

Lily's Favorite

by Alison

Severus is having a difficult evening. The last thing he needs are memories from the past.

Complete short story

Chapter 1 of 1

Severus is having a difficult evening. The last thing he needs are memories from the past.

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Severus sank into the overstuffed armchair in the empty staff room and took a deep breath in a futile attempt to calm himself, staring blankly at the far wall.

The curse that had destroyed Albus's hand was spreading. At first he'd hoped his skills would have been enough, but he'd come to realise that his attempts were palliative at best. Every time he examined the Headmaster's hand, the insidious black threads of gangrene had spread further, into the wrist, up the forearm. The flesh had now died off as far as Albus's elbow, despite all Severus's best attempts to cure the affliction.

Tonight had been the first time he'd suggested amputation of the limb. It had been a last desperate option, as both Severus and Albus knew that the curse was borne in the blood, carried along through the circulation, and that amputation could not save the Headmaster's life. It would only serve to prolong the inevitable, gaining him a few extra months of agonizing pain.

Not surprisingly, Albus had refused. It was more important now, he'd said, that he present an unharmed and confident front, a façade of normality while Potter matured into his full potential. He'd merely pressed Severus for a strong pain-relieving potion and once more reminded him of the promise Severus had made, to do what must be done, without shirking, when the time came.

Now Severus put one shaking hand over his eyes, but the image of that horrible blackened skin was imprinted on his mind's eye, and he couldn't rid himself of it. Yes, he had promised, but that had been sixteen years ago, at a time when he'd fervently hoped the Dark Lord was gone forever.

He was grateful that the staff room was empty at this late hour. He simply couldn't face returning to his quarters, not yet. For that had been where he had examined Albus's arm. He hadn't needed to say anything; the look on his face as he met the old man's eyes had been enough. Albus knew he was doomed ...

An irritating buzzing tickled at the edge of his perception, and Severus dropped his hand in irritation and looked for the source of the noise, sighing wearily when he saw it was the radio left going in the far corner. Filius Flitwick liked listening to the Wizard station while he relaxed in the staff room, but quite often he forgot to turn it off before he left for bed.

Severus heaved himself to his feet tiredly and walked across the room to the set. As he reached for the "off" switch, however, he became aware of what was issuing from it.

"And that was Elvis, of course, with 'Jail House Rock.'" The announcer's voice was brash and grated on Severus's frayed nerves. "And to round out our evening of Muggle Music Appreciation, here we have one from the vaults. Muggle singer Ira Denyon had a brief spell of fame in the seventies with a number one hit, plus an album that made it to Number Six in the Muggle Top 40, before fading back into obscurity. Here's his first big hit, 'Always, Love,' from his album of the same name."

Severus paused, his hand still on the switch, as the music issued from the radio. Yes, as the disk jockey had observed, Ira Denyon had been an obscure Muggle singer. Yes, long-lasting fame had eluded him. But Severus knew the song by heart. For it had been Lily's favorite.

He closed his eyes as memories flooded through him, drawn from the shadowy depths of his mind, coaxed out of hiding by the familiar sweet strains of the song.

Lily, his best friend since they were ten years old, was trying without success to make her Muggle radio play despite the magical interference infusing the atmosphere of Hogwarts, attempting to develop a charm to shield the device. He remembered her frustrated tears as she repeatedly tried to make the radio work.

Severus had thought about the problem for several days before working out something that might possibly work. His idea had been to forget about a charm and instead try re-wiring a Wizard radio to pick up the Muggle stations, and her enthusiasm made him determined to succeed. He was rewarded when he saw the delight in her eyes as Ira Denyon's song had issued, clear and sweet, from the rewired radio.

Their fifth year at Hogwarts coincided with Ira Denyon's brief success on the charts. How often had Severus listened to that song from Lily's radio, as it played softly in the background while they studied together?

And it was to the strains of the chorus that Lily had kissed him for the first time.

Oh, those halcyon few months, all too brief! They'd been the happiest of Severus's life. He'd even been invited to spend Christmas at Lily's house over the break. And it was there, on Boxing Day, when her parents had gone to a friend's party and her sister had left for the movies with her boyfriend, that he and Lily lost their virginity together, rolling and giggling and nearly falling off her single bed while the radio played softly in the background.

It was as they lay loosely entwined afterwards, the physical rush subsiding, that "Always, Love" had begun to play. Lily had smiled against his chest and murmured, "That's my favorite. I guess it's our song now!"

But Severus was becoming obsessed, seduced, by a new love: the Death Eaters. Lucius Malfoy had introduced him to the growing group gathering around the Dark Lord, those disaffected and often angry young wizards and witches who were unhappy with the status quo. Severus's growing preoccupation with them drove a wedge between himself and Lily.

How could he have been so blind, to let her slip away from him like that? She had tried to talk to him repeatedly about what he was doing, but he'd been so enamored of his new friends, Purebloods the lot of them, who flattered him and gave him respect, that he'd brushed off her repeated attempts to warn him of the possible dangers. And eventually it had ended with him calling her "Mudblood" and later, frantically, hopelessly, trying to apologize to her outside the entrance to Gryffindor commonroom.

She would not speak to him again after that. Severus's infatuation with the Death Eaters and their promises had made him swallow his feelings and retreat behind a cold mask for the rest of that year, telling himself that he didn't care, that he had new friends now. And anyway, if he wanted to keep his Pureblood friends, he'd better not continue his relationship with a Mudblood...

No longer did they meet to study together; no longer did they walk hand-in-hand to Hogsmeade. But one early evening, a few months before the end of seventh year, Severus had been outside by the lake and heard "Always, Love" playing softly in the background.

With it came a rush of memories, and he'd suddenly realized the enormity of what he'd done, what he'd thrown away. He knew now that despite all he had said, despite his attempts to deny how he felt, he loved her, and would love her for the rest of his life.

He'd followed the song down to the beech tree by the lakeside, intending to apologize to Lily, to renounce the Death Eaters and the dark power they promised. He'd do whatever it took to prove his love, and somehow convince her to come back to him.

He'd rounded the tree and saw her with her arms about James Potter's neck, kissing him tenderly. Lily had looked up then and saw him staring at her open-mouthed; she'd pulled away from Potter and called out to him, "Severus! Wait!"

With a leaden feeling of total betrayal in his stomach, he'd wrenched his eyes away, turned abruptly and left. And Lily had not tried to stop him ...

The song ended on a softly yearning note, and the jarring voice of the announcer sounded, jerking Severus roughly back to the present.

"And that was Ira Denyon, with his song 'Always, Love'. A Golden Oldie for those of you who enjoy Muggle music. "

With a shock, Severus realized that his face was wet with tears. He drew a shuddering breath, almost a sob, before twisting the "off" switch on the radio with a shaking hand.

Stupid Muggle song, stirring up memories best left buried. He didn't know why he'd bothered listening to it. Except that it had been Lily's favorite...

The End.

Author's note: If you liked this story, please have a read of my original story "Love Inhuman" at this link:

<http://www.thepetulantpoetess.com/viewstory.php?sid=11932>

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