

Third Yule's A Charm

by pokeystar

Excerpts from Hermione's diary, over three holiday seasons.

An Eyebrow of Doubt

Chapter 1 of 3

Excerpts from Hermione's diary, over three holiday seasons.

24 December, 2003

Dear Diary,

The day started off pleasantly enough.

I woke up at Draco's flat, as usual, and we had breakfast in bed together before doing some last minute shopping in Diagon Alley. I didn't have a clue what to get for Narcissa, and Draco wasn't much help. Thank Merlin we ran into Lavender, who suggested a spa day at the new wizarding salon—*Revelio!*, I think it's called.

We made it back to the flat just in time to Floo to my parents' house for dinner.

As you know, they never quite got over me Obliviating them and shipping them off to Australia. And now that I'm engaged to Draco—*was*—it made them uneasy all over again. Afraid they would lose me to the wizarding world and in-laws who might be preferable to them, just because they aren't magical. If only they knew. I'd trade Lucius for a Squib any day of the week.

So, their insecurities must go deeper than I thought. When we showed up, the lounge floor was cleared, with the rug rolled up and all the furniture pushed against the walls, and there was a circle painted on the floor with fireplace ash.

I called out for Mum and Dad, slightly alarmed because the place almost looked like it'd been burgled. And the circle might have been where the police found, I don't know, my parents' bodies or something. Thank Merlin they came running when they heard my voice. Only, they were dressed in these drape-like white robes, sort of Jedi Knight-ish, and Mum was carrying a smoking smudge stick.

"What's that smell?" Draco asked, wrinkling his nose.

"It's traditional to burn sage before solstice ceremonies in America," said Dad proudly. "Indigenous custom."

Dad had become very interested in indigenous cultures during their sojourn in Australia. He'd almost left Mum to go walkabout with a Whadjuk tribesman called Fat Joobaitj.

Draco lifted an eyebrow at me that said 'America?' and 'Indigenous?' and 'Solstice was two days ago.' Draco possessed a highly expressive eyebrow. It reminded me of Severus Snape. I am—*was*—very fond of that eyebrow.

Mum had been nattering on while I was distracted by the chatty eyebrow. "—and this particular ceremony requires participants to be skyclad."

Draco's eyebrow rose in alarm.

I searched my vast vocabulary, to no avail. "What's skyclad?" I asked.

Draco leaned over to mutter in my ear. "Your mum wants to get a look at my todger."

"Take that back!" I exclaimed hotly, offended on her behalf.

"Skyclad means nude," Mum answered primly.

Draco's eyebrow smirked at me.

"Um, Mrs. Granger," he said, "Hogwarts never required us to take off our clothes on holidays."

His eyebrow said, 'I wish.'

"Stay clothed then," she said, making an airy gesture with her smudge stick.

Dad picked up a book near the circle and put his glasses on to read.

Draco's eyebrow wiggled at me, but I ignored it this time, so I wouldn't miss anything my parents said. The eyebrow just wanted to make fun of Daddy's swotty habits, anyway.

Gitty eyebrow.

"Helen," said Dad, "are the elements ready to be placed?" Mum checked four little cauldron-shaped bowls on the hardwood floor and nodded at Dad, setting down her smudge stick in Uncle Artie's ashtray.

"Join the circle, please," intoned Dad importantly. Mum and I stepped onto the fireplace ash circle.

'No,' said Draco's eyebrow.

"Do it," I mouthed, "or no sex for a *week*."

Draco stepped onto the circle.

Mum passed the elemental bowls around, and we each blew air, splashed water, lit a fire, and sprinkled dirt in turn, as Dad read the solstice ceremonial passage from chapter eight of *Paganism for Dummies*.

He blessed the trees and the sun and the animals and the river for sustaining us all.

Draco's eyebrow said, 'The Thames?' incredulously.

Then Daddy said, "What in the hell is Pagan Standard Time?"

No one had an answer except Draco's eyebrow, which just scoffed in superiority.

Everyone shuffled awkwardly in place for a few minutes while Daddy tried looking it up in the glossary. He couldn't find it though, so he gave up, intoning "Now we disrobe under Father Sky and over Mother Earth to show our parents how glad we are to be their children."

And I stood frozen, as Draco's eyebrow screamed 'Naked Muggles! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!', and he turned on his heel, popping away, the Apparition echoing in his wake like the bang of a starter's pistol.

"He broke the circle!" Mum exclaimed in dismay.

"Mum, Dad, the wedding is off, I think," I gritted out, mortified in general. And angry, specifically.

I mean, I certainly did not want to see my parents naked either. But, really, there was no need to run away like a little girl, eyebrow screaming.

Aside from that, what really did it, what broke the circle of Draco and me, to the extent that no ceremony could mend it and no smudge stick could hope *purify* it, was:

Muggles

I had agreed to marry Draco after two years of dating and getting to know him well, and I believed he finally saw people ~~a~~*people*, not Muggles, not wizards. Not purebloods, half-bloods, or Mudbloods. People.

Just the other morning, I read that a French healer named Douay—Thibaut Douay—recently discovered that magical ability makes up a mere three percent of a wizard's genetic material.

Which means that Draco Malfoy might have ninety-seven percent of himself more in common with Dudley Dursley than he did with Bellatrix LeStrange or Astoria bloody Greengrass.

I even pointed that out to him, but his eyebrow didn't believe me.

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Many thanks to pyjamarama for the wicked fast beta. I hope you get an expressive eyebrow in your stocking.

Project: Empty Heart

17 December 2005

Dear Diary,

When I was at school, I didn't have crushes on other students. Except for Ron—and we both know how well that turned out. I fancied the teachers. First was Lockhart. He was my lesson in valuing substance over flash. Then Lupin, who was an excellent instructor, kind and safe. Until I found out he was a werewolf, which put a bit of a damper on things for my thirteen-year-old self. I even fancied Hagrid a little, as he was always there for me, even when Harry and Ron were not.

Then came fourth year and Viktor Krum. Who was dark, and passionate, and moody. But I didn't realise he was an unsatisfactory substitute for the real object of my affections. Until said object bared his forearm to the Minister of Magic in the school infirmary. So bravely, so contemptuously. Such anger and bitterness and... restraint. By the end of his speech, my knickers were damp. It scared the crap out of me. Which was probably the reason I gravitated back to Ron—he of the teaspoon-ish complexity.

The day Draco married Astoria bloody Greengrass, I went to Hogsmeade. I told myself it was a shopping excursion, but really, I just wanted to be as far away from London as possible. By this time, I was mostly over Draco—it had been nearly two years since we broke up, after all. But I kept running into acquaintances who were in town for the wedding, and it's all anyone was talking about. When they weren't looking at me with pity on their faces. Or smug superiority, like Pansy Parkinson, the pug-faced bitch. Who really shouldn't have, considering Draco dumped *her* for me.

After looking round a bit—nothing new except for a bistro called Bane's and an apothecary called Apothecary, very original—I ended up at the Hog's Head. Because I knew Aberforth was never in the mood for a chat and I just wanted to be left alone. I'd had three firewhiskys and was considering putting up for the night at the Three Broomsticks, since their rooms were clean and didn't smell of goat, when my fourth-year crush billowed in, surly as ever.

To my surprise, he billowed straight over to me.

"Miss Granger," he said. "Is this seat taken?"

Too tipsy to be coherent, and gobsmacked to boot, I gestured at the chair in what I hoped was polite welcome.

He sat down and sneered at me. I was tempted to blow a raspberry at him, but I took a sip of my fourth firewhisky instead. Aberforth brought over a bottle and placed it at Severus's elbow. He Conjured his own glass.

"Foolish wand-waving," I muttered and barely managed to smother a giggle.

"What was that?" Severus asked with an amused glint in his eye. We both knew he'd heard me just fine.

"Nothing," I replied with an airy gesture that mimicked his Conjuring perfectly. His teeth flashed white as he smirked. His hair was clean and soft-looking. He was also kitted out in handsome bespoke dress robes. "Was it a lovely wedding?"

He snorted. "Bloody ostentatious. The Greengrasses have more Galleons than taste." He looked me over in silence. "How drunk are you?"

I put my finger to my nose and tapped lightly. Not numb yet. "Just a little tipsy," I enunciated carefully.

"Fancy a fuck?" he asked. He stood and tucked the bottle under his arm, Vanishing the glass he'd just Conjured.

I snapped my jaw shut. "You what?" I asked dumbly.

He rolled his eyes at me. "Must you continually ask questions?"

"Yes," I answered, scrambling to stand up and put my travel cloak on.

"Ah, well." He sighed. "I suppose I can gag you if need be."

"No. No, I meant—" I stopped babbling when he raised an eyebrow at me. *The* eyebrow.

Are there knickers made from sea-sponge? If there aren't, there bloody well should be.

That was five months ago and it's all we've been doing since. Fucking. Not that I'm complaining, precisely. Because the fucking is great. Certainly better than Ron. Better than that one time with Blaise Zabini. Better than Draco, even. It's just that, up close, that eyebrow isn't expressive. It's a defense mechanism. And all that bitterness and anger and passion?

Is bottled away somewhere—maybe in his lab.

I think sometimes that he's still pining for Harry's mum and I'm the poor substitute, like Viktor was, for him, to me.

I've tried most everything I could to get Severus to open up. His favourite meal, a weekend away, calm conversation, screamed accusations. His response? Withdrawal. Or sneering condescension. He's even gagged me a couple of times. That hadn't been a joke. But his preferred method of shutting me up is fucking my brains out. And it's getting—dare I say it—old.

So last night was my final attempt at breaching the fortress walls that guard Severus's hairy heart. Hairy. Harry. It was actually Harry's idea. To give Severus a traditional Christmas with all the trimmings. I spent all day trimming his house while he worked at the Apothecary. Never one to do things halfway, I covered nearly every square inch of his abode in fairy lights, tinsel, ivy and mistletoe. *Screw the nargles*, I thought. I was listening to carols on the wireless as I worked, so I didn't hear him come in.

"What the fuck is this?" He growled as he slammed the door shut.

"It's a wreath," I replied. And then I turned back to the tree I'd been decorating with silver and green ornaments. The tree skirt was made from crimson velvet.

He billowed over to me. "What the fuck is all this doing *in* my house?"

"It's Christmas," I said. "Must you continually ask questions?"

He got very red at that. Mockery was *his* speciality, apparently. He waved a hand and Banished everything I'd put up in the blink of an eye.

"Hey!" I exclaimed. "I worked hard on that. All day!"

"You may do as you please in your flat, Hermione," he drawled, and then Banished my clothes as well. I might have gone a bit overboard with the knitted reindeer jumper. "But this is my house, and I despise this overblown, Gryffindorish, fake sentimentality. It's complete shite, and you bloody well know it."

He tumbled me onto the sofa and unfastened his trousers, pulling them down. He was already hard. He knelt over me and slid a finger between my thighs, grunting in

satisfaction when he encountered slickness.

The wireless was still on, and "I Want a Hippogriff for Christmas" started playing as he pushed into me, our bodies straining towards completion in rhythm with its cheery march-like refrain. He surged in and out, rubbing against my g-spot with every stroke. I was completely full, and yet I've never felt so empty in my life.

Molly once said something to me while I was dating Ron, towards the end of our relationship. At the time, it deeply upset me. I nearly threw away every sweater she'd ever knitted for me. In the end, to make things less awkward for everyone, I pushed it out of my head. But I know now it was the beginning of the end of Ron and me.

"Hermione," Molly said. "Do you want a project or a man you will love for the rest of your life?"

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Many thanks to Corianderpie for the beta ;-)

## A Smile So Warm

*Chapter 3 of 3*

Excerpts from Hermione's diary, over three holiday seasons.

December 22, 2009

Dear Diary,

Seriously. I should have told Harry no.

I'd only got back from America and the Cooperation Talks the previous week, and of course, with all the overtime beforehand, I had no time to buy groceries, let alone do Christmas shopping. But one look into those deep green eyes and I never could refuse him anything. So there I was at Malfoy's, three days before Christmas, looking for a pair of dragonhide gloves for Ginny.

Department stores had finally come to the wizarding world, rather ironically through the Malfoy family, who had modelled their flagship store off Diagon Alley on Harrods. Astoria's idea, I've been told. Thus, I knew exactly who to blame for the persistent perfume witch I was unable to avoid as I entered the store.

Shaking off my annoyance, I headed directly for the Quidditch supplies section. A present for Ginny was the last thing on my list before dinner at my parents', and I was eager to be out of the crush. I spotted a trio of practise Snitches buzzing overhead and made a beeline for the counter, not paying attention to the hubbub that swirled around me.

"But, Daaaaaaaad, I need a good broom," whined a child behind me.

"You have a good broom," explained a patient, pleasant voice tinged with amusement. "These gloves will help you catch better and it's what your grandmother can afford."

A hand reached out and grabbed the same pair of Chaser gloves I'd just started to pull off the rack.

"I'm sorry—" I began to say as I turned around.

"But, Daaaaaaaad—" the blue-haired young man said, his voice cracking in the middle. His nose wrinkled in disgust. "What's that smell?"

"I do apologise—" said the patient, pleasant voice. "Son, that's a very rude thing to say. Not Quidditch, at all."

The young man's hair turned pink briefly, and then reverted to blue. "Sorry I said you smell, lad—" he mumbled, and then his eyes widened. "Aunt Hermione?"

"Teddy?" I exclaimed in surprise. He was nearly as tall as I was. It had been a while since I had seen him, but I hadn't thought it *that* long.

A moment later I was caught in a gangly, awkward hug that lasted seconds—the time it took Teddy to recall he was hugging a stinky girl in public. He released me quickly and shot me a grateful look when I flicked my wand and murmured '*Tergeo*' at both of us.

"Happy Christmas, Hermione," said the pleasant voice, and I looked up into the dear, kind eyes of my former professor.

"Happy Christmas, Remus," I replied.

We stood there staring at each other, for what seemed like hours, until Teddy cleared his throat, making us both jump slightly.

"Daaaaaaaad," he whined and caught himself at the mild look Remus gave him. "Dad, I'm supposed to meet the guys at Fortescue's in five minutes."

"Go on, then," said Remus absently. "We'll follow behind you in a moment."

Teddy was gone before the word "moment" had left Remus's lips.

"Would you care to go to Fortescue's?" Remus asked me, the corner of his mouth quirking upwards.

"Yes, I think I would." I nodded and moved to put the gloves back on the rack.

"You wanted to purchase those, right?" Remus reminded me gently. "For a boyfriend, perhaps?"

"Oh, no. No boyfriend. I was shopping for Ginny, actually. I hear these are all the rage," I replied, still holding the gloves.

"Then, by all means, buy them for Mrs. Potter," he said, looking very pleased. "I can come back and get Teddy a pair after Christmas."

"Are you sure?" I asked, biting my lip uncertainly. At his somewhat exasperated nod, I paid for the gloves and we left the store.

When we got to Fortescue's, Remus spotted Teddy with his friends—all examining the latest issue of *Quidditch Monthly*—and we waited a few minutes for a table to clear. He pulled out a chair for me, and I sat down heavily.

"Thank Merlin I'm done," I said. "I couldn't take much more of that."

"Especially the rogue scent commandos," Remus commented, and we both laughed. "I'm not that fond of crowds, myself."

"I'm glad I ran into you, though," I replied, glancing down at the menu to cover my blush *Why was I blushing?* "How about you—all done shopping?"

"For the most part," he said, holding my gaze and smiling slyly. That smile made my tummy flip over. "No girlfriend to shop for, you see."

"That's a shame," I returned breathlessly. "You would make someone a wonderful boyfriend."

A shadow flitted briefly across his face. "Thank you, kind lady, but few think so, I'm afraid."

I reached across the table and clasped his hand in mine. "Complete twits, all of them."

"So says the brightest witch of our age," he murmured, staring at my mouth.

"May I take your order?" We broke eye contact and looked up. A young witch stood over us, quill in hand, a frantic look in her eyes.

Remus looked at me and I shrugged. "Two hot chocolates and ginger biscuits, please."

"Coming right up," she said as she scribbled the order on a bit of parchment and then released it. It flew to the service counter, and she moved on to the next table without another word.

"How did the Talks go?" Remus asked, putting the menus back in their holder.

"Very productive," I replied. "We were able to renegotiate several trade agreements with the States, in our favour. I have to admit, Percy is generally a stick-in-the-mud, but he can barter with the best of them."

Remus nodded. "He got me the job in Magical Creatures, you know." He chuckled at my look of surprise. "Well, he and Arthur did, actually."

"I had no idea," I murmured as the wait-witch placed our order on the table.

We sipped our cocoa and ate our ginger biscuits as we chatted, touching on Ministry gossip and news of mutual acquaintances.

As we finished, I glanced up at the shop's clock and gasped in dismay.

"I'm late for my parents!" I exclaimed, opening my purse to pay for my half. Remus waved my Knuts and Sickles off.

"My treat. Since you bought a gift for Ginny, I guess you'll be at Godric's Hollow on Christmas Eve?" I nodded and his face lit up as he slowly smiled. "It really is my treat then. We'll be there too."

I blushed again and returned his smile as I turned to leave, waving goodbye to Teddy. "I'm looking forward to it," I said, and stepped out the door.

It had started snowing again while I was drinking cocoa with Remus, and Diagon Alley was covered in a fluffy blanket of sparkly white. It crunched underfoot and I could see my breath as I walked, but somehow I didn't feel cold at all.

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Super huge thank you to Corianderpie for the beta. Remus says right back at ya, babe.

Written for Voxangelus, Slytherin House Christmas fic exchange 2009 (masterminded by pyjamarama).

Prompts:

1. Hermione brings her new S/O home to meet her parents a few days before Christmas, only to discover they've turned Pagan and are busy celebrating Yule. This probably works best if the S/O is pureblood and is appalled at the things muggles do to approximate "real" magic. Bonus for bitching about "breaking the circle", mentions of "pagan standard time".
2. An argument over the tree. Fake or real? If real, what variety? What color fairy lights? Why? Tinsel or Garland? What sort of ornaments? Etc? Could be a real knock-down drag out ending with hawt make-up sex under the tree. *leers*
3. Someone is shopping for presents, and the other person literally runs into them in a busy store. Packages fly. Apologies are made. Flirting over coffee a plus :D

I hope you enjoyed it, Vox. This was a ton of fun to write.

Merry Christmas to all, and a very Happy New Year.