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.

"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

developed feelings and simply tried to move on, forgetting the man that had cast her aside. Around a month later, she discovered she was pregnant.

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 owled 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.

The spring of the year of Voldemort's downfall, Keira was born. She knew from the beginning who her father was, and Severus had seen her a few times. When the girl was five years old, Minerva McGonagall had asked Hermione to go back to Hogwarts to occupy the vacant post of Transfiguration professor. It was a tough decision for her, but she'd accepted after knowing that Harry had also accepted to go back with his family to take the DADA post. Too late she'd discovered that after Slughorn's second retirement, Severus had accepted the Potions post again. She couldn't resign because she had signed a magical contract that bound her to the post for two years, so she now had to endure seeing the father of her daughter daily. But Hermione had refused to live in Hogwarts like the rest of the staff, and she had acquired a small house for her and her daughter in Hogsmeade.

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

"Mum, I already know what I want for Christmas this year."

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

"I want my daddy to come and spend Christmas Eve with us."

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

"Please, Mummy? I'll be so good! Pretty please?"

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

The little girl lowered her head and didn't speak for the rest of their walk.

Severus always had his breakfast and the rest of his meals in the dungeons since he'd returned to Hogwarts. He avoided being in the corridors or in the common places of the castle; that way his chances of seeing Hermione or his daughter were significantly reduced. He still cursed Minerva's name every morning for making him sign a magical contract that made it impossible for him to leave the post. It hurt to see the woman he still loved everyday and to know that she would never be his. Hermione was still so young when he'd accepted his feelings for her, and it was certainly impossible to have something together when he was still a fugitive, loathed by half of the wizarding world. Severus had been sure that he was going to die before the end of the war, so it had been better to keep her away from him. But he hadn't died, and a time later, he had a forgiven life, a daughter, and an empty existence.

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.

"Daddv!"

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.

Hermione joined them, the annoyed expression on her face intensifying, but Severus noticed her slight shiver and the subtle blush of her cheeks when she looked at him in the eyes.

"Severus."

He answered her with a little nod. "Hermione."

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

"Can we play together this afternoon, Daddy? I brought my doll and books with pretty stories to read."

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

"Keira, your father is busy, and he needs to go now."

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

"Good day." Severus bowed slightly and left as quickly as he could. He certainly wasn't prepared for that kind of encounter.

Hermione felt terrible after the brief meeting. She had not only been mean with Severus but also with her daughter, who only wanted to spend some time with her father. But it had been for the best. He had never wanted to be a part of Keira's life, and she wouldn't risk her daughter to his rudeness.

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

They finally reached Harry and Ginny's chambers, and the red-haired witch greeted them. "I was wondering where you were; your class will start in a few minutes, Hermione."

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

"What happened, Hermione?"

"Keira told me this morning that she wants to spend Christmas Eve with her father, and I refused. And a few minutes ago, we ran into him in the corridors, and I didn't want her to stay near him too long. It was obvious that he didn't want to be with her."

"Oh, I see. I know why you're doing things this way, but don't you think it might be better for her to spend time with her father? She needs to have a father figure in her life as well "

"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."

"And I guess that seeing that her parents barely talk to each other doesn't hurt her."

"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."

"Go to your class, Hermione, but you should consider thinking about the situation between you and Snape and how that affects your daughter."

Hermione just sighed, knowing it was pointless to continue with this conversation... again. "I'll see you for lunch."

Ginny closed the door and went looking for Keira. She found her in one corner of the living room with her books, James and Gwen trying to cheer her up and coax her to play with them.

"That's enough, kids. Leave her alone. She doesn't want to play now."

"Yes, Mum," said both children, and they left the room, leaving Ginny and Keira alone.

The older witch took her hand and led her to the couch. "Your mum told me you saw your dad this morning." The girl just nodded. "Is that what has you so sad today?" Another nod. "Come here, sweetie." Keira moved to hold her, careful not to crush her belly. Ginny's pregnancy had forced her to make a pause from her Healer job, so now she stayed at home taking care of her children and helped Hermione with Keira when she was teaching her classes.

"It will be fine soon, dear."

"No, it won't. Mum and Dad hate each other."

"No, Keira, they don't hate each other. In fact, they love each other very much. It's just that they have forgotten it."

"Really? Then we have to remind them how much they love each other, Aunt Ginny. Will you help me?"

"Yes, my dear, I will help you."

They hugged again, and Ginny couldn't avoid wondering what this little girl would come up with to remind her parents that they loved each other. She was, after all, Hermione and Snape's daughter.

Ginny had been right because for the next few weeks, Keira only thought about a plan to get her parents together. She had even left her books aside in order to give time to her plotting. At the beginning, Ginny had regretted the comment she'd made that had started it all, but finally, she realised it was for the best for the three of them, and she agreed to help the little girl.

One week before Christmas, Keira decided what she wanted to do and how. Her plan was simple. Her dad just had to go to their house and stay there so he and her mum could remember how much they love each other. It had to be on Christmas Eve because she knew her mum would never refuse her dad on that day. No one did something unkind on that date in all her storybooks, and miracles always happened on Christmas.

The morning of her plan, Keira was more excited than usual, which Hermione thought was only because of the date and nothing else. It also seemed that she had dropped that issue about her father, which relieved her. In the afternoon when they were getting ready to go to Hogwarts to spend the night with Harry's family, Ginny Flooed, and the plan started.

"I'm really sorry, Hermione, but the mediwitch said it was better if I had a quiet night of rest tonight, no celebrations or anything. I will, of course, Floo you dinner so you don't have to worry about fixing something."

"It's alright, Ginny. I understand, and your health is much more important."

"Thank you for understanding, and I hope to see you both here tomorrow. I'll be much better in the morning."

"Sure, we'll be there to give you your presents. Send my love to Harry and to the kids. Have a good night."

When the conversation ended, Ginny sent them Yorkshire pudding, beef Wellington, roasted turkey, mashed potatoes, Turkish delights, trifle, sugarplums, and Christmas pudding a few minutes later.

"Merlin, your aunt must think we're starving or that we'll feed a dozen people tonight. Help me put all this on the table, honey."

Keira went to help her mother with the food. She was smiling widely. Everything was going according to plan.

On the other side of the Floo, Harry was looking at his wife with an expression of disapproval.

"You shouldn't be meddling in this, you know. If Hermione or Snape find out about it, they will hex you for interfering with their lives and their decisions."

"Oh, stop it, Harry. We both know that Keira needs both her parents, and if this is the only way, then it's worth the risk. Besides, no one would dare to hex a pregnant woman, and if they try, I know a couple of hexes that will make them reconsider."

"I still don't think this is a good idea."

"C'mon, Harry, we both have seen how they look at each other. It's plainly obvious they still love each other and are only too stubborn and proud to admit it. It's about time someone did something about it and who better than their daughter?"

"With your help."

"Yes, with my help. Now, all we have to do is send Snape to her house."

"We?"

"Yes, we. Or do you want me to go to the dungeons all by myself?"

"Ok, I'll go just because Hermione deserves a chance to find happiness. But I want to make it clear that I had nothing to do with the whole plotting."

"Sure, I will let everyone know that."

Harry left his chambers muttering to himself about how this was so very wrong and how he'd end up hexed when the plan was discovered. He finally reached the dungeons and reluctantly knocked the door before remembering why he was there and beginning his act in order to start with Keira's plan. A very disgruntled Severus opened the door and glared at him.

"Potter, what are you doing here?"

"I don't have time for that, Snape. I'm here because we need help."

"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 Flooed 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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