

In Exchange for Your Tomorrows

Lim

Honorary Award 2008: obsessive24's choice

The review below may contain spoilers for Harry Potter (films 1-5, books 1-7).

Nicky: Occasionally a vid comes along with such clarity of vision that it simply blows your socks off. There's no other way to describe *In Exchange for Your Tomorrows*. It's a rare incisive look into Snape's character and motivations by drawing on the audience's knowledge not only of the existing five films but also of the additional canon contained in the Harry Potter books, creating an emotional tapestry that extends far beyond from what we've been shown at face value.

Brad: The vid certainly does achieve a rare kind of insight, and in an incredibly evocative way, but it's also quite amusing that this phrase so often describes this vidder's work. Lim has a truly unique gift for creating something entirely new out of something familiar, and yet making it look and feel as though it all *belongs* to the source material and subject matter. That's on full display here.

Nicky: It's both extremely easy and extremely hard to talk about this vid: easy because it simply contains so much that needs to be said; hard because in many ways this vid can say those things much better than words ever could.

Brad: I never thought someone could say this much, this well about Snape, given only the currently available source. But she says it, and says it in a way that feels so incredibly honest.

Nicky: It's about a childhood spent under the torturous shadow of the Marauders and desperately in love with Lily, the elements of social standing and power that drove him to join ranks with a young Tom Riddle, the specific event that triggered his turn against Voldemort, and the subsequent years carried out in penance and memory of a love forever lost. All of this is carried out fluidly against a wider backdrop of the school and the wizarding community at large, from one generation to the next.

Given that the vid uses existing and limited footage to tell a bigger story, the narrative is non-linear and driven largely by emotional connectivity and symbolism. Lim uses object symbolism to astonishing effect: in terms of character representation (e.g. repetition of umbrella blowing in the wind) but also in general setting of atmosphere, each layer of visuals more hard-hitting than the next. I get shivers every time the guitars kick in at 1:06 and we get the repetition and jump cuts on the swinging bell and ravens in flight.

Brad: That umbrella being tossed about by the wind is such an amazingly powerful and effective metaphor that I get chills just thinking about it. And the whole personality of the vid, the connections, the way it moves, and the haunting look that Lim has created, make it feel

almost like the whole thing is a funeral dirge. When the doors close and the gate comes down at 1:15 it feels, in many ways, horrific.

I think part of that comes down to the way Lim matched the song to the feel of the character and setting - a connection I never would have considered, but one that now comes home like truth. It howls and weaves and pleads, and Snape struggles and tosses, and everything is black and wet and doomed. You can't watch this vid and not feel it.

Nicky: For me, the emotional heart of the vid lies in the segment that finally delves into Snape's backstory after the first half sets the scene and the mood. "Can you tell me?" writes a disembodied pen, repeating the question mark for good measure, and the answer comes immediately: "No. But I can show you." The handle turns to the cupboard of Snape's memories, and suddenly everything comes rushing back: Lily, James, Riddle and young Snape himself, the music turns violent and uncontrolled as decisions made in Snape's youth continue to haunt him throughout life, especially upon Voldemort's resurrection.

Brad: I find it especially interesting how we see James, Sirius and Lupin - and imposing bullies and lunatics and monsters - and how Voldemort at the time seems like an empowering force. It's like Snape himself is trying to explain why he did what he did. When the book closes at 3:06, we can really feel his guilt.

Nicky: The storytelling is powerfully impressionistic, the visual metaphors dense and beautiful, overlaid with a deep sense of both guilt and foreboding. Coupled with what we know of Snape's eventual destiny, this vid plays dual roles of augury and eulogy. To my mind, there is no Snape vid, past or future, that could possibly do the character justice the way that In Exchange for Your Tomorrows has done.

Brad: Possibly not even the movies to come. Dare we hope? I wonder if Lim's free to direct.

Nicky: I think it's worth mentioning that Lim's use of motion, unobtrusive cutting, colour work and special effects are some of the best that I've seen from any vidder in any fandom. And I think that it's saying a *lot* that I only get to these technical aspects as I close off this review.

Brad: Isn't that pretty much always the case with Lim's vids? She's one of the most impressive vidders around in terms of motion, pacing, effects, and musicality, but it's always a distant afterthought because the whole of it always makes the details seem so insignificant.

I absolutely have to mention the clattering sword at 3:08 because it gets me every time. But then I'd have to talk about the transition at 3:14. And then about the way the hand bounces away in such a perfect way. And then...

Nicky: As I stated earlier, there is just too much to be said about this vid, yet nothing we say here can possibly do it justice. It's with great pleasure and a sense of deep awe that I select it as my honorary award of 2008.