

Exchange

by SS Lupin

Hermione has a visitor on Christmas Eve. Post-war and fluffy.

One-shot.

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: They're not mine.

Hermione toyed with the ribbon of her bookmark, her focus on the novel in her lap drifting away to the window. She grew more interested on the snow collecting on the frosty glass, wondering again how she was alive to see another winter. To watch the large white flakes fall.

To glimpse a tall, black figure practically glide to her front door.

"Oh!" she said, springing up from the couch and to her door. She pushed her hair back from her face and hoped there was nothing in her teeth as she welcomed Severus into the cottage.

"So what brought you to inhabit a Muggle house in the middle of nowhere this Christmas Eve?"

Hermione greeted Severus and took his sodden wool cloak before answering, "I already told you this is my parents' summer house. What's wrong with staying here?"

"That it is far too dangerous," Severus said as he produced a small vial from his robes. "Shouldn't you be with a certain troupe of merry redheads?"

Hermione accepted the vial and drank from it quickly. It tasted like peppermint and tealeaves, and the steam coming out of her ears felt gentler than the almost painful rush of air she was used to feeling.

She coughed twice and felt her nose and throat clear.

"Ah, much better," she said with a final snuffle. "You were saying?"

"That cold of yours didn't impair your hearing."

Hermione sighed and sat back in the couch. "I'll stop by the Burrow for dinner tomorrow, but for tonight..."

"Tonight you'd rather avoid Molly's attempts to put you and her youngest son back together?"

"Something like that." Hermione rested her head on the cushion behind her. "Aren't you going to sit down?"

He said nothing, but Hermione felt his weight settle in next to her. "Don't want me to leave anytime soon?"

"Not really, no..." Now that he was here, Hermione hesitated to Accio the box from the mantle over the fireplace.

Then she noticed how still Severus was. How shallow his breathing sounded.

Well, that made two of them.

"I hope you like it," she said once the present landed in his lap.

"You got me something?" he said incredulously, even as he was unwrapping the box.

"Made it, actually... I know I'm not Molly—"

"It's for me?"

"Of course it's for you! Honestly, I don't know anyone who loves black like you do."

Severus unfolded the jumper.

"Now I wonder why you asked me to come here," he said.

"A simple 'thank you' would have been sufficient—"

"After all, you didn't have to ask me for Pepperup Potion; that can be easily made or bought," Severus went on.

"True," Hermione said, "but you didn't have to walk through snow and storm to give it to me."

Severus considered this the same way Hermione remembered him after she answered a question in his class. A tilt of the head, a gaze off into the distance.

"So where does that leave me? I have nothing to give you."

Hermione placed her hand on his and smiled. "I think you will suffice."

Severus turned his palm upward, and their fingers intertwined.

"I'm feeling better already," Hermione said as they both looked into the fireplace.

- end.

Author's Note: This is a Christmas present for my beta Southern_Witch_69. Thanks so much for your help and encouragement!