

The Christmas Trap

by Lorraine Bluestar

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: All characters and concepts of Harry Potter's universe belong to J.K. Rowling; I just borrowed them for a little while.

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"Keira, hurry up, we have to go now!"

A little girl barely six years old came running down the stairs to join her mother who was waiting for her in their house's threshold. She was carrying a big book-bag on her back and a doll in her hands.

"What took you so long, darling?"

"I was looking for one of my books, Mum. You know, the one that has all those pretty stories you used to read me."

Hermione smiled at her daughter, helping her put her mittens and her hood on, and when she was properly covered, she took the girl's hand to guide her outside of the house. "Have you been practicing your reading?"

"Yes, Mum, the other day I read a complete page all by myself, and it had no drawings."

"That's great, my dear."

Hermione tightened her grip on her daughter's hand. She felt the cold winter wind filtering through her cloak, but still she preferred the daily walk to Hogwarts instead of Flooing to the castle. That way she had time to take some fresh air and prepare herself for facing the father of her daughter, Severus Snape, again.

During the war against Voldemort, Hermione was abducted by an unknown Death Eater, which happened to be Severus. In the couple of days he kept her, he convinced her to let him help them in their quest, giving her information for the Order and resuming in that way his role as a spy for the light. Mostly she had accepted because all their efforts had been useless in the months that they had been trying to find the missing Horcruxes.

After a couple of years working together in secret, one rainy night in which Hermione couldn't go back to her best friends, she had to remain with Severus. The tension between them was evident, and after awkward hours of conversation (and a bottle of red wine), they both admitted the mutual attraction they felt. After some confessions and a heated discussion about the convenience of their discovery, they kissed passionately and shared a night together. The morning after, Severus abruptly retreated into his shell again and declared everything a mistake that shouldn't have happened. His attitude hurt her immensely, but Hermione refused to let him know about her

Hermione hadn't been a virgin when she'd slept with Severus; she had given that to Ron before when she thought herself in love with him. It hadn't been a bad experience at all, but it certainly wasn't like what she'd experienced with Severus. She had been protected, of course, using a contraceptive potion regularly as a precaution because she had indulged with Ron a couple of times before, but it was clear that she had overestimated the potion. She thought that the decent thing was to let the father know about the existence of the baby, even if she didn't want him back in her life after the way he'd dismissed her after their night together. Hermione owed Severus to give him the news, stating clearly her intention of keeping the baby and raising him, or her, alone. He had contacted her back, of course, saying that if that was what she wanted, then he would not interfere with her decision.

Hermione was brought back from her musings when Keira called her.

"That's great, my dear. Tell me, what do you want this year?"

Hermione felt her heart clench; that was certainly impossible. "No, honey, not this year. Daddy has things to do."

"No, Keira, and that's the end of it."

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Well, he had never expected to live a happy life, so he could cope with the state of things. Besides, Hermione had stated quite clearly that she didn't want anything with him, so there was no point in thinking about her. He left his chambers and headed to one of the greenhouses looking for Pomona, who had promised to give him some asphodel root for his second-year class. He was walking through the corridors when he saw them. Hermione seemed to be annoyed, and Keira looked rather gloomy, but when she saw him, her eyes brightened.

The little girl freed herself from her mother's grip and ran to him. Severus couldn't move, but he held the girl awkwardly when she hugged him.

"Severus."

"Come now, Keira, your father has things to do, and your aunt Ginny is waiting for us."

Severus flinched; he had no idea how to answer his daughter. "I..."

The little girl didn't move, but after a moment, she reluctantly nodded and let Severus go, the gloomy expression returning to her face.

"Let's go, my dear. It's late."

Keira entered in the chambers without saying a word, which was quite strange for her, and immediately alerted Ginny that something was plainly wrong.

"I know it, Ginny, but what if he treats her badly or if he tells her something horrible that hurts her? I would never want her to think that she's not a loved and wanted girl."

"That's different. That has nothing to do with her. And I really don't think this is a good time for this conversation. I have a class if you remember."

"And what had happened to make you come here on this particular day?"

"It's Hermione. She..."

"What? Where is she? Is she alright? Has something happened to my daughter?"

"I'm not very sure, but Keira Flooded saying Hermione wasn't well and that she said something about a potion she needed."

"Don't just stand there, Potter. We need to go to her."

"I can't go. Ginny hasn't been feeling well, and I need to stay by her side. You'll need to go alone."

But Severus didn't answer him. He was already rushing to exit the castle and to get to the Apparition point. Moments later, he was Apparating outside Hermione's house and knocking on her door madly.

The pounding at her door startled Hermione, and her first thought was that something was wrong. "Keira, stay here while I go and see what's going on." She reached the door and cast a revealing charm to make sure there wasn't a threat on the other side before opening, but what she found on the other side made her gasp.

"Severus, what are you doing here?"

It was pretty obvious she was perfectly fine, and she looked so beautiful wearing red dress robes that clung perfectly to her body, her hair falling in loose curls over her shoulders. Severus was suddenly speechless, looking at her lovely image, but he recovered quickly.

"Potter said that you had an emergency, that you needed assistance, but it is obvious I was misinformed because you look perfectly fine. I apologise for the intrusion." He was bowing slightly and preparing to leave when a little voice broke the silence.

"Daddy! You came to see us?"

Severus felt himself stiffen again when his daughter hugged him, but this time her mother wasn't looking at him as if she were about to hex him, but it was she again who reacted first.

"Honey, I'm sure your dad wasn't planning to stay here for the night, so I'm not sure that you should ask him that."

"Mummy, I'm sure Daddy was all alone. It's not any fun to be alone at Christmas. Can't he please, please stay with us tonight? Besides, we have plenty of food."

"Keira, I don't think that's a good idea. We don't even know if your father doesn't indeed have other plans or if he would like to stay."

"Daddy, will you stay with us please? I have been a very good girl this year. You can ask Mum. Please stay."

There was something in Keira's pleas that Severus just couldn't resist. "Well, I have not been invited properly, so it would not be appropriate for me to impose my presence here."

"Mum?"

Hermione couldn't resist the look on her daughter's face, and Ginny's words came back to her mind. This was indeed what her daughter wanted this Christmas. Everything that she had done had been for her daughter, so if this was what she wanted so badly, then she would do it.

"Severus, if you don't have any other plans, would you stay with us for dinner? As Keira said, it's not good to be alone on Christmas Eve."

He knew it was now or never. If he ever had a chance to win her back, it would be this night. "Well, considering I have no other appointment for this night, I think I can stay for a while to keep you company."

Keira jumped excitedly and took Severus' hand to guide him inside. "Your hands are cold, Daddy. Come closer to the fire."

Neither Hermione nor Severus could deny that the situation was awkward, but as the minutes passed, the conversation started to flow as it had during the meetings they'd had during the war. Dinner together was very pleasant. Everything Ginny had sent was delicious, and it seemed that all of them wanted to make their first time together as a family something special. After that, they moved to the living room again, and to Hermione's amazement, Severus offered to read Keira a story.

About an hour later, no matter how much she tried to stay awake, Keira's eyes were closing, and she was yawning repeatedly.

"Honey, it's time to go to sleep. Come now. Tell your father goodnight, and let's go."

"Can my Daddy come with us and kiss me goodnight?"

Hermione just turned to Severus in order to weigh his reaction to the girl's petition, and when their eyes met, he just nodded.

"Ok, let's go to your room to change into your pyjamas, and then your dad will go and wish you a good night."

Keira nodded and stood up, kissing Severus on the cheek before following her mother upstairs.

Her small gesture left Severus startled and thinking about what had happened that night. He had felt frustrated with his daughter at times, not knowing how to respond to her affection or how to answer her questions. She was obviously like her mother, eager about knowing everything. Keira would be a very gifted witch for certain. He smiled to himself, analysing the whole evening. He had felt right, as if he really belonged with them and as if he could spend every Christmas Eve like that with them. But not just Christmas: every night as well, every morning, and every day. To be with them always, to wake up with Hermione in his arms, like that morning when he woke up to see her sleeping peacefully with that sated smile on her face. His Hermione...

"Severus! Can you hear me?"

"What? Were you saying something, Hermione?"

Hermione couldn't avoid shivering slightly when she saw the emotions in his eyes when he'd turned to look at her. "I have been calling your name, but you seemed to be so lost in thought."

"Well, you have my attention now."

"Right. Keira is already in bed, and she's just waiting for her father to go and kiss her goodnight."

"Very well. Show me to her room please."

They reached the girl's bedroom and found her already half asleep, only waiting for her father before succumbing to her tiredness. He leaned to kiss her forehead, and his fingers brushed a black curl from her face.

"Goodnight, Keira."

"Goodnight, Daddy. I'm so glad everything worked out and that you came here tonight. I knew that if you remembered that you love each other we'd finally be a family. That was my Christmas wish and the best gift I have received. I love you, Daddy."

Both Hermione and Severus were speechless. So it had been she who had plotted to bring them together. Secretly, they also felt proud of their girl for her cleverness and her cunning. Hermione extinguished the last candle, and both left the room and moved to the sitting room. For several minutes, neither knew what to say, the awkwardness settling back between them. Finally, it was Hermione who broke the silence.

"Thank you for staying here this night. It meant a lot to Keira."

"Just to her?"

"Well, I had a pleasant evening as well. I enjoyed having the conversations back."

"Me too, Hermione. It has been a long time."

"Yeah. Listen, you don't have to go back to Hogwarts this late. I have a spare room, and you can stay there. That is, if you don't mind, of course."

"Do you want me to stay, Hermione?"

"Well, I..."

He had spent so much time being afraid of his feelings, both for Hermione and their daughter, but he didn't feel the fear anymore, just felt a wish to stay with them forever. It was time to take a chance again with her. "Please, look at me when you answer. Look into my eyes and honestly say if you want me to stay."

Hermione looked at him, and she instantly knew he wasn't just talking about this night. He was talking about the future. Merlin, she still loved him so much, but what if he hurt her again or if he hurt Keira? Then, she saw that emotion again in his eyes, the one she saw when she'd interrupted him before, and she knew he wouldn't hurt them.

"I want you to stay, Severus."

He took her hands in his and softly pulled her to him to capture her lips with his. It was like the first kiss they'd shared, but it spoke of a familiarity and of years that had always been there. They kissed and kissed again, lost in the chance they had to find each other. Tomorrow they would talk about what would happen after this evening, but for tonight, they just knew they wanted to stay like this forever.

Author's Notes: I chose the name Keira for their daughter because of its meaning: dark.

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