

it runs in the family

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Characters:	Lucius Malfoy , Narcissa Black Malfoy , Bellatrix Black Lestrangle , Rodolphus Lestrangle , Sirius Black , Remus Lupin , Ron Weasley
Additional Tags:	Crack , Slytherin Hermione Granger , Don't Examine This Too Closely , Snippets , Sane Voldemort (Harry Potter) , based on a reddit post , Voldemort is Hermione Granger's Parent , okay not really but he THINKS so , Misunderstandings , One Big Misunderstanding , roddy lestrange is cool™ , weird puns , Fix-It , Happy Ending , because obviously , why do all my fics slowly go from crack to fluff , can u spot the six queer couples !!! , Aromantic Hermione Granger , wolfstar , Drarry , the works , Author's Favorite
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it runs in the family

by [justprompts](#)

Summary

"Her name is...Hermione," Lucius pronounces the name very carefully, watching Voldemort as if for some reaction. He has none to offer. "She's in my son's year. And she claims to be your daughter."

Crack!AU where Lord Voldemort *thinks* Hermione Granger is his daughter.

Notes

i have literally never written a stranger story than this

first of all, big thanks to [voilawriter](#), who also gets the main credit for this fic since most of it is based on their ideas. thank you so much for this, it was a lot of fun to write it!

anyway, it's based on the reddit prompt: [Hermione runs into blood prejudice the summer before her first year and decides to fool the blood purists. She picks up a genealogy book in Diagon and chooses a random extinct pureblood family - the Gaunts - and changes her name to Hermione Granger-Gaunt.](#)

hope you like it :)

[crack!fic playlist](#)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

ask me no questions and i'll tell you no lies

i.

"Mudbloods can never be *real* wizards," the blonde boy tells her, sneering. He looks quite ugly like this. Plus, he hasn't been able to choose any wand yet (no wand has chosen *him*) so, Hermione doesn't see how he can say that to her. 'Mudblood' is clearly an insult, even though she doesn't properly understand it, yet. It doesn't sound very nice, though.

"I want to be a witch, anyway," she turns her back on him. It's a stupid reply. But he's a stupid boy, and so it works.

"You know what I mean," he hisses, to her hair.

"I really don't," she replies, curtly. He shuts up. Hermione can feel him fuming behind her. He must be pink on top of all the pale.

It sticks, though. *Mudblood* sticks in her head like super glue.

She forces her parents to enter Flourish and Blotts once more, and buys a book on Genealogy and Pureblood Customs.

She's not a mudblood. And she'll *prove* it.

ii.

Turns out you can't just prove it. You have to not *be* it, to prove it. Hermione glances at the book once more. If only Granger was somehow included in this Pureblood Names Cult Thingy...

Oh. Wait.

She flips open to the last page.

[**The Sacred Twenty-Eight are:** Abbott, Avery, Black, Bulstrode, Burke, Carrow, Crouch, Fawley, Flint, Gaunt, Greengrass, Lestrangle, Longbottom, Macmillan, Malfoy, Nott, Ollivander, Parkinson, Prewett, Rosier, Rowle, Selwyn, Shackbolt, Shafiq, Slughorn, Travers, Weasley, and Yaxley.]

iii.

Hermione chews on her quill (yes, it's a quill, because she's a *real* witch) - and frowns at the scratched out names. None of them seem to fit.

Hermione Avery doesn't roll off the tongue well. Neither does Hermione Fawley. Shafiq is a little too much. The Malfoys, the Ollivanders, the Weasleys and the Notts are too prominent to claim, and they all apparently have characteristic features. Which Hermione doesn't have.

'Bulstrode' is, objectively, a horrid name. Yaxley sounds like a medicine company.

~~Longbottom sucks.~~

'Burke' is like begging to be bullied.

~~How do we pronounce Prewett?~~

Lestrangle. Oh, *honestly*. Hermione is already strange enough.

In the end, there isn't much choice.

Hermione Gaunt it is.

Best part is, they're extinct. All dead. No Gaunt is alive and hence, no Gaunt can ever refute her claim. Nobody can.

Even better, they're rumored to be descended from Slytherin, himself. The blonde boy, who Hermione guesses now, must be a Malfoy (there's a photograph of their family in the Pureblood Book) would probably be a Slytherin.

That would show him.

She scratches off the last of the names from the List, and smiles, grimly satisfied. Now, no pureblood will be able to say she's just a mudblood. And later, if it ever comes out that she isn't, she would have proven her worth by then. She'll cross that bridge when she gets to it.

iv.

1st September rolls in, and Hermione hugs her parents before crossing the barrier, says her goodbyes to her teary-eyed parents, and makes her way through.

"My name is Pansy Parkinson," one of the girls on the train tells her, looking at her with

barely concealed distaste.

"I'm Hermione Gr-aunt," Hermione says, clears her throat. "Gaunt. Hermione Granger-Gaunt."

Pansy blinks at her, thoroughly confused.

"Gaunt...as in?" she raises an eyebrow.

Hermione raises one right back.

Stick it to her!

"If you don't even know," she says, haughtily, "I guess I don't need *you* as a friend. See you later, Parkinson."

She silently cheers herself as she walks out of the compartment, before running into another kid.

"Theodore Nott," he introduces, dragging his trunk in.

The emphasis on his last name tells Hermione exactly what to say.

v.

Hermione's proud of her choice of name and her fast thinking. It's bound to help her now. The Hat's yelled "*SLYTHERIN!*" which is great, really. It would totally be a Gaunt's first choice.

Descended from Salazar Slytherin and all.

("Woah," the Hat says, in her head. "*There's a whole lot of things going on in here.*")

vi.

She goes through scores of books about Slytherin, and the Gaunts, and finds out everything she possibly can. It's a lot of fun, too. Breaking rules, that is. And having a secret identity while doing so. Even better.

~~Marvolo Gaunt~~

Merope Gaunt, ~~Morfin Gaunt~~

Merope is the one possible option, again. Both Marvolo and Morfin have some sort of criminal record. Hermione doesn't want *that* on her head. Merope seems good enough.

Merope's daughter? No, wait. Hermione's too young for that.

Granddaughter?

The idea has potential.

She decides on being Merope Gaunt's bastard child's bastard child, because why not, right?

vii.

"Oh, yes," she says, nodding. "Of course I know! Merope Gaunt, who you might *think* was the last of the Gaunts, actually...uh. Had a son."

"A son?" Draco blinks. He doesn't actually know who Merope Gaunt is, but the name sounds appropriately traditional and legit.

"Yes," Hermione says, quickly. "She did! A bastard son! Never married, my grandmother. My father had me. Obviously. And. Then. Well, he died, too. Vicious cycle, really."

"That's horrible," Theo Nott comments, mildly, from the side. Hermione instantly jumps on the little bit of sympathy offered.

"Oh, I know," she says, and looks down at her hands, as if hiding her tears. Theo Nott looks adequately horrified. "I got adopted by muggles."

Nobody pays that any mind. Hermione isn't sure if they know how the foster system works.

"What was your father's name?" Pansy asks, after a suspicious pause.

"His name," Hermione hasn't thought of that, yet. She draws a complete blank. Her eyes dart around nervously, and just when she feels she'll be discovered, she sees the *cat*. It's ginger and scurrying around on the window sill.

Cat. Of course. Cats. What are cats called -

"Tom," Hermione replies, smiling awkwardly. "His name was Tom. Tom Gaunt."

"Muggle name," Theo observes.

Hermione agrees, "Bastard, indeed, yes."

It's all wonderful.

viii.

"Father, aren't the Gaunts all dead?" Theo Nott asks. His father hums. It's Summer break.

"They are," he confirms, frowning. "A Noble family, the Gaunts used to be. Certainly not anymore." He seems bitter.

"I have a classmate who claims to be a Gaunt," Theo prompts.

"That's not possible," his father says, immediately. "There are no more Gaunts left."

"She has a whole story for it. Nobody believes her, they think she's a liar. But she's *too* good at magic to be a mudblood, you know."

"Story?" his father doesn't seem too interested. Theo tells him the whole thing, anyway and watches his father pale, as he finishes.

"Tom Gaunt's daughter," his father repeats, carefully, looking awfully scared. "And she's good at magic, you say?"

"Knows everything already," Theo answers, quite seriously.

His father pales some more.

"Stay on her good side," he says, abruptly. "She's- she's- she might not be lying."

He doesn't answer any more questions, just looks terrified everytime Theo brings up Hermione or Pansy bullying (re: trying to bully) Hermione.

"Need to talk to the Parkinsons, dammit," his father mutters under his breath.

Theo stays on Hermione Granger-Gaunt's good side.

ix.

Draco Malfoy comes back to Hogwarts with chocolates for Hermione.

"My mother sent these," he says, sulkily, pointing to the smaller box out of the two. "And my father sent *these*." He shoves both of them into her hands, before starting to walk out.

"Thanks?" Hermione tries for a confused smile.

"And if you ever need help," Draco says, dully, stopping in the doorway and reciting it like

he's rehearsed it a couple of times. "The Malfoys are here for you. Er- at your service, I think."

"That's...good?" Hermione blinks.

x.

"Miss Granger," Dumbledore smiles at her.

She smiles back. "Professor Dumbledore."

"I heard...some disturbing things, actually," he says, steepling his hands on the table. "About your family. Rumors about you, you know how school gossip is..."

He laughs and Hermione laughs, too, but she probably sounds constipated.

"A few Slytherins believe," he says, gently, "that *you* believe you're the daughter of a wizard called Tom Gaunt."

Act dumb, Hermione.

"What's a wizard?" she asks, nervously.

Not that dumb.

"I meant," Hermione forces a laugh, before talking, too quickly. "I don't know who that is. Tom? Tom Gun who? I'm afraid they're just rumors, sir. Nothing else. I don't know any Tom at all, in fact, I've never met a single Tom in my whole life. Well, except Tom the Bartender, who I met in - "

"Okay," Dumbledore cuts off her babbling, smiling again. "That's good to know, Miss Granger."

xi.

First Year ends with Harry Potter and his merry band of Gryffindors (It's a Weasley and a Longbottom. Thank god she didn't take those names) rescuing some-sort-of-something from someone, it's all very confusing, Professor Quirrell dies, and Slytherin loses the House Cup.

Hermione's top of her class, though. Priorities.

Second Year comes and goes, without much flair, (aside from a few minor petrifications.)

They stop, when again, Harry Potter shuts the chamber of secrets or fights for his life or something. Exams are cancelled.

Third Year isn't very eventful, either, (besides the fact that she's meddling in time and all). In the end, all Hermione can basically guess is that Harry Potter did something *again*, because just after Professor Lupin (who's a werewolf, she *knew* it!) resigns, Dumbledore comes to Hermione and takes her Time Turner. For "an important task."

The next year, the Triwizard Tournament is held.

Hermione waits for Harry Potter to get involved in something he really *shouldn't*.

He doesn't disappoint.

xii.

The Dark Lord returns in 1995, using Harry Potter's blood.

"My Lord," Lucius Malfoy begins, after that plan fails, regretting every decision he's ever made already. "There's a little piece of news, that...you might not have heard of, yet."

Voldemort hums. "Go on, Lucius."

"There's a girl, my Lord," Lucius says, and Voldemort remembers Lucius saying the exact same thing before he broke the news of his engagement with Narcissa.

That's strange, Voldemort thinks. *They had seemed rather happy last night for Lucius to try for a divorce now.*

"Her name is...Hermione," Lucius pronounces the name very carefully, watching Voldemort as if for some reaction. He has none to offer. "She's in my son's year. And she claims to be your daughter."

Voldemort blinks. Blinks again.

"Well, not your daughter," Lucius amends, hastily. "She claims to be *Tom Gaunt's* daughter."

xiii.

Harry Potter's death can wait. Lord Voldemort has something more important to attend to.

His daughter. (Or is she?)

Things in his head have been rather muddled since he's come back. Memories keep slipping

past him, especially of his early childhood, and the years before the whole Chamber of Secrets Fiasco happened back in '43.

And apparently, so do the memories of 1980 and the year before. (He vaguely remembers a Hermione Granger in his class with Quirrell. Top marks, and all. Persistent questions in class. She *can* be his daughter.)

xiv.

Voldemort ends up breaking Bellatrix out of Azkaban. Bellatrix must know.

If Lord Voldemort ever had a baby, it would have been with her, he thinks.

Primarily, because she would have killed anyone else who tried.

"Did we?" Voldemort asks her, a bit hesitantly. He dislikes not knowing things.

Bellatrix looks thoughtful. That never ends well. She's still in her prison attire. Voldemort wishes she would change. She stinks. A lot. And he can see something crawling on her shoulder.

"We...might have," she replies, finally, sighing. "She has the same hair as me," Bella points to the photograph that Voldemort had asked the Malfoy boy to get him. He doesn't point out that Hermione's hair is lighter in shade. Maybe she'd colored it. That's what kids did, right? Voldemort had seen muggle kids doing that. (And Abraxas, who'd dyed his hair blue at the end of their Fifth Year. He'd looked simply *lovely*, then -)

"And I've forgotten a lot because of Azkaban." Bella says, and glares at him, like it's *his* fault that he died.

Atleast he's come back. Most people don't.

"She must be mine," Bella says, before seemingly deciding it. "Yes. Hermione Gaunt *is* my daughter."

xv.

"Tell me about her," the Dark Lord commands.

"She's brilliant," the Malfoy kid says, immediately. His father's told him exactly what to say. "Gets top marks in everything. Professor Snape's favorite. Dumbledore's favorite, too."

Incredible. His daughter has achieved what he never could. Dumbledore's trust.

They'll rule the world together.

"What else?" Voldemort asks, trying to remember the boy's name.

(Drago? Drake? Dragonius, maybe? Lucius has always been painfully dramatic, so it could be that last one.)

It's getting difficult remembering all these tiny details and what-not. He hadn't remembered his own daughter, for Merlin's sake. "Do you *like* her?"

Drago looks to his parents. Narcissa nods frantically.

"Yes, I do!" Drake says, "I love her!"

Narcissa clears her throat, and when Drake looks over, she shakes her head, slowly.

"What I meant is," Drake corrects. " She's a friend."

Voldemort hums.

xvi.

"And what do you think of my daughter, Severus?" the Dark Lord asks, which, really. It's ridiculous. Hermione Granger, yes, *Granger* isn't the Dark Lord's daughter, for heaven's sake. Her parents are dentists. Her real parents.

"Your...daughter, my Lord?" Severus asks, gritting his teeth. "I-I think...she isn't actually- "

"Yes?" the Dark Lord asks, silkily.

"- aware you're alive," Severus changes track. "You- you should tell her. Even if she does know, she can't possibly know that you are Tom Gaunt, my Lord. Or that you want to reconcile with her. So, maybe if you tell her, then - "

"Then, we can start building our Empire together," the Dark Lord finishes, rather grandly. "You're right, of course. If she knew, she would have already seeked me out. I see my mistake."

Severus shrugs. That wasn't what he'd wanted to say, but well. Life isn't fair.

(That hasn't escaped Severus's notice.)

xvii.

"Second," Draco says. "In my year."

"To my daughter," Bella preens.

Narcissa sighs. This is *so* not what she'd thought she'd be doing this year.

xviii.

"...you think the only way to break the ice between your daughter and yourself is to send her the rarest books you own... on Dark Magic?" Severus sounds dubious.

"Draco told me she likes books," Voldemort says. "And she's *my* daughter. She must be just like me. Hungry for knowledge. Forced to live among muggles she hates. She'll love the books."

"Maybe, some context?" Severus suggests, skeptical. "As in...these books are for - "

"She'll understand," Voldemort tsks.

xix.

"Did you know Tom Gaunt is You Know Who?" Draco hisses, almost barreling into her on the Platform.

"Huh?" Hermione blinks.

"The Dark Lord? He Who Must Not Be Named?" Draco looks around, lowers his voice even more. "Did you know his real name is Tom Gaunt? Professor Snape told me! You're the *Dark Lord's* daughter."

"What the fuck," Hermione whispers.

Hermione Granger has *maybe* committed a slight error.

xx.

Okay, it's a big error.

So.

Picking 'Gaunt' had been a mistake.

Because, apparently, out of all the Sacred Twenty Eight that she could have picked, she'd picked the one who was dead-not-dead, and also the darkest Wizard of the century.

Hermione really had shitty luck when it came down to it.

You-Know-Who was now her fake father. Who knew if he knew she had been lying? Oh, what is she thinking, he obviously must *know* she's not his daughter.

It becomes even worse when Lord Voldemort gets to know. It's like the beginning of a lame murder documentary, and it starts the classic way : threats.

Poorly concealed threats in indiscreet letters posted over breakfast.

There are books of curses and hexes and jinxes and potions and all sorts of nasty things that Lord Voldemort has sent her. He's bookmarked pages with the worst and most difficult ones, which can only mean that he knows them and is planning to use them on her.

Or her parents. The real ones.

That's an issue.

She ignores the mail.

xxi.

His daughter doesn't trust him enough to write back, yet. She's got high standards, just like her father.

Of course she does.

Lord Voldemort doubles the efforts.

xxii.

Hermione gets more packages, the curses getting darker and more dangerous. Some of the books are so illegal that she worries about getting caught with them. (Professor Snape keeps turning a blind eye to them, for some reason?)

On Sunday morning, Lord Voldemort owls her a curse that can be spread through the children to the parents.

This time, she sends a threat right back.

It's a book of blood curses, standard Dark Magic, but if used in creative ways, it can be a good threat. She makes sure to *jot* down those creative ways. He should know she isn't fucking around. (Not much, anyway.)

She sends him the book.

And instantly gets more back. She even receives a few cursed objects. They haven't been activated yet, but that just shows that he underestimates her, nothing else.

Oh my god, Hermione thinks. She needs to get her parents (and herself) out of here.

xxiii.

"She's finally acknowledged me!" Voldemort tells Bellatrix, over supper. "She sent me gifts *back!* And she's noted down some amazing points. I think she wants to impress me," he confides.

"Lovely, my Lord," Bellatrix says, squinting down at the book that Hermione has sent.

She's definitely her mother's daughter.

xxiv.

"I think both of us know why you're here again," Dumbledore tells her.

"Not really," Hermione shrugs, very nonchalantly. Her face is the very *picture* of innocence. She's rather proud of that.

"You have been corresponding with Lord Voldemort," he says, simply. "Who believes he's your father. Who's other identity is Tom Gaunt."

She waits.

"Anything you have to share, Miss Granger?" Dumbledore asks, very seriously.

"I..." she sighs, swinging her satchel from her shoulder, and takes out a packet of Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans. "I have this. It's none of the nice flavors, though. Theo and I ate all those. We could share this packet. If you want. No pressure," she adds.

Dumbledore's eye twitches.

you're just as sane as i am

Chapter Notes

omg OMG DO U SEE THIS i am finally completing a fic of mine!! I've never managed this before istg it feels like a huge moment sksksjs

okay abt the chapter. it got out of hand SO QUICKLY. like it just grew and grew and welll. i hope u still like it :) it covers fifth and sixth years

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

i.

"So, Mum," Hermione directs the conversation back on track. "How about that trip to France? Or you know, even Thailand works. India, maybe."

"Hermione, dear," her Mum looks at her, worried. "Do you want to go on a vacation? Is that it?"

"I think New Zealand would be the best," Hermione decides. "Or Australia. Anywhere really, really far away would do it, actually."

The next day, Mrs. Granger starts finding travel pamphlets all over the house.

"Honey, breakfast!" she calls, staring at the large poster on Hermione's door, that says, *CHEAP ENOUGH TO GO, PHUKET I'LL GO*. It must be a magical picture, because it's a moving picture. There's a beach and Hermione is in the background, bobbing her head and flashing a smile.

"Yes, Mum," Hermione says, and comes out, glancing between her Mum and the poster with wide eyes.

Her Mum doesn't react, just gives her a strange look.

"Mum, what's for breakfast?" Hermione asks, slipping a leaflet in her Mum's bag. This one says, *THE PLANE TICKET IS THE ANSWER! Who cares what the question is?*

"Uh, toast?" her Mum replies, distractedly. "Toast, eggs. You can have a piece of cake, if you want, there's some on the table."

"You mean a *Pisa* cake," Hermione amends, smiling hopefully. "Like the tower. It's in Italy,"

she clarifies.

She's offered another worried glance by her Mum.

"Eat, Hermione," she says, opening the refrigerator, "we'll talk later. You want some juice?"

"Orange juice?" Hermione asks, pulling a face at the tetrapack.

"It has lots of vitamins," her Mum tells her.

"The only vitamin *I* need," Hermione says, dignified. "Is vitamin *sea*. Which, of course, we could get, if we just...moved. To some island country. Isolated, preferably. Just, just away from *here*. Where anyone can come find us. In fact, I should change schools all together, and we should all move to somewhere where nobody can find us."

There's a long pause after that declaration.

"Are you being bullied in school, Hermione?" her Mum asks, finally.

ii.

...don't worry, my daughter, the letter in Hermione's shaking hands proclaims. *You won't have to live with those muggles for long.*

Oh god.

Voldemort's going to kill her parents.

She changes track on the whole "moving away" thing. A vacation would do, for now.

"So...who wants to spend some *koala-ty* time together as a family? On vacation? Away from here?" Hermione adds, with a desperate smile. Her Mum stares at her. "Koalas, get it?"

Her parents exchange a few looks.

"*Aussie* what you did there," her Dad says, with a weak laugh.

They don't go on vacation.

iii.

Umbridge turns out to be a right menace.

Fifth Year starts with a Prefect's Badge, a "congratulations letter" from Lord Voldemort for said badge, an excessive use of ugly pink cardigans by an excessively useless teacher, cat decor in the DADA class, and a slightly awkward conversation with Theo Nott about "It's okay to find Blaise Zabini hot, right? Everyone does, right? *Right?!'*"

("...no, Theo, not really. I mean, it's okay, but. Not everyone thinks Zabini is hot. I don't think so.")

Hermione's got bigger problems, though.

Apparently, Harry Potter met with dementors during summer hols. There's a whole thing regarding it and about whether Voldemort is alive or not, and about Cedric Diggory's death and the Triwizard Tournament, yada yada. Hermione isn't too fussed about all this 'You Know Who being alive-not-alive' talk, really. She's fussed about her parents. And any threats to their continued existence.

Yes, Hermione Granger *does* have bigger problems than wondering if staring at Blaise Zabini's jawline is just a "friend-thing."

Problem Number One : Lord Voldemort (her fake and very much alive father) wants to have tea with her.

iv.

"Do you think it's too early to meet?" Voldemort asks, for the hundredth time. "That it's going too fast?"

"No, my Lord," Bella tells him, for the hundredth time, yawning, because she's been up half the night talking about this. "It's not. You can invite her."

"But if she doesn't agree," Voldemort insists, sounding harried, "then, it would be - "

" - clear that it's too early," Narcissa finishes, tired of the whole thing. "And then you'll know. Just ask her if she wants to go for tea. Some...father-daughter bonding time. However, I do not think it's too early."

"You're right," Voldemort says, sounding awfully doubtful. "It's not too early."

v.

"It *was* too early," Voldemort bemoans, shaking his head. He's sitting on the couch in Malfoy Manor, talking to (or rather, talking at) Lucius. "She sent me a book of poisons. And she said she'll put them in my tea. Maybe she's trying to prove that she has very little

morality. It's impressive, but I sent her a better book back. It has some poisons of my own creation," he adds, when Lucius sighs.

"My Lord, if I may," Lucius says, "maybe...maybe, your daughter isn't trying to impress you, so much as...expressing her anger."

"Anger?" Voldemort blinks. That hadn't occurred to him, yet.

"You *were* absent for the better part of her childhood," Lucius explains, gently. "She must be angry. Draco makes a fuss when he doesn't get something. Or when I'm not there if he needs help. Maybe that's why she doesn't want to meet you."

Oh Merlin, Voldemort realises. He's become his own father. Absent.

"You're right," he agrees, nodding. "I need to prove that I can be a good father to her."

vi.

OWL's start, and so do Lord Voldemort's special letters, where he gives tips and tricks on "How to always get an Outstanding grade."

If Hermione uses them, (just *sometimes*, just a little bit), well. Nobody needs to know that.

vii.

On the second last day of Fifth Year, after the last of her OWL's finish, Hermione runs into Harry Potter, stumbling outside Umbridge's office.

"What are you doing?" she asks, mildly.

He jumps half a foot into the air, and turns to her, slowly and warily.

"Uh," Harry Potter clears his throat, looking worried and rather pale, "Admiring Professor Umbridge's...decor?"

The door's to her office is shut, first of all. Also -

"You have terrible taste," she tells him, sniffing.

"I- yeah, I know," he nods, quickly, glancing around, "...see you later, then?"

"Are you waiting for someone?" Hermione looks around too.

"No!" Potter yelps, loudly, confirming that he *is* indeed waiting for someone. "I'm...I'm- "

"Waiting for someone," Hermione surmises.

A sudden and loud "Weasley is Our King" chanting starts, out of nowhere. Hermione looks at Harry curiously, as a bright flush creeps up his neck.

Harry Potter looks at her for a second more, and then says, "fuck it," and from his pocket, pulls out a knife.

Jesus Christ. Hermione blinks, horrified, looking at the knife.

But Harry turns to the office door instead of at her, and shoving the *knife in the lock*, opens it. Harry Potter is really the strangest person she's ever met.

"Weasley is Our King" strikes a higher pitch in the background, and Hermione realises that it's a diversion. *Oh*, she thinks, watching Harry Potter bend down and place a floo-call.

Hermione waits outside on the doorway, and when she watches Umbridge marching down the corridor and into her office, angry and spitting, she strikes up a nice conversation.

Harry Potter disappears (he apparently has an Invisibility Cloak, which does explain a few things), and slips out, undetected, but soon followed by Hermione.

viii.

One thing leads to another, Hermione Granger remains stubborn and inquisitive and she ends up on the back of a thestral. Ron Weasley and Harry Potter keep grumbling about "sneaky, annoying, *nosy* Slytherins" the whole way, and Longbottom offers her smiles ranging from apologetic to suspicious.

(Ginny Weasley seems rather neutral to her presence there, atleast until Luna Lovegood offers to make Hermione a pair of her special "dirigible plum-shaped" earrings. "I thought that was *our* thing," Ginny Weasley mumbles, looking red and annoyed.)

ix.

They reach the Ministry without incident.

The whole ordeal *inside* the Ministry is a series of unfortunate ones.

x.

"Potter, don't pick that up - !"

Potter scowls at Hermione as he picks up the creepy orb (with his name creepily written on it), from the creepy shelf.

"Very good, Potter. Now turn around, nice and slowly, and give that to me."

They spin around to the drawling voice, and watch as black figures appear from the shadows, all dramatic and black-robed and masked, wands lit up in their hands.

And right in front of them -

"Oh," Hermione says, awkwardly. "Hello, Mr. Malfoy."

There's a pause.

Then, a stiff, "Hello, Miss Gaunt" from under the silver mask.

"Where's Sirius?" Potter demands, overriding Mr. Malfoy's greeting.

A woman on the left laughs and starts, in a mocking baby-voice, *"Wittle baby Potter woke up fwightened and fort what it dweamed was - ah, no, no. I promised to stop speaking like this!"*

This is an odd bunch of people, Hermione decides.

"I know you have him!" Potter continues, ignoring the woman and sounding more and more confused every second.

"I know you have him!" the woman mimics him, again, before seemingly remembering something and faltering. "Wait, Lucius, what was that? What did you just call her?"

"Gaunt. Your *daughter*, Bella," Malfoy says, sneering. Atleast, Hermione thinks he's sneering. She can't see him very well in the dark.

"She's here?" Bella-whomever sounds shocked. "Are you sure- who- "

"It's me," Hermione replies, gloomily. Bella removes her mask and comes a little forward. She's pretty, in her own way. Scary and wrung out and more scary. Hermione won't pretend that she's not regretting just about every decision she's ever taken, even as Bella stares at her.

My god, she realises after a second. *This is Bellatrix Lestrange.*

"Where is Sirius?!" Potter growls. From the corner of her eye, Hermione can see Ron Weasley taking a seat on one of the empty cupboards, looking bored. Bellatrix Lestrange is still staring at her, slowly walking closer.

"Oh, he's not here, Potter," Mr. Malfoy says, making a frustrated noise. "Now, give me that Prophecy."

"Prophecy?" Potter makes a frustrated noise right back. "I-I know Sirius is here! I *know* you've got him!"

"We haven't," Mr. Malfoy hisses, "Hand me the goddamn Proph- "

"You really do look like me," Bellatrix says, softly. So softly that Hermione almost misses it, so softly that Lucius Malfoy stops bickering with Potter and looks over to them. "It's so lovely to meet you. Hello, Hermione."

"Hello, uh," Hermione stammers, eyes wide, wondering what she should call her.

"You can call me Bella," she says, before pausing, "Why have you come with this gryffindor group?"

"Uh," Hermione glances around nervously, "to...meet you? I knew you would be here. I-I-wanted to meet you...alone, first. Without uh- my...father."

Hermione *feels*, more than sees, Lucius Malfoy and Ginny Weasley's eyes roll.

"He *is* an intimidating wizard," Bella agrees, rather dreamily, and reaches her hand out to brush Hermione's hair back or something.

It's an absurdly motherly gesture, made all the more worse by the dragonhide whips and daggers that Hermione can see hanging on her "mother's" waist.

xi.

"So," Potter tries, again, looking skeptical, "...I just hand you this Prophecy, and you'll let us all go? Just like that?"

"Yes," Mr. Malfoy nods.

They're sitting just outside the Department of Mysteries, on the chairs and tables conjured by some of the masked Death Eaters.

"I don't believe you," Potter replies, which, really. They all *know* he's not believing it. It's only the tenth time he's said it.

"Just give it, Harry," Ginny grumbles. "I'm getting really tired, now. It's been almost two hours."

"Fine," Potter snaps, and grinding his teeth.

Lucius Malfoy almost cries in relief.

"Wait," Potter says, and Malfoy *snarls* at him. Hermione can see where Draco gets all his dramatic tendencies.

"Uh, how about an exchange?" Potter suggests, which makes Malfoy perk up. "I give you the Prophecy and you..."

"Let you all go," one of the Death Eaters says from the side. "That's the exchange."

"I wasn't talking to you," Potter tells him, snidely, before turning back to Malfoy. "I give you the Prophecy, and *you* remove Umbridge from school."

"Consider it done, Potter," Mr. Malfoy says, immediately.

Potter hands over the Prophecy, and they go back to Hogwarts, with Hermione promising to write to her "mother."

(Hermione's just beginning to realize that she's actually and unknowingly fooled a random dark wizard and witch into thinking that she's their daughter and that whatever Voldemort had been sending to her earlier, weren't threats, but *presents*.)

xii.

"This," Lord Voldemort pronounces, "is the most ridiculous prophecy I've ever heard."

"What was all that about 'thrice defied?'" Narcissa asks, scrunching her nose in distaste. "Lucius here, has ruined at least five missions. Is that *defying*?"

"I haven't ruined five missions," Lucius tells her, calmly. "In fact, I recently finished one very successfully."

"And you've become even more irritating since then," Narcissa glares at him.

Voldemort sighs, thinking about all the years he lost, that Lucius and Narcissa wasted doing *this*.

"It does sound made-up," Bella adds, shrugging, and staring at the broken shards of the orb.

"It might be," Voldemort agrees. "Seems like...I didn't have to target Harry Potter at all. Or his family."

"I am *pain*," Severus laments, staring out of the window.

xiii.

Her parents still don't end up moving anywhere, and neither does she. Her constant hints, the glaring, obvious, persistent, *crisis!! 911!! RED ZONE, THIS IS NOT A DRILL, WE NEED TO MOVE COUNTRIES* hints have gone unnoticed, somehow.

She doesn't know how to explain to her parents that she's adopted.

She's pretty sure nobody's ever had to do that.

And so she goes back to Hogwarts, with 11 Outstanding OWL's, Lord Voldemort's "wonderful work, daughter," Bella's "like father, like daughter" and her Mum's special sugar-free gummies.

Harry Potter doesn't return to school for Sixth Year.

Hermione hopes he isn't dead. That would be a shame.

(She tries asking Ron Weasley once, but he just laughs and refuses to tell.)

Sixth year starts off without any bumps, excluding that one very embarrassing moment when she walks in on Pansy Parkinson and Lisa Turpin snogging in the Prefect's Bathroom.

They have a new Potions teacher named Slughorn, who keeps grumbling about "not being given a career choice" and Snape as their Defense Professor. He's probably the most knowledgeable teacher they've ever had, which is good.

Hermione writes and receives regular letters to and from Bellatrix Lestrange and Narcissa Malfoy, and she's sure that this year will be a good, relaxing one.

Things are finally settling down.

xiv.

Things are not settling down.

Lord Voldemort...wants to meet Hermione's adoptive parents. *Adoptive.*

She delays it. As much as she can, makes up as many excuses she can think of, she does. She really, really does.

It works, for some time.

And *then*, then it doesn't.

xv.

She gets to know about it too late.

Through a letter.

That reaches her after Voldemort's already left for her parents' house.

Fuck fuck fuck, Hermione thinks, as she tells Draco to cover for her if need be, sneaks out of school to Hogsmeade, uses the fireplace in the Pub to go back to Diagon, and takes the Knight Bus back.

The total journey takes too long, and she's sort of terrified of what she'll find when she reaches.

xvi.

Turns out, she had good reason to worry.

Her Dad's outside in his office, wearing his usual white scrub, a green surgical cap and...sitting with Lord Voldemort.

Hermione can tell that it's Voldemort, even though he seems to have applied some sort of glamour on his eyes (and nose, obviously) and is sitting with a *muggle*, his smile polite.

Her Mum's inside the clinic, and someone's screaming and crying, very loudly.

"...how incredible," Voldemort's saying as Hermione enters, flushed and breathless from her run up, "it is like getting *paid* to torture muggles. I can understand why Hermione seems to like you."

"It's, it's not...torturing people," her Dad says, wincing as the patient next door screams. "We *help* people. We're dentists. We...we're qualified, licensed doctors who treat - "

The patient who her Mum's treating yells something that sounds like 'MMRMFUGER!'

"Yes," Voldemort agrees, sounding amused, "it *is* a wonderful facade to hide behind."

"Huh?" Hermione asks, confused, and both her Dad and Voldemort turn to her.

"Hermione!" her Dad seems surprised as he comes over and gives Hermione a hug. Voldemort's expression is unreadable. "What're you doing here?"

"I- erm," Hermione's going to spit out the truth, there's no other option, no other way, she'll just tell the truth and hope for the best...

"Actually," Hermione continues, firmly, evenly. "I came to tell you that," she takes a deep breath, looks at Voldemort, and says, "that...you don't have to pretend anymore!"

Oh god oh god oh fuck -

"Pretend, honey?" her Dad asks, with a concerned frown.

"Yes," Hermione says, standing her ground. "You don't have to pretend that I'm your daughter, anymore, Dad. I know I'm adopted."

Her Dad stares at her, speechless, mouth wide open.

(There's absolute silence, broken ultimately by her Mum's patient, yelling, 'YOU ARE NOT STICKING *THAT* IN MY TEETH!' quickly followed by a terrible screech.)

For a second, Hermione wonders if she's actually adopted.

"P-pardon?" her Dad sputters out, finally, shaking his head, bewildered. "*What* did you just say? I- Hermione, what nonsense - "

"It's alright, Dad," Hermione says, sadly, eyes downcast. "I know you've always just wanted to make me feel welcome. And that - "

"Your mother and you look the same!" her Dad protests, and he's right. "And more so, I would know if *my* baby wasn't - "

"It's okay, Dad, it's okay," Hermione says, with a comforting pat. "I know you chose me *because* I look like you and - "

"Lord," her Dad breathes out, his hands on his mouth, before he calls her mother, "Jean, Jean! Come out here! You need to- your daughter- "

"Yeah - *Hermione?!"* her Mum pokes her head out, rushing over to remove her latex gloves and giving Hermione a surprised hug. "What is it? Why're you home, Hermione? Is everything alright?"

"Your daughter," her Dad says, sounding rather angry, now, "*thinks* that she's adopted!"

Jean Granger stares at Hermione (who feels like her skin is crawling), and then, at Dan, and a second later, bursts out laughing.

"Oh, come on, Dan," she says, amused, "learn how to take jokes, will you?"

Bloody hell.

"She isn't joking," her Dad defends, scowling, "look at her, she's serious. She actually thinks we're not her biological parents."

"Dan, dear, you really can never be too sure, though, can you?" her Mum says, and winks at Hermione, like it's all a joke.

It *is* a joke.

They're just not in on it.

xvii.

They end up going to their house, and drinking tea and having biscuits.

Voldemort, surprisingly, doesn't say anything, about Hermione's real parents or fake parents or adoptive parents. They just talk about general things, muggle and magic, dentists and bad teeth and Hermione and Ministry careers.

After around an hour of not-unpleasant small talk, Hermione and her dad have both calmed down quite a bit. After around an hour *and a half* of small talk, her Dad's leg has started bouncing impatiently, as he glances periodically at the clock, a sure sign that he needs to go check up on a patient.

They say their goodbyes in the house itself, and nobody talks about Hermione's "joke" again.

"Hello," Hermione says, to Voldemort once they're alone, and walking down the stairs. "Uh. What do you prefer I call you?"

"I think..." Voldemort looks at her and hums, "I think Tom will do."

"Oh," she'd been expecting an absolute 'father.' "I...I'm sorry about all the - " *what IS she sorry about?*

"I see how much you three mean to each other," Voldemort says, stiffly. "I will not interfere in your...dynamics. The muggles seemed to be - "

"In denial," she completes, for him, sending her Dad a *sorry* in her head. "They're in denial. They...can't yet believe that I'm not their biological daughter. I mean, they believe it, but they don't like saying it."

"I am a merciful Lord," Voldemort (Tom?) says, a touch grandly. "I will allow them to call my daughter theirs. They *have* taken good care of you."

"They have," Hermione says, surprised, relieved. "They really have. They love me. A lot."

Voldemort apparates her to an abandoned alley in Hogsmeade, without even her asking him to.

"If you would like to," Voldemort says, tense, sounding somewhat anxious. "We could arrange a small...get-together."

"You really do take this seriously," Hermione blurts out, without thinking. "I mean, erm, of course. Just the two of us? Or...?"

"I was hoping for it to be your adoptive parents and you. And your Mother and I," he says, like he's been thinking a lot about this, and on the spot, Hermione really has no option but to agree.

xviii.

Sixth Year ends with Dumbledore getting injured somewhere, somehow, he's hardly been at Hogwarts these days, and Hermione sees him in the Hospital Wing, once, muttering something about "it was a fake, he took the real one" and "bloody inferis" and "Ab's fucking goats."

Barmy, honestly.

Hermione sits with the Slytherins and Lisa on the ride back to London.

At Kings' Cross Station, Hermione spots her parents (her *muggle* parents) immediately, standing with the Malfoys, Lord Voldemort in slight disguise, and a woman with white blonde hair. Her eyes are lidded and angry, though, and Hermione can already tell that it's Bella in a glamour.

She and Draco exchange amused glances as they step off.

"My Lord," Draco greets, nodding at them one by one, "Mother. Father. Auntie Bella."

"It's your cousin, actually," Narcissa says, flatly. "An obscure Malfoy Family branch from..." she trails off, looks to Lucius for help.

"America?" Lucius shrugs, disinterested. Cousin-not-Auntie-Bella looks like she wants to rip his hair off.

"Hello," Hermione says, smiling and hugging her parents (the real ones). "Mum...s? Dads?"

Nobody protests that.

Wonderful.

xix.

Their "get-together" ends up being a full Death Eater thing.

In Hawaii .

("The Death Eaters have been temporarily disbanded," Voldemort says, "till we can find and focus on a new agenda. Your adoptive parents are muggles, which, of course, forces us to change everything about our ideology." She'd stared at him in surprise, until he'd said, defensively, "You are *my* daughter. It matters!")

Hermione meets Peter Pettigrew, or 'Wormtail', first.

"He'll carry the luggage," Voldemort tells her.

He does, indeed.

Peter Pettigrew levitates the luggage from the inside of Malfoy Manor to the outside, the Grangers' luggage from their house to a portkey five feet away, from the portkey to their hotel.

She had hoped that her parents wouldn't feel awkward or scared amongst so many wizards (and dark ones, too) but really, they seem almost *too* comfortable, colorful garlands around their necks and neon pink drinks in their hands.

It's also the trip where she realises that her "mother" has a husband. She'd sort of assumed Bella was single, for some reason.

Turns out, she has a husband.

Who's not Lord Voldemort.

His name is Rodolphus LeStrange, and he orders ten strawberry smoothies the minute they step into the lounge.

"You're married?" Hermione asks Bellatrix, confused, as she watches Bella and Voldemort talking.

"It was a long time ago," Bella waves her hand, dismissively, which Hermione thinks is the complete *opposite* of helping her case. Marriages are supposed to be stronger, the longer they are. Right?

xx.

"And...you're completely fine with this?" she asks Rodolphus, when Voldemort laughs at something Bella's said.

"What?" Rodolphus raises his sunglasses, lying on the beach chair near the pool. "Fine with what?"

"With-with Bella and Him," she points, discreetly. "Isn't she your wife?"

"She is," Rodolphus looks amused. "And I love her."

Hermione blinks at him.

Rodolphus pushes his glasses up to his head, and leans in closer, giving her a knowing smirk.

"Honey," he says, with a snort, "if you think you're fooling *anybody* besides those two," he nods towards Bella and Voldemort, "then you're a little off your game. We all know you're not Bella's daughter."

"How- I mean, what no- that's not - "

"Save it," he lies back down, still grinning. "I know Bella. I've known her since we were kids. *You* are not her daughter. I would just know if you were."

She considers that.

"So," she says, carefully, "...who all...think I'm *not* their daughter?"

Rodolphus's smile widens, and he glances around before lowering his voice.

"Anyone who realises that the Dark Lord could never get it up for a girl."

Well.

"And trust me," Rodolphus says, with a suggestive smile, putting his shades back on, "I would know."

It comforts Hermione sometimes, that no matter how many things she fucks up, there are always people who fuck up different things in weirder ways.

xxi.

Draco, Hermione and Theo have a great time on the trip, anyway. They go to the beach, they go snorkeling, they go with a guide to see lava atop a volcano. Draco whines the whole way uphill, but it's still fun. They go mountain tubing with a really cool group of muggles, and

Voldemort and Hermione go alone for some "father-daughter" time to a coffee farm.

It's a lovely place, Hermione thinks, the second night, as they watch the fireworks from the paddle boats.

They rent out three bikes, and Hermione teaches Draco how to ride a bicycle, and tries teaching Theo, too, but he keeps falling and laughing. Draco picks it up fast and they race each other to the top of the hill, (atleast until Draco falls off the cliff and has to apparate mid-air so as to not die. He seems rather shaken, after that.)

xxii.

The last day of their trip brings somewhat a shock.

xxiii.

It's a completely normal day.

They're at the beach, Theo's drinking that disgusting mint drink that he likes, Draco's still applying sunscreen. It's a completely normal day, but suddenly, there's a loud bark, and a really, really large, black dog comes running out of nowhere, jumping straight at them.

Draco startles and screams, and Theo yelps out something about a "grim" but the dog's already reached where he was heading. The table.

Where, atleast until now, *Wormtail* had been lying.

Like a rat. He does that, often, Hermione's realised. Maybe he likes being a rat more than an actual human.

The dog grabs Wormtail between his teeth, who squeals and tries to get away and then, Draco's pulling out his wand to help Wormtail not get eaten, but *holy shit* -

Theo spews out his drink, as the dog abruptly turns into a man, and still holding Wormtail in his hands, smiles triumphantly and says, "Got you!"

He immediately looks confused, after that.

(It's a very familiar-looking, handsome man.)

"Wait," he asks, "what the *fuck* are you doing here, Peter?"

"As if he can answer as a rat," Theo scoffs, and the man blinks, like he's seeing them for the first time. "Who the hell are you to grab at him like that anyway?"

The man opens and closes his mouth, his gaze narrowing as he assesses them, before settling on Draco. "Cissy's brat," he guesses.

Draco scowls and picks up the sunscreen bottle that he'd dropped.

"Sirius Black," Draco replies, and *oh*.

Sirius Black looks very different when he's well-fed and shaved, with his hair trim and tied up. He has a fresh tattoo on his neck, and magical tattoos up and down his arms, charmed to move around.

Before Hermione can say anything, the clearing from where Sirius Black (who's an Animagus, Hermione realises), had come, two more people come.

"Padfoot!" "Sirius!"

And stop dead on seeing them, Sirius with the struggling rat in his hands.

It's *Harry Potter*.

And if Hermione remembers right, which she *does*, it's Professor Lupin with him.

In Hawaii.

Both of them wearing colorful Hawaiian straw hats, drinks in their hands, sunglasses on their heads, loose yellow palm-trees-patterned shirts.

They're...shocked, to say the least.

It's Theo to starts laughing, first. Harry and Sirius follow, and Hermione and Draco can't help but join.

Lupin's busy scowling at Peter Pettigrew.

Hermione wonders what the whole issue is.

Lupin and Sirius Black take Peter, and Harry Potter stays behind for some time, catching up on the happenings of Sixth Year, explains how he was completely sick of the whole war. How Sirius Black was tired of being trapped up in some house, and so they just sort of packed one night and, up and ran.

xxiv.

"You can take him," Voldemort says, shrugging.

Peter Pettigrew claws on the inside of the jar he's in. It has two holes on the top, and a huge slice of cheese at the bottom, and Sirius Black looks like he would rather die than make a deal with Lord Voldemort.

But he does.

"They'll *have* to clear your name if we give him to the Ministry," Professor Lupin says. He's got a dyed strip of red-orange-yellow in his hair that makes him look younger, and sorta crazy.

"You'll be a free man then, Padfoot," Harry Potter says, awed, as he looks at the jar. He's all packed and standing with his suitcase. "We just...turn Pettigrew in, and uh. That's it? I move in?"

He sounds so very excited.

"Of course, Harry," Sirius nods, smiling.

(There's something bitter and dark in his voice, though, when he looks at the jar. Hermione feels like Sirius is stopping himself from killing Wormtail right here.)

Peter claws on the jar again, his paws going pitter-patter.

"Oh, shut it, Wormtail," Voldemort says. "If you stay quiet right now, I'll break you out in a day or two."

Wormtail settles down and nibbles on his cheese.

Sirius shrugs like he doesn't care one way or another.

xxv.

They return home after that. Well. Hermione returns home with her parents, and after seeing them get all unpacked and settled, she goes back to Malfoy Manor, because she's still got one loose end to take care of.

"You won't...you won't tell anyone, will you?" Hermione asks Rodolphus, though it's obvious that nobody would believe him, even if he did. Voldemort definitely believes Hermione is his daughter. He's been trying to get her to learn a few "necessary spells."

Hermione's sure that "necessary spells" do not mean what they sound like.

"Look," Rodolphus says, in a matter-of-factly tone. "I was in Azkaban for a long, long time. Now you're here, with all your pretty little stories, and suddenly, we go to *Hawaii*. If you didn't lie, we would still be fighting the Order. And knowing my luck, I would have ended up in Azkaban, again. So."

"Oh," Hermione nods.

"Yes," Rodolphus agrees. "I'm not telling anyone anything. This totally works for me."

xxvi.

Works for everyone.

Hermione Granger-Gaunt is now her legal name. Voldemort gets everything done, makes her the Heir to the Gaunt Vault and everything. Bella makes her Heir to the Lestrangle Vault, and she meets Harry Potter once more at Gringotts, after the whole Peter-Pettigrew-Sirius-Black shit goes down.

Things seem to have changed, or maybe, it's just her.

Chapter End Notes

HAPPY PRIDE MONTH everyone!! 🌈

hello!! ok so the plot is basically finished. but BUT im very willing to do an epilogue. actually i **will** do an epilogue, but for now im marking it complete. i wanna expand on lisa/pansy and ginny/luna and blaise/theo etc etc in 7th year which i will :)

ALSO NOTE -> i have nothing against dentists, at all, in case anyone gets offended. no really, my parents are doctors and tbfh i dread going to the dentists office just as much as my fic shows xD

i would love it if u tell me what u thought abt the fic, anyway!! 🧡😊 thanks for reading!!

enough trouble for a lifetime

Chapter Summary

i know i said it's just an epilogue but well... it's a little long lol

Chapter Notes

btw i've been receiving a lot of messages/asks etc about this fic. collective answer: i don't mind anyone writing missing scenes for my fic or borrowing the set up/universe! i would love to read ur versions of how pansy and lisa got together, or ginny/luna scenes or canon divergences or anything that u want to write, really. GO FOR IT!

a lot of people wanted to write wolfstar missing scenes too and u should really really definitely do that.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

i.

Hermione's in the parlor at Malfoy Manor, when Voldemort abruptly enters the room and...hisses at her.

Hermione blinks.

He hisses again. Like. Just makes strange *shhshh* noises at her.

"Oh," Hermione realises. "I can't speak parseltongue."

Voldemort looks confused.

Hermione's mind goes absolutely blank for a horrible second.

"Genetical glitches," she squeaks out. "They happen sometimes."

Voldemort hums, before turning around and hissing at nothing in particular. The door behind him slides open a crack and-

"Hermione," he says, solemnly, "meet my friend. Her name is *Nagini*. Nagini, meet Hermione. My daughter. I told you about her."

That's flattering.

Nagini hisses, sounding rather bored with the whole thing, her head swaying, forked tongue flicking.

"Hello, Nagini," Hermione says, with a weak smile, as the twelve feet long creature butts her head against Hermione's shin. *Oh fucking god.*

"I met her in Albania," Voldemort says, like this is all very normal. "We lost touch when we went abroad, since Nagini is not very fond of Hawaii."

That sounds absolutely and completely reasonable.

"Is-is she venomous?" Hermione asks, gingerly.

"Oh, yes," Voldemort says, proudly. "Very."

"Lovely," Hermione's smile becomes even more strained. "We'll be the best of friends."

Nagini hisses, settling down in a coil around Hermione. This could be agreement, or it could also be an elaborate trap, so Hermione resists running away.

ii.

Harry's had a mad couple of years.

Moving in with Sirius and Remus in Sirius's newly bought four-room muggle apartment is a rather nice touch after all that.

A happy ending.

("What's a nine letter word for something distasteful?" Remus is asking, frowning at the newspaper in his hands. They're sitting in the kitchen, and Sirius is making omelette. "Or revolting?"

"Try Snivellus," Sirius says, immediately. Harry snorts, buttering his toast. Remus pulls a face at him, before turning back to the crossword.

"I think it'll be...obnoxious?" Remus asks, slowly, scanning the rows and columns.

Sirius gives him a flat look.

"It's 'repugnant,'" Sirius says, looking, as usual, absolutely sure of his choices. He's right, though, and Remus nods and fills it in.)

Yeah, so the happy ending.

Harry's always believed in those. *All's well that ends well*. It seems like a happy ending, but also like a happy beginning. A new beginning.

iii.

Voldemort starts teaching Hermione magic a month before seventh year is to start.

"When I was younger," Voldemort says, "I wanted to teach. At Hogwarts. Dumbledore never let me, though- "

"Ouch," Hermione mutters.

"Yes," Voldemort raises his wand again, slowly flicks and jerks it. Hermione copies, slowly. It's a complicated spell. "It's wonderful teaching you. Maybe I could kill Dumbledore now, and get a job at Hogwarts."

Hermione blinks at him.

"Aren't you, like," she asks, "past retirement age?"

"Retirement age," Voldemort echoes, flatly. "I am immortal."

"Are you really?" Hermione asks, curiously. "I always thought it was just something all Dark Lords say. I am an immortal-all-powerful-being, bow to me, your-ruler-of-all-times etc."

"I have never said that," Voldemort states, confidently. Then, "Atleast... not in that exact order."

iv.

"Aren't we ever going to regroup, my Lord?" Dolohov asks, hesitantly, "and cleanse the wizarding world of muggle filth- "

Bellatrix makes a snarling noise in her throat, which shuts Dolohov right up.

"We're past retirement age, Antonin," Voldemort says, primly.

"My Lord?" Dolohov asks, because he's an idiot and needs everything spelled out for him.

"I don't see why we have to," Voldemort explains, rather patiently, "You'll be dead in a few years, besides. Why do *you* care about the wizarding world?"

"I- we- " Dolohov stutters.

"Huh," Bellatrix says, scraping the dirt under her nails with a boning knife. Dolohov gulps, audibly.

Bella really *is* a terrifying woman, Voldemort thinks, fondly.

"You know what?" Voldemort sighs, looking at Dolohov's hopeful expression. "Since you do want to do something, you can help Wormtail out of Azkaban."

See? Lord Voldemort always keeps his promises.

Well. Sort of. Mostly it was because Dolohov was being a pain. And it's sort of sad to leave a man in prison when you said you'd break them out.

v.

Harry's sitting with Remus and Sirius, and watching TV in the evening, when the news comes. *Peter Pettigrew escapes Azkaban!*

That night Harry watches Sirius and Remus get slightly too drunk, apparate to London and burn down Grimmauld Place.

"It was a coping mechanism," Sirius tells Harry, the morning after, looking conflicted between feeling guilty and feeling *well, anyway*.

Harry asks if he can set Privet Drive on fire.

"Not even a little bit?" Harry asks, hopefully. "It would help *me* cope."

"We should probably sign up for therapy," Remus says, shooting Harry a concerned look, "as a family. Maybe individually. Or any fucking how."

vi.

Hermione sighs.

"So, these dentists," Rabastan pulls a disgusted face. "They just...put their fingers inside your mouth? *Anyone's* mouth? What if they put poison inside?"

"They...won't," Hermione tries. She wonders if it's possible to explain the Hippocratic oath. She decides against it.

"Even so," Rabastan shakes his head, looking horrified. "You can't just stick your fingers into

other people's mouths! It isn't *proper*."

"It's only weird if you make it weird, my dude," Rodolphus tells him, who's recently learnt the phrase 'my dude'. Hermione doesn't know if she should encourage it or not.

Probably the latter.

vii.

Bellatrix sharpens her knives a lot.

"Maybe you need to find a way to channel all this rage somewhere," Hermione wonders, aloud. "You could take up martial arts, you know."

"Martial...arts?" Bellatrix looks confused.

"I used to go for self-defence classes when I was a kid," Hermione offers. "You could try that, too."

"Self-defence?" Bellatrix blinks. "I don't require that, I can defend myself rather well."

"What if you didn't have a wand, though?" Hermione asks. "How would you defend yourself then?"

"Is it a man or a woman who's attacking me?" Bellatrix asks. "Or some form of creature- "

"Erm. A man?" Hermione shrugs.

"I would bite his prick off," Bellatrix replies, instantly, and completely straight-faced. Hermione stares. Bellatrix snaps her jaw open and shut a couple of times to explain. " Are there classes for attack?"

Hermione ignores the question, and leaves her to sharpening her knives.

viii.

They're to go back to school on September 1st, and Hermione returns as *Head Girl Hermione Granger-Gaunt*.

ix.

Ron Weasley gets the Head Boy badge, which is okay, since he's fairly tolerable, from what

she remembers.

"Hi," Neville Longbottom says, grinning at her, when she enters the head's dormitory she's sharing with Ron Weasley. He's sitting on a floating trunk, cross-legged, his tie around his head.

"Hey, Longbottom," she smiles back, settling down her trunk. "Where's Weasley?"

"Erm," he frowns at her, "he's with the First Years? He and *you*, obviously, had to show them around school? And give a talk probably - "

"Oh, fuck," Hermione dumps her things down, and runs.

x.

So, after forgetting her duties on the very first day, Hermione and Ron come to a few agreements, 1. Ron will remind her when he goes for rounds or meetings, 2. Hermione will not tell anyone about Neville leaving their shared dormitory early almost every single morning, 3. Ron has a fifty million friends and all of them will be using the head's dormitory, and 4. Hermione's friends won't sneakily hex them when they're co-existing.

The fourth one isn't really followed, but it's all sort of working out.

It's going to be a good year. Hermione can feel it.

Harry Potter and Hermione actually get along quite well.

Hermione wouldn't have guessed it (considering everything Potter's been upto these last few years), but he's actually a rather awkward, and quiet person, who doesn't much like attention. Of any sort. Hermione sometimes has to stare out of the window if she wants Harry to speak freely.

It's the first week when the whole mess starts.

"Shit," Harry mutters, straightening up from his essay. "The wedding's this weekend."

"Wedding?" Hermione asks.

"Yeah," he nods. "Ron's eldest brother, Bill. He's engaged to Fleur. Remember Fleur Delacour?"

"From Triwizard?" she frowns.

"That's the one," Harry rolls up his essay. "I need a date for the wedding. Or else Molly will keep trying to set me up, the whole time."

"Oh," she shrugs. "Who're you planning to ask?"

"Er," Harry chews the inside of his cheek. "You."

Hermione blinks.

"The food will be really good," he says. "And you can dance. Talk to people. It might be fun."

"...and what do you expect *after* the wedding?" Hermione asks, slowly.

"...we'll come back to school?" Harry replies, just as slowly. "We can apparate back."

"And after that?" Hermione insists, because he *better not be expecting more*.

"...what do *you* want to do after that?"

"Nothing," Hermione shakes her head. "Nothing at all. At all. Absolutely nothing." That should be clear enough.

"Okay?" Harry says (asks). "So, is that fine?"

"Yes?" she says (asks). "Sure, I'll go with you."

Harry grins, and they turn back to their essays.

"The wedding's on sunday, by the way," he adds.

xi.

"Shit," Hermione realises, in the evening. "Sunday. I don't have anything to wear."

Her first instincts would be to go to Pansy.

She decides to reach higher.

("Hello, Narcissa," she says, standing at the gate of Malfoy Manor. "I need a little bit of help.")

xii.

"Oh, I can *definitely* help you, don't worry," Narcissa says, after Hermione's told her the whole story, and almost physically pulls her inside. "Here, let me call Lucius."

"Lucius?" Hermione blinks.

"Well, who else is going to help?"

"...you?" Hermione asks, hesitantly.

"Lucius is much better at this, believe me," she says.

"He is?" Hermione asks, doubtful.

xiii.

Turns out Narcissa's right.

Lucius Malfoy is, indeed, quite good at all this.

He immediately narrows down what colors would suit Hermione the best, what neckline, what material.

"How do you even know all this?" Hermione says, standing in front of the mirror. The blue dress she's wearing is charmed to look like the sea. Hermione thinks she's going to be seasick if she looks any longer.

"Occupational hazard, of being raised by Abraxas Malfoy," Lucius Malfoy says, eyes narrowed calculatingly, at the pink dress in his hand.

"You mean an occupational hazard," Bellatrix mutters, giving Hermione a tired look, "of being a pretentious little fucker."

Lucius spares her a scandalized look.

xiv.

"You look really pretty," Draco comments, from where he's lying face down on the couch in his pajamas. He isn't even fucking looking at her.

It's apparently too early for that.

"Really good. Amazing. Absolutely fantastic, Hermione." He groans, muffled.

"What?" Harry asks, as he enters the room. "Oh. You look nice, Hermione."

"Thanks," she smiles, and nods to his outfit. "You're not too shabby yourself."

(She doesn't realise it, but Draco sits up at that, glancing between them, eyes widening in shock.)

They floo to the Burrow.

xv.

The Burrow's a really lively place.

Harry introduces Hermione to Bill Weasley, and she offers her congratulations. She meets Fred and George Weasley, who won't stop looking at her with eerily similar grins, and Percy Weasley, who won't stop talking about how Minister Fudge won't be minister for long because of the whole Sirius Black thing, and about who *should* have the office.

She doesn't really much care.

She also meets Charlie Weasley.

She's looking for the loo when she first sees him, his arm wrapped around a dark-haired boy she's never seen before. She crosses them again, when she's coming *out* of the loo, by which point, the dark-haired boy's been replaced by a blonde-haired girl.

Which is a little strange, since it's only been five minutes, and they're standing in the exact same place.

"Hey, you came with Harry!" Charlie Weasley calls, when she's going. "Hermione, yeah?"

"Hello," she says, turning to them, and *oh my god, it is now a blue-haired girl standing with him*. "Yes, Hermione Granger. Nice to meet you."

He shakes her hand jovially, "Charlie Weasley."

"And I'm Tonks," the girl says, grinning as her hair grow longer, turning purple-pink. "Dora Tonks."

"Metamorphmagus, I take it," Hermione grins, shaking her offered hand. "Lovely to meet you, Dora."

The wedding's great, too. The food is good, they dance a lot. Harry keeps stepping on everyone's toes. Hermione mentally thanks Mr. Malfoy for picking closed toe heels.

xvi.

Fleur Delacour is the most beautiful person she's ever seen.

"You are the most *beautiful* person I have ever seen," Hermione blurts out, when they're sitting together for refreshments.

"Oh, I know," Fleur replies, completely solemnly, and suddenly, Hermione has a new hero.

xvii.

When they apparate back to school, Draco's glaring daggers at both Hermione and Harry. Hermione's too tired to deal, though, and so she ignores it.

(She shouldn't have.)

xviii.

"Hermione!"

She's in Hogsmeade, trying to explain the point of a *telephone* to Theo and Blaise, who are still stuck on the part about "because muggle fireplaces don't exactly work like ours do" and "no, their owls are... slightly untrained."

She looks up to see Draco standing there, looking determined, two bottles in his hand.

"Want to come for a walk?"

She looks back at Theo and Blaise, and wonders for a second if she's intruding. Draco's apparently more perceptive than she's given him credit for, she thinks, slightly impressed.

"Sure," she nods, grabbing a bottle of butterbeer from his hand. They make their way down the hill, and they talk about NEWT's, and after. It's refreshing, because nobody ever talks about it with her.

("It was smart of you to do that for Theo and Blaise, by the way," Hermione says.

"Do what?" Draco blinks.

"Well," she frowns. "You know. Maybe if they spend some time alone together, they'll come to realise...certain things."

"Things?" Draco looks bewildered. "What *things*?"

It's at this point that Hermione realises Draco had no idea what he was doing when he called Hermione aside.)

She doesn't, however, realise that it's odd to have done it if not for the reason she'd guessed. Atleast, not until they reach back to school, and Harry sees them.

"You went together?" Harry asks, his voice too high-pitched.

"Sort of," Hermione shrugs, taking off her shoes as she sits.

"We did," Draco says, flatly. "It was fun."

"Erm, w-why?" Harry insists. "Are you...together?"

Hermione's eyes widen, because *oh wait what?*

"That's none of your business," Draco snaps, getting up and leaving before Hermione can clear things out. Harry stares at him as he goes, mouth wide open.

"You're dating?!" Harry asks, indignantly, turning on her. Hermione blanches.

"Erm, no," she says, "*No*."

Harry looks at her like he doesn't believe her. Well. Fuck.

xix.

"Hermione," Harry says, rather abruptly, the same evening. "I really like what you're wearing."

Hermione blinks and glances down at her jumper, her *mother's* jumper, actually, it's that old. It's faded, a weird rust-brown color, and there's a small ink stain on it.

Hermione squints at Harry, who looks supremely uncomfortable. Draco, sitting on Ron's bed, is slowly turning red.

"Thanks," she settles on. Then, because it's even more awkward like this, "I like what you're wearing, too." She doesn't. It's objectively ugly, a shirt of a very odd shade of... *mustard*, she realises, trying to let her smile not falter.

Draco makes a choked noise in his throat.

"Thanks, Hermione," Harry says, stiffly, before turning back to his book.

xx.

"I got you chocolates," Draco declares, too loudly. It's been a day since Hogsmeade. Hermione's starting to worry about him. "Your favorite ones."

Hermione takes them.

"Thanks, Draco," she says.

"*Thanks, Draco,*" Harry mutters mockingly, under his breath. Draco glares at him. Hermione unwraps a chocolate. She really can't deal with this.

Whatever this is.

xxi.

Both Draco and Harry ask her out the next day.

It's heated, but in a weird way.

"Oh, so you wanna go out with her, now?" Draco scowls. "Well, back off, Potter. You can't have everything."

"Nobody *has* me- " Hermione tries.

"I know I can't have everything," Harry says, a tad bitterly, ignoring her. "But you can't go around doing whatever you want, just like that, you complete asshole- "

"Don't look at me like that, your green fucking eyes are *freaking* me out- "

"Shut up, shut up! You don't know anything! And get away from the window, your hair looks all glow-y in the sun- "

"Oh, like your stupid face? All glow-y and smile-y and then you *laugh* and I don't like it because it's all warm- "

Hermione stands up, and slaps her hand on the table until they shut up. It's a good thing she's too annoyed to focus on the sting in her hand.

Harry and Draco both glare at her, and then, at each other.

"I really don't know what's going on with you two," she says, slowly, shaking her head. "And

you better have sorted this out by the time I'm back."

She stands up, and storms out, like she has a destination in mind.

"Where are you going?" Draco calls behind her, now sounding more panicked than angry.

"My father," she ends up saying. *Merlin, she's become Draco.* "Keep that in mind."

She ends up running down to the village and apparating to Diagon Alley.

xxii.

Hermione returns back to school with a kneazle tucked under her arm, and a whole pile of books.

Impromptu shopping is clearly *not* for her.

She braces herself for more of Draco and Harry's ambiguously-worded yelling, except that would probably have been better than finding them wriggling around on Ron's bed and snogging each other's faces off.

"I see you made up," Hermione says, dryly, clearing her throat.

Draco springs up and Harry stumbles down, looking mortified. *Crookshanks*, her recently bought half-kneazle, purrs disdainfully.

"And made out," Hermione mutters, snidely, as she enters, scrunching up her nose.

xxiii.

"And so, wait. Let me get this clear," Hermione blinks, once, twice.

Draco winces. *Clarity is bad, in some situations.*

"Just because Harry and I went, as *friends*, to one wedding, you assumed that he liked me, and you got jealous and to make him jealous back...you..." she blinks a couple of times more, mouth open like she's struggling to put it in words.

"He also called you pretty?" Draco tries.

"So did *you*." Hermione scowls.

There's a pause.

"Do you think I'm an idiot?" Draco asks, hesitantly.

Hermione looks at him like even that question is idiotic.

xxiv.

Theo and Blaise stop getting funny and start getting irritating, really fast.

Hermione decides to...spur things on. Just a little bit.

"Don't be a coward," Hermione hisses, pushing Theo towards Blaise, who's eyeing them curiously. "Come on. You asked him to come here and now- " she grabs his wrist to stop him from running because he's not the one who called Blaise here, " *-follow through!*"

Theo laughs nervously, before trying to escape again.

"Theo!" Hermione glares at him. Blaise has started to look worried himself.

"Is something wrong?" Blaise asks, finally.

That seems to snap Theo out of his fear.

"Is something wrong," Theo repeats, but mockingly. "*I'll* tell you what's fucking wrong. I've been trying to ask you out since two months now! Two! Months! And you can't take a bloody hint!"

Blaise blinks, and stares.

"I can't take a hint?" Blaise asks, slowly, before scowling. "I *kissed* you yesterday! And you just laughed!"

"Why would you laugh?" Hermione asks, sighing.

"B-because- wha-?" Theo sputters. "Well, it wasn't an actual kiss! We were just. You know. It was a caught-up-in-the-moment thing!"

"What moment?" Blaise laughs incredulously. "We were sitting on the balcony and talking quietly and I leaned over and kissed you and you were like *ha ha ha!*"

"Oh my god," Hermione mutters.

"Can I kiss you now?" Theo asks, almost desperately.

"No," Hermione and Blaise answer together.

"I need to be wooed," Blaise declares, rather grandly. "Courted. Pursued."

"Oh," Theo looks surprised. "How do I do that?"

There's a short pause, before Blaise snarls.

"Fuck it," he says, stalking towards Theo, and it is *so* time for Hermione to leave.

xxv.

Dumbledore's unconscious body turns up in the Great Hall on the seventh day of Seventh Year.

Hermione suspects foul play, but Voldemort seems even more shocked than she is when he hears the news, that she doesn't bother asking.

It's chaos, though, *pure chaos*.

Professor Sprout and Slughorn start herding the students out of the place, McGonagall seems frozen in place. Prefects are running about everywhere, First Years are screaming.

"He...must have picked up something... *horribly* cursed," Professor Snape says, with a disgusted sound, poking Dumbledore's shrivelled, black hand with his wand, quickly applying charm on charm. Hermione suspects they're to restrict the curse to his hand alone. "I don't know why he would, but he obviously did - "

"Hey, what's that?" Hermione points to something lying next to Dumbledore, and she's about to reach for it, when Snape yells and pushes her aside.

She trips, face first, and spins around to stare up at him, mouth open.

"What?" she asks, bewildered.

"And this," Snape declares, levitating what looks to be thick black, metal *ring* with his wand, " must be the cursed object."

Snape levitates Dumbledore to the Infirmary, McGonagall is self-appointed as Headmistress until he's back, and the school gets an unplanned holiday until then.

xxvi.

"He will be dead in a few months, my Lord," Snape says, pursing his lips. "A year,

maximum."

"Interesting," Voldemort says, flatly, but he sounds pleased. "What exactly did he touch, Severus?"

"It was, erm," Snape clears his throat. "A cursed...kettle."

"Kettle?" Voldemort and Hermione ask, at the same time.

"Yes," Snape glares at Hermione. "A kettle."

"Alright," Hermione shrugs.

Who is *she* to point out other people's lies, anyway?

xxvii.

"Nobody," Hermione answers, simply.

Voldemort looks approving. "Always good to maintain a standard," he says.

They're sitting in a café in Diagon Alley, and Voldemort has his patented "not fooling anybody but there's no proof either" glamour on.

"What about him?" Voldemort nods towards some sixth year boy, coming out from the Weasley's shop.

"Eh," Hermione shrugs.

"Her?" Voldemort gestures discreetly.

"She's with Luna," Hermione replies, waving to Ginny, who grins and waves back enthusiastically, spilling firewhiskey on herself. "Lovegood."

"I could kill her," Voldemort offers. "Or anyone."

"Nah."

"What about Drogo?"

"Who?"

"Abraxas's grandson."

"Oh, him," Hermione hums. "No, no, I can't. I don't like anyone. Like that."

"You will tell me if you do, yes?" Voldemort sounds insecure.

"Of course," Hermione replies. "My NEWT's are coming up, you know."

"You are prepared," Voldemort says, firmly. "You are my daughter."

Hermione clears her throat. "Oh, yes."

xxix.

"Mum," Hermione says, over tea, that evening. "Why don't I like anyone?"

"There could be a number of reasons, Hermione," her mum says, in her doctor-voice.

"Hormones, maturity level, general appearances of the people around you and what attracts you- "

"No, no," Hermione says. "I mean like, I don't like anyone. At all. And I just think all... *that* is so gross. It just is. I saw- I accidentally saw Pansy and Lisa in the loo. And I...not-so-accidentally saw a bunch of other things. Just. No."

"Well," her mum exchanges a look with her dad. "Atleast we don't have to worry about giving you the talk. We're very late, anyway. You're seventeen, already. We figured you'd read about it. You mostly do. Or..."

"You should give it anyway," Hermione suggests. *Knowledge can only help.*

It does help.

Hermione's now god-fucking-sure she never wants anything to do with any disgusting thing discussed during "the Talk."

Nothing at all.

xxx.

"Did you know muggles have something called a *deck of knives*?"

Hermione looks at Bellatrix standing, shuffling what is, indeed, a rather lethal pack of knife cards. She's about to leave for school, and this revelation of Bellatrix's definitely makes her want to hurry.

"What're you planning to do with them?" she asks, finally.

"Oh, this and that," Bellatrix says, airily, which is sort of alarming.

xxxi.

"I think I like Draco Malfoy," Harry tells Sirius, and Remus. "I mean. I know I like him. We're going out. Like- as- *boyfriends*."

"You like a pureblood?" Remus pulls a face like his own head isn't laying in the lap of the most pureblooded pureblood currently alive. "Purebloods suck."

"Damn right we do," Sirius adds, proud. "And very well, too."

xxxii.

School goes on, as always, and the subjects are getting tougher and tougher. Voldemort's lessons really do help, though.

Lisa and Hermione study together for NEWT's, Pansy and Draco make fun of them (*swots, the both of you*) but they study almost as much. Blaise and Theo are usually never around these days, and when Draco asks, Blaise says, sagely, *you do not want to know*.

"I got it!" Neville announces, entering the dormitory with a wide smile on his face. Nobody looks at him. "I *got* it," he repeats, for appropriate attention.

"Got what?" Pansy asks, head lolling back.

"The apprenticeship I wanted," Neville holds up the paper in his hand. Hermione squints at it. "With Herbert Beery, supposed to be one of the best Herbology- "

"The *what?*" Harry asks. "You can get those?"

Draco sighs, long-suffering.

xxxiii.

Harry Potter manages claiming an apprenticeship that nobody's ever done before.

Junior auror training.

For someone who was practically clueless about what an apprenticeship even *is*, until last week, Hermione thinks the whole business sounds rather dubious.

She mentions that to Harry.

"Oh, of course," he nods, simply. "They want the *boy who lived* and all. But still. It's a good opportunity."

He has training every weekend, and at the end of it, he's supposed to get one case. If he handles that well, he'll probably be promoted to a rank...above a junior auror, whichever that is. Hermione isn't sure.

For the record, it's really strange to see your classmates trying to act like adults.

It's even worse when you realise that you're doing the same.

By the time you reach to the conclusion that every single adult in the history of all adults has, at some point, just *pretended* to know what they're doing, you've practically lost all faith in the country. And its future.

xxxiv.

It's a week before NEWT's, and Hermione's sick of it all. Sick of the whole thing, sick of how most of her NEWT's aren't going to help her anyhow in anything.

They need to do something. About it all. *Who else will?*

She grumbles as she walks to where the rest of the seventh years are sitting, Theo drooling on a book, Pansy braiding his hair.

"We should do something together," Hermione states.

"Like an orgy?" Blaise asks, immediately. She squints at him, and he looks back, completely straight-faced. Well.

Theo wakes up, blearily blinks at Blaise. "Who all?"

"I meant," she clarifies, ignoring Theo, "like starting a business. Some service. Or something-"

"We don't need money," Draco says. "We have rather enough."

"And no children to pass it on to," Harry adds.

"It's not about the money- " Hermione tries.

"I thought that was sort of the point of business," Theo says.

"It's not. I'm talking about a business," Hermione grits out, "that *helps* people. Because we have enough resources and more than enough money, and we're a good team, who work well together. Plus," she shrugs, "we're all sort of free."

There's a short pause.

"An orgy would be more fun," Blaise mutters.

"We could do both," Ginny suggests, her expression considering.

"I'm in," Pansy says, with a shrug.

xxxv.

They start working on it.

The problem is, none of them have common interests, and none of them specific problems in mind.

(Or a proper brain cell.)

"There are so many, *many* things to fix," Hermione mutters. "What to fucking focus on?"

Draco and Theo exchange nervous glances.

"Draco," Hermione asks, spinning around to him, "what do the people need right now?"

"...world peace?"

Theo sinks lower on the couch.

xxxvi.

In the end, it's Harry who comes up with it.

He turns up in the afternoon on a weekend, his last weekend of training, with a ten year old girl in tow.

"Hey, 'Mione," he says, slumping down on a table. "Meet Zoya."

"Zoya Williams," the girl says, grinning. "How'd you do?"

"Er. Good?" Hermione turns to Harry. "Don't you have somewhere to be, right now?"

Harry shakes his head.

"Yes, you do," Hermione replies. "You're- "

"I quit," Harry grimaces. "I quit Auror training."

There's silence, as Hermione absorbs that. *What the fuck?*

"But. But why?" she asks, eyes wide. "You were so excited to get your first case and- "

"It was so fucked up," Harry glares at the table top. "It was barely a case. It was practically just another stupid way to arrest a werewolf. And it didn't work, because, well- " he gestures at Zoya.

"...you're a werewolf?" Hermione asks her.

Zoya grins wider. This time, Hermione can see her teeth are a little sharper than normal.

"And, you were supposed to turn her in?" Hermione prompts.

"Yeah," Harry shrugs. "But I sort of kidnapped her, instead. They think she ran off into the woods or something. She'd done literally nothing, just a little spot of accidental magic. But they found out her name's on the werewolf registry and then it all blew up- "

Hermione sighs.

"What about her family?" she asks.

"I'm better off without them," Zoya says, flippantly, rubbing her wrist.

Hermione purses her lips, her thoughts running almost feverishly fast. She comes to a conclusion, the most obvious one, and then, it's off to the library, because *by god, she is going to do this.*

(Zoya kicks Draco in the shins the first time she sees him, and that only strengthens Hermione's resolve.

Harry and Draco end up hiding Zoya at Draco's house, and she gets along fantastically well with Bellatrix, primarily because Zoya knows how to throw knives better than her.)

xxxvii.

Hermione spends all week on it. And on Friday, she floos over to Malfoy Manor.

"I need to talk to Lucius," she tells Narcissa, pushes past the door to his office.

xxxviii.

"It's possible," Lucius says, thoughtfully, after hearing all of Hermione's plans. "I just don't see what *I* would get by investing in this, what do you call this again, yes, a *children's home*- "

"My father wouldn't kill you," Hermione deadpans. Lucius sighs. "But no, I have a real proposal, too. You know what this will be good for?"

He narrows his eyes at the papers in front of him.

"Reputation," he states, finally, a glint in his eye. "It'll be wonderful for my reputation."

"And guess when the next elections happen?" Hermione prompts. "You could be Minister in two years. Everybody wins."

Lucius raises his eyebrows, and nods, looking slightly impressed.

xxxix.

It starts with Zoya.

But one child will become five and five will become ten, and ten will become twenty, and twenty will become two branches, one muggle and one magical, of *Malfoy and Mione's Magical Miracles: a Home for Wayward Children!*

It starts with Hermione and Lucius deciding the architecture and the interior design and the colors and the facilities, but soon it will turn to Neville planning the layout of the garden and the parks, it will turn to Harry starting to teach magic to the kids before Hogwarts.

It will turn into Luna coming over and talking to the kids (she'll say it's therapeutic, and Hermione can't tell for whom) and giving them rides on thestrals, it'll turn to Ginny starting an under 12's quidditch team, Dean Thomas starting a football team for the muggle side.

It starts with Zoya, and it starts with Hermione, *but it will become something big.*

xxxx.

Final examinations come and go too fast to register.

Lisa gets irritated with her transfiguration book and rips it all apart, page by page, a day before the exam. Then, she sits and cries for quite some time. Theo and Blaise take turns, one crying and another comforting. It's a weird system, and Hermione really hopes it'll work for them. A day before Potions, Harry sets Snape's robes on fire, and Draco puts it out, and *oh, honestly*, the week is too much to handle.

Pansy's the only calm person around. And thank god for that, because an annoyed Pansy is worth ten times of anyone else.

(When Hermione's packing for the last time, a day before NEWT's finish, she comes across a piece of parchment that proudly proclaims, '*Bulstrode*' is, *objectively, a horrid name. Yaxley sounds like a medicine-*)

She mutters a curse before burning the thing.

xxxxi.

Hermione Granger breaks Tom Riddle's record for the highest number of NEWT's.

Voldemort is so proud, he can't speak for a second. *That's our Hermione*, her mother says, to Voldemort and Bella, who nod, with smiles.

Sometimes, Hermione really wonders how she got here.

It's been a good year.

xxxxii.

("Are you planning to follow a career in Magical Law, Miss Gaunt?")

"It's Granger-Gaunt," Hermione corrects, automatically, "and no. I'm not. I'm hoping to do some actual good in the world.")

okayy so that's a wrap!

- the whole hermione-draco-harry part was inspired by this tumblr prompt [where there's a love triangle but then the girl realizes she's asexual and gets a puppy and a cat and the two boys fall for each other](#) except i couldn't actually find it on tumblr but anyway.

- i *am* aware not all aro/ace people are like hermione. this is just one type on the spectrum, and i hope i didn't write anything offensive. please tell me if so, I'll definitely change that.

- thank u so so much for all the lovely comments?? ur all such wonderful readers  i hope u liked this ending!

End Notes

lmk if you're liking it in the comments below! 🧡 say hi to me on tumblr [here](#) !

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