

Hidden Truth

Von YasaiNoVampaia

Just The Beginning

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Fortunately, Ron was still sound asleep, as Harry stumbled hastily to the floor. Water, he needed some water! What a nightmare! Voldemort and his Death Eaters killing his friends, his teachers. Snape being the one to defeat the Dark Lord.

And the worst part was, it was true, it had truly happened ... Oh no.

A few centimetres before he reached the door, he hesitated. No, he didn't want a repetition of the mysterious prank the twins had pulled. Thanks, but no, thanks. Harry opted for going down to the Common Room. He walked silently, as it was still way too early to actually be up, when one was in their right mind - which he wasn't.

Not bothering to retrieve his bathrobe, Harry descended down the stairs. He made himself comfortable on the couch in front of the fire, which bristled peacefully.

Harry leaned his head against the cushions and replayed the memories. For memories, they were, as he just knew that it had happened that way. The stupid git had cursed him! How dare he? Harry hadn't even known that a priority shifting curse existed, but it sure was dangerous. Snape was just such a prat! What would he have done if he couldn't have beaten Voldemort by himself? He, Harry, couldn't have helped him. Snape just wanted to get the fame all for himself. He could have killed Voldemort with one hand on his back, for all Harry cared. 'And he said the word celebrity as an insult' The boy snorted. How inconvenient must it have been for the Potions Master to lose the memory of his victory? What a pity. But then again, if Harry could now recall everything, maybe Snape could that, too. The boy rubbed his face wearily and afterwards crossed his arms in front of his chest, as he thought about how Snape would now act towards him. As if he wasn't already the biggest pain in the-

Harry stopped mid-thought, as he heard a low rustling coming from his chest. Uncrossing his arms, he fingered his breast-pocket and pulled the small parchment out. "The Fear Within" He read, recalling the scene he'd watched in the mirror. "Great." If his greatest fear was that Snape could defeat Voldemort without help of anyone, then there was seriously something wrong with him. Never had he been keen on the fame or being a damn celebrity, to begin with. Why would he envy Snape? Yes, the git would behave even more like the bastard he was, but Harry's last year at

Hogwarts was soon over. There was no point.

A cold breeze swept through the Common Room, causing the small fire to flicker dangerously. "Incendio" Harry murmured, pointing his wand towards the cracking fire. The flames grew abruptly and Harry stretched, enjoying the warmth.

"Up already?"

Harry nodded and moved up a bit to let Hermione sit beside him.

"I couldn't sleep anymore" She said calmly, hugging a pillow to her chest. Unlike Harry, Hermione was already dressed in her school robes. "What is your excuse?"

Harry closed his eyes for a heartbeat, before re-opening them, fixing his gaze on his friend's face. "I had a dream ..."

Hermione managed a small smile. "And what was it about?"

"Voldemort."

She gasped at the suddenness of the word and of the use of You-Know-Who's name. "What? When? What did he do? What did he say? He can't be still alive, can he? Oh Merlin, you have to tell Dumbledore!"

"Calm down, Mione. It was only a memory, but I don't know what triggered it." Harry discreetly put the parchment in the pocket of his pyjama bottoms, after running his hands through his unruly hair. "I already decided to tell Dumbledore, I just wanted to wait a bit. I'm not sure if he is already up ..."

Hermione snorted at that. Dumbledore never slept, at least, it appeared that way. "You have to tell him as soon as possible! We don't know how important that dream of yours was, so we can't lose any time. Go on and get dressed, I'm coming, too."

"Sorry, Mione, but I'd rather go alone, if you don't mind" Harry began, inwardly flinching at the look of rejection on his friend's face. "Look, I'll tell you everything afterwards, okay? But I don't want that when Ron wakes up that neither of us is here, you know? Maybe this is nothing serious, maybe it is, either way you and Ron are going to be the first ones after Dumbledore to know." He shot her a pleading look, trying to worm his way through her defences.

Sighing, she gave up. "Okay. I'll wait here for Ron and if you aren't back on time, we are going to keep you a seat save at the breakfast table."

"Thanks. You are the best" Harry grinned and he was gone with a cool whoosh of air.

Hermione shook her head and reached for the book she had brought with her to read. Making herself more comfortable, she flipped through the pages, becoming oblivious to everything but The World Of Advanced Potions.

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After he had donned on his school robes, Harry made his way quickly to the headmaster's office. The sun was still nowhere in sight, as it was still just half past five. Harry found himself praying that Dumbledore was already in his office, waiting for him, just as he always used to do when something important had occurred. And really, as Harry arrived at his destination, the stone gargoyle was already on the side and the entrance was revealed. As Harry made his way up the winded staircase he asked himself if it was a purpose that one had to feel dizzy after all those steps. He needed to tell Dumbledore something very important, after all.

Harry knocked on the heavy oak door and opened it, after he heard the headmaster's voice bidding him in.

"Hello, Harry. Up so early? What can I do for you? Lemon drop?" Dumbledore asked in quick succession, his blue eyes twinkled merrily over the edge of his half-moon glasses. "Take a seat, boy."

Harry sat down, but declined the sweet. "Uh, I had a dream this night ... Nothing prophetic!" He assured quickly, as the headmaster's gaze shot up. "It was merely a memory, but it was ... odd, I guess."

"Go on."

"It was about the day Voldemort died ... It was like a dam broke and suddenly I was flooded with pictures of all that happened. I don't really know what the cause was ..."

Dumbledore nodded his head, the twinkle in his eyes intensifying. "Yes, Severus succeeded in brewing a new memory potion."

"Pardon?"

"Nothing, my boy. Shall we watch your memory? With the help of the pensieve it would be easier for you. You wouldn't forget anything and you could comment the happenings. Shall we?"

After the silver strands were put into the pensieve Dumbledore and Harry began to watch the resurfaced memory, while the younger made comments. As Voldemort came into view, Harry visibly paled but refused to stop on his own accord.

"Harry?" Dumbledore prodded gently. Something was soon going to happen in the memory, something Harry dreaded to relive again. He sighed wearily. He already knew, he'd already seen Severus' pensieve after he'd had his memory back.

"It's my fault ..." Harry whispered, staring at the still figures. 'The headmaster must have stopped the pensieve' His mind absently noted. "He killed my relatives and with the help of my blood he somehow made it through the wards. Damn! Why did he have to say it? He could have died without me knowing that it was my blood that made it possible for him to get into Hogwarts in the first place ..."

"Harry, you know that this is not true." Dumbledore assured, but Harry refused to meet his gaze. Instead he stared at his own image. He couldn't stand the look those people got ... Pity - when they knew how he really grew up. Or anger that lurks underneath - when they played to understand. He wasn't going to risk seeing anything of that in Dumbledore's eyes. "Voldemort would have made it through the wards sooner or later."

Against his better judgment, Harry whirled around and glared at his headmaster, though his anger was directed towards the one creature he loathed with his whole heart. "But he DID use me, nonetheless, didn't he?!" He nearly yelled. "I'm sick of being the brainless puppet people use and then disregard! My uncle did it, Fudge does it and even you did it! But Voldemort using me to get the chance to kill all those innocents is ..." Harry's voice petered out. He needed to breathe and calm down. This didn't lead to anything but red ears. His heart clenched as Dumbledore's sad look reminded him that he also used his doing in his argument. But that was not fair. Deep inside himself, Harry knew that Dumbledore's intentions were always pure, he never wanted something for himself, he did everything for Harry's sake. "Sorry" He whispered, getting interested in the rug beneath his feet. "I didn't mean-"

"It is alright."

"No, it's not! Voldemort makes me so angry, I think I'm going to explode! ... But I didn't have the right to let it out on you. I apologize."

"Very well" The headmaster smiled. "Let's go on watching the pensieve, shall we?"

The scene went on and Harry complained about being cursed by his Potions Master to hunt after a mere rat - even if this rat was Peter Pettigrew in his animagus form.

"I believe we have more pressing subjects?" Was Dumbledore's sole comment. Then his eyes caught some faint movement, after Snape had cast the Killing Curse.

The boy from the pensieve scratched his ear and Harry commented absent-mindedly that he'd felt somewhat itchy. It wasn't a point he'd paid too much attention to.

"There is the same glitter of magic as the first time" Dumbledore murmured, stroking his beard. This had to mean something. From this point of view he could clearly see that Harry had been affected. Severus had been too wound up to notice anything so minor.

"Excuse me?" Harry asked. "This is the first time you watch my memory." How could he have seen it before?

"Your memory, yes. But I already saw Professor Snape's."

"His memory came back, too? All of a sudden? That's odd ..."

Dumbledore chuckled silently, refocusing his gaze at Harry. "No. Professor Snape

brewed a memory potion for the sole reason to regain his memory of this night in question. It was rather odd that you got yours back so shortly after. But I believe this has the same reason as why you both lost your memory in the first place ..."

"And what would that reason be?" Harry hoped silently that his headmaster would just answer his question. But there was one point that promised nothing good. The mad twinkle in Dumbledore's eyes - much like the mad gleam in some psycho's gaze - never meant anything good; even though the headmaster seemed to think so.

"Before I tell you, you have to know that the following information is to 100% of theoretical nature. I believe it would be better if you would keep it to you ..."

'Which means: Don't tell Ron and Hermione before I say so' Harry thought bitterly. Thinking of the two of them always made his heart ache these days. They were his best friends, true, and he didn't want to lose them. Would their friendship survive? Or would it die as slowly as the students still in the medical wing? Harry wasn't sure if they really coped well enough with the happenings or if they just made up appearances for the sake of him. Keeping secrets from them - after he'd told Hermione explicit that he'd tell her and Ron everything - wouldn't be the best option. He stopped suddenly as he became aware that Dumbledore wasn't talking anymore. Redirecting his gaze, which had somehow ventured aimlessly through the office, Harry winced guiltily at the grave look the headmaster shot him. "I'm sorry. I didn't want to tune you out ... It's just Ron and Hermione ..."

Dumbledore's expression became immediately much gentler. Compassion swung in his voice as he told Harry he needn't to be concerned too much about his friends. "Mr. Weasley will be fine. And Ms. Granger ... I believe she will not be in need of your worry for much longer, either."

Harry's left brow rose confused at what the headmaster meant with that last statement. But Dumbledore obviously didn't want to elaborate any further and hence opted to ignore the boy who sat vis-à-vis by pouring two cups of tea. He put one steaming cup in front of Harry and smiled broadly, causing Harry's feeling of unease to deepen. There it was again! This damn twinkle that indicated Dumbledore knew something he didn't. It was frustrating to have a conversation with someone who could most likely know everything but told you almost nothing. Scowling, Harry rubbed his temples.

"Is there something wrong, boy?" Dumbledore asked, instantly taking hold of a box of lemon drops, hidden in one of his robe pockets. The sweets were his number one problem solvers.

"Just a headache, Sir." Harry reached for the mug and took a cautiously sip. "Green tea with ..." Another sip. "... lemon grass. A new sort?"

Dumbledore shook his head, sighing. This boy was too stubborn for his own good. He always tried to distract people around him and didn't want to worry them. This once he'd get away with it. "Let us head back to the topic, shall we?" At Harry's affirmative nod, Dumbledore went on. "We still don't know WHY Voldemort erased the memory

of both you and Professor Snape. As far as I could see there was nothing out of the ordinary in your pensieve ..."

"Except that Voldemort didn't say any incantation to cast the spell."

"Yes. Well, about his purpose-"

"I don't think it was on purpose!" Harry interrupted. "Why should Voldemort merely delete our memory? Giving me this headache would have been more likely ..." Harry shook his head. This idea had already popped into his mind, but he doubted that You-Know-Who would try to end his life by giving him a headache. Although it was more painful than your average headache, Harry would survive it. It was likely that it was just a side-effect to the magic which caused his memory to vanish ... "Could it have been an accident? I mean his wand was on fire. Does a wand work properly under this circumstance?"

Dumbledore took a sip of his tea as he played the idea through his head. "Yes. That is a possibility. I haven't thought of it yet and as Voldemort's wand was destroyed there is no way to test it."

Harry shrugged nonchalantly. "It's not important now, anyway. He deleted our memory, by accident or not, but we've got it back." He smiled and emptied his cup of tea. 'Too bad it didn't work, huh?'

Dumbledore's mien, though, stayed serious. "There is still the question why you regained your memory so shortly after Professor Snape took his potion. I doubt you tested it, too?"

Harry's mood sank instantly. "No."

"It could be possible that the two of you not only lost your memory through this magical dust we saw in your pensieve and which you felt, but it may be also responsible for getting it back. That means there could have been built a link between yourself and Professor Snape. I never heard of such magic, though ..."

Harry suppressed a disgusted sound. Linked with his least favourite Potions Master? That would be more his greatest fear than ... "Oh! There is something more."

"Indeed? Very well, go on, Harry."

He pulled the parchment from his pocket and handed it to the headmaster. "Yesterday I thought I had a vision in the mirror in the dorm's bathroom, but then it appeared it was only a prank from George and Fred, so I forgot about it."

"The Fear Within" Dumbledore mumbled, the twinkling reduced to mere sparks. "What did you see, Harry?"

"Voldemort" Harry began, Dumbledore's mien turned into one of dead seriousness. "At first I thought he was back, I was shocked. But then I realized it wasn't a vision but

more like a movie ... It was somehow like the memory of his death. Professor Snape was there, too, and he killed Voldemort with an Avada Kadavra. I was paralysed and I wanted to tell you, but then suddenly there was confetti everywhere and this parchment appeared ... I thought it was only a prank, but now I'm not so sure anymore ..." His voice petered out. He restlessly shifted in his chair, the eerie calmness in the room too much for his nerves. "Headmaster?"

"Yes." Dumbledore snapped back into the present. "Did Voldemort say anything? Did he try to communicate with you?"

"No ..."

"Hm. What do you think does this 'Fear Within' mean?"

"I dunno. I mean, it's not as if I wanted to kill Voldemort ... I am somehow relieved now that I didn't have to do it. I-I ... I'm really confused and I don't know why this should be something I am afraid of ..."

Dumbledore nodded, stroking his long, white beard.

"Ehm, Headmaster?" Harry asked tentatively. He was relieved that as Dumbledore fixed his gaze upon himself the twinkling seemed to have come back, at least a bit of it. "About this 'link' you said Professor Snape and I could share ... I'd rather him not knowing, is that okay?" The last he needed was that he had something, anything, in common with his greasy Potions Master. But a link was even worse.

"Why is that, Harry?" Dumbledore asked, now popping a lemon drop into his mouth.

"Uh ... I believe he has enough to cope with at the moment, like everybody else. And having a link with me ... I don't know how he will react to that. He isn't really that fond of me, you know? It was also just this one time that I had the same memory coming back ... I think that he won't need the potion in the future ... So there will be no need to tell him. If there other occurrences I'll immediately tell you, of course!" Harry rushed to explain. Dumbledore's wide smile caused his brows to crease a bit, disturbed. Why was it that the headmaster had to smile at him being uncomfortable?

"Very well. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got a bit more work to finish. And I believe Ms. Granger and Mr. Weasley are already waiting for you in the Great Hall."

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The hot shower did his magic to soothe his aching muscles, but not that literally. Snape was positively relieved that he'd at least had four hours straight of sleep. It wasn't something he was too accustomed to, nursing others in any other form than merely making medical potions. The last day, he would have sworn that his wand would start to smoke, he had used it so much. He still couldn't believe how little progress they had made. Without the additional help of the potions, there wasn't much they could do to help reduce the pain. At this point, Severus was almost rueful that he'd treated Poppy the way he always had. He hadn't known how much work it

really was and how emotionally enervating. Watching his own students struggling for their lives ...

Closing his eyes, he let the water run over his face and wash everything away. It wouldn't be good to let anyone see how much it affected him in a way he wouldn't have thought was still possible.

Shaking his thoroughly soaked hair, Snape reached for the shampoo bottle and studied it for a moment. As if he would never wash his hair, really. He had truly other problems than that. Come to think of it, no. No, actually he hadn't problems, REAL problems, anymore. He felt so empty, like after finishing a great task and the whole adrenaline wasn't spent yet but there wasn't anything else to do. Now he was the Potions Master. No more a order member. No more a spy. No more a Death Eater. Just a Potions Master. It wasn't enough. What should he do with his time? What could he possibly do? He was far too old to do anything new, he knew. He desperately needed something to occupy himself with, something thrilling, otherwise-

'Albus Dumbledore' The soft voice whispered into his ear, causing his fingers to tighten around the shampoo bottle. What could the headmaster possibly talk about him behind his back? And, more importantly, with whom did he speak? All those years had left him extremely suspicious. Never could the old wizard hold his nose out of things he had no business with. And while one part of Severus had always been grateful that Albus was the one person, who seemed to know everything and to who he could ever turn to when he had a problem, the other part of him couldn't help but be angry. Angry that Albus obviously never made a mistake, angry that Albus knew better than himself how to live his life, angry that Albus was his friend.

For Severus knew too well that he didn't deserve a friend, such a friend, even if it was only a single one.

Gritting his teeth determined, Severus finally unstopped the bottle and squeezed some shampoo onto his left palm. But not much of the soapy substance made it, as his grip suddenly loosened and the bottle fell forgotten to the shower ground with a clear 'bang'. A strangled gasp escaped his mouth as he stared in horror at the hideous skull and the winded snake; the Dark Mark was back.

"Merlin, no" He whispered, rubbing his eyes with the back of his right hand. "I'm just seeing things. Nothing amazing there ..." He couldn't have lost it. No way. He'd lived through so many years of hell and had kept a decent amount of his sanity - even if his students thought otherwise. They were just so naïve, it was almost heart-rending, they didn't even know a whole fragment of the truth.

Opening his eyes again, Snape once again was greeted by the sight of the loathed mark. Even if he'd just thought that his life could take a bit more action, he hadn't thought about that exactly. Snape's fingers clenched into a tight fist as his head started to pound mercilessly. He tucked at a handful of damp hair, but the pain only intensified.

He needed to get to Albus, this couldn't be normal. 'How convenient' His mind

drawled. "Shut up ..." Severus reached out and turned the water off, never leaving the mark out of his sight. It could still just be a hallucination, right? And the next incident should confirm this suspicion.

Snape cried out in terror and jumped back, colliding with the hard tiles, as the ugly snake on his forearm suddenly slithered through one eye of the skull and made its way up his arm. It snaked across his shoulder, down his back and back over his hip, leaving a trail of ice-cold skin turning into goose-bumps. On his chest it curled into a lazy ball and seemingly raised its head to hiss at Severus, who was currently at a paralysed loss as to what to do. Never really being attacked by a tattoo did that to someone.

As unexpected as it had begun, as fast it ended. One second the snake threatened him with its dangerously glittering fangs, the next second it was gone. Without any trace of evidence that it ever had been there in the first place.

Snape dried himself as quickly as he could, his mind swirling frantically to come up with the most logical explanation. This couldn't have been a prank, no student of this entire school would be stupid enough to pull such a prank on him. No student of this entire school who wanted to live through his next birthday, that was. Shrugging into his robes, Severus thought of how Voldemort had said, that he'd never be rid of him. Could he have managed a final curse to drive him crazy? It sure looked that way, didn't it? Snape snickered quietly. He had to put the blame on himself.

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Chibi Snape: *@ Kateri1* 60 points to Ravenclaw. I fear you'll win the Cup all alone ... As for your review, yes, it definitely is very cut, for I don't want to bore people with unimportant details. And it appears dry, because ... well, I'm dry. It's what I am. You wouldn't want to read a comedy from me, believe me. And NO, it's not that simple! It's just the beginning. But I don't want to reveal too much ... 10 points extra for the constructive criticism. I hope this chapter is not as dry as the last one(?).

Chibi Harry: *@ Moonshine* 30 points to Slytherin *frown* Thanks for loving our stories ^^

Chibi Snape: *@ falling-alone* 20 points to Hufflepuff. *grin* I already read two of the FF's you recommended, just got to put the review on ff.net. Yes, last time I cleared up, this and next time there are going to be again more riddles *eg*

Chibi Harry: *@ MiruSedna* *hahahaha* Yes, the author is a Gryffindor! I am! 15 points to Slytherin! Oh yes. But the fun is just about to begin, believe me! Personally, I had never anything against Draco, you know? Hopefully he'll come back. About me happily skipping about: Just look at it this way, I'll get emotionally tortured, Snape (Snape: Professor for you!) Professor Snape suffers physically. (Snape: And I had already to play TWO shower scenes! One larger than the next! *whisper* Hope you liked it *wink*)

Chibi Snape: *@ Lisa13* 12 points ... to ... Gryffindor. Ugh. What a surprise that my

suffering is intriguing to you. Hmpf. I really try to even it out. All are going to suffer, really. And yes, you don't have to wait too long *grin*

Chibi Harry: *@ jelly-bean5* Conspiracy! 10 points to Slytherin. *growl* I'm not that stupid, you know! How else would I get all the credit for things I didn't do? *smirk* Oh, the FF Cup is based on the House Cup. And after this story is finished, one house will have won, simple. Yes, I came up with that. And yes, the difficult task of how to give the points was Snape's task ... And it wasn't only a bloody rat! It was a bloody deceiving rat ... (MS: It's PG-13 rating, so no major swearing in here. You may write it in review, but I don't repeat it in the answer ^^) *turning towards Snape* Did you hear? It was SMART to let her be in a painting! Haha, and you said she should just disappear and stay there!

Chibi Snape: Shut up! Oh, not you my little snake! Harry growing a brain? But you can't teach an old Gryffindor new tricks. No need to worry. Oh, BTW, you may want to leave your next review earlier ... As you see the earlier the more points (Harry: Hey! You cheat!) I do not! We already told this one sole Ravenclaw and now she collects all the points!

@ tia 9 points again to Gryffindor. What do you mean I couldn't have killed Voldemort? *frown* (MS: No, seriously. Did I forget something important? Well, I know Voldemort died very ... fast. But you'll soon know why it was important that Snape and not Harry killed him.)

Chibi Harry: *@ ennui deMorte* 8 points to Ravenclaw ^^ Why, thank you for the flowers ... You have to sleep enough, little Claw! I wouldn't want it if you banged your head on the keyboard ^^

@ Nigel T: Wow ... *stupid grin plastered on my face* ... oh ... How do I live up to that? ... \$\$&%! ... Next chapter will be even better!! - That's roughly how I react when I find out I'm on one's favourite authors list ^^