

Christmas Negotiations

by blackaces924

For her daughter's sake, Hermione makes a deal with the devil.

A Meeting of Old Acquaintances

Chapter 1 of 3

For her daughter's sake, Hermione makes a deal with the devil.



"Kevin Kern - Where Path Meets"

It was a little more than a month before Christmas, and snow was already piling high on the streets of Muggle London. *Who would have thought that it would be so cold this year? Even with a dark wool sweater under my usual cape and a few well-placed warming charms, it was still possible to freeze*, he thought darkly.

He quickly ducked into a shopping mall, glad that the heater seemed to have been turned onto full blast. Spying a coffee stall on one side of the food court, he hurried over to purchase a cup.

He was sitting at one of the tables in the food court when he felt someone gripping onto the back of his chair. His hand quickly fastened onto the wand that was concealed in his pocket, just in case it was a Death Eater. It had been nearly five years since Voldemort was defeated by The-Boy-Who-Lived-Yet-Again, but he was still loathe to let his guard down for a moment.

Hearing giggling behind him, he whipped his head around in record speed. Sneer in place, he found himself drowning in deep black pools, a pair of eyes that was oddly familiar.

It was a little girl, about three or four years old. Her black hair was smooth, wavy and curled into ringlets at the tips. When she saw his sneer, she tilted her head to her left, almost as if contemplating about something. He could almost see the wheels turning inside her head. Then suddenly, she turned on her mega-watt smile, showing him two rows of sparkling white, small teeth. He snapped out of his daze when she clapped her little hands in glee. She twirled around in her equally small red dress, all the while letting out a delightful chortle.

A thought came into his mind. *She sounds like an angel from heaven.*

She was tilting her head to the side with that 'thinking' look again. Then suddenly she said, "Magic?"

But before he could reply, she waved at him and then rushed over to the other side of the food court, disappearing into one of the many corridors that led to other shops.

He was then left with his cup of cold coffee, wondering if the child was merely a Muggle excited about Christmas or could actually detect the magic in him.

Two weeks later, he was in Muggle London again. He needed to find a few gifts since Albus was holding yet another Christmas dinner for the staff, undoubtedly with an infernal amount of twinkling decorations. *Barmy old codger.* Even after he gave up his position as Potions professor at Hogwarts since the demise of the Dark Lord, he had never been able to refuse anything the meddling old fool asked of him.

The students at Hogwarts had just left for their winter break. He didn't want to suffer the crowds at Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley that were sure to be there now that Christmas was only one week away. Muggle London was no better, probably even worse. But then again, the probability of anyone recognising him was pretty slim. Besides, he has a business appointment in Muggle London in about ten minutes.

A tiny part of him wanted to go back to that mall to see if the little girl was there again. He sighed. If he ever had a child, one such as her would be perfect.

The mall has been transformed into a replica of the North Pole. It was white everywhere. Tall Christmas pine trees were found scattered about throughout the whole mall. A large crowd gathered around a small stage in the centre of the food court. A Santa Claus with an insanely long beard was sitting in a large chair that looked like a throne. He smirked. Maybe he should suggest Albus do this next year; he wouldn't even need to attach the beard - it was already long enough. Two scantily clad elves stood on each side of Santa Claus.

The children were waiting in a line to go to Santa Claus while their parents stood outside the boundary. He was about to turn and go to his meeting when his eyes caught sight of the same little girl he had seen two weeks ago.

She was walking up the red carpet towards Santa Claus, almost skipping in delight. He could even see the sparkle in her eyes from where he was standing. Santa Claus pulled her onto his lap and asked her what she wanted for Christmas.

He saw her whisper her wish to Santa Claus, then scampered back down the red carpet with a gift from the two elves in hand to where he supposed her mother was waiting.

A woman who looked to be in her early twenties was talking to the little girl. The little girl was showing the young woman her present.

"Oh, Mummy, look!"

Oh, so that's her mother, he thought curiously. He could only see her in profile because she wasn't facing him directly. Even then, most of her face was hidden by a mass of wavy curls that flowed down past her shoulders.

He found himself holding his breath when she turned slightly, inadvertently showing him her whole face.

Bittersweet memories came rushing back at a speed that would most certainly knock out a weaker person.

He curled his lips into a sneer and gritted his teeth.

She was the last person he expected to see.

It was Hermione Granger. His *wife*.

A Little Girl's Wish

Chapter 2 of 3

For her daughter's sake, Hermione makes a deal with the devil.

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and characters belong to JK Rowling. Just borrowing them for fun.

A thumbs up to snarkyroxy for beta-reading

Songs listed in every chapter are recommended as background music.

Chapter 2: A Little Girl's Wish

"Kevin Kern - Hide and Seek"

She couldn't help but feel the burst of love and pride flowing through her as she watched her daughter walk – well, hopped would be a better word – her way to Santa Claus.

She sighed wistfully. *My baby girl is growing up.*

Who would have thought this little darling is mine and mine only? She had hoped against hope that she wouldn't wake up one day and realize that the hospital had given her the wrong baby.

She was jolted from her reverie when she felt something tugging at the hem of her suit jacket.

"Oh, Mummy, look!"

"What did Santa give you, ma chérie?" She watched as her daughter exuberantly unwrapped the gift, uttering a squeal of delight when she discovered it was a little dollhouse complete with a miniature kitchen set.

Hermione crouched down to her daughter's level and smoothed the black wavy hair that had become tangled in her energetic bouncing. "Did you tell Santa your wish?" Seeing her daughter's nod, she then winked and asked, "So, what did my darling daughter wish for?"

Giggling, the girl replied, "I want a daddy."

"Aww, sweetie."

"Mummy, why don't I have a daddy?"

It was one of those questions that Hermione had been dreading. *How was she ever going to explain the complexity of adult relationships to a four-year-old?*

"Everyone has a daddy. Amy has a daddy; Sandy has a daddy and even Carlo at the library too. How come I don't?"

"Mummy will explain to you when you're older, sweetie. CoCo is meeting us soon, so we have to get going," Hermione paused, "unless you don't want another Christmas present?"

At the mention of Christmas presents, all else was forgotten. But unbeknownst to the two of them, their entire conversation was deliberately overheard by a tall figure in black.

Meanwhile, Severus Snape was trying to work out what he had just heard. Unfortunately he reminded himself of the meeting that he was supposed to attend in five minutes. Snapping his fingers, a man in black suit discreetly appeared at his side.

"Find out everything you can about that woman and her child."

"Yes, sir."

With that said, he left in a swirl of black overcoat.

It was nearly six o'clock by the time Hermione and her daughter returned to their rented townhouse situated on the edge of city London. The little girl chattered all the way home, her round, black eyes alight with every new discovery. People on the street couldn't help but smile at the sweet little girl who smiled and waved at everyone she passed.

Once home, Hermione spelled the groceries to the kitchen and the unwrapped gifts to her own room. They had a guest coming for dinner this evening, and Hermione needed to bathe the little munchkin first; it would be difficult otherwise with "darling CoCo" doing nothing but making a mess of everything.

Hermione found her daughter in the living room, playing with the present she got from Santa Claus. Sneaking up behind the little girl, Hermione tickled her until she giggled.

"Mummy! Stop, it tickles!" the little girl squealed.

"You need to take a bath, chérie," Hermione reminded her. "You don't want to smell like a piglet when CoCo gets here, do you?"

The little girl shook her head earnestly.

"What bubble bath do we want today?"

"Strawberry!"

"Strawberry, it is."

The little girl was up to her neck in strawberry scented bath bubbles and splashing about with a rubber duck until Hermione decided it was time to dry up.

Just as she was drying her daughter with a large fluffy towel, the doorbell rang.

"That should be CoCo, chérie. Finish drying yourself, would you, darling? Your clothes are on the chair. I'll go and get the door."

The doorbell rang again.

"I'm coming, impatient git!"

She yanked the door open.

"Hello, Mudblood."

Discovery Awaits

Chapter 3 of 3

The calm before the storm - Hermione is in for a nasty surprise.

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Thanks to snarkyroxy for beta-reading =)

Chapter 3: Discovery Awaits

"S.E.N.S. – I For You (instrumental)"

"Draco," Hermione drawled mockingly as she proceeded to swat Draco's arm playfully, "you're late."

"Then I assume you don't want *these*?" With that, he held out a bouquet of fragrant, peach-coloured roses.

Pleasantly surprised, Hermione brought the bouquet close to her face and inhaled its sweet scent. "They are lovely. I've never thought I'd say this, Draco, but you're definitely spoiling me."

Smirking, Draco said affectionately, "Same here, Mudblood."

Whatever they were going to say next was cut off by the patter of little feet rushing down the staircase.

Draco felt an impact like a Bludger hitting his legs not long after hearing a squeal of delight.

"CoCo!" Little hands were already stretching upwards to show that she wanted to be carried.

"Hello, Muffin. How was your day today?"

"Me saw Santa today. Me got pressie, too." This was blurted out in a speed that was only possible with exuberant children.

"It's 'I', not 'me', cherie," Hermione corrected, unable to suppress her habit of correcting people's grammar.

"Do you want my pressie then, Muffin?" Draco asked whilst pecking the giggling girl on the cheek.

"Yes, yes, CoCo!"

"What do you say, cherie?"

"Prweety-please?" Unable to resist her puppy-dog-eyed expression, Draco pulled out a light pink teddy bear from his pocket.

The girl hugged Draco tightly, her little arms encircling his neck as she laid her head at the crook of his neck. Tucking the girl's head under his chin, Draco asked, "Where do you want to go for dinner, Hermione?"

They had both agreed that in front of her daughter, Draco wouldn't call her a "Mudblood", no matter how affectionately it was said. Although the Final Battle had been over for a few years and many purebloods had seen the errors of their prejudices, both Draco and Hermione wanted the girl to be raised with proper manners and the knowledge that Muggle-borns were in no way inferior to purebloods.

Meanwhile, Hermione was too shocked to see the sudden smirk appear on her daughter's face to even answer Draco's question. The smirk was uncannily similar to the one sported on the girl's father's face. It was a cute version nevertheless.

"CoCo forgot, Mummy!" She turned around in Draco's embrace and wagged her finger in front of his face, making ts-ing noises. "Naughty, naughty!"

She attempted to grab Draco's hair, but alas, grabbed his nose instead. "We are having ex... pee... ree... ment, remember?" she asked, stumbling slightly at the long word.

"Oh, no, the great Draco Malfoy forgot!" Hermione said in mock horror, which caused her daughter to giggle.

With a conspiratory wink, Hermione asked the little girl, "What colour are we going to change his hair into, darling?"

Clapping in glee, the girl smirked again and replied, "Pink!"

Seeing Draco's mortified expression and hearing his helpless, sputtering protests, Hermione decided to let him off the hook this time and convinced her daughter to dye his hair a more suitable colour and leave the pink until the next holidays.

Both Hermione and her daughter stepped back to admire their handiwork half an hour later. They ended up dyeing his hair black and spiking his usual fringe with gel.

"So, how do I look?"

"Yuck!"

"Thanks, Muffin." He grimaced and said, "Hermione?"

"Hmm... I'd give it an E."

"What, not even an O?"

Hermione rolled her eyes and smirked. "I don't think your inflated ego needs any more stroking. 'Exceeds Expectations' will have to make do."

He stood up and teased, "You know you love me anyway." Hermione didn't bother to answer, choosing to childishly stick her tongue out at him instead.

Draco then said, "C'mon, I'm taking you two out to dinner. Wear something nice, Hermione."

Half an hour later, the three of them arrived at the lobby of the Inter-Continental Hotel in London. Hermione fought the urge to jump up and down like her daughter when she realized that Draco was taking them to an expensive buffet dinner. The last time she went to a buffet dinner was about a month before going to Hogwarts. Merlin, that was so long ago!

Draco was happy that the three of them went out to dinner like a real family. He had been gobsmacked when Hermione reappeared, having changed into a knee-length, strapless, red dress complete with red heels. Her hair, which had tamed tremendously as she grew older, was twisted into an elegant bun.

Both he and Hermione were so engrossed in their own thoughts that they didn't notice they were being followed.

The next day they went to the local park; many children were already there, throwing snowballs at each other and making snowmen from the ample snow that had fallen throughout the night. The morning was spent making snowmen whilst the little girl teamed up with Draco to throw as many snowballs as possible at Hermione.

By lunchtime, all three of them were so exhausted that they practically stumbled into a nearby Gloria Jean's coffee shop. The rest of the day passed relatively fast.

Meanwhile, in an undisclosed location, a non-descript man placed a folder onto his boss's desk. His boss's face remained impassive as he skimmed through the file, barely seeming to acknowledge the photographs in his hands.

"Who is the black-haired man?" The face of the man with black hair always seemed to evade the camera. All that could be seen was his hair. Only one photograph had caught his side profile, but it was not enough to develop a sketch.

"We're still looking in it, sir." Knowing that cowering and stuttering were the worst things to do in front of his boss, the man stood as stiff as a wooden plank.

"Not good enough. Continue searching," was the response, bit out in a growl of irritation.

"Yes, sir."

It was around ten o'clock when Draco and Hermione tucked her daughter into bed. The girl was so positively exhausted that she fell asleep as soon as she hit the pillow. They then retired to the living room, where a fire was lit in the fireplace. Draco told Hermione that he would not be able to spend Christmas with her and her daughter. The Muggle fashion world has decided to hold another fashion show during the Christmas break this year, and so Draco, being the head of a fashion empire as well as a leading designer since his migration to the Muggle world, could not miss it.

He left when Hermione started yawning profusely, teasing her about her much needed beauty sleep.

However, Hermione was dragged from her sleep when she heard knocking at the door. She rolled over, stuffing her pillow around her ears, trying to block out the noise and go back to sleep.

But the insistent knocks on the door became louder and louder.

Whoever it is better have a damn good reason to knock on my door at midnight, she thought grumpily.

Still groggy with sleep, she opened the door and nearly had a heart attack when she saw an impossibly black thundercloud stationed outside her door.

Dear god, I must be hallucinating.

She whispered unbelievably, "Severus?"

Invisible steam seemed to be pouring out of his ears. *He is angry. Oh, no,* she corrected herself, *he is absolutely livid.*

She couldn't believe her eyes. It was then she realized that her fears over the past four years have indeed come true. He had found her. And now he was going to take her baby away.

Get a grip, Granger, she scolded herself.

Mustering all her remaining courage, she said through gritted teeth, "What are you doing here?!"

He sneered.

"I'm here to claim my daughter.