

# Time's Treasure: Yule Edition

*by debjunk*

How did Severus and Hermione share their Christmas after they became a couple in the past?

## Christmas 1977

*Chapter 1 of 1*

How did Severus and Hermione share their Christmas after they became a couple in the past?

*Disclaimer: These characters are solely the property of J.K. Rowling.*

*A big thanks to Lilith Kayden and Pathseekerme for looking this over. I know that Time's Treasure isn't finished, but Hermione's trip into the past is. Here's a part that we didn't see in the original story. You don't need to be reading the original tale to understand this one. It's pretty self explanatory. This story is for all of you who are reading the original fic and can't wait until Hermione and Severus are finally reunited. I hope you enjoy your Christmas present.*

*Oh, yes, this is in response to the Yule 2008 Challenge prompt #3: Revisiting Friends: If you have an established story, give us a one-shot tale to complement it so we know what your characters are up to for Christmas.*

### **Time's Treasure: Yule Edition**

#### **Christmas 1977**

It was a week until Christmas, and Severus Snape had yet to find Hermione Granger a present. He sat in his room, mulling over the problem. He was happy to be alone. His roommates were all back at their homes with their families. Severus hadn't wanted to be with his 'family' for Christmas, or ever, if the truth be told. He never went home for Christmas; he always stayed at Hogwarts. He usually hid in his room, only coming out to eat, but this Christmas would be different. This Christmas he had Hermione.

He smiled to himself. They had been officially together since Halloween, but he had loved her before that. In the beginning, she had been so difficult about a possible relationship with him, literally pushing him away. He had finally come to the conclusion that a relationship with her could never happen. Then, she had confessed her love for him, and they had never looked back.

Severus had never realized before then what true happiness was. He had thought Lily Evans could make him happy, but now he saw the folly in that assumption. Hermione completed him. They were like two halves of a whole. They complemented each other and were incomplete without the other.

Unfortunately, Severus feared for the future. He knew Hermione had traveled into the past and would return to her time eventually. He dreaded when that day would come. He wasn't sure how he would survive her absence for twenty-five years. She wasn't leaving yet, however, so he put those thoughts out of his head.

What he really needed to think about was her Christmas gift. Tomorrow he had gotten permission to travel to Hogsmeade with her. They were going to get presents for each other, so he would have some time alone to shop. Unfortunately, he was no good at gift giving and had no idea what would be an appropriate gift for the woman of his dreams. He just hoped that he would know it when he saw it.

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Hermione got ready for bed absentmindedly. She was worried about getting a Christmas gift for Severus. She wasn't quite sure what would be a perfect gift for him. She would love to get him some of the books that she always caught him staring at wistfully whenever they went to the bookstore. Although that seemed to be a perfect gift for Severus, she wondered if maybe a more intimate gift would be expected from the woman he loved. She sighed. She just hoped that she would know the right gift when she saw it. Extinguishing the light, she pulled the blankets over her and snuggled into the bed.

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They walked hand in hand to Hogsmeade. They stole kisses as they wandered the path. Hermione dragged him by the hand into the *Three Broomsticks* where they had a light lunch. As they left the pub, Severus placed a loving kiss on her lips.

"I'll see you back here in an hour," he instructed her.

She smiled up at him. "Alright, happy shopping," Hermione offered before she turned and headed up the street.

Severus watched her for a minute until she was out of sight. Turning around, he headed for the jewelry store. He opened the door to the shop, and a small bell tinkled. The interior of the shop was decorated for the holidays. A large Christmas tree sat in front of the window, and golden garland draped all along the top of the walls. A Santa figurine was seated on the main counter. It gave an occasional 'Ho, Ho, Ho,' and in his hand sat a box that held an engagement ring. The arm of the Santa rose up and down, begging patrons to ogle the beautiful ring. Severus would have liked to have bought the ring, but he had not the means, and Hermione's imminent return to the future killed any possible plans for a betrothal. He sighed and looked to the owner of the shop. The small man smiled at him. He was thin and had brown hair that was receding. His smile was genuine, and he looked rather fatherly to Severus. Severus approached the counter.

"I'm looking for a gift, but I'm not quite sure what I want," Severus explained.

"Who is the gift for?" the man asked.

"It is for my girlfriend." Severus scowled a bit as he said that. He really didn't think of Hermione as simply his girlfriend, but it would suffice for this man.

"Women love necklaces," the owner offered. He pointed Severus over to the end of the display case that had the necklaces in them. Severus saw it almost immediately. His heart began to race as he eyed the necklace and its partner. That was it. He had found the perfect gift for his Hermione.

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Hermione had gone to the bookstore first. She had chosen a book that Severus always read when they visited the shop. She knew he would be pleased to have it. Leaving the shop with her purchase, she stopped and looked up and down the street. She was at a loss as to where else she should look. There were various shops available but nowhere that sold a gift that would say *I love you*, as she was hoping to find. She glanced at Scrivenshaft's and immediately put that out of her head. Nothing said I love you less than a quill.

*Perhaps a gift certificate to Madam Puddifoot's would be nice?* she thought to herself. Yes, that would be ideal if she wanted Severus to hex her into the next century. She supposed she could get something from Honeydukes, but she wanted a gift a bit more original than chocolates. Glancing over at Dervish and Banges, she decided to poke around in the shop. They just might have something worthwhile. You never knew what you would come across in there.

She entered the shop and marveled at how the proprietors found anything in it. It was much more cluttered than it would be in her day. Two shelves were piled high with Sneakoscopes, and cauldrons cluttered one entire wall. There was a whole shelf devoted to astronomical models of every kind. Hermione was mesmerized by a small replica of the solar system. Its planets circled in their orbits, and the model was so detailed that it included every one of Jupiter's sixty-two moons. Tearing her gaze away from the model, she noted that there was an entire display of magical cameras. Hermione was tempted to buy a new one for herself but pushed the urge down. She wasn't here to buy herself presents.

Hermione blinked and looked around. She wasn't quite sure where to start because there was so much in the shop. She decided to head back to the counter. As she neared it, she was surprised to find a small figure standing on the counter.

"Hello, Miss. How can I help you?" it asked her.

Hermione stared at the little man in wonder. He stood about five inches tall with long brown hair that was tied securely at his neck. He wore dark grey Wizarding robes and held a wand in his hand, which he waved around as he spoke.

Hermione finally answered the little man. "I'm looking for a gift," she told the tiny man.

The man turned and put his hands up to his mouth, cupping them around it. "Hey, Pete, you have a customer!" he yelled.

Pete came out from the back of the shop and looked at Hermione. He was the spitting image of the miniature man who had called to him. Hermione's mouth dropped open as the man smiled at her.

"I see you've met Pygmy-Pete," the man said as he walked over to Hermione.

"Hello, Miss. How can I help you?" the little man repeated. He then yelled to the back for Pete again. Hermione looked at Pete with an arched eyebrow.

"It's a recordable action figure. You can have it say up to thirty seconds of recorded monologue."

Hermione bent over and looked closely at the action figure, who was staring right back. She then looked up to Pete. The likeness was exact. She straightened up.

"You can make figures of anyone?" she asked.

"You bet. It only takes half an hour too. You can shop while you wait. Can I make one for you?"

Hermione smiled broadly. "Yes, you can!"

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At the designated time, Hermione met Severus in front of the pub. She kissed him on the cheek.

"Did you find what you wanted?" she asked.

Severus smiled at her and nodded. Hermione held up a bag to show him.

"So did I."

Severus took her arm, and they walked slowly back to Hogwarts. Severus was quiet along the way. He was deep in thought, mulling over the future. The future was his enemy. He would lose his Hermione, he would be a slave to the Dark Lord, and he might not even live to see Hermione return. The future seemed bleak indeed.

"Severus?" Hermione called and snapped him from his thoughts. "Is something wrong?"

"Hmm?" he replied.

"You seem far away, and you're frowning. What's wrong? Has Voldemort asked you to do something?"

Severus shook his head. "No, he has decided to leave us alone for the holidays. I would have expected him to flex his power and kill someone, but he is lying low still."

Hermione stopped and looked to Severus. "Then what is it?"

"I was just thinking of what tomorrow might bring."

Hermione knew in an instant what he was thinking. "Severus, I will not leave you. At least not for a long while! My mission with Lucius is not yet complete, and even if it were... I can't leave you yet."

"But you will have to eventually," Severus said miserably.

Hermione gave him a sad look. "I know, and I fear that day will come too soon. But, Severus, it's Christmastime. Let's not dwell on unhappy thoughts. I want to spend this week with you and not think of what the future might bring. We deserve to just be happy for a little bit."

His arms wrapped around her as he kissed her tenderly. Pulling back, he stroked her cheek. "You're right, of course. I will strive not to let my depressive nature overtake me."

Hermione smiled at him and ran a finger down his nose. "That's all that I can ask for," she commented before she drowned in his kiss once again.

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The week went by, and Severus spent every waking minute with Hermione. They went for long walks around the lake, even though it was freezing outside. They scurried to the kitchens afterward, begging the house-elves for mugs of hot chocolate every time. They would spend every evening in their secret room in the Room of Requirement. Without any essays to grade or subjects to study, the couple was able to give each other their undivided attention.

Hermione was basking in Severus' attention. He had become even more affectionate and loving towards her. He told her how much he loved her on what seemed to be an hourly basis. She, of course, was not remiss in her declarations either. They spent long nights in front of the fireplace, just cuddling in each other's arms, kissing passionately and reveling in the touch of the other. She had never felt this loved, nor had she felt this happy in her entire life. She wished this would never end. Unfortunately, she was well aware that she would have to return to her own time at some point, but she was bound and determined to enjoy the holidays with this amazing man who fulfilled her so completely.

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As for Severus, he had tried not to think of her impending departure, but the holidays just brought out the sadness in him. He had never had a happy Christmas. No matter how he'd hoped, a part of him still hadn't thought a Happy Christmas was possible. He had a secret dread that something would happen to ruin the peace and love he had been feeling this past week.

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On the morning of Christmas Eve, Severus awoke screaming. He had dreamed that the Dark Lord had found Hermione and had killed her. In his dream, he'd had to watch her be tortured by the Cruciatus curse and then killed by Voldemort's hand.

Severus panted as the dream replayed itself in his head. He knew it was just a dream, but it had seemed so real. He jumped out of the bed and pulled some clothes on. Leaving his shirt only half buttoned, he raced out of the Slytherin dormitory and through the halls until he reached Hermione's room. He pounded on the door until she opened it. A flood of relief washed over him as he saw her worried face staring up at him. She was alright. She had not been smuggled out of the school. He entered her room and threw his arms around her.

"Oh, Hermione, you're alright!" he cried.

"Severus, what's wrong?" Hermione asked worriedly as she pulled away from him. Not releasing him from her embrace, she closed the door and led him to the sofa, where they both sat down. Severus pulled her to him and crushed her in his arms. One hand wound itself into her hair while the other gripped her tightly, afraid to let her go.

"Nightmare," he whispered finally.

Hermione picked her head up and kissed him on the cheek. "I'm fine, love. It was just a dream."

"He won't get you... I won't let him."

"You're talking about Voldemort?" Hermione asked.

Severus nodded his head. "He caught you somehow, Hermione. I had to watch as he tortured and killed you." Severus shuddered at the thought and pulled Hermione's head down into his chest. "I won't let him hurt you," he murmured as he caressed her hair.

"Severus, he will never get his hands on me. Don't worry, love, he will not win."

"If something ever happened to you..."

"I am fine and will be fine." She pulled herself back a little so she could look into his eyes. She took her hand and caressed his cheek. "This is about my returning to the future, isn't it?"

"Hermione, please, let's not talk about that."

"But it's bothering you. It has been bothering you all week. You kiss me as if it will be the last time we will kiss, and you stare at me as if I'm going to disappear any instant. Severus, you have to put this out of your mind. I'm not going anywhere...not yet."

Severus tensed as he realized his carefully constructed indifference had not been believed. He couldn't hide anything from her because she could read him so well. He had only been trying to be chipper for her benefit. He hadn't wanted to sulk when it was such a beautiful time of the year, and Hermione seemed to be so full of peace and love for him. He hadn't wanted to spoil that for her.

"I'm sorry, I've ruined Christmas, haven't I?" he asked sheepishly.

"Nonsense, Severus. I know that if you didn't love me, this wouldn't be bothering you at all. It's only helped me to see how much you care for me. I've been overwhelmed by your feelings, my love. I don't feel I deserve such devotion."

Hermione took her hand and stroked Severus' chest, which had been left exposed when he hastily threw on his clothes after his nightmare. She bent into him and placed light kisses on him after every caress. Severus took in a sharp breath at the feel of her lips on his chest. Entwining his hands in her hair once again, he maneuvered her head up to his and kissed her passionately. She groaned in pleasure, which sent a jolt through Severus' body. He deepened their kiss, and their tongues danced with their passion. Pulling away finally, Severus looked at Hermione intensely.

"You deserve everything I have to give, Hermione. It's the only thing I have to offer you. I have no wealth, nor do I have any status. All I have to offer is my love for you. I just pray that it's enough for you."

Tears formed in Hermione's eyes. "It will always be enough, Severus. I couldn't imagine being any happier even if you did have those other things. And you won't be a teenager forever. We will reunite when you are the older one of this pair."

"You will not want me then," Severus mumbled as he looked down into his lap.

Hermione drew his face back to her. "I will always want you. I will never want another. You have stolen my heart, Severus. I will never be whole without you."

"You say that now, but when you see me again, when I'm an old man, you will change your mind."

"Severus, I've already seen you then. You're hardly an old man! I already know what to expect in the future. You're incredibly appealing to me in any time."

"You're just saying that."

"No, love, I'm not. I would think that you knew me well enough to know that I don't lie about such things."

Severus looked at her hopefully. She never lied about anything. She wouldn't lie about this, would she? She wasn't trying to protect him, was she? He hoped she wasn't thinking that after twenty-five years had passed he would be able to take the truth. Heaven forbid that she was doing that. He knew that no matter how long they were separated, he would never be able to accept the fact that she would not love him at some point.

"You really think you'll want me then?" he asked, his voice filled with hope and fear combined.

Hermione traced the line of his open shirt. Her finger caressed his chest lovingly, which caused Severus to gasp again. "You have so little faith in me, Severus Snape. Do you not think that I love you as much as you love me?" There was a tinge of sadness in her tone.

"It's just that..."

"Just that what?"

"Lily..."

"Lily?" The sadness turned to trepidation in an instant.

Severus grasped Hermione's hand. "When we were close, I..."

"I thought you were over her, Severus," Hermione said, fear tinting her voice.

"I am. It's just that..."

"Severus, you're still in love with her, aren't you?"

Severus looked to Hermione in incredulity. "Of course not! Hermione, I love you." He looked at her and saw uncertainty in her eyes. Severus took Hermione in his arms. "You don't believe that I'm over Lily."

Hermione pulled back. "No, Severus, you're wrong, I do believe you. I'm just letting my fears get the most of me."

Severus took her cheek in his hand. "What fears are you talking about?" He was at a loss as to why Hermione would doubt his love for her and think that Lily still meant anything to him.

Tears formed in Hermione's eyes. "I'm sorry! It's just that in my time, you have loved her and clung to her memory for longer than I have lived. How do I compete with that?"

Severus placed a gentle kiss on her lips. "I'm not him, remember? I've had you to make me forget about her. She has no place in my life anymore."

"I know that," Hermione muttered.

"Do you?"

Her eyes met his in question.

"Come," he said as he took her hand.

"Where are we going?"

"To the Headmaster's office. I need to show you something. I will not have you doubt yourself or me for another minute."

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The couple made their way to Dumbledore's office. In a few short minutes, Severus had received permission to use Dumbledore's Pensieve, and the old wizard had left them alone in his office. Severus pulled a memory from his head and placed it into the Pensieve.

Hermione looked to Severus. "You don't have to do this, you know."

Severus looked back at Hermione. "Yes, I do. I want you to know the truth of my feelings toward Lily."

"Severus, I believe you."

Severus caressed her face. "I know you do, but you will always question that truth. It's because of the man I was. I understand that. I hope these memories will help you to assuage your doubts."

They bent over the Pensieve and disappeared into it. Severus and Hermione appeared in a school hallway. Memory Severus was walking quickly with his head down.

"Sev?" came a voice from behind him.

Severus turned to find Lily running to catch up with him. He frowned at her. Hermione watched from the side of the hall and arched an eyebrow at his reaction.

"Hey," Lily continued. "Can I ask you a question?"

Severus continued to walk down the hall. "If you talk and walk at the same time. I need to get across the castle for Defense class."

Lily nodded her head and picked up her pace. "Are you involved with Professor Granger?" she asked.

"I am," Severus said in a clipped tone.

"How long have you been together?" Lily questioned as they hurried along.

Severus rolled his eyes. "Since Halloween."

"Are you happy?"

Severus gave her a caustic look. "What do you care whether I'm happy or not?"

Lily looked uncomfortable. "I just... Severus, I... I've never held any ill will toward you."

"But you don't see that it's worth talking to me anymore."

Lily's head snapped up to his, and she glowered at him. "I have explained my reasons for that."

Severus shrugged. "You are entitled to feel however you do. I just hadn't thought that our friendship meant so little to you."

Lily grabbed his arm and shook it. "It hurt me just as much as you to break up our friendship."

Severus shrugged. "You got over it quickly. Look, Lily, I don't know why you are asking me about Hermione. I don't know how it's any of your business."

Lily gritted her teeth. "It's my business because I would like to see you happy instead of sulking all the time. If she can help you to be more human, I'm all for that!"

Severus was now the one to give her a caustic look. "Where do you get off making judgments about me?"

"I... no, you don't understand."

Severus stopped suddenly and closed the gap between them. "I believe our friendship ended two years ago. Whether I am happy is no concern of yours, but to answer your question, yes, I am happy. I love her, and she loves me. It's nice to have someone reciprocate my feelings instead of just leading me along like a puppy dog."

Lily's eyes narrowed, and she gave him a withering look. "You're a real bastard, you know?"

"Yes, I am the bastard for hurting perfect Lily Evans' feelings. I'm so very sorry. I hope you can find it in your haughty head to forgive me. Wait... no, I don't. I don't give a damn whether you forgive me or not. I could care less what you think."

Severus narrowed his eyes at Lily. "I worshiped you, Lily, yet you were unworthy. I thank Merlin every day that Hermione has come into my life. She has taught me what true friendship and caring are. I was delusional to think that you and I could ever be together. We are too different and look at the world in completely different ways. Besides, you never cared enough about me to stick by me. Hermione has done so repeatedly. She is, by far, a much better woman than you."

With that, Severus Snape continued alone down the hall, leaving Lily Evans gaping after him.

Severus and Hermione emerged from the Pensieve. Tears were streaming down Hermione's face.

"I'm such a fool," she murmured.

Severus pulled her to him. "You were understandably concerned. I hope you never fear that I love her more than you again. I could never love her the way I love you. You are everything to me, Hermione. Without you, I am nothing."

"Oh, Severus, thank you," Hermione exclaimed before throwing her arms around his neck.

Hermione ran her fingers through his hair as she kissed him. How could she have doubted him in the least? Everything he did testified his love for her. She had been so stupid.

Severus pulled back and wiped the tears from her eyes. "You shouldn't be crying over this. It was a logical concern."

"It was a stupid concern. I trust you, Severus, I should have known better."

"Well, now you do."

"I feel like such an idiot."

Severus smiled down at her. "It's alright, Hermione. Your concern just proves to me once again how much you love me."

Hermione smiled back. "What were you going to say about Lily before I turned into an insecure puddle of goo?"

Severus laughed. "You, Hermione Granger, have never once been an insecure puddle of goo. You are the strongest woman I have ever met."

"Flattery won't get me to forget the subject, Severus. What were you going to say about her?"

Severus scowled, knowing that he couldn't pull one over on this woman who knew him so well.

"It's just that," he began, "I thought Lily had cared about me, but in the end, she truly didn't. She threw our friendship away. What I thought was a strong bond wound up to be incredibly fragile. I know that what seems to be something long lasting can sometimes be a trick of the mind, something that cannot withstand time or reality. I'm afraid that's what will happen to us. When you return to your present, no matter how much you steel yourself, I will be different. I'll be older. How can you say you will still love me after all of that time?"

Hermione gave him a hard look, filled with determination. "I can say that because I love you now. That love just won't disappear because you are a little older."

Severus scoffed. "I will be old enough to be your father, Hermione. How can that be appealing to you? You deserve much better."

"Severus, I don't care! I don't care that you'll be that much older than me. I will love you in any time and in any place."

Severus felt a bit of relief at her declaration, but the truth would remain to be seen. He hoped with all of his heart that she could overlook his age when she returned to her present. He truly didn't know how he would live without her in his life.

All of that concern and worry washed away as he looked to Hermione. The love that shone from her eyes was enough for him to catch his breath. He marveled that such a sentiment could be showered upon him, Severus Snape, hated Slytherin and friendless wonder. He pulled her to him and crushed her in his embrace. They didn't surface from each other for quite some time.

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That evening they went to dinner together. It was Christmas Eve, and the feast in the Great Hall was splendid. There were only ten students who had stayed during the

holidays, including Severus. Dumbledore wore his very best yellow robes for the festivities. Hermione secretly wondered how he would top this outfit for Christmas dinner tomorrow night.

They dined at a large, circular table, big enough to fit all of them. When the dinner was over, Severus and Hermione left together, closely followed by Dumbledore. As they went through the hall doors, they heard the old wizard clearing his throat behind them. Hermione turned back to look at him, and he pointed upward. A bouquet of mistletoe floated over their heads. Severus scowled, and Hermione glanced over at the meddlesome Headmaster.

"You just live to embarrass Severus, don't you, Albus?"

He smiled widely but didn't say a word.

Hermione turned back to Severus. "Well, I guess we've been caught."

Severus was still looking at Albus with a murderous glance. Despite his blatant show of affection for Hermione at the Halloween ball, he had been very reserved in public since then. He was not one to shower her with affection when there were others present. He saved his showering for when they were alone.

Hermione distracted him from his glowering by putting her hand on his arm. He looked at her, and she pointed up.

"Come on, we have a really good excuse," she said with a twinkle in her eye.

Severus wondered whether she had planned this with Albus. Arching his eyebrow at her, he pulled her close, his lips descending on hers in a searing kiss. Hermione seemed to melt into him as the kiss continued, and he found himself supporting her weight in his arms. As he broke the kiss, he felt her stumble a bit next to him. He grinned down at her as she composed herself, enjoying the blush that had crept onto her cheeks. Before either of them had a chance to say anything, the audience in the Great Hall burst into applause.

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The next morning, Hermione was up early. Severus would come to her room in less than half an hour. She was excited to give him his present. Reflecting on the day before, she heaved a sigh of relief. They had worked out their differences, and her fears had been waylaid. She marveled at his insight into a problem she hadn't even recognized within herself. The man was amazing.

The previous evening had been spent in Hermione's room by the fireplace, wrapped in each other's arms. Hermione marveled at how at ease they were with each other. It had been a perfect Christmas Eve.

Severus had liked the book she had chosen for him. He had protested about her giving him a present on Christmas Eve, especially when he'd had none for her. She had explained that it was a long time tradition in her family and that he was not to complain, but to open his present and enjoy it. Glowering at her, he had unwrapped it, but his glower had disappeared when he saw the book. It was yet another that he had been coveting for years. Pulling her to him, he had showered her with kisses, proclaiming that he was incredibly spoiled by her. She had smiled, happy that he had been pleased. They had curled together and spent the rest of the night reading parts of the book.

Hermione now turned her attention to the Christmas tree that was taking up the center of the room. It was filled with red bows and twinkling lights. Hermione flicked her wand, and the star rose from the table and set itself atop the tree. It was also twinkling with lights. Hermione smiled to herself. She had manipulated a charm to light the tree without electricity. She smiled at her accomplishment. Growing up in a Muggle home, a tree was simply not a tree without twinkling lights.

Golden garland wrapped itself around the tree, and shiny red balls hung everywhere. The tree was definitely Muggle in its decorations, but it reminded her of home. A home that was now far away and parents who didn't even know they would have a daughter in a few short years. Hermione was having a hard time keeping her emotions in check, so she was unsurprised when a few tears fell down her face at the thought of her parents. She missed them. She missed Harry, Ron, and Ginny too. This time of year was for family, but hers was far away. It made Hermione happy to know that she had Severus, realizing how miserable she would be without him.

There was a knock at her door, and Hermione quickly brushed the tears from her face, hoping that Severus would not know she had been feeling melancholy. She opened the door and could tell by his face that she hadn't succeeded.

"What's wrong?" Severus asked as he rushed to her side.

"Nothing, love. Merry Christmas," she said as she kissed him on the cheek.

"You've been crying," he surmised.

Hermione put her arm around his waist and drew him into the room. She led him to the tree, and they both admired it.

"Very Gryffindor," Severus muttered under his breath.

Hermione giggled before explaining why she had been upset before his arrival. "I was just homesick. I miss my parents and my friends back home."

Severus pulled her in closer to him and kissed her head.

"I'm sorry you can't be with them, Hermione."

Hermione pulled back and looked into his dark eyes. "I'm not. I'm happy that I'm here with you."

He smiled genuinely at her and pulled her to the sofa. They both sat, and he excitedly handed her his gift.

"Open your present," he demanded with a broad grin.

Hermione smiled at him as she took the box and placed it by her ear, shaking it. It gave no hints as to what it could be. She gave up and unwrapped it from its festive, silver paper. Lifting the lid off the box, she beheld a gold necklace. Hanging daintily from it was a half of a heart with the words "One Mind" inscribed on it.

Hermione looked to Severus. "It's lovely," she commented as she lifted it out of the box.

"It's part of a pair," he explained as he pulled a chain from under his robes. The other half of the heart lay suspended from the chain with the inscription "One Heart" on it.

Hermione grasped the half heart and placed hers next to it, completing the set.

"One mind, one heart," she read.

Her eyes filled with tears as she beheld the two pieces of the necklace together. Unable to speak, she motioned for Severus to put her necklace on her. He complied and then admired how it shone on her, lying just below her neckline. He bent down and kissed the charm, eliciting a gasp from Hermione. She pulled his head up and kissed him fervently.

"Thank you," she said finally. "I love it."

"It's how I feel about us," Severus explained.

"I feel that way too, Severus. I will cherish it always."

Hermione got up and went to the mantle, where Severus' present lay wrapped in festive green and red wrapping paper. She brought it back to him and handed it to him. He looked at her.

"You already gave me a present, Hermione."

"That was your Christmas Eve present, Severus. This is your Christmas present."

"I only have one gift for you," he replied.

"It doesn't matter. Just open your present," Hermione said with exasperation.

Severus smirked at her as he ripped open the paper. The box was opened, and he stared at his gift quizzically. Gently lifting the present up, he looked from it to Hermione. It was a perfect replica of her.

The tiny figure looked at Severus and gave him a broad smile. The girl opened her little arms wide and hugged his thumb. Severus grinned down at the curly haired doll.

"If you stroke her hair, she says something," Hermione advised.

Severus looked up at her, wondering what the doll could possibly say. Standing the doll on the palm of his hand, he stroked her hair, and she looked up at him with love in her eyes.

"Severus," the figure began. "I will love you always. Thank you for seeing me as more than a know-it-all and for loving me as completely as you do. I don't know what I did to deserve you or your love, but I'm grateful for it. I want you to know that I cherish our time together and hold each moment deep in my heart. Always know that I am yours and will be forever."

Severus stared at the miniature Hermione for a while before looking up to his Hermione. He had no words to express how the simple statements from the doll had affected him. Gathering her into his arms, he crushed her in an embrace.

"You are amazing," he said finally. "Thank you, this is a wonderful gift."

"Happy Christmas, love," Hermione sighed.

"Happy Christmas, Hermione," Severus replied. "I have to admit, this has been the nicest Christmas I have ever spent."

Hermione beamed at him. "I'm glad. I couldn't ask for a nicer Christmas either. Thank you, Severus. You don't know how happy you make me."

Severus' heart was full. Despite her missing her family and friends, she was here and happy. She looked to him with adoration. Hermione loved him... Severus Snape... someone who recently felt he was unlovable. She had changed his life and given him hope for the future. She had even given him a future to hope for.

A sudden sense of the enormity of their relationship threatened to overtake him. How had he gotten so lucky as to have found this beautiful woman who called herself his? Why would she even consider spending her time with him? He looked at her as she gazed lovingly at him. He knew her shortcomings, but she was perfect. It didn't matter that she got peevish sometimes; she was everything he had always hoped to have. Despite the fact that she was incredibly stubborn, he worshipped her.

His feelings threatened to explode from him, so he buried those emotions in a heartfelt kiss. He was too strong-willed a person to fall apart in front of her. Instead, he channeled everything he had into the mind-blowing kiss. Her love for him shone through her fervor, which did nothing to stem his emotional outburst. Without warning, tears began to flow from his eyes. Hermione pulled back when she felt them and stroked his face.

"What is it, love?"

"I am incomplete without you, Hermione. I'm just grateful for your love." He knew his words didn't explain a fifth of how he felt in that instant, but it was all he had to offer her by way of explanation.

Hermione pulled her to him and kissed his tears away. He slowly gained composure of himself as he buried his head in the crook of her neck.

"Please, my love, don't ever leave me," he whispered.

"Severus," Hermione said as a huge lump formed in her throat. "You know I will have to go eventually."

"I know, but don't ever leave me in your mind. Keep me there, and stay with me, even when you must go."

"I will," Hermione promised. "You, however, will need to be the one to keep me in your mind, Severus. You will be the one to have to wait for me."

"I promise you, Hermione, I will wait for you forever, and I'll never stop loving you. It's my other gift to you this Christmas. I will love you forever."

Hermione's face said it all as she pulled him to her and kissed him reverently.

"And I, you, my love," she whispered finally. "Only you."

**The End**