

The Ghost of Christmas Passed Away

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Voldemort gets a surprise visit from the Ghost of Things Yet To Come. A dark comedy. Written in honor of hbar. Character death is in future memory form.

1

Chapter 1 of 1

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Voldemort sat in front of his fire, nursing his nightly Snake Venom Draught, or at least what everyone thought to be a draught. It was actually a Cough-Suppressing Potion...being slightly high allowed him to deal with the constant whinging from the Malfoys and the shrill quality of Bellatrix's voice.

The warmth of the fire was soothing, calming his nerves and lulling him into a soporific stupor. The stress of the last months overwhelmed him at times. The death of Dumbledore had been an amazing moment of triumph. The joy from that day was quickly squelched when both he and his followers had failed to capture and kill the boy. Again. Even trying to find the Elder Wand was more difficult than he expected; shouting "Accio Elder Wand" had proved entirely ineffective. The trips to actually find it were exhausting and taking their toll.

Tonight was Christmas Eve, and he hadn't received a single gift. Nagini was curled in the corner sulking, having not actually managed to eat Potter for dinner tonight. Had the snake not been carrying a piece of his soul, he would have Avada'd the hell out of her on sight. He'd given her one simple task, and even she had failed him. At this point, Severus was his only Death Eater who had not screwed up royally in the last year, except killing Dumbledore instead of letting Malfoy do it, of course.

He stared into the flames, hoping for some spark of inspiration. Instead, his robes were nearly singed by a green explosion of flames. He jumped to his feet, wand at the ready. No one had access to his fire...no one.

Out of his fire walked Albus Percival Wulfric Brian fucking Dumbledore.

"AVADA KEDAVRA!" he screamed, blasting the poltergeist back from whence it came. It had no effect.

Dumbledore chuckled. "Come now, Tom, you have to mean it!"

Voldemort glared.

"Of course, how can one kill someone who is already dead?" Dumbledore crossed the room, sitting in the chair opposite of Voldemort. "Take a seat. I'm going to be here for a while."

Voldemort stomped across the room, flopping himself inelegantly into a chair. "Would it really be so hard to call me 'my Dark Lord'? You know I hate that Muggle name..."

That stupid glint was in the older wizard's eyes. "Sorry, Tom, I do always seem to forget that." Dumbledore rummaged through his ectoplasmic pockets momentarily before

pulling out a lolly pop. He removed the wax paper with glee and stuck the sweet in his mouth.

Voldemort was becoming increasingly angry by the minute...his evening of sitting stoned in front of the fire was being ruined. "Why have you come back to haunt me, old man?"

"It's quite simple. The deities that be have tasked me with showing you the error of your ways. You've been bad, Tom. Very bad. And they've noticed. Should you not heed my warnings tonight, it shall lead to your utter damnation."

Voldemort scoffed. "Do you honestly think I care about such things? Only mortals can be damned. And as you very well know, I've already shuffled loose the mortal coil. Nothing can come of my actions but glory and honor for me and, I suppose, my Death Eaters. You're going to have to try a lot harder if you think you can scare me with your threats."

He watched as his former professor flicked his wand to the fire. Images began playing in the flames.

"Do watch, Tom. This all will happen should you continue down your path of destruction and mayhem."

The use of his former name was really starting to get on his nerves, but he was insatiably curious as to what his future would hold. He snapped his fingers, and Nagini slithered towards him before twining herself up his leg and into his lap. He petted her absentmindedly as he watched.

Muggles stood in lines before a raised platform, trying not to watch as one of their comrades was burned at the stake. On the platform, tied to the pole, screaming, was a small child, crying for his mother even as the flames burned and ripped away at his skin. The Dark Lord stood at the far end of the platform, a manic gleam in his eyes.

Voldemort watched his future self with interest. Green robes? He'd never considered green robes before. "I look quite dashing in that particular shade. Even you must agree."

"Pay attention!" Dumbledore hissed.

He removed the Elder Wand from his robes and, lifting it to his throat, cast a sonorous "Mudbloods and blood traitors, hear this. Until you turn Harry Potter over to me, the burnings will continue every hour, on the hour until every one of you is dead. I will offer clemency to the individual who tells me his whereabouts." He paused for effect. "I promise to also protect your families. All I need is one brave person, and these three weeks of burnings will end."

From the back of the line came a yell. The prisoners were all shackled together, so the Dark Lord sent Yaxley to unclasp the turncoat. After a few moments, a ginger-haired man stood before him.

"State your name." *The Dark Lord looked down at the man, attempting to Legilimize him, but the man did not meet his gaze.*

"Charlie Weasley."

"And your crime, blood traitor?"

The man winced. "Hiding a Mugg... Mudblood in my home."

"And the location of Harry Potter?"

Weasley's breath hitched. "The center of Stonehenge. You'll find his tent disillusioned at the center of Stonehenge."

"Your information has been most useful." And with a nod to his Death Eaters, toxic-green light burst forth from their wands, simultaneously killing the entire line of prisoners, knocking them over like dominoes.

Weasley's fair skin paled to translucence, his freckles looking black against his skin. "But... you said the deaths would stop! Why would you do this? You have what you needed to know! You've killed half my family already! Isn't that enough?" Weasley fell to his knees.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk, traitor, you must focus on your listening skills. I said that the 'burnings' would stop... not the killings. Frankly, I am quite tired of providing for this many prisoners. And now that I have my information, you are no longer of use to me either." He raised his wand, aiming directly between the man's eyes.

Charlie cried, "Please, I beg of you. My mother has already lost so many of us... Please, for the love of everything sacred, don't kill me. Please!" He crumpled forward, his body wracked with sobs. The tears dripped from his face leaving splatters in the dust.

The sound of the Dark Lord's sinister cackle rang through the square as the Killing Curse slammed into the man's body. He spun and Apparated away, leaving his Death Eaters to clean up the mess.

Voldemort could feel the grin on his face. It was exactly as he had always envisioned...those who put Mudbloods before magic-born witches and wizards being punished for their views. He could almost smell the stench of burning flesh and revelled in the sensation.

Then, of course, his guest had to interrupt his musings.

"Do you see, Tom? Do you see the atrocities that will come if you continue down your path? Do you understand what you are doing to your soul? And to this world you claim to hold so dear? Do you now understand why I am here?"

Voldemort sneered. "What I understand is that you are bringing me tidings of great joy, old man. You've showed me the culmination of all of my decades of work. What a wonderful Christmas present indeed. To think I was annoyed by your presence in my chambers this evening, and yet how was I to know you would bring me the greatest gift of all?"

Dumbledore's eyes flashed; he knew he had succeeded in getting under his guest's skin, and he relished the power he held over him.

"Greatest gift, Tom? Don't you mean *only* gift? It does not seem to me that any of your 'friends' saw fit to show their appreciation of you."

Dumbledore was right, and Voldemort hated it. "What could my followers give me that I do not already have? Glory? Fame? Unquestioning loyalty? A tea cosy would pale in comparison."

"You need another vision? Fine." Dumbledore thrust his wand forward with an angry, jabbing gesture.

The Dark Lord landed at the front gate of a gnome-covered lawn. They all ran for cover, cowering under trees and shrubs. The rickety house looked to be bursting at the seams, groaning under the weight of furniture and threatening to tear at the transfigured seams.

He removed a linen handkerchief from his robes and, wrapping it around his fist, knocked on the door.

A tired-looking woman with grey-streaked red hair answered the door. Judging from how quickly she reached for her wand, she was not pleased to see him. A flick of his

hand, and her wand zoomed into his hand.

"Molly Weasley?"

"Yes."

"Mother of Charles Weasley?"

She gasped, and tears welled in her eyes. "Yes."

"I have come to inform you of the death of your son for crimes against the state. He knowingly hid a Mudblood from being killed and as such was labeled a blood traitor."

The woman looked as if she was going to faint. Official 'blood traitor' status did not just mean the death of an individual under the new legal system...it meant the death of every immediate family member as well.

He watched her eyes as she realized this, reading her thoughts and emotions. "And no, my dear Mrs. Weasley, there is no way you will save your remaining children today."

He cast a nonverbal Body-Bind on her, leaving her frozen on the floor of her doorway. Taking a few steps back, he began shooting flames at the roof of the house, which quickly ignited. Whispering a spell, he launched upward above the house, stopping to hover over the roof.

With an arching sweep of his wand, he cast a circle of Fiendfyre fifty yards around the house. The flames quickly raced toward the epicenter before swallowing the house whole. He smiled before flying away.

"Did you not see the pain in her eyes before you lit fire to her home? The absolute pain of losing a child? Do you feel no remorse for your actions, Tom?"

"I grew up without a mother, and look how well I turned out." He made a wide-sweeping gesture with his hand at the opulent room to prove his point. "Women don't need children; if they did, my mother would have tried a little harder to live. If anything, the woman was probably angry that I killed one of her sources of income. I did her a service by killing her son...one less whining man in her life."

Dumbledore sighed the sigh of a man who knows he is failing. "I'm clearly not getting through, am I."

Voldemort had to stifle a giggle. "You're getting on my nerves is what you are. Could you please leave? I really would like to sleep." To prove the point, he tilted his head to the side and closed his eyes.

Dumbledore gestured to the flames, which sprung to life once again. Tempted by curiosity, Voldemort peered through his eyelashes at the scene.

The clearing oozed with smoke rising from bodies and trees. Two men faced each other, circling, neither willing to back down.

Neither can live while the other survives.

The prophecy could not have echoed more true...there was not one living being left on the battlefield, neither Order members nor Death Eaters alike.

The men paced like gunfighters, both of their hands itching for their wands. The younger wizard went for his wand, but the Dark Lord was faster. As he shouted the Killing Curse, Potter dove to the side. The blast of green moved towards the youth's body in slow motion.

Voldemort leaned forward in his chair. He had to get closer...really *feel* the curse hit the boy.

"I should just let you fall into that fire and immolate, you know..." Dumbledore mused. "The only problem with that plan being I really can't afford to let you come back to my school stuck on the back of some poor idiot's head... again..."

It broke the spell. The images in the flame vanished just before the spell knocked the boy straight in the arse.

It took everything Voldemort had in him not to pitch a hissy fit that would impress the most terrible two-year-old child.

"And I suppose this last image was supposed to make me feel guilty for killing half of Wizardkind just to murder one little orphan boy?"

Dumbledore nodded. "That was the idea..."

"Well, sorry to disappoint, but I fail to see how anything you have shown me has proven in any way that my soul would be *damned to Mudblood hell* should I not heed your warnings. You've shown me nothing more than everything I've ever wanted. I shall truly sleep well tonight knowing that all of my plans have not been in vain."

Dumbledore's face turned purple, and he sputtered trying to respond.

Voldemort drew his wand. "So long, *Brian!*" With a cry, he cast a Banishment Charm towards the poltergeist and sent him back to whatever hovel he normally haunted.

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He sat behind his desk, the room cloaked in shadow, his elbows propped up, and his head in his hands. If he lit the candles, he would have to see their disapproving faces, and frankly, after weeks on end of everyone in the castle glaring at him, he really didn't need it in his office.

He was tired of the anger, tired of the stress...tired of being in a position he never wanted. He had expected to be brought to the Dark Lord's side and had never imagined he would be made Headmaster.

The tension was radiating from his neck up into his eye. His jaw popped worse than ever these days, and he lived in the haze of a constant tension headache...it made this damned spy life that much more difficult. Between his tasks for the Dark Lord and his nightly reports to his office's newest haint, he hadn't slept well in months.

The pop of Apparition to his right would have startled him even a month ago, but now he was used to it. He didn't even bother to look up.

"You know, the Granger girl is going to have a fit if she finds out you can do that..."

"Indeed."

He detected a note of amusement in the former Headmaster's response. "Did it work, Albus? Or did your horrible acting skills fail to convince him."

"Of course it worked, my boy. Tom fell for it hook, line, and sinker; he now believes himself to be completely invincible."

He raised his head and locked eyes with Dumbledore. "And Potter? Do you truly think he's ready?"

"If you do what you need to tomorrow, then yes, I think he'll be ready in time for what's to come."

Snape sighed. "You do realize the Forest of Dean is mind-numbingly cold this time of year..."

"I do. It's necessary, Severus. Put on a double layer of those socks I left you and stop whinging. You're almost forty years old. It's getting embarrassing."

"Fine. But I'm going to hide the sword in the lake just to fuck with him..." He crossed his arms over his chest, daring Dumbledore to disagree with him.

"Whatever you need to do, Severus. I know you don't get a lot of happiness these days."

FIN

AN: This fic is lovingly dedicated to hbar. hbar, if we could bottle the squees your reviews cause us to emit and sell said squees as medicine to depressed people, the entire world would be happy. Thank you so much for all that you do to sustain our writing.

We at TPP asked hbar to submit to us a few prompts so we could write her a thank-you fic as one of our top reviewers of the year. This is what she submitted:

PROMPT - A humorous fic in the style of A Christmas Carol, or It's a Wonderful Life where the character of your choice receives a visitor(s) to show them that their life really is important and meaningful. The trouble is, the visitor is hard-pressed to find material to support that theory.

Sorry I deviated a little. I got this idea in my head, and it just wouldn't go away. I hope you enjoy it and know that we love you dearly.

Thanks to clairvoyant for live-editing this story. I would not have gotten it done on time without her (and her 'green robes' suggestion!).