

A Yuletide Draught

by Valady

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Chapter 1 of 1

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It had been five long years since the final fall of the Dark Lord. One year after the war ended, so did Hermione and Ron's relationship; they discovered they were much better off as friends. From that time on, Hermione spent all her spare time, what little there was of it, trying to find the love she so longed for. She dated many wizards, but none came close to what she was looking for in a man.

He had to be intelligent, be able to converse about something other than Quidditch. She was sick of Quidditch-obsessed men; really, there was more to life than Quidditch! She wanted a man who would respect that she wanted a career in Potions, one who had some of the same interests as she did, and not expect her to sit home cleaning, cooking, and waiting for him to return home.

Mostly... she was lonely.

She longed for what it seemed that everyone else had... someone to love.

One day, while researching a paper for her Potions apprenticeship, she came upon the formula for the Amor Adfirmo Potio. More commonly known as the Vision of True Love Draught. It was a rather complex potion and one that only the most adept master would even attempt to brew. But Hermione had much confidence in her ability to brew Potions that most Masters would shy away from. The thirty ingredients required were fairly easy to obtain, but it was the precise preparation and addition of each ingredient that made it complicated. Additionally, it had to be brewed exactly one month to the day it was to be ingested on the eve of the Winter Solstice.

Hermione had gathered all she would need for the potion, and in a makeshift lab in her little flat in Diagon Alley, she began to brew the potion that promised to show her who was her true love.

Finally, after thirty days of careful brewing, it was time to add the last ingredient, a single petal of a blood red rose. Hermione looked down at the murky green potion that slowly bubbled in her cauldron. Taking a deep breath, she held the petal over the cauldron, and letting it go she watched it spiral downwards and land on top of the liquid within. She took a crystal stirring rod and made the required three stirs clockwise. The potion slowly turned clear and thin just as the book said it should. She immediately removed it from the heat, reached for the crystal goblet, and ladled the still hot potion into it to cool.

She watched as the crystal-clear potion slowly took on a smoky hue, looking much as a crystal ball did in Muggle movies. Glancing at the time, she noted the change in the potion coinciding with the approach of midnight. Excitement and apprehension battled within Hermione; on one hand she wanted to know who her true love was, on the other hand she felt as if she were cheating fate.

As the last grain of sand in the magical timer fell, a bell sounded, announcing the potion was finished and the witching hour had begun. Hermione picked up the glass and sniffed at the contents. It had a light scent of roses. Her lips touched the cool surface of the goblet, and she took a sip of the potion. The first thing she noticed is that it was

cool and refreshing like water with a light delicate flavor. Finishing the last drop, she took her quill in hand to write down her impressions of the draught. As she looked at the parchment, she noticed the fog appearing before her eyes; she averted them, but the mist followed. Hermione tried closing her eyes, but it was still there. She leaned against her workbench as a dizzy feeling came upon her.

Hermione had no idea how much time had passed when she became aware that a figure was forming in the haze. The figure was seated but she could not yet tell anything else. Slowly, it became clearer. She saw dark shoulder-length hair and dark clothes. Hermione's heart started beating rapidly; could this be her true love? He was reading a book that partially obscured his face, but she could see his large hands. The fingers were long and his skin pale, but he held the book gently within his grasp. The man's eyes looked up as though sensing that he was being watched. His eyes were dark, almost black in color and held the appearance of someone who had lived a hard life.

She knew those eyes; she had seen them many times before. But from where? He was so familiar to her. The man lowered the book revealing the rest of his face, and Hermione cried out.

"It can't be! He's dead! I saw him die."

Tears of sorrow began trailing down her face. Hermione felt her heart break into a million pieces. Could the Fates be that cruel? Was she now destined to live her life alone, with no one she could call her own? At one time, she had harbored feelings for this man, but she had thought it was just a schoolgirl crush, and when he died, she had mourned greatly for him. Now... only now she discovered that he, Severus Snape, was her true love!

"What in the name of Merlin..."

She gasped as she heard his voice. "You can see me?" she asked.

"Obviously, you little twit! What are you doing here and how did you find me?" he asked in his stern teacher's voice that she knew so well.

"I... it was... but you're dead!"

"That does not answer my question, Miss Granger. Shall I repeat myself?" Severus said, angered and concerned that after all these years his sanctuary was being invaded.

"I took a potion."

"What potion?"

Hermione hesitated to answer; he seemed just a horrid now as he did when he was alive. It wasn't as if she had known whom the potion would reveal, though deep in her soul she knew better. "Adfirmo Potio, sir."

He appeared stunned, his infamous eyebrow rising to heights she had never seen it reach before.

"What are you doing brewing such a complex potion? You must have done something wrong!" he snorted.

Hermione was indignant. "I did NOT brew it wrong, and the reason I brewed it is entirely my own."

"Not when it affects me, Miss Granger! You disturbed my peace, and I demand to know why!"

Tears were still falling down her face as she looked at him in all his self-righteous anger. "I always thought you were brilliant, sir; surely you could think of why someone would brew such a potion," she said, her voice now heavy with melancholy.

She could see it in his face; Severus had no clue how to respond to her answer. She was certain that he knew why someone would do it, because he too knew the sort of emptiness that resided inside her. That she would think she'd be living her life bereft of love and companionship.

Hermione studied his face through her tears, and she knew that he already knew the answer. Her broken heart wishing that things had been different, wishing he was still alive and wondering how different life would have been if he had survived. The fog slowly began to thin as the potion ran its course. "I'm sorry that I disturbed you. I won't take the potion again, so I'll leave you to your peace, Severus. But I have to say this... I had feelings for you before you died, and I always will."

Hermione collapsed on to the floor curled around herself as she cried for what could never be.

Christmas Eve

Hermione spent hours wallowing in her self-pity and drowning her sorrows in hot toddies. She bowed out of going to Harry and Ginny's for Christmas Eve claiming she wasn't feeling well. She hadn't lied, not really; she wasn't feeling well at all, she was sick in her heart, in her soul and it manifested in her body. Part of her wanted to just leave this world and go to join Severus in the afterlife, but she couldn't do that. For one thing it would devastate her parents, but there was also his reaction to her to consider.

She was unaware of how much time had passed and how many more hot toddies she had indulged in when she was startled by a knock on the door. Ignoring the knock she stayed wrapped up in her throw and curled up on her sofa, warm by the fire. The person on the other side of that door though did not seem to take the hint and kept on knocking louder and harder each time. She really did not want to get up and have to deal with whoever was on the other side, but it seemed ignoring the persistent knocking was not working.

"I know you're in there, Granger, open up the door!"

Hermione's eyes opened wide, and she sat straight up turning to look at the door.

"No, it couldn't be," she said to herself.

She rose from the sofa feeling as if she were sleepwalking the short distance to the door.

"Granger? Are you sleeping?" yelled the all too familiar voice.

Hermione took her wand in hand and dropped the wards protecting her flat. Taking hold of the knob, she slowly turned and opened it a crack, peering out to see if it was really him.

"Professor?" she asked, stunned that it was indeed him.

"I'm no longer your professor, girl. Are you going to open the door and allow me in or shall we spend the night like this?"

Hermione opened the door and took in the sight of Severus Snape standing at her doorway.

"I must be hallucinating, or maybe dreaming. You can't be here... you're dead."

"I beg to differ. I am not an illusion."

Hermione started to sway as the hot toddies and the shock of seeing Snape at her door took their toll. Just as she felt her legs give out, a pair of strong warm arms gathered her into their embrace, keeping her from falling to the floor.

"Just how much have you had to drink, Granger?"

Hermione looked up at the face she thought she'd never see again in this lifetime. "How can you be here... you're..."

"Obviously I'm not, and no, you are not having drunken dreams nor hallucinating."

She felt herself being lifted. The smell of him was just as she remembered, herbal, clean and all male. She closed her eyes and sighed as she buried her nose into his neck, breathing him in deeply. "If this is a dream, I hope I don't wake up," she said softly.

Her body met the cushions of her sofa as she was laid gently down, and she felt him sit down by her side, his weight shifting her body towards his. Opening her eyes, she saw he was still there, and as in her other dreams, he was looking at her with a softness she thought would never be there in real life.

"Go to sleep, Hermione," he said as he touched her cheek. "I'll be here when you awaken."

The End

A/N: Many thanks to my betas, Nicole and AngelMischa.

adfirno - to assert as true

amor - love , passion, fondness, desire

potio - a draught; esp. [a love-draught, philtre]