

Christmas at Hogwarts

by grugster

Poppy releases Severus in time for the Christmas feast. How will he spend Christmas with Minerva and the others? Sequel to "Taking Care"! SS/MM; PP/AM

Chapter 1 – In the Infirmary

Chapter 1 of 2

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Disclaimer: All recognizable characters belong to J.K. Rowling, and I am not earning anything by writing this story.

Dear readers,

Here is the sequel to my story "Taking Care." Please read "Taking Care" first or this story will make no sense to you!

Sunny

Chapter 1 In the Infirmary

It was Christmas Eve, and Severus was kneeling in front of the fireplace in the infirmary. *Merlin, please let Poppy be occupied with Hagrid for just awhile longer. Why can't that stupid hag move faster?* he thought, eyeing the jewelry shopkeeper's every move raptly.

"Will this do, Mr. Snape?" the middle-aged witch, who was alarmingly similar to Trelawney, asked him while holding a necklace under his nose.

"Merlin, I said something with a lion, not with a cat," he spat, irritated. But after a moment's hesitation, he turned back and said, "No, wait, let me see it again."

The shopkeeper, who had already turned to search for the next item to offer the grumpy customer, turned back and beamed. "I knew you would like it."

Severus examined the pendant. It was a deep red ruby, surrounded by a curled up golden cat. "I'll take it. Put it on my bill and send it to Hogwarts, addressed to Charlie Weasley."

"Of course, Mr. Snape," the shopkeeper said.

At that moment, Severus felt a cold hand on his shoulder that wrenched him out of the fireplace. "What in Merlin's name do you think you are doing, Severus Snape?" Poppy scolded.

Being face to face with the Mediwitch, who had been pestering him for the past week, was not how Severus had wished to end his Christmas shopping.

"You refused to let me travel to Hogsmeade to buy Christmas presents; therefore this was my only opportunity," Severus muttered, in hopes that Poppy would soften at the realization that he actually planned to celebrate Christmas this year.

"And the fact that I didn't allow you to go to Hogsmeade made you think that it was okay to worsen your condition by exhausting yourself Flooing?" she asked, cocking her eyebrow.

"First, your glare is not as good as mine. Second, of course I knew that you wouldn't let me use the Floo network; therefore I did it surreptitiously." He grinned at her as he stumbled back to his bed.

Poppy was shocked at his bluntness. "Severus, that's not funny. The Floo network must have drained your magic," she said while rushing over to his bed. She waved her wand over him and viewed the results. "Like I predicted, you are exhausted."

"Nothing that an hour of sleep won't heal. I will be a good little patient and do what is necessary." With that, he turned around and closed his eyes.

Poppy opened her mouth to say something, but only took a deep breath and turned to her office. "Insufferable man," she muttered.

Severus grinned as the Mediwitch left for her office. He had learned how to handle her. *I have all I need and an hour of sleep won't hurt. Poppy will be happy that I slept freely, and I will have enough energy for the evening.* For the first time he was looking forward to the Christmas feast. Minerva and Severus had found a satisfactory way to handle their relationship. Severus enjoyed the hours Minerva spent at his bed, reading for him or telling him what happened in the castle. Sometimes they just kissed and snuggled together. Poppy never complained. Once, Alastor had caught them snuggling and pretended to have a heart attack. *'Merlin, rent a room, you two,'* he had said while closing the curtains around their bed with a flick of his wand.

Whenever Minerva was around, he felt more alive. He no longer feared that she just wanted to be with him out of pity. He was looking forward to the first day Poppy would release him, because he could finally spend his nights with Minerva as well. *Not just the sex; just waking up with her in my arms will be so nice,* he thought dreamily. Right now, 'sex' fell under the 'too exhausting activities' that Poppy prohibited. Among them were leaving the infirmary, speaking with Mr. Conner about his detention, and drinking butterbeer with Alastor. *I don't even want to think about what Poppy did to Alastor after dragging him out of the infirmary by his ear.* Speaking with Charlie about the cretins in the new Potions journal and Flooing had just been added to that list today.

"You are not sleeping, Severus," Poppy scolded him. She had come back to check on him and was now rummaging in his night table.

"I'm trying."

"Then stop thinking about whatever it is you are thinking about and just close your eyes and relax," Poppy said.

"Yes, yes," Severus answered and closed his eyes again. *I have all the presents. Now I will just sleep.*

He woke up to the smell of fresh coffee.

"I knew this would wake you up," Alastor said, waving a cup of coffee at Severus.

"Hmm," Severus mumbled. "That smells gorgeous." Severus sat up against the headboard and took the offered cup of coffee.

"Do you know when Poppy will release you? Charlie wanted to come by in an hour. If you are released before, you should find him in the Potions lab. He is still brewing the Wolfsbane," Alastor said as he sat down in a nearby chair.

"She said she would check on me at four o'clock and that if I leave, I would have to be back by midnight. Can you believe that? *Midnight!* As if I'm a stupid teenager who needs a curfew. And you talk about releasing. I wouldn't call it releasing. It sounds more like parole."

Alastor laughed. "Don't let Poppy hear you."

"*Midnight,* Alastor! I can't believe it." Severus shook his head in disgust.

"I'm sure it's to prevent you from doing what she is calling 'too exhausting activities,'" Alastor said, grinning evilly.

"Very funny, Alastor. That sentence will surely haunt me in my dreams for years," Severus said, groaning.

"Drink your coffee and stop sulking. You will have enough time with Minerva, but I'm sure Poppy has already instilled in her what is allowed and what is not."

"You are enjoying this, aren't you? Mock the grumpy Potions master until he blushes. But it won't work, old man. I have learned more in the last few days than I have in the last years about the people around me, and I know how to deal with them. So you won't get me blushing, and if you must know, I don't plan to do anything *exhausting,*" Severus grumbled.

"Oh, of course not," Alastor pretended to be shocked. "How could I believe that you think of such thing, Severus? You must be spending too much time in the company of my wife."

"Minerva would never..." *Damn the old codger,* he thought when he realized that he was blushing.

Alastor grinned as Severus groaned in annoyance. "I wouldn't be so sure about that, but you should listen to Poppy. She will find out if you've done anything 'too exhausting' when she checks on you when you return, and I'm sure the blush you would have would beat this one considerably."

Severus sighed. "I know, but I still think midnight is too early."

Alastor laughed again, vanished his empty cup, and stood up. "Tell that to Poppy, and you will be back here immediately after the feast, Severus. It's Christmas. Try to enjoy the time she gave you. Minerva doesn't want a sulking man at her side. I'm sure you will be released, and this time I really mean released, soon." When he saw Severus look hopefully at him, he added, "She didn't say anything to me, but you look much better. Albus and I are already trying to work on having her to let you leave at least in the daytime."

"And how did she react to that idea? Will she even think about it?" Severus asked, agitated.

"I would think about it if you would not only drink coffee, but also eat something," Poppy said, heading in his direction. She had just come out of her office to see if Severus was already awake for his afternoon snack when she realized that her sneaky husband was giving Severus ideas.

"I think I have to go," Alastor said quickly, avoiding the glare his wife was sending him.

"Oh, don't think you'll get away with what you just told him, Alastor," she said dangerously while blocking his way.

"Remember, it's Christmas, my dear. The feast of love and forgiving," Alastor said sweetly.

"Pour your sugar somewhere else," she said sternly to Alastor and turned to Severus. "And for your information, young man, the two old men couldn't convince me to release you in the daytime because only you can persuade me by eating something and following my rules for a change."

Alastor looked apologetically at Severus. "I will see you at the feast." He turned to Poppy and, seeing her stern face, decided not to attempt to kiss her. "I hope I will see you as well, sweetheart," he teased.

"Impossible old fool," she said and pretended to give him a swat on his bum.

With the quickest jump he could manage with his peg leg, he darted for the door, laughing. "I love you too, my dear," he called from over his shoulder.

When Alastor had left the infirmary, Poppy went over to Severus. She waved her wand over him. "You are much better, Severus, and I realize that you have been more cooperative over the past days. I am willing to release you for the daytime in a few days, but how you behave today will affect my decision enormously," she said in a normal and friendly tone.

Having the opportunity to leave in the daytime, and only having to sleep in the infirmary, was so tempting that he did not dare to argue with Poppy about his curfew today. "I will be a good boy, Mummy," he sneered, but could not hide his excitement about having the chance to leave the infirmary soon.

Poppy rolled her eyes. "Eat your snack and drink the strengthening potion, Severus. If you want, you can leave after. Do you want me to keep you company while eating?"

"It's not necessary, Poppy. I know you still have a lot to do. Mr. Weasley will come soon," Severus said, already shifting to sit more comfortably in front of his tray.

"Yes, you are right. I have a lot of work to do, and I want to finish it before the feast. You will call me when you start to feel unwell or have any problems, right?"

Severus rolled his eyes in annoyance. "Poppy, I have not thrown up in the last three days. And I will not today. I feel well, and you've already stated how well-behaved I have been lately." When he saw her crossing her arms and raising her eyebrow, he quickly added, "Yes, I will call you."

Please review!

Chapter 2 – Preparations

Chapter 2 of 2

Poppy releases Severus in time for the Christmas feast. How will he spend Christmas with Minerva and the others?
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Chapter 2 Preparations

"About time you came, Mr. Weasley," Severus said impatiently as he pushed his barely eaten snack away. "Have you retrieved all the items?"

"Yes, Master Snape," Charlie said sarcastically, bowing theatrically. Charlie refrained from adding more. He could not, however, restrain himself from glancing worriedly at the tray full of Severus' afternoon snacks. Severus had not eaten any of the fruits and just had taken one bite of the donut.

"Stop being cheeky, Mr. Weasley," Severus said sternly. After seeing Charlie's glance at his tray, he waved his wand, and the food and tea disappeared. "And don't even think about commenting on my eating habits. I have enough people pestering me."

"With hardly any effect on you, it seems," Charlie scolded lightly.

"Mr. Weasley," Severus growled warningly.

"Yes, yes, I know. It's none of my business."

"Exactly. So where are they?" Severus impatiently asked the young, red-haired man.

"I have everything. The last item just arrived a few minutes before I left my quarters," Charlie explained while reaching into the pockets of his cloak, pulling out several items, which he tossed onto Severus' bed.

"Fantastic," Severus murmured, grabbing the small jewelry case covered in red velvet. He opened it and carefully withdrew the bracelet for Minerva out of the box.

"It's beautiful, Professor Snape," Charlie breathed, while leaning over to have a closer look.

"Yes, it is," Severus said pensively. He handed Charlie the bracelet to have a closer look.

"I'm sure Minerva will love it." As time had worn on, Charlie soon became more comfortable calling his new colleagues by their first name. Minerva, however, was the only colleague he still found difficult to address her by her first name. Seven years of having her as your strict Head of House were hard to forget. Still, he was amazed at how different all of the professors were now that they were his colleagues. Excluding the Potions master and Madam Pomfrey, all of his former professors requested that he use their given names.

He had spent an extended amount of time with Snape, settling things for teaching and brewing. Severus had already agreed to let him teach the lower grades and help with brewing potions for the hospital wing. One day, Alastor had convinced them to play cards with him. *Surely, so that we would become more acquainted with one another*, Charlie had thought. *Sometimes I wonder who is more manipulative, Albus or Alastor.* They usually played a few rounds of wizard's chess or discussed a new Potions magazine, at least until Madam Pomfrey found out and scolded Charlie for agitating Snape. He seemed to be a very private man, even though it was a lot of fun to talk with him.

Charlie passed the bracelet back to Severus, who carefully placed it back into the jewel case. "I hope so," Severus said, deep in thought. He was anxious about Minerva's reaction, and he was nervous about how the evening would go.

Severus' glance fell on the old-fashioned book. *"The Magic of Healing by Barnaby Miller,"* Severus read out loud. "It's for Poppy. She loves his books." He opened it and pointed his index finger at the scribbling on the first page. "Look, I contacted him and asked him to sell me a signed version. And I'll also give her this bottle of strong whisky. She has a soft spot for it, and with a little luck, she will drink it immediately with Alastor and forget about my curfew today."

Charlie laughed heartily. He loved Severus' humor. It was statements like this that made him wonder why he was not allowed to call Snape by his first name *Would he even be telling me these things if he still felt uneasy around me? And he still insists on calling me Mr. Weasley. I've made the offer for him to call me Charlie various times, but he has never taken the offer. Alastor has said that I need to be patient because Severus isn't a man who easily opens up to others. He also has said that I should be quite proud that he can be so relaxed around me.*

"I wouldn't count on it, Professor. To be honest, Madam Pomfrey had instructed the entire staff to keep a close eye on you at the feast." Charlie felt slightly uneasy telling Severus this, but he did not want to hide it from him.

Seeing Charlie's uncomfortable expression, Severus chuckled. "Of course she has, Mr. Weasley. I would have been extremely surprised if that mother he ~~hadn't~~ said anything."

"I wished you would stop calling me Mr. Weasley, Professor. I always have to force myself to not turn around to see if my father is in the room. Why can't you just call me Charlie?"

"Hmmpf," was Severus' only reply. To distract the redhead from that particularly unpleasant topic, he showed him the ancient-looking pack of skat cards. "These are for Alastor. There are designs of small dark creatures all over them. I know that Alastor will love it. I also hope to see his face when he realizes that they bite when you are careless or cheat." Severus grinned impishly, imagining the surprised look on Alastor's face. "He's also receiving this grotesque talisman because he collects these kind of things. It is supposed to guard you from banshees. I am rather curious to see if it would work on a screaming Poppy as well. You should have seen her when Alastor sneaked a butterbeer in here for me. It was terrifying."

"I remember; he told me about it. I'm sure he will give this talisman a try next time a situation like that should arise," Charlie said, laughing.

"Just wait until you are on the receiving end of her scolding. You will not speak so lightly about it then."

"Have you forgotten that I was a frequent patient here during my school days because of my risky maneuvers in Quidditch, Professor?"

"Ah yes, how could I forget? But let me warn you that she is much harsher with her adult patients than with the youngsters."

"My ears are ringing, Severus, which can only mean that my cheeky patient is telling stories about me," Poppy said as she came out of her office and over to Severus' bed. Severus quickly threw the bed covers over the presents, attempting to hide them from her so that Poppy would not see them. She lifted an eyebrow at the big bulge under the sheets and asked suspiciously, "Hiding something?"

"Just Christmas presents, Madam Pomfrey, really," Charlie tried to calm the mediwitch and prevent her from spoiling the surprise by looking under the covers.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Weasley. We will discuss your part in my patient's forbidden Christmas shopping later." A snicker from the direction of the bed made her frown at Severus.

"What did I tell you, Mr. Weasley?" The stern expression on Poppy's face caused him to put on his puppy-dog look, which worked yet again *Merlin, why did I not come up with this earlier? All the women in this castle seem to fall for this face. All except Trelawney, but I do not even want to think about trying it.*

Poppy had turned to Charlie again. "Before I forget, you have to see me for the regular staff examination before classes start. Would ten tomorrow morning be okay with you?"

"Yes, I will be here, Madam Pomfrey. Now, I'd better go." Charlie had the slight feeling that Madam Pomfrey had already spotted the empty tray, and she seemed to suspect something. He did not want to be present when she asked Snape about it.

"Oh, no, wait, I will come with you. I just have to take my potion and gather my presents," Severus said quickly. He glanced anxiously from Poppy to the bulk under the covers to find a way to gather the presents without letting Poppy see them.

"I said you could leave when you finished your snack, Severus," Poppy said while crossing her arms, sternly glaring at him.

Severus looked at the empty tray and back to Poppy. *How could she know that I have not eaten the food? No, she must be bluffing!* "I don't know what you are talking about, Poppy. I have finished it already." He gestured to the tray.

"Oh really, that's fantastic, Severus! How were the peaches?" Poppy asked sweetly.

"Fine, as well as the chocolate donut." Severus was relieved that he could remember the donut as well.

Poppy glared at him. "I don't know how much of the donut you ate, but I do know that there were not any peaches on that plate, Severus. Where are your resolutions to be healthier now? All flushed away by your excitement for Christmas?" she said, scolding, but she was friendly as she moved the tray in front of Severus again. "As much as I enjoy seeing you in seasonal spirit, I would prefer that you don't neglect eating." Poppy waved her wand and the plate was filled again, as well as the cup.

"That's more than it was the first time, Poppy," Severus said sulkily.

"You want to complain?" Poppy asked challengingly.

Severus opened his mouth, but closed it without replying. He took one of the apple slices and began to eat.

"Maybe we can fill out some papers for your staff file while Severus is eating, Mr. Weasley," Poppy told Charlie as she pushed him towards her office.

After fifteen minutes Severus had finished his snack. He drank his potion, packed his presents in a bag and shrunk it. Quickly, he dressed in his usual robes and smoothed the cloth with his hands. *I forgot how good it feels to have my robes on. Those damn nightshirts are horrible!* At that moment, Poppy and Charlie came out of the office, and after a quick diagnostic spell, Severus was released until midnight. Or as he thought about it, he got his parole.