

# Visiting an Orphanage

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Hermione delivers gifts to orphans and bumps into Severus Snape.

## One-shot

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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**Disclaimer:** I snagged some of JKR's characters so that I could write my friend, CocoaChristy, a little special something for Christmas.

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Hermione tossed down the bag of toys she'd been carrying in anger. "Ron! You said that you'd come with me tonight. You know how important this is."

"But, Hermione, if I don't go and make this deal with George, we might lose out on a load of money for our business! That's very important to us, too, more than—"

"More than making orphans happy on Christmas, you mean? These kids lost their parents in the war against Voldemort! That's really cold, Ronald. Always thinking of yourself, aren't you?"

"That's not really fair, is it, Hermione?" Ginny said.

"Keep out of this!" she snapped.

"Fine," retorted the redhead crossly. "But not without pointing out that you're being a bit selfish as well. Think about what this deal could mean to Ron, George, and my family! You can get someone else to go with you or simply go alone. The kids will still get the gifts and be happy about it. Last I remember, you didn't need a bloody shadow!"

"Ginny, that's un—" Harry began.

"Quiet, Harry. She doesn't always need you trotting up on your white unicorn and making her feel better." Ginny got up, went to the grate, and tossed some Floo powder in. "We'll be late." And then she was gone in a whoosh, heading for her destination.

"She's right. I've got to go. Good luck, Ron. Sorry, Hermione."

"Bye, Harry," Hermione said, finally able to move her gaping mouth. Once Harry left, she said, "How rude."

"Yeah, you are, aren't you?" Ron said angrily. "Thanks for always pointing out my shortcomings and rubbing it in my face that you don't love me anymore."

Gobsmacked, she watched as he, too, left in a flurry of green smoke. The truth was simply that she didn't want to go alone. Everyone had something to do this Christmas Eve—and someone to do it with—but her. She'd hoped that spending time with Ron would make her feel less lonely. However, she hadn't realized that it would simply be using him, for he was right about her not loving him anymore. Who was she to do such a thing and to make him feel badly about bettering himself?

"Sorry," she whispered to the empty room, and then she scooped up the bag and headed for the grate. "Orleans Orphanage," she said, tossing in a bit of Floo powder.

Hermione stepped out of the large grate in the entrance hall of the old orphanage and dusted soot away from her robes and the bag she carried. Immediately, she was met by an elderly witch with blue-grey hair.

"Miss Granger, hello again."

"Hi, Madam Okon."

"Where's the rest of your party?"

"Oh, he had an emergency come up. It's just me tonight."

"Not a problem. The children will be happy all the same, dear. In fact, Father Christmas is inside with them now, reading a story to them."

"Lovely. I enjoy stories."

"They're in the eating hall. You can go along. I need to go up and check on my assistant. She's been feeling down this evening."

"Thank you."

As Hermione neared the door, she took in the lovely decorations—holly, merry wreaths, garland, and many little hand-painted ornaments were strewn about the walls. The children had decorated nearly everything. The large tree in the center of the eating hall took her breath away.

*Goodness, it looks like one of those huge trees that Hagrid drags into Hogwarts.*

And there was Father Christmas in the center of the room, sitting in a rocking chair near the fire with all the children surrounding him and listening attentively. She got a little closer and stopped. She knew that voice.

Deep. Silky. Rich. Darkly delicious. So smooth it could have been melted chocolate poured over a Sundae. Perfect.

Snape's voice.

"What the...?" she whispered to herself. He'd charmed his appearance so that he had white hair and a matching beard that rivaled the late Dumbledore's. She'd never seen him wear something so bright, but yet, there he was in red robes that were trimmed in billowy, white material.

He never looked up from his book or his audience as she placed her bag of gifts near the tree and slowly unloaded the wrapped boxes. But she could barely keep her eyes off the man or the smile from her face. Hermione would have never imagined him to be the type to spend his Christmas Eve with children of an orphanage. It warmed her soul to think of it.

"And that, boys and girls, is what little Jakob found under his Christmas tree on that cold, Christmas morning."

"Yay!" said a little girl.

"Read it again," cried another.

"I'm afraid," he said kindly, "that three stories are quite enough. I have deliveries to make and other good little children to visit." He stood and placed the book on the rocking chair. "Make certain to leave me some biscuits and milk for my return tonight."

"We will!"

"Chocolate chip!"

"No, sugar cookies."

He chuckled. "Ho ho ho. Merry Christmas to all of you."

Madam Okon returned at that moment to join him and two other ladies who'd been present. They talked amongst themselves as Hermione hugged and greeted some of the children.

"I've brought a gift for each of you," she informed them. "You can open them first thing in the morning."

"Thank you!" many said.

Snape chose this moment to turn his head and gaze at her. There was a look of shock in his eyes before he recomposed himself and nodded. She gave him a warm smile, which he did not return. Instead, he bid farewell to the group and made his way towards the exit.

Hermione quickly waved to everyone and scrambled after him, bent on catching him before he made it to the grate or the outside door. "Professor!" she called once she reached the entryway.

He stopped mid stride. "Yes?"

"Won't you even turn to look at me?" she asked, inching closer. He did so but said nothing. "What a lovely thing you did for these children."

"Surprised I didn't come dressed as the Grinch, are you?"

"Maybe," she said cheekily, glad that he didn't seem offended.

"What is it you want, Miss Granger? I'm certain you're a bit old to want to sit on Saint Nick's lap to request gifts for Christmas."

At this comment, she grinned broadly. "I was hoping that you'd have a cup of hot cocoa with me."

"No festivities to attend tonight?"

"Everyone has plans, and my parents are in Australia."

"Still?"

She nodded. "Yes, they quite like it there."

Snape frowned. "Actually, I have a potion that will need checking soon, so I will have to decline. I apologize."

Before he could turn away, she blurted, "Then maybe we could have it at your home."

His brow furrowed. "Are you quite serious?"

"Do you have any cocoa?"

"There may be some. I'm not certain."

Hermione walked right up to him and said, "Apparate us. If nothing else, we can have tea."

"And just why would you want to do this?"

"Any man who would spend his free time on a holiday trying to make children happy is someone I'd like to share a cuppa with. I don't have plans. You don't seem to have any. What harm could there be?"

"So be it," he said, giving her a small smile. "However, I hope it's not the outfit and added hair that has you this way. I intend to change back to myself immediately upon my return home."

"That's the Severus Snape I prefer anyway," she said honestly. "Shall we?"

He pulled her closer and closed his eyes, Apparating them to his home.