

A Bit of Christmas Providence

by Celisnebula

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The first couple of years after the defeat of Tom Riddle were particularly hard. We lost over one third of the Order members. I, I lost Ron, at the hands of Wormtail so bloody many people died. Harry almost died; had it not been for the actions of Severus Snape during the most crucial moment, I have no doubts Harry would have died too.

I tried to mourn Ron properly, and mostly I succeeded. I was so lost in my grief that I didn't take care of myself properly. I just didn't care anymore, I had lost everything. Nothing else mattered; I worked, I came home, and then I worked again. Harry with an infuriating sense of insight said I'd become a pillar of ice, frozen to everyone but a select few. I suppose that is true but emotionally, it was what I needed to do.

The Ministry, trying to repair the damage caused by Cornelius Fudge's refusal to believe Riddle had returned, aggressively went after anyone suspected or accused of being a Death Eater. Most of the time, the guilty were caught. However, there were some cases, like Stan Shunpike, where an innocent person was unjustly imprisoned on the assumption of guilt, all based on hearsay.

Harry was very vocal about the treatment of these prisoners. We all knew there was no way Stan Shunpike was a Death Eater. Also, if you take into account what Barty Crouch Sr. did to Sirius Black, committing him to Azkaban without a trial where he rotted for twelve years under the Dementors' kind treatment well, it was no wonder Harry reacted the way he did. He wanted to ensure that justice was served. It was one of the few times being a public figure actually worked in Harry's favor.

Rufus Scrimgeour, in an effort to appease the disturbed public, ensured that every person accused of collaborating with Voldemort received a trial; whether or not these trials were unbiased is up to personal interpretation. It was no secret that Scrimgeour was out for blood. Snape's blood but at least he went after him in accordance to the law.

It was two years before Snape was brought to trial. Two years of incarceration within Azkaban and I, along with many others, thought he'd be sent right back. It was no secret what had happened up on the Astronomy Tower that night. Harry described the scene with sickening clarity; we all believed that Snape was culpable for Albus Dumbledore's death. What I, and probably everyone else, wanted to know was why he turned at that last moment. Why had he given up certain victory for Voldemort's side simply to save Harry Potter? If Harry had any ideas, he kept them to himself.

By that time, I was working for St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, so I wasn't present for Snape's entire trial, though I did try to attend as many sessions as possible. Strikingly enough, Snape never voluntarily said one word in his own defense though given the information that came out at the trial, he hardly needed to. The entire case against Snape rested on one pivotal point: the death of Albus Dumbledore. Evidence, via one hidden Pensieve memory, as well as testimonials from various witnesses, in addition to Snape's own confession by Veritaserum, exonerated him of any wrongdoing in that death. In the end, the Wizengamot court had no choice; they voted for an acquittal, stating that his absolute guilt was not proven.

He was released from Azkaban that day, though where he went after walking out of the Ministry of Magic, I have no clue. It was whispered that he set up shop on Diagon Alley as a potions supplier for Slug & Jiggers Apothecary, but I never followed up on that information to find out if it was true or not.

Slowly, I began to emerge from my self-imposed exile; I couldn't live without the warmth of others. Viktor Krum and I started communicating again, and before long, we were dating. Our relationship was... complicated.

In some ways, I was trying to regain a sense of self a sense of who I was before I became this broken, bitter creature who only existed. Viktor was unfailingly polite sometimes too polite. He never yelled, never deliberately fought; he liked his private life to run at a placid pace it juxtaposed nicely with his chaotic career. I'd had a passionate, volatile relationship with Ron, so I found that Viktor's slow deliberation and temperate natured seemed to soothe the lonely beast inside of me.

On Halloween, following the final Death Eater trial and a full twenty-three years after the deaths of the Potters, the Ministry held a formal ceremony to award the Order of Merlin to those of us who fought in the final confrontation against Voldemort. It was a huge, glittering affair that I wanted nothing to do with but as one of the recipients, I couldn't beg off.

Viktor was my escort that night, though as soon as we walked into the ballroom, he disappeared. I sat with Harry and Arthur Weasley for a bit, but the conversation was stilted and uncomfortable. I still had trouble being around any of the Weasleys.

Giving Harry a quick kiss on the cheek and Arthur an awkward hug, I walked around the room, keeping an eye out for Viktor. I really wasn't in the mood to mingle; there were far too many people in attendance some I knew, many I did not. I did my best to be seen, smiled until my jaw hurt from the effort, all the while wishing I were somewhere else. I never did find Viktor inside the ballroom.

Finally, I'd had enough; I just couldn't take another moment inside that congested ballroom. It was bitterly cold in the dark garden, but I didn't care I needed to get away from the crowd of happy people. I couldn't understand how they could be so gay and happy after everything we had lost. I heard someone follow me out and assumed it was Viktor. I huddled against a tree, watching the snow float down from the sky.

"Viktor," I said softly, without looking back. "Why haven't you kissed me yet?" I glanced over my shoulder and saw his dark figure behind me. "Is there something wrong with me?" I asked quietly.

I could feel his eyes on me and wondered if he was measuring my worth. I crossed my arms over my chest and stared at the ground before me.

"Please, Viktor," I whispered. I could feel tears gathering at the corner of my eyes, and I'm sure he could hear the tremor of my voice as I spoke to him. I turned around and stumbled blindly to where he stood, only to fall on my knees at his feet.

"Will you kiss me? Kiss me until I feel something anything again?" I cried out, staring at the wet ground. I couldn't look at him I was too ashamed of myself.

His long, calloused fingers were cool as they brushed the tears from my cheek. I scrunched my eyes shut at his touch awed at how delicately he touched me. I think I knew at that moment it wasn't Viktor touching me, but I was too far gone in my grief to care. His warm breath scanned across my cheek as he knelt down beside me, his lips were cold as he pressed them to my forehead it was just a whisper of a touch.

He shifted his weight, as if to pull back, and I reached out to grip his robes. I heard him suck in a deep breath as I whispered, "Please," tilting my chin up.

I could feel the slightest hint of stubble as his cheek rubbed against mine before our lips met. My fingers tightened on the front of his robes; I heard a faint moan, and surprisingly enough, it was mine. His mouth was firm and commanding as his tongue swept into my mouth; he tasted faintly of brandy.

I slid my hands up around his neck and into his hair, returning his kiss with a ferocity that frankly would've scared me, had I been thinking. I felt alive everything in me focused on the feel of his mouth against mine and I wanted more.

Suddenly, with a hoarse groan, he ended the kiss, resting his forehead on mine for a moment. I slowly opened my eyes, my fingers gently touching my tingling lips. It was a good thing I was kneeling on the ground, because I doubt my legs could've held me up. The darkness sharpened his already harsh profile, his lips twisted in a slight sneer as he quickly stood up.

I simply stared at him, my fingers pressed to my lips the silence stretched between us, an incomprehensible chasm of confusion and need. I felt like a bewildered Alice, tumbling through the rabbit hole I'd just been thoroughly snogged by Snape, and I wanted to do it again.

Viktor's voice broke through the silence, calling my name. Snape merely raised a sardonic eyebrow before melting into the blackness of the night. I composed myself, as much as possible after a kiss like that, before calling out, "I'll be right there."

"You are all right?" he asked, glancing down at the mud on my knees once I reached his side.

"Yes," I mumbled, smoothing my palms down the front of my robes in a nervous gesture. "I just tripped."

I breathed a sigh of relief when he didn't ask anything else and steered me back into the overheated ballroom. Snape was at the Ministry I wondered briefly why he was there, given the current Administration's attitude towards him. It became clear as the night wore on many of the Order's members refused to show up unless everyone was acknowledged, including Snape. I can only imagine how furious that made Scrimgeour. The rest of the night passed in a blur of cheerful people and too much wine.

After that kiss, I knew I couldn't consign myself to a passionless life with Viktor, no matter how much I thought I needed his calmness. Oddly enough, he seemed almost relieved when I called it off. Made me wonder why he was even with me.

Time went on, and life returned to an almost normal pace. Had I been another sort of person, I might have tracked Snape down and demanded an explanation for his actions that night, but I wasn't or rather, I couldn't. Things at St. Mungo's remained as they always do a steady diet of Splinchings, an entire host of Weasley-related jinxed products to enlighten any Healer's week, and the occasional bit of cursed jewelry that somehow made it into the hands of an unwary Muggle.

Molly dragged me back into the Weasley fold, and while it hurt to be around them, hurt to remember that first taste of love I'd shared with Ron, it felt good to be with them again. Harry married Ginny in a small spring ceremony and settled down to a quiet life not too far from the Burrow. It might not have been as gloriously exciting as our childhood, but it was a nice life.

It would be another three years before I encountered Snape again. Three years where I tried to forget about that kiss I dated a few men from the hospital, lived through Molly's insistence that a woman simply could *not* be happy without a family of her own as she thrust another hapless prospect in front of my nose. Ironically enough, it was a potions accident that brought him, figuratively, to my door, a potions accident worthy of Neville Longbottom.

I was his attending physician, much to his displeasure a fact he was very vocal over. During his three-week stay, no one came to visit him; it was as if the world couldn't care less that he was indisposed. I found myself spending more time than what was professionally necessary checking up on him, though trying to have a pleasant conversation with a man of his ilk was like trying to pull out a molar the Muggle way, sans Novocain.

Two days before his release, coincidentally a fortnight before Christmas, I invited him to the Weasleys' annual Christmas gathering. I hated the idea of him going home alone to a cold flat on Christmas I knew, all too well, what that sort of solitude did to a person. Needless to say, the invitation did not go over well.

"I'm not interested in being your *pet project*, Granger," he growled at me before storming out of his hospital room.

I tried to let it go, to tell myself that he simply wasn't that sort but the spark of what had happened all those years ago wouldn't let me. Every time I closed my eyes, I could feel the imprint of his lips on mine the way his body felt so close to me, his unique, earthy scent.

Calling in a couple of favors, I obtained his last known address, a small, little, run-down, Muggle neighborhood just outside of London. I spent my one day off taking the Underground to its location, just to make sure he still lived there.

The night of Christmas Eve, I dressed carefully. I had a vague idea of what I wanted to do, but whether or not I could actually go through it was another thing. I bundled myself up and Apparated to Spinner's End, all the while calling myself a fool. Nibbling on my lower lip, I unraveled the nasty little privacy spells he placed around the house and knocked on the front door.

He tried to shut the door in my face, but I wedged my foot into the doorframe. I felt a small tingle of victory slide up my spine when I wasn't automatically hexed for my audacity. I pushed into his sitting room, noting the severely simplistic quality of the room.

Taking a deep breath, I let my robes drop to the floor. I stood before him, clad in only my bra, knickers, a garter belt and stockings, shivering as the cold air caressed my flesh. He just stood there, still as marble, his features composed in an unaffected mask. Had I not seen that brief tic, that lone tightening of his jaw, I might have run from the room in tears.

I could feel the weight of his gaze upon my bare flesh, but I held my ground. I nervously chewed on my lower lip, letting my hair fall into my face as the minutes ticked by in agonizing silence. When it became too much, I reached down to pick up my robe, disappointment flooding through me.

I never saw him move. One minute, he was halfway across the room, the next he was right in front of me, the fingers of each hand curled around my arms, biting into my flesh.

"What do you want from me?" he hissed out, giving me a small shake. I closed my eyes, breathing in his scent. I could almost taste it, and it stimulated my memories of that night in the darkened garden.

"I I want to feel again," I stammered out past the lump in my throat.

"To feel?" he asked with a slight sneer, pressing his thumbs into the flesh of my arms. "Do you feel this? Is this what you came for? A fuck with the last Death Eater? I gave up that kind of thing a long time ago, Granger."

"That's not it at all," I cried out. "I want... That night in the garden, I felt something I never expected to feel, I want to experience that again."

"You shouldn't be here; you should be smart enough to know that this isn't what you need." He lifted his right hand and slowly caressed my cheek as he spoke, the words whispering over my cheek.

"Then send me away. Tell me you want me to leave, and I will."

It seemed like an eternity before he hooked a long finger under my chin, raising my face to his; his lips brushed mine before crushing down in a bruising kiss. I moaned, arching up onto the tips of my toes in an effort to get closer, my heart painfully thudding against my chest. The tip of his tongue pushed in between my lips, conquering my mouth as it stroked along mine.

With a soft whimper, I wrapped my arms around his shoulders, my hands slid into his black hair. His mouth moved down my chin, and I gasped as he began nibbling along my throat until he found the slight hollow at the base. His tongue played against it lightly, his teeth grazing the flesh teasingly.

I groaned in delight as his warm, slightly calloused hands brushed against my cool flesh, his fingers tracing slight patterns in my sensitive skin. It felt like his lips and hands were everywhere at once, playing my body until it was a tingling, trembling mass of need.

He pulled from me with a harsh moan, letting go long enough to unclasp my bra; he tossed it carelessly over his shoulder. His fingers bit into the flesh of my hips as he lifted me up into his arms, bringing me up eye-to-eye with him as he pinned me between him and the wall. My head fell back against the wall as he dipped his head down to kiss along the swell of my breasts.

A cry of triumph tore from deep in my throat as he found my nipple, flicking the tip of his tongue against the hard, taut peak. Taking it between his lips, he dragged his teeth over the quivering peak, suckling gently, the warmth of his mouth was my undoing.

I felt one of his hands move to cup my other breast, his fingers slowly rolling the nipple between his thumb and forefinger as his mouth sucked the other. I clasped my knees around his hips, straining against him in an effort to get closer, my nails digging into his shoulders. I could feel the hard length of him between my thighs, and I wanted more.

"Please..." I moaned, swallowing hard. As far as we had come, I was still certain he would change his mind at any moment.

Sliding his arms around my arse, he pulled me closer, and I instinctively locked my legs around him. For such a thin, wiry man, he was surprisingly strong no doubt from years of lifting heavy potion cauldrons. He hesitated for a moment, his eyes locked on mine. I could see the silent question in them as he stood there. I pressed a light kiss to his lips.

He grunted a bit under my weight as he carried me down the hall to his bedroom. I barely had a chance to see anything in the room as he swept in through the doorway and set me down in the center of his bed.

I felt the mattress dip under his weight as he climbed over me, the length of his body brushing against mine as he covered me. Placing one knee between my thighs, he bent his head down, his lips seizing my nipple.

He drew back from me, and I whimpered at the loss. I trembled with need as he splayed one large hand against my belly. Mindlessly lifting my hips, our eyes met, and I shivered as I saw the naked desire I felt reflected back at me. My legs trembled as he hooked his fingers around the elastic waistband of my knickers and pulled them down my legs. I bit my bottom lip as he tossed them behind him, fighting the urge to cover myself now that I was completely exposed to his gaze.

He moved between my thighs again, grinding himself against me, the rough texture of his trousers causing an exquisite friction against my fevered flesh. I made a low moan in the back of my throat as I arched my hips up, wrapping my legs around him.

I pulled at the material of his robes, wanting desperately to feel his skin under my hands, nearly ripping the material as I bared his pale flesh to my gaze. I raked my nails down his chest, and he growled softly. I brushed my fingers against his nipples, tugging on them gently with until they hardened under my touch. He pulled in a hissing breath as I let my hands wander lower, skimming over his stomach lightly until they rested at the waist of his trousers.

Slipping my hand lower, I cupped his erection through the material of his trousers as he traced a finger along the outer lips of my vulva. I moaned, stroking my palm up and down the length of his covered cock. He added just a bit of pressure, teasing the area around my clit.

"Not fair," I gasped out, trying to tug his trousers down over his hips. He lifted his hips a bit in an effort to help me, the weight of his body shifting as I eased them down. My gaze dropped down between our bodies as his cock sprang free, the need to touch him almost overpowering.

He kissed me tenderly, his tongue tracing the seam of my lips until I parted them. His fingers continued to explore my body, teasing and stroking my flesh until I mindlessly arched up against him. The weight of his body pressed me into the softness of the mattress as he kicked his trousers the rest of the way off, settling the full length of his naked body against mine.

He let out a soft hiss as I arched up, cradling him between my thighs. His fingers gripped my hips as he pressed the tip of his cock against me. My nails dug into his shoulders as I shifted under him, urging him on. I couldn't suppress my gasp of pleasure as he slowly sank into me.

It was glorious, the feel of him sliding into me. With agonizing slowness, he rocked his hips against mine, urging me onto madness.

I squirmed under him, tightening myself around him as he began to thrust deeper into me. My thighs tensed and my arms slid down his back until I could grip his arse, pulling him to me. With a twist of his hips, he started moving faster, my back bowing as I arched up to meet him thrust after thrust.

He reached down between our bodies, one of those long, pale fingers finding my clit. He stroked it in tandem with his thrusts, driving me towards that edge. My hips bucked upwards, and I dropped my head back against the mattress, nearly screaming as my orgasm hit me. He rode my orgasm out, driving deeper into me than I thought was possible, before tensing with his own release.

He collapsed on top of me, the sound of our labored breathing filling the room. I could feel the bed sheets crumpled and twisted underneath me. He rolled on to his side, taking me with him, cradling my body against his. My head ended up in the crook of his arm, his fingers lightly stroking up and down my back.

"That night, in the garden, why did you kiss me?" I asked. I felt him shrug in the darkness.

"I could reasonably ask you the same thing, why orchestrate all this?"

"Because I wanted to," I whispered.

"Indeed," he replied, pulling me closer.

I twisted my body until I was nearly sprawled across his chest.

"Does it bother you that I did this?" I asked, watching his face.

He sighed, closing his eyes.

"Go to sleep, Hermione," he said after a few minutes. "We can talk about this tomorrow."

"Fine, but Severus," I whispered, settling myself comfortably against him. "I'm not sorry I did this."

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Authors Notes:

Disclaimer: Not mine (though I can dream), I've only used the characters (slightly) for my own nefarious ends (and what a climatic one it is too).

This story was betaed by Sophi (aka Sophisgotagun on LJ), who kindly agreed to be my comma Nazi. Any mistakes still contained within are solely my own (I'm stubborn about some things).

This was a story written for Stormyskizes on the SSHG_exchange, Christmas 2007.

Prompt: Simple Christmas fic, Post-Voldie, in which SS is planning on spending Christmas alone. HG (preferably anonymously) tries to get him involved in some of the holiday parties. (Of age HG, please) Tasteful smut appreciated. (After her involvement is revealed!)

Acquittal under Scots Law (which is a fascinating read, especially for Snape fans):

Scots Law has two acquittal verdicts: not guilty and not proven.

URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Not_proven