

Under the Mistletoe

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Severus receives a gift of mistletoe. Who sent it, and who can make it disappear?

Oneshot

Chapter 1 of 1

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The tapping on the window startled Severus. He wasn't expecting any owls so late in the afternoon. He went to the window and brought the bird in, extracting the note. This owl was not unfamiliar to Severus. He patted it on the head and gave it a treat.

"I hope your mistress hasn't written to bother me about her Yule party once again," he mused. The owl hooted at him, bobbed her head, and flew out the window.

Severus took the message, settling into his recliner before opening the envelope. As soon as he did, something darted out of it and settled above his head. Severus looked up and frowned immediately. It was a bundle of mistletoe, complete with red ribbon.

"Blast that woman!" he muttered as he dropped the envelope and stood, attempting to shoo away the floating monstrosity. All of his batting had no effect. His wand did nothing but make the mistletoe slightly larger. He huffed and picked up the envelope once again. Perhaps she'd had the courtesy to leave a note with her unwanted 'gift'? Yes, there was a folded parchment in there as well.

Dearest Severus,

Merry Christmas, my dear. I know you must be quite put-out with me right now, but please don't do anything rash before finishing this note. This is my Christmas gift to you. I have seen how you watch Lucius and me. I know you would like to have someone to share your life with like we do.

This mistletoe is no ordinary plant. It is enchanted to remain above your head until you are kissed. What's so different about that, you may ask? No simple kiss will make this mistletoe disappear. Only the kiss of your true love will break the spell, causing the mistletoe to vanish.

Have a good time finding her, my friend. Both Lucius and I wish you the best in your quest for a soul-mate.

Narcissa

Severus let his hand fall while still holding the parchment. Looking up, he scowled at the mistletoe, hanging merrily over his head. He batted at it a couple of times, but it just evaded his swipes and settled itself squarely over his head.

"This is ridiculous," he grouched. "Who died and made Narcissa Malfoy matchmaker?"

He threw the parchment in the fire and watched in satisfaction as it burned to ashes. Unfortunately, that didn't take care of his little mistletoe problem. Perhaps Minerva would have some ideas on what to do.

He quickly left his Headmaster's quarters and descended the stairs. Several students were gathered together on the landing. They stared curiously at Severus as he

passed by, the mistletoe bobbing above his head.

As he turned and started down another flight, he heard them giggling behind him. He spun around and glowered at them.

"Ten points each from Hufflepuff," he spat before wheeling back around and increasing his pace down the stairway.

He couldn't get to her room fast enough. There were just too many students in the hallways. They gaped, they snickered, some even had the audacity to point and laugh aloud. Each was reprimanded accordingly. One brave girl even offered to 'take care of his little problem for him.' She was handed a detention.

At long last, he rapped on Minerva's door. Her cry for him to enter sent a wave of relief over him. Unfortunately, that dissipated quickly, because Minerva's reaction to him was less than promising.

Minerva took one look at him, and her eyes grew wide.

"Really, Severus, if you wanted a kiss, you could have just asked for one!" She tittered at her humor.

Severus scowled. "I came here for your help, not your ridicule!" he snapped.

Minerva rose from her sofa and came over to him. She pecked him lightly on the lips and looked up to see the result. Severus looked to her in shock before pushing her away. He tentatively looked up, but the stupid mistletoe still sat above his head, mocking him.

"Hmm, isn't that supposed to disappear?" Minerva asked sagely.

Severus' eyes narrowed. "Not when it's enchanted by Narcissa Malfoy, evidently."

"Oh, dear. Come sit down, and let's see what we can do about that."

Severus sat with her on the sofa. He explained the note as Minerva tried some spells. Nothing worked. She tried to transfigure the mistletoe, but not a leaf transformed. She sighed as she lowered her wand.

"I guess we'll just have to figure out who needs to kiss you," she said in resignation.

Severus knew whom he'd like to kiss. He even would enjoy finding out that she was his 'soul-mate' as Narcissa had so aptly put it. Unfortunately, he held no false notions about Hermione Granger. Intelligent and beautiful as she was, he knew she could never love someone like him. His soul was too dark for one such as her, and he was so much older than she.

Unfortunately, age didn't seem to matter where he was concerned. Her youth made no difference to him. In her, he saw someone with much the same interests and beliefs.

His thoughts were driven away when Minerva asked the golden question.

"So, is there anyone you'd actually want to kiss?"

Severus couldn't help the blush that came over him. He scowled in embarrassment. "No one who would want to kiss me back."

Minerva placed a hand over his. "Now, now, Severus. You really do sell yourself short, you know."

He rolled his eyes.

"Do you think such a person is right here in the castle?" she asked.

He shrugged and looked to the floor. Minerva stood suddenly. "Well, there's only one way to find out. Let's go to dinner."

Severus looked up at her in horror. "Surely, you don't expect me to..."

"Nonsense! We'll just take a gander at the possibilities and quietly discuss it, okay?"

Severus' shoulders relaxed as he stood. "All right. I guess I have no choice in the matter."

When Severus walked into the Great Hall, all talking ceased. The students seemed to look at him en masse, their eyes wide. The professors all turned in unison and gaped. Suddenly, the hall burst with noise once again, all commotion due to him. Choosing to ignore everyone, he made his way to his seat at the center of the table. Minerva took her place at his right. Hermione was already seated in her usual spot on his left. She looked above his head and cracked a smile.

"I see you've enhanced your wardrobe!" she joked.

His eyes grew narrow, and Hermione's grin faltered. "Okay... a little touchy about the mistletoe, then," she mumbled and concentrated on her food.

Minerva leaned into Severus. "What about her?"

Severus glared until Minerva gave up, nodding subtly. Gazing down to the end of the table, she became excited. "What about Hooch?" she asked rather loudly.

"I'd rather not," he said between clenched teeth.

"Sprout? Trelawney?"

"Woman, you are causing my stomach to become gravely upset."

"What are you two talking about?" Hermione piped in.

Minerva waved at the mistletoe, which seemed to have a life of its own. It was spinning and making circles above Severus' head. Hermione giggled.

"This mistletoe has been spelled to be very resistant. Only one person can make it disappear," Minerva explained.

"Who?" Hermione asked curiously.

"That's just it, we don't know. It's the person who will be Severus' true love."

Severus sputtered, then growled. "Minerva..."

"Well, she asked!" Minerva said with an exasperated wave of her hands. "Maybe she can help us out."

"This is ridiculous!" Severus growled. He began to get up. The women grabbed his arms and pulled him back down.

"Wait, Severus. Let's just see what we can come up with," Hermione said as she gazed to the other end of the table. "Septima Vector is quite pretty. Maybe it's her?"

Severus glanced at Septima. She definitely was pretty, but they had never really said more than three words to one another whenever they were in the same company. Nonetheless, someone had to be his 'soul-mate,' and she would be as good a place as any to start.

"Perhaps," he said quietly.

Minerva stood. "I'll take care of this."

She got up, went over to Septima, and whispered in her ear. Septima's eyes grew wide as she gazed over at Severus. He turned his head and huffed.

"This is preposterous!" he muttered under his breath.

Hermione's hand rested upon his. "Oh, I think it's so romantic," she said.

Looking over at her, he noted there was a wistful quality to her voice and a sad look in her eyes. He wondered at it, but had no time to question her as Minerva returned at that moment and whispered into his ear.

"She'll meet you right now out in the hallway."

His head turned, and he looked at her with pleading eyes. "Minerva..."

"Go ahead. At least you'll know."

He nodded, rose, and made his way out of the hall. He heard the students snickering as he walked away, the mistletoe bobbing cheerily over him. He went out the door and found Septima leaning against the wall. He nervously approached her.

"I'm sorry about this," he apologized.

"No need," Septima offered.

He shifted from foot to foot.

"Well, are you going to do it?" Septima asked.

"I guess..."

He bent low and placed a peck on her lips. Quickly straightening, he gazed above him. Still the mistletoe floated over his head. He groaned.

"Sorry, Severus!" Septima said as she turned and re-entered the Great Hall.

"Wonderful."

He made his way back to his seat. This time he noticed several students pointing and whispering to one another. He figured a mass deduction of points wouldn't be looked upon highly by his colleagues, so he pursed his lips and sat back down.

"No luck, I take it?" Minerva asked.

"Obviously." He frowned deeply. "Will I have to kiss the whole staff before this curse is taken from me?"

Minerva's eyes lit up. Severus groaned, unwilling to know exactly what it was she was plotting.

"I'll tell you what. You wait out there, and I'll send them in to you one by one."

Severus' eyes closed as he pinched his nose. "I suppose there's no other way."

Hermione piped in then. "Well, at least you'll be able to count out all of us if you do that."

Severus turned to her and scowled. "Yes, just what I wanted. To have to kiss a bunch of harpies all day until one of them winds up being the person I'm to spend my life with. Simply wonderful."

Hermione's eyes flashed in hurt, and she looked away. Severus turned back to Minerva. "Start with Trelawney. I don't want her thinking for any longer than necessary that we might be well matched."

"Wouldn't you like to start with better possibilities?" Minerva asked.

"There are no possibilities, if you ask me." With that, he turned and left once again, steeling himself for his fate.

Hermione watched him as he stalked away. Her stomach was in knots. She'd been secretly attracted to him for well over a year now. Their relationship had grown since she'd started teaching at Hogwarts, and although prickly, Severus had mellowed some after the war. She'd grown to enjoy his company. She'd just been too frightened of his reaction if the truth ever came out. She valued their friendship most of all and dreaded what admitting her feelings would do to that. She knew he'd scoff at her and call her a silly child.

Now, she regretted not saying anything. He wasn't even considering her, and that hurt to the core. Septima? His first choice? Well, that was telling.

He obviously only considers me a friend.

In retrospect, it was definitely best she'd kept her mouth shut all these months. She would take what she could get with him and treasure every little bit of it.

Sighing to herself, she realized that if Severus were to find his soul-mate this holiday season, she would soon fade from the picture. She knew of few men who kept strong ties to their female friends once they were in a relationship. Even Harry had pulled back some. She didn't begrudge him at all. She understood what it was like to give your life to another. A pain unlike anything she'd experienced before surrounded her heart. She would certainly miss Severus when he had found what he was looking for.

Her eyes wandered over to Trelawney, who was conversing with Minerva. She rose from her seat, messed with her unruly hair and straightened her glasses. She whispered to Minerva and soon turned and made her way quickly out of the hall.

Hermione looked forlornly to her plate. This evening would not go well for her, she just knew it. She hoped for the best for Severus, she really did, but if he found that someone here tonight, she knew she'd have to deal with that. It certainly wouldn't be easy to do so, or to watch him with another woman when all she wanted was to be the only woman in his life.

Severus looked up as Trelawney came out the door and threw her arms wide.

"Darling!" she cried.

He blanched and turned three shades whiter than he already was.

"Let's just get this over with," he sneered.

She came up to him and threw her arms around him. "I've always known..."

He didn't wait for her to finish her sentence. He pecked her lips and pulled away, taking his hands and forcibly removing her from his person. He looked at her in disgust and then glanced above him. For once he was profoundly happy that the mistletoe still floated above him. He grinned evilly and pointed up.

"Guess you were wrong," he said haughtily.

She frowned. "But, I don't understand?"

"What's to understand? We are evidently *not* made for each other." He shooed her with his hand. "Bye now."

Trelawney huffed. She extracted a small bottle of scotch from her robes and wandered off, taking a swig and muttering to herself. Severus poked his head back in the door and shook it at Minerva. He pulled back and awaited the next *fair maiden* to accost him.

It was Poppy Pomfrey. He mused that she wouldn't be too bad, but when the kiss was placed, the mistletoe did nothing.

"Sorry, Severus," Poppy said. "I hope you find her soon. I can't wait to meet her."

With that she was gone, and Rolanda Hooch was standing there. She grinned at him evilly.

"I know I'm not the one, but there's no reason for us not to enjoy ourselves," she advised.

Grabbing his head, she brought it to hers and placed a searing kiss on his lips. Severus' eyes grew wide as his mouth was assaulted. Her tongue forced itself through his lips and tangled with his which almost made him gag. She pulled away and gave him a lust-filled look.

"I have always wanted to do that," she explained. "It was better than I'd imagined."

He watched her go and shuddered at the thought of her daydreaming about what it would be like to kiss him. Gah! Would this torture never end?

Pomona Sprout wasn't the vixen that Rolanda Hooch was. She accepted his peck and shrugged when the mistletoe didn't disappear. Wishing him good luck, she returned to her place at the table.

Severus was beginning to think he'd need to kiss every woman in Hogsmeade before this ordeal was over.

He blanched when he saw Irma Pince headed his way. He had nothing against the woman, except for the fact that she was so severe.

"Go on, then. Let's get this over with. I've got books that need shelving," the woman demanded.

He quickly kissed her lightly. Mercifully, nothing happened except that Irma turned a bright shade of scarlet before turning and hurrying off. Once again, he poked his head through the door to motion to Minerva. The annoying mistletoe bobbed and danced as he did so.

Aurora Sinistra ambled over to him. "So, you think I could be this soul-mate you're looking for?" she asked.

"No idea," he offered.

"Yeah, I doubt it too." She grabbed his head and kissed him soundly.

"Not bad for a cold-hearted bastard," she muttered as she turned to leave.

He didn't even glance up to see if the mistletoe had disappeared. Instead he scowled at his boots.

Yes, he'd definitely be searching Hogsmeade. He wondered if he should just go up and kiss random women? Maybe he could set up a booth in Rosmerta's bar. Free Kisses could be the sign in front of it. He wondered if he'd even get any business.

He looked up to see Hermione staring sadly at him. His hackles rose.

"I didn't think you would be so put-out to kiss me, Hermione," he spat.

She looked to the ground. "It's not that, Severus."

"Then what is it?"

She shook her head vehemently. "Nothing. It's nothing."

Concern flared within him. "Hermione?"

"Let's just get this over with." She moved up and kissed him.

He stood there in shock. Her lips came up and touched his, creating the most seductive feeling within him. How many times had he dreamed about this moment? His mind went back to Hooch's comment about enjoying themselves. Why not?

His arms went around her, and he pulled her close. His lips pressed harder into hers, causing her to groan a little with his insistence. Before long, they were passionately kissing, their hands unable to keep themselves from entwining in one another's hair.

Reality set in, as he pulled away. Pleasant as this had been, it was only fantasy. There was no way that Hermione could feel enough for him to be his soul-mate. He looked away, unable to make eye contact with her.

Hermione gasped, driving his gaze to hers. She pointed above his head. He craned his neck back and gaped at what he saw. The mistletoe was gone. Gone!

"But, how can that be?" he murmured.

"You don't like me that way," Hermione whispered.

"And you don't like *me* that way," Severus countered.

Hermione shifted. "What if I said that I did?"

His eyes met hers. He gazed at her in wonder. Could it possibly be true?

"You do?"

She bit her lip and nodded.

"You do?" he repeated, unable to believe it. "I didn't think that was possible."

"Why not?" Hermione asked curiously.

"No one I've ever cared about has loved me back."

"Oh, Severus!" She threw herself into his arms and hugged him tightly.

At that moment, Minerva stuck her head into the hall. "Well?" she asked. "Ah, I see we've found your soul-mate, then. I'll owl Narcissa and tell her thank you for getting you two idiots to recognize what we've all seen for a long time now."

Severus ignored her. Hermione did too. She pulled back and stared into his eyes. He thought he would burst with happiness as he looked back into her loving face.

"Happy Christmas, Severus," she whispered.

"Happy Christmas, Hermione," he said with fervor.

The End

A/N: Just a little story to get you in the Christmas mood. Yes, I know, I come up with all sorts of ways to get Trelawney to hit on Severus. I just love that odd duck, and she deserves a smooch now and then, even if it's meaningless to Severus.