

Christmas Isn't Always Merry

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Chapter 1

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December 25th, 1964

Severus is wide-awake. He has been for hours. Today is *Christmas*. Mummy and Daddy told him not to come downstairs until they call for him, but he just can't stand it. He pulls on the wooly socks Mummy made him last Christmas and sleepily rubs his eyes. He fishes out Bear from under the covers and sneaks out of his bedroom.

Severus bounces down the stairs, Bear in hand. He loves Bear—Bear sleeps with him and Bear is his best friend, other than Daddy. He doesn't mind that Bear is a little bald in one spot and is missing an eye. That's just what Bear looks like.

Severus squeals as he reaches the bottom of the stairs. "Look, Bear!" He points Bear's head towards the Christmas tree. "Prezzies!"

"Yes, Sev! Presents!" Daddy exclaims as he walks out of the kitchen, bearing a plate of cookies. Severus loves Christmas; it's the only time that Mummy and Daddy let him have cookies for the breakfast. He grabs three and tries to shove them all in his mouth at the same time. Daddy laughs and Severus grins—cookie crumbs falling out of his mouth onto his pajamas.

He sees Mummy walk into the room. She is not as happy as Daddy. She's never happy like Daddy, who chases him in the yard and lets him play "Airplane" on the floor of the living room. But he loves his mummy—she gives the best hugs and always kisses his boo-boos.

He scrambles towards the tree and, reading the tags, finds a particularly shiny present for Mummy. Maybe a present will make her happy!

She thanks him and begins opening the present. It's the ashtray he made her in day school! Daddy wrapped it up so pretty he didn't know! She smiles at him—a small, quiet smile—and pulls him into a hug. "Thank you, my little Prince," she whispers, and kisses him on the cheek. Severus is glad he made Mummy happy.

"Severus' turn!" Daddy exclaims. Daddy hands him a long box wrapped in green paper with a silver bow. Mummy laughs softly for a second, and Severus doesn't know why. He begins pulling the paper off the box in large handfuls.

"AIRPLANE!" he squeals! Daddy and he play Airplane, but *never* with an *actual* airplane! Usually, Daddy balances him tummy-first onto his feet and lifts him into the air while making airplane noises. It's fun, but it's not a *real* airplane!

And it's a special airplane, apparently. It slowly begins to rise out of his small hands. He lets go and the airplane begins flying around the room by itself. He claps his hands, and the lights on the Christmas tree begin to sparkle and flash!

He is brought of his excitement by the sound of a loud slap. The plane falls from the air and smashes into the hardwood floor, the left propeller flying off. He looks at Daddy,

standing over Mummy. Mummy is crying and holding her face. Daddy slaps her again! *Why is Daddy slapping Mummy? Was she bad? Did she break something? Sometimes Daddy spansks me when I'm bad, but only on my bottom. Why is Daddy hitting Mummy in the face so hard?*

"I *thought* you said he wasn't like you, Eileen! I thought you said that if he didn't do anything by the age of two that he was *not... like... you!*" After all these years, he still can't call her what she is.

Tears begin sliding down Severus' face. He doesn't know why everyone is angry. It's Christmas. And Christmas is happy because of cookies and prezzies. He buries Bear's head into his chest and begins crying into Bear's soft fur.

"I don't know, Tobias, I don't know! Please stop, I'll teach him not to, I swear!"

Tobias leaves the living room, grabs his coat and hat, and exits the house. Later that night he will come home and continue screaming at Eileen. This will be the general theme of the rest of Severus' childhood.

The door slams shut, and Eileen immediately grabs up her son. She quiets his crying and hugs him as hard as he hugs Bear.

"Don't cry, Severus. Please don't cry. It's okay. Mummy was bad, and Daddy had to punish her. It won't happen again."

He sniffles and buries his face farther into her shoulder.

"You and me, Severus. We're special. We're more special than anyone else we know. Mummy can make planes fly too, Severus! And, one day, she'll show you how to do it whenever you want. But, for right now, we have to just be Mummy and Severus, ok? Don't let anyone tell you you aren't special, sweetie, because you are! You're a little Prince! Just like your Mummy."

Severus doesn't know what she means, but he likes that Mummy isn't crying anymore. Pulling his head back, he looks at her. He smacks a big, wet kiss on her cheek.

"I love you, Mummy!"

"I love you too, Severus."

And, placing him on his feet, she grabs his hand and leads him back to the pile of presents. They rip the paper off and play with his new toys for the rest of the day.

AN: This story was originally written for brissygirl's LiveJournal "mini_fest".

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