

Tidings of Comfort

by Bluestocking

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: The characters belong to J.K. Rowling and not to me. I'm just having a bit of fun with them and not making any money in the process.

The Christmas present arrived by school owl during breakfast—unexpected, unasked-for.

Severus found no note, nor any obvious sign of the giver's identity. Upon thorough examination he revealed no tricks or traps, but he did discover a creative charm meant to obscure the gift's giver.

And yet, Severus thought, his benefactress' identity couldn't be more obvious than if she'd knitted her initials right into the scarf contained within; she'd covered her magical tracks while revealing herself with every stitch. After all, nobody else could combine such artless earnestness with such overachieving spellcraft and mediocre knitting.

No question: Granger was behind this.

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Granger had sent him a gift—no, she'd *made* him a gift: a lumpy, uneven scarf with matching mittens. Severus thought of his own scarf, worn thin and ragged by decades of winter, and he wasn't certain whether to be touched or disturbed that Granger had noticed his shabbiness when his colleagues had not.

Her motives he found questionable. Granger was too practical for starry-eyed crushes and too straight-laced to resort to crass bribery. However, she was notoriously overflowing with sympathy for the downtrodden, the victimised, the hopeless...

Abruptly, Severus realized that Granger had taken him up as A Cause.

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Severus crushed the scarf in his fist, glaring towards the Gryffindor table. He was no pathetic house-elf; he had no need for Granger's pity or charity—

Although.

The wool was soft, light yet intensely warm. The mittens were perfectly sized for his hands, too. (How did she do that?) They also flipped up to expose the fingertips, a

useful feature for a harvester of potion ingredients and a surprisingly thoughtful detail.

As though she cared. As though he mattered.

Slowly, Severus refolded the scarf.

It would keep him warm in the coming chill, and not only because of its wool.