

Hidden Truth

Von YasaiNoVampaia

Long Lost's Return

A/N: Some authors answer to every single review they get, some don't. The Chibi Part in each chapter is part review response and part of FF Cup. I won't cut it, because it doesn't distract from the story if it's at the end and clearly separated from the story. If you don't want additional info, then don't read it. I'm not planning on offending any reader (and I'm glad for your review ' ' - you could have given your name, you know, I'm not going to flame anyone for their opinion ^^) but it seems to me that the majority of the reader like (or tolerate) the Chibi Part, anyway. But I think I'm going to cut it shorter.

-

4. Long Lost's Return

Hermione's crying had long ago subsided. Exhausted, she lay in front of the fire, curled into a tight ball. The savagely lashing red flames had an hypnotizing effect on her, as she stared unmoving. Their love had been just like the fire. Sometimes hot and untamed, other times more domesticated, but never dead. Hermione longed to reach out and feel for herself if the flames were still burning or if it was only her imagination that played dirty tricks on her. "I knew he'd die ..." She whispered softly. Harry's eyes flew open. He'd been sitting on the couch in the Common Room now for more than four hours, trying to provide some comfort to his friend. After Hermione's tears had ended, there was such a soothing silence in the room, that he hadn't wanted to move or lose a word, in fear of destroying the moment. Now that Hermione herself said the first words, Harry tried to urge her on with his gaze - though, she couldn't see that, as she stared into the fire and not into his direction.

"I knew he'd die ... Even I couldn't help him. He had to die slowly and ... I am not even sure, if he felt any pain ... What am I good for ... for what do I ... read all those books ... for what do I learn all those ... spells and charms ... if I can't even help ..." Hermione's voice broke and she closed her eyes, wearily. "I'm just so tired ..."

"What?!" Harry snapped and shot from the couch. "What are you saying? What are you implying here?" He couldn't get the tinge of fear out of his voice as he addressed his long time friend. She couldn't just say such things and get away with it!

"I'm implying nothing. I was just saying that I am tired and I'm going to bed now." Hermione got off the ground and turned towards the stairs leading to the girls dorm. She felt as though all her energy had been sucked out of her, she felt so drained. And all she wanted to do right now was sleep.

"Oh no!" Harry cried and blocked her way. "You are going nowhere until you said what you meant!" Gazing deeply into her eyes, he grabbed both of Hermione's arms, pressing his fingers a tad too deep into her flesh. She wasn't able to disguise her

emotions very well, Harry could read her like an open book from the School Library. There was so much fear and hurt, so few hope left, that it cut deeply into his heart. "Please?"

Hermione tried to smile, she didn't want to worry her friends. She embraced Harry around the waist and nestled her face in the crook of his neck. "I won't do anything rash. I promise." After a few more seconds, Hermione and Harry let go of each other and she took a step back. "Good night."

"Night." Harry watched Hermione retreat to her dormitory. He sighed and made his way to his own bed.

-+---+

"G-Ginny?" Fred stuttered slightly, his eyes as big as saucers. He exchanged a quick glance with George, who was clutching a rather big piece of cloth. "What are-"

"-you doing-"

"-in there?"

"You know, it-"

"-shouldn't be-"

"-possible for any-"

"-living being ..." Fred's voice petered out and he looked between his two siblings with an unknowing look, bewilderment clearly written on both of the twin's faces.

Ginny's eyes filled with confused sadness. Everything seemed so big in comparison to her memories. She felt almost like Gulliver as he met the giants. This giants, though, were her own brothers. "I-I am ... dead?" She whispered, not able to comprehend what was happening. "But how?" She knew she had wanted to help. Even though she'd promised Ron not to fight, she'd sneaked away. They couldn't have killed her, could they?

"Ginny, what happened?" George asked, tentatively.

"I'm not sure ... There was an assault at Hogwarts ... You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters attacked and ... I don't know. I-I ..."

"It's okay, Gin." George softly touched his forefinger to his sister's hair.

"Something must have happened" Fred said, looking at his twin.

"Something powerful that could-"

"-send the entire Wizardry World-"

"-into this state!"

"What happened?" The twins looked at their sister and remembered that she didn't know anything.

"There are spells everywhere! We can't leave the shop!"

"And as it looks, nobody else can neither."

"We were trying to determine when the spells lose their effect-"

"-and it seems that we'll still be in here in a week or even more."

Ginny's gaze veiled. The reality came crushing down onto her: she was dead, she was trapped. Well, at least she had two of her brothers to keep her company. "Fred? George? Um, could you ...?"

"Sure ..." Gingerly, George picked up the painting of Ginny and put it onto the desk. Leaning against the wall, the girl had a better view of the room and hadn't to crane her neck so much, anymore.

Ginny drew in a shaky breath. "You know, I'm glad that you insisted on buying me a magical portrait. Otherwise ... I wouldn't have the chance to see you again." Her eyes shimmered, but her smile was genuine.

Fred nodded and George dabbed his eyes discreetly while muttering a "Yeah". If their

joke shop hadn't been such a success, the twins wouldn't have dreamed of such an exclusive birthday present. But Ginny wouldn't celebrate birthdays no more, at least she wouldn't get older. In any case, the magical portrait was perfect.

"Well" Ginny piped, trying to lighten the slightly depressive mood. "What new jokes have you two invented lately?"

-+---+-

"Still up?"

Harry startled at hearing Ron's voice so suddenly. "Yeah. Hermione went to bed only a few minutes ago. I didn't want to leave her alone in the Common Room ... What about you? Why are you still up?"

"Nothing important. I couldn't sleep. That's all." Ron rolled over in his bed and watched unmoved as Harry changed into his pyjama and got under his covers.

"What's on your mind?" Harry couldn't get rid of the feeling that he mutated into some kind of psychiatric. Every person he knew could come to him with his or her problems, he took always care of them, tried to make them feel better. That was his therapy, at the same time. If he paid no mind to his worries, they didn't worry him so much, after all. Harry wasn't dumb, he knew that they wouldn't go away on their own accord, but he appreciated the time he could buy by delaying the confrontation.

"Snape."

"That's gross."

But Ron didn't respond accordingly to Harry's attempted joke. "He's up to something. The way he looked at you during lunch today ..."

"We had this glaring contests occasionally. Nothing out of the ordinary, if you ask me ..."

"He'll kill you if he discovers that you saved him."

"What?" Harry yelped surprised. "What are you talking about?" It wasn't as if there hadn't been anyone with that desire over the years. In fact, there had been too many. But after Voldemort's downfall, Harry'd suspected that he'd finally be able to live in relative peace.

"Snape. I'm saying that if he finds out that a Potter saved his life not only once but twice, he'll kill you. And now that You-Know-Who is no more, he isn't any longer dependent on Dumbledore."

"I can't follow you." Harry tried in vain to sound amused, his worry for his friend was evident in his voice. Ron had probably the most to cope with. But it just couldn't be that the redhead had gone mental - though, it certainly seemed so.

"Ugh. Forget it. I just had too much time to think." Ron roughly rubbed his face. "How is Hermione?"

-+---+-

Carefully, Snape measured the crushed battle wings and put them into the steaming cauldron. The bright green steam vanished for a moment, as Snape stirred the potion three times counter clockwise, then erupted again. The green changed into a dark grey and grew thinner.

As the Potions Master moved his wand above the cauldron to finish the potion, he got distracted by the soft voice whispering 'Ronald Weasley' into his ear, startling him somewhat. But fortunately he covered his slip, and nothing happened - well, nothing but what should happen, anyway.

'What is that Boy-Who-Lived's sidekick now up to?' He wondered. 'Possibly roaming the school grounds already, taking advantage of the emergency case we currently have ... Stupid Golden Trio ... But I don't have time for them now.'

The mist disappeared entirely and the colouring of the potion became a deep, impenetrable black. Snape actually had to look twice, he wasn't sure if there was indeed some concoction in the cauldron, for the potion reflected images from the cauldron itself.

"Intriguing" Snape murmured, taking the pot from the fireplace and letting it cool off. After a few minutes he bottled up some vials and put them away safe of a single one which he kept in his hand. After a moment's hesitation, he drowned the potion. What could possibly happen? It wasn't as if he'd used anything dangerous in the making process.

It took two full minutes, but then the effect kicked in. At first, Snape experienced only a slight tingle of magic crawling through his body, which wasn't too unusual. The slight spinning of his vision was unexpected, but nothing to worry about too much, as well. The fact that his mind shut down abruptly was something entirely different, and with a sickening thud, Snape collapsed, head first, amidst his laboratory.

--++--

Students were falling, there was screaming and curse shouting everywhere. Hogwarts seemed so cold and like a deadly castle. Icy winds hunted through the corridors, sending chills down Harry's spine.

The war was just beginning.

"How did they get through the wards?!" Snape yelled in the direction of the Boy-Who-Lived. This was just brilliant! No, the attack wasn't unexpected, but who would have guessed they'd make it through the wards? It was practically impossible.

"How should I know?!" Harry yelled back, kicking a random Death Eater and then hexing him into oblivion. 'That's just bloody typical! Everything the slimy git can't explain, he wants me to make clear! Stupid prat!'

"Look, what do we have here?"

Harry froze in the middle of his next movement, the throbbing in his scar immediately multiplying. His vision was fixed on the inhuman creature of one Voldemort, everything else appeared to be nothing but a mere blur. The shouting around him slurred as the pain in his forehead became almost unbearable. He couldn't think straight anymore. What should he do? Which curse should he throw? Would it work, anyway? "How did you get through the wards?"

Voldemort tilted his head to the side and smiled. "You led me. It's a shame, though, really. Such a waste of blood ..."

"W-what ...?"

"That relatives of yours were very useful ..."

Snape could feel the shudder of disgust creeping over his skin, watching You-Know-Who's eyes glow eerily. Where was that pet of his? Finally gotten rid of Wormtail? A sudden movement caught his eye, and he turned just in time to see the prominent rat running in his and Harry's direction. 'Sunken this low to actually attack from the back? Pity. This'd be how I would make it but the great Dark Lord?' Snape growled inaudible. This insufferable boy was really good for nothing. Didn't pay any mind to his surroundings. "Potter! If it isn't a task too difficult, turn around and get rid of that deceiving rat!" As the boy didn't react, Snape hurled a curse at him to rearrange his priorities.

Harry flinched violently and snapped out of his frozen state of mind. He turned around and proceeded to hunt down the rat, which seemed now intent on escaping. Snape restrained himself from rolling his eyes in a very childish manner and stepped between Voldemort and Potter. He wasn't entirely sure what possessed him to try

and protect that stupid child all the time. Hadn't already died enough people to ensure that he lived just a few more days? Oh well. At least, he wouldn't be rescued by the boy, no, if then it'd be the other way round. Two life debts were definitely too many.

"If this isn't my favourite Potions Master and double spy in disguise ..." Voldemort hissed and reduced the distance between himself and Severus to roughly ten meters. Snape gritted his teeth as his mark started to burn. Not like he was being summoned, but much more intense. Starting under the skin where the Dark Mark was branded, then penetrating his bones and spreading throughout his whole body, making him feel like he burned from the inside out.

"Why are you trying to protect the boy?" Voldemort chastised, making his wand ready. "You are going to die, slowly, but just after the boy. I was so disappointed to discover your deception. Crucio!"

Anxious minutes of curse throwing led to numerous injuries, Voldemort getting better away. As the Dark Lord didn't want to use the Killing Curse, he had to just injure and stun his former Potions Master. If he thought that he already experienced torture, then Severus wouldn't know what hit him ...

Snape's wand-arm trembled slightly and on his forehead glittered sweat, he was clearly at disadvantage. As he drew his right hand over his head to cast another curse, he discreetly flexed his cramping fingers, nearly letting his wand drop. "Damn" He cursed softly and held the wand tighter. Without it he would be lost. Lost ... Snape's eyes widened a fraction as a sudden thought formed in his mind. Maybe he could manage to distract You-Know-Who and if he could take his wand down, then he would be able to use his advantage.

Snape concentrated his magic and let it flow through his arm. Two times his wand spat out sparks and stuttered, not unlike an old-timer having a backfire. He cursed more loudly and shot a calculated glance towards his perfectly functioning wand.

"Well, Severus ..." Voldemort hissed, lowering his wand slowly, after he'd send another curse towards Snape, whose wand hadn't produced any counter curse. "Now it finally comes to an end. You should have known, that no man can serve two masters ..."

"You were never my master." Snape spat through gritted teeth.

"Tst, tst, but I recall you calling me 'Master'." Voldemort shook his head in mocking, pursing his cruel lips. "All those prophecies mean nothing ... Here am I, still living. You have cursed the boy who should kill me yourself, I'm not his first priority anymore. And you ... you aren't going to kill me neither. I know you, my Severus ..." Snape shuddered inwardly at the possessive tone of his voice. "... I always knew you. You could call it morbid curiosity ... But now ... Prepare to die, my dear!"

Two till now invisible spots of magic popped into existence.

"You should have stroke while your wand was hot." Snape smirked, as the two time-spelled arrows bumped into Voldemort's back, distracting him for a few seconds. Enough time for him to raise his wand and cast a spell, which caused Voldemort's wand to erupt in flames.

The white skin of the Dark Lord bristled, while the wizard's face contorted in pain. He wouldn't let go. Without his wand he'd be helpless and the gleam in Severus' eyes told nothing good. Former he'd loved it when that side in his Potions Master erupted, it witnessed his success. But standing at the receiving end was a tad uncomfortable. "You ... won't get away ... as unscarred as you possibly like ... You'll never be rid ... of me!" A fine layer of dust-like, invisible magic erupted from the burning wand and

spread across the corridor.

Not hesitating for another heartbeat, Snape cast the Avada Kedavra, for what he hoped the last time. "But I already am."

--++--

"Great" Snape grumbled, touching his anew bleeding forehead. "Why does this stupid floor has to be so bloody solid?" But his slightly gruff mood vanished as fast as it had appeared. His thin lips turned into a satisfied grin as he recalled the events he just remembered. It had been him! Harry Bloody Potter hadn't rescued the world from the Dark Lord but him! On a side-note he'd have to add that the Boy-Who-Needed-More-Than-Half-An-Hour-To-Defeat-A-Bloody-Rat had been a little (but definitely neglectable) help.

Picking himself from the ground, Snape decided he'd finally remove his scar. In the end, it had been definitely too easy, but Snape wasn't going to complain. Rescued by his most hated Potions Master, that'd be the perfect ammunition.

-

Chibi Snape: *@ Alia*: 12 points for my little Slytherin! And yes, poor Draco. He turns out to be good and immediately has to die. Thank Merlin, I'm one of the authors, otherwise ... *whipping sweat from brow*

Chibi Harry: *@ Kateri1*: 60 points for Ravenclaw ^^ I hope this chapter was even more interesting as it solved a few mysteries. You know that you are the sole Ravenclaw and are close behind Slytherin which has six students?

Chibi Snape: *@ MiruSedna*: 30 points for Slytherin *wink* I see you have studied the concept of being a 'true' Slytherin thoroughly. As for poor Draco, yes, unfortunately I lost one more good Slytherin, but be assured, Lucius - may he not rest in peace - has definitely ordered a few (magical) portraits of his son. Maybe he'll be moved to Hogwarts, who knows? *grin* I, of course. Oh, by the way, don't be so formal. Call the boy 'Potter'!

Chibi Harry: *@ tia*: Yes! Yes! Yes! I knew it! Another Gryffindor! As such you just earned 20 points for your house! Yes, I'm slightly hyper but we have to catch up to the snakes- (Snape: *punch*) Ouch! *glare*

Daintress' skips us *sniff*

Chibi Snape: I told you we should put the Chibi stuff in the comedy, but are you listening to me? Nooooooooo! Anyway ...

@ falling-alone: 12 points to Hufflepuff. Be assured that this story will be finished - sooner or later. Hm, maybe I'll check out your one-shots ... But only if there aren't any hilarious pairings starring myself *eg* And as you surely already figured out, no, there wasn't any polyjuice usage in there. (MS: I also used the questions to my advantage, but I'm a Slytherin. So it's okay if I cheat to get what I want *gg*)

Chibi Harry: *@ Aku Maru*: First, I'm not sure if Ron's going to implode ... I mean, he eats a lot, usually, so if anything, he'll explode ^^ (Snape: You are so dumb) As for why Dumbledore is worried. I honestly don't know. Why do you ask me? Dumbledore's the one who knows everything. It's creepy sometimes, you know? But I guess the "Severus"-mumbling had nothing to do with "Oh, Severus, you'll don't like what you are going to find out." but more of a "Severus, why are you doing this to yourself? Why are you torturing yourself with memories you were able to forget? Do you think it's easy to know everything?" 10 points extra for the well-wishes *gg* As you'll already know, well, Snape rescued me *flushing ashamed* In which prophecy was written that I had to be rescued by my Potions Master? It's so embarrassing!

Chibi Snape: Get over it! Hi there! Another Slytherin! As for your question about the

importance of the memory, yes, you may ask, but I am not able to answer - although I should know it, for I'm one of the authors. But you know, my memory lacks a bit ...
murmur What a brilliant excuse *chuckle*
@ jelly-bean5: 9 points for Slytherin ... I am so ... touched ... by that review of yours
breaking into tears I am so proud to be able to call myself your Head of House!
dapping eyes I don't even know what to say! I feel so OOC at the moment. Down with Gryffindor (Harry: Hey!) and Go! Slytherin! You'll get the FF Cup!