

# The Fairy Lantern

*by magalena*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter. I make no money here.

AN: This is a 2011 birthday gift fic for talesofsnape. Many thanks to my beta Clairvoyant.

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Severus sat at his desk, his brow furrowed in concentration. In front of him was an intricately designed fairy lantern, and judging by the gentle, pulsating glow emanating from the delicate swirls of tiny pinholes pricked in the sides, there was probably a real live fairy inside. Such an artifact was a rarity nowadays, mostly due to all of the new rules and requirements established by the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures.

Not that that was a bad thing. Laws had changed and many wrongs had been righted. Magical creatures from goblins to werewolves to merpeople to centaurs and, yes, even fairies had been given certain rights and protections. So what the hell was he doing with a contraband fairy lantern in his office? He had no fucking idea.

The package had been delivered by the Malfoy eagle owl early that morning with a cryptic note that read:

*Severus:*

*Hold this package for me. Most important. Will come to fix things ASAP.*

*Draco.*

Fix things? What kind of trouble had his infernal godson got himself into now? Did he even want to know? This sounded like something he didn't want to get involved in, although at this point it seemed he'd somehow become embroiled in the situation whether willing or not. Ye gods, he'd thought his days of intrigue were over.

*What does one feed a fairy?* he wondered. It certainly wouldn't do for the poor creature to starve while in his care, however unwilling that care might be. With a sigh he supposed he would have to do a bit of research to find out more on the care and feeding of fairies. Perhaps a few chopped up flobberworms would serve the purpose.

He gave the lantern a little wiggle and was surprised to hear a tiny squeal, and he swore he heard his name, followed by a frantic tapping on the inside of the lantern.

"What the hell?" Severus tapped lightly on the top on the lantern with his fingernail. Tap, tap, tap.

Tap, tap, tap, answered back from within.

"Bugger me!" exclaimed Severus. He bent his head to try to peer through the tiny holes. He could see movement, there was definitely something in there, so it hadn't simply been charmed to glow like a real fairy lantern. He couldn't see anything clearly, though. He picked it up, looking for a clasp or some way to open the blasted thing. Without thinking he tipped it over, eliciting another squeal and several swear words, including at least three goddamns, two fucks and one dirty bastard.

Suddenly, Severus fell back into his chair with a gasp and stared at the lantern, his eyes wide in disbelief. He knew that voice, but it couldn't be. Could it?

Sliding forward, he carefully moved the lantern around, gently this time, so as not to jostle its occupant. He ran his fingers around the edges of the thing until he found a small hinge below the rim of the top. Waving his wand in an intricate pattern, he whispered a releasing spell and the clasp popped. Severus carefully lifted the top just a bit to peek within, then threw it wide open.

There was indeed a fairy inside. A fairy with bushy brown hair, snapping brown eyes, a skimpy costume and an attitude. She stood looking up at him, tapping her right foot, her hands on her hips and her face scrunched in anger. She ranted and raved furiously; he could barely understand what she was saying, she carried on so. The more agitated she became, the more she waved her arms around, and her wings began to flutter wildly until she hovered above his desk just in front of his face.

Then, as if she'd just realized that she was suspended in mid air, her wings stopped abruptly and she plummeted toward his desk. He barely managed catch her in his palm before she would have hit the hard surface.

"Hermione, you need to calm down now and tell me what happened," Severus requested reasonably. "I could hardly understand anything you just said."

Fairy-Hermione sat in his palm, leaned back against his fingers and burst into tears. Oh, dear Merlin, he could barely manage to deal with hormonal, weepy adolescents. How on earth was he going to manage a four-inch tall, inconsolable, despondent, miserably unhappy fairy... witch... Granger... whatever.

It took him nearly an hour, but he finally got the whole story sorted out. First, he had to transfigure his favorite quill into a comfortable, but doll-sized wing back chair for her to sit on his desk and his handkerchief into an afghan to cover her skimpy outfit. He would have liked to administer a Calming Draught, but he honestly had no idea of what ratio he would have to use for someone of her size and was afraid that giving it to her full strength, even in a tiny amount, might knock her out cold. So he called one of the house-elves and asked for tea, then he transfigured several paper clips into a doll-sized tea set and poured a tablespoon full into Hermione's teapot.

The tea seemed to help settle her down, and she was finally able to explain how she had ended up in this position.

"As you know, Draco and I work together at the Ministry. We'd gone out after work last night with some colleagues for drinks, and afterward, he came back to my flat to pick up some documents pertaining to our project. We were both pretty drunk by this point, and I started reminiscing about Hogwarts and recalled how funny it had been when the faux Mad-Eye turned him into a ferret. Well, Draco failed to see the humor in it and got a bit irritated when I just couldn't stop pointing and giggling. Inevitably, he pulled out his wand and transfigured me into a fairy, which he thought was fucking hilarious."

"You didn't agree, I assume?" responded Severus.

"Oh, no. I really thought it was quite funny...at first. Until Draco tried to turn me back and couldn't; that's when I started to get a tad upset."

"Hmmm... Yes, I can see how that would be the case," he commented, hiding a smirk behind his hand.

"I think that's when he panicked. And he really freaked out when Crookshanks began sniffing around and wanted to play with me like a kitty toy. At that point he realized how vulnerable I was while in this form, so he stuffed me in the lantern and shipped me off to you for safekeeping while he tried to find a way to reverse it," concluded Hermione. She paused to nervously clench her fists, and her voice wavered a bit. "What if... if he can't? What if... I have to stay like this?"

Severus could see her lip quiver and knew if he didn't head it off, he would be right back to square one with a whimpering fairy on his desk. "There, there," he consoled as he patted her very lightly on the back with his finger. "I'm sure Minerva will be able to sort this all out. Don't get yourself all worked up into a tizzy again, my dear."

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Fortunately for Hermione, Severus was right, and Minerva did know how to go about reversing Draco's transfiguration charms. And so it was that a short time later, Hermione was restored completely to her normal self with the only slight glitch being that her witch's robes did not reappear with the transformation, and she, embarrassingly enough, ended up sitting on the edge of the Headmaster's desk virtually naked. Once Severus was able to close his mouth, if not his eyes, he gallantly whipped his robe off and wrapped Hermione up securely. She was also missing her wand as well and thus was forced to wait not so patiently while Severus sent a house-elf to her flat to retrieve it for her.

After listening to her carry on for several minutes, outlining exactly how, once she had her wand back, she was going to hex Draco thirteen different ways, then start all over again, Severus stopped her. He stood before her gazing down at her with an odd little smirk on his face.

"What?" she asked, puzzled.

"Would you really like to get even with Draco?"

She studied him closely. "You have a plan?"

He nodded.

"Is it Slytherin?"

"Need you ask?"

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Draco finally showed up nearly a week later. To his credit, he looked awful. The young wizard, whose appearance was never anything less than pristine, now looked as though he'd not slept in that entire time; his clothes were disheveled, his hair uncombed and there were dark circles under his eyes. Severus felt almost guilty for what was about to occur. Almost. But not enough *not* to carry through with it.

"Draco, you look like shit," Severus stated bluntly. "What is it you're here for?"

"What am I here for?" asked Draco, confused. "I've come for the package I sent into your care, Severus. And I'm afraid that I'm going to need your help, as I honestly don't know how to undo what I've done."

"Package?" Severus asked innocently. "Oh, you must mean that fucking annoying fairy lantern. As I'm sure you know, it is quite illegal to hold live fairies captive nowadays, Draco. You could have got both of us into a great deal of trouble. Not to mention the blasted thing squealed and wailed and knocked on the sides of the lantern for hours on end. It got on my last nerve until I was ready to *Avada...*"

Draco turned a rather sickly shade of green and gasped, "Dear Merlin, you didn't."

Severus looked up at him with a scowl. "No, I didn't. I had one of the house-elves move it elsewhere so it would cease to annoy me. I don't even know where he put it. To tell you the truth, I haven't actually given it a thought since."

Draco sprang to his feet. "You sent her off somewhere with a house-elf! Severus, I expected you to take care of her for me. Please tell me you at least told the elf to care for her... feed her, let her out of the lantern. She could be starving by now," he cried.

Severus' scowl deepened. "Your note said nothing about caring for the blasted thing," he said as he opened the drawer to his desk and pulled out Draco's note. He read, "*Severus: Hold this package for me. Most important. Will come to fix things ASAP. Draco.* See... nothing at all about caring for it, just to hold it for you, and ASAP generally means as soon as possible, not nearly a full week later. If you wanted me to feed the damn thing, you should have said so. Besides, I honestly had forgotten all about it until this very moment."

Draco dropped his head into his hands and moaned. "We need to find her. Please, Severus, call the house-elf to go get her from wherever they put her."

Severus leaned back in his chair and looked at his godson, his eyes quickly stole to the corner of the room then back to Draco. "You know, Draco, if the creature has expired, it could be quite fortuitous for both of us if we play our cards right."

"What do you mean?" asked Draco warily.

"Well, harvesting the parts for potions ingredients could pay quite a pretty price. Do you know that a single fairy wing can go for a thousand galleons on the black market. And their hair is far more valuable than unicorn hair, and that's not even to mention the internal organs..."

"Aaaaaahhhhh! No! No, don't even say it! Oh, dear gods above and below, she can't be dead, she can't. Sweet Circe, what have I done? I deserve to go to Azkaban." Draco laid his head upon his arms on Severus' desk and sobbed disconsolately.

Severus saw the telltale shimmer of Disillusionment move from the corner, and then Hermione appeared and walked silently to stand next to the distraught wizard. Laying her hand on his shoulder she said softly, "Draco, don't..."

Draco's head shot up and he turned to see her. "Hermione!" he exclaimed. He fell to his knees from the chair and wrapped his arms around her legs, his face buried against her stomach. "Hermione, you're alive! And you're... you're... you. I'm sorry... I'm so sorry." He continued to babble on and on.

Hermione tried to push Draco's hands away, but he was clinging to her like the giant squid. "It's alright, Draco. I'm sorry that I let this go so far. Let go now, won't you, please?" As he continued to hold onto her, she desperately looked to Severus for assistance, mouthing the words 'help me' as she looked pointedly down to the wizard stuck to her like a barnacle.

Severus came from behind his desk and helped her peel Draco away and pushed him back into his chair. Hermione charmed a chair for herself and sat next to him while Severus leaned on the edge of his desk.

"Why didn't you let me know you were alright?" Draco demanded. "I've been driving myself mad!"

"Well, honestly, Draco, at first, I was so angry at what you had done that I just wanted to teach you a lesson. Then, the longer I waited here for you to come back for me, the more upset I got. I began to think that you weren't even worried about me at all."

"Hermione, I've spent the last six days trying to figure out what went wrong and why I couldn't reverse the transformation. I've researched spells and reviewed the whole thing in a Pensieve, over and over and over again, to get the exact wording of the spell I used and the wand movements. I'd begun to think I wouldn't ever be able to change you back, and I couldn't stand the idea of coming back here to face you. I didn't want to admit I'd done something so stupid as to cast a spell that I couldn't reverse. I've barely slept or eaten or anything for the past six days."

"Well, perhaps if I had known all that, I would have been a bit more forgiving. After waiting so long with not even a word, I thought you'd sent me off and forgotten all about me," declared Hermione.

"I was too ashamed to come back here until I had an answer. But I finally decided that I simply couldn't wait any longer and I'd have to recruit some help from Severus," Draco concluded.

"Oh, yes," responded Severus sarcastically, "because we all know that transfiguration is really my strong suit. Luckily for Hermione, Minerva was still in residence, and between the three of us, we were able to transform her back. Let this be a lesson to you, Draco; do not raise your wand in anger and especially not when intoxicated."

"And I am sorry for having you on so, Draco," apologized Hermione. "I wanted revenge, but I had no idea you'd take it so hard. You looked so miserable when Severus was speculating about harvesting my body parts that I had to put an end to it."

At the mention of body parts, Draco promptly leaned over and threw up all over Severus' shoes.

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Hermione and Draco settled their differences, and before long, Draco went on his way to return home and catch up on six days of sleep.

Before heading home herself, Hermione stopped by Severus' office to say goodbye and thank him for all his help. They had spend a lot of time together in the days since Malfoy's owl had delivered her to him. In those days, she'd had a chance to get to better know the man she had long admired.

She was surprised to see the fairy lantern displayed prominently near his desk.

"Are you seriously planning on keeping that in here?" she asked. She moved around his desk to stand next to him.

"I thought I would, yes. To be honest, I find that I am rather fond of it."

"And why is that?" asked Hermione with a grin as she leaned against his desk, her fingers brushing against his. "Do tell."

"It was the means that brought a most wonderful magical creature back into my life," Severus replied, his fingers brushing back against hers in response.

"Hmmm... dare I hope that means that I might actually be invited back?"

"Oh, I think there is no doubt that you will receive a standing invitation," he replied smoothly.

"Or perhaps, you might consent to visit me in London?" she countered.

"Why, yes, I very much believe that I might. Is that an invitation?"

"I believe it is. Shall we say this Friday at... seven?" Hermione asked hopefully.

"Very good."

"Well, good," she agreed enthusiastically, before dipping to brush a kiss to his cheek. "Friday it is then." She stood and turned toward the door.

"Indeed," he said. Following her, he grabbed her arm and pulled her into his embrace. Forcing her back against the door, he pressed his body to hers as he lowered his head to kiss her soundly. Leaning back to look down into her eyes, he explained, "I want there to be no doubt as to what my intentions are, nymph."

Hermione's face broke into a happy grin. "No, no doubt at all, Severus. I'll see you Friday," she said as closed the door behind her.

The Headmaster smiled a rare smile. Friday wouldn't come soon enough for him.

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