

"I'm sorry, Lily. I am. I know Severus was not the horrid person James and Sirius insisted he was. But, Lily, that being said, you have to face the reality of what you are doing. The truth is that Severus loves you. He always has loved you. Please don't hurt him more than what James, Sirius, Peter, and I have. That's all I am concerned about, Lily. Don't live a lie."

Lily looked at Hagrid, who was pretending to not listen to their conversation, but had a look in his eye that said he agreed with Remus wholeheartedly.

"Remus," she whispered, "without Severus, I don't even know if Harry and I would be alive! He protected us from Sirius. He was so crazed and vicious that day. He scared me, Remus, and then he tried to give me an ultimatum. Severus loves Harry so much! You should see the two of them together!" she said as she forced a laugh. "They are so adorable."

Remus smiled weakly. "Lily, what if there were no Harry?"

Lily's green eyes darted from him to her son in fear.

"No, Lily," he said reassuringly as he patted her hand. "What I mean is, what if you and James never had Harry and then all this happened. Severus protecting you, making sure you were safe from Sirius and any other Death Eater that wanted to hurt you. What if, now that the threat is over, you were just a young, single widow without a child? Would you still be with Severus?"

She looked down at her lap and crossed her arms across her chest. She felt like a whore. She had given her body to a man in exchange for safety and justified it by pushing it all off on her son. She was overcome with anger, shame, and self-contempt. She couldn't face herself, let alone face them. She grabbed Harry and ran out of the hut towards the castle—back to Severus. She had chosen this life. She had to see it through.

Resolved

Chapter 8 of 30

Lily comes to a decision that will affect the lives of everyone around her.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 8 - Resolved

As the spring approached, Lily noted how the world was coming to life again. The buds were forming on the trees; lush greenery was peeking out from the melting snow. Everywhere she looked, she saw life thriving, but inside her heart, she felt she was dying.

Harry was growing so fast! She could hardly believe he was going to be two-years old in only three months. Each day he spoke more and more, and finally, one day he called Severus, "Daddy." She cried uncontrollably upon hearing that.

Severus rubbed her back as they lay in their bed later.

"It isn't such a terrible thought, is it, Lily?" he asked as he kissed her between her shoulder blades.

Lily had long since forgone wearing anything to bed. Severus was either insatiable or he just craved her. Either way, he made love to her in some fashion every night, save when she was having her period. She believed that if she wanted him, he'd even have sex with her during that time of the month as well!

She couldn't believe her attitude. Here was her best friend, the man who'd loved her longer than anyone, who had saved her and her son, who worshipped her body like she were a goddess, and she was sulking because her son had called that man "Daddy!" Well, he was in the purest sense of the word. He fed him, changed him, played with him, read to him, hell, he even took it upon himself as the man in the boy's life to toilet train him! He loved Harry. He loved her. He wanted to marry her and have more babies with her.

"No, Severus," she whispered. "It isn't a terrible thought at all."

One night in June, she was playing with Harry on the rug in front of the fire. Severus came out of their bedroom dressed in his best robes.

"Lily," he called out to her.

She turned to him and gave a low whistle. "Severus Snape! Where are you going in that get-up?" she teased.

He smiled weakly. "I am off to visit the Malfoys."

Lily's smile disappeared. Her green eyes snapped. She picked up Harry, and as she walked by him, she hissed, "Don't you dare move!"

After she got Harry situated in his room, she came out and marched towards him with murder in her eyes.

"You made a promise to me, Severus! A promise! You swore you would never go back to that life!"

"Lily, I'm not!" he said in his defense. "I still have my job to do. I'm here after all as a cover for my real job—as a spy!"

"Severus! Those days are over!" she said happily. "You are free—free! You can live your life without having to consort with those evil people."

"Lily, Lucius is still a threat. He is growing more powerful with the Ministry every day. I see the subtle signs. Lucius is nothing if not subtle. He lied about being under the Imperius Curse, and he is a threat to you and to Harry. He has a small band of followers, and he is spouting his pureblood rhetoric. Lily, he has to be watched carefully. He trusts me. Keep your enemies close, Lily. That way you'll see the poison as they try to slip it in your cup. Remember that!"

She looked somber, and he lifted her chin to look into her eyes. She couldn't see him.

"It'll never be over, will it?" she whispered softly, her eyes looking beyond him.

He took her by the shoulders and made her focus back on him. "I will never stop until it is. However, Lucius has a son. He's Harry's age. Lucius will fight to the death to keep his son safe and give him the life he feels he deserves. He is extremely dangerous."

"You would do the same for Harry, wouldn't you, Severus?" she whispered.

His brows furrowed. "Whatever you mean, Lily?" he asked worriedly.

"Just that you think of Harry as your own son, right?"

"You know I do. I love you and Harry."

Lily's eyes began to shine brightly as she stared at the wizard before her. "You would keep him here and teach him everything about the dark arts, defense, potions—you'd make sure no one ever hurt a hair on his head, wouldn't you?" she asked desperately.

"Of course, Lily. You don't even have to ask."

"I love you, Severus," she blurted out as she embraced him. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately.

Severus was overcome with her ardor and her declaration of love. He picked her up and took her to their bed. Lucius would wait.

She made love to him. She had never truly made love to him before. He had made love to her, worshipped her, adored her, yet still after all this time, she had never really made love to him.

She straddled him after stripping him of his clothes and took control over his body. He was speechless. She was frantic, riding him so hard and desperately, they both climaxed together within minutes. Panting, she slid off him and lay next to his glistening body.

"This must be heaven," he whispered slowly.

He turned his head to her and looked deeply into her lovely green eyes. "Lily, you were so beautiful," he whispered.

"When?" she asked.

"Just now. I watched you as you came. Your face was so beautiful. You are just so beautiful. I-I wish I could take you with me. You would be the most devastating witch in the room!"

He got up and went into the bathroom to wash up. The reality of what he'd said hit her.

He'll never be able to take me out on his arm. Not as long as people like Malfoy are around, he will always have to spy and place himself in danger. I'll never be free.

Something snapped inside Lily Potter. Everything became clear and focused in her mind, and the answer was simple. She wished Severus luck as he left and, after she had cleaned and dressed herself, went to take care of her son and explain to him her plan.

He was playing nicely with his blocks. She picked him up and rocked him as she talked.

"You are The Boy Who Lived, Harry. I should have died with your real daddy." She looked into his green eyes, the eyes she had given him, and brushed her finger over the lightning bolt scar on his forehead.

"Harry, Severus is going to be your mummy and daddy now. He's going to love you and take care of you. You're going to be a great wizard, Harry Potter. Severus will see to that. He'll care for you like Lucius cares for his son. You're not a Mudblood like me. You are a Potter. They were as pure-blood as they come. I'm a witch, so even though your mother was a Mudblood, you will at least be a half-blood in their eyes. Severus is a half-blood, and he is accepted. Harry, I'll only hold you back. It's not fair to Severus, either."

She held Harry close to her and kissed him. "Oh, Harry, I pray to God Severus will find a good witch who will love him how he deserves! Now, you go to bed now. Sleep, and in the morning you'll have a new life. Severus will love you and watch over you as his own."

She leaned over and kissed her son. His hands played with her long, red hair.

"I always promised you a future, sweetheart. You shall have one. Make sure you find a good wife and give me lots of grandbabies!" She laughed as she cried. "I love you."

She left him to sleep, and she walked into Severus' private potions storeroom. She calmly looked for what she needed and went into his lab. There, she methodically created the potion she needed. She sat down at Severus' desk, took up his quill, and wrote him a note. It read,

Severus,

Don't hate me. I did it for Harry. Love him as you said you would. Make sure he becomes the great wizard we always dreamt he'd be.

Your friend always,

Lily

The Death of a Family

Chapter 9 of 30

Lily's decision has a devastating effect on all those who love her. Snape finds his world turned upside down and everything his loves has been stripped from him.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

It was after midnight when Severus returned from the Malfoys. He had a smirk on his face from witnessing the progeny of Lucius and Narcissa. If little Draco Malfoy was any indication of the future of pure-bloods, there was no need to worry! Harry would best him at every turn; he knew it!

He entered the bedroom he shared with Lily, eager to tell her about Lucius' son. It was dark. *She must be asleep*, he thought. He lit a lamp and began to undress. He saw an outline in the middle of the bed, but the covers were not turned down. He raised the lamp and looked into Lily's face. A cold shiver went down his back. He put down the lamp and lit the room brightly. She was deathly pale. Her face had a grey pallor to it. He pounced on the bed and shook her by the shoulders. Her red hair cascaded around her face and his hands.

"Lily! LILY!" he screamed.

She was cold.

Lifeless.

Dead.

He saw a crumpled letter on her robes. He tore it open with shaking hands and read it. He scrunched it up in his hand and cried out in pain and anguish. He grabbed her and cradled her lifeless body to his sobbing, heaving one.

"No, Lily. NO! Don't leave me, please don't leave me!" he begged as he stroked her hair and face.

Suddenly, he heard Harry crying in his room. He didn't know what to do. Then, Albus was in the room with Madam Pomfrey and Minerva. Severus was holding Harry close to him, although he couldn't recall getting him from his crib. Then Minerva tried to take Harry from him.

"NOOO!" he shrieked, terrifying Harry in the process. He began to cry hysterically.

They all stepped back in fear. Severus hushed the crying boy. "Hush, son. Daddy's here, everything is going to be alright," he whispered softly over and over until Harry had calmed down in his arms.

He looked at Albus and Minerva and pleaded with them. "She wrote to me. She wants me to have Harry...to raise him. He's mine. He's all I have left of her. Don't take him from me!" He broke down sobbing as he cradled Harry's head on his shoulder.

"Severus," Albus said softly. "We need to give Harry to his family. He needs protection. The kind of protection that only his mother's blood can provide."

Severus looked at him, confused by the older wizard's words.

"Albus, please. He's my son," he whispered. "I taught him how to eat with a spoon, I taught him how to use the toilet. I know his favorite books." At this he got up and walked to his desk. "Here, here," he pointed. "This is where he sits on my lap as I grade papers. Lily and I had a plan. Read her letter." He looked at Harry with a crazed gleam in his eye. "I'm going to make him the most powerful wizard since Salazar Slytherin himself!" he announced proudly.

Dumbledore was growing concerned. Severus never took loss well, and grief...he could only imagine the amount of grief the wizard was capable of feeling. There was a reason Severus Snape had learned to control his emotions. He felt them more keenly than most. He loved deeply, and he hurt deeply. Dumbledore felt his grief would be nearly unbearable.

He needed to get Harry out and away from the Wizarding world. It was imperative Severus understood that. He knew that it would only be a matter of time before either Voldemort returned or Lucius Malfoy rose to take his place. Even more dangerous was the fact that little Harry Potter had bested the Dark Lord. He possessed mighty powers that Severus may not be able to resist manipulating. The lure of the Dark still ran strong with Severus, even though he resisted it with all his might. Once a person had its taste, he can never fully be rid of it. No, Harry Potter must go and be raised away from the Wizarding world until his formative years had gained a foothold against him ever thinking too highly of himself, thus becoming a tool for the Dark.

Albus looked at Minerva in concern. Minerva went forward and placed her hand on Snape's shoulder.

"Severus, Harry isn't safe in our world. He needs the protection only Lily's family can give him."

He looked up angrily at Minerva and then at Albus.

"Petunia?" he spat as if the name were a curse word. Then his eyes grew desperate. "Albus, don't take my boy from me. Please, don't do this to me. I can't lose him now. Please, I'm begging you, Albus. Haven't I atoned enough for my sins? Can't I please have this chance at happiness? Petunia won't love him. No one can love him as I do. He knows me; he knows my voice. He calls ME 'Daddy.' ME!" He held onto Harry and whispered calming words to him.

Albus nodded his head slowly. "Severus, Petunia is the only one who can protect Harry. Tom is not really gone. When Lily finally told me what she saw the night he attacked them, I knew that it would only be a matter of time before he regains his strength and returns. Severus, he will return, and he will be even more powerful than before! This scar is a cursed scar. Tom transferred some of his powers into Harry. He may be a danger to himself and to others. We can't risk it. If circumstances had been any different, perhaps, it would have worked out. However, with Lily gone...there is no more protection for Harry against Tom. He is vulnerable. You must let Harry go, Severus," he pleaded. "You must let him go in order to save him."

Snape's black eyes met Dumbledore's blue ones, and the old wizard swore he saw something die inside of them. He pushed Harry from him roughly into Minerva's arms. She looked at Albus for direction. He gave her a nod, and she began to pack up Harry's things.

Albus looked pleadingly at Severus. "It's not goodbye for forever, my boy. He'll be back when he starts school here. You will have him back here, and if you wish, you can tell him..."

"NO!" he thundered. "You want to take him from me, then take him! I can't do this by half-measures! I'll do your dirty work. I'll watch over him when the time comes. But don't tell me that I'll be able to pick up where I left off when he returns here at eleven. He won't know me any more than he'll remember *them*."

He looked at them wildly. "You both will swear to me that you will NEVER tell Harry about this. As far as he is to know, his mother and father died together. He's not to ever know about Sirius, Peter, or Remus. You tell that damn werewolf he is to stay the hell away! If I can't have him, no one else should either!" he yelled angrily.

"Severus, Harry would want to know how much you loved him and his mother. Surely, he'll be wanting answers. You could be such a comfort!" Albus reasoned.

"A comfort?" Snape replied coldly. "I'm sure Harry will be more than happy to know his mother whored herself to me to keep him safe! The nemesis of his father had dared to take the exalted place of father and made his mother so unhappy she killed herself. The cold, hard truth is that Lily had a choice between being my wife and suicide. She chose death! Death was preferable to suffering my touch. Why should Harry have to bear that knowledge? I don't want him knowing I drove his mother to suicide!"

Minerva was shocked. "Severus, I don't think that was why she did this! I'm sure what she felt for you was real."

"NO!" he cried out. His face was twisted in torment and pain. "You don't know, you just don't know! I tried to make her love me, I tried so hard, Minerva. She was so depressed and sad. She never loved me like she loved him!"

"I swear, I will not have Harry looking at me with disdain, laughing behind my back for trying to love his mother. I'd rather he hate me for being a right bastard. You swear, Albus. You swear an oath that you will NEVER tell him anything about these past seven months!" Snape demanded. "And you make damn sure Hagrid and the werewolf

take one as well!"

"I do swear, Severus. I'm sorry to keep such an oath, but I shall. I promise he will never know the best part of you. I'll leave that for you to reveal," the old wizard said tiredly.

Minerva started to pack up Harry's belongings, and Albus tried to reason with the young wizard one last time.

"No, Albus! You're taking him away from me and dumping him in the hands of the most foul, selfish, bitter Muggle I've ever known! Petunia Dursley is a horrid woman. She will ruin Harry!"

"How do you know about Petunia's marriage, Severus?" he asked.

"Lily told me, Albus. I didn't keep her chained to my bed fucking her every minute of the day! She actually did talk with me...frequently!"

"Severus!" Minerva scolded. "There is no reason to be crass! We know how much you loved and respected Lily. We also know that she loved and respected you as well!"

Severus strode to his liquor cabinet and poured himself a generous amount of firewhisky. "Sure, Minerva. She loved me, she loved me so much she just had to kill herself!"

He slammed down the drink and poured another large amount. He turned as he lifted the drink to his lips.

"Well? What the fuck are you waiting for? Get the hell out of my rooms!" he roared. He threw his head back and tossed the drink down. He poured another.

"Make sure you get all of the brat's things. Anything I find once you're gone, I'll incinerate. So, I suggest you do a once over!" he snapped.

With that said, Minerva and Albus saw the last of the Severus Snape they had grown to love and appreciate. With each drink he gulped down, went openness, trust, forgiveness, and happiness.

Silence

Chapter 10 of 30

Snape tries to deal with Harry being at Hogwarts during the first couple of years.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews! I also want to say that I have appreciated

all the reviews I've received, and I know many of you have expressed your sadness and concern over Lily's suicide. I promise that Severus will have his day! In the meantime, Lupin will continue to be a stabilizing force and a voice of reason in Snape's life. Snape will also find love again, and Harry will find out the truth about his relationship with Snape. I hope you will keep on with the story and see it through!

Chapter 10 Silence

If you could read my mind love

What a tale my thoughts could tell

Just like an old time movie

'bout a ghost from a wishing well

In a castle dark or a fortress strong

With chains upon my feet

But stories always end

And if you read between the lines

You'll know that I'm just trying to understand

The feelings that you lack

I never thought I could feel this way

And I've got to say that I just don't get it

I don't know where we went wrong

But the feeling's gone

And I just can't get it back

"If You Could Read My Mind" by Gordon Lightfoot

June, 1982

Dumbledore had his hands full. Making those who had known the truth about Lily's death take Wizard Oaths and discreetly handling Lily's burial under a headstone that already bore the date of her birth and death...October 31st, 1981...without Muggles or the Ministry detecting was a major feat.

In the end, all had been accomplished. From Minerva down to Sirius Black, whom Dumbledore had to visit in Azkaban to secure his oath, everyone who had ever known that Lily Potter had not died that night in 1981 had sworn an oath on pain of death to never speak of the seven months she had lived with Severus Snape. There were two stipulations. First, Severus Snape was the only one who could break the silence, and second, the moment Harry became an adult, the oath would become void. Even the Dursleys, Lily's sister's family, had been ordered strictly to never mention that he had been brought to their door other than November 1st, 1981.

Petunia and Vernon Dursley had not known of Lily's life after Voldemort's attack. The night Dumbledore arrived with little Harry Potter, asleep in his arms, all they had been told was that Lily had died along with her husband, James Potter, and the people who had known them had been caring for him. Dumbledore had taken care of that right after Lily came to Hogwarts. Many sophisticated Memory Charms had been completed. Neighbors, friends, co-workers, and family members of the Dursleys had to have their memories modified to make the illusion complete.

The night of the burial, only Dumbledore, Minerva, and Severus stood by the graveside surrounded by extensive enchantments to hide their purpose. Snape watched numbly as Lily's body was lowered into the ground. He thought about how lovely the June evening was. There was a light breeze blowing that summer night, and all around were signs of life and beauty. It was such a stark contrast to the grave in front of him. He mused how he should be feeling pain, sorrow, or grief for his lost Lily. However, all he could think about was his son and if he was all right...

November, 1991

Severus Snape burst through the headmaster's office and strode to his desk.

"That boy is the most, inept, conceited, ill-mannered child!" he swore.

Albus sighed. "What has the boy done now, Severus?"

Snape began to pace up and down the floor, his black robes swirling around him as he walked. "It's not one thing, it's his entire demeanor! It's as if nothing of his mother was ever passed to him! He is hopeless at Potions, obsessed with Quidditch...he's just like his father!" he spat bitterly.

He sat down hard into a chair in front of Albus' desk. He was so angry! He had begged Albus to eradicate from his mind the seven months he had with Lily and Harry. He had even pleaded for Albus to Obliviate him, but the wizard had refused. Therefore, he had continued to live with his anguish.

Seeing Harry always brought mixed feelings. He could see so easily the little toddler he had loved. He could still remember how natural it had felt to have him sit on his knee while he graded papers at his desk. Now, Severus sat alone and had nothing to show for all the love he had given. He had refused Minerva to transfigure back the rooms she had created for Lily and Harry all those years ago. He had kept the rocking chair and many a sleepless night he sat and rocked as he cried over the memories.

Pictures of little Harry came and went through his head. He could still remember how he had held him during one night when he had been sick with colic and a bad cold. He had laid the boy to sleep on the incline of his pale chest after rubbing him down with oils to help him breathe and ease the pain. He had insisted Lily sleep while he cared for Harry...his boy. Harry had been his...HIS...and he had been stolen from him!

Now, when the boy looked at him, it was with anger and hatred. He couldn't blame him. He treated him poorly, was unfair, mean, and cruel. He didn't want to be. He wanted nothing more than to take the boy in his arms and tell him all about how he had loved him and his mother. He wanted Harry to know how when he had called him "Daddy," it made him feel like he had been the luckiest wizard alive. Every time he thought he would just do it, he would think about how Harry would ask about his mother. Why had he been lied to about her death? How had she died? Why did she kill herself?

"Why did my mum kill herself?"

He could hear the eleven-year-old's voice clear as a bell asking that dreadful question.

"Well, she committed suicide because she could no longer bear fucking me."

Oh, if only he had resisted her the night she'd come to his bed wanting to make love! He should have insisted she stay in her bed. He never should have made love to her that first time. Now he wondered if she'd ever meant any of it. Had she ever loved him? Each time she had gasped his name as she had climaxed, had she meant it, or had she had to make a conscious effort to not say James' name?

As time passed, Severus began to wonder if he would ever know the love of a woman who wanted him more than anyone. Perhaps he wasn't good enough or worth it. He grew to become even more sensitive about his lack of good looks and sank deeper into the image he believed Lily had felt about him. Once in a great while, he would go find a willing whore and find release. He had only one condition: she must be ugly. He would never approach a comely prostitute. He had experienced heaven itself with the most beautiful witch in all creation, and she had rejected him in such a way that he could only see the blame within himself. He would never let the whore see his face as he fucked; he would only take her from behind. He was callous and cold with his fucking, but he didn't care. He paid good money to feel a warm cunt around his cock. Period. The kind of love he had felt for Lily didn't exist anymore...not for him at least. There had been a couple of women since Lily who had shown interest, but he had looked at them as if they were filth. They were likely trash or insane; otherwise, they never would have given him a second look.

Harry's second year was more upsetting than the first. The entire year was full of near misses, petrified students, and a basilisk on the loose. It had begun with the boy crashing a Ford Anglia into the Whomping Willow, very nearly killing himself, and ended with a near-death experience when he'd gone into the Chamber of Secrets in order to save Ginny Weasley from the Dark Lord's soul, encased in a leather bound diary. Severus had thought that year would be the death of him. He resented how the young boy kept getting into more and more trouble. Severus did what he could to keep him safe. Many times Severus had just wanted to rage at the boy wizard and tell him that he meant too much to keep acting recklessly! He'd been so happy when that school year was over. Little did Snape know that the following year would be even worse!

Harry's third year came round and with it came Remus Lupin. Snape was beyond himself. He roared his displeasure at the sight of the werewolf that summer before the term began. Albus had wanted both Lupin and Snape to be aware of each other's presence before the students arrived.

"I want it clear, gentlemen, that I will not put up with any deviant behavior. That means no wizard dueling, no bringing up sensitive information in front of the students, and absolutely NO talking to Harry about the past that he does not already know. Remember your oaths! Now, I would appreciate it if the two of you would discuss your mutual armistice in private and let me know the terms as soon as you are able. The deadline is September 1st. You are both dismissed."

That was that. The wizards swept from the room, and Snape turned and walked away from Lupin with not so much as a glance his way. Lupin sighed and followed the dark wizard to his dungeons.

Snape knew he was being trailed. Once he reached his dungeons, he whirled upon the werewolf.

"You must really want to make a name for yourself, Lupin. The shortest time any DADA professor has stayed on at Hogwarts! I could accommodate you and end it here!" he sneered.

"Severus, please, let's not be dramatic! We need to talk. We both know it's important to Harry that you and I at least be civil in public," he reasoned.

"I'm not the one with the problem of acting like an animal!" he spat petulantly.

"Severus," he warned. "You and I both know how much Lily wanted us to get along. Is this still about our school days? Or are you just afraid I'm going to blame you for Lily's death?"

"How dare you!" he bellowed. "Don't you EVER speak to me about Lily! You have absolutely NO IDEA of what I went through or what we had together!"

"Severus," Lupin began softly, "I made a Wizard's Oath to never speak to Harry about you and Lily. As far as Harry will know from me, Lily died with James in Godric's Hollow. Nevertheless, Severus, the fact remains that I still know the truth. You *loved* her. I know you loved her with everything within you. You were honorable and kind to Lily and to Harry. I may have not have had the honor of seeing the three of you together, but Hagrid and Albus told me about how happy you were. You had a family, Severus. I cannot imagine how painful it must have been to have had that family ripped from your arms."

He paused and waited for a reaction from Snape. He had his back to him and saw a twitch in his shoulder. He decided to continue.

"Severus, I would like for us to come to an understanding. I shall go my way and not interfere, and I shall expect the same from you. Perhaps one day, you and I will be able to sit down as friends, or at least as people who can both say, 'I remember when...'"

He turned to walk away, and Snape stopped him.

"Lupin, I shall be brewing Wolfsbane for you. If you are going to darken my days, I at least would like to feel reasonably safe. I shall bring it to you when it is required."

Lupin grinned and gave a slight bow to the Potions master. "I am deeply grateful, Severus." He then turned and walked back up the stairs with a wide smile on his face. He knew that he had just received Severus' terms to the armistice Dumbledore was awaiting.

Compassion

Chapter 11 of 30

After a disturbing conversation with Lupin, Severus seeks to find solace with a prostitute and is forced to face the truth of his cruelty.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews! This was one of a couple disturbing chapters I had to write. I want to place an extra warning on this chapter. I did not put down Abuse/Rape as a warning, but rather Dubious Consent because the interaction takes place between Snape and a prostitute. He does pay her; however, I do believe that prostitutes can be taken advantage of, and in this case, I believe it to be true. Snape is not a nice person to be around and won't be for the next couple chapters. However, I shall make sure warnings are placed when needed. I don't want to spring anything on anyone unawares.

It is not my intent to make light of rape or the mistreatment of prostitutes. Any woman violated, regardless of her life choices, is a crime. Snape will not come out of these next couple of chapters unscathed.

Chapter 11 Compassion

Spring, 1994

Lupin nervously sat around a small table at the Hog's Head. He had something he desperately needed to tell the wizard who had reluctantly become his friend. He sipped on his firewhiskey as he glanced periodically at the door. Finally, he noticed the black-clad figure of Severus Snape walk through the entrance. He stood to alert Severus to his table, and the wizard calmly made his way towards him.

As he reached the table, the dark wizard sat down gracefully. "Well, Lupin, this ought to be good since I can't have all and sundry know that I even remotely approve of you," he snarked.

Usually, Lupin would have smiled and laughed at his friend's backhanded attempts at friendly conversation. But things had changed...for good. He did not know how Severus would even take the news, let alone accept what he had to tell him.

Lupin swirled his firewhisky around in his glass before swallowing it down. Best to have some liquid courage in him for this conversation! He looked at Severus. He was sitting stiffly, glowering, and growing impatient. He crossed his arms around his chest, looking decidedly put out. Yet, there was concern etched on his face.

Lupin circled his tumbler around with his fingers, watching the amber liquid swirl. "Severus, you and I have had quite the year, haven't we?" he said, testing the waters.

Snape rolled his eyes. "What is this, Lupin? A stroll down memory lane? I haven't the time." He rose to leave.

"Sit." Lupin didn't even look at the wizard, but his tone was unmistakable. Lupin only used that tone when it was absolutely necessary. Snape sat back down and took off the sardonic mask he normally wore. Whatever it was, it was serious.

Lupin looked at him and whispered darkly, "Severus, I need you to listen very carefully at about what I am to tell you and not react. It could be potentially dangerous for anyone to know something was amiss. I have some very disturbing news, and you and I need to discuss it and try to come to a reasonable decision. Agreed?" he asked forcefully.

Snape nodded curtly and remained silent.

Lupin continued. "I was rather fortunate to come across an old *artifact* from our old school days. You recall, Severus, a bit of parchment that you confiscated from Harry that insulted you when you tapped it with your wand. I perused the parchment. It held a great deal of sentimental value for me. It was in fact a map. A map that James, Sirius, Peter, and I created. This map was not like any ordinary map. It is a magical map showing the whereabouts of every person on Hogwarts grounds. It *cannot* lie. It's important that you understand that, Severus, because I have seen the name of Peter Pettigrew on the map."

The mentioning of Pettigrew's name made Snape's head snap to attention and his eyes to narrow.

"No," he insisted. "Black killed him. He killed him, just like he tried to kill Lily and Harry!" he hissed.

"I know it's mad!" Lupin whispered in reply. "Unfortunately, it doesn't change the fact that Sirius has been working awful hard to get into Hogwarts. And for what? Why after all these years would he now come here to Hogwarts if were not for the fact that Pettigrew is alive?"

"You're raving!" Snape said condescendingly. "I saw with my own eyes, Black did everything except drag Lily out of our rooms. He was completely mad, I tell you! He had gone round the twist. I'm sure Azkaban has done nothing to improve his temperament! He's trying to kill Harry, I know it! Now, what is this really about?" he hissed. "Are you secretly helping your old friend for old times sake?" he accused the werewolf.

Lupin was undeterred. "Severus, I only want the truth. What if...no, listen! What if Pettigrew had been the betrayer? What if Pettigrew had been responsible for all those deaths in Muggle London and pinned it all on Sirius? What if it had been Sirius who had confronted Pettigrew and not the other way around?" he questioned.

"Lupin, I think I need to rethink your Wolfsbane Potion. Obviously, it has addled your brain!" Snape seethed. "Sirius Black is the vicious monster that tried to kill Lily and Harry and is responsible for turning against his so-called best friend and murdering him!"

He leaned in and threatened the wizard. "Lupin, we have made strides I never thought possible in our relationship out of our mutual love for Harry. However, my patience only goes so far. If I even smell a hint of a conspiracy between you and Black, I shall have no other recourse than to bring you both to the attention of the Dementors! Do not test me, wolf!" he growled.

He stormed out of the Hog's Head, and Lupin ordered another firewhiskey. That had gone badly. There seemed to be nothing he could do to stop the coming confrontation between the four of them. He only hoped Harry would not get hurt in the process.

Snape was enraged at the audacity of Lupin to suggest that Black had been wrongfully imprisoned all these years. All because of a bloody map! Well, at least he knew the secret behind all their near escapes from the professors! They'd had a detailed map of the comings and going of every witch and wizard at Hogwarts!

He was getting too old for all this. He was drinking heavily and eating less and less. He probably was an alcoholic like his thrice-damned father! Well, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree! Look at how he had failed at fatherhood and love for that matter! He needed to get laid. He was drunk enough to get himself a willing whore and fuck her brutally. He made it a source of pride to hurt his whores in direct proportion to how much pleasure he had given Lily. He had let more than one whore walk away in pain after an encounter. He was getting quite the reputation for being a hard and cruel wizard. Not many whores wanted to fuck him anymore, but he could always find a desperate hag who would take his money. A cunt was a cunt. If a whore was resistant to his brutality, it was all the better for him! Fear made cunts tighter. The crying and whimpering was music to his ears. It was the truth. He had been lied to by Lily. She had only endured and suffered his touch. If she had been honest, she would have screamed and begged him to stop rutting on her. So, he went in search for the truth.

He found a plain, young whore on the outskirts of the Alley. She was filthy. He had hood of his cloak over his head, obscuring a part of his face and offered her more Galleons than she could ever hope for in a week's work of peddling her pussy. Once the agreement struck, he lowered his hood, and a look of terror crossed her face. He smiled coldly as he spun her around and yanked up her skirt.

"This is going to hurt, but I think after the money I've paid for your favors, you can take it," he whispered evilly.

She shuddered as he cast a cleansing spell on her privates. The women could be as ugly as sin, but he wanted his pussies clean. He tore into her viciously, and she choked and screamed as he pounded into her. He grunted and panted into her ear. He didn't touch her except to keep his arm around her waist. He continued for a long time, her blood creating the lubrication he needed to make it easier. He finally came and withdrew from her. She cowered as she slid to the ground.

"I know you hate me, but I paid you well, whore," he sneered.

She was crying. No whore had ever broken down before. It unnerved him.

"What is wrong with you? If you can't take a cock, you need to take on a different occupation!" he snapped viciously.

"It's j-just it was my first night selling myself. I never had..sex...before," she whimpered.

He bowed his head in defeat and threw a bag of Galleons in her lap. "Get to a Healer and get some potions for the pain. Next time, be more aware. Wizards such as myself are not interested in virgins," he sneered.

He wanted to not care. He wanted to walk away and forget her, but his feet wouldn't move. She looked so helpless and broken. His conscience hurt him. He knelt down and took the witch's arms in order to help her up from the ground. She flinched, but when she saw he wasn't going to hurt her, she relaxed to his touch.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Moir, " she answered.

"Moir, get the hell out of here. You don't need to spend your life doing this. You don't have to do this."

"I don't have anything. Death Eaters killed my brother, and he was the only family I had. My parents were too poor to send me to Hogwarts, and now they are dead. I had to learn my magic at home. I don't have an education. I don't know how else to survive!" she admitted desperately.

Snape felt his chest clench at the mention of Death Eaters. As far as he knew, he could have been the one to cast the Killing Curse! He cleared his mind and focused on the girl. "Well, I've given you 100 Galleons. That's a start. Meet me here at this time, this day, every week, and I shall give you more, and don't worry, you don't have to give me anything in return. I don't want to see you whoring ever again. Have I made myself clear?" he ordered.

"Yes, sir," she said. "What is your name?" she asked.

"I'm no one, Moir. I'm of no account," he answered darkly as he withdrew from her. Then he stood, turned sharply on his heel, and left.

Denied

Chapter 12 of 30

Severus tries to make sense of his life in the aftermath of Sirius Black's return. He nurtures his relationship with Moir and comes to an important decision.

Please check out Chapter three. There is a picture made by beawasley2.

It had all come undone. Lupin's suspicions had been accurate. The facts were still cloudy, but all Snape could think about was that Sirius Black was free, Pettigrew had really betrayed the Potters, not Sirius, and Harry was as proud as a peacock now that he had his godfather alive and close to him. Snape had been terrified Black would tell Harry about his mother, but Lupin had assured him the Wizard's Oath Dumbledore made them all take had been clever enough to circumvent that possibility.

Each time Snape looked at Harry, he felt jealousy. He should be the one Harry should look up to and want to be around. Well, he had burnt that bridge years ago, but it still didn't make the pain any less. Each night as he rocked in Harry's old bedroom reliving the memories that he had replayed repeatedly, Lily and Harry came to life in his mind. He had kept one toy. It was a stupid, little, stuffed duck. It had been one of Harry's favorites and had been left behind by Minerva's hasty packing. He had considered tossing it into the fire and watching it slowly burn, but he couldn't bear to not have anything of his little boy to hold and remember. He wished more and more these days that he could tell him why he was so cruel, why he made life so hard for him. Harry needed to be tough; he needed to be aware that the prophecy was still in effect. It wasn't over. The Dark Lord would rise again, and Harry needed to be prepared. Therefore, Snape did what he could.

Lupin left that summer. Snape made no excuses or apologies. He had leaked the fact the man was a werewolf. In reality, he hated that Lupin had been right. He also had played a part in reuniting Harry with Black. He could not forgive that betrayal! Black would make sure that Harry would never see him than just an ugly, hateful, waste of life.

It hurt more than he could ever tell. He spent the summer looking forward to meeting Moira in Knockturn Alley. Soon, they were meeting in Diagon Alley. She had gotten a position at Flourish and Blotts as a saleswitch. She had a real knack for sales she had said with a blush. Snape had given her a small smile. He was pleased she had retained her virginal air about her. No one who ever need know she had tried her hand at prostitution. At least that was one consolation: he hadn't permanently done damage to the girl.

Moira was becoming more important to him than he had ever thought possible. She was plain, but the brightness in her eyes as she talked about her job and her future plans made her face light up with a soft glow. She wasn't pretty, but there was something about her that was pleasant on the eyes when she talked. She wasn't smart, as she had not been formally educated; however, Snape found her to be relaxing, and she did not mind his company. When August rolled around, Snape realized he had been seeing Moira every week now for four months.

He thought about her often now. She had nice brown hair, and a lovely figure, despite her face. Snape mused if perhaps in time he could have a real relationship with her. She was nineteen, young and naïve, but she had a nature to survive and adapt. He wondered and pondered as they continued to meet, if he could gather the courage to ask her if she would have anything to do with him. They had never touched again since that one fateful night when he had taken her virginity. He at times wanted to touch her hand, just to see if she would want his affections without money or strings attached. She had stopped taking money from him, insisting that she was self-sufficient in her own right. She had offered to pay back the money he had given her, but he had stoutly refused. He said it had been his pleasure to help a witch to get on her feet again and back in respectable society.

Not that being associated with me will help her chances! he had thought harshly.

At times, he wondered if he should just call it a day, wish her well, and be done with her. She didn't need the likes of him, and she probably only still met with him out of obligation, not out of a feeling of regard or affection. He wanted to ask her if she would consider going on a date with him, but he couldn't seem to get his nerve up. She remained distant physically, but still met and chatted with him about her latest adventures, friends she had made, books she had come across. She wanted to learn, so she decided to educate herself as much as she could. Sometimes she would bring a list of questions, and he would patiently answer them one by one. They were terribly simple questions that betrayed her ignorance. However, she wanted to learn and make something of her life. He could respect that.

He began that fall to dream about her. He found himself looking at her figure during their visits. He wished he had taken his time with her during their first encounter. He wanted to know what her breasts felt like, how her lips tasted, and what she looked like when she climaxed. He knew he was feeling things that he had warned himself repeatedly he should never feel. He chided himself that it could only bring heartbreak and pain, but he couldn't help himself. He was going to tell her of his interest the next time they met.

He was so nervous as he waited for her outside her flat. He had brought flowers. He felt like a damn fool, but witches liked flowers, so he thought it could only work in his favor. Perhaps it would take away from her looking at his face as he asked her for a date.

She came down, and she looked lovely in light pink robes. She blushed as he gave her the flowers, and they walked to the café they had started to frequent during their visits. Halfway there, she stopped and looked nervously at him.

"Mr. Snape," she began.

"Please, I would prefer if you would call me Severus," he asked eagerly.

"Um, I am feeling strange, as if something has changed. Is there something you would like to tell me?" she asked timidly.

Snape was extremely agitated and unsure of himself. "I had hoped to do this at the café, not in the middle of the street; however, yes, Moira, I would like to speak with you about my intentions," he said bluntly.

She nodded as if she were expecting what he was about to say.

"I would very much like the opportunity to take you out on a real date. I find you very relaxing to be around, lovely in your determination to better your life, and your ability to adapt to new circumstances is inspiring. Would you be interested in pursuing a new level in our relationship?"

Moira lowered her head. "Severus, I was going to speak with you about something different entirely. I've met someone. He's a wonderful man that I work with. He was a student of yours a few years back. His name is Gregory McKnight."

Severus remembered Mr. McKnight very well. He had been quite the wizard on campus: a Ravenclaw, decent at Potions, and quite the looker. He had the witches fawning over him whilst he had been a student.

"Yes, I recall Mr. McKnight," he said graciously.

"He was shocked when I told him I knew you. Of course, I didn't tell him the whole extent of our association, just that you had been kind to me when I told you about my brother." She looked guilty, and Snape sensed she wasn't being entirely forthright.

"Moira, tell me the rest, don't be afraid," he said calmly.

"Well, he said that you should feel guilty, that you are a Death Eater. He said that I shouldn't see you anymore because it could be bad for me. I mean, you could have been there that night! I really like Gregory, Severus. He is so handsome and sweet, and he is working towards becoming a Healer! He really gets me and is so open and attentive. I'm so grateful for everything you've done. You've been a good friend to me, but I need to say goodbye."

She handed him his flowers back, and she dashed back towards her flat.

Loathing

Chapter 13 of 30

Severus descends into self-loathing and lashes out after Moira's rejection.

A/N: I want to warn the reader that this chapter is very disturbing in content. Severus is not in a right frame of mind and has basically lost his grip on reality. Unfortunately, the innocent suffer. On a lighter note, Severus will come to his senses and this will be the last of Severus trying to punish himself for Lily's suicide. After this chapter, the story will take on a new feel and a new hope for Severus, Harry, and for the woman who will become the great love of his life.

Chapter 13 - Loathing

Snape stood frozen on the street holding a bunch of flowers. He felt like a complete fool! What had he been thinking? Why had he tricked himself into thinking Moira would ever be interested in him! Mr. McKnight was the type of wizard who could make her happy. How could he have ever deluded himself? If one thing he had learned from Lily, it was this: he was no good. He wasn't worth loving. From now on, he would stick with the whores he knew, and if he found himself in another "Moira situation," well, she deserved what she got!

Yes, he would prove how horrid he was. Why hide from it anymore? He went back to Knockturn Alley, remembering establishment he had always shied away from, and braced himself to enter. The witches there were lovely and sexy. He'd stayed away because he didn't want to experience anyone screaming and trying to run away when he attempted to get a leg over! However, that was over and in the past. His money was just as good as the next wizard!

He entered the brothel, assaulted with the scent of heady perfume and the sight of plush red velvet. The Madame came to greet him, and he politely asked for the most comely witch she had and asked how much. The woman smiled cruelly and said that Evangeline was her best and loveliest girl.

"But, she comes with a hefty sum," she said coolly. "Two hundred Galleons for one hour."

"Has she been used today?" Snape asked curtly. "I do not want her if she has been used already...and do not try to fool me! I am a Potions master and I will know." He glared at her, and she looked upon the dark wizard with new respect.

"No, it is early still. She doesn't have an appointment until later this evening, but you'll have enough time. She will need to prepare."

"What do mean, prepare?" he said suspiciously.

She looked affronted. "Well, she has to put on her make-up, turn up her hair, and dress. You are paying a great deal of money, sir. I'm certain you want your money's worth."

Snape sat down with a graceful flourish. "Bring her to me in her shift...no make-up, no frills. I want to see her fresh-faced and her hair brushed smoothly. What does she look like?"

"She is a blonde-haired, blue-eyed beauty. She has a lovely figure and is very new to my establishment," she answered proudly.

"How new?" he asked.

"She began one month ago. She came with very little sexual experience, and the men who have enjoyed her company have expressed their time with her was quite enjoyable."

"How old is she?" he asked in a bored voice. It would not do to seem anxious or needy.

"She is twenty, sir."

"So, that means she is sixteen or seventeen. Don't lie to me, Madame! I am quite capable of ascertaining the truth. You would do well to be honest with me now before I get angry," he said softly.

"Fine. She is seventeen. Perfectly legal. So, enough of these questions. Do you want Evangeline or not?" she snapped.

"Bring her down as I have requested," he said with a wave of his hand.

Ten minutes later, the Madame came down with a buxom beauty. She was fresh-faced and nubile. She was exquisite. He rose to face her and looked at her greedily. She seemed afraid and did not want to look at him in the eye.

"I will have her," he said seductively.

He followed her up to her room after he paid the Madame. Evangeline was quiet and looked frightened. She sat on the bed and shifted her eyes nervously. Snape sat in a chair across from her and stretched out his long legs. This was different. He had not had sex with a woman in a bed since Lily. No, he wouldn't think about that. It had been a lie.

"What do you want, sir?" she asked with a sweet, tinkling voice that betrayed her youth. She had yet to learn how to speak seductively to a man. Snape got up and motioned her to stand.

"Look at me," he commanded.

She looked at him, and he saw her face wince. He smiled malevolently. He repulsed her. At least she would be honest about it.

"Do I repulse you, girl?" he asked softly as he leaned into her. "And don't think about lying to me! I will rip your mind open and lay it bare for my own perusal if you lie even once!" he warned sharply.

She blinked and stared at him in terror. "Yes," she whispered.

He took off her shift and stared at her lovely, naked body.

"Tell me, what it is about me that repulses you?" he asked silkily as he ran a hand down from her neck to her full, rounded, left breast.

"Your hair is greasy and your nose is too large. Your skin is very pale, and your teeth are horrid," she blurted out in one breath.

At least she didn't lie, he thought.

"I shall reward you, girl, when I am finished with my own pleasure, for being truthful," he announced benevolently.

He started to take off his clothes and ordered her onto the bed.

"Lay down on your back and spread your legs," he demanded coldly.

She complied, and he mounted her. He massaged her breasts, and in return, she turned her face away from him.

"You will look at me at all times while I fuck you, whore!" he growled. "You will keep your eyes open and allow me to see all of your terror and repulsion."

She was trembling with fear, but obeyed him. She had seen his Dark Mark as he had stripped. She'd never had a Death Eater before. She only knew them by reputation. She hoped he wouldn't hurt her too badly.

He hovered over her and yanked her legs up over his shoulders. She wasn't wet, but he didn't care. He slammed his penis into her tight slit, and she screamed with pain. She started to cry, but forced herself to look at him.

He pulled out of her and lowered her legs. He took one of her breasts in his hand and suckled her as the fingers of his other hand danced around her clit. Slowly, she began to squirm and writhe in pleasure. Her eyelids grew heavy as she drew near to a climax. He stopped and bent her legs up to her chest, entering her again swiftly and forcefully. She gasped and watched as he pounded into her repeatedly. He kissed her and forced his tongue into her mouth. She pushed his face away. "Don't kiss me!" she cried.

He grabbed her face and held it to close his own. Her blue eyes were full of fear. "Why?" he breathed as he continued to pound into her. "WHY?" he screamed.

She winced. "Because it's the rule," she explained quietly.

"No, you tell me it's because you can't stand my touch. My mouth with my horrid teeth disgusts you. You are sickened by the fact my cock is inside you, that my hands have touched your breasts. TELL ME!" he hollered.

She swallowed hard. "Yes! Yes, you are an ugly, hateful man!" she spat. Then, as if she had come to her senses, she covered her mouth and cowered. Snape laughed her.

"I thought you were going to hit me," she whispered.

Snape continued to thrust inside her. "No, my sweet. You have been...ah!" he gasped. "Honest," he said with a sigh.

He pummeled into her, making her cry out in pain. He didn't care. She was going to pay. She would pay for every woman who had ever rejected him, lied to him, or led him on.

"You are a lying, conniving, whore!" he ground out angrily.

He was nearing the end. She had felt so hot and resisting the entire time. He bored his eyes into hers and probed her mind. He saw the revulsion and fear she felt for him. He slammed into her deeper until his balls slapped her backside. She whimpered, and as he emptied himself, he whispered to her just inches from her face, "I hate you."

He took his wand and cleansed her. "Now, you shall have your reward. As ugly as I am and as repulsive as you find me, you will be screaming my name soon enough. It is Severus. Remember it," he sneered.

He descended onto her core, certain that no man had ever done this to her, and his intuition was proven correct as she began to strain and wriggle against him. She began to moan that she was coming. He stopped, and she came back down from her high. He did this many times, toying with her, until she began to cry.

He rose above her. "Why are you crying, girl? Surely you don't wish for this ugly, greasy, hateful man to continue?" he said in a sickening-sweet tone.

"Yes, I do! Please!" she begged.

"Please what?" he asked patiently.

"Please, S-Severus!" she groaned.

He went back down and began to bring her to the edge. She screamed and screamed his name. As she started to settle down, he was hard again and grabbed her by her arse and pounded into her deeply, hitting that spot that would make her come undone. He held her face in one hand as he held himself upright with another. He wanted to see her face as she came.

"Say my name!" he growled.

"Severus!" she breathed.

She was tightening and pulsating around his cock, and he knew she was so close. He whispered deeply in her ear, "Remember it was this horrid, greasy, ugly wizard that made you come over and over."

She began to moan and call out his name, and he came with her silently, enjoying how he had brought this beauty to her knees.

He dismounted her and dressed. She covered herself with her sheet, looking ashamed and humiliated.

"Remember me and my hideous face when your next clients come in tonight. They shall be more handsome, but I doubt if they will give you the pleasure I have," he said cruelly as he stormed out the door.

He walked out of the brothel feeling smug in asserting his dominance over the young whore, yet inside he still felt hollow and sad. He knew as he left the establishment there could be no more whores, no more women to seek out or to punish. He was through with punishing others for Lily's treachery. There could no longer be any more joy after what he had done to that poor girl. He knew what he was, and he was not lovable. Snape concluded that if there was no love involved, there could be no sex...not for him. He just didn't want to hurt anyone anymore. It was finally over.

A/N: I know this was brutal to read, but it needed to happen for him to exorcise his demons. It is just so unfortunate an innocent girl had to bear the brunt of his wrath. Know this: Severus will never forget what he did to that poor prostitute, Evangeline. He will never touch another prostitute again and resign himself to a life of self-imposed celibacy for his sin.

Next up: Lupin returns and will help Severus to recover from his pain. He will also help to open Severus' eyes to the possibility of real love with a young woman. Free house points to who can figure out the witch who holds a torch for the tortured Potions master! :)

Wanted and Unwanted

Chapter 14 of 30

It's 1995. Severus Snape returns late one night to Grimmauld Place after a meeting with Voldemort. Unbeknownst to him, things have changed.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta!

Chapter 14 – Wanted and Unwanted

Severus Snape stumbled out of the Floo into Grimmauld Place one summer night in 1995. He coughed and swore when he saw blood on his handkerchief. It was very late, and he did not wish to wake the household and answer all their bloody questions, so he stumbled to the couch and went to lie down. Instead, his hand came in contact with something soft that squealed when he touched it. He lit the room with his wand and saw Miss Granger lying on the couch in her nightgown.

"Get out of here!" he hissed. "You have a bedroom, do you not? Or has Miss Weasley kicked you out for her own immoral purposes?"

"I was reading and fell asleep. Oh, sir, you are hurt! Please, let me help you!" she pleaded.

"If you want to help, then I suggest you wake the werewolf!" he growled. "Now get out of my sight!"

She scurried away, and he fell down on the couch. It was warm from where she had lain on it. He could smell the lavender scent that lingered behind, and it was soothing. He began to fall asleep.

"Severus! Wake up!" said Lupin. "Let's see the damage."

He began stripping off Snape's shirt when suddenly halted by his patient. Severus was staring up at Miss Granger.

"Miss Granger, if you are done ogling, would you mind giving me my privacy?" he snarled.

Hermione turned beet red and dashed off.

"Severus, she just wanted to help!" chided Lupin.

"Of course, that's all she ever wants to do is help. However, I do not require her help! I refuse to receive medical attention from a child!" he snarked.

"She's hardly a *child*, Severus. She's almost sixteen. You would be surprised at her knowledge," he murmured.

"Lupin, I am quite aware of Miss Granger's knowledge. She spouts it often enough in my presence!" he grumbled.

Lupin finally got the wizard situated and stumbled wearily out of the library to return to bed. He saw the kitchen light on and opened the door to find Hermione crying on the table.

His heart went out to the poor girl. It wasn't easy for her. He knew what it was like being the odd one. Severus should recall that as well, but he had a knack for being obtuse at the worst possible moments. He sat next to the girl and put his hand on her arm. She bolted upright and muttered her apologies.

"Hermione, it's alright. You're not the first girl Severus has made cry, and I'm certain you won't be the last. Try not to take his words so close to heart."

"I can't help it, Professor. Whenever I see anyone in pain, I want to help! That's why I wanted to stay on here, to help in cases of medical emergencies. So far, only Professor Snape has needed medical attention, yet he refuses my help. Why can't I ever please him? Nothing I do is ever right!"

"Why does Professor Snape's opinion mean so much to you?" he asked softly.

"I don't know," she said honestly. "It just does. It hurts when he is so cruel, I mean, I know his personality is prickly and that's fine, but he treats me as if I'm worthless, and I'm not! He's supposed to be reformed; yet he treats me no better than Draco Malfoy. He might as well call me a 'Mudblood' and be honest!" she yelled. Then she burst into fresh tears and ran out of the kitchen upstairs to her room.

Snape came in the kitchen after her footfalls were silent.

"I suppose you heard that?" Lupin asked accusingly.

"What, I'm supposed to feel bad because I choose not to allow her to use me as a familiar? I'm not her damned cat!" he snapped.

Lupin closed his eyes and shook his head sadly. "Severus, why must you isolate yourself from everyone who wants to care about you? Hermione is a wonderful girl. She's a bright student and very intelligent. She'll be a colleague one day. You'd best watch that you don't burn that bridge. You may regret it later," he warned.

"As if I shall live long enough to see any of these children become adults," he muttered as he got some water and slowly made his way back to his sofa.

Lupin sighed. He hated it when Severus went into his fatalistic mode each time he wanted to avoid anything uncomfortable.

Snape was irritated. Why was he supposed to be responsible for the hurt feelings of a child! An irritating child at that! He hated being at Headquarters. Molly fussed too much, and her brood of brats annoyed him to no end. The truth was that he only came for two reasons: one, as a quick base to hide out after being thrashed by the Dark Lord and, secondly, to see his boy.

Yes, in Snape's mind, Harry was still his boy. Nothing would change that *ever*. He had come to grips that Harry hated him, but he'd rather the boy loathe him and continue

to loathe him for many years to come than to love him and die—all because he was coddled.

A father shouldn't coddle. That was what mothers were for. Harry had Molly Weasley and Hermione Granger fussing over him enough to cover that role! He thought it was disgusting how Miss Granger kept allowing Harry to ride on her coattails. She was forever whispering instructions and stopping him from learning from his own mistakes. In addition, Black was far too indulgent from what he had seen and heard. And he'd heard quite a bit. Minerva and Lupin made sure that he was informed. He'd made that wish quite clear from the start when Dumbledore had made the men shake hands and forced them to be civil to each another. Snape wanted to know how Black was treating Harry. From what he'd learned, the man was having a problem distinguishing Harry from James. Well, after twelve years in Azkaban, he was bound to be a bit touched in the head.

Still, that did not exempt Harry from having someone in his life who would show him how difficult the world could be. If he thought being raised by Petunia was enough, he was in for a shock. Petunia was just a Muggle! She did not have the depth or the capacity to truly hurt and destroy him. There was an entire group of people who had dedicated their lives to killing him. He wasn't going to allow his son to be a deluded fool!

A True Father

Chapter 15 of 30

Christmas, 1995: Snape arrives at Headquarters to discuss with Harry Dumbledore's plan of teaching him Occlumency.
A fight breaks out between Sirius and Snape over Harry.

Chapter 15 A True Father

Snape returned to Grimmauld Place during the Christmas hols. He was not looking forward to the arguments that were sure to come from his visit. He wanted to avoid Black at all costs, but it was impossible if he was coming into this damn place!

As soon as he entered, there was Black walking in the long hallway. He stopped and glowered at Snape.

Snape sighed internally. *I might as well get this over with!* he thought sadly. He hated that his interactions with Harry were so full of pain and loathing. As time passed, the boy grew to hate him more and more. Snape tried desperately at times to find some semblance of the little toddler he had loved so much. It seemed that some days all that remained was the scar and his mother's eyes,

He walked up to Black, his face set in cool indifference, and said, "I need to speak with the boy. I shall be waiting in the kitchen."

Black followed him closely. "What do you want with Harry?" he demanded angrily.

"You have absolutely no business concerning my interactions with Harry!" Snape growled over his shoulder.

"Oh, don't I?" he jeered as he grabbed a hold of Snape and spun him around to force the dark wizard to look at him. *I am* Harry's godfather, Snivellus! Your days of playing 'Daddy' are over!"

Severus drew his wand and was about to hex the wizard into next week when Molly entered the room.

"Severus? Sirius? What's going on here?" she demanded as she set her hands on her hips, her eyes darting back and forth as if they were two of her own children.

"Go and get Mr. Potter," Snape said curtly, never once taking his eyes or wand off Sirius.

She turned and left the wizards alone.

"You listen to me, Black," Snape hissed. "I loved Harry as if he were my own son. I was not 'playing' at anything then, and I am not 'playing' now!"

Sirius moved a step closer to Snape, ignoring the wand that was nearly against his chest, and whispered angrily, "I've been waiting for the perfect time to tell you exactly what I thought of your *keeping house* with Lily. You loved it, didn't you? Didn't you! You wanted James dead, and he died. Then you wasted no time dragging Lily into your bed. When I think of you climbing all over her, I want toretch!"

Snape punched the wizard in the face. Black fell back, and Snape invoked a nonverbal *Incarcerous*, binding Black where he could not retaliate. He couldn't resist a nasty smile at Black's helplessness. But it was a hollow pleasure. He had been cut to the quick by his venomous remarks about his relationship with Lily. Sirius had tapped right into the source of Snape's deepest grief.

"I LOVED HER!" he roared. "I loved her and Harry more than you can imagine! Don't you dare attempt to cheapen what you can't possibly begin to understand!" His fists were clenched into white balls.

Lupin walked in and assessed the situation. He released Sirius and cast a Silencing Spell. He was livid. When Lupin became angry, it was awesome to behold. Neither Black nor Snape could hold a candle to it.

"What are you two fighting about?" he snarled as he healed Sirius' bloody lip and invoked *Finite Incantatem*.

"I could hear you up the stairs. Good for you I cast Severus' *Mufflato* Spell to stop anyone from hearing you! Thank God, Harry, Ron and Hermione were so wrapped up in their own conversation they didn't hear all this! I told Molly to hold off on getting Harry."

Lupin looked at Sirius, who was panting with fury, grasping his wand. He was spoiling for a fight.

"Sirius!" he snapped sharply.

Sirius jerked his head towards his friend. Lupin walked slowly towards him keeping a keen eye on the wizard's wand hand.

"Severus, may I have a private word with Sirius, please?" he asked politely.

Snape left the room. He knew it wasn't a request. The werewolf was enraged.

Once Snape had left, he turned on his friend in a torrent of anger.

"Sirius, you have no business casting judgments on what happened between Severus and Lily!"

Sirius began to protest, and Lupin stopped him.

"NO! You weren't there. You made that decision to not support her choice. It was *her* choice Sirius! She chose Severus! Like or not, it is the truth. If you don't believe me, ask Albus, or Minerva, hell, even Hagrid! They all saw how genuine Severus' intentions were. He loved Lily, and he loved Harry! He still does. Don't do this, Sirius. You can't begin to understand how devastated we all were when Lily died, but no one was more devastated and hurt than Severus. Then having Harry taken from him...it almost killed him! Are you so bloody-minded you can't see that?"

"Then why did Lily kill herself, Remus? If she were happy, why would she do such a thing?" Sirius questioned hotly.

Lupin sighed. "I never said Lily was happy. No one will ever know the truth of their arrangement and their relationship. What I do know is that Lily lived with Severus of her *own free will*."

"Yes!" Sirius said triumphantly. "She chose to live with him, but as far as we know, he could have been forcing himself on her!" He began to pace in his irritation. It was clear nothing bothered him more than the idea that James' widow had lain willingly with her husband's nemesis.

Lupin watched him warily as he paced in his frustration. He tried to get him to see reason. "Sirius, do actually think that Lily would have lived with a man who was raping her?" Lupin asked incredulously. "Lily ended her long-time friendship with Severus over him calling her a 'Mudblood! Do you really think when that when she had Hagrid, Albus, and Minerva at her disposal, to intervene at anytime, she still would stay with him if he were abusing her? I asked her, Sirius! True, she was very conflicted. Perhaps she saw how happy Severus was having her back in his life, or how he loved Harry...and Sirius, he loved Harry. Hagrid told me the most touching stories. Severus, for all his faults, had the capacity to see the face of the man he hated more than anyone in Harry, and he still loved and adored him. He was so caring and loving, so unlike the man you and I know. You and I just DO NOT KNOW what Lily was thinking that night."

Sirius became sober and saddened at the thought of Lily. "Remus, I should never have gone after Wormtail. I should have stayed and supported her." He turned and faced his old friend. "I just feel that if I had been around, she wouldn't have felt trapped with him!" he said sadly.

"Sirius, Lily wasn't *trapped* with Severus," Lupin said staunchly. "She had choices. We all have choices. But, she was grieving so much. She wrote a letter saying good-bye to Severus, and she begged him not to hate her, that she was doing what was best for Harry. It was her dying wish for Harry to *remain* with Severus. *Albus* decided to take Harry away to live with Lily's sister."

Sirius turned from Lupin and faced the window. "I just missed out on so much! I'm Harry's godfather! I am the one James and Lily chose to protect Harry. Now that they are gone, Harry is my responsibility! Snape can't stand the relationship I have with Harry. It galls him, and I could care less, Remus!" he said angrily.

He turned back around and faced Lupin. "You talk about all that *he* lost. What about what *I* lost? If he loves Harry so much, then why should he begrudge my relationship with *my* godson?"

Lupin gestured his hands in surrender. "Look, Sirius, I'm not saying that Severus is acting correctly. Perhaps he feels threatened. Perhaps he is jealous of what he sees you and Harry have."

"Then why, in the name of God, if he loves the boy so much, why does he treat him so shabbily?" he demanded.

Lupin pondered for a moment and said slowly, "I know, Sirius, that your father was a hard and unforgiving man. His treatment of you made your rejection of the dark arts absolute. Now, he wasn't trying to do that, but the effect was the same. Severus, from what I can understand, wants more than anything to make sure that Harry grows up strong and able to combat this Prophecy and this connection with Voldemort. I think, and I may be mistaken, I am not sure, but he may feel he needs to be hard on Harry. That it would be better to be cruel than to be kind. You see how adored and loved Harry is. I think Severus wants him to be grounded, and if he has to be hated in order to ensure his survival, then so be it."

The two wizards were silent, each with their own thoughts.

Finally, Lupin said, "I'll get Molly to bring Harry down so Severus can talk to him. Sirius, please do not interfere!" he warned as he removed the Silencing Spell.

When Harry came down to speak with Professor Snape, he saw the professor and his godfather sitting at opposite ends of the table, eyeing each other with loathing and hatred...

Love and Hate

Chapter 16 of 30

Severus confronts Dumbledore after Harry looks into Snape's Pensieve. Later, after another meeting with Voldemort, he allows Hermione to tend to his wounds. One sleepless night, he discovers how much the young witch feels for him.

Chapter 16 Love and Hate

The door slammed behind Snape as he charged into his sitting room. He poured himself a tumbler full of firewhisky and gulped it down. Soon, warmth spread though him just enough to give him the edge he needed to go yell at the old bastard.

He Apparated to the Unplottable Cottage where he knew Dumbledore was hiding from the Ministry and Dolores Umbridge.

"Severus," said Dumbledore. "To what do I owe the pleasure of your company?"

"Piss off, you old sod!" he bellowed.

The Headmaster's eyes lost their twinkle, and his face turned grim and harsh.

"You dare to speak to me in such a manner?" he replied angrily as he stood up from his chair.

"I do, indeed, sir," Snape retorted coolly.

He continued as he sat down casually in a nearby chair.

"I wanted you to know from me that I threw Harry out of my office tonight in a pique of rage. The insolent whelp you have cuddled and coddled like a china doll broke all boundaries of privacy and decency and looked into my Pensieve!" he bellowed.

His black eyes were glittering madly. "I do hope you are proud of yourself, Albus. First, you take him away from me, and then when he is restored to the world he rightfully belongs, he is treated like a celebrity to be fawned over. No matter that his life is on the line, no matter that he must be trained to defeat the darkest wizard since Grindewald. I seem to be the only person you saw fit to teach him Occlumency, knowing full well how much the boy hates me, and how I would have to break him in order to build him up to be strong!" he roared.

"Damn you, Albus, for making my son hate me!" he finally whispered sadly.

"Severus, Harry is not your son. He never was your son. He is James' son," Dumbledore replied tersely.

Severus shook his head in rejection. "That man may have sired him, but *loved* him. I had for the first time a family...a *family*! And you tore it from me. Now, I will never be reconciled with him. Never! He saw the memory where I called his mother a-a *Mudblood*," he whispered, his voice choked with emotion.

"The worst thing I ever did, and now he knows. I had hopes, Albus. I had a hope that one day when he was old enough I could finally tell him. I would tell him how much I loved his mother and him. But, thanks to you, he's lost from me forever! You are a right bastard!" he yelled as he stormed out of the cottage.

Things heated up that summer. Harry was devastated by Black's death, and although Snape hated the man, his heart broke for him. He watched as his boy sought comfort in the arms of Miss Granger. He knew the two were only friends, but the sight of how open and giving she was to him was touching. He watched from a distance as he saw her offer her arms to him and he would fall right into her embrace. He was grateful his boy had a soft place to fall. She did not shun him as he cried in her arms. She seemed, if anything, even more willing to be there for him. *She must pity him!* he thought angrily. He didn't want anyone pitying his son! He was so focused he let his guard down, and he heard a voice behind him.

"It's nice that he allows himself to be vulnerable, isn't it?"

Snape jerked his head to the side and saw out of the corner of his eyes the slight, pale, mousy-haired Metamorphmagus.

"Watcher, Snape," she whispered.

"Nymphadora," he murmured as he continued to watch the tender exchange between Harry and Hermione.

"Tell me," he whispered, knowing she was still behind him. "Why would a witch do that if not for pity's sake?" he asked her.

Tonks budged closer to him. She was so short she didn't even come to his shoulder. "Hermione loves Harry. He's like a brother to her. It doesn't count when it's like family," she answered softly.

He looked down at the young Auror. He had never taken her seriously; she was too flighty and far too clumsy to inspire anything other than concern to protect his person from her myriad accidents. As he looked down at her, he saw a gnawing hunger in her large eyes. She was in a lot of pain. He could see it keenly.

"Why do you do that to yourself?" he asked contemptuously.

"Do what?" she asked defensively.

"Ever since Black died, you've been carrying on like death. If you weren't acting so blatantly obvious, I might have missed you were just another heart-sick witch."

"And if I am just a heart-sick witch, Snape?" she prompted.

"Then I'd say you're a damned fool for wearing your heart on your sleeve," he sneered.

"I think some people are obvious in other ways, Snape. Some people cry and carry on while others, like me, mope and are listless. Then there is another small percentage, which are by no means unique, stalk around brooding their life away with nothing uplifting to say to anyone, and have only sour expressions and snarky retorts for anyone who happens across their wake," she retorted smoothly without giving him so much as a look.

"Trying to match wits with me, *Nymphadora*?" he snarled.

She faced him and looked up into his hardened face. "Not trying...succeeding! You are a real piece of work, Snape. You think that your cold and derisive treatment of others keeps you safe and secure from being vulnerable. Well, it's a lie!" she snapped, her hair starting to pink up as her anger rose.

"Well, it seems my *derisive treatment* is good for something!" he retorted smugly. "You seem to be rising out from under your *funk*," he said as he gestured toward her pinking hair.

She pursed her lips and made to stalk off when he reached out to stop her. "Alright, Tonks. Just answer me this one question," he asked politely.

"What?" she said impatiently.

He guided her back to Harry and Hermione. "Look at them. Take the 'he's like a brother' out of the equation. What if he were attracted to her? Would he be able to cry and be vulnerable like that, if she were not attracted to him as well? It just would seem like pity to me," he deduced.

"You would, *Slytherin*!" she sneered. "You wizards are all alike! You make women to be so complicated when we really aren't...at least those of us who are sane!" she quipped.

Snape gave a snort. "Witches are easy to figure out? That's a boldface lie if ever I heard one. Witches are duplicitous and conniving. They say 'yes' when they mean 'no' and vice-versa. There is only one kind of witch who is truly honest, and I've only found them in Knockturn Alley!"

"You're so smart! You think you know all the answers. Well, let me tell you, Snape. A witch that does one thing and says another is just an insecure witch, and Merlin help the wizard in love with her! But a healthy witch, a witch who knows what she wants and with whom, will be very clear about her intentions. Snape, if a woman treats you like how Hermione is treating Harry, and you know she doesn't think of you like a brother, you've got a 50/50 chance. Either she wants to fuck you six ways from Sunday or she's mad as a hatter!"

She turned and marched off. He looked back and Harry and Hermione were now talking and laughing with Mr. Weasley.

50/50 chance? he thought. *With my luck, she would be insane*" he thought grimly.

He came back again, bleeding and broken from his latest meeting with the Dark Lord. Miss Granger was there waiting. She came right to his aid, and he grudgingly allowed her to assist him. He watched as she attended to him. Her hands glided all along his torso, prodding and checking for broken bones. She knew a great deal of healing spells and had him right again soon enough, although he would need to rest for a few days. He noticed how attentive she was, how caring, and patient.

She treated him with the same affection as she gave Potter. He watched her with trepidation. When she finished with him, she sat at his side and made sure cool cloths were on his forehead. He decided to let her believe he was asleep and listened to her. She whispered comforting words to him: words of respect and kindness. She began to stroke his hair, and he felt for the first time in years, safe and loved. Once he peeked through his lashes and looked at her. Her eyes were averted from him while replacing the cloth on his forehead. He took notice of her. She was a young lady. Not a girl, but not a woman. She had an earnestness that was refreshing. Over the next few days, he allowed her to care for him. She didn't say much and it was nerve-wracking. This was not the little know-it-all he was used to. He enjoyed her warmth and her gentle touch. It was confusing how physical she was with him. Her hands lingered on him. He enjoyed each time her soft body brushed against his. He knew Miss Granger was not crazy. He knew she did think of him as family, either. This was bad...very, very, bad.

It was important to get up and move about as much as possible to keep his circulation going. Nighttime was the worst. The summer heat, even with cooling charms, just didn't do the trick. He was continuously restless.

He walked silently down to the second floor. He heard the hushed whispers and pants coming from the bathroom. He heard the distinct moaning that only a woman could make. Then he heard *his son* whisper words of love and gentleness. He really shouldn't be listening, but he needed to know if his boy knew how to treat a witch with respect in regards to sex. It sounded like he was with Ginerva Weasley. She was sounding rather pleased. Then he heard his son whisper his love for her. He was bringing her to climax. *Good work!* he thought happily. At least that was something he didn't have to worry about. Now, if any of her brothers or her mother found out he were giving the Weasley girl the high, hard one...there would be the devil to pay. He would have Lupin speak to the boy about that.

He carried on and passed the room Ginny shared with Hermione. Was she alone? Was she with that idiot Ronald Weasley? A flicker of anger rushed up inside him and he paused at the door, finding it slightly ajar. *Miss Weasley must have neglected to shut it firmly when she left!* He couldn't resist looking. He didn't know why, he just was compelled. He looked through the slivered opening. He saw in the moonlight, Miss Granger. Her legs were spread in desperation as she moved her fingers around her mound. She had pushed up her short nightgown up to reveal a plump breast. She was groaning quietly as she massaged and twisted her nipple as she frigged herself wantonly. He was in shock. She was whispering something like, "harder", "deeper", "please, fuck me."

She was reaching her climax, he could tell by the panting and jerking of her hips as she moved her hand between her legs faster and faster. She parted her legs even more and he felt his body react in record time. He could see the pink flesh that she was manipulating and the jiggling of her breast as she jerked and writhed on the bed. He wanted to join her and stroke himself to completion, feeding off her desire, but he did not dare. As she climaxed, she moaned, and he heard his whispered name drip from her lips like honey.

"Severus, oh, Severus! I need you...harder, harder ..."

He nearly fell down as he watched her fantasize about *him*! It was powerful and wrong. He went straight back to his room. He was rock hard and needed to savor such a moment. There was no sense in trying to will away a perfectly magnificent erection! She had no reason to pretend. She didn't know he had been watching her. She wanted him inside her pink, tight pussy. She wanted him to suck on her nipples and drive her hard and deep into a shattering orgasm. He didn't last long at all, but it was a very satisfying experience, imagining burying himself between those spread thighs that were aching for only him. Oh, this was bad, very bad...

He decided both for their sakes to maintain a cool demeanor towards her and refused her to continue helping him. He was her teacher. She was a student and underage. He asked Molly to tend to him. It was not proper for Miss Granger to come into his room anymore.

Hermione had been mortified and humiliated when Professor Snape dismissed her from his room.

"Miss Granger, I no longer wish for your assistance. From now on, keep your distance. Mrs. Weasley shall see to my needs," he said brusquely.

She sat through dinner that evening sad and a bit bruised. After dinner, Lupin, who had noticed her melancholy, sat with her in the library and spoke with her.

"I guess being a Mudblood is far too much for his system to handle. I must make him ill!" she said angrily.

"That is not true, Hermione," Lupin replied. "Professor Snape is very concerned with appearances. Remember too that you are an underage witch. He does not want to impede any future chances for you. He wants your reputation to remain intact. He believes an association with him will only lead to scandal and ruin. He's looking out for your best interest. Please, do not make it personal," he begged.

Hermione nodded, but her eyes were filling up with tears.

"Hermione, what is it?" he asked softly.

"I-I don't know. I really don't. I feel so confused, and I haven't figured it all out yet. I just care about him. I don't even know why. I just do. I wish I didn't," she blurted out.

"I'm sorry, Professor," she apologized as she left the room.

Lupin sat contemplating with what Hermione had confessed. He turned in his chair to see Tonks standing there, looking tired and forlorn.

"Wotcher, Remus," she said with hollow enthusiasm.

"Did you hear what Hermione said?" he asked.

"Yeah, looks like she's got the beginnings of it, all right," she said sadly.

He stood up and walked towards the Auror. "Honestly, Dora, you don't think Hermione could have romantic feelings for Severus?" he asked laughingly.

"Yeah, I do," she said plainly.

"It's absurd. He is 36! She is sixteen! He's a pariah and she has a future ahead of her!" he said angrily.

Tonks shrugged her shoulders and turned to walk away. "Who are you to decide that, Remus? Sure, it would be inappropriate *now*, but not in a couple of months. You do realize she'll be seventeen in September, don't you? Who is anyone to decide an age-difference is too far apart? If two people are *of age*, who is anybody to judge the matter?" she replied as she walked away.

A/N: I realize that I have the Order still residing at Grimmauld Place, which is not according to canon, but I decided to make that change for the plot's sake. Thanks to my anonymous beta and Southern Witch for pointing out a couple of holes in the plot. Thanks, so much! As always, please review! I'm addicted to reviews! :)

Young Women

Chapter 17 of 30

Severus and Remus have a talk about the young women in their lives. Severus is pulled along by the Vows he has made to Dumbledore and Narcissa Malfoy, and after he becomes headmaster, has a meaningful discussion with Ginny Weasley.

Chapter 17 - Young Women

Snape was growing increasingly agitated by the day. Potter and his friends had begun their sixth year, and things between he and Harry had gotten worse. He spent more time talking with Lupin whenever he could get a moment. Lupin was so caught up with Greyback and trying to spy for the Order, it was rare to steal time away so they could talk.

One evening, that late fall, they sat in Snape's quarters. Lupin was torn up about Tonks and needed to vent his frustrations.

"She just mopes, Remus," Snape complained as he informed him about Tonks. "Sulking and walking around for all and sundry to know your hurts is annoying and infuriating to those of us who have the decorum to keep their grief to themselves!" he snapped.

"Well, Dora is not like you, Severus," Remus replied uncomfortably. "She is the polar opposite of you, when it comes to emotional displays of the tender sort."

"Remus, why the hell don't you just admit you want her and get on with it!" he snarled.

"You know why better than anyone, Severus! I would ruin her life. I don't want her to look at me one day and regret the choice she made, or do something foolish because of me," he replied sadly.

If the werewolf had said that a year or two ago, Snape would have had his guts for garters! But, he knew what he meant, and Remus was the only one who really understood his motives for the hideous things he did for the Order and for Harry.

"When this war is over, Remus, you shall have no more excuses to push her away. Things will be different after it's all over. You'll be a hero. I'm not giving up my plan on finding a cure for Lycanthropy, so you had better not...what did you call it? 'Burn that Bridge?'" he retorted.

A smile crept on Lupin's face. "Why, Severus, that was quite optimistic of you. Dare I think you're getting sentimental in your old age?" he teased.

"Shut up before I change my mind and make a pelt out of your carcass!" Snape snarled.

Lupin decided to change the subject and test the waters since Snape had brought up a past reference to Hermione on bridge burning. "Severus, Hermione was very hurt by your rejection of her assistance this summer," he said cautiously.

Snape snorted. "She's a child and a student, Remus! What did you expect me to do?"

"Do you ever wonder just how powerful a witch she'll become one day?" he mused.

Snape nodded and then began to absent-mindedly trace his mouth with a long finger. "Miss Granger is the brightest and most dedicated student I have ever taught. I have yet to meet a witch as powerful as she. I wish I could live to see what she would do after this war is over and has grown up. She is a credit to Muggle-borns and a thorn in many a Death Eater's side. Honestly, Remus, the girl intrigues me. Every time I think I've got her pegged down, she'll do something so shocking and amazing that I am nearly speechless."

Remus was impressed. He had never heard Severus speak about another witch so highly other than Lily. "For example," Remus prodded.

Snape shrugged his shoulders. "For example, she was able to cast a nonverbal spell on her first try. It was highly impressive. She was making Protean Charms in her fifth year, I was told. Her abilities in Transfiguration and in Charms far exceeded my own when I was a student."

Lupin watched his reluctant friend as he spoke about Hermione Granger. There was pride, respect, and perhaps a little adoration in his eyes. He also had a shadow of smile playing around his lips. Lupin hoped his friend would find happiness again. He truly did.

Snape had been annoyed after Remus left. *What was he playing at?* Hermione Granger had been nothing but an irritation and would be nothing more. He had known that without reservation because he was unlovable. He had tried to understand why he never could arouse anything more in women than disgust hidden within false interest. It had consumed him for years. However, since his brief talk with Nymphadora and experiencing Miss Granger's closeness during his convalescence this past summer, coupled with his voyeurism of her masturbating whilst saying his name, he could not stop thinking about Miss Granger's motives.

Young women.

He sat in his chair facing the small fire in his sitting room. He felt cold. He never felt warm anymore. The warmth had left him as Lily's body had cooled on his bed.

His thoughts rambled onto Moira. He hoped she was happy. There had been times he'd wanted to find out if she were doing well, but she'd made it plain that he wasn't welcome anymore. He was tainted, no good, unworthy. Young women would always find him out in the end. He wasn't a fool. He saw the looks he received from his older female students. Some of them looked at him as if he were nothing more than a bowl of cream. He enjoyed it in a twisted sort of way. He knew if he let them in close enough, they would use their pretty claws to shred him to pieces. Hermione Granger would be no different. Although, he had to admit, she was the last female he'd ever thought would see him in that light. *Perhaps she wants to be humiliated and dominated?* He could do that, but ever since his experience with Evangeline, the pretty prostitute, that urge had died out.

His thoughts returned to Hermione Granger. He remembered how she smelled of lavender and how she would stroke his hair and put cool cloths on his head. She had been so calming and soothing. He remembered how warm she had felt as she ran her hands over his skin. Her skin had been so soft.

Young women, he thought as he went to bed. *They haven't a clue. I'm far too feeble in spirit to try to resurrect that old need* He made the decision right then and there to push Miss Granger out of his mind.

Snape stood in Dumbledore's office, his fists clenched with rage.

"You mean to tell me, that after everything I've done, everything I've lost and gave up, you dare to tell me you will offer up my son as a pig for slaughter!" he roared.

"Severus, he has Tom inside him. He is a Horcrux! As long as Harry lives, Tom will never die!" Dumbledore reasoned.

The younger wizard cried out in anguish. It was a primal scream of a father losing his child. It was all for nothing! He could endure anything as long as he could remind himself it would make a better life for Harry. He could even stand his boy hating him, as long as it could be a long, long hate.

Now, Harry would be destroyed along with everything else that he had loved. He would not do it! He'd rather live under the Dark Lord's rule and have Harry next to him living in hell than not to have him...to not have that chance to be reconciled to him.

Dumbledore knew his thoughts; he bore down on the wizard.

"You will do this, Severus. You have a Vow to keep with Narcissa. You can take your hate and rage upon me when you kill me," he said darkly.

"You and I are finished, old man!" he swore bitterly.

"So be it, Severus. For what it was worth, I thought of you as my own son. However, I love you enough to lose you forever for the Greater Good."

Snape's head jerked up and his face grew dark. How he hated that phrase! He turned on his heel and stormed out of the office. As long as he was still a trusted Order member, he would get comfort where he knew he could.

He met with Lupin in an abandoned shack outside of Blackpool, where they could talk and be safe.

"Remus," he called as he stepped inside.

"In here, Severus. You sounded rather desperate."

"Remus, I have to tell you...I have something I must do. Dumbledore told me something about Harry that I cannot..." His voice wavered and he stopped talking. He would NOT cry in front of him!

"Severus," Remus said as he sat at the table. "Come, sit." He conjured two cups and took out a flask. "Have a drink, Severus."

Snape accepted it gratefully.

"It's Harry. Dumbledore told me he is a...that he has a part of the Dark Lord's soul embedded in him. It's been there ever since the beginning of this nightmare! He has to be killed, Remus, and the Dark Lord will have to do it."

He began to laugh. It was a dry, cracked, laugh, mirthless and bitter.

"Why should I be even remotely surprised, Remus? Why! It not as if things have easy in the slightest, no, rather the events in my life keep on growing darker and darker, losing is all I know. I really believed that I would be able to have my boy back. I had such foolish hopes and dreams. Now I have nothing," he whispered sadly.

Remus sat with his hands in his hair. "I can't believe this, Severus. This is just...I don't have the words!" he finally confessed.

"How about...fucked up?" he answered sarcastically as he gulped down his drink.

"Thanks for the firewhisky, Remus," he said as got up to leave.

"Severus," Remus called to him. "Do you have to leave so soon? Don't you want to discuss this more?"

"What for, Remus?" he said tiredly. "There is nothing to discuss. Dumbledore has got me by one ball, and well, someone has the other," he muttered as he thought of Narcissa.

"I can't help but feel there is more to this, Severus. Can't you unburden yourself?" Remus asked desperately.

Severus gave a twisted smile to his friend. "I wish I could, Remus. Unfortunately, this is something you are safer with not knowing."

He Disapparated then, leaving Lupin to only fear the worst for his reluctant friend.

The night Dumbledore died, Snape had only one regret: his fight with Harry. He had kept his bloody promise to Dumbledore and Narcissa. The Dark Lord was *spleased* with him now. It was all going according to plan, yet all Snape could think of was how his son had tried to kill him, had struggled with all his might to avenge the old bastard he thought was his protector! He had screamed bloody murder as he tried reasoning with the boy. He was never going to succeed if he did not learn to close his fucking mind!

Harry had called him a coward, and it had torn at his very soul. He could see the little baby he had loved. He recalled later as he laid in the filthy bed in the Dark Lord's Lair all the happy memories that had kept him sane and grounded over the years. The first time he held him in his arms and looked into his beautiful green eyes, sitting, grading poorly written essays with Harry bouncing on his knee, bathing him, holding him in his arms by the fire, smelling his clean hair, and the first time he'd called him "Daddy."

It had hurt each and every time Harry referred to James as his "Dad." He had nearly as much time with Harry as James had! If anything, he had done more than James, he had guided, and saved his life, fretted over the stories he'd heard about him playing the celebrity Romeo during the Tri-Wizard Tournament. He'd known all about his failed first love with Miss Chang, and his heart had broken right along with his.

Sure he had been a right bastard and lost his temper on a number of occasions. He had insulted and cursed James to the boy's face, he had verbally abused Harry over the years, all of which he tried to justify by telling himself it was for the boy's own good. After all, wasn't that what his father had done? His father wanted his son to be tough, not a sniveling little "Nancy boy" as he'd called it. But, it was all a lie. He had just been wrong as many times as he had been right. Sodding James Potter! He could be the perfect father, being dead. Harry could build him up in his head as the ideal of fatherhood, but Snape knew the reality all it all. *Every parent fucks it up royally, and there is no such thing as a perfect father.*

He had failed Lily. He used to wonder if she was looking down from the heavens, shaking her head, her eyes flashing in anger, as she had been wont to do when regally ticked off. He had more than once winced at the thought of her disapproval from above, but as time went on and the memory of her touch curdled with the knowledge that she had not meant any of it, he felt for a long time he owed her nothing. But, as he lay alone in his bed, shunned by the Order, a murderer, and a traitor, he felt the condemnation rise up again inside him.

Snape winced.

September, 1997

Severus sat behind his desk. The Headmaster's desk! It was quite the reward he had been given, yet he found little comfort in it. He worked now with Dumbledore's portrait, the dead wizard giving him information as needed. Their relationship had never been fully healed. The night he'd stormed into this office after the debacle with Potter and called him every name in the book, their long-standing father/son relationship had died.

Snape refused to speak to Dumbledore about his feelings for Harry. He had been devastated when the rooms originally Transfigured for Lily and Harry were restored to their original state for Professor Slughorn to occupy. He had taken the stupid duck and the rocking chair and had placed them in his new quarters. Then, when he knew he would have to leave Hogwarts immediately after he killed Dumbledore, he had decided not to leave anything to chance. He had them placed them in his Gringotts vault. He trusted no one to keep his possessions with care. Once the Dark Lord had established him as Headmaster, he took them with him again. He still sat in the rocking chair when the sadness overcame him from time to time. He was desperately lonely and wanted it all to be over.

It was only Harry that kept him going now. When the war was over, and if he survived, he was going to tell Harry everything. If the lad still reviled him, then so be it. He could not carry all of this in his heart anymore.

He wished he could talk with Remus. He wished that he could talk to anyone outside of the inner circle of Death Eaters. He had never in his life felt so utterly isolated and alone. There was no one to confide in, no one to care. He had achieved what he feared the most: unloved, unwanted, and unworthy.

He took a perverse joy in protecting the students. When he had caught Ginerva Weasley and Neville Longbottom attempting to steal the Sword of Gryffindor, he had made a good showing in front of the witnesses. Then, as he had marched them off to Hagrid to serve detention, he had stood in the shadows of the forest and shook Longbottom's hand. He had told him to be more careful, and that he was proud of him. Neville, who had blossomed into quite the renegade, had stood stock-still, his mouth gaping open. He had been speechless. He had made the two swear they would cause no more trouble, for he did not want any students hurt.

"But, if you can't be good, then be careful," he'd said. "That is what I always told my Slytherins. Your foolhardy attempt at burgling my office was ill planned and far too risky. Take care of yourselves and try to stay under the radar of the staff from now on," he had warned.

Miss Weasley had not spoken one word to him the entire time, but when he had turned to leave them, she had placed a hand on his arm and had asked Neville to leave them alone.

She had faced him with her red hair gleaming in the moonlight and her brown eyes shining brightly. "I never thought...but it all makes sense now, Professor. I swear, I won't breathe anything to a soul!" she had said fiercely.

Snape, for whatever reason, had reached and ran his hand through Ginny's hair. She was so much like Lily: brave, fierce, and tenacious. She would be a good wife for Harry. They were meant for each other, and he would make sure Harry did not lose her.

"Ginerva," he had whispered. "You may not last the year here if you continue to revolt against the staff. I will not have you beaten and bruised by the Carrows. Promise me, if things become too difficult, that you will leave. Just come to my office, and I will make your excuses for you."

"Why are you so concerned for me?" she had said in disbelief.

"I want you and Harry to have a life one day. Despite popular opinion, Miss Weasley, I do care about people, and I care about you and Harry. Don't you ever breathe a word of what I have said to another soul!" he had said urgently as he had grasped onto her wrists painfully.

"I won't!" she had pleaded. Her face had been full of terror. He had released her and muttered a feeble apology. She had responded by flinging her arms around him and said, "Thank you, Professor. Thank you so much for caring about Harry. I miss him so much!" she had said as she began to shake. He had smoothed her hair with one hand, relished in the loving contact he had longed for so many months. She had begun to cry now, and he had understood all too well the fear for someone loved dearly. Again, he had been overcome with the strength and feeling that came with the love of young women. He had thought of Hermione, out there with Harry, and he had wondered if she ever thought about him as well. He had shook his head and had extricated himself from Ginny's grasp. He had admonished her to remain strong and had given her a small smile.

He had left her standing there, and as he had walked back to the castle, he had cursed himself for his weakness. But, he could not help but feel lighter in his heart. That girl was going to be his son's wife one day, he knew it! She had been the closest he had come to Harry in so long. He had hoped that one day she might help heal the divide between them. He had never been a praying man, but after that night, he had begun to pray for his son to come back to him.

Fathers and Sons

Chapter 18 of 30

Snape wakes up after the final battle and learns Harry is still alive. Harry questions him about the memories he received from him, and the truth is finally revealed to Harry about his past.

Chapter 18 Fathers and Sons

The last thing he remembered was looking into the eyes of his son. He had given him the memories he could, and he had collapsed. He woke and thought he had died. He saw red hair and a soft voice calling to him. *Lily*.

It was Miss Weasley.

"Professor Snape, I'm so glad you are awake! We all have been taking turns waiting and hoping!" She began to weep.

"Miss Weasley, please!" he snapped. He could not bear to see her crying.

She sniffed and forced herself to stop crying.

"Harry will be so happy to see you. He has a lot of questions. Your memories were...incomplete."

"What do you mean, incomplete?" he rasped as he struggled to rise.

She gently pushed him flat on his bed. "No, sir, don't exert yourself," she pleaded. "There were enough memories for Harry to understand everything you had to do for the Order...even *Dumbledore*," she whispered.

"What was confusing was a memory. It was one memory that was mixed in with the others. It was a memory of you holding Harry and talking to him in your dungeons. You were telling him what a powerful wizard he was going to be, and you were talking to him about potions, kissing him, calling him your boy," she said confusedly.

Snape's eyes narrowed. "You mean to tell me that Potter is alive?" he whispered softly.

"Yes, it was so terrible. Hagrid was carrying him and Voldemort said he was dead! We thought he was dead, but then he wasn't, and he killed Voldemort!" she said heatedly.

Snape clenched the sheet covering him and squeezed his eyes shut. He let out a sob of relief as the tears slid out of his eyes. Ginny lightly rubbed his arm.

"It's okay, Professor, it's all over now. Harry's fine and Tom is dead."

"He's gone?" he whispered as he opened his eyes.

"Gone, Professor, look at your arm. Your Dark Mark is significantly faded."

Snape looked at his arm in amazement.

"Harry's scar is faded as well, although it's still there. He's doing well, considering the losses," she said sadly.

"Who?" he asked fearfully.

"My brother, Fred," she choked. She calmed herself and went on. "We lost Moody, Trelawney, and Dobby. Then there were so many students...Cho Chang, Colin Creevey, Dean Thomas, and Seamus Finnegan. Tonks lost her Dad...oh, she and Remus have a son! Teddy Lupin," she said happily.

Great, the werewolf named his son after a bear, he thought snarkily.

"Where is Harry?" he asked fearfully.

"He's right outside, talking with Hermione. I'll get him if you want," she asked nervously.

"Yes," he whispered.

He was so tired, he could feel sleep coming to take him away. He forced himself to stay awake; he wanted to see his son.

Harry walked in and sat next to Snape.

"Professor, how are you feeling?" he asked respectfully.

Snape lifted a pale hand and slowly brought it to Harry's face. His fingers touched his cheek.

"You're alive," he choked. The tears welled up in his eyes. He remembered the night Cedric Diggory died. He had watched on as Amos was nearly killed by the severity of his grief. He stood stonily as others had cried for another man's son. It so easily could have been Harry, so easily. He had been called unfeeling and cold. It had hurt. He had been anything but! He had cried with relief and latent fear of what the Dark Lord might have done to Harry that night in the privacy of his room. Then he cried over what might still happen to him. He had not been able to allow himself to emote in public. If he had let himself go and comforted Amos, he would have never stopped crying, and he would have lost his mind. So, he had thanked God for letting the Diggory boy die and sparing his boy. Then, he had hated himself for it. God help him, he felt the same today. He didn't care who died as long as Harry was alive. Let other men's sons die, but not his. He thought about Arthur, and he decided he'd hate himself for that later.

Harry took Snape's hand in his own, and Snape closed his eyes, overcome with emotion. He turned his face from him, ashamed of his tears...afraid of being rejected by him.

But he let his boy hold his hand.

"Sir, the memories I have...I had...I returned, but I remember seeing something that was confusing. I was with you. I was just a baby. Was that real?"

Snape controlled his emotions and turned his face back to Harry's. "Yes, you lived with me. You and your mother after...your father died."

"What happened to my mum, sir?"

"She died. She wrote me a letter one evening when I was out spying, and she told me not to hate her, but she had to do it. She asked me to care for you. She poisoned herself," he whispered softly.

Harry was pale and his hand tightened around Snape's. "The memory was so...so strange. I don't understand. It looked like *you* liked me."

Snape looked into Harry's green eyes and whispered, "I have always loved you, Harry. You are my son. Not by blood, but by love. I loved your mother, and I loved you from the first moment I held you. I read to you, bathed you, held you on my knee when I graded papers...I even took you into my lab and told you all about potion-making. Your mother and I had great dreams for you. You and your mother were my life," he confessed.

Harry dropped Snape's hand and jumped up. *Why?* Why have you been such a bastard to me? Why did you throw me away? Do you have any idea how horrible it was for me to live with the Dursleys? If you loved me, why didn't you keep me?"

Snape's anger boiled up inside him. "I fought to keep you. It wasn't my choice!" he wheezed. He started to cough and Harry gave him water to drink. He raised the head of the man he had sworn to kill one day, the man he had hated for as long as he could remember, and cradled his head to help him drink.

He lowered the wizard's head back onto his pillow and waited as Snape collected his thoughts.

"The Headmaster and Professor McGonagall came to my quarters after your mother's body was removed, and I honestly don't have a clear recollection of everything, just that Lily was dead, you were screaming, and then I was holding you in my arms, trying to comfort you. They told me you had to leave immediately, that you would not be safe unless you were under the protection of your mother's blood."

Harry nodded in understanding.

Snape continued. "I hated Petunia! I told the Headmaster she would ruin you. He told me it wouldn't be a goodbye forever, that you'd be back one day. I laughed in his face, the fool!" he spat bitterly.

Harry grew angry again. "Why were you such a nasty prick to me if you cared for me so much?" he yelled.

"The world loved you, Potter! You were adored, admired, kept safe, ensconced at Hogwarts. Yet, I KNEW you were going to have to face the Dark Lord! You needed to be tough! You needed to be strong! I did what I had to initially out of desperation to keep you alive...and if that meant you hating me, well, so be it!"

Harry's hardened face twitched. Snape narrowed his eyes and tried to scrutinize the meaning. He did not dare attempt to dive into his mind. Harry had proved himself to be a powerful wizard. He would not disrespect him by trespassing into his mind.

Harry spoke and this time his tone was calm. "You said 'initially.' What happened and when?" he demanded.

Snape continued without emotion. "Just before the confrontation between he and Wormtail, Black had stormed into my quarters and scared your mother, questioned my honor, and finally, called your mother's feelings for your father's memory into question. He broke his relationship with her and then, it was over. He went to Azkaban never having been reconciled to Lily. When Black came out of Azkaban and escaped, I knew you had a hand in it.

"When I saw how you were with him, the closeness between you, I acted out of spite. Black, who knew that you, Lily, and I had been a family, hated me for reminding him of the fact he had been so cruel to her. Our relationship, already not a good one, became even more vindictive and hateful because our feelings for you acerbated the situation.

"Black was angry he had lost so many years away from you because he had been falsely imprisoned. He saw me as a usurper back then and, after his escape from Azkaban, saw me as an irritant which to tear down and make you disrespect. He thought I wanted to disparage him so you would never accept him as a godfather."

Harry interrupted. "Which wasn't far off the mark, eh, Professor?" he said darkly.

Snape could feel the vein in his temple pulsate. "What do you want me to say, Potter? That I was jealous of your relationship with Black? That I fell for his goading because it was the only sore spot that he could touch?" he rasped.

He coughed again, and Harry exhaled impatiently while getting Snape more water to drink.

"YES!" he yelled. That's exactly what I want you to fucking say! I want you to show me a little of this caring and love you claim you felt for me all these years. From where I stand, I am having a right hard time believing it!"

Snape took a breath and began again. "In my quarters, there is a rocking chair and a stupid, little, stuffed duck that was one of your favorite toys. I kept the rooms Minerva transfigured for you and your mother even after you'd both gone, and I would sit in your empty room and rock and hold that blasted duck. I was very aware, H-Harry. I knew about your first love with Miss Chang, and my heart broke with yours as I saw you suffer with that. I rejoiced when I heard you had found love with Miss Weasley. The night she and Longbottom went to serve their detention with Hagrid for breaking into my office, I lowered my defenses for a short time and spoke with them. Miss Weasley *hugged* me, and I walked away happy because I knew she was the one you would marry. I thought how wonderful it would be if I could have grandchildren."

His eyes welled up again and he grew angry at his weakness. "You were mine! My son! I toilet trained you, I fed you, I held you when you cried and fell! My family was stolen from me, and I never recovered from it!"

Harry was in total, utter shock. It was obvious that he had been truly loved, that this man had placed him above his own needs. He hadn't been perfect, no, he was teaming with faults and failures, but he had loved him. There was just one question.

"Sir, why did my mum kill herself?"

There was no answer from the sick and battered man in his bed. Just the sound of the burst of an emotional dam and gut wrenching sobs and shrieks from a wizard who had always prided himself on never being vulnerable.

Confusion

Chapter 19 of 30

Snape wakes up after the final battle and has an interesting conversation with Harry.

Chapter 20 - Confusion

Harry was pushed out of Snape's hospital room as the Healers came to calm the professor. He walked out into the hallway and faced Hermione, Ginny, and Lupin.

Harry was crying.

He looked at Lupin with such anger. "You son-of-a-bitch! Why did you make me do that?"

Lupin's face remained passive. "You needed to know the truth, Harry. Severus is the only one who can give it to you. Albus, Minerva, Hagrid, and I only really saw glimpses into your home life. You all seemed to be happy, healthy, loved. You were doted on, cherished, and content. Yet, Lily was suffering in some way. Sirius accused Severus of keeping her against her will, which was utter rot! She lived with Severus because she chose him. She chose her life with him. Remember that, Harry. No matter what anyone may tell you, it was her choice, and Severus was a good man to her, Harry, and you were as much a son to him as if he had fathered you."

"I just don't understand, Remus! Why would my mum leave me? Leave him? If she were happy, why would she leave?"

Lupin felt a sad sense of *deja`vu*. "I never said your mother was happy, Harry. All I said was she *seemed* happy and that it was her choice to be with Severus. I think, and these are only my thoughts, Harry, but I think that your mother just broke apart when your dad died. Then when Sirius turned his back on her, his arrest for killing Pettigrew, and finally his conviction, it was all too much. All the people she loved and trusted were either ripped from her or betraying her. You know now how close she and Severus had been as children. He was familiar, loving, and doting. He was so *convenient*, and he loved her so much, I think she just let go one day and let him catch her," he said sadly.

"So, Snape lived with my mum, and slept with her, like my dad?" he said angrily.

"Harry," Remus warned. "It was her choice. No one forced her, and it does not make her a bad person just because she found comfort in Severus' arms. He was her oldest friend, and the one person who could give her all the things she needed so desperately: a home, safety, a sense of belonging, affection, love, companionship, and most of all, a man who would love her son."

Ginny wrapped her arm around Harry's. "Harry," she said softly. "You always said you thought I was a very smart girl. Speaking as a woman, I don't know if I would be able to resist either. If you were gone, and we had a baby, and I was on the run, marked for death, thinking at any moment our child or I could die, I would do anything to ensure our safety. If I were all alone with no family, and I came across a wizard I had known all my life who loved our child and wanted to protect us, love or not...I'd stay with him. Women do things like that for their children."

Harry glared at her. "So, my mother lay in his bed and let him just climb on her and use her! Didn't he care she was miserable? She killed herself because she prostituted herself!" he roared.

Lupin punched Harry in the mouth. Harry fell to the floor. Hermione and Ginny stood stock-still, their lips set in grim lines. Harry had crossed the line.

"Don't you dare! Don't you dare speak that way about your mother, Harry Potter!" Lupin shouted. "You have no idea what went on in their bed! Furthermore, it is not for you to judge! Severus Snape is a man of many things, however, he is a man capable of great love. He loved your mother and he only wanted her happiness!"

Lupin turned and stormed out. Ginny and Hermione stood glaring at Harry as he picked himself up from the ground.

"Harry James Potter!" Hermione screeched. "How can you be so thick? Ginny gave you her viewpoint as a woman; well, let me tell you mine! If I was all alone and some psychopath were trying to kill my baby and me, I wouldn't care who the man was if he loved me and loved my baby. Just the fact alone that he would want to protect my child as much as I would, would make me so grateful...I'd give him sex every bleeding day and a blow-job twice on Sundays! And I'd make sure he was the happiest wizard on earth! That's what women do for their children, and that does not make your mother a whore! She chose her life! Dumbledore could have protected her. She had the most powerful wizard in the world protecting her, yet she **CHOSE** to go to Professor Snape's bed! Obviously, Harry, he had something she wanted that she *didn't* want from anyone else, and if you think that makes her a *slut*, then you are just a *fool*, Harry Potter!"

She dashed off. She was so angry she could have hexed him. Well, he'd have Ginny to contend with and, if there was a just God in heaven, Molly Weasley as well! She was so confused. She was deeply touched by the story she had heard. Professor Snape had loved and protected Lily and Harry. He was an honorable man. She had felt such a surge of anger that she could barely stand it. She was so angry with Harry, and then at the same time as she applauded Snape's devotion to Harry's mum, she had felt a rage and jealousy that threatened to choke her.

She stopped and sat on a bench to calm herself down. Then the tears came. She was so sad and confused. She loved Professor Snape and had been frantic when he had nearly died. She didn't know what she was going to do. She Apparated back to the Burrow and decided to find some comfort with Molly and Tonks. She knew Tonks would be there waiting for news on Professor Snape. She really needed to have a good cry and some sympathy. She was just a heart-broken foolish girl in love with her old, irascible, professor twice her age. She was pathetic. Yet, she knew Tonks would understand.

Meanwhile, back at St. Mungo's, while Harry was arguing with Lupin, Hermione, and Ginny, Snape had been sedated and was lying peacefully when he had heard the shrieking voice of Miss Granger carry over into his room. She was giving Harry what for, and he listened in disbelief as she raged in his defense. It would be something to think on for a while to come.

Hermione had entered the Burrow just in time. As soon as she saw Tonks, she collapsed, sobbing on the ground. She and Molly had been very worried about her state of mind. Hermione had been able to tell them all of what had occurred at St. Mungo's and her reaction to Harry through sobs and hiccoughs.

Tonks and Molly had been quiet and subdued through the process. They listened and nodded, but let her get it all out. Finally, when she told them how Lupin had punched Harry, Tonks gasped in shock.

"Well, I guess the prat deserved it! Although I never thought I'd see the day where Remus would actually punch Harry! He was bang out of order, though, talking about his mum that way," she said firmly.

"What am I going to do?" Hermione asked the older witches as she rested her head on the kitchen table. "I love him. I've loved him since I was fifteen." She raised her head by running her hands through her hair, propping herself up on one elbow. She stared off in the distance. "The thought of him not being a part of my life scares me," she said softly.

Tonks hugged her tightly, and Molly asked, "Hermione, have you thought of the possibility that this is just an infatuation? You don't really know Professor Snape."

Hermione stiffened and replied, "I heard enough about what kind of man he is. He is prickly and sarcastic on the outside, but he is a very loyal and loving person on the inside. If you look at it from his point-of-view, his treatment of Harry all these years was an act of love on his part. Isn't that enough to know if I really love him?"

Molly's eyes darted from her to Tonks and back. "Hermione," she began, "love is a very strong and scary emotion. Love isn't all romance. Love comes with time and knowing the person on an intimate level, emotionally as well as physically."

Tonks interjected. "I don't know, Molly. I woke up one day, took a look at Remus, and bang! I was done for!" she said animatedly. "And that man, as you all know, was impossible to convince that loving me back wouldn't be a horrible thing. Remus and I have an age difference as well, so I think if our level-headed Hermione says she loves Snape, she should go get him!"

Molly pursed her lips before blurting, "She's just a child! She hasn't even finished school yet!"

"I would have if there hadn't been a war to fight. Besides, I helped Professor Snape when he was dying. Moreover, I am not a child...I've fought in a war! I couldn't give up on him then, and I won't now." She broke out in fresh tears.

Tonks and Molly looked at each other in concern. However this was going to play out, it wasn't going to be easy.

Hermione went for a lie-down, and Remus returned after calming himself down alone. Molly and Tonks had an earful for him, and he replied that he knew of Hermione's feelings for Severus.

"She's been conflicted for a while," he said. "I guess she finally came to a decision."

"Remus, do you think he could ever love her?" asked his wife.

"Dora, I really don't know. I know he'd be a damned fool to turn her away, but what Lily did was more than just plain wrong, it was scarring!" he whispered.

"What do you mean?" asked Molly.

Remus told them about his conversation at Hagrid's all those years ago and how she had reacted by running out. The witches were thunderstruck. Molly shook her head sadly. "It was a bad choice, that, but we mustn't judge her too harshly. She probably really tried to love him," she replied.

"She told him she loved him," said Remus. "He believed her when she said she loved him. He thought she was going to be his wife. He had been proposing marriage from the start. And according to Severus, Lily offered herself and he turned her down. It was only after Sirius went to Azkaban that she came to sleep in his bed and made it plain that she wanted, according to Severus, 'to make love to the man who has loved me nearly all my life.'"

"And it was a lie?" breathed Molly.

"I think it was, but she didn't wanted it to be. I think she *wanted* to love him, but in the end she knew she wouldn't ever be able."

"Yet Snape doesn't know that, none of us can know for sure. How horrid to feel you had been used and manipulated. Knowing him, he's bound to see it like that," Tonks mused.

"It's far worse than you realize, Dora. Ladies, not to be indelicate, but Severus truly believes that Lily killed herself because she couldn't bear having sex with him. 'Death was preferable to suffering his touch,' he said sadly.

"He distrusts women with a passion. He won't have a relationship because he says he can't trust them. Lily really burned him,"

"Hermione is in for a world of pain!" said Tonks. "What should we do? Tell her?"

"I think we would be risking Severus' wrath if he found out. We'll just have to wait. But is it's any consolation, I did have a conversation with him once last year, and he spoke about Hermione in a kind of wistful way. I thought, perhaps, in time, he might grow to love her. I'm convinced he holds an interest in her."

"Well," said Molly. "It isn't as if anything can be done about it now. She's still in school. She'll be back in his classes and will have to wait. We'd best make sure she understands that!" she warned them.

"True," agreed Remus sadly. "We'll all have to be very delicate with the both of them. Then, there is Harry's relationship with Severus."

The women held their breaths. Remus told them how badly it went.

"That pillock!" swore Tonks. "I can't believe Harry would be so judgmental towards his own mum!" She looked at Teddy, sleeping happily in his basket. Molly saw a pang of fear cross her face.

"Tonks, dear," Molly said softly, "you don't know yet, but you shall one day that boys do not want to think of their mothers as sexual beings. As far as my sons are concerned, they arrived here by magic and their father has only ever kissed me! They are all men now," her voice quivered as the thought of Fred passed through her mind, "but they still would faint straight away at the realization that their father and I on a regular basis engage in sexual congress!"

"Dora, Lily has been more of an angel to Harry, a gentle young woman who petted and cared for his father and his three woe-begotten friends. To think that she allowed, or worse *desired* sexual affections from Severus...a man that until recently he hated with all his might...it's far too much to process!" he exclaimed.

"This is all going to take time. Lots of time and patience." Lupin shook his head. Just as he thought life was going to get easier, now this. He rested his head in his hands. He was overwhelmed, and now his own relationship with Harry was strained.

Tonks got up and brought him some soup. "Eat up, luv," she whispered.

Lupin obeyed his wife and ate. She looked at Molly, and the women shared a concerned look. The war with Voldemort might be over, but the casualties left behind in his wake were too many to number.

A/N: Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta!

Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

This is my response to the Anything Goes Challenge Prompt #27. Voldemort decides to Stun Lily instead of killing her; does he kidnap Harry? Kill him? What happens to Lily and to Snape?

Consequences of Normalcy

Chapter 20 of 30

So many are eager to get their lives back to normal only to find too much has changed.

Chapter 21 Consequences of Normalcy

Hermione rode the Hogwarts Express just as she had done for six years. The only difference was that last year she had dropped out to help Harry save the Wizarding world. Now she was coming back to finish her final year. She was alone, and Harry and Ron were far to busy rebuilding the Auror Department to worry about N.E.W.T.s. For Hermione, school and learning were everything to her. She knew she could have forgone her last year and just sat for her N.E.W.T.s, but she needed to face Professor Snape. She loved him. She knew she loved him.

As she looked out the window, she remembered those horrific hours just after Nagini's attack. She could remember the smell of his blood; the scarlet liquid had been all over her. She had slipped in it, her hands all over his face and neck, not knowing if she had been helping or hurting him more. He had been so pale and fragile; her mind had been racing at a speed so fast she thought her head would explode. She had cried and cried as she tried to keep him alive until help could come. She recalled pushing on the wound in his neck, keeping a firm hold on it so he would not exsanguinate. His eyes had been open and empty. She had stroked his face as she leaned over him, whispering how much she loved and needed him and begged him not to leave her.

She had been tortured all last year with the thought that Professor Snape after all these years was actually a real Death Eater and had never defected to the Light. But when she saw how desperately he grabbed for Harry and pulled him close, wanting him to look at him, she knew there was so much more that she didn't know. She had to save him. He could not be evil. She would not allow it!

Hermione smoothed her robes and licked her lips. She knew how desperate and crazed she had been waiting outside his room at St. Mungo's, praying over and over that he would pull through. Ginny had comforted her, even though Hermione had never told her she loved him. She had figured she had just known. It had been a comfort to have Ginny and Remus with her. Remus knew of her love. He didn't judge her, didn't tell her she was silly or stupid for loving such a hard and cold man. She had enough judgment for herself.

Nevertheless, she loved him. She was as sure as she knew beyond a doubt how many porcupine quills belonged in a boil cure potion. She felt the rightness of her love as

she had the day she cast her first spell in Charms class: Wingardium Leviosa. He was the only one for her. It was not going to be easy, but it was her future. He was her future.

She was happy to see she was not the only held-back seventh-year. Justin Finch-Fletchley, another Muggle-born in Hufflepuff, and Dean Thomas, another Gryffindor Muggle-born, were back to finish their education. Ginny was here as well as a proper seventh-year...it was so good to have close friends nearby! As she and Ginny silently made their way to the Great Hall for the Welcoming Feast, they both smiled at the sight of Professor McGonagall in the Headmistress' chair. Hermione wondered if Professor Snape had been asked to return to his position as Headmaster. She looked at him, sitting at the same chair he had occupied all the years she had attended Hogwarts. He looked thin and sad. Usually he looked annoyed and irritated, but this year, he was not the same.

Hermione smiled when she saw Professor Lupin there. She had squealed with delight when he had told her he was returning to Hogwarts to teach Defense. She had attacked him with one of her notorious bear hugs. Tonks had laughed her arse off at Remus' look of shock at Hermione's embrace. After she had released him, she had burst into tears. Lupin had been utterly dumbfounded, as were Harry and Ron. The witches knew though. They knew Hermione would need Remus if she were to survive the school year. Knowing Snape, he would be true to form, being the surly bastard he was known to be. Hermione confided to Tonks and Lupin that she was sure he would be different now. There would be no reason for him to be cruel, now that the war was over and the truth revealed. Remus had kept a firm hold on his tongue and allowed Hermione her hopes. They were going to be dashed to pieces eventually, anyway. No reason to ruin her joy, he would save that for Severus...damn it!

Remus smiled in return at Hermione and Ginny. He was the Head of their House now, and they couldn't be happier. Snape, sitting next to Remus, saw his smile and followed it to the Gryffindor Table.

"Do try and show a modicum of decorum, Remus," he bit out in disapproval.

"Oh, Severus, the young ladies are happy at my return. It makes this old man feel rather welcome to know such lovely young women are pleased to see me back," he replied smoothly.

Severus snorted. "Honestly, Remus, I think your new wife has befuddled your already weakened mind. 'Young women' you say? I see nothing of the sort! All I see are two meddlesome little chits!" he said sourly.

"Now, Severus, I know how you feel about Miss Weasley. You approve of her highly. As for Miss Granger, you said so yourself how intelligent she is."

"I know, Remus! I don't care to discuss the matter further!" he snarled.

Remus smiled, but knew the discussion was over.

During the Feast, Snape quietly picked at his food. He was so tired. He had not spoken with Harry since the day they'd first spoken about their relationship. He had the most horrific nightmares about his question. It rolled over and over in his mind.

"Why did my mum kill herself?"

He wished he could give him a better answer, a more worthy answer that would place him in a better light, but it was impossible. Lily had killed herself because he had been, and remained to this day, an unlovable, disgusting person.

He had never sought out Moira, nor had he ever returned to that brothel where he had spent that ill-fated night with Evangeline. He had received a scathing letter from the Madame of the House saying that he was forever banned from her establishment. She had accused him of torturing her best whore and that she had been unable to work for three weeks due to his terrorizing of her mind and body. Snape had laughed when he had received the letter. The stupid bint had been only embarrassed and humiliated that she had not been able to control him. Being the best whore meant she was catered to and adored. He had only treated her as he would any Knockturn Alley whore...and a whore was a whore! He had thought with twisted delight how his vile face must have haunted her. She must have cried with shame at behaving so wanton with what she herself had named such a disgusting creature!

Towards the end of the Feast, Remus leaned over and said, "Severus, why not have a drink tonight in my rooms and let off some steam. You and I both have to put our charges into their beds. Come to my quarters and have some firewhisky to relax. You look like you could use it."

"Why not? Fine, Remus, I shall be over as soon as I am able. Thank you," he said politely.

At the Gryffindor Table, Hermione kept glancing up at the Head Table. Although Snape was none the wiser, Remus saw the covert glances, and his heart went out to the tender young woman. She was going to be crushed. He could only hope between now and then he would be able to get some sense of decency and kindness into his ornery friend so Hermione would not be scarred for life!

Remus was very happy with the conversation he had with Severus. True, he had not been particularly happy about being back. Nonetheless, he had confessed a willingness to make an effort of he could out of an uncomfortable situation. He had been aware of how the students viewed him. In the minds of many, he had been a cold and unfeeling Headmaster that had turned a blind eye when the Carrows had been torturing students on a regular basis. He had sworn to Remus he would keep his iron fisted rule over his Potions classes. He had felt the time was not right for him to settle back and tame down his personality. He had said he needed the students to know he was in charge and would not be shamed or goaded into backing down and running away from Hogwarts with his tail between his legs. He had also confided there were a couple of students that he had been genuinely looking forward to teaching. Miss Granger topped that list by far.

"Remus," he had said in all sincerity that his tipsy state could muster, "Miss Granger is a Potions master delight. She is exact, thorough, perfunctory, and conscientious. She is eager to learn and is genuinely excited about learning new ways to excel. I do hope she has given up her incessant need to spew her verbatim answers from her textbooks when asked a question. It is mind-numbing and grates on my nerves...especially since she is capable of so much more."

Remus had been impressed. "It sounds like you truly regard Miss Granger as more than just a mere student. It comes as no surprise; after all, she is turning nineteen this month. She's a woman, not a girl. She is different. The war changed her, Severus. You just weren't around to see her metamorphosis from girl to woman."

Severus had looked at Remus with a bored expression. "Remus," he had said, "As long as a student wears a Hogwarts uniform, it is inconsequential to me about any 'changes' that may have occurred in my absence. Miss Granger is no woman, I assure you," he had stated as he knocked back his drink.

"Now, if you will excuse me, I have my rounds. Besides, I find discussing students in this manner to be unsettling and unseemly!" he had said sharply.

Remus had apologized for offending his sensibilities, to which Severus had given a derisive snort. He had stalked out of the room and had disappeared into the darkness.

Remus was done for the day. He went into his quarters where his wife and son were sleeping. As he slid in bed with his wife, she turned towards him and snuggled close. He kissed her forehead, and she woke.

"How's Severus?" she whispered sleepily.

"He's got his robes in a twist. I placed a little bug in his ear about Hermione. Hopefully, he'll realize she will be the greatest thing that will ever come across his miserable path!" he mused.

Hermione was walking around her prescribed rounds. As Head Girl, she had more responsibilities than ever before. Perhaps now that Harry and Ron were gone, she wouldn't have to worry so much about her studies. She could focus on herself and only herself for a change.

She heard a figure coming her way and she said, *Lumos*."

It was Professor Snape!

He lit his wand as well and spoke tersely with her. "What are you doing out of bed, Miss Granger?"

"Sir, I am Head Girl, I have my duties," she replied calmly.

"Ah, yes. Well, I should let you carry on then," he said nervously.

"Are you alright, sir?" she asked with concern in her voice.

"I suppose I should do this now, Miss Granger. I would like to express my gratitude for your assistance in the Shrieking Shack during the final battle. I doubted anyone would care if I had lived or died," he said coolly.

Hermione was hurt. "Sir, I was genuinely concerned. I know you probably have no real recollection of the first minutes of my trying to stop you from exsanguinating, but I was terrified you were going to die!" she said heatedly.

Snape looked at her oddly. "I recall every moment, Miss Granger. I remember every scream, every tear, and every word," he said stiffly.

Hermione felt a shiver down her back. He was so detached and emotionless. It was sad and unnerving. Every tear? Every word? She had thought he was already dead at one point. She had confessed her love for him over and over. She had even kissed his lips at one point when there was nothing to do but keep the pressure on his wound. She felt very embarrassed and vulnerable. If what he said was true, he knew exactly how she felt about him and he had now enough time to consider his thoughts on the matter.

He continued. "I also heard you yelling at Mr. Potter outside my hospital room, Miss Granger. Was what you said accurate of what you would do concerning the happiness of a wizard who would care for your child?"

Hermione felt her face flush as she recalled the words she had screamed at the top of her lungs.

"I-I'd give him sex every bleeding day and a blow-job twice on Sundays!"

"I don't waste my time saying things I don't mean, sir," she said boldly.

She rose proudly to her full height. If he was ever to see her as a woman, she needed to act like one and stick to her guns.

"Ah," he said sardonically. "How wonderful it must be to live in a hypothetical world knowing your declarations shall never have to be tested."

"You never know where life will take you, sir. I know I never expected my life to have turned out the way it has during these past two years," she reflected.

"And what if this hypothetical wizard, who loved your hypothetical child so much, were so loathsome to your sight, would you still allow him to use your body for his satisfaction?" he asked in a cruel tone.

"I would think if said hypothetical wizard loved my child, he would not 'use' my body. He would respect my wishes. He would allow me to make my own decision to come to his bed. To be sure, if I were to come to a wizard's bed, it would not be for any other reason than genuine affection."

"You mean pity!" he spat.

"Rubbish!" she yelled. "That is despicable and deplorable! I would never engage a man out of pity! And if the wizard is a true gentleman, he would not want it any other way!" she said fiercely.

He gave her a twisted smile. "Miss Granger, it is a good thing you returned to the safety of these walls. You have absolutely no idea what a wizard wants, gentleman or no."

"You are telling me a decent wizard would want to have the attentions of a witch without affection?" she asked.

"That is how it has been since the beginning of time, Miss Granger. Men, wizard or Muggle, want the same thing. If they can't get it in respectable manner, they will get it through less than respectable means," he said coldly.

There was no use in continuing this line of conversation. Hermione decided to change the subject. "Sir," she asked boldly, "are you happy to be back here at Hogwarts?"

"Not that it is any of your business, Miss Granger, but actually I am not," he stated coolly.

"Then why be here?" she asked, confused.

A nerve twitched near his mouth. Then he twisted his mouth into a grim smile. "Ah, the questions of the young and ignorant! I suppose living in a hypothetical world, you do not seem to have a need for Galleons. I, however, live in reality. In reality, wizards and witches need funds to survive. I only planned to live up to a certain point and thanks to your diligence in saving my worthless life; I am now forced to make a living. I hear starving to death is a long and painful process. I do not wish to experience it. Now, if you are done interrogating me, Miss Granger, I believe I have indulged you enough, even if you did save my life."

He turned sharply on his heel and stalked off. Hermione's shoulders slumped. She felt she had been tested or quizzed, but had no idea why or what for. She also felt anger from him. Not the usual anger that everyone received from him, but a directed type of anger. She couldn't understand and figure it out. She sighed and went on back to her room in Gryffindor Tower. The first day had not gone well.

The weeks passed quickly. Hermione had tried to reach out to Professor Snape, yet each time she tried, she faced a sneering and evil-tempered wizard who, to her shock, had not deviated one millimeter from his old ways. If anyone had thought that Professor Snape would be a different person now that Voldemort was dead, he or she was in for a big disappointment. The only change was that he was just as equal a bastard to his Slytherins as he was to the rest of the houses.

Hermione worked hard in Potions, trying desperately to show him she wasn't just another "dunderhead," but he didn't seem to care. He left her alone and was silent when she knew her work was excellent. He seemed quite indifferent to her.

In the evening though, it was a different story. She made her Head Girl rounds each night dutifully and each night, without fail, stumbled across Professor Snape. Each meeting was uncomfortable and full of disparaging comments about her youth, ignorance, and idyllic nature.

One night she ventured to ask him about Harry.

His black eyes flashed viciously. "How dare you!" he hissed. "My private life is no longer your concern! Not that I have ever invited you entrance before!"

Hermione was desperate. "I'm sorry, sir. I just can't not ignore what I know. I am concerned as much about Harry as I am about..." Her hand clamped over her mouth. She was about to say that she was concerned about him!

Snape's eyes glittered in the dim light. "Tut, tut, Miss Granger. You must be more careful with your words. Anyone else would interpret that you actually gave a damn about your old, disgusting, greasy Potions teacher," he whispered softly.

"I don't think of you that way, Professor. You know that," she whispered.

"Yes, I do. How unfortunate for you," he whispered as he started to walk away. Then, he abruptly turned and strode towards her, boring his eyes into hers.

She was unable to rip her eyes from his. How could he sound so angry and yet so quiet at the same time? She felt a pressure, as if a headache were coming on her. She felt a bit nauseous and closed her eyes for a bit. When she reopened them, he was gone. She felt fine. *That was strange!* she thought. Then she continued her rounds.

Meanwhile, Snape was practically running back to his dungeons. He had done a terrible thing, prodding into her mind, but he had a nagging suspicion for weeks that he couldn't shake. He had known since the night he saw her masturbating, whispering his name that Miss Granger harbored some sort of feelings of lust for him, but he could not ascertain its depth or realness. Before then, he had easily disregarded her displays of affection for him in the Shrieking Shack as just an over-emotional outburst at seeing him so near death. When she spoke that he knew she did not see him as a disgusting old bat, he had wanted to cut her to the quick and have done with it; however, he had to know. As he had delicately prodded into her mind, an avalanche of thoughts and feelings came rushing out, threatening to bury him alive.

He reached the door to his quarters, rested his back on it, trying to calm his racing heart. He had tapped into a horrible, terrible reality. That child, that woman...had him all over her mind. He had seen images of her watching his movements in class; feelings of longing and desire that were so strong, it had been frightening. The emotions had not been new. They had been deeply attached to her mind. He had seen images that had been real and imaginary and that the imaginary ones had been quite disturbing! She actually thought that she wanted to have sex with him! HIM! There had been images of him dominating her, taunting her, fucking her brutally into submission while she cried out his name in pleasure and ecstasy. Then there had been images of him tenderly caressing her and telling her that he loved her. She had to be clearly imbalanced. She had to be. He had also seen that her feelings about what she had said to Harry that day outside his hospital room had been with him in mind.

This was bad, so very bad he couldn't relax one iota. He needed to get out. He went out into the cool autumn night and Apparated to the Leaky Cauldron. He went madly in search of a desperate whore. He needed to rid himself of Miss Granger and her fantasies. In no time, he found a willing whore that he had been with before. As he unbuttoned his trousers, he suddenly felt...wrong. He didn't want this anymore. He had made that choice years ago. He put his trousers together and apologized to the prostitute. He headed back to Hogwarts angry and randy. He would just have to take the problem in hand.

Back in his bed, his mind sharply turned to the images of Miss Granger he had seen while inside her mind. He found himself needing to slow his pace, and he began to stroke slower. He imagined Hermione as she was that night in Grimmauld Place as he started to moan and pant. He couldn't help himself. One of her fantasies burst into his mind. He was stroking her gently and softly whispering how much he loved her. He closed his eyes and imagined he was taking her. That it was her hot wetness that was wrapped around him. He found himself breathing her name over and over as he climaxed. When it was over, he found himself weak and needed to lie back and rest.

He felt confused and scared. He didn't know how he was going to go on being in Miss Granger's presence knowing what she wanted from him. He paced in front of the fire in his sitting room wishing that sex was the only problem in this God-forsaken mess! He remembered with vivid clarity how eager a lover Lily had been. She had never refused him and had been a willing and eager participant in the various sexual acts they had enjoyed. He knew from experience that sex did not mean that it meant love. And that was what he wanted: love. He wanted to be loved so badly it hurt to think of it.

He still had his secret wishes and dreams that had never died. He wanted a woman who would never lie, who would never use him, and who would adore him over anyone else. He had no idea how to acquire it. If Miss Granger on the day after she left Hogwarts as a student came to him and told him of her desires for him and then proceeded to make violent love to him, he would still never believe her. Lily had done that and she had left him. How could he ever be sure?

He decided he could not, and he would not risk it again. It hurt too much. He would have to keep Miss Granger safely locked in one of the recesses of his mind, take her out when he needed gratification and put her away again. He also would have to never speak or be alone with her again. He had to face it. She was a woman now: a woman by the look of her figure and by the word of law. Legally, he could do whatever he wanted if she were willing, but she was a student and that was not right. He would not take advantage. Even if she tried to do what Lily had done and come into his bed, he'd have her expelled before he'd take her!

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Between Wanting and Having

Chapter 21 of 30

Lily's life doesn't end when Voldemort hexes her. Instead, she and Harry go into hiding, but are things truly any better for her?

Chapter 22 Between Wanting and Having

Weekends for Severus Snape were precious and holy. He had made a promise to Remus long ago that he would never stop trying to find a way to cure Lycanthropy. So far, he had made very little progress, and time was running out. He could see the signs. The monthly transformations were changing. For years, Remus' transformations had been extremely painful, but now, they were becoming easier on him, the Wolfsbane Potion notwithstanding. It was a sign that he was melding into his werewolf form. Although Snape doubted Remus would become another Fenrir Greyback, the truth remained that Lycanthropy took its toll not only physically, but psychologically as well. The sharp decrease in pain was the first sign. Then would come the increased animalistic nature, deviant behavior, sexual sadism, and an urge to kill.

Physically, Remus was aging faster and faster. He had multiple ailments and was in chronic pain, for which Severus administered many potions to help him. He could see the desperation every month when the full moon came around. He feared for the wizard's mind and for the lives of his wife and son.

So, Severus made it a priority to keep his weekends free for his research. He worked alone, as he preferred, and faithfully every month, Remus came to give a sample of his blood to be analyzed and tested for possible variations or markers that could work towards a cure. It was tedious and frustrating work.

One Saturday, as he worked on yet another approach to his search, he heard a rap on his door.

"It's the weekend! Go away!" he snarled.

The door opened, and Hermione Granger stepped in. He rolled his eyes and started muttering to himself.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"Sir, I want to help you. I know you've been working to find a cure for Professor Lupin. I really would like to assist you," she said nervously.

"You can't help. You do not possess the breadth of knowledge required on the subject of Lycanthropy," he replied dismissively.

"I disagree, Professor. I have one thing: another perspective."

He looked at her and raised an eyebrow. "You have two minutes to prove you aren't completely wasting my time," he said impatiently.

He continued to work, ignoring her. He hoped it would discourage her, but it didn't.

"...Lycanthropy is actually not the accurate name for Professor Lupin's condition. It is Therianthropy. You and I both know the effects, the physical and psychological changes that occur. I also know Professor Lupin's condition is starting to deteriorate further."

She began to shuffle through her papers until she found the one she was looking for...he noticed that her hands were shaking.

"Here, if we can find out the course and the cause of the disease, isolate it, then we can have a starting point. A proper starting point, not just a shot in the dark."

"Is that what you think of my work, Miss Granger?" he growled. "I just putter around here blindly."

"Honestly, sir, I do. Unless you can tell me otherwise," she replied boldly.

He whispered angrily, "Get. Out."

Hermione took one more chance. "Do you know that the believed agent of the disease is a unique type of bacteria which possesses the ability to store and use magical energy?"

Snape jerked his head up to face her and narrowed his eyes.

She continued, "It is the store of magical energy that makes the transformation possible..."

"Yes, I do know that, Miss Granger!" he interrupted hotly.

"Yes, I am sure, but did you also know that the *actual* transformation is instigated by the production of certain key hormones?"

"What?" he snapped as he stepped out from behind his table. "Where have you retrieved such an asinine theory?" he demanded.

"It is *not*!" she sounded off in a clipped tone. She thrust a paper at him and said fiercely, "I read this in the latest edition of the Unabridged Encyclopedia of Magical Diseases. It is the latest breakthrough information on the disease. The transformation is only *introduced* through subconscious reactions to certain stimuli within the individual. Moreover, the stimulus varies from person to person. That is why a cure has eluded researchers while the *hormone* required for transformation is the same from subject to subject across the board. Until the medical magical community admits their focus for a cure is narrow and restrictive, one can only hope to find a cure for each infected person at a time. It is like a Muggle vaccine that is patented for one person's DNA, when millions are in need of said vaccine."

Snape stared at her as if she were insane...and what was troubling him was that he thought she was making sense!

"Once the first transformation begins, the bacteria utilize an encoded biological blueprint within themselves to guide the changes along. The encoding usually stays the same, which is why a person will change into the same form as the one who infected him. This *tunnel vision* on defeating the bacteria has been historically the locus of unlocking the disease and the only accepted gateway towards a cure. It is my theory that this course is severely misguided," she said flatly without apology.

She paused for an explosion from the professor, and when none came, she continued. "The bacterium is so strong, when first introduced into the body, actually *yeeches* onto muscle and bone. It can never be removed. *Never!* My theory is that since the hormones actually *make possible* the transformation, what if these hormones were isolated and controlled, thus suppressing the body's ability to *surrender* to the trigger event. For Professor Lupin, as with so many that Greyback infected, the trigger event is the full moon."

Snape raised a hand to halt her. "In effect, what you are saying, Miss Granger, is that whilst the bacterium makes the transformation *possible*, it is actually these key hormones that *induces* the transformation."

"Correct," she answered. "Now, we would have to ask Professor Lupin to be sure, but if my theory is sound, he should, in the minutes after his transformation back into his humanoid form, have what is called 'sheen' that coats his skin. The presence of 'sheen' is crucial to my theory because I believe that the hormones we need to isolate have to do with the body's fat stored in the intestines."

"What I mean to say, overall, Professor, is that the bacterium infects the intestines, mutates them to become a part of the person's new unique genetic make-up, and is impossible to either eradicate or separate them from other healthy cells and tissue. In addition, it varies from person to person. However, the hormones that *never mutate* and *never change* can be suppressed. I suggest that we concentrate on the hormones that aid in the digestion of the body's fat."

She was breathing hard now. Snape looked at her with sheer amazement. She was brilliant...absolutely brilliant! He looked into her eyes; they were dilated and shining brightly. He realized just how close she was standing to him. He was overcome with a compulsion to grab her face with his hands and kiss her lips hungrily. Her papers fell the floor as he moved one hand to the back of her neck and the other to the curve of her spine, pulling her firmly against him. He couldn't believe what he was doing or what she was doing in return. She melted right into him. Her mouth eagerly opened for him as he plunged his tongue inside. She felt so soft and eager under his touch, allowing him to mold her soft, warm body to fit with the solid rigid plains of his own. He grasped her so tightly; he could have been crushing her to death for all he knew. He could feel his arousal pulsating against her belly. She had to feel it too. He wanted her to know, wanted her to realize how she made him feel. He resisted the urge to grind against her. The image he had seen of her that night in Grimmauld Place flew across his mind.

Naked, writhing, and whispering his name in pleasure.

Straining to keep her thighs as far apart as possible, teasing the wet, pink skin with her fingers surrounded by a halo of small curls.

The exposure of one plump breast that moved in time with her frustrated movements.

He saw himself pounding into her mindlessly, tasting her breasts...

He tore himself from her and turned away, bracing his hands on his desk, his head bowed in defeat.

"Please leave," he breathed.

He heard her shuffling around on the floor, picking up the papers she had spilled there. He closed his eyes. He didn't dare look at her. All he could register was that Miss Granger on her knees, and all he wanted was to wrench his erection free from the buttons that were straining against it, hurting it, and let Miss Granger soothe it with her hot mouth. He did not dare move.

She left without a word, and he slammed his fist onto his desk. He had never felt such a reaction in his life. It hadn't been her face, breasts, or hips that had first enticed him. It had been her knowledge, her razor-sharp intellect that she had wielded in front of him as he tried to intimidate her into silence. The more she insisted her point, the more assured she became of her theory, the harder his blood had rushed to his loins, and he became aware of her, Miss Granger, the woman. There was no child standing there defending her position. She was articulate, poised, and fierce. She could never be anything less to him now. She was a woman, regardless of her being a student. By all rights, she should have finished Hogwarts the year prior. She was only here to finish what had been denied to her last year. And to make matters worse, he knew she had quite the figure under those robes that he was burning to touch.

He needed a drink.

"Remus," Snape said as he announced his presence at Lupin's office door.

"Severus! Come in," said Remus as he stood up stiffly from his desk to welcome his friend.

Snape walked into Remus' office looking strangely guilty. "I've stumbled upon some new information that may lead to the breakthrough I needed to find the cure," he said sadly.

Lupin's eyes shone with glee. But he saw how miserable his friend looked and was quite concerned. "Severus, is it bad news? I can't be helped, is that it?" he said flatly.

Snape waved his hand, dismissing his fear. "No, if all goes according to this new theory, you'll be fine. Remus." He drew in a sharp breath and exhaled uneasily. "I've really done it this time," he whispered.

"What is it?" Lupin said gravely as he sat down uneasily into his chair.

Snape confessed to Lupin what had occurred with Miss Granger. First, he told him about her research, then her theory, and finally the kiss.

Lupin tried to hide a snicker, and a hand went to cover his mouth when he realized his moustache wouldn't hide his smile.

Snape grew furiously angry. "How can you possibly sit there thinking this could be even remotely humorous? I accosted a student! I made sexual advances to a student, Remus. Stop laughing!" he roared.

Remus was starting to chuckle uncontrollably. "Listen to yourself, Severus. You're practically foaming at the mouth!"

Snape drew himself up to his full height and turned to walk out of the office.

"Severus, come now!" he called out to him. "Stop this and sit down. Let's talk about this rationally and realistically. Come, have a drink, and calm yourself!" He poured him a generous amount of firewhiskey, and Snape took it gratefully as he sat down heavily in the chair.

Remus spoke again, calmly this time. "Severus, let's not be coy about all this. You and I both know that Miss Granger has harbored romantic feelings for you for quite some time now."

"I fail to see how that makes this situation any better, Remus!" he growled.

"Severus, I need you to take a drink and listen very carefully. Hermione is an adult! She's here only out of her desire to take her N.E.W.T.s and to seduce you," he said evenly.

"REMUS!" Snape roared as he sloshed some of his drink on his robes.

Lupin remained calm in his chair. "Well, Severus, I told you I would speak about this rationally and realistically. I have done precisely that. You need to face the fact that Hermione has her eye on you. She has had you in her sights since she was barely sixteen. She's nineteen years old, a veteran of war, and an intelligent witch. Plus, it seems physically, she's not too shabby either, from the way you snogged her."

"I did not *snog* anyone!" he yelled.

Remus chuckled. "Honestly, Severus, you are forty years old, and you act at times like you are 140!"

"Thirty-eight," he muttered petulantly. "And you are not helping the situation!" he complained hotly.

"My mistake," Remus said smoothly. "Severus, do you want my help? I suggest that you take Miss Granger up on her offer to assist you in your research, allow her to take advantage of you whenever she desires, and sexually harass her as the mood fancies you. Then, the day after she takes her exams, invite her into your bed and shag each other raw." He smiled wickedly.

Severus felt the nerve on the side of his mouth twitch. His face was ashen. He jumped up from his seat and paced nervously. "How can you be so cavalier? Just because that tactic may have worked for you and your wife does not mean that is the answer for me!" he snapped.

"Severus, don't insult Dora," he warned the dark wizard with a stern glare. "What is so wrong with my suggestion? You both are so obviously taken with each other! You both have the intellectual drive and studious natures that would make you both comfortable with your lives. She would understand your need for research, and you would never belittle her for trying to educate herself and learn new things. You both are of age and consenting adults. The only caveat is that she remains a student. So, just curtail your lust for a few months and then let things take their natural course!"

"You think it's all so simple, don't you?" Snape sneered. "Miss Granger *only thinks* she wants me! If she truly wanted me, I'd fear for her reason! And even if she swore to the heavens her affections were real, and gave herself to me, I would never believe it. Lily came sneaking into my bed every night after Harry went to sleep. She begged me to make love to her after I first rejected her. She denied me nothing! She even told me once Potter never made her feel the way I made her feel. Did I ever tell you that? Well, she lied! She was a damn liar!" he raged. "How could I possibly ever trust another woman? After Moira? After...well, I can't do this!" he mumbled as he turned abruptly and stormed out of Lupin's office.

Lupin sighed as he slumped in his chair. He felt he almost had the stubborn wizard to the point of really accepting a chance with Hermione. *Damn you, Lily!* he thought miserably. *Why did you have to hurt him like that?*

A/N: Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please

The Small Questions

Chapter 22 of 30

Harry goes around to talk with the different people who knew about Snape and his mum, trying in hopes to get the answer Snape won't give him: Why did my mum kill herself?

Author's Note: Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 22 The Small Questions

The next month was the oddest time ever in the history of Hogwarts since Severus Snape came on as a professor. Students were confused left, right, and center. The angry, sardonic, mean wizard everyone loathed was nothing more than a sad, tired, weary man. He rarely spoke to anyone, and his classes were a mess. He just didn't seem to care anymore. He would start a lecture, and then his eyes would glaze over and stare into nothing. He remained entranced as students whispered nervously amongst themselves. At other times, he'd start lecturing again or assign the top student in the class to take over whilst he sat brooding at his desk.

Hermione was very worried about Professor Snape. He never looked at her, nor would he allow her to help him with his work. He would tell her from behind the warded lab door to slip her notes underneath the door, and he would peruse them at his leisure. Each time she saw him, she sighed inside with longing. She couldn't get the image out of her mind as he descended on her and took her mouth so passionately. She didn't know what she was going to do.

"Wotcher, Harry!" said Tonks as she saw the young man walk by her desk at the Auror Department.

He stopped and said, "Hullo, Tonks, what's goin' on?"

"Nothing much. Mum's happy as can be watching Teddy for me. She reckons it's the best gig a grandmum can have, watchin' her grandson!" she replied.

"Harry, can I talk to you for a minute? It's not work related, but I feel I need to say this."

Harry's face turned hard. "Look, if this is about Snape...save it! I've tried. He's a nutter! He won't answer one question...a question/ *reckon* I have the right to know!" he retorted angrily.

"I'm not blamin' you, mate!" she agreed. "It's bang out of order that he won't tell you...that is if he even knows the answer."

Harry looked into her eyes completely confused.

"Harry, have you even considered the possibility that perhaps Snape doesn't know why your mum...you know?" she asked quietly.

"How could he NOT know? How could we have been a happy family one day and then my mum's dead the next...by her own hand!"

"Harry," she began as she stood and placed a hand on his shoulder, "I care about you. But, the fact is that you seem to have everything all sorted out in your mind without all the facts. Have you even talked to Remus? Hagrid? Minerva? What about going to talk to Dumbledore's portrait?" she offered.

"You see, Harry, everyone seems to know the small answers, but no one really knows the big picture unless everyone who knew about them puts their encounters, interactions, and things they saw and heard into the mix. Then, perhaps when you get enough of the smaller questions answered, you won't need to ask Snape the big question after all. Look at it objectively. It's basically what an Auror does."

Harry was quiet and then said, "All right, Tonks."

"Good for you, Harry!" she said as she clapped him on the back. "Alright, back to work!"

Harry stood outside Hagrid's massive hut. He took a deep breath and knocked on the door. There was no going back now. He was finally going to get the answers he needed.

He sat and talked with his old friend over tea. Hagrid cried a lot as he told the story of how he, Sirius, and Lily surprised him by their arrival by Portkey. He told him about how scared they all had been during those first weeks.

"Wha' is hard, Harry, is tha' yer mum, well, she wanted a good home fer yeh. She was jus' heart-broke when yer dad died. Jus' heart-broke! Now, Snape's not an easy wizard ter know. Yeh kno' tha'! But, the man you kno' today isn't the man he was back then! Oh, no!"

Hagrid settled back and patted Fang as his beetle-black eyes glazed over. He had a wistful look on his face, and Harry couldn't help but be intrigued by the half-giant's calmness.

"Hagrid," he called. "What are you thinking about?"

"Oh, sorry 'bout tha'!" he said sheepishly. "I got caught there in the past! Those were good days, Harry. Good days. I went wi' Snape ter get the annual Christmas tree, like I'd always done. He cut down a littlun' fer yeh and yer mum fer yer place. I always liked yer mum, Harry. She was a very kind witch. I s'pose I needed ter kno' tha' she was a 'right. I asked Snape how things were an' his face was so happy! He loved yer mum so much. As much as any wizard had ever loved a witch, I reckon! He had the same look yer dad would get when yer mum would come inter a room." His face grew sad, and he pulled out his table-clothed handkerchief as huge, thick tears streamed down his face.

"I-I'm s-sorry, Harry. It was jus' so sad! Poor Snape, he was jus' distraught' over losin' yer mum! He came ter me after Dumbledore took yeh ter the Dursleys. Dumbledore and McGonagall thought he'd off himself, he was so upset! He cried an' cried sayin', 'They took my boy! He was all I had left of Lily. They had no right! He was my son!'"

Hagrid blew his nose. "Ah, well, it was all said and done, nuthin' no one could do."

Harry tried hard to envision a heart-broken Snape crying over him and came up short.

"Hagrid, did Snape really love me, or was it that he just loved my mum?" he asked.

Hagrid shook his head violently. "No, Harry! Don't you ever think otherwise! I saw the three of yeh together. You were a right, han'some family! Snape was beamin' ear-ter-ear all the time...ear-ter-ear smiles! He held yeh all the time! Now yeh kno' why I was so sure he wasn't out ter kill yeh when the business was goin' on wi' the Sorcerer's Stone!"

Harry felt his cheeks were hot. "Did he really think of me *ashis boy*, *his son*?"

"Really an' truly, Harry. He couldn't stop talkin' 'bout you! Said yeh were ter be the grea'est wizard ever! He figured since yeh had yer mum's smarts and his teachin', yeh were goin' to be a right thumpin' good one! An' he was right too!" he said smiling brightly.

This is too weird! Snape toting me around like I was special? Approving of me? Loving me? Harry thought.

"I don't understand, Hagrid. He always hated that I was..." He stopped short.

Hagrid was concerned. "Wha' is it, Harry?"

Harry realized he might have found the source why Snape never liked him. "I wasn't like him and my mum. I was just like my dad. That's what he always said, 'You're just like your father!' I was terrible at Potions and loved Quidditch. It must have felt like everything he did was for nothing!" he said, disappointed in himself.

"Hagrid, did my mum love Snape?" he asked nervously.

Hagrid tugged at his handkerchief. "Harry, I don't kno'. I kno' she would look at Snape holdin' yeh and her eyes would sparkle. She loved how he loved yeh, Harry. She also didn't mind him holdin' her hand, or puttin' his arm 'round her. She would sit wi' him an' settle right in next to him an' they looked happy, close together. I remember thinkin' to meself that 'it's good ter kno' Harry will have himself a dad! You know he taught yer to use the toilet, did yeh?" he said with a huge grin.

Harry turned beet red. "Yes, I remember being told that, once," he muttered.

"Proud as punch, he was! Jus' like a dad. Thought yeh were the smar'est boy in the whole world when yer finished yer toilet trainin'!"

Harry felt that revelation signaled a great time to end the conversation. "Well, thanks Hagrid. I'll let you know if I need anymore information." He turned to leave when Hagrid stopped him suddenly.

"Um, Harry," Hagrid said nervously. "There's jus' one thing, bu' yeh'd be wantin' ter speak ter Professor Lupin 'bout tha'. It was when he firs' saw yeh and yer mum...after. They had words. She left upset, I think it was about' Snape."

Harry looked concerned. He felt Hagrid was withholding more than he let on, but it wouldn't be right for him to say. Harry would have to speak with Remus next.

"Thanks, Hagrid. It was great to see you!"

Remus let out a big sigh when he opened his office door to find Harry on the other side.

"Well, Harry, I have to say I'm glad to see you here finally. It has weighed heavy on me knowing how we parted last," he confessed.

"I'm sorry, Remus," Harry apologized. "I was out of line. I wasn't myself. I should never have said what I did about my mum. I have a lot of questions. I really need to know what you know. I just came from Hagrid's. He said you and my mum had words about Snape when you first saw her after my dad died."

"Ah, yes," Lupin said ruefully as he clasped his hands together on the top of his desk. "I believe I hit a sore spot with Lily that offended her. But, before I tell you about our conversation, Harry, I need you to understand the frame of mind we were all were in...especially your mother's. Lily was terrified...we all were. At first, no one knew how Voldemort had found them, and then when we were led to believe Sirius had betrayed them, it was almost too much for your mother to bear.

"You see, Harry, your parents were the core of the Order. They were the heart and soul. So many times, they had battled Death Eaters together and always survived. It was amazing how much damage they did to thwart Voldemort. That was why they were marked for death. Even before the Prophecy, Voldemort wanted James and Lily dead because they had 'defied' him. Therefore, when they kept turning up alive, again and again, it was as if James and Lily could never die! Then when it happened, it was a crushing defeat for the Order. Harry, it was a good thing Voldemort was stopped that night. I don't think the Order could have survived such a blow.

"Anyway, I learned much later that Severus had been spying for Dumbledore, before he ever set foot in Hogwarts. He, in his way, helped James and Lily escape numerous times. Severus inadvertently saved your mother's and father's lives, Harry. I'm sure he resented it, knowing later it had been his work that led James to a victory, but he continued to work as a spy because he loved Lily that much. That was the man your mother came to see when she came back here, devastated, scared, and frightened. There was Severus, so loving, giving, and kind. I never saw you all together, I told you that before, but there was no doubt of their mutual fondness.

"When I saw you and your mother the first time after your dad's murder, she was reasonably contented, settled, and happy to see me. I could tell she had many concerns and questions. I admit, Harry, I bungled the conversation badly. I went straight to the issue I was concerned with, not thinking about what Lily was trying to process. I told her Severus loved you because he loved her. Then she got angry and told me not to judge her. I told her I didn't, but it was a lie. I did judge her. I judged her, and I judged Severus' motives. God help me, but I did. And I fear I may have caused Lily more pain than she'd already been feeling." He lowered his head in shame before his friend's son.

Harry swallowed and then whispered, "What did you say?"

Remus lifted his bowed head and said sadly, "I told her not to live a lie. I asked her if there had never been a Harry, if she and James had never had you, and she was just a young, single, widow on the run, would she still be living with Severus? Well, she grabbed you, ran out of Hagrid's hut, and didn't look back. I feared she hadn't wanted to admit the truth."

"What was the truth, Remus?" Harry whispered, his voice strained, his head bent low, so Remus couldn't see his face.

"I think the answer was 'no', Harry," he said softly.

Harry's head snapped up, his eyes were flashing in anger. "So, *shedid* use him. He loved her and me, and she lied to him!" he blurted out angrily.

Remus looked up into Harry's face. The young man was crying. Remus gazed into his green eyes and saw Lily staring back at him. However, the tears Harry was shedding were for Snape.

"Harry?" he called out to him.

Harry's eyes were glazed over. "All these years *he* wanted me. He told me, and I pushed him away. I think I understand now. She didn't love him like she said...like she

acted. Hagrid told me how she let him hold her hand, put his arm around her. She led him to believe. *why?* How could she have been so cruel?"

"Harry," Remus said emotionally. "I think she tried. I think she wanted to love him so much that she did everything she could to make it happen. She came to him and offered herself as a gift for his kindness, and he refused to take advantage. After Sirius came in and caused that scene, scaring her, and angering Severus, she was terrified. Albus told me how she reacted when he gave them the news of Sirius' attack on Pettigrew and how he had killed all those Muggles. He said she fell to pieces. She literally curled into Severus' lap, and he held her. Severus told me it was soon after that she started slipping into bed with him. They would talk about the old days when they were children, just kids, laughing and enjoying the friendship they had lost but regained. Then she told him she wanted to make love to the man who loved her, who loved her son, and who had loved her for almost all her life."

Harry was silent. He didn't know what to say, or what even to feel. "So, my mum wanted to love Snape. She wanted us to be a family."

"Yes, Harry," Remus said relieved. "She wanted it to fit because it was all so right. But I think now, you're going to have to speak with Minerva. There may be things she might have said from a woman's perspective that she could only share with another woman. I don't know how much Minerva would be comfortable telling you, but I think it would be worth the chance, especially if you are really searching for a well-rounded perspective of things."

"Thanks, Remus," Harry said as he stood up to leave.

"Harry, now that you've spoken with me and Hagrid, how do you feel about Severus?" he asked softly.

Harry's breath caught in his chest, and Lupin could see he was struggling with his emotions. "I feel I lost something that was special. I feel I lost another father. Another father..." he murmured as he walked out the door.

"Harry Potter!" Headmistress McGonagall exclaimed as she greeted her former student and one of her own cubs.

Harry nervously sat down next to the Headmistress on her couch.

"Potter, you can call me Minerva. Would you like for me to call you Potter or Harry?" she asked politely.

"Potter. It makes me feel safe somehow. When you called me Harry, it was always attached to bad news. 'Potter' made me feel everything was normal, even if I was in trouble, I knew you cared," he admitted shyly.

Minerva smiled as she poured them tea. "Well, *Potter*, it has been going round the gossip mill that you've been asking questions about your life here as a baby."

"I've spoken with Hagrid and Remus. I did speak with Snape when he was in hospital, but he was very sick, and my questions upset him. He had to be sedated when I asked him why my mum killed herself. I'm trying to retrieve all the information I can so I can figure out what was real and what was a lie. I hope you can help me," he asked expectantly.

Minerva gave a slight smile. "I can, Potter, although you may not want to hear what I have to say," she said softly as she handed him a cup of tea.

"I am ready for anything, Minerva," he replied confidently. "I know my mum had an active sexual relationship with Snape, and she chose to be with him. I know he did not force or coerce her. I'm ready to hear whatever you have to say," he declared.

Minerva summoned a bottle of scotch and two tumbler glasses. She poured them both a hefty amount and ordered him to drink.

"Put down your tea, Potter. I think this will go down better after you've had a wee dram of the demon liquor," she joked dryly.

He sipped slowly, enjoying the silence as long as he could. He was nervous. It was hard enough knowing his mother had lived with another man as she had with his own father. What made it worse was that man had been *Snape*. Nevertheless, he was getting used to the reality of Snape loving his mum. He had been good to her. That made it bearable. Hell, it even redeemed the old bastard in his eyes a little.

Minerva began her story. "Potter, your mother lived with a lot of guilt. She had a very active sex life with Severus...and if you ever tell him what I am about to reveal, may God help you, because I won't be able to!" she warned.

"Your mother came to Severus' bed after the incident with Sirius Black and asked him to make love to her. She had offered herself once before, out of obligation, which, to his credit, he had refused. But this time was different. She told Severus she was physically attracted to him. That is a *truthful statement*. She wanted to be with him sexually. Are you alright, Potter?"

He gulped down more scotch. "Go ahead, still hanging on," he said wryly.

"Severus worshiped your mother, and he adored you. He was a doting family man. Lily was swept off her feet with his passion and ardor for her and his care and gentle way with you. She enjoyed their *physical* relationship very much. Yet, her love remained with your father. God save her, she lied to him and confessed to me often how wretched she felt about it all! That's the truth of it, Potter. She lied to him when she told him she loved him, but at the same time she enjoyed how he made her feel, and not just in bed. She enjoyed how safe he made her feel as well. Then, as time passed, she felt it would have been selfish to take you away from a man you had begun to call 'daddy.'"

"What!" Harry exclaimed.

Minerva looked at him sharply. "Oh, yes, Potter. Severus was 'daddy' to you after some time had passed. She couldn't take you from another father when Voldemort had already taken James, and Sirius had betrayed them. She felt she owed you a family. So, she decided it was better to be with a man who adored and loved her and her child, who gave her physical passion, and prayed her heart would soften and change to truly love him. If it is any conciliation, Harry, I think in time she would have fallen in love with Severus."

"Then why did she kill herself?" Harry fairly shouted in frustration. "I keep getting answers, but I feel no closer to the truth than before! It's even now more confusing! What am I going to do? Snape won't talk to me about it. He gets far too angry if I do. I give up!" he muttered despairingly, throwing up his hands in resignation.

Minerva turned and gripped his shoulders firmly with her thin hands. "Don't you give up, Potter! Don't you dare! That man loves you as if you were his own flesh and blood! He's devastated and heart-broken, thinking he's lost you forever. Don't give up, Harry, please!" Her be-speckled eyes pleaded in a way her words could not. It was very disturbing to the young wizard.

"Harry?" a deep voice sounded from across the room.

Harry and Minerva turned to face Dumbledore's Portrait.

"Sir! Have you been listening?" asked Harry incredulously.

"Yes, my boy, I have. Taking you away from Severus was one of the many wrongs I committed against him. I have so many regrets where Severus is concerned. To me, he was like *my* own son. I lost him Harry. He remained faithful to his promises out of his love for you and your mother, but the day I forced him to teach you Occlumency was the 'beginning of the end,' as it were."

Harry couldn't bring himself to think about that terrible day Snape had thrown him out of his office after finding him peeking in his Pensieve without permission. "Sir, can you tell me why my mum killed herself?" he asked desperately.

"I don't know the answer any more than I believe Severus does. I do know that Lily was sad most of the time. I think her sadness came from the fact she was not being completely true to herself, although, she had made the decision to remain with Severus and be his wife one day. She told me this, Harry, not one week before her death. I fear something must have happened that pushed her over the edge or cornered her into feeling it would be better for you to not have her in your life."

Harry felt bothered by this assessment of his mother's mental state. *What a mess!* he thought tiredly.

Dumbledore continued. "You see, Harry, Severus feels it was him. He thinks she killed herself because he was so very bad, and she was so very good. He said that night, 'She chose death rather than to suffer my touch.'"

Harry nodded. "Professor Lupin told me the same thing," he said sadly.

"Ah, Remus has been a source of great comfort for Severus these past years. A true friendship has sprung between them, and I am grateful that Remus is such a noble and caring soul. Unfortunately, he only knows what Severus believes to be true. And Harry, Severus believes he is responsible for your mother's death. He feels that his sexual desire for her trapped her, and the only way out for her was death. Now, Severus believes he is unworthy of any kind of love and respectable companionship. He is very confused. Lily told him she loved him, which was not true. Although, I don't think she said it with malicious intent, the damage to Severus was devastating. She wanted it to be true so badly, she thought lying about it wouldn't be so terrible. After all, she held fast to the belief one day she would learn to love him," he finished regretfully.

"Fake it till you make it," Harry muttered.

"What?" questioned Dumbledore.

"It's a Muggle saying. 'Fake it till you make it.' Pretend something is real until it becomes real."

"That's very accurate of what I think Lily was trying to accomplish. Harry, you are going to have to go back to Severus for your answers. I think the answer lies in the note she left for him and also what occurred that night," he stated plainly.

"Did you read the note, sir?" Harry asked.

"Yes, I did. It was short and to the point. It was all about you. She asked Severus not to hate her, that she had to do this for you, Harry. She also asked him to raise you and care for you. She mentioned that they had dreams for you. Severus told me he was going to make sure you would grow to be as powerful a wizard as Salazar Slytherin himself! That was frightening, Harry. I knew Severus' intentions were pure, but he fights the call of the Dark. It has always been hard for him to resist. I feared for your safety, for his influence on you. I needed you to stay away, Harry, during those young formative years, so that you would not become another Dark Lord. It would have been so easy for Severus to slip back into that trap again."

Harry couldn't process that right now. "Sir, you say something must have occurred the night my mum killed herself."

"Yes, Harry, I do," he said honestly.

"Do you know the events of the day? Where she went, or anything?"

"Well, your mother went nowhere, Harry. Severus was terrified that Lucius Malfoy would try to kill her if it were known she was alive. He, in fact, the night your mother committed suicide, went on a reconnaissance mission to see how Malfoy was doing, if his allegiance was still with rebuilding Tom's world. You see, those days, we feared Lucius Malfoy would rise up to become another Dark Lord. You remember how it was when you first came to Hogwarts. He had immense power over the Ministry and the Board of Governors. At the height of his power, he had Fudge in his pocket. However, by that time, Tom had returned, and Lucius was not the principal threat anymore. But before Tom's return, Lucius Malfoy was a man to be watchful of and taken seriously," he said darkly.

"So, the night my mum killed herself, he was out at the Malfoys'?" Harry asked.

"Yes. Lily knew about Severus' work as a spy. She hated it, but understood he had to pretend to be a Death Eater."

Things started to come together in Harry's head. "There must have been something said," Harry surmised.

"Ah, Harry, for that you will have to go back to Severus," the former headmaster's portrait said sadly.

"I don't think he's ready to face me again, sir," Harry said doubtfully.

"Then there is only one person you can go to now, Harry."

"Who?"

"Lucius Malfoy."

Pure-bloods and Muggle-borns

Chapter 23 of 30

Harry has an enlightening discussion with Lucius Malfoy and decides it is time to talk to Snape about everything.

Chapter 23 – Pure-bloods and Muggle-borns

Harry Potter made the obligatory niceties to gain entrance into Malfoy Manor. He knew he wasn't welcome. The Malfoys were social pariahs. Their life, which had been once opulent and full of power, was now isolated and lonely. There were no more friends, no more balls. The pure-blood society, which had been in its day, grand and decadent, swelling in their ranks, were now splintered and driven underground.

Lucius Malfoy had become an old man. He was tired and weary. His hopes lay in Draco, although Draco was not so sure of himself anymore. They were a lost people, living in a social and political no man's land. How could they not feel Harry Potter to be a cause of the eradication of their world?

Harry was understandably nervous. He didn't know what to expect meeting Mr. Malfoy. He did not know if he would receive any more answers that would get him closer to the truth or not. Yet, he had to take the chance.

He sat in the salon, after a house-elf had let him inside. Lucius came in slowly without the flourishing gait for which he had been so well known. He was older and weaker. He wasn't the man Harry remembered threatening him at the Department of Mysteries nearly four years ago.

"Mr. Potter," he drawled coolly. "I must say I was intrigued to say the least when I received your owl. Although, I cannot fathom what information you could possibly hope to receive from me. I had no idea as to your mother's clandestine affair with Severus. He certainly kept that tidbit of juicy information from me."

Harry remained calm. He was done with the days when a Malfoy could get a rise out of him. Lucius was just a pathetic old, obsolete wizard whose life had no place in the new Wizarding world. He deserved pity more than anything.

"Mr. Malfoy, it has come to my understanding that in June of 1982, Severus Snape came here for some sort of gathering, party, or what-not. Do you recall the evening?" Harry asked in his best Auror voice.

Lucius tapped his finger on the handle of his cane in thought. "June of 1982? My, that was over fifteen years ago! I couldn't possibly say for sure. I do recall the months after the Dark Lord fell. My wife and I were very busy with Draco, you see. He is just a couple of months younger than yourself. I do recall about that time, Severus was starting to come round again after a prolonged absence. Of course, I know now that he was very busy with his newly acquired family. Always a dream of his, you see, making Lily his. It seemed it all fell right into his hands." He looked at Harry with a taunting glare.

Harry forced himself to stay on point.

"Sir, I want to know about the things you and Snape may have discussed that evening, or any other evening, that might have led my mother to believe she would be better off dead."

Lucius laughed coldly. "Ah, my deluded boy! You can't even hope to imagine how things were like back in those days. The Dark Lord might have been gone, but his cause was still very much alive."

"No doubt through your own influence, I'm sure," Harry said snidely.

Lucius turned his head with widened eyes, looking at Harry directly with surprise. "You actually think I had the power to make or break the pure-blood movement? Your mother and Severus knew she would never *really* be free. She would have remained a target forever! Somehow, somewhere, she would have met her end if she hadn't have taken matters into her own hands." He then turned his head to the side to gaze out the French windows that walked out into his gardens. "*Severus!* What an utter fool—thinking he could hide his Mudblood away in his dungeons forever!"

"Watch your language, Malfoy!" Harry growled. "Do not call my mother a Mudblood!"

Lucius turned his head towards Harry and inclined his head in a small bow. "I apologize," he replied condescendingly. "Severus probably thought he could bring Lily into polite society, marry her, even raise you as his own, but the truth is, Potter, that your mother would have only hindered you. Your life would have been in constant upheaval and danger. Why should that have been? You, after all, have the Potter blood—which is pure-blood flowing through your veins.

"Didn't anyone ever tell you, Potter that you are distantly related to my family? Or did your mongrel uncle decide to overlook that fact? Your grandmother, Dorea Black, who married a pure-blood, Charlus Potter, was my wife, Narcissa's, Great-Aunt. Her grandfather and your grandmother were brother and sister. That family history would have made you very acceptable in our world, even if your mother hadn't been pure-blood. That type of lineage would have made you a half-blood, like Severus, but your station would have been much higher. It could have been overlooked that your mother was a *Muggle-born*, if she had not been Lily Evans," he mused.

"Why would I have wanted anything to do with the people who murdered my father and tried to kill me and my mother?" Harry spat.

Lucius sneered at him. "I'm not saying you would, just that your mother was marked for death, and while *that* *ever* would have changed, *you* were untouchable. You had defeated the Dark Lord. Then, after the Dark Lord's re-birth, we were under instructions that no one except the Dark Lord could touch you. No danger would have befallen you until the Dark Lord's re-birth. We, not knowing the complete story, would have tried to ingratiate you into our society. Why do think my son was so gracious to seek you out and offer his friendship to you? Just because of your *scar*? It was because I told him to. After all, you were cousins. Distant, yes, but nevertheless, your father was a Black. His sire had been a Potter, which is nothing to sneeze at, but it is the mother's blood that counts for more in pure-blood families. Perhaps that was the reason the Dark Lord hated your father so. He squandered his legacy of a pure-blood.

"His parents were so damned happy they had finally conceived in their dotage, they let him run around like the devil, never teaching him the importance of our ways. Your father was not only a pure-blood; he was a *Black*. The Blacks have always been the elite of Wizarding Britain. Your father's marriage to Lily Evans would have been a shock if he had remained with us, however, it would have been tolerated. Lily was a striking beauty. She was a powerful witch, refined and well mannered from what I was told. I only ever saw her in battle.

"You see, Potter, marriage in pure-blood circles holds the same course as the Muggle Royal Family. When a King marries a princess, or even a Lady, she is automatically elevated to the status of Queen. Now when a Queen marries a prince, or a Lord, he can only rise or maintain the station of a prince. Your mother would have been accepted—to an extent—because she would have taken the name of Potter, a pure-blood, and the name Potter would have secured you. However, that would never happen, for she never accepted the world Potter had been born into.

"Severus believed whole-heartedly the old adage, 'Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer.' Perhaps, that was why your mother killed herself. She knew you would never have a chance at a real life as long as she was around to be a target. Severus would have insisted she embrace the pure-blood world, even if only to work as a spy. However, *we* never would have embraced her. The Dark Lord had marked her for death. The moment had your mother walked into any of our homes; she would have been killed on sight.

"However, if it had been just you and Severus, you would have been adored and cherished because the *stain* of your mother would have been removed. We would have taught you, along with Draco, all the rules and traditions we hold so dear. Narcissa would have been a mother to you, and Severus would have had all of the sympathy from each and every pure-blood witch." Lucius turned from the window he had wandered to during his speech and looked at Harry malevolently.

Harry felt a sense of dread that he had never felt before in his life. He excused himself hastily from the manor and Disapparated as soon as he could back to the boundary line at Hogwarts. He had to talk to Snape once and for all.

It was hard, making that trek down to the dungeons he knew so well. He allowed his mind to wander. *This was where I lived with my mum. We were a family. Snape was my dad. He had loved me.* He shook his head to clear his thoughts and knocked on the door to Snape's office.

"Enter!" Snape bellowed.

Harry walked in, slowly and calmly. Snape stood immediately, shock evident on his face. He looked pale and nervous.

"Potter," he whispered.

"Professor," the young wizard replied.

There was a silence that was so uncomfortable that Harry didn't even know how to breathe properly. He asked if he could sit, and Snape at first said yes, but then softly said, "Why don't you join me in my sitting room? It's a bit chilly here, I think we'd be more comfortable there."

Harry was gob-smacked. There was no bite or sarcasm in his voice, just a regular person talking to him. He nodded and followed him inside his private rooms.

It was cheery, homey, and lonely all at the same time. He looked around and saw a desk in the corner of the room.

"Was that the desk you told me about?" he asked quietly.

"Yes," Snape answered sadly. He walked over and ran his hand over the edge. "I would sit and read the essays I was grading, telling you what dunderheads they all were, but that you would never be one. Your mother was far too intelligent, and I was going to make sure you were—" He stopped abruptly.

The Potions master closed his eyes in painful remembrance. "Well, it doesn't matter now," he finished quickly.

"It matters," Harry said, feeling his throat constrict. He wanted so much to know the man Snape had been, the man that had smiled at him, and had approved of him—the man who had loved him. He wanted to know the man who had liked it when he had called him "daddy."

Snape looked him with such anguish and sadness; it was almost too much to witness. He gestured for Harry to sit, and before Snape could say anything, Harry said, "I've been going around, talking to Hagrid, Remus, Minerva, and Dumbledore. I even talked to Lucius Malfoy. I know there are some things that are just too painful, and I respect that. All I want is to ask about the events of the day my mum died. Can you tell me?" he asked hopefully.

"Fine," Snape answered uncomfortably.

"Um, so how was the day like?"

Snape sat rigidly in a hard chair as he began. "Well, it was a day like all the others: uneventful and peaceful. Lily and I played with you after my classes were over for the day. Then after dinner, I got ready to go to Lucius Malfoy's house for a party. I had to go and spy on him, see if he was trying to take over the Dark Lord's position."

"How did my mum feel about you going over there?" Harry asked.

Snape drew a sharp breath. "She was angry. She told me not to move, and she put you in your room to play so you wouldn't hear us argue."

"You and my mum argued?" Harry said unbelievably.

Snape shrugged. "Not really. She was angry at first. She thought I was returning to my old ways. I told her the truth: that I had spying to do for the headmaster. She didn't understand. She told me I was free, that the Dark Lord was gone, and I could live my own life."

"And then?" Harry prodded.

The older wizard continued calmly. "I explained to her the realities of the situation. Lucius Malfoy was a real threat. Slowly, he was going to gain power in the Ministry and keeping the movement alive somehow. There were enough Death Eaters around who had not been convicted whom could cause real harm if not kept under surveillance. I did what I had to do to keep my family safe!" he finished heatedly.

Harry felt strange. *His family*. He was his family, his son. He really honestly had thought of him as his. He could feel the ice between them melting. All the years of hurt and anger were starting to fall away from Harry's heart.

"How did my mum react to that information?" he said cautiously.

Snape was getting agitated. Harry was getting too close to that dreaded question. Yet, he couldn't stop now. He was so close. He could feel it.

Snape rubbed his eyes, looked straight into Harry's and said, "She said, 'It will never be over, will it?'" Harry looked into the wizard's eyes. They were so black and cold. He always thought of his eyes as dead. Was that what his mum had done to him?

Harry pondered over that statement. It was so full of despair and defeat. However, there was still something more.

"What happened after that? Did you respond to her?" he asked.

"I said, 'I will never stop until it is over. Lucius has a son Harry's age. Lucius will fight to the death to keep his son safe and give him the life he feels he deserves. He is extremely dangerous.'"

"She asked me if I would do the same for you. I was concerned why she would ask me such a thing. She kept on like she didn't even hear me. She said, 'You think of Harry as your own son, right?'"

Harry's green eyes watered.

"I told her of course, that I loved her, and I loved you. She didn't have to ask! Then she said, 'You would keep him here and teach him everything about the dark arts, defense, potions—you'd make sure no one ever hurt a hair on his head, wouldn't you?' I said, 'Of course, Lily. You don't even have to ask!' Then she told me she loved me."

He looked defiantly at the boy, daring him to call him a damn liar.

"Then what happened?" Harry asked softly.

The older man was blushing and looking very uncomfortable. Harry knew that look. He looked the same way whenever anyone asked if he was having sex with Ginny, primarily, her brothers.

"You had sex with my mum," he stated plainly.

"I *never* 'had sex' or 'shagged' your mother!" Snape roared. "I respected her! What we had was—was special!"

Harry nodded humbly. As a man of honor, he could respect how another honorable man would take offense.

"I apologize, sir," he whispered. "You and my mother had *relations*, correct?" he asked politely.

Snape nodded curtly with a jerk of his head. "She instigated it. I was feeling overwhelmed by her—hell, Potter! I can't talk to you about this!" he shouted as he stood and turned his back to him.

"You can, sir," Harry said reassuringly. "I don't need to know details, just things that could be important."

Snape drew a deep breath and spoke with a staccato voice. "A-Afterward, I was deeply touched and felt so much gratitude in my heart that your mother loved me and

wanted to give herself to me. I told her I wished I could take her with me, that she would have been the most beautiful witch in the room—and it was true! Your mother would have made each one of those pure-blooded beauties look like dull Knuts!"

Harry felt a surge of pride that his mum had been so lovely and a deep tug of respect for Snape's loyalty to her. He sat back and let what Snape said resound in his thoughts.

"What else happened?" he finally asked after an uncomfortable silence.

"Nothing," he said bitterly. "She wished me luck, and I was off. When I returned, she was—gone," he whispered sadly.

Harry sat and thought about all the things he had heard. There had been something Malfoy said that seemed to ring true.

"Severus probably thought he could bring Lily into polite society, marry her, even raise you as his own, but the truth is, Potter, that your mother would have only hindered you. Your life would have been in constant upheaval and danger. You, after all, have the Potter blood—pure-blood flowing through your veins... That made you a half-blood... It could have been overlooked that your mother was a Muggle-born, if she had not been Lily Potter."

"... Your mother was marked for death, and while that never would have changed, you were untouchable... Perhaps, that was why your mother killed herself. She knew you would never have a chance at a real life as long as she was around to be a target."

Snape still had his back to Harry, but it didn't stop the younger wizard from getting the truth. "Sir," Harry began, "I went to talk with Lucius Malfoy, and he told me some very interesting things—observations if you would—about my mum and reasons she may have killed herself," he said slowly.

Snape turned around halfway and narrowed his eyes. "Really?" he replied sarcastically as he sat back down.

"Yes. He said that that you were deluded, thinking you could ever bring my mum into 'pure-blood society' as your wife. He said the truth was that my mum would only have hindered me."

Snape slowly turned around. His eyes began to blaze, his pale face twisted with anger.

Harry went on. "He said that my mum was marked for death, and that never would have changed. However, I was untouchable. I wasn't in the type of danger my mum was in. He said he thinks that's why she killed herself. He said, 'She knew I would never have had a real life as long as she was a target.'"

Snape stood and again turned his back to Harry. It was too much. Could it be true? Lily had killed herself because she had felt she had been a hindrance to Harry? He remembered her suicide note.

"Don't hate me. I did it for Harry."

He bent his head as he grasped the bookshelf in front of him.*How could it be true? How could she think life would be better off without her?"*

He felt the tears slide down his face. *Could it be she didn't really loathe my touch after all?*

He felt a hand on his back, and he stiffened in an involuntary reflex. He turned around, and there was his boy, looking up at him with those eyes, his mother's eyes: the eyes that took his heart all those years ago. He grabbed his son and embraced him. Harry returned the embrace. Father and son were reunited at long last.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please

review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Learning

Chapter 24 of 30

Severus and Harry talk about themselves in hopes of understanding the other more. However, when the topic of Hermione comes up, all the hard work between them may have been for naught.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 24 Learning

"You know it was this same couch where I held you when you were so sick with a terrible cold and colic," Snape said softly as he sat with Harry in front of the fire.

He and Harry were sitting comfortably, side by side, in his sitting room. After they had embraced, the two men didn't know what to do. Sitting and having a drink seemed in order.

"What did you do?" Harry whispered as he looked at him in awe.

Snape's eyes glazed over, and his face brightened as he reminisced. "I told your mother to get on to bed, she was worn out. I rubbed your little chest down with oils to help you breathe, gave you a potion to ease the colic, and I placed you right here on my bare chest," He patted his chest with his hand. "You snuggled right up and slept. I remember rubbing your back and kissing your head. You were a good baby, Harry. The seven months I had with you and your mother were the happiest of my life," he said, remembering fondly.

Harry looked at his new dad and said, "Tell me about her. What was she like?"

Snape sighed. "Your mother was an angel. She was beautiful. She had a smile that could make everything okay again. She loved to play with you." He pointed to the rug in front of them. "She would sit on that rug in front of the fire and play with you for hours. She would talk, sing, and read to you. She had a lovely voice that was so soothing,

and you responded so well to her. You and I would just stare at her in awe. She used to tease me and tell me I was a terrible influence on you. She'd say, 'How will Harry ever to find a good witch of his own if he loves me so much?'"

Harry laughed. Snape smiled. Harry liked his smile; it made his face seem more likeable. "You have her laugh, you know," Snape confided. "So infectious...so carefree. You are more like her than you think, Harry."

"Professor Lupin said something like that to me once," he said quietly as he watched his hands roll his glass of firewhisky between them.

Snape turned sharply, making Harry lift his face to look his newly acquired dad in the eye. "Your mother wanted a future for you, Harry," he said in his normal serious tone. "She wanted you to be happy. Find a good witch and give your mother grandbabies. She wanted you to be whatever would make you happy with your life. It is immaterial what you chose for a living," he said urgently. "Just be happy!" It sounded more like him...a command. Harry almost laughed, but Snape wasn't done.

"I know Miss Weasley is the one for you. Don't let her slip away," he said tenderly.

"I won't," Harry whispered. "I promise."

Severus cleared his throat. He was becoming choked up. He sat back and stared into the fire, leaning his head onto one hand.

Harry sensed his unease and said, "It's so strange! I was so sure you hated me with a passion."

"No, Harry," he replied, still gazing into the fire. "I would at times become frustrated, angry, annoyed, irritated, and just plain brassed off at the stunts you pulled over the years. What was uppermost in my head was trying to make sure you didn't accidentally kill yourself with your own stupidity!" he said harshly. He sighed, looked at him and said, "It's hard when you take on the responsibility of being a parent. Your mother's dying wish was for *me* to raise you. I was not able, but I had you in my sights for six years. Not a day passed that I did not fear for you, pray for you, and, yes, even love you."

"At times, in the beginning, I *hated* that an eleven-year-old could make me feel so vulnerable. I know I was cruel when I had no reason to be. I know that I could have shown you more care. I just didn't know how. I only knew what my own father had been like. He was a hard man, and he wanted me to be tough so no one would take advantage of me. He demanded I do well in school and approved of my learning Dark magic. He, being a Muggle, couldn't believe the kind of power that a wizard could possess. He would look through the books my mother had from her father on the Dark Arts, and he would tell me, 'Learn this, boy! You don't have the brawn to fight like a man, well, by God, you'll learn to fight like a wizard. You will beat them all at their own game if anyone tries to hurt you!'"

Harry was listening with wide-open eyes. Here were the answers to the motives and reasons behind the wizard who was Severus Snape. Harry had always wondered why he was so stern all the time. He knew it couldn't have been just his existence!

"For a Muggle, my father accepted magic rather well. The darker my knowledge grew, the more impressed he became with me. The ability to be cruel and cold meant being a real man. He knew he wasn't an intelligent man, so he demanded that I learn to speak like 'a gentleman,' he called it. He would thrash me horribly when I did not perform or learn my lessons fast enough. Complaining just got me another thrashing. He said that in the real world, people weren't patient or kind. The real world was hard and cold. Men and women alike were vicious and cutthroat. So, he said he was being the best father he could be by being cruel so I would be tough enough to be a real man in a man's world. He always said, 'Wizard or no, it's still a man's world when you get down to it, my lad!'"

"I decided you had enough people to give you hugs and tell you that you were special and loved. I wanted to give you something important, so I gave you what I thought would be the greatest gift I could give: the gift of being a man in a man's world. I knew you were going to have to kill the Dark Lord. I wanted you to be prepared. I knew I couldn't come close, even on my worst day of being nasty and sadistic, to the level of sadism the Dark Lord possessed. Yet, I had to do it. I had to viciously push you...even if there were times I just wanted to...tell you how I really felt," he mumbled at the end uncomfortably.

Harry felt a surge of compassion and connection towards the dark wizard, but he didn't know how to voice it, or if he would be cut down verbally if he tried.

"What about you, sir? You want me to be happy, what about you? Wasn't there another witch over the years that you cared about?" he asked carefully.

"No," he said flatly. "Your mother's memory was enough for me. I never wanted anyone else, however..." He trailed off.

"Yes?" Harry asked.

"Nothing, Harry. I am trying to understand all of this. Lately, many things have been changing. So, do you think you have your questions answered about your mother?"

Harry nodded sadly. "I think from what you told me, that my mum knew she couldn't give me the future she wanted me to have as long as she was alive. I mean, we'll never know for sure, but I do know that it didn't have anything to do with you, sir. From what I've been told, my mum did feel sad and guilty that she didn't have the same feelings for you that she still had for my dad, but I think she just didn't get it!"

"Get what?" Severus snapped.

"Love. I loved Cho. I know I did. Yet, things didn't work out. Then Ginny came along. I love her. I still have a part of me that still feels for Cho, and although she's dead, it'll always be there. That doesn't mean I love Ginny less, just *different*. I can't love Ginny like I loved Cho. Ginny isn't Cho. Some blokes try to get their women to be and act like a certain 'type' of woman and that's just wrong. So, of course my mum wouldn't love you like she loved my dad. You aren't my dad...James Potter. I think she did love you; she just still missed my dad and was still in a lot of pain and confusion. I reckon that's what pushed her to it. But she had nothing but the kindest and loving things to say about you, sir. I heard about them. Professor McGonagall said my mum confided in her about *personal* girl stuff, you know, feelings and such." Harry couldn't say what he wanted, that he knew for a fact his mum talked to McGonagall about her sex life with Snape.

Snape raised an eyebrow. He started muttering to himself. Harry strained to hear, but couldn't. Snape jumped up and poured himself another drink, tossing it back forcefully.

He turned around, his eyes glaring, boring into Harry's. The young wizard became edgy and raised his Occlumency walls. Snape scowled at him.

"Please! I have no inclination towards rummaging through your head!" he sneered.

Harry was angry. "Why do you have to be such a bastard?" he yelled.

Snape barked out a laugh. "Really, Potter, what did you expect me to do? Just sit back as you confess how you had a great laugh with Minerva about my most intimate moments with your mother?" he spat viciously.

"So, what did Lily say? That James was the best she'd ever had, and I was a pathetic replacement? I bet you loved that! The old greasy bat of the dungeons is also a terrible lover as well!" he demanded angrily.

"You know, you really are a git!" Harry yelled at him.

Harry went to the Floo and called for Professor McGonagall.

"Professor, it's Harry. Can you please step into Professor Snape's rooms please?"

A minute later, Minerva came in confused, looking between the two men.

Harry raised his hands and stepped back. "There is only so much reality I can handle, and my mum's sex life just doesn't fit. I suggest you direct your accusations towards Minerva and not me!" he yelled at Snape before turning swiftly and storming out.

Minerva watched the young wizard walk out angrily. Then, she turned around to Snape and with her eyes snapping, lit into him.

"What is going on, Severus? I sent a hopeful and reasonably calm young man down here! What happened?" she yelled.

Snape was still raging with fury. "Why don't you tell me, Minerva? It seems all the rage! First Lily, now Potter! How many blasted people need to know I'm a lousy fuck?"

Minerva narrowed her eyes. "You are a *sorry* fuck, Severus Snape, but from what Lily told me, not so much *lousy* one!"

Snape froze. He was confused. "What?" he snapped.

She took a deep breath and shook her head in frustration as she sat down. "Lily was guilt-ridden because she was having such a great time in the sack! She was having such a great time, she even said you were a better lover than James!"

"Ah, yes! That old lie...she fed that one to me as well," he said smugly.

"For someone who prides himself on being right, you are sure dead set on remaining wrong!" the headmistress spat.

Snape threw his glass into the fireplace. "Why did she leave me? *Why*! She had to have been miserable with ME! I could have fixed anything else that was wrong!"

"Oh, really?" mocked Minerva. "You could just take care of all the rogue Death Eaters wandering the country? All by yourself? My, aren't we full of ourselves! Even Albus never fooled himself into believing he could do all things alone!"

Snape fell onto the couch and covered his face with his hands. "It's not even about her anymore, Minerva," he whispered.

He looked so small and helpless, like the little boy she knew so long ago. She budged down next to him.

"Severus, what is it?" she asked with her hand on his back.

"I kissed Miss Granger," he whispered.

She sucked in her breath and closed her eyes. She knew Hermione loved Severus; she had just hoped nothing would come of it.

"Minerva, I'm afraid. I'm so afraid; I don't know what to do anymore. I feel I can't trust anything," he whispered brokenly.

"Severus," she said quietly. "Lily was a very wounded person. I think in a way she did use you, but not with malice in her heart. No, she wanted things to fit between you. She truly did."

"Potter said she killed herself because she thought she was hindering him from having a real future," he offered.

"That would make sense. Harry's future meant everything to her. She loved him. He is her son. Severus. You are going to have to accept that Lily's death had nothing to do with you, really. You were a good man to her, and she knew it. She appreciated you..."

Snape jumped up. "Damn it, Minerva! I don't want anyone's gratitude, pity, or their fucking appreciation! I want someone who will *love* me! Someone who wants to only be *mine*!" he howled desperately.

Minerva sat pale-faced and stricken in her heart. This was what it all came down to, she realized. Severus just wanted to be the love of someone's life, not to chase after a love that could be his only if he tried hard enough to earn it.

"Severus, why do you love Harry?" she asked.

"He's my son! The day I first held him, I just fell in love with him. He looked at me and was so happy and content and...I don't know, I just do!" he snapped.

"He was just a baby. He did nothing to earn that love, right?" she prodded.

"Right," he muttered.

"Then you see where forcing love can get you? Let Lily go, Severus. She never meant to hurt you, but it's apparent she did. And now you have a chance to have a real relationship with Harry. But you also need to face that there is right now a young woman in this very castle who considers *you* to be the love of *her* life!" she pleaded.

He turned sharply and gave her piercing glare.

Harry walked back in. "It's true, sir. I can't say I've approved, but it's real, and she's been hurting for a while now," he confessed.

Snape slowly walked over to the fireplace and cast a quiet "*Reparo*," and the broken tumbler glass flew together into one piece.

If only one could do that spell with a person's heart...

Testing

Chapter 25 of 30

Lily's life doesn't end when Voldemort hexes her. Instead, she and Harry go into hiding, but are things truly any better for her?

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 25 Testing

Hermione Granger knocked softly on Professor Snape's door. She walked in as the door opened for her. She was confused. Professor Snape didn't open doors for people.

"You said you wanted to see me, Professor?"

"Yes," he said quietly, not looking her in the eye.

Hermione thought it very odd to look *down* at a man who was so much taller than she and see him hang his head in hopes of not meeting her eyes.

She watched how his hair fell into his face, curtaining himself from her. She wanted so badly to push his hair back and away from his face so she could really look at him. She had been dreaming each and every night since he had kissed her that he would do so again. She longed for him to hold her as he had before. Her arms fairly ached from being away from him. She had continued to give her notes to him, in hopes to aid him in his research. She prayed each time she came to his door that he would let her in, but time and again she had left disappointed. So, when his message had arrived saying he wanted to speak with her, she was determined not to be put off any longer and make the most of being with him face to face alone.

He seemed to have a difficult time trying to piece his words together, and she decided she didn't care anymore. She reached up on her tiptoes, ran her hands through his hair, pushing it back from his face, and pulled him to her, kissing him sweetly on the mouth. He felt his way from her hands, down to her elbows and up the back of her arms. He deepened her innocent kiss to an urgent one. He pressed his hands against her back and pulled her to him, madly exploring her mouth. Her small fingers intertwined in his hair, massaged his head and neck. He broke the kiss and took her small hands into his larger ones.

They stood and watched their hands hold the other, seeing how nice they looked together. He raised her hands to his mouth and kissed them, turning her palm over and kissing the soft flesh there. He moved to the inside of her wrist and brushed light, feathery kisses there, his eyes glittering madly as she gasped. He looked into her eyes and saw the flush of desire there. She looked into his black orbs and her breath caught. Did he know that he had just kissed her in a way that made her ache between her legs and caused her nipples to tingle?

She withdrew her hand, unaware that he could see the outline of her nipples pushing against her shirt. She caught his stare and discovered he was leering at her chest. She quickly crossed her arms around her chest in embarrassment. She looked at him defiantly, as if she were bracing herself for a verbal attack. It didn't come, instead, she received a very tender look from the dark wizard, and he cupped her cheek in his hand.

"Hermione, do you love me?" he asked.

She blinked and tried to wrench herself from him. He grabbed her and held her to him.

"Let me go, you're not funny! How dare you try to humiliate me, you bastard!" she cried out.

He held her firmly to his body and whispered in her ear. His voice was so soft and light she could barely hear, but somehow, the important words came through clearly.

"I love you..."

"...Want you with me..."

"... Help me..."

"... I'm *afraid*..."

She let him finish, and he started to let her go. She melted back into him and kissed him fervently.

The words came out, and she didn't even know they were the words he had wanted to hear for more than twenty years.

"I love you...I do. I've never loved anyone else. I've known for so long that it has just become a part of me. I can't imagine living and not loving you," she confessed with her warm, brown eyes full of tears.

He closed his eyes and felt the hot tears fall down his sallow cheeks. "I won't question why, Miss Granger. I'll take you at your word," he said deeply.

His voice tore through her, and she kissed him madly, tasting his tears and felt her own fall down her face. She felt tears streaming down her cheeks, and he tasted her tears mingled with his own.

He whispered as he broke from her lips, "Will you stay with me, forever? Will you always love me?" he asked softly.

"Yes, I will never leave you, never stop loving you, never, never!" she said passionately and captured his lips.

They kissed and kissed, not wanting to rush anything. There would be a time for more, for much more. Each kiss held the promise of other intimacies. For now, though, they had work to do for a dear friend who had suffered for far too long.

"I've done some more research into the hormones that aid digestion and come up with four main ones," Hermione said while shuffling through more papers at his desk.

They took to working opposite one another, at his office desk, discussing their latest research and ideas for testing Remus' blood.

"Did you ask Remus about sheen?" she asked.

Severus leaned back in his chair. "I did. He said that there was indeed a presence of sheen, and it transformed rather quickly, as you had described, into a fine powder in a matter of minutes."

"That's fantastic!" she said excitedly. "That means now we can move forward with our theory about the hormones in the digestive tract. Now, I have decided to focus on Secretin and Cholecystokinin, known as CCK. We need to get a sample from Remus and analyze the hormone levels. We'll be checking for elevated levels. That shall aid us in deciding the next step," she said.

Snape looked at her. She was mostly talking aloud, it seemed, to herself. She was concentrating hard on her paperwork. Then, she took a piece of paper and handed it to him. He glanced over it while she continued.

"We know that sheen is created from the fat of the stomach's contents. The transformation is vital to drawing out and using the body's fat stores as fuel, for lack of a better word. That will explain why after Remus goes through his transformation he is so hungry and starved. In addition, it explains why he is growing more and more haggard as time goes by. Sheen is full of vital nutrients that keep the human body healthy. Each transformation is literally sucking the life out of him. I propose that if we find that Remus does have a high hormone level of CCK in his blood, we can start modifying his diet. We would starve the body of fat during the trigger phase, the full moon, and then, perhaps with a few adjustments, he will never transform again!" she finished with a bright smile on her face.

Snape flung the paper on his desk and laughed. "You mean, after all this time, after all wizardkind has done, it all comes down to *fat*? No more Wolfsbane? My, my, Miss Granger, how these many years of a wizarding education was such a waste for you! You have discovered a Muggle theory to cure a wizarding disease! Whatever shall you

dream up next?" he said dripping with sarcasm.

"You are an ass," she stated emotionlessly.

His eyes narrowed as he looked at her. She was not afraid of him nor was she intimidated. He was impressed.

"If you are quite finished, I shall explain further," she said curtly.

Snape crossed his arms over his thin chest. "Go on," he said softly.

"Remus shall always need to take his Wolfsbane. The cure is one that shall stave only the *physical* transformation, not the effects on the psyche. I am aware that Lycanthropy and Therianthropy are holistic in nature. And yes, I have approached this from a different point of view. I am Muggle-born, and I do see how potions can work better than most Muggle medicines. I do not think that this is a 'cure all.' I do have other theories. However, Remus is someone we both care deeply for, and he's getting worse...much worse! We need to find something *now* to stop these transformations, and if we have to do it by half-magic and half-Muggle means, well, why the bloody hell not?" she asked boldly. "Have you any better ideas or schemes to offer?" she said sardonically.

Snape's eyes had a glint to them she couldn't identify.

"All right then, Miss Granger. I shall run the blood work on Remus and get you your results," he acquiesced.

"Oh, no!" she said angrily. "You aren't throwing me out on my arse, Professor!" She tapped on her chest and said, "I'm the one who found this test and shall assist you, or you can assist me. It's a *Muggle* test after all!" she said smugly.

"So that makes you the expert, eh?" he said tauntingly.

She narrowed her eyes and considered him. "You have a very strange glint in your eyes, Professor," she observed.

He came around his desk swiftly and wedged her between himself and the wooden edge.

"Remus told me once I would be a fool if I didn't take the chance to sexually harass you when the moment struck me," he said seductively.

She felt his erection hot on her hip. She looked at him unabashedly and said, "I'm not that kind of witch, Professor. I do not care for sexual harassment. It smacks of inequality. I would much rather prefer a mutual seduction if you don't mind." She gazed at him with wide eyes as she bit the bottom of her lip.

"I shall keep that in mind, Miss Granger," he replied huskily. He then stepped back from her and let her retrieve her belongings.

Hermione couldn't resist teasing him. "Oh, where did I leave that paper?" she said out loud to herself as she leaned over the desk. She slowly sifted through the papers on his desk, knowing he was standing right behind her, getting a full shot of her arse in her tight skirt. She had not yet put on her robe that she'd removed. She was so glad she was wearing her skirt today, even if she had tights on.

She felt two large hands grab her hips, and she was slammed backwards into something that was very hard against her bum. She braced her hands on the table as she felt the grip on her hips tighten, and she was thrust again against the hardness with even more force. This time she knew exactly what the "hardness" was. She was excited and terrified at the same time. She snatched her paper and twisted herself free from his grasp. She turned to see the desire in his eyes, and she knew she was blushing terribly.

"Be careful how you play games, Miss Granger," he warned her. His voice was deep and was careful to enunciate every word as he slowly leaned into her ear. He then nuzzled her with his nose and then flicked her ear with his tongue. She let out a very undignified squeak, and he chuckled deep in his throat. She closed her eyes, grabbed her bag and robe, and dashed out, feeling a trickle of hot liquid between her legs. Once she was out of sight, she dropped her things and slid to the cold stone floor. Her legs simply refused to support her. She exhaled and felt her heart racing at an alarming rate. She had to calm down, but she couldn't stop her face from smiling. She knew she had a stupid grin on her face, and she couldn't have cared less. He wanted her. He loved her. It was just a matter of time until he made her his.

Remus, Tonks, Snape, and Hermione were in the Potions lab ready to draw Remus' blood.

"I still do not see the reason for this undignified gathering!" Snape grumbled.

"Oh, Snape, you're just brassed off that you won't get a chance to feel up your girlfriend," Tonks said teasingly.

She received a glower from said potential proper.

Hermione snickered quietly by his side. He turned his glower towards her. "I think that will be quite enough from the both of you!" he snarled.

Remus sighed. "Let's get on with it. I'm feeling rather nervous enough as it is without all of you bickering and sniggering!" he said testily.

"Don't get all shirty, Remus," Tonks chided sweetly. "Everything is going to be fine."

"I'm glad you can be so confident," he said sourly.

After the blood was drawn, Hermione and Snape went to test it. When they returned, Remus and Tonks both jumped up.

"What took you so long? What is it? Is everything as Hermione thought?" Remus blurted out nervously.

Hermione raised her hands in front of her. "Hold on! Hold on!" she pleaded. "We have to wait a bit. These things take time. Why don't we have a drink?"

Snape poured for everyone, and Tonks dove right in, much to Snape's horror.

"So, how's things with you two?" she inquired brightly.

Snape handed her and Hermione a glass of wine. "I don't see that as any of your business, Nymphadora," he replied coolly.

"Hmm, I beg to differ. It seemed it was everyone's business for a while there. The both of you, sad and miserable, moping about the castle!" she said dramatically.

"Dora, why don't we just let Severus and Hermione tell us in their own good time," Lupin said diplomatically as he saw Snape open his mouth about to give his wife a tongue-lashing.

Snape was undeterred. "Miss Granger and I dedicating our efforts towards Remus' health. As she yet remains a student, I think the topic should be deemed off limits!" he said scathingly.

The results came back as Hermione had predicted, and a diet was then formulated to bypass his transformations. All they could do now was hope and wait.

Christmastime was upon them, and Hermione could not believe the semester had flown by so quickly. She had not told Severus, but she was sitting for her N.E.W.T.s early. Frankly, she just didn't want to wait anymore. She knew he would never be with her as long as she was a student, so she decided to work harder than ever on her studies. It was all just as well since Severus needed time to sort things out between Harry and himself. She also figured he needed to finally place Lily in the past where she would not be a stumbling block for their future.

The evening finally came for Remus to transform. Hermione stayed with Tonks and tried to keep her mind off what might or what might not be happening to her husband.

"I just love him so much, Hermione. I will love him no matter if there is a cure or not. But this is so important to him. I would hate to see his hopes dashed," she confided softly.

Hermione was very quiet. She really didn't know what to say. She wasn't married and could not begin to imagine how Tonks and Remus dealt with his illness, but she did know about love. She was now consumed with fear over Professor Snape's reaction if their theory did not work.

"Watcher, Hermione," Tonks said softly.

Hermione smiled. "I'm sorry...wool-gathering," she explained.

"Mmm," Tonks said knowingly. "So, when are you going to let Snape know that you are sitting for your N.E.W.T.s early?"

"I thought I would let him know just before. Then he won't have the time to analyze and freak out over it," she said calculatingly.

Tonks snickered. "So, Hermione Granger has finally got her man! What ever shall you do once you have him?" she asked.

"I will keep him, love him, and generally take care of him for the rest of my life," she answered bluntly.

"It's all so simple, eh?" Tonks said flippantly.

Hermione snorted. "I never said it would be simple. It's just that the plan is simple. The execution shall be far more difficult."

"That sounds about right," Tonks replied thoughtfully. "I always imagined describing a relationship with Snape would have the word 'execution' in there, somewhere!" She giggled at the look on Hermione's face.

Hermione laughed in spite of herself.

Success was success. That was how Hermione put it. Any change in the right direction was a success. Remus had not fully transformed, but he still sprouted fur, so there was a slight transformation. However, he felt better than he had in the decades since he was first bitten. He had no extreme aftereffects of exhaustion and depletion, just mild discomfort. Hermione declared a more drastic change in his diet during the week before the next full moon might do the trick.

Remus was so ecstatic, it was impossible to not watch him with his wife and son and not feel happy for them. Snape watched Hermione's eyes as she interacted with the Lupins. He saw in her a deep longing as she held their son. Snape wanted to cry, he ached so badly. She wanted him to give her this life. She wanted to be his wife and have his babies. She, who had never loved anyone else, wanted him to provide this life.

The question still remained: could he give her all of this? He slipped out, thinking he wouldn't be missed, but he was wrong. Hermione's face fell as she turned to look at him and saw he was gone. Lupin closed the door, and the sympathetic look on his face said it all.

Hermione looked at Teddy, her eyes awash with tears, then handed him to Tonks.

"He'll never want a life with me, will he?" she asked Remus sadly.

Remus sat down across from her and took her shaking hands into his own. "No, Hermione, that's where you are mistaken. It's because he wants a life with you that makes him run. He's afraid. He's scared and doesn't know what to do with himself...or you, for that matter. I think you terrify him to bits," he admitted.

Tonks laughed. "Speaks from experience, this one does!" she retorted.

"I thought it was all settled!" Hermione said angrily. "He asked me if I would never leave him...he all but proposed marriage! Why can't he just accept that I love him and don't want to hurt him?"

Remus was quiet and then it sank in. Hermione's face turned dark and furious. *She!* Hermione shouted angrily. "What did she do to him, Remus?" she demanded.

"Hermione, it isn't our business!" he warned.

"It is so my business!" she contradicted hotly. "The man I love is in pain! He's been hurt so badly...what did she do to him?"

"Hermione, she committed suicide. She told him she loved him, lived with him as a wife, let him father her son, and then she killed herself. Severus can only see to blame himself. He believes he drove her to it. He's so convinced he is unlovable that the idea of you loving him and wanting a life with him terrifies him. It is all he has ever wanted and has spent the last twenty years talking himself into the fact that he is unworthy of it. It's frightening for him to have it all given to him on a silver platter, no strings attached."

Hermione had heard enough. She took her things and sadly left.

Confessions

Chapter 26 of 30

Lily's life doesn't end when Voldemort hexes her. Instead, she and Harry go into hiding, but are things truly any better for her?

Chapter 26 Confessions

Harry knocked at the door to Snape's office. The professor wasn't expecting him, but Harry needed to see him. There still was so much undone and unsaid.

He walked in, and Snape stiffened.

Harry spoke first. "I can't seem to forget everything I saw in your memories. I feel angry with Dumbledore for taking me away, yet I can see his point of view. I'm angry with you because you say you love me, but I don't have any happy memories with you. I have lost so much. I can't stand this anymore."

Snape rose from his seat and went to get a small Pensieve. He started to withdraw one silvery strand after another. As he did, the tension in his eyes relaxed, and the countenance of his face softened. He seemed younger somehow and content.

He turned, looked at Harry, and said, "I want you to see my memories of you. I want you to know all the things I cannot say," he stated plainly.

He stepped aside and gestured for Harry to move forward. Harry reluctantly came, acutely aware of the last time he had an encounter with the wizard's Pensieve. He looked at Snape one last time, and the older wizard gently smiled and nodded his head to signal him to go and see.

When Harry came back out, he fell to the floor in agony. He knew it all now. He had seen the sacrifice, the worry, the fear, the love, the joy, and finally the pain. He felt utter shock when he saw Snape holding the body of his mother, crying brokenly in disbelief and pain. Harry had hurt when he had seen Snape forced to let go of the small boy in his arms. Harry felt a rejection so strong and fierce, it took him a while to realize he was feeling the same feeling he had when Sirius had died: abandonment.

Yet, Snape hadn't died. He had loved him from afar. Harry saw things he never realized as a child. There had been so many times the older man had watched him unseen with a small smile on his face. He had never revealed what Dumbledore called, "the best part of himself." The worst memory had been when he had seen Snape sitting, crying in the rocking chair, and holding the "stupid duck," as he called it. Harry wanted to embrace him, tell him...something, but even if could have, the words just wouldn't form in his mouth while in the Pensieve.

Now here he was, sitting on the floor. Harry just couldn't handle the feelings and emotions coursing through him. He finally just *cried*. He cried for all the losses and for what had been ripped from him over the years. Then he felt a warm hand on his back. He looked up and saw the man who had been the only real father he had ever known. Harry grabbed and held onto him. Snape held him there, embracing his son on the floor of his dingy office.

"I love you, Harry," he whispered.

"Thank you for everything," Harry replied in a choked whisper. "Thank you for loving me all these years."

He helped his boy off the floor and led him into the sitting room. They sat in front of the fire, drinking and thinking silently. After a while, Harry spoke.

"I don't know what to call you," he said honestly.

"Hmm," was Snape's only reply as he looked down at his lap into his drink. He was determined not to influence the young man. He was a man, after all, not a toddler. He would never hear "daddy" again, but he had come to terms with that. The best he hoped for now was that perhaps he would call him "Severus."

Harry knew that the man next to him was not the same man who had played with him and loved him all those years ago. Over fifteen years had passed, and Harry realized that he was about the same age Snape had been when he and his mum uprooted his life.

"Sir, how old were you when I came to live here?" he asked quietly.

Snape took his last sip from his tumbler and replied, "Twenty-one."

Harry was eighteen. Severus had only been three years older.

"How old were you when you took the Dark Mark?" he asked.

Snape sighed and said, still not looking at him, "Eighteen." He then turned and looked knowingly into Harry's eyes.

Harry swallowed. "You were my age," he whispered hoarsely.

"Indeed," was his only reply.

"How old were you when you became a spy?" the young man asked softly.

Snape's eyes continued to bore into his. "I was twenty."

Harry shook his head sadly. "I can't even imagine living and seeing what you must have experienced being under Voldemort's thumb!"

"Well, Harry, I only had to serve him when I was your age. You had to kill him," he whispered.

"I would like to think if you and I had known each other at the same age, we would have been friends," Harry admitted.

Snape chuckled. "I highly doubt that," he said dismissively.

"Why not?" Harry challenged him.

Snape poured himself another drink, and he smiled wickedly. "Me?" he asked with a quirk of his eyebrow. "I was a gangly, unfortunate youth. Other boys found it natural to dislike me," he said painfully.

"Why? Because you didn't have nice clothes and weren't cared for?" he challenged him again. "Remember, I saw your memories of you as a boy. The first time you saw me, I had on my Hogwarts uniform. The only reason those robes were new was because I had my father's money...money he received from his father. If you had seen me as a boy before Hogwarts, you would have seen a shabby boy with clothes that didn't fit, hungry because he never had enough to eat, dirty, and wearing broken glasses.

"The truth is, sir, was that I was all alone when Ron Weasley came to befriend me. The other kids didn't want anything to do with me...that is until they found out who I was. It was Hermione who fixed my glasses. Every time I break my glasses, I go see her and ask her to fix them. She always yells at me for never remembering the spell!" he laughed heartily.

"The sad truth is that Hermione was the first female who ever took care of me. I didn't have a mum. Professor McGonagall and Mrs. Weasley were the closest to real mums, being older, and all, but Hermione was there everyday, bossing, nagging, and fussing over me. I loved it. I still do. That's why I ask her to fix my glasses. Even though she's only a year older, she always had that caring, mothering nature. I was in desperate need of love and care. You saw the clothes, but not the hungry, lonely boy underneath them who had to live in a cupboard under the stairs."

Snape looked at him sadly. "You were teased when you lived with Petunia?" he asked.

"Oh, yeah, constantly! My cousin Dudley made it his purpose in life to make mine a living hell. He got all the nice clothes, enough food...more than enough food...and the affection. I was yelled at, half-starved, and truly believed one day he would kill me. The day Hagrid came and told me I was a wizard and was going to Hogwarts was the happiest day of my life!" he said fondly. "So, I think that if I had seen you and you had seen me at eleven, we would have thought, 'he's just like me!' and probably would have been mates, I reckon."

Snape massaged his forehead. "Harry, I was already a vindictive and hateful little shit by eleven," he said ruefully. "See, the difference was that you had two years of love under your belt. Then, you had the knowledge your parents were taken from you. If they had been alive, you would have been wanted."

He leaned into him and whispered, "I was never wanted, never loved. Your mother did the best she could. She tried, but I'm just not lovable. Harry, you would have pitied me, and I would have thought you a fool for wanting to be friends. I would have pushed you away," he admitted softly.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah, and I would have told you to get over yourself! I wouldn't have pitied you, either. I would have treated you with respect, and if you were an arse, I would have told you so and still have been your friend. Do you know how many times Ron and I have had words and not spoken for weeks at a time? We've called each other horrible names, but in the end, we were mates. If you haven't noticed, I don't go around trying to make enemies. I'd rather have friends. But, if someone is determined to hate me, then that's their problem, and I won't take their shite. But I never was the kind of person to go around looking to torture others. When I see a person mistreated, I don't join in. That's how I became friends with Neville. Malfoy stole his Remembrall and insulted him. I stood up for Neville because he was too afraid to do it himself. My dad was a right arse when he was a kid...he was. He was arrogant and full of himself. He was a rich, spoiled kid who had been pampered by loving parents. He was a bully. It really hurts to say it, but he was. I would like to think he grew out of it," he said hopefully.

"He did, Harry," Snape admitted. "He did, and I hated him all the more for it because it only made it easier for your mother to fall in love with him. He truly loved her. I think that's why he and I carried on so. He was jealous of what I had with Lily, and I was terrified he would take my place in her heart. I was so busy worrying over it, I never realized that place in her heart had never been mine to start."

Snape sighed deeply, running a hand across his face. "Anyway, Harry, it's all over and done now. I'm through with trying to butt my head against the wall trying to figure it all out," he said resignedly.

Harry looked at him oddly. Then he said, "Well, I'm glad, sir. Now you can move forward with Hermione."

Snape leaned over and poured another drink for the young wizard. He sighed and shook his head. "I don't think so, Harry," he said quietly.

Harry's green eyes flashed in irritation. Snape did a double take. The young wizard got that from his mother, and he knew it signaled trouble.

"Why?" the Gryffindor asked calmly but with an edge to his voice.

"Because she wants things from me I cannot and will not give her!" the Potions master snarled.

"What things?" Harry asked sharply.

"It's none of your business," Snape warned softly.

Harry jumped up. "It is so my business! You can't have it both ways! Either you throw me out and tell me you want nothing to do with me or claim me as the son you always considered me to be and deal with the reality!" he hollered.

"What reality might that be?" Snape said darkly as he stood cautiously.

"The reality that two people I care about VERY much are about to become VERY unhappy, VERY soon! The reality that a man who in all respects was the only father I have ever known is about to make the biggest mistake of his life...and I mean that! If you run from Hermione, joining Voldemort will no longer be your biggest mistake! Finally, there is the reality that Hermione is VERY dear to me. She deserves to be happy, and for God's sake, you are the only man she wants and with whom she will be happy! These. Are. The. Realities!" he roared.

Snape lowered his head. "Harry, I saw her with Lupin and his family. She was holding their son...your godson! I saw what was in her eyes. It was so apparent. She wants to have a family, babies, marriage, everything!" he said with desperation.

Harry was dumbfounded. "What the bloody hell is so wrong with that? Why would having a young, brilliant woman like Hermione, who loves you so much, be so horrible to have? I thought this was all sorted!" he shouted irritably as he threw up his arms in frustration.

"I thought it was too, but she wants a life I cannot give her!" the older man reasoned.

Harry knew he could never hex Snape fast enough. So he did the only thing he could do: he punched him in the face.

Snape grabbed the younger wizard reflexively by the throat. "How dare you strike me!" he spat.

Harry tried to hit him again, but Snape threw him onto the couch.

"You just stay right there, Potter!" he snarled. "What the devil do you think you are doing, striking me?"

"So, I'm 'Potter' again, eh? Loving is all well and good when you don't actually have to have a relationship with someone day in and day out! Hermione is what...good enough for you to keep around for a good fuck? Is that it? You can't give her enough respect to make her an honest woman?"

"I've not touched your precious Miss Granger!" he yelled.

"She's not *my* Miss Granger! I have a witch...you remember her, Ginny? She's *your* Miss Granger. You love her. I know you do. Don't deny it!" Harry shouted as he pointed an accusing finger at him.

Snape lost all sense of decorum. "Damn it, you infernal boy! I would think you of all people would understand! I did this once before. I had the woman, the child, a home, and a life! I had love and all the security and warmth that came with it. I did the 'relationship' thing and it all fell to shit! Well, I just don't have what it takes anymore. I am not Remus, dammit! Remus doesn't have the past I have! I see him with his young wife and son, and I see your mother and me!" He sat down and covered his head with his hands. Harry saw tears silently fall onto his pants. He was crying!

Harry didn't relent. "That is not you and my mum. That's you and Hermione. This is your chance to start over!"

Snape lifted up his head. "I had my chance, I had my second chance, and she died! She never wanted me! She just stayed with me out of pity! I WILL NEVER LET THAT HAPPEN AGAIN!" he screamed.

"Good! I'm glad!" Harry shouted back. "You shouldn't settle for less and neither should Hermione! She wants you. *You* are the man she wants. The *only* man she's ever wanted. Do you think I'm still a kid? Do you think me daft? I've held Hermione in my arms as she cried over you. You've been breaking her heart! I've tried to talk to her, Ron's tried, Remus, McGonagall, Tonks, Mrs. Weasley, Ginny...we've ALL tried!"

He knelt on the floor and grabbed the wizard by the front of his robes. "She either does this with you, or she doesn't at all! *Do you understand?* There is no 'getting over you' for her. You honestly want another man to have to live up to you? Forcing himself to make it all fit when there always was only one man that she could only love like that? Give it up, sir. Just stop fighting, and let yourself love her!" he said finally.

"Loving her was never the problem. I do love her," Snape whispered softly.

"Then do this! Don't keep her waiting, dammit!" Harry pleaded. His face was only inches away from Snape's. His voice grew to a barely audible whisper. "Please, Dad. Stop hurting yourself."

Snape looked into Harry's face, shocked by his address of 'Dad.' Snape embraced his son. He could not believe he called him 'Dad'. He pulled back and looked at him, took his face in his hands, and smiled happily. Harry grinned, and they both chuckled.

"You know I'll always be hard on you, Harry. I'm not going to change," the older wizard warned.

"I know. I'm always going to be an insufferable Gryffindor, wearing my heart on my sleeve," he replied with a smirk on his face.

Snape embraced him again. "My boy. I have my boy again," he whispered.

Hermione sat in her room, trying to decide what she should do. She felt so confused. Next week she was taking her N.E.W.T.s and then what? She had always considered staying with Severus for the rest of the year, spending time with him, learning each other before going and collecting her parents from Australia. But now, it seemed all over.

She felt hopeless. A life without Severus was no life at all. She felt again the fear when he had been attacked, and she had desperately tried to keep him alive. She had felt so scared that he would die, and she'd be without him. Well, now he was going to live his life without her and with him went her happiness and chances for a family of her own.

She had meant it when she'd told Harry that if Severus didn't want her, then there would be no one *ever*. Harry had thought she was being a wee bit melodramatic, but she had given him such a pained look that he had taken it back.

She started making plans for packing up. After all, next week she would no longer be a student. She started to go through her clothes when there was a knock on her door.

"Come," she answered.

She assumed it had to be Ginny. "Ginny, I've decided I had best start packing now instead of waiting until the last minute. Once I take my last exam, I want to leave immediately.

"And when shall that be?" asked a deep voice behind her.

"Severus!" she said in shock. "Why didn't you announce yourself?"

"You did not ask for a name. You let me inside of your own accord. So, you are taking your N.E.W.T.s early then?"

Hermione turned back to her clothes. "Yes," she replied curtly. "It was to be a surprise. I knew you would never touch me while I was your student, so I arranged to take them early, and we'd have Christmas together. However, that seems to no longer be an option."

She willed herself not to cry. She furiously set about her work. A warm pair of hands wrapped around hers, stopping her work.

"Hermione, please," he whispered into her hair.

She felt his body pressed against her back, and she finally broke apart. She turned around and punched and hit him.

"What do you want from me? I can't take this anymore. My feelings are worth more than this! You can't treat me this way!" she screamed.

"You're right, Hermione. You're right!" he said loudly. He stilled her hands and kissed her.

"What is this? More torment?" she asked hatefully.

"No," he said sadly. "I saw you holding Lupin's son, and I realized you want more than me. You want a family: that means babies, marriage, all of it. I just didn't think I could go through it all again," he said sadly.

"What changed your mind?" she asked as she disengaged herself from him.

"Harry. We spoke again. It was very... enlightening," he said quietly.

She stood there so angry and hurt. Snape knew he had really messed things up between them.

"Look, this is hard. The hardest thing I think I've ever had to do, save letting Harry go as a baby. Hermione, I made a promise to myself that I would never again allow a woman to ever get close to me. After Lily died, after time had passed, I met a prostitute, helped her to get back on her feet, and into a decent life. I gave her all the care and help I could, and for four months, I would spend one day a week sitting at a café with her for an hour or two, talking and answering questions she had. She had wanted to educate herself, better herself. Her family had been poor, and she had not been able to attend Hogwarts. I became rather attached after a fashion to this very young and sweet girl."

His voice became strained, and his body tense as he paced the floor. "I came to her with flowers in hand like a damn fool and asked her if I could begin courting her. She told me she had met someone, a former student of mine...don't worry you don't know him...before your time. She had told him about me, and he had advised her not to continue our friendship. She wanted to be with him. So I not only was rejected as a potential suitor, I was rejected as a person. She turned and left me in the street. I never saw her again."

Hermione was wiping the tears that were coursing down her face. "That is so wrong, Professor. Even if she didn't want you that way, she still should have kept the friendship."

He shrugged and crossed his arms over his chest. "There is more, Hermione. I don't think you will like to hear it, but you need to know this about me if we are to marry and have a family. I can be a sadistic man...yes, I know you and your classmates have said that of me from time to time, but the years after Lily were full of many whores and sadistic sexual behavior that was very unsavory. I had felt for years that Lily killed herself because she preferred death to me touching her. So, I took out my rage and anger on a great deal of women. I paid them and told them of my intentions. I have never raped anyone outright, but I admit I took a great deal of pleasure out of humiliating and hurting them. The last time I had a woman was a young prostitute whom was known as the best in the house. She was beautiful. I raped her mind and humiliated her in every possible way. Then I humiliated her further by forcing her to admit how repulsive she found me. Afterward, I humiliated her even more by telling her not to forget it had been this repulsive wizard who had made her climax. I made her feel like dirt because she had responded like a healthy woman. I don't know what happened to her. I just know one day I received an owl from the Madam of the house telling me I was no longer welcome at her establishment and that I had cost her three weeks of wages since her 'best whore' had been unable to work for that amount of time because of how I had treated her."

Hermione was pale and had sat down during his confession. She would be lying if she said his confession had not disturbed her.

She spoke weakly. "You say that after that last encounter, you have not done these acts again?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Why?"

"Because I hated myself for what I had done, and also I felt so disgusted with myself, it was better just to live with the fact that I was unlovable and far too repulsive for any decent woman to desire. Therefore, I decided a few years ago to remain celibate," he answered with a blush on his face.

"You've not been with a woman since..." she began.

"... Since the summer after your third year," he whispered.

"Don't you find me desirable?" she asked sadly.

"Of course!" he snapped. "Haven't our encounters proven that?"

He let out a deep breath. "Hermione, this is exactly what I am talking about. I spent *eleven years* after Lily's death shagging whores and prostitutes. Can you honestly say this is the kind of man you want?"

"You speak about women so...*meanly*. You weren't always that way with women. I'm sure your relations with Lily were tender and loving," she whispered.

"Yes," he admitted softly. "I was tender and rough, gentle and brutal. I was anything she wanted me to be. I laid myself bare to be everything she'd needed, and it hadn't good enough. I swore I would never, ever, let a woman play me for the fool again. Therefore, I went to whores. They know they are whores, and I paid them more than their asking price for their bodies. It was honest, and I respected that they didn't lie or manipulate me. I had grown accustomed to interacting with them. My whoring days, though, have been at an end for five years now. For me, sex without love is meaningless and sad."

"What do you want, Severus? You have confessed your deep dark secret to me, and I have no idea what you want from me. What do you want me to say? What do YOU want?" she asked.

Severus hid his face from her. "I want to know if you can still want me after knowing this about me. I am capable of very dark behavior. I will not speak to you about my service to the Dark Lord. That was under duress, and I hated every minute of it. Everything was a matter of life or death. This behavior, however, was different. I sought out the desperate whores no one wanted anymore, who would agree to anything. Is this the man with whom you want to make a family? The man you want to make love to you? I have a sexual dark side, Hermione. I can't promise I won't want to do things that may be sadistic in nature. Is this honestly the man you want to spend your life with?"

Hermione was shocked and speechless. She took time to gather her thoughts. "Severus," she said with determination, "I want the whole, not the parts of you that are perfect and fit in a neat box. I know you are a hard man; I know you are at times a cruel man. However, you are a passionate man that has an ability to love and an ethic of loyalty that is admirable. You have seen in my mind the fantasies I've envisioned. I may be a virgin, but I am not a cold woman. I do want you in my life, in my bed, and by my side. I want you to give me a baby or maybe even more than one, who knows? I do know I want to do this with *you*. Now, we will have to talk more about this and establish some boundaries about personal space and respecting each other's bodies. I am not averse to indulging in some perversions. I have my own fantasies that border on the perverse, I'm sure. Nevertheless, you **MUST** respect my body, and when I say 'no,' I mean 'no.' In addition, you must take responsibility for your own esteem issues. I love you, but it is not my responsibility to make up for the disappointments of your past. I can't do it, and it's not fair. If you can agree to these terms, I do not see anything to impede our coming together."

He looked at her and considered her words. She would be no doormat, but allow him some enjoyments in his darker nature. She was also very clear on what she would and would not accept, and it had nothing to do with what he could do for her. She accepted him as is. It was quite liberating.

"Yes, Hermione. It is a start I can accept and will agree to uphold," he promised.

"Fine," she whispered.

She walked to him, slid her arms around his neck, and they kissed.

"When are you taking your exams?" he breathed.

Within the week, the day before Christmas," she said between kisses.

He devoured her mouth. "Then, you will come to me on the eve?"

"Yes," she agreed.

He groaned. "It's been so long, I don't want to promise I'll be up to "Exceeds Expectations," he said nervously.

"As long as it's not a Troll, I'm sure it will be fine," she murmured in his ear as she flicked it with her tongue.

His hand cupped her breast and found her nipple pushing through the fabric of her shirt. "Hermione, I want you so badly," he whispered hoarsely.

Hermione rubbed the palm of her hand against the heat between his thighs. He grabbed her shoulders and ground into her hand. He grabbed her breasts and squeezed them. His eyes were closed, and his mouth open, he was completely lost in the moment.

"Please, Hermione, help me. I-I can't take much more," he said in a pained voice.

"Is this right?" she whispered in his ear.

"Squeeze harder," he panted.

She roughly grabbed his hardness and rubbed it furiously. She didn't know what *exactly* she was touching or if she was doing it correctly. In seconds, he was moaning and breathing her name. She watched as his face went slack and tensed intermittently. He grasped harder on her shoulders, holding her to him.

"Am I hurting you?" she whispered.

"No," he gasped.

He shuddered and swayed on his feet. It had been so long since a woman had brought him to orgasm. She helped him sit and got him a glass of water. She was feeling extremely aroused but a bit unnerved by his passion. She'd have to prepare herself for sex with this man. However, in the back of her mind, she was rather turned on. The idea of being able to elicit such a response from a powerful, self-controlled wizard as Professor Snape made her dizzy with lust. He left shortly after drinking his water. She could tell he was a bit nervous and uncomfortable with their frenzied encounter.

He sat in his rooms drinking with Lupin, telling him what had occurred with Hermione.

Remus laughed.

"What is so damned funny?" he scowled.

"You. You are so pent up. Don't worry, Severus. She's ready. Just be extra gentle the first time. After that, you can gradually build up to more spicy activities. Severus, you dog!" Lupin laughed.

Snape scowled in reply. "I left like a selfish boy! I didn't even ask if she needed relief. She probably thinks I'm just a selfish bastard," he said sadly.

Remus was not about to enable Severus' self-pitying. "She knows you are a selfish bastard, Severus. It's no big revelation. However, that's not all what you are. This is Hermione! If she had a problem with not getting hers, you'd be hearing about it by now. I think she was just curious about it all, and she wasn't prepared mentally to engage you in anything more than what happened. It was an important step, Severus. Good luck, Christmas Eve!" he said with a smirk.

"I suppose we shouldn't bother seeing you around for a while, eh?" Remus asked with a snigger.

"If you tell anyone, I swear..." Snape threatened.

"I'll only tell Dora," Remus promised.

"Oh, fine then, all I have to worry about is the fucking *Daily Prophet* announcing in bold that the Potions master of Hogwarts will be engaged in deviant shag fest over Christmas hols with former student just hours after her final exams!" he snarked.

Lupin chuckled. "No, I'll leave that up to Hermione and Dora to hash out. Get used to it, Severus, your sexual performance, penis size, how well, and how many times you are able to bring her to orgasm will be common knowledge for Dora, Ginny, Molly, and Fleur to analyze. I know my sexual abilities are discussed at great length, as are Bill's and even Harry's."

Snape closed his eyes. "Is nothing sacred?" he fumed. "Well, as long as I don't have to hear about it," he acquiesced.

"Oh, of course, old man. I shall know nothing except the fact that my wife knows all. She'll never tell. It's the witch's code of honor. Yet, I do know the signals that you've done well. And you had best do well; otherwise, we *all* will be on the outs with our witches. They will blush in your presence, and as soon as you leave the room, they will burst out in giggles and laughter. You'll be treated like a king because the other woman will respect the fact you are doing your duty and making their friend happy." He grinned wickedly. "I can't wait!"

A/N: As always, thank you for reading and reviewing! I want to also thank my beta for all her hard work!

Warmth

Chapter 27 of 30

Severus and Hermione finally take their relationship to the next level.

Chapter 27 Warmth

Severus was a wreck. He had planned for this evening and was impatiently awaiting Hermione's arrival. He was in a foul mood. Everyone must know what they would be doing tonight! He didn't like it, not one bit. He had half a mind to not do anything and keep them all guessing!

He tried to think about how to go about his first time with Hermione. He had only one experience with a virgin: Moira. That had been a disaster. He wondered if he should change his clothes into pajamas or perhaps that would scare her. He shook his head. No, he would remain in his teaching robes and not assume. She may not even be ready to make love. After all, they had kissed and had one unfortunate experience with over-the-clothes masturbation that had left him sated, but her wanting. He hung his head. *How could I be such a selfish git?*

When she knocked on his door, he jumped and had to take a deep breath before greeting her.

He opened the door forcefully. She blinked slowly and shuddered.

"Have I arrived at a bad time?"

"No!" he snapped. Then, he calmed down. "Please, come in, Miss Granger."

She walked in, and he noticed she was not wearing her school robes.

Thank God! he thought. The last thing he wanted was to have the image of being a lecher after a schoolgirl!

She was dressed rather nicely in her Muggle clothes. She wore a modest, yet attractive dress that showed her maturity and true age. She wasn't a girl anymore. She was a woman. He watched her as she walked slowly through his sitting room. She was wearing a mid-calf length, wine colored dress that made a delicious swishing noise against her black silk stockings as she walked. She wore black heels that were quite lovely on her feet. She was completely dressed. There was no shock or flash of bare skin to entice him. Even her sleeves were long. There were no plunging necklines or daring slits, just a row of buttons up one side. He looked at her back, and there was nothing backless or peeking. She was completely covered; yet, she looked as if she were naked.

"Have you finished?" she asked softly.

He brought his eyes up to hers and realized he had been ogling her like a common man on the street.

"I apologize," he murmured as he walked to his liquor cabinet.

"Don't apologize," she said with a strange lilt to her voice. "It was quite stimulating."

He looked at her as she came closer towards him. She wore her hair down in soft waves that framed her oval face. She wore make-up...not a lot, just enough that he would be able to notice. Her eyes were darkened with a definition of color to bring out their largeness. She was striking, and he felt hopelessly lost.

He cleared his throat as he found his composure again. "Well, you have officially ended your schooling. I thought a nice Muggle claret would be apropos, or would you prefer sherry or port? I apologize again, I thought champagne would be a bit over the top."

She smiled and said, "I think I would like the claret. I adore French wine. Although, I've never had any from Bordeaux."

"I took the liberty of purchasing a bottle for us to enjoy, if you would prefer," he asked stiffly.

Hermione swallowed a giggle. It would not do to tell Severus that he was acting like a butler.

Instead, she smiled gracefully and asked, "What vintage is it?"

"It is an eighty-three Margaux. I was told it was an excellent year," he said deeply. "Shall I pour?" he asked.

"Of course," she replied. She went to examine his bookshelves. They covered the entire wall, save for a lovely fireplace in the middle. A cheery fire was crackling. She ran her fingers along a few of the bindings of the hundreds of books he had in his collection. Suddenly, she felt a warm presence behind her.

She turned and drew in her breath when she realized how close he was to her. She took her glass from him, and he gave a toast, "Congratulations, Miss Granger, on the success of *both* your endeavors," he said with a sly smile.

"What would those endeavors be, Professor?" she asked demurely as she sipped on her wine.

"Oh, your two-fold plan on completing your education here at Hogwarts and seducing me. At least that was what I was told," he answered. Then, he took a sip of his wine.

She considered him for a moment and asked daringly, "Have I been successful? In *both* endeavors?" she added pointedly.

"Very," he said drawled.

"Thank you, Professor," she said sweetly.

They both took a sip, and he kept his eyes on her. After a bit of silence, he said in a rich velvet tone, "You must call me Severus, Hermione. After all, I am no longer one of your teachers."

"I'm so glad," she said suddenly.

"Glad?" he asked.

"I can't tell you how glad I am this day has arrived. So much has happened between last May and today. I can scarcely believe it has only been seven months," she said softly with a bright smile.

Seven months, he thought sadly.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

He looked at her sharply and was taken aback at how tuned in she was with his emotions. He gave her a reassuring smile. "Nothing. I sometimes get a bit stuck at times, but I think I've figured how to find my way out."

She placed her wine glass on the table next to where she stood and took his away as well.

She looked into his eyes, and he could see how open and willing she was to connect with him. "I wanted for so long for you to see me as a woman and not a girl. I admit there were times I doubted you ever would," she said warmly.

Warmth

He had not felt warmth for so long. It had died out so long ago, and with just an earnest look, she had reach deep inside and touched the frozenness he had endured for so long with her warmth right into his core.

He took her hands in his and brought them to his lips. They were so small in his. However, he liked the feel of them, the gentleness they promised. For so long, he had been afraid of young women and their pretty claws that threatened to tear him to shreds. He had wondered many times if she would shred him as Lily had.

He looked into her eyes and saw an absence of pain. There was only joy and anticipation written on her face. She had weighed the possibilities and the cost a long time ago and had decided on him. She had never loved any other man or wizard. He was the only one. It was all he ever truly wanted, to be the only one, the first, the best, the most loved, the most adored.

He kissed her hands, turning her palms upwards and kissed lightly on her wrists. He did not want to rush this, not this. She gasped lightly as he flicked his tongue over each wrist, letting his hair brush across her palms. He slowly turned to look into her eyes and took her face into his hands. She tipped her head back, and he lowered his lips onto hers. It was agonizingly delicate and tender. She felt so lush and easy to touch. Her hands wound underneath his shoulders and around his back. She loved the feel of the scratchy wool underneath her hands. He felt her body cling to his in urgency, and he succumbed to the strength of her ardor.

He had always been the aggressor in his sexual encounters. He was always the one who wanted, *not* *the* wanted. It was intoxicating to be at the mercy of a woman who wanted him, who had wanted him for so long.

She was so innocent, he could tell, as her attempts to draw him in were shy and intense as she hungrily kissed him. He began to lower the zipper on her dress, and she drew her lips from his to look into his eyes one last time. This would be last time she would look at him as Miss Granger. After tonight, she would forever be Hermione.

They took their time to undress and uncover each another. He was amazed at how she regarded his body. As she discovered each stage of his nakedness, she treated it as a gift to be cherished. He found himself lost in time, drinking in her curly hair, which was so soft to the touch, and her large brown eyes that enveloped him like a warm blanket.

Warmth

He watched her shyly reveal her breasts to him, unaware that he had already seen how bountiful they were. He had ached to touch her back then and now he took her breasts to his lips with trembling hands. *She is a natural at lovemaking*, he thought to himself. It took so little effort for her to open up for him. He hooked his thumbs over her stockings that strangely went right up to her waist and slowly peeled them down. He looked up at her flushed face, her eyes closed, and mouth slightly open in pleasure as he lazily flicked and licked one pert, rosy nipple. He was happily pleased to find there were no knickers with which to be dealt. Before he realized it, she had already parted her thighs, and he was resting between them. He leaned back and stroked them from her waist to her knee, urging her to spread further.

"Touch yourself, Hermione," he whispered deeply. "I want to watch you."

He held her thighs apart and watched her small fingers part the curly mound to reveal the glistening pink folds hidden inside as she manipulated herself into an ecstatic frenzy. He held her trembling limbs as she began to shatter. Each soft cry that escaped her lips was precious.

"Severus," she panted.

Warmth

She was caught up in her orgasm when he tenderly eased into her.

"Oh, Hermione," he breathed as he felt her satiny sheath mold around him.

She was panting and holding her breath intermittently, and he hushed her, urging her to open her eyes and trust him.

She groaned, and he scooped her into his arms, resting on his elbows as he began to move in her. He whispered to her how to move, how to enjoy his presence inside her.

"Please, help me," she whispered softly.

He stopped and looked into her face. Her eyes were shining and moist.

"Please, help me," she asked again desperately.

"Do you want me to stop?" he asked breathlessly.

"No," she groaned. "I need a deeper angle."

He chuckled at her frustration and kissed her gently on her rosy lips. He took her legs, wound them around his waist, and tilted her slightly. He began to thrust into her urgently and purposefully. Her eyes and his smile grew wider and wider with each stroke, he out of erotic pleasure and she out of discovering the thrill of being taken and filled.

Warmth

She was crying out as he withdrew in order to re-penetrates her. She was so inviting, so pliant, he was unable to stop his mouth from spilling everything in his heart. His love, his need, and his desire for her came tumbling out in a torrent of words.

Hermione felt the ache leave her body from his stretching of her, and a feeling of his presence inside her body surprised her with its rightness. She was enthralled with the wizard moving over her and inside her. He was taking over everything, and she did not care. He could have it all. His body was so solid and powerful, she felt her body shiver and tingle from the power of his possession of her. She began to cry out wildly, pleading for him to drive into her harder as her orgasm rippled through her.

Warmth

She never would have believed that a man so seemingly cold could be so cozy and inviting. Heat radiated from him as he picked up his pace. She was holding on as he grasped onto her hips driving them to completion. She felt light and hazy as he exploded inside her with a desperate cry of her name that felt like a blessing from his lips.

He sank onto her and panted as she stroked his hair. He had never felt this way in his entire life. She refused him to leave her; she clung to him, and he found a home nestled between her breasts. He slept then, and she was overjoyed.

They woke in the night, stirring and stroking each other. She couldn't fight off the giggles that overcame her as he found her ticklish spot on her waist.

"I have a confession to make," he said as he smirked. "A rather naughty one."

"Really?" she asked, instantly intrigued.

"Remember when I told you not to help me anymore when I was wounded? When you were in my room being my mediwitch?"

"Yes, you cruel man!" she said angrily. "You broke my heart. I thought we had made a connection."

"We did!" he admitted. "Unfortunately, you were out of bounds, you saucy minx! What did you expect? I couldn't do anything about it. Then there was that night..."

"What night?" she interrupted.

"I couldn't sleep, so I went walking. I passed your door, and it was ajar. I saw you."

"Oh my God!" she said in mortification. She hid her face in her hands and drew her knees to her chest shaking her head in disbelief.

He laughed wickedly. "I told you it was naughty! There you were with your lovely thighs open wide. I could see your pretty, pink..."

"Oh, hush!" she snapped in embarrassment as she clamped her hand over his mouth. He laughed richly at her shyness.

She slapped him lightly on the chest. "Did you watch...everything?" she asked nervously.

"Yes," he said drawn out as he swiftly descended over her again and teased her nose slowly with his own. "I watched every ~~exquisite~~ second and was incredibly aroused by your enthusiasm."

"Mmm, I love the way you talk," she murmured.

He kissed her and whispered against her lips as he slowly slid his hand down around the curves of her body, "I couldn't help myself. I was so hard; I couldn't stop. I saw you, calling my name, your thighs so open and inviting, begging me to relieve you, telling me to go harder and deeper inside you. I saw your fingers moving in desperation. In the moonlight, I could see you were wet and ready for me...only me. I loved how *libidinous* you were. You couldn't spread your legs far enough. You were so innocent and frustrated. If you had only been two months older, I would have strode in and kissed your pretty kitty."

She gasped, and a blush crept across her face. Severus was surprised that even in her embarrassment, she would not be deterred from what she wanted. She wrapped her arms around him. "Please, now, Severus. I need you."

He smiled smugly, knowing his words would make her dripping with need. He possessed her and furiously drove into her as she shrieked and screamed his name. He made damn sure her legs were properly separated for their mutual enjoyment.

"I don't think I ever enjoyed my name before tonight. You have a wonderful way of saying it," he mused as he nibbled on her right breast.

"You're making me blush!" she said shyly.

He chuckled. He took her breasts in his hands and kneaded them. "I have neglected them shamelessly," he teased.

He suckled one until Hermione was keening helplessly against him. He switched breasts and swirled his tongue around the nipple, listening to her moaning that was like a beautiful song. He took them both and pushed them together, suckling on both nipples.

"Oh my God!" she panted as she arched her back, thrusting her breasts into him wantonly.

His cock found its way home without his help, and she shuddered. He drew out an orgasm that left him shocked and terrified, for she said,

"I'll never want another man inside me, Severus. Only you."

He looked up at her and stared long at hard into her face. She was deliberately opening her mind to him, and he was afraid to look. His curiosity overcame him, and he brushed against it. She was so honest and truthful; it was downright shocking to the hardened dark wizard. He saw himself as the snarky, sharp-tongued, dark wizard that had a twisted, dry humor with a penchant for sadism, and in her eyes, a very regal face. She thought him appealing! She thought he was wondrously powerful and potent. However, what struck him most keenly was that she knew of his limitations and fears, his pettiness and duplicity. She had taken all the qualities of him and had created a whole person that he did not have to compartmentalize. She held no illusions. She knew who he was.

Christmas morning was an informal affair. Hermione rummaged through his closet, took out one of his teaching robes, and wrapped herself in it.

Severus quirked an eyebrow when he discovered her choice. "Couldn't you have found something more suitable?" he asked.

"No. I think there is something erotic about being naked in your robes. I'm quite comfortable." She smiled at him wantonly.

"I know I shall never be able to put on my robes without that image popping into my head!" he snarked. "Was that your intention? Me struggling to stave away an erection during my classes?"

"Would that make you less of a beast during your classes?" she teased.

"Probably not. I'll more than likely be even more of a snarky bastard because I will be stuck in a room full of dunderheads instead of being hidden away in you," he said as he looked at her hungrily.

Hermione cuddled with him on the floor. She never thought he would be capable of such passion. It was rather intriguing. He never thought she would welcome his rough side to sex. After a bit, he ended their woolgathering and announced, "Presents!"

Hermione scrambled to get her gift for him, and he sat watching her dash about in his robes that were ridiculously large on her small frame. She came back to him with a thin box.

"Open mine first!" she ordered.

He silently opened it and saw she had made for him the most handsome stationary he had ever seen. The parchment had swirls of silver and green filigree decorating the corners and sides while on top was the heading: Professor Severus Snape, Potions master of Hogwarts. The lining of each thick envelope was in a rich dark green. He was awed that she had placed such thought into him.

"I hope I haven't overdone it," she asked nervously. "Doesn't it just scream 'Slytherin?'" she asked.

"Hermione, it is wonderful. Beautiful. I-I thank you," he said nervously. "Here...this is for you," he added timidly.

Hermione was in shock. This was a Severus she never knew existed. He was so unsure and shy. She opened the rectangle shaped box and found a velvet box inside. She opened it and gasped. It was a gorgeous ruby and diamond bracelet! She was speechless. She looked up at him with her mouth gaping open in shock.

"I take it by your reaction that you are pleased?" he offered.

She closed her mouth and nodded. "Please, will you put it on me?" she asked.

He took the bracelet and fastened it on her right wrist. It was positively lovely. The white gold setting set the rubies off superbly.

"Severus, this is such a costly gift!" she started to say.

He raised a hand to silence her. "Not at all," he said quietly.

She threw herself on him and hugged him fiercely. She was quite the strong woman, he found. She began to wriggle her way onto his lap and kissed him ardently. He slowly slipped his robe off her shoulders and lowered her onto the floor.

"This is so cliché!" Hermione said as she giggled. "We're in front of the fireplace!"

"Would you rather move this to another area of my quarters?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

"No," she whispered.

He stripped off his robe, and she found herself enthralled with his chest and stomach.

"You are so solid!" she commented as she felt him.

He chuckled at her curiosity. "I could say the opposite for you, Hermione," he said as he wound a hand down her chest and stomach. "You are quite soft." He kissed her cleavage and continued down past her bellybutton. Hermione began to laugh from the sensations.

He growled low in his throat and took hold of her firmly and aggressively began to ravish her. Hermione was burning with lust and need. This was the Severus she had imagined and fantasized about for so long. He grabbed her legs and yanked her up onto his lap halfway. He lifted her legs straight up in the air, and he began to pound into her viciously. She bent her knees and rested them on his shoulders as he moved over her. She felt impossibly tight, and he was slamming into her without quarter. She watched through heavy-lidded eyes the thrill on his face. He looked at her with unabashed want.

"Hermione," he groaned.

She felt weightless and completely taken over by him. His powerful body was controlling hers, and she allowed him to take her wherever he wanted. She was vaguely aware of the cries that were coming from her, the panting and screams that were rising higher and higher until he was the only thing that mattered in the world.

She felt as though she was bursting inside, and she was sobbing and screaming his name over and over, unable to stop. She heard him whispering to her, "Hermione, my love," and she floated away on a soft, warm cloud enveloped in him, relishing in the fact he loved her!

Warmth

Christmas at the Burrow

Chapter 28 of 30

Severus and Hermione have Christmas at the Burrow. Later, while Hermione is questioned by the ladies about her first time with Severus, Harry and Severus go to Godric's Hollow to make their respective peace with James and Lily.

Huge thanks to my wonderful, anonymous beta! Please review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 28 – Christmas at the Burrow

Nearly every holiday for the past four years, Hermione Granger had been with the Weasleys. She loved her parents; however, her world was not their world, and her ways were not their ways. The distance between them grew more prominent after the war. It was difficult for the Grangers to see their daughter as a war veteran. So, she did not have high hopes for them to understand her choice of a future husband.

Naturally, her parents wanted her to themselves for the holidays, but she explained to them that this was a very special Christmas for Severus. This would be his first Christmas with his son. It had been confusing and difficult for her mum and dad to understand the relationship between Severus and Harry. Nevertheless, they understood that a sixteen-year separation won over a four-year separation, and they wished Harry their best with his "Dad."

It was strange for Severus, as well. He had acquired a witch and had been reunited with his son. It was far too an emotional setting to remain comfortable and at ease. Severus was not used to the hustle and bustle of the Burrow. He remained quite silent and subdued for most of the meal. Afterwards, Harry invited Severus for a walk, and Hermione was happy for the two of them to have some time alone. It also was a perfect time for the witches to gather and gossip about Hermione's new relationship.

The Lupins, along with Andromeda Tonks, came over for dessert. Tonks declared she wasn't going to miss this for the world! The wizards rolled their eyes as they were shooed out of the dining room. George pulled out his trusty Extendable Ears so they could hear as well. That was all except Ron, who declared just knowing Hermione had shagged Snape was enough for him to lose a perfectly good dinner!

Hermione sat around the dinner table with Tonks, Andromeda, Ginny, Molly, Lavender, and Fleur, drinking tea.

"Right then, ladies! I call the Witches' Circle to order!" declared Tonks importantly as she banged her fist to bring everyone to order.

"We are gathered here today to officially induct Hermione into the Witches' Circle! We are all having active relations with our significant others. Sorry, Molly, I know you're not happy about your two youngest having pre-marital sex, but I'm sure soon all shall be remedied," she said smoothly.

"Today, I have no comment!" Molly answered graciously. "This is all about our Hermione. Now what is that on your wrist?" she said pointedly.

Hermione looked at her Christmas present from Severus and stared at it with admiration.

They all lean in closely to look at the ruby bracelet and stared earnestly at the young witch until Hermione burst into a fit of laughter. They all laughed with her—it was far too hilarious!

Outside, George was giving the play-by-play. "Blimey, there'll all laughing!" he said, confused.

Arthur shook his head sadly. Lupin was just confused. "That can't be good," he said worriedly.

"You think?" said Bill sarcastically as he turned to look at Lupin sitting next to him on the couch.

"Oy! They're talkin'!" hissed George as he waved his hands to quiet them down.

"Well," said Ginny as she wiped the laughing tears from her eyes, "we have to start somewhere. Who wants to ask the first question?"

"Oooh, me!" said Tonks saucily as she rubbed her hands together. "I've always wanted to know if Snape is hung—*really hung*!"

More laughter and giggles came from the women.

"Tonks wants to know how hung Snape is—they're laughing!" George said. He shook his head, grinning from ear to ear. "Poor sod!"

Hermione took a deep breath. "Well, I didn't have a tape measure on me, mind you. Also, I was a virgin, so I have nothing to compare it to, really," she said apologetically.

"There you are!" said Molly with a flourish of her wand. There on the table was a conjured tape measure."

"That's just scary!" whispered Ginny.

Hermione took it and screwed up her eyes, trying to remember. I think about 24 or 25 centimeters," she said as she contemplated it. "Yes, I'm positive, in between there."

She looked at the shocked and pale faces around her.

"What?"

"Bugger me sideways!" George whispered.

"What?" asked the men all at once.

"Snape's hung. I mean, really hung!"

"How 'hung?'" asked Ron worriedly.

"She said either 24 or 25 centimeters. I think they may have all fainted!" George exclaimed with a smirk. He could smirk, he was just as blessed!

Lupin sighed. "George, I don't care about the ruddy details. I just want to know if Severus is going to get hexed or not when he and Harry get back! So, I want to know things such as, is she crying? Has she been traumatized? Happy as can be? Everything satisfactory? Understand?" he said irritably.

"Alright then, don't get your knickers in a twist!" George shot back.

"Hermione," said Ginny with a genuine look of concern on her face. "Are you serious? If he's like—you know—are you okay?"

She laughed. "Of course, silly! I'm sleeping with a *Potions master*. He's got anything a girl could need for aches and pains!"

They all giggled.

"So, eez 'e good?" asked Fleur.

"Yes," Hermione said, knowing she was blushing.

"Was he able to make you orgasm?" asked Andromeda seriously. "That's VERY important!"

Hermione smiled. "More than once," she whispered.

"Oh, you are blessed!" exclaimed Lavender. "Not many virgins I know can say that about their first time!"

"It was lovely," Hermione said, her eyes shining. She told them all about the wine and the fire, how gentle he was, and then how passionate. "It was perfect. We talked and shared things, you know, private things, and he held me, and was patient, and—"

"I can't believe this is Professor Snape you're talking about!" Lavender exclaimed.

"I know!" Ginny said in awe. "I guess it's true what they say about the quiet ones."

"I beg to differ," interjected Tonks. "Snape is not quiet. He just bides his time until the perfect moment when he can unleash his snarkiness!"

"They're laughing a lot!" reported George.

"Poor Severus," said Arthur sadly. "Hasn't got a chance, does he? Bless him!"

"All right, Hermione," said Molly seriously. "Oral sex. How is his viewpoint on it? Is it mutual or only for him? And if he reciprocates, is he good at it?"

Hermione thought about it and said, "He is very interested in at least doing it to me, he didn't say a word about wanting me to do it to him, but honestly the subject never arose. We were far too intrigued with intercourse to go exploring."

"Zat eez good. 'E eez a caring lover, et zeems, *oui*?" commented Fleur.

"Quite right," agreed Andromeda. The women were nodding and smiling. Ginny knew that Hermione was far too private to indulge any further. She leaned over and kissed her friend on the cheek.

"I'm so happy for you, Hermione! All the best in your future with Professor Snape," she said warmly.

"Here, here!" chimed the rest.

"Ah, it's alright then, lads!" said George with a grin. "They are all happy as a Thestral with raw meat!"

"Ugh, nice!" said Ron with a grimace.

Arthur and Lupin sighed. "Good job, Severus!" said Arthur as he raised his glass of firewhiskey to toast the absent wizard. "We can all rest easy tonight!"

Harry and Severus took the time to Apparate to Godric's Hollow. "I wanted to come with you to her grave," explained Severus as they entered the cemetery. "I know you were here before, and well, I thought it would be good to face this together."

Harry walked with Severus to where James and Lily rested. "It's so strange. I was here almost a year ago to the day!" said Harry. "I never knew before, but the date on her headstone is wrong!"

"Not anymore," said Severus. He took his wand and changed the date of Lily's date from October 31, 1981 to June 4, 1982.

Harry put his arm around his father. "Mum," Harry said. "I want you to know I forgive you for leaving us. I know now that you were sick and thought you were doing the right thing for me. I love you for all that you sacrificed. Things didn't work out the way that you had hoped, but I stopped Voldemort, and Severus had been there the whole time, helping me, and taking care of me even when I hadn't even known it. He's become a real dad to me now, and I promise I will do what you asked. I met a wonderful witch.

She has red hair like you, but brown eyes. She's pretty feisty with the Bat-Bogey Hex and can cast a Reducto Curse like no one else! She's the one. Her name is Ginny. I promise, I'll give you grandbabies, and Severus here will be a brilliant granddad."

Harry stepped to the side and knelt down to talk to James. "Dad, I hope you aren't disappointed in me. I know you never liked Severus, but he's a great man and has been there for me. I would like to think you would have looked down and understood that he tried his best to make me tough so I could do what needed to be done. I really care about him. He's my dad too, now. I hope you can accept that. I wish I could have known you, but Sirius told me a lot about you, and I have Remus to remind me and tell me things. He and Severus are practically best friends, if you can believe it! I'll always love you, Dad."

He got up from James' graveside, brushing off the snow from his pants. He was grateful that Severus had given him his space. Now it was time to return the same courtesy.

Severus knelt at Lily's grave. "I barely remember burying you. It was all so clandestine and strange. Harry is a wonderful young man. Still a bit headstrong, typical Gryffindor, but he's getting better as he gets older. Ginny will be a good wife to him. He's right about her hexing. She's a regular spitfire, just like you, Lily.

"We had dreams, didn't we? So many dreams, but that was all there was to it. I really hated you for a long time, Lily. It took me years to realize that. I sure made life miserable for a lot of other women and myself because of my anger. I don't think I shall ever understand why you did it, why you left us, but I can understand that you never could have been happy with me. You wanted to be with Potter. Well, he's your husband. I can understand that now.

"I met someone. Well, not 'just' met—rather she is one of Harry's best friends and a student of mine. She's very unique and special. Her name is Hermione. I love her, and she loves me. She loves me the way I had always hoped you would and, then after you died, *someone would* but never happened. I can scarcely believe she has loved me for so long, she's so young. It was Lupin and Harry that got me to see the light. I'm going to marry her, Lily, and I'm finally going to have the life I always wanted and never felt I deserved.

"Harry was taken from me, Lily. I didn't get to raise him. I wanted to, well, anyway, he's grown, and we're starting over. He calls me 'Dad' now. It's rather nice. I'll make sure to look after the grandchildren, Lily. Even if he names one of them James!"

He glanced over at James' Potter's grave and said, "Well, you old bastard, I think the boy turned out alright. Even if he has your unfortunate face! He's a damn good flier, I'm sure you're happy about that. I'm sure you and Black are having a right good time laughing and causing all kinds of hell wherever you are. I'll try not to be such a prick when recounting our past to the grandchildren. Just don't expect me to wax poetic about the great 'Marauders.' I'll leave that to Remus."

"Lily, I forgive you for hurting me. You hurt me badly, but I forgive you, and I can release you now. I have to let you go, so I can give all of me to Hermione. Yet, there will always be a place in my heart that will remember all what you gave me. I'm sorry you had been in so much pain, but having Harry was the best thing—the greatest gift. Everything was taken away in the end, nothing ended up how we planned. Yet the love remained. I never stopped loving Harry, caring about him. I wanted to. I had wanted to forget him and the life we had, but I couldn't. He's my son, and I'll always love him. So, I suppose I should thank you at least for giving me the honor of experiencing that kind of relationship. I don't know if Hermione and I will have babies. I hope so, I would like to. I just know that if I had not had the experience I had with Harry, I wouldn't be able to have the fortitude to do it now. Bye, Lily, and thank you for Harry."

Severus stood up, and he turned towards Harry.

"Are you ready, Dad?" Harry called to him.

"I am," he said solemnly.

They returned back to the Burrow, and Severus couldn't help but notice the silly giggles and covert glances between the witches around him. He sat after Miss Weasley graciously took his cloak from him while Fleur made a fuss over getting him a comfortable place on the sofa. Then, Miss Brown gave him a hot cup of cocoa with a loving smile. Miss Brown had never, ever smiled at him. He could scarcely remember her remotely *looking* at him! Andromeda Tonks gave him a throw for his legs in case he was cold. Severus was confused by all of the estrogen floating around him.

Mrs. Weasley came in with a nice, thick slice of cake for him. He was going to refuse when Lupin gave him a discreet kick in the leg. He accepted it, and when she had left—when all the witches had left—he turned to face the wizards who were sniggering behind their papers and books.

"Lupin, what the hell is this?" he demanded suspiciously. "Never in all my life have I been fawned over by a group of witches! Not that it isn't pleasant, but it is rather unsettling."

"I told you, Severus," replied Lupin as he casually flipped through the *Daily Prophet*. "Hermione has just been through her inquisition about your 'abilities.' I daresay you passed with flying colors! Besides, I would think you'd appreciate being 'fawned over.' Lord knows you've not had a lot of experiences with that," he said with a smirk on his face.

Severus turned ghostly white. "You mean you were actually being truthful? They dared!" he bellowed.

"Now, Severus," said Arthur. "It's tradition. Especially since Hermione is a Muggle-born. For centuries, wizards have treated witches horribly! This is now their way of making sure one of their own is not being ill-used and abused."

"Still there was a lot of laughing going on," said George viciously.

Severus was halfway to hexing the boy when Hermione came in with Tonks.

"Wotcher, Snape!"

"Nymphadora," he ground out angrily.

"Oh, George, " Hermione said innocently, "your mum would like a word with you, if you don't mind?" She smiled sweetly at him.

Ron gave a snort.

"I take it we missed something important?" asked Harry as he sat down.

"No," said Lupin. "Hermione has officially joined the Witches' Circle, and Severus passed the inquisition."

"Ah, alright then!" Harry said as he settled down in a chair to rest.

Snape looked at all the calm faces around him. "Please tell me this is some colossal joke!" he fumed.

"No, Severus," said Bill. "You must have really impressed them. I can't remember the last time Andromeda did anything for us lads!"

"Ahem," said Lupin. "I was given a lovely cup of tea, if you've forgotten."

"Oh, that doesn't count, old man! You were marrying her daughter!"

“Well, at any rate, I do think Severus made quite the impression,” teased Lupin.

“Yeah, I didn’t get cake!” grumbled Ron.

“Perhaps you weren’t deserving, son,” replied Arthur nonchalantly.

Harry busted out laughing.

“Hose down, Harry!” Ron said as he turned a furious shade of scarlet.

“You’re just still mad that I got fed grapes!” Harry announced smugly.

That got Snape’s attention. “Who fed you grapes?” he asked.

“Tonks. She said she was right proud of me. I knew better though. I knew if I didn’t do right by Ginny, my bollocks would be up for grabs!” he said as he fairly shuddered.

“I find this entire conversation quite lewd and disturbing!” snapped the Potions master. “Arthur, how can you stand knowing your daughter is engaging in sexual congress so blatantly in front of you!”

“Because Harry proposed last night,” he said with a smile.

“Mr. Weasley!” said Harry, visibly upset. He walked over to Snape. “I’m sorry,” Harry whispered. “I was going to tell you privately later.” He shot a peevish look at his future father-in-law.

“Is the witch with child?” Severus asked abruptly.

Harry was taken aback. “No, not that I am aware.”

“Just why have you decided to marry Miss Weasley?” he asked sharply. “Not that I object, of course. Miss Weasley is a wonderful catch.”

Severus could see Arthur sit up straighter in his chair proudly.

“Blimey, he *is* acting like a dad!” whispered Ron to Bill.

“Sir, I love her. She’s the only witch for me,” Harry said stoutly.

Snape was undeterred. “How will you be supporting her and any children that might come along?”

“I am in Auror Training and have been quite frugal over the years with the money left by my father’s side of the family. I have quite the nest egg set aside to buy a house. We want to settle in Hogsmeade, and I’ll Floo to work in the morning to the Ministry from there. Ginny will be trying her hand with one of the professional Quidditch teams whilst I’m in training. We’ll not have the most traditional marriages to start with, but eventually, we will settle in and start having those grandbabies my mum wanted so badly.”

“Humph!” Snape replied. “I assume that Arthur read you the riot act?” he asked.

“Yes, sir.”

Snape looked at his son with one of his infamous glares. “Know that if I ever hear of you mistreating, neglecting your duties as a husband, or ever striking her, you will have more than just the Weasleys to deal with!” he said imperiously. “No son of mine shall be a shiftless ne’er-do-well!”

“I won’t let you down, sir.” Harry grinned.

“I’m sure of that, Harry. However, I still plan to keep my eye on you. Congratulations,” he said as he offered his hand. Harry shook it happily. Snape stood and clapped a hand on his son’s shoulder. “Now, if you will excuse me, I shall congratulate my future daughter-in-law.”

He stepped into the kitchen and went directly to Ginny. She was chatting animatedly and cleaning furiously at the sink. The other women hushed and quickly slipped away when they realized Professor Snape wanted to speak with her. His eyes were warm and moist. Ginny dried her hands and faced him.

“Ginerva—Ginny,” he said softly. “I would like to see the ring my boy gave you.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed. It was a modest diamond ring. Not flashy, but not cheap. He stared at it for a long time whilst holding her hand. He began to speak as he caressed her hand in his.

“Please, respect the power you have over him,” he whispered. His voice was strained and sad. “Never lie to him, love him with all your being. Please, do not break his heart by keeping secrets you think might be for his own good. There never should be secrets! Never!” He looked into her eyes, and she embraced him.

She released him and took his hands in hers. “I’ve loved Harry Potter ever since I was a ten-year-old girl. There was never anyone really. I had to walk away from him so he could really take me seriously. Now, he’s mine, and I’ll never let him go!” she said passionately. “I know you can appreciate the depth of my love and loyalty for him.”

He kissed her on the forehead. “Thank you,” he said, his voice thick with emotion. “And I do understand, Ginny. I really do.”

He turned, and Hermione was there standing with a smile just for him. “Let’s go, Severus. My parents want to meet you,” she said happily.

Choices

Chapter 29 of 30

Severus and Hermione decide their future.

review, I'm addicted to reviews!

Chapter 29 – Choices

Hermione and Severus returned to the castle after visiting with the Grangers. "Hermione," Severus asked as they walked down to the dungeons, "I need to know what your plans are. After all, you are finished with school here. I assume you have plans and dreams for your life."

"The plan was to get you in my life. The rest has always been easy," she replied.

He stopped walking and looked at her, concerned. He wanted to say many things, but he wasn't going to do it in the middle of the stairwell! He grabbed her hand and led her down to the landing, and he swiftly led her inside his private rooms.

"I am afraid I never really thought about our life past this day," he whispered. "Your parents were cordial, reasonably tolerant, and I am happy to know my dangly bits aren't up for dissection by your mother!"

Hermione laughed.

He scowled. "You laugh now, but you didn't see the daggers she was throwing my way when you first told them about us. If she had been a witch, I would have been hexed—repeatedly!"

Hermione forced her laughter to stop. "Severus, what is really troubling you?" she asked, concerned.

He was pacing now. He was really getting worked up the more he kept himself from saying what he really wanted to say. He felt like an imbecile; no, he felt like an old fool! An old fool that somehow has completely gone round the twist and has fallen hopelessly in love against all of his better judgment. And God help him, he was completely lost. He loved her, desired her, and never wanted to let her go. However, he had been here before and did not want to repeat the past.

"Hermione, you need to understand that I did this nearly twenty years ago. I just don't want to be left behind again."

She walked to him and hugged him tightly. She looked up at him and said, "I love you. There is no pressure from the world forcing me to do this. I have my plans for a life. I'm going to work for the Ministry in their Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. Specifically, I will be working for the Office of House-Elf Liaison. You know how I've always felt about fighting for the rights of house-elves! I've not been quiet about it. I will be starting in September."

She maneuvered her hands farther down south and gently stroked him over his clothes. "I thought I would take a much needed vacation and help you here."

She led him to his desk chair and straddled him. "I thought you could use some help. Especially on those days when the dunderheads really get to you, I could be here ready to help relieve your... *tension*," she teased suggestively.

He groaned as she helped to release him from the confines of his very restrictive trousers. She slid down to the floor, and he grasped onto his desk, breathing unevenly as she slid her mouth over his engorged flesh. His hands began to shake, and he disengaged from her.

Hermione looked hurt. "Did I do it wrong?" she asked worriedly.

He fixed his pants. "No, Hermione. You are brilliant! It's just that I can't. I need to know you have your life and freedom, but you still choose me. It's important for me to feel secure that you are not pressuring yourself to remain with me. I think that we need to live apart and still be together."

"When will we see each other?" she asked worriedly.

"Whenever you wish!" he blurted out. "We'll do this like any other couple. I just need to see you settled and content with your own flat and job. Then we can come together as equals when the time is right. I want to do this right if we are going to have it all. I want everything to be the way that it should. I love you enough to let you go and live your life. Going straight from Gryffindor tower to the dungeons without ever learning who you are apart from Hogwarts, me—do you understand?"

"I see," she whispered. "Well, I will get my things," she said slowly as she turned to walk away from him.

He grabbed her and held her firmly to him. "Just where do you think you are going?" he snarled.

"You just said—" she began to say.

"We are on holiday! I do not expect to let you out of my sight until the miserable miscreants I teach return to this castle. According to my calculations, we have a little more than a week for me to show you all the various ways I love you," he said as he lowered his face closer to hers, finally crushing his lips against hers.

Hermione jumped into his arms and hooked her thighs around his waist. He took her to his bed, and they removed their clothes. She tried to return to the place she had been attending previously when he stopped her.

"Oh, no, Miss Granger. I have a desperate need to finally do something I've wanted to do for a long time. He spread her legs and looked at her pink flesh peeking out at him.

He admired the beauty of her sex as she lay blushing under his piercing stare. She felt so vulnerable and more naked than she had ever felt before.

"Miss Granger," he purred as he knelt down to press his lips against her pink softness. She watched as he tasted her. "You are so soft, Hermione, like satin," he murmured against her folds. "I've waited a long time to kiss your pretty kitty."

Hermione let her head fall back onto the pillow as he took over her mind and body. She felt her hands reach instinctively for her breasts, and they were slapped away by her lover.

He ran his fingertips over her nipples as he feasted below. She shivered at the power of his skill. Soon, too soon, she was peaking and hated that it had ended so quickly. He sat up and leaned over her, grasping her shoulders as he slid inside her.

"Ahh!" he exclaimed as he filled her. Hermione was drowsy still after her climax, and he began to drive into her furiously. The languid lovemaking she had expected was over. He was snarling and growling as he forced himself deeper and deeper inside her. Hermione felt the building of tension and the desperation for release. She was screaming and begging for more. He grabbed the back of her neck and squeezed as he captured her mouth. She hiked her legs up, and he threw them over his shoulders, fiercely ramming into her, never relenting. She felt herself falling over the edge and panting his name in short gasps. He ground out her name as he climaxed. He stared into her face, his eyes burning with passion and hunger for her. She felt she should be feeling afraid or scared, but she didn't.

"This is it, Hermione," he gasped as he stayed on top of her, refusing to pull himself out of her until he was damned ready.

"It is simple. This is who I am. I am passionate about many things, however, whom I share my passions with are few. This passion will be for only you," he whispered as he lazily drew a finger down the side of her face.

"I love you, Severus," she whispered as he looked at him with unclouded eyes.

He looked into them. They were bright, yes, after just having made love, but they were also unfettered and uncomplicated. There was just no pain or fear. She was open

and genuine.

He sighed as he rested his head on her neck. He could feel all the years of tension slide off him. She really loved him. She ~~re~~ally loved him.

The Birth of a New Family

Chapter 30 of 30

Here we leave Severus and see how things have changed after a couple of years.

Epilogue – The Birth of a New Family

Severus was trying to calm his son down. He was ready to climb the walls. The first-time father was ready to do his nut if he didn't hear any news soon.

"Harry," Severus said in his most intimidating voice, "sit down, now!"

"I can't!" he blurted out as he ran his hands through his unruly black hair. "Why don't they tell me anything? I've changed my mind, I'm going in!" he burst out as he made a dash for the door. Severus was on him like a panther.

"Boy, you passed out just watching that damn Muggle video Hermione showed you!" He gave a withering look at his wife as she sat unrepentant while breastfeeding their three-month-old daughter, Sarah.

"Don't give me that look, Severus Snape!" she warned him. "Would you rather he passed out in front of Ginny during the delivery? She'd hex him on general principle!" she snapped.

"And precisely what would be said general principle?" he asked as he folded his arms across his chest, his curiosity now piqued.

"The principle being that *she's* the one in god-awful, excruciating pain, and if anyone has the right to pass out, it would be her! You just have to look at it—it's her body going through it!" she reasoned impatiently.

Severus scowled at his wife. Now though would not be the time to explain to her the unique pain a husband feels having to watch the love of his life going through agony and be completely helpless to stop it or take it upon himself.

"Harry, you need to breathe," he told him as he put a supportive arm around him. "It's going to be just fine," he said reassuringly.

Just then Madam Pomfrey arrived and announced Ginny had delivered her baby.

Harry scrambled to get to the door and by Ginny's side. Severus sat next to his wife. He let the Weasleys and his son have this moment.

"Remember how happy Harry was about having a sister?" Hermione reminisced.

"Yes," he smiled. He had kept the conversation he had with Harry quiet. Harry had asked if he would consider naming her Lily, and Severus had refused. He had told him to save that name for when he had his own daughter.

"After all," he had said, "Lily Potter is the way it should be, not Lily Snape."

Harry had hugged him then and had said no more about it.

"How will you feel if it's a girl, and he names her Lily? she asked timidly as she switched breasts.

Severus stroked the black silky hair on his daughter's head. "It is immaterial to me. Besides, it's how it should be. Lily was the boy's mother," he said absent-mindedly. His interest was completely in his daughter.

She smiled at him. Oh, how things had changed! She had started her work at the Ministry early after the holidays were over. After a semester without Hermione, Severus had been ready to lose his mind. He had finally come to her flat in Muggle London and begged her to marry him. He had been so miserable, he hadn't care anymore if he looked desperate, for in fact, he was! She had chuckled at him and rescued him from his self-imposed misery. She had moved in, and they had been married in a small ceremony in Minerva's office. Hermione had Apparated to work each day, and things had become quiet and cozy for a while. Finally, a year later, Harry had married Ginny, and very unexpectedly she had become pregnant in record time. Hermione had burst into laughter and tears at the same time when Ginny had announced their pregnancy. She had said she was three months pregnant and had been waiting until her first trimester was over to tell everyone. Severus had rolled his eyes. He, of course, had known she was pregnant and had grown accustomed to her emotional outbursts.

Remus and Tonks had heartily congratulated both couples as Severus kept a distinct scowl on his face. He had a reputation to maintain, after all. Remus and Tonks had worked with his diet, trying to find the best combination to stave of the transformations. Every month the results were getting better and better. The Lupins looked happier and happier each time the Snapes saw them, and it was wonderful. Severus still maintained his cool demeanor in public, but everyone knew Remus and Severus had become the closest of friends and confidants.

Today, however, Severus did not care to fool anyone, for he expressed his joy and happiness over the new arrival. He was a grandfather. He was very proud of Harry and Ginny and was honored that such a wonderful and intelligent witch like Hermione had borne his child. The day Severus and Hermione's little Sarah had been born, Severus had bawled as much as his newborn daughter had. He had sat alone with Harry and had cried over her and felt so keenly the loss all over again for all he had missed with Harry. Harry had held his baby sister, Sarah, and had spoken to his dad in soft tones. No one knew what they'd discussed that day: it was between father and son.

Harry came out with a blue bundle. Severus gasped as Harry handed the bundle to him as the new father sat down. Severus held his grandson and watched as he opened his eyes wide. They were green, not so emerald as Harry and Lily's, but they would lighten as he got older, Severus was sure. Severus was overcome with joy as he looked into his grandson's eyes, and he'd remembered the first time he held Harry. It had been love at first sight. No matter what had happened, whatever had been taken, or lost along the way, the love had remained, and that love had grown into a larger love that took this child into its fold.

"We've named him Severus. Severus Harry Potter," Harry said quietly.

Severus looked at his son and then his grandson and namesake, shocked at the announcement of his name. Baby Severus was perfect. Wisps of black hair decorated his

crown and green eyes looked up at him. They would be Lily's eyes.

"Hello, Severus," he said softly. "I'm your grandfather. I'm going to teach you all about potion-making, just like I did with your father."

Severus looked up at Harry and said, "You have made me proud, son. May God grant you all the joys this life can bring. That is my blessing to give to you."

Harry felt a weight lifted off of him. The blessing from the only father he had known, the one he was sure he could never please, had blessed him. He felt free.

Harry watched his father as he held and spoke to his new grandson. A tear ran down Harry's face as he pictured for the first time how it had been all those years ago. He had felt cheated for so long, but now, watching his son being adored by his grandfather, it made him feel he could experience it, watching it through his son's eyes. It would be like growing up all over again, and all the pain of neglect and loneliness he endured with the Dursleys could be replaced with better memories, memories that should have been.

Harry sighed as he sank back into his chair, listening to his father's rich voice wash over him, lulling him to sleep, as he continued to talk to his grandson. Both wizards were so grateful that even though everything else had been lost, the love had remained.

~The End~