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Chapter One

Granger Residence – Wednesday 14th August 1991

Hermione sat still, gaping at the strange lady wearing the tweed suit. Correction, she was gaping at a tabby cat that used to be a strange lady wearing a tweed suit. The lady identified herself as Professor Minerva McGonagall who teaches Transfiguration at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. At first, she believed this woman to have a few screws loose, but when she turned into a tabby cat in front of her eyes, she was so surprised she was speechless, and that wasn't a common occurrence as most would agree.

Professor McGonagall transformed back into a woman with a slight smug yet stern look on her face.

That never gets old, thought an amused Professor McGonagall, as she sat waiting patiently for the news to be digested by the eleven-year-old witch sitting opposite her.

Hermione was brought out of doing a rather impressive impression of a fish when her parents, Jean and Richard Granger walked out of the kitchen carrying a tray of tea and a saucer of biscuits. Hermione noticed that they were the biscuits that are reserved for visitors and visitors only, and she learned that lesson the hard way when she had been six-years-old.

You eat one biscuit and get your favourite book taken away for a week, but what do you expect when both your parents are dentists? Hermione mused to herself.

Finally, the silence was broken once Jean and Richard took their seats on either side of their only daughter, wearing proud yet apprehensive expressions on their faces.

Jean was the first to speak. "Hermione's a Muggleborn? What does that mean?"

Hermione was glad her Mother had asked this question as she was curious and wanted to know herself.

"It simply means that Miss. Granger is a witch that is not born from magical parents, but rather muggles. Muggles are what magical beings call those who do not possess magic, such as yourself," Professor McGonagall explained.

"I'm to assume there are other types of witches and wizards?" This came from Richard. All eyes were trained on the Professor as she answered.

"Yes, there are four, to be exact; Squibs, Muggleborns, Half-bloods and Purebloods. Squibs are born from magical parents but they hardly possess any magic or a magical core, as such, they generally live their lives in this world, without magic. As I've previously explained, Muggleborns are born from two muggle parents; however, it is believed that the magic gene that is in a Muggleborn has been passed down from a Squib, meaning it's highly likely that you have a Squib as one of your ancestors on either the side of the family tree."

"Half-bloods are born to one muggle parent and one magical parent, or two magical parents that aren't both Purebloods; and this has led to the outcome of there being a rise in the population of Half-bloods, meaning the majority of witches and wizards are Half-bloods these days. Finally, Purebloods are born to both magical parents that have a lineage of magic that can be traced back to multiple generations for at least the last couple hundred years and they don't have any muggle ancestry in their bloodline," she finished, taking a delicate sip of her tea.

Hermione decided to ask the question that had been bothering her since the professor's arrival and she squared her shoulders and lifted her head, looking Professor McGonagall in the eye and never wavering.

Professor McGonagall noticed her behaviour and let a small smile appear on her usually stern face but it was gone within moments. 'Definitely a Gryffindor,' she thought to herself.

"Professor?" Said the young soon-to-be cub. She would bet her last galleon on it. "How do you know that I'm a witch? Are you certain that you have the correct person and haven't made a mistake?" Hermione was secretly hoping that the professor was, in fact, correct, but she couldn't let go of her doubts just yet, she needed proof.

"Well, has anything ever happened that you or your parents just couldn't quite explain or wrap your mind around, leaving you confused or feeling as though you've just imagined it?" She asked. Hermione and her parents exchanged knowing looks with her parents showing laughter in their eyes. "I thought so. When you were younger you had spouts of accidental magic that was caused by certain strong feelings and emotions. All magical children have these when growing up before attending Hogwarts. Once you have obtained your wand, these bursts of magic will stop and be contained. These magical outbursts are recorded by the Ministry of Magic and a file will be made for you and you are now considered to be a member of the Wizarding World. This is how we know that you are a witch."

The professor spoke with such surety that Hermione had no choice but to trust she was telling her the truth. The conversation between the professor and the Granger parents continued. Hermione sat taking it all in, the more Professor McGonagall had explained, the more it made sense.

This is why I feel different, why I don't fit in anywhere, why strange things happen to and around me. Even at home with my parents. I've always felt like something's been missing from my life, a missing part of me. This is it, it has to be. I'm different. A good different. It certainly explains a lot, she thought to herself, letting out a snort of laughter.

All attention turned to her and she noticed, once she looked up she gave a nervous laugh. Everyone laughed or in the case of Professor McGonagall, gave a twitch of the lip.

"You mentioned the Ministry of Magic, what is that, Professor?" Hermione, always wanting to gain knowledge, couldn't help but ask.

"It is the Wizarding World's Government. They run the Wizarding World creating and disregarding laws, Aurors, lawyers, record keeping and Ministry workers and other aspects. It's all the politics in the Wizarding World. Along with the Wizengamot and the Minster of Magic, they make decisions to better the Wizarding Community," Professor McGonagall answered.

"What are Aurors and the Wizengamont?" This question came from Jean Granger.

"Aurors are magical law enforcement officers; they are the equivalent to the muggle police only they are capable of magic. The Wizengamnt help to create and disregard laws, regulations and policies. They are made up of members of the Wizarding Community just as the muggles have the Houses of Parliament." Professor McGonagall was more than happy to answer any questions posed to her; she had a feeling that her young lion cub was destined for great things.

The conversation once again continued, both with magical and muggle means. Hermione still couldn't believe it; well, actually she could. Her excitement levels were rapidly increasing and she chided herself.

Stop acting like a six-year-old on a sugar rush, soon you'll be jumping on the couch and running into walls. Schooling her features Hermione jumped into the talk about both worlds she was now a part of. Somehow she knew she would be going home soon.

The conservation began to lull thirty minutes later and Professor McGonagall stood to leave and made her goodbyes. Walking towards the door with the Grangers she stopped once outside and turned to Hermione.

"Oh, I almost forgot to give this to you," the professor handed Hermione an envelope with a seal on the back, the Hogwarts seal she presumed.

"What is it, Professor?"

"That, My Dear, is your Hogwarts acceptance letter. Inside you will find all the information you need and what you require for your first year, including your reading list."

At the mention of books, Hermione's face lit up leaving her parents chuckling behind her.

Professor McGonagall noticed and spoke. "I also recommend that we pick you up a copy of Hogwarts, a History, it will tell you everything you would like to know about Hogwarts and evidently, its History."

"Thank you, Professor."

"It's my pleasure, Dear. Now, I will see you in one week to take you shopping for your school supplies. Goodbye."

She shook Jean and Richard's hands and made her leave walking away towards the apparition point at the end of the street. She turned and looked one last time at the younger Granger, then she turned on her heel and with her wand in hand, she apparated.

Hermione and her parents -who were looking on from their doorstop- saw Professor McGonagall disappear into thin air. They looked at each other with surprised faces and furiously blinking eyes.

"Whoa," said Hermione with a wide grin on her face that could easily give the Cheshire cat a run for its money, while her parents silently nodded their heads in agreement.

Soon, Hermione, soon, she thought to herself.

The Grangers turned and walked back into their home, and Hermione stared wistfully at the spot, Professor McGonagall had once occupied.

"Not long now," she said before closing the door behind herself.

Chapter Two

Hogwarts: Professor Dumbledore's Office – Wednesday 14th August 1991

Once she landed at the apparition point in Hogsmeade Village she quickly made her way to Hogwarts, the gates closed and locked after her passing through. Professor McGonagall couldn't believe it. It was true, everything she had been told was true.

It was her. It had to be.

McGonagall made her way towards Professor Dumbledore's office, silently contemplating to herself what she now knew. He was going to a have a field day once he hears what she had learned and all too soon she was standing in front of the gargoyles guarding the staircase to the headmaster's office.

"Bertie Bott's every flavoured beans," she spoke.

'Honestly, his obsession with sweets is ridiculous and wildly known, it wouldn't be a challenge to gain entrance to his office,' she thought to herself.

Once the stairs appeared she stepped onto the bottom step and the stairs began to wind their way up towards the office door. Wrapping her knuckles against the door she waited before opening the door.

"Come in, Minerva," she heard and then entered the office, closing the door behind her.

There was no need for warding as the room has been permanently warded to stop any eavesdroppers and prying eyes, not that there was a possibility of that happening. The gargoyles guarding the staircase hadn't yet failed in keeping the likes of those sorts away.

"Good evening, Albus."

"Good evening, there is no need for you to knock, My Dear; I already knew you were in the castle and making your way towards my office," the headmaster said with a smile. McGonagall took the seat opposite the desk Dumbledore was currently residing at.

"Of course, you did," McGonagall responded, rolling her eyes good-naturedly.

Albus looked at her with those signature twinkling eyes.

"And how have your visitations found you, this day?"

"Eventful, as always, Albus, now ask me what you really want to know, there's no point in beating around the bush, now, is there?"

"No, I suppose there isn't, you can always see straight through me."

"I delivered the letters, gave explanations on the Wizarding World and made further appointments to accompany the students to Diagon Alley to gather school supplies, the usual tasks that are always on the agenda, as you well know. Today, I met with Mr. Justin Finch-Fletchley, Miss. Sally-Anne Perks, and Miss. Hermione Granger. Tomorrow, I will be visiting Miss. Megan Jones and Mr. Zacharias Smith. That should conclude the visitations of the Muggleborn students for this school year, leaving the acquirement of school supplies which should be completed by the end of next week."

"How is she, Minerva?"

McGonagall knew exactly who he was referring to; she had been waiting for him to broach the subject from the moment she had entered the office, and to be honest, he had lasted longer than she'd thought he would've.

"She looks well, Albus, happy and excellently cared for. She's a spitting double of her mother thought she does appear to have her father's eyes and curls. You chose well placing her in the protection of the Grangers."

"The Muggle World offered her the protection that we could not. Does she suspect?"

"No, I don't believe so; I had a quiet conversation with Jean and Richard when she excused herself to use the restroom. They informed me she knows about the adoption."

At her response, Albus' head snapped to attention and looked away from the document that had previously occupied his attention.

"How does she know?"

"Unfortunately, it seems that as the child grew older she began to notice the differences in the characteristics between herself and her parents. Jean and Richard tried to put off telling her as long as possible but they eventually told her about the adoption when she was five-years-old. As far as the girl is concerned, the Grangers are her parents, she doesn't ask after her biological parents."

At her explanation, Albus released the breath he hadn't realised he'd been holding.

"Good, that's good. But does she suspect?"

"I don't believe so; she was only told of being adopted, not the circumstances surrounding it. We have successfully convinced her that she is a Muggleborn and Jean and Richard were rather convincing during the visit, claiming no knowledge of our world or magic. If I didn't know any better, I would've believed them myself," she replied and at this Dumbledore chuckled.

"How did she take the news?"

"Just as all Muggleborns do, Albus. She's quite curious. It seems she has a great love for books; she likes to gain knowledge about most things and anything that piques her interest. I wonder where she got that from," the professor said, a tone of sarcasm to her voice.

Dumbledore gave her a knowing smile as he allowed his memories of her parents to come to the front of his mind.

"When are you accompanying her to Diagon Alley, Minerva?"

"Wednesday morning," at her words he nodded. "She's going to be a Gryffindor," McGonagall supplied.

"You're getting a new lion cub?"

"Do you doubt me?" She cocked an eyebrow. "Care to make a wager?"

"What are the stakes?"

"If she is a Gryffindor, you have to buy all the faculty drinks at the Three Broomsticks during the first Hogsmeade visit of the term."

"And if she isn't a Gryffindor?"

"If she isn't a Gryffindor, I have to be on Peeves duty until the first Hogsmeade visit of the term."

Albus' blue eyes twinkled behind his half-moon glasses. "Agreed," he tipped his head, and they shook hands to complete the deal. "She's destined for great things."

"That's what the prophecy says," stated McGonagall with an annoyed twitch in the corner of her eyes.

"A witch will be born in the ninth month. With her, a new future may be formed. Once of age and her mates have been found, the power she will possess will be immense. She will be the beacon of light to banish darkness from the world," he spoke the memorised words effortlessly.

"She may not be the subject of the prophecy."

Minerva had no doubt that the young cub to be was the subject of the prophecy, but she had to protect her from the tricky headmaster. She was certain he had good intentions but sometimes his methods could be called into question.

"I will watch over her to be sure, Minerva."

"You will not, Albus! You will leave her to have a normal life and you will not meddle or interfere. If the prophecy is about her she will learn of it in due time. I will not have you disrupt her." McGonagall gave Dumbledore a look that would have a fully transformed werewolf fleeing in fear.

Begrudgingly, Dumbledore agreed. He knew he would never win such an argument when one of her cubs was involved. She was fiercely loyal and protective when it involved a member of her Gryffindor house.

Both professors continued to talk pleasantly about the other Muggleborn students that have either been visited or are yet to be visited, as well as the start of term preparations.

Chapter Three

The Burrow – Wednesday 14th August 1991

Molly Weasley was a small plump woman with flaming red hair and brown eyes. Standing in the kitchen was where she would usually be found. She loved it; the feeling of cooking for her family. Sure, two of her sons Bill (who was twenty-two-years-old) and Charlie (who was twenty-years-old) had already left home and now had careers, with Bill being a curse breaker for Gringotts and Charlie a dragon tamer in Romania, but she still had her five younger sons. Percy who was fifteen-years-old, the twins -Fred and George, and their best friend and fellow prankster, Lee Jordan, thirteen-years-old, (yes, she considered Lee to be one of her sons; she had practically raised the boy, after all) and Ronald who was now eleven-years-old, and finally that left Ginny, who was ten-years-old, making her the only daughter and the youngest child. Not to mention her husband, Arthur. All except Lee had the flaming red hair that was often associated with her family and with good reason, too.

Molly was in her element; Arthur was at work, Percy was off somewhere reading, Ron and Ginny were outside in the garden and the twins and Lee were upstairs doing Merlin knows what.

Probably up to no good, Molly thought. It was rather quiet at the Burrow which was not a normal occurrence, it unnerved her a little. Yes, they're definitely up to no good, she sighed as she continued to stir the pot on the stove.

Flicking her wand she levitated the plates and cutlery onto the kitchen table and set them out, before gathering the buttered bread rolls and placing the baskets in the centre. Again she flicked her wand at two pitchers of pumpkin juice and they appeared on the table, once Molly had placed a Cooling Charm on the juice, she went back to the stove to remove the pot, placing it onto the kitchen countertop.

Whilst checking on the cooking dessert, she heard a loud explosion that shook the house. Again Molly sighed and with her apron tied around her midsection, with her wand tucked into the pouch and her wooden spoon in hand, she walked out of the kitchen, through the living room and up the stairs where she stopped on the third floor. Smoke was pouring out from underneath the twins' bedroom door. She stood, lying in wait for her sons to emerge from their room with a stern look on her face.

She could hear arguing from inside the room, the bedroom door swung open and the boys piled out, still arguing. They stopped midsentence and looked at their Mother. They plastered looks of innocence on their faces and greeted her like they hadn't just caused an explosion in their bedroom.

"Hey, Mum, -" one of the twins said; she never could tell the difference between the two.

"- Is dinner ready?" the other twin asked innocently, but Molly has been dealing with the twins for thirteen years, she wasn't fooled.

"What was that noise?" she all but shouted as she did her best to remain calm.

"What noise? -" Fred asked, at least she thought it was Fred.

"- I didn't hear a noise, did you, Lee? -" George said, or was it Fred?

"No, I didn't hear anything," Lee replied.

"- You must -"

"- Be imagining -"

"- It, Mum," the twins smiled at her.

"What noise? WHAT NOISE? The noise that caused the entire house to feel as though it were under attack from an earthquake!" Molly shrieked.

"I think -" Fred began as George followed him.

"- That it's -"

"- You shouting -"

"- Mum," the twins finished together.

This was clearly the wrong answer and the twins knew it. Their mother's face flushed with anger, it was almost as red as their hair. Molly continued to shriek at her children, it could be heard in Percy's room and in the garden by Ron and Ginny. The boys stuck to their guns and kept up their acts of innocence. Their mother was now shaking the wooden spoon at them whilst she carried on shouting; they were starting to get slightly scared, only slightly though; they were the Weasley Twins and nothing scared the Weasley Twins.

"You know you're not allowed to do magic outside of Hogwarts, you're underage for Merlin's Sake, you could get expelled!" Molly screamed the last word. The boys winced.

"But, Mum -" This time George spoke first.

"- We weren't doing magic. -" Fred said.

"Yeah, we were doing potions," Lee said.

"- And that's not illegal -" Fred spoke.

"- Is it?" George finished.

At the end of the sentence, Ron and Ginny bounded up the stairs and looked on at the scene in front of them. Smoke was still pouring out of the open door, they looked to the twins and Lee then looked at each other and they couldn't help but burst into loud guffaws. Molly was at a loss.

"You will be cleaning this mess up and you will be punished for this incident," the stumpy little woman said, turning on her heel and marching downstairs and back to the kitchen.

Arthur met her in the living room after arriving home from work and greeted her with a kiss to the cheek; her children followed and sat down at the table waiting for Percy to join them. Upon his arrival dinner was served and conversation comfortably flowed as usual.

During dessert, five owls landed at the kitchen window until Molly got up to allow them entrance into her home. The owls landed on the table in front of the boys and stuck their legs out waiting for their letter to be removed. Once the letters were taken the boys offered the owls a drink of water and some leftover meat from the lamb stew they had previously eaten. The owls hooted their thanks and left flying out of the open window.

Molly closed the window and returned to the kitchen table. The boys opened up their letters that were clearly from Hogwarts if the seal was anything to go by. Ron was attending his first year, Fred, George and Lee their third year and Percy his fifth year; much to Ginny's displeasure she had to wait another year as she was only ten years of age and to be accepted into Hogwarts one had to be eleven. This meant a year home alone without her brothers and only her parents for company.

"Hogwarts supply list letters?" Arthur asked. Arthur was five-foot-eleven, with a slightly rounded stomach, the Weasley's trademark freckles and red hair and wearing his Ministry work robes.

"Yes, Dad," supplied Percy; or as the twins liked to call him 'Perfect Percy'. "It's the supply list for this year," he said as he opened his letter and a badge fell out of the envelope. Percy picked up the badge and read it out aloud. 'Prefect,' it said on the front of it.

Molly and Arthur were quick to congratulate their son on his achievement, Molly going as far as to give him even more helpings of dessert. Percy sat at the table with an arrogantly smug look on his face that the twins couldn't wait to wipe off for him.

Fred and George looked at each other having a silent conversation with their eyes.

Great, that's exactly what we need, he's going to be even more of an arrogant arse now, thought Fred.

Someone is going to have to keep him in his place. This thought belonged to George.

The twins smirked at each other and Lee caught the look and also smirked. This is going to be a fun year, he thought to himself.

"Well, we'll go to Diagon Alley next week and get your things. Lee, would you like us to get your supplies for you, Dear?" asked Molly.

"No, thank you, Mrs. Weasley, I'll get them the week before term starts."

"It's Molly or mum, and only if you're sure, Dear," she said and Lee beamed at her.

The conversation at the table turned to Quidditch and the recent happenings at the Ministry. Everyone stood from the table once finished and thanked their mum for dinner, the children and Arthur retired to the living room whilst Molly cleared the kitchen. The twins were playing exploding snap and sat on the floor in front of the fireplace with Ginny sat next to them waiting to play the winner. Percy had gone up to his room and Ron and Lee were having a game of Wizard's Chess sat at the small table in the middle of the room with their backs leaning against the couches. Arthur was reading a muggle magazine about car mechanics and sitting in his favourite red armchair.

When Molly's clock struck ten at night, everyone was sent to bed with some arguments from the children, and they trudged up the stairs to their respective bedrooms. The twins and Lee got ready for bed brushing their teeth and putting on their pyjamas, and they climbed into their beds. Tonight was the last night that Lee would be staying with the Weasleys; he'd spent seven weeks with them during the summer holidays as his father and step-mother were always busy working or travelling, but he'd be returning home for the last two weeks of summer. He wouldn't see the twins until the first of September on the Hogwarts Express.

Chapter Four

Granger Residence – Wednesday 21st August 1991: 09:00

Hermione woke at seven o'clock on the day of the visit to Diagon Alley. Today's my first real glimpse of the Wizarding World. I wonder what it's going to be like; extraordinary, amazing, phenomenal, probably, she thought with a silly grin. She was in such a good mood that nothing could ground her.

Jumping out of bed and running to the shower, she quickly got washed and dry. Returning to her room she dressed in a comfortable pair of blue jeans, a white jumper and white trainers. After drying her hair she forwent tackling the bushy mess into submission and put it into a not so tame ponytail.

High tailing it down the stairs and to the kitchen table, she was bouncing in her seat with excitement, her parents greeting her as breakfast was placed on the table. Hermione began to eat her bowl of porridge whilst sprinkling blueberries, strawberries and sugar over the top of it.

Talk was on the topic of muggle news until her parents decided to throw her a bone and asked her about the trip to Diagon Alley. Hermione began rapidly firing answers while she buzzed with enthusiasm and her parents watched on in amusement. After breakfast, the Grangers went to the living room and waited for Professor McGonagall to arrive. Hermione's parents usually would have left for work by now but they decided they wanted to see her off before going to the dental office. They chatted until nine o'clock rolled around and right on time, the doorbell rang.

Jean stood to answer the door as Hermione was too busy shaking with anticipation.

"How is she?" Professor McGonagall asked Jean whilst walking through the door into their home.

"Why don't you see for yourself, Minerva," Jean replied with a laugh.

Together they walked into the living room and the sight that presented itself was rather amusing, McGonagall had never seen a student with a wider grin than the one Hermione was supporting. 'She doesn't have a clue,' McGonagall thought and she smiled to herself.

"Hello, Miss. Granger, and how are you this morning?"

"Brilliant, Professor."

"Are you ready to get going?"

"Yes, I'll just grab my coat," she said, all but sprinting from the room. The Grangers and McGonagall shared a chuckle.

Hermione and Professor McGonagall took their leave out of the front door after exchanging their goodbyes with the Grangers. Outside there was a taxi waiting, they climbed in and Professor McGonagall gave the address. Halfway through the journey, McGonagall asked Hermione if she had her supply list with her which Hermione confirmed, pulling it out of her coat pocket and handing it to the professor. Hermione's rambling continued until the car pulled up on to Charing Cross Road.

"I'm excited to finally have the chance to see Diagon Alley," Hermione commented.

"So I see," the Professor replied with a smirk pulling at her mouth.

Hermione blushed straight to her roots in embarrassment. "Sorry," she said sheepishly.

"Don't be, My Dear, it's rather amusing," she replied and Hermione smiled, albeit embarrassingly.

They paid the driver and Hermione followed the professor into a pub called the Leaky Cauldron. Fitting, Hermione thought to herself. Professor McGonagall made pleasantries to the owner, Tom, whilst making her way to the back of the pub and out of the door, stopping in front of a brick wall.

McGonagall pulled out her wand from her tweed outfit and transfigured it back into her witch's robes. Hermione just stared as the wand was tapped against the wall in a sequence, almost like a passcode, she noted, gaping as the bricks began to move and part allowing a doorway to be formed.

Diagon Alley – 09:35

Professor McGonagall pushed Hermione forward, making sure she was by her side, she couldn't be losing a student, now could she? Hermione gasped and almost choked on her breath. The sight was incredible; people were walking in and out of shops and going about their own business. Children and teenagers were running around, laughing and stood in front of shops with their faces pressed up against the windows looking at the products.

She couldn't blame them; she would probably be doing the same if Professor McGonagall was looking away from her. Diagon Alley was bright with colours and laughter could be heard amongst the crowd, the window displays were even moving. Hermione couldn't believe it all felt normal, like this wasn't the first time she had been exposed to magic. It felt right!

Hermione's attention was distracted by everything and anything that she wasn't watching where she was heading as she was too busy looking and gawking like an idiot. Luckily for her, Professor McGonagall was steering her in the direction of Gringotts.

When Hermione looked up, she saw a building in the centre of Diagon Alley, it was the biggest by far and looked old, regal and imposing. On the front of the building, it read 'Gringotts Wizarding Bank.'

"What are we doing here, Professor?"

"We have to get your muggle currency changed into wizarding currency," replied the Professor.

"Wizarding currency?" Asked Hermione with a slight frown of confusion.

"Yes, My Dear, English muggle currency consists of pounds and pence, whereas wizarding currency is galleons, sickles and knuts. There are seventeen sickles in one galleon and twenty-nine knuts in a sickle," she said. "Are you with me so far?"

"Yes, I believe so," replied Hermione.

"One galleon is equivalent to four pounds and ninety-three pence, almost five muggle pounds. One sickle is equivalent to twenty-nine pence and one knut is equivalent to one pence."

"Seems easy enough, Professor," Hermione said and McGonagall smiled at her.

They walked up to the front of a desk and stopped. Hermione noticed that the bank teller wasn't human. She did her best to keep her face passive as to not seem rude. First impressions always mattered, she remembered that her mother always used to say that to her.

McGonagall took the muggle currency from Hermione and handed it to the bank teller goblin. After the money was counted out, she was given a money pouch containing twenty-four galleons, fifteen sickles and three knuts.

"Thank you," Hermione and Professor said together.

They walked out of the building with McGonagall steering Hermione towards a shop.

"What are we shopping for first, Professor?"

"The most important thing that every witch and wizard needs in the Wizarding World."

"And what's that?"

The Professor smiled at her. "A wand," she answered, stopping outside a shop called Ollivander's.

The sign had gold peeling lettering that read 'Ollivander's: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C.' Upon entering the shop, Hermione looked about. In the corner near the door, there was a small counter with a spindly chair behind it. There were rows upon rows of stacked boxes that were covered in a thin layer of dust. The wands Hermione presumed.

An old man with grey hair and wearing black wizard's robes came out of the backroom at the sound of the bell above the door.

"Good morning, Minerva," the old man said pleasantly.

"Good morning, Ollivander, we would like to purchase Miss. Granger her first wand."

Ollivander looked at Hermione and held his hand out for her to shake.

"Hello there, I'm Ollivander, let's get you your wand then, shall we?"

"Hello, I'm Hermione. Thank you for helping."

"It's no problem, My Dear, it's my job," with that said Ollivander walked towards the rows upon rows of boxes, muttering to himself and frequently looking between Hermione and the boxes.

"No, not this one…That's not right, maybe this one…Then again, maybe not..." Hermione couldn't help but smile to herself at hearing him. "I think this one will do nicely," he finally decided, pulling the box out of the pile and placing it on the counter. He opened the box and took out a wand handing it to Hermione who took it in anxious hands. As soon as she held it her whole body began to tingle and the wand fit perfectly into her hand.

"Well, give it a wave."

Hermione waved her wand and it began to glow and fireworks shot out of the tip, causing several smiles in the room. Ollivander took the wand from her and placed it back into the box and wrapped it up for her.

"That will be one galleon, eleven sickles and six knuts."

Hermione got the correct amount out of her pouch with McGonagall watching over her shoulder to ensure she handed the right amount of coins over. They said their goodbyes and left the shop.

"Where are we visiting next, Professor?"

"We'll next purchase your uniform, then your school supplies, and perhaps a visit to the Magical Menagerie before we retrieve your books?"

"Okay," Hermione agreed.

Their next stop was Madam Malkin's. Hermione was ushered onto a raised podium where tape measures were charmed to take her measurements magically. Hermione smiled and laughed. She paid for her uniform purchases of three plain black robes, three white shirts, three black/grey skirts, two pairs of comfortable black shoes, five pairs of black/grey socks, one pair of dragon hide protective gloves, one black pointed hat and three ties. Without a backward glance at her Professor - she was really getting the hang of wizarding currency.

They then visited Potage's Cauldron shop for one standard size two pewter cauldron, Slug & Jiggers Apothecary for one set of glass vials, one set of brass scales and a list of required potion ingredients which the shop clerk already had made into batches.

They must be expecting the school supply runs, Hermione thought to herself.

Next came Wiseacre's Wizarding Equipment for one telescope and they went to Scirbbulus Writing Instruments for parchment, quills and ink pots.

After paying for her supplies they made their way towards the Magical Menagerie to find a familiar for the young witch. They spent twenty minutes looking around and Hermione left the shop without a familiar. This affected Hermione's mood until Professor McGonagall assured her that she could look for a familiar the next year, as every young witch and wizard had one but they may not find the one they feel an attachment or a connection to their first year. Some may not find their familiar until after they graduated Hogwarts.

"Now, Miss. Granger, let's get you your books," Professor McGonagall said.

Hermione's spirited was instantly lifted at the mention of books. They walked into Flourish & Blotts and Hermione felt overwhelmed. Bookcases filled the majority of the room. There was a small reading area at the back of the room with comfortable looking chairs and cushions and a small empty space where the front counter was placed. There had to be a few thousand books in the shop. Hermione decided she could die happily surrounded by the smell of leather and ink. Professor McGonagall had to practically restrain her from stampeding around the shop.

First Hermione and the Professor picked up the books on the supply list - The Standard Book of Spells Grade One by Miranda Goshawk, A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot, Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling, A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch, One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore, Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger, Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander and The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection by Quentin Trimble.

McGonagall gave her wand a flick and the books already collected by the two stacked themselves and floated in mid-air following behind them. Hermione was left to explore the rest of the book shop until she paid for her items. As promised Professor McGonagall placed a copy of Hogwarts, a History onto the counter. Hermione smiled her thanks to both the shop clerk and Professor McGonagall.

There was one last thing to do; purchase a trunk. When one was obtained with her initials engraved on the front, Professor McGonagall took all the items that had been recently procured and placed them into the trunk. The trunk didn't require any charms to be placed on it to fit all the purchases in as they were already built-in. How else would students survive four months with only one trunk of clothing and other personal items? The professor then shrunk the trunk to fit into Hermione's pockets. She gasped and smiled. Professor McGonagall and Hermione walked around the rest of Diagon Alley allowing her to take it all in.

This is my world now. This is where I belong, where I've always belonged, she thought gleefully.

It was now around one pm and Hermione's stomach began growling, Professor McGonagall's face was filled with amusement whilst Hermione's flushed with embarrassment.

"Miss. Granger, would you like to get lunch as we've finished shopping for your school supplies?"

"If you wouldn't mind, Professor," she spoke and McGonagall nodded her head in confirmation.

They made their way back to the Leaky Cauldron and ordered their food of chicken soup and pumpkin juice and took a seat at a table at the back of the room. Lunch arrived and they both tucked into their meals. Hermione continuously asked questions regarding Hogwarts, classes and its professors and McGonagall happily supplied the answers.

Halfway through the meal, the fireplace roared to life with green flames and one by one out stepped a family of redheads. There was an elder witch and wizard who were obviously the parents of the four boys and the young girl.

They must be Hogwarts students shopping for their school supplies, Hermione surmised. Professor McGonagall noticed that Hermione had startled and looked up to see the cause.

"It's called flooing, with the use of floo powder witches and wizards can move from one place to another as long as there is a fireplace connected to the floo network where their destination is."

"How does it work?"

"You take a handful of floo powder and step into the fireplace and you say the name of your destination, dropping the floo powder into the grate. It's also a way of contacting someone as you can make floo calls. It works the same as floor travel only you don't step into the fireplace and you're not leaving your current location."

"So it's a form of transportation and video calling for witches and wizards?" She mused.

"Yes."

"Are there any other forms of transport and travel?"

"There are a few more, yes. There's flying on a broom, port-keying and apparition."

"And what are those?"

"Travelling by port-key is similar to what the muggles call teleportation, only in the Wizarding World we use magic instead of science and we were able to accomplish it. And apparition gives the witch or wizard the ability to move from location to location as long as there are no Anti-apparition wards in place. It is a learned skill that requires concentration as to not splinch yourself and others through side-along apparition."

"Splinching and side-along?"

"Splinching is a dangerous and fairly common risk when apparating. When you apparate you are effectively breaking your body into thousands and thousands of particles, like grains of sand. When you arrive at your destination, if you did not concentrate correctly some parts of the body may be separated. It can cause cuts and other injuries if you don't land correctly or if you land in a small or crowded place. It's not a good idea to apparate whilst gravely injured, impaired in any way or after consuming alcohol. Side-along apparition is taking someone with you when you apparate, whether they have the ability themselves or not."

"Will I learn how to do these at Hogwarts?"

"Yes, My Dear, you will. You will learn how to fly this year with a flying instructor along with the other first years. The reason we didn't purchase you a broom is first years are not allowed to bring their own and the first year students use the school brooms. There is no need to learn how to port key, simply for the reason that it only requires you to touch the item that has been spelled when it's time for departure, and I've already told you how to use floo travel. Apparition, you will learn in Hogwarts if you wish to, but you must be seventeen years old before lessons begin and you must have a license before you attempt to apparate."

During the conservation, Hermione tried to ignore the feelings that were stirring up inside of her. Ever since the redheaded family arrived her body and her magic had begun tingling, almost as if it was singing and butterflies were filling her stomach.

Hermione smiled to herself when the redheaded family walked past her table whilst they were all bickering and chatting back and forth. Once they left out the back door and headed into Diagon Alley the feelings stopped.

Strange, she thought with a frown and then she shrugged it off.

Lunch was eaten and when Hermione's stomach was full she and McGonagall stood to leave the Leaky Cauldron and made their way out the door to Muggle London, thanking Tom for lunch when they walked past him.

They got another taxi and returned to the Granger home.

Professor McGonagall left Hermione with her parents to talk their ears off. They will definitely have a headache in the morning. I just hope they continue to act clueless and don't give anything away, Minerva thought to herself, before she left to repeat that morning's school supply run to Diagon Alley with Justin Finch-Fletchley.

The Burrow - 13:15

"Fred, George, get your backsides down these stairs this instant; everyone's ready to go. Your father took a day off work to accompany us to Diagon Alley, so you better get down here or we'll leave you behind," screeched Molly Weasley.

When there was no reply Molly huffed and stomped up the stairs. When she got halfway up the first flight of stairs she heard the sound of Fred's voice, or was it George's?

"Where're you going, Mum? -"

"- Yeah, I thought we were going to Diagon Alley," the other twin spoke.

Molly slowly turned and shot her twin sons a glare. They smiled angelically at her, forcing Ginny into a fit of giggles. Their mother made her way towards the floo, when her back was turned the twins winked at their little sister.

One by one the Weasley members took a handful of floo powder, entered the fireplace and clearly spoke, "the Leaky Cauldron."

The Weasleys: Diagon Alley - 13:25

The Weasleys were piling out of the Leaky Cauldron floo. Molly was the first through and Arthur being the last who had yet to come through with Ron and Ginny. When the twins stepped out of the floo they were both suddenly hit with a feeling.

They couldn't describe it to anyone but each other as no one would understand. It felt as though their body and mind had been asleep for years and it has just awakened. Their skin felt as though it was on fire and their magic was humming. Fred and George looked at each other and moved slightly away from their mother to chat.

"Do you feel that, Gred?" inquired Fred.

"Yeah, Forge," responded George with a nod.

"It feels strange."

"Yeah, but kind of good, too."

"- My body's tingling and my magic's humming. My skin feels like it's on fire. It's odd, I feel content, -"

"- Relaxed. I've always felt like there's been something missing. I know what you mean, brother mine, but now I feel whole, -" George frowned.

"- Complete," they said together with a content sigh.

Arthur was the last of the family to come through the floo, the family gathered and made their way towards Diagon Alley. As soon as the twins separated from the group and made their way to get their school supplies, the feelings they felt previously disappeared. Fred and George looked at each other and frowned, they felt like a piece of them was missing once again. Shaking their heads, they went about their business. After all, they needed to stock up on prank and joke products and they couldn't do that if they didn't have time. They worked quickly and efficiently knowing the other's next thought and movement like only the Weasley Twins could.

Chapter Five

Granger Residence – Sunday 1st September 1991

The 1st of September finally rolled around and Hermione couldn't be more ecstatic. Since the trip to Diagon Alley, Hermione had packed, checked, repacked and double-checked her trunk twice a day for the past two weeks. It couldn't be helped; she was just too enthusiastic to finally see Hogwarts. Hermione had read Hogwarts, a History front to back twice and she had already completed reading her school books. After all, she was at a disadvantage with her being a Muggleborn and she had to be able to keep up with the other students.

Once more Hermione was found by her parents checking her Hogwarts trunk and placing the last of her belongings into it.

"Hermione, I'm certain you haven't forgotten to pack anything," Mrs. Granger smiled at her daughter.

"I know, Mum, but I'm too excited to sit still and just wait. This keeps me busy."

"Believe us, we know you can't wait to get to Hogwarts," Mr. Granger chuckled through his reply.

Hermione flushed whilst laughing. Her parents left her until it was time to leave. They had already said their goodbyes the night before so her leaving the next day shouldn't be too emotional. She was going to miss her parents terribly, but she imagined her school work would keep her busy.

It was now almost ten o'clock and Hermione and her parents were preparing to leave for Kings Cross Station.

"Hermione?" Called Mr. Granger.

"Coming, Dad," she replied through a yell.

Hermione's trunk bounded uncontrollably down the stairs; she had accidentally lost control of it as it was too heavy. She heard groaning coming from the bottom of the stairs. Hermione sprang down the steps and was met by the sight of her Mother laughing hysterically, whilst her Father was clutching his left foot and grumbling.

"Oops, sorry, Dad," Hermione spoke sheepishly.

Mr. Granger just chuckled after the pain had ebbed away. He hugged his daughter and kissed her forehead.

"It's okay, Poppet. Now that your trunk's down here, are you ready to leave?"

"Yes," she nodded excitedly.

The Grangers placed the trunk into the boot of their car and drove to Kings Cross Station.

The Burrow

The Burrow was a madhouse on the morning of the first day of term. There was yelling, screaming, arguing, stomping, running and as always, pranking. Molly was taking it all in whilst she was cleaning up the kitchen table. This was the last time she would hear those sounds in her home until the Christmas holidays which was four months from now. She loved a bit of peace and quiet, but who doesn't? But what she loved more was a house full of her children.

"Mum, have you seen my cauldron?!" Ron yelled from his room.

"It's in the kitchen where you left it, Ronald."

"Mum, I can't find my socks!" bellowed George? Fred? Whichever one of her sons it was.

"They're already in your trunk."

"Mum, do you know where my scarf is?!" The other twin asked.

"Hung up on the coat rack," Molly sighed.

She was definitely going to miss her children; even the twins with their trouble-making and mischievous ways. She would use the time they were away to recuperate and prepare herself for the Christmas holidays; who knew what they would have planned with their jokes and pranks? Merlin, they were probably already planning it.

If they only focused this hard on their schoolwork, she thought.

At least she still had Ginny and she would not be let out of her sight for more than a moment. After all, she only had one year left before she too started Hogwarts, leaving her with an empty nest.

Fifteen minutes later and Percy and Mr. Weasley were loading the trunks into the borrowed Ministry vehicle, whilst everyone piled into the thankfully magically enlarged transportation. Well everyone except...

"Fred Gideon and George Fabian Weasley! We're going to be late and miss the train at this rate. Get your backsides out here and get in the car before I give you what's for!" Mrs. Weasley yelled.

A few seconds later the trouble-making twins appeared. They were jogging up to the car whilst dragging their trunks behind them. Their red hair was messed up and sticking out at odd angles and their turquoise eyes were twinkling with mischief.

They're up to something, Molly thought as she narrowed her eyes at them. But unfortunately, she didn't have the time to interrogate them and find out what it was.

"Calm down, Mum, and get into the car. -" one twin said, whilst they both placed their trunks into the car boot.

"- We can't have ickle Ronnikins late for his first day of school, -" the other one said.

"- Now, can we? -"

"- Don't forget, Perfect Prefect Percy, Forge. -"

"- We could never forget him, Gred. -"

"- Unfortunately for us," they grumbled together, causing Ginny to giggle and Molly threw her sons a disapproving glare.

The Grangers - Kings Cross Station

The car journey was a quiet one but words didn't need to be spoken between the three. The atmosphere was sombre but filled with anticipation. Upon arrival at the station, Mr. Granger took the trunk out of the car boot and placed it on a trolley and the Grangers made their way towards platforms nine and ten. When reaching the platform Hermione turned to her parents to once again say her goodbyes. She launched herself into their arms. The hug lasted for several moments until she was released and pushed towards the barrier.

"I love you," Hermione said.

"We love you more," was the in sync reply she received from her parents.

Hermione began running towards the barrier like the instructions in her Hogwarts letter told her to do with a spring in her step.

Mrs. Granger rested her head on Mr. Granger's shoulder and he wrapped his arm around her.

"Do you think she'll be different when she comes back?" Enquired Mrs. Granger.

"Without a doubt," he nodded, "This is her world now; it has always been her world. We knew what would happen when she turned eleven and we accepted her when she came to us all those years ago."

The Grangers were reminiscing about their lives with their daughter. They regretted being away from her whilst she was growing up. They had busy schedules with the dental office so they didn't spend as much time as they would have like to with Hermione. For this reason, Hermione matured at such a young age with her having to keep herself busy -with the use of books and learning- when she wasn't at school.

They wanted to just have fun and spend time doing ridiculous and silly things with her, like going to the park or beach and having picnics, going to parent-teacher meetings at her school which they never had time for and now she was practically gone from their lives. They decided that when she was home they would correct the situation and spend as much time as possible with her.

Walking back towards the station exit, they came across a family of seven redheads making their way towards the barrier and steering trolleys with trunks on towards the platform they had just left. Jean and Richard smiled and chuckled when they heard what they guessed were teenagers, the twin boys joking around with the older woman who had to be their mother.

"Right, Fred, you go first," the mother said to one of her twins.

"I'm George, not Fred, Mum. Honestly, woman, and you call yourself our mother?"

"Sorry, George."

"Only joking, Mum, I am Fred."

Mr. Granger had a feeling that the boys were rather mischievous if the twinkle in their eyes, their behaviour towards their parents and siblings and their laughter was anything to go by. That was exactly the kind of relationship they had always wanted with their daughter. Then maybe she wouldn't have had to look to books for comfort when she didn't fit in at her muggle school, with her having no friends and getting bullied.

Although, her being a witch may have also had something to do with it, and hopefully now she could have a normal childhood. Now that she was going to a school that would surround her with people who had the same abilities as her, she could finally make friends and not be a pariah.

They looked at each other chucking and they walked back to their car so they could return home. It wasn't going to be the same without Hermione sitting on the couch, surrounded by books and mumbling to herself as she read.

The Weasleys - Kings Cross Station

When the Weasleys arrived at Kings Cross Station each child removed their trunks from the boot of the aged silver, Ministry borrowed car and placed them onto the trolleys. The Weasley family steered them to the barrier for access to the Hogwarts Express. The twins were to be the first to go through the barrier and onto the platform.

"Right, Fred, you go first," Molly said to the twin she thought was Fred.

"I'm George, not Fred, Mum. Honestly, woman, and you call yourself our mother?"

"Sorry, George."

"Only joking, Mum, I am Fred."

His mother pursed her lips as Fred ran through the barrier with George on his heels laughing at his twin. She sighed and turned towards the rest of her family and sent them through the barrier before herself.

Chapter Six

Hermione: The Hogwarts Express – Sunday 1st September 1991

Passing through platform nine and three quarters, she could feel the barrier responding to her magic and she rejoiced in the feeling whilst laughing to herself. Coming to a stop, she saw a magnificent black and red train and on the front, it read 'the Hogwarts Express' and she couldn't stop grinning. She made her way through the crowds of other students and towards one of the entrances to the train. An attendant helped to place her trunk on the train and she pulled it behind her until she found an empty compartment. Stepping into the compartment she closed the door behind her and sat down, taking a moment to take it all in.

"This is my future now," Hermione murmured to herself with a ridiculous grin on her face. "Right, well, suppose I better put my trunk in the overhead rack," Hermione said to herself.

Hermione struggled to lift her trunk into the overhead compartment when she finally managed to get one side to rest against the rack. Hermione was panting with the trunk leaning heavily on her back whilst holding it up and trying to stop it from crushing her.

Hermione began grunting trying to lift the rest of the trunk onto the rack.

Ten minutes later…

"Urghhh!" Hermione was struggling to breathe with the weight of her trunk on her. "Bloody hell!" She groaned in exasperation.

The feelings she experienced in Diagon Alley had come back; her magic was once again tingling and her stomach was filled with butterflies. She ignored them though when she became distracted and her attention was caught by her hearing, rather than seeing the compartment door open.

"Hi there, would you like some help with that?" She heard a boy ask her.

"Oh no, I'm fine, thank you, but thanks for asking though," she responded whilst panting with exhaustion.

"Yeah, but sorry, we don't believe that, do we Fred?" Another voice spoke up.

"No, we don't, George," the boys' voices were laced with amusement.

"Seriously, I can manage," Hermione insisted, her limbs shaking from the effort of holding up the heavy trunk.

"No, you can't, and you're not, so, Fred's gonna take the trunk off you and place it on the rack whilst I move you out of the way before you get turned into a pancake from the weight of the trunk you're so diligently failing to hold up."

With that said, the boy called George grabbed a hold of her around the waist and waited for Fred to take the weight of the trunk away from her and then George lifted her off her feet and placed her on the ground next to him whilst Fred easily slotted the trunk on the overhead rack.

Hermione huffed and glared at George and when she heard a laugh she turned to look at Fred. For some reason, she wasn't all that surprised they were twins even though it was the first time she'd looked at the both of them, after only previously hearing their voices which were nearly identical with only a slight difference that most people probably wouldn't hear.

They were taller than she was and looked to be a couple of years older, too. They had flaming red hair, the brightest turquoise eyes she had ever seen that sparkled with amusement and they had a smattering of freckles on their noses. She recognized them from the Leaky Cauldron from her trip to Diagon Alley. They were wearing identical clothing of dark jeans, trainers and blue jumpers. Just to confuse people, she assumed.

"Thank you, but I really didn't need your help; I was managing just fine," she all but growled at them.

"No, you really weren't," spoke George whilst chuckling. She wasn't quite sure how she knew it was George; it was a feeling, so she didn't question herself.

"So don't lie to us or yourself for that matter," said Fred. Hermione huffed before sighing and then she held her hand out to Fred and then George for them to shake.

"I'm Hermione, Hermione Granger," she spoke clearly and not at all intimidated by their height.

"Fred and George Weasley, at your service," they chirped while shaking her hand before releasing it and sitting down, pulling her to sit in-between them.

"It's nice to meet you, Hermione, Hermione Granger, -" spoke Fred.

"- Now, tell us about yourself," finished George.

"Don't you have friends you want to sit with or people waiting for you?" Enquired Hermione.

"Nope, now tell us about yourself," they said together.

As this was said, the train began to move and started on its journey to Hogwarts.

They chatted for a couple of hours with Fred and George in absolute hysterics and tears leaking from their eyes. This is where a boy with dark skin and black dreadlocks found them as he entered the compartment with a box in hand, closing the door behind him. He was wearing black trainers, dark blue trousers and a black shirt. He turned to the twins and shouted.

"Weasleys!"

"Jordan!" the twins yelled as they bounded towards the boy and they embraced in a very un-masculine-man hug.

Hermione looked on at the scene in front of her with slight confusion but that was overridden by the amusement that was bubbling inside of her, that she just smiled -slightly sadly- at the display of obvious friendship in front of her; she'd never experienced that kind of friendship before.

They released from the very feminine man-hug and looked at her with silly grins on their faces. They once again burst into laughter, forgetting about the boy that the twins had called 'Jordan.'

When they managed to calm down, the boy sat down next to her and the twins made the introductions.

"Hermione, this nosey sod, -" spoke Fred.

"- Is Lee Jordan. -" stated George.

"- Our best friend and, -"

"- Fellow Gryffindor lion."

Hermione gave a bright smile to Lee and he did the same whilst shaking her hand. She liked him already, especially witnessing what she did between him and the twins; she could already tell they were going to be good friends.

"And Lee, this lovely young lady, -" spoke George first and Hermione couldn't stop the very unladylike snort of laughter that escaped her. She was far from a lady.

"- Is Hermione Granger, -" followed Fred.

"- Muggleborn witch, -"

"- Extraordinaire!"

Fred and George - The Hogwarts Express

The twins waited until the rest of their siblings and parents passed through onto the platform. They said their goodbyes with their Mum possibly trying to squeeze them to death.

"Mum, -" said Fred.

"- We can't breathe," George said, carrying on from where his twin had left off.

Mr. Weasley finally managed to tear his wife off his twin sons and chuckled when they took a huge breath.

"Now, boys, be good this year, won't you?" Spoke Mr. Weasley.

"Don't get into any trouble and behave yourselves," said Mrs. Weasley.

Fred and George looked at each other and then at their parents with identical sceptical looks on their slightly freckled faces.

"Now, Mum, why on earth would we, -"

"- Want to do that?"

Mrs. Weasley sighed and pursed her lips whilst Arthur's eyes showed amusement. Only a small amount, of course, he didn't want to encourage his boys and face the wrath of his wife, after all, she was a rather scary witch with a bad temper.

The twins gathered their trunks from the trolleys and placed them on the floor, whilst Ginny was complaining about why she wasn't allowed to go to Hogwarts as Ron got to.

"Ginevra Molly Weasley, Ron is eleven-years-old and you are only ten. You have to wait until next year as it is the rules," Molly scolded her only daughter.

Fred and George knelt in front of their favourite and only sister and simultaneously whispered something into her ear and she smiled and giggled. The twins hugged and kissed her on the cheek, doing the same to their Mother when they stood up and made their way to the train. After giving an attendant their trunk, they went off to find the perfect compartment to sit in and plan for the upcoming year at Hogwarts. Being pranksters was extremely hard work and they had a reputation to maintain, after all, they couldn't be seen slipping, now could they?

Walking down the aisle of the train Fred and George stopped suddenly in their tracks and looked at each other. They happily sighed as the feelings they got in The Leaky Cauldron resurfaced from nowhere: the humming magic, the skin on fire and the tingling body, the feelings of being relaxed, content and complete. They released the breath they didn't realise they were holding and continued to find a compartment. They noticed the more they kept walking the more the feelings flared up, so they abandoned the need to find a compartment and instead went in the direction that for some reason, they knew they needed to be heading.

Five minutes later….

"Urghhh!"

They heard a rather frustrated and irritated groan coming from the compartment up ahead and they made their way in that direction. They stopped at the door and the feelings were the strongest that they had felt since getting on the train. They looked at each other in confusion and then their attention was caught again by an exclamation which sounded like it came from a young girl.

"Bloody hell!"

They shared a look of amusement before they chose to put the poor girl out of her misery and see if they could help her.

Fred opened the door and they both went to step inside the compartment when the feelings flared up inside of them and it felt more powerful than ever before. They were so overwhelmed by them that they didn't notice the young girl struggling with the weight of her trunk and that was about to get crushed into the floor in a matter of minutes. The panting they heard brought them out of their thoughts. When they finally looked up they saw a petite young girl who judging by the size of her, had to be a first year. Her limbs were trembling and she was grumbling to herself, but they couldn't hear what she was saying.

"Hi there, would you like some help with that?" Asked Fred with his hands in his pockets.

"Oh no, I'm fine, thank you, but thanks for asking though," she responded whilst panting, probably with exhaustion because she looked to have been in that position for a while.

"Yeah, but sorry, we don't believe that, do we, Fred?" George spoke up with barely contained amusement, leaning against the door frame with his arms crossed in front of him.

"No, we don't, George," Fred replied to his brother, also struggling to contain the laughter that was dying to be released.

"Seriously, I can manage," the young girl spoke up and her limbs were shaking, making it a dead giveaway that she was, in fact, struggling and needed help.

"No, you can't, and you're not, so Fred's gonna take the trunk off you and place it on the rack whilst I move you out of the way before you get turned into a pancake from the weight of the trunk you're so diligently failing to hold up," George said.

Whilst George wrapped his arm around her waist, Fred took the weight of the trunk off the small girl and put it into the overhead rack. George picked her up and placed her back on the ground next to him.

The girl huffed and glared at his brother and Fred couldn't help but chuckle, especially when she turned her glare on him. She was a spitfire, he reckoned.

"Thank you, but I really didn't need your help; I was managing just fine," she all but growled at them.

"No, you really weren't," George couldn't help but say whilst, he too, chuckled.

"So don't lie to us or yourself for that matter," said Fred.

The girl once again huffed, then sighed and held her hand out to Fred and then George for them to shake.

"I'm Hermione, Hermione Granger," she spoke clearly, the previous trace of irritation gone from her voice.

She looked smaller up close. Her head of hair was mahogany in colour and wild curls fell to the middle of her back in an uncontrollable mess. She had the biggest chocolate brown eyes they had ever seen - almost doe-like, with a peaches and cream complexion and a small smattering of freckles on her nose. She wore comfortable clothing: light blue jeans, trainers and a t-shirt that said, "Warning! Brains in use," on the front of it. The twins shared an amused smile.

"Fred and George Weasley, at your service," they chirped whilst shaking her hand.

When they touched her they felt a jolt of electricity shoot through them but they held their facial expressions as to not give anything away and scare the young girl. They looked at each other.

That's odd, they both thought.

They sat down and pulled her to sit in-between them. It felt right to them, they couldn't explain it.

"It's nice to meet you, Hermione, Hermione Granger -" spoke Fred.

"- Now, tell us about yourself," George finished for him.

"Don't you have friends you want to sit with or people waiting for you?" inquired Hermione.

Fred and George looked at each other and had a whole conversation with their eyes. Of course, they had other friends, especially Lee who they'd wanted to visit before they got on the train and arrived at Hogwarts, but now in the compartment with this girl sat in-between them, they didn't want to leave her. Their minds made up, they subtly nodded to each other and shrugged before they spoke together.

"Nope, now tell us about yourself."

The train began to move as they made their way towards Hogwarts. They chatted with Hermione for a couple of hours, all the way through she had them laughing like lunatics which in turn sent her into full out guffaws. They all had tears leaking from their eyes, they were struggling to breathe and they were holding their sides as their ribs hurt from laughter. The only people who could make them laugh were each other and on occasion Lee; they found this a pleasant development. They liked it when she smiled and laughed; they got the feeling that it didn't happen often. They silently vowed that they would always make sure she was smiling and laughing.

The twins discovered a lot about Hermione in two hours and the more they listened and learned, the more they were amazed by her. They discovered her to be hilarious, selfless, generous, incredibly kind-hearted and fun. They didn't doubt there was more to learn about her either which they were more than happy to do.

Hermione had just told a story about something that occurred at her muggle school that sent Fred and George into another round of hysterics; they were doubled over, leaning heavily against each other for support whilst they held their sides and their eyes watered uncontrollably.

They never heard the compartment door open, someone step into it and then close the door behind him. They jumped when they heard a very familiar voice.

"Weasleys!"

They stood and sprang on their friend.

"Jordan!" they yelled and hugged their 'brother' tightly. When they released from the hug they turned to Hermione and saw a look of amusement on her face and that sent them off into another round of bellowed laughter, leaving an incredibly confused Lee looking at the scene in front of him.

Once the twins and Hermione finally calmed down and took deep breaths, Lee sat down opposite the twins and next to Hermione. Fred and George introduced their friend to their newest friend.

"Hermione, this nosey sod, -" spoke Fred.

"- Is Lee Jordan. -"stated George.

"- Our best friend and, -"

"- Fellow Gryffindor lion."

They couldn't help the ridiculously idiotic grin that spread on their faces when they saw Hermione gave a genuinely warm smile to their friend and shake his hand whilst Lee did the same and smiled at her.

"And Lee, this lovely young lady -" spoke George first and Hermione snorted at him.

"- Is Hermione Granger. -" followed Fred.

"- Muggleborn witch, -"

"- Extraordinaire!"

"So, what had you practically wetting yourselves when I walked in here?"

When Lee finished speaking the three doubled over in laughter again, the twins leaning against each other and Hermione leaning against Lee. He could feel her shoulders shaking which in turn had him bursting into laughter, he didn't know what they were laughing at but he didn't care.

It was a few moments later when everyone had calmed down enough to answer Lee's question, and it was the twins that answered, in what Hermione had dubbed 'twin speak.'

"Hermione was telling us some stories from when she was at her muggle school. -" George started.

"- Turns out our little Spitfire, -" Fred followed, "- Pulled pranks in her classes, -"

"- And was never caught!" the twins all but yelled at Lee with barely contained humour.

Lee looked at Hermione with astonishment and admiration and she blushed in embarrassment.

"Hermione's promised to help us pull a few pranks 'round the castle and on some of the professors," George said.

Lee's face split into a grin that should have been painful and he chuckled at the enthusiasm of the twins.

"What's this story then?" He pressed.

Fred and George once again answered before she could. George started the twin speak.

"When she was nine, she pranked one of her teachers at school. -"

"- She glued everything on her teacher's desk to the desk -"

The twins were having difficultly telling the story in-between their laughter.

"- It took twenty minutes for her teacher to realise what had happened, -"

"- And it took two days to get everything unstuck from the desk. But that's not all she did." At this point, the twins were slumped on the floor, all but rolling around and they had given up on telling the rest of the story.

Lee looked over to Hermione who was blushing furiously and he raised an eyebrow at her, when the twins calmed down to get their breath back they looked to Hermione to tell Lee the rest.

"So, what else did you do that has these two noisy buggers wetting themselves?"

Hermione took a deep breath and continued from where the twins left off.

"Well, you know? I may or may not have put extra strong super glue -the kind they use in manufacturing companies- on the teacher's chair as well." The look of admiration reappeared on Lee's face and it was accompanied by the twins. Hermione continued "And she may or may not have sat down on the chair and gotten stuck."

Lee and the twins were laughing madly. If anyone walked past the door they might contemplate sending them to a psychiatric hospital. Feeling confident because of the looks they were giving her, she added the last part of the story with a laugh.

"And she may or may not have tried to stand up and she couldn't. When she finally managed to she may or may not have ripped her clothes and they were still stuck to the chair."

"And you never got caught?" asked Lee.

"No; the school could never figure out who did it, so they assumed that some kids broke into the school when it was closed and that they were the cause of it," Hermione answered.

"She's brilliant, isn't she?" spoke Fred with respect.

"I think she'll make a great addition to the team," George agreed with a grin.

"Yes, I think she will," finished Lee with complete approval for the new member of the pranking trio.

'No, not trio, Quartet. With her muggle ideas and pranks, we'll be even better than before, especially if she never gets caught. We won't get detention, thought Lee joyfully.

The newly formed quartet spent the next couple of hours this way, just laughing and having fun. Looking at the four of them now, no one would suspect that they had only met each other a mere four hours ago. There were only three hours left of the train ride before they reached Hogwarts. At this point, a woman was roaming the carriage aisle with a trolley of confectionary. Hermione bought four chocolate frogs, twelve sugar quills, one box of Bertie Bott's every flavoured beans and four pumpkin juices. Hermione decided she rather liked wizarding sweets. They decided to play a game with the Bertie Bott's beans.

"When they say every flavoured bean they mean it. I swear, I got a vomit flavoured one once," explained Lee with a grimace.

They sat with the Bertie Bott's beans in the middle of them, they would take it in turns to pick one out without looking and they had to eat it. The facial expressions and the reactions to the beans were priceless. The language used by the boys would normally have Hermione scold them, but she didn't have it in her heart to tell them off just because they were her boys. If it was anyone else she would gladly do it.

Wait a minute; did I just say my boys? Hermione muttered before she shrugged off the thoughts, not deeming it important for the time being.

Lee picked a strawberry one, Hermione picked an orange one, George picked a spearmint one, but unfortunately, Fred picked an earwax flavoured one. While Fred was practically choking the others just laughed. Then they decided that instead of picking their own bean, they would do it for each other.

They picked a cotton candy flavoured one for Lee, Hermione got a corned-beef flavoured one and George was given a bacon flavoured bean. Again poor Fred got a rather disgusting flavour.

"Yuck! Pickled pig's intestines," Fred said whilst looking like he was going to be sick. The others laughed at his misfortune. Fred decided he didn't want to play the game anymore and the others agreed, throwing him a bone.

Hermione jumped when something moved and she caught it in the corner of her eye.

"Err... Lee? What's in that box? It just moved!" Hermione questioned nervously.

The twins and Lee all turned to the box and gasped.

"Susan," they all shouted in sync as Lee grabbed the box.

"What's a 'Susan?'" asked Hermione with a tilt of her head and confusion marring her features.

Lee shared a look with the twins and they looked at Hermione as Lee moved the box in front of her and he removed the lid. Hermione gasped and when the boys were expecting her to scream and start running for the hills, she did the most surprising thing they'd ever seen a girl do before when it came to Susan, that it rendered them speechless. She started cooing.

They'd never seen it before; usually, no one would get within twenty feet of Lee unless they knew that he didn't have Susan with him or that she had been sent home. If Lee had been spotted carrying the box everyone would go in the opposite direction to him, except for the twins and now apparently Hermione. That included some of the professors too.

"Oh, she's so adorable" Hermione reached into the box and allowed the tarantula to sit on her palm where she stroked its body. The tarantula was the size of her hand. She was once again making cooing noises and the boys looked at her with awe-stricken looks.

"What?" queried Hermione when she noticed it had gone quiet and she looked at the bewildered faces of her boys.

"What she says!" said Lee with a laugh. "What she says!"

"You're holding a spider the size of a toad in your hand and cooing at her like she's a bloody kitten."

"Fred, she's a tarantula, not a spider and a pretty one at that. Aren't you Susan?" she began cooing again. The boys didn't know what to say.

Susan ran up Hermione's arm until she reached her shoulder and just sat there peacefully, Hermione sat back carefully as to not squash Susan.

"You amaze us, you know that," replied George, Hermione just smiled at them.

They sat for a while chatting animatedly and the boys gave her the rundown of the school. They contemplated pranking her and telling her that she had to wrestle a giant before getting sorted into her house, however, after hearing about the pranks she had pulled at her muggle school they thought better of it, as they didn't want her face her wrath and have her prank them. They bet she could give them a run for their galleons.

The boys were telling her about the houses and Fred was currently assuring her that they would still talk to her even if she wasn't in Gryffindor, except maybe if she was in Slytherin the boys joked.

"Fred, I believe you, alright? I'm fine, honestly," she saw the looks of wonder on the boys' faces.

"What?" she probed.

"How did you know that it was Fred? Because you seem pretty certain that it wasn't George, so it can't have been a guess," Lee pressed.

"I don't know how, I just did; I reckon I could do it blindfolded," was the reply Hermione gave to his question. The twins broke into bright smiles and they gave her a look that showed the high regard in their eyes.

The twins couldn't believe it, she could tell them apart, now they knew she was special. They could already tell that she was one of a kind, but when she announced she could tell them apart it only cemented their feelings for her. Seriously, not even their parents and siblings could tell them apart but she could! They decided to tell her so.

"Hermione, not even our own family or Lee can tell us apart -"

"- Yeah, and we have five brothers and a sister. -"

"- Not to mention mum and dad, -"

"- And other extended family members," they said in their twin speak, which had Lee and Hermione chuckling at their exclamations of disbelief.

"You know what this means, Gred? -"

"- Indeed I do, Forge. You're not only more wicked than Lee, -"

"- But now you're the same amount of wicked as us, The Weasley Twins. That's a feat never before been seen."

Lee gave a mock glare and a hurt look which only made them laugh and Hermione chuckled good-naturedly at her new friends.

Time flew by and there were only two hours left of the seven hour journey to Hogwarts. The quartet decided that they wanted to play a prank on some unsuspecting students before they arrived at the Hogsmeade Station. Hermione suggested that they should get changed into their robes first and went to leave the carriage to get changed in the bathrooms. Upon sticking their heads out of the compartment door and seeing the queue to use the bathrooms they just changed into their robes in their compartment.

When Hermione had removed her shirt as she was wearing a top underneath it, the boys could see a faint line through the fabric. It started at her left shoulder and it went all the way down and around to her right hip, almost settling on her stomach. The fact that they could see it through her clothing gave a sense of how big and thick the scar was. When the boys noticed it they all bristled and anger and worry replaced their usual light and happy expressions. They had their fists clenched at their sides trying to contain their anger. They couldn't explain their reactions and behaviour, but they hated the idea that someone had hurt her.

"Hermione?" Started Fred.

"What's that on your back?" Requested George.

"Where did you get it from?" Finished Lee.

"Why do you have it?"

"Who did that to you?" Her boys fired the questions at her, one after the other through clenched teeth.

"We'll kill them, -"

"- Then prank their dead body -"

"- And then we'll bury them," finished George.

Hermione thought it best to diffuse the situation rather quickly before her boys went on a rampage and killed some poor innocent civilian.

"You mean my scar?" The boys just glared at her so she decided to quickly continue before they could rebuttal. "Well, it's a scar, I've had it since I was four-years-old, possibly longer," before she could continue with answering their questions they interrupted.

"- Are you telling us that your parents did that to you? -" Asked Fred, looking horrified.

"- Do your parents hurt you? -" said George.

"- Because if they do we can help you, -"

"- You can tell us, we won't let anyone hurt you."

She felt tears begin to gather in her eyes at her new friends trying to protect her from any harm. She blinked them away before she spoke, continuing with her explanation.

"I don't know how I got it or why I have it. My parents didn't do this to me, they are kind people. And I don't know who or what is the cause of it."

"Well, if you've had that scar since you were four, possibly younger, why does it still look recent?" requested Lee.

"Before I was brought to the agency I was taken to a hospital and at the time my injury was badly infected. If it wasn't infected the scar should've barely been visible, but because it was, it looks like this instead and it will always look this way," Hermione finished answering their questions or at least she thought she had until they asked another.

"Agency?" they asked in sync. They were rather good at this she noted.

"Yes, the adoption agency, I was adopted when I was four by Jean and Richard Granger, my parents," she told them. "Now that I think about it, I was incidentally adopted the day I went to the hospital," Hermione said to the room but more to herself.

"What happened to your biological parents?" Asked George.

"I was told by the Grangers my biological parents died, I don't know how, when, where or why; they never told me."

"And the Grangers?"

"They take excellent care of me and love me more than anything. I'm grateful to them for the kindness they've shown me and they've treated me like their own flesh and blood rather than an orphan. They'll always have a special place in my heart, forever and always," Hermione spoke fondly. "Now that you've finished and I've gone through your Spanish Inquisition, we'd better get dressed if you want to pull that prank before we arrive, we haven't got long left."

"Right."

"Sorry."

"We didn't mean to make you feel uncomfortable," they said one after the other as they all flushed with embarrassment.

Hermione snorted. "Boys, I'm sure I could never feel uncomfortable around you and I'll always answer any questions you have for me if I can do so."

The boys smiled because they saw the sincerity of her words in her eyes. They finished getting into their uniform robes and Hermione tied their ties for them because they were rubbish at it. The boys just chuckled when she told them so. Where the boy's robes had the Hogwarts crest on the right side and they had a red lining on them and their ties were red and gold striped, Hermione's robes where all black and her tie was also black. She assumed they would change once she had been sorted into her house and her suspicions were confirmed by the boys. They set out to pull their prank before their time ran out.

Their prank involved a bucket of orange paint, an open bathroom door and a very unsuspecting Slytherin student.

They had spent thirty minutes setting it up and hid in wait for their prank to work. But their excitement was quickly ruined when a young boy foiled their plans. On the bright side, their prank was successful but it was the wrong target.

The young boy wearing the same robes as Hermione burst into tears as he was covered in orange paint. Hermione and her boys rushed forward towards the young boy. Hermione asked the boys to remove the paint and they did as she asked. She knelt down in front of the boy and pulled him into her to give him a big hug. Hermione was rocking them, making humming and shushing noises. The boys looked on in pride.

She's so kind-hearted' they thought and they shared a look and knew they had all thought the same thing. They turned back to Hermione and the crying boy and they smiled.

Hermione was apologising to the boy for falling victim to their prank. She asked for his name.

"Ne-ev-i-i-lle Lo-Long- Bot-ttom," was his reply through his hiccups.

"Hi Neville, I'm Hermione, that's Fred, George and Lee," she said as she introduced them and they waved and gave him an apologetic look.

"What were you doing? You looked like you were looking for something," asked Hermione.

Neville quickly told Hermione and the boys the situation regarding the loss of his toad and how he was new and how his Gran would kill him if he couldn't find it before they got to Hogwarts. Hermione rectified the problem by sending Fred, George and herself to look for the toad. Fred went to search the front, George the middle and Hermione the back of the train, whilst Lee waited with Neville to see if the toad would come back. The boys didn't argue with her delegating and giving orders, as they believed she knew what she was doing.

Hermione opened the door to a compartment at the back of the train and found a small boy wearing clothes that were far too big for him, black messy hair and broken glasses. The boy sat opposite him had flaming red hair and freckles along his nose. Hermione assumed this was the twins' younger brother. Her suspicions were confirmed when he introduced himself as Ron Weasley and other boy said his name was Harry Potter. Hermione didn't miss the look of disgust Ron gave her, but decided to ignore it and filed away his behaviour towards her in her mind for her to think about later.

"Oh, are you doing magic? Let's see then," Hermione said excitedly, seeing Ron pointing his wand at the rat in his lap.

She hadn't seen many spells being performed, only what the twins and Lee had shown her on the train and what she'd witnessed from McGonagall.

Ron cleared his throat. "Sunshine, daisy butter mellow, turn this stupid fat rat yellow." Nothing happened. "The twins gave me that spell!" Ron exclaimed.

Hermione had to bite her tongue to stop the laughter that was threatening to bubble out of her. Of course, they did, she thought fondly and with a shake of the head.

"Are you sure that's a real spell? Well, it's not very good, is it? Of course, I've only tried a few simple ones."

She pointed her wand at Harry's glasses and she had to stop herself from chuckling when his eyes crossed and a look of fear appeared on his face.

"For example, Occulus Reparo." Her wand sparked and in its wake, it left Harry's previously broken glasses now repaired.

Hermione was only able to cast that spell as the twins had helped her to do so, as they wanted to see her reaction to the first time she cast a spell. They'd picked one at random from her spell book and she hadn't actually believed it would be useful, but low and behold, it was.

"Hey, thanks," Harry said gratefully and Hermione smiled at him and stood to leave. "You haven't seen a toad, have you? A boy named Neville's lost one and he's rather upset about it."

Harry and Ron shook their heads as a 'no' and she left them alone. She continued searching until she met with her boys back in their compartment. They explained that Neville's toad had, in fact, returned to him during their search.

"That was a brilliant idea for me to wait behind for him to return whilst you guys went to search the train," exclaimed Lee. Hermione smiled as the twins nodded their heads in agreements.

They continued chatting until they finally pulled up to Hogsmeade Station. The twins held Hermione's hands whilst Lee held her shoulders so they wouldn't be separated through the traffic of moving students. They steered her towards a group of boats and a tall man that clearly had to be at least half-giant, if what she'd read in her school books were true. He looked intimidating at first sight with his thick bushy black hair and beard and his brown overcoat and buckled boots. But this was overridden by the soft and friendly eyes and his kind manner.

"Firs'- years over 'ere, this way please, firs'- years come on, don't be shy now!" he called.

"Right, we have to go and get into a carriage now," spoke Lee. He gave her a squeeze and a kiss on the forehead before running to get a carriage for him and the twins.

"We'll see you in the great hall for dinner, Love," said George, kissing her on the cheek and a side hug and running to the same carriage as Lee.

"You'll be fine, don't worry about a thing," Fred assured her before he mimicked the others, kissing her on the forehead and 'momma bear' hugging her. He ran towards the moving carriages and tripped over on his way.

Hermione laughed once again at Fred's misfortune. Poor Fred, she thought.

She clambered into a boat rather clumsily with Neville, Harry and unfortunately, Ron.

"Why'd we have to have her?" Ron grouched.

She just sat down and waited until she was finally moving closer and closer towards Hogwarts. They made their way through and under a rock face that was actually a tunnel disguised by all the vines, plants and algae. The castle came into view and they made their way towards the dock on the Black Lake.

The castle looked aged and the colours of the stone were mismatched; well the castle was over a thousand-years-old, after all. It was magnificently beautiful and she couldn't keep her eyes off it, they were glinting with pure admiration. She could briefly hear Ron complaining about having to share a boat with 'her and her bushy bird's nest of a head.'

They reached the edge of the Black Lake and the boats were docked. The first years were led through the entrance hall and they stood outside the door to the great hall, where the welcome feast would be held. At least that's what the twins had told her.

She heard a ruckus behind her but her eyes were trained on the closed doors.

Professor McGonagall walked towards the first year students with a scroll in her hand. Hermione was happy to see a friendly face. Well, more like a stern face; she chuckled to herself and reminded herself to tell the twins and Lee that joke later.

McGonagall informed the students of what was to happen next and when the nods of understanding ceased, the large wooden doors to the great hall opened.

Chapter Seven

Hogwarts - Sunday 1st September 1991

The doors were opened and the students were ushered forward and the gasps turned into 'ooh's and ah's.' Hermione couldn't stop smiling, she felt as though she could cry from the sheer beauty of the great hall.

There were four large tables that were for the four houses as they had huge banners hanging over the tables from the ceiling. The Slytherin table was on the far left with Ravenclaw opposite it. Then on the other side of the walkway was the Gryffindor table with the Hufflepuff table opposite on the far right.

The Gryffindor table had red and gold banners hanging with a large golden lion on, the Hufflepuff table had yellow and black banners with a large black badger on it, the Ravenclaw banners were blue and bronze and they had a large bronze eagle on and finally the Slytherin table had green and silver banners with a large silver serpent on. There was also a large table at the front of the hall that was facing the student tables, which the headmaster and professors occupied. And this had the Hogwarts crest above the table.

She looked up and was met by the sight of hundreds of floating candles that complemented the vision of a starry night sky that replaced the ceiling. Hermione knew that the reason this was the case was that the great hall was spelled to take on the image of the sky outside; she learned this whilst reading Hogwarts, a History. She told some of the students near her this when they asked how it was possible. Once again she could hear Ron making comments about her and ignored him as she continued to walk with the crowd towards the front of the hall, where a three-legged stool stood with a black aged pointed hat resting on top of it.

The crowd of students came to an abrupt stop. Hermione was feeling very nervous and it obviously showed on her face because when she looked up, her eyes locked on that of her smiling boys, pulling faces and waving, trying to get her attention. She quietly laughed and turned back to listen to Professor McGonagall.

The twins and Lee could tell that Hermione was nervous as she looked a little pale and they immediately worried that she might faint. After they had seen the scar on her back, they felt far more protective of her than they had when they had first met her. Than they had any right to. Than they should. Don't get them wrong, they had felt protective of her then, too, but now it was different. They couldn't understand who would want to hurt her; she was just so lovable it baffled them. When they were in the carriage they'd talked about Hermione and everything they had learned about her life and they all made a vow that they would never let Hermione feel hurt again. They would've made an Unbreakable Vow but their mother would kill them before the vow had a chance to.

So when they saw their Hermione looking worse for wear, they got her attention by waving madly at her like loons and pulling faces to make her laugh. They succeeded when she saw them and began to laugh, and then she smiled and turned back to Professor McGonagall. Before they looked back at the professor, they noticed Percy from the corner of their eyes, scowling at them scowling and then a look of confusion and possible pride filled the features of his face.

Hermione watched in wonder as the Sorting Hat burst into song.

"Oh you may not think I'm pretty, but don't judge on what you see, I'll eat myself if you can find a smarter hat than me.

You can keep your bowlers black, Your top hats sleek and tall, for I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat And I can cap them all.

There's nothing hidden in your head The Sorting Hat can't see, so try me on and I will tell you where you ought to be.

You might belong in Gryffindor, where dwell the brave at heart, their daring, nerve, and chivalry set Gryffindors apart.

You might belong in Hufflepuff, where they are just and loyal, those patient Hufflepuffs are true And unafraid of toil.

Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw, if you've a ready mind, Where those of wit and learning will always find their kind.

Or perhaps in Slytherin, you'll make your real friends, Those cunning folks use any means to achieve their ends.

So put me on! Don't be afraid! And don't get in a flap! You're in safe hands though I have none, for I'm a Thinking Cap!"

The great hall burst into cheer and applause as the Sorting Hat finished its song, the students soon calming down and retaking their seats. Professor McGonagall stood near the Sorting Hat and opened the scroll in her hands, calling the first name from the list.

"Hannah Abbot," called Professor McGonagall.

The young girl walked towards the hat, the professor lifted the hat and when the girl sat down the hat was placed on her head. She sat there for a few seconds before the hat yelled "Hufflepuff." The hall cheered and she jumped down off of the stool and made her way towards the Hufflepuff table. As she was walking Hermione saw her robes and tie begin to change. The robes now had yellow outlines with the Hogwarts crest on the right-hand side and her tie was striped yellow and black.

The sorting continued along with the cheers and applause as the rest of the first years were given their houses for the next seven years.

Susan bones – Hufflepuff, Terry Boot – Ravenclaw, Mandy Brocklehurst – Ravenclaw, Lavender Brown – Gryffindor, Millicent Bulstrode – Slytherin, Michael Corner – Hufflepuff, Stephen Cornjual – Ravenclaw, Vincent Crabbe – Slytherin, Tracy Davis – Slytherin, Kevin Eheulhule – Ravenclaw, Justin Finch-Fletchley – Hufflepuff, Seamus Finnegan – Gryffindor, Anthony Goldstein – Ravenclaw, Gregory Goyle – Slytherin.

"Hermione Granger," Professor McGonagall called. She gave a quick encouraging smile to her cub. She was about to win a bet; she looked over at Professor Dumbledore at the head's table and her mouth twitched.

When her name was called Hermione began to briskly walk towards the Sorting Hat, she felt horrendous. Needing courage, she looked at her boys who were once again smiling and pulling faces and she took a breath before the hat was placed on her head, obstructing her view of everything.

"Well, Miss. Granger, I have been waiting for you to come to Hogwarts for a long time, I can tell you are destined for great things and that you will be, if you're already not, an immeasurably powerful witch. I see the Weasley Twins and Mr. Jordan have struck up a friendship with you, that in itself, is incredibly impressive. They'll be an important part of your future, plus a few others Miss. Granger, that I can reveal."

"Back to the sorting, back to the sorting. Where to put you? Where to put you? Now, this is going to be a challenge, I haven't had this much difficulty placing a student since McGonagall and Dumbledore. Hmmm, let's see, you are loyal, kind, hardworking, patient and selfless; you would do well in Hufflepuff. What about yellow and black? Then again, yellow's not really your colour, is it?"

"You're highly intelligent and you have a thirst for knowledge and an appreciation for learning, you're quick-minded and witty. What do you think about Ravenclaw? The blue and bronze eagle? But then, I don't think so. You'd make a great Slytherin, you're cunning, ambitious and very resourceful, from what I can see. The green and silver serpent, do you think you'd do well in there? No, you're too kind to be a serpent. Gryffindor, the mighty red and gold lion? You are brave, daring and chivalrous and you have a fire in your belly that would benefit Gryffindor well. Hmm, you would make an excellent addition to either of these houses. You're a tricky witch, aren't you, Miss. Granger? And you don't have a preference for a house? Interesting. Never mind, I like a good challenge and I haven't had one in the last few decades."

Hermione could feel panic setting in. What if she couldn't be placed into a house? What would happen? Why was it taking so long?

The Sorting Hat, sensing her panic, was quick to make a decision.

Fred, George and Lee were all looking at Hermione in amazement and the hall was deadly silent and all the students had their eyes trained on her. She had been up there for several minutes and the Sorting Hat still hadn't made a decision. They looked at each other with proud looks on their faces, the last time it took this long to sort a student was McGonagall and Dumbledore.

Several minutes later...

The boys were beyond worried; everyone at the Gryffindor table could feel the waves of anxiety in their magical auras. They'd only met her seven hours ago and after spending only an hour with her they could all see the qualities of all four houses were within her and that was extremely rare.

Ten minutes later...

Everyone in the hall was beginning to get nervous, ten minutes had passed in total and she hadn't yet been placed, she remained quietly sitting on the stool, the Sorting Hat too large for her small head.

"What's taking so long?" Lee whispered.

"I don't know, but I'm worried," replied George, his leg bouncing nervously beneath the table.

"She's too suitable; intelligent, loyal, brave, cunning," and as an afterthought, Fred added, "Especially with her pranks." This made George and Lee smile a little, but it was gone from their faces instantly as they turned their attention back to Hermione.

Twelve minutes later...

The professors at the head's table were all staring at the young witch. It hadn't taken this long for Dumbledore to be sorted decades ago and he was one of the most powerful wizards in existence. They all secretly hoped that she would be placed in their houses.

The twins and Lee were livid, they looked murderous; they were so close to standing and dragging Hermione to sit at the Gryffindor table regardless of house affiliation. The students were slightly fearful; she'd been sat there for twelve minutes and with the Sorting Hat having difficulty making its decision showed how powerful this young witch was or could be. They all waited with bated breath, wondering which house would get her. It was obvious that she would be a great addition to the house she was placed in, so they all silently hoped it was theirs.

Percy was watching the young witch in wonder; he couldn't believe what he was witnessing. He looked over to the twins and Lee and what he saw surprised him. He had never seen the twins anything but light and cheerful and always joking. He had watched their facial expressions change for the last fifteen minutes. They went from happy to encouraging to patient to anxious. But what he was witnessing now was rather frightening, they were murderous.

"GRYFFINDOR!" Roared the Sorting Hat to the occupants of the hall. "I can't wait until you fulfil your destiny, Miss. Granger, and remember that help will always be found with me if you need it."

The Sorting Hat was removed by Professor McGonagall who gave Hermione the brightest smile that had ever graced her face and at the look of pride, Hermione beamed at her new head of house. Professor McGonagall turned towards Dumbledore and her lip twitched.

And he doubted me, I know a Gryffindor when I see one, thought Professor McGonagall smugly.

The entire Gryffindor table burst into cheers and the other houses looked extremely jealous at that moment. Fred, George and Lee all but sprang from their seats, walked over the Gryffindor table making some of the students laugh and they flung themselves at Hermione, wrapping her up in a tight hug.

Hermione stood from the chair and had only taken a couple of steps before she was tackled by her boys; she was laughing and the boys were making some rather funny noises that they would probably be embarrassed about later.

Percy couldn't help but laugh -yes you heard right; Perfect Prefect Percy was laughing- at his brothers and the way they behaved towards the young witch.

They made their way back towards the Gryffindor table and to their seats and they all frowned at the exact same time when they realized that there weren't any empty seats near them. Hermione smiled at them and made her way towards an empty seat at the other end of the table, but she was abruptly stopped in her tracks when she felt one of the boys pull her back and she squeaked in surprise. She was placed onto Fred's lap, her legs were on George's lap and her feet rested on Lee's lap. Hermione just laughed at them when they smiled cheekily at her. It was likely highly inappropriate, but given their young ages and the fact Hermione didn't feel uncomfortable, she didn't let the thought bother her.

The sorting continued after the hall fell silent again.

Daphne Greengrass – Slytherin, Wayne Hopkins – Hufflepuff, Megan Jones – Hufflepuff, Su Lee – Ravenclaw, Neville Longbottom – Gryffindor, Isabel Unglal – Ravenclaw, Morag MacDougal – Hufflepuff, Draco Malfoy – Slytherin, Eloise Midwidgeon – Hufflepuff, Lyla Moon – Slytherin, Theodore Nott – Slytherin, Ernie MacMillan – Hufflepuff, Pansy Parkinson – Slytherin, Padma Patil – Ravenclaw, Parvati Patil – Gryffindor, Sally-Anne Perks – Ravenclaw.

"Harry Potter."

When his name was called the entire hall went silent. Harry made his way up to the chair and the hat was placed on his head. It took longer than the other students except for Hermione to be placed into a house. Five minutes later the Sorting Hat bellowed.

"GRYFFINDOR!"

The screaming and banging on the table started and Hermione was pulled up by Fred. He, George and Lee stood up and began chanting rather loudly. "We got Potter! We got Potter!"

"Harry," she called and waved him over, the young wizard looking grateful for her kindness.

When he made it opposite them the entire table shifted to allow him access to a seat. At this the twins and Lee glared at the table's occupants -they didn't do it for Hermione- who swiftly looked in the opposite direction and continued to watch the rest of the sorting ceremony.

Dean Thomas – Gryffindor, Lisa Turpin – Ravenclaw, Zacharius Smith – Hufflepuff, Ronald Weasley – Gryffindor.

Their little brother had also been sorted into Gryffindor and the twins, Lee and Hermione cheered for him as he made his way to Harry. Harry made room for him and he sat down opposite Hermione and the boys. Hermione smiled at him and Ron gave her a less than pleasant look. The look made her sink back into Fred and he hugged her closer to him, missing the look on his little brother's face.

Blaise Zabini – Slytherin was the final first year sorted and Dumbledore stood to say the welcoming speech and make his announcements.

"First years please note that the Forbidden Forest is completely forbidden to all students and that it should not be entered. Also, this year the third floor corridor is strictly out of bounds unless you wish to die a very painful death. Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few final words. And here they are Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak! Thank you."

Dumbledore took his seat, food appearing on the table the moment he did so. Hermione couldn't understand how much food could fit on one table. At the look of the food, her stomach growled loudly causing those in her vicinity to chuckle and her boys to laugh loudly and Ron just glared at her.

Everyone began to eat and Hermione and the boys chatted throughout dinner. She told them the joke about Professor McGonagall and she was right; they found it hilarious, so funny in fact, that Lee's pumpkin juice squirted out of his nose and straight into George's face causing another round of guffaws and bellowed laughter.

When dessert replaced the dinner food on the table Hermione grumbled about wishing she had been told that there was going to be dessert too, otherwise she wouldn't have eaten so much at dinner. Everyone that heard laughed and nodded their heads in agreement, after all, everyone but the first years had been in the same position as her.

Hermione had long since fallen asleep with her head buried under Fred's neck. Lee removed his cloak and placed it around her as she didn't have hers with her, it was only the beginning of September so the weather wasn't too bad, but it was still cold. The twins and Lee glared at anyone who looked at Hermione with disgust, which was most of the girls at the Gryffindor table. They had noticed the looks she was getting but thankfully Hermione hadn't.

The trio especially didn't take it well, when their fellow Quidditch team member and Gryffindor, Angelina, tried to grab a hold of Hermione when she was asleep and drag her off of Fred's lap and onto the floor. The looks Angelina received from the boys would make Snape's greasy hair curl, and they promised a world full of pranks and pain if she even tried to touch Hermione again.

Luckily for Angelina, the food and plates were banished to the kitchens and the students were released to their common rooms, the first years were asked by Percy to follow him. Since Hermione was asleep and the boys didn't want to wake her, Fred carried her, George made sure that Lee's cloak stayed wrapped around her to protect her from the castle's chill and Lee glared at anyone who was too loud and made her rouse in her sleep. Besides, they knew where they were going anyway.

When they finally reached the Gryffindor common room in the east wing of the seventh floor, the boys had a conversation about Hermione deciding what to do with her. Percy who had become intrigued with the little witch and her relationship with his brothers watched on from the shadows.

"What should we do?" Asked Lee.

"I don't want to wake her up but the charms on the stairs..." Fred trailed off and the others understood him.

"Yeah, and did you see the looks she was getting from the girls at the table?" George muttered and they all nodded.

"Thank, Merlin, she didn't notice," said Fred. "Well, she can't sleep in the common room; it's way too cold for her, even with the fire, -"

"- And I don't think she would be too happy waking up in our room, even if we could get her past the wards," finished George.

They all looked at each other and nodded in agreement, they hated to do it but they had to.

"Spitfire, Spitfire, wake up."

Hermione opened her eyes and Fred put her feet on the ground and held her up.

"Okay, I'm awake, Fred," she muttered.

"It's time for bed and I don't think your roommates will appreciate us barging in, but will you do something for us?" Lee spoke in a soft voice, seeing that she was still drowsy.

"Hmmm?"

"When you get into bed, draw your curtains closed, take your wand and touch it to a knot in the middle of the top right bedpost," Fred said.

"What for?"

The boys looked at each other and decided to tell her the truth, not all of it, only a very minuscule amount.

"It'll help you sleep better."

"Okay," Hermione shrugged. She kissed each of her boys on the cheek and tiredly made her way up the stairs. Behind her, she called, "Night boys!"

"Night, Spitfire."

"Night, Princess."

"Night, Love."

When Hermione couldn't be seen they breathed a sigh of relief and made their way to the stairs to go to their dormitory.

"You can come out now, Percy," they all said together.

Percy huffed at having been caught spying and the boys laughed as they made their way to bed.

Chapter Eight

Hogwarts - Monday 2nd September 1991

Hermione woke up on Monday morning; she hadn't gotten as much sleep as she would have liked but she was still feeling refreshed. The reason being she was woken up at two-thirty in the morning by the girls in her dorm room. They were trying to get through the closed curtains on her bed, but for some reason, they couldn't. It was as if the curtains were preventing them, acting like some sort of shield. Hermione was amazed even the curtains were magic. She wasn't able to get back to sleep until an hour later when the girls had finally given up and returned to their beds.

Hermione looked at her watch which read six am and she climbed out of bed and checked if her dorm mates were still sleeping. They were.

They must be exhausted from failing miserably, Hermione chuckled to herself.

She grabbed her wash kit and uniform and trudged to the bathroom. The good thing about waking up early is that she gets the bathroom to herself.

Hermione turned on the shower and began washing her body and hair. As she was doing this she thought back on the happenings of the night before.

Last night….

Hermione climbed the stairs and made her way to her dorm, when she opened the door and walked in she received a less than welcoming response. The girls turned to her and sneered or glared. Hermione was floored; she couldn't understand what she had done, she hadn't really even met these girls before so she didn't know why they were showing so much hatred and disgust towards her.

When Hermione took in her surroundings she noticed that there were four dark wooden double poster-beds with thick curtains drawn open and red and gold quilt sets with the Gryffindor crest in the middle of the bedspread and each bed had a bedside table. Hermione noticed that all the beds were taken apart from the one furthest away from the mirror. Hermione bit back a laugh while she thought to herself, Please, as I care about the mirror.

In the top left corner of the room, there was a full-length mirror with two sets of chest of drawers close by, on the other side of the room opposite the chest of drawers there were two wardrobes on either side of the door. On the other side of the chest of drawers, there was a door that Hermione presumed would open to the bathroom. Opposite the four beds, there were two desks that could easily fit two people on and still allow for space. In-between the desks there was a built-in fireplace in the wall with a red rug placed in front of it on the floor.

She then noticed that her trunk was at the bottom of her bed and she walked over to her bed, opened her trunk and pulled out a pair of her favourite pyjamas which were a blue and pink button-up shirt and trousers with a checkered pattern, and she changed into them before crawling into bed and doing what her boys had asked. Drawing the curtains closed around her bed, Hermione touched her wand to the knot in the middle of the right-hand post. And then she slipped into a peaceful sleep until the girls started trying to get through her curtains.

Present time…

Hermione finished in the shower and stepped out grabbing her towel. She dried herself and her hair leaving it in damp ringlets as it was more tamable that way. Hermione dressed in her uniform and it was now six-thirty so she grabbed her new favourite book, Hogwarts, a History, and traipsed down to the common room and sat down in an armchair near the lit fireplace.

Hermione didn't really look at the Gryffindor common room the night before so she decided to now. It was a large room that was filled with comfy couches, lounge chairs and armchairs (all a deep red) with red and gold cushions spread haphazardly around the room. There were coffee tables in the middle of the room where the chairs and couches were.

There were window seats that allowed you to get an amazing view of the Hogwarts grounds, study desks and tables in the same dark wood as the one in her dorm room. The fireplace was massive and would heat up the entire room and she could imagine the beauty of it in the winter. There were Gryffindor tapestries and hangings on all the walls which were also painted in different shades of red and gold and the rooms had darkened areas for privacy if it was wanted.

Overall the common room was cozy and warm; it had a homey feel to it and for this she was grateful. She couldn't wait to spend many a night reading by the glow of the lit fireplace. Hermione smiled and she leaned back heavily into the comfy armchair, pulled her feet up and tucked them under her and began reading her book.

Fred woke up first and George followed soon after, they shared a look and they remembered the new member of the pranksters. The boys had a bit of a restless night; they were all worried about Hermione and the fact that they had let her walk into a group of harpies didn't ease their worries in the slightest, particularly after the looks they had witnessed her receive from them.

Fred and George shot out of bed lightning-fast and rushed to Lee to wake him up; they had to be especially careful with him when he was tired. Once last year, he fell asleep in the great hall during breakfast and some idiot fifth year thought it would be hilarious to wake him up. Well, Lee got the last laugh when he broke the boy's nose. Every student and professor knew not to wake him up if he was tired, it was an unwritten law within the halls of Hogwarts, and the Burrow which Charlie had learned the hard way.

They rushed to his bed and began to shake him awake; the look he gave them when he opened his eyes would intimidate Molly Weasley and when he was about to launch himself at the twins for waking him up they said Hermione's name. And that worked. Lee was awake and running to the showers at lightning speed leaving the twins in his wake to follow behind him. They showered and quickly dressed in their uniforms and made their way down to the common room where they would wait for Hermione to come down from her dorm.

When the boys reached the common room, they halted in their steps at the scene that met them. Hermione was curled up on the armchair closest to the fire, with her feet under her and her head resting on one of her arms which were resting on the side of the armchair. The other arm was resting on the open page of a book which was resting and her knees and it probably weighed more than she did. Her wild curls were covering one side of her face and they were all over the place, it was still slightly damp from her shower and she had her uniform on. The boys approached her and bent down in front of her chair.

Fred gently called out to her while George shook her shoulder.

"Hey, Spitfire, wakeup."

Hermione made, in the boy's opinion, a cute little groan which they stifled a laugh at. She sluggishly opened her eyes.

"Morning, boys," she greeted sleepily, stifling a yawn.

"Morning," they echoed.

They stood up and sat on the couch opposite her chair whilst she stretched and rubbed her neck which was sore from the position she had fallen asleep in. She must have been more tired than she thought if she fell asleep whilst reading.

"What time is it?"

"Almost seven-thirty," was the reply she received from George.

"How long have you been down here, Spitfire? Did you sleep down here last night?"

"Did those girls do something to you? Are you okay?"

Hermione blinked in surprise at their questions.

"I've been down here since six-thirty. No, I didn't sleep down here last night I just fell asleep whilst reading, they didn't do anything to me and I'm perfectly fine, tired that's why I fell asleep, but I'm fine."

They looked appeased at this but then as if a light bulb went off above his head, Lee watched her with narrowed eyes, daring her to lie to him.

"What were you doing down here so early? Why are you so tired that you fell asleep?"

Fred's and George's attention was on Hermione when Lee spoke up, they realised he had a good point.

Hermione, on the other hand, realised that she just made a little slip-up. She couldn't decide whether or not to tell them the truth about last night or lie. She didn't want to lie to them and have them worry because she was a terrible liar and then they would definitely know she wasn't telling the truth and keeping something from them. On the other hand, if she told the truth they would probably be angry at the girls and they may prank them and she didn't want that for them no matter what they tried to do to her. She hadn't known the boys long, but even she knew that to be on the receiving end on The Weasley Twins wrath wouldn't be a pleasant experience.

She decided that the best course of action was to tell the truth and she could hopefully control their reactions.

"I woke up at six as I've always been an early riser, thankfully as I got the bathroom to myself. I can sing as loudly and as badly out of tune as I want to and no one would hear me or tell me to shut up." Their mouths twitched into smiles and they chuckled.

"And I'm tired because I didn't get much sleep after what happened."

"Why, what happened?" George said with an anxious tone to his voice and they all sat up straight waiting for her to answer.

"I was woken up early this morning by some noises."

"What noises?" George ground out.

She didn't answer.

"Hermione, we told you on the train not to lie to us," said Fred.

She looked at each one of their faces and decided to just get it over with. "When I went to bed last night I did what you told me to with the curtains and touching my wand to the knot on the bedpost. And then I was woken up by noises. When I looked I could see the girls in my dorm trying to get through my curtains, but they couldn't get through. It's as if the curtains were acting like a barrier or shield of some kind, strange, right? You wouldn't happen to know anything about that would you?"

Hermione tried to stray them away from what she had just told them. But unfortunately, it didn't work, but the boys did look a little sheepish, but not at all apologetic; they would never be sorry for protecting her. Hermione chuckled at their reaction.

"Why were they trying to get to you?" asked Lee with barely contained rage. He knew exactly why but he wanted to know what Hermione's thought on the matter.

"I don't know, I reckon they were just playing a prank by trying to scare me. Anyway, they finally gave up and I fell back asleep until I woke this morning."

The boys had calmed down a little knowing that Hermione genuinely thought that the girls were just trying to scare her. They knew better. Witches could be vicious when they wanted to be, no matter their age. Especially when they no longer had parental supervision and we left to their own devices when not in classes.

"Well, breakfast starts at seven-thirty and it's now seven forty-five, shall we go down?" asked George and everyone nodded in agreement.

"I'll just put my book back in my dorm first," with this said Hermione ran back to her dorm to put her book back into her trunk.

When she got there she noticed that the bed where all empty and the bathroom door was closed. She walked up to her trunk and when she touched it, it glowed red.

"That's odd," Hermione mumbled, slotting her book away and making her way back downstairs.

When Hermione left the room the boys all stood and began to have a hushed conversation in case someone walked into the common room and they didn't want to be overheard.

"I knew it, I knew they'd try something!" Lee fumed.

"Maybe they just wanted to scare her," Fred offered. They all knew it was a load of bull, he'd just wanted to placate Lee, but that didn't work when he glared at him, looking at him as if he were the thickest person he'd ever met. Fred sighed.

"Thankfully she did what we asked her to do with her curtains," George spoke up.

"Why do they hate her so much?" Fred muttered.

"I know! I just don't get it!" Lee agreed.

"They were looking at her in disgust, as if they hated her," George said baffled and they frowned. "We'll have to keep an eye on her."

"After what her dorm mates pulled this morning they're probably going to try again, I think that's a good idea."

"She doesn't go anywhere alone," they finished together and that's when Hermione came back downstairs with a confused look on her face, the boys raised an eyebrow at her and she just shook her head.

They left the common room and made their way towards the great hall. When they stepped through the doors they noticed that it wasn't quite busy yet and made their way towards their table. Hermione sat down next to Lee with the twins sat opposite them. They began to eat breakfast and Hermione took note of what they liked to eat and drink for future reference. Lee had scrambled eggs, two sausages, three hash browns, one piece of white buttered toast, two slices of bacon and a mug of coffee with a little milk and one sugar. George had scrambled eggs, two sausages, one hash brown, two pieces of brown buttered toast, two slices of bacon and a mug of tea with a little milk and half a teaspoon of sugar. Fred had three sausages, two hash browns, one piece of white buttered toast, three slices of bacon, an apple and a glass of apple juice.

Hermione took her bowl and put some apple, banana, grapes, blueberries and strawberries into it and had a glass of orange juice. The conversation was light and cheerful and it continued this way until they were interrupted thirty minutes later by Professor McGonagall as she handed Hermione and the boys their new class schedules.

"Good morning, Miss. Granger, and how was your first night at Hogwarts?"

"Good morning, Professor, it was eventful," Hermione said with a laugh, McGonagall smiled at her, nodded at the gobsmacked Fred, George and Lee in greeting and then continued to hand out the class schedules to the rest of her Gryffindors.

Hermione turned to her boys who were staring with their mouths hanging open.

"You know if you don't close your mouths you could swallow a fly."

This had the reaction she hoped it would and the boys snapped their jaws shut.

"Hermione, what was that about?" asked Lee.

"What d'you mean?"

"Well, McGonagall just..." George was cut off by Hermione.

"Professor," she chimed.

"Professor McGonagall just smiled at you," he continued.

"Yeah and Professor McGonagall never smiles. Ever!" exclaimed Fred.

Hermione shrugged uselessly and turned her eyes to her timetable, focusing primarily on her classes for that day.

*Monday*

*7:30 – Breakfast*

*9:00 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, Gryffindors*

*10:30 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, Gryffindors & Ravenclaws*

*12:00 – Lunch*

*1:00 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All*

*3:00 – END of classes*

*5:00 - Dinner*

Hermione stood to leave so she could leave the great hall and make her way towards the Gryffindor common room so that she could get the required books and head off to class. As the boys had finished their breakfasts they stood with her and walked back to also get their books.

"Boys, what does it mean that when I touched my trunk this morning it glowed red?"

The boys shared a look and turned to Hermione.

"What shade of red?" Asked Lee.

"A bright, neon colour," she replied and the boys looked at each other with worried expressions.

"What? You asked me not to lie to you, so don't lie to me."

"Well you see, the thing is that, well, -" started Fred.

"- When you weren't looking, we put a Privacy Charm on your trunk -" said George.

"- To stop nosy buggers from opening it. -"

"- Only you can," George finished off the twin speak.

When they said this Hermione stopped and stared at the twins and Lee. They were worried that she would yell at them for disrespecting her privacy.

"Really?" They all nodded."You did that for me?" They nodded again. "Seriously?"

Hermione was speechless that her friends who she hadn't even known twenty-four hours, had done something so kind and sweet that they'd wanted to protect her privacy. For the second time in twenty-four hours, she felt tears prickle in her eyes and she had to blink them back to stop them from running down her face, instead, she threw herself at them and she tried to squeeze the oxygen out of their lungs.

The more questions she asked the more anxious they were becoming, so when she threw herself at Lee and into his arms and squeezed him tightly in a hug, they were all utterly stunned. Hermione disentangled herself from Lee and threw herself at George and then Fred and they were ready for her after witnessing what she'd done to Lee and they were more than glad to enjoy her attention. It sufficed to say that they were more than pleased with her reactions towards them.

"Thank you, that is the kindest and sweetest thing anyone has ever done for me," she said honestly and they all smiled proudly and continued walking."So, what does it mean that it was glowing red?" Hermione asked again.

"It means that from the time you woke up to when you were in the common room, someone tried to get into your trunk. -" spoke Lee.

"- What for though? -" said George.

"- We don't know," continued Fred.

They reached the common room and they went to their respective dorm rooms to collect the required books, before the boys walked Hermione to her first class, telling her all about her first professor.

"Professor Binns is the most boring professor in the entire world. -" started Fred.

"- That's muggle and wizarding, -" George promised.

"- He puts the bored in chalkboard. -" followed by Lee and she snorted at him.

"- Seriously, even the desks fall asleep in his class. -"

"- Considering you're tired after this morning's events, it'll be difficult for you to stay awake."

Hermione giggled at them.

"One of us will be here to take you to your next class," finished Lee.

"Boys, you don't have to do that, I'm sure I can find my own way."

They looked at her incredulously and then left her at the classroom door and went off to their own classes.

Hermione walked into the classroom and she looked around. There were ten single desks in rows of two and Hermione sat in the middle desk of the front row. She placed her satchel bag on the table, took out some parchment, a quill and an inkpot and placed them on the desk and then removed A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot and placed that on the desk also. She sat facing forward. The class began to file in a couple of minutes after she had and they took their seats. Professor Binns entered the classroom, passing through his office door and floating to a stop in front of the class.

The beginning of the class started with the professor giving an introduction to what the class is about and what the curriculum would be covering that year.

"This year you will be learning about the Gargoyle Strike of 1911, the Soap Blizzard of 1378, the Werewolf Code of Conduct, Emeric the Evil, Uric the Oddball, Gaspard Shingleton and Elfric the Eager," Professor Binns drawled in the same bored tone he began with at the beginning of the lesson.

They weren't kidding about his personality, she thought.

But Hermione couldn't let his lack of enthusiasm affect her; she was too excited to be in her first magic-based class. And the fact that her first class was all about the history of magic and the wizarding world had her practically jumping in her seat. Hermione spent the lesson taking copious amounts of notes on almost everything he said; you never know when something could come in handy.

When she finally looked up the lesson was almost over and she noticed that her boys were right as almost everyone was asleep; some had fallen asleep with their heads on the desk, some leaning back in their chairs and looking dangerously close to falling off to the side and others with their heads lulling while they struggled to stay awake.

Hermione huffed at their behaviour. Honestly, learning about the history of the wizarding world is important; it tells us about where we came from and what mistakes we made in the past so that we can prevent ourselves from making the same mistakes. Not to mention it's fascinating, she thought.

When the bell rang Hermione packed her things back into her satchel, whilst everyone else startled awake almost falling off their chairs. Well almost everyone apart from Ron who actually did fall off his chair. Everyone laughed at him including Hermione but she kept it contained to just a giggle, whereas everyone else was all but in hysterics. Ron caught sight of Hermione and sneered at her.

"What're you looking at?" he growled.

Hermione was taken aback with his behaviour towards her, she honestly couldn't understand it. What has she done?

They all left the room and true to their word, Fred was waiting outside of the classroom for her. They smiled at each other and Fred walked her to her next class which was charms who the Gryffindors had with the Ravenclaws. They chatted pleasantly about coming up with a prank for the first official day back at school.

"What's wrong, Spitfire? Did something happen in class?" Fred asked anxiously.

"I'll tell you later."

Fred nodded and they continued to talk, Fred telling Hermione that they'd all be waiting for her outside the classroom so they could go to lunch together. Hermione reminded him that she could walk by herself but Fred just brushed her off, walking away towards his class and throwing a bye over his shoulder.

Hermione entered the classroom, the desks seated two people and there were ten of them. She sat at the middle desk on the front row and she removed her parchment, a quill, an inkpot and The Standard Book of Spells, Grade One from her satchel and placed them on the desk. When Professor Flitwick entered the room through his office door, Hermione took in the sight of him.

He was no taller than four foot but bigger than three-foot-five, he was wearing black robes and he had an impressive moustache and brown hair. He looked like the bank teller from Gringotts but not completely as he still looked human.

Must be half-goblin, half-wizard, Hermione mused.

When he stepped onto a pile of books to improve his height so the students could see him and when he began speaking with his squeaky voice Hermione smiled. Once again the class was just an introduction to the course and what they would be learning over the year. But unlike history of magic, Professor Flitwick was giving demonstrations as to what they would be learning. Hermione couldn't keep the grin off of her face whilst she took her notes.

She supposed that the first lessons of each subject would just be introductions into the subjects to ease the students in. This year they would be covering: Levitation Charms, Wand-Lighting Charms, Lumos Solem, the Fire-Making Spell, Softening Charms, Severing Charms, Unlocking Charms, Locking Spells, Mending Charms and making a pineapple dance across a desk.

Before she knew it the bell was ringing for lunch. As she walked towards the exit someone barged past her knocking her into a table and caught her right hip on the corner of the table. When she looked up it was Ron with the same sneer he always had on his face when he looked at her.

What's his problem? Hermione asked herself.

She exited the classroom rubbing her right hip and she bumped into something again. She looked up with a glare on her face expecting to see Ron but it turned into a smile when she saw her boys who were watching the movements of her hand on her hip.

"What'd you do to your hip?" Asked George with a frown.

"I knocked it on a table," she told them half of the truth, not wanting them to know about Ron's behaviour.

They walked to the great hall, sitting the same way as they had at breakfast and they began picking the food they wanted then eating it and chatting.

"So, Hermione, are you gonna tell me what happened in history of magic?"

"Why?" George spoke.

"What happened?" Lee asked.

When they asked these questions Hermione was about to answer but she noticed Ron glaring at her viciously and she shrunk back into Lee who put his arm around her thinking she was cold.

She shook her head and answered, "Later."

They all nodded and the conversation resumed. They all walked her to her last class of the day and told her that they would pick her up. The boys only had a one hour lesson of potions whereas Hermione had double herbology so they would return to the common room after potions and then meet her when her class finished. Because the boys' lesson was in the dungeons and Hermione's in the greenhouses, they walked her to the entrance hall and left her to walk to the greenhouses alone. This class consisted of all the houses as the greenhouses had the space to accommodate all of the students.

Hermione was making her way towards the greenhouses when she was pushed. She went headfirst into the damp grass. She looked up and saw Lavender Brown -one of her dorm mates- stood with a couple of Ravenclaws looking down at her with a smug look. She walked past Hermione making sure to stand on her hand.

Hermione cried out in pain and when the girls were out of sight, she stood and smoothed her robes out, seeing she had some mud stains on her skirt and knees. She picked up her satchel and walked to her class, making it just in time. The greenhouse was bigger on the inside with hundreds of different species of plants surrounding the outside of the room as well as the front. There were two square workbenches that seated four and six L shaped workbenches that seated five. The only space left was a workbench at the back of the greenhouse. She made her way to it and took the last space available at the end of it.

"Great. Why do we have her sitting at our table?"

"There were no more seats available, Ron," Harry defended.

Hermione smiled at him and he gave her one back. She looked around the table and saw who else occupied the seats. Apart from Harry and Ron there was Seamus Finnegan and Dean Thomas and they gave her a smile which she returned. The only person who seemed to have a problem with her was Ron.

Hermione did what has quickly become a routine for her and took out parchment, a quill, an inkpot and her herbology book; One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore. Professor Sprout walked into the greenhouse wearing green robes, dragon hide gloves and a witch's pointed hat. She was average height and was plump with brown-greying hair tied in a loose bun under her hat. Professor Sprout began the introduction to the lesson and covered what they would be learning. She also introduced the students to some of the plants in the greenhouse and what they would be working with for the rest of the year.

The curriculum for the year included: the Fire-Making Spell and how plants can be used in conjunction with the spell, theory-based work on Venomous Tentacula, Spiky Bush, Bouncing Bulbs, Severing Charms and how plants can be used in conjunction with the charm, Puffapods, Moly, Asphodel, Dried Nettles, Dittany, Wormwood, Mandrake Root, Aconite, Lumos Solem and Devil's Snare. Hermione made more notes on everything the professor said to the class.

At the end of the lesson, Hermione packed her things away and stood to leave, she waved to the boys and made her way to the door. Before she could reach it she was once again pushed to the floor by Lavender Brown. Hermione got up and walked out of the greenhouse without even giving a second glance back to her.

Whilst walking back to the castle Hermione felt a warm liquid running down her leg. She looked down and saw blood running down her left leg from a cut on her knee and she sighed.

Brilliant, just brilliant, she thought with a sigh. The boys aren't going to like this. I'm just going to have to tell them only some of the truth and keep the rest from them. Just great, now I'm lying to them.

When she reached the entrance hall the boys were all stood waiting for her whilst they talked. Probably planning a prank for tonight, she mused. She approached them and smiled. Her face dropped when she saw the look of anger on their faces.

"What in the name of Merlin happened to you?" Lee spoke through gritted teeth.

"What the hell is that?" George said, pointing to her leg.

"Why're you covered in blood?" Fred spat whilst looking at her knee.

"Nothing happened to me, unless you count me being ridiculously clumsy today," Hermione said with a chuckle.

The look they gave her stopped her fake amusement. They couldn't tell she was lying, could they? Of course, they could, she was a terrible liar. She decided to tell the story not all of it mind you, just some of it.

"Well, when you left me at the entrance hall, I walked to the greenhouses and I tripped and fell, hence the mud."

"And the blood?" Asked George.

"Oh that, well, on my way out of the greenhouse I slipped on some water, I fell and scraped my knee on the floor."

When she was done with her explanation the boys calmed considerably. They made their way back to the common room, Hermione went to put her things in her room, she went to her trunk and it didn't glow so no one had tried to get into it again and she pulled out the antiseptic wipes and plasters she had packed just in case. She always had to be prepared.

She went down to the common room passing her dorm mates on the stairs and they roughly pushed her into the wall. She rubbed her arm, "That's probably going to leave a bruise," she muttered and continued to the common room.

She sat in between Fred and George on the couch and rested her foot on the table and pulled her knee-high sock down. She used the antiseptic wipes to clean the blood and mud away to prevent the spread of infection and she picked up a clear plaster, removing the packaging, she placed it over her wound on her knee.

"What?" she asked.

"What are these?" Lee asked, pointing to the wipes and plasters.

"These are antiseptic wipes which are used to clean wounds and they also help to prevent infection from setting in. They contain chemicals, enzymes and bacteria that help to rid the wound of any bacteria that can be harmful. And these are plasters and they're used to temporarily cover up a wound until they seal and heal."

She quickly ran back to her room and put away the items noticing that her trunk was once again glowing red. She sighed and ran back down to the common room. The boys wanted to give her a tour of the castle so she wouldn't get lost. They were even going to show her the secret passageways that would help her get to classes quicker so she wouldn't be late. They walked and talked planning out a prank that they wanted to play in the common room later that night.

Their intended target was, of course, their little brother Ron, Hermione had tried to persuade them to pick another target; she didn't want to give him any more reason to hate her, if that was at all possible. She was convinced otherwise when George spoke.

"Love, don't worry, Ron's used to us pranking him at home anyway," he shrugged.

It was almost time for dinner so they began walking towards the great hall, they hadn't finished the tour of the castle yet and so they would continue with it after dinner.

"Som Spitfire, what happened in history of magic today?" Fred asked for the third time that day.

Hermione laughed. "Well, you were right about Professor Binns; almost the whole class fell asleep, including Ron."

At this, her boys got an evil gleam in their eyes.

"What did you do to him? Please, tell me you did something to him," asked George hopefully.

"I didn't have to," she replied and she received puzzled looks in return. "I didn't have to do anything because when the school bell rang, he fell off his chair and face planted the floor."

They were all laughing when they entered the great hall but they didn't care, they continued to laugh as they made their way to the table. Unfortunately like the night before there were not enough seats for all of them and the Gryffindors wouldn't move for Hermione, so the boys pulled her and placed her in the same position as they had last night. Hermione on Fred's lap with her legs on George's lap and her feet on Lee's lap, and Hermione had tried to persuade them to allow her to sit somewhere else, but they wouldn't hear of it. They went through dinner laughing, planning and joking.

They left the hall forty-five minutes later after finishing dessert. They had about two hours before curfew so they continued with the tour of the castle and working out problems with the prank they hoped to pull.

The last place they stopped was the kitchens. Fred, George and Lee dragged her towards a painting of a bowl of fruit.

"Tickle the pear," Lee said with barely contained excitement.

Hermione gave them a confused look but did as he asked. When she tickled the pear it began to move and giggle which in turn made Hermione giggle and the boys smiled at the sound.

The painting suddenly opened and a passageway appeared so she followed it and the twins and Lee followed behind her. She gasped at the sight of about fifty little creatures running around the kitchens completing chores. The boys explained house elves to her and what their purpose was, that most weren't treated well but the ones at Hogwarts were cared for extremely well and that they were happy to be at Hogwarts, that usually only rich families had them and that they would happily do anything for the students and professors if asked.

When they finished their explanation, right on cue a house-elf ran forward after noticing their arrival.

"Goods evenings, Misters Fred, George and Lee. What's can I get for yous?"

The house-elf was small and he had some wrinkles on his face but he didn't seem to look old, he had fluffy pointed ears -which Hermione had to restrain herself from petting- and he was wearing a clean white pillowcase for clothing. Hermione decided that house-elves were adorable.

"Hey, Bopsy, this is Hermione, we were just showing her around the castle and thought we would bring her to meet you," George smiled at the house-elf.

Bopsy looked as if he was about to cry at the announcement when he bowed in front of Hermione.

"Its be a pleasure tos meet Misses Her – her –mm."

"It's a pleasure to meet you too. Bopsy, a lot of people have trouble with my name so won't you please call me, 'Mione or Mia?"

"Bopsy is honoured to call yous Misses 'Mione." Hermione smiled at the house-elf. "What can I gets for yous Misses Mione" asked Bopsy.

Hermione looked at her boys and they nodded in encouragement.

"Can we get some cookies for our journey back to the common room please?" Hermione asked reluctantly.

"Yes, yes, of course, Misses 'Mione I's happy tos serve," with that said, Bopsy turned and ran to get the cookies. At her startled look the boys chuckled. Bopsy returned with four cookies and they thanked him and said goodnight.

Once they arrived back at the common room they went to set their prank in motion. Hermione and Lee hid in a darkened area in the common room. The twins were luring Ron to where they were hiding. It seems that the twins had succeeded and Ron followed them to the corner.

"What d'you want, I was busy?" Ron grumbled out none too kindly.

The twins answered him, Fred followed by George.

"Well, Ickle Ronnikins, we just wanted to talk to you, -"

"Because we are loving big brothers. We just wanted to know, -"

"How your first day went," the twins finished together.

Hermione and Lee sniggered from where they were hidden as just before he answered them and when he least expected it, Hermione and Lee jumped out, screaming. Ron startled and stumbled backwards, tripping over the table that had been moved for that purpose and he fell backwards into a puddle of water that the twins had subtly created when they were talking to him. The whole common room burst into bellowed laughter, leaving Ron extremely embarrassed and soaking from head to toe.

He glared at the twins and Lee but sneered at Hermione and she practically hid behind Lee. He stomped out of the common room and up the stairs leaving a trail of water in his wake. They banished the puddle of water and took seats on the couches.

"Gotta love your muggle heritage, Spitfire," spoke Fred with a laugh.

They continued to chat until Hermione yawned, which in turn set the boys off and they all decided to settle in for the night.

"Spitfire, if you wake up in the morning and we're not in the common room, find a way to wake us up, yeah? Given your big brain, I'm sure you could do it," said Fred.

"Are you sure?" Her brow furrowed. "What if I wake early?"

"We're sure, Love," assured George. Fred and Lee nodded in agreement.

"Do you promise you'll wake us?" Lee asked.

"Yes, I promise. Night, boys."

They all went to their dorm rooms to sleep, it had been an exhausting day and tomorrow was surely going to be the same.

Hermione entered her room and went to her trunk and got out her toothbrush and pyjamas. Once again she found it glowing red. Seriously? Three times in two days? Hermione thought with a sigh. She went to the bathroom to brush her teeth and change into her pyjamas before crawling into bed and once more drawing the curtains closed and touching her wand to the knot. She decided that she was going to do this every night, who knew what would happen with the way her dorm mates had been acting?

Chapter Nine

Hogwarts - Tuesday 3rd September 1991

She was woken at early in the morning by the girls she shared a dorm with, trying to get through her curtains, but they eventually gave up when her watch read three in the morning and she fell back asleep until she was awoken by the girls again not long after five in the morning, trying to get into her trunk. They gave up twenty minutes later and Hermione waited for them to fall back to sleep.

Once their breathing had evened out, Hermione got out of bed, collected her wash kit and a clean uniform and she went to do her daily routine of brushing her teeth and showering in the bathroom. As she had received her class schedule the day before she knew which books were required for the day, so she packed her satchel with what she needed for the day.

She left for the common room to find it empty. She didn't know what to do. She promised the boys she would wake them up but she wanted them to sleep. Deciding that the boys would be less than happy that she broke her promise to them she made her way up the boys' staircase and towards the third year boys' dorm room. And after climbing the stairs and stopping at the correct door she knocked. She could hear snoring coming from behind the door so she knocked again. No answer. She opened the door cautiously.

She walked in and shut the door quietly behind her, seeing the room to be bigger than her own dorm. There was the biggest cauldron she had ever seen in one corner of the room, with three desks that could seat two people joined together but they could be pulled apart if needs be and a couple of feet away from the desks were two wardrobes. On the other side of the room were three double poster beds with red thick curtains; red and gold bedding with the Gryffindor crest on the centre and each bed had a bedside table.

On the side of the bed closest to the bathroom door, there was a set of chest drawers and on the wall in-between the door and cauldron, there was another set of chest drawers. When she looked to her left from where she stood by the bedroom door, there was a fireplace built into the wall and on the back of the door, there was a mirror.

Hermione looked over to the beds with the curtains drawn open and she saw three sleeping boys, two sprawled on their stomachs and George was half hanging off the edge of his bed, his head almost touching the floor. Lee was on the left being closest to the bathroom, Fred was in the middle and George was on the right closest to the door. She chuckled and walked over to Fred, she shook his shoulder gently until he groggily opened his eyes. She looked at him and smiled.

"What time is it?" He asked sleepily.

"Around six-thirty," she responded.

"Why're you up so early?"

"I didn't get much sleep," she shrugged.

At her words, he shot up, almost falling out of bed in the process. He looked over to see his twin half hanging off the bed and then looked to his left and saw Lee snuggled into his blanket.

"Why? What happened?" he asked anxiously.

"You made me promise to wake you up if you weren't in the common room when I came down and I always keep my promises."

Fred looked at her; he would get her to tell him at breakfast, but first...

"How did you get in here?" He asked, looking at her strangely, knowing the wards on the staircase prevented girls from walking up them, and the same with boys on the girls' staircase.

"What do you mean?" She frowned. "I walked up the stairs until I found your room, why? Should I not have done that?"

"You didn't find a spell or cast a charm before coming here?" He pressed.

"No, why would I need to do that?" Her head tipped, bemused with his line of questioning.

Very strange, Fred thought. "No reason," he said innocently, making a note to tell both Lee and George later.

"Alright then, I'll wake the other two up and you can get ready."

He nodded and headed to the bathroom whilst she walked over to George and pushed his hair out of his eyes and he smiled, his eyes opening slowly.

"What time is it?" He mumbled.

"Time for you to get up and get ready. Go on, move it."

"Alright, I'm going. Bossy Witch," George mumbled, before climbing out of bed and trudging to the bathroom.

"Okay, two down, one to go," she said to the almost empty room.

She walked over to Lee and called his name.

"Lee, it's time to get up now," she said with a smile.

He opened one eye and looked at her. "You better have a good excuse for waking me up," he grumbled.

"You made me promise to wake you up if you weren't in the common room when I came down," she reminded.

"Yes, but why are you up so early?" Lee asked.

"I didn't get much sleep."

Lee replicated Fred's reaction. "What? Why didn't you get much sleep?"

Hermione shook her head as she sent Lee off to the bathroom and she then proceeded to make their beds, get the boys clean uniforms to wear and placed them on their beds. Then she found their bags and placed the required textbooks and stationery needed into them. She had learned their schedule the night before -and they had learnt hers- so she was able to do this for them.

When the boys all came out of the bathroom, she made to leave and wait for them in the common room whilst they readied for the day but Fred just pushed her onto his bed and drew the curtains so she couldn't see anything. The curtains were opened when the boys were half-dressed and Hermione smoothed the wrinkles out of Fred's bed. She tied their ties and sorted out the twins' hair and when they were ready to leave, she handed the boys their bags and they gave her a wide grin.

It still wasn't time for breakfast but the boys wanted to show her something so they dragged her out of the common room and through the portal. Fred and George each had one of her hands in theirs and Lee had his hands on her shoulders as they guided her through the halls.

"Where are we going?" She finally asked.

"We want to show you something?" Replied Lee.

"And what, pray tell, do you want to show me?"

"Well, it's more of a someone than a something," Fred put into the conversation.

"And who is it you want to show me?"

"We want you to meet a fellow prankster here at Hogwarts," George answered.

They had finally found what they were looking for on the second floor.

"PEEVES!" Bellowed Fred, George and Lee simultaneous.

Just when Hermione thought they'd lost their minds, a ghost flew around the corner and stopped in front of them. Peeves began squealing in delight.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here? Planning mischief are we? Tut, tut, tut," Peeves spoke, wagging his finger at them and then he burst into laughter.

Hermione had noticed that the boys looked amused since the arrival of Peeves. When Peeves noticed Hermione he turned opaque.

'Odd,' Hermione thought. 'It's almost as if he's... blushing?'

Hermione smiled kindly at the ghost. "Hi Peeves, I'm Hermione."

"Peeves, we want you to meet the newest member of the Hogwarts pranksters. She's wicked! She's already helped us pull two pranks since arriving and thanks to her, we're ahead of schedule," Lee beamed and Peeves looked impressed.

"And when she was in her muggle school, -" Fred spoke.

"- She pulled pranks all the time, -" stated George.

"- And she never got caught, Peeves," the twins finished together.

Peeves looked as though he was in love with Hermione after hearing that. His eyes turned all puppy dog-like and his smile grew wider.

"Well, Peeves, we better get to breakfast before Ron eats all the bacon and the boys try to kill him," Hermione said with a smile and the boys chuckled at her statement. "It was an honour to meet you Peeves and I'll see you later." When she said this his smile grew even wider, if it were possible.

They made it to breakfast in time to get some bacon as Ron had not yet arrived. They sat and there wasn't enough space for all of them, Hermione was placed on Fred's lap with her legs on George's lap and her feet on Lee's, and once again, her attempts of persuading them to allow her to sit elsewhere when unheard.

This was beginning to become a routine now so they thought nothing of it until Hermione got the glares and sneers she had been expecting from the girls of Gryffindor. The boys were livid and Hermione pretended not to notice the looks she was receiving, but to be honest, one had to be an idiot to not notice that for some reason, the entire female population of Hogwarts with the exception of the professors seemed to hate her.

She gathered the plates and made the boys their breakfasts with them watching her in awe. If they weren't already smiling they would've been now. She made a plate of their breakfasts how she observed them doing it yesterday morning, and the boys filled a bowl with apple, banana, grapes, blueberries and strawberries and filled a glass of orange juice for her and she beamed at them.

They finished eating and left the hall so they could have a slow walk towards Hermione's first class. Hermione's class schedule for today was:

*Tuesday*

*7:30 – Breakfast*

*9:00 – Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Quirrell, Gryffindors*

*10:30 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, Gryffindors*

*12:00 – Lunch*

*1:00 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, Gryffindors*

*3:00 – Potions, Professor Snape, Gryffindors & Slytherins*

*4:00 – END of classes*

*5:00 – Dinner*

"Boys, can I ask you something?" she asked.

"Yeah," Fred said.

"Of course," George spoke.

"Always," Lee finished and they all smiled at her and she returned the gesture.

"Well, you know the Privacy Charm you put on my trunk?" She waited for them to nod and carried on. "How long does it last? And can it be broken?"

"It's not a permanent charm but it should last a couple of weeks. But the length of time that the charm lasts for can be weakened if someone continues to try and break through it, it'll eventually be broken and it'll have to be replaced," explained Lee.

"Why?" George asked.

Her brow furrowed as she said, "Yesterday I noticed the Privacy Charm on my trunk had been set off twice and it was set off once this morning. I just wanted to know how effective it was."

The boys all shared an anxious look at hearing this news from her.

"Is this why you were up early this morning?" Lee asked.

"Yes, the girls were trying to get passed the curtains on my bed again, they later tried to get into my trunk and when they went back to sleep, that's when I finally got up."

The boys were furious, she could tell by the teeth gritting and fist clenching.

"Love, d'you want to put your trunk in our room?" asked George.

"Are you sure? You don't mind having my stuff in there?"

"It's okay, we don't mind in the least," assured Lee, "They'll get bored eventually."

"Yeah, and it's not as if we don't have the space," added Fred.

They left her at her defence against the dark arts class and she entered the room, the layout to the room was similar to that of history of magic, with ten desks in rows of two. Hermione took a seat in the front row and removed her things and she took out her book, The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection by Quentin Trimble, and she waited for the other students and the professor to enter the room. When the students had filed in and taken their seats Professor Quirrell entered from his office and stood at the front of the class. He gave an introduction of the subject to the class as well as what they would be learning for that year.

Professor Quirrell was a strange man; he wore purple robes and something on his head which resembled a turban, but somehow she doubted he was a religious man. Did they even have religion in the Wizarding World?

He was average height and he had a stutter. He seemed nervous and he didn't stay in one place for too long, constantly moving around the classroom. The course for the year was separated into sections; dark creatures and spells. The dark creatures that were on the first year curriculum included: Curing Werewolf bites, Gnomes, Doxies, Snails, Imps, Bowtruckles, Ghosts, Gargoyles, Hags, Fire Crabs and Gytrashes. The spells that they would be learning that year included: Curse of the Bogies, Knockback Jinx, Vermillious, Verdimilllious, Wand-Lighting Charm, Smokescreen Spell, Green Sparks, Red Sparks and Periculum.

Hermione took her notes and the class was dismissed. She avoided Ron, especially after last night's prank as he didn't look too happy about it. Lee was waiting for her and walked with her to her next class of history of magic.

Her history of magic class was the same as her previous one, with the students falling asleep in rather awkward positions that possible couldn't be comfortable and Hermione listening with rapt attention and taking her notes like her life depended on it.

She left the classroom and her boys were waiting for her and they walked to the great hall for lunch, Hermione taking a seat beside Lee and opposite the twins.

"Hey, when do you want us to move your trunk into our room?" Lee asked.

"It's up to you boys, it's your room," she shrugged.

"Then we'll do it after dinner tonight," spoke George and the others nodded in agreement.

Hermione was escorted to her next class of transfiguration and she waved bye to the boys before entering the classroom. This classroom had twenty single desks in rows of five, Hermione took what was quickly becoming her regular seat in all of her lessons and removed her belongings from her bag and placed them on her desk along with her book, A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch.

Professor McGonagall entered the room wearing her black robes, witch's hat and her hair in a tight bun.

"Good afternoon, Miss. Granger."

"Good afternoon, Professor," she echoed.

"How are you finding your classes?"

"Fascinating, Professor. Honestly, I don't know how I'm going to have time to read all the books in the library but I can't wait to be finally learning magic," Hermione beamed.

Professor McGonagall chuckled at her enthusiasm.

The class began to file in and they took their seats and Professor McGonagall gave the introductions to the course. This year they would be focusing on: the transfiguration alphabet, turning a desk into a pig (theory), turning a match into a needle, turning mice into snuffboxes, turning small creatures in matchboxes, the switching spell and the Avifors spell. Hermione had her parchment filled with notes and when the class was excused she placed her things into her satchel and made her way to George who walked her to her potions class.

"Love, don't you worry about Snape not liking you."

"Why?"

"Snape doesn't like anyone, especially us Gryffindor folk. And don't worry about his insults either, depending on who they're aimed at, they can be funny and watch out for the look."

"What look?"

"Don't worry; you'll know it when you see it. We'll meet you at the common room; our lessons don't finish until four-thirty today."

"I'll see you later," she nodded

"See ya, Love," George kissed her forehead and left. When she turned around and entered the potions classroom, she saw the girls in the room both Gryffindor and Slytherin glaring at her.

The workbenches were set out into rows of three and there were six workbenches in total which were separated by aisles that allowed for easy movement around the room. Each workbench seated four people. She walked over to the workbench at the front right side of the room and sat down removing her belongings and her book, Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger. Unfortunately for Hermione, Lavender Brown and the rest of her dorm mates took seats beside her.

When Professor Snape walked into the room his black robes billowed behind him. It was rather impressive and it reminded her of a bat. The entire class jumped when he slammed the door shut. He had very pale with greasy hair that fell between his chin and his shoulders and he had hooked nose.

He began the introduction and Hermione began to take notes copiously. Professor Snape was talking about brewing glory, bottling fame and putting a stopper in death but Hermione was too busy with her focus on the parchment writing that she didn't notice the looks she was receiving from the girls and particularly Ron. But Professor Snape did.

Interesting, he thought to himself.

The course matter for the year included: Aconite, Bezoars, some basic details on the preparation of the Draught of the Living Death (such as what would be created if powdered root of asphodel was added to an Infusion of Wormwood, and the difference between Monkshood and Wolfbane), Types of Cauldrons, Types of Vials, Cure for Boils, Forgetfulness Potion, Antidote to Common Potions, Herbicide Potion, Wideye Potion, Wiggenwood Potion, Collecting the ingredients for Wiggenwood Potion, The twelve uses of dragon blood, Potion Ingredients such as Moly, Dittany, Flobberworm Mucus, Wiggentree bark, Asphodel, Puffapod spores and Moondew.

With the lesson only being an hour long they only managed to get the introduction to the lesson completed but she did get her first piece of homework that was due for their next potion lesson on Friday. She had to write an eight-inch essay about a potion of her choice that included: why they would want to brew it, what are the uses for it, the ingredients needed and the properties of the potion and a step by step guide on how it should be correctly brewed. Hermione was ecstatic and she had already begun planning it out in her head. Hermione had indeed seen the look that George was talking about earlier. If was a cross between a glare and looking at someone as though they were an idiot, Ron had received it on more than one occasion in the last hour.

She packed her belongings away and left the classroom and made her way through the dungeons to the Gryffindor common room. If she hurried she could put her stuff back in her trunk before the boys move it to their room. Before she managed to exit the dungeons she was pushed roughly into the brick wall, where she caught her palms and scratched them and then proceeded to fall to the floor, cutting her right elbow as she landed on it. She looked up and saw Lavender Brown and the other girls from her dorm standing over her and looking down at her menacingly. The scratches on her right elbow and her palms were bleeding and stinging.

"What was that for, Lavender?" Hermione asked, as she got up from the ground and brushed her robes down, getting blood on them.

"You're an ugly whore with bushy hair and buck teeth," she responded cruelly and the other girls laughed.

Hermione was confused; she honestly didn't understand why they hated her so much, she hadn't done anything to upset them. Sighing, picked up her school bag and turned to leave when she hit into something and fell back onto the ground, landing on her bum.

It wasn't something, but someone. It was Ron and he was glaring down at her.

"What was that for?" Hermione said with irritation in her voice.

"That was for last night," Ron said with a dark tone to his voice.

"The prank?" She frowned. "But Fred, George and Lee were also a part of it. I tried to talk them out of it but they said you'd be fine with it as you're used to them pranking you."

"Yeah, but they're my brothers, you're a freak," Ron spat out.

Hermione grabbed her bag, got up from the floor and ran all the way back to the common room and to her room. She threw everything in her trunk, took off her cloak and put it on her bed and took out the antiseptic wipes and plasters, before going into the bathroom and sorting her injuries out before the boys could see them. When she returned from the bathroom she went down to the common room and saw her boys waiting for her.

"Hey, Love, are you ready?" George asked her.

"Yes, what do I do?"

"Go to your room and shout for Bopsy and he'll know what to do next. Meet us in our room," replied Fred, sending a look to Lee and George that she didn't understand.

"Okay," she replied and she made her way to her room and called for Bopsy. "Bopsy."

She was sceptical about why they wanted her to call for Bopsy and how he would hear her but as soon as she had finished speaking, the little house-elf appeared in front of her and she startled.

"What can Bopsy dos for yous, Misses 'Mione."

Hermione smiled at him. "Hello, Bopsy, I was wondering if you could help me move my trunk, please."

"Yes, yes, of course, Misses 'Mione. Wheres would yous like it?" The house-elf exclaimed excitedly.

"Can you take it to Fred's, George's and Lee's dorm room, please?"

Bopsy snapped his fingers and her trunk disappeared. Hermione blinked at the empty space and then gave the house-elf a big smile once she shook herself out of the shock.

"Is there bes anythings else Bopsy can help yous with Misses 'Mione?" Bopsy asked.

"No, I'm alright. Thank you, Bopsy, I couldn't have done it without your help. You're a brilliant friend."

Hermione bent down and gave the little house-elf a hug and when she pulled back she noticed that Bopsy was crying but before Hermione could question him he disappeared.

Hermione walked out of her room, through the common room and up to the boys' room. She knocked on the door and George opened the door and let her in closing the door behind her, with Fred mouthing the words, "I told you so," to both him and Lee, as they looked at Hermione surprised.

How had she gotten past the wards?

"Hey, Georgie."

"Hey, Love," he greeted.

"Hi, Lee, Freddie."

Fred arched an eyebrow. "Freddie? Really?"

"Yes, it makes you sound cute and cuddly, like a teddy bear," Hermione said with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Hey! I am cute and cuddly!" He pouted. Hermione watched in incredulously and Lee and George sniggered at them.

"Anyway, did my trunk get here?" Hermione asked and the boys nodded, gesturing to an empty corner of the room in which her trunk now resided in. "You could have told me what would happen when I called Bopsy's name, you know? I almost had a heart attack."

The boys laughed at her. "We thought we'd let you figure it out for yourself," Lee said through chuckles.

"Well, thank you, boys; I'll just have to show you my appreciation for that then, won't I?" Hermione said with a sweet smile.

The boys' laughter stopped as they looked at her and shared a nervous laugh, gulping so loud, Hermione could hear it from the other side of the room. Her mouth twitched into a smirk.

"Anyway, speaking of Bopsy, why did he start crying when I hugged him? I didn't hurt his feelings, did I? Please tell me I didn't physically hurt him? Oh Merlin, I'm a bad person," Hermione muttered, feeling the panic rising.

"Whoa, calm down, -" spoke Fred.

"- We promise that you didn't hurt him in any way, Love. -" George followed.

"- In fact you made him really happy, that's why he was crying. -"

"- Yeah, house-elves don't tend to get a lot of affection; they're treated rather badly by most wizarding folk. The fact that you treated him with kindness and willingly hugged him made the little guy incredibly happy, -" said George.

"- Bopsy will probably do anything for you now, without you even having to ask."

"So, no, you're not a bad person," Lee said and Hermione nodded slowly.

"Right. Okay. Got it, I'm not a bad person," she mumbled to herself.

"Hermione? What happened to your hands?" Asked George with narrowed eyes.

"And why is there dried blood on your robes?" Fred asked with a frown.

Hermione stiffened and mentally cursed, she was going to have to lie; she didn't want to tell them what had happened with their brother and the girls in the dungeons for fear of their reactions.

"When I was walking out of the dungeons I tripped on one of the stone bricks in the floor and sent myself flying into the wall, scraping my palms and then I fell onto the floor cutting my right elbow in the process. I must've wiped my hands on my robes. I cleaned them and put the plasters on," she said with a shrug, the boys looked like they didn't believe a word she was saying but they let it go for now.

"Hey, Georgie, I saw the look," Hermione changed the subject.

"You did? It's funny right?"

"Yes, I had to stop myself from laughing, especially since Ron was on the receiving end of it on more than one occasion," she replied.

"Which look did he get?" asked Lee.

"There's more than one?" Hermione asked with a raised eyebrow.

"There's a few," Fred nodded. "Which one was it that Ronniekins received?"

"I would say it was a mixture of a glare, looking at someone as though they are an idiot, and with a hint of longing to kill him." They laughed at the visual Hermione had described. "Oh, I forgot to put my cloak in my trunk, it's in my room, I'll just go and get it. I'll be right back."

"Alright, don't bother knocking, just come in," Fred said, once again sharing a look with George and Lee and Hermione nodded in response.

Hermione left the boys' room and went back to her own to retrieve her cloak.

"Oh, look at this, the Muggleborn swot's returned from whoring it around," sneered Lavender upon her appearance in her dorm room.

Hermione ignored her, grabbed her cloak and walked out of the room closing the door behind her. Walking towards the boys' room Hermione noticed that her cloak didn't feel right. She stopped and held it out in front of her, getting a better view.

She gasped and felt tears pricking in her eyes. The cloaked looked as though it had gone ten rounds with a lion; it was all ripped and clawed to pieces and Hermione didn't want the boys to see it. She did the only thing she could think of doing.

"Bopsy," she called and the house-elf appeared.

"What can Bopsy bes helping Misses 'Mione with?"

"Bopsy, can you repair clothing?" Hermione asked desperately and Bopsy nodded enthusiastically. "Can you please repair my cloak for me?" Hermione asked, holding out the item of clothing for Bopsy to examine. Bopsy's face fell and all his excitement vanished.

"Bopsy is sorry, Misses 'Mione, but Bopsy is nots able to fix this. Its bes too badly cuts up."

Hermione nodded in understanding and reassured Bopsy that she wasn't mad at him and hugged the house-elf before he went back to his chores.

Hermione took a deep breath, how am I going to explain this one? Hermione thought to herself. Then she opened the door, walked into the room and closed the door behind her. She quickly made her way to her trunk to try and hide the damaged item of clothing but she was stopped by Lee.

"What's wrong?" He asked, after they noticed her crestfallen face.

Hermione put on a fake smile. "Nothing, I'm fine."

"See, we don't believe that," said George.

"What're you hiding behind your back?" asked Fred.

"Nothing."

When she received a look of disbelief she dashed for her trunk, but the Fred caught her before she could make it.

Damn those Quidditch reflexes, Hermione thought.

George grabbed the article of clothing from her and held it up for the others to see.

"What's this, Love?" George asked, a perplexed frown on his face as his eyes swept over the fabric held in his hands.

So much for not telling them, she grumbled to herself. She took a deep breath before she answered.

"My cloak," she answered.

"What happened to it?" Lee asked with a look of anger beginning to creep into his eyes.

"I'm pretty sure that it was an accident, I think one of my dorm mates has a cat and it must've gotten on my bed, and well, clawed it a little," Hermione said, gesturing towards the former cloak.

"Clawed it a little? Clawed it a little? Spitfire, it looks as though it's gone through a shredder," Fred exclaimed.

Hermione shrugged. "It doesn't really matter what happened since I wasn't there, I just found it in that state. I'll order a new one as soon as I can. Now, what are you guys doing?"

"We're working on something for a prank," spoke George, getting the feeling that Hermione didn't want to talk about the cloak anymore and he sent his twin and friend a glance of warning to back off.

"Okay, well I'm going to go to the library and get some studying done; I've got an essay to write," she stated.

"Who gave you an essay on your second day?" Asked Lee with a raised eyebrow.

"Professor Snape," she responded.

"Of course, he did," they said in sync whilst rolling their eyes, completely unsurprised.

Hermione grabbed her bag, made sure she had her parchment, quills and inkpots before she headed for the library. Upon arrival, Hermione made her way towards the back of the library and found herself a quiet little nook with a small table and she placed her bag on the table before heading to find the relevant potions book she needed and she returned to her table to start her essay. Forty minutes later she had completed her essay which she based on a Wit-Sharpening Potion. She thought that Professor Snape would approve of her choice and explanation.

She put her things away and went to find a book on enhanced spells and charms. She needed something to get the boys back for what happened with Bopsy. She returned to her seat and began reading. Whilst reading she found a section on Glamour Charms, which she thought might come in useful, especially with all of these "accidents" that had been happening lately. Hermione checked out the book with Madam Pince and headed back to the common room before curfew.

She went upstairs to the boys' room and stepped in, seeing they were all stood over a cauldron and the twins' hair was sticking up at odd angles. She couldn't help it, she burst into laughter. They turned around and looked at her with confused expressions, so Hermione moved away from the door so the twins could see themselves in the mirror that sat on the back of it. They shared startled looks before they laughed at their appearances.

She sat on Fred's bed leaning her back against the headboard and resting the enhanced book of spells and charms on her propped up knees. They chatted casually whilst they worked at the cauldron and Hermione read her book.

It was beginning to get late and Hermione decided to go to bed so she said goodnight to her boys, they kissed her on her cheek and she left to her own dorm room. She put the pyjamas she had on the night before on before heading to the bathroom to brush her teeth. She climbed into bed shutting the curtains and touching her wand to the knot in the bedpost before continuing from where she left off in the book. She spent most of the night practising Glamour Charms and the spell she wanted to use for pranking the boys. She even ignored the sounds of her roommates trying to terrorize her for the third night in a row.

She finally went to sleep when she had perfected the charms and spells. She was rather excited that she'd managed to perfect a few spells and charms that she wasn't supposed to learn until possibly fourth and sixth year.

Chapter Ten

Hogwarts - Wednesday 4th September 1991

Hermione woke at six in the morning which seemed to be her routine now. She got a shower and washed her hair and dressed before she headed to the boys' room. When she entered, she closed the door behind her, smiling at the boys sleeping forms before putting on her game face.

She walked into the middle of the room, taking a deep breath she lifted up her wand and spoke the incantation.

"Aquamenti," she whispered, with her wand pointed at Lee first, then she moved it to Fred and then George then back the other way and she continued this pattern for about thirty seconds, laughing the entire time. Well she had to make sure they got out of bed, didn't she? She collapsed on the floor holding her sides when she ended the spell.

"AHH!"

"WHAT THE HELL?!"

"SHITE!"

Were the replies she received from the now fully awake thirteen-year-old boys.

They were all soaked from head to toe. They all looked at each other and then the laughing girl on the floor of their bedroom. They all shared a nod, leapt out of bed and jumped on top of her squashing her beneath them but she managed to get free a few minutes later and they were all laughing.

"What was that for, Love?" George asked as he shook his head, resulting in water flying everywhere.

"I did tell you I would show you boys my appreciation for the Bopsy incident."

"Yeah, but how is this," Lee indicated between himself and the twins. "You showing us your appreciation?"

"Well, now you don't have to shower," she replied lightly.

The boys looked at her and shook their heads. She truly is something else! They thought.

Eventually, they got up off the floor, the boys headed to the bathroom and Hermione got their things ready and cleaned their room. They weren't messy by any means, they just had a few things out of place so she righted them. She sat on Fred's bed with the curtains closed and when they were half-dressed, she climbed off the bed and helped them with their ties and sorted out the twins' hair for them.

They headed down to breakfast after collecting their already packed bags off Hermione. They all had a routine and they had only met Hermione four days ago but it was like they have known each other for years. They fit together in their little group perfectly; they complemented each other.

Breakfast went fast and then it was time for lessons. Her schedule for Wednesday was:

*Wednesday*

*7:30 – Breakfast*

*9:00 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All*

*10:30 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, Gryffindors & Ravenclaws*

*12:00 – Lunch*

*1:00 – Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Quirrell, Gryffindors*

*3:00 – END of classes*

*5:00 – Dinner*

*Midnight – 01:00 – Astronomy, Professor Sinistra, Gryffindors*

They walked her to her first class; herbology which turned out to be rather uneventful except for the note-taking, the death glares she received and learning about Devil's Snare.

George escorted her to her next lesson, kissing her on the cheek and taking his leave; charms which was similar to herbology except they learned how to do a Severing Charm. Hermione was the first in the class to perfect it which she did in only five minutes.

The boys walked with her to lunch where they sat and ate in their own comfortable bubble ignoring anyone who tried to talk or flirt with them and only focusing on each other, which Hermione found hilarious. They walked her to her defence against the dark arts class where she learned about ghosts.

The boys still had lessons for another hour so she made her way to the common room but on her way, she was once again stopped by Lavender. Hermione was pushed to the ground, Lavender leaned over Hermione and kicked her in the stomach and then left and Hermione rushed to the nearest bathroom where she splashed cold water on her face and looked at her stomach in the mirror.

She could already see a bruise beginning to form and it was going to be painful, and she was sure she'd been winded as it hurt for her to breathe. She removed her wand from her robes and began muttering the incantation for the Glamour Charm which instantly covered up the injury. Now she just had to make sure she wasn't too obvious about the pain. She could do that. Couldn't she?

Hermione rushed back to her dorm, grabbed her book off of the nightstand and went to wait in the boys' room. Lying down on her back with the book open resting against her propped up legs it wasn't too painful for her stomach.

The boys walked in to find Hermione reading and they said hello and then went to work at their cauldron. They continued in the way they had the night before, with her reading and talking to the boys as they worked.

They walked down to the great hall for dinner and sat in the familiar positions (despite her grumbles that she would sit somewhere else, but they ignored her words) as she put food on their plates and they filled the goblets with the desired drink, namely pumpkin juice. Whilst the boys were still eating dessert Hermione had fallen asleep with her head buried in Fred's neck, with one of his was arms wrapped around her shoulders. The boys quickly noticed that she appeared to be cold so George removed his cloak and put it around her. They really had to do something about her cloak being destroyed; she would freeze without one. Hermione sighed happily in her sleep and the boys all smiled softly.

That's when the trouble started.

Angelina didn't like the way the boys were looking at Hermione or the way she was curled up in their laps like the night of the welcoming feast. So she decided to do something about it. Angelina got up from her seat and sat in the now empty seat next to Fred. She tried to convince him to wake Hermione up and get her off his lap but he blatantly refused as did George and Lee. She huffed in annoyance.

Angelina used one hand to grab Hermione by the shoulder and the other to grab the arm that Hermione had around Fred's waist. She yanked hard and because Fred, George and Lee weren't expecting it, Hermione was pulled roughly off their laps, she hit the bench seat and landed on the floor, banging her head.

Before anyone knew what was happening Fred, George and Lee were stood up on their feet and walking towards Angelina who was backing up as they advanced on her. The only thing that stopped them was the groan of pain that Hermione made. She sat up slowly and the boys rushed to her side. She had probably just saved Angelina's life at that moment.

They helped her stand up, she pulled George's cloak tightly around her and she smiled gently at her boys letting them know that she was fine. They let out the breath they didn't even know they were holding. Hermione looked at Angelina and she just shook her head at her before making her way out of the great hall and back to the common room. The boys looked at Angelina and glared at her and she paled slightly, but when they left the great hall a smirk appeared.

Everyone in the hall thought that she must have a death wish and luckily for Angelina, the professors hadn't noticed or witnessed the incident. Well except for one. Professor Snape.

He had been watching the dynamic between the Weasley Twins, Lee Jordan and Hermione Granger unfold since the sorting hat ceremony. He was intrigued by them and the bond of friendship they had built; it seemed to be unbreakable after only four days of knowing each other. He wanted to keep an eye on them especially, Hermione. He had noticed her holding her stomach when she stood from the floor but no one else had. He knew that whatever was wrong hadn't occurred with the incident that just happened as she had hit her head and not her stomach.

Hermione walked into the boys' room and curled up in a ball on Fred's bed, wrapping George's cloak around her tighter and she didn't care that it hurt her stomach. When the boys walked through their door they weren't surprised to see Hermione there. They knew she felt more comfortable with them in their room than she did in her own. But they couldn't blame her, after all, her dorm mates were hags. Fred and George laid down on either side of her on the bed effectively wedging her in the middle of them and Lee sat with his legs crossed at her feet. They stayed that way in comfortable, companionable silence for twenty minutes until Hermione finally spoke.

"Are you boys okay?"

"Us? Are you okay? You're the one that got bitchhandled and practically thrown to the ground," Fred spoke first.

"You mean manhandled?" She checked.

"Nope, said it right the first time," he replied and she gave a slight giggle.

Fred and George loved to hear her laugh. They had noticed that whenever she wasn't around them the feeling of being complete, content and relaxed disappeared with her. So did the feeling of their skin being on fire, of their magic humming and their bodies tingling. But when she was around they always reappeared and stayed there until she'd left their presence. It didn't take a genius to know that she was special. That she was different.

She would always be special to them, but they didn't want to think about that until they were older. Who knew what the future would bring? They wanted to enjoy the time that they had with her now. Thanks to the feelings they could sense when she was in the room without even having to look up. But for some reason, they knew that she would always be in their lives, that she was always meant to be in their lives and the thought of this didn't bother them one bit. Sure, they've only known her for four days but they couldn't imagine their lives without her in it. And they didn't want to. Ever!

Hermione was unknowingly having the same thoughts as Fred and George. Whenever she was around them she felt complete, happy and like that the missing part of her that she felt for as long as she could remember had been filled. Even now she felt content even with the pain she was in. Her magic was practically singing and her body was tingling. Over the last few days, she had learned to become accustomed to the feelings, seeing them as being normal. But for her they were. She didn't ever want to live a life without the twins and Lee being in it. Don't get her wrong, those feeling didn't appear when Lee was around like they do when the twins are, but instead, she gets the feeling of family around Lee. But the twins were different.

The boys left her to read and they went to work at the cauldron.

"Hey, Love?"

"Hmmm?"

"What was that spell that you used on us this morning?"

"Aquamenti," she replied.

"What?" the three boys spluttered.

"That's a sixth year spell. How d'you know that?" Lee's brow furrowed.

"I read about it in a book and decided to give it a try. I managed to perfect it in about thirty minutes," she shrugged.

They looked at her speechless; she was a first year who had only been at Hogwarts for four days and she'd perfected a sixth year spell?

"Seriously?" asked Fred disbelievingly. "Spitfire, like Lee said, that's a sixth year spell and a lot of them have trouble casting it, never mind perfecting it."

"It was actually really easy, Freddie." They appeared to be stunned. "Do you want me to teach you?"

"Can you?" They chorused.

"I think so," she frowned thoughtfully.

With that said, they all gathered around Fred's bed, Hermione sat up slowly but she still winced. Luckily for her, they were all getting their wands and didn't notice. Hermione read out the passage on the Aquamenti spell and showed them the incantation and wand movements. They managed to perfect it an hour and thirty minutes later and they were ecstatic.

"So are you okay, Love?" George asked.

"Yes, I'm fine, I promise. I have a bit of a sore head but that should be gone by tomorrow. Why don't you guys continue with your work and I'll read my book?"

"Are you sure?" Lee asked.

"Positive, besides, the more spells I can perfect, the more I can teach you and the more we're able to use in pranking."

They all looked at her with pleased, smug smiles.

"Read away then, don't let us stop you," Lee said, all but shoving Hermione's book into her hand.

"But you are stopping me," she said with a laugh and the boys jumped away from the bed and returned to work at the cauldron.

Hermione fell asleep reading in Fred's bed and they didn't have the heart to wake her up. So instead George and Lee pushed their beds on either side of Fred's so there was more room. They all went to brush their teeth and change into their pyjamas. When they returned to the room they removed Hermione's shoes, George's cloak and the book from Hermione's grip. They lifted the covers with Fred and George climbing in on either side of Hermione and Lee sleeping beside Fred. They all fell into a deep sleep and unknown to them, they moved closer together in their sleep until they were cuddled closely.

Hermione woke up at eleven-thirty when she remembered that she had an astronomy lesson at midnight. She tried to get up but she was stopped by something heavy. She looked and saw two arms; one wrapped around her waist and the other her stomach and it was hurting the bruise but she wasn't bothered. She looked to see herself, Fred, George and Lee all snuggled close together and they were sleeping peacefully. She quickly but gently removed their arms and got out of bed. She put on her shoes and penned a quick a note to her boys in case they woke up before she could wake them up in the morning.

*Boys,*

*I went to my astronomy lesson, so don't worry about me, yes I am well enough to go George (I'm rolling my eyes at you right now) so don't worry about me. I'll see in the morning.*

*- H*

With that completed, she quickly grabbed her school bag and ran to her lesson. She made it just in time. She sat down at the front of the room. The layout of this room was different from the other classrooms. They were in a circular room and instead of desks and chairs there were pillows and cushions on the floor. They were in an open tower and she didn't have a cloak as she didn't want to take George's, so she would just have to make do with what she was already wearing.

Professor Sinistra was an average-sized woman who wore brown robes and a witch's pointed hat and she was dark-skinned like Lee. She began the introduction to the class and Hermione took notes. Thank Merlin the lesson was only an hour long otherwise she would've probably frozen to death. The lesson seemed to fly by and so she was able to quickly make her back to the common room. She debated going back to the boys' room but she didn't want to risk waking them or being caught, so she went to her dorm room where she readied for bed and went to sleep.

Chapter Eleven

Hogwarts - Thursday 5th September 1991

Surprisingly, Hermione woke up from the best night's sleep she'd had since her arrival at Hogwarts. Her dorm mates didn't terrorize her in the early hours of the morning, although it was probably more to do with them being tired after the astronomy lesson, than it was out of the kindness of their hearts. Still, she woke at six as usual; readied herself in the bathroom and went to wake the boys.

Entering the room she saw the boys all huddled together and she smiled softly at the sight. She took off her shoes and got on the bed before jumping up and down whilst making as much noise as possible by singing Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go by Wham!

"Wake me up before you go-go, don't leave me hanging on like a yo-yo!" she sang loudly.

The boys sat up whilst they were being jostled about in bed and bumping into each other.

"What're you doing, Spitfire?" Fred asked.

"Waking you up in a fun way, obviously," she replied, still jumping up and down and rolling her eyes at him, as if he'd just said the stupidest thing in the world.

"You almost gave me a heart attack," Lee grumbled whilst rubbing his sleepy eyes.

"Would you prefer it if I woke you up with Aquamenti?"

"Nope, this way is a lot better; we might have to listen to your dreadful singing but at least we're not soaked from head to toe," chuckled George. Hermione feigned a hurtful look by pressing her hand to her heart.

"Are you saying that you didn't appreciate the fact that you didn't have to shower because I already took care of it for you?"

The boys laughed at her before they climbed to their feet and began jumping on the bed with her. Well, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

"Why're you so energetic this morning?" asked Lee.

"I got a full night's sleep without any interruptions except for my astronomy lesson."

"We forgot about your astronomy lesson," said Fred and the boys frowned. "Why didn't you wake us?"

"Because I didn't want to," she shrugged. "Honestly, there's no point in waking you boys so that you might walk me to my lesson, which I can find by myself by the way, for you to come back to your room to fall asleep again and then you having to get up to walk me back to the common room for you to go back to sleep afterwards, it's too much hassle. You boys need your sleep and you need to stop worrying about me. I can take care of myself."

"We can't help but worry about you, particularly with the way the girls at Hogwarts have been treating you," said George.

"Yes, well, I can handle it and when I can't I'll let you know, okay?"

The boys nodded at her and then George thankfully changed the subject.

"So, Love, what was that terrible song you were singing? Sorry, did I say singing? I meant butchering," George teased, which earned him getting smacked in the face with a pillow.

Hermione hit him with such a force that he wasn't expecting and it resulted in him falling off the side of the bed and landing on the floor. The others burst into laughter and had tears roaming down their faces all the while still jumping on the bed. George pulled himself off the floor and mock glared at Hermione who winked at him causing him to chuckle.

"Are you going to answer my question?" George got back onto the bed and began jumping again.

"It's by a muggle band called Wham from the early eighties. The song's called Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go, I love it because it's fun to sing and dance to and not to mention, it's silly," she responded, and then she began humming it, eventually breaking into song causing the boys to laugh at the lyrics.

They listened to the song and Hermione taught them the lyrics so they could sing along. She sent them off to the bathroom so she could ready their things. She left the beds the way they were but made them. Getting their uniforms and their bags ready Hermione got onto one the beds and the curtains were closed, when they were opened she made her way to each of the boys sorting out their hair and uniform and the boys were all singing Wham under their breath and she chuckled, humming along. They made their way down to the great hall, all singing the song over and over again. The closer they got to the great hall the louder they got.

When they entered the great hall they were essentially shouting the words and laughing making their way towards the Gryffindor table and sitting down to eat. They were later than usual due to them messing around that morning so the hall was almost full. The quartet received a number of looks from the students and professors and they ranged from: confused to amusement to worrying that they had lost their minds and too annoyed that they could be so energetic before nine in the morning.

Today Hermione's schedule consisted of:

*Thursday*

*7:30 – Breakfast*

*9:00 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, Gryffindors & Ravenclaws*

*10:30 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, Gryffindors*

*12:00 – Lunch*

*1:00 – Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Quirrell, Gryffindors*

*3:00 – Break*

*3:30 – Flying lesson, Madam Hooch, Gryffindors & Slytherins*

*5:00 – Dinner*

After eating breakfast they made their way to Hermione's charms class and the boys said goodbye and made their leave. The charms class consisted of Hermione taking notes and perfecting yet another spell before the rest of the class and within ten minutes of her first attempt. They had been learning how to cast Lumos which caused the caster's wand to emit a beam of light and it's commonly used as a torch.

Whilst the rest of the class continued with the Lumos Charm, Hermione read through her charms book and took it upon herself to learn the extinguishing spell Nox, which of course she also perfected before the end of the lesson. She received praise from Professor Flitwick and scowls from most of the class but she didn't let it bother her. After all, it wasn't her fault that she was a quick study, now was it?

The class ended and Fred was waiting to walk with her to her next lesson.

Transfiguration entailed Hermione taking detailed notes as they were learning about the transfiguration alphabet; if they didn't have the knowledge of this then they wouldn't be able to successfully transfigure anything. So Professor McGonagall spent the hour and half lesson lecturing the class. At the end of the lesson, Professor McGonagall announced that the class would be continuing to work on the transfiguration alphabet during their next lesson.

Hermione packed up her belongings and made her way out of the classroom where her boys were waiting for her and they went to lunch.

"Hey, Love, do you want to stay in our room on Friday night?" asked George.

"What, you mean like a sleepover?"

"Yep, exactly like a sleepover," nodded Lee.

"And what do you have planned?"

"Well, first of all, we need to start planning for Halloween, its only seven weeks away and we need to be prepared," Fred told her.

"Okay, as long as I'm allowed to show you some muggle sleepover traditions."

"What traditions?"

"You'll see," Hermione said, looking a little too pleased with herself. They aren't going to know what's hit them, she thought, as she began to plan out exactly what she was going to put them through.

They conversed until they finished eating then they walked to Hermione's defence against the dark arts class.

"Boys, don't bother picking me up after class, I have a break and then I have a flying lesson."

"A flying lesson, you say? Aren't you afraid of heights?" Asked Fred teasingly and Hermione smacked him in the arm.

"Ow! What was that for?" He whined.

"For reminding me of my fear of heights; I've been trying to forget about it and you were being a prat," she responded with Lee and George sniggered at the scolding Hermione gave Fred whilst he pouted at her.

Hermione entered the defence against the dark arts classroom and took her seat, then took out the necessities. She spent the double lesson learning about gnomes from the skittish Professor Quirrell which was difficult with his stutter, giving the students problems with the note-taking due to his speech impediment, but Hermione soldiered on until the end of the lesson.

When she left the classroom, she decided to take a slow walk to where her flying lesson would be held and when she reached her destination, she took a seat on the ground and waited until the lesson began.

The flying instructor was called Madam Hooch; she was tall for a woman, had a pixie style hair cut with brown hair, wearing black robes and she was carrying a whistle in one hand and a broom in the other.

She approached the class and made them each stand next to a broom that was laid on the floor. First, they started with the theory of flying, including broom control. Malfoy spent some of the lesson bragging about his flying abilities which not only annoyed her, but the rest of the Gryffindors who looked as though they were quietly plotting an "accident" that would land him in the hospital wing.

Once the basics of flying had been covered the class was then instructed to hold their hand over the broom and command it into their hand. Ten minutes later when the class had all succeeded they were told to mount the brooms and then she gave the go-ahead to gently hover off the ground. Unfortunately, that's when problems began to occur.

Poor Neville kicked off the ground but he didn't have control and ended up flying in the air and he couldn't stop. The broom was out of control flying in one direction and then quickly changing and flying in another. He wasn't stopped until he fell off his broom, got caught on part of the castle and then fell to the ground. Hermione rushed over to Neville and hugged him, before Madam Hooch took him to the hospital wing to get his injuries healed, including the wrist that he was cradling to his chest.

But the trouble didn't stop there…..

Malfoy started acting like a complete arsehole, taunting poor Neville and he wasn't even there to defend himself, but Harry was. Before anyone knew what was happening both Malfoy and Harry where in the air fighting over a remembrall. Hermione couldn't help but be impressed with Harry's flying; he was a natural and a way better flier than Malfoy which he seemed to realise. The remembrall was thrown by Malfoy into the air and Harry dived from one hundred feet and caught it, pulling out of the dive and stopping at one foot above the ground and the Gryffindors ran towards Harry like a stampede, cheering and howling.

During this Hermione was silently coming down from the panic attack she had just endured. The crowd was dispersed by Professor McGonagall taking Harry away from the class with a stern look on her face. And everyone assumed that Harry was in serious trouble, but Hermione could see the excitement in the professor's eyes. For some reason, she didn't think that Harry was going to be punished. The class was dismissed early and Hermione ran to the common room and up to the boys' room, rubbing her stomach unconsciously.

"What's wrong?" Lee asked.

Hermione told them the story of her flying lesson and the boys listened with rapt attention. Once she'd finished with recalling the events, Hermione took a deep breath and collapsed on Fred's bed. The boys were speechless, astonished by the tale of Harry's flying.

"I swear, I almost had a heart attack," she told them, "And I'm positive Harry won't be punished. Professor McGonagall looked far too pleased by Harry's flying and reflexes with catching the remembrall. Wait..." Her brow furrowed, "Didn't you say that you needed a seeker for the team?"

"Well yeah. You don't think..." George trailed, off catching onto her train of thought.

"I do, Georgie. If you saw him fly the way I did, you'd probably drag him to Oliver yourselves, in fact, I bet that's where Professor McGonagall took Harry, to see him."

After the conversation, they all went down to the common room and waited for Oliver to return. They sat down in one of the corners of the room. Fred, George and Lee had introduced Hermione to Oliver Wood during the welcoming feast and despite their age gap, Oliver and Hermione got on quite well and they had quickly become friends over the last couple of days, something that might seem odd given the four year age difference.

When Oliver walked into the common room looking like he'd been hit with ten Cheering Charms at once, they sniggered at him, their eyes darting between him and the many witches that didn't bother to hide the fact they were staring at him, and despite not being interested in boys the way the older girls were, Hermione understood the reason for the stares.

Oliver stood at a height of five-foot-ten with Hermione being convinced that he was still growing, given that he was only a fifth year. He had light brown hair with strands that often fell over his forehead and into his eyes, and his big brown eyes that reminded her of puppies. He was a heartthrob (or so she'd heard from most of the female population when walking in the corridors) with his Scottish accent and athletic build, and he was now the Captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, making him one of the most sought after boys in the school.

"Hey, Ollie," Hermione raised her voice slightly to be heard over the chatter in the common room.

Oliver's eyes searched the crowd of students before landing on her and seeing her smiling at him, his grin grew wider. He approached, making his way across the common room and he dropped down onto the armchair beside Hermione, his arm slipping around her shoulders and tugging her against his side.

"Ye know, don' ye?" What was meant to be a question came out more like a statement of fact. Hermione gave him a knowing smile and he laughed. "Af course ye do, Lassie," he said, at which point her boys sniggered. "So, is he really as good as McGonagall says he is?" he asked and Hermione smiled brightly.

"Professor," she scolded lightly. "And yes, he is. He almost gave me a heart attack; he scared the life out of me, and I'm not being metaphorical about that. He was over one hundred feet in the air when he dove to catch the remembrall (which he did in one hand, by the way) before pulling out of the dive and hovering a foot above the ground," she explained.

"Seriously?"

"Seriously! He's never been on a broom before, he was raised by muggles like me and he was a natural. Madam Hooch hadn't even given us the instructions before he took off flying. It was like second nature to him, he knew exactly what he was doing when he flattened his body against the broom and took off like a bloody rocket. And if he did that on one of the school brooms, can you imagine what he'd be like on his own? Anyway, I know that Quidditch season hasn't started yet and that tryouts aren't for another week or so, but I promise, you'll not find anyone who can fly like him," she spoke animatedly and Oliver chuckled at her fondly. "Please tell me you told Professor McGonagall that he needed his own broom?"

He nodded in reply and her grin widened. "Hoo did ye know Professor McGonagall brought Harry tae mae, Lassie?" Oliver asked.

"Come on, Wood, it's Hermione, she knows everything, didn't you know?" Lee said, teasing both Oliver who chuckled and Hermione who blushed.

"Hoo could a ferget?" Oliver replied jokingly and Hermione mock glared at him.

"If Professor McGonagall hadn't of dragged Harry to see you, I would've, Ollie. You should've seen the look on her face. I swear to Merlin, if she didn't have that stern look plastered on her face she would've looked like a six-year-old on a sugar rush at Christmas," she replied to their chuckles.

It was cold, even in the common room and with Oliver's arm around her, and she felt herself shiver which the boys noticed.

"Are you cold?" Asked Lee and she nodded.

"That reminds us, we have something for you, come with me," George said, grabbing her by the hand and dragging her up to his room. After they entered the room George pulled her over to his trunk and opened it, rummaging around until he found what he was looking for.

"Aha got it!" Exclaimed George, holding out the navy blue knitted jumper with a big yellow 'F' on the front, victoriously.

"Okay, why are you holding a jumper?" She arched an eyebrow.

"It's for you since you don't have a cloak anymore, your new one hasn't been ordered yet and we don't want you to catch a cold. I know that you can't wear it in classes but you can during the weekend and when you're in the common room and such," George shrugged.

"Are you sure? I don't want to keep taking your stuff."

"Yeah, we're sure, besides this one's Fred's and it doesn't really fit him anymore. Anyway, all Weasleys have one. Each person has a different colour and the initial of their first name apart from me and Fred as we have the same colour jumper; navy blue, this makes you an honorary Weasley," he replied, putting the jumper over her head and covering her school uniform. It went down to just above the knee and the sleeves were far too long so she rolled them up.

The jumper was already helping to take the chill off and she snuggled into the warmth and George chuckled, put his arm around her shoulders and they walked back to the common room where Lee, Fred and Oliver were waiting for them to return.

When George and Hermione left the room Fred and Lee looked at each other concerned and Oliver who noticed the look frowned. He was about to ask what the look was about, when Fred and Lee began a conversation.

"We have to do something about her cloak," Lee spoke.

"I know. She had astronomy yesterday and I don't think she took George's cloak with her, she was probably freezing. You know how cold the tower gets, especially as the temperature in the castle has already started to drop and it's getting colder every day," Fred said to Lee.

"Giving her the jumper's fine but she can only wear it in the common room and at the weekend. She can't wear it for classes and she has potions in the dungeons and you know how cold it is in there," Lee said.

"Yeah, I almost lost a nut from the chill in there last year," Fred nodded seriously.

Given the fact that the conversation between the two was serious, Oliver who had been listening with rapt attention couldn't help but snort at his statement, causing Lee and Fred to look at him. They had completely forgotten that he was there.

"What happened tae her cloak? Anno she has one, she was wearin' it on Monday," Oliver probed and by the looks of anger on the younger boys' faces, he guessed it was serious, so he sat forward, resting his elbows on his knees, giving them his full attention.

Lee looked to Fred for confirmation and the wizard nodded in agreement, and so, turning towards the older wizard, between them, Lee and Fred explained all that had happened with Hermione's trunk and her cloak being destroyed, Oliver asking questions in the appropriate places.

"Ye don' think she's telling ye the truth, do ye?" Questioned Oliver, once they'd finished explaining Hermione's excuse for her cloak being destroyed.

"No, we don't," Fred and Lee replied together.

Oliver looked up to see Lavender Brown walk into the common room and he looked at Fred and Lee.

"Have ye asked?" Oliver asked.

"What?" They chorused in confusion and Oliver rolled his eyes.

"Hey, Brown," Oliver called, beckoning her over to them.

Lavender turned around with a look of surprise on her face until she smiled and started giggling as she made her way towards them.

"Hey boys, Hi Ollie," she all but purred and the boys cringed.

"Don' call mae tha', a don' like it, me name's Oliver. Anyway, yer Hermione's roommate, aye?" Oliver asked, with Fred and Lee wondering what he was doing.

Lavender showed a look of disgust on her face but it was gone almost instantly, leaving the boys wondering if they had imagined it. Of course, they hadn't.

"Yeah, why?"

"Well, do any af yer roommates have a familiar? Possibly a cat?" He asked slyly.

Fred and Lee smirked at each other. He's good, they thought, impressed.

"No. No one in my dorm has a familiar, why?" She asked suspiciously.

"Am jus' doin' some homework which involves mae havin' tae do a survey aboot familiars in the castle," he said, forcing a smile at her.

"What's that for?" she asked nosily.

"Oh, ye know? A class," he replied and Fred and Lee sniggered. Lavender walked away and the boys breathed a sigh of relief when she left. "So, tha' proves yer theory tha' it wisnae a cat tha' destroyed Hermione's cloak."

"I knew it!" both Fred and Lee exclaimed, getting them odd looks from the others in the common room and they smiled awkwardly at them before turning back to the discussion.

"Why do a get the feeling tha' this isnae the only thing tha's happened?"

"It's not," Lee sighed in confirmation.

"Well? Get on with it befere they get back."

Sharing a look, they continued to explain the strange occurrences that had happened to or around Hermione, laminating on the fact they were certain she was keeping things from them, especially given her injury count.

"There's more, isnae there?" He asked gravely.

"Didn't you see what happened last night at dinner?" Asked Lee and Oliver shook his head no, so Fred filled him in.

"She fell asleep at dinner and Angelina tried to get George, Lee and I to wake her up and when we blatantly refused she took it a step too far. We weren't expecting her reaction so we didn't catch her in time. Angelina grabbed a hold of Hermione and pulled her so that Hermione hit herself off the bench and fell to the floor banging her head in the process."

Oliver's face was filled with anger. Angelina was a member of the Quidditch team and now Oliver was the newly appointed Captain. That didn't bode well for Angelina.

"And do you know what Hermione did?" Asked Lee and once again Oliver shook his head no and Lee answered with a small smile. "She stood up, looked Angelina dead in the eye, shook her head at her and walked away. We found her curled up on Fred's bed with George's cloak wrapped around her. She ended the silence by asking and I quote 'are you boys okay?' I mean, she gets pulled to the floor, bumps her head and asks if we're okay?"

Oliver smiled. "Is tha' it?" He asked, sighing when they told him there was more.

"Have you seen the looks she gets? For some reason most of the female population hate her. They look at her with disgust and hatred. Why don't you sit with us at dinner so you can see for yourself?" Fred said and Oliver nodded in agreement.

"Please tell mae tha' there's naw more. A don' think a can handle anythin' else," he pleaded.

"When she walked in after her flying lesson she was holding her stomach and she looked like she was in pain. Whatever is wrong with her we don't think happened today."

Oliver couldn't believe the way Hermione had been treated and it had only been five days since they arrived at Hogwarts and already she had been terrorised.

With that said, the boys heard George and Hermione talking as they walked down the stairs and the boys plastered an innocent look on their faces.

"Did she jus' come from the boys' dorm rooms?" Oliver's rose slightly in surprise. They nodded at him. "Hoo? Hoo did she get past the wards? Hoo long has she been doin' tha' fer?"

"She's been doing it for a couple of days now, and we don't know how she does it. I asked if she'd found a spell or used magic on the staircase, she just told me so walked up the stairs and the wards didn't stop her, I don't even think she knows about the wards existing," Fred said.

Oliver's surprised expression morphed into a smile when he saw her wearing the jumper that was almost bigger than her, and when she sat back down next to Oliver, he noticed her holding her stomach and wincing, which he frowned at.

"So, Ollie, did the boys tell you how I've been waking them up in the mornings because I think they're rather creative?" She asked and he shook his head. "Well on Tuesday I was nice and woke them up gently but on Wednesday... not so much. They pranked me, Ollie!" Her voice rose at the end of the sentence and he raised an eyebrow at her. "They didn't tell me that when I called for Bopsy that he would appear out of thin air. I almost had a heart attack and of course, I promised them that I would show them my appreciation," she exclaimed and they all laughed.

"So, what did ye do?"

"I poured freezing cold water on them and I showed my appreciation by saving them time as they didn't have to shower thanks to my kindness."

At her words, everyone was in hysterics with tears rolling down their faces and Oliver was slumped over himself trying to breathe.

"Yeah, but she left out a little bit of detail in her explanation," said Fred.

"I did? What?" She asked confused.

"She used the Aquamenti Charm to do it," George said and Oliver looked at Hermione with his eyebrows almost in his hairline.

"Seriously? Tha's a sixth year spell."

"Yes, I know; I read it in a book on Tuesday night and started playing around with it and I perfected it thirty minutes later."

Oliver was speechless.

"Yeah and she taught us how to do it and now we have perfected it too, granted, it took us an hour and a half," Lee spoke.

"Ye taught them?" He asked and she nodded.

"Yes, do you want me to teach you?" She asked excitedly.

"Can ye?"

She nodded and she agreed to teach him after dinner.

"Oh I forgot, this morning I woke them up by jumping on the bed and singing," she said laughing and they all burst into song with the exception of Oliver.

"Wake me up before you go-go; don't leave me hanging on like a yo-yo. Wake me up before you go-go, I don't want to miss it when you hit that high. Wake me up before you go-go, cause I'm not planning on going solo. Wake me up before you go-go, take me dancing tonight. I wanna hit that high," they sang badly and Oliver laughed

When they finished George looked at Hermione and mock glared at her.

"Yeah, and when I said she butchered the song, she hit me with my own pillow, in the face, and sent me flying off the bed and onto the floor," George exclaimed and everyone burst into laughter once again.

"She's stronger than she looks for someone so small," said Fred.

"So tha's why ye were all singing when ye came intae the hall fer breakfast this mornin'," stated Oliver.

"Yes, it's a great song sung by a muggle band from the early eighties and I love it. It's fun to sing and dance to and just be silly really and I taught them the lyrics."

"It's time for dinner," Lee said, nodding subtly at Oliver who nodded back.

"Let's go then," Oliver said standing up.

He pulled Hermione up and she winced, he felt guilty for hurting her and she was obviously in pain. He put an arm around her shoulders and they all walked to the great hall. When they arrived they all sat together and Hermione didn't sit with her boys but with Oliver who still had his arm around her shoulders and they sat opposite the boys.

Conversation started flowing once they began eating and Oliver kept his attention on Hermione. When he felt a kick under the table he looked up and saw the looks given to him by the twins and Lee and he nodded. He carefully looked around the Gryffindor table and its occupants trying not to draw attention to himself and what he saw made him frown. They were right; almost every girl was glaring at Hermione.

She was cold, he could tell by the shivering she was so diligently failing to hide, so he carefully moved his arm from her shoulder and put it around her waist gently as to not hurt her stomach further and he tugged her to rest against him and she sighed gratefully when she began to feel the heat from his larger body. He looked up and saw all the girls now sneering at her and he didn't like it. It didn't settle well with him, and he couldn't explain why, but he felt fiercely protective of Hermione, had since the moment he'd met her.

"Hey, Ollie, we're..." Hermione was cut off by the sound of an angry Lavender Brown, who was sitting a few seats down from them.

"You said that you didn't like it when people called Ollie and you told me not to call you that," she said gruffly.

Oliver turned to look at Lavender as he said, "Yer right, a did, but she isnae jus' a person; she's Hermione," Oliver smiled down at Hermione who smiled back gratefully. "An' it's rude tae cut people aff when they're speaking, not tae mention butting intae other people's conversations tha' have nothin' tae do with ye."

Fred, George and Lee shared an amused smile as Lavender huffed and turned back to her meal.

"Ye were saying, Lassie?" He prompted.

"We're having a sleepover on Friday, the boys want to start planning for Halloween because it's only seven weeks away," she said sarcastically with a roll of her eyes and the others chuckled. And then she gasped causing the boys to look at her worriedly until she spoke. "What if we don't have enough time to plan everything? What are we going to do?" she said with mock sincerity causing them to laugh even louder. "I'm going to show them some muggle sleepover traditions," she told Oliver.

"Like what?" He asked curiously and she smirked, putting Fred, Lee and George on edge and Oliver smiled at her expression.

She's up tae somethin' he thought to himself in amusement.

"I'll tell you later," she replied and they continued chatting until they finished eating and they made their way to the common room. When they entered, they came face to face with an apologetic Harry Potter and a furious Ron Weasley.

"What the hell are you wearing?" He demanded.

"Umm, it's a jumper, Ronald. Look, you're wearing one, too," Hermione said, gesturing to his jumper with the boys sniggering behind her.

"Why are you wearing Fred's jumper? Why is she wearing your jumper, Fred?" Ron asked accusingly, look at the wrong twin.

"That's George, Fred's on the left," she told him, only for his glare to snap back towards her.

"And she's wearing Fred's jumper 'cause it's cold in the castle," Lee shrugged.

"It doesn't fit me anymore, so I didn't see the point in keeping it when I could easily give it to Hermione. -" Fred spoke.

"- And because her cloak was "accidentally" destroyed," George added, finishing the response to Ron's questions, glaring at him like he was the one responsible for Hermione's cloak being destroyed, and Oliver stood next to Hermione with his arm slung over her shoulders.

"She isn't a Weasley!" Ron stated.

"Neither am I technically," responded Lee with a shrug.

"You practically live with us for Merlin's sake," Ron argued.

"Yes, and Hermione's family now, too," Fred and George spoke simultaneously and forcefully, ending the conversation.

Hermione decided to stray the conversation on to a different topic, even though she was immensely happy they thought her as family.

"Hey, Ollie, do you want me to teach you that thing now?" She said trying to be discrete and nodding to the stairs that lead to the boys' dorms.

"Aye, let's go, Lassie," Hermione and the boys went up to the third year dorms, and no one noticed Hermione being able to walk up the staircase.

Oliver entered the room and took in the surroundings. Their dorm was similar to his except they had a much larger room and a large cauldron in the corner of the room. The beds were still pushed together but Oliver didn't take any notice. Fred, Lee and George walked over to the cauldron and Oliver noticed looking over to Hermione who just shook her head and responded, "don't ask."

She led him over to Fred's bed which was in the middle of the pushed together beds and they sat down; Hermione with her back against the headboard and legs crossed and Oliver sat opposite her.

"Are you ready, Ollie?"

"Aye," he replied.

Hermione took the book from George's bed and placed it on her knees looking for the Aquamenti section. When she found it she read out the passage aloud and showed Oliver the wand movements and the incantation. Whilst Oliver was practising the spell Hermione had found a Duplication Spell in the book and decided to try it out. She perfected it on her third attempt.

"Gemino," she called softly, waving her wand at a pillow.

Everyone stopped what they were doing and looked over to Hermione, their mouths hung open when the pillow duplicated itself.

"Hermione, hoo did ye do tha'?" Oliver asked and Fred, Lee and George walked over to them, surrounding her as they took seats.

"I said the spell as any other normal person would."

"Tha's not what a meant. Tha's a fifth year spell, one tha' a should be learnin' this year in transfiguration."

"It was easy."

"Hoo did ye do it? Yer sat right in front af mae an' a dinnae even notice ye practising."

"I perfected it pretty quickly so you probably wouldn't have noticed, Ollie."

"Hoo quickly?"

"I got it on my third attempt."

"Can you show us how you do it?" George asked.

"What, the Duplication Spell?" Her head tipped to the side.

"No," Fred shook his head, "We want to see you learn a new spell,"

"Umm okay, just let me look through the book for a spell."

Hermione spent the next couple of minutes going through the book until she found a spell she wanted to try. She told the boys the spell and then began reading the passage on it before trying the incantation and wand movements. It had taken fifteen minutes but she had perfected it.

"Avis." When she said the incantation a flock of birds erupted from the tip of her wand, flying around the room and making Hermione laugh in delight.

"That's a sixth year transfiguration spell," he muttered in surprise.

"Well, it was really simple actually. In charms today I perfected the Lumos Charm in less than ten minutes and I completed the Nox Charm before the end of the lesson."

"That's amazing...But I don't understand how it's possible," Lee spoke.

"What do you mean?" She frowned in confusion.

"Well you're a Muggleborn, Love," George said.

"What has that got to do with anything?" She asked in irritation, sitting tall and narrowing her eyes.

"He just means that you only discovered the existence of magic a couple of weeks ago and you've only started attempting spells less than a week ago. Whereas George, Oliver and I are Purebloods, who are not only older than you, but we've been around magic all our lives and our magic can be traced hundreds of years back through our families. Lee's a Half-blood but he was raised in the Wizarding World so he's been around magic all his life, too. But you were raised by muggles and you've perfected spells that you're not supposed to learn for another six years. I don't think many people have been able to do that except maybe Dumbledore and that's a sign of powerful magic," Fred explained.

"Professor," she scolded. "What happened at the Sorting Ceremony, was that normal?" She questioned, her voice small and shy.

"No, not really," Lee shook his head. "From what we've seen, it usually only takes a few seconds, no more than five minutes at most. The last students to take longer to get sorted were Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall and they're really powerful, but as far as we're aware, you took longer to get sorted than even they did,"

"How long did it take?"

"You don't know?" asked Fred in surprise and she shook her head. "It took you twelve minutes and as far as we know, that's the longest it has ever taken in the history of Hogwarts."

"Twelve minutes? It felt like I was up there for a while but I didn't think it was that long. When you boys where sorted did it talk to you?"

"Aye, it talks ta ev'ry student but naw one can hear except fer ye. Why, what did it say tae ye?"

"That it had been waiting for me for a long time and I was destined for great things, and that I would be if I'm not already a powerful witch."

"We can believe that, you've already proven it to us. Did it say anything else?" Fred asked.

"It said something about Fred, George and Lee too."

"It did? What?" Asked George surprised.

"That you would be an important part of my future. He said it would be difficult to place me, especially when I didn't have a preference. When he sensed my growing nerves, I assume he made a split-second decision and placed me in Gryffindor." Sighing, she said, "Anyway, back to work boys, I'm trying to teach Ollie the Aquamenti Charm." Once the words left her mouth everyone went back to what they were previously doing, contemplating what they had just learned and what they already knew.

Thirty minutes later…

Oliver had finally managed to perfect the Aquamenti Charm and he was overjoyed.

"Hey, Ollie, can you help me with something?" She asked him.

"Aye, what is it, Lassie?"

She looked over at Fred, Lee and George to make sure they weren't listening to their conversation before she turned back to Oliver and leaned closer to him and he did the same to her and they began a hushed conversation.

"I want you to help me prank them."

Oliver and Hermione shared a darted glance to the boys and then smirked.

"What 'ye need mae tae do, Lassie?"

"I need two things from you and they're fairly easy. First, I need your help tomorrow for the sleepover and I need your help in a week or so but I haven't decided on the date yet, I'm thinking maybe the Quidditch team tryouts." Oliver smiled at her. "I'm going to introduce the boys to some muggle girls' sleepover traditions and one of them includes makeovers." Oliver sniggered at her. "But since I don't have access to makeup I'm going to use marker pens."

"What?"

"They're used to write with and they come in all sorts of different colours, but this particular brand of maker pen is permanent so it takes a while to wash it off. What I want is for you to help me give them their makeovers. I was thinking about slipping them a Sleeping Draught and then I would somehow convince them to come down to the common room. I'll even get Bopsy to help me slip it into something, maybe their pumpkin juice."

Oliver laughed at her. "Yer an evil genius; ye definitely give the twins a run for their galleons. A'll help ye 'coz they pranked mae last year. What aboot the other prank?"

"I haven't decided what to do yet... maybe glueing them to their brooms and repeatedly casting the Aquamenti Charm on them? What do you think? Or should we come up with something else?"

"Sounds like a plan, let's go with tha'," he nodded.

"Okay, can you meet me in the common room tomorrow after dinner?" He nodded his consent, they smirked at each other before Oliver started to explain Quidditch to her in more detail than her boys had previously done during the week.

"When I'm in the library I'll read some books on Quidditch and see what I can learn to help you," Hermione said, smiling at Oliver.

"Thank ye," he responded with a happy smile of his own.

Hermione climbed off the bed and started picking up items of thrown about clothing off the floor. She balled them up to a quaffle-sized shape and threw them into the correct drawers or washing basket, never missing her target.

"Yer pritty good at tha'. Have ye thought aboot tryin' oot fer the Quidditch team as a Chaser?" Oliver asked and Hermione burst into laughter.

"Good one, Ollie, that was hilarious," Hermione said, calming her breathing.

"What's so funny? A don' get it."

"First of all, first years aren't allowed to tryout because they don't have the flying experience with the exception of Harry and..."

George cut her off. "And second of all, she's terrified of heights."

"Thank you, George," she said sarcastically. "Not to mention falling, I don't like the fact that I have to trust a broom for flying especially when I was using one not one week ago to clean my living room floor back home. No, thank you, Ollie, I prefer my feet firmly on the ground," she finished her ramblings and they looked at her amused.

"But ye've got one hell af an arm on ye an' ye havnae missed a shot yet."

"Yes, but I'm on the ground and don't even think about trying to get me on a broom. I thought I was going to pass out in my flying lesson today and I was only hovering a foot above the ground."

"Yeah and don't remind her of it either, she's got one hell of a punch on her, too," Fred said, whilst he rubbed his arm as he remembered her smacking and scolding him earlier that day and the others chuckled at them as they bickered.

"Oh, Freddie, don't start pouting; you deserved it."

"I did not!" He protested.

"You were being insensitive and a prat, yes, you did," she argued.

The others were doubled over laughing at this point and the group continued chatting teasingly until they decided to turn in for the night. Hermione grabbed a fresh pair of pyjamas and a clean uniform before saying goodnight to the boys, kissing them on the cheek and going back to her room where she readied for bed and fell asleep.

Chapter Twelve

Hogwarts - Friday 6th September 1991

Hermione woke once again after having an amazing night of sleep. She wondered if her dorm mates finally given up and would leave her alone, although she seriously doubted it. Once she had showered and dressed she made her way to the boys' room. When entering she closed the door quietly. Looking at her watch she noticed she was early and sat down on the floor thinking of new ways to wake them up. She didn't want to do it in a way she had already done previously, so she began brainstorming.

Ten minutes later she made up her mind, took of her shoes and stood on Fred's bed she picked up a pillow from Lee's bed and proceeded to hit Fred repeatedly, moving on to Lee and then George.

"Ow!"

"What the bloody fuck!"

"Seriously 'Mione!"

Were the responses she received and she responded by hitting them with the pillow again.

This resulted in a pillow fight until there were feathers covering the room and everyone collapsed in laughter, due to their antics. George reached out to Hermione and pulled a feather that had been stuck in her hair and she laughed whilst doing the same for Fred.

The boys readied for school showering and dressing whilst she went about her morning routine of packing their belongings into their bags, helping out with their uniforms and sorting out their hair. Making their way down to breakfast they made plans for the sleepover that would be taking place later that night. Reaching the great hall they took their seats, gathered their plates and food and began eating.

They spent the remainder of breakfast chatting; the boys trying and failing to convince Hermione to tell them about muggle sleepover traditions, but she held her tongue, after all, if she told them she wouldn't be able to surprise them, now would she? Hermione's schedule for the day was considered brutal by the boys, particularly her first and last lessons.

*Friday*

*7:30 – Breakfast*

*9:00 – Potions, Professor Snape, Gryffindors & Slytherins*

*11:00 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, Gryffindors*

*12:00 – Lunch*

*1:00 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All*

*2:30 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, Gryffindors*

*4:30 – END of classes*

*5:00 – Dinner*

Once they'd finished eating they walked her to the dungeons for her potions lesson with Professor Snape. They kissed her on the cheek and left her at the door and headed to their own class.

She took her seat and removed the necessities for the class including her homework. The homework she had been given was only supposed to be eight inches but, of course, Hermione was too motivated and enthusiastic and made it a foot long.

Once the class filed in and everyone was seated and settled, Professor Snape made his entrance once again slamming the classroom door and his robes billowing behind him. He collected the homework from the class, placing it on his desk before giving out the instructions for the lesson. Instead of learning about and brewing a first year potion, Professor Snape instructed the class to brew the potion that their homework essay was based on. Hermione was extremely pleased with this development.

The Wit Sharpening Potion was a fourth year potion and she was glad to finally have the opportunity to make an attempt at it. She didn't want to start off simple, she wanted to challenge herself. Hermione walked to the store cupboard and collected the correct ingredients of scarab beetles, ginger root and armadillo bile, before returning to her workbench.

She added water to her cauldron and brought it to a gentle simmer. She grabbed the scarab beetles and ground it before placing the correct amount specified into the cauldron she then stirred it five times clockwise. She allowed for the potion to simmer for five minutes, before putting in the correct amount of ginger root until the potion turned lime green in colour, and then without stirring she left it to simmer for a further twenty minutes.

She let the solution cool before stirring seven times every three minutes and alternating between clockwise and anti-clockwise stirring for a total of nine minutes. Hermione then placed her hand above the potion and when she could no longer feel any heat coming off of the potion she added the correct amount of armadillo bile until it turned lilac purple in colour. She allowed the potion to sit for a further eight minutes until it turned a dark orange before placing some in a glass vial, putting the stopper in and labelling it with the potion name as well as her own name.

She walked up to Professor Snape's desk and placed the vial on to it, before walking back to her workbench, putting the ingredients back in the correct places in the store cupboard and then cleaning her workbench and cauldron. She sat down at her workbench, opened her potions book and began to read. The rest of the students in the class were still working on their potions and there was still another forty-five minutes left of the lesson.

Professor Snape entered the classroom, slamming the door behind him and he billowed his robes, before walking around the classroom collecting the homework he had set. He gave the instructions to the class to brew the potion they had based their homework on, before sitting at his desk, taking out a quill and red inkpot and he began reading, correcting, marking and grading the work.

He was muttering to himself whilst going through the essays.

"What an idiot!...Imbecile!...That's not even a word!...Wrong!...Completely wrong...Who taught you to write? A hippogriff?... Salazar himself would be crawling in his grave!... He can't be serious!...Fail!...Merlin's Sake...Do you have a brain condition?... Do you even have a brain?... Embarrassing!...Dunderheads, the lot of them."

He got through half of the essays before getting up from his desk and making his rounds around the classroom, checking on the progress of the students, and it was of no surprise to him they were all doing terribly. When he walked past Hermione's workbench he noticed the ingredients she was using and his interest was piqued. He made his way around the rest of the class before returning to his desk to continue with marking the homework assignments.

He searched through the pile of unmarked work until he found Hermione's and he set to marking it. When he found that her essay was on a fourth year Wit Sharpening Potion he couldn't help but be curious, especially as the rest of the class had gone with simple first year potions; either a Boil Curing Potion or a Forgetfulness Potion.

Whilst reading he had to stop himself from chuckling to himself as she had reasoned she would like to have a decent conversation with some of the Gryffindors, but they couldn't keep up with her. And several came to his mind, namely Weasley and Potter. When he failed to stop himself from snorting, he snapped his eyes to the students, glaring at anyone who had heard him, and they quickly diverted their attention back to their cauldrons.

He was interested to see if she would be able to perfect the potion as he knew it to be her first time brewing a potion, a fourth year potion at that. He graded her work giving her an Outstanding –he was a harsh marker, but even he couldn't deny she had done a remarkable job with the research aspect- before continuing to mark the rest of the essays.

He looked up twenty minutes later to see a vial on his desk labelled with Hermione's name. Professor Snape looked over to Hermione's workbench to see her quietly reading her potions textbook whilst the rest of the class were struggling to complete their potions. He picked up the potion and saw it to be the correct colouring of dark orange, which meant that he was certain she had brewed the potion perfectly leaving him staggered.

If he didn't have better control of his emotions (which comes from decades of being a Slytherin – twenty-five years actually) his jaw would probably be touching the floor. He made his rounds once again, checking on the progress of the potions whilst looking at the first year Muggleborn in confusion.

Hermione was five chapters into re-reading her potions book when the bell rang; she put her belongings back into her bag and left the classroom to walk with George, who was waiting outside so he could escort her to her next lesson.

Transfiguration was rather tedious for Hermione as Professor McGonagall recapped the transfiguration alphabet to the rest of the class. Luckily for Hermione, this lesson was only an hour long, an hour which she spent going over the notes she had made during the previous lesson and making any changes and adding more detail to them where she could. When the bell went for lunch, Hermione and the boys walked to the great hall and took their seats.

Once lunch was finished with they walked her to the entrance hall so Hermione could make her way to the greenhouses for herbology. They worked on bouncing bulbs which brought some amusement and entertainment to the class, particularly when a bouncing bulb escaped from someone's hands, resulting in that person being hit in the face multiple times before they had to chase it around the greenhouse in order for them to recapture it and put it into another plant pot. Ron was a victim of this a few times and Harry, Seamus and Dean tried to help wrangle in the on the loose bouncing bulb, and it took all of them to succeed. Even Professor Sprout could be spotted chuckling whilst making her rounds around the greenhouse.

Hermione was on edge, no one had tried to hurt her. In the past two days, she had been left alone but she didn't want to relax and be led into a false sense of security. When the class had ended she packed up her belongings into her bag. She dropped her herbology book on the floor and bent down to pick it up. When she did she felt something smash against her head and she fell from her knees onto the floor, hitting her already saw stomach and her head against the concrete.

She slowly and gently pushed herself into a sitting up position. She could feel liquid running down her face. Touching her fingers against her head she saw blood when she pulled them away to look at them. She could hear cackling and so she looked up to see the faces of Lavender Brown and Pansy Parkinson along with some other girls laughing at her. She looked back down at the ground and saw a smashed plant pot.

"Oops. So sorry, I was putting it on the workbench when it just slipped from my hands," Lavender said, and the others cackled rather loudly, before walking away from her, not even bothering to help.

Hermione climbed to her feet and slipped her book into her bag before running to the entrance hall. She completely forgot to Glamour herself to cover the injuries and dirt but she continued walking briskly. She swiftly made a decision and began running, not even knowing where she was heading before coming to a sudden stop outside the kitchens at the picture of the fruit. She unconsciously tickled the pear then headed through the passageway and into the kitchens.

When she entered about twenty house-elves rushed towards the crying first year as she was covered in mud stains and had blood running down her face, ruining her uniform and robes. Bopsy roughly pushed his way through the crowd of house-elves to get to Hermione. When he saw her he gasped rather loudly, gently took her hand and led her to the fireplace before getting her to sit in a chair.

"Misses 'Mione is hurts."

"Can you help me please, Bopsy? I didn't know where else to go."

Bopsy nodded conjuring a bowl of lukewarm water and a cloth. He began to carefully clean the blood away from the cuts and the mud from her face and hands. Hermione was whimpering in pain and her stomach began to hurt and she jumped in her seat.

"Is Misses 'Mione hurts somewheres else? I can heal it for yous if Misses 'Mione pleases."

Hermione looked at the house-elf before nodding; she removed her robes and lifted her shirt and v-neck jumper. Bopsy gasped loudly and stared in horror at the yellow, green and dark purple bruise that covered most of Hermione's left side and to the middle of her stomach.

"Misses 'Mione must tells someone; a professor!"

"No, Bopsy, I don't want anyone to know. They'll get bored eventually and leave me alone. Please, don't tell anyone," Hermione begged and Bopsy nodded, albeit reluctantly.

Bopsy healed the cuts on Hermione's face and the bruise on her stomach but informed her that it would take a couple of days for the bruise to heal fully. Hermione thanked the little house-elf, hugging him and making her way towards her last lesson of the day, already feeling much better.

She was thirty minutes late to history of magic; she snuck in and took her seat, taking out her things. Professor Binns didn't notice and until Lavender decided to stick the knife in deeper.

"Professor Binns, Sir, Hermione's just snuck into class. She's thirty minutes late, Professor," she said.

Luckily for Hermione, Professor Binns continued on with his lecture on the Gargoyle Strike of 1911 which would be the topic for the next three weeks of lessons. Lavender looked less than pleased. Hermione took notes and she quickly catching up with what she had missed.

When the lesson ended Hermione packed her things away into her bag and made her way to Gryffindor tower, avoiding everyone along the way. She quickly made her way to her room and then to the bathroom to look at her bruise in one of the mirrors on the wall. Her bruise still hurt but not as much as it had before Bopsy had worked his magic on it. It was still the same size but the colouring was had faded, indicating that whatever Bopsy had done was working.

Her facial injuries had also been completely healed leaving very faint scars which Hermione Glamoured, after all, she didn't want the boys to notice or they would know something is wrong, and no matter what was happening to her, she wouldn't wish for anyone to face the wrath of her boys; she had a feeling it would be a fate worse than death.

She left her room and headed for the boys', entering through the door and putting her things on top of her trunk before walking over to the boys who stood over the cauldron.

"Hey, boys," she greeted. "What are you working on?"

"We're not going to tell you until its ready," replied George.

"But..."

She was cut off by Fred.

"Nope, it's a surprise."

"Come on, tell…"

She was cut off once more by Lee.

"Like we said, not until it's ready."

"Fine," she huffed, trudging over to the beds then dramatically flopping down onto them with an exaggerated sigh, which made the boys chuckle.

They returned their attention back to the cauldron and Hermione grabbed her enhanced charms and spells book as they continued to converse with each other.

"So, you had potions first thing this morning, how was the old bat? What did he make you poor unsuspecting first years do in his bad mood? -" George asked.

"- Was he all glaring and hating students or was he his usual jolly old self?" Followed Fred sarcastically.

"- He's not really a morning person, is he?" George mused.

"He was actually pretty quiet for the most part; if he wasn't marking the essays or insulting students, he was glaring at them. He made us brew the potion that we based our homework essay on. I don't think the time of day really affects him, he still hates everyone and he's not shy about voicing his hatred either," she replied with a chuckle.

"What potion did you have to brew?" asked Lee, peering at her over his shoulder.

"Well, everyone in the class was making a Forgetfulness Potion or a Cure for Boils Potion."

"That makes sense; they're potions that you learn to brew in first year," nodded George. "Which potion did you brew, the Forgetfulness Potion or the Cure for Boils?"

"Neither, I made a Wit Sharpening Potion. I think Ron could do with some."

"Love, that's a fourth year potion, you know?" George asked.

"Yes, I know, it was really easy to brew actually."

"Did you brew it perfectly?" Lee questioned, arching a dark eyebrow.

"I assume so; it was the dark orange colour it needed to be when I had finished, and I followed all the instructions."

In fact, the boys weren't all that surprised to find that Hermione had brewed a fourth year potion correctly, especially after witnessing her perfect a sixth year spell. Hermione took advantage of their distracted state.

"So, boys, what are you working on?" She asked slyly.

"Oh it's a..." but Fred caught on to what she was doing and what he was about to divulge to her and he quickly recovered. "Nice try, Spitfire, you almost had me there but we're not going to tell you until it's ready."

"You can't blame a girl for trying," she said cheekily and they chuckled at her.

They all went back to their tasks before heading down to dinner. They didn't eat much as they were having a sleepover that night and so they would get snacks and food from the kitchens later.

"You said that Snape..." George was cut off by Hermione.

"Professor," she corrected.

"You said that Professor Snape was glaring and insulting everyone in class?"

"Yes, but I don't blame him; if I was in his position I would likely do the same. I mean, have you seen who's in my class? It's ridiculous. Seamus blew his cauldron up today within the first five minutes of him brewing his potion and when he had a replacement, he blew that one up too. He's a health and safety hazard. And your brother Ron, honestly, I don't even have words to describe him. I feel sorry for Professor Snape if every class is like mine. He deserves a raise having to deal with students like them. The poor man. Besides, he wasn't insulting them, it was more like a very subtle sense of dry humour on his part."

At this, she heard a throat clearing behind her. She turned very slowly to see the one and only Professor Snape stood behind her and the boys, trying to keep the look of amusement off his face. Hermione smiled and laughed nervously.

"Miss. Granger, meet me in my office after dinner."

"Of course, Professor," she squeaked out and he curtly nodded his head before heading to the head's table. "Oh Merlin," Hermione breathed out, burying her face in her hands. She could hear George and Lee laughing and she could feel Fred's laughter through the rumbling in his chest, with her shoulder pressed against his. "How long was he there for?"

"Pretty sure he's been standing there since we sat down," when Fred finished speaking he could hear Hermione grumbling which made them chuckle.

"Don't worry, Love, I think he found it amusing."

Hermione lifted her head, picked up a bread roll from a basket nearby and lobbed it rather forcibly at George, which bounced off his head, leaving him stunned. Fred, Lee and Hermione burst out laughing and those that had witnessed the scene play out laughed, too.

After dinner, the boys offered to walk Hermione to the dungeons but she refused and sent them to get ready for the sleepover. She walked to the dungeons and to Professor Snape's office before knocking gently three times.

"Enter," she heard and so she opened the door slowly, entered the office and closed the door behind her quietly.

"Good evening, Professor. You wished to see me?"

"Good evening, Miss. Granger, please take a seat," he replied and Hermione proceeded with his request, sitting in the chair behind his desk.

"Miss. Granger, I read over your homework essay which was written and structured remarkably for someone of your age, but what impressed me the most was the perfectly brewed fourth year Wit Sharpening Potion."

Hermione let out a breath of relief.

"Thank you, Professor," she responded, somewhat embarrassed.

"I wish to know your reasoning of not choosing a first year potion like the rest of your peers. There was only you and another student who managed to brew their potions correctly, whereas the others failed miserably."

"I don't really know why, Professor. I suppose I wanted a challenge; I didn't want to go for the easy option and the potion could be used on some of the students in the class," she responded and Professor Snape's mouth twitched.

"Indeed, Miss. Granger, I believe you are correct. How did you brew a fourth year potion? You're a Muggleborn, correct? Meaning you've never seen a potion before attending Hogwarts."

"I don't know, Professor, I found it easy to brew the potion. I simply followed the instructions and it resulted in the potion I handed in. I've been finding that since arriving at Hogwarts, many things come easy to me."

"Such as?" He arched an eyebrow.

"I've perfected charms that I've been told I shouldn't be able to cast yet."

"And these charms are?"

"I've perfected the use of Glamour Charms, the Aquamenti Charm, the Lumos Charm and it's counter, Nox. I've perfected the Severing Charm, the Duplication Charm and the Bird Conjuring Charm."

When Professor Snape learned what she had just told him he didn't believe her. It's impossible for her to be able to do those charms, let alone perfect them at such an early age. She's a Muggleborn. She's a first year. She's been at Hogwarts five days. It's impossible. I must witness it for myself, he thought.

"Miss. Granger, you have listed two sixth year charms and one fifth year charm. May I see you perform them?"

Hermione nodded her head in confirmation and pulled out her wand.

"Lumos," she muttered and her wand lit up."Nox," she said the counter curse and extinguished the light from her wand. "Diffindo," she said, with her wand pointed to a piece of parchment on his desk and it cut it in half.

She asked for a glass which Professor Snape conjured whilst staring at her wand disbelievingly; he wasn't sure what he would do if she was telling the truth about the more difficult spells.

Hermione thanked him as she took the glass from him.

"Aquamenti," she said, filling the glass with water that poured out of the tip of her wand.

He was speechless, Professor Snape was speechless. He'd never been at a loss for words. He nodded his head to Hermione and she continued with her little display.

She pointed her wand at a book and duplicated it. "Gemino," she said. She then pointed her wand in the air and said, "Avis," at which a flock of birds erupted from the tip of her wand and flew above her head and around the classroom.

"Salazar!" Professor Snape said in a whisper so quiet, Hermione hadn't heard him.

In twenty-five years no one had been able to render him speechless in the way she had just done. He was going to have to take a trip to the hospital wing to see Madam Pomphrey once the meeting had ended.

"I would show you the Glamour Charms but I'm afraid I don't have anything to glamour." That was a complete lie but she wasn't going to let him know about the injuries, now was she?

"I believe you could cast it perfectly, Miss. Granger," he spoke, his tone softening in a way no one had heard him do before.

"Why is everyone so surprised that I can do this? I don't understand," her brow furrowed and she fiddled with the hem of her jumper anxiously.

"Miss. Granger, what I have just witnessed is virtually impossible. There are reasons to why different spells and charms are taught in different years. Lumos is a first year charm and Aquamenti is a sixth year charm, Lumos is one of the easier charms to use, but it takes great skill to cast Aquamenti. This is why first years are taught spells and charms that require extremely little skill and understanding, and we build up the difficulty level as you develop your knowledge and skills. What you've just done is completely surpass five years worth of training and spell work and moved straight onto the sixth year syllabus. And to do it so quickly and effortlessly shows signs of great power and understanding. Power that could rival Professor Dumbledore's someday. The reactions your friends have shown you are completely understandable, in fact, I find myself in a similar situation."

"What did the sorting hat say to you?"

"That he would have difficulty trying to place me in a house because I possessed all the qualities of all the houses and that he had been waiting for me to come to Hogwarts. He said that I'd be an exceptionally powerful witch if I wasn't already."

Professor Snape just sat staring at her. It's true. The prophecy is true. It's her, it has to be. I'd better keep a better watch on her from now on. She needs protecting. No one can find out. I'll have to talk with Minerva, he told himself.

"Is this why you wished to see me, Professor?"

"No, I wished to discuss your potions lessons. It seems from the results of your Wit Sharpening Potion and from what I've recently learned, you're more advanced than your peers and it's my belief you should be taught at a higher level, but it will be difficult for me to teach you and the other students in you class a different syllabus. I have decided that on Tuesday night after dinner I will hold a three hour potions lesson for those who like yourself, are more advanced than others in their class. This class will be open for third through to fifth years, and if you decide to participate in this class, you will not have to attend your current potions lesson, and instead, you will have a free period in its place. Miss. Granger, are you interested in the advanced potions lessons?"

"Yes, I am, Professor, but I'm only a first year."

"Yes, and you'll have to pass the syllabus for both first and second year."

"Professor, I've already read my potions textbook front to back three times," she said sheepishly and Professor Snape looked at her with a thoughtful expression.

"Miss. Granger, what is a bezoar?"

"It's a stone-like mass that is taken from the stomach of a ruminant animal such as a goat, and it's an antidote to a number of poisons, but it's not able to halt every poison. As a result, it's why bezoars are commonly used in the preparations of antidotes to common poisons. Bezoars are commonly made from hair, plant fibre and it forms a stone," she replied.

"What is the difference between Aconite, Monkshood and Wolfsbane?"

"There is no difference, Professor; they're the same substance, they just have different names. The flowers and roots can be used in many potions but the leaves are toxic. It's commonly used in the Wolfsbane Potion which helps a werewolf during the full moon transformation. It helps to dull the side effects if it's taken once a day for the week leading up to the full moon. The potion allows for the werewolf to have control of its own mind, actions and instincts once transformed as well as keeping the memories of the night before. Wolfsbane could once be found in most places, but it can now only be found in the wild."

"What are the twelve uses of dragon's blood?"

"Oven cleaners, a cure for verrucas, for faking a death, curing diseases, curing many injuries, the removal of spots and acne, it can be used Strengthening Potions, to produce a fine red ink, for channelling magic, in alchemy, it can dull pain, and the Philosophers Stone was made from dragons blood."

He couldn't deny it, he was impressed, only three uses where listed in the first year's potions books, which meant she had researched it herself, and discovered all twelve uses, and only very few people knew of the existence of The Philosophers Stone.

"It looks as though, Miss. Granger, that you could pass your first year potions syllabus on the theory aspect, and with the quality of your Wit Sharpening Potion you are more than likely able to pass on the practical aspect. What I will do is prepare an end of year test for Wednesday's potion lesson, which you will be theory-based. I will also require you to complete a practical test next Friday, which will involve you being able to brew several potions of my choice. If successful, you will not only pass your first year, but you will be placed into an advanced class with those considerably older than you."

"What about my second year, Professor?"

"I will acquire a second year's potion book for you and you will complete both a practical and theory test. I will do this either the week before your first advanced potions lesson or during your first advanced potions lesson. That, Miss. Granger, is entirely up to you and how quick a study you are."

"I'd like to do my second year tests the week before, as I will be caught up with at least the third years, and I won't be at a disadvantage."

"As you wish, Miss. Granger. The syllabus for second year has less to cover than first year, however, the difficultly level does increase."

"How many will be attending in the advanced classes?"

"I'm unsure at the moment, you're the only student I've informed so far, but it shouldn't be more than the number of students in your current class. Do you wish to suggest potential students?" he asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Fred and George Weasley, Lee Jordan and Oliver Wood and possibly Seamus Finnegan."

"Miss. Granger, you said so yourself, the boy is and I quote, "a health and safety hazard." He's more than likely to blow up my classroom."

"I know, but if you think about it, Professor, some potions do need to be explosive proof and he seems to have a knack for making things explode, and if this class is going to have fewer students than my original class, Seamus can get help from the older students, and hopefully, he will no longer be a danger to be around. It could work like a mentoring scheme, where an older student helps a younger one."

"Point well made, Miss. Granger, I will think about it. Will you please inform the others? I believe they'll be a good addition to the class."

"It will be my pleasure, Professor."

"Good evening, Miss. Granger."

"Good evening, Professor."

Hermione stood from the chair before exiting his office and walking out of the dungeons. She made her way to the kitchens for the second time that day, tickling the pear and walking through the passage. Hermione saw Bopsy run over to her looking worried until he noticed Hermione's expression and he relaxed considerably.

"Hello, Bopsy."

"Misses 'Mione, what cans I do for yous?"

"Can you send up some pumpkin juice and snacks to the boys' dorm room please?"

"Of course, Misses 'Mione. I am happys tos help," he said joyfully.

"Oh and Bopsy, can you slip some Sleeping Draught into their pumpkin juice please?"

Bopsy looked at her suspiciously.

"Yous be planning somethings, Misses 'Mione?" Bopsy said accusingly.

"Yes, Bopsy, I'm going to prank the boys, but I need them to be asleep when I do it."

"How much, Misses 'Mione?"

"Enough to knock them out for no longer than thirty minutes," Hermione replied.

"Okay, Misses Mione, I wills send it tos the dorm room ins an hour. Is this tos your likings, Misses 'Mione?"

"Yes, Bopsy, very much so, thank you for your help. You're officially a Hogwarts prankster," Hermione bent down and give Bopsy a hug before taking her leave and returning to Gryffindor Tower coming face to face with the portrait of the fat lady.

"Good evening, Miss. Granger," the fat lady greeted.

"Good evening, boulder-dash," Hermione said the password and entered the common room.

She saw Oliver from the corner of her eye wave her over to him, so she walked over and sat in the empty seat beside him and he hooked his arm around her shoulders, on the back of the chair.

"Hey, Lassie, where've ye been? I saw the boys come back almost an hour ago."

"I had a meeting with Professor Snape," she said.

Oliver winced in sympathy. "Aboot?"

"I'll tell you later, prank first."

"Ye ready?"

"Yes, I've gotten everything I need in my trunk and Bopsy is going to send up some drinks and snacks. I've convinced him to slip a mild Sleeping Draught into their drinks. Come to their dorm room in about thirty-five minutes, and I think I've finally figured out a way to get them into the common room without them being suspicious."

"Alright, Lassie, let operation prank the twins an' Jordan commence," Oliver said excitedly.

Hermione laughed at his enthusiasm.

"You're rather excited about this, aren't you?"

"Tae right am. The prats pranked mae last year in the locker rooms befere a game, an' a havnae gotten me payback. A dinnae think tha' a ever would, but then ye showed up, yer bloody brilliant, ye know tha'?"

Shaking her head, she turned and made her way up to the boys' dorm before entering and closing the door behind her, seeing the boys were waiting for her as they played exploding snap on the bed.

"Hey," they said in unison.

"Hi, boys," she responded as she walked over to them and sat down next to Fred.

"How was your meeting?"

"It was good, I'll tell you about it later because I have a surprise for you."

"You do?" They all said with raised eyebrows.

"I do. So go and change into your pyjamas and I will teach you about muggle sleepover traditions."

They left for the bathroom, grabbing a pair of drawstring bottoms and practically leaving Hermione in the dust and she just laughed at their behaviour.

When they emerged from the bathroom they were all wearing drawstring pyjama bottoms; Fred blue, George red and Lee grey and they wear all shirtless and the twins had a slight muscular build from their time playing Quidditch. She picked up a pair of pyjamas from her trunk before getting changed in the bathroom. She was wearing a pair of pink cotton shorts that went down to her mid-thigh and a white t-shirt that was slightly too big. She pulled her hair on top of her head into a messy bun and secured it with her wand.

She exited the bathroom, making her way over to boys, who were waiting for her.

"Alright, Love, muggle sleepover traditions. Lay it on us," spoke George, waving his hands about madly, obviously excited.

"Okay, rule number one. You must always have…" She trailed off as she slyly reached behind her for a pillow.

"Always have a what?" Lee asked excitedly.

"Pillow fight!" She yelled before hitting Fred in the face, sending him sprawling backwards in surprise and laughing his head off whilst everyone around him were hitting him repeatedly with the pillows they had suddenly grabbed.

The pillow fight lasted for a good fifteen minutes until feathers were covering the entire room as well as being stuck in their hair and clothing. But they didn't care for the mess; they were too busy laughing and having a good time to notice and they were celebrating as they had only minor injuries with only Lee and George falling off the side of the bed and Fred getting piled on by the others.

"Okay, so rule number two. Always…"

"Always what, Spitfire? Stop torturing us," Fred said with a pout.

"Wait for it… and now!" When she finished speaking a tray of snacks and drinks appeared in front of everyone. "Always stuff yourselves with so much junk food and sweets that you want to be sick."

They laughed, picking up their goblets of pumpkin juice and downing it in one go.

"It tastes different," Lee mused before all the boys dropped onto their backs and fell asleep. Hermione heard a knock on the door and got up to let Oliver in, who had a gleam of mischief in his eyes.

"Let's do this," he said, jumping on to the bed. Hermione laughed whilst she took out the marker pens from her trunk as well as some nail varnish and she placed them in between herself and Oliver.

"Okay, you take George, I'll take Fred and we'll leave Lee till last. I also have red and gold nail varnish and we only have thirty minutes before they wake up. In that time, we have to clean up and get you back into the common room as well."

"We better get a move on then," he suggested and with that said, they both got to work, drawing on their faces and chests with the marker pens and painting their nails before they both did the same to Lee. Twenty-five minutes later they were cleaned up and had hidden all the evidence and Hermione kicked Oliver out of the room and told him to wait in the common room for the big reveal. He walked away laughing to himself.

He'd better stop laughing before he gets to the common room, otherwise, people'll think he's weird, she thought amusedly.

Closing the door after him, she ran back to the bed and sat down, just in time for the boys to wake up.

"We must have fallen asleep, sorry, Love," he said groggily.

"It's okay, Georgie, believe me," she replied with a mischievous smile.

The boys looked at each other and noticed that the others were covered in drawings, but they didn't realise that themselves had been pranked, too, so they looked at Hermione proudly and she winked at them.

"Rule number three, always have a dance party."

She stood up, pulled the boys up with her before jumping up and down on the bed and singing. They quickly joined in and they quickly recreated the scene from Thursday morning when Hermione had woken them up whilst making as much noise as possible.

Back in the common room, everyone could hear the loud bangs and bumps coming from the boys' room, most didn't pay attention to it being used to strangle noises coming from the Weasley Twins' room, but some were scowling like Lavender and Ron.

Lavender stormed over to Percy who was sat in a chair reading a book.

"Make them shut up, I'm trying to talk with my friends, I can't hear myself think," she said.

Percy thought he heard someone say, "You need a brain for that," and he sniggered behind his book.

"Oi, you harpy! I'm studying for the seven NEWTs I'm taking and you're the only one that's making noise that's bothering me, shut up, you bloody hag!" A very angry seventh year said from one of the study tables before going back to his studying.

This caused Percy to fall into another fit of sniggers and when he finally gained control over himself, he put down his book and looked at the annoyed first year in front of him.

"I'm sorry, what were you saying?"

"Make them shut up!".

Percy raised an eyebrow at the girl and said, "I'm a prefect and if you want me to do anything, you'll have to show me some respect."

"Sorry," she said, looking anything but. "Will you please make them be quiet?"

"I'll see what I can do," he sighed, rising to his feet and he trudged up the boys' staircase and opened the door. "You're making too much noise, I need you to all come down to the common room to apologise," he said, not even bothering to look in the room, if he had, he'd have seen Hermione there, too.

The boys all looked at each other and then Hermione before smirking. They still hadn't realised that all of them had been given makeovers thanks to Oliver and Hermione.

Hermione grabbed a pillow and blanket, the boys doing the same before trudging down the stairs and into the common room. Hermione went first so she could warn Oliver and she flew down the stairs, and surprisingly, no one had noticed her exiting the boys' staircase, being too engrossed in their conversations, but if they had, it would've brought up a lot of questions.

When she reached the common room, she crossed over to a laughing Oliver and he stood from his seat, high-fiving each other, leaving the other occupants confused as to what was happening. It all became clear when the boys entered and the entire common room howled in laughter, doubling over on themselves, leaning against each other and some were sprawled out on the floor.

Even Percy had tears running down his face and he was so very proud of Hermione in that moment. Oliver took out a magical camera, taking picture after picture of the boys and he would copy them later for Hermione as well. They were getting framed! No one had ever gotten one over on The Weasley Twins since the day they were born, so they had to take the opportunity to remind them the fact that Hermione and Oliver had.

Hermione yelled over the crowd, "RULE NUMBER FOUR OF MUGGLE SLEEPOVER TRADITIONS... MAKEOVERS!"

Laughter erupted even more as those up in their dorm rooms came down to the common room to see the cause of the ruckus.

Oliver yelled, "PAYBACK'S A BITCH, WEASLEYS!"

The boys looked at each other before it all fell into place and they realised that Hermione had done it to all of them.

Fred's chest was covered in pink, yellow and purple flowers and red hearts and had. "I heart Hermione Granger," written across his chest. His face received the most damage though. He had, "I heart Snape," across his forehead in black lettering, his eyelids had been coloured in a bright blue which clashed horribly with his hair, his cheeks had pink circles to represent a rosy blush and he had been given an orange moustache in the style of the monopoly guy, as well as his chin being coloured in for a beard.

George's chest had "I'm madly in love with Oliver Wood," written across it, with colourful butterflies and love hearts filling the rest of his chest. His eyelids had been coloured in green, he had also been given rosy pink cheeks and he had his nose coloured in and whiskers had been drawn on his face to look like a rabbit. On his forehead Oliver had written, "Marry me, McGonagall?"

Lee's chest had "I have an undying love for Slytherins," written across it by Hermione with green love hearts and snakes surrounding it. On his face, his eyelids had been coloured in yellow and like the others, he had been given rosy cheeks. On his forehead Oliver had written, "I'm a tosser," and he had glasses drawn around his eyes.

"NICE FACES!"

"NICE NAILS!"

When this was shouted, they all looked down at their nails which were painted red and gold before looking at Hermione who winked at them whilst laughing. They couldn't decide whether they should be extremely proud or embarrassed.

"NICE CHEST, LEE!" Someone yelled and he looked down, but all he could see was the word Slytherin.

Oliver and Hermione both shouted simultaneously over the roaring crowd, "AT LEAST IT'S NOT SLYTHERIN COLOURS!" Which caused more bellowed laughter.

Percy got up and walked over to Hermione and Oliver before clapping Oliver on the back and smiling proudly at Hermione. "Very well done, Miss. Granger, that's quite impressive."

"Thank you, Percy, please don't tell anyone in your family yet, save it for the Christmas holidays and tell them in person. They'll get a lot more laughter out of it that way and it'll embarrass the twins again, especially if Bill and Charlie are there."

Percy smiled at her and nodded in agreement. "I want copies of that, Wood," he said, pointing to the camera and Oliver laughed as Percy walked off, chuckling with a glance back to his brothers.

After the embarrassment wore off the boys began putting on a show, twirling around in circles and dancing in a girly manner, making everyone cheer and clap. After twenty minutes everyone had calmed down, though some could still be heard chuckling. They all bowed and made their way over to Hermione and Oliver who had long since collapsed on the floor and they sat down in front of them.

"So, I admit it, you're a genius. I don't think we could've come up with anything like this in a million years," Fred said.

"But I hope you know that we're getting you back for this," spoke George.

"Of course, boys, I wouldn't have it any other way," she replied with a smile.

"Good, because whether you liked it or not, it will happen," Lee promised.

"Oh boys, by the way, rule number five is always prank someone," she said and Oliver burst into laughter.

"A rather like muggle traditions," Oliver grinned.

"Oh boys, I forgot to say, Oliver charmed your nails; you won't be able to get rid of the colour for at least four weeks." Oliver and Hermione laughed whilst the boys looked to each other, both impressed and horrified. "There's something else, we used muggle permanent marker pens which would usually take about four days to wash off but we charmed that too so that's going to last at least four weeks and you can't wash it off or Glamour them."

By this point, Oliver was keeled over and gasping for breath.

"Ye, Hermione Granger, Muggleborn extraordinaire, are a gift from Merlin himself," Oliver stated proudly. "So, Lassie, are ye gonna tell us aboot the meeting with Professor Snape?"

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot. You, Fred, George and Lee were mentioned."

"We were?" All four boys asked together without even realising it.

"Yes, I may have mentioned your names Professor Snape wished to talk about the potion I brewed today in class."

"What potion would tha' be, Lassie?" asked Oliver.

"Wit Sharpening Potion," she responded.

"But tha's a fourth year... Never mind," Oliver trailed off; he should have guessed.

"Anyway, he said that by the results of my potion and my first homework essay that I'm more advanced than the rest of the class, and I'm not the only one throughout the classes that have some students more advanced than others. So he's offering a potions lesson on Tuesday after dinner for three hours. If you attend this lesson you get all of your current potion lessons as free periods."

"Seriously? That's wicked," said George and the others nodded in agreement.

"Yes, he said that he shouldn't have more than eighteen students for the entire class. And that it's open to third through to fifth years."

"Lassie, ye are only a first year," Oliver stated rather obviously, but softly as he didn't want to upset her.

"I know, but Professor Snape is allowing me to skip ahead into third year so long as I pass the exams he gives me before the advanced classes begin. He gave me a quick quiz to see if I was ready to complete the syllabus and I got all the answers correct. Or at least the look on his face convinced me I was correct in my answers. On Wednesday I have a theory test and on Friday I have to brew the potions of his choice from the first year syllabus. Then the Wednesday after I have to a theory test and the following Friday, I'm completing the practical test for the second year syllabus. As long as I pass I'm allowed to enter the advanced class. Professor Snape is getting the book that I need to cover the second year syllabus for me and I have a week to study."

"You think you can pass first and second year potions in two weeks?" asked Lee arched an eyebrow.

"I read the entirety of my class books twice before arriving at Hogwarts," she replied with a shrug and they chuckled, completely unsurprised. "He asked if I knew anyone who was advanced enough for the class and so I told him your names, as well as Seamus Finnegan's."

"Seamus Finnegan?" Fred said shocked.

"Isn't that the kid you called, "a health and safety hazard," 'cause he blew up two cauldrons in one lesson?" George checked.

"Yes, but how many potions need to be tested to make sure that it's explosion-proof? He would be good at it. Plus, with the right supervision, he would be able to improve his skills and possibly stop blowing things up." They didn't argue with her; they could see her point. "It's up to you boys if you want to do the advanced classes, just let Professor Snape know your decision. Now back to muggle sleepover traditions. I think we should teach Ollie them, too. He already knows rules four and five."

"Agreed," Fred, Lee and George replied together, smirking at Oliver who suddenly looked very nervous.

He never saw it coming when he was smacked in the face with a pillow, sending him onto his back as the others laughed. The boys picked up their pillows and began attacking a defenceless Oliver with them and he was crying with laughter.

"Rule number one, always have a pillow fight!" Hermione called, and the common looked on at the scene in front of them whilst laughing at their antics.

Eventually, Oliver wrestled the pillow off of Hermione and he turned them so that she was flat on her back in the line of the attacking pillows. He had swapped positions with her and Hermione wasn't taking that lightly. She removed her wand from her hair and she pointed it at the pillow Oliver was holding.

"Gemino," she said, and the pillow duplicated itself.

She got to her feet and the war began. Feathers were flying in all directions covering anything nearby; the floor, the furniture, the common room, even some of the students, and they just laughed as they plucked the feathers out of their hair and off their parchment or books. The seventh year that had scolded Lavender for complaining was creased with laughter as he tried to write notes whilst constantly removing the feathers off of his work and out of his hair.

When Lavender saw this she scowled and glared at Hermione. Ron was having the same problem not being able to control himself and he was openly glaring at the girl who was having a pillow fight with his brothers and the Captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team. No one took notice of their reactions; they were too busy having fun watching the group of friends.

Hermione took it another step further in the war.

"Gemino," she pointed her wand at herself. Stood next Hermione was well... Hermione, with a pillow in hand and smirking at the boys, who just stared at her. Both Hermione's took advantage and hit Oliver and George, sending them backwards onto the floor with the boys letting out, "oomph's," on impact. Both Hermione's jumped onto Oliver and George and continued to hit them repeatedly, whilst Lee and Fred hit the Hermione's with their pillows, trying to help their fallen comrades. They were all laughing as everyone stared in shock. They couldn't believe it, two Hermione's. She had duplicated herself! That's probably going to be the topic of gossip for a while.

"Looks like you're not the only Gryffindor twins, Weasleys!" both Hermione's shouted together, making them all laugh.

Eventually, they gave up on the pillow fight and she moved on to the next rule.

"Rule number six is always make a fort."

They jumped up, quickly gathering the blankets and pillows before Hermione instructed them on how to make a fort. They tried to use magic but Hermione just grabbed their wands and told them to do it the muggle way as it was the only way to do it correctly. Using magic would take the fun out of building the fort.

Fifteen minutes later they had successfully made a fort in-between two armchairs and a couch and they all crawled underneath it. Hermione asked Oliver if he wanted to stay for the sleepover and he agreed and went off to change into his pyjamas. When he returned he was wearing black drawstring pyjama bottoms, was shirtless like the others and he had a more muscular build than the others, probably due to an extra two years of playing Quidditch. He crawled under the fort and they all got comfy.

"Now, Ollie, My Dear Boy, it's time for you to learn rule number two. Bopsy," Hermione called softly.

Bopsy appeared and Hermione leaned over and whispered in his ear and then Bopsy left after hugging Hermione.

"So, what's rule number twa, Lassie?"

"Wait for it...And now!" Two trays of snacks and drinks appeared. "Rule number two, Ollie, is to eat so much junk food and sweets that you want to be sick," she said and he chuckled at her. "I promised I haven't spiked these ones," she said to Fred, George and Lee and Oliver laughed at her whilst they playfully glared in response.

"How'd you manage to knock us out?" Asked George.

"I've got an inside man," she grinned.

"What? Who?" Lee's brow furrowed.

"Bopsy; he slipped a mild Sleeping Draught into your pumpkin juice. You got pranked by a house-elf," she grinned.

The boys were very impressed; they'd been trying to get the house-elves to assist them in a prank since their first year. They all began eating and chatting about the prank Hermione and Oliver had pulled on them until Hermione changed the topic.

"Rule number seven is always play truth or dare."

"What's that?"

"It's a game and it's really simple to play. So, we go around and ask a person, "Truth or Dare." If the person chooses truth, you get to ask a question and they have to answer truthfully, if they don't they have to do a forfeit. If they choose dare, they have to complete the dare given to them or do a forfeit. Simple right?" They nodded. "Okay, who wants to go first?"

"Why don' ye go first, Lassie?" Oliver said and Hermione agreed.

"Freddie, truth or dare?"

"Bring it on! Dare."

Hermione smirked at his choice and he instantly regretted it noticing her expression and he laughed nervously as the others watched on in amusement.

"Freddie, I dare you to eat the bacon off Ron's plate on Monday morning at breakfast," she said and he gulped before reluctantly nodding as the others sniggered. "Now it's your turn."

"Right, Lee truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"I dare you to flirt with McGonagall in transfiguration on Monday."

They laughed as he accepted.

"My turn, George, truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"I dare you to serenade Professor Snape for a week." As soon as he said this, everyone was in stitches and George agreed.

"Okay, 'Mione, truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"I dare you to prank Professor McGonagall."

Hermione accepted reluctantly as the others were in hysterics, clutching at their sides.

"Oliver, truth or dare?"

"Dare."

"I dare you to wear all of your clothes backwards starting from Saturday until Monday night." He agreed.

"Okay, Fred, truth or dare?" Oliver asked.

"Dare."

"A dare ye tae wear a skirt on Monday."

They had tears rolling down their faces. This continued on for ages and they all had some pretty nasty dares to complete as no one had bothered to choose truth.

Fred had to eat Ron's bacon at breakfast and wear a skirt on Monday, talk backwards for two hours on Saturday and he had prank Ron again. George had to serenade Snape for a week, lock Filch in a cupboard, wear underwear on his head on Saturday and wake Lee up one day next week. Lee had to flirt with McGonagall on Monday in transfiguration class, ask Malfoy for a kiss, confess his undying love for Slytherins and walk backwards all day Saturday.

Oliver had to wear his clothes backwards from Saturday until Monday night, talk Gaelic on Monday during lessons, wear a fairy princess costume on Monday in the great hall for dinner and start a food fight at the Halloween feast. Hermione had to prank McGonagall, blow a kiss to Goyle and Crabbe whenever they walk past her for a week, scare Malfoy in some way and somehow prank the entire Slytherin Quidditch team before the first Quidditch game of the season.

They had all fallen asleep in the fort. Hermione had her head resting on Fred's chest and her left arm thrown over him, Oliver had a hold of her right hand whilst he lay slightly in-between Hermione and Fred with his head at their waists, George had his arm around Hermione from where he slept behind her, spooning her, and Lee was on the other side of Fred. They were all snuggled and showed the perfect picture of innocence, but everyone knew different, particularly when they are awake.

As the common room occupants began to file out, Percy ducked his head under the fort and stared at the sight that greeted him in curiosity. They were all curled around each other and snuggled close with peaceful and content smiles on their faces. Something was definitely happening within the group of friends that he couldn't explain.

Something was different.

Percy shook his head and Accio'd a blanket before placing it over the occupants of the fort. With one last look, he exited the fort and placed a Silencing Charm over it -he didn't want anyone to disturb them in the morning- and then he left for his own dorm room.

Chapter Thirteen

Professor Snape's Office - Friday 6th September 1991

The moment the office door closed, Professor Snape rose from his desk and made his way to the floo. Grabbing some floo powder and chucking it into the grate he called, "Minerva McGonagall," before putting his head through the flames.

"What can I help you with, Severus?"

"I need to talk to you regarding one of your Gryffindor students."

"Very well, I'm coming through."

With that said, Snape removed his head from the floo and McGonagall stepped out and they both walked to his desk and took seats.

"I'm assuming this is about Hermione Granger," she spoke and Snape nodded in confirmation.

"Well, we best get this over with. What is it?"

"She's the one," he stated and McGonagall knew exactly what he was talking about.

"How do you know, Severus?"

"I've witnessed it. Her bond with the Weasley Twins, Mr. Jordan and now possibly Mr. Wood, is remarkable given the fact it's not even been a week and..." he was cut off.

"Wood? As in Oliver Wood? Why have you included him?" Her brow creased.

"Didn't you see them in the great hall at dinner last night? He kept his arm around her throughout dinner and he seemed to get into a disagreement with another student over Miss. Granger. His behaviour towards Miss. Granger is similar to that of the Weasley Twins and Mr. Jordan. The prophecy does not state how many mates she will have," Snape stated. "Only that she has them. But if I had to hazard a guess I would say three and no more."

"But between the Weasley Twins, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Wood, that totals four," she argued.

"Perhaps one of them isn't a mate but possibly a sibling? She may have soul bonds with three of them and a sibling bond with the other," he said and McGonagall nodded in agreement, Snape had made an excellent point and she would observe her five Gryffindor cubs closely. "How many know of the prophecy?"

"Just myself, Albus and yourself."

"The others may not know but they would have noticed something by now. Between the bonds of those five, the quick pace she learns and teaches others and the Sorting Hat Ceremony incident. That can't have gone unnoticed."

"I know and when it's time to tell them, we will," McGonagall said. "Is this all you wished to speak of, Severus?"

"No, Miss. Granger is going to be taking a place in my advanced potions class on Tuesday evenings."

"Is that really wise, Severus? She is, after all, a first year and has only had her first week of schooling."

"She perfectly brewed a fourth year potion on her first attempt and her homework essay was to a standard that most fifth years cannot produce or fathom."

"Her first attempt?" She checked and Snape nodded at her.

"And that's not all; she has confided something in me."

"And that is?"

"She is able to cast spells and charms well beyond the talents of any fifth and sixth years."

"Impossible, Severus," McGonagall scoffed in disbelief.

"She showed me the spells and charms that she has learned and she cast them all perfectly, Minerva," he assured her.

"And those would be?" McGonagall asked curiously.

Snape quickly explained what he had witnessed, and McGonagall sat with her eyes wide. Of course, she believed her colleague, but she had to witness it for herself. One fifth year charm and two sixth year transfiguration charms? She would have to set up a meeting with Miss. Granger to discuss her current progress.

"We knew she would powerful, particularly with the Sorting Hat episode, but even so, hearing that she is capable of the advanced magic she is, is quite unbelievable. Did she convey how long it took her to perfect these charms?"

"No, but I can't imagine it being long, given she's only been here five days."

"Ever since I delivered her acceptance letter I was sure it was her, but everything you have just shared with me has solidified my suspicions. Albus can't know about this, he already suspects it's her, but if he discovered what she was capable of after only a week here, he would interfere in her life. We cannot let happen. Not yet; she's too young and she deserves to have a normal childhood and he would jeopardize that."

"Agreed. Albus won't find out about her yet, but I don't think it will take him long to see what she's capable of, so I don't know how long we can protect her. She taught the Weasley Twins, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Wood how to cast the Aquamenti Charm, so she can not only perfect them herself, but she can easily teach them to others."

"Even when Albus does discover the truth we'll run interference and keep him from doing anything too drastic. Back to the point at hand, are you certain she can handle herself in your advanced class? She won't be at the same level as the other students."

"Yes, I'm certain. I asked her some questions in our meeting on the first year syllabus and she answered them, not only correctly but in great detail, too. She even listed the twelve uses of dragon's blood and knew of the existence of the Philosophers Stone. I'm going to give her the end of year theory test on Wednesday and the practical test on Friday. The following week she'll complete the theory and practical tests for the second year syllabus. She'll be up to par with at least the third years. Speaking of which, I need to acquire Miss. Granger the second year potions textbook by Monday so she may study."

"Are you sure she can pass both first and second year in such time restraints?"

"She informed me that she has read her potions textbook three times already, so yes, I am positive she can handle it."

McGonagall nodded albeit reluctantly.

Saturday 7th September 1991

Fred and George were the first to wake to find the occupants of the fort to be all cuddled together and in the same positions as the night before when they fell asleep. And they felt comfortable; there was no awkwardness present in the atmosphere. The next to wake was Lee and Oliver as they followed fifteen minutes later and they too felt similar to Fred and George. They felt at ease.

"What time is it?" Asked Fred.

Oliver looked at Hermione's watch on the wrist of the hand he was holding.

"Almost, ten past eight," he replied, at which Hermione slowly began to rouse from sleep and she sat up slowly before stretching.

"Morning, boys," she yawned.

"Morning," they said in unison.

"I'm hungry," she said, and as if on cue, Hermione's stomach growled. She flushed in embarrassment and they laughed at her.

"Okay, Love, why don't you go and get dressed and we'll get this cleaned up and meet you down here, yeah?"

She agreed and she went to the boys' room to get a clean change of clothes before heading to her dorm to get dressed and washed. Fifteen minutes later she emerged from her room and made her way back down to the common room.

"Oh look, it's the muggle bitch," Lavender spoke once Hermione had descended from the stairwell.

"If I didn't think you were a slut before, I definitely do now with the way you were whoring yourself out last night. I don't understand why they would even look at you; you're ugly. They'll drop you once they've finished with you, you know? After all, who would want to be around you?" Lavender spoke cruelly and Hermione's dorm mates laughed.

Hermione kept her head down and at that point, the boys entered the common room and walked over to her.

"Hey, what's wrong, Love?"

"Oh nothing, just realised I'm a little homesick. I'm going to write home after breakfast," she lied, only slightly though, because she was going to write to her parents.

"Good idea, Spitfire, I think we'll do the same," nodded Fred.

"After all, Love, we have to let mum know that the school is still standing and that we've got a new prankster in the midst of Hogwarts."

Hermione shook her head at them and sat waiting for Oliver to return to the common room.

"Hey, Georgie, where's the underwear you're supposed to be wearing on your head today? If you don't you have to do a forfeit and it'll be a lot more humiliating than the dare you have to complete now," Hermione said. Fred and Lee looked on amused at the fact that George had tried to get out of his dare.

"Fine," he huffed, walking back to his room and a few minutes later he returned with a pair of red and gold underwear on his head and everyone laughed at him. Hermione took the opportunity to remind the others of their dares for the day.

"Don't forget, Fred, you have to talk backwards for two hours and, Lee, you have to walk backwards for the day." They nodded; it's not like their dares were embarrassing like poor George's.

When Oliver finally entered the common room and made his way over to them, Hermione stopped him in his tracks.

"What do you think you're doing?" Hermione asked him with narrowed eyes.

"Umm... we're jus' aboot tae go tae breakfast befere it finishes," he said confused.

"What are you wearing?"

"Umm... clothes, Lassie, it's generally what people wear," he replied and Hermione rolled her eyes at his attempt to be a smartarse.

"Don't you have to wear all of your clothes backwards until Monday night?" She pointed out.

"Fine, a thought ye would've ferget aboot tha'," he sighed.

"No, but nice try, Ollie."

She shooed him with her hands and Oliver went to change, returning a few minutes later with his white shirt and blue jeans on backwards and Hermione smiled at him.

"Better, much better," she nodded. "You've got to play by the rules, Ollie."

They finally left and made their way to the great hall for breakfast, as it turns out breakfast on the weekend finished later than usual so the hall was almost at full capacity. Hermione and Oliver winked at each before running into the hall and turning around, they once again high-fived each other for all the professors and students present to witness.

Everyone in the great hall was confused at the action until Fred, George and Lee entered the great hall and it became alive and buzzing with laughter. The reaction to the twins' and Lee's new looks were magnified by a thousand. The boys looked at each other confused until they realised they had forgotten their new look and they turned bright red. You couldn't tell where Fred's and George's hair began and where it ended.

Professor Snape watched on at the scene intrigued until The Weasley Twins and Lee Jordan entered, in which he then watched on in amusement. Professor McGonagall was too, like the others and confused until the boys entered. She barely stopped herself from laughing but she held it in and instead settled for a smirk. Well done, Miss. Granger. Very nicely done indeed, she thought. Professor Dumbledore did in fact laugh at the sight, not even bothering to hide it as his overly blue eyes twinkled.

"Hey, George, at least the underwear matches yers, Fred's an' Lee's nail varnish!" Oliver laughed and it caused those who were eating to choke on their food and drinks.

"We're never going to live this down," Fred muttered to the others and they nodded in agreement.

They figured they might as well put on a show if they were being stared at and so they twirled in circles and skipped over to the Gryffindor table and before taking a seat, they bowed to the hall. Once they took their seats, Hermione filled their plates with food as they did the same for her and she watched Oliver to see what he ate so that she could serve him breakfast the next time they ate together. Oliver ate two slices of bacon, two sausages, two pieces of buttered white toast and two hash browns.

"So, Lassie, when are ye gonna prank Professor McGonagall?"

"When I've come up with a prank idea and planned it perfectly, I don't want to get caught and, besides, I wasn't given a time frame. Maybe I should do it on the final day of term, that way she can't punish me until I return to Hogwarts next year and she might even forget about it."

They nodded at her logic and conversation flowed easily until they finished breakfast and left to go back to the common room.

Oliver went to his room to complete some homework; it was after all his OWL year and Hermione and the boys retired to their rooms.

She took out a notebook and a muggle pen that she'd brought with her and sat down at an empty desk and began to write a letter to her parents.

*Mum and Dad,*

*My first week in the magical world is almost coming to an end. And I miss you both terribly. I miss the smell of mum making breakfast in the morning and the sound of her humming. I miss the sight of dad reading the morning newspaper at the breakfast table whilst he chuckles at mum's humming. I miss our morning debates and me always winning. I miss the hugs goodbye before you leave for the dental office. I miss the three of us reading in silence in the sitting room surrounded by books. I miss dad trying to make us dinner on Friday nights and failing. I miss him and that ability of his to somehow burn water. I miss not being covered in egg and flour as I make you both a cake for dessert and I miss your complaining that I'm purposely making you put on weight and your accusations of death by overfeeding. I miss mum secretly sneaking into my room at night (yes I know about that) to tuck me in, even though I get warm and the blankets just end up on the floor. I miss the smell of her perfume and the smell of your aftershave. I miss the sound of your voices and your kind smiles. I just miss you.*

*Hogwarts is an amazing place. The castle's beautiful with its old age and mismatched bricks made of stone. With the secret passageways and entrances that only a select few know about, which now includes me, thanks to my new friends, but I will talk about them later. The castle is truly beautiful and magical and that is both metaphorical and literal.*

*The professors all have their own personalities and are all so different but yet similar to one another. Some are strict, some are kind and some are challenging but they are all caring and passionate about their subjects and the students. (Well maybe except Professor Binns). The lessons are challenging for some and simple for others. My classes for my first year include transfiguration, herbology, charms, astronomy, history of magic, flying, defence against the dark arts and potions.*

*Apparently I'm an anomaly when it comes to learning. In the first week, I've perfected spells, charms and potions that takes years of training to achieve. My potions professor would like me to be removed from my first year class and into an advanced class that is open for third to fifth years. Don't worry; he's convinced that I can pass both first and second year potions before the advanced classes begin. I've perfected casting some spells and charms that aren't taught until fifth and sixth year, due to the level of skill that is required to perform them.*

*The Wizarding World has these magical beings called house-elves and they take care of the castle. They clean, cook and do laundry. They are the cutest little beings that I have ever seen; they are small and wear pillowcases or tea towels for clothing. They are so sweet, kind and extremely well-mannered and they will do anything for anyone no matter what is asked of them. They love their jobs. I've become very good friends with one of them in particular. His name is Bopsy and he is so kind and considerate.*

*He has fury pointed ears, some wrinkles but he isn't old and he wears a white pillowcase for his clothing and he is so adorable. My friends have told me that house-elves are usually owned by rich wizarding families and that most house-elves are treated awfully and are abused by those families. I plan to change the way they are treated in the future. They deserve to have equal rights to that of witches and wizards. In fact, all magical beings and creatures do. Anyway, the house-elves here at Hogwarts are treated remarkably well. They are even offered days off and a salary but they refuse to take it. They are honoured to just be here. As am I!*

*The train journey was unbelievable; I made friends before the train even left the station, the twins, Fred and George Weasley. They have just started their third year here at Hogwarts and they are hilarious, caring, scary smart and they are very mischievous. They helped me with my trunk on the train and we became friends instantly.*

*During the train journey, I met their friend, Lee Jordan, and now we're friends too. He's like the twins, caring, mischievous and hilarious. Lee practically lives with The Weasley family as his Dad and step-Mother are too busy with work. Seriously, he spends seven weeks out the nine that are given for the summer holidays with The Weasley family, and he spends the other holidays with them too. The whole Weasley clan think Lee as family, so really he's more their brother than their friend.*

*We spent the entire train ride together. We haven't been separated yet apart from classes and even though they gave me a tour of the castle, showed me the secret passageways and no matter how much I insist that I can walk to my classes by myself, they blatantly ignore me and at least one of them is always waiting for me outside of my classroom when the lesson ends. We always walk to the great hall together for meal times where we always sit together. The twins and Lee introduced me to Oliver Wood who has become a great friend too and he spends a lot of time with us. He's just entered his fifth year at Hogwarts and he's now the Quidditch Captain for Gryffindor house.*

*Quidditch is a sport here in the Wizarding World and it's extremely popular, just like football. It's very dangerous or at least I think it is after what the boys have told me. They assure me it isn't, but I haven't seen my first game yet as tryouts for the team aren't being held until next week and Quidditch season hasn't started yet, not until November I think.*

*I'm going to try and explain what Quidditch is so bear with me. Quidditch is a mixture of baseball, basketball and dodgeball. There are seven players on a team: three chasers, two beaters, one seeker and one keeper. Then there are three balls that are used to play the game: two bludgers, a quaffle and a snitch. There are three hoops for each team which the chasers have to put the quaffle through and the keeper obviously guards their team's hoops and defends them from the other team scoring (see like basketball). Every time a goal is made ten points are awarded but if the quaffle is put through the middle hoop they are awarded twenty-five points. Now the beaters' job is to hit the bludgers (there are two in play) with their beater bats (like baseball and dodgeball) into the opposing team's players, to get them to fall off their brooms, distract them or to get them to drop the quaffle. And the seeker's job is to catch the snitch. The snitch is a small ball that is slightly smaller than a golf ball and it's gold and has wings. It flies around the Quidditch pitch and it's extremely hard to spot and catch because they are incredibly fast.. The seeker has to catch the snitch in order for the game to end. Whoever catches the snitch earns one hundred and fifty points for their team. Did I mention that this all takes place hundreds of feet in the air, whilst the players are flying on brooms? See what I mean? Dangerous! They are mental, completely mental.*

*Oliver is now the Captain of the team and he plays keeper, the twins are beaters for the team and Lee is the commentator. They are trying to convince me to try out as a chaser because I haven't missed a shot when I am throwing their dirty clothes in the laundry basket, but I can't fly. I had a flying lesson on Thursday and I only hovered a foot above the ground and I almost had a panic attack. Besides, first years aren't allowed their own brooms so they don't generally tryout until second year.*

*Anyway, the houses! There are four houses at Hogwarts that students are sorted into Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Slytherin and Gryffindor. They are named after the founders of Hogwarts: Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff, Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor. They have a magical hat that talks and it's placed on your head in front of everyone at the welcoming feast. The hat then looks through your thoughts and personality traits to put you in the house that is the best fit for you. I'm going to tell you the traits for the houses and we'll see if you can guess where I was placed.*

*Slytherin's traits are cunning, ambitious and resourceful, and their colours are green and silver and they have a silver snake as the emblem. Hufflepuff's traits are loyalty, kindness, hardworking, patience and selflessness. Their colours are yellow and black and they have a black badger as the emblem. Gryffindor's traits are bravery, chivalrousness, honourable and daring. Their colours are red and gold and they have a golden lion as an emblem. Ravenclaw's traits are intelligence, quick-minded, witty, and an appreciation for knowledge and learning. Their colours are blue and bronze and they have a bronze eagle as the emblem.*

*So can you guess which one I belong to?*

*I'm a Gryffindor, the red and gold, the mighty lion. Fred, George, Lee and Oliver are also Gryffindors. In fact, from what I've been told every member of Fred and George's family have been Gryffindors. Their Mother and Father, and their older brothers were. They have an older brother called Bill who is twenty-two and he's a curse breaker for the wizarding bank. Gringotts. They have an older brother called Charlie who is twenty and he's a dragon tamer in Romania. I know right? Dragons are real! They have an older brother called Percy who's fifteen and he's now in his fifth year. They have a younger brother called Ronald who's a first year like me and he was sorted into Gryffindor too. And they have a little sister called Ginny who doesn't start Hogwarts until next year because she is only ten years old but she will be a Gryffindor too, I'm sure of it.*

*I love you both more than anything in the world and in case you don't know, I miss you both. I will send pictures when I can but don't freak out when I do because wizarding photos move. I love the Wizarding World!*

*I love you,*

*Love, Hermione.*

Hermione finished writing her letter and folded it before writing the address on the front of the envelope. She looked over to see Fred, George and Lee taking it in turns to write on the parchment for the letter they were sending to their parents. They finished writing the letter and they too folded it and wrote the address on the envelope. They all walked down to the common room and then to the owlery.

The entire journey they chatted and laughed when people walked past laughing and pointing at George with his red and gold underwear on his head. When they reached their destination, they attached the letters to the owls, gave them the address and watched as they flew out the window. They made their way back to the boys' room where they spent their time planning for Halloween as they didn't the night before and when dinner came they went to the great hall.

Fred had successfully talked backwards for two hours, Lee had successfully walked backwards for the day and George had successfully worn underwear on his head. They had all completed one of their dares.

After they finished dinner they made their way back to the boys' room where they continued to plan for Halloween and when Hermione began yawning she excused herself, said goodnight and kissed each boy on the cheek before grabbing a pair of pyjamas and heading to her dorm. She readied in the bathroom, got into bed, drawing the curtains and touching her wand to the knot in the bedpost before drifting off into a peaceful night's sleep.

Sunday 8th September 1991

Hermione woke at eight in the morning and decided to let the boys have a sleep in, after all, it was a Sunday. She grabbed her advanced charms and spells book and decided to spend her morning reading and learning new spells. She decided upon learning the Summoning Charm, the Silencing Charm and a spell to slow down moving objects or people. When her watch read eleven o'clock, she got out of bed and exited her dorm room in her blue and white polka dot button-down shirt and pyjama bottoms and went to the boys' room. She entered and closed the door behind her to see them all awake and dressed.

"Morning, boys."

"Morning," they replied in unison.

"You're up late, Love."

"Nope, I've been up since eight, I just wanted to let you guys sleep in. So, I read my book and learned some new spells."

"Will you show us?"

Hermione nodded at his request. "Just let me get changed first."

With that said she grabbed some clean clothes from her trunk and went to change in their bathroom. When she exited she was wearing a pair of black skinny jeans, white converse and a white t-shirt that said, "I'm allergic to stupidity, I break out in sarcasm," on the front which made the boys laugh when they read it. They all gathered on the beds, which still haven't been moved back to their original positions, and they surrounded Hermione.

"Okay, so show us what you've learned, Spitfire."

"So the first one I learned was the Summoning Charm which really should be taught in first year, it's so useful."

She pointed her wand to her schoolbag which was on the other side of the room and as she performed the wand movements she said the incantation.

"Accio quill," she said, and a quill flew out of her bag and into her hand. They chuckled at how pleased she looked with herself.

"And the others?"

Hermione pointed her wand at Lee and his eyes crossed over and he leaned back slightly. Fred and George laughed at his reaction and Hermione chuckled. She began the wand movements and said the incantation.

"Silencio. Lee, say something," she instructed.

Lee tried to talk but he couldn't say anything. Fred and George applauded Hermione and she mock bowed at them, making them laugh as Lee huffed in fake annoyance, but his face broke into a grin.

"Finite Incantatem," the spell was lifted and Lee began talking once again.

"Three charms in three hours. That's impressive."

"Actually, it's four," she corrected.

Hermione then handed the quill that she had recently Accio'd to George and asked him to go on the other side of the room and stand on her trunk and he did just that.

"Okay, Georgie, when I tell you to drop the quill," she instructed and he nodded. "Now."

He dropped the quill; she pointed her wand at the falling object doing the correct wand movements as she said the incantation,

"Arresto Momentum," she muttered and the quill's descent to the ground slowed until it gently touched the floor.

"Nicely done, Spitfire."

"Thanks, Freddie, I learned that one for when Quidditch season starts; I want to be prepared for anyone who falls of their broom."

"Madam Hooch and the Professors have that covered."

"Yes, well one more person who can cast the spell won't hurt, George," she argued.

They headed down to lunch early and met Oliver in the great hall, they all sat together and Hermione was glad to see Oliver wearing his clothes backwards. Once they finished eating, they all returned to the boys' room, Hermione and Oliver both studying and the twins and Lee working at the cauldron. They didn't stop studying until dinner where once again they went down to the great hall to eat and when they finished eating they returned to their previous tasks.

That was until Fred decided to complete his dare and prank Ron. They all went down to the common room to watch what Fred had in store for his little brother and Fred set up the prank. This prank was really simple and it didn't involve the use of magic either.

Ron was in the common room and he had fallen asleep in the armchair next to Harry who watched on in interest. Fred crept up behind Ron before placing a fake tarantula on his head. He stood up and moved away from the chair and Harry and the others now watched on in amusement.

"RON! THERE'S A BLOODY TARANTULA ON YOUR HEAD!" Fred yelled.

Ron sat up at lightning speed before jumping up and screaming like a seven-year-old girl. He was jumping up and down on the spot and brushing his clothes down. When he saw the fake tarantula land on the floor he screamed once more and jumped onto the armchair he had recently been sitting in and he was pointing at it.

"KILL IT. GET IT AWAY FROM ME. KILL IT!" Ron shouted.

Fred walked over and picked up the fake tarantula, he winked at Hermione and the others before he threw it at Ron who fell over the back of the armchair. At that point, he got up off the floor and ran out of the room. Harry had tears rolling down his face and was doubled over laughing at the misfortune and stupidity of his newly made best friend.

Everyone in the common room laughed at the outcome of the prank until they all felt sleepy later. Hermione decided she wanted to go to bed so she Accio'd a pair of pyjamas from the boys' room.

"I told you it was handy," she said lightly.

She kissed them all on the cheek, said goodnight and left to get changed, climbing into bed, closing the curtains and touching her wand to the knot in the bedpost before drifting off to sleep.

Chapter Fourteen

Hogwarts - Tuesday 17th September 1991

A week had passed and Hermione had now been at Hogwarts for three weeks. A lot has happened in that time as Fred had completed both of his dares and he had been greatly humiliated and injured. When Fred entered the great hall with the group of Gryffindors he was wearing a skirt and anyone who had witnessed the sight had burst into laughter. Fred and George sat next to Ron and Lee, Hermione and Oliver sat opposite them and Hermione didn't miss the glares she received. Fred had distracted Ron and stole a piece of bacon from his plate and he quickly shoved it into his mouth to hide the evidence. Unfortunately for Fred four pieces of bacon later, Ron had caught on and the next time Fred had gone to steal another piece of bacon, he had been stabbed with Ron's fork, and he yelped in pain.

George had also completed his dares. He had managed to lock filch in a broom cupboard on the second floor whilst heading to breakfast, he had woken Lee up far too early for his liking and when they had entered the great hall that morning, George had sported a black eye. And every time George saw Professor Snape, he had burst into song no matter where he was or who was watching. Hermione had very graciously offered to teach George muggle love songs to serenade Professor Snape with and he hadn't let her teachings go to waste.

Hermione could still remember the first time it had happened….

Flashback...

Monday 9th September 1991

Hermione and the boys entered the great hall for lunch and they all sat down and began eating when Professor Snape walked in and took his seat at the head's table. George took the opportunity to start his dare. He climbed onto the Gryffindor table and stood in the middle. Every occupant of the great hall watched on in anticipation, knowing that something was going on with the five Gryffindors as they had been doing strange things lately. George took a deep breath, pointed at Snape and began to sing at the top of his lungs, You're Still The One by Shania Twain.

"Looks like we made it, look how far we've come, my baby. We might of took the long way, we knew we'd get there someday. They said, "I bet they'll never make it," but just look at us holding on. We're still together, still going strong. You're still the one I run to, the one that I belong to. You're still the one I want for life. You're still the one that I love, the only one I dream of, you're still the one I kiss good night."

Halfway through the song, Hermione, Fred and Lee, climbed onto the table and stood behind George. They began waving their arms slowly back and forth and most of the students waved along, as they laughed loudly. Professor McGonagall couldn't hold her laughter but she managed to hide it behind her hands, whilst the other professors and Dumbledore didn't bother to hide their laughter, letting out full belly laughs. Professor Dumbledore had managed to get gravy all over his white beard.

"Ain't nothing better, we beat the odds together. I'm glad we didn't listen, look at what we would be missing. They said, "I bet they'll never make it," but just look at us holding on. We're still together still going strong. You're still the one I run to, the one that I belong to. You're still the one I want for life. You're still the one that I love, the only one I dream of, you're still the one I kiss good night."

All through the song, the occupants of the great hall had tears crawling down their faces and even the Slytherins couldn't deny it wasn't funny to see their head of house embarrassed in such a manner. Professor Snape was surprised and when he looked at the three other Gryffindors of the group, he understood what was happening between them. After all, he was a Half-blood so he knew the game they were playing. When he looked at Hermione and saw the amusement and mischief in her eyes and the way she was doubled over on herself, he knew that he had her to thank for the little display. When George had finished Professor Snape was traumatized.

When George hit the last verse of the song Hermione joined in with him and they put their arms around each other and belted the final verse, pointing and making overly dramatic arm movements whilst the great hall continued to laugh and wave their arms slowly in the air to the sound of their voices.

"You're still the one, you're still the one I run to. The one that I belong to, you're still the one I want for life. You're still the one that I love, the only one I dream of. You're still the one I kiss good night. I'm so glad we made it, look how far we've come, my baby."

When they finished the song the hall erupted into cheers and applause and George took a bow as did the others. Snape rolled his eyes at them, struggling to contain his embarrassment and humour.

"Thank you, Mr. Weasley, Miss. Granger," Snape drawled.

"No problem, Professor," they replied in unison.

George had serenaded Professor Snape in the classroom, in the halls, in the dungeons, in the men's toilets and in the great hall. It's fair to say that Professor Snape had tried to avoid George as much as possible during that week.

Back in present time, Hermione, Oliver and Lee were the only ones who had dares left to complete as Fred and George had completed all of theirs of which they were extremely thankful for.

The twins had informed Hermione that Lee had completed his dare by flirting with Professor McGonagall for their full hour and a half lesson and he had been greatly shot down in his attempts to woo her. Luckily for Lee, Professor McGonagall had seen the funny side and she also had a suspicion that Hermione had something to do with his behaviour. If it had been anyone else, they would've been put in detention, but he got away with only his pride hurt.

Oliver had also completed his dare of wearing his clothes backwards and talking in only Gaelic during his lessons. The most embarrassing dare so far was that Oliver had to wear a fairy princess costume to dinner and Hermione had picked out a great outfit for him.

He had worn a pink dress with shoulder straps and the dress had been covered in sparkles, diamantes and glitter. It fell down to his knees and he wore pink elbow-length gloves, a tiara and he had a fake fairy wand and fake fairy wings to match. When they had walked into the great hall it had fallen silent; you could've heard a pin drop. Of course, that had been until the students erupted into howls of laughter. Oliver had received a bigger reaction than to when everyone was first introduced to Fred's, Lee's and George's new makeovers.

And so far, Hermione had only completed one of her dares which was to blow a kiss to Crabbe and Goyle whenever they walked passed. And that's just what she did. Now every time they passed her in the halls they would blush and she would chuckle to herself or if she was feeling cruel she would wink and their blushes would darken.

Hermione did attend Quidditch tryouts but she had kept her distance as she had planned to prank the twins and leave afterwards. She had managed to put a Sticking Charm on the twins' brooms which she learned specifically for that purpose. When the twins were stuck to their brooms failing terribly to remove themselves, Oliver and Hermione had snuck up behind them and used the Aquamenti Charm, effectively soaking the twins until they were dripping water from their hair and clothing.

It had taken them a while to figure out that if they flew their brooms, the water wouldn't reach them, but they had eventually. Hermione and Oliver high fived, bowed to the students present at the tryouts as they applauded and cheered them before she took her leave. True to her word, Oliver hadn't found a better flyer than Harry or at least that's what she'd told him because he hadn't seen Harry fly yet, meaning the only addition to the new was Harry.

Hermione had long since been avoiding all four of her boys since last Wednesday, as things had gotten worse for her in regards to her bullies as they add stepped up their terrorization of her, becoming more -if at all possible- cruel and violent.

Hermione was bruised black and blue and was covered in injuries and cuts. She glamoured every single one of her injuries and kept her distance from anyone and everyone. The boys were worried about her and every time they were in the same vicinity as her, she would change directions and go the opposite way. Hermione had taken to eating in the kitchens with the house-elves who were always kind to her and Bopsy took great care of her injuries as he tried to convince Hermione to tell someone about her mistreatment. But, of course, she refused.

Due to these reasons, Hermione had taken to sleeping in abandoned classrooms, being mindful to use ones she knew wouldn't be searched during the night. On the nights she found herself crying, Peeves would show up and keep her company, doing his best to make her smile and laugh, and when he'd succeeded, he would be beaming a smile of his own, and his cheeks would be more opaque than the rest of him. Peeves had become a good friend of Hermione's and he vowed to get revenge on those who dared to hurt her.

During the night, Hermione would sneak out of Gryffindor tower then sneak back in the morning, before Accio'ing some clean clothes from the boys' room and when she was ready she would head down to the library, back to the abandoned classrooms or to the kitchens, and she frequented these places a lot.

*Flashback… Monday 16th 1991*

On Monday night, Hermione had been walking down the stairs to the empty common room when she felt a presence behind her. Before she could turn around, she was falling forward, down the stairs until she hit the ground at the bottom, landing on her left arm and twisting her ankle in the process. When she turned her eyes back to the staircase, it was to see Lavender with a cruel smile on her face.

Hermione didn't dignify Lavender with a response, she just stood up and limped out of the common room and she walked until she reached the kitchens, cutting through the secret passageways as to not get caught out after curfew.

When she reached the painting at the entrance of the kitchens she tickled the pear and walked through the passageway and made her way to her favourite chair by the fireplace. Bopsy rushed over to Hermione, talking in the sight of his injured friend. He examined her wrist and ankle, bandaging them up, before attending to her ribs, which she had hurt during her fall.

"Misses 'Mione really should tells someones, yous is hurts very badly."

"Bopsy, I'm fine, honestly, I'm dealing with it the best way I know how; by not letting it get to me. This is the first time I've been faced with bullies, and once they realise I'm not going to allow them to get to me, they'll get bored. Please don't tell anyone, it may only make the situation worse."

"Okay, Misses 'Mione," he agreed, but it was obvious he wasn't pleased. Hermione left the kitchens, glamouring her bandages before, limping to one of her abandoned classrooms, where she cried herself to sleep.

*Present time …*

Hermione had awoken in the cold classroom shivering, with the inability to feel her toes, fingers and nose and covered in goosebumps. She had been woken by a note that once she read it informed her there was to be a meeting after dinner for those who were to partake in Professor Snape's advanced potions class. Hermione quickly returned to Gryffindor tower to ready for the school day.

When she entered the room she was immediately surrounded by the girls of her dorm, and several others who she had seen in the common room. Hermione was pushed down on to the ground as the other girls held down her wrists and legs, as Lavender climbed on top of Hermione and she had somehow acquired a spike off the Venomous Tentacula plant.

The Venomous Tentacula plant was known to be dangerous and the spikes contained poison that could be fatal, depending on the amount of poison that was absorbed into the bloodstream, as well the immune system of the individual as the poison was known to affect people in different ways.

Lavender took the index finger of Hermione's right hand and pricked her finger with the spike. She couldn't believe they'd attacked her with a potentially lethal plant. Hermione felt the pain of the poison enter her bloodstream. The girls left her the dorm room, laughing as they did so.

Hermione quickly found her herbology book and re-read through the chapter on the Venomous Tentacula plant, being mindful to memorise the symptoms that would be a cause for concern as the poison in her system being fatal, and those were, headaches, nausea, drowsiness, nose bleeds, inability to concentrate, pains in the chest and stomach and cuts appearing on her body.

Hermione had skipped breakfast, being too focused on her herbology book, and she'd almost been late to her first lesson. She attended all of her lessons of the day, whilst documenting any symptoms she recognised in herself. When dinner came around she made her way to the kitchens to eat, and once she had finished, Bopsy noticed cuts appearing on her body.

Bopsy rushed to Hermione's side to try and heal the cuts but when he did they would just reappear worse than before, the wound being wider and deeper. Bopsy grabbed a hold of Hermione's right hand and squeezed which caused Hermione to break into sobs of pain. Hermione promised Bopsy that she would get them looked at later at the hospital wing. The only symptom she had noticed were the headaches, but that could've been caused by having her head stuck in a book for hours on end, and the recent cuts, so she assumed the poison would eventually make its way out of her system and she would be fine.

Hermione realising she was later for her meeting with Professor Snape, Glamoured the cuts and left the kitchens. As she neared the dungeons, she ran into the man himself.

"Miss. Granger, aren't you supposed to be at a meeting?" he asked.

"I was just heading to the potions classroom now, Professor," she replied.

"Very well, I will accompany you since I am heading that way myself," he said.

Walking down the stairs Hermione placed her right hand on the bannister, forgetting about the pain in her hand, as it had been the hand the poison had been injected into. When her skin touched against the cold stone, she let out a quiet whimper, but not quiet enough. Professor Snape's head whipped around so fast she never saw it coming.

He gently picked up her hand in his and she whimpered again. He couldn't see anything injuries or tells that something was wrong, but he remembered her revealing that she was able to cast Glamour Charms.

Professor Snape held his wand against Hermione's hand and muttered, "Finite Incantatum."

What he saw made him bristle in anger. The veins in her hand were clear to see as they no longer appeared to be the regular blue colour, but they were black, and she had the blisters and cuts to accompany it. Hermione's eyes widened; she hadn't had those when she left the kitchens!

"Are there any other injuries?"

Hermione reluctantly nodded, ashamed that someone would see her so weak and defeated, or at least in her opinion, she was weak.

"Yes, they're Glamoured, too," she muttered.

Professor Snape made to remove the rest of the Glamours from her but she stopped him.

"Not here, please. I don't want anyone to see should they happen upon us," she said and he nodded, carefully leading her towards the classroom.

Meanwhile, Fred, Lee, George and Oliver were all waiting in the classroom for the arrival of Hermione and Professor Snape. Hermione had informed him that maybe he should give Harry and Neville a chance in potions and if it didn't work then they could be moved back to normal lessons and he had hesitantly agreed. So, Neville, Seamus and Harry were also present in the room, along with a number of fifth years that no one seemed to care about.

The occupants of the room were all watching the boys, pacing back and forth and in circles. Every couple of minutes they would all look up at each other, shake their heads and then continue to pace. This had been the case for the past fifteen minutes and the others were beginning to get nervous and fidgety. Hermione had been avoiding them all week; they knew something was wrong, they could all feel it.

Just when they were about to leave the classroom to go in search of Hermione, the door opened and the sight that met them had everyone go stiff. Professor Snape had an arm around Hermione's shoulders as she sobbed uncontrollably. Her eyes were puffy and red and she had tear-stained cheeks.

"Hermione," the four boys whispered painfully.

She walked over to them and they all dropped to their knees so they were at eye level, given they were all much taller than her. Fred and George hugged her and then Lee and Oliver did the same, when she whimpered they pulled back from her as if it had hurt them.

"What happened, Love?"

Hermione shook her head, refusing to answer.

"We'll do it now," Professor Snape said, and Hermione looked up at him terrified. "You have been caught out, Miss. Granger, it's time that you stop keeping secrets," he told her, his expression hard and unmoving.

Everyone in the room watched on in horror as Professor Snape raised his wand to Hermione and cast the counter charm, gasping in surprise whilst Fred, George and Oliver let out strangled cries as they looked at Hermione.

She had cuts and blisters now covering the majority of her face, arms and legs from the Venomous Tentacula poison, she had a broken left wrist, a twisted right ankle, and some scrapes on her palms, she likely had injured her ribs, too, of which they could tell by the way she moved, but the most horrifying thing was that all of the veins in her body had now turned black.

Professor Snape stared at the young girl in sadness; she was clearly being bullied and had gone through it alone, and he knew the feeling. He raised his wand before sending his doe Patronus off to deliver an urgent message to both Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall.

The entire room was silent; the only sounds that could be heard were Hermione's sniffles, and soon Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall entered the potions class before stopping in astonishment at the scene of Hermione Granger; bloodied, bruised, battered and bawling her eyes out.

"Oh, Dear Child," McGonagall whispered sadly before she rushed forward and enveloped Hermione into a comforting hug, easing up slightly when she heard Hermione's yelp.

"Are you well, Miss. Granger?" Dumbledore asked.

"Of course she isn't, Albus," both Snape and McGonagall hissed at him, surprising many of those in the room.

"How long has this been going on for?" Harry asked as he took a step forward.

"Since the night of the Welcoming Feast," she confessed quietly.

"Why didn't you tell anyone?" Neville asked as he and Seamus both moved a step closer to her.

"I thought they were just trying to scare me so I wouldn't be a bad dorm mate, but then they changed."

"They changed?" Seamus said.

"At first they would just keep me awake at night, trying to get to me through my curtains but the boys told me to touch my wand to a knot in the bedpost and it acted like a barrier. They began saying cruel things when they passed me in the corridors. They pushed me around and down the stairs…"

"What!" Four wizards chorused together with looks of fury on their faces, and the twins' cheeks and ears began to turn red.

"When, Miss. Granger?" asked Professor Snape.

Hermione looked to each person in the room and then to Professor McGonagall, who still held her close in a hug. She hadn't let go of her once and she wasn't planning to until Hermione had finished explaining herself.

"Last night in the common room," she muttered.

"And no one witnessed this?" Dumbledore pressed.

"No, Professor, it was late, or rather early and everyone had been in their dorm rooms. As I was walking down the stairs, I felt myself being pushed until I fell and landed on the ground. I was able to get to the kitchens and Bopsy did his best to heal me."

"What else has happened to you, My Dear? And please, don't lie to us," McGonagall asked quietly and softly.

Inside she was livid. She couldn't believe that someone could hurt her newest lion cub; especially her Gryffindors who were noble and brave. What they had done to Hermione is not how a Gryffindor should act.

"I was woken up by Professor Snape's note informing me about the meeting." She turned to look at the other students before saying, "I'm sorry about this, I know that this must be an inconvenience that has disrupted this meeting." They all looked at her as though she belonged in a psychiatric ward.

"I think this takes precedence over a meeting," a fifth year Gryffindor boy said and the other students nodded in agreement; McGonagall felt an instant wave of pride flow through her.

That is how a Gryffindor should act, she thought proudly.

"Please, continue, Miss. Granger," Dumbledore encouraged, his blue eyes not twinkling as they usually did.

"Perhaps, this should be done in a more private setting," Snape suggested, pointedly looking at the other first through to fifth years.

"I believe you're right, Severus," McGonagall said. "Return to your common rooms and do not speak of what you have learned or witnessed, is that understood?"

"Yes, Professor," several voices answered, before the door was opening and closing, leaving only Hermione, her boys and the three professors in the classroom.

"When I woke I made my way back to Gryffindor Tower to…" Hermione was cut off again

"You made your way back to Gryffindor Tower?" Snape said.

"I've been sleeping in abandoned classrooms for the last week," she muttered.

"What!" Fred, George, Lee and Oliver yelled simultaneously.

"I couldn't sleep in my room, and when I tried to sleep in the common room, I was woken by someone throwing water over me," she explained.

"But you could've frozen to death!"

"You could've gotten lost, Lassie!"

"Love, you could've spoken to us!"

"I didn't want to bother you with my problems, and you need your sleep."

"So do you and getting it by sleeping in abandoned classrooms, in the freezing cold, with damp walls and in complete darkness is not it, Spitfire," Fred said angrily.

"It wasn't so bad, I sometimes had company," she muttered.

"Who?" The four boys demanded.

"Peeves," she answered and at her reply, they released the breath they were holding and their anger dissipated slightly.

"Peeves?" asked Professor Snape in confusion, his reaction being mirrored by those that weren't aware of Peeves' soft spot for Hermione.

"Yes, he's very sweet; he spent most of his time making me laugh," she said with a small smile. The first they had seen. "When I returned to the common room, I summoned my uniform from the boys' room and..." once again she was cut off.

"Why is your clothing in their dorm room and not yours?" McGonagall asked with a frown.

George answered for her. "When we first arrived we placed a Privacy Charm on her trunk and the girls in her room repeatedly tried to break through it. So before the charm could be broken we moved her trunk and belongings into our room for safekeeping. Everything she has is in our room and we had the space for it."

Fred spoke after George wanting to be a part of the conversation. "Yeah and her cloak was destroyed, it looked as though it had been shredded, there was hardly anything left of it." Everyone in the room took in a deep breath.

"I told you, Fred, that was an accident. It was a cat," Hermione responded.

"Naw, Lassie, it wisnae, when Fred an' Lee told mae aboot it, a asked Brown if anyone in ye dorm had a cat a' she told mae tha' naw one did."

"How did you do that without her getting suspicious?" Hermione asked Oliver.

"Oh ye know? A told her a was doing a survey fer a class," he replied.

"Please continue, and no more interruptions," McGonagall said, pinning the four wizards with a glance.

"Sorry," they mumbled.

"When I entered my dorm room, I was surrounded by several girls, I was held to the ground whilst someone used a spike from a plant to prick my finger, which is the main cause for my appearance now. Bopsy tried to heal the cuts but they reappear worse than before."

"What plant was it, Miss. Granger?" Professor Snape asked softly and everyone stared at him in shock. They didn't think he was capable of the way he was treating Hermione, and he rolled his eyes at their reactions whilst McGonagall smirked knowingly.

"Venomous Tentacula," she muttered.

Her boys frowned, trying to recall the plant they had once studied in herbology, whilst the professors stared at her in horror.

"Miss. Granger, the poison of that plant can be fatal," Dumbledore stated gravely and Hermione nodded, unaffected by his words.

"I know," she mumbled. "I've memorised the symptoms that point towards it being fatal for an individual, I have only documented the cuts on myself, and I believe the colouring of my veins is due to my immune system fighting off the poison in my body. I believe the poison is not fatal for me."

"Who did this to you?" he asked.

"I don't wish to say, I don't want to get them in trouble."

At this Fred, George, Lee and Oliver scoffed.

"They'll get a lot more than just getting into trouble. -" George said.

"- We'll kill them," Fred said and Lee and Oliver nodded in agreement.

"I think it's best that no one knows the identity of the ones responsible, I don't want them going to prison for murder," Hermione pointed to the boys.

"We have to do something; those involved must be punished for their actions. Who was involved?" Professor McGonagall said.

"The girls. Some of them were directly involved, whereas others preferred to verbally abuse me or just laugh when someone did. I don't know why but the female population hates me."

"I'm sure that's not true."

"It is; they either glare or sneer at her," Fred said.

"I don't want this happening to someone else. Can we call a meeting and inform the school. I was weak and I was scared, I just wanted to wait until they got bored of hurting me, but now I see they would've continued for as long as I allowed them to. Seeing as my secret's no longer so, I want the school population to know and understand what happened to me, so it can be prevented from happening to someone else."

"That's a very brave and inspiring decision, Miss. Granger," Dumbledore stated.

"Gryffindor," she said as she pointed to herself.

"And if we have a school meeting we can watch the way the crowd reacts to the news. We can distinguish between those that are guilty and those that are innocent," spoke Snape.

"I didn't think of that, that's very sneaky," Hermione huffed and Snape pointed to himself.

"Slytherin," he said, she and the other professors laughed at him as her boys stared in astonishment. Snape just made a joke! They couldn't believe it. He'd actually made a joke. In front of them!

"May I place my Glamours back on? I don't want anyone to see until we're in the great hall, the shock factor will hopefully work in our favour."

"If that is what you wish, Miss. Granger."

She nodded and did so, McGonagall pulling back slowly before taking her face in her hands.

"Are you certain you want to do this, My Dear? You don't have to if you don't want to."

"I'm sure, Professor; if I do this they'll see what's happened to me. Then maybe they'll think twice about doing it to someone else, maybe the other students will realise how harmful bullying can be."

McGonagall smiled proudly at her young cub. A true Gryffindor indeed, she thought to herself.

Dumbledore raised his wand and cast his Patronus and he sent the magnificent phoenix off with a message for all professors to gather all students and as many ghosts as they could find and to send them to the great hall for an emergency meeting. He provided instructions to separate the boys and girls placing them on opposite sides of the great hall. Dumbledore thought it would be easier to spot the culprits as well as to see if what he had been told about the female population of Hogwarts was to be true.

When McGonagall moved away from Hermione she made her way over to Fred and George who hugged her close to their bodies as they breathed a sigh of relief in knowing that she was going to be okay. They let go of her as she turned towards Lee and Oliver and they mimicked the twins' actions, hugging her gently and close to their bodies whilst sighing in relief.

McGonagall looked on at the scene and at the bond that surrounded the five Gryffindors. She looked over to Snape to see him giving her a look that she translated to, "See? I was right," and she nodded subtly to him.

She now understood what he had observed between her cubs and she decided that she would keep a closer eye on them. Especially Hermione, all of this had happened right under her nose and she would never forgive herself.

A Patronus of a mouse appeared in front of Dumbledore, letting them know that the students and ghosts had been gathered and they awaited their arrival in the great hall.

"Are you certain you are feeling up to this, Miss. Granger? Perhaps we should have Madam Pomphrey check you over before heading to the great hall," McGonagall suggested, observing her worriedly.

"I feel perfectly fine, Professor, I know my appearance may be frightening, but I'm only experiencing one of the symptoms of fatality from the poison and it appears to have stopped now, and I'm not in any paint. I see no danger in waiting for Madam Pomphrey to look me over afterwards."

Fred and George each took a hold of one of her hands, Oliver rested his hand on the small of her back, and Lee walked beside them with the professors walking in front of them.

"Am I correct in my assumptions that you wish to accompany, Miss. Granger?" He asked her boys once they reached the great hall and they nodded in confirmation.

Professor McGonagall put her arm around Hermione's shoulders, Professors Snape and Dumbledore were in front of them and the boys were behind them.

The great hall doors were pushed open and the group entered and walked down the walkway towards the front, as the students and ghosts began whispering between them, and the professors who don't know what was happening watched on in confusion.

When they reached the front of the great hall they turned to face their audience. When Hermione was noticed to be the one at the front, most of the female population either glared or had looks of disgust aimed in her direction. The professors noticed this too and they weren't too pleased about it either. Snape's face twitched as he felt the urge to growl at the girls, McGonagall was horrified at the treatment of her new cub, especially the Gryffindors, and Dumbledore's mouth set in a thin, tight line and his eyes pinched. It was time to put an end to the mistreatment of Hermione. When Dumbledore spoke, the usual friendly and warm tone to his voice was not present; he spoke gravely and he was barely controlling his anger and disappointment.

"You might all be wondering why it is you have all been called into attendance tonight and not only are your professors present, but the ghosts that roam this castle are also. It has come to my attention that we have a student who has been terrorized by the female population and terrible and unspeakable things have been done to her." His eyes scanned the crowd, seeing the surprised and confused looks of the males, and the worried and confused looks of the females.

"Fortunately for you, ladies, she has refused to identify her tormentors as she does not wish for you to be punished too severely for your behaviour and actions. It is thanks to her that you are still in this castle as if you are identified you will be expelled. Despite all she has been made to suffer, she wishes to protect her tormentors, the tormentors that could have easily killed her!" Dumbledore's voice resonated in the silence of the great hall and everyone could be seen flinching.

A third year boy gingerly raised his hand and Dumbledore looked to him.

"Professor Dumbledore, Sir, you said that they could have killed her, how?"

"I will leave that for her to tell you," Dumbledore replied, and he looked to Hermione "Are you ready, Miss. Granger?" Hermione nodded, and she stepped forward, no longer being shielded by her professors.

"For those that don't know, I'm Hermione Granger, and I've been bullied for reasons I can't understand. They began with insults which barely registered before the verbal abuse worsened and I won't repeat the things they said to or about me. Once verbal abuse was no longer enough to keep them amused, they turned to physical violence, pushing me down in the halls or on the way to class. At one point, I had a plant pot dropped on my head but the pinnacle of the violence occurred just this morning. I'm currently wearing a Glamour, and it's going to be removed so that you may see what it is they have done to me."

The moment the Glamour was removed, the occupants of the hall gasped in horror and shock, as her entire body was streak with black where her veins could be seen. The hall broke out into noise; some of the boys shouting at the girls in disgust for what they had put Hermione through, some shouting, "what did they do to you?", "who was it?" and, "how did that happen?"

McGonagall quickly silenced the room with a Sonorous Charm and her wand pointed to her throat when she spotted Hermione rubbing at her temples and wincing. McGonagall gave Hermione an encouraging nod.

"I'm not going to reveal identities of my bullies, as if I do, they are more than likely to be expelled, and I don't wish for that to happen," she spoke and everyone stared at her in shock.

A fourth year boy raised his hand and Hermione nodded to him.

"Why are you being so nice to them after everything they did to you?" He asked, confusion filling his voice and nods of agreement could be seen from others.

"What's your name?"

"James," he answered.

"Well, James, even though they did all of this to me, and they hurt me in more ways than one, I will never change who I am for anyone..." she was cut off by Fred as he stepped forward.

"Anyone who has gotten to know Hermione will know how selfless and kind she is."

George stepped forward next.

"Hermione's hilarious and scarily smart! Seriously, she scares me!" He admitted and chuckles were heard as Hermione smiled at him.

Oliver stepped forward, wishing to get his opinion on Hermione heard, too.

"Hermione is tae loyal fer her own good," Oliver said whilst glaring at the Gryffindor girls murderously. "She's brave an' she's proving tha' fact by standin' up here in front af ye all an' telling ye what happened tae her." To lighten the mood slightly Oliver made a joke. "An' she's got a wicked arm on her, jus' ask Fred," he said, and Fred subconsciously rubbed the arm Hermione had punched a couple of weeks ago, remembering the incident.

"If I name those responsible, I'll be stooping to the same level as them. If my bullies want to do the right thing and come forward themselves, it's their decision and the right one to make, but if they wish to be cowards, then I feel sorry for them. I'm a Muggleborn and magic was kept from me until I received my Hogwarts letter, and for that reason, just like other Muggleborns, I'm at a disadvantage in this world, as I have to learn how to be a part of a world the rest of you already know how to navigate. No one should be kept away from the world they were born into or born a part of. Turning them in would mean they'd lose their education and I don't want that to happen to anyone, no matter their behaviour."

"As for my injuries, most of them have been healed, but I currently have a possible broken left wrist, possible cracked ribs and cuts and blisters covering most of my body. I've been pushed to the ground more times than I can count, but most recently, I was pushed down a flight of stairs." Gasps rang out. "Luckily, I had almost reached the bottom, so it wasn't that bad of a fall but it could've been so much worse if I had been further up the staircase. I was terrorized during the night so I wasn't able to sleep, and I started sleeping elsewhere. This morning when I returned to my dorm room to ready for the day, I was attacked by several girls, and in the process, I was injected with poison from a potentially fatal plant. "

"What plant, Miss. Granger?" Professor Sprout asked with a frown, looking at her worriedly.

"Venomous Tentacula," she answered, most of the students looked confused, whereas those that took herbology at a higher level gasped, as did some of the professors. "Luckily, I have only shown one symptom of the poison being fatal in my blood, and I feel perfectly fine. I believe the cause for the black in veins is my body's immune system fighting to destroy the poison. My bullies got lucky, as it could have very well killed me."

"You are all now aware of how serious this situation is," Dumbledore stepped forward, drawing attention to him. "Miss. Granger could have been killed due to the horrific and malicious actions of others. Let it be known, that not only has Miss. Granger been verbally and physically abused, but some of her personal belongings have been destroyed and vandalised, too. The verbal and physical violence alone could be cause for expulsion, and she has now been attacked with a potentially fatal poison, and that is grounds for a trip to Azkaban. If I were aware of those responsible for Miss. Granger's suffering, l would see to it they were suitably punished. All of those involved owe a great debt to Miss. Granger, for showing you kindness and compassion when you did not return the sentiment. The staff at Hogwarts are to be keeping a very close eye on the female population for the remainder of the school year, and you are not permitted to travel in groups of more than three." He kept his eyes on the crowd before him, before turning to look at Hermione. "Miss. Granger, do you have any final words?"

"I was wrong for my response to my bullies. I thought that if I ignored it, if I didn't dignify them with responses, they would get bored and it would go away, but it didn't. I didn't tell anyone and I should've, and if I had, maybe things wouldn't have gotten as bad as they did, or maybe they would've gotten worse, I don't know what would've happened, but I should've taken the risk. The only reason I'm stood in front of you all right now, is because a professor noticed I was hiding something. And if it wasn't for that professor I would still be suffering, so I would like to say thank you and I truly appreciate how observant this professor is. I'm not going to say their name as I don't wish to get a detention for embarrassing them," she said, and the hall filled with chuckles, "But can we please get a round of applause for this professor?" She asked, and everyone in the room clapped, and Hermione knew that if the students knew who they were clapping for, half of them would never admit to willingly praising and thanking him.

"So before I go to the hospital wing to be checked over, I want to make sure that you all understand what it is I've gone through and that you shouldn't have to. So if you are getting bullied, please tell someone like I should have, don't make the same mistakes I did." T

he hall burst into applause once more.

Hermione couldn't tell you what happened next. She felt fine, there was nothing wrong with her apart from the pain in her ribs and wrist, and before she knew it, she was looking out at the crowd in front of her and she went light-headed.

"I feel dizzy," she muttered, and the last thing she heard were gasps, as her eyes fell shut and she collapsed to the ground.

"Hermione!"

The four boys saw her sway on her feet, but she hit the ground before they could catch her. Oliver was the first to react, picking her up in his arms before rushing down the walkway, out of the great hall and to the hospital wing with Fred, George, Lee and Professors McGonagall, Dumbledore and Snape not far behind him.

As Oliver reached the hospital wing, he kicked open the doors and the heavy wood slammed against the stones walls. Madam Pomphrey was beside him instantly, instructing him to place Hermione on one of the beds.

"Oh Goodness, what happened to her?" She asked, looking horrified at Hermione's appearance.

Oliver was in a stake of panic and shock, that he was barely able to get his words out.

"Bullied. Pushed doon the stairs. Venomous Tentacula poisoning," he muttered, not hearing her gasp in response.

When Oliver gently placed her on the bed and took a step back, allowing Madam Pomphrey to get to Hermione, he noticed that his white school shirt was now covered in blood, and he turned his eyes back to Hermione. She was pale, too pale. He couldn't see her chest rising or falling, indicating that she was breathing.

She wasn't breathing!

His panic intensified at the realisation and he pushed his blood-covered hands into his hair, tugging on the strands painfully.

"Oliver," he heard.

He spun around, seeing the professors, Lee and the twins stood behind him and staring between him and Hermione.

"She isnae breathin'! She isnae breathin'!" he whispered with unshed tears in his eyes.

Chapter Fifteen

Hospital Wing - Tuesday 17th September 1991

Three of the boys fell to the ground on their knees with heavy breathing and tears in their eyes. The professors -particularly Snape and McGonagall- were observing the four boys and their reactions whilst they too tried to come to terms with what they had just learned, and three of the boys, in particular, were taking the news far worse than the other.

Lee felt as though he had lost a little sister, someone he would look out for and protect whether she liked it or not. But Fred, George and Oliver felt as though their whole lives had come to a complete standstill. As though the world had just crashed down around them. As though they were missing a part of them. They didn't feel right. They felt cold, alone and empty.

Five minutes later, Madam Pomphrey called them over to the bed where a lifeless Hermione lay, so they could have a moment alone with her before they informed the Ministry of Magic of her death.

They rushed to her side and she was cold, pale and lifeless. Just lifeless.

Oliver asked for a camera to take pictures as evidence of the crime committed against her, including images of her bruised ribs, before putting the camera aside and staring at Hermione's body. She was gone.

Fred and George each took one of her hands, Oliver placed his hand to her cheek, feeling her much colder temperature, and Lee stood a little ways off to their side.

As soon as skin contact was made Hermione took a small intake of breath. She was breathing again! Madam Pomphrey pushed her way through the boys and shooed them away so she could attend to Hermione and quickly heal her injuries before she was once again lost to them.

Fred, George and Oliver were mesmerized by the rising and falling of her chest. She was alive! That they hadn't lost her and all the pieces slotted back together and they felt right again. Whole. Complete. Warm.

The most difficult injuries to heal were those caused by the Venomous Tentacula poison. Madam Pomphrey left Hermione's side to quickly retrieve the potions she believed could possibly heal the cuts and wounds. The fact she was once again breathing meant the poison in her system could've only been a small amount and her immune system was trying to fight it off. Coupled with treatments she would be given, Hermione had a chance for a complete recovery, as long as she made it through the night.

Fred, George and Oliver made their way back to Hermione's side and resumed the positions they were in before. The twins were each holding one of her hands and Oliver with his hand resting on her cheek, and her temperature was beginning to rise. They were all staring at her face, looking for signs that she was either getting better or worse.

That was until they began to glow a bright gold that started at their hands and flowed into Hermione until her body was covered in the glow. Madam Pomphrey rushed back to Hermione's bed after noticing the golden light and stopped in her tracks, dropping the potion vials from her hands and they smashing against the hard floor, bathing everyone's feet in the liquids.

Professors Snape, McGonagall and Dumbledore watched in amazement as Fred, George and Oliver began to glow and in turn Hermione. Hermione levitated off the hospital bed slowly until she was hovering a foot above it. Her injuries began to heal themselves from head to toe. All her scars and bruises that would take days; maybe weeks to completely heal disappeared within a matter of seconds.

To say that the adults in the room were stunned would be an understatement. Their jaws hung open comically and their eyes were wide as they watched the scene in front of them. The thoughts running through Professors Snape's and McGonagall's minds were similar to 'oh shit, he knows, there's no way we can hide this.'

Whereas Professor Dumbledore was thinking something along the lines of, It has been confirmed, she is the one.

The tears that had escaped from the boys; eyes had now stopped as they watched on in amazement, as they healed their Hermione. They looked to each other, knowing what it was they had to do –although they didn't know how- and they nodded before closing their eyes and concentrating on every injury that covered Hermione's body.

When they opened their eyes barely a minute later, they had smiles on their faces and Hermione slowly and softly floated down back on to the bed. Her breathing was now at a regular pace, her body temperature was back to normal, she no longer looked pale and sickly, but she had back her peaches and cream complexion that showed a small smattering of freckles on the bridge of her nose. They all breathed out a sigh of relief and looked back to the astonished audience in the room, only just remembering that they weren't alone.

Lee was the first to speak.

"Wh-wh-what the blo-bloody fu-fuck w-was th-that?" He stuttered, paying no mind to the professors and school nurse in the room, after all, that was what they were all thinking, too.

They looked at him and shrugged gleefully with grins on their faces.

Everyone's attention was diverted back to Hermione as she let out a sleepy groan. She opened her eyes slowly, to see identical turquoise and brown puppy dog eyes looking deeply into her chocolate brown ones, as if they were searching for something. They must have found it as they broke into face splitting grins, much bigger than the ones they had worn previously and Hermione couldn't help it when she responded with a smile of her own.

After Madam Pomphrey had finished getting her bearings, she rushed to Hermione, casting spells to check her vital signs as well as looking for injuries. Her vitals read that she was completely healthy and she had no injuries. She was speechless. She relayed the results to the others and the boys let out a laugh of relief, whilst the professors let out the breath they were holding.

Both McGonagall and Snape exchanged glances and anxiously turned their eyes to Dumbledore who looked like the cat that had gotten the cream. They were going to have to do some damage control and keep him in line. Merlin would be resurrected before they'd allow him to interfere in Hermione's life, especially at the young age she was.

Hermione sat up slowly, Lee walked over to her bed and she hugged all of her boys tightly. She looked over to her professors and gave them a reassuring smile and they smiled back at her.

"Well... Miss. Granger, it looks as though you're completely healthy," Madam Pomphrey said disbelievingly.

"Does that mean I go can now?"

"No, you may be healed but I still want to monitor you and make sure that all traces of the poison are no longer in your system to cause you any problems in the future," she said and Hermione huffed in annoyance whilst the others chuckled at her behaviour.

"Do you mind if I have a moment alone with Professor Dumbledore in private?" Hermione asked and the boys gave her scrutinizing looks before hesitantly nodding.

"We'll be jus' behind the curtains," Oliver promised and his heart all but melted with the soft and tender smile she gave him and he smiled widely back in return.

"What are you grinning at?" Fred asked with a smirk.

"Nothing," Oliver said quickly.

Professor Dumbledore walked over to Hermione's bed and closed the curtains, being mindful to cast a Silencing Charm for privacy.

"What is it you wish to discuss with me?" Dumbledore asked, although he already suspected.

"I've changed my mind, Professor; I want the people that did this to me to be punished."

"Of course, Miss. Granger," he tipped his head.

"But I want to be the one to punish them; to teach them a lesson."

"Oh? And what would that entail?"

"Nothing too bad, just a few pranks that will not harm them, but I can't guarantee it won't be embarrassing. I believe humiliation is a far worse punishment, rather than detentions and suspensions. Embarrassment stays with you for a lifetime."

"And what is it you want from me, Miss. Granger?"

"Your permission to do so, Professor, without me or anyone else who chooses to aid me getting punished," she stated hopefully.

"Now, Miss. Granger, you know that I cannot allow you to do such a thing to another student, so if I see you, you will most certainly get detention."

"So if I don't get caught, Professor, it's okay?"

Dumbledore remained silent as he dropped the Silencing Charm and walked out of the curtains and when he turned around to close them behind him, he winked at her and she grinned evilly.

They deserve everything that's coming their way, she thought.

After fifteen minutes of discussion about the best course of action for Hermione, they all left her in the hospital wing to rest up. The boys all kissed her on the cheek, hugged her and then left back to Gryffindor Tower and the professors left for Dumbledore's office.

Professor Dumbledore's Office

They entered his office with Professor Dumbledore taking a seat behind the desk and Professors Snape and McGonagall took a seat opposite him.

"My suspicions have been confirmed; she is indeed the one and those boys are her mates. That is why they have such a bond of friendship; they recognized each other without knowingly doing so. After what I have just witnessed, the bond between them has been cemented," Dumbledore said.

"They are way too young, Albus," stated McGonagall with a frown on her face.

"Age is no longer a factor, Minerva. The bond has been formed but not yet completed. I believe the cause of the bond formation is that her life was threatened and her mates unknowingly felt the pressure of losing her and subconsciously they protected her through healing."

"They didn't just heal her, they brought her back from the dead," Snape added in his usual bored tone, rolling his eyes.

"Messrs. Weasley and Wood were able to do so due to the power of the bond they share. The bond is stronger than it was before, so now they will be stronger than they were before and they will likely be inseparable for the remainder of the foreseeable future."

"If the bond is formed but not yet complete, how would they complete?" McGonagall asked.

Dumbledore raised an incredulous eyebrow at her and she scowled at him and bristled.

"No, Albus, she is far too young and so are those boys," she hissed like the cat she was.

"I agree, Minerva, when it is time for the bond to be completed, they will know."

"Do they know about the bond?" Snape asked.

"I am unsure; we will have to observe their actions towards each other more closely. Now that the bond is stronger than before, they may feel the need to be in the constant presence of each other and they will likely become restless if they are separated for long periods of time. They may be able to weakly sense each other's emotions and as the bond intensifies, a mind link is a possible development. When the bond is complete all of these aspects, will, of course, become a lot more powerful, but for the next few years they should be diluted," he explained and they nodded their understanding. "We should also start Miss. Granger's training now that she has been identified as the subject of the prophecy."

"No, Albus, I have told you before, she is far too young and you will not interrupt her life. She is a tremendously powerful and intelligent witch, she will likely figure it out herself. I'd bet my last galleon that she's already aware there's something different about her, and maybe the female population can sense that, too."

"You think that's why they've been treating her the way they have?" Snape asked McGonagall, seeing her logic in the situation.

"It must be. When I first met her I could sense she was not the same as other witches. They are jealous of what she is. Of what she will become, subconsciously, of course," she said and they nodded in agreement.

"Besides, she's already training herself; she doesn't need our help; she is doing perfectly fine on her own," added Snape.

"What do you mean, Severus?" Dumbledore asked curiously.

McGonagall shot Snape a look. He looked her right in the eye and he gave her a look that she translated to, "he'll find out eventually, but if we inform him now we may have the ability to control his actions towards her." McGonagall reluctantly nodded her agreement.

"She has confided in me that she has perfected a number of advanced spells and charms. Not to mention her brewing of potions rivals the talents of fourth years and her essay writings rival fifth years and upwards."

"Really? Interesting, what spells and charms?" Dumbledore asked.

Snape quickly listed off the spells and Dumbledore appeared to be surprised yet pleased.

"She's curious and likes a challenge which the lessons with the other first years aren't giving her. She gets bored too easily. She has already been moved to advanced potions, if we move her into other advanced classes, those that don't suspect will definitely find it strange. We can't draw too much attention to her magical ability," McGonagall stated.

"Agreed, however, the Sorting Hat did that for us. So we leave her to her own devices to learn and develop. If she wishes to, she may approach any one of us and we will help her," Dumbledore said.

Perhaps it wouldn't be too difficult to keep him in line, McGonagall thought hopefully, but she seriously doubted it.

Fred, George, Lee and Oliver entered the Gryffindor common room through the portal and were instantly bombarded by the males occupying the space.

"Is she okay?"

"Is she going to be alright?"

"Is she dead?"

"Did she make it?"

"How is she?"

"Have her injuries been healed yet?"

"She's alive, right?"

The boys noticed some of the girls sat at the back of the common room looking rather pleased with the outcome and they weren't going to take that lying down. The boys pushed their way through the crowd of anxious students and made their way towards the girls who had smug smiles plastered all over their faces.

When they looked up and noticed the four very livid boys with murderous eyes, they all stood shakily with the fear of Merlin in them and walked backwards as the boys advanced, especially when they noticed the blood-covered Oliver. The boys got closer and closer to the girls who turned and ran up the girl's stairwell knowing that the charms would stop them from following. Once again, they had smug smiles on their faces. But they instantly dropped when they say the boys removing their wands from their robes and pointing them at the stairs, the girls scurried away in terror and to their dorm rooms.

The boys counted to ten and then backwards, placing their wands back into their robes before turning around and walking into the middle of the common room, taking seats on the couch and armchairs. They were surrounded and questions were being repeatedly asked.

"By the time a reached the hospital wing, her condition had worsened," Oliver said, deliberately leaving out the fact she'd died. Everyone looked at the blood covering his shirt and hands with a look of horror and they paled at the news. "Madam Pomphrey was able tae heal her, an' she's a lot better."

"As long as any and all traces of the Venomous Tentacula poison are no longer in her system, she can be released from the hospital wing tomorrow and she'll be alright," George said, and the four boys looked relieved and exhausted, and no one could blame them.

"Now, if you'll excuse us, we have some planning to do," Fred spoke with a truly evil glint in his eyes and the others didn't say anything to deter him, they agreed with his plans.

Even if they didn't know what they were going to do yet, the Gryffindor boys would all agree wholeheartedly with them. It didn't matter that some of their girlfriends may be the targets; they wouldn't be their girlfriends for much longer. That's right, there was going to be a lot of single Gryffindors after tonight.

Fred, George, Lee and Oliver went to their respective rooms to wash and change into their pyjamas, and fifteen minutes, Lee had fallen asleep and the twins couldn't blame him, it'd been a tiring day but they had work to do. They closed the curtains around his bed and continued to plan until they were interrupted by a knock on the door. Fred got up to answer and seeing it was Oliver at the door, he let him in. Oliver was wearing grey drawstring bottoms and a white t-shirt similar to the twins who were wearing red and blue.

Oliver helped the boys plan well into the night until they were satisfied with their decisions and they had all agreed that Peeves would be a huge asset.

"Can a ask ye a question?" Oliver asked the twins and they nodded. "When yer 'round Hermione, do ye feel different?" The twins shared a look. "What?"

"There's a reason to why we met her on the train -" Fred started.

"- It wasn't a coincidence. -" George spoke next.

"- We got this feeling that we've only felt once before in Diagon Alley, when we went for school supplies. Our bodies tingled, our skin burned and our magic hummed. -"

"- We felt relaxed, content and...Complete, I guess is the right word to use. But before we even got back to the Burrow, every one of those feelings disappeared and we felt like something was missing, it didn't feel right. -"

"- But when we got on the Hogwarts Express, all of those feelings returned almost immediately. So we decided to follow them, follow the tug that we felt and the further into the train we got, the more powerful the feelings got. -"

"- Until we heard a noise, so we followed it to a compartment and when we opened the door, we became overwhelmed by the sensation of happiness that we felt and we heard a noise again. -"

"- And when we finally looked up we saw, -"

"Hermione," Oliver said, cutting off Fred and the twins nodded in confirmation.

"- Yeah and when we aren't around her, we don't feel right, but when we are we feel happy. It doesn't matter what mood we're in, we could be angry or tired, but when Hermione walks into the room it's replaced by complete content and relaxation. She calms us. -" Fred continued.

"- We can sometimes tell if or when she's about to walk into a room that we're in."

"Tha' how ye were able tae track her when she was ignorin' an' avoidin' us all af last week. Ye could sense her?" Oliver guessed and the twins nodded.

"- And the first time we touched her, we felt like a bolt of electricity had surged through our bodies -" Fred said.

"- Why do you ask?" George questioned.

Oliver gave him a look that he recognized.

"You wanted to know because you feel the same when you're around her, don't you?" Fred spoke up.

"Aye, a feel ev'rything tha' ye jus' described. The tingling tae the feeling af bein' complete, tae the electricity when a first touched her. When a was on the train a felt strange, different. A got this feeling like a was meant tae be there an' tha' somethin' was gonna happen this year. When a first met her it was like a wee flicker, but the more time tha' a spent with her, the stronger it felt. A guess a can kind af sense when she's in the room. A jus' thought tha' it was normal so a dinnae question it. Merlin, the night af the sleepover is the best night's sleep a've ev'r had."

"We felt it, too," Fred and George chorused.

"Somethin's happenin' between us. Do ye think she feels the same?"

"We're not sure. We've never asked her," said George with a shrug.

"There's something definitely happening between us and as soon as we touched her she started breathing. She came back from the dead! I just thought that it might've been a coincidence, but when we healed her, all of her... I don't know how we did that but I knew that we could," Fred said.

"A felt tha' tae, like there was somethin' guiding us, tellin' us what tae do," Oliver spoke and the twins nodded.

"So we should talk to her about this sometime in the future, when everything's calmed down," George said and the others agreed.

They let the conversation drop and eventually they all fell asleep, dreaming about getting revenge on the harpies and hags that had dared to hurt their Hermione.

Wednesday 18th September 1991

Hermione awoke in the hospital wing feeling groggy; she hadn't slept well at all. It didn't matter that she wasn't cold, that she wasn't sleeping on the floor or that she was no longer in pain. She knew why she hadn't slept well, it was the same reason she hadn't slept well the past week and a half. It was because she wasn't in Gryffindor Tower with the twins. And possibly Oliver?

She had begun to notice ever since she had met Oliver, that the feelings that accompanied her when she was around the twins seemed to appear with Oliver too. When she first met him it felt like the beginning of a fire, the first flame, but the longer she was around him, the more the feelings intensified.

Something had changed with him and the twins. She could feel it, when she first opened her eyes to see their very handsome faces and smiles with their beautiful eyes looking right back at her, and she couldn't resist smiling herself. She had felt blinded by their answering smiles. Something had definitely changed.

She had died, she knew it. She couldn't feel Fred or George or Oliver. She no longer felt pain. She felt cold and was surrounded by darkness. She was terrified and she could see a light coming towards her that she felt inclined to touch, but she knew she shouldn't. There would be no going back if she did.

She was powerless to the pull it had on her. As she was slowly reaching out towards the light she was stopped in her tracks, her fingertips barely millimetres from touching it. She spotted a golden glow in the distance flickering and she walked towards it, forgetting the light in front of her.

As she got closer to the glow, the flicker became more powerful and intensified. Hermione could hear her boys; voices, their laughter; she could feel the pain of their loss and see the tears threatening to spill in their eyes. She couldn't leave them; she had to get back to them. Just before she touched the glowing light it transformed into an eight-foot-tall burning flame and when she touched it she felt no pain, no fear and no worry. All she knew was that she was going back to her boys. She was going home, and she couldn't be more thankful.

Thinking back to the conversation she'd had with Professor Dumbledore had her mind spinning with idea after idea to teach those who actually did cause her almost death a lesson. She wasn't going to injure them because that would be stooping to their level. No, she was going to humiliate them greatly. She didn't doubt that her boys would want to be part of her revenge plan. Merlin, they'd probably planned their own revenge scheme. But if they could combine the two they would be incredible. She also wanted to get Peeves involved, after all, he has been pranking for centuries and he was technically dead so he couldn't be punished if he was caught, and he would be caught; he wasn't very subtle.

Hermione was finally released from the hospital wing and the boys came to collect her before breakfast. They made their way towards the great hall, the twins holding her hands and Oliver with his hand on the small of her back.

Lee walked beside them; he could feel a change within the friendship group, especially after witnessing what he did yesterday in the hospital wing; it wasn't a bad change and it didn't bother him, in fact, he found that the group was stronger than ever. But he didn't feel the need to touch her as much, he still felt protective, but more like a big brother would and he could see the protectiveness in the other boys by the way they were reacting to her and their need to be closer to her. Something had definitely changed.

When they reached the great hall doors they stopped.

"Are you sure you want to do this, Love?"

"Ye don' have tae do this if ye don' want tae, Lassie," Oliver said softly.

"Yeah, we could eat in the kitchens, Spitfire."

"Boys, I'm perfectly fine," she assured them.

"Alright, then let's do this."

Hermione took a deep breath and they walked through the doors. As soon as they entered the great hall went silent, that was until the professors, every male in the room and the girls from the Hufflepuff table stood up and cheered loudly, applauding her. Hermione smiled whilst her entire face flamed bright red. They made their way to the Gryffindor table and some of the boys made room for them and she beamed at them; they smiled proudly back at her.

Professor McGonagall came over to her after she had eaten and pulled her to one side.

"Professor?" Hermione questioned.

"Miss. Granger, I would like for you to take the day off from classes to rest. I will give Messrs. Weasley, Wood and Jordan a pass from classes also, as you have all been through a trying time."

"No, thank you, Professor, I'm perfectly alright to attend lessons," she replied and McGonagall frowned.

"I don't think that is a wise choice, Miss. Granger. But I am willing to compromise; you may take tomorrow off from lessons as it is Thursday and your birthday."

"My what?"

"Your birthday, Dear. Don't tell me you've forgotten," she said and Hermione looked at her sheepishly. "Well, that settles it then. You will take tomorrow off and I will also give passes to the others," she said, and before Hermione could refuse, McGonagall walked away quickly and feeling pleased with herself.

Hermione made her way back to the table and sat down grumpily at having been outsmarted by her professor.

"What was tha' aboot, Lassie?"

"I'll tell you later," she muttered and he nodded.

Just like Hermione said she would she attended all her classes for the day. The boys in her class were friendly with her -except Ron, of course- and they all kept a close eye on the girls in the class and watched as they repeatedly glared at Hermione during lessons.

During herbology, the class learned about the Venomous Tentacula plant and its effect on people and for obvious reasons, Professor Sprout used Hermione as an example, disregarding her embarrassment, as she was too busy scolding the female students, whether they were guilty or not. She also reminded the class to inform a professor if they knew information about Hermione's bullies, and if they did, they didn't say anything.

In charms, she learned how to perfect the Mending Charm and, of course, she was executing it perfectly within fifteen minutes and she received the praise she rightfully deserved.

After attending lunch with her boys she went to the last lesson of the day, defence against the dark arts, where the class learned and perfected (at least Hermione did) their first defensive spell, Verdimillious. She took notes on the spell about the effects it can have on an individual and how it can be used. The spell was generally used to find hidden items, but it could be used in duelling, if done correctly. When used in duelling, the spell creates a force of electrical energy that crackles around the opponent.

As usual, the boys had another hour of lessons so they weren't waiting for her outside of her classroom and so she began to slowly make her way towards Gryffindor Tower with Professor Dumbledore meeting Hermione on the fourth floor.

"Good afternoon, Professor Dumbledore."

"Good afternoon, Miss. Granger, I was wondering if you might accompany me to my office."

They made their way to the gargoyles were Professor Dumbledore spoke the password, "Sugar Quills," and stepped onto the stairwell as the stairs proceeded to move upwards until it came to a stop at a door.

When Hermione entered the room behind Dumbledore she smiled to herself seeing the cluttered but tidy shelves and desk. The walls were covered in portraits of the previous headmasters and headmistresses of Hogwarts and they were all whispering and stealing glances at her; some when she wasn't looking and others being less subtle.

"Please take a seat, Miss. Granger," he said. Hermione did as he instructed, sitting down in a seat opposite his desk. "Now that you are out of the hospital wing and have been given a clean bill of health, we can't have you sleeping in your dorm room, as I do not wish to place you in any unnecessary danger. For this reason, we need to find a replacement that will accommodate you nicely."

"What did you have in mind, Professor?"

"I have been informed it's your birthday tomorrow, is it not?" He checked and Hermione nodded. "Well, seeing as all of your belongings are currently in the third year boys' dorm, I believe that it would be best if you are moved into Messrs. Weasleys' and Jordan's dorm room. It will also provide you with protection with having them in your presence."

Hermione was shocked. She hadn't been expecting that.

"Professor, I don't believe that's a wise move. If my parents were to find out I was sharing a dorm with teenage boys, I can't imagine them being too impressed. And the girls in the school won't like it either. I don't want to give them any more reason to hate me and it's not a traditional answer to an accommodation problem."

"I am perfectly sure, Miss. Granger. I will speak to your parents myself."

"No, I don't want them knowing what happened. They believe me to be safe here, that I would fit in as I was with others like me. If they learn of my being bullied, they'll remove me from Hogwarts."

"I don't believe they will," he replied, his eyes twinkling as if he knew something she didn't. "You will be most comfortable with your friends and you will be safe. Think of this as a birthday gift. The wards on the boys' stairwell will be altered to allow you access to your new rooms."

Hermione frowned. "Wards? What wards?"

"The wards preventing females from being able to access the boys' dorms, of course," he answered.

"But there are no wards on the staircase."

"I assure you, there are and there has been for centuries."

Hermione's frown deepened. "But, Professor, I've been in the boys' dorm room plenty of times since arriving," she confessed, "And I've never been stopped from using the staircase, or entering their rooms. It was as if I was on the girls' staircase, walking to my own dorm."

He hummed thoughtfully. "Interesting. Still, you will be given access through the wards, so you may enter your new accommodations."

"I don't know how to thank you, Professor."

"You just take tomorrow off from classes and rest up and we'll call it even. I will send a pass in the morning for proof that I have personally given you a pardon, in case you are caught out of lessons."

"You've been talking to Professor McGonagall, haven't you, Sir?" Hermione said suspiciously.

"I have no idea what you're talking about, My Dear," he replied.

"Thank you, Professor," Hermione said to him, slightly annoyed that both Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall had ganged up on her. Who's next, Professor Snape?

"You are very welcome, Miss. Granger."

With that said, Hermione left Dumbledore's office and made her way to Gryffindor Tower. She was halfway up the girl's staircase before she realised that her room was no longer up there and she descended the stairs and walked up the boys' stairwell, stopping outside the door of the boys' room. No, their room, and she walked in, closing the door behind her.

She jumped a foot in the air when she felt someone behind her wrap their arms around her and gave her a tight hug before picking her up and spinning her around in circles. She laughed loudly and she was eventually put back on feet and Hermione grabbed a hold of one of the bedposts to steady herself until she finally lost the sense of feeling dizzy.

"Welcome to your new quarters, My Lady," Fred said with a bow and she giggled at him, the sensation warming his heart and he smiled widely.

Hermione played along. "Why thank you, kind Sirs."

Hermione curtseyed low to George, Fred and Lee and her eyes darted about, seeing the extra bed and nightstand, hers that had been in her previous dorm.

"Shouldn't you boys still be in class?"

"Professor Dumbledore pulled us from class early so we could have everything ready for when you arrived," Lee said.

"And you don't mind me being here?"

They all scoffed at her.

"Don't be ridiculous; you spend most of your time here anyway and it wouldn't be the first time we stayed together. Except now it will be a sleepover every night," George shrugged.

"Does that mean makeovers?" Hermione asked and the boys mock glared at her as she grinned cheekily.

"Can ye slip them more Sleeping Draught in their pumpkin juice?" Oliver asked from where he was stood behind her. She startled, holding her hand against her heart as if trying to stop it from jumping out of her chest.

"Merlin, Ollie, don't do that, I almost had a heart attack. Do you want me to end up back in the hospital wing?" Hermione asked jokingly and Oliver had a sad look on his face as he frowned and answered her question.

"Naw, a don' ev'r want ye in the hospital wing again," he said seriously.

Hermione noticed his forlorn expression and quickly changed the subject.

"What are you doing here?"

"Movin' me stuff in."

"Huh?" She said in confusion before finally noticing the fifth bed in the room.

"Tha's right, Lassie, ye have a new roommate. Well, technically four new roommates."

She laughed at him before running and jumping onto her bed and she sprawled herself out with everyone laughing at her behaviour.

Dinner rolled around and Hermione practically skipped to the great hall with glee, happy with her new accommodations and roommates. They all sat down together and Hermione dished out the food and everyone began eating.

"Hey, Hermione, I heard it was your birthday soon," Seamus piped up from a few spaces down the table.

"It is. How did you know?"

"I 'eard McGonagall mentioning it this morning."

"It's your birthday soon? When?" George probed.

"The 19th," she replied.

"Of?" Fred rolled his eyes at her.

"September."

"Wait! It's the 18th today," George said.

"So your birthday's tomorrow," Lee spoke.

"And you didn't tell us," Fred stated.

"I guess I forgot to," she shrugged.

"Hoo can ye ferget tha' it's yer birthday?" Oliver asked with a raised eyebrow.

"My birthday isn't that big of a deal, my parents were always working so I never celebrated it."

The others exchanged looks and vowed to make tomorrow the best birthday she has ever had.

After dinner, they made their way back to Fred's, George's and Lee's... No, wait, back to their room. This is going to take some getting used to, Hermione thought, as she climbed the stairs and entered her new dorm.

"Campfire!" Hermione called.

"What?" Fred asked confused and Hermione huffed.

"You know, campfire? Like when you're camping in the woods and you build a fire and everyone huddles around the campfire to keep warm and you chat and tell stories. So, campfire basically means everyone gather 'round."

"Oh okay, makes sense," George said with a shrug.

"So, campfire!" Hermione repeated and then walked over and sat in the middle of the beds that still hadn't been moved back to their regular positions, and everyone followed her until they were sat in a circle. "Okay, so every time I say campfire it means we need to talk," she said and the boys nodded.

"Right, what are your plans?"

"We have no idea what you're talking about", Fred said with a far too innocent look on his face that mimicked his twin's expression.

"Ollie?" Hermione looked at Oliver, giving him the puppy dog eyes that stopped his breathing before he answered, after all, he couldn't deny her anything, especially when she was using puppy dogs eyes on him.

"We have several pranks in the works an' ready tae put intae action," he spilled. Fred and Lee groaned whilst George punched Oliver in the arm. "Ow," Oliver grumbled.

"Hey, don't hit him," said Hermione unhappily. "He told me the truth, which means that I'm going to let him in on a little secret and you boys aren't allowed to know it."

"What? -" George said.

"- Oh, come on -" Lee spoke.

"- That's not fair," whined Fred.

Hermione leaned over and whispered in Oliver's ear, "So, I've changed my mind and I've got a good few pranks planned that will humiliate those involved in my bullying."

"Seriously? Can a help?"

"I was hoping you'd ask that, after all, look what happened the last couple of times we've worked together," she said, and they both smirked looking at Fred, George and Lee admiring their work, making the boys feel uncomfortable under their gazes.

"When do we start, Lassie?"

"Tomorrow," she replied and he nodded.

"Tomorrow? What's tomorrow?" Whined Fred and Hermione and Oliver smirked.

"Not gonna tell you," she sang.

"What if we tell you what we have planned?"

"Nope, I could just ask Ollie and he would tell me."

"What if we told you that we have something special planned? Something that Oliver doesn't know about. Something big!" Lee said.

Hermione eyed him thoughtfully.

"You tell me and I'll tell you," she offered.

"We've got several pranks planned," Fred said.

"So have I," Hermione said.

"You have?" The three asked together, surprised at her announcement.

"Yes, what did you think I was talking to Professor Dumbledore about?" She asked and they all shared a look of confusion.

"Are you telling us that you got permission from Professor Dumbledore to prank those who had a hand in terrorizing you and technically killing you?" Fred asked.

"Not exactly, more along the lines of, if he doesn't catch me doing it, he can't punish me."

"Even if someone tells him it was ye, Lassie?"

"As I said, if he doesn't see me doing it, he can't punish me for it," she smirked whilst the boys looked at her in admiration. "I'm thinking we should combine our pranks and they'll be amazing. Muggle classics and magic could work well together."

"That's not a bad idea, Love," nodded George.

"Besides, if you went off on your own, you'd get caught. I'm going to use Peeves, too, I know he wants his revenge and because he's a ghost he can get into places we can't and he can't technically get punished when he gets caught, and he will get caught, because let's face it, he's not very subtle," she said and they snorted.

"Alright then, let's get planning," Fred clapped his hands excitedly.

They spent the remainder of their time plotting and planning, merging all of their pranks together until it was time for dinner, in which case they made their way to the great hall. Taking their seats they ate quickly and left within an hour. They had to find Peeves before curfew, which they did on the fifth floor.

"Hey, Peeves," Hermione said as she smiled at him and he blushed, causing the boys to stifle their laughter.

"Hello, My Princess!" He exclaimed in greeting.

"We're planning something; do you want to help us?"

"Is it for revenge?"

"Yes."

Peeves smiled wickedly as Hermione explained the plan.

"Tomorrow, Peeves," Hermione reminded before she waved and blew him a kiss at which he once again blushed.

They made it back to their room before curfew and double-checked their plans for the next day. They all changed into their pyjamas and got ready for bed before they worked out the timing of when to put the plan into action. They all fell asleep soon after like they had the night of the sleepover, all huddled close together.

Thursday 19th September 1991

The twins and Oliver woke first and they headed to the bathroom to ready for the school day.

"How did you sleep?" Fred asked Oliver.

"Great, ye?"

"Brilliant," the twins replied together before Lee joined them in the bathroom, getting ready for the school day.

When they finished and came out to see Hermione still asleep, they felt themselves relax at her peaceful expression. They figured that she hadn't slept properly for close to two weeks and none of them wanted to wake her, but they had no choice as she'd shout at them for letting her miss her first class. The boys were slightly nervous; no one had had to wake Hermione before and so they didn't know what to expect.

Instead, they settled on the muggle game of rock, paper and scissors that Hermione had previously taught them and with Oliver finding himself the loser, he approached Hermione whilst the others headed down to the great hall.

When he reached the bed, he gently shook Hermione's shoulder but other than her making a small grumbling noise she didn't wake. Chuckling, he tried once more.

"Lassie, ye have tae get up now or ye'll be late fer class," he said softly.

Hermione mumbled something that he didn't quite catch and he perched on the edge of the bed as he continued to try and rouse her from sleep. She grabbed his hand, pulled him down next to her and rested her head on his chest mumbling about a note before drifting back to sleep. That's when he noticed a piece of parchment on the bed and he picked it up and read it.

*Messrs. Weasley, Jordan, Wood and Miss. Granger,*

*You have been given a pass from all lessons today to allow you to rest up after the trying day you had on Tuesday. You really should've rested yesterday but seeing as it's your birthday you can consider this as a gift. Please, rest up. Happy Birthday, Miss. Granger, from the whole of Hogwarts.*

*Professor Dumbledore*

Oliver smiled as he looked away from the note in his hand and down to the sleeping witch halfway across his chest. And his body turned to jelly. He couldn't believe how relaxed he felt. How right it felt to be like this with her. He reluctantly shifted Hermione off him and left the dorm room until he ran into a fellow Gryffindor and asked them to pass on the note to Fred, George and Lee.

He returned to bed and the others appeared in the room twenty minutes later, stopping when they saw the sleeping Hermione and Oliver cuddled together. The twins quickly got changed back into their pyjamas before climbing into bed with Lee following them, and they quickly fell asleep, feeling content and peaceful.

Hermione woke around eleven in the morning, untangled herself from the pile of boys surrounding her and she stood up and stretched before she started jumping up and down on the bed until the boys woke up. After grabbing a pillow, she started an epic pillow fight.

"Not again," muttered Lee, as she whacked him in the face, sending him flying backwards. The pillow fight finally let up ten minutes later.

"Okay, boys, it's time to put the plan into action," she said, they all smirked mischievously and then high-fived.

Hogwarts was not prepared for what was about to be unleashed.

Chapter Sixteen

Hogwarts - Thursday 19th September 1991

“Let's get to work, boys," she said, clapping her hands in excitement.

The boys went to ready themselves in the bathroom and Hermione had a quick clean around the room, selecting her clothes for the day and then readying in the bathroom once the boys exited it. When Hermione left the bathroom she was wearing white converse, pale blue skinny jeans and a white t-shirt that had the saying, "natural born prankster," on the front of it and the boys smirked at her whilst she gave them a cheeky wink.

They slowly walked down to the great hall for lunch when they spotted Peeves. When he saw Hermione's t-shirt he grinned widely and rushed off to get ready for his part in the plan. Hermione made a quick detour to the kitchens to get Bopsy involved and gave him some coins for the purchases that she needed, both wizarding and muggle. Professor Dumbledore's eyes twinkled when he read Hermione's t-shirt, as she entered the great hall. He was aware she had something planned, and unless he explicitly witnessed her committing the crime, he wasn't going to interfere.

Hermione and the boys sat down for lunch, when the food was dished out on the plates they ate and chatted casually, giving off the impression that it was just a regular day. Once lunch had finished they left the great hall and Hermione went to check on the supplies which Bopsy promised would be waiting in her room. Hermione thanked him and hugged him furiously before skipping giddily to her room. True to his word the supplies were there waiting for her. The boys greeted her when she entered and they had one final look at the plans.

After ten minutes the twins and Lee left to set up some pranks whilst Hermione and Oliver also left to set up their own pranks. They walked out of the castle and onto the grounds with two buckets that Hermione would enlarge later on in the day. They walked to the Black Lake before collecting water and Oliver levitated them behind them as they walked back to the castle. When they arrived back at their room, they placed the buckets on the floor before walking over to another set of buckets and picking up several tins of syrup, which they filled the buckets with. Finally, they walked over to another four buckets and filled two of them with green paint and the other two with white feathers.

The twins and Lee left to the where the flying lessons would take place and took the brooms that the girls who were involved in Hermione's bullying, before placing a sticking charm on them (Hermione had informed them each first year used the same broom for each lesson). They placed the brooms back in the shed and made their way back to the castle to where Peeves waited for them. When they arrived the boys handed over a bag that was filled with both magical and muggle joke products before Peeves left to place them where he wanted. The boys smirked and walked back to their room to pick up more supplies.

When they arrived it was to see Hermione and Oliver putting the last of the feathers in the buckets.

"How's everything going, boys?"

"On schedule," grinned George.

"Good, we only have…" Hermione checked her watch, "About two hours before lessons start finishing, however, we have until five o'clock for the Gryffindors and Slytherins to finish flying lessons."

"We better get on with it then, Spitfire. We have a lot left to do."

With that said they grabbed a box filled with more supplies and left out the door and Hermione and Oliver did the same and headed to the great hall with the buckets floating and following behind them. When they reached the hall they set up, before meeting up with the boys in their room where they relaxed until three o'clock.

When the time came for the first years' flying lesson, Hermione and the boys made their way to the field and arrived before the class which is what they were counting on. Hermione had recently learnt the Disillusionment Charm and she wanted to put it into practice. She cast it on the boys first before she cast it over herself. They all kept close and held onto each other so they didn't get separated and they sat down on the ground, waiting for their targets to arrive. Oliver had brought a camera so they could document what was going to happen and keep it as a reminder.

Twenty minutes after the start of the lesson everyone mounted their brooms and they laughed. When the class had begun to hover a few feet above the ground, they stood up and pointed their wands at the Gryffindor and Slytherin girls. Quietly they cast the Aquamenti Charm under their breaths, and Hermione quickly cast a Silencio on herself and the boys, so their laughter wouldn't give them away.

Water sprouted seemingly out of nowhere and the boys in the class were clutching their broom handles, as they laughed so they didn't fall off, whilst the girls were soaked from head to toe. They didn't quite understand that if they flew, they would be out of range. Hermione and the boys eventually cancelled the spell and they were creased with laughter but thanks to Hermione's quick thinking they couldn't be heard.

The girls in the class looked like drowned rats and they squirmed and squealed in frustration as they couldn't remove themselves from their brooms, at which point Peeves arrived and winked in Hermione's direction, before smirking at the drenched girls. He began pelting water balloons (Hermione's suggestion) at the girls as they screamed. Oliver had photographed the whole incident. Hermione and the boys left back to the castle and when they entered their room the charms had worn off, and they all collapsed onto their beds with laughter.

"Phase one is complete!" Called Hermione and the others would've laughed harder if it was possible.

They sorted themselves out and made their way down to the common room, when they reached the bottom of the staircase Hermione's old dorm mates trudged past with their shoes making squelching sounds and leaving a trail of water behind them. The common room had long since burst into laughter. Hermione plastered a confused look on her face as the girls glared murderously at her and she looked down at her t-shirt and returned her eyes back to the girls with an innocent look on her face. Hermione turned around to look at her smirking boys and when they too saw her 'innocent' face, they burst out laughing too. The twins had fallen backwards and were now sat on the stairs as Oliver and Lee leaned against the wall for support.

They eventually made their way to the great hall and it was buzzing with conversation about gossiping about the happening during the first years' flying lesson. They all sat down at their table and after dishing out the food they began to eat. Staying off the topic of what happened during the flying lesson and doing the exact opposite of what everyone else was doing, which should've been a red flag.

When the Slytherin and Gryffindor girls entered the great hall, they were soaked once more. Hermione smirked as did the boys. Looks as though Peeves has completed his part of phase two, Hermione thought in amusement.

Hermione had organised for Peeves to have double the amount of water balloons necessary so that he could have a bit more fun and catch them off guard when they were on their way to dinner. She was kind like that.

When the girls took their seats very loud fart noises were heard throughout the hall as the sounds echoed, and the hall was filled with laughter as the girls went bright red as they tried to give an explanation. They had stood but when they realised that no one was listening to them, they sat back down and once again fart noises could be heard echoing in the hall.

The professors were having a hard time trying to keep a passive face but they slipped a few times showing a smile. Besides, their faces may have been somewhat passive but their eyes showed mirth. Hermione and the boys were heavily leaning against one another as they struggled to contain their laughter. When Hermione and Oliver were in the hall setting up, Hermione had cast a Disillusionment Charm on the muggle classic whoopee cushion and placed numerous amounts of them in the regular seats where the girls sat. But phase two wasn't yet complete, that would come later.

After dinner was eaten Hermione and the boys watched as the Gryffindor first year girls, Angelina and the Slytherin first year girls got up from their seats and began walking towards the great hall doors. Hermione wore robes over her clothing and sneakily removed her wand from her pocket, and held it under the table with it pointed towards the doors. Oliver also removed a camera from his robes and readied himself to document the prank.

When they were just passing through the doorway, Hermione flicked her wand and the two buckets of foul-smelling water from the Black Lake that she had enlarged earlier, tipped over the girls. The hall went silent and then burst into howls and bellows of laughter. When the girls got out of their shock, they looked up towards the archway and Hermione once again flicked her wand and green paint was tipped on them and the hall grew louder. When they looked up again, Hermione flicked her wand causing the syrup to be poured, covering them in the sticky treat.

"Last one, Lassie," Oliver smirked and Fred, George and Lee looked at her confused; they thought that the syrup was the last one but Hermione had a surprise for them.

Hermione for the last time flicked her wand and the bucket of white feathers fell over the girls and covered them as the feathers stuck to the syrup. Hermione quickly put her wand away as the boys opposite her and Oliver who was sat next to her howled and looked at her in admiration.

"THEY LOOK LIKE CHICKENS!" Shouts rang out, and then nothing could be heard over the laughter.

Teach them a lesson, indeed, Miss. Granger, Dumbledore thought with amusement.

That's the point. They're supposed to look like chickens," Hermione muttered to her boys and they laughed at her.

The girls, after getting over the squealing they were doing, stormed over to the head's table and it was, of course, Lavender that had to speak.

"Aren't you going to punish her for this?" Lavender demanded as she spoke to Professor Dumbledore none too kindly, forgetting who it was she was talking to in her anger.

"Punish who, Miss. Brown?"

"Her! Hermione Granger!" Lavender shrieked.

"Miss. Brown, I'm afraid I cannot do anything as I did not witness Miss. Granger being the one responsible."

Just then, Peeves came barreling into the great hall, cackling like a mad man.

"Hahaha! Got you! I got you!"

"Ah, it looks as though, Miss. Brown, that Peeves is the cause of this."

"Punish him then!" Lavender squawked, like a parrot Hermione noted with a chuckle.

"I'm afraid that I cannot punish him as I do not have control over his actions." When Dumbledore finished speaking Peeves started lobbing stink pellets at the girls as they screamed and ran from the hall with Peeves chasing after them; leaving students doubled over in laughter behind them.

"Nicely done, Love," George praised.

"I now see what you mean about using muggle tricks and magic together, Spitfire. Honestly, muggle pranks are hilarious.

"I told you that using muggle pranks but using magic to set them up is a lot easier and you have less chance of getting caught. How did you guys always get caught? I don't understand it," Hermione frowned. Fred, Lee and George just shrugged before they shared a victorious high-five.

Professor Snape had watched the scene and was overcome with pride. 'Nicely done, Miss. Granger, you would have done well in Slytherin, he thought.

Professor McGonagall was overcome with pride for her lion cub, even if the targets of her wrath had been some of her other Gryffindors.

All of a sudden a chocolate birthday cake appeared in front of Hermione with twelve lit candles adorning the top. When the twins and Lee were setting up the pranks around the castle earlier, they had made a sneaky detour to the kitchens to convince a certain house-elf by the name of Bopsy, to make Hermione a birthday cake. As it turns out Bopsy didn't need much persuasion and gleefully agreed to the challenge.

Her boys burst into song singing, "Happy Birthday." Hermione blew out her candles, blushing furiously as she made a wish and grinning from ear to ear whilst Oliver took photos.

Once they finished their meals, they left the great hall and when they reached their dorm room they burst into laughter,

"Phase two is complete," Hermione yelled through her laughter.

Thirty minutes later…

There was a knock at the door and Fred got up to answer, when he saw the people outside the door he smirked and let them him. Harry, Seamus, Dean and Neville entered the room each carrying a box, and they placed them on an empty bed before walking over to where Hermione and the boys were sitting and they too climbed onto the bed and sat down; they were all sat in a makeshift circle.

"That was brilliant, Hermione," Seamus said.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," she denied.

"'Mione, they were classic muggle pranks; the water, the syrup, the paint and the feathers? Come on, we know it was you," Harry pointed out with a knowing look. Hermione huffed good-naturedly.

"Fine, it was us," she admitted.

"And the fart noises?" Harry asked amused.

"Whoopee cushions," she replied. Harry laughed at her.

"The classic whoopee cushion," Harry said thoughtfully. "One of the best muggle inventions," he commented and Hermione nodded in agreement.

"What about during flying class today?" Neville asked.

"Yes, that was us, too," she nodded and the first year boys laughed.

"You were all there, weren't you?" Seamus said and they all nodded. "Bloody brilliant, you guys are," he said and the boys puffed out their chests in pride.

"We knew it! What else do you have planned?" Neville asked.

"We're not going to tell you, so you'll be surprised to see what and when it happens."

"How did you get Peeves involved?" Dean asked curiously as Hermione and her boys laughed at him, leaving the others confused.

"What?" The four first year boys asked.

"Nothing," the five replied together.

"So, Hermione?"

"Yeah?"

"Happy birthday!"

All of the boys got off the bed and ran to collect the presents they had gotten for her, before running back to the bed and sitting huddled together with the boxes on their knees.

Hermione had opened all of her presents with a lot of hugs and kisses to the cheek and a lot of, "I love it's," "thank you, I really appreciate it," and "you really shouldn't haves," and "no, you really shouldn't haves."

Hermione's presents consisted of a silver charm bracelet from the twins which they had magically charmed so that it couldn't be taken off and had been transfigured by an amazing bit of magic. It had a silver witch's pointed hat charm, a silver lion charm from Oliver, and a silver book charm from Lee. The boys told her that the bracelet was to represent her life and the wizarding world and she could continue to add charms, and she was surprised with how quickly they had worked, seeing as they had only known about her birthday since the day before.

Hermione also received a bag of sugar quills from Harry, a framed sketch of Hogwarts from Dean, a box of chocolate frogs from Neville and some cauldron cakes from Seamus.

They all spent their time chatting and laughing before the first year boys left to turn in for the night. Hermione and the boys continued to laugh well into the night as they looked over the photos that Oliver had taken of that day's events.

After they changed into their pyjamas they all got comfortable on the bed as the boys looked over the plans for the next day and Hermione read her advanced charms and spells book, to see if any spells could be useful for the next day of set pranks. Eventually, everyone fell asleep huddled together in a pile of tangled limbs, with content smiles and pleasant dreams.

Chapter Seventeen

Hogwarts - Wednesday 2nd October 1991

Two weeks later and Hermione and the boys had long since completed their pranking schemes on the girls of Gryffindor and Slytherin. It's safe to say that none of the girls had given Hermione any trouble since and they had learned their lesson. As soon as Hermione and the boys entered a room, the girls would leave the room or avoid them as best they could. As soon as they would see or hear Peeves, they would run in the opposite direction, not wanting to be in the same vicinity as him. And Hermione couldn't blame them. Peeves had been relentless when it came to pranking them. Hermione had ceased the pranking a week after she began whereas Peeves continued to prank them for an extended few days.

The entire school had laughed, cried and almost passed out from breathlessness. Hermione and the boys had made sure that their targets were always pranked when there were several people around to witness it. Their favourite location was, of course, the great hall. The twins and Lee had been tremendously creative when it came to their pranks whereas Oliver and Hermione had stuck with classic muggle pranks. Oliver had also used his magical camera to take numerous photos of each prank and they spent a lot of time looking through them and laughing into the night until they fell asleep.

Hermione had just woken up surrounded by the boys as was the routine now. They had all been roommates for two weeks and instead of sleeping in their separate beds, they all slept huddled together in a tangle of limbs and sighs of content on the three beds that had been pushed together since the beginning of school. And that wasn't going to change. If anyone saw them they may have thought it to be weird but they did it out of comfort. It was normal for them to be this way together.

When Hermione woke she had to stifle a giggle that was threatening to bubble out of her as she didn't want to wake the boys just yet. She was thinking back on the past two weeks and the pranks that had been pulled. Hermione had no choice but to be impressed with her boys and Peeves and she would have to think of a way to thank them.

On Sunday 20th September, Hermione had gone down to the kitchens to meet with Bopsy as she handed him some more wizarding and muggle money and a list of supplies that she needed for the last couple of days of pranking. When Bopsy had returned, he sent the bags up to her room. Hermione waited until early morning before she snuck into her old dorm room and then into the bathroom. Hermione then proceeded to place fake tan into the girls' shower gel and green hair dye into their shampoo and conditioner. When they all entered the great hall on Monday morning for breakfast they looked livid as the great hall had burst into laughter. Hermione had intended for them to look as Oompa Lumpas from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and she had succeeded.

Fred, George and Lee had placed some Dr Filibuster's Fabulous Wet-Start, No-Heat Fireworks in the corridor leading to the great hall and when the girls walked down the corridor they cast the Aquamenti Charm setting off the fireworks, before running into the great hall and taking their seats and acting as though they hadn't just been up to something.

They had barely taken their seats when the great hall echoed with screams and shrieks as the girls ran into the room being chased by the fireworks. And of course, the hall's occupants laughed and applauded the boys who stood up and bowed as Oliver took photos.

Peeves had snuck into the Gryffindor and Slytherin girl's dormitories and dropped dung bombs in the room and he placed frog's born soap in the girl's bathroom replacing the normal soap. The girls weren't at all pleased with this development.

Hermione had made the muggle classic flour bombs. Filling a balloon with water, flour and eggs and she gave them to Peeves to do as he pleased with. When the girls came running into the great hall on Tuesday 22nd September being chased by Peeves and getting said flour bombs lobbed at them, she had to admire his flare. Peeves couldn't be subtle to save his life. Or afterlife?

Hermione had finished reminiscing about the last couple of weeks that had been the best of her life and decided to get ready for the school day. She carefully untangled herself from the boys surrounding her before climbing off the bed, collecting her uniform and trotting into the bathroom. When Hermione exited the bathroom she was freshly showered and dressed and her hair hung down to the middle of her back in damp ringlets. She woke the boys up, who grumbled and groaned, but when she threatened to use the Aquamenti Charm on them, they were out of bed like a shot and returned partially dressed with damp hair. Hermione had also learned Oliver's timetable, so like she would with the other boys; she packed his school bag for him too. She sorted out their hair and ties and they headed down to breakfast.

They all walked Hermione to her first lesson, herbology, where they each kissed her on the cheek and headed to their own classes afterwards. During herbology, Hermione learned about dittany. It's used in potion making and as a healing and restorative. It's used to cure werewolf bites and when placed on a wound it covers it with a new layer of skin, leaving the wound looking only a couple of days old. Dittany could also be ingested to heal shallow wounds and sometimes it could emit flammable vapours. Hermione had taken notes furiously until the end of the lesson.

Oliver was waiting at the entrance hall and they walked to Hermione's charms class together and he left to his own class but not before giving her a kiss on the forehead. In charms class, they were learning the Locking Charm, Colloportus, which Hermione perfected almost instantly. Hermione decided to learn the counter charm whilst the class struggled to learn the locking charm. She had mastered Alohomora in several minutes and proceeded to read through her grade one spellbook for the remainder of the lesson.

After lunch, the boys all walked her to her defence against the dark arts lesson and she learned how to cast the Periculum Spell which sends up red sparks in the air. It acts like a muggle flare and it's used to display the location of a person who may be in trouble or is in need of rescuing. Hermione had perfected it before the end of the lesson whereas the rest of the class hadn't.

She walked to her dorm room by herself and read through her advanced charms and spellbook until the boys returned from their lessons which ended a while after Hermione's. They decided to go down to the common room and spend some time there when they returned. They ran into Harry who explained the situation between himself and Malfoy, who had challenged him to a duel later that night after curfew, because he was annoyed that Harry had not been punished for the flying incident during the first week. Hermione was adamant that Harry not go as she was sure it was a trap but he just waved off her concerns. So after dinner, they all waited in their dorms until it was time to meet Malfoy in an old trophy room.

Hermione, Oliver, Fred, Lee, George, Harry and Ron were all waiting outside the trophy room when Hermione spoke up.

"I don't think this is a good idea, Harry. It's a trap; he's not going to show. You don't even know how to duel, you could get hurt."

"Relax, Love, the worst that can happen is they aim red sparks at each other or they trip. They don't know any defensive or offensive spells, Harry will be fine," assured George.

Hermione was not placated at all by his words. Ron had been continuously glaring at Hermione but no one noticed him, not even her.

"I'm telling you it's a trap; I've got a bad feeling about this."

They'd been stood there for almost twenty minutes when they heard the sound of Filch heading their way and they all froze in their movements.

"What is it, My Dear? Are there students out after curfew?" They heard Filch speak to his cat, Mrs. Norris.

"I told you it was a trap," Hermione hissed.

"What do we do?" Harry asked as they heard Filch's footsteps coming closer.

Hermione and her boys shared a look before nodding.

"Run!" The five shouted in unison before they turned on their heels and ran in the opposite direction of Filch, and Harry and Ron followed behind them. They could hear Filch's footfalls accelerating meaning that they were now in a chase with a staff member.

They had been running for ten minutes, ducking and diving around corners and down halls and corridors and they were all struggling to breathe.

"What're we going to do?" Harry asked through pants. No one had realised but they were on the third floor corridor. They came to a door.

"In there," Hermione whispered, and they all ran to the door and tried to pry open, but it was locked.

"What now? It won't open," Ron said panicked. Hermione huffed and she removed her wand from her robes before she muttered, "boys," under her breath. She pointed her wand at the lock and said, "Alohomora," and the door clicked and she opened it and they all rushed inside, closing the door behind them quickly and breathing out a sigh of relief.

I knew learning that spell would be useful, Hermione mused to herself.

"Nice one, Spitfire."

"Yeah, great job, Love."

They heard a loud noise. When they all looked up and focused, they all saw a sight that had stopped their breathing altogether. In front of them, was a three-headed dog bigger than a double-decker bus.

"We're on the third floor corridor," Hermione whispered in horror.

"We have to leave now," Fred said quietly.

"What about Filch?" Ron stupidly asked.

Fred, Lee, George and Oliver glared at him.

"If ye want tae stay here, be our guest, but a would rather take me chances with Filch an' get detention, than get mauled by tha' thing," Oliver hissed, jabbing his thumbs towards the three-headed dog. The others nodded in agreement.

The dog was beginning to rouse from sleep from the whispered conversation and Hermione noticed.

"Everyone out now," she hissed.

She opened the door and slid out after them, closing the door slowly and quietly behind her. Just before she closed the door she noticed that the dog had one of its paws covering something on the floor. A door? Her brow furrowed. She closed the door at the exact moment the three-headed dog woke up. Hermione replaced the Locking Charm on the door. She didn't want anyone to wander into the room as they had.

They all let out the breath they had been holding and they jumped when the doorknob began violently rattling. When Peeves shot out of it, Ron and Harry looked terrified and turned, preparing to run in the opposite direction but they halted when they heard the others laughing at him.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here? Students out after curfew," Peeves tutted and wagged his finger in front of them before saying, "Naughty, naughty, you'll get caughty!"

Harry and Ron's panic began to build; they could hear Filch getting closer and they'd been stopped by Peeves from escaping. They were going to get caught!

"But you have my favourite prodigies and Princess with you," he said.

Hermione smiled at him and blew a kiss and on cue he turned opaque. Harry and Ron watched on in confusion at the behaviour Peeves was showing towards Hermione. Is he blushing? Harry thought to himself and looked over to Lee, Fred, George and Oliver, seeing that they appeared more amused than panicked.

Peeves left them after blowing a kiss to Hermione and making as much noise as possible to gain the attention of Filch. They could hear Filch bellowing at Peeves. "I'll get you this time and Dumbledore will have to banish you!" Crashing sounds echoed down the hall and they could hear Peeves cackling and everyone except Harry and Ron -who were still confused- were chuckling.

Once the laughter had subsided they quickly made their way back to Gryffindor Tower and to the safety of the common room. They all looked at each other, not saying a word and made their way to their rooms. They changed into the pyjamas (except Hermione, who had an astronomy lesson at midnight), and they proceeded to get comfy and then they fell asleep, trying to forget the night's events.

Chapter Eighteen

Hogwarts - Wednesday 30th October 1991

Hermione and the boys had all attended breakfast, lunch and all of their lessons, and now they were currently sitting in their room going about their own business. The boys were focusing, as usual, on the cauldron in the corner of the room, Oliver was going over the Quidditch practice schedule and Hermione was reading a book on the history of Quidditch, just like she promised Oliver she would. She might not agree with the danger of the sport but all her boys played, so for them, she would learn to enjoy it – or at least tolerate it. She was currently looking at the history of the sport as she wanted to help Oliver with the team as a researcher rather than a player. If she knew all the rules and plays she could help invent new plays and use rules that most would've forgotten about to their advantage.

They had been sat quietly emerged in their own tasks for a while until it was time for dinner and so they headed down to the great hall and taking their regular seats at the Gryffindor table. Halfway through dinner Hermione asked the twins and Lee a question.

"Hey, boys, isn't it your mum's birthday today?"

All the boys except for Oliver dropped their forks and their mouths hung open in shock.

"No, I don't think so, Spitfire," was the nervous reply she received.

"Are you sure? I remember you telling me that her birthday was the day before Halloween. And I hate to burst your bubble, but it's the day before Halloween," Hermione said smugly as she and Oliver both smirked at the others' facial expressions as they realised that Hermione was right. It was the day before Halloween, and it was their mother's birthday.

"Shite!" The twins and Lee said simultaneously.

"What are we going to do?" George whispered to Fred and Lee, feeling guilty that he'd forgotten their mother's birthday.

"I don't know, but mum's going to be so upset," Fred said dejectedly.

"Well, it's a good job that you have such an amazing friend then, isn't it?" Hermione said happily.

"What do you mean?"

"I had a feeling you'd forget, so I owled my mum a week ago and asked her to get me a few things for your mum's birthday. After all, who better to ask what to get a mother for her birthday than another mother?"

At her statement Fred, George and Lee let out a sigh of relief and smiled gratefully at Hermione.

"Well, what did you get her?" George said hopefully.

"They should be in our room when we return after dinner, I'll show you and then I'll wrap them for you."

"Thanks, Spitfire, I don't know what we would've done if you hadn't already thought ahead for us."

Hermione smiled softly at them and the twins' hearts skipped a beat at her gesture. They returned to their room rather quickly after dinner as the twins and Lee wanted to see what Hermione had gotten for their mum. When they entered there was a bag sitting on the bed with a large white gift box sat next to it.

"So, what did ye yer ma get her?" Oliver asked as they all sat on the bed surrounding Hermione as she began to remove the contents of the bag and opening the empty gift box where she would place the gifts and wrap it later.

"Well, we a have a bottle of perfume; Coco Chanel number five," Hermione said, as she removed the box of perfume, showing it to the boys before she placed it in the gift box.

"Mum will probably like that. She doesn't get a lot of perfume having so many sons, who don't know what to buy her," George replied.

"I thought that might be the case. This is one of the most popular and expensive brands of perfume in the Muggle World. The original retail price for a bottle of this size would be around twenty-two galleons..." She was cut off by the boys' gasps of shock and choking on their breath at the price.

Even Oliver was surprised by the price and his family was fairly wealthy. They were nowhere near the wealth of the Malfoys, but his family was still considered to be wealthy and he was a part of the 'Sacred Twenty-Eight'.

"Bloody hell, Spitfire!"

"But I know the owner of the shop which I got this from. He owed me a favour as I helped him out during the summer. I called it in and he gave me a discount, reducing the price to just over six galleons." They whistled in appreciation.

"Well, a guess ye also got her something else, seein' as tha' bag is big fer a bottle af perfume, ," Oliver said and Hermione nodded in confirmation.

"We also have a pair of slippers and a new dressing gown," she said as she removed the items showing them the fluffy white slippers and the matching dressing gown that was made of the softest material they had ever seen. "Together, this came to just under five galleons."

"Is that everything?" Asked George.

"No," she shook her head, removing a wicker basket from a second larger bag that sat on the ground by the bed. "We also have a bath set with different scented oils and candles, bubble baths,

"Bath bombs?" Fred puzzled.

"You put them in your bath and they disintegrate in the water, leaving it smelling nice. Merlin knows your mum could use these having to wrangle the Twin Terrors and Lee the nutter," Hermione said, gesturing to Fred, George and Lee and Oliver laughed at them as they showed looks of mock hurt, placing their hands over their hearts and gasping loudly. "These items will help your mum relax and de-stress and the slippers and dressing gown will provide her with comfort and keep her warm afterwards."

"How much for those items, Love?"

"Just over three galleons. Combined it's around fifteen galleons, and if we split the cost four ways, it's easily affordable."

"Four ways?" Fred arched an eyebrow, his mouth twitching.

"Of course, four ways," she replied, looking slightly offended and the twins smiled at her adoringly.

"Seriously, I don't know what we would've done for gifts. You did great compared to what we would've gotten her," George said and Fred and Lee agreed wholeheartedly.

"Mum'll love them and we'll be the favourites," said Fred, sharing a high-five with his twin.

"I hope you're right. Why don't you boys write a letter to your mum and we can take it and the gifts down to the owlery and send them off. I'm sure she would love to hear from you," Hermione suggested as she placed the final items in the gift box.

As they were writing their letter to their mum, Hermione removed red wrapping paper and some cello-tape from the bag and proceeded to wrap up the gift box, finishing it off with a golden ribbon tied into an elegant bow.

Wrapping fit for a Gryffindor, Hermione mused with a smile, pleased with the aesthetics of the box.

Hermione looked through her advanced spells and charms book for a Shrinking Charm and a Feather-Light Charm to be placed on the box so the school owl could deliver it without any problems. She had found and perfected both charms with ease and in no time at all.

The boys had finished with their letter and they stuck it to the box with cello-tape. They headed down to the owlery and then tied the box to a school owl before giving it the address and it flew out of the window.

They all headed back to their room and continued with the tasks they were doing before dinner before they all readied for the night and went to sleep snuggled together with Hermione setting an alarm on her wand to wake her before her astronomy lesson.

The Burrow - Wednesday 30th October 1991

Mrs. Weasley was sat at the dinner table with her husband, Arthur, and youngest child and only daughter, Ginny, eating dinner when there was a pecking at the window. Mrs. Weasley got up from the table and walked to the window seeing one of Hogwarts' many owls. She smiled and let the owl in and it flew around the room once before landing on the table. Mrs. Weasley gave it an owl treat and a drink of water before untying and removing the parcel from the owl, at which the owl quickly took off from the kitchen table and left out of the window and she closed it behind it.

Mrs. Weasley walked back over to the table and picked up the parcel, seeing a letter addressed to her, and she noticed the sticky substance on the letter, effectively stopping the letter from getting separated from the parcel. Mr. Weasley was obsessed and fascinated by anything muggle and the Muggle World and he too noticed the substance and recognised it.

"Ahh! A fascinating muggle invention selly-type is. Don't you think so, Molly? They use this selly-type to stick things together..." Mr. Weasley babbled on about cello-tape to Ginny, who looked less than interested and Molly chuckled at her husband's behaviour as she opened the letter.

*Dearest Mum,*

*We just wanted to wish our beautiful, terrifying mother a very happy birthday all the way from Hogwarts. We bet you thought that we'd forgotten your birthday, didn't you? Ha, well, even as brilliant as you are, you're so wrong! With the help of the bestest friend ever and newest roommate, who by the way is terrifyingly, scary smart, hilariously good at pranking and downright frightful when they want to be, we obtained for you, our dear mother, the best gifts ever!*

*You see the newest member of the Hogwarts Pranksters is a Muggleborn, and with their help, we were able to gift you items from the Muggle World. And let's just say that with the presents we got for you for your birthday, we can't wait for our birthday to come around to see what they'll get us. You see, even though our best friend is a first year they have perfected a Shrinking Charm and Feather-Light Charm and have placed them on the gift box to allow easy transportation for the owl. We hope you enjoy your gifts as you, our wonderful mother, deserve them. We've been told that they're perfect for you. So go ahead and remove the first gift and we'll explain away the gifts one by one for you.*

Mrs. Weasley put down the letter, grabbed her wand from her apron and used the counter charm on the box and it returned back to its normal size; which had Molly's eye widen at the size of the wrapped gift box.

She was beginning to worry that her sons had put a small animal or maybe fireworks in the box. It wouldn't be the first time, she thought with a snort.

She removed the golden bow, which had been intricately tied and the red wrapping paper followed until she came to a white box and she removed the lid. Inside she saw several gifts and firstly removed a small box.

*Okay, our darling mother, have you removed the smallest box? Good! That box contains a bottle of muggle perfume called Coco Chanel number five. We have been informed by the Muggleborn extraordinaire that is our roommate that that perfume is one of the most expensive and popular muggle brands. We almost died when we heard the retail price. We're not kidding. I know, we never thought it possible either but it had to happen sometime. Now remove the next two items from the box.*

She did as she was told and removed a pair of white fluffy slippers and the matching dressing gown. And she picked up the letter and carried on reading from where she left off.

*Now what you're looking at is a new pair of slippers and a matching dressing gown. Our roommate informs us that they will provide you with comfort after a long day on your feet and they will keep you warm during the cold months.*

*Now remove the wicker basket.*

*She removed the final item from the gift box and placed the heavy basket on the table, seeing it filled with numerous items and she continued reading the letter.*

*Now we've been informed that this is the most important gift of all as it will help you relax from a hard day of and we quote this straight from our roommate's mouth, "Wrangling the Twin Terrors and Lee the nutter."*

Mrs. Weasley chuckled. 'It is a rather accurate description,' she thought to herself.

*Anyway, stop distracting us Mother! Right, the basket contains different scented oils and candles, bubble baths, lotions, creams and bath bombs. We have been told that you place the bath bombs in the bath and they'll disintegrate in the water leaving it smelling nice. This will help you to have some time to yourself away from doing the chores around the Burrow and allow you to relax; because you, our stunning Mother, more than deserve it.*

*What do you think of the gifts? Amazing right? We're seriously considering leaving our roommate in charge of all gifts from now on. I can't wait to see how they top those gifts at Christmas.*

*Happy Birthday, mum, have a fun-filled birthday –but without us that's possible, we love and miss you. Oh and Ginny and Dad, of course. We miss them too. Ickle Ronniekins is doing fine, don't worry about the idiot. We forgot to tell you that we also have another roommate beside the Muggleborn genius and this would be, Oliver Wood. You remember him, right? He's still a pain in the broomstick, wish us luck for Quidditch season.*

*See you at Christmas.*

*Forge, Gred and Lee*

Mrs. Weasley smiled at the letter with tears in her eyes. Her boys were so thoughtful and they had made a new friend. They had let him into their group. That hasn't happened since they first met Lee when they were four-years-old. And despite the age gap, they shared a room with him and Oliver; she would have to find out how that happened, and she repeated her thoughts to Arthur.

"We'll have to thank this new friend of theirs for his thoughtful contribution to the gifts. Let's invite the boy to the Burrow for Christmas," Mrs. Weasley suggested and her husband agreed, nodding his head with cello-tape, somehow, stuck in his hair and wrapped around his fingers.

Chapter Nineteen

Hogwarts - Thursday 31st October 1991

Halloween had final made and appearance and Hermione was beyond ecstatic; it was her first Halloween as a witch, her first Halloween as a member of the Wizarding World and her first Halloween at Hogwarts. The boys had explained and described in great detail the meaning of Halloween, as they had told Hermione about He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived and the Wizarding War. Hermione had already read everything written about it, but hearing about it from the boys who had lived through it -despite their young age- was amazing.

They had also told her what to expect during the Halloween feast and the decorations that would cover the entire great hall, and she couldn't wait to see and experience it for herself.

She was currently readying the school bags, filling them with the essential books and stationery for the day whilst the boys were in the bathroom showering and dressing. When they exited Hermione helped to tie their ties and smooth down their hair with her small hands, and they later headed down to breakfast.

During breakfast, Hermione was bouncing in her seat with badly contained excitement and the boys of Gryffindor laughed at her enthusiasm. Fred, George and Oliver found her behaviour endearing and they smiled softly at her.

"Oh, Ollie, don't forget that the deadline for your final dare is today," Hermione reminded.

"Aye, anno, Lassie. An' don' ye ferget tha' the first Quidditch match af the season in on Saturday," he replied.

"Yes, I know and I already have everything planned and ready to go, I'm just waiting for the right moment."

"Which is when?" Lee arched an eyebrow.

"You'll know when it happens; it'll make your day, I promise," she grinned.

"It's going to be difficult for you to pull this off, Love. Pranking fourteen people at the same time, without getting caught and executing the plan perfectly; I don't envy you."

"Do you doubt me?"

"No, we don't, Spitfire," Fred shook his head.

"Good, because if plan A fails, then I have a plan B and a plan C."

"Aye, she's not gonna fail," Oliver chuckled.

When they finished eating, they walked Hermione to her first lesson of the day, charms, and after pressing kisses to their cheeks as was routine, they left for their own classes. Hermione entered her class and took out the essentials for the lesson including her wand. Professor Flitwick started the lesson demonstrating the charm that they would be learning that day. When Harry and Ron entered the classroom late, the excuse they gave was that they had gotten lost. Unfortunately for Hermione, the only seats available were next to her and Seamus. Harry sat in-between Hermione and Seamus, which didn't bother her, but that meant that Ron had to sit at the end of the table on the other side of her.

Professor Flitwick started the lecture from the beginning for the benefit of Harry and Ron, then later conjured large white feathers and placed them in-between the students, setting them into pairs, meaning Hermione had to work with Ron and he didn't seem to be at all impressed, considering the glare he had on his face.

The class would be learning how to perform the Levitation Charm, Wingardium Leviosa. Hermione had perfected this charm during the week of the pranks as she had to help Oliver levitate the large buckets of feathers, water, paint and syrup above the great hall entrance as well as using a Sticking Charm to keep it in place and a Disillusionment Charm to keep them hidden until the charms were cancelled.

Ron struggled with the charm, and the more he tried, the more frustrated he became until he was huffing and glaring at the feather, as if it was its fault.

"Wingardium Leviosa," Ron said, his wand barely aimed at the feather and it being waved around madly. Hermione thought it was time to intervene before he injured himself or someone else.

"Ron, stop, you're going to take someone's eye out," she interrupted, reaching out to steady his hand. "You're saying it wrong. It's Win-gar-dium Lev-i-osa. Not Levi-o-sarrrr," she told him and he glared at her.

"Well you do it then if you're so clever," he snarked.

Hermione rolled her eyes before pointing her wand at the feather, making the correct swish and flick wand movements and saying the incantation perfectly.

"Wingardium Leviosa," she said softly, and the feather began to levitate from the desk, floating up higher into the air allowing for the entire class to see.

"Excellent. See here class, Miss. Granger has done it!" Exclaimed Professor Flitwick and Ron glared at her murderously and she flinched back slightly.

Seamus being encouraged by Hermione's success decided to try and levitate his feather, unfortunately for Harry. He began to wave his wand while saying the incantation. After a few seconds the feather exploded leaving Harry and Seamus covered in black soot and their hair stood up as if they'd just had a bolt of lightning strike them, and Seamus' eyebrows had been singed off. Hermione chuckled at her friends and promised herself that she would teach Seamus how to cast the spell correctly, without putting others at risk.

"Sorry," Hermione mumbled to Harry. He understood and he waved away her concerns, a snigger falling from his lips at both his own expense and Seamus'.

The class ended and they were all making their way towards the door when she heard Ron complaining and making fun of her.

"It's Win-gard-ium Lev-i-osa not Lev-i-osarrrr. Honestly, she's so annoying and bossy, it's no wonder no one likes her and she has no friends," Ron griped.

However, he didn't notice the furious looks coming from Harry, Seamus, Dean and even sweet Neville, as they balled their hands into fists down by their sides. They all had become good friends with Hermione and she'd helped them all with their homework at some point, she'd even helped Harry during his first Quidditch practise when he'd been so nervous. And she'd been kind to them all, despite the way Ron treated her and them not sticking up for her as they should've.

They all thought highly of her and they respected her, and just when the first year boys were about to say something to their idiot friend, Hermione pushed her way through the group and quickly squeezed Harry's and Neville's hands and she turned to give the four first year boys a small smile and they all nodded at her when she walked away with her hair covering most of her face.

"I think she heard you," Harry said non to kindly, but Ron didn't notice the tone of his voice or the glares he was receiving from the others. Harry nudged Ron with his shoulder, but not as a friendly gesture, and Ron nodded in thought to Harry's words.

George's flaming red hair stood out in the corridor where he was waiting for Hermione to exit the classroom so he could walk her to her next lesson, and when he saw her approach, he frowned and rushed towards her, clearly being able to see that Hermione had unshed tears in her eyes and she looked upset. No, not upset; crushed!

"What's wrong, Love?" He questioned softly. So softly, in fact, that Hermione barely heard him.

She smiled at him. "Nothing, Georgie, I'm fine," she lied.

George frowned at her, obviously not believing her but before he could reply, she grabbed his hand and pulled him in the direction of her next class and when they reached her transfiguration classroom, he stopped her and looked down into her eyes as if searching for something, and he nodded, satisfied with what he saw.

Hermione looked happier. And she was. Her boys could alter her mood instantly and for that she was grateful. She knew that Ron was wrong about his opinions of her but she couldn't help but allow it to hurt her. Walking to transfiguration with George had lifted her mood and she was smiling once more.

She kissed him on the cheek, grateful for his presence and making her feel more like herself and she walked into her transfiguration classroom. In previous lessons, they had finished the transfiguration alphabet and then moved onto the transfiguration formula of which - the intended transformation is directly influenced by body weight (a), viciousness (v), wand power (w), concentration (c), and a fifth unknown variable (z). Now that the class had finished learning about the formula over the past weeks, they were now able to begin transfiguring objects into animals.

Professor McGonagall began the lecture and proceeded to demonstrate how to correctly execute the spell. When the class had their turn to do the spell, Professor McGonagall kept her attention on Hermione, she knew what she was capable of and she knew the type of spells and charms she could cast perfectly, but she had never witnessed her learning a spell for the first time and she was intrigued to know how long it would take her and if she would succeed at all during her first practical lesson.

Halfway into the lesson, Hermione had successfully changed her goblet into a mouse and changed it back three times, and she smiled to herself and when she felt as though someone was watching her she looked up. Professor McGonagall nodded and smiled proudly at Hermione and she beamed in response. To say Professor McGonagall was proud would be an understatement.

Hermione spent the rest of the lesson reading through her transfiguration book. When lunch came she exited the room smiling gratefully at Harry, Seamus, Dean and Neville and they smiled back. The boys were waiting for her and they walked to the great hall together. When they finished eating, they all walked Hermione to her defence lesson, kissing her on the cheek and then leaving for their own lessons.

Professor Quirrell stuttered and mumbled his way through the explanation of the jinx they would be attempting to cast. The desks and everyone's belongings were moved to the sides of the classroom, leaving the rest of the room spacious. Everyone was split into pairs and Hermione was paired with Neville. She smiled encouragingly at him as they began to shoot the jinx at each other. Hermione had learnt quickly and was successful in knocking Neville backwards. She wasn't putting a lot of force behind the spell as she had read that the weakest of the pair could easily be overpowered and injured, and she didn't want to harm him.

As she said the incantation, Neville was pushed slightly back and she rushed to help him keep his balance and to stop him from falling over.

"It's no good, 'Mione. I'm useless; I shouldn't have been placed in Gryffindor," he said dejectedly, looking down at the ground.

"Neville, I want you to listen to me. You are not useless. You just have a little difficulty picking up defensive and offensive spells. Look around, Neville, you're not the only one struggling."

Reluctantly lifting his gaze, his eyes darted about the room, seeing that she was right; the only other person who looked to have succeeded with the jinx besides Hermione was Harry.

"Neville, you may not be good at defence but you have other strengths, like herbology. And if you weren't a true Gryffindor then you wouldn't have been placed in Gryffindor house. Do you know what that means, Neville?"

"That I'm a Gryffindor," Neville said shyly and Hermione beamed at him and nodded.

"That's right. Now, let's try this again," she suggested, as she pointed her wand and showed him the correct wand movements and incantation. "Flipendo," Hermione said, and the jinx pushed Neville backwards but he held up better than he had previously. "There you go Neville, that was a lot better," she praised with a smile.

Professor Quirrell called for a change of partners and her next partner was Harry. They smiled at each other and began to repeatedly cast the jinx back and forth. They were both matched evenly so they put more force behind the spell, sending each other further backwards but neither had fallen yet. They were panting in exhaustion and still smiling at each other smugly and pleased with themselves, but also pleased for the other. Professor Quirrell called for one last partner change and to Hermione's rotten luck, her final partner was Ron. She sighed and pointed her wand at him and he did the same. He began to try and fire the jinx at her but he failed miserably.

"Ron, you're doing the wand movements wrong. You're supposed to do it like this."

Hermione demonstrated it for him, hitting him with a perfectly executed Flipendo and he was knocked back slightly as she'd dialled back the force of the spell. His eyes were set, staring angrily at her and he tried once more, failing again. And this continued for the next few minutes.

Ron had begun to taunt Hermione, saying cruel things to her and she was barely containing her anger. But eventually, she would snap. And she did.

"Shut up! I don't need your help, you bossy, annoying hag."

Hermione lost control of her temper, pointing her wand at Ron and saying forcefully.

"Flipendo!"

Ron was sent flying back as he landed on his backside and he skidded back until he hit a wall. The entire class laughed at him and Harry, Seamus, Dean and Neville smiled proudly at her. Even though Ron was their friend they knew he deserved what she'd done to him. It'd been a long time coming and Hermione could've done a lot worse, especially after they witnessed the pranks she pulled on the girls. She'd gone easy on him, too easy as far as they were concerned.

Ron stared at her in surprise, not having expected her to fight back as she had, and he finally pulled himself off the floor just before the class was dismissed and Hermione ran from the room and towards her flying lesson.

The flying lesson wasn't as bad as the previous ones had been. The boys had been helping her with her fear of heights and flying giving her pointers, tips and advice. She now had better control of the broom and she could fly fairly well for a beginner. Nowhere near as well as Harry or the others but she could at least move when she was on the broom, as long as she wasn't more than three feet above the ground. But baby steps. She would eventually get over her fears. She hoped.

When her lesson finished she made her way to the entrance hall where her boys waited for her and they chatted as they walked to the great hall for dinner. When they entered the great hall Hermione gasped in delight and the boys smiled at her. They could remember the first time seeing the great hall decorated for Halloween.

There were hundreds of lit floating candles, large carved pumpkins placed around the hall intentionally the size of carriages. Cobwebs covered every wall and live bats were flying around the room not at all mindful of the occupants. The bats flew towards Hermione and she ducked as they flew over her head and she laughed loudly as the boys joined in. Occupants of the hall noticed the spectacle and smiled as they heard her melodious laugh which was complimented by the others' boisterous ones. They worked well together; like a symphony.

They made their way towards the Gryffindor table and sat down. Before Hermione took her seat she decided that she needed to use the bathroom and she told the boys that she would be back soon.

When Hermione exited the hall she ran headfirst into someone and she began to apologise profusely until she heard the voice of Ron.

"What's wrong Granger? Upset 'cause no one loves you? I heard you were adopted. Even your birth parents didn't love you, so they got rid of you. How does it feel to be unloved and unwanted? They'll drop you as soon as they're done with you, you know that right? They would never be friends with you and they actually hate you. And as soon as they can, they'll get rid of you so they won't have to deal with you. Did you honestly think the pranksters of Hogwarts would be friends with you? Did you honestly believe that Oliver Wood, the Gryffindor Quidditch Captain and the most drooled over gut at Hogwarts would genuinely like you?" Ron said meanly.

Hermione felt tears prickle in her eyes and she turned and ran towards the girl's bathroom, running into a stall and shutting the door behind her as she fell to the floor in a heap and sobbed her heart out.

Ron walked into the great hall looking pleased with himself and he took his seat next to Harry who was sat closer to the twins than usual.

"Where've you been?" Harry asked Ron suspiciously.

"Got distracted," he shrugged.

The great hall fell into silence as Professor Dumbledore stood and made a speech, after which the hall clapped and the feast began as the food appeared on the tables. The boys filled their own plates for the first time in a long time and they didn't like the feeling as they did it and they frowned.

"Don't forget," Fred said to Oliver and the older wizard rolled his eyes.

"Thanks fer tha', like Hermione would let mae get away with not goin' through with it," he replied and those in the know chuckled as everyone watched the conversation in confusion.

Halfway through the feast, Hermione had still not returned and the boys were worried and steadily growing agitated. The others noticed the familiar behaviour they showed during the sorting hat incident and the day they found out about Hermione being bullied and they were slightly afraid for what might happen if they weren't calmed down.

They were done waiting for her to return and when they were about to stand up to leave, Professor Quirrell ran into the great hall, slamming the doors open.

"TROLL! TROLL IN THE DUNGEON! JUST THOUGHT YOU OUGHT TO KNOW!" he yelled in panicked fear, and then he fainted, hitting the ground with a 'thud' that rang in the silence of the hall.

Professor Dumbledore stood from his seat and cast the Sonorous Charm quieting the screams of those in the halls and effectively preventing a full-blown riot. He asked the prefects to escort their houses back to their common rooms, the head boy and girl to keep the prefects on task and for the professors to follow him. They all exited the hall quickly. When they were being pushed towards their common room the boys stopped; they still hadn't seen Hermione. They spotted Harry and Ron and quickly made their way over to them.

"Have you seen, Hermione?" Asked Fred hurriedly.

"We haven't seen her since she said she was going to the bathroom," Lee spoke.

"She dinnae come back tae the great hall," Oliver added with a wild and frightened look in his eyes.

"We can't find her," George stated anxiously, his eyes darting about his surroundings in search of her.

"No, I haven't seen her," Harry said, also feeling worried and when Ron didn't answer they all turned to look at him and saw his guilt-ridden face.

"What did you do?" George said as he growled at his younger brother, who was more frightened of his brother than of the troll wondering the castle.

Harry turned, glaring at Ron, but stood in front of him slightly as if to give Ron some protection from the four older boys in front of him, particularly from the three very pissed looking boys who looked as though they were contemplating committing murder.

"I said some things I shouldn't have," he admitted quietly.

"Like what?" George demanded, taking a threatening step forward.

"Everyone hates her, even her own parents and that's why she was adopted," he muttered, looking down at the ground. That was not the answer the four older boys wanted to hear from Ron and Harry was horrified at his admission.

"She was adopted because her parents died, you prick!" Fred growled at Ron and he actually feared for his life. The looks he was receiving from the boys weren't 'I'm going to prank you,' but rather, 'I'm going to kill you, prank your dead body and then bury you where no one can find you.'

Ron turned and made a bee-line down the corridor, George moved Harry to the side by guiding him with a hand on his shoulder and with a slight push, and once he was out of the way, Fred, Lee, Oliver and George soon followed after Ron. Harry stood in surprise at what'd just occurred until he realised that he may be attending Ron's funeral if he was caught by the others and he quickly scampered after them, unsure of what he could do to help his friend but knowing he had to do something. Harry ran straight into the back of someone and groaned as he hit the floor, but he was shushed in his noise of pain. When he stood he noticed all the boys were stood frozen, and the cause of their reaction was clear to see. There, in front of them, was a ten-foot troll, dragging a club almost bigger than Harry behind it.

"What the hell is that doing here? It's supposed to be in the dungeons," Ron whispered in fright.

"I don't know; why don't you go ask it?" George hissed at him and Ron's face flushed.

"Hey, there's a door with a key in the lock over there, maybe we can try and get it in there," Harry suggested, gesturing to the door of his meaning and the others nodded hesitantly.

They all crept towards the room and Fred and George lobbed some broken rocks into the room creating noise and the troll followed the sound into the room. When it entered they all closed the door quickly and turned the key in the door, effectively locking the troll in the room. They all high fived and looked pleased with themselves until they all heard a scream and a voice that sounded exactly like Hermione.

"That was the girl's bathroom!" Lee exclaimed in fear and without warning or reluctance, Oliver turned the key in the lock and pulled the door open before entering the room, being followed by the others.

Hermione had lost track of time and didn't know how long she'd been crying for. She heard a loud banging sound so she stood and exited the stall. She came face to knee with a troll. She probably shouldn't have, but she screamed with everything she had in her, hoping that someone would hear her, but the troll grunted and growled.

The troll began swinging its club at her as she was backed into a corner near the sinks, the club was being swung around wildly, hitting one of the sinks which broke away from the wall and landed on top of Hermione's leg, effectively trapping her and causing her an incredible amount of pain. She screamed more.

"HELP ME! HELP ME!" As she thought over and over to herself, Where are you guys? Oliver. Fred. George. Lee. Where are you? I need you.

As if her prayers had been answered, she saw her boys come running into the bathroom, coming to a stop behind the troll.

Oliver was panicking; Hermione was cornered by the troll and had something on top of her leg, stopping her from escaping. He shared a look with Fred and George and just like that day in the hospital wing, they let their instincts take over and they knew exactly what they had to do. Oliver ran and slid under the troll's legs and the twins fired any and all spells and charms they could think of at the troll to gain its attention. The others realised what the twins were doing and they pulled out their wands, mimicking their actions. Oliver had reached Hermione and she could see the anxious look in his eyes and he could see the fear and pain in her puffy and red eyes.

"Hey, Lassie, hoo's it goin'?" He asked, as he tried to move the broken sink off of her.

"Oh, you know, just trying to stop myself from sinking into unconsciousness," Hermione replied through a pain-laced voice, trying to ease the tension.

"Tha' was bad, even fer ye," Oliver chuckled at her bad attempt of a joke.

"Oh shut up, I'm in pain," she huffed.

After hearing her admission, Oliver tried harder to remove the sink but it wasn't working; it was far too heavy and so he removed his wand and tried to cast the Levitation Charm but it was ineffective against the sink.

Meanwhile, the others were still trying to maintain the attention of the troll, which was a battle they were losing terribly.

The troll brought down his club, splintering one of stalls and the wood ricocheted, a large piece slamming into Oliver's back, and a smaller piece catching his head, placing a deep cut with blood running down his face, and his knees buckled and he fell to the ground.

Hermione gasped in horror and worry, forgetting about the pain she was in and too busy staring at Oliver. He looked up and he locked his eyes on hers, seeing the fright held in them. Despite the fact blood was pouring into his eye and stingingly painfully, and his back was in so much pain he didn't know how he was still conscious, he smiled at Hermione in a calming way, before wiping the blood away from his eye with his sleeve, and turning his attention back to trying to get the sink off of her.

Out of nowhere, Harry ran and jumped onto the troll and held on to its arm and he tried to make his way towards the trolls back. He had his arms wrapped around the troll's neck and he was being thrown around like a rag doll and Harry's wand had somehow ended up being shoved up the troll's nose.

Ron panicked and pointed his wand at the club in the troll's hand and flicked his wand saying the incantation of the first spell that came to mind, and the club levitated from the troll's hand. Fred, Lee and George each cast a Flipendo at the troll, using all the pent up anger they had for their younger brother, just as the club fell from the air and hit the troll in the head. It collapsed on the floor with a loud thud that echoed in the room. Harry had fallen from the troll's back and George and Fred managed to break his fall.

"A need help over, here!" Oliver yelled to the others, still trying to lift the sink off of Hermione. He'd made a little progress but it wasn't enough that Hermione was able to remove her leg from its entrapment.

Hermione's whimpers of pain propelled the boys forward and they all took a hold of the sink and helped Oliver to lift it, whilst Ron grabbed ahold of Hermione under her arms and he tugged her backwards away from the sink, which crashed to the floor as soon as she'd been pulled away from it. Ron knelt in front of her as he hugged her tightly, all but sobbing into her shoulder.

"I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry. I didn't mean any of the things I said to you. I promise you I didn't. I was jealous that my brothers treated you better than they did me and I'm so sorry. I know they really care about you and you deserve to be treated better than me. You're a good person and I'm not. Can you forgive me? Please say that you can forgive me. I promise you that I'll make it up to you for everything I've done. I promise that I'll be a better person. Please forgive me. I'm so sorry," he whispered.

Hermione sat in shock at hearing his pleas, but she knew she'd already forgiven him for his appalling behaviour. She would forget about the past and give him a clean slate. Hermione hugged him back.

"I forgive you," she whispered and Ron sobbed harder.

Professors McGonagall, Snape and Quirrell came barreling into the bathroom. McGonagall gasped in horror at the sight of her injured young cub and the troll passed out on the floor. Snape raised an eyebrow at the scene and Quirrell sat down to prevent himself from fainting as he muttered to himself, but everyone acted as though he wasn't even there. They huddled together and Hermione leaned heavily against Oliver and Ron.

"What happened here?" McGonagall asked sternly.

"It was my fault, Professor, I heard about the troll and I had read about them. I thought I could help. But I needed rescuing. If it wasn't for everyone's bravery I would be dead. I'm so terribly sorry," she lied. Fred, George and Oliver glared at her for lying and protecting Ron.

"No, it was my fault, Professor," Ron said and he explained in great detail the events of the day. From his behaviour in charms class to when the professors walked into the bathroom, he even included his breakdown and admission to Hermione.

"Twenty-five points from Gryffindor for bullying and twenty-five points to each of you for your teamwork, skill, bravery and for forgiveness," McGonagall said looking at Hermione. "Right, well off to the hospital wing, all of you," McGonagall instructed and they all left as instructed.

Hermione was picked up and carried bridal style by Oliver as she couldn't put pressure on her leg, making it difficult for her to walk. George and Fred continuously fussed over her, as Lee walked a little behind them, Harry and Ron followed closely behind, observing the behaviour of the four people in front of them.

There's something different about them; they don't just act like best friends, they act more… I don't know...It's weird, Ron mused was a frown.

The dynamics have now changed. Hopefully, for the better, Harry thought to himself.

"Hey, Ollie?" They heard Hermione say.

"Aye, Lassie?" He replied.

"Don't think you're getting away with not completing your dare," she warned him and the others chuckled.

"What? Come on, a would've done it but the troll interrupted," he argued.

"Don't care; you still have to do it. We'll give you a different deadline but you're not getting away with it. Unless you want to do the forfeit, that is?" She said with a smirk and an evil glint in her eyes.

"Err... Naw thanks, Lassie, a will do the dare," he said and they laughed at him as they finally reached the hospital wing.

Chapter Twenty

Hogwarts - Friday 1st November 1991

It was the day before the first Quidditch match of the season. It was Gryffindor versus Slytherin. And for the past couple of weeks the atmosphere between the houses had been tense; from fights breaking out in classrooms to hexing in the corridors. With the Quidditch match starting at ten o'clock the next morning tension was at its peak.

Hermione couldn't wait for it all to be over with. Merlin knows that she loves her boys but they had been driving her mad with the constant Quidditch talks and late practices. The research Hermione had done had been put to use by Oliver, making the team better than they were before. Not to mention that Harry had her watching him during practice to look for any weaknesses in his flying technique, not that she was an expert, she barely knew a thing about flying. He couldn't help it though, it would be the first time anyone other than the team and the first year Gryffindors and Slytherins would see him fly. He would be showcasing his abilities as a seeker to the entire school, staff and any visiting parents for the first time. He wanted to be perfect and he was using practices to bury his nerves.

Hermione was currently sitting on the stands watching the practice above her. She spent several minutes watching and jotting down notes on each player. She started with the chasers on the team, Alicia Spinnet, Katie Bell and Angelina Johnson, before she moved on to the beaters, Fred and George, then the keeper, Oliver and finally the seeker, Harry. She began the process again until she ran out of parchment. She had numerous pieces of parchment filled with notes on each player including their strengths, weaknesses, and improvements to be made, plays that can be used as well as rules that could be used to their advantage. Oliver flew towards her and away from his post of guarding the three hoops, whilst the others continued with practice as he ordered.

Alicia and Katie were throwing the quaffle back and forth, Fred and George were hitting bludgers and Harry was chasing after the snitch, catching it and then releasing it repeatedly. Oliver had Angelina doing laps. She had to complete five laps of the Quidditch pitch on foot, followed by fifty on her broom, and she had been doing the drills since the first practice of the season. Oliver claimed that it was to build up her cardio and speed, but honestly, he was still pissed at the way she had reacted and behaved towards Hermione, and he would be making her do those drills for the foreseeable future.

"Okay, Lassie? What did ye think?" He asked, his breathing slightly heavier than normal as he dismounted his broom and sat down next to her.

If she was honest, Hermione was slightly annoyed at the way he was pushing himself. He'd only gotten out of the hospital wing the night before and he should be resting to prevent injury to himself rather than practising to death.

"That's the best practice to date. Here are the notes," Hermione said as she handed him the pieces of parchment.

As Oliver read through the notes, a crease appeared on his forehead and in-between his eyebrows. Hermione's eyes sparkled in amusement until Oliver sighed, clearly feeling disappointed. Hermione's eyes softened at his crestfallen expression and when he looked up and saw her tender eyes and facial expression, the previous feelings of annoyance and disappointment were replaced with calmness.

"What's the matter, Ollie?" She asked and the frown once again made an appearance. Hermione subconsciously reached up and ran a finger across the wrinkles until they disappeared before moving to swipe a piece of sweat-soaked hair away from his eyes.

"It's still not good enough tae win the cup," he sighed as he revelled in the touch of her skin on his and he subconsciously leaned into it.

"Practice only started less than two months ago, you didn't practice as a team together over the holidays and you have a new member. You're all just getting use to each other and the more you practice, the better you'll be. Besides, tomorrow's only the first match and the last match is in June. That gives you a little over seven months to get the team to the level they need to be at to win the cup." Oliver nodded slowly and she leaned her head on his shoulder in an effort to comfort him. "And you're not working as a team like you should be. You need to be more in sync like Fred and George," Hermione added as an afterthought and she bolted, sitting up with her back straight.

Oliver was startled by her sudden movement, being shocked out of the relaxation he'd felt once she had rested her head on his shoulder.

"What is it, Lassie?" He asked, slightly worried by her action.

"You need to trust each other more," she said as the realisation hit her.

"An' hoo do we do tha'?"

She smiled brightly at him and he couldn't help the answering smile that he gave back before Hermione stood to her feet and cupped her hands in front of her mouth.

"CAMPFIRE!" She yelled.

Fred and George immediately stopped practising (alright, they were hitting bludgers at each other for fun) and flew towards her, and Oliver snorted at the confused faces of his Chasers and Seeker before he mimicked Hermione and cupped his hands in front of his mouth.

"SHE MEANS GET YE ARSES OVER HERE NOW!" He shouted a level that was a lot louder than Hermione had.

As the twins landed on either side of Hermione, they dismounted their brooms and kissed her on the cheek and laughed at her reply to Oliver's statement.

"Yes, thank you, Oliver! Real subtle use of language there."

"Anytime Lassie," he said with a cheeky wink and smile. She rolled her eyes at him.

The others landed and dismounted their brooms, approaching them on the stands.

"What's up?" Harry asked.

"A dunno," he shrugged, turning to her, "Hermione?"

"Alright, everyone, follow me," she said and she walked down the steps of the stands, walking onto the pitch as everyone trailed behind her, bemused.

She came to a sudden stop and the others not expecting it, all walked into each other.

"Ow!"

"Watch where you're going!

"Remove your elbow from my stomach!"

"Move out of the way!"

"What the bloody hell!"

"Seriously!"

"Shite!"

"Okay, everyone, put down your brooms as we won't be needing them for this part of practice," she instructed, gesturing to the correct place on the ground she wished them to set their brooms down on and they complied with her instructions. "Please line up," she said and they did, whilst still having no idea what is was she was doing.

Oliver stood at the right-hand side with Fred and George next to him, followed by Harry, Alicia, Angelina and Katie stood on the left.

"Okay, the first match is tomorrow and your plays, flying and skills are fine. That's not the problem."

"Then what is?"

Hermione looked at George, tilting her head as contemplated her next move. She walked over and stopped four foot in front of him with her back facing him and without warning, she fell backwards. George instantly caught her without even having to think about it, helping her into a standing position and steadying her.

"Okay, why'd you that?"

"Why do you think I did that?" She echoed.

"Because she trusts you," Harry interjected, understanding Hermione's train of thought.

"Yes, that's correct, Harry. I did it because I trust George. I trusted that he would have my back and not let me fall. I trusted that he would catch me and he did without hesitation."

"But what's that got to do with anything?" Alicia asked, still sounding confused.

"Do you trust everyone on the team, Alicia?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Are you sure?"

"I think so," she frowned.

"She doesn't sound so sure, does she?" Hermione challenged, looking to the other members of the team. "My point is, that you haven't been practicing as a team for long, you didn't over the summer and you have a new member on the team that you've only been practicing with. You haven't played a match with him yet. You don't trust each other. You don't trust Harry to catch the snitch. You don't trust Oliver to guard the hoops and stop the other team from scoring. You don't trust Alicia, Katie and Angelina to score against the other team. And you don't trust Fred and George to protect you from the bludgers. If you…"

She was cut off by an angry Angelina.

"What the hell do you know about Quidditch? You don't even play and you don't know how we feel about each other," she snapped.

Hermione arched an eyebrow at her outburst and before she could reply, Oliver's furious voice cut in front of hers.

"She's not a player because af her fear af heights. If she did fly, am she'd be a better Chaser than ye are. A've seen her aim an' she never misses her target, unlike ye. Hermione knows more aboot Quidditch than most fans. She knows ev'ry rule, ev'ry play an' tactic ever made an' used in the history af Quidditch, ev'ry ootcome af the World Cup games an' player statistics. She's the reason our skill set's improved since the beginnin' af practices this year an' she's created new plays fer us tha' naw one has seen befere. The reason ye havnae seen them is 'coz they require more skill befere they can be tested. Hermione's as much a part af this team as ye are. An' she's right aboot our feelings, a dunno aboot ye guys, but a certainly don't trust ev'ryone on this team," Oliver snapped, his eyes looking to Fred and George and they were more than happy to agree with Oliver as they glared in Angelina's direction.

Alicia and Katie, who were stood on opposite sides of Angelina, flinched somewhat, even though they knew the looks weren't aimed at them, it was still frightening and they shifted away from Angelina who looked like a scolded child.

"You were saying, Spitfire," Fred prompted, offering Hermione a smile.

"I was saying that if you trust each other to do your jobs, then you can all relax knowing that you all have each other covered. If you're relaxed, you can have fun. If you trust each other, you can work in synchronicity as Fred and George do; they trust each other explicitly. If you can all do the same and work as a team, you'll be unstoppable," Hermione explained confidently.

"So, what do we do?" asked Harry.

"We build your trust up with a few exercises and quickly; we don't have a lot of time left. So, let's get started."

Hermione separated them into pairs. Fred with Alicia, George with Katie, Harry and Angelina and even though she already trusted Oliver implicitly, she was paired with him as they had an odd number of people. They did the falling exercise, taking turns to fall and catch each other. Then swapping partners until everyone had been paired together. Hermione had to glare at Fred, George and Oliver as they intentionally tried to not catch Angelina and eventually they got the message and did it correctly.

Hermione and Angelina's pairing was interesting. Angelina tried to 'accidentally miss' catching Hermione when she fell backwards, but Hermione being Hermione, had already anticipated this move from her and so she fell slightly diagonally, leaving Angelina unintentionally catching Hermione, which she wasn't at all pleased with.

Hermione then moved on to the minefield exercise. Hermione removed her Gryffindor tie and placed it around Oliver's head covering his eyes, making him lose his ability to see. She then had the other members of the team work together to direct Oliver to a specific destination whilst avoiding the objects that were scattered about the ground. She repeated this exercise with each member of the team.

When they finished that exercise, she retrieved the quaffle and used the Gemino Spell to multiply it so she had seven in total. She had a member of the team stand in front of the others as she handed a quaffle to each one of them. The girls were shocked by her spell casting, but didn't comment. The object was to stand still and not move, trusting the others to not hit them as they threw the quaffle towards them, and once complete, Hermione told Oliver she thought they were ready.

He ordered everyone to pick up their brooms and have another quick practice and Hermione headed back to the stands to watch the progress they had made. By the end of practice the team had built up their trust between each other and Hermione was proud of them. They could now work as a team.

They were all walking towards the locker room to get changed before they headed back to the common room for an early night.

"Don't forget, Love, the match is tomorrow."

"Yes, thank you, George, for that reminder."

"You have to go through with it or do the forfeit, Spitfire."

"Who said I won't go through with it?"

"Well, ye havnae done it yet, Lassie, an' like the twins said, ye only have until tamorrow."

"Actually, I have until the start of the match since the start of the season doesn't begin until the quaffle is thrown in the air for the first time," she said as she smirked at them with an evil glint in her eyes that mildly frightened Harry and the girls, but her boys were more amused than anything else.

Saturday 2nd November 1991

It was the day of the match and Hermione was sat at the Gryffindor table in the great hall observing her boys. Lee was sat next to her and was eating as normal, Fred and George were quieter than usual but Oliver was the worst. He was currently sitting opposite Hermione and next to the twins, staring at his untouched plate of food, muttering to himself and huffing, whilst running his hands through his hair, making it stand up at odd angles.

After the tenth or so huff, Hermione lost her patience and she intervened.

"Oliver, eat your breakfast," she instructed.

"A don' want tae. Am tae busy tae eat anythin' an' am goin' over the plays in me head," he muttered.

"Oliver Wood, eat your breakfast! And you, too, Weasleys, don't think you're getting away with it either," Hermione scolded.

"A don'..." But Oliver halted his speech when he saw the frighteningly determined expression on her face.

He sighed, picking up his fork and he began eating as the twins sniggered at him, quickly quieting down when Oliver elbowed one of them in the ribs and they saw the glare Hermione fixed them with. She scared them more than their mum did! They gulped and picked up their forks and began eating, too. Lee chuckled at them and nudged Hermione with his shoulder, looking at her amused for her mothering behaviour.

"You need to stop worrying about the match. Don't think about winning, or losing or the other team. Think about how much you love the game. How much you love flying. And just have fun. The rest will take care of itself. Now, do you feel better?" She asked and the three nods she received made her smile. "Good, now drink your drinks. You need to stay hydrated and eat everything on your plate; you need the energy and we don't want you fainting hundreds of feet above the air."

"You've only got about an hour to do your dare."

"I've already done it, Lee," she said with a smirk.

"I don't see anything, Spitfire."

"That's because it's time-sensitive. The plan's already been put into motion and the results will be showcased later."

"What did you do?" George eyed her curiously.

"You'll see," and with that, she took her leave from the boys and walked further down the table to give Harry a piece of her mind about not eating his breakfast. Her boys laughed when they saw Harry's fearful expression as Hermione sat opposite him and proceeded to scold him.

10:00

Hermione was sat in the stands with Neville, Seamus, Dean and Ron. She was wearing an old Quidditch jersey with 'Weasley' on the back and almost swallowed her whole. Underneath, she wore a pair of light blue jeans and white converse for comfort and practicality. Her hair was thrown up into a haphazard bun and wisps of curls were flying about in the wind. She was also wearing Oliver's scarf that was far too big for her but she didn't seem to care.

"So, rumour has it you've gotten a dare from the Weasley Twins that has to be carried out today, is it true?" Seamus asked.

"All will be revealed in the next few minutes," Hermione said with a mischievous look in her eyes, and as she said this, the Slytherin team flew out on to the pitch and the Gryffindor team followed shortly after with Hermione cheering loudly.

The boys noticed her as they hovered in the air and tapped their wrists indicating that she had run out of time. Hermione smirked and pointed to the Slytherin team and they all turned to look at them.

All of a sudden and out of nowhere, every member of the Slytherin Quidditch teams' hair began to change colour... red with a gold stripe down the centre.

Fred, George, Oliver and Lee -who was sat in the commentator's box- looked at Hermione in complete awe and admiration. She smirked at them. Do they really that's all I'm capable of? Not a chance, Hermione thought to herself with a snort.

Then their green and silver robes turned green with red and gold polka dots with a large lion on the back of their robes. But that wasn't all. Oh no! Hermione pointed upwards and everyone -students, players, staff and visitors- looked up to see a cloud of smoke appearing above the Slytherin teams heads. The smoke moulded into letters until it read,

'We love Gryffindor! All hail the glorious Gryffindors.' Hermione had also done the same to the reserve players for the team. She took no prisoners.

All houses looked at Hermione in appreciation and wonder, even the Slytherins, though they weren't as amused as the other three. Professor Snape was trying hard not to snort at the misfortune of the students of his own house. To say he was impressed would be an understatement. Should've been a Slytherin, he thought to himself.

Professor McGonagall also seemed to be having trouble controlling her emotions. Her mouth hung open comically. She didn't know whether to laugh, cry, scold or praise Hermione, so instead, she settled for chastising Lee who was making jokes in the commentator's box and having the crowd in tears of laughter.

After the crowd had calmed down the game began.

The quaffle had been tossed into the air and Gryffindor took possession. Hermione watched as Alicia, Katie and Angelina worked in sync and scored for Gryffindor. Hermione could see Harry high in the air circling above the pitch looking for the snitch and she looked away from him knowing that he was safe for now. She then looked for Fred and George; she could easily tell they were excited and having fun. They were messing about, doing loop the loops which made Hermione feel uncomfortable. Even though they were joking around they were still keeping the bludgers away from the chasers and sending them towards the other team, laughing every time a Slytherin had to duck or swerve out of the way. Finally, she moved her eyes to Oliver and despite the distance between them; she could still see the determination set on his face.

The Slytherins weren't playing fair, blatantly cheating and playing dirty and Hermione had lost count of the number of times fouls had been called. She didn't like the turn the game taken and she was unknowingly digging her nails into her palms, almost drawing blood in the process. When that wasn't enough to quell the anxiety within her, she gripped Oliver's scarf in one hand and one of the twins' Quidditch jersey in the other, her knuckles turning white. Ron placed his hand on Hermione's shoulder in an attempt to offer her comfort. It didn't work, but she was thankful for his attempt and she smiled at him.

Things took a turn for the worst when Marcus Flint, the Slytherin Quidditch Captain - who by the way was a chaser - stole a beater's bat from one of his players and swung, hitting a bludger towards Oliver. Oliver had his attention diverted on Harry warning him against a bludger heading his way that he didn't see the one coming for him until it was too late. It smacked him straight in the stomach with such a force that it knocked him off his broom and sent him flying backwards through one of the hoops. He hit the side of the metal ring and began falling two hundred feet to the ground at a rapid pace. Without even blinking, Hermione followed her instincts that told her to protect Oliver at all costs and she pulled her wand.

"Arresto Momentum," she yelled with a force she didn't even know she was capable of.

Oliver's unconscious body began to descend at a much slower rate at which Hermione controlled. She cast the spell before any of the staff had even thought to and everyone stood and watched mesmerised trying to figure out who was casting the spell. The answer was given when Hermione descended the stairs of the stands and moved onto the pitch with her wand pointed at Oliver.

The whole pitch had gone silent and the players above stopped in mid-air and watched as Oliver was slowly and gently laid on the floor with Hermione kneeling over him. Fred and George were quick to fly down to her and drop to their knees next to her, surrounding Oliver and their brooms lay forgotten. Hermione knew what she had to do, she didn't know how, but she did and she slowly put her hand to Oliver's cheek and the twins each put a hand on her shoulder. A soft golden glow covered the four, only noticeable by those close enough. Seconds later, it disappeared and Oliver slowly opened his eyes and stared into the large chocolate brown eyes filled with worry and distress and she smiled softly at him.

Hermione spoke tenderly. "Hey, Ollie, done anything interesting lately?"

"Oh ye know, jus' fell a couple hundred feet."

"And you're trying to convince me that flying isn't so bad."

"Aye, this is a bit af a setback, isnae it?" He replied and she chuckled at him. But it was soon replaced by a look of worry when he grunted in pain.

"How bad does it hurt?"

"Not tha' bad, Lassie, a've had worse injuries."

Her frown deepened. "That doesn't make me feel better."

Madam Pomphrey arrived and placed Oliver on a stretcher, taking him to the locker room to be checked over but she wouldn't allow Hermione to go with him until the match was over.

"It's okay, Lassie, keep an eye on the game fer mae an' keep the Twin Terrors in line," he said with a strained smile due to the pain.

She agreed reluctantly and kissed him softly on the cheek and then the forehead before she marched back up to her seat in the stands, not at all happy with the outcome and the reserve Keeper played in the game as it continued.

Slytherin was winning 60-20, the reserve Keeper was nowhere near as good as Oliver and the Slytherins were still playing dirty. When Harry spotted the snitch, he raced after it and the crowd cheered. Harry became panicked and the reason why was clear to Hermione. His broom began to buck wildly, as if it was trying to shake him off whilst Harry held on for his life. Hermione knew the signs and realised that someone was jinxing his broom. She looked around and her eyes landed on the staff's stands and several professors were all making eye contact with Harry.

Hermione rushed over and hid under the stands and pulled her wand. Whispering, "Sorry, Professor," she pointed her wand and whispered, "Incendio," setting Professor Snape's robes on fire.

It caused the distraction she wanted and Harry climbed back on to his broom and continued to race after the snitch, as if nothing had happened. He reached for it and fell off his broom. Luckily he wasn't too far above the ground so he wasn't badly hurt, but when he opened his mouth the snitch fell from it.

Lee roared from the commentator's box and over the crowd's cheers,

"HE'S DONE IT! HARRY POTTER'S CAUGHT THE SNITCH! GRYFFINDOR WINS, 170-60 POINTS!"

Hermione quickly ran to Harry, hugged him tightly and congratulated him before rushing to see Oliver.

"Hey, hoo's the game?"

"The reserve Keeper's rubbish; he could use some more training. Gryffindor won 170-60. Harry fell from his broom but still caught the snitch in his mouth."

"What?" Oliver spluttered gobsmacked.

"Harry caught the snitch in his mouth," she repeated, still finding it difficult to believe it herself and she'd witnessed it. "I told you he was good. I just wish you could've seen it for yourself. Anyway, what's the damage?"

"Jus' a few bruises an' cracked ribs, they should be healed by Monday. It would've been a lot more serious if ye hadn't af cast the spell as quick as ye did," he said softly, noticing her distressed look.

"I couldn't let you fall and get hurt. But you did get hurt because I wasn't quick enough," she said upset.

Oliver slowly pushed himself into a sitting position before he reached out and pulled her to sit beside him and taking her hands in his, he looked deep into her eyes.

"The injuries a have are from the bludger tha' hit mae. Ye couldn't help tha'. Me injuries may have been paralysing or more likely fatal if a hit the ground at the speed a was goin'. Ye stopped tha' from happening, long before the Professors thought tae."

Taking a breath, she nodded slowly and he pulled her into him, enveloping her into a hug.

"I was so scared, Ollie," she whispered as tears fell from her eyes and onto his jersey, soaking into the fabric.

"Am fine, a promise ye," he muttered, hugging her tighter and closer to his body as she began to shake, the shock of the incident finally taking hold of her.

He buried his face in the crook of her neck as he comforted her and after hearing footsteps, he lifted his gaze to see Fred and George stood at the entrance of the locker room, smiling at the scene before them.

'Am gonna be fine. We all are, Oliver thought to himself, his lips twitched into a smile and the twins nodded in understanding.

Chapter Twenty-One

Hogwarts - Saturday 16th November 1991

Two weeks later and it was the second Gryffindor Quidditch match. Gryffindor versus Ravenclaw. Hermione had spent her breakfast, glaring and scolding Oliver, Fred, George and Harry for not eating their breakfast, whilst making Lee laugh in the process.

Hermione thought that she should ease the tension somehow, so she decided to complete one of her dares. Hermione noticed that Malfoy hadn't appeared in the great hall yet and stood to leave and make her exit.

"Where are you going, Love?"

"I have something I need to do, I'll be right back," she said with a smirk that instantly had her boys on edge and they nodded slowly. Hermione left the great hall and cast the Disillusionment Charm on herself and waited by the great hall doors for her target to arrive.

"She's up to something, isn't she?" Fred asked.

"She's always up to something, brother mine," was the reply he received from his twin and they shared a smirked.

"Fair point," Fred tipped his head.

Hermione didn't have to wait long for Malfoy to show up and when he did, she stepped out in front of him and cancelled the Disillusionment Charm, Malfoy physically startling and he let out a girly shriek.

"Why so jumpy, Malfoy?" Hermione tipped her head curiously.

When Malfoy looked at her he noticed that her lips didn't move.

"You know it's rude to stare," said her voice, but once again Hermione's lips didn't move.

Turning in the direction of the voice, he saw Hermione stood behind him and when he faced forward, it was to see Hermione stood in front of him, an angelic expression on her face. Malfoy heard a noise and turned to his left to where Hermione now stood, then to his right where Hermione stood, too. He slowly turned around in a circle to see himself surrounded by not just one, but four Hermiones and he let out a girly scream before he darted away from her, stumbling into the great hall.

Cancelling the Gemino Charm, Hermione calming followed after him, stepping into the great hall to see Malfoy stuttering as he pointed at her before he unexpectedly and suddenly fainted. Hermione looked at him lying on the floor, shrugged her shoulders unconcerned and then she took a seat at the Gryffindor table.

"What did you do?" George arched an eyebrow.

"Nothing," she replied. Seeing their incredulous expressions, she amended, "I didn't do anything to him; I cast the Gemino Charm on myself."

"How many?" Fred asked, his mouth twitching.

"Four. He may have freaked out a little."

"A little! If that your idea of a little then I'd hate to see your idea of a lot," he snorted.

"A lot would be him fainting immediately," she shrugged. "I'm actually surprised he lasted a lot longer than I thought he would. He's lucky; I originally planned to cast the Aquamenti Charm but that would ruin his hair and I don't think I could deal with a crying Malfoy because his hair was wet."

They looked to one another and laughter surrounded her, Hermione being pleased that she'd succeeded with her goal of calming the boys. Once they'd finished with breakfast, they headed over to the locker rooms, Hermione hugged and kissed the boys on the cheeks and wished them good luck even though she knew they didn't need it, and she headed to take her seat in the stands with Ron, Seamus, Dean and Neville. And the game began shortly after with Hermione, like the previous match, sporting Oliver's scarf and one of the twins' old Quidditch jerseys.

The match ended with Gryffindor winning 210-70, with it taking almost three hours for Harry to catch the snitch and it had been the worst three hours of Hermione's life. She'd spent most of her time with her eyes glued to Harry, Fred, George and particularly Oliver. After his injury during the last match, Hermione had stayed by Oliver's side, barely moving except for classes. Not that he was complaining, he was rather pleased with that development. She was just as protective of him as he was of her.

When she wasn't watching the game or her boys, she was gripping her clothes tightly with her knuckles turning white or she had a firm hold on Ron's arm, leaving bruises and almost breaking something. Ron decided that the next match Seamus could sit next to her.

Her boys were fine and without injury. However, Fred and George had aimed a few bludgers towards the Ravenclaw players and had hit their target but there were no serious injuries and luckily no one had fallen off their brooms.

They had all headed to Gryffindor Tower for the after party to celebrate with Hermione and Lee sneaking down to the kitchens to retrieve food and beverages and Bopsy kindly agreeing to send some up to the common room for them.

They partied for the rest of the evening, only stopping to head to the great hall for dinner, and when they returned to the common room, the party continued until the early hours of the morning until they all trudged up to their rooms exhausted and barley managing to change into their pyjamas before they fell asleep.

Friday 29th November 1991

It was Bill's birthday. The twins' and Lee's eldest brother and he was now twenty-three years old. They had of course forgotten' they were useless at remembering numbers and dates unless it had something to do with pranking. Luckily for them, Hermione had remembered. The boys had told her everything about their families, so she knew that Bill was a curse breaker. To order the right gift for Bill, Hermione had read everything she could in the library on the profession of curse breaking, and to be a curse breaker you had to be smart, logical, enjoy challenges and puzzles, be determined and never quit.

Sticking to her muggle roots Hermione had asked her owled her Mother and asked for help in retrieving the items she needed. She had bought Bill a rubik's cube and four different wooden puzzles and brain teasers that required Bill to take them apart and put them back together again. The puzzles were varied in shape, size and colour and were some of the most difficult puzzles in the Muggle World (or so her parents had said) and she had also bought him the classic board game, Cluedo.

She reminded the boys of Bill's birthday and they panicked until Hermione placed a gift box in front of them wrapped in red paper with a gold bow sat atop, which would later be sent with an accompanying letter that read,

*To our dear big brother,*

*Happy Birthday, Old Man!*

*We hope these gifts keep your mind sharp. Use them every day to strengthen your mind and prevent you from forgetting things, which now you're old, we're sure you've already begun the process. They are muggle items courtesy of the Muggleborn extraordinaire that is our best friend and roommate. We've been informed that these items are the most difficult puzzles in the Muggle World so you can solve them to your heart's content. Just don't get too angry if you can't figure it out!*

*If you need help just let us know; we are, after all, geniuses and a lot smarter than you.*

*Fred, George and Lee*

*P.S. our roommate placed the Shrinking and Feather-Light Charms on the gift box so use the counter charms.*

Thursday 12th December 1991

Today it was Charlie's twenty-first birthday, and as the twins and Lee had once again forgotten another member of their family's birthday, Hermione was left with finding the perfect gift for him. And she had struggled until she was finally hit with inspiration. She knew that Charlie's Patronus was an Eastern Dragon and she knew that Charlie had a thing for tattoos. For that reason, Hermione had Dean sketch out a design for a new tattoo for Charlie. They worked together; Hermione researching and Dean sketching to incorporate both muggle and magical heritage into the design. When they had finished they looked over the final results and they were pleased with what they saw. In the middle of the page, there was a large Eastern Dragon coloured with blues, yellows, reds and greens. It was surrounded by flames in the colours and shades of red, yellow, orange, pink and blue and the flames were emitted from the word Gryffindor.

Hermione had also gotten Charlie a book on magical creatures and a muggle book on the legends and myths of magical creatures which included creatures such as, Griffins, Dragons, Unicorns, Phoenixes, Werewolves and Vampires. Hermione thought that Charlie would find the muggle opinion on these creatures humorous compared to the facts –sometimes biased bigotry- of the Wizarding World. She placed the items in a gift box and wrapped it in red paper and tied it off with a gold bow.

When Hermione presented the gift box in front of the boys, they sighed in relief.

Did they honestly think I wouldn't come through for them? As if, she thought to herself and snorted.

The letter they wrote to accompany the gift box read,

*To our second favourite oldest brother,*

*Happy Birthday, Barmie!*

*We can't take credit for the gifts that have been sent your way. All praise should go to our terrifyingly smart roommate. They thought you would enjoy the books on magical creatures from both a magical and muggle point of view. Don't even get us started on that tattoo design of your Patronus. We would've never thought of anything as brilliant as that. They collaborated with a fellow Gryffindor to get that done for you. They spent two days researching non-stop, everything they could about Eastern Dragons to make the tattoo as authentic and realistic as possible. Did they succeed? They would like to know. We think the tattoo will make you look manlier. Then maybe people will be able to tell that you're a guy and not a girl. In the words of our wonderfully terrifying mother, 'Honestly, you really need a haircut. You look ridiculous!'*

*We have also included two golden ribbons so that you can tie your hair up into pigtails like the little girl you are.*

*Enjoy, you Ginger Sod!*

*Fred, George and Lee*

*P.S. our roommate placed the Shrinking and Feather-Light Charms on the gift box so use the counter charms.*

Wednesday 18th December 1991

It was the final day of the Christmas term. Harry would be going to the Weasley's with the boys for Christmas, Oliver was going home to his family and Hermione would be returning home to her parents. At first, she'd been upset that she couldn't go home to see her parents as they had a dental conference in France during the holidays, but remembering their vow to spend time with their daughter, they'd decided that Hermione would visit with them until they had to leave and then she would spend the remainder of the holidays with the Weasleys.

Hermione would travel on the train with the others, travel to the Burrow and use their floo network to floo home, as her parents weren't able to make travel arrangements or pick her up from Kings Cross Station. At this news, she was ecstatic as she got to see her parents and still be with her boys. Well three of them at least. Oliver had promised that he would floo to the Burrow and visit during the holidays which had improved her mood somewhat. She was grateful that Professor McGonagall had made arrangements for the Granger's fireplace to be connected to the floo network, as it made travelling so much easier and it gave her access to the Wizarding World.

Hermione had spent the night before the departure packing everyone's trunks the muggle way. She had to only pack three trunks that night. Oliver's, Fred and George shared and so did Lee and Hermione, and she would be leaving her stuff at the Burrow as she didn't need it when she was at home. When she'd finished packing, she picked up her wand and pointed it at the trunks performing a packing spell.

"Pack," she muttered. She had to make sure that she hadn't left anything out so nothing got left behind. Of course, she hadn't, but she couldn't be too careful.

Everyone had now eaten breakfast and they returned to their dorm rooms to collect their belongings. Hermione pointed her wand at the trunks and perfectly performed two spells she probably shouldn't have.

"Reducio," she said shrinking the trunks before she added the Feather- Light Charm, "Pluma Lux."

She picked up the trunks and handed them to their owners and they smiled in gratitude, kissed her on the cheek and then placed the trunks in their pockets.

11:30

Hermione, Fred, George, Lee and Oliver were all sat in the same compartment Hermione had met the twins and Lee in. They had all commandeered that compartment for the rest of their Hogwarts years; it now belonged to them. They carved their initials into the wood on the overhead rack. They all left the compartment to go in search of the confectionary trolley and when they returned they had their arms filled with liquorice wands, chocolate frogs, Bertie Bott's every flavoured beans, sugar quills, pumpkin juice and pumpkin pasties.

When they opened their compartment door, it was to see a group of third year Slytherins sitting in their seats.

"Oi move!" Fred said.

"Yeah, beat it," followed George, jabbing his thumb behind him.

"I don't think so, this is our compartment," one of the boys sneered.

"No, it's not, besides, we were here first," Lee said calmly.

"We don't care and I don't see your name on it."

Everyone smirked and pointed to the overhead rack and when the Slytherins looked up they saw the initials HG, FW, GW and LJ carved intricately into the wood.

Some of the Slytherins huffed in annoyance at being out-thwarted by the Gryffindors, but that same boy as before glared at them and that's when Oliver stepped forward, leaned over him and he peered down at the boy. Before anyone knew what had happened, the seats were empty as the boys had legged it out of the compartment.

Hermione was exhausted as she'd spent most of the previous night packing and she'd been too excited sleep, and after Oliver pulled her to lean against him, she'd made herself comfortable by lying on the seat with her head cushioned on Oliver's thigh and Lee covered her with a blanket. She slept soundly the whole train ride, with the twins and Oliver just as relaxed and happy as Hermione appeared to be in her dreams.

Lee had been observing the four of them for weeks and he knew they were different. He couldn't tell what they were or what they would become, but he knew that it was special and he knew he would watch over and protect Hermione as a big brother would.

They watch over and protect her as would a friend? No, that's not the right word. It's more than that. So much more than that. Lover? That's the word lover? I've heard stories about some witches and wizards having mates and soul bonds, but they're rare and it hasn't happened in centuries. They don't act like other people do. I'll have do some research. Whoa! Slow down, Jordan. Where the bloody hell did that come from? Oh for Merlin's Sake, I've been spending too much time with Hermione, he thought to himself.

"What you laughing at?" Fred, no wait... George asked.

"Nothing. Did Hermione remember to pack copies of the photos taken of the pranks?"

Fred, George and Oliver raised an eyebrow in unison. Okay, because that's not creepy, Lee thought to himself.

"Sorry, stupid question," he said and they shook their heads at him.

"Mum's going to love her," George spoke or was it Fred? Hermione was still the only one that could tell them apart. Lee and Oliver could sometimes do so when they used their names and stayed in the same place, otherwise, they were at a loss.

"Yeah, Bill and Charlie, too, especially after the gifts she bought them," said Lee.

"Percy and Ron already like her," added the other twin.

"That just leaves your dad and Ginny," Lee said.

"Ginny will love her 'cause she's a girl and she won't be surrounded by boys all the time. Dad will love her 'cause she's a Muggleborn," said one of the twins that Lee thought was Fred.

"My ma an' da, will love her tae," Oliver said confidently, his eyes darting down to the sleeping witch beside him fondly.

Conversation continued until they finally reached Kings Cross Station and they exited the train with Hermione being carried and cradled to Oliver's chest as she slept peacefully; they didn't have the heart to wake her as they knew she was exhausted.

They met up with Harry and Ron -who also had their trunks in their pockets as Hermione had kindly cast the Shrinking and Feather-Light Charms on them- and they all began walking on the platform towards a group of five redheads.

Stood further back on the platform were Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Ginny, Charlie and Bill who had come to finally meet the 'Muggleborn extraordinaire' (they would've met them over the Christmas holidays but they couldn't wait) who their brothers had talked non-stop about and who had sent brilliant birthday gifts.

As they got closer everyone looked on at the scene and did a double-take, shaking their heads to make sure that they were actually seeing what they were seeing. Walking towards them was Ron, Lee and a boy they presumed to be the famous Boy-Who-Lived, Harry Potter, from the very few letters they received from Ron.

But that wasn't what caught their attention.

Walking in front of them was Fred and George standing on opposite sides of Oliver Wood - the Weasley's knew him because he played Quidditch since his second year and with Charlie before he graduated and he was a Pureblood, too) who was carrying a petite young girl with wild mahogany curls in his arms and pulled tightly but gently to his chest, hugging her close.

Everyone could see her wearing blue jeans, white converse and a jumper that was easily recognisable as a Weasley jumper. One of the twins, in fact, as the blanket shifted slightly off Hermione's figure and showed a large yellow 'F' on the front.

Mrs. Weasley's eyes bulged at the sight, especially when they began fussing with the blanket draped over Hermione and securing it tightly around her to protect her from the cold, December weather. Not to mention, the Weasley jumper she was currently sporting.

"Who do you think she is?" Charlie whispered to Bill.

"Did they ever mention the name of their new roommate in the letters they sent you?" Bill asked.

"No, they just called them 'the Muggleborn extraordinaire who was terrifyingly smart.'"

"Same with the letters they sent me," Bill nodded.

"Well, if she is their new roommate, mum's going to be pissed. How did she even end up their roommate?"

"I don't know, do I?" He rolled his eyes. "Twenty galleons mum scares her off before we even get her back to the Burrow," Bill grinned.

"You're so on. If she is their new roommate and the things I've read are true, you're so losing that bet."

They shook on it and waited for the bomb to explode as the group finally reached them.

"Here we go. Get prepared to pay up, little brother," said Bill and they shared a grin before turning to watch the scene unfold.

"WHAT IN THE NAME OF MERLIN DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING? YOU PUT THAT SCARLET WOMAN DOWN RIGHT THIS INSTANT!"

Chater Twenty-Two

Kings Cross Station – Wednesday18th December 1991

Miraculously, Hermione didn't wake but she did snuggle deeper into Oliver's embrace and he held her tighter whilst Oliver, Lee, Fred and George glared and shushed her. Mrs. Weasley was speechless; the looks the four teenage boys were giving her, she was sure was what she looked like when she did it to them. And it made her rethink her next move.

Ron and Harry were finding it difficult to control their reactions to the gaping Weasleys; they knew exactly what they were going through as they'd experienced it several times before and it hadn't been pleasant. In fact, just thinking about it made them feel queasy. The Gryffindor boys were very protective of Hermione, and they didn't care for anyone upsetting her or disrupting her sleep.

The Weasleys were shocked at their behaviour; the twins and Lee for obvious reasons, but Oliver had always been polite and respectful towards the Weasley Matriarch, and Bill and Charlie shared a curious, questioning glance.

"Okay, that's interesting," Bill muttered.

"It sure is. We're so finding out about that," Charlie stated in a whisper.

"Yes, we are," Bill agreed and they turned back to the scene in front of them.

Percy finally walked up the platform, nodding to the boys and he smiled at the sleeping Hermione, passing them to get to his parents and he hugged them but their eyes were still trained on the boys and the sleeping girl in their presence.

"A've got tae go, me parents are over there waitin' fer mae," Oliver huffed unhappily and the twins nodded in understanding and sympathy. They knew what he would go through being away from Hermione; they would experience it as well but for a much shorter period of time.

Oliver stole a final glance at the sleeping girl in his arms before he did the exact opposite of what he wanted to do and he gently lifted Hermione into Fred's waiting arms. He and the others chuckled when Hermione grumbled at being jostled and snuggled deeper into Fred's chest. Oliver leaned over smoothed the hair away from her eyes and he bent down and whispered in her ear.

"A will see ye sooner than ye think, Lassie," he mumbled. When he rose to full height, he placed a gentle kiss to her forehead and she smiled softly in her sleep and let out a sigh.

Oliver nodded to the twins, Lee, Ron and Harry before turning and walking towards his stunned parents. Here comes the interrogation, he thought. Oliver could already feel the loss in him and he counted down the days he would see Hermione again.

George pulled the blanket tighter around Hermione and pushed the hair away from her face as he and Fred smiled tenderly, but their attention was drawn back to their family when they heard a throat clearing. When they looked up, it was to see the surprised expressions of their parents and little sister, Ginny. Bill and Charlie seemed amused as they each had an eyebrow raised and a smirk plastered on their faces.

"What?" The twins chorused in confusion.

"I think it's best if we take this elsewhere," Mr. Weasley suggested, leading them away from the platform.

The Burrow

One by one they stepped out of the floo and into the living room of the Burrow but Hermione had been woken during travel and she desperately needed to use the bathroom, so once she'd been set back on her feet, Fred showed her to the bathroom and the remaining members of the Weasley family all made themselves comfortable in the living room with Percy, Ginny, Charlie, Bill and Lee taking seats on the couches, Ron and Harry stood next to the couches with Ron's arm slung around Harry's shoulders and George and Mr. Weasley stood in front of the group.

Mrs. Weasley came through the floo and immediately began yelling at George.

"Where is she!?" She demanded.

"Upstairs," he answered, not looking surprised at her outburst as he stood with his hands casually shoved into his pockets.

"GO GET THAT SCARLET WOMAN AND BRING HER DOWN HERE NOW, FRED GIDEON WEASLEY!"

Everyone but Mrs. Weasley noticed that Lee had flinched slightly after speaking Fred's name, quickly understanding that she was currently yelling at the wrong twin. Harry was slightly scared at that moment as Ron leaned against him, shaking his head at his family and trying to suppress the laughter that was threatening to boil over whilst giving Harry a sympathetic look. He'd get used to it, he told himself.

I can't wait to see how Hermione deals with this, he thought amusedly. There was only one person who frightened him more than his mother and it was Hermione.

"That's George," a soft voice filled the tense room and all eyes turned to see Hermione and Fred descending down the stairs.

"What?" Snapped Mrs. Weasley unhappily.

"You've got the wrong twin, that's George, Fred's behind me and by the way, I am not a scarlet woman."

"If that's the case, why were you in the arms of a teenager boy?!" She demanded, her hands settling on her hips and her eyes narrowing.

"First of all, I'm only twelve, not quite old enough to be considered a scarlet woman. And second of all, I thought it was evident that I was sleeping and they didn't want to wake me because I was up all night packing their trunks," Hermione replied calmly, her head tipping as she regarded the older woman before her curiously. "I'm Hermione, Hermione Granger, it's nice to finally meet you Mrs. Weasley. The boys have told me so much about you," she said as she lifted her hand up to shake Mrs. Weasley's.

Everyone but Mrs. Weasley chuckled as she was shaken about the fact that a first year had talked back to her.

Charlie turned to Bill. "Pay up, big brother," he said smugly and Bill begrudgingly gave up twenty galleons to his smirking little brother, slamming them into his hands unhappily.

"So, you're our little brothers' 'terrifyingly smart' roommate then?" Bill asked, his eyes darting between her and his brothers.

"The 'Muggleborn extraordinaire' best friend?" Charlie added, not giving Hermione a chance to answer.

"I think they were being a bit dramatic when they wrote that, but I am one of their new roommates and friends. And yes, I am a Muggleborn," Hermione said as she walked away from Mrs. Weasley, dropping her hand and walking towards the other members of the family that seemed more welcoming.

"So, Hermione, Hermione Granger, how did you become their roommate?" Bill asked.

"You must be Bill, did you like your birthday gifts?" She said, avoiding his question.

"Yeah, they were brilliant, although I still haven't figured out how to complete the puzzles and that cube thing and that game with the weird name is giving me some bother," he admitted, scratching at his chin and she chuckled at him.

"So basically all of it," Lee muttered.

Bill shoved Lee off of the couch and he hit the ground. "Shut up, Leah," he said and everyone laughed at them both, except Mrs. Weasley, who was still in shock and not paying attention.

"Do you want me to show you what you need to do to complete them?" Hermione offered and he nodded gratefully. "I'll show you sometime after I return from visiting my parents. Right, anyway, how did it become their roommate?... Well, basically, Professors Dumbledore thought it was best for my safety despite my objections to the unorthodox solution."

"Your safety? Why would they worry about your safety?" Mrs. Weasley questioned in puzzlement, the previous tone of voice gone and replaced by her normal, kinder tone.

"I was bullied during the first few weeks of school."

"Love, it was a lot more than just bullying -" George spoke.

"- They could've killed you," Fred exclaimed, making others jump.

When he saw Hermione's defeated expression, he sighed and walked over to her, hugging her against him and whispering his apologies into her ear. She knew he wasn't angry at her but his outburst had still surprised her, and George crossed over to them and he was pulled into the hug, too with the others were watching curiously.

Definitely going to find out about them, Charlie and Bill both thought, sharing a look.

"What do they mean they could've killed you?" Mrs. Weasley asked, her expression paling and her voice taking on her usual motherly tone.

"Exactly that, they could've killed me," Hermione responded with a sigh, deliberately leaving out the part where she had technically died.

It had been agreed upon by all involved - Professors Snape, Dumbledore and McGonagall, Madam Pomphrey and her boys- that they would keep it quiet that she had technically died. If anyone asked, or it was brought up, she could've died, but didn't.

"What caused this?" All previous opinions she had on Hermione had changed and she was now concerned for the young girl, with her mothering instincts kicking in.

"They verbally abused me, destroyed my cloak and other personal items, kept me awake at night, pushed me around and when that wasn't enough, I had to sleep in abandoned classrooms. I spent most of my time in the library and kitchens with the house-elves. They are wonderful magical beings; very kind and tolerant of me."

"What did they do to you?" Mr. Weasley asked this time, he too, was concerned for Hermione.

"It doesn't matter what they did to me, it's been dealt with and it's in the past."

"It doesn't matter!" The twins exploded, and she jumped in surprise, as did the others.

"Spitfire, they injected you with Venomous Tentacula poison," Fred said.

The atmosphere filled with tension as the adults in the room digested the information they'd just been told.

"I was fine though," Hermione said quickly, seeing the angry looks on their faces. "I only had one of the symptoms of the poison being fatal towards me, as it affects each individual differently. My immune system did its best to fight off the poison, and during that process, I was rather frightening to look at. I collapsed and later woke in the hospital wing but I was released the next morning, completely healthy."

"Who were they?" Bill asked, barely controlling his anger. For some reason that he couldn't quite fathom, he saw Hermione as a little sister and he had only met her not even an hour ago. He darted a glance to Charlie, seeing he appeared to be struggling with his own emotions.

"The girls," she shrugged.

"What girls?" Asked Mr. Weasley.

"All of them. They treat me like a pariah, but it was only a select few that physically harmed me. Most of them are starting to come around. Mainly the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws, but some Gryffindors have, too. I think it's because they all saw what happened to me and most of them had at least a small part in it and maybe felt guilty, but also Professor Dumbledore's forbidden all girls from being in groups of more than three when travelling around the castle."

"How did no one know what was happening to you?" Mrs. Weasley asked, sending a pointed glare to her sons. Hermione and the others hadn't told her about Ron's part in the bullying and she wasn't going to and she would be sure to stop the twins and Lee from blabbing, too.

"I was rather good at hiding it, if I didn't admit to it, then it wasn't happening. Ignorance is bliss."

"What were the punishments they received?" Mrs. Weasley asked dazed and at this Hermione, George, Fred and Lee smirked and Ron and Harry chuckled and even Percy snorted. This caused a few raised eyebrows from the others not in the loop.

"I didn't want those involved to have their education jeopardised no matter what they did to me or how they treated me. No magical being should be kept from the Wizarding World like Harry and I were for eleven years. I spoke to Professor Dumbledore and we came to an agreement of sorts about their punishments. I asked for permission to do something and he refused me, but if he didn't witness me committing it he couldn't punish me for it."

Hermione walked over to Lee and held out her hand. Knowing what she wanted he took out their shared trunk and placed it on her palm. She smiled at him and placed the trunk on the ground. She clicked her fingers and the trunk returned to its original state, and everyone stared at her, even her boys.

"What?" She asked.

"Spitfire, you can't do magic outside of school until you're seventeen. You'll get in trouble with the Ministry," said Fred, glancing between her and the window worriedly, as if expecting a Ministry owl to arrive at that very moment.

"Yes, I know, but I didn't do any magic."

"We just saw you do it, Love," George said.

"I played around with the spells a bit and made them more adaptable. I permanently placed them on all your trunks, all you have to do is click your fingers."

Hermione did so and the trunk shrunk in size again, and then she did it once more returning it back to the correct size.

"As that's how you activate the spells, technically, you're not using any magic because I've turned the trunks into a magical object." Everyone gaped at her. "What?"

"Nothing," Lee, Fred, George, Ron and Harry said in unison and they looked at each other in surprise before snorting.

"So back to the punishment," Hermione said as she opened the trunk and pulled out a wad of magical photos.

She pulled the boys over to the couches and sat on the floor in front of those already occupying the seats. She asked Bill to enlarge several photos and he did and he levitated them in front of them so they could all see.

The moving images showed the girls getting soaked as water poured seemingly out of nowhere, as they screamed and struggled to get free from their brooms, followed by an attack from Peeves. Everyone laughed, even Mrs. Weasley.

"What did you do?" Charlie asked through his laughter.

"Aquamenti Charm, Disillusionment Charm, Sticking Charm and Silencing Charm so they couldn't hear us laughing, although the laughter of the class covered that anyway."

The second set of photos were enlarged and levitated for everyone to see, and the photos showed the whole incident during the great hall with the water, green paint, syrup, feathers, and it included Peeves and the water balloons.

"And here?" Bill asked with tears leaking from the corner of his eye and he reached to wipe them away.

"Levitation Charm, Disillusionment Charm, Sticking Charm and Finite Incantatem. I wanted them to look like chickens. Some of them may have been Gryffindors but they were cowards to not come forward with the truth about what they did to me. I may not have wanted to out them myself, but I would've had a lot more respect for them if they had confessed themselves. Besides, we have a saying in the Muggle World for being a coward and we call it, 'Being a chicken,' and it seemed fitting."

They went through the rest of the photos seeing the other pranks they pulled from dying the girl's hair green and slipping fake tan into their shower gel, to getting chased by fireworks courtesy of Fred, George and Lee. They also showed Peeves helpings in the pranking as he placed dung bombs and frogs born soap in the girl's rooms and bathrooms and Hermione making flour bombs and giving them to Peeves, which ended in him chasing the girls through the great hall.

"Well, you boys were relentless with the pranks, very creative, too. I don't think I've seen those pranks before," Bill said proudly. Fred, George, Lee, Ron, Harry and even Percy shared a look before they burst into laughter. "What did I say?"

"It wasn't them, most of those pranks were from the Muggle World," Ron gasped out as he continued to laugh. Those who weren't laughing looked at Hermione and she smiled slyly.

"Merlin," Bill whispered awe.

"And Peeves has a soft spot for her, all she has to do is look at him and he blushes, he was far worse than we were. We stopped after about a week of pranking but Peeves carried on for a few more days afterwards; he wasn't happy with the treatment of Hermione," Lee said.

"Blooming hell," Charlie whispered impressed.

"That's not even the half of it, Barmie! You've no idea what we've learned about Hermione and what she got up to in her muggle school," George said with pride evident in his voice.

"What did you learn?" Ginny asked, all but jumping in her seat. They explained everything they knew and it had them in hysterics.

Mrs. Weasley had warmed up to Hermione considerably and she now understood why she was her sons' best friend and she approved.

Mr. Weasley spoke breaking them off-topic."I heard a rumour there was a student that caused quite a stir during the Sorting Hat Ceremony. You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, would you?"

The twins and Hermione flinched. Of course, she knew something about that; she was the student that caused the stir!

"Yes, it was me, it took twelve minutes to sort me into a house," she reluctantly answered, knowing from the look on his face, the subject wouldn't be dropped until he'd gotten answers.

Bill and Charlie had taken a sip of pumpkin juice, and due to their shock, they choked as Percy and Mr. Weasley patted them on the back.

"What?" Bill and Charlie gasped as they struggled to get their breathing back to normal.

"That's longer than Professor Dumbledore and he's one of the most powerful wizards in the world. That should be impossible," Mr. Weasley said with a frown.

"I know, Mr. Weasley, but I've done and I am doing a lot of things that are impossible."

"Such as?" Pressed Mrs. Weasley.

"I skipped ahead to third year potions within the first two weeks of school and I'm further ahead in my other subjects, but I can't be moved ahead otherwise other students will get suspicious. I can perfect and perform spells and charms well beyond my years, as evidenced by the trunks I turned into magical objects and the same can be said for my brewing potions."

"What spells and charms?" Bill asked intrigued and the others listened attentively to her answers.

She quickly listed off the advanced spells and charms she had perfected and everyone stared at her stunned, except for her boys and Percy, who to be honest, wasn't at all shocked by the revelation. Harry and Ron knew that she was capable of perfecting spells quickly but they didn't know that she had done so with spells for fifth years and above, or that she had already perfected that many in such a short amount of time.

"It's true, I've seen her do some of those spells; she used the Duplication Charm to win a pillow fight in the common room and the Aquamenti Charm to prank the twins," Percy said.

"You pranked the twins!" Bill struggled to contain his excitement.

"Your outsmarted the demonic gingers!" Charlie demanded to know.

"Several times and Oliver helped me, too. That reminds me," Hermione said as she retrieved the photos of the pranks pulled on the twins and handing them to Bill, and he wasted no time in enlarging them.

There, in the middle of the room the size of an elephant, were the moving photos of Fred, George and Lee with their makeovers. Everyone burst into laughter particularly Mr. and Mrs. Weasley at seeing their prankster sons being outsmarted by a twelve-year-old.

"That's wicked," Ginny cried in laughter.

"Bloody hell," which surprisingly came from Mrs. Weasley who didn't even notice her exclamation as she had tears swimming in her eyes.

"And we charmed them so they were stuck with their new makeovers and nails for at least four weeks," Hermione stated proudly.

"Can we keep her?" Bill and Charlie asked, their parents looking as though they were giving the notion some serious contemplation; she could be handy around the Burrow and keep the twins and Lee inline.

"That's not all," Hermione gestured to the pile of photographs in Bill's hands, and he wasted no time in enlarging and levitating the rest of the photos.

They showed the twins stuck to their brooms and being soaked from head to toe by a laughing Hermione and Oliver. The twins were yelling and spluttering as water went into their mouths, but Hermione and Oliver didn't let up.

"You do realise that if you flew on that broom that you can't seem to get off of, you wouldn't have been in the firing range, yes?" Percy said smugly.

"Well, we know that now," George rolled his eyes.

"But we were too busy being soaked and we were trying to get off the broom that that little genius over there..." Fred said pointing to Hermione who smiled at them proudly and not at all sorry before George continued,

"Used a Sticking Charm on us and we didn't know the counter charm."

"You could've used Finite Incantatem," Hermione said smugly.

"Again, we know that now," they repeated.

"That's not all either, I taught them a muggle game; Truth or Dare and we played."

"What's that?" Mr. Weasley's eyes immediately lit up at the word 'muggle'.

"It's a game people play, in which you go around the group and you ask someone 'truth or dare' if they pick truth they have to answer any question you ask them truthfully, if they don't they have to do a forfeit which is usually mortifying beyond belief. But if they choose dare they have to complete the dare and if they don't they have to do a forfeit which is usually worse than the original dare."

"Sounds fun," Ginny said.

"It is," replied Fred, George, Lee and Hermione.

"So I'm guessing you all choose dare," Charlie commented and they nodded in agreement.

"What did you have to do?" Bill asked. Hermione went into detail explaining each dare (they had already done and only vaguely explaining the ones yet to be completed; they had to be surprised) to them and showing them the corresponding pictures; which of course had them all in hysterics. Particularly George serenading Snape and Oliver wearing a fairy princess costume. But the best of the dares they all decided was Hermione's prank on the Slytherin Quidditch team.

"I still can't believe you pranked the entire Slytherin Quidditch team and the reserves too," Charlie said, looking at her in admiration.

"And there's still more dares to complete too and we'll take more pictures for you," Hermione assured them and they all brightened at her statement.

"She also saved mine and Oliver's lives," Harry said and everyone looked at her. She silently cursed and glared at Harry who didn't notice.

"What does he mean?" Mr. Weasley asked fascinated.

"Someone was jinxing Harry's broom, probably trying to cheat and Marcus Flint knocked Ollie off his broom sending him backwards, hitting into the hoop and falling a couple hundred feet to the ground and I was able to cast the Arresto Momentum Charm in time. Speaking of which, I still need to show Marcus Flint my appreciation for that," she said with an evil glint in her eyes and a smirk that scared everyone but Fred, George and Lee.

"Hmm, we've been on the receiving end of her gratification and let me tell you, we've never thought once about crossing her again," Lee said with a shiver.

"So you're saying that Tiny 'Mione over here, scares you?" Charlie smirked.

"No, we're saying she terrifies us," the twins corrected and the others chuckled at the genuine fear in their eyes.

Even their own mother didn't strike as much fear in them as Hermione seemed to and Mrs. Weasley was honestly proud. Yes, Hermione was a prankster like the twins, but she also kept them grounded and she made sure that they got their homework done rather than getting detention.

"She didn't just do it in time to stop him from hitting the ground but she did do it before any of the Professors had even thought to take out their wands and was on the pitch, kneeling over his unconscious body before they even stood up. When the twins flew down from the air, she touched him and a golden light appeared, before it disappeared and he woke up," Ron said.

"Maybe we should talk about this when Ollie's here," she said anxiously and the twins picked up on her change in mood and put their arms around her. Fred's around her shoulders and George's around her waist.

"Sure, Love, it'd be easier to explain anyway with him here," he said.

They quickly changed the topic; they had laughed for hours until Hermione had to go home. She said good bye to the Weasleys and was surprised when Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Ginny, Charlie, Percy and Bill hugged her. Hermione then hugged Ron, Harry and Lee before hugging the twins tightly.

They placed her in the floo and she went off to her home to see her parents for the first time in months.

When Hermione left, the twins felt lost and unhappy and the adults in the room picked up on the change in their moods instantly. The children went upstairs and the adults went into the kitchen to talk. Mrs. Weasley placed a Silencing Charm around the room before the conversation began.

"It's strange the way they act around her," Bill said before anyone else could.

"And after what we've learned about her relationship with not only the twins but with Wood, too, it's definitely strange," Charlie spoke.

"She can do spells and charms that should be impossible for her. It was probably impossible for Dumbledore to learn as quickly as she has," Mr. Weasley said with a frown.

"They seem to be in tune with each other's mood. It's almost as if they can sense what each of them needs. They immediately comforted her when Ron said something about what happened to Oliver. He hit a nerve and her reaction to Marcus Flint was interesting. She's very protective of them," Mrs. Weasley noted.

"Did you all see when one of the twins left the room and before he even walked back in, Hermione looked to the stairs and then he appeared? It was like she knew that he was going to be there," Bill spoke.

"It was the same when she left the room; before she returned, the twins both looked to the stairs and she appeared," Mr. Weasley stated.

"And what's that thing with the golden light and Wood waking up?" Charlie asked.

"I don't know, but we should keep an eye on them when she returns from her parents, I'm sure Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall and Snape know exactly what's going on. They can't have missed her abilities, the sorting hat incident and the way she is with the boys. We should start researching and see what we can find. The bond between them is bizarre and we shouldn't mention this to anyone who isn't in this room," Mrs. Weasley said and the others nodded in agreement.

Wood Manor

When Oliver and his parents returned to Wood Manor, he was feeling the loss of not having Hermione in his presence; and he didn't like the feeling at all. He knew there was nothing he could do to numb the pain of loss except grin and bear it until he saw her again.

Oliver sighed for the umpteenth time and his parents smirked at each other.

"Oliver, sit doon fer a moment please, so we can talk tae ye," his mother said.

Oliver did as she said took a seat on the couch opposite his parents.

"So, Oliver, are ye gonna tell us what tha' was all aboot with tha' girl?" His father asked amused.

Oliver sighed once more at the reference to Hermione. Here we go with the interrogation. Better get it over with, he thought.

"Tha' was Hermione; she fell asleep on the train as she was up all night packin' ev'rybody's trunks an' we dinnae want tae wake her. She's so peaceful when she sleeps," Oliver said with a faraway look in his eyes which didn't go unnoticed by his parents.

"So tha' was Hermione. The one ye always talk aboot in ye letters home?" Mrs. Wood asked and Oliver nodded in confirmation.

"A heard a rumour an' was wondering if ye could clear things up fer mae. Supposedly, a student caused quite a stir during the Sorting Hat Ceremony," he said, seeing they way Oliver violently flinched.

"It was Hermione, it took her twelve minutes tae be sorted intae a house," he sighed.

"Twelve minutes?" Whispered Mrs. Wood and Oliver nodded.

"Merlin. She must be powerful,"

Oliver agreed before launching into a brief explanation regarding Hermione's ability to cast and perfect charms for above the skills of a first year, as he wanted to see their reactions. He knew it was strange, but he wanted to know what his parents thought on the matter.

"Why is she ye roommate?" Mrs. Wood asked curiously. "A cannae imagine Dumbledore allowing such a violation of the rules."

"The Professors thought she'd be safer with me, Lee Jordan an' the Weasley Twins," he answered with a shrug, leaning back into the couch cushions.

"Why was her safety called intae question?"

Pushing his hand through his hair, Oliver explained the whole situation with the bullying, her speech to the entire school and the incident with the Venomous Tentacula poison.

"She fell unconscious an' wouldn't wake up, she was barely breathin'," Oliver whispered, his chest tightening as he remembered the day he and the twins had almost lost her.

His parents noticed his heartbroken expression and understood they knew something was happening between Oliver, Hermione and the twins. Something strange.

"When we touched her, her breathin' evened out an' she woke up. It was almost as if we had healed her."

"An' hoo did ye do tha'?" his father asked with a frown.

"A dunno, a jus' knew what tae do. We knew what tae do. A dunno hoo but we did. When she was unconscious, barely breathing and unresponsive, a began tae panic an' when a touched her cheek, a felt a jolt af lightning. A always feel it when a touch her. There was this voice in the back af me mind, in me heart, in me soul, it was talking tae mae an' telling mae what tae do. When the twins' touched her, a followed its instructions an' a let me instincts take over, she levitated above the bed an' we all glowed this bright golden light tha' filled the room, an' after what felt like a few seconds, she was lowered back on tae the bed an' all her injuries were gone, healed. When she opened her eyes... It was the happiest moment in me life; when a looked intae her eyes an' when she stared right back intae mine an' she smiled so softly, Quidditch couldn't make mae as happy as a was in tha' moment."

His parents were stunned at his revelation. What he described wasn't normal and they had heard tales of such things happening but they hadn't happened since the time of the Hogwarts founders.

"Were her attackers punished?" Mrs. Wood whispered and Oliver smirked at her.

"Aye, they were punished," he replied and Mr. Wood raised an eyebrow.

Oliver explained everything and went into incredible amounts of detail before he took out the photos he had taken on the revenge pranks. He pulled his trunk out of his pocket and clicked his fingers like Hermione had told him to and the trunk returned to its original size.

"Oliver, ye know tha' ye cannae do magic outside af school. Ye will get in serious bother with the Ministry," his mother scolded.

"Naw a won't 'coz a dinnae do any magic. Hermione adapted the Shrinking and Feather-Light Charms an' placed them on the trunk permanently. All a have tae do is click me fingers tae activate the spells. Hermione created a new magical object an' they're not illegal tae use oot af school or underage."

His parents stared dazed at hearing the news that a first year had created a new product of sorts. And a brilliant one at that.

Oliver showed them the photos of the revenge pranks before moving on and he also showed his parents the photos of Hermione lying motionless on the bed in the hospital wing covered in injuries. When they saw Oliver's reaction to it and the young girl in the photo they both had tears forming in their eyes. Oliver quickly moved on showing them the pictures of the pranks and they laughed.

"A almost fergot a have taw show ye these," Oliver said as he removed the photos of the pranks they pulled on the twins and the photos of the dares.

The Woods were greatly impressed, they knew the infamous Weasley Twins and their reputation and the fact that this first year girl had out smarted them both, numerous times had them holding Hermione in high regard.

"A cannae believe she got George tae serenade Snape fer a week an' she convinced ye tae wear a pink fairy princess costume in front af the entire school," his mother laughed and Oliver grumbled at the last part as his parents laughed at him.

"Merlin, the makeovers ye helped her give the twins, an' the fact tha' she stuck them tae their brooms an' soaked them an' a cannae believe tha' she pranked the Slytherin Quidditch team and the reserves tae," Mr. Wood said awe-struck.

"She saved me life tae ye know?" Oliver said.

That stopped his parents from laughing dead in their tracks and they held serious expressions on their faces.

"What?"

"She saved me life. In the first Quidditch match, Flint stole the beater's bat an' hit a bludger at mae, a was tae busy giving Harry orders an' dinnae see it. It hit mae an' a fell aff me broom, through the hoops an' a fell unconscious. Hermione had cast the Arresto Momentum Charm an' was on the pitch kneelin' by me side befere the professors had even thought tae. A was unconscious but a could feel the pain. It was unbearable. A felt someone touch me face an' the pain began tae fade. A could hear a voice talkin' tae mae. A could hear a familiar laugh ringin' in me ears; her laugh. An' all a could see in me mind was Hermione. Somethin' told mae tae open me eyes an' when a did, a saw a golden light –the same golden light the night af the hospital wing incident – an' a knew she'd healed mae. She'd saved me. A fall like tha'... A would've been paralysed or it could've killed mae. A looked up intaw her eyes an' a felt the same as a had in the hospital wing; happy, content an' relaxed. The twins were there tae, a knew they had a hand in helping tae heal mae. She dinnae leave mr side fer twa weeks after. She's been plannin' revenge on Flint fer a while now. An' it's gpnna be bad. Ye saw what she did tae the twins an' the girls tha' terrorized her. Imagine what she'll do tae him."

If a dinnae think tha' somethin' strange was happenin' befere a do now. It isnae a coincidence tha' can apparently heal each other, they always seem tae be together naw matter where they go' Mr. Wood thought.

"Hoo do ye feel when ye are around her?" Mrs. Wood asked.

"The twins an' a feel the same. When we touch her it's like a bolt af lightning passes through us. When we're near her or in the same room as her we feel happy, content, relaxed an' whole. When we're away from her we feel lost, saddened an' there's a part af us missing. We can tell when she's aboot tae walk in tae the same room as us an' we can more or less sense her emotions an' moods. It's like we know exactly what she needs an' what tae do fer her."

We'll have tae start researchin' immediately, Mrs. Wood thought and when she looked at her husband, she knew he thought the same and they subtly nodded to each other.

"Hoo does she feel?" Mrs Wood asked.

"We dunno, we havnae asked her, but a think she might feel the same way. She's very protective af us an' she treats us differently tae other boys, jus' like we treat her differently tae other girls. She doesn't have a good night's sleep unless she's sleeping next tae mae or the twins, an' it's the same fer us, we cannae sleep if she isnae next tae us. She seems tae know our moods. When we're angry, she calms us an' when we're upset aboot somethin', she makes us laugh. When a walk intae a room she's usually lookin' at the door expectantly."

"What's she like?" Mr. Wood asked, wanting to know more about the young girl that had a strange relationship with his son.

"She's great. There's a reason it took so long tae sort her at the ceremony. She's tae suitable. She has traits af all the houses. She's kind, caring, generous, hardworking, loyal, witty, terrifyingly smart, frighteningly cunning an' she's doonright scary when she want tae be, she's brave, noble and hilarious. She knows hoo tae calm down a cryin' Neville Longbottom an' boost his confidence an' tha' in itself is a miracle."

Oliver had a soft and goofy smile on his face and his parents' mouths twitched in amusement. They continued to talk until Oliver left to his room and his parents went to the library to research.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Burrow – Saturday 21st December 1991

The twins had been miserable since Hermione had left for her parent's house. They spent most of their time, isolating themselves from the rest of the Weasleys and locking themselves in their bedroom, doing Merlin knows what and planning Merlin knows what. They also spent less time with Lee than usual, which was a serious indication that something wasn't right.

When the twins weren't in their bedroom, they were sat at the kitchen table eating their food with the rest of the Weasley brood, only all the jokes and laughter that usually accompanied the twins that they always brought to mealtimes, had vanished and instead, they sat sulking and barely eating their plate of food, never mind the second or third helpings that were customary with the Weasley children.

Fred and George only responded to questions in one word answers and with the same monotone voice. The twins' behaviour mostly struck the adults and it severely concerned them; they couldn't understand what had caused the sudden change in their mood and behaviour.

The always joyous and mischievous twins were nowhere to been seen, instead, they were replaced by pouting and brooding teenagers who looked to be in constant pain. When they walked into a room the atmosphere changed to one of longing and utter sadness, and it broke the adult's hearts seeing them in such agony.

Nothing could lift their spirits. Not Quidditch, not experimenting with potions, not Lee, not eating their favourite foods (which Mrs. Weasley slaved over for hours in the kitchen making) and certainly not pranking.

In the last three days, they hadn't finished a single meal, played or talked about Quidditch, pulled or planned a single prank or teased any of their siblings or their parents when they mixed them up. But most importantly, they hadn't smiled or laughed. It was causing distress to their Mother. It was obvious that whatever was happening between her sons and Hermione was a lot more serious and complex than they had previously thought or had been led to believe. They hadn't managed to find any answers in the research they had conducted when they had the time and with what limited resources they had available.

Even Lee was worried; he'd seen what happened to the twins -and Oliver- when they had been away from Hermione for a few hours at most, but they had never been away from her this long. For three days. He could see the suffering they were both going through and he was at a loss as to what he could for them. Lee had learned that it was best to leave them well alone.

The twins were different from other magical twins. They possessed a rare bond. A twin bond. This type of magic had occurred only a handful of times in the last thousand years. And as far as anyone was aware, Fred and George were the only magical twins with a bond in Hogwarts at the moment and have been for the last decade. The last known case was their twin uncles, Fabian and Gideon, who died in the Wizarding War.

The twin bond allowed the twins to be two separate individuals but they shared the same thoughts and feelings, and they were currently using their twin bond to comfort each other and decrease the levels of loneliness and suffering they were feeling, since being away from Hermione.

But Oliver had it worse, he was alone and he had been away from Hermione for a longer period of time than the twins had.

Wood Manor

Mr. and Mrs. Wood had no luck with their research and they had far more resources available to them than The Weasleys. They had never seen their son so defeated and broken.

Mr. Wood had bought Oliver tickets for a Puddlemere United (Oliver's all-time favourite team) Quidditch match the previous day, but Oliver refused to leave the manor and instead spent his time looking through all the photos that had been taken during the previous term at Hogwarts.

Oliver paid particular attention to the photos that contained Hermione and himself together. His favourites were the ones where Hermione was laughing and smiling widely, where she looked at her happiest. But his absolute favourite had to be the that was taken during the Slytherin versus Gryffindor Quidditch match. When Oliver was comforting Hermione after the game, one of the twins had somehow managed to obtain a camera and took a photo of Hermione and Oliver hugging tightly, with her face buried in his neck and her shoulders shook as she cried. He had managed to make her give a watery laugh and the smile she gave blinded him and softened his heart and he smiled softly back at her.

When the Hermione in the photo noticed Oliver staring at her, she gave him that same soft smile that she had on that very day and he couldn't help the way his eyes shone and how his face split into a grin.

He spent the rest of the day in his room, laying on his bed and staring at that same photo.

His parents knocked on his bedroom door and entered, seeing that he had was lying on his stomach with a pillow under his chin, and he held a photo out in front of him. They could see the anguish on their only child's face and their hearts ached for him. They wished they could help him but they were at a loss of what to do.

"Have ye found anythin' with the research yer've been doin'?" Oliver asked his parents, as they sat on the end of his bed and he smoothed his fingers over the photo and they looked at him slightly guilty but mostly surprised to learn he'd known what they'd been up to.

"We should've known ye already knew," his father said with a chuckle and he shook his head.

"Naw, am afraid we havnae found anythin' yet, but we'll keep lookin'. Ye said the Weasley Twins feel the same as ye do aboot Hermione, does tha' mean they're feelin' the same as ye now?" Mrs. Wood spoke.

"A suppose so," he shrugged uselessly, "But they have a twin bond so they'll be able tae comfort each other; they won't be in as much pain as a am."

Mr. and Mrs. Wood were shocked to hear that the twins had a twin bond; there hadn't been one since the Wizarding War.

"It hurts ye tae be away from her?" His mother asked in concern, her blue eyes that were usually filled with happiness were now filled with worry and sadness.

"Aye, more than gettin' knocked aff me broom a couple af hundred feet in the air. A feel like a'll never be happy again. Tha' am filled with nothin' but longing an' desperation tae be in her presence again. Ev'rything hurts; me head, me heart an' it feels like me magic is unhappy – depressed. It always feels this way when am away from her fer tae long, but this is the worst a've experienced it. A havnae been away from her fer this long befere; it's usually only a few hours. A cannae sleep unless she's next tae mae an' a dinnae want tae eat 'coz me body doesn't need food; it needs tae be near her. A feel as though am not complete, a feel empty an' lost," Oliver mumbled, his eyes locked on the photo in his hands.

They could see the suffering he was currently going through and they wondered if Hermione was experiencing the same symptoms.

"We'll keep lookin' fer any information tha' relates tae what ye've told us," his father promised, patting Oliver on the shoulder.

The Granger Residence

Unfortunately for Hermione, she was suffering just as Fred, George and Oliver were, but her symptoms were a lot more severe.

At first, she had been ecstatic to see her parents, hugging them tightly and only letting go after some encouragement and teasing from her parents. They stayed up until the early hours of the morning, talking and with Hermione explaining everything about Hogwarts, Quidditch, the Wizarding World and her boys in person. The feelings had started off slowly, growing stronger as the time she had been away from them increased. When they had all agreed to retire to bed Hermione could sense the feelings beginning to sink into her.

The next morning she was absolutely shattered, but she had some Christmas shopping to do and her mother agreed to go shopping with her. Hermione had to buy presents for the Weasleys, Harry, her parents and the Woods. They spent the whole day together and even though Hermione didn't quite feel one hundred percent, she'd had a brilliant time shopping with her mother. When they returned they sorted out the gifts and wrapped them up, making sure to label each one correctly, as it would be a nightmare if the gifts went to the wrong people. When they retired that evening Hermione could feel the loss and emptiness.

But three days later, Hermione was suffering greatly. Hermione was bedridden with illness. She'd had insomnia for the past three days, she's had nose bleeds, migraines and her balance was suffering making her clumsier than usual.

"Hey, Poppet, how are you doing?" her parents entered her room with her Mother carrying a tray that held some bread and tomato soup.

"I'm feeling better now, thanks, Dad. I can't believe I'm ill during the Christmas holidays, especially since I only have a few days with you both."

It was a lie; she was feeling like she'd been hit by the Hogwarts Express, and she knew that she wouldn't get better unless she was in the presence of Fred, George and Oliver. She wondered if they too were in the same position as her. She wondered what it was and why it was happening. She wondered if she should research it or allow the answers to come to her in their own time.

"It's okay, Sweetie, I suppose it's better that you're ill now and not during the school term so you don't miss any classes," her mother mused and Hermione tried to smile at them both but it probably came out as a grimace.

"I'll probably be better by tomorrow," Hermione said, though not at all hopeful and parents nodded before making to turn in for the night. "Goodnight, Mum, Dad, I love you."

"Good night, Poppet, we love you, too," he replied as he closed the door behind him.

The Burrow - Sunday 22nd December 1991 – 04:00

Fred and George bolted up from their beds and stared at each other in fear.

"Hermione!" They chorused in a spluttering gasp, so loudly that it woke Lee and he fell from the bed in surprise. If they hadn't have been so frightened or worried they'd have laughed. Lee got up from the ground grumbling under his breath and he was about to yell at the twins when he noticed their expressions.

"What's wrong?"

But Fred and George didn't answer him. Instead, they removed themselves from their bed put on the first pair of shoes they could find and shoved on a Weasley jumper, running out of their room and to their parents. They knocked loudly and rushed into the room.

"Mum! Dad!"

"What is it, boys?" Mrs. Weasley asked sleepily, her eyes opening wider when she noticed the twins' fearful expressions and she and her husband both climbed out of bed, put on their slippers and pulled on their dressing gowns, giving them their full attention.

"Hermione's in trouble!" They chorused, their loud exclamations waking and drawing the attention of their siblings who were soon crowding the room, half asleep and confused. "We have to go, now!" They said hurried as they made a dash down the stairs and to the living room.

They went to the floo when someone stepped out with the same terrified expression on their face (that they knew they were currently sporting themselves) and they followed by two concerned parents.

Wood Manor – 04:00

Oliver was asleep when he was hit with emotions so powerful it took his breath away and he woke up gasping, struggling to catch his breath. Heartbreak, devastation, loss, fear and anger. When he realised where they were coming from, he stood and put on a pair of shoes and rushed to his parents' room.

"Ma! Da! Wake up, we have tae go. Hermione's in trouble!" He called, banging on the door and he didn't stop until it opened.

"What?" His father asked when he and his wife exited the room with their slippers and dressing gowns on.

"Hermione's in trouble, she needs mae, we have tae go!" Oliver said fearfully and panicked as he ran to the nearest fireplace to use the floo and his parents followed behind him.

"The Burrow," he shouted clearly and stepped out of the fireplace, coming face to face with two identical looks of fear. His parents stepped through and he could hear them walking over to him and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley.

Oliver, Fred and George shared expressions of terror.

"We have to go now! She needs us!" They bellowed simultaneously, scaring those around them as they startled.

They headed to the floo, stepping inside and saying Hermione's floo address, not even bothering to check they were being followed by their parents.

"Percy, you're in charge," was the last thing that was heard from Mr. Weasley as he was the last in the floo.

The Granger Residence

Hermione awoke startled; she'd heard a noise and stepped out of bed to investigate. She grabbed her wand from her bedside cabinet draw. She knew she wasn't allowed to use magic, but having her wand with her made her feel safe and grounded.

She pulled open her bedroom door and walked out; she noticed that her parent's bedroom door was open and she peeped inside, seeing it empty. She sighed in relief, realising that she'd just heard her parents downstairs .

Well, I'm already up and it's not like I've been sleeping lately. I might as well get up, she thought to herself.

Hermione descended the stairs as comprehension dawned on her; she would be seeing her boys in less than two days. That fact alone made her feel better and any previous illness began to fade slightly, lessening the effects it was having on her.

She reached the bottom of the stairs with a grin on her face and she jumped, missing the last two steps and she landed with a thud on the floor as she giggled to herself. She was stopped in her tracks when she heard a crashing noise, the door being thrown open and a cold blast suddenly chilled her to the bone. But that wasn't the worst. She could smell something and she wasn't sure what it was, but it certainly wasn't pleasant.

She gripped her wand tightly and rounded the corner into the kitchen noticing it empty and with the backdoor opened. She ignored it and walked into the living room. What she saw made her stomach drop, her heart clench, her eyes fill with tears and she dropped her wand.

She had the unbelievable urge to scream and that's what she did. She opened her mouth and a pained cry left her as she dropped to the floor on her hands and knees and she continued to yell and scream in anguish as tears streamed down her face heavily.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Granger Residence - Sunday 22nd December 1991 – 04:00

Letting out heart-wrenching sobs that burned the back of her throat and stung at her eyes, Hermione somehow found the strength to crawl over to her parents. They were lying on the ground, her father was on his back and her mother on her side. With shaking hands she lifted her father's head and gently set it on her lap, cradling it as she leaned over and hugged her mother close to her. She was making so much noise she didn't understand how none of the neighbours had come to the house to complain or investigate. She couldn't hear anything but the sounds of her heart shattering and her cries of anguish, and for that reason, she didn't hear the sound of the floo activating and several familiar faces stepping out of it.

Oliver exited the floo first followed by Fred and George, the three wizards halting in their steps, not noticing those that followed behind them. Oliver could feel the emotions that had alerted him to Hermione's suffering flare up and he almost collapsed from the impact, being caught by his father. He looked over to the twins to see they'd been caught by Bill and Charlie, being exposed to the same powerful emotions and struggling to navigate them.

As gasps filled the room, his eyes fall back to Hermione, seeing her wearing button-down pyjamas that little angels and devils printed onto them, but they were mostly obscured by the blood covering her face, hands, shirt and bottoms. They could see the blood being washed away from her cheeks as tears streamed down her face with such a force that it should've been impossible.

Oliver broke out of the trance first and slowly approached her, keeping his attention on her and away from her blood-covered and lifeless parents, trying to contain his own emotions should Hermione be able to sense them. He crouched down next to her and whispered to her as the adults observed, horrified.

"Lassie," he whispered so softly that only Hermione could hear him and she turned to look at him.

She wasn't surprised that he was there and she couldn't explain why but she didn't care.

"They're gone. They left me, Ollie. I don't know what to do or how to save them. What will I do without them?" She whispered and Oliver's heart broke at her pained and lost tone.

She threw herself into his arms and Oliver had been expecting it; he caught her and pulled her close to him as he rocked them back and forth from his place on the floor, with her sobbing into his neck, and he could feel her tears running down his bare shoulders as he'd forgotten to put on a shirt, otherwise being too distracted.

The twins were next to break out of their horrified trance and they rushed to their side and dropped on the floor and they all hugged tightly with Hermione sandwiched between them. She could feel them comforting her and even though she didn't want to, she felt better; even if she would never speak to her parents again and that she should be a broken shell, she couldn't help but feel better in their presence. A golden glow appeared around them, blinding the others in the room before it vanished as if it hadn't happened.

"Tha' must be the golden light Oliver mentioned," Mrs. Wood whispered to her husband in a trance and he nodded.

Bill, Charlie and Mrs. Weasley rushed to Mrs. Granger's side to see what they could do to help and Mr. and Mrs. Wood and Mr. Weasley did the same for Mr. Granger.

Mr. Weasley pointed his wand and cast his Patronus, sending the weasel off with a message to Professor Dumbledore, in hopes he would bring help with minutes later, Professor Dumbledore came through the floo flanked by Professors McGonagall and Snape. They stopped and stared at each other; they knew that something like this would happen but they didn't think it would've happened so soon. They thought they still had time.

The adults in the room noticed their behaviour and the looks the three were exchanging and they instantly knew that the professors knew exactly what had happened; they didn't look surprised. They assumed they would know a lot more about Hermione, Oliver, Fred and George's situation too, and they would all be having a sit-down and a few choice words would be shared.

Professors Snape and Dumbledore rushed towards The Grangers. Snape grabbed a hold of Mr. Granger and Dumbledore, Mrs. Granger, they nodded to each other before apparating to Merlin knows where and leaving the room in complete silence, only the cries from Hermione could be heard, as they stared at each other, not knowing what to say or how to proceed.

Oliver was the first to react, picking Hermione up in his arms and cradling her to his chest; she had her arms wrapped around his neck and her head buried into the crook of his neck. Fred and George stood and they shared a nod with Oliver.

The adults noticed this exchange and where confused until they walked towards the floo and went back to the Burrow. The Weasleys followed whilst the Woods and Professor McGonagall stayed behind to secure the house before following behind them.

The Burrow

Oliver, Fred and George walked out of the fireplace and into the living room and were followed by the Weasleys. They walked straight past Harry, Ron, Percy, Lee and Ginny, ignoring all the comments and questions about Hermione being blood-soaked, and they walked up the stairs and into the twins' and Lee's bedroom. Lee had followed behind them and closed the door behind him, locking it shut. They pushed the beds together making it big enough for the five of them. Oliver placed Hermione in the middle of the bed and laid on her right side. Fred lay on her left side and George was laid in-between Hermione and Oliver at their hip level whilst Lee was on Fred's left. They all huddled together to comfort Hermione and eventually, she cried herself to sleep, at which point the boys followed after her.

The Weasleys watched Oliver, Fred, George and Lee walk upstairs and waited for the sound of their door closing. Then they turned to Harry, Ron, Percy and Ginny who were currently firing off questions and demanding answers.

"That is enough! Now all of you back to bed! And leave them alone, do not disturb them!" Mrs. Weasley said sternly with a look on her face the others didn't dare argue against as they headed back to their bedrooms.

"What happened there?" Bill asked aloud, unsure of who it was directed at.

"I don't know, but we're going to find out, Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall and Snape know more than they're letting on," Mrs. Weasley said, sounding none too pleased. She headed to the kitchen to make some tea, and her husband and two eldest sons followed and sat at the table.

Mr. and Mrs. Wood and Professor McGonagall arrived not long later and they too sat at the kitchen table with a cup of tea in front of them, waiting for Dumbledore and Snape to arrive, and that happened ten minutes later with them both stepping out of the floo and walking into the kitchen where they took a seat. Nine people were currently sat at the table, in silence and waiting for someone to talk.

Mrs. Weasley had had enough and after placing a Silencing Charm around the room to protect against any of the children trying to listen in, she said,

"I think you need to tell us what's going on, Albus."

"Aye, especially between Hermione, Oliver, Fred and George," Mrs. Wood spoke and the others not in the know nodded in agreement, staring at the three professors and waiting for answers.

Dumbledore sighed; he knew he couldn't keep it a secret any longer and they were the parents and family of his students so they could be trusted. He looked at McGonagall and Snape and they nodded, giving him their agreement on the matter.

"During the war, we were placing families under the protection of the Order and into safe houses. I'm certain the majority of you will know of who I speak of," he began.

"The Potters, Mckinnons, Lovegoods tae name a few," Mrs. Wood added and he nodded at her.

"What you don't know is that we placed a young married couple and their child under our protection also. The Blakes."

"I didn't that, I thought they died along with their child in the war," Mr. Weasley frowned thoughtfully.

"Not exactly, the Blakes came to me worried that Voldemort..." He was interrupted when everyone flinched but he continued as if it never happened, "Was trying to recruit them. What you don't know is the Blakes are descendants of the bloodline Marvolo Gaunt. Unfortunately, not much is known about Morphin's life except that he shared the same unstable emotional state as his father. When he was released from his time in Azkaban, he took a Squib for a wife and he had a Half-blood son. From there, it went quiet as he changed his name to Blake for his family's safety. Voldemort descends from the Gaunt line but from Merope, the daughter who fell in love with a Muggle and used a Love Potion, resulting in marriage and child. As you are now aware, Voldemort was blood-related to the Blakes, which is the reason he wished to recruit them."

"That makes sense, but what does this have to do with Hermione?" Charlie asked confused, leaning back into his seat and folding his arms over his chest, eyeing Dumbledore closely.

"For their protection, we placed the Blakes in a safe house, however, it wasn't solely based on their bloodline. The wife of Spencer Blake, Amy White, was a confirmed Siren," he admitted, the room filling with noises of surprise and disbelief.

"But they're rare magical creatures," Bill stated dumbly, blinking slowly.

"And vastly powerful, too. Their numbers are drastically declining, they're almost extinct," Charlie added with a frown.

"Yes, they are," Dumbledore agreed. "To conclude, we have the Blakes; the husband a descendant from the Gaunt line and the wife a Siren, and they had a child."

"Between both parents, the child would be tremendously powerful once fully matured, whether they possessed the Siren trait or not," Mr. Wood mused.

"Precisely," Dumbledore tipped his head. "It was imperative that Voldemort not discover the news of the Blakes being under the Order's protection, which is why it was done so in secret. Unfortunately, during the war, the Blake's safe house was compromised and they lost their lives. We arrived in time to save the child but not before the child was harmed. Before their deaths, Amy and Spencer placed their child in the Order's custody should something happen and they provided vials of memories, real and fabricated, to later be given to the child. The child was taken to a secure safe house and placed in the care of a Squib until they reached the age of four, at which, they were adopted by a Muggle couple until they were of age to attend Hogwarts." He took a short pause to allow the information to be processed before he continued with, "A prophecy was made almost thirteen years ago."

"Prophecy?" Mr. Weasley echoed.

"A witch will be born in the ninth month. With her, a new future may be formed. Once of age and her mates have been found, the power she will possess will be immense. She will be the beacon of light to banish the darkness from the world," Dumbledore recalled easily, having long since memorised it.

"Are ye sayin' this prophecy is aboot on the child af the Blakes? A witch?" Mr. Wood asked.

"An' tha' would put the witch now in Hogwarts, which means ye know who it is," stated Mrs. Wood with her eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"We believe we have confirmed so, yes."

"Well, that's all well and good," injected Charlie, "But I still don't understand what this has to do with Hermione, the twins and Oliver."

"Are you aware that Miss. Granger is adopted?" Dumbledore asked the group, unsurprised by the expressions of understanding that surfaced.

"Are you saying that Hermione is the one, the child?" asked Mr. Weasley, his eyes wide but his brow furrowed.

"Yes, I am. She was adopted at the age of four, it took twelve minutes for the Sorting Hat to place her and not without difficulty."

"She can perfectly brew potions to at least a fourth year level on her first attempt and she skipped both first and second year in less than three weeks," Snape added calmly.

"She can also correctly cast spells and charms well beyond the talents of fifth and sixth years and is able to teach them to others, and the magic that is put into her pranks is remarkable," McGonagall spoke proudly.

"Professor McGonagall's got a point, those pictures they showed us prove it," Charlie said smugly, remembering a particular photo of the twins and Lee in the common room.

"The reactions of the female population is frightening," McGonagall added.

"What d'ye mean by tha'?" Mr. Wood asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I believe that females treat Miss. Granger as poorly the way they do because they can sense her power. Without knowing so, the females are jealous of her power, of what she is and will become. Molly, Beth did you feel something when you met Miss. Granger?" McGonagall asked and all the males looked at them both expectantly.

"Well, a havnae officially met her yet, but when a entered her house, a got a strange feelin' tha' a cannae quite explain," Mrs. Wood frowned in thought.

"I felt the same when I first met her. It put me on edge; I think that's why I was rather hard on her when I first met her," she explained, glaring at Bill and Charlie when they snorted.

"That's an understatement," Charlie said.

"It felt as though I was in the presence of something not of this world. It's what I'd imagine having several Albus' in one room would feel like," Mrs. Weasley said and Mrs. Wood and Professor McGonagall made sounds of agreement.

"When the females are around her they don't know how or what to feel: jealousy, anger, bitterness and fear, but I'm certain it will fade the longer they are around her, as proven in the way the female population is starting to treat her more kindly now. I'm assuming it's because they now know who she is and they don't have a reason to fear her; they're becoming accustomed to her," Snape explained.

"And we also believe Miss. Granger to be the subject of the prophecy due to her bond between Messrs Weasleys, Jordan and Wood," Dumbledore said.

"We need to talk about that. Why did you include Lee? We haven't witnessed a bond between and him and Hermione," Mrs. Weasley said with a frown.

"Of course, I thought that might be the case. They do indeed have a bond, and I will go into greater detail about that later, but for now, what do you want to know?" Dumbledore asked.

"How can they have a bond? They're not yet of age?" Mr. Weasley asked suspiciously.

"From birth, they were each born with the bond already in place, waiting to be activated the moment they recognized each other for who they were. I believe they first met each other on the Hogwarts Express or at Hogwarts in Mr. Wood's case, the bond within them would've drawn them to each other. In the beginning, they would've had a close and strong bond of friendship, and it should still be the case now, however, it was provoked into developing quicker than what is considered normal or appropriate."

"Meaning?" Bill asked, his eyes narrowed on him and daring him to lie or to leave anything out.

"I suspect you know of the bullying incident with Miss. Granger," he started, being correct in his assumptions when he noticed their angered expressions.

"Yes, we do and we have seen the photos of her abuse. Why wasn't anything done sooner?" Mrs. Weasley said sharply, feeling protectiveness sweep over her.

"An' why did ye not punish her attackers?" Mrs. Wood asked just as shrilly.

"It was not seen sooner as Miss. Granger was rather adept at casting Glamour Charms by this point, and there were no apparent changes in her behaviour or grades, to suggest something being wrong. I was not aware that she was able to cast spells and charms at a higher level until after the bullying was discovered. And they were punished; each student involved was given detention four nights a week for three months, along with two months of cleaning the owlery. Miss. Granger is unaware as we waited until after her pranks, so we might have a clear confirmation as to who was involved," Dumbledore said.

"Then why did it take so long fer ye tae get her seen tae after ye found oot she was being bullied?" Mr. Wood asked, feeling just as protective over Hermione as those that sat around the table.

"Miss. Granger informed us that she was only experiencing one of the symptoms of fatality, and she insisted on the meeting in the great hall, Henry," Dumbledore stated, looking to the Scottish wizard, his expression stoic and difficult to read

"You are the headmaster, you could've escorted her to the hospital wing and after she had been attended to, called the meeting," Mrs. Weasley said. "Why didn't you?"

When he remained silent, she glared at him and he shuffled in his seat. Bill and Charlie both smirked; they'd both been on the receiving end of that glare more than once in their lives, in fact, they still received them. Dumbledore was one of the most powerful wizards to grace the Wizarding World, he wasn't afraid of Voldemort, the darkest wizard the Wizarding World had known, but the small, plump Weasley Matriarch currently had him carefully choosing his words.

"I had my suspicions but I had to be certain that Miss. Granger was the child of the prophecy. If she was the child in question, she would be powerful and have potential Siren in her blood that would make her stronger and prolong the effects of the Venomous Tentacula within her. She would have been affected differently compared to a regular witch as her immune system would be stronger."

"Are you telling us that you allowed for that child to suffer, so you might see whether or not she was the subject of your bloody prophecy!" Mrs. Weasley said and her tone of voice increasing throughout the speech.

Everyone winced as she shrieked, being thankful a Silencing Charm had been placed around the kitchen, otherwise not only would the children have heard but the rest of Devon, too.

"Yes, and as I suspected, Miss. Granger survived far longer than any other witch would've done, due to her power," he replied, with not one ounce of regret in his tone or body language.

"Whilst suffering!" She shrieked, her palm hitting the kitchen table, the sound echoing in the room.

"It had to be done."

Everyone stared at him as if they didn't know who he was. Professors McGonagall and Snape were at a loss for words over his actions of the girl they felt the urge to protect from him and they were right to. The Woods and Weasleys started at Dumbledore in shock, not knowing what to say to him.

"I can see that you do not agree with me," he remarked.

"Absolutely not!" Mrs. Weasley, Mrs. Wood and Professor McGonagall cried, as they stood from their seats. Henry and Arthur put a hand over their wives' hands as they along with Bill, Charlie and Snape glared at him.

"You all feel protective over Miss. Granger," Dumbledore stated.

"Af course, she is jus' a child," Mrs. Wood said to him. "A child yer bound tae protect."

"You have accepted her unknowingly into your family. The houses of Wood and the Weasley are now one. You see Miss. Granger as a daughter and you have paternal feelings of protectiveness for her. You love her as a daughter. And Bill, Charlie you feel protective over her as a big brother would. You love her like as a sister," Dumbledore said confidently, receiving nods of confirmation. "When Miss. Granger collapsed, she was rushed to the hospital wing by Mr. Wood. When he reached the hospital wing, Miss. Granger was no longer breathing."

They bristled in fury.

"That is not what we were told," Mrs. Weasley said coldly. "We were informed she fell unconscious, not that she had died!" She hissed.

"It was agreed upon, for the safety of your children and Miss. Granger, that her experience of death not be spoken of or revealed to anyone. She did, in fact, legally die. Messrs. Wood and Weasley felt the bond in them weakening and acted upon their instincts to protect Miss. Granger, despite not being aware that the bond exists," he said.

"Tha's not entirely true," Mr. Wood interrupted, almost snorting at the heads that snapped his way and the expressions on their faces, particularly the three professors.

"What do you mean?" Dumbledore asked quickly.

"They are aware; Oliver an' the twins are, at least. He explained what'd happened between himself, Hermione an' the twins over the previous school term. With their first meeting, the growing af their feelings fer Hermione, the bullying incident an' the Quidditch match incident," he replied.

"What has he told you?" Mrs. Weasley asked curiously.

If the twins and Oliver felt the same way then she would have some insight without having to ask the twins and risking them clamming up. Mrs. Wood looked at her and told her what she wanted to know as if their places were reversed, she would want to know too.

"Oliver has told us tha' he an' the twins have spoken aboot their feelings fer Hermione an' discovered they feel the same, both when 'round her an' away from her. When they touch, Oliver said it feels like they've been hit with a bolt af lightning tha' passes through them. When they're in the same room as her, they feel happy, content, relaxed an' whole, an' when they're away from her fer tae long, they feel lost, saddened an' as if there's a part af them missing. He said tha' they can sense when she's aboot tae walk intae the room an' they can sense her emotions an' mood; they know exactly what she needs an' what they can do fer her, an' they proved tha' back at her house when they knew tha' she needed them. We were in Scotland, ye here in Devon an' Hermione in London, all miles apart."

"We didn't know it was that serious already. We thought it would take longer for the bond to strengthen," McGonagall frowned, looking concerned.

"And Miss. Granger? Did Mr. Wood say how she feels about them in return?" Dumbledore pressed.

"The boys are not sure hoo she feels aboot them as they havnae asked, but Oliver suspects she feels the same. He has noticed some behaviours tha' are similar tae theirs."

"Such as?"

"She's protective af them, she doesn't sleep unless she's near them, an' Oliver confirmed it was the same fer him an' the twins as well. She may be able tae sense their moods an' emotions an' she knows hoo tae improve their moods, an' she knows when one af them is aboot tae walk intae the room."

"We noticed that the other day," Bill nodded in agreement. "She can tell the twins apart without even looking. She just knows which is which. It's a little unnerving actually."

"And when they're apart?" Dumbledore prompted.

"Well, I don't know about Oliver, but the twins isolated themselves in their bedroom. They only made an appearance at mealtimes but they hardly touched their food. They haven't laughed, smiled, teased or pranked anyone since Hermione left, and even Lee couldn't get them to smile," Mrs. Weasley said, her fingers twisting into her cardigan worriedly.

"And when they walked into a room, the atmosphere changed to one of longing and despair; they always looked as though they were in pain," Mr. Weasley added and Dumbledore nodded.

"And Mr. Wood?"

"He admitted he was likely suffering a lot more than the twins were as they've a twin bond an' they were using it tae comfort each other an' decrease the level of pain they were likely feelin'. But Oliver was the same as the twins, he never left his room an' spent all af his time staring at the photos taken during the previous term, particularly one taken after the first Quidditch match af him an' Hermione tagether. He wouldn't eat anythin' an' said it was 'coz his body dinnae want food, but rather tae be with Hermione's. He said it was painful tae be away from her an' he felt he'd never be happy again. He felt lost an' empty," Mrs. Wood said sadly.

Mr. Wood put his arm around her and tugged her into his side and Mrs. Weasley placed her hand over Mrs. Wood's. She knew what she was going through but her twins had a way to decrease the suffering and Oliver didn't.

"And Miss. Granger?"

"We don't know, we haven't exactly seen her nor had the time to ask her, now have we?" Mrs. Weasley snapped. If they had been told of this before, they would've been able to stop their children's suffering.

"This is the reason they should not be separated for the foreseeable future, otherwise the symptoms of the separation may worsen. As the bond between them intensifies, they will be able to feel each other's emotions, and they may share a mind link and be able to hear each other's thoughts. The bond isn't at the strength it should be yet, but I imagine it won't be long. So to be clear, Messrs Weasley and Wood are her mates and they have a bond that has been formed but not yet complete."

"How do they complete it?" Charlie asked. Dumbledore arched an eyebrow. Charlie grimaced. "That's disgusting," Charlie complained, shifting in his seat uncomfortably.

"They're far too young!" The mothers said in unison.

"They will complete the bond when they need to. They will know when the right time is for them," he explained and they all breathed a sigh of relief.

"Now, as you can imagine, we don't want this information being released to anyone as it may put the children in danger, particularly if the Ministry learns of this," Snape said.

"Of course, we will keep it between ourselves. Who else knows?" Mr. Weasley spoke.

"Only those in this room and two others who are not present," Dumbledore answered.

"So let's recap," Charlie sat forward, his forearms pressing against the table, "Hermione Granger is really Hermione Blake, her mother was a Siren and her father a decedent of Marvolo Gaunt making her related to You-Know-Who. Her parents died in the war and she was placed into a safe house until she was adopted at the age of four. She is the subject of a prophecy and will be - no scratch that - she is an immensely powerful witch. Her mates are Oliver, Fred and George, who all have a bond and if they are away from each other for too long they suffer, and she can change the future of the Wizarding World for the better?"

"Yes, I believe that is everything, Mr. Weasley," Dumbledore tipped his head.

"So where does Lee fit into all of this?" Bill asked confused.

"Whilst Messrs Weasleys and Wood are her mates and have a soul bond with her, Mr. Jordan has a sibling bond with her," Snape explained.

"That makes more sense," Charlie nodded. "He's protective of Hermione but not as forcefully as the twins and Oliver."

"What happened to Hermione's parents?" Mr. Weasley asked, seeing the professors share a glance.

"Jean and Richard Granger have been aware of Hermione's heritage since before the adoption and we placed her with them for protection so that she might have a normal childhood, as the Muggle World could offer her the protection the Wizarding World couldn't. We have convinced Miss. Granger that she is a Muggleborn when, in fact, she's a Half-blood. Jean and Richard were attacked and tortured for information on the whereabouts of Hermione Blake by both muggle and magical means."

"Are they alive? There was an awful lot of blood covering that room along with tossed furniture. We tried to help them but they weren't breathing," said Bill.

"We arrived at St. Mungo's in time and they have been treated the best they could have been in the short amount of time we had, and they have been moved to a safe house. They will be allowed contact with Hermione when they are fully recovered, but only once, and then they'll be cut off from each other until this situation has been dealt with."

"Hoo long will tha' be fer?" Mr. Wood asked with a frown.

"At the moment, indefinitely. This is why we need to make arrangements for Miss. Granger, and quickly."

"Arrangements?" Mr. Weasley repeated.

"Living quarters and parental guardianship arrangements," Dumbledore clarified.

"We would be happy to have here," Mrs. Weasley said without missing a beat. Dumbledore looked to her husband questioningly and he chuckled.

"What's one more to add to the family? Especially since it seems she's already a part of the family with her being the twins' mate."

"Point well made, we will also take parental guardianship af Hermione," Mrs. Wood said and her husband agreed.

"Well, it seems as though everything has been sorted, both the Woods and Weasleys will have joint parental guardianship of Miss. Granger, the paperwork will be filed with the Ministry."

"One more question," said Charlie, seeing that he shifted in his chair as if to leave. "What does Hermione know about all of this?"

"Miss. Granger has been aware of her adoption since she was five-years-old. She has been told that her biological parents died in an accident a year prior and that she was rescued from the crash site. Miss. Granger has a scar on her back that was infected, leaving it in the state it is now. If you see it, don't stare at it. We don't want her to be reminded of it. She obtained it in the war when she was still a baby. She has been led to believe that she's a Muggleborn. She has no knowledge of the bond, her mates or the prophecy and we want to keep it that way, at least for now. She deserves to have a semi-normal life before we place the weight of the Wizarding World on her shoulders," McGonagall said sternly, daring anyone to argue with her.

Chapter Twenty-Five

The Burrow – Sunday 22nd December 1991

Everyone stood to leave the kitchen but was stopped by Mrs. Wood.

"One last question. Is this why ye placed Hermione an' Oliver with the twins an' Lee as their roommate?"

"Yes," Dumbledore nodded, "We knew if they were separated it may affect them but we didn't know to what extent. We were not aware that the children need to be in close quarters to sleep. Miss. Granger trusts those young men implicitly and they would protect her if she needs them to."

"Does this mean they need to share a bedroom when they're away from Hogwarts?" Mrs. Weasley said with a frown, not liking the idea of her teenage sons sharing a room with a young girl, no matter if they were to be mated or not.

"Not exactly, as long as they are placed in a room that is nearby, they should be fine."

"An' what happens when they leave Hogwarts? Oliver has three years left an' the twins five. What will happen then?" Mr. Wood asked.

"We will cross that bridge when we get to it," Dumbledore replied, and with that said, the three professors left to return to Hogwarts.

Bill and Charlie left to go back to bed. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley led Mr. and Mrs. Wood up the stairs and stopped in front of the twins' and Lee's bedroom. They tried the door and realised it was locked from the inside, so Mrs. Weasley took out her wand and cast an Alohamora. She opened the door slowly, and when they looked into the room, they saw that the three beds had been pushed together and the five figures huddled together closely in a tangle of limbs.

The looks of pain and suffering had vanished from the boys' faces, but not from Hermione's but that was to be expected. At that moment, the adults knew they had accepted the bond between Hermione, the twins and Oliver. Mrs. Weasley walked into the room and Accio'd a spare blanket; she enlarged it and placed it over the sleeping group. They all left the room closing and relocking the door behind them, after assurances from Molly and Arthur that is was alright for Oliver to stay the night, Mr. and Mrs. Wood left for Wood Manor and would return later on in the day, and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley returned to bed, hoping to get more sleep before their children woke.

The Burrow - Monday 23rd December 1991

Oliver and the twins woke to see Hermione sleeping, her face stained with dried tears and the rest of her body and clothing covered in dried blood. They all shared a look of concern when they remembered what had happened a few hours ago. Fred looked to his left to see that Lee was not there.

That's a first, I thought I would die before the day I saw Lee up before anyone else, he thought to himself.

Their thoughts were stopped when they heard a few grumbles and felt the mattress shift. They looked to Hermione to see her awake and looking at them all like she was the happiest girl in the world. Her smile was soft and her eyes were shining, that was until she noticed the blood covering Oliver's chest, her clothing and hands and the twins clothing, and it was all transference from her.

Then everything hit her, it all came rushing back and her heart dropped. She could feel tears running down her face. The boys all held her tightly until she cried herself to sleep once more. The boys all took shifts, swapping between watching over Hermione and sleeping.

When Hermione woke for the second time she managed to get out through her sobs that she wanted to wash the blood off herself. They all left the room and took her to the bathroom where she cried loudly and washed the evidence of her parent's attack off herself. The twins had gotten some clothes for Hermione; a pair of Hermione's jeans and one of her Weasley Quidditch jerseys with her white converse. Hermione dressed in the bathroom and went back to the bedroom with the twins. Oliver showered and borrowed some of the twins clothing -which didn't really fit- and returned to the bedroom, then Fred showered and dressed followed lastly by George.

They all lay on the bed silently comforting Hermione. A tray of food appeared in the room courtesy of Mrs. Weasley and the boys ate with Hermione staring at the ceiling. It took them an hour to coax her into eating her food but she did eventually. They stayed in silence for the remainder of the day until it was time for dinner. The boys convinced Hermione to go downstairs for dinner and to see if there was any news regarding her parents.

When they left the room and descended the stairs they walked into the living room and all the previous chatter and conversation died, plummeting the room into silence.

Mrs. Weasley stood and rushed to Hermione's side and enveloped her into a tight hug that took the breath out of Hermione's lungs. There were some chuckles coming from the room and when Mrs. Weasley released her, Hermione took a deep breath and gave a small smile.

"Is there any news about my parents?" Hermione whispered and Mrs. Weasley nodded, taking Hermione by the hand and pulling her into the kitchen. Mr. Weasley, Fred, George and Oliver followed right behind them and they all took seats at the kitchen table.

"Your parents were injured gravely, it was touch and go for a while but they should make a full recovery."

"Really?" asked Hermione hopefully.

"Really," Mrs. Weasley said with a smile.

"When can I see them?"

"Soon, when they've fully recovered. They've been placed in a safe house."

"Why?" Mr. and Mrs. Weasley shared a look, they weren't supposed to tell Hermione everything just yet, but they couldn't lie to her. Hermione noticed their exchanged. "What was that look?"

"You see, your parents' attackers weren't muggles, they were from the Wizarding World," Mr. Weasley said gently.

"Why would wizarding folk want to attack my parents? It doesn't make any sense."

"Well, it seems that almost a decade ago, your parents were given something that needed protecting and their attackers wanted them to reveal the location of what it was they were given to protect. They were hurt and pressed for information, using both magical and muggle means."

"You're saying that my parents knew before Professor McGonagall's visitation about the Wizarding World?" She checked and the Weasley parents nodded. "So everything was just an act? When Professor McGonagall was explaining the Wizarding World, when I told them about Diagon Alley and Hogwarts? Did they know I was a witch? Why didn't they tell me?"

"I imagine that your parents wanted you to have a normal childhood before you were brought into a world that would change your life. They wanted you to experience both worlds," Mrs. Weasley said softly.

"What were my parents given to protect? It must be important if they were attacked and almost killed for it. Did the attackers get it?" Hermione fired question after question at them.

Oliver, Fred and George were sat quietly taking everything in. They knew that Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were keeping something from them and they would find out what it was. Sooner or later.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you what they were protecting, My Dear. Arthur and I only found out this morning when we returned to the Burrow. Yes, what they were given to protect is very important and powerful and it needs to be kept a secret, at least for now. And no, the attackers did not get the information on what they were looking for and they left empty-handed. The item is as safe as it can be and will be for a long time," Mrs. Weasley said cryptically, squeezing Hermione's hand.

"I suppose it makes sense the attackers were from the Wizarding World. I wondered why it took me so long to hear any noises and why the neighbours didn't complain about the noise. They used Silencing Charms, didn't they?"

"We believe so," Mr. Weasley nodded.

"You said they used magical and muggle means to hurt my parents, what did they do?"

"All you need to know is that they used spells and charms as well as some muggle weapons."

"Knives?" She whispered.

"Yes, but as Molly said, your parents will make a full recovery and you can visit them when they do."

"How long will they be in the safe house?"

"Until the attackers are captured, but unfortunately, we don't know when that will be so at this moment in time, they will be in the safe house indefinitely."

Hermione's head shot up at Mr. Weasley's statement.

"What?"

"You will see your parents once and then all contact will be cut off between you, it's the only way to keep both you and your parents safe, My Dear. Now, because of this, Dumbledore has had to make living and parental guardianship arrangements. You will live here at the Burrow during the holidays and both the Woods and the Weasleys have joint parental guardianship of you."

Oliver and the twins looked at each other before they grinned widely and began laughing as Hermione looked at them, beamed and then flung herself into their arms.

She let them go and hugged Mr. and Mrs. Weasley tightly, making them chuckle.

"Are you sure you don't mind?"

"Of course, we don't mind, you're part of the family," Mrs. Weasley said proudly and with a knowing look her in eye which the boys noticed.

They definitely haven't told us the whole story and we're going to find out what it is, they thought.

Hermione's depressed and sullen mood was now replaced by a joyful and excited one. Even though she knew she should be upset about having to lose contact with her parents, she knew that it was for their safety and she would be with her boys. Besides, she would find a way to still talk to them without people finding out, magic was a wonderful thing.

Mrs. Weasley finished in the kitchen making the dinner and everyone else returned to the living room. Those there noticed the change in Hermione's mood and they relaxed knowing that everything was once again fine. They spent their time laughing and chatting and Oliver finally introduced Hermione to his parents. After five minutes with her, they both agreed that Hermione was a wonderful young woman and they were pleased that she was now a part of the family.

They all ate dinner together and Oliver stayed over at the Burrow with Hermione and the Woods left and would return the next day. They all headed to bed and slept huddled together with smiles on their faces. Mrs. Weasley walked into the bedroom and chuckled at the sight and covered them with a blanket.

The Burrow - Tuesday 24th December 1991

It was Christmas Eve and the Burrow was alive and buzzing with excitement. Hermione needed to go back home and collect her presents for everyone as well as some personal belongings. When she explained her situation to the Weasleys, they agreed to accompany her. Mr. Weasley went ahead first, followed by Hermione, Fred, George, Oliver and then lastly Mrs. Weasley.

The Granger Residence

When she got through the floo she stopped and took a deep breath. The place hadn't yet been cleaned up; the floor and furniture were covered in bloodstains, all the furniture had been turned over and there was glass covering the floor from things that had been broken.

"This is ridiculous! This place should've been cleaned up by now," Mrs. Weasley huffed in annoyance.

Everyone noticed Hermione's haunted expression and Mrs. Weasley pushed Hermione forward and towards the stairs, whilst Mr. Weasley stayed downstairs with the boys and clean up the mess.

Hermione entered her bedroom and Mrs. Weasley followed, saying, "Now, My Dear, I know we're here to just pick up the Christmas presents but we might as well pack up your things and bring them back with us and put some of your parents' things into storage."

Hermione's eyes darted about her room before she slowly nodded and she set to work collecting all of the wrapped Christmas presents including her parents, and Mrs. Weasley sent them back to the Burrow and conjured a trunk for Hermione to place her things in.

She emptied her wardrobe and chest of drawers, placing everything into the trunk along with her shoes and coats. She then moved on to her books and there were a lot of them, which took almost thirty minutes to pack with the help of Mrs. Weasley casting spells. She then packed away any other items and trinkets. Lastly, she moved onto the photos in her room and placed them in the trunk. The only things left were the chest of drawers, the wardrobe, the desk and the bed. The place was bare with pink and white walls. She hadn't bothered decorating her room and it had been the same since she was four years old.

They moved onto Hermione's parent's room, placing every article of clothing, book and photo into the enlarged trunk; leaving the desk, wardrobe, chest of drawers and bed along with the plain black and white walls.

They then moved on to the study where most of the books were held, placing them all into the trunk which took two hours. Hermione made sure to pack all of the board games that she and hopefully Harry, would later teach everyone how to play. They both made their way back down the stairs and Mr. Weasley and the boys had done a great job cleaning. There was no evidence of an attack, it looked undisturbed. Hermione went through the kitchen, hallway, living room and to the staircase wall removing all photos and placing them into the trunk. Mrs. Weasley then banished the trunk back to the Burrow.

She conjured another trunk this time to be used as storage. They went back through the house with Mr. and Mrs. Weasley shrinking the furniture and placing them into the trunk, whilst Hermione and the boys were in the kitchen, sorting things the muggle way with Hermione instructing them on the placement of different items. Somehow they had packed away the entire house and all before dinner time. Still dinner would be late and the Weasley children would probably complain. So Hermione wanted to do something nice for the Weasleys.

She told Mr. and Mrs. Weasley that she had an errand to run, it took her ten minutes to convince them that her safety would not be called into question and left the house with the twins and Oliver whilst Mr. and Mrs. Weasley went back through the house, double-checking that they hadn't missed any furniture or items that needed packing away.

"So, where are we going?" Fred and George asked in unison and rather excitedly, practically jumping in their steps. They had never been in the Muggle Word before.

"I don't want your mum to have to stand and spend hours cooking dinner, especially since she has been on her feet since she got out of bed this morning, she deserves a break. Besides, I don't think I could take Ron's whining about dinner not being ready when we get back," she said and Oliver chuckled at her.

"So, where are we going?" the twins repeated.

"I'm going to a takeaway shop to buy dinner for everyone and to thank you all for the kindness and generosity you have shown me."

"What's a take away shop?" Oliver asked confused.

"It's a shop that sells food and we order what we want and then we can either pick it up or they deliver it to you. Take away shops sell rather unhealthy and fattening foods so prepare to be fattened up," she explained and they chuckled at her.

They continued to walk until Hermione stopped at a pizza shop. She entered and the boys followed. They stopped when she walked to the counter and the smell hit them. Their stomachs growled and their mouths watered. Hermione laughed at them and they laughed too.

"Hi, what can I get for you?" The lady at the counter asked.

Hermione looked at the overhead menu and placed her order, taking into account that approximately fifteen people would be eating at The Burrow.

"Can I please get two sixteen inch mozzarella pizzas, two sixteen inch meat feast pizzas, two sixteen inch chicken and sausage pizzas, two sixteen inch bacon and cheese pizzas, eight large chips, eight chicken burgers, eight cheeseburgers, four salad boxes, four chocolate fudge cakes, four large barbeque sauces, four large garlic sauces, four large mayonnaises and four large chilli sauces?"

The lady at the counter stared at her in shock and looked behind her to the three teenage boys, who looked too excited to stand still and were rocking on the balls of their feet.

"Seriously?" She spluttered.

"We're feeding fifteen people," Hermione said as an explanation and the lady nodded in understanding, not as shocked as she was previously.

"Right, we'll just get that sorted for you," she replied and she walked off to give the order to one of the cooks. Hermione walked over to the boys and chuckled.

"What's that?" Fred asked happily pointing to the overhead menu.

"That's the menu."

"You mean they cook all of those different foods in here?" he asked excitedly.

"Yes."

"So what did you get?" George asked and Hermione relayed the order to them.

"What are those foods?" Oliver asked confused but intrigued.

"You mean you don't have these foods in the Wizarding World," Hermione said and the boys nodded. "Oh, Merlin! That's criminal! Well, I won't tell you what the foods are, but instead wait for you to taste them for yourselves, I've no doubt you'll love them."

"If they taste as good as they smell..." Fred trailed off, inhaling the smell of the shop and she chuckled at him.

"'Mione!" She looked up to see the owner of the pizza shop walking towards her.

"Buddy!" she called, and ran towards him and they hugged tightly with the boys looking on in confusion and... jealousy? Hermione let go and dragged Buddy over to the boys.

"Buddy, I want you to meet my best friends. This is Fred, Oliver and George," she said, pointing to the boys in question. "Boys, this is Buddy, he owns this place," she said and they shook hands with the man.

He was in his fifties with greying hair and was no bigger than five-foot-eleven, and he had laugh lines around his eyes which were bright green.

"So, how is that fancy new boarding school of yours? 'Mione here, just got accepted into a boarding school for gifted and talented students," Buddy said proudly, making Hermione blush.

"Buddy! Oliver, Fred and George also attend the boarding school. It's in Scotland and at a castle," she responded, Buddy whistled.

"Good to know people are finally recognising you for your talents, this one here is a genius. Bloody brilliant she is," he said and Hermione's blush darkened at his praise. The boys laughed at her.

"Don't we know it, she scares us sometimes. She already has the highest grades in her year," Fred said proudly.

"You're not in the same year as Hermione?"

"No, my brother and I are in our third year and Oliver's in his fifth year."

"Well, your orders up, that's a lot of food, 'Mione!" Buddy remarked and they followed him back to the counter.

"I'm spending Christmas with both Oliver's and the twins' families," she responded and he nodded in understanding.

Hermione pulled her bank card out of her coat pocket and placed it in the card reader. She entered her pin and paid for the food.

"Your parents have a dental conference again this year?" he asked and she nodded.

"Yes, but at least I got to see them before they left, originally they wanted me to stay at school but we convinced them otherwise. Anyway, we better get going, Buddy, I'll see you later."

"You better come back and visit soon."

"I will, I promise," she said, and she was handed eight bags of food and they each took two to carry as they made their way back to Hermione's house.

"What was that weird plastic thing you gave the lady?" George asked as they walked down the street.

"It was a bank card. Basically you put the card into a special machine and you put your password into it. When the password is accepted it takes money directly out of your bank account. It's a form of payment that muggles use that means we don't have to carry around money all time and instead we just use the bank card. Also if you're robbed there's less likely a chance that you'll lose a lot of money. And as long as no one knows your password, your card cannot be used by anyone but yourself."

"But what if someone steals your card and that person knows the password or figures it out?" Fred asked.

"If your card is stolen you inform the bank and they cancel the card, meaning that no one can use it, whether or not they have the correct password, because the card technically no longer exists. Then the bank will give you a new card and a new password."

"The Wizarding World should use tha', then people wouldn't have tae carry 'round pouches af heavy coins all the time," Oliver mused.

"Oh, wait a minute, I want to get something from there," she gestured to the newsagents up ahead before she crossed the road and stepped inside with the boys following her.

She walked straight to the shelves and asked the boys to grab two of the two-litre bottles of Coca-Cola's each and she did the same, she then walked to the back of the shop and grabbed two tubs of vanilla ice cream out of the freezer and she walked to the counter. She paid for her purchases and then left the shop and walked back to her house with the boys asking questions about the products in the shop, mainly the muggle candy and she promised she would bring them back to the shop later and buy whatever they wanted.

They walked through the door of her house and she locked it behind her, knowing that she would be leaving through the floo and not returning for the foreseeable future.

"Oh, there you are, you've been over an hour," Mrs. Weasley said worriedly.

"Sorry, Mrs. Weasley, we had to wait for the order to be finished."

"What's in those bags, Dear?"

"I thought that I would reciprocate the kindness you have shown me and treat you to a muggle delicacy," at her words Mr. Weasley's eyes lit up with excitement.

"Oh no, Dear, you shouldn't have gone to so much trouble. I imagine that much food was expensive. I would've cooked dinner when I got back to the Burrow," Mrs. Weasley said.

"It was no trouble and at all Mrs. Weasley and it was my pleasure to give you a night off from cooking and Ronald's whining, so you can relax and don't worry about the price. Let's go shall we?"

The Burrow

When they arrived through the floo, Hermione led the boys to the kitchen and the others followed her. When she walked through the living room she told the others to follow her as she had a surprise for them. When they reached the kitchen Hermione asked Mrs. Weasley for plates and glasses and with a flick of her wand she had them laid out on the table. Everyone took their seats. Sat at the table were Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Mr. and Mrs. Wood, Bill, Charlie, Percy, the twins, Ron, Ginny, Harry, Lee, Oliver and Hermione.

"What's that, 'Mione?" Charlie asked, taking in a deep inhale of the enticing smell.

"Well, I thought I'd treat you all to a muggle delicacy. Take away!"

"What did you get? Curry? Chinese? Kebab? Fish and Chips?" Harry asked curiously, eyeing the bags on the table.

"Pizza. Two mozzarella pizzas - which is cheese and tomato puree sauce, two meat feast pizzas – which is cheese, tomato puree sauce, ham, chicken and pepperoni, two sausage and chicken pizzas with cheese and tomato puree sauce and two bacon pizzas with cheese and tomato puree sauce. I also got four salad boxes, eight chips, eight chicken burgers, eight cheeseburgers, four large barbeque sauces, four large garlic sauces, four large mayonnaises and four large chilli sauces and four chocolate fudge cakes. I also went to the corner shop and bought vanilla ice cream and Coca-Cola," she explained for the sake of the wizarding folk, and everyone other than Harry stared at her wondering what she was talking about.

Harry whistled. "You went all out, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did, this is their first experience of our wonderful muggle delicacy and it should be done properly. Harry, help me dish out the food?"

They cut the chicken and cheeseburgers in half and placed a half of each burger on everyone's plate. Then they divided the chips up onto fifteen plates, doing the same for the salad. When it came to the pizzas each plate was given one slice of each pizza, and they opened the bottles of Coca-Cola and poured them into the glasses, with Mrs. Weasley placing a Cooling Charm over the ice cream and the chocolate fudge cake when Hermione asked.

"I hope you enjoy your very first taste of muggle takes away."

With that said everyone tucked in and Harry and Hermione watched as everyone took their first bite of pizza, cheese or chicken burger or chips. They shared a smile and a chuckle when they saw their faces beam at the taste of the food and the drink.

"Merlin!" Charlie and Bill said in awe, staring at the pizza in their hands like it was their reason for living.

"Bloody hell," the twins and Oliver muttered, looking at their pizza lovingly.

"It's good, right?" Hermione asked.

"Yes!" Was chorused and she laughed.

Conversation started up over the table with everyone asking questions about muggle food to Hermione and Harry and they gladly answered. When everyone was full and their hunger satisfied, Hermione convinced Harry, Ron and Ginny to wash the dishes which shocked Mrs. Weasley speechless.

"Hermione's going to be good for this family; she got them to do the dishes. I can't even get them to make their own beds," she whispered to her husband and he chuckled at her and kissed her on the cheek.

Everyone retired to the living room and had a good time playing games of wizarding chess and exploding snap, and not to mention teasing from the twins. Hermione promised Mr. Weasley that she'd teach everyone how to play some muggle board games over the Christmas holidays and he was exceptionally pleased and spent the rest of the night grinning from ear to ear.

Mr. and Mrs. Wood left and would return early in the morning, after all, it was Christmas. Everyone went to bed excited and anticipating what was to come the next morning. Hermione and her boys fell asleep contently and smiling all warm and snuggled together.

Chapter Twenty-Six

The Burrow – Wednesday 25th December 1991

It was Christmas morning and the Burrow was quiet. Hermione had a wonderful sleep, snuggled in-between her boys and daylight was beginning to seep through the gap in the closed curtains, indicating that early morning was now upon them, but it was far too early to get out of bed, so Hermione huddled deeper under the covers.

She was drifting off and just before she entered the land of dreams, the bedroom door was flung open and it slammed against the wall before someone dived on the bed and Hermione and the boys were crushed under the heavy weight as she heard herself gave a small yelp and the boys groaned in pain.

"WAKE UP! IT'S CHRISTMAS!"

"COME ON, LET'S GET DOWNSTAIRS!"

"YEAH, GET UP YOU LAZY GINGER SODS!"

Hermione grumbled out her reply.

"I'm not ginger," she said and then she heard Oliver and Lee speak in unison after her.

"Neither am I."

"You're ginge,r too," the twins mumbled, a snort falling from her before she realised that she wouldn't be getting back to sleep anytime soon.

When she reluctantly pulled her head from under the covers she was expecting to see Ron, Harry and Ginny. But what she saw brought amusement to her, so much so that she couldn't help the giggle that escaped her, which quickly turned into a full belly laugh with Hermione clutching her stomach and her whole body shaking with laughter.

The boys snorted at her and smiled widely as tears fell from her eyes and they revelled in the melodic laugh that left her. She hadn't laughed like that for some time, so the boys did nothing to discourage her.

When her laughter finally subsided she took a deep breath and beamed at the three siblings that had entered the room. Bill and Charlie were half on the bed covering Hermione and the boys with their weight and the other half of them was on the floor. But underneath them was Percy who had obviously fallen off the bed during Hermione's outburst of laughter. The three looked at her sheepishly and she just shook her head at their silliness and continued to beam, she was pleasantly surprised.

Even though Bill and Charlie were twenty-three, and twenty-one years old, they were still kids at heart, she should've expected that behaviour from them. But Percy was the real mystery. Percy who always followed the rules. Percy who isolated himself from his family. Percy who hardly smiled. Percy, who for a lack of a better term, had a broomstick stuck up his arse - was sprawled out on his back on the floor pinned beneath his older brothers after participating in waking up and partially assaulting Hermione and the boys.

"You alright down there, Perce?" She arched an eyebrow.

"I'm brilliant, thank you! This has always been one of my goals in life - to have my older brothers crush me to death. I feel quite accomplished," he replied and the others gawked at him.

"Did you just make a joke?" The twins shouted the last word in disbelief.

They flung the covers off and jumped, pushing both Bill and Charlie completely off the bed, to the floor and landing on top of them with Percy still crushed underneath them and they all grunted in pain. Hermione, Oliver and Lee shared a look and burst out laughing. Hermione and Oliver shared a nod and without anyone noticing, they each grabbed a pillow, stood up and proceeded to repeatedly hit The Weasley boys wherever they could with Lee soon joining in and aiding them. A full-scale pillow fight broke out.

The twins and the rest of the Weasley brood had noticed a change in Percy. He was still set in his ways, obeying the rules and nagging everyone; living up to the role of a prefect but now he smiled more, he laughed more and since returning home to the Burrow, he had spent more time with the family rather than reading in his bedroom. The only major change in the family had been the addition of Hermione.

Mr. and Mrs. Weasley appeared at the door of the bedroom after hearing the commotion from the living room and they couldn't help chuckling and grinning at the sight of her family and she didn't want to miss the opportunity to capture the happy and amusing moment, so she took out her wand and summoned a camera before she took several photos; all without the occupants of the room noticing as they continued to make a mess and hit each other with their pillows and laughing without a care in the world.

Mrs. Weasley had already decided that Hermione was an amazing addition to the family, but now, with the changes she had witnessed in her family it only cemented her feelings. Not only had she affected the lives of Lee and the twins, but she was now affecting the rest of the family for the better. Don't get her wrong, the Weasleys had always been a tight-knit group, but now they were closer than ever. Everyone spent more time with each other and were constantly laughing and smiling. She had also brought four -six if you count the Granger parents- new members to the Weasley clan with the Woods and Harry.

"Alright, children, I think that's enough of you abusing each other," Mr. Weasley said with a chuckle. The entire room went quiet and they all dropped their pillows from their hands and looked towards the doorway and gave a nervous smile or laugh.

"Brea…" but before Mrs. Weasley could finish her statement the room was empty with the Weasley siblings having already legged it down the stairs; leaving Hermione and Oliver looking around the room slightly dazed. There were no Weasley children in sight and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley could see the confusion on their faces and they chuckled at them.

"You'll get used to it, Dears," Mrs. Weasley said with a smile.

"I doubt it," Hermione and Oliver said in unison, not even noticing with Mr. and Mrs. Weasley to sharing a laugh.

They all made their way down to the living room where everyone was waiting for them. Oliver quickly made his way through the floo to Wood Manor to wake his parents, and when he returned he had a trunk behind him. When Mr. and Mrs. Wood made their entrance, the latter flicked her wand and the trunk emptied its contents and they floated to the Christmas tree in the corner of the Burrow's living room. With another flick of her wand, the trunk shrunk and she put it out of the way. The adults all sat on the couches and the children sat on the floor near the roaring fireplace. Mrs. Weasley levitated trays of food behind her from the kitchen, filled with different juices and tea, waffles, pancakes, bacon, eggs, toast and sausages.

It had started to snow outside and the Burrow's grounds were being dusted with snow. Hermione was glad as she loved a white Christmas. They all ate their breakfasts in the living room before the excitement was too much for Bill and Charlie to bear.

Bill and Charlie dashed to the tree and began handing out presents to the correct people, and when they had all been dished out, they took their turns opening them.

Hermione had received: a silver love heart charm from Lee as it was his nickname for her, a silver flame charm from Fred which was his nickname for her, a silver princess crown from George which was his nickname for her and a silver broomstick charm from Oliver in hopes that one day she would enjoy flying as much as he did. She received hair bands to help keep Hermione's hair out of her face from Ginny, a book on advanced transfiguration from Harry and Ron, a book on rare magical creatures from Charlie, and a book containing rare magical curses and the counter potions or charms from Bill. She received a book on advanced potions from Percy, a book on advanced defence against the dark arts from Mr. and Mrs. Wood and homemade fudge and her very own Weasley jumper from Mr. and Mrs. Weasley.

When Hermione reached the presents from her parents, she had a feeling of sadness wash over her as she realised that her parents weren't there to experience Christmas with her. She pushed the feelings to the back of her mind and opened her presents. A new pair of winter boots, a new cloak for Hogwarts, some new clothes and books. Her favourite was the first edition of Pride and Prejudice which had her beaming as she ran her fingers over the cover of the book, mesmerised by the feel of it and the smell of the aged pages and ink.

Hermione was ecstatic with her Christmas presents and she couldn't wait to put them to use. Hermione's favourite part of the day was observing the reactions of everyone when she gave them their presents. She had decided to continue with the tradition of buying everyone presents from the Muggle World as she wanted to share a part of her other world with them and they didn't seem to mind in the least.

From Hermione, Mr. Weasley received a muggle train set which he immediately set up and made everyone laugh at his excitement and Mrs. Weasley rolled her eyes good-naturedly at him. Mrs. Weasley received cookbooks on muggle cuisine so that she could experiment and some new aprons with slogans on the front that made her chuckle. Fred received a muggle pranking kit, Lee received a new pet tarantula as Susan had unfortunately died back in October and he was over the moon with glee and named her Roxy. George received a book on the most famous pranks in the Muggle Word. Whilst Oliver received a football kit and a book about the sport and he was pleased that he could learn a new sport. Ron received a basket filled with muggle candy and he ate half of it before everyone had even finished opening their presents. Harry received t-shirts that actually fit him with some slogans and quotes that made him laugh. Percy received a new muggle notebook and muggle pen that were both monogrammed with his initials.

Bill received different earrings for his pierced ear, and Charlie received a day pass to Chester Zoo and he loved it, Ginny received a new pair of jeans, a top and a jumper which ended with Hermione in a bone-crushing hug. Mr. Wood received a book on different muggle sports, Mrs. Wood received a bottle of muggle perfume and a day trip to a muggle spa which she was thrilled with.

Hermione promised that she would teach both Oliver and Mr. Wood about different muggle sports and that she would do her best to teach them how to play them when the weather improved, even though she was useless when it came to sports.

The rest of the day was spent outdoors in the snow which was now thick and covered every surface. They built snowmen, made snow angels and had a legendary snowball fight that would be talked about for years to come. Somehow Hermione had come out victorious and no one saw it coming, especially those that were hit in the face and knocked to the ground. Several times.

They had been outside for hours and it was beginning to get dark, and they returned to the comfort and warmth of the Burrow. They ate a wonderful Christmas dinner cooked amazingly by Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood and after dinner they spent their time together as a family in the living room by the fire before everyone retired to bed, falling asleep happy, warm and with their stomachs filled.

It was the best Christmas both Hermione and Harry could've asked for.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Hogwarts - Monday 6th January 1992

It was the first day back at school and everyone was currently sat in the great hall eating dinner. the Hogwarts Express had returned the students to the Hogsmeade Station and they had taken the carriages back to Hogwarts grounds. The atmosphere was light and filled with laughter with everyone sharing tales of their Christmases spent at home or at the castle.

Her time on the Hogwarts Express had been filled with fun and laughter but that was to be expected. She and her boys sat in their compartment and Harry and Ron joined them. They told jokes, stories and ate loads of junk food which they purchased from the confectionary trolley. They were good and didn't pull any pranks, but that didn't mean that they didn't think about doing it, or that they hadn't been planning for future pranks.

Hermione was a lot happier and was settled after what had happened during the holidays. She had visited with her parents the day after Christmas and she spent the day with them laughing, talking and exchanging presents and stories. They had shared a tearful goodbye and Hermione promised that she would find a way to contact them, at which they told her not to bother and just focus on school. This was why she was joining in telling stories of the pranks that she and her boys had pulled whilst home at the Burrow, rather than sulking, as she knew he parents wouldn't approve of it. They wanted her to continue with her education and to enjoy her time at school, and she had been sad and she missed them, but she wasn't going to disappoint them.

They were currently sharing a story of a prank they pulled on Bill and then later, Charlie. Hermione had decided that she wanted to prank them both for all the teasing they did during the holidays and it worked perfectly, making even Mrs. Weasley laugh and Hermione wormed her way out of punishment which amazed the occupants of the Burrow.

Hermione obtained some cling film and placed it over the toilet, so when Bill and Charlie used the bathroom to relieve their bladder you can guess what happened. Let's just say that it wasn't very hygienic and rather disgusting. During the tale, the occupants of the Gryffindor table listened with rapt attention and burst into laughter at the end of the story.

Once everyone had finished eating they all returned to their respective common rooms where everyone continued to converse until they retired for the night.

Hogwarts - Monday 13th January 1992

It was Oliver's sixteenth birthday and Hermione wanted to surprise him. Luckily, she had already purchased birthday presents for those whose birthday occurred during the school term, so she was all set. Hermione had stuck with the muggle sports theme and bought Oliver a pair of football boots and a football, to complete the football kit she had gotten him for Christmas.

During breakfast, she also managed to cause a slight disturbance all for Oliver's entertainment. She had enlisted the help of Peeves as she couldn't enter the Slytherin boys' dorm rooms, but most importantly their bathrooms. She gave him chilli powder and told him to put it onto the toilet paper in Marcus Flint's bathroom. Of course, this meant that not only would he be pranked, but the rest of his dorm mates too which Hermione thought was a bonus.

When he and the rest of his dorm mates entered the great hall for breakfast they seemed rather uncomfortable and waddled to their seats. They spent the majority of breakfast trying to relieve the itch that they couldn't find.

Hermione explained what she had done to her boys and wished Oliver a happy birthday at which he laughed at her and hugged her tightly.

They all attended their lessons and ate together as usual. After dinner, Hermione made an excuse that she had to study in the library and the boys complained that because it was Oliver's birthday she should put it off for the night, but she stuck to her choice, leaving Oliver disappointed. But what they didn't know was that Hermione didn't go to the library, but instead to the kitchens; where she convinced the house-elves to allow her to bake a cake for Oliver.

She grabbed the ingredients she needed and began to whip up the chocolate cake batter before placing them into two large rectangular baking tins and placing them in the oven. While she waited for the cake to cook she decided to use the leftover ingredients to make some cupcakes. She made a mixture of chocolate and vanilla sponge, before removing the cake tins from the oven and replacing them with the cupcakes.

As she waited for the cake to cool she quickly made a bowl filled with dream topping cream and dyed it red, then she later slathered one half of the cake in the red cream before cutting up some strawberries and placing them on top of the cream and then placed the other half of the cake over the top.

She removed the cupcakes from the oven and allowed them to cool as she began decorating the birthday cake; then doing the same for the cupcakes.

Hermione finished and looked at the cake and cupcakes which had taken her two hours to finish. The birthday cake was covered in white icing with a red and gold checkered pattern around the cake board and the edge of the icing on the cake. In the middle, she had written 'Happy 16th Birthday, Oliver,' in black and silver piping.

The cupcakes had been decorated similar to the cake with red and gold squares on the top and black and silver lettering saying '16' on top of that. Hermione placed the cupcakes around the edge of the cake board and placed it into a box, doing the same for the leftover cupcakes. She had purposely left some cupcakes to send to the Burrow later on and Bopsy sent them to her room for her. She placed a Stasis Charm over the cupcakes which she'd learned just for that purpose.

The entire time the house-elves watched Hermione with rapt attention, anxiously as she pottered and flittered about the kitchen. They were impressed with her baking abilities. Hermione quickly and efficiently cleaned her work area leaving it spotless. She thanked each one of the house-elves and left the kitchens, carrying the boxes in her arms. Halfway to the common room, she had to levitate them as they were too heavy to carry the rest of the way.

When she reached the common room she took a deep breath and spoke the password, she cancelled the charm on the boxes and placed them back into her arms as she stepped through the portal and walked into the common room.

She was overwhelmed as the noise hit her ears and to say it was loud would be an understatement. Everyone seemed to be having a good time laughing, dancing, talking, and drinking butterbeer and eating snacks that the twins and Lee had obviously smuggled into the common room. She spotted her boys laughing and having a good time and she smiled, making her way over to them whilst trying not to drop the heavy boxes as she was jostled about in the crowd.

Oliver spotted her and his face split into the biggest smile she had ever seen and her stomached started fluttering. He walked over to her and met her halfway.

"A dinnae think ye were coming."

"It's your birthday, of course, I wouldn't miss it," she smiled.

"Let me help ye with tha'," he said, taking the two heavy boxes from her arms. "Bloody hell, Lassie, ye bring the whole library back with ye?" He asked, straining with carrying the weight of the boxes and they walked over to Fred, George and Lee and he placed them onto the table. They all smiled at her and hugged her in greeting.

"Yeah, about that, I didn't go to the library."

"Dinnae ye want tae come then?" Oliver asked with a disappointed frown.

"Of course, I did, Ollie. As I said, I wouldn't miss your birthday. I just had something to do beforehand," she pointed to the boxes and the boys looked at them quizzically.

"What is it?" He asked cheerfully, his frown gone.

"Open it and find out."

He moved the smaller box off the top and placed it next to the larger box. He put his hand on the lid of the cake box and went to lift it, but he stopped, looking at Hermione with a suspicious, fearful expression and she snorted.

"I promise, I'm not going to prank you."

Oliver took a deep breath and opened the box quickly, the sight of a large rectangular decorated cake surrounded by cupcakes meeting him. He looked at Hermione not knowing what to say and slightly stunned.

"Happy Birthday, Ollie," she said beamed at him and he shook himself out of his daze and smiled at her.

"So this is what yer've been doin'?"

"Yes, it took me two hours and I made the house-elves rather anxious when I was using their kitchen," she laughed.

He scooped Hermione up into a hug and spun her around a few times and she laughed at him as he continued to thank her repeatedly.

He placed her back on her feet and she swayed slightly with the others laughing at her. That's when she noticed both Ron and Fred trying to steal one of the cupcakes from Oliver's cake. She walked up to Ron and slapped his hand away, then she smacked him upside the head and turned around, punching Fred in the arm. She walked back over to Oliver with Ron and Fred whining and those in the vicinity who'd watched the situation unfold laughed.

Oliver opened the other box and saw more cupcakes and he turned to Hermione.

"Seriously, ye made all af this fer me?"

"Yes, all of it, you have both chocolate and vanilla sponge cupcakes. And your birthday cake is chocolate sponge with dream topping cream that I dyed red and cut up strawberries for a filling. It's my secret recipe. Well, one of them anyway," she replied and he smiled goofily at her.

She picked up a chocolate cupcake knowing that Oliver preferred chocolate rather than vanilla sponge and she handed it to him.

He removed the case and took a big bite and his eye widened.

"So, how is it?" Fred and George asked excitedly, eyeing up the other cupcakes in the box.

"Merlin, it's so good," he said as he took another bite and handed the others one to try for themselves.

"Don't be so dramatic, Ollie, they're not that good," she rolled her eyes at him.

"Love, he's right, they're amazing."

"Yeah, Spitfire, they taste better than mum's." Fred realising what he'd just said, stopped eating his food. "But don't tell her I said that," he said fearfully and they snorted at him.

They passed out the rest of the cupcakes around the common room, and they eventually lit the candles on the birthday cake and sang "Happy Birthday" to Oliver and he blew out his candles and made a wish which he refused to tell anyone.

He cut the first piece of cake and ate it with a goofy grin on his face.

"A really like this filling, a've never had it befere, what is it?" he asked.

"That's probably because it's from the Muggle World and I thought you'd like it," she responded and he nodded in agreement along with the rest of the common room who all ate a slice of cake.

At the end of the night, Hermione boxed the remainder of the cake up -not that there was much left-, placed a Stasis Charm over it and put it in their room. When they changed into their pyjamas and got into bed, Hermione jumped out of bed, remembering that she hadn't given Oliver his presents.

"What are you doing, Love?"

"I've just got to get something," she said rummaging around in her trunk.

She smacked herself on the forehead remembering she was a witch and the others laughed at her. She grabbed her wand and Accio'd Oliver's presents, closing her trunk, she placed her wand on top of it before walking over to the bed and getting back under the warmth of the covers. She handed the gifts to Oliver who was stunned.

"Ye dinnae have tea get mae anything else. Ye already made mae a birthday cake an' the cupcakes, an' ye pranked Marcus Flint an' his dorm mates," he said.

"You didn't really think that that was your present, did you?" She arched an eyebrow and he chuckled at her.

He opened his gifts and Hermione explained what they were. After some badgering from her boys, she promised that she would teach them how to play the muggle sport during the weekend after the next Quidditch match if the weather wasn't too bad.

Hogwarts - Saturday 18th January 1992

It was the day of the Hufflepuff and Gryffindor Quidditch match. Hermione was stood in the stands wearing one of the twins' Quidditch jersey and Oliver's scarf, with her eyes glued to the game watching and waiting for injuries to happen. The match didn't last long. Only five minutes. It was a Wizarding World record. No one had even managed to score against the opposing team before Harry spotted the snitch and dove towards the ground, catching it and pulling out from his dive just before he hit the ground. Hermione's heart had stopped in that moment and when she recovered she vowed to scold him later for his recklessness.

Hagrid invited Hermione and the others over to his hut after the game and they all agreed. Oliver, Lee, Harry, Fred, George, Hermione and Ron all squeezed into the hut. They spent their time chatting with Hermione trying to get information about the third floor corridor and what the three-headed dog was guarding. Hagrid never being good at keeping secrets slipped and confirmed that he allowed Professor Dumbledore to use 'Fluffy' to guard something. That's when they noticed the large egg over the fire.

"That's a dragon egg," Ron exclaimed and the conversation changed to questioning Hagrid about the dragon egg. That was before it hatched. And that's where the trouble began.

Hermione noticed someone watching through the window; upon closer inspection, she noticed it was Malfoy. They began to panic until Hermione quickly thought of a way to fix the problem.

"Charlie," she whispered.

"What?"

"Charlie," she repeated and her boys looked at her in understanding and they are shared a smug smile. Ron and Harry still confused, once again asked.

"What?"

Hermione huffed and rolled her eyes at their cluelessness.

"What does Charlie do?"

"He lives in Romania on a Dragon Reserve as a Dragon Tam…" Ron trailed off, realising Hermione's point. "Oh, right," he nodded in understanding.

"Right, we'll get in touch with him and get all of this sorted before it can become a problem we can't control," Fred said.

They all left Hagrid's hut and returned to the common room and then to their room. The boys wrote a letter to Charlie about Norbert and asked if he could help. They crept to the owlery using the secret passageways and sent the letter off before returning to their room and retiring for the night.

It was a couple of days before they heard from Charlie, who outlined a plan instructing that some of his friends were in Scotland and would soon be returning to the Dragon Reserve. He agreed to help them as long as they sent some of and they quote, "'Mione's amazingly, so far out of the Wizarding World that it's in the Muggle World, delicious cupcakes".

So on the night that was arranged Harry and Hermione used the invisibility cloak Harry received for Christmas to sneak to Hagrid's hut. Ron was in the hospital wing after suffering from a bite from Norbert, but Hermione couldn't feel sorry for him; she did warn him. And did he listen? No, he didn't. The twins, Lee and Oliver wanted to go with Hermione and Harry but there wasn't enough space under the cloak so they stayed in the common room waiting anxiously for them to return.

They explained the plan to Hagrid and Hermione comforted him as he became upset at having to give Norbert up.

"Hagrid, he'll have a much better life in Romania. He'll have plenty of space to fly around, there's trained professionals who will take great care of him and he'll be with other dragons. He'll be much happier and well protected from anyone who may want to hurt him," she said softly, to the crying half-giant.

Eventually, they made their way to the Astronomy Tower, half carrying the crate and half levitating it whilst under the cloak. They removed the cloak at midnight when they saw four figures flying towards them.

When they reached them, Harry and Hermione handed the crate off to Charlie's friends, who secured the crate and took the boxes of cupcakes that Hermione handed them. Hermione had made forty-eight cupcakes both chocolate and vanilla sponge, which she had iced in different colours and with flames on the front. She used black lettering to write 'Dragon Tamers Only' on the cupcakes, and she also decorated some with dream topping cream dyed different colours and with cut up strawberries.

"I hope these are as good as Charlie says they are. He's been talking about them since he returned from his time off at Christmas," one of the men said and Hermione chuckled at him.

"I hope so too, boys, since I slaved over them for hours using my muggle magic. I know for a fact how many cupcakes there are in those boxes so don't be eating them all on the way back."

"We wouldn't dare," another said with mock outrage and the others snorted at him in disbelief.

"If you boys are anything like Charlie, I know for a fact that you would," she replied, not buying his act of innocence. "Oh, wait a minute," she said and she pulled her wand out pointing it at the boxes she used the Shrinking Charm and the Feather-Light Charm -not that they were heavy- to make them more manageable to carry during the flight. The men on the brooms looked at her stunned.

"What year are you in?" One of them asked her.

"First," she responded with a shrug. All four of them were thinking, 'Charlie wasn't kidding about her magical ability.'

They said their goodbyes and left, flying off with Norbert.

"Well, that's done, now all that's left to do is get back to the common room without being seen," she said to Harry and he nodded.

Before they had the chance to get back under the cloak, they were stopped, coming face to face with Malfoy and a stern-looking Professor McGonagall. Harry and Hermione lied about what they were doing as they didn't want to get Hagrid into trouble and they were both issued detention along with Malfoy who didn't look at all pleased. They had to leave the cloak where it was, but Hermione had subtly moved it behind a statue as they were escorted back to the common room.

When they entered the common room they were ambushed by Fred, George, Lee and Oliver and they explained what had happened. They all retired back to their rooms and went to bed; it'd been an exhausting day.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Hogwarts - Saturday 25th January 1992

It was the night of the detention and Hermione, Neville, Malfoy and Harry had made their way to Hagrid's hut being escorted by Filch. Poor Neville had also received detention for trying to warn Harry and Hermione about Professor McGonagall on the night of the Astronomy Tower fiasco. For their detention they had to accompany Hagrid into the Forbidden Forest, it was also a punishment for Hagrid as his secret pet dragon hadn't stayed a secret for long. They were to track and find a creature hidden in the Forbidden Forest that was harming Unicorns.

Filch spent his time taunting and teasing Hagrid over the loss of his pet and it greatly upset him. Hermione felt the urge to hex Filch for the way he was treating Hagrid, but she kept herself in check. Barely.

When they reached the entrance of the Forbidden Forest, Hagrid separated the group into two. He gave them instructions and told them that if they got into trouble they should send red sparks into the air. Hagrid, Harry, Hermione and Fang were to go one way and Malfoy and Neville another.

They had been walking for ten minutes when they saw red sparks in the air. They rushed over to the site where the spell had been cast, to see Malfoy taunting a frightened-looking Neville. It seemed that there was no danger, just Malfoy being a prat.

Hagrid swapped Neville for Harry and Malfoy insisted on having Fang, Hagrid agreed and sent them on their way. They separated from Harry, Malfoy and Fang and continued back the way they came. It was a while later when they came across a heard of centaurs and Hagrid being Hagrid, settled into conversation with them.

A few minutes later, Harry arrived on the back of Firenze the centaur, who both explained what had happened with the dead unicorn, the creature feeding on the blood and both Malfoy and Fang running away scared. They said their goodbyes and went in search of Malfoy and Fang which they found with the former shaking in his robes and the latter drooling everywhere.

They left the Forbidden Forest and headed back to the castle. Hagrid told the Gryffindors and the only Slytherin to head back to their dorms, which they did. They were all exhausted so they retired to bed. Fred, George, Lee and Oliver had been waiting up for her. She explained what had happened during the detention and her boys didn't look at all pleased with the danger she had been put in, Lee, on the other hand, complained about always missing the fun stuff and Hermione shook her head at him.

They all readied for bed and fell asleep. With Hermione dreaming about the strange things that had happened so far that year at Hogwarts as the puzzle pieces began to slowly slot together. Soon she would have answers; soon she would figure it all out.

Thursday 6th February 1992

Hermione was in the last lesson of the day, flying. She had improved phenomenally, but she still wasn't able to surpass those in her class. She was now up to seven feet in the air but any higher and she would panic, but she was able to fly at any speed she wanted. It wasn't the speed that bothered her, so much as the heights, the broom and the plummeting to her death part. But she was improving. It was all thanks to Oliver and the twins helping her get over her fears.

She was doing laps around the field when she remembered it was Mr. Weasley's forty-second birthday. She allowed her thoughts to wander back to Christmas as she remembered all the talks they'd had about the Muggle World and when she helped him with the train set she had bought him. She had gotten a birthday gift she hoped he would love. All she had to do was send it along with the boys' gifts. Of course, she knew that they would forget so just in case, she had purchased gifts for them to send off to the Burrow, too.

She finished her lesson and walked to the entrance hall where the boys stood waiting and they headed to the great hall for dinner. When they finished eating they headed to their room and everyone went to their regular places and continued with their routine.

Hermione waited an hour before presenting the twins and Lee with their gifts for their Father's birthday and they hugged her gratefully. They all spent time writing a letter together before heading to the owlery and sending it off along with the gifts.

The Burrow

They were sat eating dinner at the kitchen table when Mrs. Weasley stood to let the owl waiting outside in through the kitchen window. She offered it a treat and a drink of water as she removed the items from it before it flew out the window and she closed it.

She handed the items to her husband who opened the letter and his eyes lit up in excitement as he did so.

*'Dearest, Dad,*

*We hope you have enjoyed your birthday and had a blast. (Lee)*

*But then we realised that it wouldn't be the best birthday ever if you didn't get a letter from the bestest sons in the world. And a Quidditch nut and the Muggleborn extraordinaire. (Fred)*

*We have sent you the best birthday gifts ever! Way better than what Bill, Barmie, Perfect Percy and Ronniekins will send you! (George)*

*Ow! Dad, Hermione just hit me! (Fred)*

Mr. Weasley chuckled at the whining tone that was obviously from one of his twin sons before continuing to read his letter.

*Sorry, about that Mr. Weasley but Fred was teasing me about my flying lesson when George was writing his part of the letter. I promise you he deserved it. (Hermione)*

Mr. Weasley laughed as he looked closer at the parchment. He could see ink dots where the quill had clearly been pulled from George's hand so that Fred could write on the parchment.

*We hope that you enjoy your gifts. And the instructions for mine and Oliver's gift to you are inside the box. If you need any help let me know. (Hermione)*

*Our gifts are better though, so don't listen to her. (Lee)*

*They are not, Mr. Weasley, I think Lee's dreadlocks are too tight and are cutting off the blood circulation to his brain. (Oliver)*

*Anyway, Happy Birthday Dad!*

*Love your favourite sons -don't lie; we know we're your favourites- Hermione and Oliver*

Mr. Weasley chuckled at the behaviour of the children and put the letter down so that he could open his gifts. Mrs. Weasley picked up the letter and read it for herself, chuckling throughout at the behaviour of her children.

Mr. Weasley used his wand to cancel the charms Hermione had placed on them. Hermione and Oliver had gotten him a model aeroplane that he had to assemble himself, along with a book on aeroplanes. Hermione had also made some of her cupcakes and decorated them with butterscotch icing for Mr. Weasley. Fred, Lee and George had given him -courtesy of Hermione- books based on car mechanics that he could use for the car he had hidden in his shed away from his wife. He loved them.

Hogwarts - Tuesday 18th February 1992

It was Dean's birthday and Hermione and the first year boys had all gathered in the common room after dinner to give him his gifts. Hermione had given him some football memorabilia for West-Ham, knowing it was his favourite team. She'd also baked him a chocolate cake with a chocolate fudge filling and she decorated the cake in maroon, blue and yellow, the colours of the West-Ham football team. He was rather pleased with his gifts and he couldn't stop grinning like an idiot.

Sunday 1st March 1992

The boys wanted to prank Ron, but because it was his birthday Hermione had managed to convince them to wait for a few days, so that his day wouldn't be ruined. Hermione had given him a box of muggle sweets containing chocolates, biscuits, hard candies, jellies, marshmallows and lollipops. He had eaten half of it before he had even opened the rest of his gifts.

Hermione also made him a chocolate birthday cake with white buttercream icing and chocolate chips as a filling and it was decorated with orange icing, Chudley Cannon orange. It was gone and eaten within ten minutes and Hermione was shocked by the boys' appetites.

She couldn't understand how someone could eat that much cake in such little time. It made her feel ill. But all the hard work she had put into baking his cake was worth it when she saw how happy Ron was.

Wednesday 1st April 1992

It was Fred's and George's fourteenth birthday and not only had Hermione baked them the biggest cake she had yet, bought them gifts and spent the time during meal times with her boys pranking anyone and everyone who came close to them -seriously no one was safe, not even Lee who had fallen victim, whereas Oliver just avoided Hermione and the twins altogether- she had decided to provide entertainment for the two and complete her dare; to prank Professor McGonagall.

She was a little worried; she hadn't actually pranked a professor at Hogwarts yet. She had her prank set out and was waiting to put it into motion. Hermione and the boys were sat in the great hall eating dinner when Hermione made an excuse to leave, saying that she needed to use the bathroom.

When Hermione left the great hall she hid behind the great hall doors and removed her wand from her robes. She pointed her wand above Professor McGonagall's head and cancelled the Disillusionment Charm and flicked her wand, tipping the contents of the magically enlarged bucket over her. The great hall fell silent with everyone staring at McGonagall in complete shock before they burst into laughter.

Professor McGonagall was livid, to say the least. Hermione had borrowed Oliver's camera and had covertly taken a few pictures, after all, such a prank had to be documented for proof. Bill and Charlie would never let her live it down if she didn't take photos. She reduced the size of the camera and hid it back in her robes.

Hermione took a deep breath, placed her wand back into her robes before she walked in the great hall and she stopped at the sight of Professor McGonagall. She was soaked from head to toe in water from the Black Lake and she had fish surrounding and covering her. Well, after all, she was a cat: and cat's like fish, right? Hermione plastered an innocent yet shocked look on her face, trying to draw any suspicions away from her.

The twins, Lee and Oliver watched Hermione when she left the great hall. The twins and Oliver knew she was up to something, they could somehow feel it. When McGonagall was covered in fish they were right. When she walked back into the great hall looking all too innocent they laughed harder than they thought possible, almost wetting themselves and gasping for air. She really is brilliant, they thought.

She looked at Malfoy to see him looking smug as he laughed, McGonagall followed her gaze and saw Malfoys facial expression. She had already picked out his punishment. Hermione walked over to the Gryffindor table and sat back down. She shared a look with the twins, Lee and Oliver and they laughed.

When they were in their room they cornered her on the bed.

"Happy Birthday!"

"Merlin! You're officially a legend," Lee grinned.

"I can't believe you actually pranked her, Spitfire," Fred shook his head in disbelief.

"And didn't get caught! Although, you looked far too innocent, Love. But nicely done!"

"An' by the looks af it, ye got Malfoy the blame," added Oliver.

"Yes, well, the prat deserved it after turning us and Hagrid into Professor McGonagall. It's not my fault he happened to look guilty," she shrugged.

Hermione, Lee and Oliver gave the twins their presents and Hermione gave them the birthday cake she made for them. This cake was different from the ones she has previously made. The bottom half of the cake was chocolate with red dream topping cream in the middle and the top half of the cake was vanilla sponge with chocolate fudge cream on top with grated white chocolate sprinkled on the top. The edges of the cake were covered in red icing and gold piping.

"You may be twins, but you're two different people. You have different likes and dislikes. Just like how Freddie prefers vanilla sponge and George prefers chocolate," she explained her reasoning behind the odd cake.

The twins' hearts swelled; she was the only person that could tell them apart and see them as two different people rather than just one single unit, and they gave her a dazzling smile which made her dizzy.

Hermione had placed some Dr Filibusters Fabulous Wet-Start, No-Heat Fireworks around the edges of the cake board. She placed a Silencing Charm on the room and lit the fireworks. Hermione gave the camera back to Oliver.

"Ye took photos?" he asked and she nodded and smiled.

"Oh thank, Merlin, I mean, we'll always remember that prank for the rest of our lives, but having photographic evidence is just icing on the cake," Lee said and they agreed with him.

Oliver took plenty of photos as the fireworks exploded and burst into colour around the room and everyone laughing gleefully. The twins blew out their candles and smiled with goofy grins at Hermione.

"So, I pranked Professor McGonagall and Malfoy's going to be punished for it. You boys better appreciate it because it was difficult. I didn't think I'd be able to pull it off and I don't think I'll be able to do it again."

"Oh, we appreciate it, Love," George assured her. "Best gift ever!"

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The Burrow - Wednesday 15th April 1992

Everyone had recently arrived home from the Kings Cross Station. Today was the start of the two week Easter holidays. Oliver returned home with his parents but he would see Hermione the very next day. Just like Christmas, the Woods and the Weasleys would be spending Easter together, of course, this would now be a tradition for many years to come as they were now a family thanks to the arrival of Hermione.

Hermione and the boys were unpacking their belongings away into their rooms. Mrs. Weasley had moved Hermione into Ginny's room so she was putting her things away in the wardrobe and chest of drawers that she now shared with Ginny. Ginny, of course, was ecstatic. She finally had a sister who could keep her from going stir crazy with all the testosterone in the house. She now had someone to share secrets with, to share clothes with, to do makeovers with and just have girl talk with. Although Ginny had quickly figured out that Hermione would need a lot of convincing to do the last two items on her list. She was contemplating ways to get Hermione to do those last two items with her when her thoughts were interrupted.

"You're sure you don't mind sharing with me? I could always sleep on the couch," Hermione asked.

"Don't be ridiculous, Hermione, like mum would ever let that happen," Ginny said with a snort and rolling her eyes, "Besides, I've never had a sister before, it'll be great to have you at the Burrow to help control the boys. They're far more scared of you than they are of mum, which to be honest, is hilarious," she said with a laugh.

"It'll be good to be here with your family. It was always just me and my parents but I'm an only child and my parents worked a lot. I was always on my own with just my books to keep me company and it was very lonely. This is a big change for me."

"What about your friends? You went to a muggle school before Hogwarts, right?"

"Yes, I did, but I didn't have many friends. None at all, really," Hermione admitted. "Everyone usually stayed clear of me and my bookish ways. They always bullied me and called me names, I guess they could sense that I was different."

"Well now you not only have friends, but a new family and a sister and you have also brought Harry and the Woods with you. Our family's bigger than ever," Ginny said, beaming proudly at Hermione and she smiled back at Ginny as she continued to unpack.

"I think I can see why people treat you differently, particularly the girls at Hogwarts," Ginny said.

"What do you mean, Gin?"

"Well, you're different."

"I thought that once I got to Hogwarts I would be accepted, everyone's able to perform magic and I thought it would allow me to fit in, rather than being an outcast," Hermione said sadly and she dropped down onto her bed that Mrs. Weasley had kindly placed in the room ready for when Hermione returned home to the Burrow.

Ginny stood up from her place on her bed and walked over to Hermione where she sat down beside her and took her hand and gave it a squeeze.

"'Mione you're a witch, there's no doubt about it, but I mean that the aura around you, the energy you give off is different from other witches. Believe me; I've been around magic all my life. I can feel it, and apparently, the girls at Hogwarts can, too. When I first met you I felt a rush of emotions that I didn't know how to deal with. I felt threatened, jealous, angry, bitter and fearful all at the same time."

"Of what?"

"Of you. Of your magical ability. Of your power. 'Mione you're a very powerful witch, or you will be. But after half an hour of getting to know who you are, those emotions disappeared. I don't feel those things any more when I'm around you. I see you as my friend, like my sister. I feel relaxed and comfortable around you. I think that's why mum was so cold towards you when you first met. Didn't you notice that the only one who seemed to have a problem with you was mum and none of the boys? The boys don't seem to be able to see it. She felt the same emotions that I did but as soon as she learned that your safety was called into question at Hogwarts those feelings were replaced by motherly ones. They were overridden by concern and worry for you. She now looks at you like you're one of her children."

"You're saying that's why the girls at Hogwarts bullied me and treat me the way they do? Because they all feel those emotions when they near me?" Hermione's brow furrowed.

"Yes. Are they acting differently around you?"

"The Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw girls are being a lot friendlier and about half of the Gryffindor girls are, too. I doubt the Slytherins will come around but for obvious reasons. I just assumed they were being friendlier with me because they felt guilty or they pitied me."

"No, Hermione, I think that it's because they are starting to see that you are not a threat to them, that you won't harm them. The more time they spend around you, those negative emotions will no longer surface and then they'll treat you as they would any other witch."

"I hope so; even those that are being friendlier still give me glares."

Ginny contemplated Hermione's statement.

"Do you happen to be with the twins or Oliver when that happens?"

Hermione looked at Ginny strangely. "Yes, how did you know?"

Ginny smirked at Hermione's confused face.

"It doesn't take a genius to figure it out. They're still jealous."

"Of what this time?" Hermione huffed.

"They're jealous of the bond you have with the twins and Oliver. They treat you differently than they do other girls. They're very protective of you, just as you are of them. They hardly spend time with anyone but you and Lee and I've seen the way they look at you. If the twins weren't my brothers and I didn't see Oliver as the same I would probably be jealous, too. They're Quidditch players, Oliver is the Captain, and even though they're my brothers, even I can admit they're handsome, they're funny and they're protective. They don't seem to notice any other girl apart from you and we can't rule out Oliver's accent. They would do anything for you, like I know you would do anything for them. I also know the only other people you spend time with are Lee, Ron, Harry, Seamus, Neville and Dean. But you put Oliver and the twins first. There's a bond between you four."

"A bond?"

"Yes, a bond. When you first met I imagine it was a bond of friendship, but now I think it's escalated."

"To what?"

"Love."

Hermione scoffed. "Don't be silly, Gin, we're too young. Not that I'm saying I agree with you," Hermione blushed furiously and Ginny laughed at her.

"Then why are you blushing?" Ginny teased and Hermione hit Ginny with a pillow that she grabbed from behind her. Ginny stuck her tongue out. "But you're not too young, Hermione; love can happen at any age. But maybe you're not ready yet. I imagine within the next couple of years though, you'll be singing a different tune."

"You're sure of yourself, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am!" She replied confidently. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Knock yourself out," she shrugged.

"I want to know how you feel when you're around the twins and Oliver and how you were when you were away from them at Christmas before you came to the Burrow."

"Why?" Hermione asked with a cautious tone to her voice.

"Please," Ginny said with puppy dog eyes.

Hermione leaned back on the bed so she was looking up at the ceiling and Ginny copied her actions and laid down next to her.

"How do I feel when I am around them? I feel happy, relaxed, my magic practically sings and it tingles, my stomach fills with butterflies and my body feels like its vibrating. I feel like a part of me that's been missing for as long as I can remember, is suddenly filled. I feel complete. I can't get a good night's sleep unless they're with me or are close by and I feel uneasy until they are. I don't know how, but I guess I can sense them, too. I can sense when they're going to walk into a room and I get a feel of some of their emotions. That's how I know what they need to make them happy again."

"When I touch them after I've been away from them, I feel like lightning's passing through me and it makes me shiver. Before Ollie was hurt during the first Quidditch match of the season, I don't know how, but I kind of knew something was going to happen. And when he fell off his broom, I'd pulled my wand and had him on the ground and I didn't even realise I'd done it. It was my instincts, they told me to save him, to protect him."

Ginny could see that Hermione's soft expression had turned into a frown as she remembered that day and changed the topic.

"And when you were with your parents?"

"Why? How were the boys?" Hermione asked softly.

"They hardly ate anything, they locked themselves in their room, they didn't smile or laugh, they didn't do any pranks and they didn't tease anyone when we got them mixed up."

"What about Ollie?" She whispered.

"I don't know but I suspect that it was the same as the twins but maybe more painful. The twins have probably told you they have a rare twin bond and they're able to use it to comfort each other when they need to."

"They told me, and I can't believe my boys had to suffer through that." A tear escaped her eye and it fell down her cheek.

"Were you as bad as they were?"

"Yes, worse I think."

"What do you mean? What happened to you?"

"It took me a short while to feel the effects, but by the time I went to bed, I could feel them starting to set in. I had insomnia, I couldn't sleep, I was bedridden with illness, I couldn't keep any food down, I had nosebleeds and migraines, I always felt uneasy and my balance was off, making me clumsier than usual. And I knew that I wouldn't feel better until I saw them again."

Sitting up, Ginny sat pulled Hermione into a sitting position before she hugged her.

"I told you there's a bond between you and by the sounds of it, it's getting stronger. Maybe we should do some research?" She suggested.

"You're rather smart, you know that?" Hermione muttered.

"I know, it's about time someone saw my genius," she replied arrogantly and they both laughed, which quickly turned into tears running down their faces and ending with Hermione falling off the bed and landing on the floor with a thud as she gave a loud yelp. They both stopped laughing and looked at each other before they once again burst into howls, laughing harder than they were before.

Meanwhile, during the conversation Fred and George where stood behind Ginny's bedroom door that was propped open, listening to their conversation. They smiled, chuckled, scowled, frowned, shared looks of relief, adoration and joy when they heard her describe her feelings before they frowned again when they were reminded of their suffering and they shared looks of horror when they heard of Hermione's suffering and then they had to stifle their laughter when Hermione fell off the bed as they quickly ran to their room where they closed the door and burst into laughter.

They were extremely grateful to their little sister after listening in on the conversation. She had helped to fill in some of the gaps in their thoughts, confirming Hermione's feelings for them, confirming that something was happening between them, Hermione and Oliver as well as being a good friend and sister to their Hermione. They couldn't wait to share that information with Oliver.

That night, Hermione didn't sleep with the twins and Lee as she stayed with Ginny as they talked well into the night until they fell asleep.

The Burrow - Saturday 25th April 1992

It was Seamus' twelfth birthday and Hermione had sent along her presents by owl along with Ron's and Harry's. She had no idea what they had gotten him but Hermione had baked him a chocolate cake with vanilla cream as a filling with chocolate chips. She decorated it in green icing and it had fondant shaped clovers placed strategically around the cake. She had written 'Happy Birthday Seamus' in white and orange piping on the cake. She knew that Seamus was proud of his Irish heritage and she wanted to use that on the cake. She had also bought him a new earring and a t-shirt that had 'Irish you would go away' written on the front of it.

When she was baking the cake she had Mrs. Weasley watching over her shoulder with rapt attention. The entire Weasley clan plus Harry and the Woods had convinced Hermione to bake them some cupcakes and she did eventually agree. When she placed them in the middle of the kitchen table at the Burrow, the plate was empty in a matter of seconds. Hermione stared at the plate in shock and she looked up seeing everyone stuffing their faces, not looking at all guilty and she laughed at them.

Hermione received a letter from Seamus thanking her for his birthday presents. He exclaimed many times that his family loved the birthday cake and that he thought the t-shirt was wicked.

The Hogwarts Express - Thursday 30th April 1992

Easter had been a good holiday for Hermione. She'd been slightly sad that she wasn't able to spend it with her parents but the Weasleys and Woods quickly took her mind off it. Every day the Woods would floo to the Burrow and they would all spend their time together either in the Burrow or in the gardens playing Quidditch or swimming in the lake as the weather was now warming up for the start of summer.

Oliver spent some nights at the Burrow and some nights at Wood Manor. Hermione had also taken to spending half her time sleeping in the twins and Lee room when Oliver stayed over and the other half of her time sleeping in Ginny's room. She'd had a wonderful Easter and she couldn't have wished for a better time.

Oliver, Lee, Fred, George and Hermione were all sat in their compartment on the Hogwarts Express as they were heading back to Hogwarts for the last term of the year. Ron and Harry sat with Neville, Seamus and Dean in another compartment somewhere on the train.

The boys were chatting about Quidditch and Hermione was reading a book on advanced transfiguration when she fell asleep leaning against Oliver. Lee had gone off to the bathroom and then to find the confectionary trolley, leaving them to talk privately without knowing it.

George pulled a blanket from the overhead rack that had their initials engraved into it and placed it over Hermione as she slept peacefully and soundly. Oliver shifted slightly so he could make himself and Hermione more comfortable and Hermione let out a small sigh whilst they chuckled at her.

Fred and George had yet to tell Oliver everything they had learned the night they returned to the Burrow and so decided to do it in the privacy of their compartment.

"You remember that chat we had back in September about Hermione?" Fred asked unexpectedly, not that Oliver knew it was Fred. Just like everyone else -except for Hermione- he wasn't yet able to tell them apart.

"Aye, what aboot it?"

"We know," they chorused.

"What? Ye mean ye asked her?"

"Not exactly, we overheard her talking to Ginny," George said.

"When ye say ye overheard, ye mean tha' ye listened in on their conversation?" They both had the grace to look sheepish and Oliver snorted at them. "Okay oot with it, tell mae, hoo does she feel?"

The twins quickly explained everything they knew, and the three teenagers looked down to the still sleeping Hermione.

"Now tha' we know hoo she feels an' hoo she's affected when she's away from us, a think tha' it's time we talked tae someone aboot it," Oliver said and the twins nodded in agreement.

"Ginny thinks there's a bond between us and that other people have noticed it," Fred said.

"Seriously?" Oliver said.

"You know how the girls are a lot friendlier to Hermione but she still receives glares? Ginny thinks the girls are jealous."

"Af what?" Oliver asked confused.

"Of us and her," George said with a smirk twitching at his mouth.

"They're jealous of how we treat her; we treat her differently to every other girl. Even Ginny's noticed and she's seen less of us than the school. She confessed that if we weren't her brothers and she didn't see you as one, then she'd likely be jealous, too," Fred spoke smugly.

"Aye, but tha's hoo we've always been with Hermione, since the day we met her. Why would tha' change now?"

"Think about it, that's exactly why. We don't generally give other girls the time of day. Ginny said and I quote, 'they're Quidditch players, Oliver is the Captain, they're handsome, they're funny and they're protective. They don't seem to notice any other girl apart from you and we can't rule out Oliver's accent,'" George said in a rather over-exaggerated tone of voice and they snorted at him. "Now that I think about it, I am rather handsome, unfortunately for you Fred, I'm the more handsome twin."

"Oi we're identical, you prat!" Fred said, smacking his twin upside the head and Oliver rolled his eyes at them.

"A do tend tae get a lot af attention from the girls," Oliver said, trying to sound nonchalant but he just looked smug. The twins rolled their eyes at him.

"That's an understatement," Fred snorted.

"Yeah, remember that fan club he had last year, Forge? They followed him everywhere. -" George said laughing.

"- To Quidditch practice, to classes, through the halls. Merlin, they even followed him to the bathroom, Gred." Fred laughed. "- They would giggle in little groups as they stalked him. -"

"- Yeah and they would flirt constantly and bat their eyelashes like they had something in their eye. -"

"- And now that he's the Gryffindor Quidditch Captain, it's only gotten worse. Except now, you don't take any notice of the girls that follow you around and flirt with you, trying to get your attention."

"A did on the train but then..." Oliver was cut off by the twins.

"But then Hermione," they said together in understanding and Oliver nodded.

"Anyway ye cannae talk, ye both have girls trying tae flirt with ye all the time an' have since yer second year," Oliver said. The twins puffed out their chests and sat taller.

"Back to the point, when Hermione and Ginny were talking, she blushed when talking about us," George said.

"Hoo do ye know?" Oliver asked.

"Ginny was teasing her about it," Fred said amused.

Interesting, Oliver thought.

Hogwarts - Sunday 24th May 1992

As exams were due to start soon and Lee was the only one left to complete his dares, he decided to do it at dinner in the great hall. He'd tried to get out of it and when Hermione brought up the forfeit with an evil glint in her eyes and a smirk on her lips, he wisely went with the dares. At least he knew what he was getting himself into. Merlin knows what Hermione would make him do for the forfeit and with the look she had on her face, he didn't want to chance it.

So at dinner he stood up and climbed onto the table and cleared his throat, the entire hall fell silent and everyone looked on at him in curiosity. Snape noticed Hermione's smirk from the head's table and immediately knew that he was in for some entertainment.

"I just wanted to say that, I, Lee Jordan of Gryffindor house, have a guilty pleasure." He looked at Hermione pleadingly but she shook her head and Lee sighed before closing his eyes. "My guilty pleasure is that I have an undying love for the silver and green serpent. That's right, I'm in love with Slytherin house."

Everyone stared in shock at him. Professor Snape looked at Hermione, seeing her motioning for Lee to continue and knew that it wasn't over. And he was glad more was to come, he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"There is one member of the Slytherin house that I love in particular." Lee jumped down from the table and he walked towards the Slytherin table, the occupants looking like they wanted to bolt at that very moment. He stopped in front of Malfoy.

"Oi Malfoy, give us a snog would ya?"

He leaned towards him and Malfoy immediately flew out of his seat and ran from the hall screaming. The hall burst into laughter. Lee looked at Hermione and she put her thumbs up, laughing as she did so, letting him know that his torment was finally over.

Professor Snape was rather glad that Hermione had somehow managed to get Lee Jordan to declare his love for his house, it brought him much amusement, plus Lee would be getting teased for weeks to come about that. Of course, Oliver had taken pictures to show the rest of the Woods and Weasleys. They weren't ever going to let Lee forget this moment for as long as they lived, and Hermione was certain, the twins would carry it into the afterlife with them too.

Sunday 31st May 1992

It was Lee's fourteenth birthday and Hermione had baked his birthday cake when she took a break from studying. She made a chocolate cake with strawberry jam and vanilla cream as the filling. She decorated the cake in Gryffindor red and gold with a lion painted in the four corners thanks to Dean. She had bought Lee a book that contained information on the most common animals that muggles kept as pets. Hermione knew that Lee had many interests other than jokes and pranking -not many did or could see past his goofy exterior, but of course, Hermione could- and one of them was animals.

She also bought him some muggle candy and a t-shirt that had, 'despite the look on my face, you're still talking' written on the front. When Hermione presented the presents to him after the birthday party in the common room had ended, he was grinning from ear to ear, making Hermione and the boys laugh.

Friday 12th June 1992

It was the week of exams and every year was required to take them. Hermione had been driving everyone crazy with her ramblings about failing her exams when they all knew that she'd likely gotten an Outstanding in all her subjects and they tried to convince her but she continuously brushed off their comments.

It was Friday, and with Hermione having taken her final exam, she was in the common room, her mind running through the answers she'd given when Harry entered the room looking worried. He walked over to her with Ron and he explained what he'd overheard between Professors Quirrell and Snape. Harry was adamant that Professor Snape wanted to steal whatever was under the trap door and that he threatened Professor Quirrell, but Hermione was sceptical after everything he'd done for her over the school year.

A while ago, she'd learned from Hagrid that whatever was hidden under the trapdoor had something to do with Professor Dumbledore and someone named Nicolas Flamel. Hermione still hadn't found where she'd heard his name before and according to Harry, the theft would take place tonight. She didn't have long to figure it out and she was beginning to get stressed. To help herself calm down she ran through a list of potion ingredients in her head before moving onto the twelve uses of dragon's blood.

Oven cleaner, fine red ink, strengthening potions, alchemy, the Philosophers Stone... Wait a minute, the Philosopher's Stone. She slapped herself on the forehead for being so stupid and not realising it sooner.

She explained everything to Harry and Ron including the details of the stone giving people immortality and turning any metal into gold. They rushed to Professor McGonagall's classroom in hopes that she would know where Professor Dumbledore was. She explained that he was at a meeting in London at the Ministry of Magic and that he wouldn't be back until later.

"But Professor Snape's going to try and steal the Philosophers Stone!" Harry protested.

"I don't know where you heard about the stone but I assure you that Professor Snape is not trying to steal it."

"But he is, I heard him talking about it and it's going to happen tonight," Harry tried to continue but Professor McGonagall shook off his worries and sent them on their way back to the common room.

They quickly made their way back to the common room and changed out of their uniform into comfortable clothing, later meeting up after agreeing to help, they came up with a plan.

That night they all snuck out of their rooms and down into the common room but before they could leave they were stopped by Neville who refused to let them leave. Hermione pointed her wand at Neville and whispered, "Petrificus Totalus," and Neville's body went rigid as he fell to the ground with a thud. "Sorry, Neville," she whispered.

They rushed out of the common room and to the third floor corridor and knowing what was on the other side, they reluctantly entered. The door was unlocked and music was being played from a harp as Fluffy slept, and not wanting to waste time, they quickly made their way to the trapdoor and dropped down through the floor before Ron was unfortunately eaten.

They landed on a pile of vines that immediately began to enclose around them and smother them. Hermione quickly realised that the plant was Devil's Snare and she relaxed her body and sunk until she hit the ground underneath. She told Harry to do the same and he too fell to the ground. Of course, Ron was being unreasonable and began to panic.

Hermione had to quickly think of a solution before Ron was suffocated. She pointed her wand and said, "Lumos Solem," at which the Devil's Snare shrieked loudly and Ron was dropped to the ground.

They got their bearings and walked into a room filled with keys and that had a broom propped up against a wall. As soon as Harry tried to touch a key they all suddenly came to life and flew around the room almost attacking them. Harry grabbed the broom after Hermione pointed out the right key and he used his seeker abilities to catch the correct one. He dropped it and Hermione caught it, opening the door and rushing in with Ron, then closing it behind them as soon as Harry flew into the room, effectively stopping the keys from trying to kill them.

They had landed on a chessboard. A giant-sized wizarding chessboard. Before they took a step Ron stopped them from moving and gave them instructions. Ron played an amazing game of chess that ended with him sacrificing himself so that Hermione and Harry could progress into the next room. Unfortunately, they had to leave Ron where he was, but Hermione checked he was breathing before she left him.

They walked into another room and towards a table filled with potions; there was a piece of parchment with a riddle written on it. Hermione managed to solve Professor Snape's riddle and gave Harry the correct potion that would allow him to progress, but Harry was in need of a pep talk and she gave him one before she took the potion that would allow her to go back the way she came, so she could get to Ron to the hospital wing. When she reached Ron he was still unconscious but breathing, she levitated his body back to the trapdoor entrance where she came face to face with Professors Snape and Dumbledore.

"I see you beat us to it, My Dear," Dumbledore said with the twinkle in his eyes.

"What happened to Mr. Weasley?" Snape asked.

"He completed the room with the life-sized wizarding chessboard and he sacrificed himself so that Harry and I could progress."

"Then why are you here, Miss. Granger?" Dumbledore asked.

"I completed the room with the potions riddle and there was only enough potion for one to move forward. Harry took that one and I took another potion which allowed me to return to Ron so that I could bring him to the hospital wing," she explained.

"And we best see that you arrive," Dumbledore said.

The professors helped Hermione and an unconscious Ron back through the trapdoor where Professor McGonagall stood waiting. She took in the sight of the unconscious boy and the bruised, bloodied and dirty Hermione with ripped clothing, and rushed them to the hospital wing.

Fred, George and Oliver were waiting for them when they arrived. When they saw the state of Hermione and their younger brother they looked murderous. Hermione and Ron were seen to and their injuries were checked and healed. They stayed the night in the hospital wing with the twins and Oliver refusing to leave Hermione's side and she spent the night worrying about Harry until she fell into a troubled sleep.

When she woke the next day, it was to see Harry awake on the bed next to her and she darted out of bed and rushed over to him, hugging him tightly, being happy that he seemed fine. He explained everything that had happened after she'd left him, including his talk with Dumbledore.

It was the last Quidditch match of the season and Fred, George and Oliver were on the Quidditch pitch, and Harry had to stay in the hospital wing along with Hermione and Ron until later that night. He wasn't able to play in the Quidditch match, which resulted in a loss for Gryffindor and the Quidditch Cup. When the boys returned to the hospital wing, Hermione explained everything that'd happened the previous night in detail. Oliver was in a sour mood with Harry; first for convincing Hermione to get involved in what'd happened the night before resulting in her getting injured and second for missing the game.

They were finally released from the hospital wing and they went to their rooms to change into their school robes before they headed down to the great hall for the leaving feast. Slytherin had won the House Cup and every house apart from Slytherin was bitter. The great hall was decorated in large Slytherin banners and everyone felt ill and wanted to punch the smug faces of the Slytherins.

Dumbledore made his speech before awarding some last-minute points. Hermione was given fifty points for her use of intellect, Ron was given fifty points for the best game of wizarding chess Dumbledore and Hogwarts had ever seen, Harry was given sixty points for nerve and outstanding courage and Neville was given ten points for standing up to his friends. Thanks to Neville they took the lead and won the House Cup. The hall broke out into cheers as the banners changed from Slytherin to Gryffindor. Fred and George even went as far as to stand on the Gryffindor table to jump up and down whilst shouting, "Loser! Loser!" repeatedly, whilst pointing to the Slytherin table. Everyone ate heartily and discussed the events of the past year as well as their plans for the summer.

The next day, they all boarded the Hogwarts Express with their packed trunks and they wouldn't be returning to Hogwarts until after the summer in September.

Chapter Thirty

Mr. Weasley had won a competition at work and his prize was a generous amount of galleons. As a result, the Weasley parents stored some of the prize galleons into their Gringotts vault to later pay for their children's school supplies for the following term and the rest was used to visit Bill who was currently working on a job in Egypt.

Mr. and Mrs. Wood had given permission for Oliver to travel with them to Egypt as no one knew what would happen if Hermione and the boys were separated for two weeks, whilst also being in different continents, they didn't want to find out either. The adults knew of Oliver's and the twins' suffering after only three days of being apart, but they didn't know of Hermione's and her symptoms had been much worse. And for that reason, they had been alternating between Oliver staying at Wood Manor and at the Burrow.

And their time in Egypt had been brilliant. The twins, Lee, Oliver and Hermione had taken to pranking Ginny, Ron and Percy, and they hadn't been merciful to anyone. Sometimes their victims would find the pranks hilarious, and others, not so much, which meant Mrs. Weasley had spent an awful amount of time trying to stop her children from strangling the twins.

One of the most memorable pranks had been on Ron. Bill had been giving them a tour of the pyramids, whilst describing the types of curses that had once been protecting the tombs and chambers before his team had dismantled them. Whilst Bill had been discussing the history of the pyramids, they'd come across a number of skeletons, which had clearly been there for thousands of years. The twins had shared a look before they rushed ahead and they each crept behind a skeleton, where they waited for an unsuspecting Ron.

When Ron had walked past the skeletons, Fred and George whispered in an eerie voice that echoed throughout the pyramid. Hermione had never seen Ron look so frightened, not even in the presence of a spider.

"You dare enter the tomb of the noble Pharaoh Menes. -"

"- You shall suffer a fate worse than death, -"

"- For disrupting the final resting place of the first Pharaoh of Egypt."

Whilst Bill, Hermione, Lee, Oliver, Ginny and Percy where up ahead and watching the scene in amusement, struggling to contain their laughter, Ron had gone pale and froze up as though being under the influence of a Petrificus Totalus.

Fred and George lifted the arms of the skeletons they were hidden behind and had them reach out and touch Ron as if they were trying to grab him. Ron has screamed so loudly, they all covered their ears and winced, before he turned and ran back down the tunnel until he reached the entrance with their laughter left behind him. They were thankful Oliver had insisted on bringing his camera and the entire scene had been thoroughly documented. Mrs. Weasley had scolded the twins until she had been red in the face, for, "not respecting the dead," and for doing such a devious thing to their younger brother, but everyone present were witness to the chuckle that escaped after her scolding.

The rest of the trip to Egypt had continued in the same manner and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves, well, unless they happened to be the victim of a prank on that day. Hermione hated that Harry had been stuck with the Dursleys and that he'd missed out on the trip to Egypt, but she knew there was nothing she or anyone else could've done for him.

After the two weeks were up, they returned back home for the rest of the summer.

The Burrow - Monday 27th July 1992

It was almost the end of July meaning everyone would be returning to Hogwarts in a little over month's times, and so far everyone had had a great summer filled with laughter, pranks, teasing, Quidditch, flying and swimming in the lake on the Burrow's land. Hermione had even gone as far as to convince the Weasley children to sleep outside one night, so they could experience camping and, of course, campfires, and much to her hopes, they had all loved it.

It was Mr. Wood's, thirty-seventh birthday, and with the help of the Weasleys, Oliver and his Mother had planned a surprise party at Wood Manor whilst his father was at work in the Ministry, and Mr. Wood sharing his son's love of sports, he worked for the Department of Magical Games and Sports.

The ballroom of Wood Manor had once been empty with a high glass ceiling, dark wooden flooring and cream-coloured walls, but it was now filled with tables that were overflowing with food and presents, there were table and chairs for guests to rest and there had been space left for dancing and mingling. Family and friends had been invited to the party and were currently fluttering about the ballroom, chatting away and having a good time whilst waiting for Mr. Wood to arrive home from work, and minutes later, they were informed that Mr. Wood had returned from the Ministry and was on the grounds. Everyone rushed to the entrance of the manor and when Mr. Wood opened the door he was hit with cheers and applause.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY!" Everyone chorused and Mr. Wood was scared speechless.

After he got his bearings, he greeted and thanked everyone for attending the party, and he thanked those responsible for planning and setting it up, all without his knowledge too.

Hermione had baked Mr. Wood a birthday cake, and it was the biggest one she had made due to the number of guests attending the party. She had to bake several vanilla sponge cakes just to be sure there would be enough for all the guests attending, and thankfully Wood Manor had a rather large kitchen with several ovens.

When Mr. Wood finally opened his presents –leaving his gifts from the family until the guests had gone- everyone left the party and the ballroom was quickly cleaned up and returned to its original state with the aid of magic.

Everyone crowded on the sofas and floor in the main living room and watched as Mr. Wood opened his gifts. Hermione had purchased him a cricket set including the bat, the stumps and a couple of cricket balls. Mr. Wood had been thrilled to learn another muggle sport, especially since he'd read about it in the book Hermione had gotten him for Christmas. He'd dragged her outside, with the barely contained excitement of a five-year-old, and with the others laughing as they followed them onto the grounds.

Hermione's father was an avid sports fan and when Hermione had been younger, she'd bond with her father whilst watching the sports matches on the TV, with her father doing is upmost to ensure she understood every rule. And although she knew the rules and the jargon of some sports, she was not able to physically partake as she was rubbish.

When they had reached the Quidditch pitch on the grounds behind the Manor, a crowd surrounded her as she explained the basics of the sport and its rules, whilst correctly setting up the equipment, and later separating them into two teams.

The Weasley parents, Percy and Mrs. Wood were observers rather than players, as they watched from their places perched on a nearby picnic bench. The game hadn't been played too badly considering it was their first time playing the muggle sport, although Fred and George seemed to be the best with the cricket bat, but that wasn't surprising given their positions on the Quidditch team.

They'd all enjoyed themselves, laughing at those than fell over, those that were hit with the cricket ball and those that injured themselves with the cricket bat, and after the winning team completed a victory dance, plans were made to play the muggle sport throughout the remainder of the summer holidays.

The Burrow - Friday 31st July 1992

It was Harry's twelfth birthday and knowing Harry wouldn't receive much from his awful muggle relatives, the occupants of the Burrow had made sure to get him gifts they were sure would lift his spirits, and Hermione had baked him a cake that he could have for himself.

She'd bought Harry some new muggle t-shirts and jeans, that wouldn't be hand-me-downs from his cousin, and that would actually fit him. She'd gotten him a new Quidditch book based on the seekers throughout the history of the sport, and she's gotten him several chocolate frogs, and she'd hinted in his letter, that if he were to release them in the house, it would drive the Dursleys insane. They couldn't wait until Harry was finally free for the summer, as he was to be collected and brought to the Burrow for the final two weeks of the summer holidays. Hermione hadn't held back when she told Mrs. Weasley about Harry's muggle relatives, and although Mrs. Weasley had been far from pleased with the knowledge, there wasn't anything they could do but give him the best summer of his life when he arrived.

So, they settled for sending his cake and gifts to him for his birthday, hoping it would bring him a little joy until he arrived.

The Burrow - Tuesday 11th August 1992

It was Ginny's eleventh birthday and Hermione found herself being woken by an annoying redhead jumping on her bed, and effectively crushing her. Hermione had been hinting at Ginny's birthday gift for the last two weeks and it was now the day that she could finally give the gift to her, and put Ginny out of her misery.

"Get up, 'Mione, it's my birthday," Ginny said, as she picked up a rogue pillow from the floor and repeatedly hit Hermione with it.

"Is it?" Hermione asked sarcastically from under the covers and Ginny rolled her eyes at her as she sat on top of Hermione, squishing her into the mattress and continuing to hit her with the pillow.

"Come on, get up."

"Fine," Hermione huffed and quickly sat up.

Ginny, not expecting this movement from Hermione, had rolled off Hermione and onto the floor with a loud thud. Hermione looked at the shocked expression on Ginny's face and burst out laughing. Those who'd already been woken up by Ginny rushed to the girls' room after hearing the commotion. Upon seeing Hermione pointing and laughing at Ginny who was on the floor mock glaring at her, the others laughed too.

They all made their way down to the kitchen and ate the breakfast that Mrs. Weasley had made for the birthday girl before they quickly dressed for the day and went outside to play Quidditch, with Hermione watching from below and doing her summer homework.

When dinner rolled around, they ate the birthday meal and the birthday cake Hermione had made before they gave into Ginny's pleas, and convened in the living room to hand out her gifts.

Hermione handed Ginny her present and it unwrapped before Hermione had a chance to blink. Ginny took the items out of the box with a large smile on her face, whilst the others watched her amused. Hermione had bought Ginny a very pale pink sundress that fell just above the knees, it had thin shoulder straps and flared out slightly at the waist. To accompany the dress there was an elbow-length white cardigan that fell to the small of the back, a pale pink thin belt and to finish off the outfit, a pair of white ballet pumps.

Ginny ran upstairs and when she returned a few minutes later she was wearing the outfit. Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood gushed at how pretty Ginny looked and Hermione was given a bone-crushing hug as thanks.

The Burrow – Wednesday 12th August 1992

Hermione had woken and both she and Ginny walked downstairs and to the kitchen. Neither of them noticed the boy with black shaggy hair and glasses until they sat down at the table.

"Harry!" Hermione shouted in surprise and she jumped out of her seat to hug her friend. "What are you doing here? You weren't supposed to arrive for a few days," she asked and she sat down at the table next to him. She noticed that Ginny was nowhere to be seen and her lip twitched in amusement.

"The twins, Lee and Ron rescued me from the Dursleys," Harry told her, launching into an explanation on what'd happened whilst Hermione had continued to sleep through the night.

When Ginny made a reappearance, she was wearing the outfit Hermione had given her the day before.

Could you be any more obvious Gin? She thought to herself with a snort.

Hermione ran upstairs after eating her breakfast and quickly changed into a pair of white shorts, a pair of black trainers and a plain black vest top. She left the kitchen with Harry and Ginny and they walked out into the garden of the Burrow to find Ron, Fred, George and Lee de-gnoming the garden.

It was their punishment for stealing Mr. Weasley's car and flying it to London to retrieve Harry, but none of them looked all that bothered by it. Hermione had seen the boys de-gnome the garden before and knew that they would later be exhausted and more than likely injured and covered with bites. It was a rather hot day that day so Hermione brought the boys a cold drink of pumpkin juice and some breakfast, knowing that they hadn't had anything to eat yet.

"Thanks, Love," George grinned, swiping a glass from the tray in her hand and downing half of it in one go.

She turned around when she heard Mrs. Weasley talking to someone from the kitchen and Oliver walked through the door and over to where Hermione and the others were stood. He side-hugged her in greeting and grabbed a glass from the tray.

They spent the day in the garden talking with the twins, Lee and Ron whilst they completed their punishment.

The Burrow – Wednesday 19th August 1992

It was late and everyone was in bed except Fred, George and Oliver, who were sat at the kitchen table in the Burrow. With them were the Wood parents, the Weasley parents and they were waiting for the arrival of Bill and Charlie who walked into the kitchen and after greeting each other, they sat down and waited; they had no idea why they had been summoned by their parents.

It was time. The time when Fred, George and Oliver spoke to someone about what was happening between them and Hermione. They'd decided to involve someone after the Easter holidays but they hadn't had that chance. They were returning to Hogwarts within the next couple of weeks and they wanted to know as much as possible before the new school term started.

Mrs. Weasley had a feeling that this was a serious subject the boys wished to discuss, so she placed a Silencing Charm around the room for privacy.

Mr. Weasley cleared his throat. "So, boys, what did you want to talk to us about?"

Oliver turned his eyes to his parents. "A think ye know what we want tae talk aboot," he said. When his parents looked at his serious expression they nodded in understanding.

"We thought this would be happenin' soon," his father replied, not in the least bit surprised his son was broaching the subject. Not only was he a Gryffindor, but he was older than the twins, more mature.

"They want tae talk aboot Hermione," Mrs. Wood explained to the confused faces of the Weasleys, and they all sat up straighter upon hearing the news.

"What about Hermione?" Mr. Weasley asked.

"I think you know, Dad," George said, crossing his arms over his chest and leaning back into his chair.

"We have no idea what you're talking about," Mrs. Weasley quickly denied and the boys narrowed their eyes suspiciously.

"Really?" Fred arched an eyebrow, noticing the nervous expressions on their faces and his mouth twitched.

"Look, let's not go through the whole denial thing an' get straight tae the point at hand," Oliver said and he looked to his parents. "A assume yer've told them ev'rything a told ye an' tha' they've discussed the twins with ye in return." His parents nodded in confirmation. "So we're up tae speed then."

"Fine, we've spoken about you," Charlie admitted and his parents glared at him. "What? They already know," Charlie defended, holding his hands up as if to say, 'it's not my fault'.

"You know something that we don't. We can tell, so don't even try to deny it" George said.

"And we know something that you don't," Fred added confidently.

"What do you know?" Asked Bill curiously.

"We know how Hermione feels and how she suffered during the time we spent apart at Christmas," George shrugged. .

"How? I'm guessing you didn't ask her," Charlie asked intrigued.

"We overheard Hermione telling Ginny when she asked," Fred admitted and the twins looked sheepish when they departed with that information. Bill and Charlie chuckled at them.

"And how is that?" Mr. Weasley asked.

They looked to Fred to explain since he was the better speaker of him and George, and he gave them a rundown version of Hermione's feelings towards them and the suffering she was subjected to during their time apart. The adults sat there...staring at them...in complete surprise. Speechless.

"Ginny thinks there's a bond between us. She's right, isn't she?" George asked and they all exchanged glances.

"Please, don't lie to us. Between the Sorting Hat incident and the magical ability she possesses, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that Hermione's different from other witches. She's special," Fred said.

"A think we should tell them, if they know the truth they'll be able tae protect Hermione until it's time tae tell her," Mrs. Wood suggested. .

"Tell us what?" Oliver, Fred and George asked in unison.

"That was slightly creepy," Charlie said, trying to lighten the mood and he succeeded as everyone chuckled.

"They're too young," Mrs. Weasley said with a frown, shaking her head in denial.

"A agree, we should tell them," Mr. Wood nodded and he looked around the table. The only person who didn't seem to agree was Mrs. Weasley but she was outvoted, five to one.

"Boys, what we're about to tell you should never leave this room. You don't talk about it and definitely not whilst at Hogwarts or out in public. And don't tell Hermione either, we'll tell her when the time for it comes. If the wrong people were to discover what we're about to tell you, Hermione will be placed in a tremendous amount of danger," Mr. Weasley warned, eyeing them each in turn.

The twins and Oliver sat up in their chairs at the news and the others could feel the atmosphere change, they could practically feel the waves of protectiveness and possessiveness being given off by the three teenage boys as it mixed with the tension in the room.

"Right, well where to start?" Mr. Weasley said to himself. "You know that Hermione's adopted, correct?"

"Yeah, we have since we met her on the train," George confirmed.

"Do you remember the conversation we had about Hermione's parents at Christmas, about their attack? We told you they were attacked because they were given something that needed protecting." They nodded with a frown marring their features. "What we didn't tell you was what they were given to protect."

"And that is?" Fred asked.

"It wasn't an object or an item like we led you to believe, but a person."

"Hermione!" The boys gasped in unison.

He nodded. "During the war, a young married couple and their child were placed into a safe house for protection against You-Know-Who. Spencer Blake was a descendant from a very powerful wizard and due to this, he is related to You-Know-Who, and he tried to recruit them for his cause, but Spencer's wife, Amy, was a Siren."

The teens spluttered, looking to one another in surprise. Of course, they'd learned about Sirens during their care of magical creatures class, and although much wasn't known on the species, it was known how rare and powerful those magical beings were.

"They had a child; a daughter. Now, this little girl is a descendant from a powerful wizard, related to You-Know-Who and she may or may not be a Siren when she comes of age. During the war, Spencer and Amy both died trying to protect their daughter, she survived but was injured and she was placed in another safe house until she was placed into the protection of her adoptive muggle parents."

"Are ye saying tha' this girl is Hermione? Our Hermione?" Oliver asked disbelievingly and when he received nods, he looked at the twins as they silently digested everything they'd just learned.

"It makes sense, as to why she has the magical ability she does, especially with her parents' heritage," George said thoughtfully. "Is that everything?"

"Naw, there's more," Mr. Wood said. "Before Hermione was born, a prophecy was given and it has been confirmed that Hermione is the subject of the prophecy."

"What prophecy?" the three asked together.

"We cannae remember the exact wording, but the prophecy states tha' Hermione, along with the help af her mates, will better the Wizarding World when she comes intae her full powers," Mrs. Wood said.

"So we're Hermione's mates? That's what you're saying?" Fred said with a befuddled look on his face.

"Yes, you are. You have a soul bond. You are Hermione's perfect match. She will always need you and you will always need her. The soul bond has been activated a lot earlier than it should've, but it is not yet complete. This means that you've not yet received your full abilities. When you've completed the bond, you should be able to sense each other's emotions. You may produce a mind link meaning that you'll be able to read each other's thoughts and communicate through telepathy, but it's not guaranteed," Bill explained.

"Wicked!" The twins grinned at one another.

"If the bond isn't complete, how do we complete it? And how was it activated if wasn't supposed to happen until later?" George asked confused.

"It was activated when you healed Hermione and brought her back from the dead."

"You know about that?" His eyes widened and the teenagers looked at each other like a deer caught in headlights.

"We do, yes. You felt the bond that had always been present in the back of your mind, heart and soul weaken and you followed your instincts. It's why you're so protective of her and why she's so protective of you. As for completing the bond, well…" Charlie trailed off and everyone averted their eyes.

When the boys understood his hesitation to answer they all blushed furiously and fidgeted in their seats. Oliver cleared his throat.

"Don' worry, the bond won't be completed until Hermione's magic senses tha' it's time. But don' push her on the matter. Jus' let ev'rything happen between ye an' Hermione naturally," Mrs. Wood encouraged.

"Is tha' ev'ryhing?" Oliver asked uncomfortably.

"Yes, for now," nodded Mrs. Weasley. "You can't tell anyone and don't tell Hermione either. Her parentage is a Siren for a mother and a relative of You-Know-Who for a father and a lot of people want her. They want to control her power and use it for themselves. You've seen what she's capable of now and she hasn't come into her full powers yet. Protect her, don't rush her and good things will come in time," she promised. "If you wanted to, you can do some research in the library on soul bonds and Sirens but be careful, don't let anyone catch you. Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall and Snape are aware of your situation so if you need to, you can talk to them. They will give you access to any books you need."

The Burrow - Saturday 22nd August 1992

It was Percy's birthday and everyone was sat out in the garden. Mr. Weasley and Mr. Wood levitated tables out into the garden and then enlarged them, before placing them in the correct place. Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood were in the kitchen cooking the food whilst Hermione made Percy's birthday cake and the others were out in the garden playing Quidditch. Hermione had finished baking the cake when Ginny rushed into the kitchen asking if she could help decorate and Hermione agreed.

They had fun decorating the cake together, of course, they had a food fight and were both covered in different ingredients and they made a right mess in the kitchen. Mrs. Weasley turned around ready to scold the girls but when she saw them both covered in cream, jam and icing, she shook her head and laughed. Mrs. Weasley attracted the attention of everyone outside and they came to see what was going on. They hid the birthday cake and stood in front of it, keeping it from the view of everyone. Everyone laughed at Hermione and Ginny, Oliver took photos and eventually they left leaving Hermione and Ginny to finish the cake.

Everyone ate the delicious food cooked by Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood before Hermione and Ginny brought out the cake with the lit candles on the top and everyone sang, 'Happy Birthday'. When Percy blew out his candles everyone cheered and the cake was cut and handed out whilst Percy grinned widely at Hermione and she hugged him.

The Burrow - Tuesday 25th August 1991

It was Mrs. Wood's birthday and just like Mr. Wood's birthday, they had planned a birthday party. Hermione had once more made a large a chocolate, and after eating the food and cake, they all sat in the main living room after returning the ballroom back to its original state. Hermione was the last to give Mrs. Wood her gift and she had given her numerous magazines that showed the evolution of muggle fashion from the thirties to the nineties. Mrs. Wood loved her gift and hugged Hermione before she chatted excitedly with Ginny as they flicked through the magazines.

Chapter Thirty-One

The Burrow – Wednesday 26th August 1992

After breakfast, everyone readied in their respective bedrooms. Hermione and Ginny were in their bedroom changing and helping each other pick out clothes and Hermione took some convincing on Ginny's part. After deliberation, Ginny was wearing a pair of black leggings, her new white ballet pumps and a white Weird Sisters t-shirt and over the top, she wore black witch's robes left open. Hermione had on her light blue Weasley jumper, a light blue pair of skinny jeans and her white converse. She didn't bother with her witch's robes, after all, she was still a Muggleborn and the weather was still warm enough to go without wearing them.

'How do I look?" Ginny asked Hermione as she was tying her shoelaces.

"Amazing as always, Gin," Hermione replied.

"So do you," Ginny said to Hermione with a smile and Hermione snorted at her statement.

"Come on, let's go."

Hermione grabbed Ginny's hand and dragged her out of their room, down the many stairs and into the living room and over to the floo, where everyone stood waiting to leave.

"Well, don't you girls look lovely," Mrs. Weasley said and the girls smiled at her. "We're just waiting for the twins to come down."

As usual, Lee had left to spend the rest of the holidays with his father and step-mother, but unusually, he spent an extra week with the Weasleys. They knew that he'd already purchased his belongings for the next school term so they wouldn't see him until they were on the Hogwarts Express.

"Hermione, is Oliver meeting us at Diagon Alley?"

"Yes, Mrs. Weasley, we should be meeting him at Gringotts," Hermione replied and Mrs. Weasley nodded.

"Honestly, where are those boys?" Mrs. Weasley huffed and she stormed up the stairs. "Boys! We're ready to leave, if you don't get your backsides down here right now, we'll leave you behind!" She shouted shrilly.

Hermione felt two people sidle up beside her, Fred snaked his arm around her shoulders and George did the same around her waist.

"Where are you going, Mum? -" Fred asked.

"- Yeah, I thought we were going to Diagon Alley," spoke George.

Mrs. Weasley turned around and glared at her sons and they smiled angelically. Ginny and Hermione let out giggles and Mrs. Weasley stormed towards the floo, muttering under her breath and everyone followed behind her.

"Right, everyone get sorted," Mr. Weasley said. He went first, then Percy, Fred, George and Hermione, Ron, Harry and Mrs. Weasley and Ginny.

Diagon Alley

"Where's Harry?" Mr. Weasley asked with a slight frown.

"You mean he's not here with you? He floo'd after Ron," Mrs. Weasley said with worry in her voice. They looked around in a panic, noticing that Harry wasn't with them.

They quickly divided into groups and made a plan to meet up at Gringotts. Hermione and the twins spent twenty minutes looking around Diagon Alley with no luck in finding Harry and headed to Gringotts. There they met the rest of the Weasleys, Hagrid and a soot-covered Harry. It turns out Harry hadn't pronounced the location clearly enough and he'd ended up in the not so nice Knockturn Alley, at which point, the twins proceeded to compliment and praise Harry. Hermione glared at them and they immediately stopped, much to Mrs. Weasley amusement.

"Hermione!" A very familiar Scottish accent called from behind her.

Hermione turned around and beamed at Oliver, walking towards him and they hugged tightly before returning to the Weasleys, where they greeted Oliver and said their goodbyes to Hagrid.

They entered the bank and walked towards one of counters when Mr. Weasley pulled out a key from his robe pocket and handed it to a shocked Hermione, he explained that Dumbledore and her parents had set up an account for her at Gringotts. They'd also had a meeting with the goblins who agreed that they would place the monthly allowance from Hermione's inheritance from her Grandfather into her vault so she could have easy access to it, since she wouldn't be spending much time in the Muggle World.

Their keys were handed over and they were separated into the carts.

Hermione felt ill; the cart was accelerating, decelerating, waving and weaving, dropping, rising and turning corners. It reminded her of a rollercoaster, but then again she knew that rollercoasters were more than likely safer than an old and rickety cart on wooden tracks. She looked to her right, then her left and then straight in front of her. The twins and Oliver were sat with their hands in the air laughing and yelling, and Hermione made a mental note that one day she would have to take them to a muggle theme park.

They had finally reached Hermione's vault and the last they had to visit before they could shop. Hermione stepped from the cart and walked to the door, her key was placed in the lock and it opened for her. When she stepped inside, the door closed behind her giving her some privacy.

Hermione picked up a pouch that was sat on the floor and walked towards the pile of coins. She quickly did the math in her head of how much was sitting in front of her. She knew her parents and therefore knew that they had likely put a thousand muggle pounds into her vault to get her through the next couple of years. Her Grandfather had died when she was eight-years-old, and since then, every month she receives one hundred and fifty pounds which Hermione thought ridiculous.

It had almost been four years exactly since she received her first allowance -on her ninth birthday- and she knew from the muggle bank that she'd received a little over seven thousand pounds so far. In the past four years, she'd spent no more than eight hundred pounds and that left her with approximately six thousand and five hundred pounds in her vault. She converted that into galleons and got an estimate of one thousand and three hundred galleons.

Nodding to herself, Hermione grabbed a couple of handfuls of coins and put them in the pouch before she walked out of the vault door and back to the cart, and the ride back made Hermione just as uneasy as it had before. They met everyone at the front of the building and they separated into groups to get what was on their supply lists and they would later meet up at Flourish and Blotts to purchase their books before they headed home.

Hermione, Oliver and the twins first went to Gambol and Japes wizarding joke shop so that the twins could stock up on their jokes and pranking supplies. Then they went to the Magical Menagerie for Hermione but when they exited the shop, just like the year before Hermione had not bought a familiar and was a little upset. They next visited Quality Quidditch Supplies with Hermione being dragged through the doors by the twins each holding one of her hands and Oliver walking behind her, pushing her forwards by the shoulders whilst she complained the entire time about how much she didn't want to go in there.

"But, Love, you don't have flying lessons this year," whined George.

"I know and I'm so glad of that fact, my feet will stay firmly on the ground," she folded her arms over her chest.

"Yeah, but that means that you won't have a broom," Fred said in the same whining tone as his twin.

"As I said, my feet will stay firmly on the ground," she repeated, putting her hands on her hips and a scowl settling on her face.

"But, Lassie, yer now able tae take ye own broom, an' hoo are we supposed tae continue ye flying lessons with us if ye don' have a broom? Hoo are ye supposed tae try oot for the team if ye don' have a broom?" Oliver said.

The look he gave Hermione made her feel guilty but there was no way in hell she was going to back down or try out for the Quidditch team. Absolutely no way!

The twins looked at each other and had a quick whispered conversation leaving Hermione and Oliver to it.

"He's good," said George thoughtfully.

"That he is, Gred. She's going to cave," Fred nodded.

"I don't know, Forge, Hermione's rather stubborn in case you haven't noticed."

Fred snorted at his brother. "Who hasn't? Anyway, I think she'll walk out of here with a broom in her hand."

"Oh, you're on," he replied and they shook hands.

Their attention was brought back to Hermione and Oliver, their eyes flickering between the two of them in amusement as they watched them, bicker and argue back and forth

When they exited the shop, the boys looked triumphant and Hermione annoyed. Somehow –and she didn't know how- they'd managed to convince Hermione to buy a bloody broom! And not just any broom, oh no, but a Nimbus 2000, just like the one Harry had been given the previous year by Professor McGonagall. The twins and Oliver explained something about control and speed, but she hadn't been paying attention. Hermione wasn't all that bothered about speed, it was the heights that terrified her, so she conceded to their pleas.

They made their way to Madam Malkin's so they could purchase their uniforms, but the boys were sure to walk slightly behind Hermione as she muttered to herself under her breath and even though it amused them, they were slightly scared and knew better than to get too close to her when she was like that.

Next, they went to Slug & Jiggers Apothecary where they handed over their supply lists to the staff member at the counter, the older wizard arching an eyebrow at Hermione and looking her up and down, noticing her size and that she was obviously not in the correct year for the potion ingredients that were listed.

"I'm in advanced potions; I skipped both my first and second year, I'm technically at a fourth year level and above," she shrugged.

The wizard gave her a surprised expression but otherwise retrieved the ingredients that were listed and he did the same for the boys. Now that Oliver would be entering his sixth year at Hogwarts, he would no longer be in advanced potions with Hermione as he was now at NEWT levels. He was sad that he wouldn't get to spend his potions class with her but he knew there was nothing that could be done.

Oliver wasn't the only one who would no longer be in the advanced potions class. Harry, Seamus and Neville would be returning back to the original potions class with the rest of the soon-to-be second years. They'd found the advanced potions class too difficult and had failed the test they were given to see if they could proceed into the next year.

After visiting Scribbulus Writing Instruments and buying quills, inkpots and parchment, the group of four wandered around Diagon Alley for a little while, chatting and window shopping before they headed over to Flourish and Blotts to meet with the others.

There was a huge queue of people leading from the front door into the Alley and the noise coming from the witches and wizards was overwhelming to their ears. The women and girls were squealing in excitement whilst the men and boys were groaning and grumbling in annoyance. Hermione spotted a group of familiar redheads closer to the front of the queue and she dragged the boys in that direction, ensuring they were following behind her.

"Hello, Dears, did you get everything you needed?" Mrs. Weasley asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Weasley, I made sure that everything on the lists was purchased and I had them sent to the Burrow. They should be there by the time we arrive back home."

Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Fred and George all smiled at hearing Hermione calling the Burrow 'home'.

"Looks like it's our turn," Mr. Weasley said and they were ushered inside Flourish and Blotts. The whole shop was buzzing with noise, people squeezing past each other, people searching for books and… Camera flashes.

Hermione heard Mrs. Weasley give a screech and quickly looked in her direction, drawing her wand from her back pocket. She was still on edge from everything that'd happened during her first year at Hogwarts and she hoped that this year would be better.

When she saw that Mrs. Weasley was fine as she rushed towards the camera flashes, Hermione took a deep breath and placed her wand back in her back pocket and turned around to face her boys.

"Whoa, nice reflexes, Hermione," Fred complimented and George and Oliver nodded, looking slightly stunned at how fast she'd pulled her wand.

Oliver wondered if her reflexes had something to with her Siren heritage and he made a mental note that whilst he was in Flourish and Blotts he would search for books on bonds and Sirens, maybe even a book on the Gaunt family would be helpful.

They turned back to the camera flashes after hearing a commotion and there stood poor Harry looking quite shell shocked as some man gave a speech. His name was Gilderoy Lockhart. Hermione recognised the name but she couldn't remember where from but when she looked down at her book list she saw that more than half of the books were written by him.

When she looked up at him, she saw his smiling face as he continued to talk. His teeth were so white that they almost looked as if they were glowing; he had sandy blonde hair and bright blue eyes. Hermione, at that moment, realised that he was very handsome. She felt something akin to admiration for the man.

He must be incredibly smart; half of the books on the list are written by him, she thought.

When he informed the press and everyone in the shop that he would be the new defence against the dark arts [rofessor at Hogwarts, Hermione couldn't wait to have him for a Professor, she hoped that she could learn a lot from him, after all, he couldn't be worse than Quirrell, Right?

The twins and Oliver looked at Hermione and they felt a hard tugging in their chest when they saw the dreamy expression and the look of admiration on her face. They looked at each other, asking with their eyes if they could feel it too and they all confirmed they could. They felt disgusted and disappointed in the way Hermione was looking at the buffoon Lockhart. That's when they realised they were jealous. The three boys at Hogwarts that were least likely to get jealous were, in fact, completely jealous. There was no denying it.

Harry was handed a pile of books for free from Lockhart and he broke away from him as quickly as possible, handing the books to Ginny who blushed at the action, and that's when Lucius Malfoy appeared with his son, looking as though they owned the world.

He taunted Harry and Ginny before Mr. Weasley intervened and an event happened that no one saw coming. A brawl between Mr. Weasley and Mr. Malfoy broke out in the shop. Everyone turned and watched as punches began flying, books were knocked off shelves and bookcases were tipping over. When Hermione noticed Malfoy's shocked expression, his mouth hung open and his eyes wide she wanted to laugh but she couldn't as she too was in shock.

The two brawlers were separated. Mr. Malfoy dropped one of Ginny's books that he'd taken from her earlier and placed it back inside her cauldron and left with his son following behind him. Mr. Weasley was reprimanded by the store owners and his wife as his children laughed and praised him. The store was quickly fixed up and everyone went in their own directions to find the books they needed.

Hermione read through her list as she walked through the different sections. She retrieved her books and took them to the counter to be paid for, Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger, Grades three, four and five, The Standard Books of Spells by Miranda Goshawk, Grade two, Break with a Banshee by Gilderoy Lockhart, Gadding with Ghouls by Gilderoy Lockhart, Holidays with Hags by Gilderoy Lockhart, Voyages with Vampires by Gilderoy Lockhart, Travels with Trolls by Gilderoy Lockhart, Wanderings with Werewolves by Gilderoy Lockhart, Year with a Yeti by Gilderoy Lockhart, One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore Grade two, A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot, Grade two and A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch, Grade two.

After she had paid for the books, she had them sent to the Burrow and since everyone had now finished their shopping, they all headed to the Leaky Cauldron and floo'd back to the Burrow.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Hogwarts - Tuesday 1st September 1992

The great hall was silent; the only sounds that could be heard were the crinkling of the scroll in Professor McGonagall's hands and the breathing of the occupants of the hall, whilst everyone sat at their house tables waiting for the Sorting Ceremony to be completed so they could eat.

It was almost finished with Ginny being the last to be sorted. Fred and George, who were sat on either side of Hermione, tensed as Ginny made her way to the three-legged stool at the front of the hall.

Honestly, I don't know why they're worrying, she's a Gryffindor; it's not like she's going to be placed anywhere else, Hermione thought with a snort.

As usual, Hermione was correct as the Sorting Hat roared, "Gryffindor," after Ginny had barely taken a seat on the stool. She felt the twins relax beside her and she chuckled as she clapped along with the rest of her house, and she hugged Ginny when she made her way to the table and took a seat with her siblings.

Professor Dumbledore gave the welcoming feast speech and when the food appeared everyone dug in with the Weasleys in particular, piling their plates as high as a mountain. Hermione and Oliver shared a look before they laughed. Fred, George, Ginny and Lee looked at them in confusion.

"What?" They asked in unison with food in their mouths and their forks paused halfway in-between their plates and mouths.

This just caused Hermione and Oliver to laugh louder. When they calmed down a few minutes later, Hermione looked around the Gryffindor table and noticed there were two people missing.

"Have any of you seen Harry and Ron? They aren't here," Hermione asked. Everyone looked around and frowned when they realised she was right.

"A havnae seen them since Kings Cross Station," Oliver said.

"I didn't see them on the train either," spoke Ginny.

"I'm sure they're fine," said Lee, "Maybe they just went to bed early."

"Yeah, or maybe they just weren't hungry." They all looked at George with a raised eyebrow. "Or maybe they went to bed early," he corrected.

"I'm sure they're fine," Lee repeated and Hermione dropped the subject and continued eating, but that didn't mean she stopped worrying.

When everyone returned to the common room Harry and Ron were sat waiting. They were instantly bombarded with questions by the group as they walked over to them and sat down in the armchairs and on the couches. When they explained what had happened, Hermione scolded them for their behaviour and for not contacting Hogwarts whilst Fred, George and Lee complained over the fact they weren't invited to travel in the flying car with Harry and Ron; which resulted in Hermione giving them a disapproving look.

Everyone went to their rooms to unpack, whilst Hermione, Ron and Harry stayed in the common room for a while longer, having a hushed conversation. Harry explained the situation that had occurred at the Dursleys with Dobby and the cake before he was rescued.

When they finished chatting, they retired to their respective rooms. Hermione entered the room that she shared with the boys which was now on the fourth year boys' corridor.

As she walked into the room, she saw the boys unpacking their things and placing them in the correct places. Hermione looked around the room and noticed that it was exactly like it had been the previous year, except that instead of two wardrobes and chest of drawers there was now three, but everything was in the same position as it was before – including the overly large cauldron in the corner of the room. Hermione walked over to her trunk and began to remove certain items and placing them on her bed. She flicked her wand and levitated everything to where they needed to be, she placed some of her clothing in one of the wardrobes and in a couple of draws in the chest of drawers. She placed some of her books on one of the desks and on some on her bedside table, she put her wash kit in the bathroom and removed some stationary and put it in her school bag, leaving the rest of her things in her trunk to be used at a later date.

Everyone had finished unpacking and when Hermione came back from changing into her pyjamas and getting ready for bed in the bathroom, three of the beds had been pushed together to allow room for all five of them and Hermione smiled. As the boys went to get ready for bed in the bathroom, Hermione placed some stationary into their school bags so that all she had to do in the morning was place the correct books into their bags when they received their time tables at breakfast.

When the boys returned they all got into bed and snuggled together drifting off to sleep.

Wednesday 2nd September 1992

Hermione had dragged the boys out of bed, literally, she had dragged them. As they were still on the same sleeping schedule as they had been during the summer, meaning they slept later than they would at Hogwarts, she'd had trouble getting them up and ready for classes.

She pulled the cover off of Oliver and when he didn't move Hermione huffed and grabbed a hold of his ankles. She gave a hard pull which only resulted in Oliver moving but an inch down the bed due to her small size and nonexistent upper body strength. She gave another tug but Oliver didn't move until the third time she did it. Chuckling, Oliver rolled over onto his back and sat up on his elbows.

"You're awake?" Hermione grumbled, crossing her arms over her chest with a scowl on her face.

"Aye, have been since ye came back from the bathroom," he chuckled, mirth showing in his eyes and he didn't bother hiding it. Hermione muttered insults beneath her breath with Oliver still laughing at her, and unsurprisingly, Lee, Fred and George didn't even flinch.

"Are you going to help me wake these lazy sods up or not?" Hermione asked and Oliver laughed harder.

Hermione's eyes and facial features softened and she looked at Oliver. Oliver's laughter immediately stopped and he gulped as he stared at Hermione. Hermione resisted the urge to smirk when Oliver jumped up from the bed and grabbed one of Fred's ankles in one hand and one of George's ankles in the other and he gave a sharp tug, dragging them both off the bed where they landed on the floor with a thud.

The boys grumbled and groaned in pain whilst Oliver and Hermione laughed at them. They both looked to Lee who was still sleeping.

Honestly, that boy could sleep through the apocalypse, Hermione thought.

Oliver grabbed both of Lee's ankles and pulled him off the bed. That did the trick. After Lee had been restrained from attacking a grinning Oliver, they readied in the bathroom and headed down to the great hall for breakfast.

They were eating breakfast when Professor McGonagall approached them and handed out the class schedules.

"Good morning, Miss. Granger."

"Good morning, Professor," she returned the greeting with a smile.

"How does it feel to be back?"

"It's wonderful, Professor, I can't wait to get back to classes," Hermione said excitedly. Professor McGonagall chuckled at her lion cub.

"I'm eager to see what you're capable of this year," Professor McGonagall said before she left to hand out the rest of the class schedules.

Oliver, Fred, George and Lee were slightly dazed; they'd just heard Professor McGonagall chuckle. That was the equivalent of seeing Snape wearing bright pink and yellow robes with love hearts and declaring his love for unicorns. It never happens!

Hermione looked at the boys who still looked stunned; she chuckled and then looked at the parchment in her hands.

Chapter Thirty-Three

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Monday* | *Tuesday* | *Wednesday* | *Thursday* | *Friday* |
| *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* |
| *9:00 – Free* | *9:00 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, All* | *9:00 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All* | *9:00 – Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Lockhart, All* | *9:00 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All* |
| *10:30 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All* | *11:00 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, Ravenclaw & Gryffindors* | *10:30 – Free period* | *10:30 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, Ravenclaw & Gryffindors* | *10:30 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, All* |
| *12:00 – Lunch* | *12:00 – Lunch* | *12:00 – Lunch* | *12:00 – Lunch* | *12:00 – Lunch* |
| *1:00 – DADA, Professor Lockhart, All* | *1:00 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, All* | *1:00 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, All* | *1:00 – Free period* | *1:00 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, Ravenclaw & Gryffindors* |
| *2:30 – END of classes* | *3:00 – Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Lockhart, All* | *3:00 – END of classes* | *2:30 – END of classes* | *2:30 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, All* |
| *5:00 – Dinner* | *4:00 – END of classes* | *3:00 – END of classes* |  | *4:30 – END of classes* |
|  | *5:00 – Dinner* | *5:00 – Dinner* | *5:00 – Dinner* | *5:00 – Dinner* |
|  | *6:00 – 9:00 – Advanced Potions, Professor Snape, third – fifth years* |  | *Midnight – 01:00 – Astronomy, Professor Sinistra, Gryffindors* |  |

When they finished breakfast, they headed to their dorm room and grabbed the correct books for the day, placing them in their bags before they walked Hermione to the entrance hall and left for their own classes.

Thursday 3rd September 1992

Hermione couldn't wait for her first defence against the dark arts class with Professor Lockhart and she practically ran to her class, leaving Fred, George and Oliver in the wind and scowling in jealousy and Lee watching in amusement. They said their customary goodbye with hugs and kisses on the cheek and went their separate ways. Hermione walked into the classroom and took her seat in the front row.

When all the students had arrived and taken their seats, Professor Lockhart finally made an appearance.

"Let me introduce you to your new defence against the dark arts teacher, me. Gilderoy Lockhart – Order of Merlin: Third Class, member of the Dark Force Defence League and five times winner of Witch Weekly's most charming smile award. But I don't talk about that."

The girls all smiled and swooned whereas the boys all shared looks of disgust.

"Now, be warned, it's my job to arm you against the foulest creatures known to wizardkind. You may find yourselves facing your worst fears in this room, know only that no harm can befall you whilst I am here, I must ask you not to scream; it might provoke them."

Lockhart dramatically ripped off the sheet that was covering a cage sat on a table in front of the class.

"Cornish Pixies!" Seamus exclaimed with a laugh and everyone else joined in.

"Laugh all you want, Mr. Finnegan, but cornish pixies can be tricky little blighters. Let's see what you make of them."

Lockhart opened the cage and the cornish pixies were released from their confinement. Before anyone knew what had happened, the classroom was in mayhem; the students being terrorized by the pixies, books being ripped to pieces and thrown around the room, and poor Neville being lifted by his ears and hung from the metal chandelier by his robes.

Hermione had a pixie in her hair and it was pulling at it; Harry took a book in his hands and hit the pixie with it, sending it flying through the air. Hermione would have scolded him for his treatment of the pixies if she hadn't have been so grateful to him for his quick thinking.

Lockhart took out his wand and with a smug look on his face, he said a spell, a spell she was sure didn't exist. His face dropped when he realised that it hadn't worked and his wand had been stolen by a pixie. The pixie used it to release the chains on the skeleton of the dragon that was hung above the classroom, and it smashed against the floor. Lockhart ran to his office.

"I'll ask the rest of you to just nip the rest back in their cage," he said with a smile before he ran into his office and slammed the door shut, leaving the students in the room.

"WHAT DO WE DO NOW?" Hermione heard several people yell from their places hiding under desks and chairs, fighting off the little creatures and defending themselves against them.

"I've had enough of this," she huffed and pointed her wand in the air. "Immobulus!" She shouted.

The entire room went silent as all the pixies suddenly froze and slowly floated in the air around the classroom. Hermione sighed in relief and lowered her wand arm with the room bursting into cheers. Hermione flushed in embarrassment.

"Why is it always me?" Neville asked with a sigh.

Hermione looked up at him and give a small chuckle and with the help of Harry and Dean, Hermione was able to levitate Neville from the chandelier and back on to the ground. Everyone then quickly levitated the cornish pixies back into the cage and shut and locked the door before the spell wore off and they had the chance to escape.

The lesson was over. Thankfully.

Saturday 10th October 1992

Hermione and Ron were walking towards the Quidditch pitch to watch the Gryffindor team practice. Tryouts had been held with Hermione on standby watching with Oliver and the team. No new members had been added to the team for that year.

They weren't far away from the others when they heard what was unmistakably Malfoy bragging and they rushed forward. Ron stood next to Harry and Hermione stood in-between Fred and Oliver.

"Malfoy's Father bought them for the entire team," said Marcus Flint smugly.

Hermione looked at him and the corners of her mouth twitched as she refrained from smirking. He seemed to notice her sudden presence and he took the smallest step backwards. Fred, Oliver and George looked down at Hermione with identical raised eyebrows, and she looked up at them with an innocent look on her face, making the boys snort in amusement.

"They're far better than the cleansweep fives," Malfoy said, pointedly looking at Fred and George meanly. Hermione's spine stiffened at the clear jab towards the Weasleys lack of funds, and she glared at Malfoy.

"Well, at least no one in Gryffindor had to buy their way onto the team, they got on due to pure talent," she hissed.

Malfoy snapped his attention towards and sneered at her.

"No one asked for your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood." As soon as the words left his mouth gasps could be heard and Hermione's eyes widened.

Fred, George and Oliver lunged towards Malfoy and Hermione, Harry, Ron, Katie, Angelina and Alicia quickly grabbed onto their robes and did their best to hold them back whilst the boys were yelling insults at Malfoy, but it wasn't good enough, their strength seemed to have doubled in their rage. Hermione let go and moved so that she stood in front of Malfoy, blocking him from the boys.

"Boys," she said softly, but when that didn't work she said it once more, still softly but louder. "Boys."

It caught their attention and when they looked at her, she shook her head. They immediately understood what she wanted and they sighed in unison, glaring at Malfoy unhappily. Hermione tipped her head towards the others and they let go of the boy's robes as Hermione turned around to face Malfoy.

"I suggest that if you don't wish to get injured, you leave," she said with a cold tone to her voice.

Ron, however, didn't let it go and pulled his wand, he cast a spell that, unfortunately, due to his broken wand, backfired and hit him square in the chest. The Slytherins burst into laughter as Hermione and Harry rushed to Ron who sat up and proceeded to vomit slugs everywhere.

They pulled him up and rushed him to Hagrid's hut with Hermione throwing a ''see you later," over her shoulder.

Saturday 31st October 1992

Almost two months had passed and Hermione's second year at Hogwarts was going splendidly. She loved all her classes, just as she did the year before, and when she wasn't with her boys or Harry and Ron she could, of course, be found in the library, doing homework and reading books that should've been far too advanced for her to understand.

Hermione's birthday had passed and she was now thirteen-years-old - a teenager. Mrs. Weasleys birthday was the day before and everyone's gifts for her had been sent off to the Burrow.

Tonight it was the Halloween feast and Hermione would be splitting her time by spending half of Halloween with her boys in the great hall and the other half with Ron and Harry, who had promised Sir Nicolas they would attend his five-hundredth death day party.

This was where she currently was; in a freezing cold room with Harry and Ron surrounded by ghosts, creepy music and rotten, mouldy food that made Hermione's stomach turn. The sight of the food wasn't very appetizing and the smell wasn't very pleasant either. They had been there for nearly an hour when they had decided to leave so they could head to the great hall and see what was left of the feast, not to mention, they couldn't feel their fingers or toes.

They were rounding a corner when Harry suddenly stopped in his steps, and Ron and Hermione carried on walking until they noticed that he wasn't with them. They turned to him and looked at him oddly.

"Harry? What are you…" Hermione was cut off when Harry shushed her.

"Can't you hear that?" he asked.

"Hear what, Mate?" Ron asked Harry, giving him an odd look.

"That noise, it sounds like...whispering? Hissing?"

They all squinted their eyes and strained their ears, listening for the noise, but they couldn't hear anything.

"Harry, we can't hear anything," Hermione shook her head.

"This way!" he said as he ignored Hermione's words, and he took off down the corridor.

Hermione and Ron looked to each other before they followed after Harry and he led them to the second floor corridor, where they came across a flooded girl's bathroom. As their eyes drifted from the floor and up the wall they gasped in shock. Mrs. Norris, Filch's cat, was frozen still, looking as though she had been a victim of taxidermy and mounted on the wall, and next to the cat there was a message.

"The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemy of the heir, beware," Hermione read aloud, a frown marring her features and not liking the sudden plummet her stomach had taken. Something bad had happened. She knew it.

They could hear rushed footsteps and when they turned around they came face to face with professors and Hogwarts students. Hermione could see Fred, George and Oliver push their way through the crowd, looking terrified as their eyes moved between Hermione, the writing on the wall and Mrs. Norris. Before anyone could stop them, they rushed forward and hugged Hermione tightly between them.

When they released her from the hug, they looked her up and down checking for injuries and they hugged her again. Professors McGonagall, Dumbledore and Snape shared a look at their behaviour. That's odd, they all thought, filing it away for later as they had more important things to tend to.

Before Hermione knew what had happened, she was sat in her dorm room slightly dazed as the boys surrounded her and covered her with a blanket and they allowed her to sit in silence as she processed what she'd seen. Her mind was running at a hundred miles an hour as she tried to search her brain for what she knew of the Chamber of Secrets, and in actuality, she knew nothing.

So much for having a great year, something's happening at Hogwarts, something bad, she thought to herself as sleep finally claimed her.

Chapter Thirty-Four

Hogwarts - Tuesday 2nd November 1992

Hermione had spent both Sunday and Monday trying to figure out a way to find information on the Chamber of Secrets, and so far she had been unsuccessful.

She was currently sat in her first lesson of the day, transfiguration, and Ron had just attempted to change his rat into a goblet and unfortunately for him, his wand was still broken and his goblet was furry and still had a tail.

Hermione had a sudden spurt of inspiration and raised her hand.

"Yes, Miss. Granger?"

"Professor, I was wondering if you could tell us about the Chamber of Secrets."

Professor McGonagall's eyes swept the room, seeing the curious expressions of her students, and knowing she wouldn't be able to continue the lesson without answering the question, she resigned herself to informing the students what she knew.

"Very well, of course, you all know that Hogwarts was founded over a thousand years ago by the four greatest witches and wizards of the age; Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw and Salazar Slytherin. Now, three of the founders coexisted quite harmoniously, but one did not. Salazar Slytherin wished to be more selective about the students that were admitted to Hogwarts. He believed that magical learning should be kept in all magical families, in other words, Purebloods. When he was unable to sway the others he decided to leave the school. Now according to legend, Slytherin had built a hidden chamber in this castle; known as the Chamber of Secrets. Though shortly before departing he sealed it until the time when his own true heir returned to the school. The heir alone would be able to open the Chamber and unleash the horror within, and so by doing, purge the school of all those who in Slytherin's view, were unworthy to study magic."

"Muggleborns," Hermione offered and Professor McGonagall nodded.

"Well, naturally, the school had been searched many times, and no such chamber has been found."

"Professor, what exactly does legend tell us lies within the Chamber?"

"Well, the Chamber is said to be the home to something that only the Heir of Slytherin can control. It is said to be the home of a monster."

Hermione spent the remainder of the day pondering what she had learned, hardly focusing on her classes.

At the end of the day when everyone readied for bed, Hermione explained to the boys what she had learned from Professor McGonagall and Fred, George and Oliver shared worried looks before falling asleep.

Saturday 14th November 1992

It was the day of the Gryffindor versus Slytherin match and Hermione was in the stands with Seamus, Ron, Dean and Neville. Ron refused to sit anywhere near Hermione after the injuries he'd suffered through the year before, so she was sat in-between Seamus and Dean.

Hermione kept her eyes glued on Harry and a particular bludger that was only concerned with targeting him. Fred and George tried their best to keep the bludger away from Harry, but when they hit the bludger it would change direction and continue towards him as if they hadn't intervened at all.

Hermione was rather good at lip reading and when Oliver told Harry to "catch the snitch or die trying," she glared murderously in his direction. Oliver felt as though someone was trying to burn a hole through his back and turned his head to see Hermione glaring at him from the stands. Even the distance between them didn't obstruct his view from her terrifying expression.

Bloody hell, she heard me! Hoo in the name af Merlin did she hear me? A can barely hear myself think between the crowd an' the wind, he thought fearfully.

Meanwhile, whilst this was occurring Fred and George could only think, 'Is he mental? Does he want Harry to die?' They looked to each and knew they both had the same thought.

Oliver withdrew his statement to Harry and told Fred and George to continue to protect him from the rogue bludger. Fred and George noticed the glare Hermione was sending Oliver's way and they smirked at each other, having identical thoughts. He made the right choice, I wouldn't want to face 'Mione's wrath, particularly with the glare she's giving, and they both shuddered thinking of Hermione showing her 'appreciation'.

The game continued and after a few minutes Harry told Fred and George to focus on the game and the other players and to leave him to the bludger and they reluctantly agreed.

Oliver was in the process of warning Harry when the stray bludger that had obviously been jinxed was heading straight towards him. Hermione had flashbacks of the year before with Oliver getting injured and felt her instincts to protect Oliver flare up inside her.

Hermione kept her focus on Oliver and yelled, "OLLIE!" As loud as she could.

Miraculously, Oliver heard as her voice carried in the wind and he turned to face Hermione, the moment he did so, the bludger whizzed past his face, millimetres from touching his skin. He had a stunned look on his face and Hermione sighed in relief, she smiled softly at Oliver and he nodded his head, seeing that she wasn't mad at him anymore. In fact, she was giving him that same smile that always made him feel warm and tingly.

One boy safe, another to go, she thought whilst looking at Harry worriedly.

Admittedly, Slytherin was in the lead with 50-20, when Harry spotted the snitch above Malfoy's head. He ignored the taunts and comments coming from Malfoy and headed straight for it. Malfoy quickly realised what had happened and chased after Harry. They both disappeared under the pitch along with the rogue bludger intent on killing Harry, and everyone waited in silence for a few minutes. Malfoy suddenly shot up from under the pitch and both bounced and rolled across the floor before coming to a stop, Harry followed behind him and he too fell from his broom, but with the snitch in hand.

"HARRY POTTER CAUGHT THE SNITCH! GRYFFINDOR WINS!" Lee yelled from the commentator's box.

Hermione ran from the stands and down to Harry who was still getting attacked by the rogue bludger. When she reached them Fred and George were trying to wrestle the bludger back into the chest.

"Let go!" Hermione shouted to them and without hesitation they did as she asked. When they released the bludger it headed straight for Harry and Hermione pointed her wand and said, "Finite Incantatem," and the bludger burst into ash and it fell to the ground around them.

"Nice one, Love," George complimented.

Hermione rushed to Harry's side as he cradled his arm and Lockhart reached them and boasted about his ability to heal Harry's injury and when he cast the spell the pain in Harry's arm vanished because Lockhart, the idiot, had removed all of the bones from his arm. Harry was rushed to the hospital wing followed by Hermione, Ron and the Quidditch team, where Madam Pomphrey proceeded to mock Professor Lockhart and his stupidity whilst gathering the medicinal potions for Harry.

Hermione walked up to Oliver and dragged him away from the group by the arm. She dropped his arm and turned to him and glared. He gulped and laughed nervously.

"Catch the snitch or die trying! Catch the snitch or die trying! What were you thinking?" Hermione hissed and she punctuated each word by jabbing her finger into Oliver's chest. When she finished talking, he rubbed his chest and grimaced in pain.

"Am sorry, Lassie; a let the outcome af the match come befere a friend's safety."

"Don't do it again," she warned, once again jabbing her finger into his chest. "Now, are you alright? The bludger didn't hit you, did it?" She checked as she turned Oliver's head from side to side, checking him for any injuries or marks and he basked in her attention with a smug look on his face.

Fred and George watched Hermione drag Oliver away from the group, observing in amusement as Hermione scolded Oliver and Oliver rubbed his chest from the pain she had inflicted upon him. When Hermione was checking Oliver's head over for injuries and he had a smug look on his face, the twins couldn't contain their laughter any longer and they burst into howls. They received some funny looks from the others but they didn't care, they were too busy laughing at Oliver's too pleased expression.

Hermione made her way back to Harry and the others with Oliver following behind her, watching as Harry was given the Skele-Gro Potion, the bones in his arm being expected to be re-grown within the next couple of days. Everyone left to celebrate the win that Harry insisted must be done in his absence and at the end of the night they retired to bed.

When Harry returned to the common room after dinner the next day, he pulled Hermione and Ron aside and explained what he had learned the previous night regarding Dobby and the petrification of Colin Creevey.

When Hermione explained everything to the boys as they readied for bed, they shared the same fearful looks and surrounded Hermione for both their comfort and her protection.

Wednesday 2nd December 1992

It was after dinner and the second years were all gathered in the great hall. Professor Lockhart with the watchful eye of Professor Snape had been given permission from Dumbledore to start up a duelling club and today was the first meeting and quite honestly, probably the last after the events that occurred.

Hermione had to bite her cheek on more than one occasion to stop herself from outright laughing at the glares Lockhart received from Snape. Hermione had recently come to her senses regarding Lockhart; he may be a pretty face, but that was all he was. Hermione doubted that he seriously had done all those things written in his books.

Hermione was prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt during his first lesson with the second years, putting the fiasco that occurred down to nerves, but as the number of lessons taught by him increased, the respect she had for his intelligence decreased. He seriously had no clue what he was doing and Hermione thought that she could probably do a better job teaching than he could; unknown to her, so did most of her class. It was safe to say the Fred, George and Oliver were more than happy with the development, going by their pleased and smug looks and it greatly amused Lee.

Professor Snape and Lockhart took their positions on the stage that had been set up in the great hall, their wands in hand and they bowed to each other. They turned around and walked five paces, before they faced each other and counted to three with Snape beat Lockhart to it, saying his incantation first.

"Expelliarmus," he said, sounding bored and he effectively sent Lockhart flying backwards a good few feet before landing on his back with a loud thud.

At that point, Hermione did laugh. As what was now noticed as typical Lockhart behaviour, he swept away the embarrassing moment by telling the students that it was planned as a demonstration and Snape rolled his eyes.

Harry and Malfoy were chosen to duel next. They took their places; wands drawn; bowed, walked five paces and then turned to face each other with their wands raised. Before anyone could grasp what had happened, Harry had been knocked flat on his back by Malfoy, then Malfoy had been knocked flat on his backside by Harry.

It was needless to say that Malfoy was not happy and cast his next spell.

"Serpensortia!"

A snake was conjured from the tip of Malfoy's wand and it immediately turned its attention on Harry. Lockhart being his usual idiot self, attempted to get rid of the snake and failed, resulting in it being thrown into the air and hitting the ground, only angering the snake further. It then turned its attention on Justin Finch-Fletchley and Harry began walking towards it, making funning noises.

The hall went quiet as everyone stared at Harry in shock and fear. After a few seconds, the snake backed away from Justin and Snape stepped forwards in shock.

"Vipera Evanesca," he said and the snake disappeared. Hermione looked to Snape and when he looked towards her they both shared the same stunned look.

Harry rushed out of the hall with Hermione and Ron following behind, Hermione and Ron both explained the significance of Harry being a Parselmouth and the connection to Voldemort.

The next couple of weeks that followed weren't the best for Harry, everyone besides Ron, Hermione and the boys avoided him like the plague. It didn't help much with the twins making things worse as they walked down the corridors of Hogwarts.

"Make way for the Heir of Slytherin, seriously evil wizard coming through," yelled Fred as they walked down a corridor.

Percy did not approve of his twin brother's behaviour and he let his feelings be known.

"It is not a laughing matter," he said coldly.

"Oh, get out of the way, Percy," said Fred "Harry's in a hurry."

"Yeah, he's nipping off to the Chamber of Secrets for a cup of tea with his fanged servant," George laughed. Hermione scowled at him and his laughter died down.

But little did they know, things were only going to get worse.

Thursday 19th December 1993

Hermione, Harry and Ron were making their way out of the great hall and to the Gryffindor common room after finishing dinner, when Harry heard that same noise as he had the day they found Mrs. Norris. He followed it with Hermione and Ron following behind him and they came across the petrified state of both Sir Nick and Justin Finch-Fletchley. Hermione froze, not only was another student petrified but a ghost, too. Her mind was racing with thoughts as she tried to figure out what 'monster' could be doing this.

Once more they heard footsteps approaching and when they turned around it was to see students and professors surrounding them and murmurs were all that could be heard. Oliver, Fred and George pushed their way through the crowd of students and professors, and just like the time Mrs. Norris had been found, they shared looks of horror and fear. This time it was more justified having it being another student and a ghost.

They rushed towards her and began checking her over for injuries before hugging her between them. They gently pulled her away from the scene before anyone had the chance to question her and the professors allowed this after seeing the distraught and anxious looks on the boys' faces.

Returning to their dorm, they laid together in silence as the boys allowed waves of fear and worry to roll off them, not that Hermione noticed; she was still in a catatonic state, her brain searching for the answers to the mystery surrounding Hogwarts.

Chapter Thirty-Five

Hogwarts - Friday 25th December

Hermione had made some cupcakes and laced them with a Sleeping Draught. After Crabbe and Goyle finished eating Christmas dinner, Harry and Ron led a trail of cupcakes away from the great hall and once Crabbe and Goyle ate the cupcakes, the sleeping draught took effect. Harry and Ron hid them in a broom closet and switched out their robes for the Slytherin ones.

They made their way to the girl's bathroom on the second floor corridor and found Hermione filling three goblets with Polyjuice Potion.

"Now, we only have an hour, so we better not waste time, add the hair and drink it," she instructed.

When they drank the disgusting potion Hermione and Ron ran into a bathroom stall as they felt the urge to empty their stomachs.

Suddenly, Hermione's form began to change but when she noticed her hearing and eyesight were better than they were before she took the potion, she lifted her hands to her face. Her hands dropped immediately and she held in a gasp of shock.

She could hear Harry and Ron - or Crabbe and Goyle conversing, waiting for Hermione to exit so they could find some Slytherins to follow to the Slytherin common room.

She convinced them to leave without her and as soon as she heard the door close behind them, she left the bathroom stall and looked into one of the mirrors at the sinks. When she looked at herself she saw, a... well, a cat. She had whiskers, eyes that seemed to glow, pointed ears and her face was furry. Hermione let out a sob. It took her a few minutes to collect herself and then she made her way to the hospital wing with her robes covering her head and face.

She had a difficult time explaining to Madam Pomphrey how and why she now had feline facial features which she was sure Madam Pomphrey didn't believe a word of.

As Hermione sat on a hospital bed closest to Madam Pomphrey's office with the privacy curtain drawn, she thought back to how all of this had happened.

*Flashback... Tuesday 23rd November 1992*

Hermione and the boys were sat in their dorm room after returning from their advanced potions lesson.

"Now, Spitfire, why would Harry, the 'Heir of Slytherin', come to our advanced potions class in the middle of a lecture, knowing fine well how Snape hates interruptions? And why would Harry need to cause a distraction? -"

"- And why would you make a dash to Snape's personal potion ingredients supply cupboard during said distraction?" Finished George, arching an eyebrow.

"Professor Snape, and I have no idea what you're talking about," she said quickly and the boys smirked at her as she flushed at having to lie to her boys and at having been caught in a lie.

"Now, see we don't believe you. You're up to something but we won't badger you for information just yet. -"

"- We'll wait until you want to tell us what you're up to, but we're proud of your mischief. Using fireworks in class and as a distraction, -"

"- Was brilliant. Why didn't we ever think of that? -" Fred and George finished together with a thoughtful look on their faces.

Hermione had long since decoded their twin speak and was no longer confused when they talked that way. Hermione looked to see Lee and Oliver nodding their heads in agreement even though they probably didn't understand a word of what they'd just said.

If only they knew what she had been planning; they would have either stopped her or asked to help, and it was too important to be kept from doing and too dangerous and fragile to have her boys involved. This was something she had to do with Harry and Ron.

*Present time...*

Hermione had been in the hospital wing for a couple of hours, she was anxious; she needed to know what Harry and Ron had been able to find out, or if the plan had even been successful.

Hermione had taken potion after potion given to her by Madam Pomphrey but nothing seemed to work. Hermione couldn't blame Madam Pomphrey though as she hadn't told her the correct cause of her new appearance, so it was all trial and error based.

She could hear a commotion outside of the hospital wing and she could recognise those voices anywhere; Fred, George and Oliver. Madam Pomphrey popped her head around the curtain and asked if she wanted visitors.

Hermione agreed and she covered her face with her robes, then the pillow and she laid down with the blanket covering her also.

"Hermione," she heard three worried voices chorus as the curtain was drawn open and then closed once more. She felt the bed dip slightly as someone sat next to her and she heard the other two take seats in the two chairs by the side of the bed.

"I'm fine," she said, her voice muffled by the multiple layers covering her face.

"Then why are ye in the hospital wing on Christmas day?" Asked what was unmistakably Oliver.

"And why are you covering your face?" She knew it was Fred.

"I had a slight mishap with a potion and it had unexpected results," she told them.

"What results?" They asked in unison, Hermione groaned and shook her head, not that they could see her doing so.

It was quiet for a few moments before the blanket was dragged away from her, this she wasn't expecting but she did expect them to remove the pillow. Hermione held the pillow to her face tightly as she wrestled with Oliver for it. When the boys realised she wouldn't let go of the tight hold she had on the pillow, they changed tactics.

Oliver kept a hold of the pillow and the twins stood and proceeded to tickle Hermione's sides. She laughed loudly and her grip weakened. The boys faltered slightly as they marvelled in the sounds of her laughter and their hearts dropped in the chests. They shook out of their stupor and they managed to get the pillow off of Hermione. When they pulled it away, the twins rolled their eyes and Oliver huffed dramatically at seeing that her robes were also covering her face.

"Seriously, Lassie," he huffed.

The boys grabbed the robes and pulled them away from Hermione and they froze in shock and stared at Hermione in a daze. Hermione sighed with her eyes closed and she sat up slowly, her back resting against the propped up pillows and her legs crossed on the bed.

The boys finally got their bearings and returned to their seats whilst Oliver sat next to her and put his arm around her shoulders, tugging her to lean into him.

"What happened?" He asked.

"I told you, I had a mishap with a potion."

"Does this have anything to do with that distraction Harry did last month in..." Hermione cut Fred off by slapping her hand over his mouth and she glared at him. Oliver and George chuckled as Hermione glared at Fred and he plastered an innocent look on his face.

Hermione picked up her wand from the table next to the bed and put up the Silencing Charm that she had learned long ago, before she removed her hand from Fred's mouth and he smirked at her.

"That's a yes then," he said, pleased with himself.

"So, Love, what was this potion you were making that meant you had to sneak into Snape's personal supply cupboard?"

"Professor Snape, and it was Polyjuice," Hermione muttered the last part under her breath.

"What?".

She took a deep breath and repeated it louder. "Polyjuice."

They stared in shock before the twins smirked at her.

"And why would you need to brew Polyjuice Potion?" They asked together.

Hermione sighed and looked between the three boys. She had to tell them, she didn't like lying to them and she couldn't keep it from them any longer, so she told them everything about the plan. When she finished, they had looks of adoration on their faces.

"Why didn't we think of that, Gred?" Fred asked his brother.

"I don't know; blimey, think of all the pranks we could've pulled on the Slytherins, Forge. -"

"- And in their common room, too; that's bloody brilliant," they both said in awe whilst looking at Hermione.

"So, what have they found out then?" Fred asked.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "I don't know, I haven't seen them since we took the potion."

George smacked Fred upside the head for his stupidity and Hermione chuckled at them as they bickered back and forth.

"So, Lassie, why dinnae ye potion work? Did ye do somethin' wrong?"

Hermione glared at him and he paled slightly. Shouldn't have said tha', he thought to himself. Fred and George, on the other hand, watched in amusement as Hermione glared at Oliver.

"No, Oliver Charles Wood..." He winced as she said his full name, proving that she was far from pleased with him. "I didn't do anything wrong, I brewed the potion perfectly. I suspect the reason I look like Catwoman with fur is that the hair I took from Millicent Bulstrode's robes wasn't one of hers but one of her cat's," she said, almost growling.

Fred and George were now in hysterics laughing; Hermione pulled a pillow from behind her and whacked them both in the face, effectively shutting them up.

"I don't know how long I'm going to be in here for; I can't tell Madam Pomphrey about the Polyjuice Potion so it's just trial and error with the treatment she's giving me. I'm going to miss so much school work," she whined.

"No, you're not. First of all, you're months ahead - years if you take in account the spells and charms you've learnt outside of the classroom - of everyone in your class. -"

"- And second of all, we'll collect your work from your professors and bring it to you until you return to classes."

Hermione hugged her boys tightly and thanked them and then they talked until Harry and Ron turned up at the hospital wing. The boys gave them some privacy and left them to talk and once Hermione had processed what she'd been told, she repeated it later to her boys.

"I didn't think he would be; Malfoy may be a Slytherin and a mean, prejudiced, arrogant, slimy..." Hermione was cut off by Oliver clearing his throat and she flushed in embarrassment. "Sorry," she mumbled.

Oliver chuckled. "Don' worry aboot it, Lassie, am sure ye could think af plenty more words tae describe him, but am sure ye had a point befere ye started ranting."

"Yes, my point is that he might be all of those things but he was here last year. If he was the Heir of Slytherin, the Chamber of Secrets would've opened last year and not this year; the same for Harry, although he is none of those things that Malfoy is. I think it's likely a first year."

Saturday 13th March 1993

Three months had almost passed since the last incident and even though the school was still tense and unsettled, people were now beginning to let their guard down. But everyone remembered those petrified in the hospital wing.

Oliver's seventeenth birthday had passed and there had been a massive party in the Gryffindor common room and Hermione had baked a huge cake to celebrate Oliver's coming of age in the Wizarding World.

Since Hermione was released from the hospital wing cured after the Polyjuice Potion incident, whatever time she didn't spend with the boys, she spent in the library trying to research and find answers to solve the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets. So far she'd found nothing and it greatly annoyed her.

It was the day of the Hufflepuff versus Gryffindor game and Hermione had sent the boys down to the great hall after making them promise to eat their breakfasts. When she woke up that morning a thought occurred to her; a thought that could be a breakthrough in her research and so she quickly headed down to the library before she went to the Quidditch pitch; she wasn't going to miss the game or her boys would be upset and she didn't want them to get injured whilst she wasn't there. Her protective instincts flared up at the thought and si she rushed to do what she had to do before she went to the match.

Hermione reached the library, walked to a secluded table in the back of the room and Accio'd the book she needed. She had learnt everything she needed to, she now had answers and she quickly made her way out of the library with a mirror in hand just in case and she made her way towards the Quidditch pitch. As usual, she wore a Weasley Quidditch jersey and Oliver's scarf over a pair of black skinny jeans and a pair of trainers.

When she rounded the corner, she came face to face -well mirror to face- with the monster from the Chamber of Secrets.

Hermione fell to the ground but not before noticing a familiar figure stood in the corridor. Hermione's body was frozen, she couldn't move. She was forced to look up at the ceiling, a mirror held in one hand and a balled-up piece of parchment with the answer to the mystery she had to get to Harry in the other.

She heard footsteps walking her way before they stopped and a sudden scream was released. Before she knew it Professor McGonagall was looking down at her worriedly and she was levitated to the hospital wing and placed on a bed. She heard the privacy curtains close and saw Madam Pomphrey begin to cast healing charm after charm to check her vitals before she was left alone.

Professor McGonagall quickly made her way to Dumbledore's office and entered, not bothering to knock; he was currently talking to Snape.

"Whatever is the matter, Minerva?" Dumbledore asked, noticing her pale face.

"There has been another victim."

"Who?" Asked Snape.

"Hermione Granger," she said quietly and looking them both in the eye. Dumbledore and Snape both stood suddenly.

"We will go to the hospital wing. Minerva, will you head to the Quidditch pitch and inform Messrs. Weasleys, Wood, Potter and Jordan?" Dumbledore said.

McGonagall nodded and left quickly to the Quidditch pitch, all the while thinking and worrying about the reactions she was going to have to witness from her young male cubs.

Meanwhile, Oliver and the team were in the Gryffindor locker room going over the plays for the game that would shortly start, when all of a sudden, Fred, George and Oliver felt something within them freeze, they felt cold and then everything went black.

A couple of minutes later, they were roused to see the other four members of the team leaning over them and looking at them worriedly. Shaking their heads, they quickly climbed to their feet, assuring everyone that they were fine and Oliver continued with the pre-game talk like nothing had happened. When it was time, they picked up their brooms and walked towards the entrance of the tent.

"Alright, listen up, we play our game an' Hufflepuff doesn't stand a chance. We're stronger, quicker an' smarter," said Oliver.

"Not to mention, they're dead scared that Harry would petrify them if they fly anywhere near him," George added.

"Tha' too," replied Oliver with a smirk.

They rounded the corner and were just about to walk onto the Quidditch pitch when Professor McGonagall approached and blocked their way.

"This match is cancelled," she said gravely.

"What? Ye cannae cancel Quidditch!" Oliver raged.

"I can and I have! Now, Mr. Potter will you please find Mr. Weasley and Mr. Jordan and bring them to the hospital wing." Harry nodded and left and at the words 'hospital wing,' Oliver's head snapped up and his face paled.

"Why? What's happened?" He asked anxiously, already knowing that it wasn't good. Professor McGonagall gave him a sad look and his suspicions were confirmed, he stumbled back into Fred and George who caught him and righted up.

"What's wrong?" They asked him, noticing that he had gone deathly pale.

"You three come with me," McGonagall said, gesturing to Fred, George and Oliver. "And you three head to the common room," she said, gesturing to the Gryffindor Chasers.

McGonagall turned and walked back to the castle with the three boys behind her but Oliver already had an idea about where they were going and why they were going there, and as soon as they rounded the corner to the corridor where the hospital wing was located, Oliver rushed passed McGonagall and ran towards the door with Fred and George quickly following behind him, sensing his panic. The heavy wooden doors were thrown open and Oliver looked around wildly until he saw Madam Pomphrey and he ran towards her.

He opened the curtains that she had just come out from and he froze. He stopped breathing, he stopped hearing and he lost all focus as he stared at Hermione's petrified body.

Fred and George had caught up to him and skidded to a stop. They had the exact same reaction to Oliver. The stumbled backwards and their legs hit the back of two chairs which they fell into unceremoniously.

McGonagall, Dumbledore and Snape walked up to them and observed the three teenage boys, seeing their pained, lost and fearful expressions. Oliver kneeled down beside the bed and held Hermione's hand with Fred and George both taking a hold of Hermione's other hand.

"It feels strange, like she's here but she's not," Oliver whispered. "A can still feel her but it's faint, almost nonexistent." Fred and George looked at him and nodded in confirmation, letting him know they felt the same.

McGonagall, Dumbledore and Snape shared a look.

"You can feel her, Mr. Wood?" Dumbledore asked.

"Aye, a guess it's 'coz af the bond an' tha' we're her mates," he whispered, still looking at Hermione's unchanging face.

"What?" Was the undignified response they received from the three professors. If Hermione hadn't have been petrified and laid in front of them in a frozen state, they would've laughed.

"You know?" Snape asked, after gaining his composure. He was a Slytherin and had to keep his emotions carefully concealed. Salazar Slytherin himself would be rolling in his grave at the burst of emotion he'd failed to contain.

"Yeah, our families told us during the summer after we rescued Harry," Fred said quietly, not that the professors knew it was Fred.

"Everything?" McGonagall asked, her eyes darting between them, her colleagues and Hermione.

"Everything," repeated George, not taking his attention away from Hermione.

"They shouldn't have told you," Dumbledore commented unhappily.

Oliver, Fred and George snapped their heads up to Dumbledore and McGonagall and Snape were taken aback by the glares the three teenage boys sent his way.

"Yer right, ye should've told us. Ye should've told us last year when we couldn't figure oot why we felt the way we did, or why we got ill when we were separated from her fer tae long. Then we could've protected her," Oliver said coldly before the boys' attention went back to Hermione.

"She doesn't need your protection" Dumbledore replied. It was the wrong thing to say as their attention was once again on him.

Snape restrained himself from smacking himself on the head. For one of the most brilliant wizards to ever exist, he can be an imbecile, he thought to himself.

"Clearly she does! She might be magically powerful due tae her parentage an' she may be the Brightest Witch Hogwarts has seen in a long time, but she's still a thirteen-year-auld girl an' our mate," Oliver glared murderously.

"We will always protect her," Fred and George vowed.

Professor McGonagall felt pride swell within her chest at her male cubs and she smiled proudly at them. They were slightly taken aback by her reaction but their attention returned to Hermione as Oliver tenderly pushed her hair away from her eyes and continued to watch her.

Harry, Ron and Lee finally arrived and everything was explained to them. They stayed for an hour and then left and the boys insisted that the Wood and Weasley parents be informed.

The professors left and did as they had been asked and not long later Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and Mr. and Mrs. Wood floo'd into Professor Dumbledore's office. Hermione's condition had been explained to them and they were escorted down to the hospital wing, gasps sounding when they set their eyes on Hermione. They did their best to console their children but nothing brought their attention away from Hermione.

When it was time to change Hermione into her pyjamas, the boys refused to leave until Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood physically pushed the males away from the bed and drew the privacy curtains closed. They carefully removed Hermione's socks, shoes and jeans and they placed her into a pair of comfortable pyjama bottoms but left on the Weasley Quidditch jersey and Oliver's scarf. The boys had insisted so that "she wouldn't feel alone and so they would always be with her when they weren't in person."

When it was time for everyone to leave, the boys flat out refused and they spent the night and the next day sleeping in the chairs by her bed. They hardly ate anything and when it rolled around to Monday, they had to be magically removed from the hospital wing and sent to classes.

Thursday 13th May 1993

They were not allowed to sleep in the hospital wing anymore and all visitations had been cut off, sealing off the hospital wing for only those who needed treatment. When the boys found out they kicked up a fuss and were granted permission from Professor McGonagall to visit Hermione.

They would visit her during meal times and after their final classes. They would do their homework and would talk to her even though they knew she couldn't respond, sometimes they would sneak Lee in with them but not often as they would've liked too, as he hadn't been granted permission like they had and they didn't want to risk losing their visiting privileges.

As the weeks went by, the boys' mood didn't improve, and everyone noticed a change within them. The twins didn't laugh, they didn't tease or joke anyone and they definitely didn't prank anyone or even plan to. Oliver didn't talk excitedly with Half-bloods or Muggleborns about the muggle sports Hermione had taught him or the ones he'd read about, he didn't constantly rave about Quidditch and tactics; it was like all the passion within him had dissolved.

The three boys seemed to work on autopilot. They would get up from the restless sleep they had, eat breakfast, visit Hermione, go to classes, eat lunch, visit Hermione, go to classes, visit Hermione, eat dinner, visit Hermione and do homework, before going to bed and then repeating the process. The only reason they ate was that Lee reminded them that Hermione would be furious with them for not taking care of themselves or eating correctly, and they didn't want to deal with a furious Hermione, regular Hermione was frightening enough.

Harry and Ron had snuck into the hospital wing a few times using the invisibility cloak. They explained what had occurred since her petrification and the situation of Hagrid in Azkaban to the unresponsive form of Hermione.

Hermione, on the other hand, spent weeks listening to her boys' voices. They talked to her, asked her questions regarding their homework –even knowing she couldn't answer- told her jokes and sometimes they read aloud to her. She was extremely grateful to them. She couldn't sleep, move, eat or drink. She couldn't even close her eyes. All that she could do was think. The boys gave her a distraction during their visitations and reminded her that there was hope, that she would soon be cured. She wanted to laugh and cry but she couldn't. So instead she patiently waited for them to visit her. Not that she could do anything else.

She was angry at herself for putting herself in this situation. She was angry that her boys were suffering and that it was her fault. She was angry at herself because she had missed the twins fifteenth birthday. She couldn't bake them a cake, she couldn't give them their presents. She was angry that she had ruined their birthday and she made a vow that she would make it up to them. To all of them.

She was also angry that Harry and Ron had yet to figure out the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets even though the answer was literally in her hand. But little did she know that today was the day that all would be revealed.

The Weasleys and the Woods were all in the hospital wing sat around Hermione's bed distressed. She had overheard them talking about a student that had been taken into the chamber. Ginny.

Harry and Ron had finally found the crumpled up ball of parchment in her hand and rushed from the hospital wing, and if she knew them as well as she thought she did, they were going to try and rescue Ginny rather than leaving it to the adults.

A few hours later, Harry, Ron, Professor Lockhart and Ginny were brought into the hospital wing. They were given medical attention and hugs were exchanged between everyone.

Harry and Ron were given privacy with Hermione whilst the others spent time with Ginny and they each explained their version of events to her petrified body. Inside she was crying, but on the outside, she lay unmoving, as she had for the last few months. Eventually, the visitors were all removed from the hospital wing. Harry, Ron and Ginny were also allowed to leave after a few healing charms and potions, leaving Hermione by herself and to her thoughts.

Friday 14th May 1993

Everyone was sat in the great hall eating dinner, and the occupants were now smiling and laughing since they had been made aware that the Chamber of Secrets had been dealt with and the 'monster' would not return. Everyone was in high spirits, except Fred, George and Oliver. They were happy that Ginny was safe but Hermione was still in the hospital wing in a petrified state, they missed her, they worried for her. They picked at their dinner, pushing the food around the plate and barely eating.

All of a sudden the hall went quiet and Fred, George and Oliver looked up in confusion, their eyes roaming the hall until they landed at the entrance to the great hall where Hermione stood smiling softly and wearing her school uniform for the first time in months. The boys dropped their forks onto their plates with a loud clatter and abruptly stood, their shock, happiness and intentions clear.

They walked away from the table and towards Hermione and she began walking towards them and when she was close enough, she launched herself into Oliver's arms and hugged him tightly. When she disentangled herself from Oliver, she launched herself at the twins and they crushed her between them, sharing a smile once they'd disentangled. Lee came up behind her and hugged her, spinning her around in circles as she laughed loudly. The boys beamed a smile; they hadn't heard her laugh in months. Next up to hug Hermione was Harry and Ron.

"You did it! You solved the mystery," she praised excitedly with Harry and Ron laughing at her as the group walked back to the Gryffindor table.

"No, Hermione, you did it! You solved the mystery long before we did," Harry said.

Ginny hugged Hermione tightly and Hermione gave her a knowing look and Ginny recognised it and her face filled with guilt. "I'm so sorry, Hermione," Ginny whispered as tears rolled down her face and she hugged Hermione tightly again.

"It's okay, Gin, it wasn't your fault," Hermione whispered. Stepping back from the younger witch, Hermione took a seat and said, "Oh, Merlin, food, I'm starving! I haven't eaten in I don't know how long,", as she piled her plate high and began eating.

Everyone looked at her in surprise as the plate of food was like a mountain, and even more surprising, more than what the Weasley children ate. Hermione looked up from eating and noticed the shocked expressions surrounding her.

"What?"

Dumbledore made the announcement that all exams except OWLs and NEWTs were cancelled. Those who didn't have any exams cheered loudly and Hermione grumbled in annoyance.

Tuesday 15th June 1993

The last month at Hogwarts had been light and fun with the threat of danger now gone. Everyone enjoyed their time and were surprised when the end of term feast arrived. Gryffindor once again lost the Quidditch House Cup, much to Oliver's displeasure, and the others had to listen to him complain and make plans for the next year for days on end, but Gryffindor had won the House Cup for the second year in a row.

The next day, when everything was packed up, they headed to the Hogsmeade Station and boarded the Hogwarts Express, sitting in their compartment.

Ginny popped in their compartment for an hour and explained her odd behaviour to them all.

"Oh, and Percy has a girlfriend," she injected slyly.

"What!" Shouted the twins, spitting out the pumpkin juice they had just taken a drink of all over the compartment and its occupants. The others either laughed or grumbled.

"Yeah, I walked in on him and a girl in a classroom," she giggled. "You won't tease him, will you?"

"Wouldn't dream of it," Fred nodded.

"Definitely not," said George with a far too innocent expression.

Hermione, Lee and Oliver all shared similar looks of amusement and smirked. Poor Percy, they're going to torture him this summer, she thought to herself.

When Ginny left to see her friends and Lee left to find the confectionary trolley, the boys turned to Hermione as she stared out of the window with a faraway look on her face.

"Are you alright, Love?" She ignored him. "Hermione" George called a little louder and she snapped out of her daze and turned to face them.

"What?" She asked dumbly.

"Are you alright?" He repeated.

"I'm fine," she smiled.

The boys shared a look, obviously not believing a word she said.

"Are you lying to us, Spitfire?" Fred said.

"No, I'm fine, it's just still a little strange being sat here with you all, rather than in the hospital wing."

Their faces softened at her words.

"Ye weren't in any pain, were ye?" Oliver asked.

"No, not physical pain at least," she shook her head.

"What do you mean by that?" Fred asked, a worried frown marring his features.

She sighed. "It was strange. It was as if I was frozen in time yet everything around me was still moving, and I was being left behind. I couldn't move, I couldn't blink, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't eat or sleep, but I could feel someone touching me, I could see anyone that stood over me, and I could hear everything that was being said to me."

A look of panic crossed their faces, as their eyes darted to each other.

"Everything?" George asked quietly.

"Well, everything after I came to, that is. All I remember is seeing Ginny stood in the corner before I saw the basilisk in the mirror and before I knew it, Professor McGonagall had found me and I was taken to the hospital wing. I imagine my mind had gone into shock at that point, because the first thing I remember is hearing your voices, you were reading Hogwarts, a History to me," she smiled.

They all released a breath of relief, knowing she hadn't heard of them speaking of their bond with the professors.

"Thank you, boys, you made my time during my petrifaction a lot more bearable. I knew you were there and that I wasn't alone; when you were visiting with me, everything was better."

"Of course, we'd visit you, you're our best friend," George said, his eyes moving to his twin and Oliver.

Hermione shook her head, sighing. "You're more than my best friends. You're my lifelines."

Chapter Thirty-Six

Romania: Dragon Reserve – Wednesday 16th June 1993

Hermione, Oliver, Lee and the Weasleys were currently staying at the dragon reserve in Romania, as they were visiting Charlie for the summer and it was all thanks to Hermione.

Before leaving Hogwarts, Hermione with the help of Professor Dumbledore had organized a port key to take them to Romania. It was a gift to both thank the Weasleys for everything they had done for her during the past couple of years and a wedding anniversary gift for Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. When Hermione made the announcement that they would be visiting Charlie for seven weeks, they were ecstatic but Mr. and Mrs. Weasley took some convincing to accept the gift.

Everyone and their shrunken down packed trunks were gathered a couple of miles away from the Burrow and in the woods, where an old photo frame was lying on the ground waiting to whisk them away.

Mr. Weasley picked it up and everyone grabbed a hold of it. All of a sudden, Hermione felt dizzy. She felt as though her body was being squeezed through a tube and spinning rapidly in the air, then she hit the ground landing on her back. She heard groans of pain around her; she obviously wasn't the only one who had landed uncomfortably. She looked up to see Mr and Mrs Weasley and Oliver walking in the air? Their feet touched the ground and they were chuckling at everyone lying down sprawled on the ground. Oliver walked over to Hermione and helped her up.

"It takes practice," Oliver said to her, answering the question she hadn't even asked yet. She raised an eyebrow at him and he smiled in response.

When everyone was off the ground and had brushed themselves off, they walked in the direction of the dragon reserve until they came to the gates and were let in. Another dragon tamer escorted to where Charlie was currently working.

"Oi, Charlotte!" The Dragon Tamer yelled.

Charlie appeared to be finishing off feeding a Welsh Green when he turned around laughing, freezing when he saw his family -bar Bill- standing not far away from him and he walked towards them with a big smile on his face.

"Mum, Dad, what are you doing here?" He asked as he hugged them both.

"Thanks to Hermione, we thought we would visit you this summer," Mr. Weasley said with a large grin.

"Seriously? That's great. How long are you visiting for?"

"Seven weeks," Mrs. Weasley replied. He smiled and he greeted and hugged everyone.

"Well, you all won't fit in my apartment," Charlie said thoughtfully as they all walked to his apartment on the reserve.

"Oh dear, we didn't think of that," Mrs. Weasley said frowning.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Weasley; I already thought of that and took care of it," Hermione said. Everyone looked at her.

"You did?" Mr. and Mrs. Weasley asked in unison.

"Yes, a guest house has been reserved for us."

"Ah, so that's why the Opaleye guest house has been cleaned and closed off to everyone; it's because it was reserved."

"Apple what now?" Ron asked confused.

Hermione rolled her eyes at him. "Opaleye, as in the Antipodean Opaleye. It's a dragon, Ronald," she sighed.

"It's native to New Zealand and it uncommonly tends to reside in valleys. It's uncommon because..." Charlie was cut off by Hermione.

"... Most dragons tend to live in areas that contain mountains and caves for them to dwell in. On average an Opaleye dragon can reach a height of..." Hermione was cut off by Charlie, and they continued to cut each other off throughout the whole explanation, paying no mind to the others listening and watching with wide eyes and surprised faces.

"... Forty feet and it's considered to be one of the most beautiful of the dragon breeds, due to..."

"... Its body being lined with scales that are the colour of pearls; it has multi-coloured eyes that sparkle and no pupils. The dragon eggs are commonly mistaken by muggles for fossils due to their pale grey colour. Their flames are also a vivid red colour..."

"... The Opaleye is generally not an aggressive breed as it only kills if it is hungry. That's why the Opaleye dragon is easier to tame and train than any other breed and the prey of choice for an Opaleye tends to be sheep, but it has been known to attack larger animals. During the 1970's there was a case of several kangaroo killings..."

"... It was thought to be caused by a male Opaleye that had its lair taken by a female," Charlie finished off.

During Charlie and Hermione's impression of Fred and George's twin speak; everyone was looking between the two, with their heads moving from side to side as each one of them spoke. When they had finished speaking Hermione and Charlie looked to see the others with their mouths hung open and staring at them.

"What?" They both asked and everyone burst into laughter whilst gesturing towards them.

"What are they laughing at?" Charlie whispered to Hermione, leaning over so he was closer to her height.

"I don't know. Do you think they've lost their minds?" She asked him.

They looked at each other, then to their laughing family members in front of them and then back to each other.

"Yep! Definitely!" They both agreed, which only seemed to add fuel to the fire and the laughter grew louder.

"Hey, it's the new us, Forge."

"Do you think they're trying to take away the title of the Weasley Twins from us, so they can have it for themselves, Gred?"

This only sent everyone back into another fit of hysterics. Charlie and Hermione were still stood and staring at them worriedly.

"Yes, they've definitely lost their minds," Hermione nodded. "What is it?"

Oliver finally managed to calm himself down enough to answer Hermione's question.

"Nothing, Lassie, let's keep walking."

Everyone had calmed down slightly as they continued on their way to Charlie's apartment, although Hermione could still hear some chuckles coming from the back of the group.

"So I see you read the book I gave you," Charlie said to Hermione.

She scoffed at him. "Of course, I did, I've read it three times."

"So you liked it then?"

"Loved it! And I've decided to take care of magical creatures as an elective," she told him and Charlie beamed at her.

"Oi, are you two finished with the nerd talk?" Ron asked. Hermione turned around, glared at him and smacked upside his head.

"Ow, 'Mione!" he whined and everyone chuckled.

They finally reached Charlie's apartment, he gave them a tour and they stayed for a couple of hours before he took them to the guest house.

Romania: Dragon Reserve – Thursday 1st July 1993

It had been two weeks since they arrived at the dragon reserve and everyone was having a great time. She had spent a lot of time with Charlie, talking to him about dragons and other magical creatures as he worked, and keeping him company.

On his day off, Charlie and some of the other trainers on the dragon reserve showed Hermione and the rest of the family to a huge tree that was by the lake on the land. Upon her request, Charlie side-along apparated Hermione to a nearby muggle town where she bought a list of items she needed. When they returned to the lake where everyone was lounging around in the sun, she emptied the bags onto the ground as everyone proceeded to ask questions about the items she had bought, until she told them to just watch what she was doing, and they did.

Hermione climbed the tree with the rope she bought draped over her shoulder.

"Hermione, what are you doing?" Ginny asked curiously.

"Just wait a minute, Gin," she called from her perch on a sturdy branch.

She tied one end of the rope securely around an appropriate branch and allowed the rope to fall towards the ground, hovering a good few feet above it. She climbed back down the tree and took a hold of the rope and she began to walk backwards until the rope was pulled tight.

"Now what are you doing?" Fred and George asked together.

"I'm going to show you what muggles do when there is a tree, a lake, and the weather is sweltering hot like it is now. Just watch!"

Everyone watched on in curiosity and fascination as Hermione ran forward and jumped on the rope. When she was far enough over the water she let go and did a half somersault before landing in the water with a big splash. She broke through the surface to see everyone laughing and cheering.

"That was wicked!" The twins yelled and she laughed loudly.

"Me next!" Fred called, but when he reached the rope swing, Charlie pushed him out of the way and he fell to the ground.

Everyone was laughing at both Fred's misfortune and Charlie's childish behaviour, as he grabbed the rope and copied what Hermione had just done. When he was far enough over the water Hermione yelled, "let go," and he did.

He landed in the water with a bigger splash than Hermione's and everyone cheered and laughed. When Charlie resurfaced, he looked at Hermione.

"That was awesome!" He yelled at her through laughter. He turned around to face everyone. "You have got to try that!"

And everyone did multiple times. Including Charlie's friends who also had the day off from the dragon reserve, Hermione recognized that a couple of them were the ones she had met the night Norbert was taken in her first year. Even Mr. Weasley gave it a go after some persuasion from everyone. Mrs. Weasley, however, just watched from the sidelines, incredibly happy and taking pictures on the magical camera.

Hermione got out of the lake and walked back towards Mrs. Weasley, where she kneeled down next to her and emptied another bag onto the ground.

"What are you doing now, Dear?"

Everyone noticed that Hermione had left the lake and was now emptying the contents of another bag and they too left the lake and surrounded her, watching what she was doing.

"I'm just going to set up something else that we muggles like to do."

She grabbed the roll of black bin bags and unrolled them, breaking several off and opening them up before she ripped down the seams to completely open it up and create a flat plastic surface of which she placed on the ground.

"So, what's this supposed to be?"

"It's not finished yet Lee, here, everyone grab a bag and do exactly what I just did," she instructed and they did as they were told and when they had finished, Hermione placed each one on the ground until it made a pathway that led to the very edge of the lake. The pathway was a good fifteen feet long.

"I need someone to help me do this next part; it'll be quicker if we use magic."

"What do you need help with, 'Mione?" Charlie asked.

She whispered in his ear and he nodded. He was confused, he didn't understand why she wanted him to cast that charm, but he did as she asked. Everyone also watched on in confusion when Charlie cast several Sticking Charms along the fifteen-foot pathway.

Hermione noticed the looks surrounding her and she explained. "It's so the bags don't come away from the ground. If this is going to work they need to stay firmly in place."

"If what's going to work?" Ron asked.

"You'll see." Hermione went along the makeshift pathway and made sure that the bin bags were, in fact, stuck to the ground. "Okay, Charlie, I need you to do something else for me," she said as she made her way back to the group.

"Okay, what?"

She whispered the charm and he cast it.

"Make sure that the entire surface is covered, walk along the pathway a couple of times," she said.

"Why is he using the Aquamenti charm?"

"As I said, Georgie, you'll see. Just hold your horses."

"What?" Several people asked confused.

"It means wait, I promise it will be worth it."

"Okay, it's done," Charlie said and she quickly walked along the pathway to make sure it was covered in water.

"There's just a couple more things to do and then we're ready to go."

"What is it?" Ron asked again. Hermione looked at him and Fred and George both smacked him upside the head.

"Ow!" He yelled and everyone laughed at him.

Hermione picked up a bottle of washing up liquid and she poured the bottle onto the plastic bin bags, walking up and down several times to cover the entire surface and she used the whole bottle.

"Alright, Charlie, this is the last one, I promise." She gave him instructions and he cast the Aquamenti Charm, once more walking along the pathway.

"Okay, done," he said as he jogged back to the group. Hermione made sure that everyone was stood at one of the sides so that the pathway was clear and she stood a few feet away from the start of the pathway.

"What now, Lassie?"

Hermione smirked at Oliver before she took off in a run and just before her feet touched the start of the pathway, she jumped slightly forwards and landed on her stomach. She slid passed everyone at a fairly fast speed and was laughing as she reached the end of the makeshift pathway and she flew into the lake.

When she resurfaced everyone was clapping and laughing and cheering. Of course, Charlie was the first to have a go of the homemade water slide, pushing George and everyone else out of the way. When he landed in the water and he resurfaced he was laughing loudly.

"You have got to try that!" He yelled, and they all did.

"What was that?" He asked.

"It was a makeshift water slide. You've seriously never heard of one?" She asked and he shook his head.

"Well, usually they're at water parks and..." Charlie cut her off.

"What's a water park?" he asked.

"A water park is an establishment that is based entirely on water and having fun. They have water rides, lakes, pools, splash pads, splash zones, water fights, water guns, water skiing, waterboarding, canoeing and kayaking, peddle-boats, water slides and that's only naming a few. There are tons more to do at a water park, I just can't think of them all."

"Seriously, all of that in one place?" He asked amazed.

"Yes, and they can be both indoors and outdoors."

"Do they have water slides that are like the one you made?"

"No, the one I just made was something people would use in their gardens to occupy children during the summer. Water parks have water slides that are made out of plastic and are all screwed together with nuts and bolts and they're incredibly safe. They're usually over thirty feet tall. I believe the tallest water slide in the world is one hundred and thirty feet tall, and that you travel at a rate of sixty-five miles per hour so the ride only lasts about five seconds."

"You're joking," he said gobsmacked.

"Nope, they pump hundreds of gallons of water down water slides that allow you to travel incredibly fast. Some water slides are just simple but most are complicated, but they are all fun. They have built them in different shapes and sizes. They have water slides that are at an angle of one hundred and ten degrees, so you are basically falling through the air and you don't touch the actual slide until you reach the bottom."

Charlie was speechless, as was everyone else who had stopped to listen to their conversation.

"They have water slides that are looped and that go upside down, ones that travel around the entire water park, they have ones that overlap other water slides, ones that are wavy and they also have ones that require you to use a rubber ring or a rubber dingy. They also have ones were several people can go down at once and race each other or they all get on the same rubber dingy. Oh, I almost forgot; they have water slides that are circular, like the shape of a bowl and there is a hole in the middle, and you basically slide around the bowl until you hit the middle and fall down the hole into the pool below."

She could see the confused looks on everyone's faces and thought of another way to explain it.

"You know when you flush a toilet and the water swirls around and then it goes down the hole into the pipe?" everyone nodded. "Well, it's similar that. Sometimes you're just dropped into a pool beneath it and sometimes you are dropped into another water slide. It just depends on the water park and its design."

"Are there a lot of water parks in the Muggle World?" Ginny asked.

"Oh, Merlin, Gin, there has to be thousands."

"Ye said tha' some af the water slides do loops an' go upside down?" Hermione nodded. "Well, hoo do people not fall aff them when they're in the air?" Oliver said confused.

"The water slides that are built in that design are like tubes. There are no ways that you can get out until you come to the end of the slide and land in the water. You're effectively boxed in," she explained and he nodded in understanding. "How about one day, I promise to take you all to a muggle water park?"

Everyone cheered and applauded Hermione. I guess they liked that idea, she thought to herself and she laughed when Charlie plucked her up out of the water and threw her backwards and she landed back in the water.

"Can we come, too?" one of Charlie's friends asked.

"Of course, the more the merrier," she smiled.

"What?" Several people asked.

"It means the more people there is, the happier the experience," she said to them and they nodded.

"Hey, Charlotte, I like this friend of yours," another of his friends said.

"She's not my friend. She's my new little sister! And I wouldn't make her mad if I were you. You've heard what the twins are capable of?" They nodded. "Well, 'Mione's far scarier, even the twins are afraid of her," he said.

"We are not!" Was the reply the twins shot at him. Everyone turned to look at them and Hermione raised an eyebrow. "Okay, maybe a little," they admitted and everyone laughed.

"See? Remember those pictures I showed you last year of the pranks that were pulled at my old school? Particularly the ones of the twins and Lee?" again his friends nodded. "Well, 'Mione was the mastermind behind them," Charlie said proudly, as he put his arm around her and beamed. His friends looked at her slightly fearful. Charlie laughed.

"Now you're getting it!" he said and then he moved away from Hermione and he dunked one of his friends underwater. "And don't call me Charlotte!"

Hermione and Ginny smiled and hugged each other tightly after Charlie's words, then Ginny dunked Hermione under the water which started off a water fight between the two.

Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were sat on a blanket by the lake and they had watched and heard everything that had transpired, and they beamed with pride after hearing Charlie's speech.

"She's a miracle," Mrs. Weasley whispered. Mr. Weasley looked down at her and smiled. "She really is good for this family, look, even Percy is joining in and having fun with his siblings."

Mr. Weasley looked to the lake to see Percy, the poor sod, being jumped on and dunked under the water by Fred, George and Lee, but they were all laughing.

Everyone took turns of the rope swing and the water slide for the rest of the day. When it started to get dark they all got ready to head back. Hermione promised that she would leave the makeshift rope swing and water slide for Charlie and the rest of the reserve to use in the future, particularly with the weather mostly being warm. She told him that he would have to buy more washing up liquid from a muggle town to keep the water slide working correctly and that he would likely have to replace the bin bags often. They headed back to their respective accommodations and they all dried off and changed, then they met at the pub on the reserve where they had dinner and talked for the rest of the night.

Romania: Dragon Reserve – Tuesday 17th August 1993

The rest of the visit flew by; they had been there for seven weeks now, and they would be returning to the Burrow later on that day.

As Hermione was packing the rest of her belongings into her trunk, she recalled some of her fondest memories from the trip. The days they spent at the lake, the days they went exploring in both the wizarding and muggle towns nearby, chats with the workers on the reserve, spending time with everyone, specifically her boys and pulling pranks.

One prank, in particular, stood out to her. Fred, George and Lee had tried to lock Percy in one of the dragon enclosures, but Mrs. Weasley had found out and put a stop to it. Hermione's ears still hurt from the scolding the boys had received, as she was stupidly standing nearby when Mrs. Weasley released her wrath on her sons. Although it had hurt her ears, Hermione had watched in amusement as everyone in the area winced, feeling sorry for the boys.

Everything was packed and she was ready to go, they all met near the entrance to the dragon reserve and they said their goodbyes to Charlie. Hermione hugged him, and when he made her promise to write to him when she returned to Hogwarts she laughed at him.

Hermione had become a lot closer to Charlie over the summer and she was grateful, since she had technically been 'adopted' into the family and she didn't want to be an outcast in the tight-knit family that The Weasley's were.

Charlie had recently been forced into a hair cut by Mrs. Weasley; he had escaped narrowly a few times by avoiding her with Hermione's help. She would give him subtle warnings when Mrs. Weasley was heading his way and he would disappear for a while, and it made her laugh. But unfortunately for Charlie, Mrs. Weasley had gotten her way a few days ago.

Every time Hermione looked at Charlie and his sulking form, she would laugh and tease him along with the twins.

"Well, look at it this way, Charlie, your friends have no reason to call you Charlotte anymore and now your hair's less likely to catch fire when a dragon decides it would be fun to use that flame thrower of a mouth on you," she would say to him after teasing him, to make him feel better.

Professor Dumbledore had sent ahead the port-key that would allow them to return to The Burrow. They all grabbed a hold of the weird-looking feather and they returned home.

Diagon Alley – Thursday 26th August 1993

They had been back at the Burrow for about a week, Lee had gone to spend the rest of the holidays with his father and step-mother and everyone had received their Hogwarts supply list. Percy had been driving everyone up the wall; he'd been made head boy. It made the twins seriously upset and annoyed that they had failed to lock him in a dragon's enclosure back in Romania.

They had received word from Dumbledore that something had occurred at Privet Drive - Harry's home and that he was staying in Diagon Alley at the Leaky Cauldron. Everyone packed immediately and were at the Leaky Cauldron and putting their things in their allocated rooms before anyone even knew what had happened.

When they all met Harry at the Leaky Cauldron, Hermione hugged him tightly and he laughed at her. Everyone had their greetings including Percy which was far too formal, and only set the twins off in their teasing ways.

Fred pushed Percy away from Harry and he bowed to him.

"Harry! Simply splendid to see you, old boy. -"

"- Marvellous! Absolutely spiffing," George said as he pushed Fred out of the way and he grabbed Harry's hand and shook it enthusiastically.

Percy scowled at them and Hermione giggled. She walked up to Percy, put her hand on one of his shoulders and leaned against him slightly. She had also spent a fair amount of time with Percy and they had become closer also; they spent a lot of time talking about their favourite books – Hermione muggle and Percy wizarding. After spending time with Percy, she realised that he was just misunderstood and she promised herself she would do what she could to help him, without him knowing it of course.

"Come on, Perce, you know they're only messing about," she said to him.

He sighed and nodded. "Yes, I know, Mia."

"You should be grateful that they tease and prank you," Hermione said softly.

"And why is that?"

"It's the twins' way of showing respect. I would be worried if they didn't prank you, if I were you."

"But they respect you and they don't prank you. And they prank the Slytherins at every opportunity they get," he pointed out and Hermione snorted.

"They prank the Slytherins because they don't like them. But when they prank family members it's their way of showing respect. Look at Bill and Charlie, they prank them all the time - at least when they see them. You're one of their older brothers, of course, they respect you. Although they would never admit it, they do."

"Right, but what about you?"

Again Hermione snorted at him. "They pranked me before in first year and I got my payback. Have you forgotten already, Perce?".

This time Percy snorted. "Not till the day I die," he promised.

"They don't prank me because they're afraid of me."

"And rightly so, to be honest, you scare me a little, too," he said and they chuckled.

Later that night, everyone was sat around the tables that had been pushed together. They had chatted happily throughout dinner and they were now eating dessert.

Mrs. Weasley was talking to Harry about Percy making Head Boy and she was not subtle in showing her disappointment that the twins hadn't been made prefects.

"What do we want to be prefects for?" George said. "It would take all the fun out of life."

They continued to listen to Percy boasting and George turned to Harry.

"We tried to lock him in a dragon enclosure," George whispered.

"But mum caught us," Fred muttered unhappily and Hermione and Ron chuckled, whilst Harry looked at them in surprise.

"How are we getting to Kings Cross Station? Floo?" Hermione asked.

"The Ministry's providing a couple of cars" Mr. Weasley said. Everyone looked up at him.

"Why?" Percy asked intrigued.

"It's because of you, Perce," George said seriously. "And there will be little flags on the bonnets, with HB on them -"

"- For Humongous Bighead," Fred finished.

Everyone bar Percy and Mrs. Weasley laughed or snorted with food in their mouths. Mrs. Weasley gave Mr. Weasley a disapproving glare and he immediately stopped laughing.

Everyone looked at his guilty face and they laughed harder, Percy joined in with the laughter at the scolding of his father. They heard a coughing and Hermione and Percy looked to see Ron choking on his dessert, they looked at each other and burst out laughing. They were leaning against each other and giving a full belly laugh. Mrs. Weasley couldn't stop the smile that spread on her face and then the laughter that escaped her. All traces of anger and disapproval gone.

Diagon Alley – Friday 27th August 1993

The next day they decided to get their school supplies. Hermione and the boys met with Oliver and they got everything on their lists. They dropped everything back at the Leaky Cauldron and then they went to the Magical Menagerie with Hermione to look for a familiar. Third time lucky, Hermione thought to herself with her fingers crossed.

When they exited the shop twenty minutes later, Hermione had a skip in her step and was beaming with the boys walking behind her, and being happy for her but slightly scared of the thing that she was carrying.

When they got back to the Leaky Cauldron, everyone was sat down waiting for lunch to be served and Hermione sat down and placed her new familiar on the table.

"What the hell is that?" Ron exclaimed.

"This handsome little fellow is Crookshanks," Hermione said, as Crookshanks sat on the table in front of her and nuzzled his face against hers.

"Handsome? He looks like he's been trampled by a heard of hippogriffs, then been hit in the face with a beater's bat and then been carried away in a tornado with his fur sticking up at odd angles like that. That fur really needs a brush and to be sorted out. It rivals your hair."

Crookshanks looked at Ron and Ron looked fearful as the cat glared at him. Cats couldn't glare, could they? He shook off his thoughts.

Fred and George looked at each other, then to the orange fur-ball and back to each other, amusement evident on their faces. Hermione watched and waited with Oliver for something to happen, and as always, her boys didn't disappoint.

Fred bravely picked up Crookshanks (he was slightly scared after hearing tales from the staff member at the Magical Menagerie about the cat's temperament and him not liking anyone) and held him up next to Ron's face. Fred and George had thoughtful frowns.

"Now that you mention it, Ronniekins -" Fred said.

"- He does look like you," George finished and they burst out laughing, those who had heard the conversation laughed along with them.

"Dinnae the lass at the counter say he was vicious, that he dinnae like anyone an' he always attacked the customers? An' tha's why he was at the shop fer ten years?" Oliver questioned, looking at Fred as he still had a hold of the cat with the squashed up face.

"Nonsense, My Crooksy is a big softy," Hermione said as she scratched the cat's ears and speaking as though she were talking to a baby. "He just has a good judge of character; obviously he didn't trust anyone who walked into that shop. He seems to like you though, Freddie, since he's letting you hold him without him growling at you," she said.

Fred sat up straight and puffed out his chest, and a look of victory and pride filled his features. Everyone laughed at him for a good few minutes and he placed the cat back on the table and scratched him behind the ears. Hermione shook her head at him. Crookshanks walked over to his new owner and he nuzzled his face into her neck and she laughed as his whiskers tickled her.

When dinner was finally served, everyone ate heartily whilst talking and laughing. Crookshanks had somehow managed to sit on Hermione's shoulders and was curled around her as she ate. Every so often she would take a piece of food off her plate and feed the cat sat on her shoulders.

She had giggled a few times during lunch when Crookshanks' bushy tail would hit her in her face and tickle her nose. Fred, George and Oliver would smile softly at the faces she would pull when it happened; they thought it was adorable. At the moment, the cat sat on her shoulders seemed to remind Hermione of a mixture of a squirrel and a parrot.

Mr. and Mrs. Weasley had been watching the boys' behaviour around Hermione and they smirked at each other when they saw the almost lovesick expression on their faces.

I can't wait to tell Minerva and Beth about this, she thought.

Chapter thirty-Six

The Hogwarts Express - Wednesday 1st September 1993

A couple of days ago, Harry had told Ron and Hermione everything he had overheard between Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and he included why and how he ended up staying at the Leaky Cauldron in the first place, and to say Hermione was worried would be an understatement. But for the last few days of the summer, they tried to forget about all that had happened, and they focused on having fun before they were to return to Hogwarts for their third year.

Hermione, Oliver, Lee and the twins were sat in their compartment, each with their attention on their own tasks. Hermione was reading, Oliver was working out a Quidditch practice schedule and the twins and Lee were, of course, planning a prank.

After a couple of hours on the train, Hermione decided to go and check in on Harry and Ron, so she said her goodbyes to the boys and made her way down the train aisle until she came across the compartment that she was looking for. She entered, closed the door behind her and took a seat next to Ron and opposite Harry. What caught her attention when she looked up was the sleeping figure sat next to Harry.

He had shaggy brown hair, a few scars on his face and he looked rather pale, almost sickly. His clothes were all tattered and ratty. She continued looking around the compartment when she noticed a case in the overhead rack, and as she looked closer she noticed that it was monogrammed and it read, 'Remus J. Lupin.'

Interesting, Hermione thought, her eyes darting between the case and the sleeping man.

She brought her attention back to Harry and Ron and they settled into a comfortable conversation until Ron found something to complain about, as usual.

"'Mione, did you have to bring that thing with you?" He asked none too kindly.

"What thing?" She asked, pretending to be clueless and she plastered an innocent look on her face and Harry chuckled at her.

"That nuisance right there," Ron said, pointing to Crookshanks who was currently glaring at him.

"Oh, that was a big word, Ronald. Would you like me to heal you from that headache you likely have from using it?" She said sweetly.

Harry burst out laughing at the look on Ron's face. Hermione thought she saw the corner of the sleeping man's mouth twitch but she shook her head and returned her attention back to Ron.

"And, yes, Ronald, I did have to bring Crookshanks with me. Where I go, he goes."

"But he's a vicious monster," he protested. Crookshanks hissed at him and Ron flinched.

"Nonsense, he's a big softy and he wouldn't harm a fly," she said to him.

"He attacked me last night," Ron argued, his voice rising slightly and his ears turning red.

"Yes, well, I said that he wouldn't harm a fly, I didn't say that he wouldn't harm a human," she said with a smirk.

Harry burst into laughter; this time with tears welling up in his eyes as Hermione had a smug smile on her face. Ron processed what she had said before he too joined in laughing. This time Hermione was sure she saw a smile creep onto the sleeping man's face.

"You're something else, you are," Ron shook his head.

"You're only just figuring that out now, Mate?" Harry said, calming down from his laughter but with an amused smile on his face.

"Anyway, Crooksy didn't attack you for the fun of it, he wanted the rat."

"Well try and keep the demon fur-ball away from Scabbers."

"He's a cat, Ronald, that's impossible; they hunt rodents in the wild, and it is in their nature," Hermione said, whilst rolling her eyes at him.

"'Mione? Could you really heal someone?" Harry asked intrigued.

"Well, it depends on the injury. But in theory, I imagine so. I haven't had a chance to practice what with the magic restrictions out of school, but I did some research whilst we were at the dragon reserve."

"Why were you researching healing spells?" Ron asked confused.

"Quidditch," was the one word answer she gave them. They both hummed in realisation. "Between Fred and George as Beaters, Ollie as Keeper and Harry as Seeker, you four boys put the fear of Merlin in me."

"I don't know why. Quidditch's a perfectly safe sport," Ron said seriously.

Hermione scoffed at him. "Are you kidding me? Have we been watching different matches for the last two years?"

"What?" Ron asked confused and Hermione huffed.

"First year, Harry's broom was jinxed and he fell off it when he caught the snitch in his mouth. Not to mention Ollie was knocked off his broom by that prat, Marcus Flint, and he fell two hundred feet. Second year, the bludger was jinxed by Dobby and it kept trying to kill Harry, it broke his arm and he fell off his broom. Then Lockhart the idiot healed his arm and removed all of the bones from it. That's not even taking into account any injuries from practices or when we're home," she finished, taking a breath.

"She's got a point," Harry stated thoughtfully. "What did you actually do to Flint for deliberately hurting Oliver? I remember him and his roommates walking into the great hall for breakfast looking rather uncomfortable."

"I HAD Peeves put chilli-powder on the toilet roll in their bathroom," she stated.

"I don't think I've heard of that being done before," Ron muttered. "And what about his roommates?"

"You wouldn't have heard of it happening before because it's a muggle classic. And well, Flint was my intended target, but getting the rest of them was a bonus. It was fine anyway; they were only Slytherins," she said. Okay, she definitely saw the man smile that time, she was sure of it. "Anyway, back to reasons why I researched healing spells...".

"There's another reason?" Ron said, interrupting her.

"Yes, Ronald, there is. In first year; we dealt with a dragon, detention in the Forbidden Forest, a three headed dog, a trap door, devil's snare, the flying and catching of the correct key whilst we were being attacked by other keys, then the life size wizarding chess game, then the potions riddle and then the whole Voldemort had taken up residence on Professor Quirrell's head and The Philosophers Stones incident. Then in second year when people, cats and ghosts were being petrified, when I was petrified for two months, when you two found The Chamber of Secrets with that moron Lockhart, then Harry defeated the Basilisk and Tom Riddle -aka baby Voldemort- and rescued Ginny. Face it, we're huge magnets for danger and trouble."

"What's a magnet?" Ron asked confused.

"Muggle thing," Hermione and Harry said in unison.

"Again, she's got a point, Mate," Harry said and they nodded in agreement.

They continued to chat pleasantly when Percy entered the compartment.

"Gentlemen, Mia," he said.

"Hey, Perce," she smiled.

"Mia, why aren't you with the others?" He asked her.

"I was, but I thought I should check up on Ron and Harry," she answered.

"Are the twins planning something?"

"They're always planning something," she said with a chuckle. Then she noticed his badge. "Errr, Perce," she pointed to his badge with a guilty look on her face.

Percy looked down and huffed, taking a seat beside Harry as he said, "Not again, I only got it back to Head Boy last night," he sighed, turning his eyes to her, looking as though he'd had an epiphany. "Mia, will you prank the twins for me?"

"Are you sure?" Her eyebrows rose high.

"They've been pranking me since they were born and I haven't once gotten revenge. But the twins are scared of you," he said with a mischievous glint in his eye that reminded her of Fred and George. Ron and Harry laughed.

"Yeah, that's because she knocked them out in first year and give them new makeovers that lasted over a month," Ron said, smiling fondly at the memory.

"Yeah, and then at the Quidditch tryouts she stuck them to their brooms and soaked them from head to toe, and since then they haven't once tried to prank her," Harry added, pride evident in his voice.

Hermione saw the sleeping man smirk. Maybe he isn't asleep, she thought before shrugging.

"Please, Mia; you haven't pranked anyone since your first year," Percy said.

"Actually, that's not true."

"You're always helping the twins with their planning of pranks, I meant you haven't done anything independently."

"Merlin, remember when she pranked the entire Slytherin Quidditch team and the reserves at the first match of the season? You still haven't told us how you did that," Ron said, looking put out.

"And I'm not going to either," she shrugged.

"I think that was the last big prank, disregarding your revenge on Flint. And I'm guessing the whole Malfoy running screaming into the great hall and fainting had something to do with you, too," Harry said and she didn't bother denying it with an amused smile on her face.

"See? You haven't pranked anyone in a while," Percy said.

"Again, that wasn't the last prank I did," she said and the boys looked confused. "Do you remember that prank that happened to Professor McGonagall in the great hall?"

"Yeah, the one Malfoy was punished for. I hate to admit it but it was genius; tipping a bucket of water and fish from the Black Lake over and on to her at the head's table was hilarious," said Harry. She smirked at him. "Wait a minute! That was you, wasn't it?!" Harry exclaimed.

Hermione would've scolded Harry for his outburst, but she was certain the mystery man was awake; he had a smirk on his face and an eyebrow arched.

"Yes, it was, and Malfoy getting the blame was the cherry on top. He's a prat, so he deserved it. It wasn't my fault that he happened to look so guilty."

"I should've known it wasn't him. That idiot isn't capable of using the charms that were used. Plus, the prank was far too muggle and far too similar to the other ones you did at the beginning of the year. The prank conveniently happened when you weren't in the great hall and you looked far too innocent when you returned from the bathroom," Percy said.

"You're bloody brilliant, 'Mione" Ron said with a dazed look in his eyes.

"Will you prank the twins for me? Please, Mia," Percy asked, a pleading tone to his voice.

"I've said it before Perce, pranking is how the twins show their respect, at least for family members. If it's a Slytherin they prank, they do it because they don't like them."

"I know, but I want revenge, they deserve it after all the years of humiliation and annoyance." The mischievous glint was back in his eyes.

"Fine, I will prank them for you," she agreed. "But if I were you, I'd prepare myself for the retaliation when they discover you've put me up against them," she said, and he waved her off being too excited to care.

"So what's the plan?" he asked.

"Just leave it to me, Perce, I'll figure something out," she assured him.

"If it's going to be anything like your other pranks, I'm worried for the twins," Harry said with a chuckle.

Percy left with the compartment to continue with his patrols with a skip in his step, and Hermione, Harry and Ron continued to talk and laugh for a while, when the train began to slow to a stop.

"That's strange, we're not due to arrive for another four hours," Hermione said with a frown as she looked out of the window.

That's when she noticed it; the windows were fogging up and the glass began to crack. When she breathed out she could see her breath forming a smoke cloud in front of her. The compartment became cold and she shivered and wrapped her arms around herself, trying to keep the warmth of her body.

She felt depressed; as though every bit of happiness was leaving her body. She could feel the loss of both her birth parents and her adoptive parents. She could no longer see her life with The Weasleys, Woods, Harry and Lee. She could no longer feel the twins and Oliver in her life. She didn't like the feeling. The feeling of being without them and she felt as though she was going to die of heartbreak. Was that possible, for someone to die of heartbreak? Well, at this moment in time, Hermione would respond with a resounding 'yes'. Just then she heard the compartment door open, along with an agonising scream. Then everything went black.

Hermione woke to see the strange man looking down at her anxiously; when he noticed she was awake he smiled and helped her sit up. She didn't realise it, but she had tears running heavily down her face and her eyes were a puffy, red mess. Just as he planned to hand something the compartment door was pulled opened and it slammed against the wall.

When she looked up, it was to see four very concerned faces, and three of them had fear in their eyes. Lee breathed out a sigh of relief after seeing that she was fine. But Fred, George and Oliver rushed forward and they dropped to their knees surrounding her. They all sandwiched her tightly between them and she sobbed in both relief and for remembering the feelings she had been exposed to.

Then they all glowed and the compartment and its occupants were bathed in the golden light. When it disappeared the man looked at the four teenagers on the ground slightly dazed and with a raised eyebrow. He looked at the other three teenage boys and noticed that they didn't seem all that shocked, making him believe the strange occurrence was a regular thing.

Harry noticed the man's expression and he spoke up from his place on one of the seats, as he ate the small piece of chocolate he had given him.

"It's happened before," he said.

"How many times?" He asked curiously.

"Don't know, possibly four," Lee responded with a shrug.

Hermione was helped up from the floor, before being sat on the bench, sitting in between the twins, with both then and Oliver touching her in some way.

Interesting, he thought to himself.

Harry had asked what those hooded creatures were and Hermione cut off the man as he was explaining it to the group. He raised an eyebrow at her amused when she finished talking.

"Sorry," she mumbled and he chuckled at her. "Are you the new defence against the dark arts professor?" she asked curiously, to which he nodded.

"Yes, I'm Professor Lupin," he replied and introductions were quickly made between the professor and his new students.

"I hope you're better than that idiot Lockhart, but judging by the way you handled the dementor, I would say you're already leagues in front of him and his peanut-sized brain. I'd be surprised if the idiot could even spell his own name and don't get me started on his lesson content and plans," she sighed and everyone grimaced as they remembered their time with Lockhart well.

"That bad?" Lupin arched an eyebrow.

"Unfortunately, the moron didn't have an ounce of usefulness in him."

"I'm sure he wasn't that bad," he defended, chuckling at the incredulous looks he received from the seven students.

"In our first lesson, he released a cage of cornish pixies in the classroom. The room was destroyed, students were fighting them off by hitting them with books or hiding under the tables, and they picked poor Neville up by his ears and dangled him from the chandelier by his robes. When the idiot tried to act all smart and clever and put the little devils back into their cage, he said a spell which I'm pretty sure doesn't even exist, had his wand stolen by a pixie, which they used to cut the chains on the dragon skeleton that was hanging from the ceiling, and then he left us alone with the pixies whilst he locked himself in his office," Hermione said. The professor stared in shock.

"Seriously?" he asked, a frown on his face. They nodded.

"If it wasn't for Hermione we would've been in a lot of trouble. She managed to stop the pixies and get them back in the cage and she got Neville down from the ceiling," Harry said proudly and Hermione blushed.

"Everyone in the class helped, too," she muttered. "Merlin, do you remember the duelling club?"

Harry, Hermione and Ron shared a chuckle and a smile.

They finally reached the Hogsmeade Station and jumped into the carriages which took them to the Hogwarts grounds.

They entered the great hall and took their seats, and once the sorting ceremony had finished, and Dumbledore had given the welcoming speech and introduced Professor Lupin -who Hermione and the boys applauded loudly for- dinner appeared and they all ate heartily.

Hermione was not thrilled to hear that the dementors would be permanent residents at the castle until Sirius Black was found; she didn't want to feel the way she had on the train again.

News of both hers and Harry's fainting had reached the entire hall before the end of dinner and they had listened to taunts from the Slytherins. When they exited the great hall they saw Malfoy being a prat and pretending to faint, and they all scowled at him.

"That little git; he wasn't so cocky when the dementors were down our end of the train. Came running into our compartment, didn't he, Forge?" George said.

"That he did, Gred, he nearly wet himself," Fred smirked.

"I wasn't too happy myself. They're horrible things, those dementors…" George trailed off and Fred picked up.

"Sort of freeze your insides, don't they?" He nodded in agreement.

"You didn't pass out though, did you?" Harry said with a mutter of annoyance.

"I did," Hermione injected as she playfully nudged him with her elbow. "I cried enough tears to fill the Black Lake," she said and a smiled crept on his face at her comment.

"Forget it, Harry," George encouraged, "Dad had to go out to Azkaban one time, remember Forge? And he said it was the worst place he'd ever been. He came back all weak and shaking. They suck the happiness out of the place, dementors. Most of the prisoners go mad in there."

They ended the topic of discussion and made their way to Gryffindor Tower whilst Hermione headed to Professor Dumbledore's office after receiving a letter from Professor McGonagall that asked her to meet with her at Professor Dumbledore's office.

Once she reached the stone gargoyles, it was to see Professor McGonagall waiting for her.

"Good evening, Professor," Hermione greeted with a smile.

"Good evening, Miss. Granger. How are you?"

"I'm glad to be back," she said with a smile, which McGonagall returned before saying the password and heading up to Dumbledore's office.

When they entered Hermione took the seat next to McGonagall and opposite Dumbledore. She spent thirty minutes being lectured on the proper use of a time turner as well as going over the rules twice.

When she finally left the office she quickly made her way back to Gryffindor Tower, heading up to the fifth year boys dorm room and entering. She walked in to find the boys all unpacking and she quickly made work of her own belongings.

"So, Spitfire, what did Professor McGonagall want?"

"Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall just wanted to review how I was dealing with the separation from my parents," she told them.

It wasn't a complete lie; they did talk about her parents, but the golden rule was to tell no one about the time turner, even her boys, even if it did hurt her.

Why did it hurt?

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Hogwarts - Thursday 2nd September 1993

Hermione woke and detangled herself from the boys surrounding her before she headed to the bathroom and readied for the first day back at school.

Once she exited the bathroom, she spent twenty minutes gently coaxing the boys out of bed, and when that didn't work she huffed and threatened to hex them which sent them swiftly into the bathroom in fear for what she would do to them; she wasn't known for holding back. She readied their bags with everything but their books and when the boys finished getting ready they headed down to the great hall for breakfast.

As was the norm, halfway through their meal Professor McGonagall walked around and handed out the timetables to her students.

"Are you absolutely positive, Dear?" McGonagall checked, looking at Hermione with an expression of concern.

Hermione knew that she was asking about the use of the time turner and she nodded confidently. The boys, however, were not in the know and looked on in confusion.

"Yes, Professor, I'm positive," she nodded certainly and McGonagall smiled at her young cub, handed Hermione her timetable, then she nodded to the stunned boys surrounding her before continuing with her task.

"I will never get used to seeing that," Fred whispered to the others and they nodded in agreement.

"Are you positive about what, Love?"

"What? Oh, she means am I positive that I'm dealing with the separation," Hermione said, trying not to go into too much detail. They had all decided it best to keep Hermione's situation with her parents away from the students and gossip at Hogwarts.

"And are you? Dealing?" George asked anxiously.

They all knew that she would sometimes feel depressed. They didn't have to feel it; they could see it on her face when she thought no one was paying attention. Sometimes, instead of reading she would just stare into space and take no notice of her surroundings. She did her best to keep it in check though, making sure that it never happened in classes or that it affected her studies.

"Yes, I miss them, of course, I do. But how could I not be dealing when I have the support of family?" She replied, looking to them with a soft expression.

The boys' stomachs dropped and their hearts melted as they listened to her words, as they saw Merlin's honest truth in her eyes. Hermione felt someone walk up behind her and hug her from behind. She looked over her shoulder to see Ginny. Her eyes were shining from unshed tears, and she gave a watery smile before they both chuckled.

Hermione stood up and pulled Ginny back out of the hall.

"You mean it? That we're your family? That I'm your family?" Ginny said.

"Of course I do, Gin, you're my sister," Hermione replied with a smile.

They hugged tightly and when Ginny sorted herself out, Hermione teased her as they walked back into the great hall laughing and with their arms linked with each other's. Hermione retook her seat once more surrounded by the boys and Ginny continued walking further down the table to sit with her friends. She picked up her timetable and read it over.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Monday* | *Tuesday* | *Wednesday* | *Thursday* | *Friday* |
| *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* | *7:30 – Breakfast* |
| *9:00 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, All* | *9:00 – Care of Magical Creatures, Hagrid, All* | *9:00 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, All* | *9:00 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All* | *9:00 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, All* |
| *10:30 – Care of Magical Creatures, Hagrid, All* | *11:00 – Muggle Studies, Professor Burbage, All* | *9:00 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, All* | *10:30 – Divination, Professor Trelawney, All* | *9:00 – Arithmancy, Professor Vector, All* |
| *10:30 – Muggle Studies, Professor Burbage, All* | *11:00 – DADA, Professor Lupin, All* | *10:30 – Arithmancy, Professor Vector, All* | *10:30 – Muggle Studies, Professor Burbage, All* | *10:30 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, All* |
| *12:00 – Lunch* | *12:00 – Lunch* | *10:30 –Runes, Professor Babblings, All* | *10:30 – Arithmancy, Professor Vector, All* | *10:30 –Runes, Professor Babblings, All* |
| *1:00 – Divination, Professor Trelawney, All* | *1:00 – Charms, Professor Flitwick, All* | *12:00 – Lunch* | *12:00 – Lunch* | *12:00 – Lunch* |
| *1:00 – Ancient Runes, Professor Babblings, All* | *3:00 – Divination, Professor Trelawney, All* | *1:00 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All* | *1:00 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, All* | *1:00 – Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Lupin, All* |
| *2:30 – Defence Against the Dark Arts, Professor Lupin, All* | *3:00 – History of Magic, Professor Binns, All* | *3:00 – END of classes* | *1:00 – Care of Magical Creatures, Hagrid, All* | *2:30 – Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall, All* |
| *4:00 – END of classes* | *4:30 – END of classes* |  | *3:30 – END of classes* | *2:30 – Herbology, Professor Sprout, All* |
| *5:00 – Dinner* | *5:00 – Dinner* | *5:00 – Dinner* | *5:00 – Dinner* | *4:30 – END of classes* |
|  | *Midnight – 01:00 – Astronomy, Professor Sinistra, Gryffindors* |  | *6:00 – 9:00 – Advanced Potions, Professor Snape, third – fifth years* | *5:00 – Dinner* |

It was going to be a lot of work even with the help of the time turner, but she believed she could do it. Unfortunately, Oliver was sat next to her and he spotted her timetable, a frown making itself known.

"Lassie? Why does ye timetable say tha' ye have divination, muggle studies an' arithmancy, all at the same time?"

"It says what?" The twins chorused suspiciously.

"It's likely just a mistake, I'll have Professor McGonagall look at it before classes," she said with a shrug of her shoulders.

They finished eating and Hermione walked to the head's table and she explained her problem to McGonagall, she nodded and with her wand, she touched the parchment and it showed a regular third year timetable and they shared a knowing look.

"Thank you, Professor."

"You're welcome, Dear."

Hermione walked back to the boys and they headed to their dorm room to collect their books before walking to classes.

Professor Lupin had been observing Hermione and the boys since they had entered the great hall for breakfast, and he used his werewolf hearing to listen in on their conversation. He probably shouldn't have with him now being a professor, but he was a Marauder and that was something you couldn't lose. After listening in on the conversation between Hermione, Percy, Ron and Harry yesterday on the train and then listening to the antics of the twins and Lee, he was only reminded of the fact that he was a Marauder. But those teenagers were the new and improved modern version of him and his friends from when they were at Hogwarts. If only his friends could see him now, the defence against the dark arts professor.

Merlin, the teasing would be endless, he thought sadly.

He shook off his thoughts and his interest was piqued when he heard them talking about 'Hermione's separation' and he paid closer attention and watched them and their reactions. He could see the utter adoration on three of the boys' faces and when he saw the young girl -obviously a Weasley with the flaming red hair- hug Hermione with a watery smile, he realised there was more going on. When they exited the great hall together, he strained his hearing but they were too far out of range. When they re-entered with beaming smiles, laughing and looking carefree, he knew that whatever they had discussed was important to the young Weasley girl.

When Hermione walked up to the head's table, he pretended to be interested in his food and not in the conversation happening between her and Professor McGonagall. When he heard her explain the problem with her timetable, he risked a quick peek and his eyes widened in surprise. How was that possible?

"I have placed an Illusion Charm on the parchment, so long as no one looks closely, it will appear to be a regular timetable. No one can know about what we have allowed you to do this year. What we have done has never happened in the history of Hogwarts."

Hermione said her thanks and left, walking away.

He looked to McGonagall and raised an eyebrow at her knowing look.

"That, Remus, is the mystery that is Miss. Granger."

"What's this I hear about a separation?"

"You've been listening in on their conversation," she stated and he had the grace to look sheepish.

"I couldn't help it," he said with a guilty smile and she chuckled at her fully grown cub.

"Have you noticed anything different about her?" she asked curiously.

"I know there's something different about her, but I'm not sure what. There was that bizarre occurrence on the train after the dementor attack, when she and three others glowed when they touched."

"Yes, I remember the first time it happened," she said fondly.

"Are you going to tell me what the mystery is?" He asked hopefully.

"I'm afraid not, Remus; only if you discover it for yourself. Only a select few know of her and it must be kept under wraps for as long as possible. We are only telling those who have noticed and broached the subject with either Albus or me. But I imagine it won't take you long to crack the mystery. I wonder who will figure who out first," she mused.

"Sorry, Minerva, you've lost me," he said to her confused.

"I wonder if you will solve the mystery of her before she discovers you're a werewolf," she said and he bristled. "Don't worry, Remus, she will not judge you."

"I'm a monster, of course, she'll judge me," he said bitterly.

"You're not a monster," she said firmly. "And don't let Miss. Granger hear you say that." He raised an eyebrow at her. "You think I'm frightening Remus, you haven't seen what she is capable of. She mothers the boys in her year, the fifth year boys and Mr. Wood. In fact, do you remember Molly Weasley?"

"I could never forget her, that glare she used to give at the meetings still makes me shiver when I think about it. She's one scary witch, who I hope to never get on the bad side of."

"The Weasley Twins are more afraid of Miss. Granger than they are of Molly," she said, amused by his incredulous look. "You have no idea what she is capable of," she repeated.

"I guess not, I heard stories on the train, but I suppose I will see for myself in the near future."

"Your meaning?" she asked intrigued.

"I believe Miss. Granger is plotting a prank against the Weasley Twins for pranking the Head Boy, one too many times," McGonagall chuckled.

"Ah, yes, that would be their third eldest brother, Percy. Well, that should be interesting to witness," she said and he looked at her in clear surprise.

"You're condoning the pranking... Of students... In the castle?" He questioned slowly, dazed by her reaction. She was never like this when he was at school and pulling pranks with his friends.

"Yes, I am aware. I fondly remember the last few she pulled around the castle. I'm unsure how, but she was able to persuade Lee Jordan to declare his undying love for Slytherin house, she was able to convince Oliver Wood, the Gryffindor Quidditch team Captain of now three years, to wear a pink and sparkly fairy costume to dinner in the great hall, complete with wings and a fairy wand. And my favourite, she had George Weasley serenade Severus for a week. Whenever he saw Severus he would burst into song, no matter the time or location and Severus would very nearly run in the opposite direction, with Mr. Weasley following behind him. I don't believe I've ever seen Severus move so fast," she said, chuckling at the memory and he stared at her.

Hermione had attended all of her lessons with the use of the time turner and she was exhausted. She had loved every one of her lessons except for divination. As soon as she stepped foot into the classroom she could tell that she was not going to enjoy the syllabus or Professor Trelawney.

Professor Trelawney made Hermione feel uncomfortable with her dazed expression and stumbling around the classroom. She was tall and skinny, she wore thick round glasses that resembled jam jars and knotted light brown hair. She wore on brown witch's robes with a patterned cardigan over the top. She reminded Hermione very much of a stick insect.

But when Professor Trelawney started making predictions based on the death of Harry, she lost it. She had to be physically restrained by Harry to stop her from unleashing a string of rather inappropriate words, as well as to stop her from storming out of the classroom.

When the class finally ended, Hermione couldn't get out of the classroom fast enough and Ron and Harry laughed at her as she mumbled and grumbled under her breath

Friday 3rd September 1993

Professor Lupin had been trying to piece together everything he knew about Hermione. But having only a minimal amount of information on her, he hadn't been doing too well. Today he would be teaching her class for the first time and he couldn't wait to see what it would unfold.

When the class entered his room and took, what he guessed, were their regular seats, he introduced himself and they began. The first defence class of the new school year was based on Hinkypunks. He was surprised to see Hermione immediately raise her hand when he asked if anyone knew what they were.

"A hinkypunk is a pocket-sized, one-legged creature that has the appearance of a wispy blue, grey or white smoke. It has an inclination of luring people, particularly travellers, off of their paths at night and into treacherous bogs or wetlands. It does this under the pretext of a helpful, lamp-bearing being. They are mischievous varmints who revel in discommoding magical folk and non-magical folk alike. They can force fireballs far from their lamps causing serious damage. They also periodically emit hollering and grunting noises. In order to defend yourself against a hinkypunk, it's recommended that you corner or trap them in a tight space, whilst approaching them. Then you should cast the Lumos Duo Charm until the hinkypunk becomes solidified. Finally, you should use the Knockback Jinx anywhere between three and five times, at which the hinkypunk will disappear into a puff of smoke," Hermione answered perfectly and confidently.

He stared at her in surprise.

"Yes, well done, couldn't have put it better myself, Miss. Granger, ten points to Gryffindor," he said. She beamed and Harry and Ron chuckled at her, so she shoved them slightly as they sat on opposite sides of her.

The lesson continued in the same manner, meaning Lupin asking questions and Hermione answering them perfectly, almost word for word from the textbook.

When the lesson ended he had another piece of information that he could add into the equation. She was smart and obviously well ahead of her peers.

Friday 15th October 1993

They were in their defence class and Lupin said that he had a surprise for them. They left their belongings in the classroom and he locked the door behind him before they walked through the halls until they were interrupted by Peeves.

There was some amusing conflict between the professor and Peeves and Hermione giggled at their behaviour. When Professor Lupin pointed his wand at the door and said, "Waddiwasi," a wad of chewed-up chewing gum shot out of it and landed in Peeves' nose and everyone burst into laughter.

"What do you think, My Princess?" Peeves said as he turned to Hermione, bowing slightly.

"It's a good look for you, Peeves," Hermione laughed. "Now, Peeves, can I please continue with my defence lesson?"

"Yes, of course, My Lady. Bye, Princess," Peeves said.

"See you later, Peeves," Hermione replied, giving him a little wave goodbye. He blushed and blew a kiss at Hermione before he took his leave from the corridor, everyone watching her in surprise at the interaction they'd just witnessed between the two.

"No matter how many times I see that, I will never get used to it," Harry vowed and Hermione snorted at him. Professor Lupin raised an eyebrow at her and she shrugged her shoulders in response, offering no explanation.

They finally entered the staff room, with Snape letting out insults as he left the room. Hermione rolled her eyes at him and again Lupin noticed. She really is a mystery, he thought to himself and then he led them over towards a wardrobe that was shaking and rattling.

He began asking questions and Hermione, Harry and Neville answered correctly gaining twenty-five points for Gryffindor. The class practised the spell together before they faced the boggart.

Neville was first up; he struggled at first at the sight of Professor Snape, but after some encouragement from Professor Lupin and Hermione, he successfully had Snape wearing his Grandmother's horrendous stuffed vulture hat, a pink dress and a handbag which the entire class laughed at. One by one, each member of the class took their turns. Ron's boggart turned into an acromantula which he put on roller skates, Padma changed her giant cobra boggart into a jack in the box and Pavarti made her mummy boggart trip on its own bandages.

Then it was Hermione's turn, everyone assumed that her greatest fear was failing. But they wrong. So incredibly wrong.

Hermione could hear Harry, Ron, Dean, Seamus and Neville whispering encouragements as she approached the boggart and then it suddenly changed…

There, laid on the ground in front of her, were Fred, George and Oliver. They were covered in blood, their clothes dirty and torn. They looked as though they had been tortured, as though they had been shredded by large and sharp claws. But that wasn't the worst of it, they slowly stood up, obviously in pain and they began speaking, and at that moment the entire room fell into silence as everyone stared wide-eyed at the scene in front of them. Even the Slytherins couldn't tease and taunt her, being too horrified by what they were forced to witness.

Hermione paled considerably and she looked as though she were about to faint. Professor Lupin watched on in horror, waiting for her to make her move before he jumped in.

"Why didn't you save us, Love?" George said, his eyes black and no longer the turquoise colour she loved to see.

"Ye let this happen tae us," Oliver whispered, his hair mattered and plastered to his forehead rather than falling into his eyes as usual.

"Spitfire, you let us suffer," Fred mumbled, his skin so pale, he looked lifeless.

"How could you do that to us?"

"We would do anythin' fer ye, why dinnae ye help us?"

"Where were you when we needed you the most?"

"You failed us; this is all your fault. You know that, right?"

"Ye killed us, Lassie."

"We hate you for not saving us."

"You killed us! This is your fault! We hate you!" The three boys said in unison as they repeated those words over and over and over again.

Hermione had a look of absolute agony on her face, she had tears streaming forcefully down her cheeks and her wand hand shook as she raised it.

She felt worse than she did on the train during the dementor attack. She felt as she did the night she found her parents. She then remembered her boys and how they were there for her. How they made her feel better, how they took care of her and they continued to do so years later. She took a deep breath and raised her wand steadily. She had determination in her eyes and her face was set hard as tears continued to fall, but she ignored them.

"Riddikulus!" she said loudly and the image in front of her changed into one of the twins and Oliver laughing as she had pranked them.

They were in their pyjamas and had their chests and faces covered in marker pen. Hermione noticed that it was exactly the same as the night she and Oliver had pranked them, although this image showed Oliver taking Lee's place as the victim.

She smiled and the tears began to slow, she took a deep breath and the colour began to slowly return to her face. She turned around and faced the class, Harry rushed forward and hugged her tightly and the class began to laugh at the scene in front of them. Professor Lupin looked both proud and horrified.

Another piece of the puzzle, he thought to himself.

The class moved and Harry took his turn. Hermione was worried, who knew what his boggart would be? That was when his boggart turned into a dementor and Professor Lupin quickly rushed forward, only for his boggart to turn into the full moon.

Strange, Hermione thought.

Professor Lupin quickly finished off the boggart, putting it back into the wardrobe and they returned to the classroom and collected their belongings. When she was about to exit Fred, George and Oliver rushed in with anxious expressions, taking in Hermione's tear-stained face and they bristled. Lupin watched on in interest.

"What happened, Love?" George asked softly.

"Boggart," she replied tiredly.

"What was it, Lassie?" Oliver asked softly, looking at her worriedly and his eyes checking her over for any possible injuries.

"You, Freddie and George dead. You blamed me for failing you, you hated me," she said, tears beginning to well in her eyes.

"We could never hate you," they promised, hugging her between them and once more, they began to glow but it wasn't like it was on the train, this was duller, like a flicker before it disappeared.

Lupin noticed that the three boys shared a look and then nodded, obviously having a silent conversation.

"It's over now, let's get you to your next class," Fred said.

Hermione and the boys said their goodbyes to Professor Lupin and they made their way out of the classroom. Lupin noticed that Hermione's mood had changed significantly since the boys had shown up. She was once again smiling and laughing.

They can affect her mood?

Friday 5th November 1993

Hermione was sat in her defence class waiting for Professor Lupin to enter and begin the lecture. Hermione, Harry and Ron sat glaring at Malfoy who was milking his 'injury' for it all it was worth. Honestly, it was only a scratch and he deserved it; he deliberately provoked Buckbeak, Hagrid's favourite Hippogriff.

It was a surprise when Professor Snape walked into the classroom, giving the explanation that Professor Lupin was under the weather. Hermione was listening to Professor Snape being his usual joyful and smiling self. Of course, he was a big softy and she knew it, but he did have a reputation to uphold. That was why he was currently glaring at everyone in the class, daring them to speak out against him.

Hermione thought it peculiar that Professor Snape was pushing them for information about werewolves and when they were assigned an essay on them her mind began to fit the pieces together.

When she returned to the common room after dinner, she settled down and began to work on the essay, and the more she wrote on her parchment, the more it made sense.

The scars, the boggart turning into the full moon, the sickly look he took during the week of the full moon and the full moon had been the night before. She was certain of it. Professor Lupin was a werewolf.

Fitting, she thought with a giggle. Professor Lupin's a werewolf.

Monday 8th November 1993

Hermione had handed in her essay to Professor Snape at breakfast and he gave her a knowing smirk which she returned.

"What can I do to make it easier for him?" she asked Snape and he gave her a one word answer before sending her on her way with a skip in her step.

Hermione was now sat in her chair waiting for the last class of the day to begin. Professor Lupin walked into the room and began his lecture. All throughout his lecture, he could feel eyes burning into him and when he looked up, it was to see Hermione staring at him, looking concerned. When she noticed he was looking at her, she gave a knowing look, and his thoughts began to run wild.

But the thoughts that dominated his mind were along the lines of, Oh shit, she knows. What am I going to do?

Hermione must have sensed his panic because when he looked at her again she had a soft and kind smile on her face. It held no judgment and no pity, but knowledge and understanding. He relaxed slightly and continued with the lesson until it ended.

When he walked back up to his desk to get things in order, he noticed a bar of chocolate placed on top of a stack of unmarked homework. He looked up surprised, but the room was empty. When he looked to the door he saw Hermione looking at him as if she was searching for something. She looked concerned... For her safety? For his health?

No, she couldn't be worried about my health, he thought.

She must have found whatever she was looking for because she smiled like she had before, softly and kindly.

"Enjoy," was all she said before she turned and left him to his thoughts.

Lupin had done some research over the weekend and he believed he had an idea to the mystery of Hermione Granger. But he was too shocked, now that he knew that she knew his secret. With the chocolate bar in hand, he wandered the halls not having even decided on a destination until he entered Dumbledore's office.

"Remus, we've been expecting you," Dumbledore said.

Lupin looked up surprised to see that he was, in fact, in the headmaster's office. McGonagall and Snape were both there sat in chairs and smirking at him. He sat himself down in the final chair.

"She knows," he stated.

"I told you that she would discover your secret before you did her," McGonagall said smugly.

"Actually, I believe I've known since the weekend," he said.

"Miss. Granger has known since Friday," Snape said, also looking smug. Lupin looked at him. "I believe she suspected long before but wasn't certain until Friday."

Lupin mumbled under his breath childishly.

"So, what did she do?" Snape asked curiously. Lupin put the chocolate bar on the desk in response.

"She smiled at me throughout the lesson, left a chocolate bar on my desk and before she left she looked at me as though she was looking for something. Then she smiled, said 'enjoy' and left," he said dazedly.

McGonagall laughed at him. "I did say she wouldn't care, and she was checking you over for injuries. She was worried about your health. She would likely try and mother you if you weren't her Professor," she said chuckling and Snape agreed with her, nodding his head.

"You believe you have discovered the answer?" Dumbledore said.

"Yes. Soul bonds or mates," he said and Dumbledore nodded.

They spent the next thirty minutes explaining everything to Lupin and when they finished he sat back in his chair.

"Bloody hell," he muttered

"Indeed," Dumbledore said chuckling.

"I'll keep an eye on her and Harry," he said.

"Don't worry about Potter, Miss. Granger has worked miracles in keeping the idiot alive and helping him to pass his classes," Snape drawled, to the less than pleased look on Lupin's face at his clear dislike of Harry.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

Hogwarts - Saturday 13th November 1993

It was the first match of the season; Ravenclaw versus Gryffindor. Oliver had been pushing the team hard during practice. Hermione could feel herself flinch when she saw the team emerging from the locker room wincing and barley being able to walk after every practice, and she was incredibly annoyed that he was making them practice until they were actually injured, but she couldn't do anything about it, knowing that it was Oliver's last year and he wanted to win the Quidditch Cup more than anything in the Wizarding World and likely Muggle World, too.

And with that in mind, Hermione had resigned herself to re-reading every Quidditch book she could, just in case she'd missed something the first time. She was already under pressure from her school work and was exhausted, even with the use of the time turner it was hard to fit everything in, but she was managing, barely.

She was sat in the stands with Ginny, Ron, Neville, Seamus and Dean watching the match take place, and she had lost count of the number of times her heart had almost stopped beating, but Lee, from his place in the commentator's box, always brought her back to reality.

"Gryffindor takes possession of the quaffle, Johnson passes to Bell, who drops it for Spinnet to catch. Wow, look at the aim on that boy, WAY TO GO FRED WEASLEY, that's one of my best friends. Ohhh! Bell drops the quaffle after dodging a bludger. And Davies of Ravenclaw takes possession as he heads for the hoops, he aims, he shoots and... He misses. Brilliant save by keeper and Captain, Oliver Wood. Whoa, look at the speed on that bludger sent to Davies by George Weasley. He's also one of my best friends."

Suddenly, Harry dove for the snitch and he pulled up with the snitch in hand.

"HARRY POTTER CAUGHT THE SNITCH! GRYFFINDOR WINS! 250- 110!"

They celebrated well into the early hours of Sunday morning.

Saturday 20th November 1993

A week later and the Gryffindors were playing against Hufflepuff. They were originally scheduled to play against Slytherin but Malfoy was being a wuss and still complaining about his 'injury' so Marcus Flint had the matches switched around. Hermione hadn't been pleased when she heard the news.

"The weather for this week has been terrible and it's highly likely it will be for the match. That's why they pulled out; they know that Gryffindor will smash them, no matter the weather we have to play in. Honestly, I've seen fleas bigger than Malfoy's 'injury'. It's not our fault he has the temper tantrums of a two-year-old and is a spoilt, slimy, egotistical, arrogant, arsehole," Hermione fumed.

Everyone who had heard her rant burst into laughter and she flushed in embarrassment. Okay, maybe the exhaustion caused by the time turner and excessive load of school work was affecting her mood. She'd just cursed in public! Not that anyone cared, they were too busy laughing.

The weather for the day wasn't at all pleasant, particularly for a Quidditch match and Hermione was in the stands watching the match as usual. Well, what she could see of it anyway, she couldn't even see her own hand in front of her. If it wasn't for Lee in the commentator's box she wouldn't have known that Gryffindor was in the lead.

As the game continued, there was no hope of Harry catching the snitch and suddenly she was hit with inspiration. She did her best to gain Oliver's attention and after five minutes of trying to do so, she mentally screamed in her head out of annoyance, but miraculous, as if hearing her thoughts, Oliver looked over in her direction and being thankful that she had taught him about muggle sports, she made the time out sign with her arms, he nodded and called a time out.

Everyone flew to the ground and under a tent that had been put up.

"What did you call a time out for?" Angelina growled out.

Oliver raised his eyebrow at her and said. "A dunno," he replied, gesturing towards the stands and they turned to see Hermione running towards them as she trudged through the mud.

She had her robes covering her head the best she could but her hair was still soaked and stuck to her face and neck. Just before she reached them she lost her footing and skidded. Oliver caught her around the waist and lifted her upright before she fell flat on her face and he chuckled at her when she huffed.

"Why'd ye call a time oot?"

Hermione grabbed Harry's goggles and glasses off of his face and everyone looked at her confused.

"Impervius," Hermione whispered. "There you go, Harry; they'll repel the water now."

"Brilliant!" Oliver shouted and lifted her up into a hug.

Everyone laughed and smiled except for Angelina. Now, that was one person Hermione didn't feel sorry for after Quidditch practice. When Oliver put her back on the ground she grabbed everyone's goggles and also cast the charm. They could now see, meaning they had all but won the match, all Harry had to do was catch the snitch.

She made her way back to the stands after wishing them good luck, but obviously it wasn't enough, as out of nowhere the sky grew darker and hundreds of hooded figures descended on to the pitch. Harry screamed just as he was about to catch the snitch and fainted, falling off his broom.

Oliver darted away from his place as keeper and raced after him to try and catch him, but Dumbledore stopped him from hitting the ground in time. Hermione couldn't really remember much of what happened as she fell to the ground in complete sadness and despair, with her friends looming over her with anxious expressions.

After the dementors incident, she made her way to the hospital wing where the team surrounded him, but she couldn't see Oliver.

"Where's Oliver?" She heard Harry ask.

"Still in the showers, we think he's trying to drown himself," Fred snorted as she reached the hospital bed.

Fred noticed her expression and he pulled her so that she stood wedged between him and George and the twins gave Harry the news of his Nimbus 2000 losing the fight against the Whomping Willow, something he wasn't about.

They stayed with him for a little while before they had to leave, and Hermione made her way to the locker rooms and she stormed inside.

"OLIVER CHARLES WOOD!"

Oliver winced as he walked out of the showers partially dressed, of course, Hermione didn't bat an eyelash; she was used to seeing him in this form of dress after being around him for years.

"Why haven't you been to see Harry?" she demanded but she didn't allow Oliver the chance to reply. "He thinks that it's his fault that Gryffindor lost. He's blaming himself, and you should be there as the Captain of the team to ensure him that he's not to blame." She glared at him and he paled.

Who would've thought that a six-foot-two, seventeen-year-old man was afraid of a five-foot-two, fourteen-year-old girl?

"Anno an' am sorry, Lassie, a should've gone tae see him but am disappointed we lost the match. This is me last year an' a want tae win the cup fer Gryffindor. It's been tae long since we last won," he said sadly and her expression softened. "Diggory offered us a rematch, he said he wouldn't have caught the snitch if the dementors hadn't af shown up an' attacked Harry. A turned him down, he won fair an' square." Hermione walked up to him and hugged him tightly; she was proud of him. "An' a'll go an' see Harry," he said into her hair.

"And I'll do everything I can to help you and the team succeed in winning the cup," she promised and he sighed happily. When she pulled back from him, he finished dressing and then left for the hospital wing.

Tuesday 23rd November 1993

Hermione was sat in the stands of the Quidditch pitch waiting for the team to emerge from the locker room and begin practice. She had a surprise up her sleeve for Harry; he had been really upset since he had found out the news of his broom, which means that he would also have to use a school broom for the foreseeable future until a new one could be purchased.

The team exited the locker rooms and they stood on the pitch in a semi-circle, listening to Oliver's instructions. Hermione put down her parchment and muggle pen, stood up and then walked down onto the pitch.

"Katie, Alicia and Johnson," he looked to them.

Angelina frowned, since her third year Oliver only referred to her using her last name, and she didn't like it. It's all that bitch, Granger's fault, she growled in her thoughts.

"A want ye tae run drills. Fred, George, a want ye doin' what ye normally would be, Harry, the same fer ye."

As she came to a stop beside Oliver, they all smiled at her in greeting, except Angelina, who didn't look pleased to see her.

"What's she doing here?" Angelina spoke with a barely concealed sneer.

Fred, George and Oliver all narrowed their eyes on her, hearing the clear hatred and malice in her tone.

"Get it through your thick skull, Hermione's here 'cause she's a part of the team, whether you like it or not," Fred said.

"Without her, we don't stand a chance of winning," George added.

"An' she's our secret weapon," Oliver said in a low tone, glaring at Angelina. "Now, it's time fer practice, get on with yer tasks," he snapped.

Everyone mounted their brooms and flew to their respective places. Harry looked at his borrowed school broom and huffed in disappointment before he mounted his broom and went to kick off the ground.

"Harry, wait!" She put her hand on his arm, preventing him from flying.

"Hermione?" He questioned with a confused frown.

"Give me the broom," she instructed, holding her hand out expectantly as he dismounted the broom.

"Why?" He asked, handing it over to her with those in the air was watching on curiously at their interactions.

She took out her wand and pointed it at the broom in her hand, being mindful to concentrate on the broom shed.

"Depulso," she muttered and the broom flew out of her grasp and off towards the broom shed, just as the team descended back on the ground.

"Why the fuck did you do that! He needs that to practice!" Angelina screeched.

Seeming to forget where she was or that Hermione was a third year and two years younger than her; she pulled out her wand and aimed it at Hermione and before anyone could stop her, Angelina had thrown a hex at Hermione.

"Protego," Hermione calmly deflected with the hex bouncing off the shield and ricocheting in the direction it came from. Angelina shrieked and ducked out of the way, the hex narrowly missing her.

Upon seeing that her hex hadn't gotten past Hermione's shield and that she remained unaffected, and being more enraged than ever, Angelina threw hex after hex at Hermione, and none of them landed its target. They all stared in shock, whilst Fred, George and Oliver seemed to be battling between amusement, pride and anger.

Hermione was tired and she'd had enough; she huffed, dropped her shield and then sent a hex of her own at Angelina.

"Batius Bogium," she said and Angelina not expecting it, the hex hit her square in the chest.

Angelina shrieked and screamed as bogies shot out of her nose, grew wings and they proceeded to attack her. Hermione cast the Silencing Charm on Angelina to keep her quiet whilst the others laughed. Hermione turned back to the others, not caring that Angelina was being chased around the pitch.

"Wicked!" The twins said proudly.

"Remind me to never get on her bad side," Harry whispered to Katie and Alicia and they nodded in agreement, slightly fearful of the little witch. "So, why'd you take my broom and where'd it go?" Harry asked, paying no mind to Angelina's cries.

"I used the Banishing Charm and sent it back to the broom shed because you can't use it during practice, let alone a match; it's not safe. The school's brooms are fine for learning to fly, but they don't meet the standards that are needed for a broom that is to be used for sports," she explained.

"So, what am I supposed to do?" He asked sadly.

Hermione pulled out an object from her robes, muttering "Finite Incantatem," and the object grew back to its original size.

She held in her hand the Nimbus 2000 broom that she'd bought the summer before her second year, and the boys recognising it, watched as Hermione held it out to Harry.

"Here, you can use this instead."

"That's a Nimbus 2000. Where'd you get it?" Harry asked, eyeing her strangely.

"I bought it obviously," she said with a roll of her eyes.

"You bought me a new broom? 'Mione I can't accept it. I won't."

"I know and I didn't buy you a new broom, when would I have had the time? This is mine. You can use it until you're able to get another one. And it just so happens it's a Nimbus 2000."

"When did you get a broom? And why did you get a Nimbus 2000? You can't fly," he said confused.

"I bought it last year, it's a Nimbus 2000 because the boys convinced me it was the best model to buy," she said with a shrug.

"And she can fly," George beamed.

"Amazingly actually," Fred nodded, sending her a wink.

"I'm not that good. I'm average at best," she flushed.

"We're talking about the same Hermione, aren't we? The Hermione that was rubbish at flying in first year? The Hermione that's afraid of heights?" Harry said disbelievingly.

"Aye, we are; she's a great flyer now," Oliver beamed proudly.

He turned around, removed his wand from his Quidditch robes and pointed his wand at Angelina, finally cancelling the hex and spell Hermione had hit her with and the witch dropped to the floor exhausted and panting.

"An' much better than Johnson!" He yelled meanly so that Angelina could hear. Hermione's blush darkened.

"Show me?" Harry demanded. Hermione shook her head. "Please, 'Mione" Harry whined childishly.

She huffed and knowing that he wasn't going to let it go, she mounted the broom, kicked off the ground and flew straight into the air. She flattened herself against the broom and she sped around the pitch in a blur-like fashion. She was a hundred feet above the ground when she finally began her descent and landed on the ground smoothly.

"What the bloody hell?" Harry whispered as he stared at Hermione in shock, along with Katie and Alicia. Whereas Angelina had made her way back over to the group and glared at her.

"When did you learn to do that? You were rubbish the last time I saw you fly."

"My boys," Hermione noticed the glare from Angelina hardened and she resisted the urge to smile, "Have been giving me lessons since first year; I no longer have a fear of heights, but I'm still uncomfortable with the thought of possibly falling and plummeting to my death," she said.

"Why didn't we know about this?" He frowned.

"Because I didn't want anyone to know until I was able to fly. And if Ron had known about the lessons he would've just made fun of me," she answered.

"He wouldn't do that," Harry defended.

"Yes, he would, and you know it," she replied. He sighed and reluctantly nodded in agreement.

"Well, Oliver's right, you're a better flyer than Angelina. You could probably take her place on the team if you wanted. I've seen your aim when we were teaching everyone basketball at the Burrow and Wood Manor during summer. You're definitely better than she is," Harry said, deliberately provoking Angelina.

"What?" Angelina screeched, gripping her wand tightly.

"Unless you want a repeat of what happened earlier, I suggest you lower your wand," Hermione said in a dangerous tone that told she shouldn't be messed with. Eyeing her cautiously, she turned back to Harry and once again held out the broom.

"'Mione, I can't take your broom. What if I break it?"

"Yes, you can, you're my friend. And if you break it, then you break it," she shrugged her shoulders. "Take the broom before I hit you with it."

"You wouldn't dare," he challenged. The twins and Oliver chuckled knowingly.

"Oh, Harry, you should know by now; I never refuse a dare," she said sweetly before she hit him on the bum with it.

"Ouch," Harry yelped, rubbing at the aching spot.

"Now take it," she said. "Do you want me to hit you with it again?"

Harry grabbed the broom, mounted it and flew into the air before she could so and she laughed at him.

Saturday 27th November 1993

Hermione was currently walking around Hogsmeade Village with a smile on her face. Fred, George, Lee and Oliver were showing her around and pointing out shops that she may like to visit whilst Hermione beamed in response. Hogsmeade village was no Diagon Alley, but it was amazing in its own right. The village was homey and quaint and Hermione felt comfortable.

They made their way around the village and stopped in at The Three Broomsticks for lunch and a butterbeer. When they finished eating they left and continued around the village before returning back to the castle before dinner. They had visited Honeydukes, Tomes and Scrolls, Zonko's Joke shop, the Quidditch shop and they had even seen the Shrieking Shack; the most haunted and frightening building in Wizarding Britain.

Hermione met up with Harry and Ron in the common room, the boys took her bags except for one and went to their room. Hermione sat down in the armchair near the fire and she picked up the bag, handing it to Harry with a smile. He raised an eyebrow at her and took the bag.

He emptied the contents to find some liquorice wands, fizzing whizzbees, fudge flies and ice mice. She had also bought him some hiccough sweets from Zonko's, and he thanked her. She could tell he was sad when Ron continued to explain his visit to Hogsmeade with Neville, Seamus and Dean, so she kicked him in the shin, effectively shutting him up.

Thursday 9th December 1993

Hermione lay awake in her bedroom surrounded by her sleeping boys in the early hours of the morning. She couldn't sleep; the full moon was currently high in the sky and all she could think about was Professor Lupin. She had only known that he was a werewolf for a month, but she felt the urge to look after him and she knew that wouldn't go down well given her age and that he was her professor. So instead, she stayed awake worrying over him. When it was early enough she dressed, left Gryffindor Tower and snuck down to the hospital wing.

She could hear voices coming from inside and she knew that she had made it on time. She placed down a small wicker basket on the ground, knocked loudly on the wooden doors and when she heard footsteps approaching, she ran and jumped behind the corner, hiding out of sight.

She peeked her head around the corner to see Madam Pomphrey looking quizzically down at the basket. She took out her wand and said a few spells, checking for any spells and charms that may be harmful. When she finished she picked up the basket with a small smile and shut the door behind her. Hermione smiled and made her way back to the common room. She Accio'd some items from her room and proceeded to check over all of her essays.

The next day she had defence against the dark arts and when Professor Lupin entered she looked him up and down seeing that he seemed perfectly alright and she smiled to herself. He looked at her knowingly -obviously knowing that it was she who had left the basket of chocolatey goods for him- and she looked at him innocently. He chuckled at her and began the lesson.

Saturday 25th December 1993

Christmas day had arrived and like the year before, everyone was staying at Hogwarts. Surprisingly Lee wasn't with them. He had been asked to spend Christmas with his Father and step-Mother for a reason no one could fathom.

They all gathered around the Christmas tree in the common room and handed out their gifts to each other before opening them. Hermione had received books, homemade treats and a new Weasley jumper and some more charms for her bracelet. Fred had gotten her a silver cat charm signifying Crookshanks, who had become rather fond of Fred and he boasted about it every chance he got. George had given her a silver elephant charm, as they signified wisdom, family and friendship, and Oliver had given her a silver cloud charm, to signify her ability to fly, and that she was no longer held down – the sky was the limit.

When Harry had opened one of his gifts and pulled out the rather expensive and newly released Firebolt broom, she was both pleased and worried.

She allowed the things she had learned from Harry over the previous week after he had snuck out into Hogsmeade, as well as the events that had happened that year, to run through her mind.

Number one – Sirius Black was a deranged murderer and he was on the loose.

Number two – Sirius Black had caused the death of Harry's parents and was more than likely after Harry.

Number three – Sirius Black would do anything to get to Harry and hurt him.

Number four – Sirius Black had already broken into the school and tried to gain entrance into Gryffindor Tower, and when he was refused he slashed up the portrait of The Fat Lady.

Number five – a broom had just shown up out of nowhere without the sender attaching a name or a message.

Alarm bells were ringing and she couldn't ignore them.

"Harry, I think we should take the broom to Professor McGonagall," she spoke.

"What!" shouted five male voices and one female voice. Percy just sat watching in interest, wanting to hear the logic behind her suggestion, whilst Ginny looked confused.

"Think about it, out of nowhere a broom just shows up, with no name or message."

"That doesn't mean anything," Ron said gruffly.

"Sirius Black tried to break into Gryffindor Tower on Halloween or do you not remember that fun little camp out we had in the great hall?" she snapped.

Fred, George and Oliver all paled slightly as they remembered that frightful Halloween night.

*Flashback… Sunday 31st October 1993*

They were all heading back to Gryffindor Tower after the Halloween feast, and when they weren't paying attention they bumped into someone in front of them. Pandemonium ensued as screams could be heard through the corridors that the Fat Lady was missing from the portrait and it had been considerably damaged. When Dumbledore appeared, a search for the Fat Lady went underway until she was found in another portrait. She gave her story of a dishevelled man caked in dirt and mud, trying to gain entrance into the common room without a password. When she refused, he got angry and attacked her.

Every student in Hogwarts was sent to the great hall for the night whilst the professors searched the school. The boys had cocooned Hermione between them and formed a protective shield around her. They were livid when they saw the glares and sneers sent her way whilst she was sleeping, but then they remembered what Ginny had said about the girls being jealous. So they played it up to amuse themselves and provoke the girls. They fawned over Hermione's sleeping form and when they were tired they snuggled down and fell asleep, looking both smug and peaceful.

*Present time…*

They shook off the memories.

"Love, I doubt anyone would do anything to the broom," George tried to reassure her.

"Why not, George? His broom was jinxed in first year. What's stopping it from happening again?" She said and glared at everyone in the room.

"We're not telling McGonagall," Ron said bad-tempered.

"Professor!" Hermione scolded, and she ran out of the common room and to her dorm room. She slammed the door shut and flung herself onto her bed -not theirs- and cried into the pillow.

A couple of minutes, later there was a knock at the door.

"Go away!" she said, her words muffled by the pillow.

The door opened and closed, mattress dipped as someone sat on the bed beside her. When she looked, she saw someone she wasn't expecting.

"Percy? What're you doing here?" She said with her face buried back in the pillow.

"I came to check on you," he answered.

"Why? Surely you agree with them."

"Me? Perfect Percy? Head boy? Agree with those rule-breakers?" He held his hand against his chest in mock outrage. She giggled at him and turned over to face him. He smiled; he'd gotten the reaction he had wanted. He'd made her smile.

"Do you agree with them? Am I overreacting?" She asked quietly.

"I think you're trying to protect him. If you tell someone then they'll check it over and if the broom is jinxed, they'll get rid of it or try to remove the jinxes. If it's checked over and the broom is perfectly safe, then he'll get it back. No harm done."

"Except he'll hate me for taking away his stupid broom," she muttered.

"Yes, but he'll get over it when he realises that you were just trying to protect him. It's what you do; protect people. You do it without even realising it," he said. "Like you're doing with Professor Lupin," he added with a smirk.

Hermione's eyes widened, she grabbed her wand and cast a Silencing Charm around the bed –in case one of the boys entered- and looked at Percy.

"I have no idea what you're talking about, Perce," she denied.

"Oh, so you don't know about his monthly date with the full moon?" he said innocently.

"How long have you known?"

"How long have you known?" He echoed.

"Since the full moon at the beginning of November," she said.

"Since the full moon at the beginning of December," he replied, slightly put out that she had discovered it before him.

"Have you told anyone?" she asked.

"No, it's his secret. You?"

"No, it's not his fault and he suffers enough without the students making nasty comments about his condition, or the parents complaining that the school's employed a werewolf."

"You're helping him, at least you're trying to," he said

"How do you know?" she asked suspiciously.

"First of all, as I said, you like to help and protect people whether they need it or not. Secondly, I know you. Thirdly, I am the head boy and it's my job to know what's going on around school. And finally, I saw you leave the tower and I followed you to the hospital wing," he said sheepishly.

"Percy! That was badly behaved and against the rules," she said and he blushed. "I'm so proud of you!" she exclaimed and he chuckled at her.

"I've been spending too much time around you, you're a bad influence," he sighed and she giggled at him.

"So do you think I should tell Professor McGonagall about the broom?"

"I think you should do what you think is right. Now, how's the prank on the twins coming?" He asked with a mischievous glint in his eyes and she smiled.

"I'm working on it, it needs to be done perfectly or they may suspect something's up. Plus, I'm swamped with all of my school work and studying," she said.

"I don't know how you do it, you look exhausted." She nodded her agreement. "Maybe you should have a rest."

"I can't, I have tons of research, studying and homework to do."

"No, you're going to have a nap and once you wake, you're going to come down for the Christmas feast and then you can do some work later on," he said with a tone that showed he would not be swayed. She sighed in defeat before crawling under the covers. "I'll wake you up before the feast," Percy said.

A few hours later Hermione was woken by Percy, she dressed and headed down to the common room, to find that the boys were still fawning over Harry's bloody broom and ignoring her. She walked down to the great hall with Percy and she sat next to him rather than her boys. The professors noticed and raised an eyebrow in surprise. Professor Dumbledore, Snape, McGonagall and Lupin shared a look of worry and observed the group of teenagers throughout the feast.

When the food had been eaten, everyone left. She went in the opposite direction and hid behind a suit of armour waiting for them to be out of sight.

"Where's she going?" Ron asked snidely.

"She has some work to complete and she needed some books from the library," Percy said, looking down at his younger brother.

"Of course, she's going to the library, because she doesn't have a life. Her and that stupid cat of hers get on my nerves. The monster keeps trying to eat Scabbers. 'Oh Ronald, what do you expect? He's a cat?' 'Ronald, leave Crookshanks alone; it's not his fault.' 'Oh Ronald, maybe you should keep Scabbers out of Crookshanks' reach,'" he said, mocking Hermione.

The twins and Oliver were walking behind them and obviously hadn't heard him mocking Hermione. If they had Ron wouldn't have gotten off lightly. Percy winced slightly as many scenarios ran through his thoughts, none of them pleasant for his little brother.

"The only reason she wants to take Harry's broom away is that she's jealous he has the best broom in the Wizarding World and that Harry's a better flyer than her. She's rubbish, she can barely hover off the ground," he snorted.

Percy bristled at hearing his brother talking about Hermione that way, but he couldn't really do anything except give him detention which would only make the situation worse.

Harry spoke up defending Hermione. After all, she wasn't there to do it herself.

"Actually, Hermione's an amazing flyer."

Ron burst out laughing. "Good one, Harry," he said, still chuckling.

"I'm being serious, she's an amazing flyer. She could give me a run for my galleons if she wanted to. Fred, George and Oliver have been giving her lessons since first year."

"Yeah right, Mate, like they would waste their time teaching her. She's useless when she gets anywhere near a broom," he shook his head.

"Where do you think I got the Nimbus 2000 I've been using? It's hers and she gave it to me to use until I got a new one. I watched her fly around the Quidditch pitch, she's a better flyer than Angelina; and she really didn't like that I rubbed it in her face," he said laughing.

Meanwhile, Hermione had snuck back into the great hall, she made her way to the head's table and stopped in front of Professor McGonagall.

"Professor, I was wondering if I could talk to you for a moment."

"Of course, Dear," she replied. She looked at Dumbledore and he nodded "Why don't we talk in Professor Dumbledore's office?" she said and Hermione nodded in agreement.

They quickly made their way to his office and they took their seats opposite his desk. Professors Dumbledore, Snape and Lupin walked in and took their seats before facing Hermione. She didn't know why they were all present, but she didn't see the point in questioning it.

"Now, Miss. Granger, what would you like to discuss with us?" Dumbledore asked.

"I'm worried about Harry, sir," she said, nibbling at her lip.

"And why are you worried about Harry?"

"Well, he received a gift that has led to me having some concerns on the reasoning behind it."

"And why do you have concerns? It is Christmas."

"Well sir, the gift he received was a Firebolt broom and there was no name or message attached. I know that it's just a gift but then I remembered that Harry's broom was jinxed in first year," she turned to Professor Snape and said, "I never did apologise for setting your robes on fire, so I'm sorry, Professor." McGonagall snorted and Lupin laughed at hearing that bit of news for the first time.

"I should've known it was you," Snape said, with an amused twitch of the lip. She turned back to Dumbledore.

"I remembered everything that has already happened this year and Harry getting a broom sent to him for Christmas by an unknown person when he just so happens to need a new one, makes me anxious."

"I see your reasoning; we will confiscate the broom and run diagnostics to make sure that it is indeed safe. If your suspicions prove to be false then the broom will be returned to Mr. Potter as soon as possible."

"Thank you, Professors," she said and she stood to make her leave when she was stopped at the door.

"How will Harry take this news?" Lupin asked curiously.

"Not very well, I tried to explain to him this morning the significance of turning the broom in, but he and the others didn't like the idea and waved off my suspicions. I imagine that when he finds out I told you, he will not be too happy with me, but I'd rather be safe than sorry. If I lose his friendship at least he won't be harmed."

"You're always protecting him aren't you?" Lupin said as a statement rather than a question.

"He needs it. He's not exactly the perfect rule-abiding citizen, is he? Trouble always seems to find him, and if I don't protect him, no one else will, and he certainly won't look after himself," she said and then she left the room.

"She really does mother people," Lupin remarked.

"I don't think she realises that she does it. It's just a part of her. I told you she would keep Harry safe. She's risking her friendship with him and the others to protect him," McGonagall said.

"And by the looks of it, she is risking the bonds between her mates also," Dumbledore said gravely.

"What do you mean?" Snape asked as everyone snapped their eyes on him.

"Well, they may be her mates but the current bond share is not yet complete. It can be broken. And if that happens, it will not end well for anyone involved. The children are fragile at this stage in their lives and they need to be observed closely. We can't allow for the bonds between them to fall apart," Dumbledore said and everyone took a moment to digest the information. Then Dumbledore changed the subject to something slightly more cheerful. "So Remus, how did you find the basket of treats Miss. Granger left for you outside of the hospital wing?" Dumbledore asked, his eyes twinkling and the others chuckled.

"They were quite good. I don't know where she got muggle chocolate from, but I haven't had any since…Well, I can't actually remember."

"Bopsy likely acquired it for her," McGonagall said.

"The house-elf?" Lupin asked.

"Yes, they seem rather taken with her, Bopsy, in particular. You should see the way she is with them," she said with a chuckle and Lupin raised an eyebrow in response.

"She sometimes sneaks into the kitchens to visit the hose-elves, when she leaves the house-elves visit with us and shower Miss. Granger with compliments," she chuckled with a smile.

So, it wasn't just werewolves and humans she cared for, but house-elves, too, Lupin thought.

Hermione had gone to the library to work on some essays for the many classes she had. She used the time turner to give herself another couple of hours before curfew came around. She eventually made her way back to the common room and when she entered her 'family' rounded on her.

"What the hell did you tell for?!" Harry fumed.

Everyone who had stayed for the holidays -not that there was many besides the Weasleys- watched on in shocked horror.

"To make sure the Firebolt was safe for your use," she replied calmly, having prepared herself for his outburst.

"It's been confiscated until further notice!"

"Yes, so that the Firebolt can be analysed for any possibly harmful spells, dark magic or substances"

"He needs tha' broom fer Quidditch! Ye said tha' ye would do anythin' tae help us win, but ye took the broom away!" Oliver yelled at her.

Her insides began to twist and turn.

Oliver had never once raised his voice at her. He had never even made a cruel comment or disrespected her in any way before. She was in complete shock and felt as though she was about to burst into tears. It hurt her to have him angry at her, but she wasn't backing down for anyone. She had made her choice and she was sticking to it. Harry's safety was paramount.

"And I will help you win, having the Firebolt will not make a difference to Harry's skill and he still has my Nimbus 2000. It's not like I've left him or the team without options."

"But it's a Firebolt!"

"Would you rather have Harry on a safe, reliable broom or a broom that is likely to be jinxed and that would have the ability to kill him? Do you want your friend to die? We discussed this last year Oliver. You promised you wouldn't put your friends in danger," she said to him.

She looked around the room to see that no one was going to stand up for her. But when she looked at Percy he smiled proudly at her, she gave him a small smile, so small it was barely there. She looked at Fred and George to see the same annoyed expression on their faces.

Her heart and stomach gave a powerful tug and she ran up to her room. She flung the door open and ran to the bathroom, just as she emptied the contents of her stomach into the toilet. She flushed the chain and brushed her teeth before she climbed on her bed in the corner of the room, closed the curtains and cast a Silencing Charm, cutting herself off from the world and she cried herself to sleep.

Friday 7th January 1994

No one besides Ginny and Percy had really spoken to her in the last two weeks. Ron would yell at her for Crookshanks trying to attack Scabbers and she would yell back, causing many arguments. Ron would yell at her and call her a traitor and Harry would look at her like she had, in fact, betrayed him. But that didn't stop him from using her broom, which made Hermione hopeful; if he was still willingly using her broom then maybe he would forgive her.

Oliver could barely look at her and she got the feeling that it was because he was ashamed at the way he had treated her. Fred and George would look at her sadly and stare at her because they didn't know what to say to her. Everyone had been sleeping in their separate beds. The boys still looked rested because they were in close proximity to Hermione but they didn't like sleeping without her beside them. She didn't have Lee to talk to as he had not yet returned to school and he wouldn't until Sunday.

Hermione, on the other hand, had been throwing herself into her school work and using the time turner more often than usual. If you looked closely enough you would see the exhaustion in her body and she ate less, too. She wasn't suffering physically like she had the Christmas of first year, rather, this time, it was emotionally.

Hermione knew that Harry was due to start his Patronus lessons later tonight. She was interested in what was required in order to cast a Patronus, so she had done extensive research in the library. Of course, she had to use the time-turner more than usual which just drained her and she was exhausted, but she wasn't going to give up. She was fascinated by the subject and knew how complicated the magic was to cast. She was curious to know if she was able to cast a Patronus, too. After all, she had been perfecting sixth year spells and charms since her first year. She also needed something to distract herself from the feelings of loss and despair.

For that reason, she had found an empty classroom on the fifth floor corridor in the east wing; putting her two floors directly below the Gryffindor common room. She had silenced the room and locked the door making sure that no one would be able to find her.

She read through the passage on casting the Patronus a few more times before attempting it the charm for the first time.

She brought up one of the happiest moments she could think of, raised her wand and said, "Expecto Patronum."

She opened her eyes and nothing happened. She frowned, she had been thinking of baking a cake for the first time with her mother. She was five and they had ended up making a mess. Somehow flour had gotten onto the ceiling and eggshells had gotten in the plant pot on the kitchen window sill.

She had been smiling thinking of that memory and then frowned when she realised she would likely never be able to bake with her mum again. She shook her head and tried again. She brought another memory to the forefront of her mind and raised her wand.

Two hours later, Hermione had only managed to produce a small wisp of blue smoke. She was annoyed at herself. She packed everything away and made her way back to her dorm room. She snuck in and jumped into bed trying not to wake the boys.

Saturday 5th February 1994

It was late at night and Hermione was walking around The Hogwarts' grounds. She didn't care that it was after curfew and that she could get caught. She had just gotten into another argument in the common room with Ron.

It had been over a month since the Firebolt incident had occurred. Lee had not taken any sides and continued to be friends with both Hermione and the boys, splitting his time between them, and she felt awful putting him in that position. Ginny did her best to cheer her up, but it didn't work and Percy would read with her when he wasn't doing his work or head boy duties. Fred, George and Oliver still hadn't spoken to her, but would often send sad looks her way when they thought she wasn't paying attention. Harry would look at her like he wanted to forgive her but he couldn't. But Ron was the worst; whenever she would walk past him, he would call her a traitor and Hermione would feel like she'd just died inside.

I'm just trying to protect him, can't they see that? Why am I the only one trying to protect Harry? She would think to herself in those moments.

Hermione had gotten into an argument over Scabbers and Crookshanks, before running out of the common room crying and in search of her beloved familiar.

She was currently walking along the edge of the Forbidden Forest when Crookshanks finally appeared.

"There you are, Crookshanks," she said, "Don't listen to that idiot," she approached Crookshanks and he looked towards the forest. "What? You want me to follow you?" She asked and he looked at her. "In there?" She said uncertainly. "Well, okay then," she begrudgingly agreed.

She pulled out her wand from her robes and cast a Lumos Solem. "Lead the way, Crookshanks," she swept her arm out in a gesture and she followed her familiar into the forest.

They had been walking for fifteen minutes when they stopped in front of a large tree.

"What? Is this what you wanted to show me?" She asked. The cat sat down and Hermione took the hint and sat down on the ground. Crookshanks then stood up and walked into a large cluster of trees. "Where are you going?" She called after him and he meowed impatiently in response.

Crookshanks walked back out and stopped in front of her. A few feet behind Crookshanks there was a large black dog and it was slowly approaching her.

"Is this your friend, Crooks? Is this where you disappear to for hours on end?" She asked as the dog stopped in front of her.

She tentatively reached her hand out and allowed the dog to sniff at it. The dog nudged her hand and she took the hint and scratched its head and behind its ears. Hermione allowed her thoughts to travel back to every interaction and argument since Christmas day, and she sighed in despair.

"Why am I the only one who wants to protect Harry, Crookshanks?" She asked, looking down at the ginger fur-ball curled up in her lap. "Can't they see that I did what I did to keep him safe? It feels like I'm the only that cares whether he gets hurt or not. He seems to attract trouble and he needs help. I knew that I'd lose his friendship and it was worth knowing that he would be safe, but I thought he would've forgiven me by now. I don't think I can take this much longer. Everyone is calling me a traitor. I'm a traitor because I want to protect Harry? How does that even make sense, Crookshanks?" Hermione rattled off, talking to no one but her cat and the strange dog. She'd begun to cry and the dog whimpered. She snapped herself out of her self-pity.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said with a chuckle as she wiped her eyes with the back of her hand before she continued to scratch the dog's head. "Here I am, wallowing in self-pity because my so-called friends are calling me a traitor for having their best interests at heart, and I bet you've been out here for a while, haven't you? You must be hungry. I'll see what I can do."

She wiped her face once more and then she cast a Glamour Charm so that Bopsy wouldn't notice that she'd been crying.

"Bopsy," she called softly.

"What cans Bopsy dos for, Misses 'Mione?" The little elf bowed as she appeared before her.

"Hello, Bopsy, I was wondering if you could please bring me some food for my friend here. I don't think he's eaten in a while," she said.

"Yours friend, Misses 'Mione," Bopsy said, eyeing the large black dog suspiciously.

"Yes, Bopsy, my friend. This is..." Hermione looked down at the dog and back at Bopsy and smiled. "This is Mr. Snuffles."

Bopsy disappeared with a pop and Hermione looked down at 'Mr. Snuffles'.

"You get used to him, he's quite bossy actually," she chuckled.

Bopsy appeared with three bowls on a tray, it holding pieces of chicken, pork and beef in one bowl and it was filled to the brim. Another bowl had some fish bits in for Crookshanks and the other bowl was filled with water.

"Thank you, Bopsy, we really appreciate it. Oh, I have a surprise for you," Hermione said, and she pointed her wand. "Accio Bopsy's surprise," she muttered, and soon, Hermione held her hand out and caught the item before holding it out to the little elf. "Here you go, Bopsy, I made this for you. And before you say that you don't want to be a free elf, if you accept this it will not make you a free elf as you are bound to Hogwarts, and not its students. This is a friend giving another friend a gift."

Bopsy took hold of the gift and opened it. It was a white t-shirt and on the front Hermione had charmed it to say different phrases. It currently said in bold black capital lettering 'Misses 'Mione loves Bopsy'. Bopsy stared at Hermione.

"And it's charmed, Bopsy, all you have to do it click your fingers and the phrase on the front changes. You have several different phrases to choose from, I'll show you."

Hermione clicked her fingers and the phrase changed to say '#1 house elf'. She clicked her fingers again and then it said, 'I'm the boss of the kitchens'. She clicked her fingers again and it said 'I pranked the Weasley Twins'. Hermione clicked her fingers one last time and it changed back into the original phrase.

Bopsy was speechless until he flung himself at Hermione and cried. Hermione hugged him gently and chuckled at him. He finally got his bearings and pulled away.

"Misses 'Mione is too kinds tos Bopsy," he said with tears fresh in his eyes.

"Bopsy, I could never be too kind to you, you're one of my best friends. Family even," she corrected and Bopsy started crying again.

"Misses 'Mione bests bes careful, she may gets caughts after curfews by that nasty man and his cat," he said.

"Bopsy, don't worry about me. I memorised the Marauders Map in my first year. I may no longer have it because the boys and I made the decision to give it to Harry, but I still know where all the hidden passageways and tunnels are. I won't get caught, I promise."

Bopsy nodded and left.

Hermione sighed and leaned back against the tree as she watched the dog wolf down the food.

"Harry James Potter, I could kill you! Merlin, Crookshanks, I love him but he's a bloody spanner sometimes," she said, running her hands through her hair in frustration. Crookshanks cocked his head to the side. "It's a muggle thing, Crooksy. All of this mess is over a bloody broom," she sighed in exhaustion.

The black dog looked at her once all of the food had been eaten and then all of a sudden, the dog began to shift until a man stood before her. A dirty, dishevelled man that looked familiar. She'd obviously seen him from somewhere before but she couldn't quite remember where. Then she looked closer...

It was Sirius Black.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Hogwarts - Saturday 5th February 1994

Hermione stared open-mouthed. The murderer Sirius Black was stood in front of her; she'd just fed him, petted him and practically cuddled with him!

"Are you going to say something?" He asked amused, his eyebrow cocked.

Hermione wasn't expecting that tone of voice to come from him. He didn't sound or even behave like a murderer, well, not that she knew how a murderer behaved. She carefully stood; her wand in her hand and leaning against the tree for support.

"I was not expecting that. An Animagus and an unregistered one I'm guessing," she said, still shocked and her eyes wide.

He laughed at her. "Of all the things to say to me, you say that you're surprised I'm an unregistered Animagus? You didn't even scream. You don't seem scared of me considering I'm a murderer."

"If you want me to scream I could if you'd like?" He shook his head 'no'. "Well, I imagine if you wanted to kill me you would've done it a while ago. My Crookshanks brought me to you and he's an excellent judge of character, if he thought you'd want to hurt me I wouldn't be here now." He just stared at her as if trying to read her."So, I take it you wanted something from me in particular," she said calmly, despite mentally going over hexes she could use to subdue him if needs be.

"I need your help."

"What? To kill Harry? My best friend? Sorry, but I would rather die," she said with conviction in her voice. He arched an eyebrow at her statement but his facial features hardened and he flinched slightly.

"I don't want to kill Harry."

"Weren't you put in Azkaban for murdering fourteen people, including Harry's parents?" She said as a statement.

"I'm innocent. I'm not a murderer. I would never hurt James or Lily. I would lay down my life for theirs!" He yelled.

"I never said that you did kill anyone, I said that you were incarcerated for it," she corrected.

"You think I'm innocent?" He said shocked, his anger taking a back seat for the time being.

"I never said that either. But you have to admit the evidence against you rather compelling."

"That was my fault, I acted rashly. I went after the real murderer and it didn't turn out so well."

She snorted. "That's an understatement," she said and he mock glared at her. "Sorry, please continue, the floors all yours."

"I was imprisoned for murdering all those innocent people. If I had stayed at the house, I would've been Harry's guardian and he wouldn't have had to grow up without his family," he said sadly.

"He's living with his aunt, uncle and cousin. The Dursleys, they're awful people," she said with a scowl on her face.

"I know; when I escaped I discovered where he was taken as a baby and I went to watch over him. I wanted to see his guardians, and from what I witnessed, they weren't nice people. I saw him storm out of the house with someone chasing after him and yelling. I waited until the knight bus showed up before I left."

"Do you know they abused him? Maybe not physically, but it was still abuse. For years they made him sleep in a cupboard under the stairs. Last year they put bars on his bedroom window and locked him in his room. The boys had to rescue him by pulling the bars off his window with a flying car. He wasn't allowed any connection to the Wizarding World or any of his friends. They wouldn't let him send letters. They wouldn't allow him to let Hedwig out of her cage and they wouldn't even let him do his homework. They have told all of their muggle relatives that he goes to a reform school for troubled boys, where they beat him until his behaviour improves."

"No, I didn't know all of that, but now that I do, I'm going to kill them," he said furiously.

"I thought you weren't a murderer, that would kind of defeat the purpose of you protesting your innocence," she mused innocently. He stopped, looked at her and burst out laughing. "And just so you know, when I'm of age and legally allowed to do magic out of school, I will be paying The Dursleys a visit," she said, with an evil glint in her eyes.

"I don't doubt you will," he replied. He couldn't decide whether he should be amused or afraid.

She couldn't believe it. She was having a civil conversation with a convicted murderer in the out of bounds Forbidden Forest. She was about to speak when she heard a noise; twigs and leaves crunching under the heavyweight of something. Something was heading their way.

"Quick, you have to hide," she touched his arm so that she could push him behind a tree.

But when she touched him her body shivered. She felt dizzy and a powerful sensation began in her head. She felt like she had a migraine, before image after image swam, around in her brain. It began with Sirius and three other boys. One looked like Harry, one looked like a younger Professor Lupin and the other she didn't know. Then it changed to an image of laughter and happiness as the boys ran through the hallways of what was clearly Hogwarts, wearing a uniform and Gryffindor colours.

Then it changed to an image of a stag, a werewolf, a black dog and a rat during the full moon. The next image showed the wedding of a man that looked like Harry and a woman with red hair. The best men were Sirius and Professor Lupin. Then it changed to one of a baby and everyone was crowding around him and taking turns to hold him whilst they laughed and joked around.

Then it changed to one of Sirius suggesting that he not be the secret keeper and instead someone named Wormtail should be used. It changed into an image of a house wreckage and a distraught Sirius, followed by Sirius yelling at someone at wand point before an explosion occurred. The last image showed Sirius being thrown into a dark, cold and damp cell.

She gasped, let go of him and stumbled backwards.

"What is it?" he asked anxiously.

"You didn't do it. You're innocent. Someone named Wormtail did," she muttered, looking at him with wide eyes full of knowledge and understanding, but also disbelief and confusion.

"You believe me," he whispered.

"Yes, I don't know how, but I saw it. When I touched you, I saw what happened."

He was about to speak when someone stopped in front of them.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here? You're so getting expelled for this. Who would've thought Gryffindor's Princess and know-it-all is a traitor? Working with a murderer to kill her so-called best friend? I guess I know why everyone is calling you a traitor now."

"Angelina, what are you doing here? Are you following me?"

"I knew that it was only a matter of time before I caught you doing something, but I never dreamed that I would find you plotting a murder. When I tell Dumbledore what you're up to, he'll have to expel you and you'll be sent to Azkaban for the attempted murder of Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived."

"First of all, it's Professor Dumbledore, have some respect. Secondly, don't call Harry that, he doesn't like it. He has a name so use it. Thirdly, I'm not plotting Harry's death; I've spent the last two and a half years keeping him alive and passing his classes you moronic bint. And lastly, what is your problem?"

"You! You're my problem. The way Oliver and the twins fawn all over you, it's disgusting," she sneered.

"So let me get this straight, you're jealous that three of my best friends spend time with me. You're jealous that they like me better than you. You're mad that Oliver makes you do drills every practice as a punishment. You're mad that you're one of the twins' favourite targets for their pranks. You're mad they threaten to replace you on the team with me because they think that I'm a better flyer than you?"

"You've never even played Quidditch before," she snarled.

"True, but I'm a Muggleborn and my Father was into a lot of different sports. He taught me the rules of every game he knew. I know every rule and play ever made in Quidditch. I know every outcome of every World Cup match and I know player statics. You put all of that together along with the different abilities I have learned from watching and being forced to play in muggle sports; I'm already a better candidate than you. And the boys have spent three years getting me over my fear of heights and flying, so now I'm a fair flyer too," she said glaring.

Sirius watched in both confusion and amusement, whilst Angelina's glare hardened.

"oh, I almost forgot, the boys also don't like you because you were responsible for my near death," Hermione said sweetly.

"No, I wasn't," she denied quickly.

"Do you think I'm an idiot? There's a reason people call me 'The Brightest Witch.'"

"What? Really?" Sirius asked surprised. Hermione shrugged her shoulders. "Wait, what do you mean she caused your near death?" he asked, glaring at Angelina who paled at the terrifying look on the face of the convicted murderer.

"Oh, I was terribly bullied for my first few weeks of school; they physically abused me and pushed me out of my own dorm room and then the common room. I ended up sleeping in abandoned classrooms at night, and when that wasn't enough, they attacked me and poisoned me with Venomous Tentacula."

"WHAT?" he snarled, looking murderous and Angelina looked to be on the verge of passing out in fear.

"Now, Mr. Black, do you think that a couple of first years, who had never heard of this plant before would think to use it, knowing what it could possibly do to me?"

"No, they wouldn't have thought of that themselves," he agreed.

"So they had help, from someone older and who could steal a section of the plant from the greenhouse then?" she asked, he nodded at her statement.

When she looked at him and saw the livid look in his eyes she spoke to calm him down.

"Oh don't worry, Mr. Black, I got my own back and maybe I will show you the photos later," she said with the glint in her eyes he was beginning to recognise wasn't good for those on the receiving end of it.

"You took photos?" He asked, his anger fading into amusement.

"Of course, such genius had to be documented. It also reminds people they shouldn't mess with me."

Hermione saw Angelina lift her wand and point it at her from the corner of her eye.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you. Don't you remember what happened the last time you raised your wand to me?" Angelina sneered at her. "As I recall, it didn't end well for you. It must have really annoyed you that someone, two years younger than you, out-duelled you," she said sweetly. Sirius barked out a laugh.

Angelina threw a hex at Hermione but she had already anticipated this move.

"Protego Totalum," Hermione said clearly and a powerful shield formed in front of both herself and Sirius.

Sirius stared in shock. "Nice reflexes, how do you know that spell, it isn't taught until sixth year?" he said.

"I got bored," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "I needed something to do."

A few hexes later Hermione huffed. "I don't know about you Sirius but I'm bored." With that said she lowered the shield and sent a spell in Angelina's direction. "Silencio," followed by a "Batius Bogium."

As Angelina ran around in circles, Sirius was laughing hysterically and leaning against a tree for support.

"That's one I haven't heard before. Merlin the things we could've done in school with that one," he managed to get out through his rumbling laughter and she raised an eyebrow at him, before cancelling both spells.

"Are you going to leave now?" Hermione asked. Angelina glared and sent a hex her way. Hermione dodged it. "I guess not. Stupefy," Hermione said. She walked up to Angelina, "Petrificus Totalus, I'm sorry about this, but I can't let you turn in an innocent man. Obliviate."

Hermione focused on what see wanted Angelina to forget.

"Somno Leporem. Sirius, can you turn back for a minute please?" she asked kindly. As soon as he changed back she called for Bopsy.

"Bopsy!"

"What can Bopsy dos for yous, Misses 'Mione?"

"Bopsy, can you please take Angelina back to her dorm room? She followed and attacked me; I didn't hurt her, she's just asleep."

"Of course, Misses 'Mione."

"Thank you, Bopsy," she replied, as the house-elf left with a slumbering Angelina in tow. Sirius changed back.

"What was that spell? The last one you used? I've never heard of it," he asked with a frown.

"Somno Leporem, it's a Sleeping Charm; I created it a few weeks back. I was bored and noticed that there weren't any Sleeping Charms or Spells apart from the one that puts someone into a deep sleep. It only lasts a maximum of eight hours and I thought it would be useful."

"You invented that charm?" he asked surprised.

"I was bored," she shrugged her shoulders.

He shook out of his stupor. "So you said that you knew I was innocent. How?"

She sat down on the ground and he followed suit. Crookshanks waddled over from out of his hiding place and laid down in-between them.

"When I touched you I saw some images. It was like a vision or a movie that was playing out in my mind."

"What did you see?" he asked, both shocked and curious.

She frowned, nibbling at her lips whilst she tried to remember what was shown to her, and once she did, she recalled the images for Sirius.

"Did you use a spell?"

"No, I just touched you."

He held his hand out for her to take. "Try again," he encouraged her. She hesitantly grabbed his hand, but nothing happened.

"No, nothing happened."

"What did she mean? That girl when she called you a traitor? You were talking about it earlier, but when taken out of context it's difficult to understand."

"My friends, they're more like my family really, think I betrayed them, betrayed Harry because I told Professor McGonagall about a gift Harry received at Christmas"

"What gift?"

"It was a Firebolt broom." Hermione saw the recognition in Sirius's eyes. "So it was you who sent it?"

"Yep, afraid so," he nodded.

"I suspected it was. And I guess it wasn't jinxed to kill Harry?" he shook his head. She sighed. "Sorry," she muttered.

"What for?" he asked curiously.

"When Harry received the gift with no name or message attached, my mind went into overdrive and I couldn't stop it. You were a convicted murderer and you had already broken into Hogwarts once before and attacked The Fat Lady. Everyone assumed you were after Harry so that you could kill him. When the broom arrived when he conveniently needed one I remembered everything. I was worried that the broom had been jinxed. I tried to get the boys to turn it into the Professors so that it could be checked to be certain that it was safe for use. When they blatantly refused I gave them my reasons for wishing to do so but they wouldn't listen. So I weighed up my options and told the Professors myself.

"The broom was confiscated so diagnostic charms could be run and everyone is mad at me. That's why they're calling me a traitor. When his broom was destroyed I gave him mine to use, he's still using it now so it's not like I left him without a broom. Anyway, the broom doesn't change Harry's talent. It doesn't matter what broom he has, he's still an amazing seeker. I'm sorry because I assumed the worst in you and I'm responsible for getting your gift to Harry taken away from him."

"It doesn't matter, it's only a broom. And I'm not mad that you assumed the worse, all you've heard or learned about me is from the newspapers, and of course, you believed it. I'm rather glad that Harry has someone like you to watch out for him. I would be upset if you hadn't have notified a Professor. You're correct in your thinking; I could've easily jinxed that broom to hurt Harry."

"It's better to be safe than sorry," Hermione said and he nodded in agreement. "I knew I would lose his friendship if I did it, but I would rather feel alone and have everyone mad at me, rather than having to bury my best friend at the age of thirteen."

"Has he forgiven you yet?"

"No, no one in Gryffindor's really spoken to me since Christmas day. Harry just looks at me like he wants to forgive me but he can't. Ronald glares at me, calls me a traitor or yells at me for Crookshanks trying to eat Scabbers. Fred, George and Ollie look at me in utter sadness and despair but they don't know what to say to me or how to say it. I can kind of feel it and it's clear in their eyes and body language. Lee still talks to me, he hasn't taken sides. Ginny tries to cheer me up but it doesn't work and Percy reads with me when he isn't doing work or his head boy duties. The bloody Slytherins love the fact that everyone in Gryffindor hates me. I've lost count of how many times I've had to stop myself from hexing someone," she said and he chuckled at her.

"Wait a minute!" Her voice as a metaphorical light bulb went off above her head. "Scabbers, Crookshanks really does seem to have it out for him, even if he is a cat," she said, looking at her cat suspiciously. "You called him Wormtail. I've seen that name on the Marauders Map. And in that vision, I had there was a rat, a werewolf, a black dog and a stag. On the Marauders map, it also says Moony, Prongs and Padfoot."

"You know about the Marauders map?" he asked surprised. She shushed him and she began to put the pieces together.

"Oh, I'm so stupid," she smacked herself on the forehead. "Wormtail is the rat, you're the black dog which makes you Padfoot, Professor Lupin is obviously Moony which means that that man I saw, the one that looks like Harry is his Dad, the stag and Prongs," she said triumphantly.

"You know Moony's a werewolf?"

This one's full of surprises, he thought.

"What? Yeah, of course. I figured it out in November. I've been leaving baskets of chocolate outside of the hospital wing and I check him over for injuries the next day," she said waving him off.

He stared with wide eyes, spluttering.

"It doesn't bother you that he's a werewolf?"

"What? No, of course not," she frowned. "It's not his fault he has to suffer from the condition. So what he gets a little furry and grows a snout at the full moon. So what he likes his chocolate a few days after the full moon and when he gets stressed. So what that he likes to eat his meat a raw on the days leading up to the full moon. He's still a person. He just happens to have lupine abilities," she said and once again he stared at her.

"How do you know he eats chocolate when he's stressed?" he asked amused.

"When we're in lessons I see him sneaking bites of chocolate when he thinks no one's looking," she answered and he chuckled at her.

"Sounds about right," he nodded, "He used to do that in classes."

"Don't you think that it's ironic that his last name is Lupin and he's a werewolf and has lupine abilities?" she asked.

He burst out laughing. "Oh Merlin, I've never noticed that before. That's brilliant." He laughed for a few more moments until he finally managed to calm himself down enough to speak. "You honestly don't care that he's a werewolf?"

"I honestly don't care. On the night of the full moon, I lay awake at night worrying about him, then I sneak down to the hospital wing and leave a basket of chocolate for him. When I see him I check him over for injuries as well as his mood. It's all I can do without mothering him. Which I don't think he would appreciate given the fact that I'm a teenage girl and he's my Professor. It'd just be weird," she shrugged and he chuckled at her.

"Should I expect that?" She looked confused at him. "You trying to mother me?" He clarified.

"Yes, probably," she nodded and he laughed. "Now stop distracting me! Where was I? Oh that's right, but in that vision, I saw Wormtail die," she trailed off with a frown. "Unless he changed; you're all unregistered Animagi except for Professor Lupin. So if he changed and escaped he would still be alive. Now that I think about it, Scabbers has been with the Weasleys for about twelve years and rats only live for about three. Was there anything found at the site of the explosion?"

"A finger, it's all that was left, that's how they identified Pettigrew."

"And it just so happens that Scabbers is missing a toe. Wormtail is Scabbers. That sneaky, manipulative, traitorous, little arse…" Sirius cleared his throat. "Sorry," she flushed and he chuckled at her.

"No problem, Kitten. So, you've figured it out and in less than ten minutes. I'm impressed, it took me almost thirteen years."

"Well, you obviously aren't after Harry, but you're after him... Wormtail?. If you can prove that he's alive, then you can prove that you're innocent. You've got Crookshanks helping you," she looked at the cat and Sirius chuckled. "So why did you want to see me?"

"I need your help catching him, the traitor," he said.

"The problem with that is Ronald already doesn't let me near that thing he carries in his pocket. So I won't be able to get close enough to him. It's best left to Crookshanks," she said and he looked sad. "But," he looked at her hopefully "I may be able to help you in others ways."

"How?" he asked.

"I could bring you updates and food and make sure that you stay hidden. I can try and sway Harry so that he no longer believes that you killed his parents, plus I won't let that thing hurt him. But that's a given, I've been protecting him since first year," she said with a shrug of her shoulders.

"What did he need protecting from?"

Hermione launched into the tales of both first and second year, by the time she had finished Sirius trusted her with both his and Harry's life. And he had only ever trusted three other people with his life, Lupin, James who died and Pettigrew who is responsible for James' death.

"I'm glad Harry has someone like you as a friend and to protect him," he said softly.

All of a sudden it went cold, she was filled with despair, and she knew what was happening.

A hooded figure was heading their way.

"Sirius, change now!"

"No, I'm not going to leave you to deal with that thing alone."

"Padfoot, do it now!" She snapped and he was taken aback by her tone before reluctantly changing into the black dog and he stood next to her. He wasn't going to leave her side.

Hermione had her wand in hand and was muttering to herself. "Come on Hermione, you can do this. Happy thoughts. Happy thoughts."

The figure got closer and closer. Hermione lifted her wand and thought about Harry. Of how happy he would be when he discovered he had family that cared about him. When he discovered that his Godfather didn't betray his parents. She thought about how happy she would be when Sirius was cleared of his charges and when Harry could get away from the Dursleys. He would be happier. He would be safe. He would be loved.

"Expecto Patronum!"

She looked at the blue-silver wisp of smoke in front of her and just when she was about to give up, it began to change in size. She stared mesmerised when it began to change shape. Before she knew it, a large lion stood in front of her. It bounded off in the direction of the dementor and attacked it until the dementor disappeared out of sight. The lion ran back to her and ran around her feet, she laughed and scratched its head. She didn't notice Sirius change back or his staring at her wide-eyed.

"What does a lion symbolise?" he asked, amazed at the regal big cat stood in front of him, purring at the teenage witch.

"I read that it symbolises self-control, nobility, fairness, courage, patience, protectiveness, peacefulness unless challenged, tactical, skill, wit and balance."

"Seems fitting," he mused. Even he could see that the lion fit her perfectly and he had only met her not a couple of hours ago.

"And it's the emblem of Gryffindor," she said with a chuckle.

"I guess that just proves that you're a true Gryffindor, through and through."

He reached his hand out and the lion nuzzled his head against his palm. "I guess that's just another reason why I'm right in trusting you," Hermione said as she ran her hand through the lion's mane.

"There's more than one?"

She nodded.

"Number one - You're an innocent man. Number two - You don't want to kill Harry but protect him from a traitorous rat. Number three - You're an innocent man. Number four - Crookshanks trusts you. And when I say he has an excellent judge of character I mean it. He spent ten years in the Magical Menagerie because he didn't like anyone, apparently, he would attack the customers before I bought him. Number five - My Patronus seems to like you. Number six - Did I mention that you're an innocent man?"

He chuckled at her. "Once or twice."

The Patronus disappeared.

"How did you know how to produce a Patronus? You're only thirteen"

"My birthday's in September so I'm fourteen and Professor Lupin's teaching Harry how to cast a Patronus. The dementors seem hell-bent on Harry as a target. I was curious so I read everything I could about it. When I learned the complex magic behind it, I was fascinated and I wondered if I had the ability to produce one. I've been trying for a month and that was the first time I've managed to produce it successfully. I usually only get wisps of blue smoke."

"Why did you wonder if you could perfect magic that complex and powerful? The Patronus Charm isn't usually taught until seventh year and when it is, you're given a choice if you want to learn how to cast it or not. Most people choose not to due to the complexity of it."

"I've always been able to perfect magic beyond my years," she said with a shrug of her shoulders.

"What?" he asked confused, and she quickly listed off the spells she had learned in her first, second and third year.

"That's not even including anything I have learned in class. Everything I have just listed is what I have learned by myself from a book, or from one of my boys."

"That's not normal," he frowned.

"It is to me" she replied with another shrug.

She looked at her watch and when she saw the time she gasped.

"Oh, Merlin. I'm so sorry, I have to go," she said. "But I'll come back within the next few days," she promised. "Crookshanks are you staying with your new best bud Padfoot or are you coming with me?" she looked down at the cat. "Right, staying it is."

She turned to leave. "Wait, you never told me how you knew about the Marauders map."

"Oh right. Fred and George found it in Filch's office during their first year. And you will be pleased to know they've been putting it to good use. They idolise you and the Marauders. They're your biggest fans; they talk about you all the time. Fred and George gave it to Harry before Christmas. I guess it's a good thing because it does belong to him; being a Marauder's son and all. Not to mention having a Marauder for a Godfather," she snorted before walking away.

Chapter Forty

Hogwarts - Monday 7th February 1994

Hermione was sat in the library writing essays for muggle studies, arithmancy, ancient runes, care of magical creatures and transfiguration. She had to use the time-turner to give herself an extra couple of hours and when she finally finished, she sighed in relief and slumped back into her chair. She picked up all of her finished essays, rolled them up and put them into her bag, before making her way to Gryffindor Tower.

"Prepare to joust fair maiden."

"Good evening, Sir Cadogan," she said, rolling her eyes. "Exploding snap."

"You may not enter, you trespasser."

"That was the password this morning" she huffed. "King Arthur," she said. He looked at her with narrowed eyes, obviously, the password was correct."Sir Cadogan, please just let me in."

"No!"

"Sir Cadogan, I swear, if you don't let me in I'll hex you! Portrait or not!" She growled. He gulped and then the portrait swung open. "Thank you," she said politely, all trace of frustration gone.

She trudged into the common room and walked straight passed her 'family'. She could feel everyone's eyes on her as she continued towards her dorm room. Rather than looking at them, she noticed the rat in Ron's hands and she fiercely glared at it. When stepped into her room, she quickly changed into a pair of jeans, a jumper and a pair of trainers, she grabbed a box from her trunk and placed it on her bed and filled it with a spare blanket and pillow from the wardrobe, a quill and some books after shrinking them all using the modified spell she'd placed on the trunks in first year. After reaching for a hair tie, she turned it into a port-key before carefully placing it on her wrist and then she cast the Disillusionment Charm over herself.

She crept down to the common room and stood nearby waiting for someone to open the portrait so she could get out without being detected, and it wasn't a long wait as curfew was almost upon them. She tiptoed out and used the secret passageways for extra security to get down the kitchens.

"Good evening, Bopsy, how are you liking your new t-shirt?" Said Hermione, cancelling the charm and seeing that he was wearing the t-shirt, and it currently said, 'I'm the boss of the kitchens'.

"Bopsy loves it, verys much, Misses 'Mione, thank yous," he said with a wide smile and watery eyes as if he was about to cry again.

"Does it fit alright? I could make some alterations."

"No, no, Misses 'Mione, it fits just fines. What can Bopsy dos for yous, Misses 'Mione?"

Hermione kneeled down and whispered in Bopsy's ear and once she rose to full height, he scurried off and she chuckled at him, taking a seat on one of the stools at one of the large wooden tables in the middle of the room. Soon, a group of house-elves came to greet her.

"Goods evening, Misses 'Mione," they chorused.

"Good evening Tilly, Ramone, Hinks, Folly and Duke. How are you?"

"We are very goods, thank yous for askings, Misses 'Miones," Hinks said.

"What do you think of Bopsy's new t-shirt?"

"Bopsy saids Misses 'Mione made its for hims," Tilly said.

"That's right, Tilly; I did make it for him. Would you like me to make one for all of you?" The house-elves all frowned uncomfortably. "Don't you worry, if I make you all one and you accept you will not be a free elf as you are bound to the castle and not its students. How about I make shirts that will act as a type of hierarchy?" The house-elves all looked confused as they tipped their heads to the side. "A hierarchy is a system in which workers are ranked according to their status or authority. For example, Ramone, you're in charge of the laundry so you would have a t-shirt that shows the importance of your responsibilities and your job. Let's see, we could have blue for the laundry, white for the kitchens, red for the cleaners, yellow for the dishwashers and black for the maintenance of the fireplaces, portraits and suits of armour."

Bopsy waddled over having difficulty with all of the items he was carrying on the tray.

"Yes, that's what we'll do," she nodded to herself. "I'll have them ready within the next couple of weeks," she left no room for arguments. "Thank you, Bopsy, I can't tell you how much I appreciate this." She took the items, placed Cooling and Stasis Charms where needed and reduced the size before placing the items in the box. "Bye, everyone, I'll make sure to get those t-shirts to you as soon as possible."

Hermione cast the Disillusionment Charm on both herself and the box and left the kitchens.

Little did she know, she wasn't the only person in the kitchens that night; Professor Lupin stepped out from behind a shelving unit with a contemplative look on his face.

That's interesting, I wonder why she needed all of that, he thought.

Hermione headed to the Forbidden Forest, she cancelled the disillusionment charm on herself, lit her wand and entered. As she neared the grouping of trees Crookshanks had led her to previously, she stopped. She didn't want to scare Sirius, so she had to think of a way to let him know it was her approaching. That's when inspiration hit her; her Patronus. She had cast it for the first time only a few days ago, so she knew she could do it. She cleared her mind and thought of exactly what she had the last time. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"Expecto Patronum," she said clearly and opened her eyes, seeing the beautiful lion stood before her.

She smiled as a laugh left her and she reached, her hands carding through the lion's soft mane of fur before sent him off ahead of her. She followed behind him, when she walked into the grouping of trees Padfoot was sat waiting with Crookshanks sat next to him and when he saw her approaching, he changed into his human form.

"You're getting the hang of that," he commented. "I didn't think you'd be back so soon."

Hermione turned slightly and pointed the way she'd just come from. "Well, I can leave and come back later if you want," she said amused, walking backwards.

"No, you can visit me all you want," he said with a chuckle, shaking his head. "I can do with the company."

Her mouth twitching into a smile, she walked over to him and took a seat on the ground opposite him and he followed suit. She lifted the Disillusionment Charm from the box and placed it on the ground.

He raised his eyebrow at her. "What's that?"

"I brought you some things." She opened the box and removed a flask of soup, a flask of tea, a flask of coffee and some sandwiches.

"Tea or Coffee?"

He blinked slowly. "Coffee." He couldn't remember the last he'd had coffee. Probably twelve years ago.

She handed him the flask and took out some milk and sugar, watching as he put a little milk in the flask and drank from it whilst she put a little milk and one sugar cube in the tea and she sipped at the hot liquid.

"Here," she said, handing him the other flask.

"What is it?"

"Tomato soup I believe, eat it. You're more than likely malnourished so you need fluids and something light on your stomach," she said. "Although, I probably shouldn't have given you coffee straight off the bat," she said thoughtfully.

"You're mothering me," he muttered, drinking down the soup.

"Yes, we've already established that it would be an almost certain outcome," she shrugged and he chuckled at her. She patiently waited whilst he ate and when he finished, he gave her the flask back and she placed it on the ground beside her. "Are you still hungry?" She asked. He nodded, Hermione being unsurprised and she grabbed a couple of the sandwiches and gave them to him and he ate heartily.

"So, what else is in that box of yours?"

She pulled out a blanket and a pillow and he arched an eyebrow at her.

"What? I don't care if you sleep in dog form and you have all that fur, it still gets cold out here. And,

it will provide you with more comfort," she argued, handing them to him.

"Will you put them back to their original size?"

"Click you fingers," she answered and he looked at her confused. "Click your fingers," she instructed.

He hesitantly clicked his fingers and the items turned back to their original size. He clicked his fingers again and the reduced in size.

"How'd you do that?"

"I modified the spells in my first year and then placed them on my friends' trunks. It makes it easier during the holidays and I can't get in trouble with the Ministry as I'm not using magic out of school since I turned the trunks into magical objects, which aren't illegal for underage wizarding folk to use."

He whistled in appreciation. "What else have you got in that magic box of yours?"

"Some water and pumpkin juice, a few flasks of soup and some sandwiches fitted with the appropriate Cooling and Stasis Charms. They should last you a few days until I can bring you more food. I've packed you a few books to keep you entertained as well," she told him, removing numerous books and handing them to him.

"Their muggle classics; Pride and Prejudice, Of Mice and Men, Wuthering Heights, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Catcher in the Rye, Animal Farm and Frankenstein. When you've read them, I'll bring you some more. If there are any books you would like from the Wizarding World, then I'll get them as soon as I have the chance."

"Thank you, for all of this, you didn't have to go to this much trouble," he said sincerely.

She tipped her head and smiled. "Well, I did, there's no point in arguing because you won't win, so get used to it."

He chuckled at her. "What's with the quill?" He asked, holding it between his fingers.

"Oh, I almost forgot, give me that for a second," she instructed and he handed it over to her. She took it in her hand and pointed her wand at it. She thought about her house, the one she grew up in, in London and whispered, "Portus." He looked at her wide-eyed. "It's now a port-key that you can use in case someone gets close to catching you here. Crookshanks, you can't come with us, I don't think it's safe for you, so you can either wait for us to return or you can go back to my dorm," she looked at the cat. "Okay, waiting it is. Padfoot, put your hand on it."

He reluctantly touched it, it's not he didn't trust her because he did, it was more of the fact he didn't know where she was taking him. As soon as he touched it, he felt like he was spinning uncontrollably before he hit the ground hard. He grunted and she groaned.

London: Granger Residence

"It's been a while since I last did that," he groaned in pain, slowly sitting up and rubbing at his lower back.

"I swear, one of these days, just one, I'm going to not land on my backside," she grumbled and he chuckled at her.

"Where are we?" He asked, looking around curiously at the empty room.

"London, my parent's house, no one will look for you here. You can come here whenever you want as long as you don't make too much noise, you stay out of sight and you don't lose the port-key."

"Why's it empty?"

"My parents don't live here anymore," she muttered, avoiding his gaze.

"Why not?"

"Haven't since Christmas my first year."

"Are they deceased?" he asked softly.

"No, they're in a safe house," she replied.

"Why?"

"Apparently, they knew about the Wizarding World long before they adopted me. They were given something of great power and importance to protect. Professor Dumbledore thought that whatever it was would be safest with muggles protecting it."

"You were adopted?" He questioned in surprise.

"Yes, when I was four," she nodded. "I don't know what happened to my birth parents, apparently there was an accident and they died, that's all I've been told."

"What happened? Why are they in a safe house?"

"During the Christmas holidays, I woke up because I heard a noise and came downstairs to check it out. I heard something break and then a door being thrown open. I found my parents, barely breathing and lying in pools of blood. Before I knew it, Oliver, Fred and George showed up with their parents, Bill and Charlie. I don't know how, but they knew something had happened. Professors Dumbledore, Snape and McGonagall showed up and they took my parents away. The next day Mr. and Mrs. Weasley told me that my parents had been attacked by people from the Wizarding World. They used magical and muggle means of torture."

Sirius flinched; he knew all too well what magical means of torture included.

"They were looking for what my parents had been trusted to protect all those years ago after the Wizarding War. But they didn't get it. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley assured me that whatever it was they wanted, was safe and would be for a long time."

"Are they okay?"

"I imagine so; I haven't seen them since the day after Christmas my first year. I don't know where they are or what they're doing. Professor Dumbledore hasn't told me anything so I think they're fine; after all, no news is good news as we muggles say."

"Where do you live now?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Wood and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley who I assume you know," he nodded and she continued, "All have parental guardianship over me, but I live with the Weasleys. There aren't many people that know, as I don't want to draw attention to myself, well, no more than necessary. Anyway, if you're wondering why this place is empty, it's because almost everything was put into storage. Follow me," she instructed, rising to her feet and making for the stairs.

He followed after her, stopping when she opened a door and walked into the bathroom before she removed a box from the linen cupboard. Opening it, she removed a towel, a box of soap, a bottle of shaving foam, a bottle of shampoo and conditioner, a toothbrush and some toothpaste and a razor, all still in the original packaging and covered in dust. She then removed a step ladder from the cupboard and walked onto the landing, stopping below a hatch, climbing the ladder, opening the hatch and pulling the light chord before she climbed into the attic.

"If this place is abandoned, then why do the lights work?" She heard him shout.

"How do you know what lights are?" She called back curiously.

"Lily explained them to me once."

"Oh, well Professor Dumbledore made sure that all utility bills are paid monthly so that whenever I come back here, it's suitable for me and safe for use. The house is already paid for in full and was left to me. And he sent that stuff in the bathroom over so that I had the necessities since almost everything is in storage."

She finally found what she was looking for and exited the attic, seeing his arched brow as she hopped from the final step.

"I asked Mrs. Weasley to leave the attic alone. There's still furniture and other things up there that I didn't want to put into storage. Like this box, it's filled with some of my dad's old clothing, you're about the same size so they should fit you," she handed the box to him before heading for the bathroom and switching on the shower, steam soon filling the room. "If you want to change the temperature, twist that dial to the left for hot and twist it to the right for cold. Enjoy," she pushed him into the bathroom, shut the door behind her and went back downstairs.

She sat in the room that used to be the study and stared into space as memories flitted through her mind. She didn't know how long she sat there but she looked up when she heard a throat clearing, seeing Sirius comfortably leaning against the door frame, his arms folded over his chest and his legs crossed at the ankles.

A smile pulled at her mouth as she asked, "How do you feel?"

"Brilliant. Don't smell too bad either," he replied and she chuckled at him.

He looked far better; he was clean-shaven and his black hair had been washed. It was free from dirt and debris and now looked shiny and soft, hanging just above his shoulders in waves. He was wearing a pair of blue jeans, black hiking boots and he had on a black sweatshirt that he'd rolled the sleeves up to elbows and she could see the tattoos on his forearms. He looked healthier.

"You know muggles are bloody geniuses, these are so comfortable, more so than those stuffy clothes I had to wear before I rebelled," he said, doing a little jig in the doorway.

She laughed at him, his dancing and his happy expression for a good few moments before she was able to speak.

"Well, as I said, you can stay here whenever you want and you should be safe. There's a spare bedroom upstairs and there should still be a bed in there. If not, then there's some furniture in the attic that you can use. There was a couch and a bed up there last time I checked. Do you want to stay here tonight or go back to Hogwarts?"

"Hogwarts," he answered.

"Right, well then, let's go."

"How are we getting back?"

"Port-key," she shrugged, grabbing the hair tie from her wrist and he took a hold of it.

Hogwarts

This time, Sirius smoothly landed on his feet and Hermione once again landed on her backside.

"You're very accurate with the destination," he observed, seeing the familiar grouping of trees and the box they'd left behind. "Where'd you learn to make a port-key?"

She shrugged. "I got bored last year and was curious."

He chuckled. "Should've known," he said with the shake of his head.

"Oh, I almost forgot," she said, hitting herself on the forehead.

"What?"

She walked over to the blanket and pillow and pulled her wand. "Impervius," she said before doing the same to the box containing the food and books.

"Now they're not only water-proof but dirt-proof, too. When it rains you can use it as a shield unless you go to the house. Oh, look at the time. It's late. Don't lose the port-keys," she warned. "The quill will take you to the house and the hair bobble will return to this spot. Don't forget and get them mixed up. I'll see you in a few days. Crookshanks, staying or coming?" She looked at her familiar questioningly and he stared up at her, licking at his paw lazily. "Staying, got it."

She cast the Disillusionment Charm on herself and returned to the castle and when she reached Gryffindor Tower without incidence, she used the time-turner to arrive just before curfew. When someone finally walked into the common room she followed behind them and crept up to her room, removing the Disillusionment Charm and heading into the bathroom to ready for bed.

After climbing beneath the curtains and closing the curtains, she sighed tiredly.

"There, it's like I never even left."

Saturday 19th February 1994

It had been almost two weeks since she'd port-keyed Sirius to her house, and since then she'd visited him every couple of days for a few hours at night, which she would have to use the time-turner for and her friends still hadn't spoken to her.

It was the day of the Gryffindor versus Ravenclaw match. Instead of watching the match from the stands with the rest of the Gryffindors, she slipped into the Forbidden Forest undetected. She sent her Patronus ahead as was now routine and walked into the grouping of trees, taking a seat next to Sirius and she had brought a spare Gryffindor scarf with her for him.

"For me?" He asked with a girlish tone, fluttering his eyelashes and holding his hand against his heart.

She laughed at him and wrapped the scarf around his neck for him. He'd recently been back to the house; he was freshly washed and wearing clean clothes.

"You, Sirius Black, are what we in the Muggle world, would call weird," she informed him and she snorted.

"So, who's going to win?"

She scoffed. "Gryffindor, obviously. Where's your school spirit, Mr. Black?"

"On the pitch with my Godson who just happens to be flying a certain Firebolt broom."

"What!" Her voice rose and her head snapped to Harry who was, in fact, speeding high above the pitch searching for the snitch on a Firebolt broom. "I guess you didn't jinx the broom to kill your Godson after all," she said with fake shock and he laughed.

Their attention went back to the game and they both flinched whenever a bludger was sent in Harry's direction and they breathed a sigh of relief when Fred or George would intercept it.

"Those twins of yours are the best Beaters I've ever seen," he said, laughing whilst they messed around and taunted the Ravenclaws.

"You mean for their age?"

"Nope," he shook his head, his freshly washed hair falling about his face.

"Don't let them hear you say that; their egos are already big enough. It'd be even worse considering the fact they idolise you," she rolled.

"Keeper's pretty good, too," he commented.

"Ollie wants to play professionally for Puddlemere United when he graduates It's his favourite team."

"Have they apologised to you yet?" She shook her head sadly. "I'm sure they will tonight since the Firebolt's been returned."

"It doesn't matter, Sirius. I'm not sure what to do if they do apologise. It's been almost two months and they've isolated me. My so-called 'family' have hurt me more than any hex could. They called me a traitor for trying to protect Harry, Padfoot. So what would I have been if I allowed him to get hurt? If I allowed him to die? A killer? I don't know if the bond between us can be repaired. Mrs. Weasley won't be very happy about this when she finds out."

"Maybe she won't find out," he offered.

"She will," she said confidently, "Because Ginny'll tell her. She loves spragging on her brothers, she's the youngest child and only girl; she gets away with a lot."

Whilst they were watching the match they saw something float on to the pitch.

"That's not what I think it is, is it?" Sirius asked Hermione.

"I don't think so, it looks different," she said, squinting her eyes.

They saw a bolt of blue light shoot out of Harry's wand and the figure fell from the broom, the cloak falling away to reveal three bodies as they headed towards the ground, being caught an Arresto Momentum.

"Malfoy! That cheating, arrogant, slimy, blonde-haired demon!" She fumed.

He snorted, giving her a look of pride. "Why don't you like my relative?"

"Apart from the obvious?" She said and he snorted. "He treats everyone like they're beneath him, he struts around like a duck with a broomstick shoved up his backside and acting like he owns the world. He wouldn't last ten minutes in the Muggle World, behaviour like that is a guaranteed way of landing yourself in hospital. He has a fanny fit when his hair gets messed up! He's mean and preys on those who are weaker than him. He makes everyone's life hell, not to mention, he seems to have it out for Harry, Ron and I. Every time he sees me he calls me a Mudblood!"

Sirius flinched at that word.

"Like his blood is cleaner than mine," she scoffed. "He's a product of inbreeding. Do you know it's illegal for muggles to have relations with close relatives? Studies show that offspring that are the products of inbreeding have serious health problems that can cause deformities and can be fatal. Have you heard of a dog breed called King Charles Cavalier?" He shook his head amused.

"Well they're a dog about this big," she said showing him with her hands, "And they're incredibly adorable and cuddly and have big floppy ears and soft fur. They've been inbred so much they have now developed a brain and spinal disorder called Syringomyelia. It causes paralysis, seizures and twitches, and these twitches cause the dog to repeatedly kick themselves in the head whilst they have a seizure. It's extremely painful and they usually die before the age of five. And the sad thing is that it's common in this dog breed and it can be avoided. I remember my neighbours had one and I used to hate them as they knowingly bred their dog that had it, it had three litters, and most of them were likely affected. It's hereditary, so it can be passed down from the parents. Do you understand my point?" She didn't give him a chance to answer. "Being a 'Pureblood' isn't a good thing; you're more than likely to have a health condition of some sort. Did you know that Squibs are more commonly birthed from Pureblood witches and wizards than they are to Half-bloods and Muggleborns?" She huffed. "Sorry, you're a Pureblood, aren't you?"

He stared at her silently before a bark of laughter tumbled from him and he shook his head.

"Don't worry, Kitten, I agree with you. I don't see the point in all of that Pureblood supremacy

bollocks." She didn't reprimand him for his language.

"Purebloods are going to become extinct. They'll be so inbred that their own health will kill them. Half-bloods are going to save the Wizarding World and keep the population alive. Muggleborns bring in fresh blood, and studies have been done and it's believed that Muggleborns don't steal magic, but in fact, have a witch or wizard somewhere in their ancestry. Sorry," she mumbled.

"It's okay, Kitten, it's amusing. So, you don't like Malfoy, my delightful cousin's son?"

"Wherever did you get that idea, Padfoot?" She frowned. "Malfoy and I are like this," she crossed her fingers in front of her, "We're best friends, we do everything together. Bully those weaker than us, cry when our hair's messed up and tell daddy when someone upsets us." He chuckled at her.

They heard Lee yell, "HARRY POTTER CAUGHT THE SNITCH, GRYFFINDOR WINS!"

They both sprung to their feet and cheered loudly, not that anyone could see or hear them.

She made her way back to the common room and straight back up the stairs to her room, ignoring the celebrating students around her. She sat down on her bed and began to write an essay for advanced potions. A few minutes later the door opened and she didn't bother looking up. When someone stopped at the foot of her bed, she lifted her eyes far enough to see his shoes but otherwise, she kept her quill scratching away at her parchment.

They cleared their throat but she ignored them and continued working on her essay.

"Umm, Lassie?"

"Oh, so you do know that I exist? Lovely to know. I see Harry got the broom back then and it wasn't jinxed? I was wrong, I bet you just love that," she said coldly.

"Anno ye did what ye did tae protect Harry, an' yer right, the broom doesn't affect Harry's ability tae catch the snitch. We beat Slytherin without the Firebolt."

"Don't gloat; it's not an attractive trait."

"Sorry," he winced and his smile fell from his face. "What ye did, it was the right thing tae do. If tha' broom was jinxed then Harry would've been hurt. An' we were wrong tae take our anger oot on ye. We've felt so bad since ye walked oot."

"It's been two months, Wood!" She snapped and he flinched back in surprise.

She only ever called him 'Ollie'. And as much as he hated the nickname, he loved it when she said it, because it was her. She was special to him, they were mates. And he'd hurt her. He was an awful person.

He took a seat on the edge of her bed. "We dinnae know what tae say tae ye."

"How about we're sorry? That would've sufficed. You know me and that I forgive people far too easily for my own good. You wouldn't even look at me."

"We were ashamed af what we did tae ye," he said softly.

"You promised me that you would never hate me, that you could never hate me."

"We don' hate ye," he promised, "We're family."

She scoffed. "That's the way you all made me feel. You made me feel like I was back in first year again, back when I was being bullied, when I was helpless. You may not have physically hurt me, but you isolated me. Ginny, Lee and Percy are the only ones who have spoken to me. Ginny apologised to me the next day for her behaviour. It wasn't difficult to do. Just one little word. Do you know I've been living my life with my boggart for the last two months? You weren't injured or dying, but you made me feel alone, hated, unloved and unwanted. Do you know what that feels like?"

She had stopped writing her essay at this point and was looking at him, tears rolling down her cheeks, seeing his horrified expression through her blurry eyesight.

"Everyone called me a traitor. Particularly Ronald, he never missed an opportunity to throw that insult in my face. But if I had allowed Harry to use that broom and it had been jinxed, what would I have been called? A killer?"

"Yer not the traitor; we are. We all are; we betrayed ye trust in us. Ye were doin' the right thing an' we got caught up in the fact tha' Harry had a Firebolt."

"That's no excuse"

"We know," he said sadly.

"You're sorry?"

"Aye, incredibly so. A hate meself fer what we did tae ye." His voice was thick with regret and pain.

"Then where is everyone else? Where's Ronald, Harry, the twins?" He flinched at her cold, emotionless tone. "If they were sorry, they would be here apologising. They don't appreciate me, or everything I do for them. No one does. I spend hours watching your practices and taking notes, doing research and coming up with new plays for you to use. I spend hours researching laws regarding magical creatures so that I can try and prevent Buckbeak -Hagrid's favourite hippogriff- from being executed because that arsehole, Malfoy, made a big deal out of a God damn scratch. Harry and Ron promised to help me and they haven't even opened a book because apparently they don't have time. Well, I don't have time either, but I made time!

"I spend hours helping everyone with their homework because they're too lazy to do it for themselves. Ronald either copies my work when he thinks I'm not looking or he asks me to do it for him. And like the idiot I am, I do it for him because I don't want him to fail. So much for being 'The Brightest Witch'," she scoffed at herself. "The Slytherins have been relentless in making me feel worthless and rubbing it in my face that Gryffindor hates me. Angelina's been stalking me and she tried to hex me a couple of weeks ago, I Obliviate'd her memory so she doesn't remember anything. Not to mention, I am taking twelve classes, I hate divination and I'm stressed with my workload. I haven't been sleeping or eating because I have too much on my mind. I can't shut it all out. And I miss my parents!"

He moved as if to hug her but she darted out of his reach, jumped off the bed and ran out of the door with Oliver quick on her heels, chasing her down the stairs and into the common room filled with the celebrating students.

"Hermione, wait, please," Oliver called over the students but she ran out of the common room and into the halls of the castle.

The room fell silent and as Oliver made to leave and follow her, Ginny stood before him with a glare on her face, a glare terrifyingly similar to Mrs. Weasley's.

"Where do you think you're going?" She demanded, her hands settling on her hips.

"After Hermione," he said hesitantly, eyeing her warily and trying to determine if he could get around her and to the door.

"Why did she run away from you?"

"A was apologising an' then she went on this rant aboot hoo she felt during the last couple af months befere she ran aff when a tried tae hug her."

"You were apologising to her?" She checked, eyeing him closely. He nodded slowly. She turned her attention on Fred, George, Harry and Ron. "And why weren't you apologising with Oliver?"

"We didn't know what to say," George said quietly, looking down at the ground shamefully.

"You didn't know what to say! You didn't know what to say! How about I'm sorry that I isolated you, that I made you feel hated and unloved for trying to protect Harry!" she screamed. They all went white in the face and those in the room didn't dare speak. "Because that's what she did! She was protecting him like she always does! Everyone knows Sirius Bloody Black is after Harry! He wants to kill him for Merlin's Sake! She did what she did because she loves him, and she was the only one that could see he was potentially in danger. If that makes her a traitor then I'm glad I have her for a sister, because I know she'll do whatever it takes to protect me, even if it means she loses my friendship!" She stormed out of the room and everyone stared at the group of deeply ashamed boys.

Percy walked over to them. "You think that was bad? Wait until mum finds out," he said. They paled further. "And Bill and Charlie," he added as an afterthought and they winced, imagining what their brothers would do to them.

Everyone was sat in the dining hall eating dinner; Hermione was sat next to Ginny and Percy whilst Lee was sitting with his new girlfriend, Alicia Spinnet, at the other end of the table. They were chatting when five boys approached them.

The hall went silent and all eyes were trained on them. Four professors, in particular, were watching with their eyes glued to the group. They had been worried for months. They could see the impact the argument had taken on the young witch. They thought they would have to intervene if it wasn't sorted out by the end of the week.

"Hermione, we're sorry for how we treated you. You were trying to protect me and I allowed myself to be blinded by the Firebolt. You're the only person who's ever cared enough to try and keep me safe. Even after the argument you still allowed me to use your broom. You didn't even ask for it back."

"Do you honestly think that I would do that to you? Then you would be without a broom. You would either have to use a rubbish school one or forfeit any matches because there is no reserve seeker."

"Hermione, I'm sorry I called you a traitor. You're not; you're one of the most loyal people I've ever met. I'm sorry that I yelled at you about your cat. You're right; it's not your fault that he attacks Scabbers. It's his natural instinct."

"Do you honestly mean that?" She questioned and he nodded "I don't believe you. Calling me a traitor once is fine but doing it every time you see me is not. The others didn't call me names, they just ignored my existence." The boys' faces fell and saddened.

"I know, and I honestly didn't mean it. I'm sorry."

"Spitfire, -"

"- Love, -"

"- We can't even begin to tell you how sorry we are. We hate ourselves for making you believe that we hated you because we don't hate you, we're a family -"

"- A slightly dysfunctional one, but a family nevertheless. We didn't apologise straight away like we should've because we were ashamed of how we treated you. We should've defended you in the argument and we didn't. -"

"- You always do the right thing and you always know best, we should've trusted your judgment. We'll do anything to prove how sorry we are and that we'll never treat you that way again. -"

"- We promise, can you forgive us?" they finished together, a hopeful look in their eyes.

"I honestly don't know," she admitted. "You wouldn't even look at me." Their facial features filled with sadness and everyone felt sorry them in that moment, even the Slytherins. Their expressions were heartbreaking.

"Lassie, a've already apologised tae ye, an' there's nothing more a could say tae ye right now, tha' a havnae already said tae ye back in Gryffindor Tower. But ev'rything ye said tae mae... Am sorry. We should've noticed tha' yer exhausted an' stressed with not only havin' tae do yer own work but ev'ryone else's as well. We should've noticed tha' ye weren't sleeping well or eating enough."

"WHAT?" Fred and George called, their eyes darting to Hermione in pained-surprise.

"You yelled at me, Wood." He flinched, as did the twins. "You've never yelled at me before, you've never even taken that tone with me before. You basically accused me of sabotaging your chances at the Quidditch Cup, even after everything I do for you and the team."

He looked to be in agony and he knew she was right.

"You remember my boggart? That's what it' felt like for me these last two months. You isolated me, you made me feel worthless. You all take me for granted. After everything I have done for you all, how could you treat me that way? My life revolves around all of you. I put you all before myself. I have never once complained when you ask me to sit for hours and watch you practice. I have never once complained when you ask me for help with your homework. I don't complain when you don't even ask because you just expect me to do it for you. I don't complain when you copy my work when you think I'm not looking and I don't complain when you get mad and call me names. So how could you do that to me?"

"We're sorry," they chorused.

"Do you know what hurts the most? That you caused me to feel something I never thought I would experience with you boys. It wasn't anger, despair or depression. You made me feel disappointment. I am so disappointed in the way you behaved and the way you handled the situation," she said sadly.

The boys looked as though they could cry.

"We promise that we'll try for ourselves first before asking for help. We' won't expect you to do our work for us and won't copy off of you," Harry said, looking pointedly at Ron and he flushed to his roots. "Can you please forgive us?"

"I don't know," she sighed.

"Come on, Love, what do you want us to do? Beg?" George asked, his expression broken and lost.

Hermione looked at Ginny and then to Percy.

"You know, that's not a bad idea. What do you think, Gin, Perce?"

"Definitely, 'Mione," Ginny replied amused.

"I agree," Percy nodded with a smirk.

"Beg," Hermione said, staring the boys down to see if they would actually do it.

They all shared a look before they got down onto the floor on their knees with their hands clasped and held in front of them.

"Please..." They all started but Hermione cut them off with a roll of her eyes.

"Oh get up, you muppets," she sighed with Ginny and Percy sharing a laugh.

The boys looked confused as they slowly stood, their eyes carefully examining Hermione's expression before they sighed in relief. Hermione rose from the bench and before she could step away from the table, Oliver was before her, pulling her into a tight hug, burying his face in her hair. He was reluctant to let her go but when he felt the presence of Fred and George behind him, he stepped back and allowed them to take his place, Hermione being sandwiched between them.

The professors sighed in relief. Their bond was safe and they didn't have to intervene.

They were in their dorm room, all stood awkwardly staring at each other and not knowing what to say.

"Ye dinnae come tae the Quidditch match," Oliver cleared his throat. "We looked fer ye but ye weren't there."

Hermione shifted on her feet and pushed her hair back from her face and over her shoulder nervously. "I was watching, just not from the stands. The other Gryffindors wouldn't have been happy to see me there and I didn't want a repeat of what happened at the Gryffindor versus Slytherin match," she muttered, her gaze lowering.

Oliver was before her before she could blink and he reached out, pulling her against him and into a hug, sighing in relief when she didn't pull back. Fred and George were quick to surround them and they all glowed that brilliant golden light that seemed to always appear when they comforted each other.

They could feel everything that had occurred over the last two month wash away as if it never happened. Hermione no longer felt sad or disappointed. The boys no longer felt shame and despair. They felt...Right. They all did.

Hermione had been worried that things would never be the same as they were before, but she had nothing to worry about; things were going to be just fine. She had her family back and had adopted Sirius Black as a new member of her family too, and she was going to do everything she could to clear his name so that he could have his life back.

Sunday 27th March 1994

The last five weeks for Hermione had been great; everyone was friends again, most of Gryffindor house had apologised to her, the sleeping arrangements returned to how it was before the falling out, the boys were making sure she got enough sleep and that she was eating correctly and she visited Sirius regularly.

Everything was perfect... Until Ron stormed down the boys' stairs and into the common room where Hermione and the others convened by the fire.

"Your demonic cat killed Scabbers!" He snapped and she looked at him in shock at his outburst.

"What?" She frowned.

"That thing you call a pet killed Scabbers!"

"No, he didn't."

"Yes, it did. There's blood and ginger hair on my bed!"

"Well, it wasn't Crookshanks, he's been with me all day," she replied.

"Obviously he hasn't!"

"Yes, he has, and has it escaped your attention that the hairs could be yours, you're ginger too?"

Ron was clenching his fists by his side and the others could see that it was starting to get out of hand and that Ron was about to do something he would regret and possibly result in him getting hexed.

"Oh, my dear little brother, Ronniekins, Hermione's telling the truth. We've been in our room all day and Crookshanks has been asleep on the bed the entire time. He didn't even move," George spoke up.

"Come on, Ron, you were always saying how boring Scabbers was. And he's been off-colour for ages, he was wasting away. It was probably better for him to snuff it quickly. One swallow, he probably didn't feel a thing," Fred placated.

"Fred!" cried Ginny indignantly and Hermione glared at him.

"You know, it could've been another cat. Hermione isn't the only one to have a cat in Gryffindor Tower," he added.

"Besides, Ronald, he was twelve-years-old, rats generally die around the age of three," Hermione informed him.

"All he did was eat and sleep, Ron, you said it yourself," nodded George.

"He bit Goyle for us once! Remember Harry?" Ron said miserably.

"Yeah, that's true," Harry agreed uselessly, not knowing what else to say to his friend.

"His finest hour. Let the scar on Goyle's finger stand as a lasting tribute to his memory," Fred said, finding it difficult to keep a straight face.

Ron sat down in a chair and huffed sadly.

Later that night, Hermione crept out of the castle armed with her box of usual supplies and to the Forbidden Forest, sending her Patronus ahead of her and when she arrived, she sat down and waited, Sirius soon appearing and he took a seat opposite her, accepting the food she handed him.

"We may have a problem."

"What?"

"Pettigrew is missing."

"WHAT?" He yelled, spitting out some of his sandwich.

"Say it, don't spray it, Padfoot," she said, pulling a disgusted face. "Ron came down into the common room not long ago and started yelling, saying that Crookshanks had killed the rat as his bed was covered in blood and ginger hair."

"Crookshanks hasn't brought him to me," he said with a frown.

"That's because it wasn't Crookshanks. He's been with me all day, asleep in my dorm room. The boys were there, too. Fred and George tried to placate him and it may have worked even if Ron didn't understand they were also making fun of him," she said. He smiled a little.

"Where is he then?"

"I don't know, I think he understood what's happening. Of course, it didn't help when you broke into the common room and tried to kill him with a knife like a mad man. If no one was convinced you were trying to kill Harry, they are now. I can't believe Crookshanks stole Neville's parchment with the passwords written on. He lost his Hogsmeade privileges for that."

"I said I was sorry," he muttered, avoiding her gaze.

"Oh shut up and eat your sandwich," she huffed.

She could remember that night when Sirius broke into the common room. When she had heard the story from Ron, she sneaked out of the castle and to the Forbidden Forest. She reprimanded and scolded him for an hour for his stupidity and downright lack of control and patience. His excuse was that he didn't want Pettigrew to be in the same room with Harry any longer. When Hermione had finished scolding him he'd looked like a five-year-old boy. Since then he didn't do anything rash and he was patient.

"I will keep my eyes open for him. He won't be too far away. He won't leave Harry and he wouldn't have killed himself. The traitor doesn't have the courage."

Saturday 4th June 1994

Hermione had, in fact, been keeping a lookout for Pettigrew and she hadn't seen any sign of him.

Hermione was with Harry and Ron; they were going down to see Hagrid. They had heard that all of the work Hermione and Hagrid had done hadn't save Buckbeak's life. As they grew closer, they could see figures around Hagrid's hut and one of them was clearly the executioner.

Then more figures came into view; Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle.

Hermione could hear Malfoy talking and the other two idiots laughing at him and unable to stop herself, she saw red and stormed over to them.

"Ah look who's here. Come to see the show?" Malfoy taunted and his two lackeys laughed at him.

"You, you foul, loathsome, evil, little cockroach!" She hissed as pulled her wand on him.

He was backed up against a stone boulder with her wand pressed into his neck as he screwed his eyes shut and whimpered. Hermione took delight in the noise and the fearful expression on his face. She wondered if she could make him wet himself, unfortunately, Ron appeared to be the voice of reason that day.

"'Mione, no, he's not worth it!"

His words surprised her; she thought that she'd never see the day when Ron willingly stopped Malfoy from being hexed; usually, he was the first one to pull his wand on him.

A few moments passed before Hermione reluctantly lowered her wand and turned to walk away, but when she heard Malfoy breathe a sigh of relief and he gave a little laugh, she turned at the last moment and so quickly, that no one saw it coming. She balled her hand into a fist and punched him square in the nose. She heard a crunching noise and felt satisfaction flow through her when Malfoy stumbled back, held his nose, gave her a quick surprised expression and then ran away with dumb and dumber following behind him.

"That felt good," she admitted with a smile and they burst into laughter.

"Not good, bloody brilliant," Ron correct with a proud look in his eyes.

Hermione, feeling her eyes being drawn to the Forbidden Forest, saw the black dog hidden in the group of trees staring at her, and when she sent a wink, it turned around and disappeared from view. She knew that when Sirius changed back he would be laughing.

They quickly made their way to Hagrid's just as the Ministry workers left and the spoke with Hagrid whilst he explained that the execution was to happen in two days' time on Monday evening. After comforting Hagrid to the best of her ability, they took their leave and returned to the common room to be greeted with,

"There's our beautiful, -"

"- Magnificently, -"

"- Brilliant, -"

"- Best friend -" Fred and George chorused loudly.

The common room fell silent, all eyes on her.

"Is it true?" Ginny asked impatiently.

"She punched Malfoy in the nose and no doubt broke it," Ron confirmed proudly.

The common room burst into laughter and applause.

"We're so proud of you -" Fred said.

"- Wait till Bill and Charlie find out. -" George laughed. "- Merlin, they'll probably buy you an entire library."

After being praised and congratulated, they headed for the great hall, stepping inside to see Malfoy sitting at the Slytherin table with his nose bandaged up. He glared at Hermione and she smiled sweetly in return.

The Gryffindors laughed and cheered, and it quickly made its way around the hall and soon everyone knew what had happened. The Slytherins were both annoyed and amused, whereas everyone else idolised Hermione for her actions.

Professor Snape smirked behind his goblet. Whilst Malfoy was his Godson and he should be annoyed, even he was aware that he had more than likely deserved it.

Professor McGonagall struggled between reprimanding Hermione for using violence against another student and being proud that she didn't use her wand and still brought Malfoy down a peg or two.

Professor Lupin, on the other hand, didn't bother hiding his amusement. He knew he shouldn't be amused given that he was now a professor, but he'd gone to school with Malfoy Senior and he'd witnessed cruelty with both Malfoys on the front line, leading the charge. He felt it was justified.

Chapter Forty-One

Hogwarts - Monday 6th June 1994

It was the day of Buckbeak's execution. Hermione couldn't escape the feelings of sadness within her. Whilst she had been helping Hagrid with research on Magical Law, she had spent a lot of time with Buckbeak and she'd been surprised to discover Buckbeak to be rather loving, docile and sweet for a wild animal, and he didn't deserve to lose his life.

Hermione was in her dorm room with the boys after finishing dinner in the great hall.

"Boys, I'm going to visit Hagrid, then I'll head to the library. There's something I want to research," she said as she pulled on a jumper to fend off the chill of the night.

"Look at that, our little rule-breaker," George said, his lip twitching in amusement.

"She walks out of divination in the middle of class and now she's a rebel troublemaker," Fred added and the twins snorted in amusement.

"Ye want us tae come with ye, Lassie?" Oliver asked, looking up from his Quidditch playbook, going over the plays for the final match of the season.

"No, it's Buckbeak's execution tonight," she said quietly, her voice tinged with sadness and guilt.

"Are you sure you should be going to visit Hagrid? Fred asked, his voice a little unsure to match his worries.

She glared at him in response. "Yes, he needs us and I won't let him go through this alone!" She said before she left the room without a backwards glance, slamming the door behind her.

"Way to go, Fred," George muttered, smacking him on the back of the head and his eyes on the door. He had the feeling something was going to happen, and he didn't like it.

Hermione was sat in Hagrid's hut with Harry and Ron, and she trying to comfort him. They had all expressed their wishes to stay with him during the execution, but Hagrid would have none of it, as he didn't wish for the teens to see what was to happen to his favourite hippogriff.

Before the teens were expected to leave, Hagrid turned around and walked over to a box sitting on a shelf, he opened it and took something out and when he turned around, he handed Ron his rat.

"Scabbers, you're alive!" Ron exclaimed in surprise.

"You wanna keep a clos'r eye on your pets, Ron," Hagrid scolded.

"I think that means you owe someone an apology," Hermione said coldly.

"Right. Next time I see Crookshanks I'll let him know," he said snidely.

"I meant me," she all but growled.

Before an argument could start, the vase next to her suddenly shattered and broke into hundreds of tiny pieces, the shards scattering across the ground. They all turned their eyes to it in confusion, until Harry was hit on the back of the head with something. On closer inspection, it was a pebble. They looked out the window to see Ministry employees and Professor Dumbledore making their way down the steps and approaching Hagrid's hut.

Hagrid quickly ushered them out of the back door and they hid in the pumpkin patch, as they listened in on the conversation as the sound carried out through the opened windows. Hermione quickly jerked her head around; she had heard a noise, someone stepping on a branch and it cracking under the weight.

"What?" Harry asked alarmed.

"Nothing, I thought I just saw... Never mind," She shook her head.

"Let's go," Ron muttered.

They quickly made their way up the steps and stood at the top of the hill. Hermione turned into Ron and cried whilst the three huddled together until Scabbers bit Ron.

"Ow, Scabbers bit me," he said in surprise before he quickly chased after him.

"Ron, Ron!" Hermione and Harry yelled as they chased after him.

Ron finally caught Scabbers and they came to a stop, staring at the Whomping Willow.

"Harry, you do realise what tree that is, right?" Hermione asked, her breath coming out in pants and her eyes wide.

"RON, RUN!" Harry shouted.

"HERMIONE, HARRY, RUN!" Ron yelled from his place on the ground. "IT'S THE GRIM!"

They both turn around to see the large black dog. Hermione sighed in relief until she noticed the tense stance of the dog.

Don't do anything stupid, Padfoot, she pleaded.

Unfortunately, he did.

He charged at them, she grumbled in annoyance but not loud enough for Harry to hear. She put her hands on Harry's shoulders and pushed him down towards the ground, making it easier for Sirius to jump over them without hurting anyone. He did with little effort, before grabbing Ron by the trouser leg and pulling him into the tunnel hidden beneath the Whomping Willow.

They were both shouting and yelling, running after them trying to catch Ron before they could no longer reach him but they failed. Before they had time to process what they'd just witnessed, they were both knocked flat onto their backs as a branch from the Whomping Willow hit them in the stomach.

Hermione groaned as she stood up, quickly pulling Harry onto his feet. They tried to make their way towards the entrance but every time they advanced one of them would get knocked back again. An idea formed in her mind, and she couldn't decide if it was genius or suicidal.

She grabbed ahold of a branch heading her way and latched herself onto it, as it swung her around whilst it continued to try and hit Harry who was on the ground, and Hermione was screaming.

It's just like the swings at the amusement park, she thought to herself, trying to steal her courage. Oh, who am I kidding?

The tree swung her around again, but this time she grabbed a hold of Harry and when they were close enough to the hidden tunnel, she let go of him and he slid straight down the tunnel. She waited a couple more turns before she let go of the branch, hoping to not get knocked away as she fell to the ground and rolled across the floor. She slid down the tunnel and she landed on Harry at the bottom.

They groaned. "Sorry, Harry," she grumbled.

"Don't worry about it," he replied.

"Where do you suppose this goes?" She asked, still groaning slightly and wincing as she stood to her feet and helped Harry up.

"I have a hunch; I just hope I'm wrong," he muttered.

They walked through the tunnel, up some stairs and they climbed through a hatch.

"We're in the Shrieking Shack," she realised, her eyes widening in surprise.

They walked into a room to find Ron sitting on the floor, terrified and holding Scabbers in his hands tightly.

"Ron, the dog, where is it?" Harry asked as they quickly made their way to him.

"Harry, he's the dog, it's a trap. He's an Animagus!" Ron said, pointing behind them with a shaking hand.

They turned to see paw prints on the floor; their eyes followed them until they landed on Sirius Black. He looked ruffled and slightly dirty, she could tell that he hadn't been to the house in the last few days. He shut the door behind them, locking them in the room.

Hermione sighed, left Harry's side and walked over to Sirius. Stopping in front of him, he arched an eyebrow at her and despite the tense and awkward atmosphere, his eyes twinkled in amusement.

She reached up and smacked him upside the head.

"Ow! What was that for?" He asked, rubbing the stinging spot on his head.

Harry and Ron watched the scene unfold in complete disbelief and shock.

"For being stupid and reckless. What happened to patience? Do you not remember the last lecture I gave you?"

"How could I not? You almost bored me to death."

She reached up and smacked him upside the head once more.

"Ow, will you stop hitting me?" He grumbled.

"That depends, will you stop being a prat? You could have hurt Ron. You did hurt Ron!" Her voice rose.

"It's only a scratch," he snorted.

"Malfoy's injury was just a scratch; Ron has a hole in his leg!"

He snorted at her.

"I can't believe it! You're a traitor! He's trying to kill me and you're helping him!"

"Harry, let me explain," she said calmly, turning to face the bespeckled wizard.

"You're trying to kill me, you're a traitor!"

"If you want to kill Harry, you're going to have to kill me first," Ron said. She was sure it was meant to be courageous but it came out sounding rather pathetic.

Hermione was about to speak, but Sirius beat her to it. "Only one will die tonight."

"Then it will be you!" Harry said and he launched himself at Sirius. Given the size and strength disadvantage, Harry had Sirius pinned to the ground with Harry's wand in his face.

"Harry! No!" Hermione yelled in shock.

Then the door burst open, Professor Lupin disarmed Harry and he stood up and backed away, staring at Lupin with wide eyes as he had his wand trained on Sirius and he slowly circled him.

"Well, well, Sirius. Looking rather ragged, aren't we? Finally, the flesh reflects the madness within," Lupin spoke.

"You would know about the madness within, wouldn't you, Remus?" H replied, sounding amused

Lupin lowered his wand with a small smirk on his face and he helped Sirius up of the floor before they hugged. Hermione made her way back over to Sirius and she once more reached up and smacked him upside the head.

"Ow! What was that one for?" He grumbled. Remus looked on equally as shocked as Harry and Ron had been.

"For provoking him, I'm trying to calm him down so we can explain everything to him and you just made things worse." she glared at him. "Only one will die tonight," she said, imitating his voice mockingly. "What were you thinking?" She fumed.

She went to smack him upside the head again but he took a step back, holding his hands up defensively.

"Don't hit me again," he whined childishly.

"Again? How many times has she hit you?" Remus asked amused.

"Three," Sirius mumbled.

"And you deserved them, don't act like you didn't. The first one was for being stupid and reckless, the second one was for hurting Ron and making smart-arse comments and the third one was for being an idiot and provoking Harry," she said as a matter of fact. Remus' eyes darted between the two.

"How long have you known?" Remus asked her.

"How long have you known?" She countered and he chuckled.

"I wasn't certain until a couple of days ago."

"February 5th," she replied.

"That long? That's why you would visit the kitchens and take a box load of supplies. You were giving them to Sirius?"

"How do you know that? Never mind," she sighed.

"It took me twelve years to figure it out," Sirius said, looking at Remus. "It took her ten minutes."

Remus snapped his eyes back to her, he raised an eyebrow and she shrugged in response. He chuckled. She then turned her attention back to Sirius and she pulled her wand and pointed it at him.

"What're you doing?" he asked, sounding anxious to have her wand pointed anywhere near him.

"Oh shut up, Padfoot," she huffed and Remus snorted. "Aquamenti," she said, and soaked him with cold water, "Scourgify," she muttered and cleaned him and his clothes and finally she mumbled, "Siccatio Fascinationem," and it dried both him and his clothes.

"I don't think I've heard of that spell," Remus said thoughtfully.

"I created it," she shrugged her shoulders.

He eyed her. "What? Why? How?"

"I was bored," she said, just as Sirius said it, mimicking her voice. Remus laughed and she hit Sirius in the arm.

"Ow! Why did you do that with those spells?"

"The last time I saw you, you smelled a lot better," he chuckled at her, tipping his head in agreement. "You haven't been back to the house, have you?"

"No, I was going to go tonight when I heard you three chasing after that thing," he growled at the end of the sentence. He turned to Remus, "I've found him. He's here."

"I know," Remus replied.

"Let's kill him", Sirius whispered.

"No, wait, Sirius," he said.

"I've done my waiting. Twelve years of it in Azkaban!" He yelled hysterically.

"Very well," Remus handed over his wand to him. "But wait one more minute, Harry deserves to know why."

"I know why, you betrayed my parents. You're the reason they're dead!" Harry spoke.

"No, Harry, it wasn't Sirius. He's innocent. Do you really think I would betray you? That I would do anything that would put you in harm's way? Look at the trouble I went through protecting you from that stupid broom, Sirius was the one that sent it to you. It wasn't until the day I met him, that I figured out he was innocent and that he hadn't jinxed the broom," Hermione explained, looking him in the eyes, begging him to believe her.

"Someone else betrayed your parents. Someone, until quite recently, we thought to be dead," Remus said.

"Who was it then?" Harry growled.

"Peter Pettigrew," Sirius spat as if the name had been a foul taste in his mouth. "And he's in this room right now. Come out, come out, Peter. Come out and play."

"Expelliarmus," a voice called, disarming Sirius, just as the door once again slammed open. "Vengeance is sweet, how I have hoped I would be the one to catch you."

"Severus," Remus said, trying to be the mediator but Snape trained his wand on him.

"I told Dumbledore you were helping an old friend into the castle and now I have the proof."

"Brilliant, Snape, once again you put your keen and penetrating mind to the task and as usual come to the wrong conclusion. Now if you will excuse us, Remus and I have some unfinished business to attend to," Sirius said, stepping forward. Snape pressed the tip of his wand into Sirius's neck.

"Give me a reason. I beg you," his voice was cold and hard.

"Severus," Remus said. "Don't be a fool."

"He can't help it, it's a habit," Sirius said childishly.

"Sirius, be quiet," Remus warned.

"Be quiet yourself, Remus," he griped.

"Listen to you two, quarrelling like an old married couple," Snape sneered.

"Why don't you run along and play with your chemistry set?" Sirius snapped and Snape pressed the wand harder into his neck, the area turning white from the lack of blood flow.

"I could do it you know, but why deny the dementors? They're so longing to see you. Do I detect a flicker of fear, oh yes? The dementors kiss; one can only imagine what that's like to endure. It's said to be unbearable to witness, but I will do my best."

"Severus, please," Remus pleaded.

Hermione sighed; she'd had enough. "Expelliarmus," she said, disarming Snape.

"Hermione you attacked Snape," Ron said. She couldn't tell if it was horror, pride or shock in his voice.

"No, I didn't Ron, I just disarmed him," she corrected.

Snape was visually shocked. "Miss. Granger?"

"I'm really sorry, Professor, but Sirius is innocent. He isn't a murderer; he's too much of an idiot."

"Yeah... Hey. That wounded me deeply, Kitten," he said in mock hurt, holding his hand up to his heart.

She rolled her eyes at him. "I'm sure you'll live. I'm sorry about this Professor, but there's too much to do and not enough time. I'll explain when you wake up."

"Wake up?" He questioned, his voice containing a mix of emotions.

"Somno Leporem," she said and Snape fell to the floor in a heap, his eyes closed and his breathing even and deep.

"He's not dead, is he?"

"Of course not, Ronald, he's just sleeping. It's a charm I invented a while back."

"What?"

"I got bored," she and Sirius said in unison. She glared at him and he gave her a cheeky grin. Remus chuckled and shook his head.

Harry picked up his wand off of the floor and pointed it at Sirius. "Tell me about Peter Pettigrew," he demanded.

"We went to school with him Harry, he was our best friend," Remus said.

"No, Pettigrew's dead. He killed him!"

Remus stepped in front of Sirius so the wand was now trained on him. "No, he didn't, I thought so too, until you mentioned seeing Pettigrew on the map."

"The map was lying," Harry said.

"The map never lies, Harry. Pettigrew's alive," Sirius spoke, pacing behind Remus. "And he's right there," he pointed at Ron, who had a terrified and confused look on his face.

"Me? That's mental," Ron squeaked.

"Padfoot, you should be more specific," Hermione huffed. "Ron, he means the rat, Scabbers."

"Don't be stupid; he's been in my family for…"

"Twelve years, Ron. I told you rats generally die at the age of three, they don't have long life spans," she spoke softly.

"He's missing a toe, isn't he?" Sirius said knowingly.

Hermione noticed the look of comprehension on Harry's face.

"So what?" Ron said.

"Go on, Harry, say it. You know what it is?" She encouraged gently.

"All they could find of Pettigrew was his finger," he muttered, an imaginary light bulb going off above his head.

"The damn coward cut it off so everyone would think he was dead," Sirius hissed. "And then he transformed into a rat, the rat he is!"

"Show me," Harry demanded.

Sirius grabbed the rat from Ron's hands.

"Give it to him, Ron," Harry said.

"What are you trying to do to him?" Ron asked, as Sirius walked away and put the rat down onto a flat surface. Remus stood on one side and Sirius on the other, keeping the rat in-between them.

Hermione threw Sirius her wand to allow him to use it and he caught it. He and Remus began shooting a spell at the rat, but they both missed when it jumped off the desk. They chased it around the room until the rat tried to jump through a hole in the wall and Sirius hit him with the spell.

"Oh no you don't," He yelled.

Before their eyes, the rat changed into a short, plump man that resembled a chipmunk. Remus and Sirius grabbed him and pulled him out of the wall and they pushed him into the middle of the room when he tried to escape. Ron stared at the man, not even blinking. Hermione wasn't sure if he was breathing, so she hit him on the back of the head and he took a breath, but still, he didn't blink or move.

Hermione glared at the man and he paled slightly when she caught his eye. Remus and Sirius smirked slightly at his reaction. Whereas Harry, Hermione couldn't decipher his expression.

"Remus, Sirius, my old friends," he said nervously before he darted in the direction of the door, trying to make a run for it, but they pushed him back into the middle of the room, as they surrounded him. He then looked towards Harry.

"Harry, look at you. You look so much like your father, like James. We were the best of friends he and I."

Sirius rushed forward and pushed him away from Harry. "How dare you speak to Harry!" He growled. "How dare you talk about James in front of him?"

Remus and Sirius were on either side of him as he hid behind an old piano.

"You sold James and Lilly to Voldemort? Didn't you?" Remus asked, his wand pointed at Pettigrew and an angry and pain-filled look on his face.

"I...I didn't mean to. The Dark Lord, you have no I idea the weapons he possesses. I ask you, Sirius, what would you have done? What would you have done?" He whimpered.

"I would've died. I would've died rather than betray my friends," he snapped. Pettigrew ducked under the piano and they followed him.

Harry stood in the doorway with Hermione next to him, preventing him from escaping. Pettigrew ran up to him and grabbed a hold of him, and he whispered in his ear but Hermione heard him.

"Harry, James wouldn't have wanted me killed. Your dad, he would've spared me. He would've shown me mercy."

Hermione could feel the anger inside of her building and building. She couldn't stop it. All she could think of was all the pain this man had caused to both Harry and Sirius. Sirius had his life destroyed; he spent twelve years in Azkaban with soul-sucking creatures. Everyone in the Wizarding World believed him to be a murderer, that he betrayed his best friends. Even his best friend had believed it until recently.

She thought of Harry; of him losing his parents at such a young age because they were betrayed by someone they literally trusted with their lives. Of his suffering and abuse with the Dursleys and the attacks from the dementors. She thought about the last two years in which Voldemort had made Harry a target and put him in danger.

Pettigrew may not be responsible for that, but she didn't care, she was far too angry to care, so she blamed that on him, too. Her friendship between her and Ron had almost broken down when the rat went missing and Crookshanks was blamed. So when he was whispering manipulative things into Harry's ear, she lost control of her emotions and she saw red. She couldn't stop herself.

She raised her hands and pushed them out forwards. Pettigrew let go of the grip he had on Harry's collar and he was thrown almost ten feet across the room until he smashed against a wall. Everyone looked at her shocked.

"Where's your wand, Hermione?" Harry asked her softly.

"In Padfoot's hand," she whispered, staring down at her hands in confusion and horror.

"It's okay," he said softly. He gently took a hold of her hand and held it down by their sides in-between them. "It must've just been a case of accidental magic. You remember? I blew my aunt up at the beginning of the year."

She gave a small chuckle. "Yes, that must be it. Accidental magic," she nodded.

"Yeah," several voices replied, although Remus and Sirius shared a look that no one noticed. She glared at Pettigrew who was slowly climbing to his feet, using the wall for support.

"You should've realised, Peter, that if Voldemort didn't kill you, we would. Together!"

"NO!" Hermione and Harry yelled.

"This man is..." Remus began but Harry cut him off.

"I know what he is, but we'll take him to the castle."

"Bless you boy, bless you," Pettigrew whimpered as he knelt on the floor.

"I said we'd take you to the castle, after that the dementors can have you," Harry said, his voice filled with pain and anger.

Pettigrew began to cry and Remus and Hermione kept an eye on Pettigrew as they walked with him, out of the shack and through the tunnel, with Sirius and Harry helping an injured Ron.

"Sorry about the bite," he said to Ron. "I reckon that twinges a bit, yeah?"

"A bit! A bit! You almost tore my leg off!" Ron said hysterically.

"I was going for the rat. Normally, I have a very sweet disposition as a dog. In fact, more than once James suggested that I made the change permanent. The tail I could live with but the fleas are murder."

Hermione laughed from her place behind him and he turned his head slightly, acknowledging her.

"What's so funny, Kitten?" He asked cheerfully.

"Nothing, Mr. Snuffles," she replied, laughing at his disgusted expression as she knew he hated the nickname she had given him.

They climbed from the tunnel and walked out of the firing line of the Whomping Willow in case it tried to attack them again before they set Ron on a boulder with his injured leg stretched out. Sirius walked away from them and stared at the view of the castle whilst Harry was crouched beside Ron when Hermione approached.

"Why don't you go talk to Sirius?" She suggested, darting a glance over to the older wizard.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'll take care of Ron. Off you go," she nodded in Sirius' direction.

He stood to leave and looked down at her. "Hermione?"

"Yes, Harry," she said, her eyes scrutinizing Ron's leg.

"I...I'm sorry I called you a traitor."

She looked up at him with soft eyes. "I know you are, you don't have to apologise. I wanted to tell you but you wouldn't have believed me. So, instead, I did my best to care for and help Sirius so that when the truth finally came out, like I knew it would, I could say that I had done something to help you. If you knew that Sirius was okay, then you would be less worried."

"Will you tell me everything?"

"Of course I'll tell you everything, but later. Right now, you need to talk to your Godfather, he's been waiting twelve years for this moment. Off you go," she said, shooing him away with her hands, watching as he walked away and then she turned her eyes back to Ron's injured leg. "That looks really painful," she commented.

"So painful, they might chop it," he replied deliriously and she barely stopped herself from laughing at him.

"Madam Pomphrey will fix it in a heartbeat," she assured him.

"It's too late. They'll have to chop it off."

"You sound like Malfoy," she chuckled, reaching for her wand which Sirius had dropped to the floor beside her. "Diffindo," she muttered, cutting a strip of fabric from her jumper.

"What're you doing?"

"We have to stem the blood flow, otherwise, you'll suffer a lot of blood loss," she explained, wrapping the fabric tight around his leg and tying it off.

Pettigrew sank to the floor, reaching out to grip Ron's sleeve. "You won't let them give me to the dementors, will you? Haven't I been a good friend? A good pet?" Ron stared at him blankly. Then he turned to Hermione. "Oh, sweet girl, clever girl, you won't let them..." She glared at him and he promptly closed his mouth with Remus chuckling as he pulled him away from them.

"Not bad, Kitten," Sirius praised, coming up behind her and eyeing the work she'd done to Ron's leg.

"Thanks," she smiled, noticing his cheerful expression. Her eyes widened. "Padfoot!"

"What?" he asked anxiously, noticing her panicked expression.

She pointed behind him and when he turned around, the full moon was the only thing his attention was focused on and he was soon running to Remus and holding up him as he yelled and screamed in pain.

"Have you taken your potion?" Sirius demanded.

He hadn't.

Remus dropped his wand to the ground and as Sirius continued to talk to him, Pettigrew picked it up and pointed the wand at Sirius' back.

"Expelliarmus!" Harry yelled, the wand flying from Pettigrew's grasp.

He looked at them and with a smirk on his face, he waved mockingly before he began to shift back into the rat he was.

"I don't think so," Hermione hissed with her wand pointed at Pettigrew. "Petrificus Totalus," she muttered, hitting him just as he'd finished the transformation. For good measure, she hit him with her Sleeping Charm. "Somno Leporem."

By the time she had finished, Remus had changed and was now a fully transformed werewolf, and they were in trouble. Big trouble.

The trio began to slowly walk backwards as the wolf advanced on them. A large black dog jumped in front of them and distracted the wolf long enough for them to get away, but he was injured in the process. Harry sent Hermione and Ron back to the castle, and despite her not wanting to leave him, she agreed, picking up the rat none to carefully and giving it to Ron to carry.

"Why do I have to carry it?" He whined as she helped him walk back to the castle.

"Because it's your rat," she argued, glaring at him.

"It's not a rat. It's a bloody murderer!"

"I bet you wish Crookshanks had eaten him," she grumbled.

They made their way to the entrance of the castle, to find that Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall were stood waiting.

"Professor Dumbledore, Sir, Harry needs help. Professor Lupin transformed and..."

"Do not worry, Miss. Granger, we are already aware and he will be contained momentarily."

"I think we need to talk," she said sheepishly.

"I think so, My Dear," he chuckled at her.

They were escorted to the hospital wing where Ron was seen to by Madam Pomphrey and Hermione spoke with Professors McGonagall and Dumbledore with a Silencing Charm placed around them for privacy.

"You've been helping Sirius Black," he stated.

"Yes, I have, Sir; he was wrongfully accused and imprisoned. He's innocent. He didn't murder anyone, and he didn't betray Harry's parents. If you knew that I was helping Sirius, then why didn't you stop me?"

"You have excellent judgment and you help those in need. I'm unsure as to why Sirius tried to break into the castle."

"He tried to break into the castle (and believe me I gave him an hour lecture for his recklessness and impatience afterwards) to capture the real murderer. Sirius wasn't the Secret Keeper, Peter Pettigrew was! "

"Peter Pettigrew is dead, Miss. Granger."

"Is he though, Professor? All that was found of him was a finger, not a body."

"You have a point, however, the explosion disintegrated his body."

"Professor, are you aware that Peter Pettigrew is an unregistered Animagus?"

"What!" Professor McGonagall's voice rose higher than normal.

She had been listening quietly to the conversation, and just like the rest of the wizarding population, she had believed Sirius Black to be guilty. She had assumed it was Sirius Black.

"Yes, Professor, he's an unregistered Animagus and has been since his days in Hogwarts and he isn't the only one." They both gave her a confused look. "Sirius Black is an unregistered Animagus, as was James Potter before his death. Sirius is a black dog and James was a stag," she explained.

"How do you know they were Animagi?" Professor McGonagall asked Hermione.

"I know because when I first met Sirius, I saw it; the four of them inside the Shrieking Shack at the full moon. They became Animagi so Professor Lupin wouldn't have to be on his own during the full moon, they wanted him to have a pack to prevent him from self-harming."

"What is Peter's Animagus form?" Dumbledore asked.

"I'm glad you asked, Professor. Ron had a rat, Scabbers. He was twelve-years-old which is rather strange as rats don't tend to live past three years and he just so happens to be missing a toe. And it just so happens that all that was found of Pettigrew was a finger. A strange coincidence, don't you think?"

"A strange coincidence indeed, Miss. Granger," he nodded. "I assume you have proof."

"I do," she confirmed, picking up the rat and placing it on the bed in front of him. They looked at it. "If you cast the Counter Charm he'll chance back to Pettigrew. It's not dead, just sleeping."

"There's only one sleeping induced spell I can think of and it has not been used on the rat," he said, looking at her with an unidentifiable look on his face.

"I noticed there was only one spell, so when I was bored, I created a new one."

"Miss. Granger, that is extremely difficult to do," Professor McGonagall said, her eyes slightly wide and her mouth parted.

"Really?" She questioned with a frown. "It only took me a few hours," she admitted.

Dumbledore chuckled at her. The doors were thrown open and Harry was brought in on a stretcher.

Hermione was sat beside Harry's bed, waiting for him to wake and Dumbledore was in his office trying to keep Sirius from the dementors kiss. When Harry's eyes fluttered open, he turned his head to see Hermione watching him worriedly but a smile pulled at her face upon her realising that he was awake.

"I saw my dad," he said.

"What?" She frowned. Had he hit his head?

"He sent the dementors away. I saw him across the lake."

"Listen, Harry, they've captured Sirius and any minute now the dementors are going to perform the kiss."

"You mean they're going to kill him?"

"No, it's worse, much worse. They're going to suck out his soul," she said, her voice and eyes sad.

They turned their eyes to Dumbledore as he entered the room, hopefully with good news.

"Sirius Black is in the top cell of the dark tower, you know the laws, Miss. Granger. You must not be seen. And you will do well, I feel, to return before this last chime. If not the consequences are too ghastly to discuss. If you succeed tonight, more than one innocent life may be spared. Three turns should do it I think." He walked out of the room and turned back around to face them. "When in doubt I find it wise to retrace my steps from the beginning. Good Luck," with that said, he closed the doors behind them.

"What the bloody hell was that all about?" Ron asked, sounding frustrated, whilst Harry looked confused and Hermione understood perfectly.

"Sorry, Ron, but seeing as you can't walk; you're going to have to stay here," she said and Harry sat up and climbed off the bed, standing next to her.

She pulled the time-turner out from beneath her jumper and she put the chain around Harry's neck before she began to turn the dial. When Harry tried to touch it, she slapped his hand away and glared at him.

"Sorry," he mumbled.

"Close your eyes," she instructed.

He did and when he opened his eyes they were still in the hospital wing, only now it was empty. Hermione removed the chain from his neck and began walking towards the doors and he followed behind her confused.

"What happened? Where's Ron?"

"It's seven-thirty. Where were we at seven-thirty?" She asked, looking over her shoulder at him.

"I don't know, Hagrid's?" He shrugged.

"We have to go and we can't be seen."

They ran all the way down to Hagrid's.

"Hermione? Hermione wait! Hermione, will you please tell me what we're doing?"

They stopped and he was surprised to see himself, Hermione and Ron walking down to see Hagrid. She grabbed him by the arm and pushed him against the wall, making sure they were out of sight.

"This is a time-turner, Harry. It's how I've been getting to my classes all year. McGonagall gave it to me the first day of school."

"You mean we've gone back in time?"

"Yes. Professor Dumbledore obviously wanted us to return to this moment. Clearly something happened that he wants us to change."

They followed behind the three teens and hid behind boulders as they entered Hagrid's cabin.

"Buckbeak's still alive," Harry said happily.

"Oh, of course, remember what he said? If we succeed more than one innocent life can be spared. Let's go," she said.

They ran and hid in the trees, their eyes watching the hut.

"Right, let's set him free," Harry said.

"Harry, we can't yet, they have to see Buckbeak otherwise they'll think Hagrid set him free."

They could see Ron being handed a rat through the open windows.

"That's Pettigrew, that's the man who betrayed my parents; you don't expect me to just stay here do you?"

"Yes, I do, and you must," she stressed, holding him back. She dragged him further into the trees as she knew that the others would be leaving the hut soon.

"They're coming and we aren't leaving, why aren't we leaving?" She questioned.

Her eyes searched her surroundings and she noticed some pebbles on the floor next to her, and then the pieces slotted together. She picked them up and threw them through the window of the hut. One hit the vase and the other Harry.

"Ow! That hurt," He said, bringing his hand up to his head.

"Sorry," she muttered.

They watched the trio leave the hut and they hid in the pumpkin patch. They could hear them talking and as soon as they left, Hermione and Harry crept forward. Harry and Hermione bowed to Buckbeak and then approached him slowly. They released him from the chains and with some difficulty and effort, they were able to lure him out and way from the pumpkin patch with dead ferrets and into the cover of the forest. They ran through the forest until they reached the lake where Harry insisted he saw his father save his life.

"Now what?"

"Now we save Sirius," she replied, her voice filled with determination.

"How, Hermione?"

"No idea, we wait until you both show up."

They sat in silence waiting for what felt like hours.

"Hermione?"

"Yes, Harry."

"Before, when I was down by the lake, I did see someone. That someone made the dementors go away."

"With a Patronus, with what you described only a powerful witch or wizard could produce it."

"It was my dad, my dad conjured the Patronus."

"Harry, your dad is..."

"Dead, I know," he said flatly, "But that's what I saw."

She sighed; there was no point in arguing with him, he wouldn't listen.

"They'll be here soon."

"Sirius asked me to come and live with him," he informed her.

"I know, it's all he's talked about," she smiled.

"I'll be free and I'll never have to go back to the Dursleys. It'll just be me and him."

A sudden coldness seeped into her bones and she looked up to see hundreds of dementors heading their way.

"It's time!"

The dementors were attacking an injured Sirius and Harry who was trying to protect them both. Harry's dad still hadn't shown up and she could tell Harry was confused and anxious.

"You're dying, both of you," she said quietly. Panic set in and he ran forward to the waterfront.

"Expecto Patronum!" he yelled.

A large silver-blue stag poured out of his wand and stood before him.

Hermione beamed and laughed from behind him. He had done it! He had cast a Patronus! The stag and a brilliant white light attacked the dementors, wiping them all away and protecting Sirius and Harry. When the spell ended, Harry was exhausted, she could tell, but there were still a fair few dementors lingering about and circling above. They weren't out of danger yet. Harry had done most of the work but she would take care of the rest, and so she ran forward and allowed Harry to lean against her for support.

"Expecto Patronum," she called, and her beautiful and regal lion stood in front of her, assessing the danger before it sprang into action, destroying the remaining dementors.

Harry looked at her wide-eyed. "What the bloody hell was that?" He asked, half amazed, half shocked.

"My Patronus," she answered.

"You did that like it was nothing," he noted. "How long have you been able to conjure it?"

"I conjured it for the first time when I first met Sirius."

"How? When? Why?" He spluttered.

"I first met him at the beginning of February and I had to conjure it because a dementor spotted us. From that moment on, whenever I visited Sirius in the Forbidden Forest, I would send my Patronus ahead of me to let him know I was on my way to see him."

"Since February! You've been conjuring it since February! When did you first start?"

"I started the same day you did."

"It took you a month? It's taken me five!"

"Yes, but every person learns at a different rate, you have to find a memory that is powerful enough and you have to believe that you can cast it, that's the key. Not only magical power is needed, but belief and true happiness."

"What was your memory?"

"Honestly?"

"Yes, tell me the truth."

"Well, there weren't a lot of memories to choose from and they weren't strong enough. Every time I thought about a memory from my childhood, I was reminded that I would likely never see my parents again. Every time I thought of something to do with Oliver, the twins, Ron or you, I was reminded that you all hated me, at the time none of you were speaking to me. So it was difficult for me to choose."

He was saddened by her words. "So what did you chose?"

"I didn't choose a memory, I chose hope; based on you and Sirius. I knew that when Sirius' name is cleared, he'll get his life back and he'll be happy. I knew that you would be happy because you could live with him instead of those awful Dursleys. I knew that you would be with your true family and that you wouldn't suffer anymore. Your future happiness was what made my Patronus possible."

"I was your Patronus?" He said dazedly.

"Yes, and in case you're wondering, every Patronus has a meaning. It symbolises something or is linked to certain personality traits." As she spoke, her lion returned and stood in front of her, waiting for any further instructions now that they were safe from the dementors. She stroked her hand through its fur. "He won't bite you, Harry," she chuckled, noticing his slightly fearful expression.

He lifted his hand out and the lion nuzzled into his palm and he laughed. "Yours is a lion, what does that mean?"

"Fitting," he nodded after she had finished explaining. "And mine is...?"

"Yours is a stag, Harry. It symbolises compassion, power and experience, balancing your weaknesses, empathy, sensitivity, gentleness, quietness and regeneration. You're also spirituality in tuned to the stag because like Sirius, your father was an unregistered Animagus, and his form was a stag," she smiled at him. "Please don't tell anyone I can cast a Patronus. Not yet anyway, there's already enough oddities about me and I don't want anyone staring any more than usual." He nodded. "Come on, we've wasted enough time, we have to save Sirius."

They quickly ran back to Buckbeak, who was wondering about as he foraged from the forest floor.

"How are we going to get to the tower and save Sirius in time?" She paced back and forth, trying to rack her brain for a solution.

"Err, Hermione," Harry interrupted uncertainly.

"What, Harry?" she questioned, turning to face him. He gestured to Buckbeak sheepishly. "No, no way!"

"I thought you were okay with flying now."

"That's not a broom; that's a hippogriff!"

"Come on, for Sirius."

"No!"

"Please? For me," he said, smiling sheepishly.

"No, not a chance in hell. Hell will freeze over before I ever fly a hippogriff!"

"How did I end up doing this?" She grumbled as Buckbeak dived down towards the tower.

"Because you're my best friend and you love me," Harry said, a small smile on his face.

"That's debatable at the moment!" He laughed at her. "I think I'm going to be sick," she groaned as Buckbeak touched down on the ground.

They climbed off his back and ran to the locked door of the cell. Sirius looked up, relieved to see them.

"Bombarda!" Hermione yelled, and not only did she blow the lock off, but half of the stone wall surrounding the door too.

"That's one way to do it," Sirius laughed, shaking his head.

They all climbed onto Buckbeak's back and flew down to a courtyard, far away from the tower.

"I want to go with you," Harry said, his feet now back on the ground.

"Maybe some other day, Harry," Sirius said softly.

"That won't be too far away, I'll make sure of it. Now, your name isn't cleared yet so unfortunately, you're still in hiding. When it's safe for you to return, I'll send you the signal," Hermione spoke.

"Right you are, Kitten," Sirius nodded to her with a small smile.

"Accio magic box," Hermione said, pointing her wand in the air and within in minutes two boxes came flying towards her and she caught them. "This one is from the forest and it should still have the port-keys, blanket and pillow in. This one is the one with fresh food. It should last you a few days," she explained.

"You weren't kidding when you said you took care of him," Harry said with a laugh, whilst looking grateful.

Sirius took them and clicked his fingers, the boxes shrunk down in size and he put them in his pocket.

"The charm you put on the trunks?" Harry questioned with a raised eyebrow/ Hermione nodded.

"Use the house whenever you need to but be careful with Buckbeak. You won't be on the run forever," she promised.

"I know, not when I've got you looking out for me," Sirius responded.

He said his goodbyes before quickly leaving on Buckbeak, flying off into the distance. They quickly made their way to the hospital wing, just in time for the last chime. They came face to face with Dumbledore as he closed the door.

"It's done, Professor," Hermione said.

"What's done?" He asked innocently, winking at them before walking off.

They walked into the hospital wing and Ron looked at them scared.

"How did you get there? I was talking to you there. Now you're there."

"What's he talking about, Harry?" Hermione tipped her head in faux confusion.

"I don't know. How can somebody be in two places at once?" He replied, sharing a secret smile and laugh, leaving a confused Ron.

Hermione spent a couple of hours explaining everything to Harry and Ron, about how she had met Sirius and how she knew he was innocent, about how she had helped him. Afterwards, Harry and Hermione told Ron about travelling back in time and Sirius' escape with Buckbeak but leaving out the part of Hermione's Patronus.

Later that night, Hermione returned to her dorm room and when the boys saw the state she was in, with dirtied and ripped clothing they weren't happy and they demanded answers.

She told them that she wouldn't explain anything that had happened until they had returned to the Burrow, and they reluctantly agreed, knowing they couldn't change her mind.

Thursday 16th June 1994

They were on the Hogwarts Express. Lee was with Alicia and the twins and Oliver had gone to find the confection trolley to celebrate. They had finally won the Quidditch House Cup. Oliver had cried when it had been awarded to him and the team, and the twins hadn't missed the opportunity to tease him but Oliver hadn't cared.

When it was just Hermione, Harry and Ron left in the compartment, an owl arrived, delivering a letter from Sirius.

Sirius explained that all was well with himself and Buckbeak and they hadn't been seen and he was keeping a low profile. Since Ron had lost his pet and familiar, and for injuring him, Sirius gave the owl to Ron as a gift and he wasted no time in naming him Pigwidgeon.

"Well, another year over and done with," Hermione sighed, and before long they reached Kings Cross Station. "Hey, Harry, if the Dursleys give you any trouble just tell them Sirius Black's your Godfather," Hermione said and he laughed at her.

Harry went back to the Dursleys, Oliver went returned to Wood Manor and everyone else returned to the Burrow, where Hermione would prepare to tell everyone the truth about Sirius Black.

Chapter Forty-Two

The Burrow - Thursday 16th June 1994

Hermione knocked on Percy's bedroom door and she didn't have to wait long for him to open it, move aside for her to enter and then close the door behind her.

"Mia," he greeted with a smile.

"Perce, do you trust me?" she asked, nibbling at her lip nervously.

"Yes, why?" He eyed her cautiously.

"I need a favour."

"And that would be?" He arched an eyebrow.

"Can you please make me a port-key?"

"What for?" He asked suspiciously.

"I can't tell you, but you'll find out tomorrow."

He kept his eyes on her, trying to read her. She stared right back at him.

"Where to?"

"Here, the Burrow, preferably the garden. You know I wouldn't ask this of you if it weren't important, and you know I'd never do anything that would put everyone in danger."

He sighed before nodding and he quickly made a port-key for her in the form of an empty inkpot.

"I promise tomorrow all will be explained. And I'm almost done planning the prank. I may need some help with the magic aspect, if that's alright with you?"

"I thought you'd never asked," he said with a wide grin that made her laugh.

"Do you mind if I include Ollie and Ron?"

"To help?" He asked with a tilted head.

"No, as victims," she clarified.

The smirk he gave her told her all she needed to know. She shook her head with a laughed before leaving his room and making her way to her room which she shared with Ginny, and she placed the port key in her trunk for safekeeping, before making her way to the kitchen where she knew Mrs. Weasley would be preparing dinner.

"Hey, Mrs. Weasley," she greeted.

"Hello, Dear, and how many times do I have to tell you, it's Molly or Mum?"

"Once more as always, Mrs. Weasley," she said with a cheeky grin.

Mrs. Weasley chuckled with a shake of her head. "Now, what can I do for you, My Dear?"

"I was wondering if you would call a family meeting," Hermione answered.

"Tonight? What for?" She asked anxiously.

"No, I was thinking tomorrow night, a few hours before dinner."

"What for?" She repeated.

"Ron and I need to explain some things that happened at Hogwarts this year, I'm sure you've heard stories. But mainly I need to explain some things. It's important that you trust me because I want to invite a guest to dinner and the meeting."

"Who?" She asked with a narrowed gaze.

"I can't tell you, not yet, but know that I would never harm you or your family in any way. I wouldn't allow that to happen."

Mrs. Weasley was sceptical as she eyed Hermione. She had heard the sincerity in her tones and the young witch was all but begging her with her eyes.

"Very well, Dear, what about Harry?"

"He was there for most of it, but for the events that only included myself; I explained everything to Ron and Harry before the end of term. The Woods should be here, too. I don't want them to be left out of the loop; it could be dangerous. The boys have been nagging me about that night for almost two weeks. I refused to tell them what happened until we returned home."

Mrs. Weasley still wasn't used to Hermione calling the Burrow 'home' and every time she did Mrs. Weasley would beam a smile. Mrs. Weasley agreed and Hermione hugged her before running off to find Ron.

He was playing Quidditch in the garden with the twins, Lee and Ginny.

"Ron!" She shouted, so he was able to hear her whilst he was up in the air on his broom.

"What?" He yelled back.

"I need to talk to you!"

"What?"

"Well, if you came down, I could tell you!"

"Just tell me now!"

She huffed. "MR SNUFFLES!"

Ron froze in mid-air. "Coming!" He replied without further argument.

He immediately began his descent and touched down on the ground. Everyone still in the air looked confused at the sudden change in Ron's mood but continued with their game.

"Let's go for a walk by the lake," she suggested and he nodded, knowing they wouldn't be disturbed there and could talk privately. Once they reached their destination they sat themselves down on the ground. "Your mum's calling a family meeting tomorrow night before dinner. I've written a letter and Percy's made me a port-key so we can get him here safely. Are you ready to set them straight?"

"I'm not sure, 'Mione" Ron sighed, an anxious expression crossing his face.

"Do you want Sirius to be on the run for the rest of his life? Do you want Harry to live with the Dursleys until he graduates?" She knew she was using dirty tactics but it worked.

"No, I don't, they're awful to him," he scowled.

"Well, then you better prepare yourself, the meeting's starting at four tomorrow evening. Can I borrow Pig?"

"Yeah, go ahead, last I saw he was flying over by the shed."

They both stood and made their way back to the Burrow, Ron returning to his game of Quidditch whilst she went to her bedroom. She collected the letter she had written for Sirius, placed the port key in a box and went in search of Pigwidgeon, who she found flying around outside near a large oak tree.

"Pig," she called and he flew down to her, landing on her arm clumsily. She attached the items to the over-excited owl and sent him off with instructions to deliver it to Sirius and to wait for a reply.

She walked back into the Burrow and over to the fireplace, where she grabbed some floo powder and threw it into the grate. "Wood Manor," she called and she stuck her head in the flames.

"Ollie"! She called.

Oliver rounded the corner and knelt down in front of the fire. "Hey, Lassie," he smiled.

"Hey, family meeting tomorrow at four."

"Right, what aboot?"

"What happened at school," she answered.

"It's aboot bloody time, a've been waiting fer weeks."

"Oh, don't be a baby," she rolled her eyes. "Can I borrow your pensive?"

"Af course, ye want mae tae bring it with mae?"

"Please, and make sure to bring your parents, too."

"Will do, a'll see ye later."

"See you later," she nodded, removing her head from the fireplace and standing up, turning around to leave the room but she came face to face with the twins who were watching her suspiciously.

"What was that about?" Fred asked curiously.

"I've asked your mum to call a family meeting tomorrow."

"Why?" George arched an eyebrow.

"I'm telling everyone what happened at school, they need to know."

"Really? It's about time; we've been waiting forever."

"Don't be a baby, Freddie," she chided. "And I would prepare yourselves, Gin will probably tell your mum," she said and she walked off, leaving two slightly fearful teenagers behind.

The Burrow - Friday 17th June 1994

Hermione was pacing in the living room of the Burrow in front of the fireplace, and she had been for the past half an hour when the fireplace roared to life. Oliver stepped out and followed by his parents. She and Oliver hugged and she felt herself calm with his touch. She reluctantly pulled away from him and Oliver placed a trunk in the middle of the room. All available seats had been rearranged in a semi-circle facing where the trunk was now placed.

The Woods greeted everyone and sat down wherever they could, and waited for Bill and Charlie who arrived minutes later.

"Sorry we're late, so 'Mione, what's this meeting about?" Charlie asked as he and Bill hugged her.

"Do you trust me?"

"Yes," they answered without hesitation.

"Well, remember that," she said anxiously and they looked at her trying to gauge her expression.

They took their seats and the room went quiet. Everyone faced Hermione and Ron stood and walked to her side. She took a deep breath and wrung her hands in front of her nervously.

"Alright, so I know you're all wondering why I asked for a family meeting to be called, and I see no point in putting it off any longer. A lot of things happened at school this year, some wonderful and some not. I'm sure you've heard rumours and stories, but I, we, want to tell you the truth. I thought it best that we do it using a pensive and if you still have questions, they can be asked afterwards and we'll do our best to answer them." She opened the trunk so she could access the pensive. "We're just waiting on more arrival before we can begin," she said.

"Who?" Bill asked curiously, and that was followed by a noise coming outside.

"He's here now, just remember, I would never put any of you in danger," she said before she and Ron made their way out of the Burrow, to see Sirius waiting for them.

Hermione was glad to see that he looked healthy and that he'd recently been to the house. He was freshly showered, clean-shaven and dressed in clean clothing of dark jeans, black hiking boot and a black shirt rolled up to his elbows with the first few buttons undone, showing some of his tattoos.

When he caught sight of her, he beamed a smile and she hugged him tightly in greeting and Sirius patted Ron on the shoulder. She noticed that Buckbeak was behind him, so she approached him and bowed. He bowed back and she walked up to him and stroked his beak and feathers.

"You're going to have to stay out here, I'm afraid, Buckbeak, but we shouldn't be too long," she told the hippogriff. He nodded and started chasing the gnomes around the garden; she chuckled and walked back over to Sirius. "Ready?"

"Let's go, Kitten," he nodded.

The three of them made the short walk to the Burrow and stepped inside, and when she looked up, it was to see eight wands pointed in her direction. The twins, Lee and Ginny stared at her with parted mouths and wide eyes and before she could explain, eight differently coloured beams were heading their way.

"NO!"

She felt panic rush through her and instinctively raised her hands, a large shield covering herself, Sirius and Ron. The spells bounced off the shield and ricocheted in different directions, hitting different targets: vases, photo frames, walls and even a wooden chair, shattering it into pieces.

Everyone slowly lowered their wands whilst staring at Hermione in surprise and disbelief. She looked at her hands in confusion and fear, like she had the night that she and Harry had saved Sirius.

"I'm sure it's just another case of accidental magic, Kitten," Sirius said softly, putting a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

"It's happened befere?" Mr. Wood asked, sharing a look with those in the know about Hermione's heritage.

"That's the second time it's happened in the past two weeks," Hermione spoke, sounding dazed even to her own ears. She heard some shuffling and lifted her eyes, noticing that once again eight wands were trained on Sirius.

"You said you trusted me," she said, a glare forming on her face and her hands dropping to her sides.

"We didn't know you invited Sirius Black to dinner," Percy said stiffly. "And if I had known it was him, I wouldn't have made that port-key for you."

"You didn't even let me explain why he was here before you tried to kill him! He's innocent. He was framed and I can prove it. Ron can prove it. Professors Dumbledore, Lupin and McGonagall will vouch for us."

"Professor Dumbledore?" Mr. Weasley questioned slowly.

"Yes, he's aware of Sirius' innocence and he's helping me to ensure the true murderer is prosecuted, but until that happens, Sirius is still in hiding. He took a great personal risk in coming here tonight because I asked him to. Now, are you going to let me explain?" She said, her glare still firmly on her face and her hands held on her hips. They hesitantly lowered their wands.

"If I knew I would be receiving this welcome I would've brought a trifle and a bottle of elf wine," Sirius joked.

Hermione spun around, reached up on her tiptoes and smacked him upside the head.

"Ow!" He scowled, rubbing the aching side of his head. "You said you would stop hitting me," he whined.

"Yes, if you stopped being an idiot," she said as a matter of fact.

Ron laughed at the two and shook his head, and their attention moved to him. He cleared his throat nervously when he saw them staring.

"This happens a lot between them, you get used to it," he said with a sheepish look on her face and a shrug of his shoulders.

Hermione moved to the centre of the room and they all took their seats, sitting stiffly with their hands still gripping their wands, as Hermione crossed to the pensive and she was followed by Sirius and Ron.

"Shall we begin?" She asked, receiving nods in agreement. "Bill, can you help me?"

He nodded in reply and stood up, walking over to her. He pointed his wand at her head and Hermione focused on which memories she wished to share, knowing that she had be careful to not miss anything of importance. The little wisps of smoke tendrils were pulled from her temple and deposited into the pensive.

"There isn't enough space for us all to fit in the pensive," he said.

"I know; that's why I spent time creating a spell before I left Hogwarts," she replied, removing a piece of parchment from her back pocket.

"You created a spell!" Several people said loudly in surprise.

Hermione nodded. "Several, actually."

"What spells?" Mr. Wood asked curiously.

"A Sleeping Charm, a Drying Spell and this Projector Spell," she answered.

"How? Why?" Mr. Weasley asked slowly.

She shrugged. "I was bored," she said, and of course, Sirius joined in, mimicking her. She punched him in the arm in retaliation.

"For someone so small and sweet, you're very violent," he huffed, rubbing at the aching spot on his arm.

"Oh, stop whining, Padfoot," she scolded.

"What! Padfoot!" The twins exclaimed in excitement and surprise.

"Yes, he's a Marauder," she said smugly.

The boys jumped up and rushed over to him, shaking his hands enthusiastically and bowing to him, completely forgetting that he was a fugitive. They were talking animatedly and no one could understand a word they were saying. Sirius and Hermione laughed at them.

"Freddie, Georgie, maybe we could get on with the explanation first and then you can talk with him," she said amused and they reluctantly sat down.

"Just say that spell Bill and wave your wand like so," she said, showing him the wand movements.

"Proiectura Incantatores," he muttered, finally perfecting it on his fifth attempt and he retook his seat.

They all watched with their attention firmly fixed on the large screen that appeared in front of them and Hermione's memories began from the begging.

It started on Christmas day and Harry receiving the broom, they watched the conversation between the group, they watched as Hermione ran to her dorm room and they watched the interaction between her and Percy.

"You made a joke? -"

"- And broke the rules? -"

"- Followed 'Mione? -"

"- And made her smile? -"

"- Who are you? -"

"- And what have you done with Percy? -" the twins said in that unique language of theirs.

"Hey, leave him alone, I'm proud of him," Hermione chided.

"Us too," Bill and Charlie chorused, nodding to their younger brother. Percy flushed.

The memory played and they watched Hermione telling the professors about the broom, and they watched on sadly as they witnessed Hermione confessing that she would probably lose Harry's friendship for trying to save his life, but they didn't prepare themselves for what was about to happen next; the argument.

"What the hell did you tell for!" Harry fumed.

"To make sure the Firebolt was safe for your use," she replied.

"It's been confiscated until further notice!"

"Yes, so that the Firebolt can be analysed for any possibly harmful spells, dark magic or substances"

"He needs tha' broom fer Quidditch! Ye said tha' ye would do anythin' tae help us win, but ye took the broom away!" Oliver yelled.

Everyone watched on in shock as the argument began to unfold. Those involved looked down in shame for the way they treated Hermione. Particularly, Oliver, who for the first time, was seeing the way Hermione had reacted to him yelling at her.

Was it possible to be so disgusted with yourself that you could physically be sick? That's the way he felt.

"And I will help you win, having the Firebolt will not make a difference to Harry's skill and he still has my Nimbus 2000. It's not like I've left him or the team without options."

"But it's a Firebolt!" he shouted.

"Would you rather have Harry on a safe, reliable broom or a broom that is likely to be jinxed and that would have the ability to kill him? Do you want your friend to die? We discussed this last year Oliver. You promised you wouldn't put your friends in danger," she said to him.

Everyone watched Hermione's reaction in the memory. They watched as the twins looked at her annoyed, they watched Oliver yell at her and they watched Hermione run upstairs and to the bathroom. They heard her being sick before the memory faded.

Everyone stared at the boys, not knowing what to say, not knowing what to do, not knowing how to react. That was before Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood stood from their seats and began yelling at the boys.

"How could you treat Hermione in such a way!"

"Hermione did the right thing, an' ye had naw right tae yer voice tae her!"

The boys looked down at the floor ashamed and Bill and Charlie glared murderously at them. Everyone forgot that Sirius was standing next to Hermione. He was furious; she hadn't been kidding when she'd said they'd treated her harshly, but he was amused at the dressing down they'd received from their mothers. There was nothing a teenage boy was more afraid of than his mother.

"Mollywobbles, maybe we should allow the rest of the story to unfold," Mr. Weasley said cautiously, scared his wife would turn her anger on him.

"Aye, Beth, Arthur is right. We should continue an' see what else has been kept from us," Mr. Wood agreed. The two women glared at their children before retaking their seats.

The memory continued. It showed the way Hermione was treated, it showed Ginny and Percy trying to cheer Hermione up, it showed the boys ignoring Hermione - not even looking at her and it showed Ron calling her a traitor every time he saw her. The memory faded again. And everyone was again glaring at the boys.

The next memory that was shown was Hermione walking along the edge of the Forbidden Forest, conversing with Crookshanks as he led her through the trees until he sat on the ground and Hermione did the same, watching as the familiar left, only to return with a large black dog following behind him. Hermione was scratching the dog behind the ear as she cried and spoke of her inner turmoil at her loss of friendship

They watched as Hermione cried and the dog whimpered. The boys felt ashamed and everyone else felt anger. Hermione and Sirius shared a secret smile; they knew that soon everyone would understand that he was innocent.

The memory continued with an interaction between Bopsy, Hermione feeding the large dog and before their eyes, the large dog transformed into Sirius Black. Gasps and mutters of profanities filled the room as no one has known of Sirius Black's well-kept secret.

"I don't want to kill, Harry," Sirius admitted.

"Weren't you put in Azkaban for murdering fourteen people, including Harry's parents?" she said.

"I'm innocent. I'm not a murderer. I would never hurt James or Lily. I would lay down my life for theirs!" he yelled.

"I never said that you did kill anyone, I just said that you were incarcerated for it," she corrected.

"You think I'm innocent?"

"I never said that either. But you have to admit the evidence against you rather compelling."

"That was my fault, I acted rashly. I went after the real murderer and it didn't turn out so well."

She snorted. "That's an understatement,"

They chuckled at Hermione and everyone noticed the mock glare he sent her. Bill and Charlie were thinking the same thing. He seems awfully playful considering he's a murderer. They both looked to Sirius and Hermione who had sat down on chairs sometime during the memory showing and they observed how comfortable the two seemed to be with the other.

"Sorry, please continue, the floors all yours."

"I was imprisoned for murdering all those innocent people. If I had stayed at the house, I would've been Harry's guardian and he wouldn't have had to grow up without his family," he said sadly.

"He's living with his aunt, uncle and cousin. The Dursleys, they're awful people," she scowled.

"I know; when I escaped I discovered where he was taken as a baby and I went to watch over him. I wanted to see his guardians, and from what I witnessed, they weren't nice people. I saw him storm out of the house with someone chasing after him and yelling. I waited until the knight bus showed up before I left."

"Do you know they abused him? Maybe not physically, but it was still abuse. For years they made him sleep in a cupboard under the stairs. Last year they put bars on his bedroom window and locked him in his room. The boys had to rescue him by pulling the bars off his window with a flying car."

The boys laughed at the memory and stopped instantly when Mrs. Weasley glared at them. Sirius felt his mouth twitch in amusement.

"He wasn't allowed any connection to the Wizarding World or any of his friends. They wouldn't let him send letters. They wouldn't allow him to let Hedwig out of her cage and they wouldn't even let him do his homework. They have told all of their muggle relatives that he goes to a reform school for troubled boys, where they beat him until his behaviour improves."

"No, I didn't know all of that, but now that I do, I'm going to kill them," he said furiously.

"I thought you weren't a murderer, that would kind of defeat the purpose of you protesting your innocence," she mused innocently.

They watched in shock as Sirius laughed out loud. They looked over to him and Hermione and saw the two of them chuckling at the memory.

"Quick, you have to hide."

They watched stunned as Hermione grabbed his arm and she suddenly stilled, as if she'd been hit with a body-bind, and the screen froze when Hermione stood from her chair.

"Now, this is how I first knew Sirius was innocent. Don't ask me how it happened because I'm not entirely sure how I did it and I haven't been able to do it again since," she explained before sitting back and they turned back to the screen, curiosity niggling at them as the memory began to play again.

They watched as images played out in front of them.

It began with Sirius and three other boys. One looked like Harry; one looked like a younger Professor Lupin and the other they didn't recognise. Then it changed to an image of laughter and happiness as the four boys ran through the hallways of Hogwarts, wearing a uniform and Gryffindor colours. Then it changed to an image of a stag, a werewolf, a black dog and a rat during the full moon. The next image showed the wedding of a man that looked like Harry and a woman with red hair. The best men were Sirius and Professor Lupin. Then it changed to one of a baby and everyone was crowding around him and taking turns to hold him whilst they laughed and joked around. Then it changed to one of Sirius suggesting that he not be the secret keeper and instead someone named Wormtail should be used. Then it changed into an image of a house wreckage and a distraught Sirius, followed by Sirius yelling at someone at wand point before an explosion occurred. The last image showed Sirius being thrown into a dark, cold and damp cell.

Everyone looked at Sirius, confusion making it difficult to understand what they'd just seen, but it didn't stop them from doubting that maybe Sirius wasn't the one to kill all of those people

"What is it?"

"You didn't do it. You're innocent. Someone named Wormtail did it," she said.

"You believe me," he whispered.

"Yes, I don't know how, but I saw it. When I touched you, I saw what happened."

The boys bristled when Angelina appeared out of nowhere and instantly that knew that the next memory wasn't going to be good.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here? You're so getting expelled for this. Who would've thought Gryffindor's Princess and know-it-all is a traitor? Working with a murderer to kill her so-called best friend? I guess I know why everyone is calling you a traitor now."

"Angelina, what are you doing here? Are you following me?"

"I knew that it was only a matter of time before I caught you doing something, but I never dreamed that I would find you plotting a murder. When I tell Dumbledore what you're up to, he'll have to expel you and you'll be sent to Azkaban for the attempted murder of Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived."

"First of all, it's Professor Dumbledore, have some respect. Secondly, don't call Harry that, he doesn't like it. He has a name so use it. Thirdly, I'm not plotting Harry's death; I've spent the last two and a half years keeping him alive and passing his classes you moronic bint. And lastly, what is your problem?"

"You! You're my problem. The way Oliver and the twins fawn all over you, it's disgusting," she sneered.

Bill and Charlie didn't bother hiding their smirks at the flush that appeared on the twins' and Oliver's cheeks, whilst the parents shared a knowing, amused smile. Sirius noticed both reactions and was intrigued.

The memory continued with Angelina and Hermione staring each other down, much like a Mexican standoff, until it was revealed that Angelina had been the one responsible for getting the venomous tentacula plant and the twins and Oliver were difficult to calm afterwards, particularly when Hermione was forced to defend herself against an attack, which she did easily.

More memories flicked across the screen of Hermione and Sirius interacting, of Hermione taking care of Sirius and of him comforting her when she cried about her circumstances due to the Firebolt Harry had been gifted for Christmas, and then the screen paused.

"If after everything you have seen so far, you still believe Sirius to be a murderer, what you're about to see may change your mind," she spoke.

"Scabbers, Crookshanks really does seem to have it out for him, even if he is a cat. You called him Wormtail. I've seen that name on the Marauders Map. And in that vision, I had there was a rat, a werewolf, a black dog and a stag. On the Marauders Map, it also says Moony, Prongs and Padfoot."

"You know about the Marauders Map?"

"Oh, I'm so stupid. Wormtail is the rat, you're the black dog which makes you Padfoot, Professor Lupin is obviously Moony which means that that man I saw, the one that looks like Harry is his Dad, the stag and Prongs," she said.

"You know Moony's a werewolf?"

"Professor Lupin's a werewolf?" Lee said surprised.

"Obviously," Hermione and Percy said together as they rolled their eyes.

"Did you know Professor Lupin was a werewolf?" Ginny asked both sets of parents and they nodded.

"And you let him teach us?"

Hermione knew Ginny didn't mean it in a cruel way but she couldn't stop herself from defending him.

"He wouldn't and didn't hurt us," Hermione defended with a frightening glare on her face.

Ron coughed. "That's not technically true."

"That was our fault, not his," she protested. "And he didn't hurt us, Ronald. Anyway, he was only sensitive around the full moon. He loves his chocolate a few days after the full moon and when he was stressed. He was the best defence teacher we've had. And on the night of the full moon, he locked himself away in the Shrieking Shack. That's why people say it's haunted; when Professor Lupin was a student in Hogwarts that's where he changed," Hermione explained.

"Sorry, 'Mione, I didn't mean it like that," Ginny said sheepishly.

"That's why he quit, there were rumours spreading about his Lycanthropy and he didn't want the parents to complain that their children were being taught by a werewolf," Hermione explained before they turned back to the screen.

"I saw Wormtail die. Unless he changed; you're all unregistered Animagi except for Professor Lupin. So if he changed and escaped he would still be alive. Now that I think about it, Scabbers has been with The Weasleys for about twelve years and rats only live for about three. Was there anything found at the site of the explosion?"

"A finger, it's all that was left, that's how they identified Pettigrew."

"And it just so happens that Scabbers is missing a toe. Wormtail is Scabbers. That sneaky, manipulative, traitorous, little arse…"

"No problem, Kitten. So you've figured it out and in less than ten minutes. I'm impressed, it took me almost thirteen years."

"So you obviously aren't after Harry, but you're after him, Wormtail. If you can prove that he's alive, then you can prove that you're innocent. You've got Crookshanks helping you," she looked at the cat and Sirius chuckled. "So why did you want to see me?"

"Now do you believe that Sirius is innocent? No one has noticed that Ron no longer has Scabbers but instead an owl? Sirius gave Ron the owl to replace his familiar. Now, when was Scabbers found?" Hermione asked, looking to The Weasley parents.

"A couple of day after the defeat of You-Know-Who," Mr. Weasley answered.

"And he was missing a toe and he's been with your family for twelve years," Hermione said softly.

"Merlin! We've been living with a murderer for the last twelve years. I put my children in danger," Mrs. Weasley started to cry hysterically.

Everyone else apart from Ron, Hermione and Sirius sat dazed. She wasn't sure they were even blinking. Before anyone could do anything, Hermione was hugging Mrs. Weasley and whispering in her ear.

"It wasn't your fault, you didn't know and if you did, I imagine you would've done a lot more than that Bat Bogey hex I sent Angelina's way," Hermione said and Mrs. Weasley gave a water chuckle. "What do you say we continue with the story?" Hermione asked, pulling away from Mrs. Weasley.

"There's more?"

Hermione snorted. "Of course, there is. This is only February 5th, the story doesn't end until June 6th."

"I imagine we're in for a real treat then," she said with a chuckle, shaking the others out of their daze and turning back to the screen.

They watched as Hermione told Sirius what had happened in the last two years. They were all surprised, they knew what had happened but they only knew the basics. They didn't know everything in that much detail, and then they saw a hooded figure headed their way. They all paled.

"Sirius, change now!"

"No, I'm not going to leave you to deal with that thing alone."

"Padfoot, do it now!" she snapped.

They watched as Sirius reluctantly transformed and Hermione held her wand tightly in her hand, closing her eyes and raising her wand arm.

"Expecto Patronum!"

Bill had been taking a drink of pumpkin juice when a large and regal looking lion was conjured and pounced at the dementor. He choked on his drink.

"What the fuck!" Charlie cursed. No one reprimanded him, they couldn't; they were too busy with their eyes glued to the screen.

"Ye can cast a full Patronus!" Oliver said quietly, staring at her in disbelief and pride. "Even a cannae do tha'. Percy?"

"No, I can't," Percy shook his head.

"It wasn't easy, it took me a month," she said.

"A month? It took me almost two years," Bill spluttered, recovering from his near-death experience of choking to death on pumpkin juice. "You can cast a Patronus?"

"Evidently," she gestured to the memory that had been paused. Sirius snorted at her.

"Can we see it?" Charlie asked hopefully.

"Not really since I'm out of school and underage," she said amused. "Keep your eyes on the screen, there's plenty more to come."

Chapter Forty-Three

Friday 17th June 1994

The memory changed and they were now watching Hermione sat on her bed writing an essay when Oliver walked into the room, after the Quidditch match. All the children sighed; they knew what the memory led to.

"Umm, Lassie?"

"Oh, so you do know that I exist? Lovely to know. I see Harry got the broom back then and it wasn't jinxed? I was wrong, I bet you just love that," she said coldly.

"A know ye did what ye did tae protect Harry, an' ye are right, the broom doesn't affect Harry's ability tae catch the snitch. We beat Slytherin withoot the Firebolt."

"Don't gloat; it's not an attractive trait."

Mr. and Mrs. Wood smirked at Oliver and the way Hermione had successfully scolded him and stopped his ego from inflating with only seven words.

"Sorry, what ye did, it was the right thing tae do. If tha' broom was jinxed then Harry would've been hurt. An' we were wrong tae take our anger oot on ye. We've felt bad since ye walked oot."

"It's been two months, Wood!" She snapped and he flinched.

They watched and felt intense sadness and anger at the look on her face and the tears falling heavily from her eyes. The boys had caused her to feel that way.

"What was ya boggart?" Mrs. Wood asked softly. Hermione looked up at her; she had tears in her eyes.

"Fred, George and Oliver, they were lying on the floor dead. Covered in blood, they looked like they'd been tortured. And then they got up and started talking. They blamed me for their deaths. They said it was my fault because I couldn't save them, I couldn't help, I couldn't stop them from dying. They told me that I'd killed them. They told me they hated me." Her tears fell down her face, Mrs. Wood stood up, walked over to her and hugged Hermione as she cried. And they continued watching.

"We dinnae know what tae say tae ye."

"How about we're sorry? That would've sufficed. You know me and that I forgive people far too easily for my own good. You wouldn't even look at me."

"We were ashamed af what we did tae ye."

"You promised me that you would never hate me, that you could never hate me."

"We don' hate ye; we're family."

She scoffed at him. "That's the way you all made me feel. You made me feel like I was back in first year again, back when I was being bullied, when I was helpless. You may not have physically hurt me, but you isolated me. Ginny, Lee and Percy are the only ones who have spoken to me. Ginny apologised to me the next day for her behaviour. It wasn't difficult to do. Just one little word. Do you know I've been living my life with my boggart for the last two months? You weren't injured or dying, but you made me feel alone, hated, unloved and unwanted. Do you know what that feels like?"

She had stopped writing her essay at this point and was looking at him, tears rolling down her cheeks and he had a pained look on his face.

"Everyone called me a traitor. Particularly Ronald, he never missed an opportunity to throw that insult in my face. But if I had allowed Harry to use that broom and it had been jinxed, what would I have been called? A killer?"

"Yer not the traitor; we are. We all are; we betrayed ye trust in us. Ye were doin' the right thing an' we got caught up in the fact tha' Harry had the best broom made in the Wizarding World."

"That's no excuse."

"We know," he said sadly.

"You're sorry?"

"Aye, incredibly so. A hate meself fer what we did tae ye," his voice was tinged with pain, and his eyes matched.

"Then where is everyone else? Where's Ronald, Harry, the twins?" He flinched at her tone. "If they were sorry, they would be here apologising. They don't appreciate me, or everything I do for them. No one does. I spend hours watching your practices and taking notes, doing research and coming up with new plays for you to use. I spend hours researching laws regarding magical creatures so that I can try and prevent Buckbeak -Hagrid's favourite hippogriff- from being executed because that arsehole, Malfoy, made a big deal out of a God damn scratch. Harry and Ron promised to help me and they haven't even opened a book because apparently they don't have time. Well, I don't have time either, but I made time!"

"I spend hours helping everyone with their homework because they're too lazy to do it for themselves. Ronald either copies my work when he thinks I'm not looking or he asks me to do it for him. And like the idiot I am, I do it for him because I don't want him to fail. So much for being 'The Brightest Witch.' The Slytherins have been relentless in making me feel worthless and rubbing it in my face that Gryffindor hates me. Angelina's been stalking me and she tried to hex me a couple of weeks ago, I Obliviate'd her memory so she doesn't remember anything. Not to mention, I am taking twelve classes, I hate divination and I'm stressed with my workload. I haven't been sleeping or eating because I have too much on my mind. I can't shut it all out. And I miss my parents!"

Everyone stared at her; they didn't know she felt that way. They didn't know she'd suffered, that she hadn't slept or eaten properly during those two months. Sirius was furious, he'd come to know Hermione over the last few months and he saw her like he saw Harry; family. And Sirius protected his family.

"How did you take twelve classes?" Percy asked; surprised by everything he'd just learned.

"That's explained later in the story," she mumbled, still crying, only now Mrs. Weasley and Ginny were also hugging her.

Mr. Wood and Mr. Weasley moved off of the couch, they took the empty seats and the girls sat down close together. Bill and Charlie were furious. They stood up from their seats on the couch and they sat on the floor in front of Hermione, as if acting like a shield. They glared fiercely at the backs of the four boys heads and smirked in satisfaction when they shivered and paled slightly.

They watched as Oliver tried to hug her and Hermione bolted out of the room and Oliver chased after her.

"Hermione, wait, please!"

They could see Oliver attempting to go after her, but Ginny stood in the way.

"Where do you think you're going?" she demanded.

"After Hermione."

"Why did she run away from you?"

"A was apologising an' then she went on this rant aboot hoo she felt during the last couple af months an' then she ran aff when a tried tae hug her."

"You were apologising to her?" Oliver nodded. "And why weren't you apologising with Oliver?"

"We didn't know what to say," George said quietly, looking down at the ground.

"You didn't know what to say! You didn't know what to say! How about I'm sorry that I isolated you, that I made you feel hated and unloved for trying to protect Harry! Because that's what she did! She was protecting him like she always does! Everyone knows Sirius Bloody Black is after Harry! He wants to kill him for Merlin's Sake! She did what she did because she loves him, and she was the only one that could see he was possibly in danger. If that makes her a traitor then I'm glad I have her for a sister, because I know she'll do whatever it takes to protect me, even if it means she loses my friendship!"

Just like in the memory, the boys once again went white in the face, remembering the feeling of their little sister yelling at them. It reminded them too closely of their Mother. Mrs. Weasley gave Ginny a proud look and Hermione wouldn't be surprised if Ginny received extra servings of dessert, the following night.

"You think that was bad? Wait until Mum finds out. And Bill and Charlie," Percy said.

Bill and Charlie smirked at the looks of fear on the boys' faces. They were right to be scared; they couldn't wait for the chance to teach their little brothers a lesson or two.

The memory changed to the great hall and they watched as Hermione chatted with Percy and Ginny. The hall went silent as five boys approached them.

"Hermione, we're sorry for how we treated you. You were trying to protect me and I allowed myself to be blinded by the Firebolt. You're the only person who has ever cared enough to try and keep me safe. Even after the argument you still allowed me to use your broom. You didn't even ask for it back," Harry spoke.

"Do you honestly think that I would do that to you? Then you would be without a broom. You would either have to use a rubbish school one or forfeit any matches because there is no reserve seeker."

"Hermione, I'm sorry I called you a traitor. You're not; you're one of the most loyal people I've ever met. I'm sorry that I yelled at you about your cat. You're right; it's not your fault that he attacks Scabbers. It's his natural instinct," said Ron.

"Do you honestly mean that?" He nodded "I don't believe you. Calling me a traitor once is fine but doing it every time you see me is not. The others didn't call me names, they just ignored my existence." The boys' faces fell and saddened.

"I know, and I honestly didn't mean it. I'm sorry."

"Spitfire, -"

"- Love, -"

"- We can't even begin to tell you how sorry we are. We hate ourselves for making you believe that we hated you, because we don't hate you, we're a family -"

"- A slightly dysfunctional one, but a family nevertheless. We didn't apologise straight away like we should've because we were ashamed of how we treated you. We should've defended you in the argument and we didn't. -"

"- You always do the right thing and you always know best, we should've trusted your judgment. We'll do anything to prove how sorry we are and that we'll never treat you that way again. -"

"- We promise, can you forgive us?" They finished together, a hopeful look in their eyes.

"I honestly don't know. You wouldn't even look at me." Their facial features filled with sadness.

"Lassie, a have already apologised tae ye, an' there's nothing more a could say tae ye right now, tha' a havnae already said tae ye back in Gryffindor Tower. But ev'rything ye said tae mae, a'm sorry fer. We should've noticed tha' ye are exhausted an' stressed with not only havin' tae do yer own work but ev'ryone else's as well. We should've noticed tha' ye weren't sleeping well or eating enough," Oliver spoke.

"WHAT?" The twins yelled.

"You yelled at me, Wood. You've never yelled at me before, you've never even taken that tone with me before. You basically accused me of sabotaging your chances at the Quidditch Cup, even after everything I do for you and the team."

Both memory Oliver and real Oliver looked to be in agony at her words.

"You remember my boggart? That's what it' felt like for me these last two months. You isolated me, you made me feel worthless. You all take me for granted. After everything I have done for you all, how could you treat me that way? My life revolves around all of you. I put you all before myself. I have never once complained when you ask me to sit for hours and watch you practice. I have never once complained when you ask me for help with your homework. I don't complain when you don't even ask because you just expect me to do it for you. I don't complain when you copy my work when you think I'm not looking and I don't complain when you get mad and call me names. So how could you do that to me?"

"We're sorry," they all said.

"Do you know what hurts the most?" They shook their heads. ""That you caused me to feel something I never thought I would experience with you boys. It wasn't anger, despair or depression. You made me feel disappointment. I am disappointed in the way you behaved and the way you handled the situation," she said sadly.

"We promise that we'll try for ourselves first and then ask for help. We'll not expect you to do our work for us and we will not copy off of you," Harry said, looking pointedly at Ron and he flushed. "So, can you please forgive us?"

"You copied your work from Hermione's! You made her do your work for you!" Mrs. Weasley screeched.

"I don't know."

"Come on, Love, what do you want us to do? Beg?"

"You know, that's not a bad idea. What do you think, Gin, Perce?"

"Definitely, 'Mione," Ginny said.

"I agree, Mia," Percy smirked.

"Beg," Hermione said.

They all shared a look and got down onto the floor, on their knees with their hands held in front of them.

"Please..."

"Oh, get up, you idiots."

Percy and Ginny laughed along with the memory of themselves and Sirius smirked, and then the scene changed and they were in their dorm room.

"Ye dinnae come tae the Quidditch match. We looked fer ye but ye weren't there," Oliver spoke.

"I was watching just not from the stands. The other Gryffindors wouldn't have been happy to see me there. I didn't want a repeat of what happened at the Gryffindor versus Slytherin match," she said sadly.

They watched as Oliver pulled her into a hug, which the twins quickly joined in with and they glowed the golden light.

"Does anyone else think that it's strange that that happens?" Hermione asked with a frown on her face, as if she was trying to remember something but it wouldn't come to her.

Sirius noticed the twins, Oliver, Bill, Charlie and the parents share a look. They know something, he thought. He would definitely be finding out what it was.

The scene changed again to the common room and it showed Ron storming down the boy's staircase and they watched as Ron yelled at Hermione and blamed Crookshanks for the death of his rat. Ron looked guilty and ashamed for treating Hermione that way.

The memory changed again to one of Hermione sitting in the Forbidden Forest with Sirius as he ate the food she' brought for him.

"We may have a problem."

"What?"

"Pettigrew is missing."

"WHAT?"

Fred and George couldn't help but laugh when Sirius spat his food out and at Hermione's reply.

"Say it, don't spray it, Padfoot," she said, pulling a disgusted face. "Ron came down into the common room not long ago and started yelling, saying that Crookshanks had killed the rat as his bed was covered in blood and ginger hair."

"Crookshanks hasn't brought him to me."

"That's because it wasn't Crookshanks. He's been with me all day, asleep in my dorm room. The boys were there too. Fred and George tried to placate him and it may have worked even if Ron didn't understand they were also making fun of him."

Fred and George looked smug when they saw the reaction they'd gotten from Sirius, due to something they'd done. Hermione picked up a pillow from behind her and threw it, this time hitting George in the head, followed by Bill and Charlie leaning forward and smacking them on the back of the head. They whined and she smiled gratefully at them and they winked.

"So where is he then?"

"I don't know, I think he understood what's happening. Of course, it didn't help when you broke into the common room and tried to kill him with a knife like a mad man. If no one was convinced you were trying to kill Harry, they are now. I can't believe Crookshanks stole Neville's parchment with the passwords written on. He lost his Hogsmeade privileges for that."

"I said I was sorry," he muttered.

"Oh shut up and eat your sandwich."

They watched as Hermione, Ron and Harry made their way to Hagrid's when they came across Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle.

Sirius started laughing, realising what was about to happen.

"Is this what I think it is?" George asked excited.

"It is, isn't it?" Fred said with an evil glint in his eye.

"I think it is," Ginny said, barely stopping herself from bouncing in her seat as she rubbed her hands together.

"Why is everyone so excited?" Charlie asked confused.

"Just wait, Barmie, this'll make your day, your month, your year! We heard about it but we didn't get to see it," George said.

"Bummer, really, but now we get to finally witness it for ourselves!" Fred said, shaking with excitement.

"What is it?" Bill raised his voice in annoyance at clearly being left out of the loop.

"You'll see," the twins said with a smirk.

"Ah, look who's here. Come to see the show?" Malfoy said.

"You, you foul, loathsome, evil, little cockroach!"

Hermione had her wand pressed into Malfoy's neck and he was pinned up against a boulder, whimpering. The parents were shocked at her behaviour but everyone else was impressed. Bill and Charlie looked at her proudly. She pointed to the screen and they quickly looked back at the memory, not wanting to miss whatever was going to happen next.

"'Mione, no, he's not worth it!"

She pulled her wand away and turned around, and then she turned back after hearing Malfoy laugh and she punched him in the nose, breaking it. He ran away.

Everyone stared in shock. Bill and Charlie stood up and started cheering. Hermione flushed in embarrassment. They pulled her up and each took turns picking her up, hugging her and spinning her around in circles and she laughed.

"You amazing little witch!" Charlie exclaimed and she laughed.

"You are officially my hero!" Bill said loudly.

"That was brilliant," the twins laughed loudly.

They eventually calmed down and continued watching the memory. Hermione turned around facing Ron and Harry and they laughed at her.

"That felt good."

They laughed at her. "I bet it did," Lee nodded.

"Not good, bloody brilliant!"

"Hey, now you have something in common with fad, you've both punched a Malfoy in the face!"

"GINNY!" Mrs. Weasley cried indignantly. Mr. Weasley and Hermione shared a knowing smile and laughed.

The scene changed so they were back in the common room.

"There's our beautiful, -"

"- Magnificently, -"

"- Brilliant, -"

"- Best friend! -"

"Is it true?" Ginny asked.

"She punched Malfoy in the nose and no doubt broke it," Ron said proudly.

"We're so proud of you -" Fred said.

"- Wait till Bill and Charlie find out. -" George said laughing.

"- Merlin, they'll probably buy you an entire library."

"Do you want that? An entire library? Because we'll buy you one if you want," Bill offered.

"Just say the word and it's done. Merlin knows you deserve it!" Charlie added proudly and she shook her head at them, laughing as Mrs. Weasley glared at them.

Hermione stood.

"After all you've witnessed so far regarding Sirius' character, if you still believe there's even a small possibility of Sirius being guilty, then the next few memories will definitely convince you otherwise." She turned to her boys. "And this is what you've been nagging me for almost two weeks about so pay attention," she said and sat back down.

The memory showed them in Hagrid's hut and Hagrid giving Ron his rat.

"Scabbers, you're alive!"

"You wanna keep a clos'r eye on your pets, Ron," Hagrid said.

"I think that means you owe someone an apology," Hermione said coldly.

"Right. Next time I see Crookshanks I'll let him know," he said snidely.

"I meant me!"

They were ushered out of Hagrid's hut after they'd been made aware of people approaching. They hid in the pumpkin patch and made their way up the hill shortly after.

They watched as Hermione cried into Ron's shoulder and she was hugged between Harry and Ron. And then Scabbers bit Ron and he chased after him, followed by Harry and Hermione. Ron finally caught Scabbers and they came to a stop, staring at the Whomping Willow.

"Harry, you do realise what tree that is?"

"RON, RUN!"

"HERMIONE, HARRY, RUN! IT'S THE GRIM!"

Hermione pushed Harry down to the ground and the large dog jumped over their heads.

Hermione got up and walked over to Sirius with the others watching them in amusement. She hit him with a pillow.

"What have I done now?" He huffed.

"Because I forgot to do it for that," she said, gesturing to the screen and indicating to the moment when he'd jumped over her head.

Sirius grabbed Ron by the leg and pulled him into the tunnel beneath the Whomping Willow. Mrs. Weasley gave a shriek of horror and Sirius looked at her sheepishly, mouthing "Sorry, please don't kill me!"

They watched as Hermione and Harry had some trouble and everyone winced or gasped whenever one of them was hit with a branch. Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood yelped when Hermione was clinging to one of the branches being swung around and when she grabbed Harry.

"Awesome!" Lee laughed.

They sighed when they went through the tunnel and chuckled when they landed with groans.

"Sorry, Harry."

"Don't worry about it," he replied.

"Where do you suppose this goes?"

"I have a hunch; I just hope I'm wrong."

They walked through the tunnel, up some stairs and they climbed through a hatch.

"We're in the Shrieking Shack."

They found Ron.

"Ron, the dog where is it?"

"Harry, he's the dog, it's a trap. He's an Animagus!"

Sirius shut the door behind them and Hermione sighed, left Harry's side and walked over to him. She stopped in front of him and he raised an eyebrow at her amused. She leaned up and smacked him upside the head.

"Ow! What was that for, Kitten?"

Ron laughed.

"Have you seen the look on our faces? I think we would've been less shocked if you told us that Professor Dumbledore was really a gnome married to a troll who lived in an ocean in the Sahara Desert," he said laughing. "And I told you she hits him a lot!"

"You know where the Sahara Desert is?" Hermione asked surprised.

"Yeah! It's in America," he said confidently.

Hermione and Bill snorted, shaking their heads.

"What's so funny?" Ron asked in annoyance.

"It's not in America. It's in North Africa," Hermione corrected.

The others laughed at Ron's embarrassed expression and his flushed face.

"Close enough," he muttered.

"Ron, they're pretty much on opposite sides of the world," Bill said through chuckles.

"Why don't we get back to the story now?" Ron snapped.

They chuckled and turned their attention back to the screen.

"For being stupid and reckless. What happened to patience? Do you not remember the last lecture I gave you?"

"How could I not? You almost bored me to death."

She reached up and smacked him upside the head once more.

"Ow, will you stop hitting me?"

"That depends, will you stop being a prat? You could have hurt Ron. You did hurt Ron!"

"It's only a scratch," he snorted.

"Malfoy's injury was just a scratch; Ron has a hole in his leg!"

"I can't believe it! You're a traitor! He's trying to kill me and you're helping him!"

"Harry, let me explain."

"You're trying to kill me, you're a traitor!"

"Harry let me explain, please."

"If you want to kill Harry, you're going to have to kill me first," Ron said.

The twins snorted and Ron glared at them.

"It would've been more believable, -" Fred said.

"- If you weren't shaking in your boots," George laughed.

"Only one will die tonight."

"Then it will be you!"

"HARRY! NO!"

They watched in surprise as Harry launched himself at Sirius, ending with Sirius on his back and Harry's wand pointed threateningly.

"Who knew Harry was tha' strong?" Oliver mumbled to the twins, who nodded in agreement.

Then the door burst open, Professor Lupin disarmed Harry and he moved out of the way.

"Well, well, Sirius. Looking rather ragged, aren't we? Finally, the flesh reflects the madness within."

"You would know about the madness within, wouldn't you, Remus."

Remus helped Sirius up from the floor and they hugged. Hermione walked back over to Sirius and smacked him upside the head.

"Ow! What was that one for?"

Sirius and Hermione laughed at Lupin's shocked expression.

"For provoking him, I'm trying to calm him down so we can explain everything to him and you just made things worse. Only one will die tonight. What were you thinking?"

They laughed at Hermione mocking Sirius and they laughed harder at Sirius begging Hermione not to hit him again.

"Don't hit me again," he whined.

"Again? How many times has she hit you?" Remus asked in surprise.

"Three!"

"And you deserved them, don't act like you didn't. The first one was for being stupid and reckless, the second one was for hurting Ron and making smart arse comments and the third one was for being an idiot and provoking Harry."

"How long have you known?" Remus asked

"How long have you known?" She countered.

"I wasn't certain until a couple of days ago."

"February 5th," she replied.

"That long? That's why you would visit the kitchens and take a box load of supplies. You were giving them to Sirius?"

"How do you know that? Never mind," she sighed.

"It took me twelve years to figure it out," Sirius said, looking at Remus. "It took her ten minutes."

Hermione pointed her wand at Sirius and he looked terrified.

Charlie chuckled and turned to Bill. "He's right to be afraid," he said, which Bill laughed at.

"What are you doing?"

"Oh, shut up, Padfoot! Aquamenti, Scourgify, Siccatio Fascinationem!"

"I don't think I've heard of that spell," Remus said

"I created it."

"What? Why? How?"

"I was bored."

They laughed when Sirius mocked her along with memory Sirius and she hit him in the arm.

"Ow! Why did you do that with those spells?"

"Because the last time I saw you, you smelled a lot better. You haven't been back to the house, have you?"

"No, I was going to go tonight when I heard you three chasing after that thing. I've found him. He's here."

They watched Sirius and Remus argue.

"I know," Remus replied.

"Let's kill him", Sirius whispered.

"No, wait, Sirius," Remus said.

"I've done my waiting. Twelve years of it in Azkaban!"

"Very well, but wait one more minute, Harry deserves to know why."

"I know why, you betrayed my parents. You're the reason they're dead."

"No, Harry, it wasn't Sirius. He's innocent. Do you really think I would betray you? That I would do anything that would put you in harm's way? Look at the trouble I went through protecting you from that stupid broom, Sirius was the one that sent it to you. It wasn't until the day I met him, that I figured out he was innocent and that he hadn't jinxed the broom," Hermione said.

"Someone else betrayed your parents. Someone, until quite recently, we thought to be dead," Remus spoke.

"Who was it then?"

"Peter Pettigrew! And he's in this room right now. Come out, come out Peter. Come out and play!" Sirius said madly.

Professor Snape made an appearance from out of nowhere and disarmed Sirius.

"Vengeance is sweet, how I have hoped I would be the one to catch you."

"Severus," Remus said.

"I told Dumbledore you were helping an old friend into the castle and now I have the proof."

"Brilliant, Snape, once again you put your keen and penetrating mind to the task and as usual, come to the wrong conclusion. Now if you will excuse us, Remus and I have some unfinished business to attend to," Sirius said.

"Give me a reason. I beg you," his voice was cold and hard.

"Severus, don't be a fool."

"He can't help it, it's a habit," Sirius quipped.

The twins, Bill, Charlie, Oliver and Lee laughed out loud and Sirius had a smug expression on his face. Hermione rolled her eyes, completely unsurprised.

"Sirius, be quiet!"

"Be quiet yourself, Remus!"

"Listen to you two, quarrelling like an old married couple."

"Why don't you run along and play with your chemistry set."

All the boys laughed at Sirius and he looked pleased with himself. Hermione huffed.

"I could do it you know, but why deny the dementors? They're so longing to see you. Do I detect a flicker of fear, oh yes? The dementors kiss; one can only imagine what that's like to endure. It's said to be unbearable to witness, but I will do my best."

"Severus, please."

They watched as Hermione disarmed Snape.

"Hermione, you attacked Snape!"

"No, I didn't Ron, I just disarmed him."

"Miss. Granger?"

"I'm really sorry, Professor, but Sirius is innocent. He isn't a murderer; he's too much of an idiot."

"Yeah... Hey. That wounded me deeply, Kitten."

Everyone chuckled at the two of them.

"I'm sure you'll live. I'm sorry about this Professor, but there is too much to do and not enough time. I will explain when you wake up."

"Wake up?"

"Somno Leporem," she said and Snape fell to the floor in a heap, his eyes closed and his breathing even and deep.

"He's not dead, is he?"

"Of course not, Ronald, he's just sleeping. It's a charm I invented a while back."

"What?"

"I was bored."

Harry picked up his wand off of the floor and pointed it at Sirius. "Tell me about Peter Pettigrew."

"We went to school with him Harry, he was our best friend," Remus said.

"No, Pettigrew's dead. He killed him!"

"No, he didn't, I thought so too, until you mentioned seeing Pettigrew on the map."

"The map was lying," Harry said.

"The map never lies, Harry. Pettigrew's alive," Sirius spoke, pacing behind Remus. "And he's right there," he pointed at Ron.

"Me? That's mental," Ron squeaked.

"Padfoot, you should be more specific. Ron, he means the rat, Scabbers."

"Don't be stupid; he's been in my family for…"

"Twelve years, Ron. I told you rats generally die at the age of three, they don't have long life spans."

"He's missing a toe, isn't he?" Sirius said.

"So what?" Ron said.

Hermione encouraged Harry.

"Go on, Harry, say it. You know what it is?"

"All they could find of Pettigrew was his finger."

"The damn coward cut it off so everyone would think he was dead. And then he transformed into a rat, the rat he is!"

"Show me," Harry demanded.

Sirius grabbed the rat from Ron's hands.

"Give it to him, Ron," Harry said.

They watched as they chased the rat around the room trying to hit it with the spell.

"Oh no you don't!"

Everyone stared in shock as the rat transformed into a man and Mrs. Weasley shrieked.

"Remus, Sirius, my old friends," Pettigrew said nervously, darting for the exit and they stopped him.

"Harry, look at you. You look so much like your father, like James. We were the best of friends he and I."

"How dare you speak to Harry? How dare you talk about James in front of him?" Sirius growled.

"You sold James and Lilly to Voldemort? Didn't you?" Remus demanded.

"I...I didn't mean to. The Dark Lord, you have no I idea the weapons he possesses. I ask you Sirius, what would you have done? What would you have done?" he whimpered.

"I would've died. I would've died rather than betray my friends."

"Harry, James wouldn't have wanted me killed. Your fad, he would've spared me. He would've shown me mercy."

They could see the anger on Hermione's face at what Pettigrew was saying to Harry. And before they knew it, Hermione had raised her hands and pushed them forwards. Pettigrew was thrown almost ten feet backwards into a wall.

Everyone in the room stared at Hermione stunned, as she looked at her hands as confused as she was that night and not too long ago, when she put up the shield, she didn't notice the looks sent her way.

"Where's your wand, Hermione?"

"In Padfoot's hand."

"It's okay," Harry said softly. He gently took a hold of her hand and held it down by their sides. "It must've just been a case of accidental magic. You remember? I blew my aunt up at the beginning of the year."

"Yes, that must be it. Accidental magic."

"You should've realised, Peter, that if Voldemort didn't kill you, we would. Together!"

"NO!" Hermione and Harry yelled.

"This man is..."

"I know what he is, but we'll take him to the castle."

"Bless you boy, bless you," Pettigrew whimpered.

"I said we'd take you to the castle, after that the dementors can have you."

The memory changed to in front of The Whomping Willow. The watched Harry apologise to Hermione and she sent him off to talk to Sirius. Hermione's attention was on Ron's leg.

"That looks really painful."

"So painful, they might chop it."

"Madam Pomphrey will fix it in a heartbeat."

"It's too late. They'll have to chop it off."

"You sound like Malfoy."

The others laughed at Ron and he blushed right to his roots. They watched as she tied a piece of fabric from her jumper tightly around his injured leg. Pettigrew knelt on the ground and begged Ron to save him and when he just stared at him, he turned his attention on Hermione. They laughed along with Remus when she glared at him and he stopped talking.

"Not bad, Kitten."

"Thanks... Padfoot!"

"What?"

Sirius turned to see the full moon and he ran to Remus.

"Have you taken your potion?"

They watched as Pettigrew picked up the wand and pointed it at Sirius's back. Harry disarmed him and Pettigrew began to transform into the rat he was.

"I don't think so. Petrificus Totalus, Somno Leporem!" Hermione called.

They watched the fully transformed werewolf advanced on them and the black dog that jumped in front of them to protect him. Harry chased after an injured Sirius and Hermione picked up the rat and gave it to Ron.

"Why do I have to carry it?" he whined.

"Because it's your rat."

"It's not a rat. It's a bloody murderer!"

"I bet you wish Crookshanks had eaten him," she grumbled.

The others laughed at her.

They watched as Hermione and Ron made their way to the castle and were escorted to the hospital wing by Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall and they watched Hermione explain everything to them, the thing that stuck out the most to the parents was Dumbledore revealing that Peter Pettigrew was the secret keeper and that Dumbledore had known Sirius to have been innocent all along, why didn't he help him?

"You weren't the secret keeper?" Mrs. Weasley asked Sirius.

"No," he replied with a shake of his head.

"But I thought you were. Everyone did. It was the obvious choice, given how close you were to James."

"That's why we chose Peter rather than me. Everyone would assume that it was me and even if they did capture, torture or kill me, they would've been safe because I wasn't the secret keeper. Pettigrew was the least likely of choices, no one would've suspected him," he said sadly.

"Am sorry," Mrs. Wood said softly.

"We all are fer believing ye were a murderer," Mr. Wood said.

They watched Hermione and Harry converse about Sirius when he woke up and Dumbledore walked into the hospital wing.

"Sirius Black is in the top cell of the dark tower, you know the laws, Miss. Granger. You must not be seen. And you will do well, I feel, to return before this last chime. If not the consequences are too ghastly to discuss. If you succeed tonight, more than one innocent life may be spared. Three turns should do it I think. When in doubt I find it wise to retrace my steps from the beginning. Good Luck."

"What the bloody hell was that all about?" Ron asked.

"Sorry, Ron, but seeing as you can't walk; you're going to have to stay here."

She pulled the time-turner out from under her jumper and put the chain around Harry's neck.

"That's a time-turner!" Percy's voice rose in surprise.

"Hoo did ye get a bloody time-turner!" Oliver said loudly.

"The Ministry approved Professor McGonagall to give it to me. It's the only known working time-turner left in the United Kingdom. It's how I managed to get to all of my classes and how I got all of my work done. I had two or three classes at one time."

"That's why you were stressed with the amount of work you were doing, not to mention why you were always exhausted and would appear in random places," Percy said and she nodded. They turned back to the memory.

They watched as time rewound itself and they stood in an empty hospital wing. Hermione removed the chain from Harry's neck and began walking.

Hermione and Harry ran to Hagrid's and Hermione told Harry about the time-turner. They figured out that Dumbledore wanted them to save Buckbeak as well as Sirius, so they did and then they headed to the lake.

"Now what?"

"Now we save Sirius," she replied.

"How, Hermione?"

"No idea, we wait until you both show up."

They sat in silence waiting for what felt like hours.

"Hermione?"

"Yes, Harry."

"Before, when I was down by the lake, I did see someone. That someone made the dementors go away."

"With a Patronus, with what you described only a powerful witch or wizard could produce it."

"It was my dad, my dad conjured the Patronus."

"Harry, your dad is..."

"Dead, I know, but that's what I saw."

"They'll be here soon."

"Sirius asked me to come and live with him."

"I know, it's all he's talked about."

"I'll be free and I'll never have to go back to the Dursleys. It'll just be me and him."

Hundreds of dementors appeared on the screen.

"It's time!"

The dementors were attacking an injured Sirius and Harry who was trying to protect them both.

"You're dying, both of you!"

Harry ran forward and cast his Patronus.

"Expecto Patronum!"

They could see Hermione stood behind him laughing and beaming as the stag attacked the dementors and Harry wiped away most of them, except for a few. They were astonished at the sheer power of the Patronus.

"A stag?" Sirius asked surprised.

"Yes, a stag," Hermione said, beaming at Sirius.

Hermione ran to Harry and cast her Patronus.

"Expecto Patronum!"

They watched proudly as her lion Patronus pounced and got rid of the rest of the dementors. Hermione explained to Harry her ability to cast her Patronus.

"Since February! You've been conjuring it since February! When did you first start?"

"I started the same day you did."

"It took you a month? It's taken me five!"

"Yes, but every person learns at a different rate, you have to find a memory that is powerful enough and you have to believe that you can cast it, that's the key. Not only magical power is needed, but belief and true happiness."

"What was your memory?"

"Honestly?"

"Yes, tell me the truth."

"Well, there weren't a lot of memories to choose from and they weren't strong enough. Every time I thought about a memory from my childhood, I was reminded that I would likely never see my parents again. Every time I thought of something to do with Oliver, the twins, Ron or you, I was reminded that you all hated me, at the time none of you were speaking to me. So it was difficult for me to choose."

"What did you chose?"

"I didn't choose a memory, I chose hope; based on you and Sirius. I knew that when Sirius' name is cleared, he'll get his life back and he'll be happy. I knew that you would be happy because you could live with him instead of those awful Dursleys. I knew that you would be with your true family and that you wouldn't suffer anymore. Your future happiness was what made my Patronus possible."

Sirius looked at her. "Harry's happiness was your Patronus?"

"And yours," she said softly.

She turned back to the screen.

Hermione told him that every Patronus has a meaning and he asked what hers meant. She told him and explained what his meant and the connection between him and his Father.

"Come on, we've wasted enough time, we have to save Sirius."

They quickly ran back to Buckbeak, who was wondering about as he foraged from the forest floor.

"How are we going to get to the tower and save Sirius in time?" she said, pacing back and forth, trying to rack her brain for a solution and Harry's face lit up.

"Err, Hermione," Harry said.

"What, Harry?" She questioned, turning to face him. He gestured to Buckbeak. "No, no way!"

"I thought you were okay with flying now."

"That's not a broom; that's a hippogriff!"

"Come on, for Sirius."

"No!"

"Please? For me."

"No, not a chance in hell. Hell will freeze over before I ever fly a hippogriff!"

The scene changed to Hermione and Harry flying on Buckbeak.

"How did I end up doing this?"

"Because you're my best friend and you love me."

"That's debatable at the moment!" she grouched. "I think I'm going to be sick," she said, just as Buckbeak touched down on the ground. They climbed off and ran to the locked door of the cell.

Sirius could be seen in the tower, and he looked up relieved to see them.

"Bombarda!" she yelled, blowing not only the door off, but some of the bricks too.

"That's one way to do it," Sirius spoke, sounding amused.

They laughed at her as she flushed bright red.

They climbed onto Buckbeak and flew down to a courtyard. They watched the interaction between the three and Hermione promised to free him. They walked into the hospital wing and Ron looked at them scared.

"How did you get there? I was talking to you there. Now you're there," Ron asked.

"What's he talking about, Harry?"

"I don't know. How can somebody be in two places at once?"

That was the end of the retelling of events from their year away at school. Everyone looked at Sirius. And one by one, they stood up and shook his hand whilst apologising to him.

"Why did you tell us?" Mr. Weasley asked Hermione.

"Sirius has been terribly wronged; he wasn't even given a trial. He deserves to have a normal life. I consider Sirius family and Harry and I consider you all family, and family protects each other. I'm doing everything I can to free Sirius. I've captured Pettigrew but a trial has yet to happen. I was wondering if you'd all be my witnesses."

"Of course, we will," Mrs. Weasley nodded, her eyes darting between her and Sirius, showing motherly concern. "And don't you boys think you've gotten away with how you treated Hermione." Mrs. Weasley turned to glare at Ron, the twins and Oliver. They gulped. "Right, dinner time!" She clapped her hands cheerfully, the change in her mood giving everyone whiplash.

They all made their way to the kitchen and the table was enlarged and more chairs were conjured. The twins sat opposite Sirius and they chatted excitedly throughout the meal about his Marauder years. The conversation was light and happy and the food was amazing as usual. Hermione was pleased; she couldn't stop smiling. She was one step closer to getting Sirius his life back.

Oliver, Mr. and Mrs. Wood, Fred, George, Bill, Charlie and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were sat in the kitchen with Percy and Sirius, whilst the others were in bed. Sirius was staring them down with narrowed eyes, waiting for the first person to pluck up the courage to speak.

"You're going to tell me," he stated confidently, leaning back into his chair and crossing his arms casually.

"Tell you what?" Mrs. Weasley asked nonchalantly. They rolled their eyes at her.

"About Hermione, the twins and Oliver," he said simply.

They sighed. A Silencing Charm was cast around the room and everything was explained to them. When they finished Percy and Sirius were sat back in their chairs with frowns on their faces.

"I was not expecting that," Percy muttered and they chuckled at him.

"You know you could've killed her?" Sirius said coldly.

"What are you on about?" Fred said with a confused frown.

"When you had that falling out, she told me she could feel your shame and despair. And it must have been in a powerful form as she could feel it. As the bond is not yet complete, you're only able to feel powerful emotions, but they will be almost non-existent unless you're focusing on it. It's more like sensing someone's mood than feeling it at this stage. She confided in me about her worry that you wouldn't be able to repair the bond between the three of you. Of course, she meant metaphorically since she isn't aware that an actual bond exists. You're her mates and you made her feel as though you'd rejected her. It's like a veela, if the mate rejects the bond, the veela dies."

The boys paled and looked down in shame.

"Now, it seems she's coming into her powers," he changed the subject, feeling as though the boys truly did regret their mistakes from the previous year and there was nothing else that could be done about it.

"Why would you say that?" Bill asked intrigued.

"She's had three separate cases of 'accidental magic', only I don't think it's accidental. Well, it is, but it's not like when you're a child. Her powers are developing and she doesn't know how to control them yet."

"But she isnae af age. The prophecy stated tha' when she was af age she would come intae her powers," Mrs. Wood frowned.

"That doesn't matter; her powers are coming to her early. I'm not sure if you've noticed but she looks different. When I first met her she had bushy hair and buck teeth. But now she has a perfect smile and her hair's less bushy, I'd say it's frizzier more than anything, as though she's just ran a brush through it. She's taller and slightly more tanned, too. And you can say that it's puberty and the weather, but she's been in Scotland for most of the year and we all know the Hogwarts' grounds don't see much sun. Additionally, Sirens are notoriously beautiful creatures. Hermione is coming into her heritage."

"But it's too early," Mrs. Weasley said, blinking dumbly.

"If you think about it, it isn't. She used a time-turner for the entirety of her year at Hogwarts. As a result, on her next birthday she will not be turning fifteen but..."

"Sixteen," Percy said, cutting off Sirius and picking up on his train of thought. "She's only one year away from being of age. Of course, no one will know apart from those in this house. The Ministry won't legally recognise her as being of age, but she will be."

"And she found her mates when she was at the young age of eleven. They will add to her power."

"She's related to the Gaunt family," Charlie commented.

"Wait, if she's related to the Gaunt family, doesn't that mean she's related to Salazar Slytherin, too?" Bill said with a strange look on her face.

"Then doesn't that mean she's also the Heir of Slytherin?" George said. They absorbed George's thought.

"Bloody hell," Oliver muttered with a sigh.

"That's why Voldemort wanted her on his side. Once she's of age and she has her mates by her side, her powers would rival both his and Dumbledore's. It's better to have her as an ally than an enemy. She can do wandless and non-verbal magic at the age of fourteen," Sirius explained. "She was able to get a glimpse into my past by doing something as simple as touching me. She lost her temper and control of her magic when Pettigrew touched Harry, and as a result, she threw him into a wall. When she panicked due to you all pulling your wands on me, her magic acted out and protected me with the most powerful Shielding Charm known to wizardkind, and to be honest, I noticed something different about that shield."

"What was different?" Mr. Wood asked curiously.

"Firstly, it was a different colour. The Protego Totalum shield is usually transparent in colour, but the one she created had a slight blue tint to it. And secondly, you threw eight different hexes simultaneously and the shield didn't once falter. It's to my understanding that she created a new Shielding Charm without any intention of doing so. It was purely instinctual to protect me. This makes her more powerful than Dumbledore, even at the age she's at now and without having control over her powers."

"How can we teach her to control her magic without telling her about her heritage?" Mr. Weasley asked, rubbing his hand over the back of his neck.

"We can't, but it won't be long before she finds out who she is. We can't technically teach her to control her powers, she has to learn that for herself, we may have to subtly encourage her to practice. At the moment, it appears that it's powerful emotions that are the trigger for her magic, but she's getting more powerful each day. This means she'll unknowingly become more protective of her mates and she'll rely on them and the bond more than she does now," he said, looking to the three boys in question.

"What's going to happen when Dumbledore discovers that her powers are growing?" Charlie asked with a worried tone to his voice.

"I'm not sure; he may try to use her power," he confessed.

"He wouldn't do tha'," Mr. Wood asked. "Would he?"

"You don't know him as I do. He can be and is manipulative," Sirius shrugged. "He certainly was during the war, I should know, I was in attendance for most of the Order meetings, I saw it all first hand."

"He's got a point; remember what he did with Hermione during the bullying incident?" Charlie muttered.

"What? What did he do? You never told me about that," Sirius said, sitting up in his chair and with his eyes narrowed slightly.

They quickly told Sirius about how he'd allowed Hermione to suffer so he could be sure that she was the child of the prophecy.

"HE DID WHAT?" Sirius stood up enraged, knocking his chair back and it hit the ground with a clatter. "SHE WAS A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL!"

Fred, George and Oliver were fuming. They sat quietly with their fists clenched under the table. That, too, was their first time hearing what Dumbledore had done. They'd originally believed that if he'd have thought Hermione was in danger of getting hurt, he'd ensure she sought medical treatment before the assembly was called. If they'd had known, they would've never let Hermione anywhere near the great hall until after she'd been cleared by Madam Pomphrey.

"Sirius, calm down, don't get yourself worked up," Mrs. Weasley scolded. "I assure you, we've been keeping a close eye on Dumbledore."

"We?"

"Minerva and Severus, they're keeping him from interfering in her life as much as they can."

"SNAPE!?"

"Dinnae' worry, Sirius; Severus can be trusted with Hermione. Even we could tell he was furious when he discovered what Albus had done tae Hermione," spoke Mrs. Wood.

He picked up his chair and sat down with a sigh. "I think we need to discuss the bond you believe she has with Lee."

"What about it? It's a sibling bond," Charlie said shrugging.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, it's confirmed Hermione has four mates," Bill said.

"Yes, but are you sure it's with Lee?"

Sirius could practically see their minds going into overdrive, trying to understand his point.

"Actually, it was Snape who was adamant that it was Lee," Charlie said thoughtfully.

"You don't think its Lee?" Mrs. Weasley asked and Sirius shook his head.

"Then who?" Mr. Wood asked confused.

"It's obvious, isn't it?" Sirius replied with a laugh.

"Harry," the twins spoke in unison and Sirius tipped his head in their direction.

"If you think about it, it certainly makes a lot of sense," Sirius said.

"Hermione and Lee aren't as close as they were in the first few weeks of her first year. They're still close like she is with Ron, but she has a stronger bond with Harry," explained George.

"She's very protective of him, and she's been protecting him for last three years," Fred said thoughtfully.

"An' when she isnae with us she's with Harry," Oliver added.

"Exactly, and they have more in common," Sirius spoke.

"How so?" Percy asked intrigued.

"They're both orphans and they both have scars from the war, Harry's on his forehead and Hermione's on her back. They were both able to cast a full Patronus in their third year, they are both powerful and they're both Half-bloods. Voldemort was after both of them during the war and it seems his followers are still searching for them now. They feel connected to one another."

"An' they do tha' weird thing the twins do," Oliver commented with a thoughtful frown.

"What thing?" Bill arched an eyebrow.

"When the twins look at each other, they can have a full conversation with only their eyes an' they're able tae understand each other. A've seen both Hermione an' Harry do it several times, an' they tend tae have one word conversations, in which they completely understand each other, leaving the rest af us confused. It's strange," he said, to which the others chuckled.

"They comfort each other, too," Bill injected. "In those memories she showed us, it was Harry who comforted her when she freaked out when she threw Pettigrew against the wall. And he comforted her when they thought Buckbeak had been executed."

"And she tried to comfort him when they were talking about his dad," Charlie nodded.

"Don't forget about Quidditch," Percy added into the conversation.

"Hermione was livid when his broom was jinxed and he fell off in their first year. I thought she was going to breathe fire when Lockhart tried to heal his arm in their second year and don't even get me started on the dementors this year," Fred said, shaking his head slightly and sighing.

"Yeah and she yelled at Oliver when he told Harry to and I quote, "catch the snitch or die trying,'" George said amused, noticing the way Oliver shivered at the reminder.

"Tha' was terrifying," Oliver muttered.

"When Oliver didn't visit Harry in the hospital wing, she yelled at him and we all know what happened with the Firebolt," he trailed off.

"They also have the dementors in common," George said.

The adults in the room appeared to be confused.

"They both fainted at the exact same time, twice. Once on the train and once at the Hufflepuff versus Gryffindor Quidditch match," he clarified and they nodded in comprehension.

They sat in silence for a couple of minutes, digesting all the new information they had learned.

"Harry is Hermione's fourth mate, he's her sibling bond," Mr. Wood nodded.

"A suppose tha' means we're related tae the Potters an' Blacks now, tae," Mrs. Wood chuckled. "Welcome tae the family," she said and Sirius raised an eyebrow at her. "When we were made aware af the situation, Dumbledore informed us tha' we'd already accepted her as our children's mate. An' through the bond the Houses af Wood an' Weasley are now family. Now tha' yer Harry's guardian, or soon tae be guardian, yer've accepted Hermione as part af ye family, which makes ye a part af our family."

"I accepted her as family the day we met," Sirius admitted.

"As did we, it wasn't until later we discovered the truth behind her heritage," Mrs. Weasley said. "Hermione truly is a gift from Merlin himself," she smiled to herself.

"Then I suppose we're family now," Sirius leaned back into his chair and folded his arms. "But that means that Remus Lupin is, too. He's like family to me and he was to James, too, which makes him family to Harry, and Hermione's already kind of adopted him."

They chuckled at the truth in that statement.

"She does tha' a lot, doesn't she?" Mr. Wood chuckled fondly.

"She takes care of everyone else, she puts others before herself," Mr. Weasley agreed.

"She's not jus' protective af us, her mates," Oliver mused.

"What do you mean?" Bill asked

"She's protective af her family. Like the way she protected Sirius with tha' shield, an' she protected him from the dementors twice whilst caring fer him fer five months. She gave him a safe house; she made sure he was properly fed, clothed, clean an' healthy. She captured the actual murderer an' is preparing herself fer a trial tae make him a free man. She said tha' Harry an' Sirius were the reason she was able tae cast her Patronus, she had hope they'd be happy," Oliver said.

"He has a point," Charlie nodded in agreement.

"And the way she cared for Remus," Sirius inputted.

"When anyone says anything insulting towards the family, Hermione's glare has them running in the opposite direction," George chuckled, looking far too pleased.

"And Ginny, too," Percy nodded.

"Ginny?" Mr. Weasley questioned.

"After the Chamber of Secrets and possession disaster last year, Ginny had a bit of bother with some of the students. They'd make comments and glare and sneer, and whenever Mia caught them, she would threaten to hex them. She set them all straight. After a few weeks, the students got over their problem with Ginny and treated her like they usually would," Percy said proudly. The others smiled at hearing that.

All of a sudden, the twins bolted up out of their seats, standing straight and with their eyes wide.

"What is it?"

"Is Hermione in trouble?"

"Is she hurt?"

"What's wrong?"

The boys grinned widely. "We're related to Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, The Marauders. - " George said.

"- We lived with a Marauder for twelve years, even if he was a murderer who framed Sirius. -" Fred said.

"- And we're related to Harry Potter, the son of James Potter, a Marauder," George finished.

They were both doing this strange little happy dance with their arms and legs, it looked like they were possibly having a seizure. Sirius burst into laughter, and the others soon followed. Mrs. Weasley sighed at her twin boys before a small chuckle broke free.

The twins pulled themselves together and sat back down in their seats, after being convinced by their mother's frightening glare.

"Now that we're all aware that Hermione's powers are growing as well as her beauty, people will begin to notice, just as I did. Hopefully, they'll put it down to puberty, but some may realise what she is and this will put her in danger. She'll never be safe from those that wish to use her power for themselves, or from those that wish to harm her, but she will be better protected when the bond is complete, however, that likely won't happen for a couple of years. She loves you but she doesn't know that she's in love with you. All she knows is that she isn't happy unless you're with her. She knows she needs you and she knows you're important to her but her mind doesn't question why. This means the bond is still not ready to be completed," Sirius said.

"So what do we do until then?" Oliver asked.

"You continue with your lives the way you have been."

"Can we date other girls?" Fred asked with a frown. He couldn't imagine himself with anyone but Hermione.

"Yes, you can. At least until the bond is ready to be completed and it's sealed. But I imagine from that frown on your face, you don't want to," Sirius said, chuckling at him.

"It doesn't feel right," Fred nodded, his body shuddering at the thought alone.

"It would feel as though we're betraying her by doing that. Whether we are or not, it would still feel that way," George agreed with his twin. "Just thinking about it makes me feel sick."

"What aboot mae? A was gonna talk tae Dumbledore aboot it, but seeing as ye seem tae have more information than he does, an' a trust ye more with Hermione than a do him, a thought a'd ask ye instead. Hoo do ye know so much anyway?"

"The house I grew up in has a library that has rare and ancient books on magical creatures, bonds and dark magic. I read a lot of them when I was bored but I moved in with the Potters in my fourth year and haven't been back there since. As for you, I assume you're talking about how you will suffer with the separation and how you can manage it now that you've graduated."

Oliver nodded and his parents sat straight, wanting to hear what Sirius knew.

"If you visit her regularly you should be fine for a few days, particularly since the bond grows stronger as she grows older and more powerful. As a result, you'll all suffer less as time goes on and you'll be able to be away from each other for longer periods of time."

"So regular visitations? What aboot sleeping? We cannae sleep unless we're near her or we're close by."

"If she gives you something of sentimental value to her, something that will have her scent or DNA then..."

"What's tha'?" he asked confused.

Sirius wasn't surprised to see the confused looks staring back at him. He only knew what it was because it was in a muggle science book he'd read that Hermione had given to him.

"Blood, hair, saliva, anything that can be used to identify an individual. If you could get something that may have this or even something that smells like her, it should calm you and allow you to sleep as you'll still technically have a part of her with you. That's why you can't sleep, because you feel on edge."

"It's tha' simple?"

"Yep, it's that simple," Sirius confirmed with a nod.

"It may be difficult tae visit her regularly; a've got a tryout with Puddlemere fer the position af reserve Keeper. If a get it, a'll be training a lot an' travelling tae away games.

"That may be problematic," Sirius frowned. "But don't worry, we'll figure something out."

Saturday 18th June 1994

Hermione woke early to see the sun beginning to rise and she quickly got out of bed, readied for the day and headed downstairs. She walked into the kitchen to see no one up and about, and surprisingly, even Mrs. Weasley wasn't awake, so Hermione raided the cupboards and decided to make breakfast for everyone. Before she did, she quickly stepped outside to check on Buckbeak. He was sleeping and she smiled, before quickly making her way back to the kitchen.

She cut up some fruit and placed it into two large bowls. As she was making the pancake batter she allowed her mind to wander; she was happy. She missed her parents but she was happy. Sirius had more people on his side; he was almost free to live his life. And soon Harry would be free, too.

She couldn't stop the grin that spread across her face, but it was soon overtaken by a frown when she remembered her cases of 'accidental magic'. She was convinced it wasn't accidental magic; that's was what children had. It was levitating things and making toys dance. It wasn't seeing someone's past, it wasn't throwing someone across a room and it wasn't putting up a powerful shield. She knew that her magic was growing, it didn't take a genius to work that out, but she didn't know why. Her wand was supposed to give her control, so why hadn't it?

When she'd done those things, she didn't think about doing them, but she followed her instincts which lead to them happening. When she concentrated she could faintly remember thinking in the back of her mind that she had wanted those things to happen. And she wondered if she could do it again.

She shook off her thoughts and put the pancake batter into the pan. When she was sure she had cooked enough to feed the many occupants of the Burrow, she placed them on a plate, before moving on to making waffles, bacon and eggs. She set the table and put a pitcher of orange juice and a pitcher of pumpkin juice in the centre. She walked back over to the counter, realising that the food was going cold and she wasn't sure when the others would be getting up. She realised that a stasis needed to placed on the food but she had no way of doing it.

She wondered...

She looked at the food and held her hands over the plate of bacon. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath and concentrated on what she wanted to happen. When she opened her eyes nothing happened. She frowned, took a deep breath and again nothing happened. This continued for fifteen minutes. She was going to give it one last try and give up. So when she opened her eyes to see the faint glimmer of the Stasis Charm being placed over the bacon, she moved her hands away and laughed to herself, beaming a smile. Feeling more confident she did the same to the pancakes, eggs and waffles and she was successful. She picked up the plates and skipped to the table, placing the plates down, doing the same with the bowls of fruit. The only thing she had left to do was get out the glasses and mugs.

I wonder, she thought.

She lifted her hands in the air in the direction of the cupboards. She concentrated on the Accio Charm and the cups. All of a sudden a dozen cups flew out of the cupboards and floated in mid-air, she turned and pointed her hands at the table and the cups followed the path. She lowered her hands slowly and the cups landed on the table.

She looked at her hands and laughed to herself in joy and disbelief.

Meanwhile, when Hermione was focusing on the cupboards several people stood watching from the doorway. They had been woken by the smell of food. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Bill, Charlie and Sirius (who Mrs. Weasley had insisted stay the night), were watching Hermione to see what she was doing. When the cups flew out of the cupboards and followed the path of her hands, their mouths hung open and their eyes widened. She was doing wandless and non-verbal magic, and she was doing it will little effort. She made it look easy.

They quietly walked away from the kitchen and back into the living room, still being able to hear Hermione laughing to herself.

Mrs. Weasley rushed to the fireplace and placed a fire call to Wood Manor.

"Beth, Henry," she called.

Three figures walked into the room, still clad in their pyjamas.

"What is it, Molly?" Mrs. Wood asked.

"We have a situation."

"We'll be right through."

Mrs. Weasley moved away from the floo and Mr. and Mrs. Wood and Oliver stepped out of the fireplace and into the Burrow's living room, standing with the others.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Wood asked

"It looks are though Hermione's getting the hang of her new magical ability," Charlie said with a chuckle.

"Excuse mae?"

"We just watched her wandlessly and non-verbally Accio mugs from the cupboard, landing perfectly on the kitchen table after following the path she made for it with her hand," Charlie grinned proudly.

"Maybe we don't have to encourage her to practice after all," Sirius said with a smirk pulling at his mouth.

"She makes it look so easy," Bill said, sounding awed.

"She makes everything to do with magic look easy," Mr. Weasley corrected and they nodded.

"Is thing a good thing?" Mrs. Weasley asked anxiously.

"It is. If she can control her magic then she will be safer as people will be less likely to notice. However, she may use her magic subconsciously so we need to keep an eye on her. The twins will have to watch her at school and make sure she doesn't do it in public places. What we need to worry about is her emotional state. If she's at Hogwarts and a Slytherin pisses her off..." Mrs. Weasley glared at Sirius. "And she loses her temper, she may accidentally throw them against the wall like she did with Pettigrew, or worse."

"That is a problem," Mr. Weasley agreed.

"She'll have to learn to control her emotions and that's not an easy thing to do," Sirius sighed, pushing a hand through his hair.

The conversation ended when the rest of the Burrow's occupants bounded down the stairs after they'd been woken by the smell of food, and they all made their way to the kitchen and sat down in their chairs and their eyes widened at the freshly cooked food on the table.

"Morning," Hermione sang.

"Morning," they all chorused and they chuckled at the goofy grin plastered on her face.

She walked over to the counter and picked up the pot of coffee in one hand and the pot of tea in the other and she made her way back over to the table. She poured tea into George's mug and kissed him on the cheek and poured coffee into Fred's, kissing him on the cheek. She made her way around the table. She poured coffee for Bill, Charlie and Sirius and kissed them on the cheek. Then she poured tea for Mrs. Weasley and kiss her on the cheek.

"Morning, Maji," she said with a big smile.

"Morning, Dear, you're in a good mood. And Maji?"

"I'm happy. You said it right, Maji. I believe it means mum in Hindi, I've heard it somewhere before but I can't remember where, probably from one of the Pavarti Twins," she shrugged. "And anyway, it reminds me of you because you're my magical mum," she said beaming whilst Mrs. Weasley's eyes watered.

She sat down and began eating.

"Where did you learn to speak Hindi?" Bill asked.

"I don't speak Hindi but I do love learning different languages. The Grangers would travel around Europe for conferences and I would go with them. I learned enough of a language to get by. And I have an eidetic memory so it was easy for me."

"What's that?" Ginny asked confused.

"An eidetic memory?" She checked and Ginny nodded. "It means I have the ability to recall anything I've ever heard, seen or read. That's why it doesn't take me long to learn things."

"So you can speak different languages?" Fred asked surprised; she hadn't told them that.

"Not fluently, just enough to get by," she answered.

"What languages can you speak?" Percy asked intrigued.

"English is my first language, but I can speak some French, Spanish, Italian, German, Greek, Polish, Bulgarian and a little Russian." They stared at her.

"That's nine languages including, English," Bill said, sounding impressed and she shrugged.

"The Grangers attended around six conferences a year and we spent up to two weeks at a time in each country. My Granddad that died and left me my inheritance spent three months of the year living in Russia. He would teach me Russian whenever I visited. I also had a Grandmother who lived in Bulgaria before she died and when we visited her she would teach me Bulgarian," she said.

"I want proof," Sirius challenged, setting down his fork and leaning forward, pressing his arms against the table, locking gazes with her.

"Alright then, what do you want me to say?"

"In Russian, I want you to say, I love Padfoot; he's the best prankster in the world."

"I love Padfoot; he's the best prankster in the world," she replied in Russian.

They stared at her. "Yeah, didn't understand a word of that," Charlie snorted.

"Say it again and I'll cast a Translator Charm," Bill said. Hermione did as he asked and he cast the charm.

"Bloody hell," Ron said as he slumped back in his chair.

"Language, Ronald," Mrs. Weasley scolded.

"He speaks English, Mum -"

"- Unlike Hermione, who speaks eight others, -" the twins laughed.

"In Polish say, Oliver Wood is the best Keeper in the world an' a will miss him greatly," Oliver said.

"Oliver Wood is the best Keeper in the world an' a will miss him greatly," she echoed in Polish.

"Alright, in French say, I'm your favourite sibling and you love me the most, red hair and all," Ginny said, to the many snorts of disbelief from her brothers.

"You're my favourite sibling and I love you the most, red hair and all."

"Yep, she's right," Sirius nodded. They looked at him in surprise. "I was forced to learn French as a child," he shrugged.

"I was not expecting that," Hermione said, similarly to the night she had met him and he chuckled at her.

The boys were playing Quidditch and Ginny was flying around on Buckbeak. The parents were sat together and unbeknownst to Hermione, they were discussing what they'd witnessed and learned that morning.

Hermione was in the garden when Bill and Charlie walked over to her and sat on the ground on either side of her.

"So, what are you planning?" Bill asked.

"What do you mean?" Her brow creased.

"We know you, 'Mione, and there's no way you'd let the boys get away with treating you the way they did. So, you're planning something and we want in," Charlie said. She laughed at them.

"Well, at the beginning of the year Percy asked me to plan a prank to play on the twins as payback for all the pranks they've pulled on him over the years. And now I've added Ron and Ollie to the victim's list."

"That's more like it," Bill grinned.

"You both still have the weekend of 13th August off?"

"Think so," nodded Bill.

"Last time I checked," said Charlie.

"Good, I've got the trip to the water park planned and the prank will take place there. At least, one of them will."

"You've got more than one planned?" Charlie's mouth twitched.

"Of course, they ignored me for two months. One prank isn't going to cut it."

"I want in," they turned around to see Sirius standing behind them.

"You're kind of on the run, Sirius," Hermione reminded him amusedly.

"But I won't be for long. I got a letter from Dumbledore," he said, handing it to her.

She took it out of his hands and quickly read it over. Once she'd finished reading it, she read it for a second time. And then a third.

"Are they serious?"

"Nope, I'm Sirius," he said grinning. She smacked him on the leg.

"Ow!"

"That's amazing," she squealed, jumping up and hugging him tightly.

"What does it say?" Bill asked.

"Pettigrew's trial is in two weeks," she beamed. "Two weeks and you're a free man, Sirius. Yes, you can help with the pranks," she agreed.

"Molly refused to let me leave the Burrow; she says I have to stay here until the trial's over. I'm on house arrest," Sirius pouted.

"Come on, we have to tell everyone!"

They laughed at her excitement.

Chapter Forty-Four

The Burrow – Saturday 25th June 1994

There was one more week until Pettigrew's trial and Hermione was preparing herself for a battle. Mrs. Weasley had kept her promise and not allowed Sirius or Buckbeak to leave the Burrow, despite Sirius being well into his thirties and a fully grown wizard, well, physically at least. Her reasoning being that the Burrow was the least likely place he would ever be suspected of hiding and therefore no one would think got look for him there, meaning he was safe.

Hermione knew that she just liked to have another person (or hippogriff) to mother, disregarding Sirius' age. She'd been hesitant around Buckbeak at first, but after she'd witnessed his gentle nature around her children, she'd started giving him leftover food from the meals they'd had that day, though there didn't tend to be much, so she also made sure to put a little aside before the food was dished out.

They were all sat in the kitchen eating lunch -bar Bill and Charlie who had returned to work the previous Saturday night-, thinking of ways to get Harry to the trial safely and with the permission of his awful muggle family, when Hermione got an idea.

"Mrs. Weasley, I'll take care of it. The Dursleys won't allow Harry to accept or send mail, but I have a way of contacting Harry that doesn't require the need for an owl."

"Very well, Dear," she agreed.

"I'll have to go back to the house."

"You shouldn't be going there alone," Mr. Weasley said with an anxious tone to his voice.

There hadn't been any more cases of wandless or non-verbal magic and Hermione hadn't been practising, but it was still dangerous for her to be out in public alone, even in the Muggle World.

"Sirius can come with me," Hermione shrugged.

His head shot up and away from his plate. "Really?" He asked excitedly.

"No, it's too risky for him to leave the house," Mrs. Weasley scolded. Sirius pouted at her childishly and the others snorted at him.

"If he comes with me in his Animagus form he should be fine. People will just assume I'm taking my dog for a walk. A change in scenery will do him some good," Hermione said, looking at Mrs. Weasley hopefully and Sirius' expression matched hers.

Mrs. Weasley looked between the two, scrutinising them. She sighed and they knew they'd won. "I suppose I can't stop him from leaving, he's a thirty-five-year-old man, after all."

"But thirteen mentally," Hermione quipped, erupting chuckles from everyone and gaining a pout from Sirius. "We'll go later on this afternoon and I'll pick up some food on the way back for dinner."

"Oh Dear, that's kind of you, but you don't have to do that."

"No, Mum, if that's what she wants to do, then let her," Ginny said and the others chuckled. "Is it going to be that pizza stuff you bought in your first year for us?" She asked with a loving look in her eyes, clearly thinking about the delicious muggle food she'd been introduced to.

"No, I was thinking of another muggle delicacy," Hermione responded.

"What? Is it as good as pizza?" Ron said dreamily.

"Yes, just as good," she promised.

"Let her, Mum, she knows what's she's doing," he said.

Muggle London

Later that afternoon, Hermione and Sirius stepped into the floor in the living room of the Burrow, and they floo'd over to Hermione's parents' house.

"Maybe I should just sell this place. It's not like I'm going to use it," she commented, looking around with sad eyes.

"Maybe you should hold off on that, you never know when your parents will be out of hiding," Sirius spoke with a kind tone to his voice. She sighed and nodded.

"Come on, I need to get something from the shop," she said. "Better change into Mr. Snuffles," she laughed as he looked at her disgusted at the name she'd given him many months ago, though he did change into the large black dog.

They walked to the front door; Hermione unlocked it, walked out and then re-locked it behind her with the key she hadn't used since Christmas Eve three years ago.

"Right, Padfoot, this way," she said, as she walked down the path with him slightly behind her as he took in his new surroundings.

He bounded after, catching up to her and walking obediently by her side. After a few minutes they reached the corner paper shop and she turned to him.

"You'll have to wait here, dogs aren't allowed inside." She chuckled when the large dog deliberately stuck his tongue out at her, giving him a goofy expression.

After entering the shop, she walked to the counter and asked if she could use the phone book. When the man handed the large book to her she walked off towards the payphone in the back corner of the shop. She quickly flipped through the pages and found The Dursley's home telephone number, after which she grabbed the pen nearby and wrote it down on the back of her hand. She grabbed a few items off the shelves and took them to the counter, paying for the purchases and returning the phone book. As she stepped through the door and into the street, the sight that met her was children playing with Padfoot and she smiled and laughed quietly at the sight.

There were five children, all currently running around and laughing as Padfoot chased them with his tail wagging madly and his tongue lolling out of the side of his mouth. She noticed a group of parents stood off to the side and conversing between themselves and when they noticed her appearance, they all turned in her direction.

"Is this your dog?" A woman asked.

"Yes, he is," Hermione replied politely.

"He has a lovely nature," another woman said, chuckling at the children now chasing the dog.

"He's a handful, but I wouldn't have him any other way."

"Where did you get him? We've considered getting a dog for our two kids," a man said, pointing at his two children in the group of five.

"Oh, he's a rescue," she said. Well, it wasn't a lie. I did more or less rescue him, she thought.

"A rescue?" another man asked, sounding intrigued.

"Yes, he spent most of his life locked in a cold, dark and damp cage and his previous carers hardly fed him. I found him in the woods of the school I attend and started caring for him. And before I knew what had happened, he was living with me."

"Oh, that's awful. Well, he hardly seems affected by it. You've done a good thing and remarkably well, too," the first woman praised.

"Thank you, but I can't take the credit, he found a way to put the past behind him and I'm proud of him," Hermione said, her soft smile aimed towards the dog. She knew Sirius was listening to their conversation even as he was running around with the children.

"You found him in the woods at the school you attend? Which school is that?" The first man asked.

"Oh, I go to a boarding school in Scotland. I'm home for the summer before I return for my fourth year."

"Wait! Are you Jean and Richard's daughter?" The second woman asked, a look of familiarity taking root on her face.

"Yes, I'm Hermione," she nodded.

"I thought you looked familiar. We sometimes watched over you when you were little as your parents were at work. We're the Collins and these are the Mullins. We live on the same street as you."

Hermione looked them over. Both Mr. and Mrs. Collins had dark blonde hair, his being cut short and hers falling down to her shoulders in waves. They both had pale skin and bright green eyes, though Mr. Collins appeared to be taller than his wife, standing at five-foot-eleven, and his wife appeared to be a few inches shorter.

Mr. Mullins had dark brown hair that fell just over the tips of his ears, dark blue eyes and pale skin, and where he stood at six-foot, his wife was remarkably smaller, standing at five-foot-four. Unlike her husband, she had brown eyes, tanned skin and black hair that was cut into the style of a short bob.

"Oh yes, I remember. You had that bird that liked to sit on my head," Hermione said amused, recalling the memory fondly.

"Yes, we did," Mrs. Collins said chuckling. "And I must say, you've grown up beautifully."

Hermione flushed at the comment. "Thank you," she mumbled, of course, she didn't believe them but it was polite to accept the compliment.

"Your children have really grown since the last time I saw them at that community barbeque at the park almost four years ago."

"Tell us about it. They're a handful. Where are your parents? Are they nearby? We haven't seen them around in a while," Mr. Collins asked and Hermione flinched.

The large dog noticed and he wasted no time in leaving the children and walking over to her, nudging her leg. She looked down at him and scratched his head, grateful for the support he was giving her. The children walked over and continued to pet him and he revelled in the attention of the laughing children.

"They moved out of the country two years ago. We had a distant relative that passed away and my parents went over to see to the funeral. They decided to stay for a while and they now run the dental practice over there."

"Where'd they move to?"

"Australia," she answered with a strained smile.

"It seems that dentists really do run in the family," Mr. Mullins said and she smiled tightly. "So, how are you liking your school and living in Australia?"

"I love my school, it's in Scotland so I spend most of the year there at the castle and…" she was cut off.

"A castle? Blimey," he said, giving a whistle of appreciation.

"Yes, a castle, it's rather beautiful, particularly the lake at night. And I don't live in Australia."

"But I thought that's where your parents now live," Mrs. Collins frowned in confusion.

"Yes, they do. I live with one of my best friends from school and his family. They have parental guardianship of me until I become of age, but I visit my parents during the holidays," she said, lying through her teeth on the last part of her explanation.

"Where is it that you live now?" Mrs. Mullins asked curiously.

"I live in Devon," she answered.

"That's a long way from here," Mr. Mullins commented.

"It is," Hermione agreed. "I'm just visiting another friend from school for the day and checking in on the house, it's still our property."

"I've seen someone walking around in there, we've called the police but there was no evidence of a break-in," Mr. Collins said and Hermione stiffened.

"Oh, that was probably my friend. He has a key and checks on the house for me from time to time." They nodded in response.

"What's his name?" One of the children asked Hermione.

She smiled down at them. "Mr. Snuffles," she said with a grin. The large dog growled playfully at her and she laughed, whilst the children gasped.

"Don't worry; he won't hurt you, he's just playing. He doesn't like it when I call him Mr. Snuffles. His real name is Padfoot." The dog licked her hand. She took the hint and scratched behind his ears.

"That's a cool name," another child said. Hermione rolled her eyes when Padfoot smugly stood taller.

"Yes, and doesn't he know it!" Hermione replied as the children laughed as the dog rolled on his back, so they could have easier access to scratch his stomach.

Hermione looked at her watch. "Oh, I'm terribly sorry but we have to go," Hermione said. The children whined and Padfoot whimpered, not wanting to leave the attention he was getting.

"Do you have to leave?" One of the children said, looking sad.

"I'm afraid so, we have to go meet my friend. Don't you want to see Harry, Padfoot?" She said, looking down at the dog sprawled on the ground on his back. She laughed when he jumped up and started barking, his tail wagging eagerly.

"I think he likes that idea," Mrs. Collins chuckled.

At this point, the children had tears gathering in their eyes and they crowded around their parents.

"But, Mummy, I don't want Padfoot to leave," one child whined.

"Well, maybe you'll see Padfoot again someday soon," Mrs. Collins said.

Hermione felt bad for the children and before she could stop herself, words were leaving her mouth.

"Yes, you probably will. In fact, my family and I will be visiting a friend and going to the park next Friday. Maybe we'll see you there," Hermione said. Now she just had to convince the Weasleys, but it was the day of the trial and they would be in London anyway.

The children looked up at their parents hopefully and they chuckled in response.

"Alright then, we'll go to the park next Friday so you can see Padfoot," Mr. Mullins agreed and the children cheered loudly. "What time will you be there?"

"Well, I would like to say around ten but with, Ginny, Ron, the twins, Lee and Ollie, I doubt they'll be out of bed by then."

"Who are they?" Mrs. Collins asked curiously.

"Oh, sorry, I forgot you wouldn't know them. Ron is my friend and basically my adopted brother, as are the twins and Ginny's my adopted sister, and they have three older brothers too. Lee's a friend, and his circumstances are similar to mine, in which he spends most of his time with us since his parents work a lot. And Oliver is another friend from school and his parents have joint parental guardianship over me, too."

"That's a lot of people. Do they all attend this boarding school?" Mr. Collins asked.

"Yes, except Bill and Charlie graduated a few years ago and Percy and Ollie graduated this year. The twins and Lee will graduate in two years. Ron, Harry and I graduate in four years and that just leaves Ginny and she graduates in five year's time."

"How many people shall we be expecting to meet?" Mrs. Mullins asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Well, those that I just mentioned, along with The Weasley and Wood parents, and Bill and Charlie both made sure they'd have the day off from work. You can't miss us."

"You speak of them fondly," Mrs. Collins observed.

"Yes, we're a really close family. Shall we meet near the pond?"

"That's a wonderful idea," she said and they all nodded in agreement.

"Right well, didn't you say you were late for something?" Mrs. Mullins said with a smile.

"Oh yes. Right," Hermione said and they chuckled. "Well, we best be going, I'll see you all next week, Mr. and Mrs. Collins, Mr. and Mrs. Mullins. And we will see…" Hermione trailed off, waiting for the children to supply their names.

"Amelia, Jack." They were The Mullins children and it was clear.

Little Amelia couldn't have been older than five and she was the spitting double of her mother, with her black hair tied back in a ponytail and her brown eyes shining with excitement. Jack looked like his Father, with shaggy brown hair and dark blue eyes, and she'd have guessed him to be no older than seven.

"Brittany, Joey, Callie." They were The Collins children.

Brittany appeared to be the oldest of the three, no older than eight. She looked more like her Father with the same button nose, dark blonde hair that fell to her shoulders and bright green eyes. Joey appeared to be a mix of both parents, with dark blonde hair cut short, bright green eyes and he was no older than six. That just left Callie who couldn't have been older than four. She looked like her mother with an oval-shaped face, dark blonde hair plaited and pulled back from her face and bright green eyes.

"Well, Amelia, Jack, Brittany, Joey and Callie, my name's Hermione." They grinned up at her. "We'll see you next week with our family. You'll love the twins, they're a right handful and they're always getting into trouble for pranking their siblings," Hermione said and the children giggled."See you next week." She turned and walked in the direction of a few shops on the opposite end of the road.

"Bye!" Several people chorused.

"Well, Padfoot, are you happy now? You get to go to the park on a family picnic and chase children and pigeons to your heart's content." She took his head lolling to the side with his tongue sticking out as a resounding yes.

She stopped outside of a Chinese takeaway restaurant.

"You're going to have to wait here, animals aren't allowed in food establishments," she said, he made a whining sound. "Do you want food or not?" Padfoot immediately sat down and didn't move. "Boys and their food," she mumbled as she entered through the door.

She exited the shop five minutes later after ordering and paying for the food. Padfoot turned his head to the side, looking the perfect picture of confusion.

"They're going to deliver it to the house shortly. There would be too many bags to carry otherwise," she explained, he nodded and they made their way back to the house.

The Granger Residence

When she walked into the house, she placed the items she'd bought from the shop on the ground and walked over to the telephone that had been left in the kitchen. She sat on the floor, leaning against a cupboard and Sirius changed back before sitting next to her and mimicking her position. She checked to make sure the phone was still working before dialling the number she'd written on her hand.

It rang six times before the phone was answered.

"Hello," a gruff voice answered, and Hermione put the phone on loudspeaker so Sirius could hear, too.

"Hello, is this the Dursley residence?" Hermione asked politely. Sirius sniggered from beside her and she whacked him in the stomach in retaliation.

"Oomph!" He grunted in pain and she smiled smugly.

"It is," came the voice over the phone.

"Wonderful. My name's Hermione Granger. I attend the same school as Harry." She could hear the change in his breathing through the speaker.

"You're one of them then?" He said unkindly.

"Yes, Sir, I was wondering if I could please speak to Harry."

"No, you can't. I don't need him plotting away with other freaks."

Hermione felt the anger within her beginning to bubble up. Sirius noted the change in her body language and the hard posture of her shoulders. He quickly put a comforting hand on her shoulder and took her free hand in his, trying to comfort her.

He didn't want her levelling the house. Because that would be hard to explain to the muggles, he thought with a snort. Hermione took a deep breath and spoke in a calm voice that told nothing of the anger raging inside of her.

"Please, Sir, it's an urgent matter. He's been called as a witness to a murder trial."

"I don't care; the more of you freaks that are dead the better!"

The cupboard doors began to rattle and Sirius looked around in a daze. This wasn't going well.

"Kitten, you have to stay calm, otherwise, you may lose control of your anger and level the house," he said softly.

Hermione took several deep breaths and the cupboard doors abruptly stopped. He could still see the anger on her features but she seemed to have control of it.

"Mr. Dursley, I'm afraid you don't understand the..."

"No, you don't understand the strain that freak has put on my family. We took him in out of the kindness of our hearts and all he does is bring us trouble," he ground out.

Now, Hermione wasn't the only one who was having trouble containing her anger, Sirius was livid and a growl rumbled within his chest.

"What was that?" Mr. Dursley asked with a slight shake to his voice.

Hermione smirked with an evil glint in her eye. Sirius looked at her and his anger dissipated; he'd seen that look before and he knew she was about to hand Mr. Dursley his balls on a silver platter; he grinned.

"Oh, nothing for you to worry about, Mr. Dursley, however, you didn't let me finish my sentence. You are not aware of the consequences that will befall you if you do not cooperate."

"You freaks can't do anything to me," he snarled and Hermione's grin widened.

"Now, Mr. Dursley, it's not polite to call people names. However, you are incorrect in your assumptions. You see, we have the legal right to arrest you for interfering with a criminal investigation."

"No, you don't, I'll alert the authorities."

"Yes, and so will I, Mr. Dursley. You see, both your government and the magical government are aware of the other's existence and therefore they have an agreement. One of which is that non-magical beings can be prosecuted by the magical government if they so desire. And Mr. Dursley, are you aware of what prison is like in the Wizarding World?"

He didn't answer.

"No. I thought not. Well, let me tell you. It's nothing like muggle prisons. You're placed in a cold, damp and dark cell, no bigger than that cupboard you made Harry sleep in." She heard him gulp and she smiled to herself. "You are fed only once a day, and given the amount of food you make Harry cook for you and your family, I'm betting you'll struggle with that, not to mention the food is barely edible, actually, you're more likely to die of food poisoning due to the bacteria that grows on the rotten food."

Sirius was shaking with silent laughter beside her and she allowed a smirk to form on her lips. He waved his hands, indicating that she should continue; he was enjoying himself.

"And the guards are nothing like you've ever seen. We call them dementors." She heard him laugh at the name. Obviously, he thought they were a laughing matter. "Laugh all you want, Mr. Dursley, but I assure you they are no joke. They make grown men shake with fear. They aren't human. They're awfully dark magical creatures that suck out the happiness and love from your life and when you have no happiness left, if you're lucky, they kill you. Do you know how they do that? Well, Mr. Dursley, I'll tell you. They suck out your soul."

She didn't have to be in the same room as him to know he was likely sweating and pale in the face by this point.

"So, may I please speak to Harry, Mr. Dursley?" She asked sweetly. Sirius couldn't see properly due to the tears that were swimming in his eyes from his laughter.

"No," he replied. It came out more like a nervous squeak.

"Okay, I'm going to give you one last reason as to why you should allow me to speak to Harry. This man that Harry will be testifying against murdered fourteen people. Two of those people were magical beings and twelve of those were non-magical beings. Now, if he goes free due to your incompetence and gets away with the murder of fourteen innocent people, I will be sure to let him know your address so that he can graciously thank you. And as you can work out from the statistics, he isn't rather fond of muggles."

"You don't know where I live," he said confidently.

Hermione winked at Sirius.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that, Mr. Dursley. In fact, I'm watching your home right now. Number Four Privet Drive, Little Whinging, I believe."

She heard him running before a door was roughly pulled opened. At this point, Sirius was all but laid on the floor, crying with laughter. She worried he might actually wet himself by accident.

"I can't see anything," he said strongly.

"Oh, Mr. Dursley, that's because I can use magic to disguise myself."

"How old are you?"

"Fourteen," she answered.

"You'll go to that prison with those soul-sucking creatures. I know it's illegal to use magic outside of school and under the age of seventeen," he said smugly, thinking he'd won, but Hermione wasn't backing down.

"That's true, Mr. Dursley, the magical government are able to track when we do underage magic by tracking our wand signatures," he laughed at her triumphantly. "However..." she said and he stopped laughing at the sound of the tone to her voice. "Some magical beings are able to do wandless magic. Now, I don't have to tell you what that is as it's rather self-explanatory. It's true that children's accidental magic can be tracked, but wandless intentional magic can't be, and since I don't use my wand for it, I can't be tracked so I won't find myself in trouble with the government... So, I will ask you one last time, can I please speak to Harry concerning a vital matter?"

She heard footsteps, then banging on a door before it was opened.

"Yes, Uncle Vernon?"

Hermione smiled in amusement at the annoyance she could hear in Harry's voice. She heard some shuffling before Harry spoke uncertainly.

"Hello," he said as the sound of a door closing came over the speaker.

"Harry!"

"Hermione!" He laughed happily. "What did you say to my Uncle? When he came up here, he was all pale and sweating like a pig."

She laughed "He wouldn't let me speak to you so I told him about the Ministry and he thought he would try and be a smart arse, so I told him about Azkaban and the dementors and what would happen if he didn't let me speak to you."

Harry was laughing loudly like a lunatic. She knew he was happy to talk her and he likely hadn't laughed since he got off the train.

"Harry, Pettigrew's trial's next Friday."

"What? Really?"

"Yes. I'm picking you up at nine o'clock on Friday, so be ready."

"Will do. What else did you say to my Uncle? I know he would've likely tried to laugh off the dementors."

"Oh, he did, but then I told him that if he didn't let me speak to you and Pettigrew went free, that I would give him your address so he could pay him a visit and thank him."

"You did not!" Harry spoke through laughter.

"I did, and then he smugly pointed out that I didn't know your address."

"And what did you say?"

She could tell he had a huge grin on his face, even without her being able to see, she could practically hear it in his voice.

"I told him your address and that I was stood outside, watching your house. At that point, I heard him running and pulling open a door."

"I can't believe you did that!"

"You should've heard him Harry, he sounded so smug when he told me he couldn't see me, particularly when I told him I could use magic to disguise myself."

"He gave you the lecture about underage magic, didn't he? He never fails to remind me of it every day."

"Yes, Harry, he did, but when I explained about wandless magic and how it works, that's when he granted me permission to speak with you," she grinned and he laughed at her.

"I could really use you here; it'll keep them off my back and you can prank Dudley for me."

"Just tell them about wandless magic and Sirius. Speaking of which…" she trailed off.

"Harry?" Sirius said.

"Sirius"! He cried said happily. "How are you?"

"Well-fed. I've been at the Burrow for the last week. Molly wouldn't let me or Buckbeak leave. I'm surprised she let me out with Hermione, to be honest."

"Out?"

"We're at my house, Harry; we've just been to the Chinese shop. We're waiting for it to be delivered before we take it back to the Burrow."

"Chinese," he said dreamily and she chuckled. "If you send Hedwig to my house, I'll send her back with some food.

"The Dursleys won't let me let her out of her cage."

"Just tell them I told you to."

He snorted at her. "Yeah, they're probably scared of you now." She heard him opening the cage and then a window. "Alright, she's on her way. You're my hero." She laughed at him.

"You talk to Sirius for a while, there something I need to do."

When she returned to the kitchen, it was to see Sirius laughing and she could hear Harry laughing through the phone.

When the food was delivered she quickly set out some for Harry and when Hedwig arrived not long after, she attached the food and some of the sweets she'd bought from the shop to her and sent her on her way back to Harry.

"Right, Harry, food's on its way."

"You have to go now, don't you?" He said sadly.

"Yes, we do, but we'll see you in less than a week, and you have a Chinese takeaway about to be delivered to your window by an owl. That doesn't happen to many people. Now, put your Uncle back on please."

"Right, hang on a second."

She could hear him walking down the stairs and she could hear people talking in the background.

"Yes?" Mr. Dursley said, sounding uncertain and she smirked.

"Hello, Mr. Dursley, I will be arriving for Harry at nine o'clock on Friday, please ensure he's ready. Don't worry about him wearing a suit. He will be getting changed at the trial."

"Right."

"Good evening, Mr. Dursley, and do be kind to Harry." Of course, he paled at the clear warning in her voice and Harry struggled to keep a straight face.

"Harry, if he treats you unkindly, remind him of who I am. I will see you on Friday."

"See you later, Hermione," Harry called down the phone.

"Goodbye, Harry and Mr. Snuffles says bye, too."

Harry heard the growl through the phone just before Hermione hung up and he laughed.

"What does she mean 'remind us of who she is'?" Dudley asked, both sounding and looking scared.

Whilst Harry had been on the phone, Mr. Dursley had explained the conversation he'd had with Hermione to his wife. Of course, he left out the parts where he was terrified by her; he couldn't be seen being terrified of a fourteen-year-old girl.

"Oh, nothing really. Hermione's my best friend and she's very protective of me. She's the nicest person you'll ever meet, unless you make her mad; then she's just downright terrifying," he said with a shiver for dramatic effect. "Everyone calls her 'The Brightest Witch.' She knows spells that fully grown witches and wizards haven't even learned yet because the magic is too complex, and she's created spells of her own, which is unheard of for someone her age," he explained and he took pleasure in seeing their frightened faces.

The Burrow

Hermione made sure the front door was locked before she and Sirius picked up the bags and floo'd back to the Burrow. They took the bags into the kitchen and Hermione began setting the table before she put the food on the plates.

Sirius met with Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and Mr. and Mrs. Wood in the living room, whilst the others were outside playing Quidditch and Percy read. With it being summer it had yet to get dark.

"She almost lost control of her magic," Sirius told the others.

"What?" Mrs. Weasley hissed.

"She used this telephone thing to talk to Harry and when Dursley was talking to Hermione he was insulting both her, Harry and our world. She got angry and the cupboard doors started rattling. I honestly thought she was going to level the house."

"An' did she?" Mr. Wood asked.

"No, when I told her that she might do that she controlled her anger. The cupboards stopped shaking and then she handed him his balls on a silver platter," he said proudly.

"Sirius Black!" Mrs. Weasley hissed.

"Really? How?"

"Arthur!" She hissed and he flushed red.

"Maybe you should see for yourself," Sirius replied with a smirk.

"DINNER!" Hermione shouted and everyone from outside ran into the kitchen and they quickly followed by the adults, they took their seats eyeing the deliciously smelling food in front on them.

"What's this?" Ginny asked.

"Chinese," she answered, and she listed off the items and pointed to each one of the plates. "This is special fried rice (prawns, peas, chicken, pork and beef), house chow main (prawn, chicken, pork, beef and noodles), barbecued spare ribs, prawn crackers, chips, duck spring rolls, vegetable spring rolls, sweet and sour pork balls and gravy. You have coca-cola in your glasses and I have apple crumble and custard for dessert. Enjoy!"

They all tucked in and ate their food heartily, giving compliments on the food or asking questions which Hermione would answer. When they finished eating; they all retired to the living room with their stomachs full.

"I don't think I can eat anything ever again!" Lee said, rubbing his stomach for effect.

Hermione walked back into the kitchen and picked up the bags containing the items she'd bought from the corner shop and she returned to the living room.

"So you won't be wanting any of these then?" She asked innocently, tipping the bags upside down and packets upon packets of muggle chocolate, candy and sweets landed on the floor in a pile. They all stared at her before the twins and Ron dived into the pile. She chuckled at them and sat back down, shaking her head.

"Now, Hermione, Sirius tells us tha' ye were very excellent in the way ye handled Harry's relatives," Mr. Wood said, barely holding back a grin.

"I believe so, yes. Would you like to see?"

Before anyone could answer; Sirius said, "Yes! They all want to see!" He then turned to the many amused eyes watching him. "You definitely want to see," he promised and they snorted at him.

Oliver made a quick trip to Wood Manor and brought back the pensive; Percy took the memory from Hermione and placed it into the large dish. It took him twenty minutes to learn how to cast Hermione Projection Spell before the screen appeared.

They all watched the memory of Hermione on the phone. They spent the entire time laughing at both her and Sirius, who spent most of the time in the memory laughing at Hermione. They would often make comments about how they never wanted to get on Hermione's bad side. Those in the know about Hermione frowned slightly when the cupboards started rattling but Ron, Lee and Ginny didn't seem to notice as they continued laughing at the memory. When it ended they turned to her.

"That was brilliant," Ginny beamed.

"You threatened him with dementors, jail, wandless magic, the law and a murderer. It was more than brilliant. It was genius," Lee said laughing.

"Oh, I forgot, the day of Pettigrew's trial can everyone please be up and ready by nine o'clock?" Hermione asked.

"Why, it doesn't start until four in the evening?" Percy asked curiously.

"Well, you see, I met some of my old neighbours and we conversed whilst the children played with Padfoot. When we had to leave the children started crying and I felt really guilty, so I promised them we would be at the park on Friday so they can see him again. I told them all about you and said that I'd bring you all along. So, what do you think about spending the day at a muggle park, with a picnic and other families? Plus, I said I was picking Harry up at nine o'clock so I could get him out of that house and away from the Dursleys for the day."

"Yeah, can we, Mum?" Ginny said.

Mrs. Weasley eyed the hopeful looks that were sent in her direction, and with a shared look between her husband and Oliver's parents, they all agreed.

"Great," Hermione smiled.

"I guess it's a good thing Hermione's a big softy; it gets us out in Muggle London for the day," Ginny said and they snorted at her as Hermione shrugged.

"But remember, no magic. That means no charms on the picnic baskets, no magical pranks and no brooms. No magic, got it?" They nodded and she smiled.

Chapter Forty-Five

The Burrow - Friday 1st July 1994

Hermione had woken early, showered and readied for the day, pulling her hair into a messy bun atop her head, and adorning a pair of black shorts, white converse and a white short-sleeved t-shirt that said, "I'm not weird, I'm a limited edition," tucked into her shorts. She knew that Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were already up and ready, given the smell of food coming from the kitchen, so she went around and banged on every bedroom door and didn't stop until she was sure they were up.

"Come on, guys, you have just over an hour to get ready and eat breakfast!" She called as she walked down the stairs on her way to the kitchen. At the mention of breakfast, all doors were thrown open and everyone rushed past her, down the stairs and into the kitchen.

She shook her head and mumbled, "I will never get used to that," before walking into the kitchen.

"That t-shirt's brilliant," Ginny said laughing and several people looked toward her before chuckling, too.

She noticed that Bill and Charlie were already sat at the table and eating breakfast, meaning they'd arrived early.

"Morning, boys," she greeted, taking a seat on the chair in-between them.

"Oi, we're not boys!" Bill said.

"Yeah, we're men," Charlie said with mock hurt plastered on his pace.

She shrugged. "Well, 'morning boys' sounds a lot better than morning men."

"And you will always be my little boys," Mrs. Weasley said, placing breakfast in front of Hermione.

"MUM!" They whined as she kissed their cheeks and Hermione giggled. Mrs. Weasley walked off and placed plates in front of the others.

"So, I hear we're going to a muggle park today, how do we look?" Charlie said.

Hermione motioned for Bill and Charlie to stand up and turn around. Bill was wearing black knee-length shorts, white trainers and a blue short-sleeved t-shirt. Charlie was wearing dark blue muggle jeans, black hiking boots and a black short-sleeved t-shirt that showed off his tattoos and muscles. She imagined he would look terrifying if he wasn't always smiling.

"Perfect, very muggle," she complimented and they smiled proudly, before sitting down and continuing with eating their breakfast.

"Thank you for breakfast, Maji," Hermione said. Mrs. Weasley smiled; she still wasn't used to Hermione calling her that.

"You know, I was thinking," Mr. Weasley began, a thoughtful expression crossing his face. "Molly has a name you call her, and I would like one, too, if you wouldn't mind."

Hermione smiled at him. "Papa?"

"Papa, it is," he said with a smile. Mrs. Weasley had tears in her eyes at the small but meaningful interaction. It meant that Hermione had truly accepted them as family.

"Alright, everyone, go and get dressed and then come and show me, I need to make sure you're dressed appropriately for muggles." They left the kitchen.

"How am I dressed, Hermione?" Mr. Weasley said, standing up. He was wearing blue jeans, with brown hiking boots and a red and purple striped shirt. She chuckled.

"Very muggle," she said and he looked incredibly pleased with her answer. Hermione took Mrs. Weasley by the hand and dragged her up the stairs and to her bedroom.

"Where are we going, Dear?"

"To your room to find you something nice to wear."

"Oh no, Dear, I couldn't possibly," her cheek tinged pink.

"Nonsense, Maji," she said as she dragged her into the bedroom.

Hermione looked through the wardrobe and pulled out a simple black knee-length dress with capped sleeves and flowers along the edge of the dress. She handed it to Mrs. Weasley who looked at it appraisingly before hesitantly dressing whilst Hermione looked through her shoes. Hermione found a pair of red flats.

"These would be perfect if they were black," Hermione commented. Right before her eyes, the shoes changed from red to black. She blinked several times to make sure she wasn't seeing things. But the shoes were still black. Forgetting the strange happenings, for the time being, she smiled and handed them to Mrs. Weasley.

"Now it's time for your hair."

"Hair?"

"Yes, we don't want it in your face." Hermione quickly put it in a loose bun. "And we're done," she said triumphantly. Mrs. Weasley looked at herself in the mirror.

"You don't think it's too dressy?" She said uncertainly, fiddling with her fingers and her blush darkening.

"You look perfect, Maji, and you can just wear your robes over the dress for the trial. Come on, let's go, we have to make sure that everyone is suitably dressed." She dragged Mrs. Weasley back down the stairs and into the living room, where they found Mr. Weasley, Percy, Bill and Charlie.

The boys looked up and it was evident they were surprised by their Mother's appearance. They'd never seen their mother in anything but a dressing down during the night or an apron during the day.

"It's too much, isn't it?" She said sadly.

"You look lovely, Molly," Mr. Weasley beamed, walking up to her and kissing her on the cheek.

"Yeah, you look amazing, Mum," Bill agreed after he shook out of his daze and the others agreed, making Mrs. Weasley blush. They chuckled at her. Hermione checked her watch noticing that she had forty minutes before she would be collecting Harry.

She walked over to the floo and placed a floo call to Wood Manor.

"Hello," she called out until someone approached the fireplace.

"Good morning, Hermione."

"Good morning, Mr. Wood," she greeted, "We don't have long left before we have to leave. Are you nearly ready?"

"Aye, hoo do a look?" He was wearing black trainers, black jeans and a red polo shirt.

"You look good," she replied and he smiled. Then Mrs. Wood and Oliver walked around the corner and into view.

"Hello, Dear."

"Morning, Lassie."

"Morning, Mrs. Wood, Ollie," she greeted.

Mrs. Wood was wearing a pink knee-length dress, white flats on her feet and she had her hair in a half-up half-down do. Oliver was wearing blue jeans, white trainers and his football shirt.

"So, what do ye do at a park?" Mr. Wood asked. Hermione blinked at him in surprise.

"Err, well you have a picnic, you play games, you laugh and you have fun."

"What games?"

"Sports," she shrugged.

"Like the ones in the book?"

"Yes, football, cricket, rounders, things like that."

"Really, we can play football an; cricket?" Oliver said and she chuckled at his excitement.

"Yes, if you bring the things you need. Just no magic," she replied. They nodded.

"We'll just grab the picnic baskets an' sporting things an' we'll be right through," Mrs. Wood said.

"Alright." She stepped away from the floo and she turned to see everyone stood around and talking, after arriving whilst she'd been talking with The Woods.

Ginny had her flaming red hair in a ponytail and she wore dark blue shorts, a pair of Hermione's pink converse and a pink Weird Sisters short sleeved t-shirt.

"Gin, you're going to have to change that shirt." Ginny nodded and ran up the stairs with Hermione yelling after her. "Just go through my wardrobe!"

Ron was wearing blue jeans, black trainers and a bright orange Chudley Cannons short-sleeved t-shirt.

"Ron, the same for you, you're going to have to change your shirt."

"Why?"

"You're not only wearing a shirt with the name of a sport and team that no one in the Muggle World knows about, but your shirt has moving Quidditch players that are flying around," she said and he flushed. He ran up the stairs to change.

Fred and George were wearing blue jeans, white trainers and Fred was wearing a red short-sleeved t-shirt and George a blue one. She nodded at them and they looked pleased. Lee was wearing blue knee-length shorts, white trainers and a white short-sleeved t-shirt, she nodded to him and he grinned. Percy was wearing smart clothing; black shoes, black trousers and a long-sleeved shirt and tie.

"Err, Perce?" She said uncertainly.

"Yes?" He questioned, seeing the look she wore on her face.

"Are you sure you want to wear that to the park?" She said.

"Why?" His brow furrowed, darting a look down the length of his body, examining his clothing, trying to understand what she saw as being wrong with it.

"Well, because they're likely to get dirty, grass stains, mud, food, that sort of thing. And when at the park, people usually tend to fall in the pond and when I say fall, I mean people push you in if you're stood too close."

The twins face lit up at hearing that. "Wicked!"

"Perhaps, something more casual and comfortable would be more suitable. You know, jeans, trainers and a t-shirt, the same as everyone else," she suggested.

Nodding, he made his way up the stairs to change, and all three siblings returned minutes later with Ginny was now sporting a pink t-shirt with a picture of a cat on the front, Ron had changed into a plain orange t-shirt and Percy had changed into what Hermione had suggested; a pair of light blue jeans, black trainers and a black short-sleeved polo shirt. He still looked smart but more casual.

"Better, much better. Wait, Gin, I have an idea. Give me one of your shoes."

"Why?" She asked, removing the right one.

Hermione took it and removed her right shoe before putting on the pink one and giving the white one to Ginny.

When they finished, they each were each sporting one pink and one white converse shoe.

"I love it," Ginny grinned, looking down at her feet and twisting her ankle this way and that to better see it from different angles.

"Sirius is right, these clothes are a lot more comfortable than wizarding ones," Lee said, doing some over-exaggerated lunges, causing Hermione to break out in a fit of laughter.

"Right, we're almost ready to leave," she said, checking her watch. "We've just got to check on the food," she said, before walking into the kitchen.

She was quickly checking through the picnic baskets to ensure they did not contain any strange wizarding foods when The Woods floo'd in, carrying several picnic baskets and a bag of sports equipment. She checked through those baskets and deemed everyone fit to enter the Muggle World.

"Has everyone got their robes with them? We can change at the house after we return from the park." They nodded in reply and one by one, they all floo'd to Hermione's house.

The Granger Residence

When they stepped out of the floo, they placed the bags and picnic basket to the ground.

"Right, I need to go and collect Harry, no doubt Sirius will want to come with me," she said knowingly and he nodded in confirmation. "And I want Charlie to come with us, too."

"Why?" Ron said gruffly. She raised an eyebrow at him.

"First of all, Ronald, Charlie can apparate us since Harry lives in a different part of London to this house, and secondly, I want to scare the Dursleys."

"How's taking Charlie with you going to scare them? He's a giant, walking, talking teddy bear," Fred said with a snort.

"Charlie looks intimidating, so as long as he keeps a straight face, doesn't talk and doesn't smile, they'll be terrified by him," she shrugged. "So, Charlie, no laughing, no matter what happens," she said sternly and he laughed at her. She elbowed him in the stomach

"Oomph!"

"No laughing and no smiling," she warned, pointing her finger at him threateningly. "Right, it's almost nine o'clock so let's go. If anyone needs the bathroom it's upstairs to the right."

She linked her arm with Charlie's and he grabbed a hold of Sirius's wrist, picturing the memory of the Dursley's house as Sirius had shown him his memories from the year before.

Hermione closed her eyes and she felt a hard tug in her stomach before the feeling of being squeezed through a small tube took over, and then her feet hit the ground. She stumbled slightly and leaned over with her hands on her knees.

Privet Drive – The Dursley Residence

"That is not as fun as it seems," she groaned, taking deep breaths and Sirius and Charlie chuckled at her.

"You get used to it," Charlie shrugged.

After several moments, she breathed deeply, steeled herself and rose to full height.

"Wow, I'm impressed you didn't throw up, most people do their first time."

"Right, Sirius change," she instructed and he did so without argument. "Let's go."

They walked down Privet Drive until they came to a stop outside number four. Hermione looked at her watch and when it said nine o'clock exactly, she stepped forward and pressed the doorbell.

The door was lurched open and Mr. Dursley stared down at the Hermione.

"You must be, Mr. Dursley, I'm Hermione Granger, Harry's best friend," she said, holding out her hand for him to shake. He didn't take it but instead glared at her and she rolled her eyes.

"Can we come in? Lovely," she said, not waiting for an answer and pushing past him. Charlie and Padfoot followed her in with the former struggling to contain a smile and holding his wand in his pocket, trying to be intimidating.

"That mutt is not welcome in this house!" Mr. Dursley said, glaring and pointing to Padfoot, who growled at him in return.

Hermione bit back her retort of saying, "then why do you live here?" knowing it wouldn't be appreciated. Instead, she went with something more polite.

"Actually, Mr. Dursley, I suggest you make an exception in this case, as Padfoot is here to protect us from any possible dementor attacks," she said sweetly and Charlie's mouth twitched, trying to stop the laughter threatening to bubble out of him.

"Harry, your friend's here!" Mr. Dursley called up the stairs and none too kindly either.

Hermione walked into the living room to see a chubby boy, her age sat down in an armchair and staring at her with his mouth hung wide open. Charlie stood behind Hermione and Padfoot sat next to her on the floor as she took the armchair next to Dudley.

"Hi, you must be Dudley, I'm Hermione, Harry has told me a lot about you," she said kindly, holding her hand out for him to shake but he just stared at her. When he didn't move, she turned to Mrs. Dursley who was sat on the couch next to her husband.

"Hello, Mrs. Dursley, It's nice to meet you." Mrs. Dursley didn't reply as she was too busy staring at Charlie, Hermione's eyes darting between the two, fighting back a smile. "Oh, I'm so sorry, how rude of me, this is Padfoot," she said, gesturing to the large dog and scratching his head. He allowed his head to fall to the side and his tongue lolled out the side of his mouth comically. Hermione snorted. "He's a handful, as you can see, but we wouldn't have him any other way. This is Charlie Weasley," she introduced, gesturing to him with her free hand. "He's my big brother and he's here to guard us. Don't be intimidated by him. He's a big softy. He wouldn't hurt a fly."

Charlie noticed the Dursleys looking him up and down and when their eyes landed on his muscles and tattoos, they all but fell out off the heads and Mrs. Dursley flushed, her eyes darting to the ground as she shifted on the couch. He felt the urge to smirk but bit the side of his cheek.

"Although..." Hermione said. "He does work in Romania on a Dragon reserve as a Dragon Tamer," she said sweetly. "Yes, dragons are real." If they weren't intimidated before, they certainly were now. Padfoot laid himself down on the floor and quickly fell asleep, snoring. She chuckled at him.

"I'm. I'm. I'm Du-du-Dudley," Dudley stuttered, his attention now back on Hermione.

Charlie's eyes were filled with laughter; she really had no clue just how pretty she was. Sirius was right; she was coming into her Siren heritage. He'd first noticed it when he looked closer at Hermione and he was sure other people would start to notice it too.

She smiled politely at him. "I know, Dudley, Harry speaks about you often at school."

"He, he does?" She nodded. "You, g-go to sch-school with Harry?" She nodded again. "S-so yo-you are a wi-witch?"

"Yes, I am, Dudley. I'm a Muggleborn; it came as quite a shock when we found out. Your sister was a Muggleborn, too, wasn't she, Mrs. Dursley?" Hermione tipped her eyes.

Mrs. Dursley eyed Charlie as she spoke, "My sister was a freak," she said nastily. Hermione didn't imagine Mr. Dursley's face paling as he looked from his wife to Hermione.

"Yes, well, that's your opinion. In the Wizarding World many people believe muggles are freaks for not having magic," she said with a shrug of her shoulders. This time Charlie didn't bother hiding his smirk.

"I thought your last name was Granger," Mr. Dursley said gruffly.

"Yes, it is."

"If his is Weasley, how is he your brother?"

"Well, Mr. Dursley, Charlie..." she said, putting emphasis on his name, since he did have one and if he was going to be referred to, then his name would be used. "Is my brother because his parents have parental guardianship over me."

"Your parents kick you out when they discovered you to be a freak?" He said nastily with a smug smile on his face.

Hermione flinched. Charlie stiffened and made a big show of pulling his wand out of his pocket and holding it by his side and placing one hand on Hermione's shoulder for comfort. He couldn't allow her to lose control of her magic. She grabbed a hold of his hand gratefully.

"No, Mr. Dursley, they didn't kick me out, they're very proud of me. You see, I was adopted when I was four-years-old as my biological parents died in an accident. Not long ago, we were informed that a distant relative passed away. My parents went to Australia to manage the funeral and they decided to stay for a few years so they might get the business left to them up and running again. They left the family business here in London, with a family friend in charge until they return," Hermione lied.

"They did kick you out because you're a freak," he said smugly.

Hermione clenched her hands, trying to control her anger. But it didn't work and things began to rattle and shake in the room. The Dursleys looked terrified and Padfoot startled awake. He kept his eyes on the Dursleys; it didn't take a genius to figure out that they'd upset Hermione in some way. He growled at them.

"Hermione..." Charlie bent down and whispered in her ear. "Don't let him get to you, you're better than he is," he said softly.

She took a deep breath and everything stopped. He released a relieved sigh and stood to full height.

"Wh-what's your sch-school like?"

Hermione was grateful for the change in topic. "Oh, it is just magnificently beautiful, Dudley. It's a thousand-year-old castle in Scotland filled with magic, ghosts, magical creatures and hidden passageways, rooms, chambers and tunnels which only a select few students know about."

"D-do you kn-know about th-them?"

"Of course, I do, Dudley, how else am I supposed to cause mischief and hide from the groundskeeper and professors without getting caught?" She said laughing and with her eyes sparkling. Dudley's eyes would've widened more if it were possible.

At that point, Harry appeared, stepping through the door and into the living room.

"What was that? The whole house shook?" He frowned. "Hermione!" He spluttered, a look of surprise on his face.

She'd changed a lot since he'd last seen her and that had only been two weeks ago. She stood slightly taller and her complexion was a shade darker, indicating she'd spent some time in the sun. Her mahogany hair was now less frizzy and no longer resembled a bird's nest, her chocolate brown eyes seemed bigger and sparkled, her teeth were straight and he could see curves beginning to form under her t-shirt. He looked at Charlie with surprised eyes and he arched an amused, questioning eyebrow in response.

"Harry!" She said happily, walking over to him and hugging him tightly.

"Hermione, I can't breathe," Harry said and Hermione released him.

"Sorry," she said giggling.

At that point, Dudley drooled a little. She looked at Harry checking him over. He, too, seemed taller and his hair was longer. But apart from that, he hadn't changed much. He was wearing some of the clothes she'd bought him; black jeans, white trainers and a white short-sleeved t-shirt with a checked long-sleeved shirt over the top.

Charlie and Harry shook hands and exchanged greetings before Hermione and Harry sat down, squeezed together on the armchair next to Dudley. Padfoot jumped up at Harry, his tail wagging and barking happily. Harry laughed and scratched his head.

"I missed you, too," Harry said.

Padfoot barked and then laid back down on the floor at their feet watching Mr. and Mrs. Dursley with narrowed eyes. Hermione smoothed the hair away from Harry's head and out of his eyes.

"You need a haircut," she said and he chuckled at her, shaking his head. When she could see his scar she gently ran her finger over it, tracing it. "How's it been?"She asked him softly and with a frown creasing her forehead.

The only thing Harry could think was, how did she know? Charlie watched the two of them with a raised eyebrow.

"I'll tell you later, Hermione," he replied and she nodded.

"I was just describing to your cousin here what the castle is like," Hermione said, smiling at Dudley and he sighed. Harry smirked and he and Hermione held hands out of comfort.

"Right, so I better explain what is happening today. So, the trial isn't until four o'clock this evening…"

Mr. Dursley cut her off. "So why on earth did you make us get up early if it isn't for another seven hours?" he said nastily.

Charlie made a show of twirling his wand in his hand. Mr. Dursley paled. Harry noticed and looked around to see the cause. His eyes landed on Charlie and he winked at Harry, who had to bite his tongue to stop himself from laughing.

"Mr. Dursley we have to prepare for the trial. We can't allow the murderer to go free because we are not ready to take the stand. And also having too much sleep is unhealthy for you," she said seriously.

"You should already be prepared," he spat.

"Oh, we are prepared, but we want Harry to have some fun before he has to testify against a murderer, you know, to ease him into the day. But after the trial, we will bring him back. Likely around nine o'clock," she said glaring at him.

"Fun?" Dudley said.

"Yes, Dudley, would you like to come with us?" Hermione said pleasantly. He sat dumbfounded and nodded repeatedly.

"NO! He will not be going anywhere with you freaks!"

Hermione squeezed Harry's hand tightly and then the wooden table in front of them exploded into pieces. The room went quiet and everyone stared at the table until their eyes landed on Charlie.

"It wasn't me," he said, looking towards Hermione, worried that she may do something worse than blowing up a table.

"Accidental magic, Hermione," Harry muttered softly.

Mr. Dursley laughed. "You just did magic, you're going to get expelled from that school of freaks."

Hermione's eyes narrowed and Padfoot growled at him. Hermione scratched his head to calm him down.

"Do you remember what I told you about wandless magic, Mr. Dursley?" He nodded slowly; he didn't know where she was going to take the conversation. "I told you that it couldn't be traced because there is no wand signature involved. I also told you that only powerful magical beings can do it," she said, letting it sink in. And when he gulped, she knew he understood. "And as I've told you before, it's not nice to call people names. Is that the kind of example you want to set for your son? For him to grow up thinking that it's perfectly alright to be a bully?" she said and he flushed. "And I almost forgot, we were wondering if Harry could spend the summer with us starting from August."

"Why August? Don't want to spend any more time with him than necessary? I don't blame you," he said nastily.

She glared at him when Harry bristled. Hermione squeezed his hand. "If we could have Harry sooner, then we would, but we have arrangements that have to be made before he can stay with us."

Mr. Dursley snorted at that. She let go of Harry's hand and Hermione stood so quickly, they all blinked at the sudden movement. She narrowed her eyes and spoke in a tone that had Mr. Dursley leaning back into the couch cushions, as if trying to put as much distance between them as possible.

"We love Harry, the Weasleys and the Woods love him. I love him and as far as I'm concerned he is my little brother, blood or not. We're a family."

As she was talking things began to float in mid-air; photo frames, cushions, the broken pieces of the table.

"Hermione," Harry said softly, walking up behind her slowly and trying to get her attention without frightening her.

"And do you know what, Mr. Dursley? You don't have to worry about Harry much longer, as soon he'll be living with family; with people who care about him. The only reason I haven't hexed you is because of Harry; he's the one protecting you. But as soon as he's free of you, you're fair game, Mr. Dursley. And believe me when I say, I'm not the only one who isn't happy with your behaviour towards Harry."

Hermione felt a hand slide into hers and she turned her head to see Harry watching her and she sighed. "Sorry, Harry," she mumbled, and he pulled her back down into the armchair, sitting beside her. All of the items slowly lowered back to their places and Charlie let out a sigh of relief.

Mr. and Mrs. Dursleys were practically shaking in fear, whilst Dudley stared at her in amazement.

"So, may we collect Harry at the beginning of August, so he may stay with us for the rest of the summer?" Mr. Dursley gave an almost unnoticeable nod. "Brilliant, I'll let you know the date and time I will be collecting Harry once arrangements have been made, now, we really must be going. Are you sure you don't want to join us, Dudley?" He just stared at her. "Okay then, ready to go?" she asked, turning to Harry and he nodded.

"Well, we'll see you later this evening, Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, Dudley." She pulled Harry out of the room and Padfoot and Charlie followed after her.

Charlie popped his head back in the door. "I feel it only right that I tell you I wasn't here to guard us against dementors; my true purpose was to ensure my little sister didn't hurt you. You're lucky the only thing that ended up damaged is that coffee table, speaking of which..." Charlie pointed his wand at the table. "Repairo," he said and the pieces of the table flew into the air and melded back together, before a fully fixed table landed on the floo. They stared at him. "Gotta love magic! You're welcome, by the way," he said sarcastically before waltzing out of the room.

The small group walked to the end of the street and out of sight, Sirius wasted no time in changing back into his human form and he hugged Harry before Charlie apparated them back into Hermione's house.

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The Granger Residence

They all greeted Harry and Charlie pulled aside his parents, the Woods, the twins, Percy and Bill. They walked upstairs and into slipped into the spare bedroom, making sure to cast a Silencing Charm around the room.

"What did you need to talk to us about?" Bill said.

"It's easier to show you," Charlie answered and Bill nodded in understanding. He pointed his wand at Charlie and cast Hermione's Projection Spell, so they could watch the memory of their time spent at the Dursleys.

"It wasn't her fault, he was deliberately provoking her by using her parents, Harry, our family and the Wizarding World against her," Charlie said in Hermione's defence.

"She didn't hurt anyone; just made a few things float and blew up a table. It could've been a lot worse. She controlled her emotions well, at least until Dursley set his attention on Harry," Bill agreed.

"She's goin' tae be a lot more protective af ye all; ye saw what she did just 'coz someone said somethin' insulting towards Harry," Mr. Wood said.

"Fred, George, ye have tae keep an eye on her. She unconsciously did tha' an' it'll be worse fer her at school," Mrs, Wood said and they nodded their understanding.

"Sirius was right about her coming into her Siren heritage. Did you see the way that kid was staring at her? He was stuttering and drooling like an idiot," Charlie laughed.

The twins and Oliver let out sounds that resembled growls, and they all looked at them in amusement.

"Harry's expression was the best, he didn't know what to do," Bill snorted with a shake of his head.

"She scared the living daylights out of the Aunt and Uncle," Percy commented.

"Merlin, never mind them, she scared the hell out of me. I thought I was going to have to change my underwear," Charlie said, erupting laughter from the boys and chuckles from the men. Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood rolled their eyes and sighed.

"Honestly, A dunno why she bothered tae take ye with her; she was fer more intimidating than ye were," Oliver said, a look of amused pride held in his eyes.

"I think we're going to have to watch her more frequently, she wasn't joking about Harry protecting the Dursleys. As soon as Harry is away from them, there's nothing stopping her from hexing them," Mr. Weasley said.

"Nah, she's a big softy," one of the twins disagreed and they all turned to him with identical looks of disbelief.

"Well, she is. She was nice to that chubby kid despite him being a prat. And the only reason we're going to the park is that a bunch of kids started crying and she felt bad. Just face it, she's a spitfire but she's a softy at heart... Just don't make her mad."

They quickly made their way down the stairs and they noticed that Hermione and Lee were missing from the group.

"Where are Hermione an' Lee?" Oliver asked.

"Kitchen," Ginny replied.

Meanwhile, as the adults went upstairs to talk, Hermione walked into the kitchen, leaned against the wall and slumped down onto the floor. She sat there, staring at the wall in front of her and that was how Lee found her, and he sat down next to her.

"Hey, 'Mione," he greeted.

"Hey," she said, sounding upset.

"What's the matter?" He asked, putting his arm around her shoulders and she rested her head against his shoulder.

"I feel bad."

"What for?"

"I couldn't control my anger. I wandlessly and non-verbally blew up a table."

"That's awesome!" He exclaimed until she looked at him with disapproving eyes. He cleared his throat. "Sorry," he smiled sheepishly. "Did you hurt anyone?"

"No, I just scared them and later threatened them."

"How?"

"I told them the only reason I hadn't hexed them was because of Harry, and once he was free of them they would be fair game, since I wasn't the only one who wasn't happy with their behaviour and actions."

Lee laughed at her and she glared at him.

"Do you know what? I'm proud of you." She looked confused. "I'm proud of you for everything you've done these last three years. You've learned complicated magic that no one would even dare to attempt, you've overcome bullying, you've helped Harry through his first year, you figured out the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets, in which you helped Harry save the school from a killer snake the size of the Hogwarts Express whilst being in a petrified state, too. You've overcome your fear of flying, you stand up for anyone who can't do it for themselves as well as those who can. You kept Lupin's werewolf secret and helped to care for him after the full moon and you defended him. You figured out Sirius is innocent, and you cared for him, gave him a family, you gave him his life back and you've captured the actual murderer. You're going to a trial today to give evidence of Sirius's innocence."

"You can make Percy laugh, you're a great sister to Ginny, and you're incredibly kind, unless someone pisses you off, at which point you're terrifying. You took on Angelina twice and effortlessly out duelled her, you've created your own spells, you can cast a full Patronus, you've defeated dementors twice and you've found a way to get Harry away from The Dursleys. Hermione, you're amazing and I couldn't be any prouder," he said sincerely. She had tears rolling down her face and she hugged him tightly.

Unknown to them, Oliver and the twins had been listening in to their conversation and their faces split into smiles. They disappeared from the kitchen doorway when Hermione and Lee got up from the floor and made their way back to the others.

"Right, is everyone ready to go?" She asked and they nodded. "Sirius, you'll probably want to change into Padfoot now. Remember, no magic, no talk of magic, if there's something someone asks you and you don't know how to answer, just look at me or Harry and we'll cover for you. If there's something you don't understand then Harry and I will explain. Alright, I said we'd meet the Mullins and the Collins there at ten o'clock, meaning we've got about ten minutes, luckily the park isn't far away so let's go."

Mr. Wood, Mr. Weasley, Bill, Charlie, Percy, Lee, Fred and George all grabbed a picnic basket each and Oliver grabbed the bag of sporting equipment. They left the bags with the robes in behind, as they followed Hermione out of the door which she locked behind them.

They followed Hermione down the street and when she reached the corner shop, she stopped them.

"Wait right here, I want to get you another muggle delicacy to try. Harry?"

They both walked into the shop and exited a few minutes later with several bags in hand.

"What is it?" Ron asked whilst trying to look in the bags. Hermione slapped his hands away from the bag and walked away. They all followed behind her chuckling. After five minutes of walking, they came to the park gates.

Chapter Forty-Six

London – Friday 1st July 1994

"Okay, everyone, welcome to a muggle park," Hermione spoke, gesturing towards the large gates.

They all followed Hermione and Harry through the gates, where they could be seen staring, smiling, laughing, and whispering to each other and spinning in circles, taking it all in.

The area was filled with laughing children, playing games, running around, playing in the pond, climbing trees and playing in the soft play areas. Parents could be seen setting up picnics, sitting down reading, playing with their children and talking to other parents.

"What do you think Padfoot? Enough pigeons, ducks and children to chase?" she asked. He barked happily before running off to chase a flock of pigeons that were nearby.

"It's amazing," Ginny laughed.

"You honestly don't have parks in the Wizarding World?" Hermione asked.

"No, but we should," Lee replied.

"Well a park is basically a big garden were children play together, socialise, walk their dogs and have fun," Hermione said. "I would say stick together but it's not like we'd lose sight of you." They snorted. "But please don't wander off past those gates, I don't want you getting lost." They nodded in agreement. "Now, we just have to look for The Mullins and Collins."

They slowly made their way through the park until they neared a pond.

"Oh, there they are," Hermione said, just as five children were barrelling towards her. She laughed as she knelt down and the children pounced on her, laughing and sending her flying backwards until she laid on the ground.

"Hermione!" They cheered. The others watched with amused smiles, as Hermione both groaned and laughed at the same time. The parents arrived and shook their heads at their children, laughing lightly.

"Hey, guys," Hermione said as she stood up and brushed herself down before turning to the wizarding folk behind her. "Everyone, I'd like to introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Mullins"

"Just call us Alison and Jeremy," Mr. Mullins smiled.

"And these are their children. Amelia and Jack," she said, and the two children waved shyly. "And we have Mr. and Mrs. Collins."

"Please call us Brian and Jenny," Mrs Collins smiled.

"And these are their children. Brittany, Joey and Callie." The three children waved shyly at them. "And this is my family. We have Mr. and Mrs. Wood."

"Henry an' Beth," Mr. Wood corrected with an amused smile.

"And this is their son, Oliver."

"Hello, it's nice tae meet ye, Hermione hasnae stopped talking aboot ye fer the past week," he said charmingly, the girls giggled at him, whether it was out of embarrassment or at his accent, they weren't sure, and they chuckled.

"And we have The Weasleys, do you think you can keep up?" Hermione asked, they nodded and others snorted at her. "First we have, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley."

"Arthur and Molly," Mrs. Weasley said with a kind smile.

"And these are their children. This is Bill and Charlie. I know he looks scary, but he isn't, he's a teddy bear..."

"Oi! You stole my line," Fred cut her off in mock outrage.

"Sorry, Freddie," she replied with fake sincerity.

"Just don't let it happen again," he crossed his arms over his chest.

"Anyway, next we have Percy, then the twins, Fred and George..." she said and the children cut her off with a gasp.

"The pranksters you told us about?" Jack asked with a wide grin.

"Yes, those twins," Hermione smiled.

"Fred -"

"- And George -"

"- Weasley at your service. -"

"- Twin pranksters, -"

"- Mischief makers -"

"- And geniuses," they finished together, bowing low to the children who looked at them wide-eyed.

"I would say you get used to it, but you don't," Hermione commented. "Moving on, we have Lee, Ron, Ginny and finally, Harry." Ginny and Harry waved at the kids and they waved back.

"Where's Padfoot?" Callie asked.

"Right behind you," Hermione replied with a twitch to the mouth.

The children laughed as they turned around and the large dog jumped up at them, barking and his tail wagging happily, before turning around and running off with the children chasing after him.

"Don't go far, kids!" Mr. Mullins called.

"The same goes for you, Mr. Snuffles!" Hermione yelled, laughing when she heard a growl carrying in the wind.

"He really doesn't like that name, does he?" Mr. Collins chuckled.

Together they walked over to the area where The Collins and Mullins had set up and they proceeded to do the same. Hermione removed several blankets from the picnic baskets and placed them on the ground, with everyone sitting down and getting comfortable.

"So what is it you do, Arthur, Molly?" Mrs. Collins asked.

"Well, Dear, I'm a housewife and Arthur works for The Mini…"

Hermione cut Mrs Weasley off. "He works for the government," she said quickly.

"What about you boys? I hear you've graduated school," Mrs. Mullins asked.

"Yes, we have Mrs. Mullins. I graduated almost six years ago and now work as a curse breaker…" Bill spoke.

"What's that?" Mr. Mullins asked confused.

"Oh, it's just some slang words he uses. He means he works for the government cracking codes and encryptions. We visited him two summers ago in Egypt where he was working on the pyramids," Hermione explained.

"Really? That's fascinating. Charlie, what about you?" Mrs. Collins said.

"I graduated almost four years ago and now I work in Romania as a Dra…"

Hermione cut him off quickly too. "He works on an animal reserve where they protect exotic animals. Mainly large reptiles."

"Nice save," Harry muttered in her ear as he leaned closer to her.

"Thanks," she muttered back.

"Oh, that's wonderful of you to help preserve animals' lives," Mrs. Mullins said.

"What about you boys?" Mr. Collins asked, his eyes watching Oliver and Percy.

"Well, Sir, I graduated this year and I start my job on Monday. I will be working for the government like my Father," Percy said and Hermione sighed in relief, grateful that he understood what he could and couldn't say.

"An' a have also graduated this year; a have a try out fer mae favourite sports team next week," Oliver said, drawing their attention.

"Oh, really? What sport?" Mr. Mullins asked intrigued.

"Quidditch," Oliver replied to the confused muggles.

Hermione barely stopped herself from smacking herself on the forehead and then leaning over to smack him too, but Harry's hand that encircled her wrist did so.

"It's a very popular sport in Scotland. It's a mixture of baseball, basketball and dodgeball, and it's played in school. There's a championship every year between the four school houses. Every member of The Woods and Weasleys, including myself and Harry, are or has been in Gryffindor house. It kind of runs in the family," Hermione explained the best she could without breaking the Statute of Secrecy and whilst leaving out the part where they fly hundreds of feet in the air and magic is used.

"How's it played?" he asked curiously.

Hermione felt like smacking herself in the head again, but if she did that, she'd waste time and one of the wizarding folk surrounding her might take up the mantle of explaining the sport and accidentally reveal something they shouldn't.

"There's seven players to a team. Three chasers, two beaters which is what Fred and George are, one keeper which is what Oliver is and he was the Captain for the last three years of school before he graduated, and the final player is the seeker which is what Harry is. There are four balls in play during the game; a quaffle, two bludgers and a snitch. The quaffle is a ball used by the chasers; their job is to get the quaffle through the opposing team's hoops. The bludgers are what the beaters use and it is their job to distract the opposing team's chasers and stop them from scoring, by hitting the bludgers at them with their bats. The seeker's job is to find a small golden ball that flies around the pitch. It's so fast you can barely see it. When the snitch is caught the game is over. The keeper has three hoops to guard and has to stop the other team from scoring."

"You said it flies around the pitch?" Mr. Collins asked confused and Hermione realised her slip up and quickly covered it.

"It's remote-controlled, like a boat or helicopter," she said and they nodded. She and Harry both sighed in relief.

"What is it like attending a school for the gifted?" Mrs. Mullins asked with a smile, her eyes darting off to the side where the children were playing with Padfoot, before turning back to look at them.

Harry answered this time allowing for Hermione to have a break from having to cover for the others. She leaned against Fred, who wasted no time in putting his arm around her shoulders and smiling down at her.

"It's brilliant; we have plenty of classes and electives that we can choose from at the end of our second year. The first two years are mandatory lessons but then you can choose your electives."

"Such as?"

"There's classes such as advanced maths, care of animals, music and chemistry, herbology where you learn about nature and plants and there's defence where you learn to defend yourself, and ancient runes where you learn to translate ancient languages," Harry explained, Hermione smiled at him. "So, Mr. and Mrs. Mullins, what do you do for a living?" Harry asked changing the subject.

"I work for the police department, and Alison is a nurse," he said.

"Aurors without magic," Hermione muttered, after seeing the wizarding folks' confused expressions.

"Mr. and Mrs. Collins?" Harry asked.

"I work as a school councillor and Brian's a car salesman," Mrs. Collins said. "Henry, Beth what do you do?"

"A take care af the family affairs an' Henry also works fer the government," Mrs. Wood replied, and she sent a sly wink to Hermione.

"Hey, do you want to play cricket?" Lee asked, getting the feeling that Hermione was frazzled from the conversation.

They nodded in agreement and stood up to set up the sporting equipment. The wives and Mr. Weasley sat out, preferring to observe the game whilst and watching over Padfoot and the children, making sure they didn't stray too far.

They split up into teams. On team one was: Hermione, Fred, George, Oliver, Charlie, Mr. Collins and Mr. Wood. On team two was: Ginny, Ron, Harry, Percy, Lee, Bill and Mr. Mullins

They spent over an hour playing and having fun with those on the sidelines laughing and cheering. At some point during the game the children and Padfoot wandered over to watch and when the ball had been hit, Padfoot stole the ball and ran off with it, which the others spent several minutes chasing after him until they managed to get it back from him. The children had thought it was hilarious and were all but rolling around on the floor laughing, whilst Padfoot looked rather pleased with himself.

When the game ended Hermione's team came out victorious, winning the game. Hermione did a strange victory dance with her arms, whilst the twins took it further and looked as though they were standing barefooted on hot coals, sending everyone into a fit of hysterics. Hermione later taught the twins the muggle classics of the sprinkler, the Macarena, the Y.M.C.A, the moonwalk and the robot. She had attempted to show them the worm, but she couldn't do it for laughing. The twins weren't much better at it and in the end they just settled for rolling around on the floor.

When they'd all calmed down, they retrieved the food from the picnic baskets and shared it between them whilst chatting and laughing. Once they'd finished eating they all rushed into the soft play area. Charlie was the first one there which made The Mullins and Collins laugh.

"I did say he was a softy," Hermione said amused, before walking over to the soft play area herself.

They stayed in there for a while before leaving back to the gathered parents and setting up some goalposts so they could play football.

On team one was: Jack, Oliver, Fred, George and Harry, and on the opposing team was: Lee, Bill, Charlie, Ron and Joey. The others watched and cheered. They played for a while, until Padfoot once again, ran off with the football in his mouth, instigating a ten minute chase around the park as they attempted to get the ball back. In the end, they had to bribe the large dog with food. Once again team one was victorious and a victory dance ensured.

The groups sat down for a little while talking and laughing when the twins started their pranking. They had gotten Oliver to place an Enlargement Charm on their jean pockets when no one was looking and as a result, they had several muggle joke products stashed away. They placed whoopee cushions under the adults' spots on the blanket and when they sat down they all went off. The children burst in laughter and high fived Fred and George who didn't look at all apologetic.

"I'm guessing they're a handful, Molly," Mrs. Collins chuckled.

"You have no idea, they're distracted today, they're holding back so it may be a quiet day with those two," she replied, though as she did so Ron started screaming as she jumped up and down, brushing down his clothing with his hands frantically.

"Argh! Get it away! Kill it!" he yelled. The twins had placed a fake tarantula on Ron's head. She didn't know how, but they had.

The Weasley children didn't bother hiding their laughter, and the five young children in particular, found it hilarious.

"Or maybe not," Mrs. Weasley sighed, causing the adults to chuckle at her. "George, leave your brother alone," she scolded.

"I'm Fred, Mum, not George. You call yourself our Mother and you can't even tell us apart?"

"Sorry, Fred," she said and she turned to the other twin. "George, leave your brother alone."

"I'm Fred, Mum, not George," the other twin replied. She looked between the two with a narrowed glare and they smiled angelically at her.

"Hermione, Dear?" Mrs. Weasley said.

Hermione answered without even looking up from the picnic basket she was digging through. "Fred's wearing red and George blue." Everyone looked at her. They couldn't understand how she told them apart.

"Thank you."

"No problem, Maji," she said.

"Traitor," the twins muttered, scowling and crossing their arms over their chest. She winked at them and smiles broke out onto their faces.

"Wait a minute," she said, looking between the two of them with a frown.

"What is it, Dear?" Mrs. Weasley asked and everyone looked at Hermione.

"Fred's wearing blue, and George's wearing red. When did you two swap shirts?"

"So she doesn't tell us apart by the clothes we wear," George said thoughtfully, tapping his finger against his chin with a look of thought on his face.

"It didn't take her long to figure it out either, that was the first time she's looked at us since," Fred said, pride evident in his voice. He then noticed the narrowed eyes she had trained on them, and answered her, deciding it was best for his safety. "A few minutes ago when no one was looking," he shrugged.

"How do you tell us apart?" George asked. Of course, they both knew about the soul bonds they shared, but they weren't sure if it was something to do with that or if it was something else entirely.

"I don't know I just can," she shrugged. "I reckon I could do it with my eyes closed."

"Really? That's quite a bold statement. Do you want to test that?" Charlie asked.

"Alright," she replied slowly, eyeing him strangely.

Charlie leaned over to Bill. "Twenty galleons she gets it right," he whispered.

"Oh, you're on little brother. There's no way she can do it with her eyes closed," Bill replied.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," Charlie said, and they shook hands.

Hermione stood up and closed her eyes, as the twins did the same, shuffling around a little bit and then standing behind her. Without missing a beat Hermione answered.

"Fred's on the left, George's on the right."

The twins' eyes widened in surprise.

"Is she right?" Mr. Weasley asked. They nodded.

"Bloody hell," Ron said.

"Language, Ronald!"

"Sorry, Mum."

"It's a fluke; she couldn't possibly do it again," Percy said, eyeing Hermione with an undecipherable look on his face.

"A agree, do it again, Hermione," Mr. Wood instructed.

The twins changed positions behind her several times before Hermione answered and she did so correctly. They made her do it another five times, to ensure it wasn't just luck and she guessed correctly every time. The twins were openly proud and everyone else was surprised. Confident that she'd proved herself, she sat back down and got comfy once more, with the twins shifting to sit on either side of her.

"So how do you do it? I mean they're twins," Ron said.

Fred and George looked at each other with wide eyes.

"So we are, -"

"Who would've guessed? -"

"Georgie, did you know we were twins? -"

"- No, it's a good job someone told us, -"

"- Otherwise we never would've figured out, -"

"- Why we have the same face," the twins spoke and the others laughed whilst Ron flushed in embarrassment at their sarcastic speech.

"Seriously, Hermione, how do you do it?" Harry asked.

"There's plenty of ways to tell them apart. If they didn't share a birthday and look similar to each other, I wouldn't have thought they were twins," she replied to their disbelieving stares..

She was sat in between Fred and George and given their height difference, they both looked down at her. She couldn't read their expressions.

"Tell us," George encouraged softly.

Hermione sighed in defeat. "Well, Fred's slightly taller than George. George has a freckle on the left side of his neck and Fred doesn't. Fred's hair is usually messier than George's. George tends to stand with his arms crossed over his chest whilst leaning against something and Fred stands with his hands in his pockets. Fred's favourite colour is Gryffindor red whereas George's is sky blue."

Everyone was looking at the trio and The Collins and The Mullins were watching in shock. Those who knew about Hermione were smiling. Oliver was smiling softly and the others were intrigued and shared confused looks. Hermione was now holding a hand of theirs each and playing with their fingers with a small smile on her face, whilst the twins listened to her attentively and watched her with shining turquoise eyes.

"When they're planning pranks, Fred does the theoretical planning and George is more practical based, figuring out how they'll get the products to where they want them. George's quieter than Fred, whereas Fred prefers to be around someone and never on his own. George's more honest and will tell you what he thinks, whereas Fred would hold back because he doesn't want to hurt your feelings."

"Fred always stands on my left and George on my right. George has better control over his laughter but not by much. When they laugh, Fred tends to lean against someone or something whereas George tends to lean forward or sits down. Fred's eyes shine when he laughs and George's sparkle. George's nose crinkles when he's trying to stop himself from laughing and the corner of Fred's mouth twitches when he's doing the same. Fred has a small scar above his right eyebrow," she said, and she let go of his hand, lifting her own so her finger could trace the scar. "And George has one near his left ear," she said, as she released his hand to trace his scar with her finger. The twins subconsciously leaned into her touch. She dropped her hands and they retook them in theirs.

"Fred piles his plate high with food, whereas George likes it to be more spread out across his plate and then he gets more food when his plate is empty. Fred likes apple juice and George doesn't. Fred prefers white bread and George prefers brown bread. They're both good at chemistry and they're both rubbish at herbology, but George is better in Professor Flitwick's class whereas Fred is better in Professor McGonagall's class. George fidgets in his sleep and Fred's easier to wake up."

She looked up to see everyone staring at her, all with different expressions on their faces. "There's plenty more ways to tell them apart, but I think that's enough for now." Still, no one spoke. "Alright, it's now two o'clock..." she said, whilst looking down at her watch. "We have that family commitment at four, so we've about an hour left before we have to leave." She stood and walked over to one of the soft play areas with the children, the others eventually followed.

Ten minutes later she walked up to Bill and Charlie. "Do you want to do a prank now?" she asked. They grinned evilly and it was all the answer she needed. "This is a muggle one so there's no need for magic to be involved and it's fairly simple." They nodded, before crouching down so she could whisper the instructions into their ears, and they wasted no time in getting into position afterwards.

She quickly made her way over to Ginny, she grabbed Lee, Percy and Padfoot and explained the plan to them, stating she needed their assistance. They laughed, or in Padfoot's case, barked.

"Alright, let's do this," she said and they all got into position by the pond.

Mrs. Weasley wasn't blind to the interactions between Hermione and the others, as the children ran over to the group and sat down.

"We heard Hermione talking to them," Callie said.

"Hermione's up to something," Mrs. Weasley said and everyone turned to watch the scene unfold.

They didn't know how or why, but Bill and Charlie had convinced Oliver, Fred, George, Ron and Harry to stand in a straight line, whilst Lee, Ginny, Hermione, Padfoot and Percy had snuck up behind them and kneeled down on their hands and knees.

"Now, boys, it seems we haven't yet had the chance to talk about your behaviour," Charlie said, taking a menacing step forward.

"What behaviour?" Ron squeaked.

"Why the way you were with Hermione at school, of course," Bill smiled, taking a step forward.

"And for that we feel you all need to be taught a lesson," Charlie said, and both he and Bill took another step forward.

They slowly advanced on the boys, which in turn made them take steps backwards. They were almost near the edge of the pond, one more step and it would all be over. Both Bill and Charlie took the largest step forward yet, and that was all that was needed. As the group of teenage boys backwards they tripped over those who were knelt behind them and they fell backwards into the pond.

The parents and children stared in shock as the boys emerged from the pond, coughing and pushing their hair out of their faces. Laughter erupted, Percy and Hermione high-fived and when the boys climbed out of the pond they all ran back to the group to hide behind the parents.

"What was that for?" Ron fumed.

"I think I know," Harry said, chuckling as he took off his glasses. Hermione held her hand out and he threw them to her so she could dry them off with her t-shirt.

"Care tae enlighten us?" Oliver asked, wringing out his football shirt.

"Payback," he answered as Hermione handed him back his now dry glasses.

"Payback for what?" George said, as he took off his shoe and tipped it upside down, emptying it of the water.

"School," Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood said together with a small smile on their faces.

"You didn't honestly think I would let you get away with just an apology, did you?" Hermione said and they stared at her. Hermione turned to Percy. "Was it worth the wait?" she asked him.

"Definitely, I never thought it would be that simple and easy to set up though," he said smirking.

"Percy was in on this?" Fred said, clearly surprised.

"Yes, he asked me on the train to school to come up with a prank for the twins, but then after that incident at school, I thought I should add you three to the victim's list," she said smiling sweetly. Ron turned to Mrs Weasley.

"Mum, are you going to punish them for this?"

Mrs. Weasley smirked and the boys were taken aback. "As far as I can tell you tripped over them whilst they were sitting by the pond. No one is at fault, it was evidently an accident." They gaped at her. "And if it was planned, it would be no less than what you deserve. In fact, I think she was rather easy on you boys."

The Mullins and Collins started laughing which set off everyone else, eventually, the boys started laughing, too.

"Didn't I tell you people fall in the pond all the time, Perce?" He nodded. "Bet you're glad you changed clothes." He nodded again through his laughter.

Fred, Oliver and George pounced on Hermione when she wasn't looking and they crushed her between them. She squealed and laughed. She managed to break free and they chased her around the park. Olive caught her, picked her up and flung her over his shoulder.

"Ollie, put me down!" she said laughing.

"Alright then," he said and threw her up in the air, despite the short distance she was from the ground, Hermione screamed and Fred caught her. He then threw her up in the air, she screamed again and George caught her. This continued for a while as the others watched them smiling and laughing.

George was currently carrying her and spinning in circles. She squealed and laughed hysterically. "George! Put me down, I'm getting dizzy!" she said laughing and he finally put her down and steadied her as she swayed a little on her feet.

"I hope you're happy, my clothes are soaked now," she said. He winked at her in response. Fred crept up behind her, lifted her from behind and spun her in circles. "Merlin, Fred, I think I'm going to pass out. Stop, I'm dizzy," she said laughing and he put her down.

Oliver crept up behind her, picked her up and threw her over his shoulder and jogged back to the group with Fred and George behind him. He put her on her feet and she slumped to the ground, leaning against Harry for support and he put his arm around her shoulders, laughing at her dazed and sickly look.

"I think I'm going to faint," she said and he chuckled.

"Can't do that; you're making Padfoot a free man today, passing out will not make a good impression on The Ministry."

She snorted "Like I care what The Ministry think." She checked her watch and noticed that it was almost three o'clock. "Guys, it's time for us to leave, if we don't we'll be late," she said and everyone groaned.

The children ran up to Hermione. "Do you really have to leave?" Brittany asked.

"Yes, I'm afraid we do."

"We don't want you to go," Jack said. The five children looked to be on the verge of tears and Hermione felt bad.

"Tell you what, why don't we meet up at the park again?"

"Soon?" Joey said.

Hermione looked at her family and they nodded eagerly. Then she looked at The Mullins and The Collins and they nodded in agreement too.

"Yes, soon. How about on Sunday 31st July? It's Harry's birthday and we could have a little party here in the park," she said and they all nodded immediately.

"Will you bring Padfoot?" Callie asked.

"Padfoot goes wherever we go, so yes we'll bring Padfoot."

They all hugged Hermione around the waist, and surprisingly every member of her family too, no one had been expecting that. Afterwards, they quickly packed up and left, throwing a bye over their shoulders.

"Padfoot, leave the ducks alone!" Hermione shouted as they walked towards the gates. "That doesn't mean you can have the pigeons!" she yelled, and they laughed at her.

They all walked the short journey back to Hermione's house. Oliver dried them off with a quick Drying Charm, and they all changed into their robes, taking turns in the bathroom.

"Sirius, I want you to stay as Padfoot until I'm sure they won't try and arrest you," Hermione spoke.

"Right, Kitten," he nodded, before changing back into Padfoot, and once he had, they all floo'd to the Ministry of Magic for the trial.

Chapter Forty-Seven

London: Ministry of Magic – Friday 1st July 1994

They were all stood in the busy foyer as people bustled around them in favour of asking the large group to move or trying to barge their way through them, and once everyone was accounted for, Mr. Weasley led the way to two grand wooden doors, quite similar to the ones found at Hogwarts, the doors magically opening at their approach.

"I guess they were expecting us," Ron muttered in comment and Hermione rolled her eyes at him good-naturedly; sometimes he could be so dense.

Stepping into the room, Hermione took in the large space, the white marble floors she'd have to be careful not to slip on, the plain white walls and the jury and public stands made of white-coated wood. Stood in the centre at the front of the large room was a tall black table counter with the Ministry officials perched in cushioned wing-backed chairs. Those of who, she would be presenting to.

As a group, they headed for the public stands, Hermione and Harry sitting beside another with Padfoot taking up position lying on the ground between their feet, hiding him from view and keeping attention away from him. As Hermione surveyed her surroundings a little more closely, she caught sight of Professor Lupin approaching the public stands with the intention of taking a seat.

She rose from her seating position and greeted him with a smile. "Professor," she said pleasantly.

He halted in surprise, his eyes slowly cataloguing the young witch before him. She looked different, far different from the last time he saw her. The only indicator that he was currently stood before the Hermione Granger he knew and not the pretty young witch before him being the kind smile and eyes. He chanced a look at those that surrounded her, seeing they gave nothing away.

Shaking his head, he said, "Hermione, I am no longer your professor. I think Remus will suffice," he chuckled, greeting Harry warmly before his eyes fell downcast, seeing the large black Grimm sat at their feet. "I see you've gotten yourself a new pest," he teased, laughter sounding when the large dog growled playfully. "Sorry, did I say pest? I meant pet," he corrected, quickly finding a seat within the group.

With the jury all in place and ready to make a judgement on the case that was about to be presented to them, a well-hidden door on the far side of the room opened.

"All rise," a magically amplified voice instructed.

Little noise was made as every occupant of the room rose to their fee and several Ministry officials stepped in, calmly walking to their seats in single file formation. The Minister of Magic sat in the middle in the largest of chairs, and on his left sat the current Deputy Head of the Auror Department, sporting standard grey Auror robes, and he had light brown shaggy hair, dark blues eyes and a smallish nose. Hermione thought he would be considered handsome by most, but the self-knowing twitch to his mouth led her to believe he knew it. On the right of the Minister, sat Barty Crouch; the man responsible for Sirius going to Azkaban without a fair trial, something Hermione couldn't forgive and she couldn't wait to undermine his previous decision to convict an innocent man.

Sound filled the room as they were instructed to take their seats by a wave of the Minister's hand, and he made himself comfortable, his gaze darting about the rooms curiously, cautiously.

"On this day, a trial has been requested, for which we do not know the reason, by Albus Dumbledore," the moment he finished his words, Dumbledore strode into the centre of the room, his usually tall frame looking tiny in the large space. "Albus, to what does this request pertain?" Fudge asked.

"Minister, I think it best that I allow Miss. Granger to explain, as this is all her doing," Dumbledore replied.

"Very well, Albus," said Fudge, eyeing him strangely. "Miss. Granger approach the bench," he instructed.

Taking a breath, Hermione silently thanked Harry when he gave her hand an encouraging squeeze and then she rose to her feet, descending the stands until she stood beside Dumbledore, diligently ignoring the whispers that picked up.

"You wish for a child to take your place?" He asked, scrutinising Hermione as she kept a passive expression.

"Minister, I assure you, Miss. Granger is more than capable of taking my place; I am merely here for support." The Ministry officials remained silent as they continued to scrutinize her. "Miss. Granger may be a child in age, but she is incredibly gifted with intelligence and magical ability; I would not be surprised if she could teach the Aurors a thing or two," Dumbledore chuckled. Some of her family snorted in agreement. The young Deputy Head Auror raised an eyebrow in both amusement and challenge, at which, Hermione simply shrugged her shoulders.

"Very well, she may take your place," he agreed reluctantly. "You are aware of the consequences this could have, Albus?"

"Yes, Minister, I am. However, I trust Miss. Granger implicitly."

Dumbledore turned his twinkling eyes to Hermione and lowered his voice as he spoke, "the evidence is waiting, give me the signal and I will have it brought forward."

"Thank you, Professor," she replied, turning her eyes forward when he left her side to take a seat.

"Well, Miss. Granger, could you please inform us as to why we are all here today, as we are at a loss?"

"Yes, Minister. I have significant information regarding the case of Sirius Black."

At the mention of Sirius' name, people spoke, sending the once quiet room into uproar and camera flashes went off, bathing the room in flashes of light.

"QUIET!" The Deputy Head Auror ordered through a Sonorous Charm, effectively quieting the room.

"Now, Miss Granger, what is the information you refer to?"

"To simplify, Minister, Sirius Black is innocent for all crimes that resulted in his incarceration."

Uproar and pandemonium ensured and it swept through the hall. People were yelling obscenities at Hermione and accusations of her working for Sirius, of turning to the dark side and her favourite, being under the Imperius Curse. She bit back a laugh, unfortunately, her family didn't seem to find it as amusing as she, seeing their furious expressions.

"Miss. Granger, Sirius Black was caught in the act, so what makes you believe that he is innocent?" The Auror asked after silencing the room once more.

"Sir, I don't believe it, I know it. Let me ask you, was he really caught killing fourteen innocent people or was he found at the scene of the crime? Not only did you arrest him, you put him in Azkaban without a trial," her tone considerably darkened as she glared at Barty Crouch. "And according to regulation 1457-9 of the Department of Magical Law, all magical beings are given the right to a trial to present their case and prove their innocence. Not only was Sirius Black not given a trial, but his human rights were also violated," she said angrily, the Auror once more raising an eyebrow in surprise, at her, a young teen knowing such regulations.

"Is that true?" Fudge asked the Auror.

"Yes, Minister, I believe it is. Miss. Granger, how are you aware of such regulations?" He questioned curiously.

"I can read," she said simply and he chuckled, sitting back in his chair and watching her with curious eyes.

"What do you wish to share with us?" Crouch asked, staring her down and drawing her attention to him. Something he would later learn was a bad move on his part.

She held her ground and stared right back at him unafraid and by far from intimidated.

"Today, I wish the chance to prove Sirius Black's innocence."

"How do you plan to do that?" Crouch asked, publically rolling his eyes, as if she were an idiot.

Her eyes narrowed, the Deputy Auror chuckling in amusement,

"I wish to present you with evidence. Evidence, that will prove that he did not commit these crimes"

"Very well, you may proceed."

Hermione snorted. "Like you had a choice," she mumbled but the sound carried in the room. Some of her family chuckled and the Auror watched her in fascination.

Given her age, she was rather pretty, and he couldn't see what she wearing under her robes but he got a small glimpse at her smooth legs when her robes billowed slightly as she turned. He realised she was quite intelligent, too. He had, of course, heard the rumour that a Hogwarts student had been a given a time turner to aid in the attendance of the many classes taken as electives, he'd also heard the rumours of what she'd accomplished during her three years at Hogwarts, and her loyalty to her best friend, The-Boy-Who-Lived.

Deep down he knew it should bother him, terrify him, that he was interested in a barely fourth year student; she was fourteen, soon to be fifteen, but he soon remembered the time turner and knowing the effects it could have on its user, meant she'd soon be sixteen. That wasn't too bad an age, only one year off physically and magical maturity. He shook off the thoughts that it was wrong for him to be looking at her that way, he didn't know why but he didn't care it was wrong. After all, he wasn't that much older than her; he was twenty-one, only five years older.

Perched in the stands, Charlie wasn't blind to the Auror watching Hermione in a trance-like fascination and a frown pulled at his brow. To him, it had been amusing when Harry's cousin had been staring at her, but this was different. He knew this Auror. He'd been in his year at Hogwarts, he'd graduated at the same time as him, making him the same age. Wanting to subtly gain Bill's attention, he elbowed him in the ribs.

"Ow, what was that for?" Bill hissed, glaring at him. Not responding, Charlie simply gestured to the Auror and Bill's eyes followed, an immediate frown settling on his face. "That doesn't look good."

"He's practically undressing her with his eyes," Charlie hissed.

"Think the boys have noticed?" Bill questioned, them both turning to look at the three younger wizards, seeing their murderous glares.

"Yep," Charlie responded.

"She's starting to come into her heritage," Lupin whispered from behind them after hearing their conversation.

"You know?" They both said in surprise as they turned to look behind them.

Lupin chuckled. "Yes, I was told by Minerva, Severus and Albus after Hermione had figured out my secret. Minerva and I had a bet going; she believed that Hermione would figure out I was a werewolf before I figured her out. Of course, Minerva won. I should have known better," he shook his head.

"How long have you known?" Bill whispered quietly, not wanting to draw attention to them.

"November. But, the current glances from the young Auror may be troublesome," Lupin said with a frown.

Charlie tapped his father's shoulder with him being sat in front of him. "Dad?"

"What is it, Charlie?" He asked, looking at him disapprovingly. Charlie leaned forward slightly and put his hand in front of his father, subtly pointing out the Auror.

"Oh dear," Arthur frowned, seeing the leering expression on his face. "He looks rather young to be the Deputy Head."

"If I'm remembering right, his name's Thomas Reddings, he was in Ravenclaw, graduated the same time as me," Charlie informed him.

"Better keep an eye on him," Arthur whispered in instruction and Charlie nodded, sitting straight and keeping his eyes firmly on the Auror.

Padfoot, having heard their whispered conversation, lowly growled in the Auror's direction and hearing this, Harry looked about in confusion before his eyes soon settled on the Auror, too, a frown pulling at his brow in worry.

Arthur nudged Mr. Wood who was sat on his right before directing his attention to their current problem, sharing a worried frown as Arthur relayed the information he'd learned to Hermione's other guardian.

"First, I would like to share with you all some memories. Bill?" She looked behind her questioningly and the red-haired wizard silently stood and approached her, his wand already at the ready, wispy white tendrils being pulled from her mind.

"We will take those memories and review them in the privacy of the board room," Crouch said as he rose to his feet, but at this, Bill cast Hermione's Projection Spell and a large screen appeared in the centre of the room for all to see.

"That won't be necessary, Sir," Hermione said. She didn't trust him, not by a long shot; he was the one responsible for Sirius' suffering.

"Mr. Weasley, I have never before seen such a spell," Fudge commented, seeing the large screen for what it was. "It is phenomenal, did you create it?"

"No, Minister, Hermione did," he said, looking at her in pride. The Ministry officials looked to her in surprise.

"You, Miss. Granger? How?"

"I was playing around with some things and it just happened," she replied, not wishing to go into detail. "Anyway, back to the trial. The memories that Bill has extracted have not been tampered with and if you still don't believe me after they have been shown, I have other evidence."

They spent the next twenty minutes or so watching Hermione's memories, showing when Hermione first met Sirius and the night at the Shrieking Shack.

"How do we know they haven't been tampered with to suit Mr. Black's personal gain?" Crouch asked.

She barely stopped herself from rolling her eyes.

"Because, Sir, I told you they haven't been."

"I'm unfortunately unable to take your word for it," he said stiffly.

"Very well, Professor Dumbledore, will you please share your memories of Sirius Black?" Hermione asked.

The tall wizard approached and removed his own memories, allowing Bill to once more cast the Projection Spell so his memories could be shown. They painted the picture of a laughing, pranking mischief-maker, not a murderer. They showed his involvement in the war, his relationship with the Potters and finally, his devastation at their deaths.

Hermione, hearing a whimper from Padfoot, looked over her shoulder and locked gazes with Harry. One look at her and he knew what she wanted him to do, so he reached down and ran his fingers through the soft fur on the canine's head, Padfoot soon quieting at the comforting touch.

Oliver leaned forward and whispered to the group surrounding him, "Told ye they do tha' freaky eye conversation thing," .

"You have proof from Professor Dumbledore himself, that Sirius Black was not the Secret Keeper, which evidently indicates that he was not the one to betray the Potters and disclose the location of the safe house as only the Secret Keeper is able to do so."

"The memories could've been tampered with," Crouch argued.

Hermione glared at him, feeling the anger at his dismissal and stupidity begin to rise. But she had to keep herself calm.

"We are talking about the same person, aren't we, Sir? Because, I'm talking about one of the most powerful wizards in the world. There is no one near powerful enough to tamper with Professor Dumbledore's memories, and you know that. You're just grasping at straw because you realise that you made a huge mistake that could cost you your job if Sirius Black decides to take action and seek compensation for what you did to him," she said calmly, staring him in the eyes. He visibly gulped and her family smirked along with the Auror that had yet to take his eyes from Hermione.

"But if you wish to have more evidence I will humour you. What happened to Peter Pettigrew?" She asked.

"We found evidence of his death," he replied.

"What evidence was that?" She asked slyly.

"A finger,"

"Only a finger and not a body?"

At his confirmation, she twisted to look over her shoulder, glancing at Dumbledore who silently stood from his seat and approached her, his wand at the ready as he conjured something rectangular in shape and covered with a blanket, and it lowered to sit on the marble floor. Hermione reached down, pulling the blanket free to revealed a glass tank. Opening it, she was quick to grab the rat inside before he had the opportunity to bite her and escape. She was not letting happen.

"Now, this rat is over twelve-years-old. I don't know if you know this, but this breed of rat is highly common and their life span is generally around three years. Peculiar, don't you think, that this rat has lasted an additional nine years," she mused, spinning in a circle so every pair of eyes in the room could catch a glimpse of the rat. "And I don't know if you can see, but this rat is also missing a toe. Now, Mr Crouch, what did you find of Peter Pettigrew again?" She asked sweetly.

Crouch remained silently, his gaze darting between her and the rat in her grasp.

"A finger, Miss. Granger," the Minister answered when it was clear Crouch wasn't going to.

"Hmmm, strange, don't you think?" She questioned innocently, once more turning in a circle to show the rest of the room.

"It's a coincidence," Mr. Crouch argued.

Hermione sighed tiredly. "Mr. Crouch, I think you're in denial. But very well, if you want absolute proof, I will give it to you. Professor, if you please."

Without warning, she released her hold on the rat as she threw it into the air, gasps and loud noises of exclamation sounding as Dumbledore cast the Reverse Animagus Spell and Peter Pettigrew landed on the ground in a tangle of limbs.

"There's your proof!"

The jury went wild, Hermione couldn't hear herself think and she was blinded by the flashing lights of cameras.

Rising to his feet, Pettigrew tried to make a run for it.

'Not a chance in hell' Hermione thought, and as the image of a door slamming shut filled her mind over and over on a loop, her vision came to life, the large doors closed just before Pettigrew could reach them, the pudgy man smacking straight into them and falling to the ground. The noise stunned the room into silence.

"Where are you going, Pettigrew?" She asked sweetly, watching as he pushed himself back to his feet.

He whimpered."I didn't do it. I'm innocent!" He cried, falling to his knees. "It was Sirius Black…" Hermione glared at him, cutting him off and he squeaked. She took a step forward and he shuffled back a little.

"Now, Pettigrew, don't lie; I don't like liars," she said. He kept his eyes on her, trying to determine what she was going to do to him.

"We have already given the evidence against you, showing that you faked your own death, that you framed an innocent man who spent twelve years in Azkaban for something he didn't do, that you hid out with a magical family, and that you didn't leave Harry's side in case you could use him to win your favour with his Lord Moldyshorts and his idiot followers." Gasps of horror sounded as she publically mocked Voldemort, where Harry and the twins burst out laughing.

"I've never heard someone call him that before, Miss. Granger," Dumbledore said with his eyes twinkling.

"I like to be original," she said proudly. Those sat at the table stared in shock; the Minister had no words and Crouch looked livid. The Auror continued to eye her as she turned her attention back to Pettigrew.

"Because of you, Harry was removed from Sirius' care and placed with his muggle relatives, because of you, Harry has been treated terribly and he's suffered emotional abuse. You betrayed your friends and killed fourteen innocent people. People who didn't deserve to lose their lives, all because you're a coward," she glared.

She felt the anger once again surface and before she did something stupid, like throw him across the room, she turned away, clenched her fists tightly and took deep breaths.

Harry subconsciously stood from his seat and walked over to Hermione, taking her hand in his in an offer of comfort and he smiled at her gently, as them seemed to have an entire conversation in once single look Nodding, Hermione sighed, feeling the anger and tension leave her body, them both oblivious to the stares in the room.

Lupin leaned forward and said to Bill and Charlie, "What have I missed?"

Charlie snorted. "Oh, you know, not much. Just that 'Mione's having more cases of accidental magic, well, we've determined it's actually wandless and non-verbal magic, which is quickly developing and she's getting better control of it, but she has a way to go yet. When she first introduced us to Sirius, she wandlessly and non-verbally threw up a shield that re-bounded eight different hexes and it didn't falter. We caught her in the kitchen wandlessly and non-verbally summoning cups and setting the table and placing Stasis Charms on the food. When we picked Harry up today, Dursley was deliberately provoking her and the house shook, things floated in the air and she blew up a table and these things happened on three separate occasions. Harry managed to calm her down, luckily for his Uncle," he whispered.

"Harry?" Lupin said confused.

"Yeah, Sirius figured out that Lee isn't her sibling bond, Harry is," Bill whispered.

"Makes sense if you think about," Charlie nodded, "They have a hell of a lot more in common."

"Anything else?"

"Well, there's just one more thing..." Bill said.

"What?"

"Welcome to the family," Bill and Charlie chorused.

"What?" Lupin said, shocked.

"Well, due to this whole situation that we're in, the Weasleys and the Woods and now the Potters are all related." Lupin nodded at Bill showing his understanding. "And because Sirius is soon to be Harry's guardian…"

"He is?" Lupin said surprised. They snorted at him.

"Have you not met 'Mione?" Charlie spoke amused.

"Fair point, continue," Lupin tipped his head.

"So, since he's his guardian, he's a part of the family, which also makes us related to the Blacks. And then Sirius pointed out that you were family to him and Harry and also Hermione, as she technically adopted you, so that makes you related to us, too," Bill finished, chuckling at Lupin's face.

"You don't care that I'm a werewolf?" He muttered and they snorted at him again.

"I work with dragons, Mate," Charlie snorted. "The twins had a little dance when they figured out they were related to the Marauders. It looked like some sort of seizure, I thought we were going to have to take them to St. Mungo's."

"And if we did have a problem with you, which we don't, 'Mione would put us straight. She's terrifying," Bill shivered.

"Yeah, she took me with her to the Dursleys, said she wanted to scare them and if I don't smile I look intimidating. Let me tell you, I didn't need to be there. She scared the hell out of me, never mind the Dursleys. I thought I was going to have to change my underwear. I can't imagine what the Dursleys felt like when we left," he snorted.

"Anything else?"

"Not really, just Percy and Sirius know now. That's pretty much it," Bill shrugged.

They turned back to Hermione and Harry, who seemed to be having a silent conversation.

"If that is all the evidence that is to be presented, can we have a decision please?" Fudge said as he looked up at the stands where the jury sat. A Silencing Charm was placed around the jury as they discussed the trial and Hermione hardly blinked or breathed during that time.

A few minutes later, the charm was removed and a woman wearing white robes stood.

"Jury, Peter Pettigrew has been accused of these following offences: the murder of fourteen innocent people - two magical and twelve non-magical, of being an unregistered Animagus, of hiding from the law, for the framing of an innocent man and for supporting He-Who-Shall-Not-Be-Named. How do you find the accused?"

"We, the jury, find Peter Pettigrew...Guilty of all crimes," the woman said.

The Weasleys and the Woods clapped loudly and cheered. Hermione and Harry looked at each other in surprise before they both laughed and then shared a tight hug.

"You did it!" Harry shook her, hugging her tightly once more whilst the Auror watched the pair in what could only be described as jealousy.

"Congratulations, My Dear," Dumbledore congratulated after approaching.

"Thank you, I don't think I could've done it without your help, Professor."

"Nonsense, you would've done just fine," he assured her before he took his leave.

Fudge stood, silencing the room.

"His sentence shall be life in Azkaban until such a time when the dementor's kiss will be deemed appropriate." Pettigrew whimpered. "Congratulations, Miss. Granger, you have set an innocent man free."

"Does that mean he is no longer a fugitive, Minister?"

"Yes, Miss. Granger, it does. I suspect you know his current whereabouts. Why don't you tell him the good news?"

"I believe he already knows," her mouth twitched into a smirk when they watched her in confusion. "Padfoot," she called, the large black dog appearing from the stands and running to her, skidding to a stop on the marble floor before changing to his human form. The crowd gasped as Sirius picked her up, hugging her and spinning her in circles.

"You amazing, magnificent, beautiful little witch," he praised with a laugh, setting her back on her feet and hugging Harry happily.

"Miss. Granger, Sirius Black is also an unregistered Animagus."

"Evidently," she rolled her eyes at the young Deputy Auror.

"That is against the law," he stated.

"Yes, well, I know he'd only be sentenced to one year in Azkaban. He has already served twelve years for a crime he didn't commit. I think you can let him off," she folded her arms over her chest, challenging him and he arched an eyebrow.

"That is a reasonable request, Miss. Granger," Fudge interrupted. "Anything else you desire?" He asked. He didn't want a lawsuit filed against the Ministry; that would be bad publicity, so he would give them what he could to avoid such an outcome.

"All of the Black's possessions and assets are to be returned to Sirius without incidence; including his wand, which we want now. He is to be excused from the Animagus registry. An article is to be published immediately stating Sirius Black's innocence and that he should not be feared or harmed. We want his reputation restored. We also want the Muggle World to be alerted to his status as a free and innocent man as soon as possible. He shall be granted parental guardianship over Harry Potter. He is to be given some leeway from the Ministry as you still owe him eleven years of his life. And lastly…" She listed.

"Yes, Miss. Granger?"

"A public apology is to be made to Sirius Black by the Ministry and those involved in his wrongful incarceration. You allow these things and we will not file a lawsuit against the Ministry of Magic," Hermione stared down the Minister unflinchingly, her family sharing amused glances.

"Very well, those things are acceptable and we will grant them. Effective immediately."

"I'm proud of you," Fred grinned after hugging her tightly once he and the rest of the family had surrounded her for congratulatory hugs.

"Thanks, Freddie," she replied, as he pressed a kiss to her cheek and she smiled at him.

George was next to pick her up and hug her tightly. "You're brilliant," he said, kissing her other cheek.

Lastly Oliver picked her up and hugged her tightly. "Ye did a good thing taday," he said. He leaned down and kissed her on the forehead, pulling back and tucking some of her fallen curls behind her ear as she smiled softly at him.

The Auror had been watching the interaction between the four teens and jealousy spiked within him. He wanted her to have her attention on him, not them, so he spoke up.

"Miss. Granger, have you ever considered a career in the Department of Magical Law?"

She turned her eyes to him, shrugging. "Not really, I did what I did because Sirius is family. Everyone stood around me is family, and I protect my family."

She turned her gaze elsewhere as she removed her robes, revealing the shorts and t-shirt she wore underneath. The Auror hungrily devoured her figure with his eyes before staring at her legs. He was a legs sort of wizard, but he could appreciate a nice arse, too, which she had.

"Fred, stop teasing Percy," Hermione heard Mrs. Weasley scold from behind her.

"I'm George, Mum," Fred said.

"Sorry, George." She turned to George. "Fred, leave him alone," she chastised.

"I'm George, Mum," the other twin replied innocently.

Mrs Weasley glared at them, her hands settling on her hips. "Hermione?" She sighed.

Hermione turned her eyes to the twins, "Fred's on the right, George's on the left."

"Not again!" Fred whined and she snorted at him.

She looked at her watch. "It's five-thirty now. I think we should celebrate. What do think, should we go back to the park for a couple of hours? I could get some more muggle takeaway," she suggested, to which, they agreed eagerly.

She walked away slightly before she paused, turning back to face the Ministry officials.

"May I make a suggestion, Minister?" She said sweetly. "Place Anti-Animagi wards around Azkaban to prevent Animagi from shifting and escaping."

With that, she turned on her heel and Sirius barked out a laugh. Fred reached out and swept her into his arms, quickly throwing her into the air. She squeaked loudly before George caught her and before she could sigh in relief, he threw her into the air, only to be caught by Oliver. Oliver threw her into the air one last time and Fred caught her bridal style as he spun them in circles as if dancing, her arms looping around his neck as she laughed. Feeling dizzy, she was thankful when he set back on her feet and she pressed a kiss to his cheek before she quickened her steps, catching up with Harry. He slipped his arm around her shoulders and she settled hers around his waist as they stepped out of the room, the Auror's eyes being on her legs and arse.

He would definitely be seeing her again.

Before they left the Ministry, Sirius had his wand returned to him and he twirled it in his hands before casting his Patronus. The large Grimm-like dog burst from his wand in a silver-blue misty-smoke before it circled Hermione and Harry excitedly.

After returning to Hermione's house with the use of the floo network, they all changed out of their robes before returning to the park, having a blast as they busied themselves with playing cricket and football, playing chases and attempting to push one another in the pond. Sirius spent half of his time joining in with the games and laughing, and the rest of it as Padfoot, chasing the ducks, pigeons and the young children that still occupied the park.

It was late into the evening when the sky was growing dark and it was time for them to leave with Hermione shouting,

"PADFOOT, LEAVE THE DUCKS ALONE," to the large dog. "NOW LEAVE THE PIGEONS ALONE! WHAT DID THEY EVER DO TO YOU?"

After heading to a Fish and Chips shop and purchasing their orders, they returned to Hermione's house and perched themselves on the floor, laughing and talking amongst one another as they ate their meals.

Privet Drive - Dursley Residence

"Yo-your back," Dudley stuttered, his attention on Hermione and not Harry or the large dog at her side.

"Yes, Dudley, we are, may we come in?" She asked kindly and he nodded his head enthusiastically. It reminded her of a bobble-head doll.

As they stepped into the house and made their way to the living room, Hermione noticed Mr. and Mrs. Dursley perched on their couch, both watching her mistrustfully.

"Can you please excuse us for a few minutes; Harry and I have to do a review of the trial, we shan't be long. Padfoot, keep them company" she said, winking at the dog before she dragged Harry out of the room and he led her up the stairs and to his bedroom.

It was simple; a small white bed sat in the middle of the room with a white bedside table to the right, a white wardrobe stood against the wall and a matching desk was beside it with his Hogwarts trunk sat beneath it. The walls were a dreary white and the floor wooden, no colour or personal items were present.

"Why's it so plain in here?" She frowned, taking a seat opposite him on his bed and crossing her legs.

He shrugged. "They didn't want to decorate it. It's too much time and effort," he rolled his eyes.

Hermione silently huffed. Her eyes surveyed the room once more, this time replacing the current furnishings and imagining what it should look like. His room should be a place where he could relax and be comfortable. Where he could get away from the Dursleys and feel safe. It should be his. She imagined the walls being Gryffindor red and gold, she imagined his single bed being a double with a red blanket printed with a large golden lion in the centre. She imagined the wardrobe, bedside table and desk being made of dark wood. She imagined many Quidditch posters covering the wall above his desk. She imagined framed wizarding photos lined up on the walls. A photo of his parents, a photo of his parents' wedding, photos of Hermione, Harry and Ron together at Hogwarts, photos of the Weasleys and Woods, photos from Quidditch matches and victories. She smiled sadly thinking about the visual; that was what Harry deserved. She wished she could give him that.

Lifting her gaze, she saw his mouth hung open and his eyes wide.

"What is it?" She asked anxiously.

His mouth moved but no sound came out, so he settled for waving his hands about wildly. She looked at him worried but allowed her eyes to wander, a gasp falling from her lips and her eyebrows lifting. Everything she'd been thinking of had appeared down to every last detail.

"Well, that's not normal," she said lightly.

"How'd you do that?" He whispered.

"I don't know. I didn't mean to do it; I was just thinking about what your room should look like. Something that you'd feel at home in."

"You're right, that's not normal," he chuckled slightly.

Hermione turned back to Harry and frowned, raising her hand she gently ran her finger over the scar and asked him the same question she had earlier that morning.

"How is it?"

Harry frowned and sighed. "How'd you know?"

"I don't know, I just do."

"It's been hurting and I'm having trouble sleeping," he admitted quietly.

"Nightmares?"

"Not sure," he shrugged. "I just toss and turn all night and I can't remember what I dreamed about when I wake up."

"Do you think it's him? Moldyshorts?" She questioned, smiling victoriously when his mouth twitched and he snorted.

"Maybe, I'm not sure yet."

"Well, if it is we'll figure it out and I'll help you/"

He looked at her and Hermione felt as though she could cry. He looked so much like a vulnerable young child that her heart all but broke in two.

"I will never abandon you, Harry. We're family. Now, come on, we better check that Padfoot hasn't mauled your Uncle or peed in your Aunts shoes." Hermione said, Harry laughing and silently hoping he'd done one of the two.

Hermione and Harry entered the living room and both squeezed onto the armchair, Padfoot moving until he sat before them, staring at the Dursleys.

"Sorry about that. I hope Padfoot wasn't too much trouble," she said.

"You-you're back" Dudley stuttered, staring at Hermione.

"Yes, I am," she replied slowly.

"Ho-how did th-the trial g-go?" He asked.

"Splendidly, thank you for asking Dudley. We got the murderer life in Azkaban and he'll be getting the dementor's kiss when the Ministry deems it necessary. We freed an innocent man because of it," she smiling and he sighed at the sight.

"I told you that mutt isn't welcome in this house," Mr. Dursley bravely said, glaring at the dog.

Hermione and Harry shared a smirk. "Very well," she conceded, seeing his look of surprise at her sudden cooperation.

"Well, good," he said smugly.

"Padfoot you heard him, dogs aren't allowed in this house,"

At her words, Padfoot became Sirius Black. Mrs. Dursley shrieked as she recognised that, Sirius Black, the murderer, was standing in her home.

"I would like to introduce you to Harry's godfather. This is Sirius Black," her mouth twitched into a smirk.

"I'm calling the police, he's a murderer," Mr. Dursley said bravely, reaching for the phone.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," she warned.

"And why not?" He growled.

"Because, you'll look like an idiot. Dudley, please will you hand me the TV remote," she said and he did so, staring at her. She smiled her thanks and turned the TV on, putting it on the news channel.

They watched the news as the newsman told the story of Sirius' innocence, at least the non-magical parts. She turned the channel over several times to see that they had broadcasted it on nearly every channel.

"Looks like the Minister kept his word," she commented.

"Yeah, because he didn't want you filing a lawsuit against him," Harry snorted a laugh. She smiled and turned back to Mr. and Mrs. Dursley.

"That's why you shouldn't call the police, Sirius was innocent. The real murderer has been captured, faced trial and been given his punishment."

"That's what the trial was for; you helped him get out of prison!" Mr. Dursley fumed.

"Actually, Mr. Dursley, he was an innocent man and he escaped from prison without my help, I didn't meet Sirius until February this year. Now, it is being filed at the Ministry of Magic that Sirius is to be given parental guardianship of Harry. It won't take long for that to come through. You know what that means? Harry will be away from you and as I said, you won't be protected. I wasn't joking when I said a lot of people weren't happy with you and Sirius is one of them. He might be a big softy with his family and an innocent man, but he spent twelve years with soul-sucking creatures before he escaped. Azkaban changes people and Sirius and I protect our families. Of course, Sirius will have to get inline because I'm first to hex you," she smiled innocently.

Sirius snorted "I don't think so, Kitten, I'm first."

She looked at him. "Flip you for it?" She said and Harry bit his tongue to stop from laughing.

"No,"

"Rock, paper, scissors?"

"No,"

"Noughts and crosses?"

"Yes,"

"Really?" She perked up.

"No," he deadpanned.

"Arm wrestle?" She suggested. He made a show of looking down at his fitted black t-shirt which showed his muscles and tattoos before arching an eyebrow at her. "Yeah, you're right. It would be too easy for me to beat you, it wouldn't be fair to you and just downright embarrassing," she said seriously. Harry burst out laughing and Sirius chuckled.

"Game of cards?"

"No,"

"Game of dominoes?"

"No,"

"Roll a dice?"

"No,"

She looked away from a badly amused Sirius and a hysterically laughing Harry. "Don't you worry, Mr. Dursley; we will figure out who gets to hex you first," she smiled and he gulped. "Now, there's been a change of plans. I will be collecting Harry on his birthday, which you probably don't know happens to be Sunday 31st July. He will be spending the rest of the summer with our family from that date. I will let you know about the guardianship arrangements when they had been completed. Now, we must go. Do be nice to Harry." It was an order, not a suggestion.

She kissed Harry on the cheek before she linked her arm with Sirius', he gave a menacing look before taking out his wand and apparating them back to Hermione's house.

"What does she mean when she says she'll hex us?" Mrs. Dursley asked Harry distractedly.

"She means that she will use magic on you, but 'Mione has one hex in particular; it's hilarious to watch but not very nice to be on the end of. It's called the Bat Bogey hex, and it makes the bogies in your nose grow wings and fly out and chase you whilst they're attacking you," he snorted just thinking about it. His Aunt and Uncle didn't look impressed so he went upstairs.

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The Granger Residence

"What are you two laughing at?" Percy arched a brow, his eyes darting between a laughing Hermione and Sirius.

"What'd you do?" Ginny said knowingly, looking both amused and suspicious.

Hermione's laughter tapered off. "Nothing, we just discussed who was going to hex the Dursleys first. Sirius and I had a little bit of a disagreement, so I offered to flip him for it."

"WHAT?" Oliver roared, looking as equally as outraged as Fred and George. Sirius looked at them amused.

"THERE WILL BE NO FLIPPING OF ANYTHING!" The twins roared, glaring darkly.

"Flip him for it. It means you take a coin like this," she removed a one pound coin from her back pocket, "You say heads or tails and then you flip it," she explained, flipping the coin and catching it. "Whoever said the side it lands on, wins," she finished, the boys looking far less red in the face and the others amused at their outburst.

"I said no," Sirius said.

"So I offered rock, paper, scissors."

"I said no,"

"So I said noughts and crosses,"

"I said no,"

"I offered him an arm wrestle and then looked at him and decided to let him off because I would obviously win." They laughed at her. "Then I offered to play a game of cards."

"And I said no."

"So I offered to play a game of dominoes."

"And I said no."

"And then I offered to roll a dice for the honour."

"And I said no,"

"And then we told them we would figure out who gets to hex them first later on," she smiled. They stared between them silently. She and Sirius smiled cheekily.

"You two are to never be left alone together again," Mrs. Weasley decided, her hands on her hips and looking at them disapprovingly.

Hermione wasn't fooled. She saw her lip twitch, fighting off a smile.

Chapter Forty-Eight

The Burrow – Friday 1st July 1994

They'd only been home an hour and when they'd arrived, a copy of the Daily Prophet was waiting for them attached to a disgruntled-looking owl, which was soon offered a sugary treat as Mr. Weasley hesitantly removed the newspaper from the owl.

*SIRIUS BLACK INNOCENT!*

*Today a mysterious trial was called at the Ministry of Magic headquarters in London and later upon arrival it was revealed that Professor Albus Dumbledore -Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry- had requested it for soon to be fourth year student and best friend of The-Boy-Who-Lived, Muggleborn, Hermione Granger.*

*Uproar ensued when Miss. Granger insisted that Sirius Black -the known mass murderer- was innocent of all crimes during the war that took place thirteen years ago.*

*After all evidence was broadcasted for the jury, Minister and Ministry officials, the jury made their verdict.*

*SIRIUS BLACK IS, IN FACT, AN INNOCENT MAN.*

*Not only did Miss. Granger give compelling evidence against Sirius Black's case, she made known the true culprit of these crimes in which Sirius Black was framed and wrongfully incarcerated for. We are not able to name names at this point in time; however, we can confirm that the murderer is soon to be transported to Azkaban for life imprisonment until given the dementor's kiss.*

*Sirius Black is no longer a fugitive but a free and innocent man due to Miss. Granger's commitment and bravery; a true Gryffindor, indeed. Upon threat of a lawsuit for the violation of Sirius Black's human rights and lack of trial, Miss. Granger composed a list of demands as payment to which the Ministry granted.*

*Congratulations Miss. Granger and Sirius Black.*

The celebrations continued with fun and laughter but that, unfortunately, didn't last as Dumbledore's impressive phoenix Patronus arrived with a missive that was most unwelcome.

The room went silent as the phoenix spoke in Dumbledore's voice, by the tone Hermione knew there was no ever-present sparkle in his eyes, even if she couldn't see him.

"Peter Pettigrew has escaped Auror custody whilst being transported to Azkaban," he said gravely before the Patronus disappeared.

You could hear a pin drop in the room; the atmosphere no longer light and happy but filled with tension and shock. They could feel the anger radiating off of Sirius and Hermione.

Before anyone knew what was happening, Sirius had stormed out of the house and into the garden, and it wasn't their imagination that they could hear things exploding with loud 'bangs', and things hitting the ground with 'thuds'. But Sirius' exit hadn't pulled their attention, it was solely on Hermione and with good reason.

Anger like she'd never felt before coursed through her veins. She squeezed her eyes shut tightly and clenched her fists, her nails painfully digging into her palms. At first, the room started to buzz and a tingling sensation washed over everyone. Following that, the house suddenly began to shake violently and out of control. Photo frames fell off walls, the table and the fireplace, furniture shuffled around the room and objects and trinkets rattled.

Sirius being outside, stopped in his task of throwing Bombardas at trees, when he felt the vibration in the ground beneath him and his instincts told him to turn around, his eyes landed on the oddly-shaped house.

"That's not good," he muttered, spinning and quickening his steps as he returned to the house, stopping at a standstill when he entered the living room, his eyes widening and his head going fuzzy at seeing Hermione stood in the centre of the room, her expression of fury clear for all to see.

Unexpectedly, her frozen form slowly levitated off the ground as if being hit with several Wingardium Leviosa's, only stopping when she floated above even the tallest in the room.

"What the bloody hell!" Surprisingly, this exclamation came from Percy and if they weren't stood frozen at what they'd just witnessed, they would've likely laughed to hear him speak in such a way that was so out of character for him.

A few moments later, Hermione's mouth opened and rather than the scream or shriek of anger they'd expected, a roar of fury erupted from her lips. But not just any roar; a lion's roar. Without warning, she was plummeting towards the floor, the house ceased in its shaking and she passed out. Fred, being the closest, had barely managed to catch her and he cradled her unconscious body to his chest, his desperate eyes looking around the room for answers.

"Definitely need to keep an eye on her at school," George mumbled quietly, his eyes locked on Hermione's face.

"Does someone want to explain what that was?" Lee asked, his voice a mixture of confusion, surprise and fear.

"It's nothing for you to worry about," Bill said, his voice belying his own surprise and worry.

"Nothing for me to worry about! She caused an earthquake, floated in the air above my bloody head and passed out!" Lee bellowed.

"It's just her magic reacting to the strong emotions in her body, Dear. Don't worry, now everyone, off to bed," Mrs. Weasley explained, shooing them out of the room with her hands and up the stairs, signalling for them to head to their rooms for the night.

They didn't do as she wished, standing their ground and when a groan fell from Hermione's lips. All eyes darted to her.

"We've caught him once before, we'll do it again," she mumbled, darkness once more taking over as her eyes closed after barely opening.

Wednesday 13th July 1994

She'd sent word to Harry the next day of Pettigrew's escape and he was livid given the reply he sent back to her with Hedwig, the poor owl looking frazzled as she knew how draining Harry's temper tantrums could be and she'd been sure to allow the snowy-owl a day or two to rest comforting at the Burrow before sending her back to Harry. Since, there'd been no more incidences with Hermione's and no one had spoken of the escape of Pettigrew for fear of the reaction from Hermione's magic.

Hermione currently sat in the sun, staring out at the lake in the grounds of the Burrow. Oliver had left for his try-out with Puddlemere United five days ago and she missed him. Surprisingly, she hadn't become ill but she felt less happy. She knew that he'd be gone for another two days at least before he returned and she couldn't wait to see him again.

She had given Oliver her favourite stuffed bear that she'd had since she was a baby for good luck. It was the only thing she had left of her biological parents and she knew he would take care of it, and if he didn't, she'd kill him. She always had it with her in her trunk; it brought her comfort and good luck, and she hoped it would do the same for him, too.

Of course, Sirius had told Oliver to somehow get something of sentimental value from Hermione, but she didn't know that. They wanted to test Sirius' theory regarding the separation that would come when Hermione returned to school with the twins without Oliver. He'd sent an owl to Sirius explaining that, so far, it had been working; they may have just solved the problem.

The twins, wandering the grounds in search of their favourite witch, finally spotted her sitting by the lake and they approached, Fred sitting on her left as was usual, and George taking his spot on her right, slipping his arm around her waist whilst Fred's fitted around her shoulders, Hermione titling to lean against him.

"You okay?" He asked.

"Yes," she smiled before tilting to lean against George. They both shared a smile, knowing she was always careful never to favour one over the other, always giving them equal attention without even knowing she was doing it.

"You miss him, don't you?" George said.

"Yes,"

"He'll be back in a couple of days, Spitfire."

"Yes,"

"Are you only going to give us one word answers, Love?" He asked amused.

"Yes," she nodded and they laughed.

"Come on, let's do something fun," Fred said, dragging Hermione up onto her feet.

"Like what?" She asked, wiping down her shorts and removing any grass and dirt.

Fred and George shared a look and smirks crept up onto their faces, her eyes narrowed distrustfully, and out of nowhere, Fred swept her into his arms and took the few steps to the edge of the lake before he threw her into the water with a big 'splash'. She came up for air, coughing and spluttering whilst pushing her soaked hair out of her face. Once she'd calmed herself and being grateful it was quite a warm day, her eyes searched her would-be attackers before a sweet smile spread across her face and she slowly approached the lake bed, stepping out of the water and towards them.

They weren't stupid and they knew retribution was on the horizon; they laughed nervously and took a step back every time she took one forward, Hermione soon circling them like a shark in the water. They turned with her, trying to remain face to face, and once their backs were turned towards the water, she took a step forward and they backed up considerably until they toppled on the edge of the small bank and fell into the water.

She laughed loudly as they resurfaced and Fred and George pushed their hair out of their faces and then shared a smile. Their plan had worked, unfortunately, they hadn't intended for it to result in their impromptu bathing, but Hermione's laughter had been the end goal. She really was beautiful. Of course, they'd also thought so but they could see the changes the Siren within her was making. But now, with her laughing loudly and water droplets falling from her hair and running down her skin, they couldn't help but smile. With her being distracted, they shared a nod before reaching out, taking her by surprise when they pulled her into the water.

Unknowing to the three teens, Sirius and Mr. Weasley had been watching them from afar, smiling at the scene.

"How much longer do you think, Sirius?" Mr. Weasley asked.

"A couple of years, maybe, not too long a wait, I believe, they are still young," Sirius replied.

"They are good for each other," Mr. Weasley commented.

Sirius snorted. "Well, they were born to be together, it was written in the stars."

"It seems to be working; she doesn't seem to be hurting."

"Yes, it does, Oliver owled me last night, he hasn't suffered any symptoms and neither has Hermione. His only worry was that he doesn't feel as happy as he should or as he does when around her. I believe it's a result of the growing bond between them. They might just make it through the school year without incidence," Sirius said and Mr. Weasley looked at him sceptically. Sirius chuckled and gave his head a shake. "Then again, maybe not, who knows with Harry, Ron and Hermione?"

Their attention was drawn back to the lake when they heard a particularly loud shriek and they shared a laughed at the sight that met them. Fred and George were stood over the edge of the lake and each had a hold of one of Hermione's legs, effectively holding her upside down with her head almost touching the water, the tips of her hair skimming the surface. How they'd been able to get her in such a position without her noticing before it was too late was beyond them but it didn't make the scene any less amusing.

"Fred Gideon and George Fabian Weasley! Put me down this instant!" Hermione demanded, her hands on her hips despite her current position.

"Okay," they both chimed innocently. And without warning, they released their hold on her ankles, sending her into the water headfirst. When she resurfaced, she glared at them fiercely and climbed from the water, the twins wasting no time in turning on their heels and running in the opposite direction, making a break for it as Hermione chased after them.

"Come back and fight like a man!" She yelled.

George spun, jogging backwards, facing her. "Technically speaking, we're only sixteen, so we're not of age, which technically means we're not men yet," George winked.

Hermione stopped dead on the spot and crossed her arms with a smirk aimed at George, a confused look settling on his face until he slammed into a tree behind him, sending him headfirst and groaning into the ground. Hermione laughed loudly as she fell to the floor on her knees, holding her stomach and aching ribs. Fred halted to a stop, his gaze darting to his twin and laughter breaking free, not in the least feeling sorry for his brother.

George rolled over onto his back and pushed himself up, propping himself up on his elbows. "I meant to do that," he said with a sniff, which only made Hermione and Fred laugh as George pouted at their reactions.

Hermione found the strength to force down her laughter and she rose to her feet, approaching George before she pounced, sending him sprawling on her back as she relentlessly tickled his ribs as he laughed uncontrollably, wriggling and shrieking beneath. Seeing this, Fred quickened his steps and dropped to his knees, giving Hermione a hand when he pinned his twin's shoulders to the ground, keeping him still.

"I give up, you win, you win!" George called through a breathless laugh.

Pleased with herself, Hermione ceased in her tickling-torture and retreated, moving to sit beside him. "That's another way to tell you apart," Hermione mused.

"What is?" Fred asked curiously.

"George has ticklish ribs and you have ticklish feet."

"I do not!" He protested.

Hermione and George shared a look before they both pounced, George pinning Fred to the ground as Hermione wrestled Fred's wet shoe from his foot.

Friday 15th July 1994

As Hermione perched beneath her favourite oak tree on the Burrow's grounds, she caught movement from the corner of her eye and lifted her head, seeing Oliver quickly approaching. Her mouth set into a dazzling smile and she all but flung the book in her grasp to the ground as she propelled herself to her feet and took off on in a run, meeting him halfway and ploughing into him, almost knocking them both to the ground. He laughed, giving her a few spins before setting her back on her feet, smiling down at her.

"Hey, Lassie," he chuckled, "Ye miss mae?"

"No, why would I miss you? I don't even like you," she replied.

"Charming," he snorted "An' here a was thinkin' a was special."

"Special? You? Don't be silly," she kept her face passive as she reached for his hand and dragged back over to her favourite reading spot, tugging him down to the ground until they sat opposite one another, their legs crossed.

"So?" She questioned excitedly.

"So, what?" He spoke innocently.

She huffed. "So, how did it go?"

"It was exhausting; they had us running drills an' practicing fer the first six days. On the final day the actual try-oots were held."

"So, how did you do?"

"Alright, a suppose," he shrugged his shoulders.

She rolled her eyes. "So, you did good then," she said confidently, "How many others were there?"

"There were aboot thirty others tryin' oot fer the keeper position an' slightly more fer the other positions."

"You'll get it," she said assertively.

"Not likely," he said, his shoulders slumping in defeat and his voice sounding resigned.

"Yes, you will, and if you don't and I'm wrong... You can prank me for a week and I won't retaliate. The twins can help you, too."

He raised both eyebrows in surprise. "Yer tha' confident?"

"I'm that confident,"

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Saturday 30th July 1994

"Hi, Maji," Hermione greeted, stepping into the kitchen after sending Pigwidgeon to deliver Neville's birthday present.

"Hello, Dear," Mrs. Weasley smiled. "Do you need something?"

"Yes, I was just wondering if you'd like to come shopping with me."

"Shopping?" She questioned.

"Yes, so I can get some things for Harry's birthday party tomorrow."

"That's nice of you, Dear, but we have plenty here," she waved her off.

"I was thinking we could have a barbecue," Hermione shrugged.

"What's that?" she asked confused.

Hermione stared at her. "You honestly don't have barbecues in the Wizarding World?" Hermione asked, sounding horrified even to her own ears. Mrs. Weasley shook her head slowly. "Well, it's another muggle tradition and food delicacy. We usually have them when it's warm, so in the summer. You basically cook food outside on a grill."

"What food?" She asked intrigued.

"Anything really; chicken, ribs, burgers, hot dogs, sausages, things like that."

"Well, I now know what burgers and ribs are, but what are hot dogs?"

"They're basically sausages in bread buns, but they taste different to the ones you eat for breakfast, and don't ask what's in them because, trust me, you don't want to know," she said with a slight grimace. "So, would like to come shopping with me? It's a muggle supermarket."

"Very well, Dear, I'll just let the others know that we're leaving for a short while," she said, as she removed her apron and then left the kitchen.

London - Supermarket

Mrs. Weasley quickly changed into some muggle worthy clothing with Hermione's help and they floo'd to Hermione's house, the young witch leading the way to the nearest bus stop and arriving barely minutes before the correct bus arrived.

When they reached their destination, Mrs. Weasley's eyes bulged at the size of the building whilst Hermione collected a large trolley before pushing it into the shop with Mrs. Weasley at her side.

"You okay, Maji?"

"Yes, Dear, this place is huge and they sell food?" Her eyes darted about in wonder.

"You think this supermarket is big, you should see the one in Central London. It's triple the size of this one. And yes, they sell food, but they sell other things, too."

"Such as?" She asked curiously.

"Pastries, toys, games, clothing, shoes, jewellery, electronics, washing and cleaning supplies, medication, books and magazines, game consoles and games, DVD's and music CD's, TV's, phones, birthday cards and party supplies, outdoor furniture and toys and seasonal things."

"Seasonal things?"

"Well, when it's Easter, Halloween or Christmas and other holidays they will sell products and items that are associated with those holidays. Like Easter eggs, Halloween costumes and decorations, Christmas trees, cards and decorations and things along those lines. They also sell items based on the seasons, so when it's summer they'll sell more items linked with warm weather. Like summer clothing, ice, alcohol and barbecues and food. And in the winter they'll sell warmer clothing and foods."

They made their way down the first aisle, which was fruit and veg. Hermione knew that they wouldn't likely eat the fruit but she put some apples, bananas and oranges in the trolley anyway, before moving to the other side of the aisle where the vegetables were located. Mrs. Weasley helped her place some salad into the trolley consisting of lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, mixed peppers, spring onion, onions and carrots.

They then walked down a confectionary aisle and placed chocolate bars, biscuits and sweets into the trolley, and when they reached the aisle over, Hermione placed several brands and flavours or crisps in the trolley, and they soon reached the chilled food aisles, with Hermione placing several blocks of cheese and several jars of cocktail sausages in the trolley, as well as different brands and flavoured yoghurts and mousses.

"Maji, do we need milk?" Hermione asked.

"Oh, I'm not sure, Dear," she said with a frown.

"Well, we might as well get some, just in case, we're here anyway," she said, selecting the cartoons of full-fat milk; if she got anything healthier the Weasley children would kill her.

"What are these cold boxes?" Mrs. Weasley asked, as she looked at the fridges suspiciously and Hermione smiled and chuckled.

"They're called fridges, we put food and drink in them to stop them from spoiling and to keep them cold. It's the muggle version of a Cooling Charm. Muggles also have freezers where they keep the frozen foods instead of using a Freezing Charm. Plus, frozen foods last longer as they don't spoil as easily," she said as they walked down the bread aisle.

She grabbed several packets of burger buns and several packets of hot dog buns and placed them in the trolley, making sure they didn't get squashed by the other items.

"Do we need bread?" Hermione asked.

"I don't think so," Mrs. Weasley replied.

Hermione shrugged her shoulders and placed a few loaves into the trolley anyway, they could always be frozen if needs be. They walked down the cake and pastry aisle and Hermione restocked on flour, cake decorations and icing so that she could bake Harry a cake when they returned to the Burrow. It would've been much easier to have purchased one but it had become a tradition for her to bake one, a tradition that her friends and family enjoyed and valued, ever since she was a tiny first year.

They made their way down the freezer aisles and Hermione placed several bags of sausages, chicken legs, beef burgers, ham burgers, chicken burgers and ribs in the trolley, knowing she'd need quite a lot with how much the Weasleys ate.

"Should we get some cereal?" Hermione asked Mrs. Weasley as they walked down the aisle.

"May as well, Dear," she agreed.

"Right," she nodded, selecting a few of her favourites and ones she was certain would be well accepted.

"We're going to need another trolley," Hermione said. "Wait right here, I'll be right back."

Hermione disappeared from view and returned not long after with another empty large trolley. Mrs. Weasley pushed the empty one and Hermione the full one. When they reached the drinks aisle, Hermione quickly shuffled around some items and placed the cartons of milk in the empty trolley, along with the dilute orange juice and blackcurrant and she grabbed several soft drinks of various kinds and flavours.

They then quickly made their way through several aisles which they didn't need anything from before they walked down the canned food aisle, Hermione placing several tins of hotdogs into Mrs. Weasley's trolley along with a jar of pickled onions.

"We're almost done, we just need a few more items," Hermione said, as she made her way down another aisle and selected a carton of eggs and some cocktail sticks.

"We're going to need several barbecues. They come in different shapes and sizes, but the ones we're going to buy are disposable ones so we'll need several. You can buy large metal ones that are kept in the garden and they last a long time, but those tend to be expensive. The disposable ones are small and easier to transport and carry around," Hermione said, as they made their way down the summer-themed aisle.

They then made their way down the celebration aisle and Hermione grabbed a box of prank birthday candles that you can't blow out and some disposable cups, plates and cutlery. She'd had a fun time explaining those to Mrs. Weasley, who looked as though she'd just discovered that Charlie was over his playboy ways and was finally getting married.

"I think that's everything, but we might as well look at the summer clothing. We might find something for you. A new dress or sun hat maybe," she mused and headed that way.

"Oh no, Dear, I couldn't possibly," she replied, blushing.

"Rubbish," Hermione waved her off as she looked through the racks of clothing.

She was right; she'd found a long black maxi dress that fell to the floor and a lightly tanned brown sun hat, along with a pair of black sandals and black sunglasses.

"Now, Maji, go into that changing room and try these on," she said, pushing her into the room and closing the door behind her, not giving the older witch room to protest.

Once she was sure Mrs. Weasley wasn't going to make a break for it, Hermione turned her attention to a rack of sunglasses, selecting several pairs of different shapes, sizes and colours and placing them in the trolley, ensuring she'd have enough for each member of the family, they could fight over which ones they preferred later. She spied the jewellery section and her eyes were drawn to it, spying a silver bracelet. It was obviously not real silver but it was pretty and Hermione put it in the trolley thinking Ginny would like it. Since she'd gotten something for Mrs. Weasley and Ginny, she'd decided it would only be fair to purchase something for the others, too; she didn't want them to feel left out or upset.

"You look beautiful, Maji," Hermione complimented her mother figure as she stepped out of the changing room.

"Thank you, Dear," she blushed bright red before disappearing into the changing room once more.

She quickly changed back into her clothing and Hermione placed the clothes into the trolley, and when Hermione spotted a white knee-length dress with capped sleeves, she picked up a darker brown sun hat to match for Mrs. Wood. She walked down the teenagers' aisle and smiled when she saw the perfect dress for Ginny. It was green, had thin shoulder straps and fell just above the knee and flared out at the waist. The colour perfect for her vibrant red hair.

Hermione moved them down to the toy and games aisle, selecting a remote-controlled car for Mr. Weasley and several packs of the correctly sized batteries. She got a swing-ball set and several water guns, several packets of water bombs and several hula hoops to be used at the park and then the Burrow afterwards, waste not want not, as her mother used to say. For Fred, she got a muggle pranking kit and she got George a set of fake animals used in pranking like snakes, spiders and bugs.

For Oliver, she'd chosen two tennis rackets and a couple of tennis balls and for Mr. Wood she'd purchased a rugby ball. After perusing the book and magazine aisle she found a crossword puzzle book for Bill, and a design and pattern colouring book for Charlie, something she knew he secretly liked to do when he was bored and it could double as potential new tattoo ideas. Lee had taken an interest in art and drawing so Hermione was sure to pick up a sketch pad and some colouring pens and pencils, and for Percy, she selected a notebook and set of fountain pens. They headed down the pets aisle and Hermione grabbed a few dog toys for Sirius with Mrs. Weasley unable to stop her chuckle, that was, until, Hermione selected a bottle or two of muggle alcohol. As they made their way to the checkout, Hermione made a detour back to the confectionary aisle to select some chocolate for Harry, Ron and Lupin. That was everyone.

They went to the checkout, the shopping was paid for and packed away in bags and placed back in the trolleys. They exited the shop and hid in an alcove as Mrs. Weasley banished the shopping to the Burrow and Hermione returned the trolleys before she took her arm and the older witch apparated them to the Burrow.

The Burrow

They walked into the kitchen to see several nosy teenagers trying to look through the bags on the kitchen table and several of the gifts she'd bought just happened be sticking out of the bags.

"Hello, Dears," Mrs. Weasley said and they jumped in the air before they froze and turned around slowly to face a smirking Hermione and their annoyed mother.

"Hello, Mum," the twins chorused, smiling angelically.

"What are you doing in Hermione's bags? She arched an eyebrow.

"Nothing, just making sure everything's there and there's nothing missing," Ron said quickly.

"You didn't come shopping with us so you don't know what I bought, therefore you don't know if anything's missing or not," Hermione pointed out, smirking. Ron gulped and ran from the room, followed quickly by Ginny and Lee.

"You boys need something?" She asked the twins with a raised eyebrow.

"Yes, we need your help with something," Georg replied.

"Right now?" she asked.

"No, Spitfire, if you're busy it can wait until later."

Hermione smiled at them softly. "Just let me put all this shopping away and bake Harry's cake. I'll come and find you in a couple of hours," she spoke and they nodded with smiles. They exited the kitchen, kissing Hermione and their mother on the cheek as they did so.

"They're up to something," Mrs. Weasley commented with narrowed eyes.

"They're always up to something, Maji," Hermione shrugged.

Mrs. Weasley chuckled. "Good point."

Mrs. Weasley used her wand to put all the food away and to place the appropriate charms over the food when needed. She then banished the gifts she bought to Hermione's room, bar the clothes Hermione bought for her which went to her wardrobe.

Whilst Mrs, Weasley set to work on preparing dinner, Hermione baked Harry's birthday cake and decorated it and Mrs. Weasley placed the appropriate charms on the cake afterwards and Hermione boxed it up and placed it out of reach from the others, knowing they'd eat it if they could both find it and get to it. Once she'd cleaned herself and her little area up, she headed for the twins' bedroom.

"Hey, boys," she greeted, stepping into their room and closing the door behind her.

"Hey, Hermione," they chorused as she walked over to them.

"What did you need my help with?"

Fred put his arm around her shoulders and she leaned against him. "Well, we're working on this potion to change someone's hair colour, and we can't seem to get it right. We're missing something but we don't know what."

She leaned forward slightly, peering into the cauldron. "Haven't you already done the hair colour changing prank?" She arched her brow.

"Yep, we did that three years ago," George confirmed with a nod. "We're not one to recycle pranks but this one we're working on is different. Not only will it change the colour of the hair on your head, it'll change the colour of the hair all over the body, including eyelashes. And, it'll change a person's hairstyle to something completely different, too," he explained excitedly.

"Right, so the potion should be similar to the previous one you made, so the colour's wrong and the potion's thickness doesn't seem to be right, either. Have you thought about charming the potion?"

"It's impossible to charm a potion. The potion will either spoil or react badly and explode," Fred said.

"Yes, but if you prepare the ingredients, charm them and then make the potion..."

"That's bloody brilliant!" The twins exclaimed, swooping down to kiss her cheeks as one.

"And because you're working on a prank that will affect hairstyles and hair colour, you should take a look at Cosmetic Spells and Charms," she suggested.

"You got any books on that, Love?"

"No, but even if I did it would have to wait until school."

"Because we're underage," Fred said sadly. Thanks to Hermione they'd just had a breakthrough and they couldn't do anything about it.

She walked over to Fred's bedside table and picked up the muggle notebook and pen she bought him a while ago. She noticed it was almost full. 'I'm going to have to create something for him instead, something that will last and won't get damaged,' she thought.

She walked back over to the twins whilst writing in the notebook, barely watching where she was going but by this point, she knew the layout of the twins' room fairly well.

"What're you writing?" He asked, peering over her shoulder and down at the words on the page.

"Well, I may not have the books, but I remember reading about a few spells, so here's a starting point for you boys, and in the meantime, you can work on another product," she said, handing the notepad over to Fred and they looked it over as she walked over to Fred's bed and made herself comfortable by laying down.

"Products?" George echoed confused.

"What do you boys want to do after school?"

"Mum's pushing us into the Ministry," he said.

"That's not what I asked you. What do you want to do?" She propped herself up on her elbows and locked gazes with them.

"We don't know, but we love pranking," Fred shrugged.

She smiled and patted the sides of the bed next to her and without questions, they approached and laid down on either side of her. She shuffled to get more comfortable, pressing her head to George's chest and reaching out to hold Fred's hand, absentmindedly playing with his fingers.

"Then you should do that,"

"Do what, Princess?"

"Be pranksters, make people laugh, sell products and open a shop. Like Zonko's, but he's outdated; you could be so much more successful than him. The things that you've done are truly phenomenal."

"You think we can do it?" Fred questioned, a timid tone to his voice.

"There's nothing you can't do when you put your mind to it. You're smarter than you allow people to believe and this would be easy for you. I mean, obviously it would be difficult as you have to do the planning, find a location and set it up, create the products, get a business permit and know the laws, plus, you need the money..."

"Are you trying to talk us into this idea or out of it?" George chuckled.

"But, for you, it will be easy; no matter what people say, you're incredibly smart and you have brilliant minds, you're creative and you love pranking. It's what you were born to do, you were born to make people smile, laugh and happy, to bring joy and light to people's lives. I know you can do it, I have faith in you and I always have," she said softly.

Wide smiles spread across their faces. It made their chests fill will love and pride that she thought of them in such a way. When everybody else thought they were just jokesters and idiots, she saw them for what were they truly were, what they kept hidden from others, and what they could be.

"And you have a secret weapon."

"Oh yeah? What's that?" Fred asked with an arch of his eyebrow.

"Me, of course! I already know everything you need to for you to set up your own business and I've already read every book in the Hogwarts library based on law, which admittedly, isn't many. And I know you would never take money from me but I would gladly be an investor to help jump-start the business. I'll help you in any way I can."

"What d'you think, Georgie?" Fred asked.

"I think it's not a bad idea. You?"

"Yeah, not a bad idea," his twin agreed.

"Mum won't be happy though."

"Probably not," he nodded.

"Your mum will fight you tooth and nail on this business venture, but when she sees what you have achieved, she'll be proud of you. All she wants for you is to succeed and make something of yourselves. That's what she wants for all her children. No matter your decision as a career choice, no matter what she says, she loves you. And I will be proud of you boys no matter what you choose to do with your lives. I will always be proud of you."

Chapter Forty-Nine

The Burrow - Sunday 31st July

Hermione was bustling around the kitchen checking that she had all of the food in the many picnic baskets and that she had the bags of games for the park. She had her hair in a messy bun and was wearing light blue converse, blue shorts and a white vest top. Underneath she had on a plain white bikini. She wasn't sure about it but Ginny had persuaded her that it looked fine and it was modest and safe to be around children. In fact, she'd said "I've seen Grandma's wear more daring bikinis than that," which made them chuckle.

"COME ON GUYS, GET A MOVE ON. WE DON'T WANT TO BE LATE!" She yelled as she walked through the living room and over to the fireplace, quickly placing a floo call to Wood Manor, enquiring about their time of arrival.

One by one, people came running down the stairs and into the living room and they were all carrying something in their hands.

"Hey, what's with the boxes?" She asked them.

"Harry's presents," Lee answered.

"Are they all Wizarding World bought?" She questioned, knowing they were.

"Well, yeah," Ron said, looking at her like she was daft.

"Well, then you have to leave them here. Muggle World means muggles."

Recognition showed in their eyes and they put the gifts down on the table, whilst she did a quick sweep of their clothing.

Fred and George were wearing white trainers, black knee-length shorts and white fitted short-sleeved t-shirts. She raised her eyebrow at them; they usually dressed similarly but not completely identical.

"Not taking any chances with you being able to tell us apart."

"Well, you're going to have to try harder than that, Fred" she replied amused, folding her arms over her chest.

"I'm George," he said.

"Nice try, Freddie."

"No, I am, look I have the freckle on my neck," he said, pointing at said freckle.

"So does George, you drew that on, Fred. But I'll give you boys an O for effort." Laughs picked up as they scowled at her.

Lee was wearing blue knee-length shorts, black trainers and the short-sleeved t-shirt Hermione had bought him for his birthday. On the front, it said "there's no need to repeat yourself. I ignored you just fine the first time," something Lee had been taken with. Bill was wearing blue jeans, a blue short-sleeved t-shit with white trainers, and Charlie was wearing black trainers, black jeans and a black fitted short-sleeved t-shirt. Ron was wearing blue jeans, white trainers and an orange short-sleeved t-shirt, Percy blue jeans, black trainers, and a checked shirt with Mr. Weasley sporting brown hiking boots, blue jeans and a colourful Hawaiian shirt, making her chuckle.

When the Woods arrived, she saw Mr. Wood wearing dark blue jeans, a green polo shirt and white trainers, Oliver white knee-length shorts, white trainers and a black fitted short-sleeved t-shirt, and Mrs. Wood was clad in the clothing Hermione had sent her the day before. They were all carrying a couple of picnic baskets each.

Ginny came down the stairs with Mrs. Weasley, both wearing the clothing that she had bought and given them the day before, too, and they looked lovely, Hermione silently patting herself on the back.

"Where'd that come from?" Ron questioned, pointing to them.

"'Mione," Ginny smiled gratefully at her.

"You bought them those?"

"Yes, Ronald," she arched a brow at him.

"Did you but something for everyone else?" He said with an edge to his tone that she didn't like.

"Yes, Ronald, I did, but It's Harry's day today so no one is getting their gifts until tomorrow," she glared at him. "But I did buy some things for the park."

"Oh yeah? What?" Charlie asked excitedly.

"You'll see, and I'm sure you'll approve, especially as they can be used here, too, during the warmer weather. Has everyone got a swimming costume and towel; you're likely to end up in the pond?" She asked, receiving nods in reply. "Sirius, did you remember to owl Lupin?"

"Yep, he's meeting us there," the Animagus replied.

"Okay, if that's everything, let's go."

The Granger Residence

"I'm coming," Sirius said, the moment they stepped out of the floo and into Hermione's house.

"No, you're not going, Sirius," Mrs. Weasley said sternly. "We can't trust you and Hermione to be in the same room together with the Dursleys."

Hermione and Sirius grinned at each other. Mrs. Weasley had a point.

"We should floo," Mr. Weasley said.

"I don't think they have a fireplace," Hermione informed him but he'd already called out the address and disappeared into the flames.

Hermione sighed, picked up the floo powder and called the address and disappeared, closely being followed by the twins. She was going to regret this, she knew it.

Four Privet Drive - The Dursleys

She landed, it was dark and cramped and she could feel people standing on her.

"Ow, that's my foot!"

"Sorry. Princess,"

"Oh, this is ridiculous," she huffed. "Papa, you're going to have to blow the wall out."

"Right, Bombarda!"

The wall exploded and bricks propelled forward and landed with a loud bang. Hermione coughed as the dust began to clear and they stepped out of the wall and into the Dursley's living room, seeing Harry's surprised expression.

"'Mione?" He questioned.

"Don't ask," she sighed, approaching and hugging him tightly, pulling back and grinning at one another. "Happy Birthday, we can't give you your presents until we get to the Burrow." He nodded in understanding as her eyes checked him for injuries, seeing him wearing a red polo shirt, black trainers and blue jeans. They fit perfectly. "Really sorry about that," Hermione said, turning to the Dursleys squished onto the couch. "I tried to tell them you didn't have a fireplace but they wanted to floo. We'll fix it for you, it'll be as good as new," she smiled. Mr. Dursley glared at her. "Hello, Dudley," she greeted.

"Yo-your back," he stuttered.

"Yes, I am," she said slowly.

The twins didn't know whether they should be amused or angry that Harry's cousin was drooling over their Hermione. Harry bit his tongue to stop himself from laughing and the twins looked to him, not amused.

"He's always like this when she's here, hasn't stopped talking about her and asking me questions about her since the day of the trial," Harry said quietly. The twins' eyes narrowed dangerously.

"Harry, my lad, you ready?" Mr. Weasley asked, smiling widely.

"Yes, Mr. Weasley, my trunk's upstairs," Harry replied, turning to leave and get it.

"Don't worry, Harry -" Fred halted his movements.

"- We'll get it for you. -"

"- We'll be back -"

"- In a jiffy."

With that said, the twins turned to leave, winked at Hermione and left the room. She smirked and Harry looked at her, receiving a wink from her when she caught his gaze. His mouth tugged into a smile; they were up to something.

Their attention was pulled by Mr. Weasley asking questions regarding the TV and seeing the Dursleys annoyance, it was great timing when the twins returned.

"Now, Harry, we love the room, brilliant colour choice with the Gryffindor red and gold. -" George started.

"- We knew you loved us, I mean who doesn't? We are the Weasley Twins, after all. But, Harry, -"

"- We didn't expect that you loved us so much that you'd have pictures of us on your bedroom wall. -"

"- Although we do look amazing in those Quidditch robes -"

"- Whilst we're holding the Quidditch house cup. -"

"- We are so winning -"

"- Again this year." -

"- GO GRYFFINDOR!" They finished together, sharing a high-five. Hermione and Harry looked to another before they burst into laughter, their father rolling his eyes at them good-naturedly.

"I still don't know how you did that to your room, boy. It's disgusting, and when I find out, you will be sorry," Mr. Dursley threatened gruffly, the room falling silent. Fred and George dropped Harry's trunk to the floor, sending a glare to Mr. Dursley whilst trying to keep a close eye on Hermione, their father watching her worriedly.

"It was me, I did it to his room, albeit by an accident, but I did it," Hermione said in a cold and dangerous tone. "Harry deserves to have a room that is comfortable, where he can be by himself and escape from you horrible people."

"How dare you? You freak. When he's gone that room will be destroyed along with his stuff and it will be turned into a gym."

"You won't be doing anything to his room because I'm going to have wards placed around it, preventing you from getting near it. And don't lie, we both know you won't turn it into a gym, a KFC is more fitting," she said meanly, staring at him. The twins sniggered at her comment. "By the way, the papers have come through, Harry is no longer under your care," she informed them, seeing Harry's surprised expression morph into a wide smile. "That means you are no longer protected by him. However, it has been advised that he spends the first two to three weeks of the summer holidays here. Then he will spend the rest with his family," she said. Harry frowned. "Dumbledore, Harry," she said softly in explanation, their gazes locking.

"Now I know how people feel when we do that, it's scary," George whispered to Fred and he nodded in agreement.

"And I don't take kindly to you threatening my brother. Are you stupid? After all the warnings I have given you about your behaviour towards Harry and you still treat him that way in front of me. You're very lucky he's still in this room," she said, both he and his wife paling in fright. "Harry, is there anything else that you need from upstairs? Maybe Hedwig?" She asked him, looking a lot calmer than before.

"She went hunting last night, I told her to go to the Burrow afterwards. That the right place?"

"Yes. Freddie, Georgie?"

"Yes, Princess?"

"Can you please fetch Hedwig's cage?" She asked with an evil glint in her eyes. They knew what she wanted them to do.

"Be right back," they chorused before running to the stairs and returning not long later with a cage held by George and their pockets being considerably lighter, giving her a subtle nod.

"Well, we better get this stuff to the Burrow so we can leave for Harry's party," Mr. Weasley said.

"Party?" Dudley echoed.

"Yes, would you like to come with us?" She asked kindly and nodded eagerly.

"HE WILL NOT BE GOING ANYWHERE WITH YOU FRE..."

"Finish that sentence, I dare you," she said menacingly, a finger pointed in his direction threateningly. He snapped his mouth shut.

Snickering, Fred and George carried Harry's trunk between them as they headed over to the fireplace but during their journey, they tripped and dropped the trunk to the ground. Their pockets emptied of the candies and they were quick to retrieve them, intentionally leaving some on the floor. That was the only time Dudley's eyes strayed from Hermione as he zoned in on the sweets; he'd been on a diet since he'd returned from school for summer and hadn't had any sugar since.

When Fred and George stepped into the makeshift floo, they heard a scream before they disappeared. Harry and Hermione shared a laugh before they were sent through the floo, but not before she issued another threat to Mr. Dursley.

The Granger Residence

"Did he eat it?' said Fred excitedly before she'd even had the opportunity to step out of the fireplace and wipe the soot from her clothes.

All eyes turned to them, watching them curiously.

"Yeah," she and Harry chorused, Hermione grinning as she approached the twins and shared a high-five.

"What was it?" Harry asked, his smile still on his face.

"Ton-Tongue Toffee," said Fred brightly. "George and I invented them; we've been looking for someone to test them on for ages!"

"That was planned?" Harry's eyebrow arched.

"Yep, although, what we left for your Aunt and Uncle wasn't but they deserved it. I wanted to hex them but the twins persuaded me otherwise," Hermione said.

"That wasn't funny, Fred!" Mr. Weasley shouted as he stepped out of the fireplace, his gaze automatically landing on the twins. "What on earth did you give that muggle boy?"

"That's George," Hermione corrected.

"Sorry," he turned to the other twin, "Same question," he narrowed his eyes.

"I didn't give him anything. I just dropped it," he replied innocently. "It wasn't my fault I tripped on the carpet. It was his fault he and ate it, I never told him to," he grinned.

Mrs. Weasley glared at her sons as she walked over to her husband's side.

"What did you do?" She asked.

"Nothing," the twins chorused.

"He's right, Maji, they didn't technically do anything to Dudley, they tripped over Harry's trunk and things fell out of their pocket. They must've missed some when they picked them up off the floor," Hermione defended. Mrs. Weasley glared at the twins before walking away.

"So, Princess, how big did his tongue get?" George asked eagerly.

"I'd say about five feet, it was touching the floor," she said and they grinned. "I told you, this would be a good career option for you," she smiled before heading over to Harry as he was surrounded by Ron and Ginny.

"We've been hearing explosions out of their room for ages, but we never thought they were actually making things," said Ginny. "We thought they just liked the noise!"

Hermione chuckled. "Oh, they do like the noise," she confirmed. "Alright, everyone, let's get going!" She called. "Padfoot, you going in Animagus form or human form today?"

"Animagus, obviously. People in the park tend to give me food when I'm a dog," he grinned and they snorted at him as he shifted.

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London: The Park

Just as they were about to enter the gates, Lupin showed up and they greeted him.

"Hello, Professor," she greeted.

"Hermione, I'm no longer your Professor, call me Remus," he chuckled.

"Sorry, force of habit," she looked sheepish.

"Let me help you with that," he motioned to the bags she was carrying before taking them from her.

They'd barely entered through the gates and into the park when Padfoot was gone from their side, darting after the ducks by the pond.

"What is it with him and ducks?" She muttered.

They picked a large empty spot in-between the pond on the play areas with a couple of picnic benches close by and they set the blankets up, halfway through they were interrupted by squealing children, looking up to see the Mullins and Collins approaching.

"MIONE!" The children chorused, tackling her to the ground as one, laughing loudly. When she was allowed back to her feet, they pounced on the others with Bill, Charlie, the twins and Oliver picking them up, settling them over their shoulders and spinning them in circles, the children laughing loudly.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY! HARRY" The children yelled as one and hugged him tightly, Harry looking surprised and shyly thanking them. They were easily distracted when Padfoot appeared, chasing after the children and allowing the adults to continue with the set up of the blankets and food.

Hermione had set up the swing-ball, demonstrated how to play and then left them to it, gathering the water guns and bombs and taking them to the pond to fill with water, Harry aiding her in the task given how many there were, and soon hiding them away for the time being.

Hermione, with the help of the four mothers, retrieved the food from the bags, and the broke the packaging on the barbeques before setting them up in formation and lighting the coal with the firelighter. Luckily, they'd managed to get a couple of picnic benches to themselves near their blankets so they set the food upon the tables. They buttered all the buns and placed then on the table, they removed the bowls of salad and fruit they'd prepared the night before and followed that with the already prepared orange juice, blackcurrant and disposable cups. They removed the crisps and sweets and placed them on the tables, too. Mrs Weasley cautiously and slyly placed a charm over all the food and drink to keep away any insects and other animals.

Hermione checked the barbecues and noticed they were ready and when she was about to start placing food on the grills, Mr. Collins and Mr. Mullins appeared by her side.

"We'll do that for you, Hermione," Mr. Mullins said.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, it is the dad's job to tend the barbecue, after all," Mr. Collins chuckled.

She smiled at them. "Okay then, I'll just get everything for you," she stood and walked off returning with an armful of bags.

"Blimey, you go all out, don't you?" Mr. Mullins whistled.

"Well, it's Harry's birthday and he hasn't really had the best birthdays in the past; that's why we try to make his summers the best it can be when he's with us."

"His parents don't hurt him, do they?" Mr. Collins asked quietly as they removed the food to be cooked and placed it on a clean blanket.

"No, but it's a long story," she sighed.

"Well, let's make this the best birthday he's ever had," he decided.

"I think it already is," she responded, her eyes trained on a laughing Harry as he was tackled to the ground by the large dog and group of children, Hermione reaching for the Illusioned wizarding camera and snapping a shot.

"Do you think there's enough food?" Hermione asked as she approached the picnic tables, the last of the food and nibbles being set out. The women looked at her and laughed.

"Yes, Dear, I think there's enough food here to feed everyone in the park," Mrs Weasley assured her.

"Well, at least the food won't go to waste," she shrugged.

With the food now prepared, Hermione selected a few miniature sausage rolls and Mrs. Weasley slyly filled a bowl with water before Hermione approached Padfoot as he chased the ducks.

"Padfoot!" She called, the large dog running over to her. "Here, I brought you some water and food." She placed it on the ground and took a seat, looking out over the pond as he quickly had his fill and then laid beside her, his head in her lap as she scratched his head. "They tired you out already? You must be getting old," she commented, laughing when he growled at her. "I'm only kidding, you've got the mind and heart of a thirteen-year-old, if that makes you feel better. Are you sure you want to stay as Padfoot the entire day, I could just tell the kids that you had to leave." He shook his head at her and accepted the sausage roll she held to him, her attention being pulled when she heard a call of her name.

"Miss. Granger?"

She lifted her head, seeing a familiar face walking towards her. It was the Auror from the trial.

"Deputy, what brings you to a muggle park on a Sunday?" She questioned, surprised to see him.

"Well, it's my day off," he replied. He wasn't wearing his Auror robes, rather, he was sporting white converse, black jeans and a blue polo shirt.

"Really? So you're not here because the Ministry screwed up again and allowed Pettigrew to escape? And you're not worried that he will come after Harry and me? And you're not here to keep an eye on us?" She arched an eyebrow.

He chuckled at her. "I should've known you were already aware. You really are bright. May I?" He gestured to the ground.

"If you'd like, I don't own the ground." He took a seat on the ground next to her, a little too close which had a growl ripping from Padfoot and it most certainly wasn't a playful one. Hermione scratched his head and frowned down at him. "What is it, Pads?" She questioned.

"Sirius Black, I imagine he doesn't much like Aurors. Why is he in his Animagus form?" He tilted his head.

"I imagine it's because he can get away with a lot more than he could as a human. Apparently, he gets more food from people, he can play with the children and he can chase the ducks and pigeons," she snorted. "Speaking of which...Padfoot, here they come."

"MIONE!" Several voices shouted before she found herself sprawling on her back, laughing.

"Hey, girls," she groaned. "Where are the boys?" As soon as she said that, two more children appeared and jumped onto the pile.

"We're here," they laughed.

"Never mind," she groaned once more. When they climbed off her, she pushed herself up and Padfoot chased after them, down towards the pond.

"Take it they know you," the Auror commented.

"Their parents live on the same street as I did when I was growing up; they used to care for me when my parents were at work. Anyway, how did you know we would be here?"

"I heard you talking about celebrating here after the trial."

"That was almost a month ago, how did you know we would be here now? And at this park? There are many in London." He stayed silent. "I don't suppose it matters, I have my suspicions."

"Care to share?"

She remained silent and she chuckled at her, her eyes darting to the large black cloud quickly approaching and he sat before her, tilting his head to the side. Silently, she leaned forward and whispered in his head, the large dark releasing a bark before he turned and ran off.

"What did you say to him?"

"Just watch, Deputy."

Hermione's eyes were glued to the scene of Fred standing by the pond, his back turned away from Padfoot, and so he didn't see when the large dog jumped up at him, sending him sprawling into the water, Hermione laughing when Padfoot used George's laughter as a distraction and did the same to him. Luckily for them, they were wearing their swimming trunks and had taken off their shirts.

The twins climbed from their water, their eyes narrowing in search until they landed on her. Upon seeing the leering Auror from the trial, their expressions darkened and upon seeing Hermione's laughter, they both shared a smirk. Hermione, seeing this and them approaching with purpose, froze.

"Oh no," she whispered before she sprang to her feet and took off in a run in the opposite directions. Unfortunately, the twins had longer legs and were faster than she was and they easily caught her, Fred throwing her over his shoulder and marching to the pond, hearing the laughter and cheers from the family.

"Fred, put me down," she laughed

"Nope," the twins both chirped.

"Please,"

"Nope," they repeated, speeding up their pace.

"Well at least let me take my over clothes off, I have my bathing suit on underneath!"

As soon as those words left her mouth, they halted to a stop, Fred setting Hermione on her feet so fast she swayed on the spot and he had to steady her. Giving her head a shake and knowing she'd never be able to outrun them even if she tried, she made quick work of removing her shorts, t-shirt and shoes, only to be thrown over Fred's shoulder and marched to the pond, being dropped into the cool water, the twins canon-balling in after her, a water fight breaking out between them.

As Hermione was picked up and thrown over Fred's shoulder, the Auror glared fiercely at the twins' retreating backs, but the moment she removed her clothing, revealing the bikini she wore beneath, he actually drooled a little. 'She certainly doesn't have the body of a near sixteen-year-old.'

When he felt a looming presence behind him, he looked over his shoulder to see a tall, muscular, tattooed angry-looking man.

"Weasley," he greeted.

"Reddings," Charlie narrowed his eyes and gritted his teeth.

"What can I do you for?"

"You can stop staring at my little sister," Charlie glared.

Readings rose to his feet and brushed down his clothing, holding his hands up in surrender. "Just here for her safety."

"Well, then maybe you should be more discreet and not deliberately interacting with her. Since your failure allowed Pettigrew to escape, if he's watching her and Harry, he's going to know that you're watching her, too. And that is a barely fifteen-year-old girl you're leering at," he growled at him.

"With the time turner she's sixteen," he argued, shrugging his shoulders.

"And you're twenty-one, back off," he said menacingly.

"Like you wouldn't want to have a go at her," he scoffed.

Charlie took a menacing step forward. "I'm five years older than her and she's underage. Even if she weren't my little sister, that's disgusting and perverted."

As Bill helped one of the children climb the steep ladder to the stairs in the playground, his eyes searched for his brother, not seeing him. He turned his eyes elsewhere, spotting him being too close to the leering Auror for comfort. What the hell was he doing there? Ensuring none of the children were doing anything that required help, Bill took off in a jog, approaching in the middle of their conversation.

"She doesn't look or act her age," he argued.

Bill's eyes narrowed as he stepped forward. "That's our little sister you're talking about, I'd be careful what you say and how you look at her," Bill warned before dragging Charlie away from him before he hurt him muggle style and without magic. He was certainly capable of doing so.

"'MIONE" Bill called, his eyes locked on the Auror behind him. When he turned his eyes forward, she was looking at him questioningly and he gestured towards the picnic tables where they were starting to gather for food.

Climbing out of the pond, Hermione snagged one of the towels by the bank and quickly dried before redressing and returning to the others with the twins at her side.

It took a while to convince the children to actually eat something as they only wished to play, but they'd managed to do so, them each going their separate ways once they'd had their fill. The adults remained at the tables, watching the children whilst Bill and Charlie pulled their father, Remus and Mr. Wood off to the side, relaying what had happened with the Auror earlier.

Meanwhile, Hermione was hidden behind a rather large tree trunk, looking to Harry as he was ducked behind the one next to her.

"Ready, Harry?"

"Let's do this," he said excitedly.

Sharing a serious expression and nod, they both cocked their water guns, one in their grasp and another thrown over their shoulders as a backup should they run out of water.

"Ready, kids?" They asked together.

"Let's get them," Joey practically bounced, his arms laden with water bombs and the other children giggling and laughing.

"On the count of three, we run and the war begins. Are we ready?" Hermione said.

"Yes!" The children chorused in giggles and laughter.

"One...Two...Three!"

They sprinted from behind the trees, releasing a loud battle cry as the children lobbed water bombs at the unsuspecting boys who were playing football. The adults turned towards the sound, sharing amused looks and laughter.

They chased them around the park, soaking them through with water. Hermione threw her spare water gun to Ginny and she caught it, getting in on the action and aiming for the boys. She quickly made a dive behind the parents, landing on her stomach but out of harm's way, knowing they'd never attack for fear of angering them.

"You alright down there, Dear?" Mrs. Weasley asked amused.

"No, I'm out of ammo, I repeat I am out of ammo!" She panicked and they laughed at her. "Remus, cover me?" She questioned.

He looked at her amused."How?"

She pulled out a bag filled with water bombs and two bottles of water that she'd hidden underneath the picnic table earlier in the day. She had done this several times throughout the park so she could reload when she needed to without being left in the open. After refilling her water gun, she pushed the water bombs over to Remus.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" She asked him, a serious expression held on her face. The adults chuckled and Remus' mouth twitched but he nodded.

"This is war; people are going to get hurt. Or worse, soaked and thrown in the pond and pecked by angry ducks. DUCKS! REMUS, DUCKS! They take no prisoners." Her expression was one of mock terror and horror.

"I can handle it," he assured her, his expression grave.

"Right, solider, cover me," she ordered.

"Yes, ma'am" he saluted her.

"One... Two... Three!"

She dived out from her hiding place, successfully making her way to Harry and Ginny as they huddled behind a tree, out of sight.

"I'm out of ammo," Harry informed her and she was quick to hand him the final bottle of water.

"Ginny, how you fairing?"

"I'm good on ammo, for now."

"I have another stash of ammo hidden behind that bin over there," she pointed to it. "I have one hidden inside the tunnel in the play area over there," she pointed it out. "And, I have one hidden underneath that picnic table of there," she pointed to it.

"We'll split up. I'll go to the play area, Ginny, the picnic table and Harry, you take the bin. Meet me back here at base and we'll take cover in the trees. Agreed?" They nodded.

"Ready?"

"Let's do this," Ginny's expression serious.

They darted away, running in separate directions with the boys trying to lob water bombs at them after they'd wrestled them from the children. They were now sat near their parents watching the war, laughing and cheering. It was Hermione, Ginny, Harry and Remus against the twins, Bill, Charlie, Percy, Oliver, Ron and Lee. They were outnumbered but they were going to win. Hermione would make sure of it. She wasn't backing down and she had ammo hidden around the park, ammo they didn't know about.

Hermione ducked into the play area and removed the bag of water bombs, quickly returning to 'base' and she climbed the tree, the branches covering her. Ginny made it back and was followed by Harry, Hermione hissing at them from above, instructing them to climb the surrounding trees and hide in the cover of the branches. When the boys approached, searching but unable to find them, they struck, dropping water bombs from above until they were yelling and crying out, trying to dodge them. When they ran out of water bombs, they used their water guns, using the last of the water bottles as refills and climbing from the trees, chasing the boys on foot, herding them towards the pond until they fell in, ducking beneath the water to take cover. They'd won.

Laughter erupted when they threw the water guns to the ground and a victory dance ensured, the children running over to them, high-fiving them for their victory and joining in with the moves, suggesting new ones.

Half an hour later, Hermione had prepared Harry's cake and she called out, "CAMPFIRE!" Her family soon returned to their little group and collected the children on the way. Harry was pushed to the front of the group coming face to face with his birthday cake as they burst into song. When it was time to blow out the candles, the candles reappeared and looking confused, he tried again, unsuccessfully. Five tries later, laughter and sniggers surrounded him.

"Go on, Harry -"

"- Give it some welly," the twins said.

"I'm trying," he huffed in annoyance, and Hermione couldn't contain it, she fell forward, leaning against the table and laughing hysterically.

"What did you do?" The twins shared an amused, knowing glance.

"Sorry, I couldn't resist, Harry. I bought the pranking candles, the ones that never go out," she confessed.

Harry stared before laughing and shaking his head, not in the least bit surprised. When Hermione removed the candles and put them out with the aid of water, the cake was cut and handed out. When it grew late and past the children's bedtime, they knew it was time to leave and head home for the evening.

The Burrow

They all sat in the living room and Harry was given his presents which he thanked everyone for. As they were all talking and laughing, Hermione walked over to Harry and sat down next to him.

"So, how was your birthday?"

"Best birthday I've ever had and it's all thanks to you," he smiled.

"No problem, Harry, you deserved today."

"Thank you," he said gratefully.

"Harry, we're family, I will do whatever I can to make sure you're happy. Now, I need to talk to you." She stood from her seat, took Harry's wrist in her hand and dragged him out of the living room, up the stairs and to her and Ginny's room. They both climbed onto her bed, sitting opposite each other and folded their legs.

She reached out, tracing his scar with a gentle touch. "How is it?"

"The same as the last time I told you, why?"

"I've got this feeling something's going to happen and I haven't been sleeping either," she confessed, his gaze snapping to her.

"The same as me?" He asked hesitantly.

"Yes, but I think I'm starting to remember some of my dream."

"And?"

"We're all celebrating and laughing but I can't remember enough of it to know why, and then we're running and we get separated and someone's chasing me. I'm hit by a spell and I fall to the ground and when I turn around, I'm looking at something. That's all I can remember. I know you're going to say it's a dream but it doesn't feel like it. It feels real. I'm worried, Harry, really worried."

Monday 1st August 1994

The next morning they were all at breakfast when Percy stood to leave for work at the Ministry and an owl arrived.

"Careful with that, Percy," George warned.

"Yeah, someone might've slipped dragon dung in it again, eh, Perce?" said Fred.

"That was a sample of fertiliser from Norway!" Said Percy embarrassedly, as his face turned the same colour as his hair. "It was nothing personal!" He snapped before storming out of the kitchen.

"It was," Fred whispered to Harry, "Because we sent it"

Harry burst out laughing as the twins left the table to carry on making products for the new shop they wanted to open.

When Hermione entered into the kitchen, Harry said,

"Okay?"

"The same, you?"

"The same," he nodded.

Mrs. Weasley has been watching the interaction closely, the two teenagers looked exhausted.

"You okay, Dears?" She questioned.

"Fine," they both said without missing a beat.

She nodded hesitantly and walked away from them. They're keeping things from us, she thought knowingly.

Chapter Fifty

The Water Park - Saturday 13th August 1994

"Is everyone ready? Has everyone got everything they need?" Hermione asked the crowd in front of her and they nodded. "Okay, Charlie and some of the boys from the reserve are meeting us there. We'll split into two groups and the port-keys will leave."

They landed behind a building out of sight from the public and they were making themselves presentable when Charlie and his friends arrived nearby. The parents were wearing summer clothing and everyone else was wearing bathing suits. They all greeted each other before Hermione led the way to the front of a ticket booth, where she paid for the tickets and took a map for easier navigation.

"Here we are, welcome to a muggle water park," she said, as they stood in the middle of the park, their eyes darting about in wonder, as they exclaimed their awe.

"You think this is good, you should see the water parks they have in places like America and Spain. It's like putting Filch up against Professor Dumbledore," she said and they chuckled. "Do you want to have a go on everything?" They nodded eagerly.

They slowly made their way around the park, stopping in the children's water splash zones and jumping in swimming pools and having a swim before they came to the first water slide.

"This is the Devil's Drop, who wants to try it?"

Everyone but the parents rushed towards the stairs and Hermione was pushed in front of them with Charlie behind her, all but bouncing on his spot in his excitement. They waited in line until they reached the front of the queue.

"Be careful when you go down the slide as you're in the air for a couple of seconds and then before landing against the slide, so it may hurt. I'll see you at the bottom," she said.

She sat down, crossed her arms and wiggled forward. She fell down the slide before landing in the water and continuing until she reached the small pool of water at the bottom and she laughed loudly throughout. She quickly climbed out of the way and stood behind the railing where her family was waiting and taking photos with their disguised magical cameras and it was a good job they decided to cast the Impervius Charm on the cameras too.

Charlie was next and they trained their cameras on the slide, they could hear him yelling and laughing loudly and when he reached the bottom he stood up and punched the air.

"That was wicked, you weren't kidding when you said that one you made back in Romania was child's play, muggles are awesome," he said as he moved to stand next to her.

"How's your backside?" She asked amused.

"It hurt a bit when I landed," he winced, rubbing the aching area and she laughed. They turned back to the slide and watched everyone have their turn, whilst taking plenty of photos. Bill was next followed by the twins, Oliver, Percy, Lee, Harry, Ron, Ginny and then Charlie's friends.

They walked around the park stopping at the next slide; the Wild Kamikaze. They all lined up until they reached the front of the queue, before moving onto the next slide, Sidewinder where they sat on rubber rings and went down the slide, bouncing and bumping against the slide walls until they reached the pool below. The next one they went on was the screamer.

"You might want to block your ears," Hermione said to the others as they approached the slide.

"Why, Dear?" Mrs. Weasley asked, but as soon as she said it they heard a loud piercing scream coming from the water slide in front of them.

"What was that?" Ron asked worriedly and Hermione rolled her eyes at him.

"It's someone on the water slide, Ronald, the ride is called 'Screamer', you can imagine why," she said, before making their way over to the queue.

Hermione sat down in the water and grabbed the bar in front of her, preparing to go down the slide.

"Don't scream, Hermione," Bill teased.

"Wouldn't dream of it; be careful you don't hurt yourself, it's a tight space in the tunnel and the harder you propel yourself forward the faster you go."

When the green light showed she gave a hard lurch forward and laid flat on her back. She laughed loudly and squealed in delight as she went through the tunnel and hit the pool of water below. She climbed out and stood near the others.

Charlie, Bill, Ginny and the twins had already been down the slide. They were talking when they heard someone scream loudly. They looked at each other amused before focusing on the slide and who would come out at the bottom.

They laughed hysterically when it was Harry, bursting into laughter and he flushed red in embarrassment. He was never going to live that down and he knew it, at least, that was until one of Charlie's friends came down the slide and shrieked loudly, doing a rather good impression of a seven-year-old girl discovering she'd been given a pony for Christmas. Harry was let off the hook and Charlie's friend would be tormented for the rest of his life.

As they walked towards the next water slide Hermione whispered in Mrs. Weasley's ear and they both had small smirks on their faces. Hermione ran forward and pushed the twins backwards a little under the very large bucket of water that was about to tip. They looked at her in confusion as she backed away quickly and everyone burst out laughing when the ice-cold water poured over them.

When they looked up they were stunned and before they could enact their revenge, Mrs. Weasley slyly flicked her wand from under the jacket she had draped over her arm, placing a Sticking Charm on the twins' feet.

They struggled to move before they were hit again with the water. People were walking past with strange and confused looks being aimed the twins who looked to be flailing around like idiots, complaining and getting soaked repeatedly. They didn't understand why they didn't just move and that fact made the wizarding folk laugh louder.

"Why can't we move?" Fred asked, panic laced into his words.

"I don't know, move your legs, that how people tend to walk," Hermione laughed and he mock glared at her. After the twins were hit another four times, Mrs. Weasley cancelled the charm as Hermione hugged her tightly, laughing.

"Way to go, Maji," Hermione praised and Mrs. Weasley smiled.

"Wait, Mum?" Fred said confused.

"That was you? You did that?" George exclaimed.

"Well, you didn't think you got the mischief gene from your father, did you?" She questioned. The twins looked both horrified and dazed, their mother who was always scolding them for pranking had just pranked them!

They spent the rest of the day in the pool and repeatedly going on the water slides, before they returned to the Burrow for dinner.

"So, did everyone have a good day?" Hermione asked at the kitchen table.

She laughed as everyone talked over each other, she couldn't hear anything they were saying.

The Burrow - Monday 22nd August 1994

Hermione awoke with a start. She'd just had that dream again. Ever since she'd spoken to Harry on his birthday, the dreams had become more vivid, more real. She pealed the sweat-soaked sheets off herself and practically crawled along the floor. She didn't know the time but she needed to shower, so she entered the bathroom, locked the door behind her and stripped, stepping under the spray of the hot water.

As the water poured over her, she tried to recall the dream. She tried her hardest but the details hadn't changed. She knew something was going to happen, she didn't know how, but she did.

Maybe it was years of protecting Harry, being in danger and having to fight for her life that made it possible. Maybe it was her instincts, she'd seen things that most Aurors hadn't and she was in defence mode. Or maybe it was her magic, it had been growing lately, it could be a side effect of that.

She shut the water off, climbed out of the shower and dried off before going back to her bedroom to change. She put on a pair of black boots that went to her knees, black leggings and a white short-sleeved t-shirt that read, "I tried to be normal once. Worst two minutes of my life" and it hung off one of her shoulders because it was slightly too big.

They would be leaving for the Quidditch World Cup Final that day and it had been a surprise no one saw coming. When Mr. Weasley came home from work with tickets, Harry and Ginny bounced around in excitement, the twins started singing and Ron burst into tears, Hermione just rolled her eyes, amused at the lot of them.

She dragged herself down the stairs, it was early but she could smell food being cooked. When she entered the kitchen it was to see Mrs. Weasley bustling about making breakfast, she smiled and she sat down.

"Morning, Dear," she greeted.

"Morning, Maji," Hermione yawned. The truth was she hadn't gotten much sleep since she began having those dreams. She didn't know how she didn't have bags under her eyes but it was a miracle.

"Are you okay, Dear?" She asked as she placed a bowl of porridge in front of Hermione who thanked her and began eating.

"Yes, I'm just tired."

Mrs. Weasley sat in the chair opposite Hermione, eyeing her knowingly. "You look like you haven't been sleeping lately, and you and Harry have been having an awful lot of hushed conversations. Is there something you wish to tell me?"

Hermione froze. "No," she whispered.

"Are you sure? You can tell me anything."

"I don't want to betray Harry's trust."

"Well then, why don't you tell me what's bothering you and not Harry?"

Hermione looked at her like a deer caught in headlights.

"I...I...I..."

"Don't bother lying to me, you're an awful liar," she said amused.

Hermione sighed. "I haven't been sleeping well lately," she admitted.

"I can see that. Why?" She asked worriedly.

"I don't know. You're probably going to think I'm being paranoid, but I've got this feeling that something's going to happen and I don't know what it is. I've been having these dreams for a while now. At first I used to just toss and turn and then wake up, not being able to remember anything."

"And now?" .

"Now I can remember some of it. Small things."

"What can you remember?" She was anxious, Hermione could tell.

"I'm celebrating and laughing, I'm happy and then it goes dark. The next thing I remember is that I'm being chased and I'm hit by a spell and I fall. When I turn around I see someone stood over me and that's when I wake up, sweating and struggling to breathe."

Mrs. Weasley didn't know what to say to her, it could've just been a dream or it could be a suppressed memory of some sort, or it could be something else entirely. She wasn't sure which she'd prefer.

"Well, Dear, there's no point in worrying about it now, is there anything else you wish to tell me?" She saw the way Hermione bit her lip. "Yes?"

"My scar has been a little sore lately," she confessed.

"Your scar?" She tipped her head in confusion; Hermione didn't have any scars that she could see or think of.

"The one on my back," she clarified.

Mrs. Weasley frowned, she'd forgotten about the scar on Hermione's back. As far as she knew, no one but the twins, Lee and Oliver had seen it. She kept it hidden.

"Do you want me to have a look at it for you, Dear?"

"No, no, that's alright, I don't like people seeing it; it makes me self-conscious."

"Nonsense, I'm sure it's not that bad," Mrs. Weasley waved her off before standing and walking around the back of Hermione's chair. Hermione pushed her chair out and leaned forward slightly to allow for Mrs. Weasley to lift her shirt.

She saw nothing there; there was no scar, no mark, not even a freckle. She couldn't understand it, the boys had told everyone about the scar, not in detail of course, but she knew there was to be one.

"Hermione, Dear, there's nothing here," she sounded confused.

"I'm wearing a Glamour Charm."

"It's illegal to use magic outside of school," she scolded and Hermione chuckled.

"Don't worry, Maji, in my second year before the whole Chamber of Secrets situation, I figured out how to alter the Glamour Charm to make it permanent."

"You're wearing a permanent Glamour Charm? Is that even possible?" She asked amazed.

"Yes, I don't like catching glimpses of it and I certainly don't want people to see it. It's brings up awkward questions."

"Well, I'm going to have to remove it," she said.

"I know, just use Finite Incantatem, that should work."

Mrs. Weasley lifted her shirt back up, pointed her wand at Hermione's back and muttered the incantation. She gasped loudly and stared in horror at finally seeing the large scar covering Hermione's back. It still looked to be recent, within the last few years rather than almost fourteen years.

Hermione tensed. "It's ugly! I told you it was bad," Hermione whispered sadly.

"I've seen worse, Dear. My son's a Dragon Tamer, in fact, I think he'll be impressed, or rather upset now that I think about it."

"Upset?"

"He no longer holds the record for 'coolest and biggest scar'," she said and Hermione chuckled.

'Sounds like, Charlie,' she thought fondly.

Mrs. Weasley turned her eyes back to the scar, this time noticing that it appeared to be red and itchy. She gently touched the middle of Hermione's back and Hermione took an intake of breath, as if she were forcing herself to breathe through the pain. Mrs. Weasley removed her hand and dropped the shirt, walking out of the room, leaving a shocked Hermione. When she returned moments later, she was carrying a tub in her hand and she returned to Hermione's side, lifted her shirt and scooped some of the cream out of the tub and gently placed it on and around the scar. Hermione left out the breath she'd been holding when she felt the burn of her scar suddenly quell, as if being washed away by a steady stream of water.

"That should help, Dear."

"Thank you, Maji."

"I'm your guardian; it's my responsibility to ensure you're healthy and well cared for."

"No, you're not." Mrs. Weasley looked at her confused. "You're not my guardian," she said and hurt showed on Mrs. Weasley's face. Hermione smiled softly. "You're my mum," she said confidently and with pride edged into her words.

Mrs. Weasley started crying, she gave a watery laugh and they hugged tightly, being careful of Hermione's back.

"I love you, Maji." That was the first time Hermione had said those words to anyone but Harry and the Grangers, being too afraid that should she say them aloud, she'd lose the one they been spoken to.

"I love you, too, My Dear Child," she replied with a sniffle.

"Will you put the glamour back in place, please? I'll show you how to do it, it comes in handy."

Mrs. Weasley hesitated but allowed Hermione to show her the wand movements and incantation, mimicking it as though she had a wand in her hand.

"You won't tell anyone about my scar, will you? About what it looks like?"

"No, Dear, I won't, not until you're ready for people to see it."

Hermione ate her breakfast and left to wake everyone up. They didn't have long before they had to leave.

She woke only the twins up since Lee was with his parents before moving on to Ginny, and then heading to Ron and Harry's bedroom. She was about to knock, her hand raised to the door when she heard someone grunting in pain and without thought she flung the door open. Her eyes landed on Harry, he was thrashing about in bed with a pained look on his face. He'd never told her it was this bad! She rushed forward and sat down on the bed next to him.

"Harry," she said softly, but he continued to thrash around. "Harry," she tried again and nothing changed.

She lifted her hand and ran her fingers through the sweat-soaked hair on his forehead, gently touching the lightning bolt shaped scar. His eyes shot open and he looked frightened and confused.

Hermione handed him his glasses and he put them on and sighed in relief as she continued to brush her hands through his hair comfortingly. He pushed himself until he was sitting up and she hugged him, which he returned gratefully.

"Does it hurt?" She asked and he nodded. "I'll be right back," she whispered and quickly left the room, leaving a befuddled Harry staring at the door. She walked back into the room and over to Harry not long after with the tub of cream Mrs. Weasley had given her in her hand.

"What's that?" He asked, as she sat down on the bed beside him and removed the lid.

"Some cream Maji gave me, it'll help," she explained. She scooped some out, removed his hair from his face and tenderly rubbed it into the scar and around it. She heard him sigh in relief and she smiled; she knew the feeling of relieve it brought when the burning was soothed.

"That's the same reaction I had," she said.

"What did you need this stuff for?"

"My scar has been a little sore lately," she admitted, shrugging her shoulders and putting the lid back on the tub.

"Scar? You have a scar?" He appeared confused. "I've never seen a scar on you."

"Only a handful of people have. It starts from my left shoulder, comes all the way down to my right hip and stops about here," she told him, pointing to the place that was almost her stomach.

"How did you get it?"

"Don't know, I've had it since I was little; and before you ask, you haven't seen it because it makes me self-conscious and I wear a Glamour Charm. I altered it when at Hogwarts, making it permanent."

"So, that's why we don't see it when you're wearing a bathing suit," he mused and she nodded. "Can I see it? It can't be that bad."

"It is, Harry, and I'm not ready for people to see it, but when I am you're the first, okay?"

"Okay," he said smiling slightly.

"Come on, have a shower, get dressed and eat breakfast. It's the World Cup today," she spoke, patting his leg and moving to wake Ron.

Harry smiled, 'She's always mothering us,' he thought fondly, leaving the room.

"Wake up! Wake up, Ronald!" She said, hitting him upside the head when he didn't move. He bolted upright and pulled the blanket higher to cover himself. She rolled her eyes; he was wearing pyjamas for Merlin's sake!

"Bloody hell!" He exclaimed.

"Oh honestly, get up, breakfast's ready," she said as she left the room.

They were all gathered in the living room. Hermione was currently standing, leaning against the wall and watching the twins and Mrs. Weasley in amusement.

"What is that in your pocket?"

"Nothing!" They said, clearly lying.

"Don't you lie to me! Empty your pockets," their mother demanded.

"They are empty, Mum," George swore.

Mrs. Weasley pointed her wand at each twin and said, "Accio,"

Trick candy flew out from surprising places and congregated in a pile on the floor before them.

"We told you to destroy them!" Mrs. Weasley spoke furiously as she burned them into ash in front of them.

"It took us six months to make those!" Fred said angrily.

"Why can't you be more like Percy? Only three OWLs," she said disappointed.

"I think it's time to leave," Hermione said, walking towards them and effectively ending their argument. The twins picked up their bags and walked out of the door, following after the others, sending a glare over their shoulders, directed towards their mother.

"Well, have a lovely time,"' Mrs. Weasley said, "And behave yourselves!" She called after the twins who didn't look back but carried on walking, obviously planning to ignore their mother's words.

"I'm proud of you," she said suddenly, breaking the silence that surrounded them as she walked in-between the twins, grasping their hands in hers to offer them comfort. They looked at her in surprise.

"You are?" Fred said.

"But we only got three OWLs," George spoke.

"Yes, of course, I'm proud of you. The magic and theory behind those trick sweets could compare to that of a Patronus. And don't tell anyone I said this but not all qualifications get you somewhere in life. They help but the rest is on you. You boys are brilliant and you don't need an exam to tell you because I'm telling you," she said softly and they smiled, no longer annoyed but feeling happier.

As they continued on the journey through the woods, they chased one another, playing tag as they darted between their gathered group and ducked behind trees.

"Where's Bill, Charlie, Percy and Sirius?" George asked, finally noticing that they weren't with them.

"They're probably still sleeping, they're apparating, Fred. Oliver, Beth and Henry are meeting us there," Mr. Weasley spoke.

"That's George, Papa," Hermione corrected with a chuckle.

"Sorry, George," he apologised as they made their way through the thickening woods.

They came to a stop with the twins and Hermione still playing tag, paying no mind to their surroundings.

"Why have we stopped?" Ron whined.

"We've just got to wait for someone and they should be here any minute... Ah, here he is now. Amos," he greeted with a smile.

"Arthur," the other man spoke as they shook hands.

Hermione ran from the twins and laughed at them and when they dived for her and she side stepped them, it resulted in them completely missing her and falling to the ground, face first. She burst out laughing along with Ginny.

All of a sudden, Hermione heard a branch snap and something heavy made contact with the ground behind her. Startling in fright and without thinking, she turned on the spot and instinctively pushed her hands out, sending the person behind her flying at least fifteen feet backwards until they hit the floor, skidding to a stop on the rough texture of the ground.

Realising what she'd done, Hermione gasped and ran to the boy sprawled on the ground, oblivious to the wide-eyed stares trained on her back. No one moved; they didn't know what to do as they watched as she kneeled down beside him.

"Oh My...I'm so sorry. Are you alright?" She asked, looking down at him and staring into his hazel eyes.

"Yeah, I'm good," he groaned, shaking his head and lifting it, getting trapped in the large, sparkling, worried chocolate brown eyes staring into his own.

"I really am sorry, you startled me," she said sheepishly.

"It's not your fault," he started, "I shouldn't have jumped from the tree when you were standing there," he stared, pushing himself up on his elbows. "Nice hit with that spell, what was it?" He asked, looking down to her hands and noticing that both were free of a wand. "Where's your wand?" He added.

"In my bag," she replied sheepishly. He continued to stare, until a laugh of disbelief fell from his lips and she held her out hand, helping him back to his feet. "Are you sure you're not hurt?"

"Yeah, I'm fine, but you pack one hell of a punch for someone so tiny," he chuckled, rolling his shoulders and trying to rid himself of the ache.

"Hey, I am not tiny, I'm five and a half feet tall, that's average height for a girl my age," she barely held back her glare as she folded her arms over her chest. He laughed at her and shook his head, his copper hair falling into his eyes.

"Cedric," he introduced himself, holding his hand out for her to shake.

"Hermione," she replied, reaching for his hand and shaking it.

Hermione was distracted by the appearance of the others and therefore didn't notice that Cedric held her hand for longer than what was considered appropriate.

Mr. Diggory approached them laughing and he clapped his son on the back. "She sure put you on your backside," he laughed at his son.

Hermione flushed. "I'm really sorry, Mr. Diggory, I didn't mean to. My magic's been getting a little out of hand lately," she said, her red cheeks darkening and he looked at her thoughtfully.

"Don't worry about it, Miss. Granger; it was rather amusing. I can't wait to tell his mother about this," he chuckled and Cedric groaned.

"That was awesome!"

"George!" Mr. Weasley scolded.

"That's Fred, Papa," Hermione said and they both smiled at her in thanks, one for the correction, the other for ensuring that his father was aware he'd scolded the wrong twin.

"You can tell them apart?" Cedric asked in surprise, and he didn't know why, but he felt jealous.

"She's the only one that can, Mate," Ron nodded.

"Yeah, and she can do it with her eyes closed," Ginny said proudly.

"Seriously?" He asked with a cocked eyebrow.

"Yep, we made her do it at least five times, fair to say Bill's pockets had a lot less galleons than Charlie's did. He's still bragging that he get one over on him."

After Cedric was quickly introduced to the others, they were on a tight schedule and continued on their journey towards the port-key. The twins were openly glaring at him; he hadn't taken his eyes off Hermione since he'd met her and they certainly weren't happy about it. It was Dudley and the bloody creepy Auror all over again! They quickly and collectively decided they didn't like that Hermione was coming into her Siren heritage.

They had to restrain themselves from breaking Cedric's nose when they caught him staring at Hermione's arse, and his eyes would linger over the shoulder uncovered by the large material. Mr. Weasley often found himself having to smother chuckles due to his sons' clear dislike of Cedric Diggory.

They didn't like his eyes lingering on her but they most certainly drew the line at him touching her. When they'd come to steep hill, Hermione had struggled to climb it until Cedric placed his hands on her hips to help give her the push she needed. At this, the twins quickly come up with a plan that ensured they didn't harm Cedric or have Hermione upset with them. They wanted her attention, her closeness, not her anger.

The faked slipping on the damp grass and rolled down the hill, Hermione bursting into a fit off laughter and then she lost her footing, falling onto her arse and sliding down the hill, too. When she came to a stop, she was beside the twins and right back at the bottom of the deep hill, their laughter mixing with that of the others. Once they'd calmed, they rose to their feet and Fred and George were diligent in helping Hermione back up the hill. Cedric hadn't done well to hide his jealousy and the twins hadn't bothered to hide their smirks.

And as they closed the last few steps towards the manky old boot that was their port-key, Fred walked behind Hermione and was helpless to do anything but stare at her arse.

'Muggles are geniuses,' he thought, his eyes sweeping her figure appreciatively in her tighter than wizarding-muggle clothing.

"Stop staring at our mate's lovely backside. At least until she knows," George said to his twin, his tone laced with humour.

Fred smirked. "How would you know that her backside's lovely?" He asked and George smirked right back at him. They both turned back to Hermione and openly stared at her arse.

Fred groaned. "It's not fair!" George looked at him amused. "It's not fair that we have to wait."

"We won't have to wait much longer," George replied.

Fred nodded. "Soon, she'll be ours."

"She already is," George pointed out.

"Yeah, I know, but it's just…Soon she'll be ours and she'll know."

George nodded. "And Oliver's," he added, remembering their other bond mate.

"And Oliver's," Fred agreed, counting down the days until Hermione finally knew the truth.

Chapter Fifty-One

Quidditch World Cup Final - Monday 22nd August 1994

They landed with thuds and groans of pain; Hermione, however, landed on top of someone and she raised her head, catching George's gaze as he watched her closely.

As they stared at one another, Hermione unknowingly inched closer and for a small moment, her eyes flash and he was convinced she was going to kiss him. He'd thought he'd seen recognition, that she knew who he really was, that she was ready to be his mate. But it left just as soon as it came, Hermione giving her head a shake.

George shook off his disappointment and smirked at her. "Now, Hermione, I know I'm a good looking bloke, but if you wanted to snuggle, all you had to do was ask," he said, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively. She burst into laughter, her head tipping forward to bury against his chest, which only made him laugh, too.

Fred landed beside Hermione and George and when he lifted his head, he was surprised to see them staring at each other in a way they hadn't before and Hermione inched closer to him. Fred barely breathed and hope filled his chest that maybe this was it, but it wasn't.

Mr. Weasley had watched the scene with Hermione and George and he'd seen the look of hope on Fred's face, and he felt sadness for his sons when it disappeared. He couldn't understand what his sons were going through. He loved his wife with everything he had but she wasn't his mate like Hermione was to his sons. She wasn't his other half physically, emotionally and soulfully. If she should die it would sadden him but should Hermione die, it would destroy his sons.

Cedric had been watching and was now openly glaring at George. He wanted that to be him that Hermione was on top of and staring into his eyes. He approached and reached down, pulling Hermione off George and back to her feet.

"Thanks, Cedric," she said, laughing lightly and she unconsciously leaned against him as she righted her balance.

"Come on, Georgie," she said, holding her hand out and he took it. She pulled him up but unfortunately, she slipped on the grass and fell backwards, resulting in George falling forwards and landing on top of her.

They both groaned before it traipsed off into a laugh. "Now, Georgie, if you wanted to snuggle all you had to do was ask," she teased, feeding his words back to him and he laughed.

Cedric was livid and he roughly grabbed George and pulled him off Hermione and he made to help her up, too, only Fred got to her first and pulled her up into a hug.

"Thanks, Freddie," she said, kissing him on the cheek and walking off.

Cedric scowled; she'd kissed Fred and not him. They followed the others who were heading towards the front of the accommodations, thousands of tents in white, green and red. There were decorations for Ireland and Bulgaria covering the tents, people were flying on brooms and running around laughing and arguing.

They walked up to a man sat at a table and Mr. Weasley struggled to understand the muggle money.

"Would you like me to help you, Papa?" She offered.

"No, no I got it," he smiled.

"Dad, let her help you," Ginny rolled her eyes.

He sighed in defeat and Hermione was quick to show him the correct amount with the coins and notes, Mr. Weasley proudly giving it to the man as he received strange glances. With their fee paid, they headed in search of their tent, them finding it a little while later and they all entered, quickly choosing their bunks before anyone else beat them to it. Hermione loved it. There was a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom and several bedrooms, and she found hers with Ginny, selecting their bunks and placing their things on top of it.

When they left the tent in search of some water, they met up with Oliver and his parents, staying to talk to them for a little while before leaving back to the tent. The match was due to start shortly and Hermione knew they likely wouldn't see them again until after the World Cup and they returned home.

Soon after they got back, Sirius, Percy, Charlie and Bill arrived and they settled into their rooms before they received a visit from the Department Head of Magical Games and Sports. Hermione's eyes watched him closely, recognising his light blonde hair, dark blue eyes and his beater's build.

"You're Ludo Bagman," she stared. He raised an eyebrow. "Now you're the Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports. Previously you were a beater for the English National Quidditch Team and before that the Wimbourne Wasps, who have said that you're the best beater they've ever had." She then went on to say his player statistics but stopped when she saw everyone looking at her in clear surprise.

"She knows everything about Quidditch, doesn't really like it, but she knows everything," George said proudly, slipping his arm around her shoulders.

"So I see," Bagman said amused.

"I like Quidditch; I just don't like it when you're all playing. It's dangerous and I've lost count of the injuries you've all had over the last three years," she huffed.

"We're playing Quidditch when we get home," Charlie said and Hermione snorted at him.

"Not likely," she scoffed and they laughed at her.

Bagman tried to get everyone to place bets but Hermione was sceptical. She couldn't remember if she'd read somewhere that Bagman was in debt or if it was just a rumour, either way, she knew to be careful.

"We'll bet 37 galleons, 15 sickles, 3 knuts, that Ireland wins – but Viktor Krum gets the Snitch. Oh, and we'll throw in a fake wand," Fred said, as he and George emptied their pockets of all the money they had.

"Excellent! I haven't seen one that convincing in years! I'd pay 5 galleons for that!" Bagman said, looking at the wand amused and putting the money in his pockets before leaving.

"Don't tell your mother you've been gambling," Mr. Weasley said in warning.

"Don't worry, Dad, we've got big plans for this money, we don't want it confiscated," Fred said.

"Because that makes me feel better," he mumbled as he walked off, leaving Hermione chuckling.

"I'd be careful with Bagman if I were you."

"What? Why?" George frowned.

"Just some rumours that's all. Just be careful," she said.

Not long after they were all sat in the living room and Percy was gushing over his boss, Barty Crouch, who had also paid a visit to their tent.

"He doesn't even know your name," George rolled his eyes.

Percy ignored him. "He can speak Troll you know?" Percy said with awe in his voice and they all smirked at him.

"Anyone can speak Troll, all you have to do is point and grunt," Fred scoffed.

"You're just jealous you're not as accomplished as him," Percy huffed.

"Oh, shut up, Weatherby!" Fred snapped, everyone bursting into laughter.

Hermione chuckled as she perched on the armrest of the couch beside Percy, rubbing his back comfortingly as he sulked.

"Don't forget that he put Sirius in Azkaban without a trial," she said softly and Sirius growled from across the room at the reminder.

"It was a mistake," he muttered childishly, crossing his arms with his lower lip stuck out.

"Spelling your name wrong is a mistake. Annoying the Giant Squid is a mistake. Mixing up flour and powdered monkswood is a mistake. But putting an innocent man in prison without a trial was not a mistake. It was sheer desperation and stupidity. I'm not denying that he's hard-working and for that, he should be admired, but be careful around him, okay?" She said softly and he nodded. "Good, it's your birthday and you shouldn't be upset on your birthday." With that said, she kissed him on the cheek and made her way to the kitchen.

"Where's she going?" Percy mumbled.

His question was answered when Hermione walked back into the room carrying a birthday cake with lit candles and she started singing with everyone joining in.

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you! Happy birthday dear, Weatherby! Happy birthday to you!"

He blew out his candles and the cake was cut. Hermione had baked a Victoria sponge cake with chocolate chips in the cake and raspberry jam and vanilla cream for the filling.

"I love your baking," Percy said appreciatively and everyone agreed with nods since they couldn't speak due to them stuffing their faces.

"Everyone finished eating?" They nodded. "Good, I think it's time to leave. The match is starting soon," she said, running off to grab a jacket.

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They all huddled together as to not get lost in the crowd and made their way towards the stadium. They'd been walking up the stairs for what felt like hours when they finally only had a couple of flights left before they found their seats.

"Dad, how high are we?" Ron called ahead.

"Well, put it this way, if it rains, you'll be the first to know," Hermione heard a cold voice say before two laughs followed. She halted to a stop, twisting to see Malfoy and his father. Well, that was her evening ruined, wasn't it?

"Father and I are sitting in the Minister's box, by personal invitation of Cornelius Fudge himself," Malfoy said smugly.

"Don't gloat, Draco, there's no need, not with these people," Mr. Malfoy partially scolded and partially insulted.

Hermione couldn't help it but giggle at Malfoy's scolded and defeated expression and his attention snapped to her, his eyes slowly roaming her body.

"Hello, and who might you be?" He questioned, his mouth tugging at one corner and arching an eyebrow. Hermione's eyes widened. Was he trying to seduce her? She felt like throwing up.

"Malfoy," she replied stiffly.

"Granger!" His voice rose in surprise. "What the hell happened to you?" He asked as he continued to leer at her.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," she frowned, twisting to look behind her. "What's he talking about? I haven't changed," she said confused.

Sirius rolled his eyes; of course, she didn't see how beautiful she was. The changes were unnoticeable to her.

"You actually look decent."

Hermione spluttered in surprise, he was complimenting her now? The world was ending, she was sure of it. The apocalypse had arrived.

She turned to see Mr. Malfoy staring at her in the same way as his son was and it made her feel highly uncomfortable. Fred was stood behind her and she leaned back against him for support and he immediately, without thinking about it, wrapped his arms around her stomach and rested his chin against her shoulder, glaring at them murderously whilst George instinctively moved closer to them, mimicking his twin's impressive glare. Mr. Weasley watched them from the corner of his eye.

"Draco is correct, you do look decent for a Muggleborn. If you ever get tired of hanging around with the riff-raff, let us know," Mr. Malfoy's mouth twitched and his eyes leered. Hermione leaned further back into Fred and he tightened his grip on her.

"I'm fine, thank you, Mr. Malfoy; the Weasleys are my family."

"They could never buy you the things I could," Malfoy drawled with a half-smirk. She tried to keep the look of disgust off her face but she was sure she failed.

"I don't care for possessions or money and even if I did, I could easily buy myself whatever it was I required."

"Your parents are muggles," he stated with a raised eyebrow.

"Yes, and I have two legs, the Weasleys are redheads and you're a moron."

George and Fred chuckled. 'Trust her to insult Malfoy in front of his father,' they both thought proudly.

"What's your point? My parents may be muggles but I come from a fairly wealthy family, thank you," she sniffed.

"Really?" Malfoy's other eyebrow arched at her statement.

"Really,"

"How wealthy?"

"Enough to live off and never have to work and still have money left over."

"Really?"

"Really," she narrowed her eyes in annoyance.

"Well, in that case, Miss. Granger, perhaps you would be useful, disregarding your blood, of course," Mr. Malfoy said. "And given your appearance, I am certain they are more mature activities that you may do. I have some old friends that have, of course, heard tale of the great Muggleborn witch, Hermione Granger. I'm certain they would like to meet you," he leered at her.

Hermione felt fear rush through her veins. Fred's grip tightened on her, almost hurting her. Several growls could be heard coming from Bill and Charlie, but the loudest and most frightening came from Sirius.

"They will meet her over my dead body," he ground out.

Mr. Malfoy's head lifted, seeing the furious Black heir. "My, my, I guess the rumours are true, you really are no longer a fugitive."

"Yes, which means that I'm free to kick the shit out of you if you so much as touch a hair on her head," he growled.

Mr. Malfoy cocked an eyebrow. "And you'll find yourself right back in Azkaban. Not very smart, are you?" He drawled.

"Don't have to be, as long as my lawyer is, then I'm good."

"Pray tell, who your idiot lawyer is?" He mocked. Sirius pointed to Hermione and he raised an eyebrow. "I doubt a child could represent you," he scoffed.

Hermione didn't bother hiding the fact that she was furiously glaring at him.

"She got me off my charges, didn't she? I'm no longer a fugitive thanks to her and she got me a lot of benefits without having to file a lawsuit against the Ministry. If she went up against the Ministry and won, imagine what she could do to you in a trial," Sirius said smugly.

Mr. Malfoy was about to retort but Ginny intervened. "The match is about to start, we should get to our seats."

Hermione was pushed in front of the others out of sight and they left, but not before Mr Malfoy threatened Harry, which most certainly did not make Hermione or Sirius happy.

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They were stood leaning against the railings watching the Irish team fly around the pitch, Hermione cheering loudly along with everyone else and she laughed at the fireworks and dancing leprechauns.

Then the Bulgarian team came out and flew around the pitch, the veelas being brought out as their mascot. She rolled her eyes as all the boys stared and practically drooled before she smacked them over the backs of their heads, breaking them out of their daze. Harry and Ron required more than one and Fred and George had looked sheepish.

"It's Viktor Krum," Ron said star-struck and she rolled her eyes at him.

Before she knew it, the quaffle had been thrown into the air and the game was underway. Ireland scored the first three goals followed by Bulgaria scoring. After that, things went downhill and two penalties were awarded to Ireland. Bulgaria's seeker, Viktor Krum, was hit in the face with a well-aimed bludger from Ireland's beater.

The game continued and the race was on. Ireland's seeker spotted the snitch first but Victor Krum was faster and he reached out and caught the snitch. The final score was 170 - 160. Ireland won.

Everyone screamed and cheered loudly for their winning team, Hermione watching as the twins laughed and shared a high-five; they had won the bet.

They returned to the tent amidst the celebrations of the Irish, the twins prancing and dancing about the room as they sang badly out of tune.

"He's more than an athlete, he's an artist," Ron professed his undying love for Viktor Krum, a serious, love-struck expression on his face and Hermione burst into giggles.

"I think you're in love, Ron," Ginny teased as she walked past him, a mug of hot chocolate in her hand.

"Viktor, I love you, Viktor, I do. When we're apart my heart beats solely for you!" The twins sang with Harry joining in, Hermione laughing loudly and Sirius wolf-whistling, Ron's cheeks flaming red.

Hermione was having that dream again but she couldn't figure out what it meant, something was wrong. That much she could tell. So she wasn't surprised when she was woken from sleep by someone yelling and telling them they had to leave and she quickly threw on her leggings and boots and grabbed her wand.

They were ushered out of the tent to see people running and screaming in terror, things were burning and destroyed and there were people in black robes hurting people and firing spells, not caring for their targets. They separated into smaller groups as those who were of age went to help and the others were told to meet at the port-key. So, Hermione, Harry and Ron ran through all the debris and weaved in and out of the crowd.

When Hermione turned around it wasn't as crowded with terrified people as it was before but she'd lost sight of Harry and Ron. She panicked and began heading for the woods with her wand in her grasp and with her back turned, she was hit by a spell. She fell to the ground, her shoulder aching with a sensation and she hissed in pain. Pushing herself up into a sitting position and twisting to look behind her, she saw a dark hooded figure approaching. She automatically began shuffling backwards as they advanced on her.

"Well, you're a pretty little Mudblood, aren't you?" A cold and unfamiliar voice said. "Maybe we could have some fun before I kill you," he said, as he pointed his wand at her and began to kneel down so that he could pin her down with his larger body. She tried to kick him away from her and he slapped her across the face, leaving a red welt and a cut on her cheek.

Hermione let her instincts take over and quickly pointed her wand at the threatening figure. "Stupefy, Somno Leporem," she called, the figure dropping to the ground. She sighed in relief and rose to her feet, turning and running towards the woods.

When Hermione saw the trees up ahead, she faltered in her steps when she heard a call of,

"GET HIM!"

She turned to see three figures in black hooded robes chasing a boy who was throwing curses over his shoulder but he was hit and fell to the ground like a sack of potatoes. She turned towards the woods and then without thinking she turned around and ran towards the four figures, one potentially friendly, the other three definitively not.

"HEY!" She yelled, gaining their attention and they were quick with their firing of spells her way.

"Protego Totalum," she said clearly and a large powerful shield covered her body, the spells bouncing off it and rebounding, miraculously, hitting all three of their attackers. With them distracted, she made a break for the boy on the floor, halting beside him. "Okay, up you get, we gotta go," she said, helping him to his feet and she slung his arm over her shoulder, trying to take as much of his weight as she could without being knocked over given that he was quite a bit bigger and taller than her.

"I'm so getting in trouble for that," she muttered.

She was pretty sure they were following her and her suspicions were confirmed when a red light whizzed past her ear.

"Oh, that was a close one," she breathed out, a green light whizzed past her ear. She froze, halting in her steps. "That better not have been what I think it was," her eyes narrowed. A purple beam whizzed past her ear. "They're not very good, are they? I mean, we're stood still and they still miss," she said to the boy, who looked down at her like she was crazy. Another green light passed her ear. "That's it, I've had enough of these idiots," she said angrily, before spinning around, the boy copying her movements to see what was happening.

Before she knew what she was doing, she'd lifted her hands and pushed forward, sending the three figures flying backwards. "That should slow them down, let's go," she instructed, dragging the boy forward as he stared at her, stunned. She'd just done wandless and non-verbal magic without any effort.

She looked behind her to see seven figures chasing her this time and she pushed the boy into a cave, lighting her wand and walking as deep into it as she could. The boy slid down the wall until he was on the ground, a groan of pain falling from his lips. Frowning in concern, she approached and crouched down beside him, noting that his hand was pressed against his shoulder firmly. She raised her own and settled it over his with the intention to pull it away so she could get a better glimpse of what she may be dealing with, but he groaned.

"I can help you if you let me," she spoke softly, hoping it would help to calm him. His dark eyes lifted to hers, seeing only kindness and worry. Was that for him? Why? Taking a risk on trusting her, he relented and allowed her to move his hand and she lifted her wand higher to provide better lighting. A large, deep wound the length of her hand covered his shoulder and it looked quite painful.

"Okay, we can do this," she muttered to herself, taking a steadying breath. "Can you give me some light, please?" He nodded and weakly lifted his wand, muttering an incantation she didn't recognise, but she did recognise the language. He was Bulgarian. She cancelled the light on her own wand and took his from his hand and lifted it to the wound. She pointed her wand at the wound and said, "Tergeo," which cleaned the wound and then finally she muttered the most effective Healing Charm she knew, it soon sealing the injury.

"Right, that's done," she breathed out in relief, handing his wand back to him with a smile.

She could feel something unsettling inside her. She remembered her family and she felt worry and panic set in. She hadn't seen the Woods since before the match and she hadn't seen everyone else since they left the tent. She remembered; Harry, Fred, George and Oliver. She could feel the urge within her to leave the boy next to her and go and find them so she could protect them, but she did her best to push down those instincts and feelings. She couldn't leave him. Not when he was injured and vulnerable.

"Are you hurt anywhere else?" She questioned and he gestured to his stomach and ankle. Upon closer inspection, he had a rather large cut on his stomach which was easily healed, and then she moved her attention to his ankle. "It's broken, this is going to hurt," she said softly in warning and he nodded, not looking surprised. She pointed her wand at his ankle. "Episkey," she muttered, the bone snapping back into place and Hermione winced as the boy growled out a foreign curse, the noise being loud and attention-grabbing. She flinched when voices carried from the mouth of the cave.

All of a sudden, a purple spell came flying into the cave and Hermione aimed her wand readily.

"Protego Totalum!" A large shield was conjured and it protected them both from the continuous fire of spells, none of them friendly.

The boy's eyes widened slightly. 'Who is this girl?' he thought.

She huffed in annoyance, "I've had enough of this."

She dropped the shield and stormed forward, the boy following after her at a slightly slower pace, his ankle needing time to strengthen. He halted to a stop at the sight of seven hooded figures pointing their wands at them.

"Maybe we should teach this Mudblood," one of them spat, "Not to raise her wand at her superiors."

The boy flinched. 'She's a Muggleborn.'

"She does look pure, maybe we should taint her," another said, his intent clear.

"She's pretty for a Mudblood," another said, his words a backhanded compliment if she'd ever heard one.

"I suggest you lower your wands before you get hurt," she warned calmly.

They laughed at her. "And what are you, a Mudblood, going to do?" Another asked.

She raised her eyebrow and flicked her wand at him. "Batius Bogium," she muttered, the figure soon darted about as he tried to fight off the flying snot bats and they watched him, not sure what to do or say. The boy stood next to her found it rather amusing but he kept his laughter in control, he didn't want to make things worse. Hermione took her chance at their distraction and cast several spells on the distracted figures.

"Stupefy, Petrificus Totalus, Flipendo, Incendio, Immobulus, Expelliarmus," she said quickly, sending a different one to each figure. A couple of the figures had sent spells her way in defence and some of them had hit her but she didn't register the pain or even notice she was injured. She had three stunned, one stamping out the flames on his robes, one getting up from the ground, one with the Bat Bogey Hex still running around and one without a wand.

She quickly stunned the other three and disarmed the one running around with the Bat Bogey Hex before stunning him, too. It was far too easy, she thought. She then walked over to each Stunned figure and cast her sleeping spell on each one of them, guaranteeing them being out for at least eight hours."Somno Leporem," she said before she disarmed them all. She had eight wands in her hands including her own.

The boy stood in place, frozen; he hadn't even gotten one shot off; this girl had just successfully fended off seven attackers by herself without aid and protected him. He stared at her open-mouthed when she turned, sighing in relief and a small smile pulling at her face.

"Are you okay?" She asked kindly and he nodded. Hermione was covered in blood and mud, her hair was messy and her clothes had tears in them. The boy noticed how pretty she despite her current appearance; her beauty seemed to shine through all the dirt and grime.

"I'm so getting in trouble for this, I hope I don't get expelled," she sighed.

"Vhy vould you be expelled?" He spoke for the first time since meeting him, his voice deep and his words spoken in broken English, but she'd heard worse.

"Underage magic," she shrugged.

"You don't duel like you are underage," he commented and she smiled at him.

"Well, I've had a lot of practice trying to keep my best friend alive, he's always getting into trouble," she said chuckling before she spun with her back to him and raised her wand, muttering, "Expecto Patronum." A silver-blue majestic lion formed of misty-smoke before settling on the ground before her, watching her obediently. "Go and get the others, please," she instructed, reaching out to push her fingers through his mane and he nuzzled at her hand before turning and running off into the distance.

"What?" She questioned in confusion, once she turned to face the boy once more and saw his surprised expression.

"You can cast Patronus?"

"Yes,"

"How old are you?"

"Well, that depends, are we going by Ministry standards or technicality. Because with Ministry standards, soon to be fifteen, technicality, soon to be sixteen."

He watched her curiously; the more she talked, the more fascinated he became. She didn't seem to recognise him either and that'd never happened before. That pleased him.

"You used spell I've never heard before," he said,

"Somno Leporem," she frowned and he nodded. "I created it last year."

"You created a spell at your age?" He asked, genuinely impressed. He knew it had been done before but still, it was an impressive feat.

"Several actually," she nodded, "I was bored and needed something to occupy my mind."

He made to reply only voices in the distance carried and they were both on their guard, raising their wands defensively, only as the voice drew closer, Hermione's wand arm fell to her side and she breathed a sigh of relief.

"'MIONE!"

It was Charlie and Bill and they ran towards her, Charlie reaching her first and he scooped her up into a tight hug and sighed in relief, before handing her over to Bill who did the same and he placed her back on the ground.

"Are you okay?" Charlie asked.

"What happened?" Bill said.

"First, how is everyone?" She said and they chuckled, sharing a knowing glance. She always put others before herself.

"Everyone's fine, no injuries and they made it back to the Burrow. Sirius and dad are on their way," Bill explained and she let out the breath she hadn't realised she'd been holding.

"Am I going to get expelled?" She whispered.

"No, we won't let that happen. Any wand magic you did was in self-defence, besides, the Ministry doesn't want to mess with you now," he said.

"What happened to you? How did you get these injuries? What happened to your face?" Bill questioned, noticing the mark and cut from her first attacker. She was covered in both her own blood and the boy's, she had cuts on her stomach and knees, a burn on her shoulder and she had a deep gash on her arm.

"Hermione!"

"Papa," she greeted, being pulled into a hug. "Padfoot," she said quietly, the Black heir taking her from Mr. Weasley and hugging her against him protectively.

"You gave us a scare there, Kitten. You were the only one who didn't make it to the Burrow, everyone's in a right state," he said softly.

"Miss. Granger, you did magic - underage magic, there are consequences for such an act."

Hermione's eyes lifted and automatically narrowed into an unkind expression. Barty Crouch.

"I am aware, but should you wish to take me to trial, I ask you, can you defeat me?" She challenged, Charlie and Bill sniggering and Sirius smirking. "My reasoning is justified. The law states that underage magic is prohibited unless, in a dire situation, I believe this evening's happenings qualifies as such."

"And what did happen?" Deputy Auror Reddings questioned, his eyes focused solely on her, ignoring the glares of Bill and Charlie.

Hermione took a breath before quickly explaining what she'd face in the last hour but only mentioning things that were necessary, the boy behind her nodding in confirmation and ignoring their wide-eyed stares upon their realisation of who he was, and with Sirius' grip on her tightening when she spoke of the threats and intentions of her attackers.

"Is that all, Miss. Granger?" Minister Fudge asked once she came to an end of her explanation.

"Yes, afterwards, I sent my Patronus to my family."

"Your Patronus?" Reddings asked.

"May we see, Miss. Granger?" the Minister spoke.

"Will I get expelled?" She asked quietly.

"No, Miss. Granger you will not, it seems that you have subdued and captured more criminals than the Aurors. We cannot punish you for not only defending yourself and another," he said kindly.

"Okay," she nodded, raising her wand and muttering, " Expecto Patronum."

The large regal lion stood before her and she reached out and ran her fingers through his fur, feeling more at ease with his presence being nearby.

"Merlin!"

"It's even more wicked seeing it in person," Charlie grinned, reaching out towards the lion and he turned, nuzzling into his outstretched hand, pulling a laugh from the redhead.

"He trusts you," Hermione smiled.

"Miss. Granger, you have to understand the consequences," Crouch interrupted, the large lion turning towards him and releasing a warning growl, Sirius smirking when Crouch seemed to pale, even if the lion wasn't actually real and could do no physical harm or damage.

"You, he doesn't trust. Mr. Crouch, I have already been pardoned by the Minister himself and I don't think you understand the consequences. If I hadn't of used magic, not only would I have been raped and murdered, that boy behind me would likely have been murdered, too" she said gravely, gesturing to said boy behind her. "And don't dare to lecture me, I know for a fact Pettigrew escaped after I warned you and showed you he was an Animagus and you still let a dangerous murderer slip free. It took me and Sirius a year to capture him. It took you barely an hour to lose him. Are you even looking for him? Don't worry, Mr. Crouch, I will just have to do your job for you and catch the lunatic myself. Again!" She glared. Bill and Charlie shared a subtle fist bump and Sirius laughed.

"And are you aware that these idiots," she gestured around her with her hands, "Are followers of good old Lord Moldyshorts? In other words, they are Death Eaters?"

The boy raised his eyebrows in shock; she'd just deliberately and fearlessly mocked You-Know-Who in public.

"That's one hell of an accusation, Miss. Granger" Reddings said.

"It's not an accusation if it is true" she glared at him.

"And where's your proof?"

"There," she narrowed her eyes, pointing behind them. As one and as if in slow motion, they all turned to look behind them, seeing the skull and snake glowing green. The dark mark.

"We better go, have a safe trip home, Miss. Granger," the Minister said.

"Thank you, Sir."

With that, they left. They were about to head home when Hermione remembered the boy.

"Are you sure you're okay?" She questioned, turning to face him and he nodded.

"How are you getting..." She was cut off when she heard voices and caught sight of several people running towards them, but she wasn't worried, she could tell by the boy's reaction that he knew them."Never mind, well, we better get going."

With Sirius' arm around her shoulders, she turned and headed in the opposite direction, being followed by Charlie, Bill and Mr. Weasley.

"Vait, vhat be your name?" He called after her.

"Granger," she twisted to look over her shoulder but didn't halt in her steps, trusting Sirius to not let her fall. "Do me a favour and get those injuries looked at be an actual healer," she said before she disappeared from sight.

The Burrow

They landed with a 'thud' in the garden of the Burrow and they slowly walked towards the house, the door lurching open as they drew closer and Mrs. Weasley waddled out. Hermione, seeing this, disentangled herself from Sirius and ran towards her, gladly accepting the fierce mamma bear hug and breathing a sigh of relief.

"Oh, my dear child," she whispered in her ear.

"I'm okay, Maji,"

Mrs. Weasley pulled back from her, her eyes surveying her and seeing the blood and injuries, and the dirt or tears in her clothing.

"What happened?"

"Inside," she said, Mrs. Weasley nodding in agreement and helping her to the house.

Before she'd even reached the front door the twins appeared looking tired and distressed.

"MIONE!" They called. They hadn't stopped worrying since they'd returned to the Burrow and everyone was back except Hermione. Even the Woods were sat in the living room. They had spent the last hour or so pacing, making everyone nervous.

They were quick to approach, hugging her between them tightly and refusing to let go. Suddenly, the adrenaline wore off and the events of the night hit her, Hermione breaking into sobs. Oliver and Harry made an appearance and Hermione was passed to Harry for a hug before she reached Oliver, the older wizard lifting her into his arms and muttering soothing words into her ear as he carried her to the house.

"What happened?" Several people asked, seeing Hermione in the state she was in.

She remained quiet as she took a seat beside Oliver, Ron and Ginny being sent to bed but not without argument. To spare her the time it would take to explain the events, Bill took her memories and they watched events play out on the screen before them. By the time they came to an end, she was sobbing into Oliver's chest and curled up in his lap as he held her to him tightly. Harry left the room, being too furious to stay in the presence of so many people.

"I said something bad was going to happen," she sniffled, her sobs calming. She pulled her face away from Oliver's chest and looked at everyone with puffy and red-rimmed eyes.

"What?"

"I told Maji this morning that I knew something was going to happen. My dream it came true" she said.

"What dream?" Mr. Wood frowned.

"Ever since the beginning of the summer, I've been having trouble sleeping, at first I would just toss and turn and then wake up sweating and finding it difficult to breathe..." The twins and Oliver shared looks of horror, she'd been suffering and they hadn't noticed! "At first, I couldn't remember what I was dreaming about, but then after a couple of weeks, I started to remember bits and pieces. We were celebrating and laughing, we were happy. And then it changed. It was dark and I was being chased, I was hit by a spell and I fell to the ground and then this dark figure was walking towards me and it stood over me. That's what happened back there. My dream came true!" Her eyes darted about the room, seeing the many eyes gazing at her.

"Something's happening to me. There's that whole situation with the sorting hat in my first year. I can do spells no one else can. I can create spells within an hour. I saw Sirius's past just by touching him. I threw Pettigrew across a room. I put up a shield like I've never seen before to protect Sirius, Ron and I. Then there was that whole Pettigrew escaping earthquake situation. I'm starting to get the hang and control of wandless and non-verbal magic very easily. Today I accidentally threw Cedric Diggory fifteen feet across the woods just because he jumped from a tree and landed behind me, startling me"

Fred and George laughed. "That was hilarious," they said and Mr. Weasley glared at them.

"Seriously?" Oliver asked amused.

"Yes, I apologised profusely but he just shook it off. Mr. Diggory thought it was hilarious and just kept teasing Cedric about it. Anyway, people seem to stare at me more, both Lucius and Draco Malfoy hit on me and made rather lewd suggestions, making me feel nauseous."

"Malfoy hit on ye?" Oliver said angrily.

"Yes, and his father, it was disgusting, made my skin crawl," she shivered.

"What did he say?" he ground out.

"He made suggestions"

"Like what?" his teeth were clenched.

"That I'm pretty and wealthy, so, therefore, I'm worthy of being around them, disregarding my blood, of course. Mr. Malfoy said that should I get bored, he had some friends that wanted to meet me and they could find something more mature for me to do," she said, tears falling down her face.

"WHAT!" Mrs. Weasley and the three Woods shrieked in distress and disgust.

"They are gettin' nowhere near ye," Oliver promised, pulling her further against his chest.

"It doesn't matter anymore. I used wandless and non-verbal magic to throw three men away from me at the same time, without any effort. It's become really easy for me to do, I don't even know I'm doing it until it's happened. And apparently I can sense when things are going to happen and I'm having premonitions. What's happening to me? Please, just tell me. You must know!" She begged.

She was sure to look at each of them, seeing the twins and Oliver looking hopeful as they begged everyone in the room for permission to finally tell Hermione the truth. They received a negative response and glared at each of them.

"I'm starting to scare myself. What if I'm dangerous to be around? What if I hurt someone? I've already lost two sets of parents; I don't want to lose anymore. I've lost my family twice, I can't do it again. I don't have it in me," she cried.

The twins shuffled closer to her and Oliver so they could comfort her, each of them touching her in some way. Their hearts seemed to break watching her but despite that, they couldn't tell her, not yet, it was too soon.

"What if I accidentally lose control of my magic in school, when a Slytherin pisses me off and I accidentally throw them across the room into a wall? What if I accidentally set someone on fire? I'm dangerous. Please, I'm scared. What's happening to me?" She wept.

"We don't know," Mrs. Weasley replied, it breaking her heart to lie to Hermione. "But we will do some research," she promised.

Sirius moved from one side of the room until he crouched down before Hermione. "Kitten," he said softly and she hesitantly looked at him, tears falling. He smiled at her. "You're not dangerous; you're the kindest, gentlest and most caring person I've ever met. You took care of me, a convicted murderer."

"You were innocent," she pointed out.

"You took care of Moony."

"It's not his fault he's a werewolf, he shouldn't have to suffer more than he has to."

"You take care of Harry."

"I love him," she said simply and he smiled.

"My point is, you could never hurt anyone."

"Did you not see what I did to those people?"

He chuckled at her. "'Course I did, and I'm very proud. And by the way, Kitten, loved the dressing down you gave Crouch," he winked and she giggled.

"I'll help you learn to control your magic. But from what I've seen, you've a pretty good handle on that, so we'll most likely focus on learning to control your emotions. That's the only time when your magic flares up; when you're scared or angry. You learn to control that and you won't hurt anyone."

"But only powerful witches and wizard can do wandless magic. I mean, it's easy to do certain spells wandlessly but the spells I've done have been accidental and non-verbal. I've read books Padfoot, it's not normal," she insisted.

"You are a powerful witch, your powers are just growing and that is normal," he said reassuringly.

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Always, Kitten," he smiled.

"Am I a Muggleborn?"

"What?" Mrs. Weasley squeaked in panic.

"Am I a Muggleborn?" She repeated. She missed the anxious and startled looks everyone was sharing because she was looking at Sirius.

"Why would you think you weren't?" He asked curiously, neither admitting nor denying anything.

"I know that magical ability, potential and power have nothing to do with bloodlines, but in the books I've read in the Hogwarts library, for a Muggleborn to have the magical ability I seem to have is unheard of. Plus, my parents died when I was little so they could've known about the Wizarding World and been magical beings themselves. No one knows."

"Whatever is happening to you we will figure it out," Sirius assured her.

"Promise me! I'm really scared," she whispered to him.

"I promise," he said. She leaned forward and hugged him tightly and when she pulled back she kissed his cheek and walked out of the room to go and shower before changing for bed.

"What the hell was that?!" Fred yelled.

"Calm down, George," his mother instructed.

"I'm Fred, I don't have a freckle!" He cried, glaring at her as he pointed to his freckle free neck, emphasising his point.

"Why didn't you tell her?!" George raged.

"We lied tae her 'coz af ye!" Oliver shouted.

"Tha' is enough!" Mrs. Wood shrieked, the room falling silent as they darted their gazes to one another.

"We didn't tell her because it's not the right time," Mrs said calmly.

"You don't get to decide that, Mum," George scowled. "She's terrified of what's happening to her. You don't get it. We lied to her. We've never lied to her before. It hurts us. When she's upset, it hurts. When she's happy, we're happy!" He said distressed.

"It's not the right time, she's not old enough," Mrs. Weasley repeated.

"She's almost sixteen, almost of age. She's halfway through completing the transformation and power gaining process. She's almost ready," Fred said.

"No, she's not!" Mrs. Weasley said sternly.

"Mum, you're not listening to us. Today when we port-keyed to the Cup Final, Hermione landed on top of me and when I looked at her, there was something in her eyes that I haven't seen before. It was like she knew me, she knew who I was to her. She was going to kiss me, I'm sure of it, but something snapped her back to reality," George said sadly.

"Is that true?" Charlie asked, arching an eyebrow.

"Yes," Mr. Weasley and Fred said in unison.

They looked at them questioningly and the fatherly wizard nodded. "It's true. I saw the look on Hermione and the twins' faces when it happened."

"And when the Malfoys were hitting on her, she leaned back into me, almost like she was asking for protection, like she knew she was safe with me. I could feel her tension but as soon as she was touching me, all that seemed to melt away," Fred said.

"Really?" Oliver asked hopeful and they nodded.

"So, she may not be ready now but she will be very soon. With the way she's coming into her heritage, the way she treats us and the way she's asking questions. She asked if she was a Muggleborn for Merlin's sake!" George said.

Having nothing else to say and knowing they weren't going to listen even if they did, they called it a night and headed to the twins' bedroom and as they'd expected, Hermione had pushed the beds together and was lying in the centre. They silently surrounded her, Oliver using his wand to heal Hermione's injuries, being thankful they weren't too severe. She kissed his cheek in thanks, being dangerously close to his mouth and his breath hitched.

When she pulled away from him and she smiled, she looked deep into his eyes, almost as if she was staring into his soul. Oliver stared right back and he noticed it, too, what George had seen earlier. He smiled, the expression soon falling when it was gone from her eyes and she laid down and fell asleep almost as soon as her head hit the pillow.

"A saw it, in her eyes," he said in disbelief. George smiled.

"Twice in one day, looks like it's happening a lot quicker than we originally thought it would. Your turn next, Freddie," George said and Fred smiled. He couldn't wait to see that look in her eyes; he was now the only one who hadn't seen it.

"Soon she'll understand," Fred promised his, Oliver and himself. He had to believe that.

Chapter Fifty-Two

The Burrow - Tuesday 23rd August 1994

After a relatively quiet breakfast with the exception of Ron and Ginny demanding answers regarding the happenings of the day before and Hermione remaining tight-lipped, as well as Ron shouting for Harry to come to breakfast after having barricaded himself in their room, Hermione was now on the grounds of the Burrow with Sirius beside her, an impressive oak tree before them.

There were no spectators or observers remotely in range, Mrs. Weasley having forbidden anyone from going within fifty feet of them, knowing Sirius planned on helping Hermione with learning to control her emotions and therefore, her magic, too.

"Padfoot, I'm scared," she confessed quietly, fiddling with her hands as she sat on the floor crossed legged, Sirius sitting opposite her.

"There's nothing for you to be afraid of," he assured her softly.

"I could hurt you," she whispered in argument.

"Well, if you do throw me halfway across the garden, be sure to do it in the direction of the lake, it's a softer landing and it's quite warm today, I could do with a bit of a cool down," he joked, her mouth tugging into a small smile. "Are you ready?"

"No,"

"Good, let's do this," he ignored her. She glared at him. "I want you to take deep breaths to calm yourself. Five in through the nose and five out through the mouth but hold your breath for eight seconds." Sirius watched as she did exactly that, her eyes fluttering closed and her posture straightening. "Great, now, we need to identify what makes you angry, it will be easier to avoid such triggers if we know what they are. If avoidance isn't possible, at least you will be prepared and able to control your reaction. So, what makes you angry?"

"Malfoy, Pettigrew, the Dursleys, bullies, people who make mean comments or threaten anyone I care for, and Voldie and his sheep."

He snorted. "You never fail to find some way to knock him and his followers down and amuse others to know end with the way you do it," he said proudly. "So, is that all that makes you angry? Those particular people, nothing else?"

"Well, I don't know what makes me angry until I'm angry," she shrugged.

"Fair point," he tipped his head. "Firstly, we will focus on those things. I want you to think about Malfoy, he's most likely to be your biggest obstacle when at school. Think of every comment or action he's done in the past that has upset you or made you angry."

She looked at him, her expression terrified. "I don't want to. I might hurt you."

"I'm a big boy. I can take care of myself."

She arched an eyebrow. "You were in prison for twelve years and then an escaped fugitive for one."

"Yes, well, when I can't take care of myself, I have you to do it for me," he sniffed. "You'll be fine. You'll be surprised at what you are capable of. I know you can do this."

"Fine," she sighed in defeat, "But will you move out of the way, just in case?"

He reluctantly moved so he was sitting beside her and not in front of her. "Now, think of Malfoy and what a tosser he is."

"There's a challenge," she snorted.

She closed her eyes and took a few steady deep breaths, allowing her memories of Malfoy to rush to the surface; the first time he said mean comments to her or about her family, when he left Harry alone in the Forbidden Forest, the first time he called her a Mudblood, making fun of Harry during the dementor attacks, he was responsible for the almost execution of Buckbeak and Hagrid's depression, spreading rumours about Lupin being a werewolf, the bad treatment of her family and his behaviour at the World Cup, all of it playing on a loop.

The anger burned within, growing and building until it became too much to bear, until her thoughts jumbled together and she couldn't think clearly, feel anything but rage and fury. It was too much, too hard t control, so she just stopped. She stopped fighting and let it out.

Her hands propelled forward with a snap, her breath hitching as she felt lighter, calmer, is if she were floating on water. Her eyes fluttering open, she took an instant step back and her mouth parted, seeing the once beautiful oak tree now a blazing fire. She could hardly look away from it.

"Did I do that?" She whispered frightened. Being just as surprised, Sirius could only nod, being lost for words. "Don't you think you should put it out?"

He pulled his wand and pointed it at the tree. "Aquamenti," he muttered, water bursting from the tip of his wand, extinguishing the fire and leaving behind a hiss of smoke.

"Good job I moved, yeah?" He chuckled, soon sobering when a look of horror crossed her face and she looked about ready to collapse to the ground.

"What if I hadn't told you to move? That could've been you. You could've been hurt. I told you I'm dangerous," she cried hysterically.

"I doubt it; you knew I wasn't there so you had no reservations. I imagine if I had been sat there, things wouldn't have been as grand a display," he placated.

Meanwhile, the four guardians had been perched on the porch of the Burrow, silently observing Hermione and Sirius whilst the others were distracted by a pick-me-up game of Quidditch on the other side of the grounds. They were at such a distance away they would be free Hermione's range, hopefully, and that they couldn't hear their words or see their expressions clearly.

They shared surprised glances when they witnessed a small flickering appear before Hermione, quickly growing in size until it was huge, almost half the size of Hermione herself, before she thrust her hands forward, the fireball propelling forward and crashing into the oak tree, it becoming a raging fire.

"Merlin!"

"It's incredible hoo powerful she is when she's yet tae gain her full power," Mrs. Wood commented. "If she is capable af such magic now, what will she be capable af when she reaches maturity."

"She seems to be able to control her magic, just not the emotion behind it," Mr. Weasley mused thoughtfully.

"You call that having control, Arthur?" His wife hissed.

He froze, his face paling. "Yes, Molly, I do. She did that effortlessly and she aimed for the tree, if she hadn't have had some control, it would have been directed elsewhere. She ensured she aimed for the tree because it would not put anyone in harm's way."

"An' if ye think aboot it, Molly, Hermione has never harmed a'body when she experienced her magical outbursts. She's accidentally thrown people across a room, levitated things an' she's caused small indoor earthquakes, but naw one was ever hurt," Mrs. Wood injected.

"We're going to do it again, but this time you're going to try and control your anger."

"I don't want to. You saw what I just did," her voice rose, her hands gesturing about wildly.

"You have control of your magic, not your emotions, there's a difference. You have never harmed anyone."

She hesitantly nodded. He, of course, was right; she hadn't actually hurt anyone, not really. If anything, it was effortless to do, instinctual, and she'd used it to save her and someone else's life. It did make her feel better but she was still apprehensive.

"So, do it again, but this time when you begin to feel the anger building, I want you to head it off, suppress it."

"How do I do that?"

"You think of things that you love, think of people you love, things that make you happy and make you laugh."

She frowned thoughtfully before nodding to herself. Peter Pettigrew popped into her mind. She hated him. He was a murderer; he'd killed fourteen innocent people including Harry's parents and Sirius and Lupin's best friend. He'd tried to manipulate Harry, he'd allowed Sirius to rot in jail for twelve years, he'd lived with the Weasley's for years and used them to benefit himself. He'd escaped his punishment for his crimes again.

Her anger built, swarming and filling her stomach and she forced herself to consider Sirius' words of advice. She thought of those she loved, she thought of how happy and safe Harry would be now that he was with his family, she thought of the twins and their happiness when pranking and making products for their future joke shop. She thought of Oliver and happy he would be when he got the position at Puddlemere United - and he would get it, she knew it. She thought of her own happiness, of the twins and Oliver.

The twisting, knotting sensation in her stomach ceased and Hermione breathed a sigh of relief, slowly opening her eyes and seeing Sirius' smiling proudly.

"You did it!" He exclaimed as she breathed a laugh.

Their observers from the Burrow porch shared expressions of surprise, but pride. They'd witnessed the rapidly growing fireball before Hermione and when they were convinced they'd witness the same occurrence as before, the fireball slowly decreased in size until it was gone, leaving only a small puff of smoke as evidence of its existence.

"She can do this," Mrs. Weasley said without any doubt or argument from the others.

After finishing up with dinner for the evening, Hermione stood from her chair at the table and reached for a plate, filling it with food with the intentions of taking it to Harry, who'd yet to resurface.

"If you hear any loud noises like banging and screaming, don't worry; it's just me kicking the door down and then kicking Harry's backside," she informed then, leaving the kitchen and their snorts behind. She climbed the many stairs to the attic and wrapped her knuckles against the door.

"GO AWAY!"

"Harry, let me in," she sighed.

"NO!"

"Harry, I'm going to give you one last chance to open this door or I will, and I can't guarantee you won't get injured in the process."

"YOU WOULDN'T DARE!" He challenged.

Hermione's mouth tugged into a smile. "Did you just say dare? Now, Harry, you know me and you know I never refuse a dare."

Silence reigned for a few moments before she heard shuffling and then the door opened, Hermione stepping inside smugly and Harry locking the door behind her. She followed him over to his bed when he flopped onto his stomach and buried his face in his pillow and she perched on the edge of the mattress.

"Look at me,"

"No," he muttered, his voice muffled.

"Don't make me Bat Bogey you. Even if I get into trouble with the Ministry, it'll be worth it." Slowly, he lifted his face from his pillow and peered at her over his shoulder. "What's the matter?"

"You were put in that situation because of me. You got hurt because of me." Hermione huffed, picked up a pillow and hit Harry with it. "Ow! What was that for?!" He glared at her.

"For being an idiot," she rolled her eyes. "You honestly think those things happened to me because of you?"

"Yes, I'm Harry Potter and you're my best friend." She huffed and hit him with the pillow again. "Ow! What was that for?"

"Not everything is about you, you know?" She joked and he snorted, pushing himself up and turning until he was propped up against the pillow and facing her and her expression suddenly became serious. "You're wrong, Harry; I wasn't targeted because of you, it's because I'm a Muggleborn. Your name was never mentioned and neither was mine. They weren't there because you were but because of the large number of people they could victimise. They wanted to cause damage, terror and panic and they succeeded. It had nothing to do with you." She held the plate out towards him. "Now eat, I know you haven't had anything all day."

"I don't want to," he said childishly, but the glare she gave him silenced any further protests and he slowly reached for the plate, deliberately eating his food slowly as if to spite her.

"Sirius helped me today with my magic," she said conversationally.

"How'd it go?"

"Well, I knocked him on his arse, set a tree on fire and levitated a boulder, but I think I've got a good handle on things now."

"All in all a good day," he smiled. "Even if you did knock Sirius on his arse."

She laughed. "Yeah, he wasn't happy about that, he said if I did it again he would Flipendo me into the lake."

"So your dream, it came true," Harry sighed, placing his empty plate on the ground.

"It did," she nodded, lifting her gaze to see his worried expression. "What is it, Harry?"

"Well, your dream came true, what if mine does, too?"

"What happens in your dream?"

Harry's eyes locked on a point over her shoulder. "There's an old man, he hears a noise and follows it to a building. He climbs the stairs and stops when he reaches a door and he can hear voices and partially see inside. Pettigrew's there, there's another man kneeling before someone sat in a chair but I can't see who it is. They're talking about a plan, they want something. They want me, but before I can learn more, the old man's spotted and then it goes black. That's when I wake up with my scar hurting."

"Well, the way you've described it, it sounds like something that's happened in the past and not something that will happen."

"But what if it does happen?"

"Then we'll deal with it, I'm not letting anything near you. Over their dead body."

He frowned in confusion. "Don't you mean 'over my dead body?'"

"Nope, said it right the first time," she grinned, Harry laughing at her pleased expression.

The Burrow – Wednesday 31st August 1994

"MIONE! MIONE!" Oliver all but bounced into the kitchen, disturbing them during lunch.

"What is it?" She asked worriedly.

"A got it! A got it! Am Puddlemere's newest reserve keeper!"

It took a moment for his words to sink in but once they did, Hermione let out a squeal and stood from her chair so fast it toppled to the ground, and she darted over to him, Oliver laughing when she jumped into his arms. Cheers and congratulations were shared and passed to Oliver by the others, and the Woods stepped into the kitchen, looking amused.

"A see he's told ye already," Mr. Wood chuckled.

"Told wouldn't be the word I'd use, more like yelled," Hermione corrected, jabbing Oliver in the ribs teasingly.

"So, Oliver, when do you start, Dear?" Mrs. Weasley asked.

"Next week," he grinned and his eyes darted to Hermione. "Okay, ye can say it."

"Say what?" She tipped her head slightly.

"A told ye so,"

Hermione looked at him seriously. "Ollie, I would never say that to you."

He looked at her sceptically. "Ye wouldn't?"

"No, of course not. I'd say you were wrong and I was right. And this means we've got a celebratory party to plan!"

The Hogwarts Express - Thursday 1st September 1994

"It's weird," Hermione muttered, hugging Oliver tightly as they stood on the platform with the Hogwarts Express behind them. .

"What is?"

"Going back to school without you," she said sadly and Oliver smiled. She was going to miss him and that thought made him happy.

"Well, ye'll see mae often, am helping Dumbledore with something so I'll be visiting the castle a lot," he told her. It wasn't exactly a lie, rather, it was an excuse, a reason for him to visit the castle and her without her or anyone else getting suspicious, especially with him now having graduated.

Reluctantly, she pulled herself away from him, stretching up on her tiptoes to press a kiss to his cheek before she turned her attention to Charlie, being pulled into a hug.

"I guess we'll see you at Christmas," she said, stepping back from him and looking to each of them.

With a final goodbye, she and the twins were ushered on the train and they quickly found and claimed their compartment, sticking their heads out of the window.

"We'll see you sooner than that," Charlie said mysteriously.

"What d'you mean?" Hermione asked curiously.

"You'll see," he smirked.

"You know something I don't?" She arched a brow at him, his smirk widening.

"Tell us!" The twins whined.

"No, you'll find out soon enough when Dumbledore announces it," Mrs. Weasley replied.

"So something's happening at school," George said smugly.

"Tell us, we'll keep it a secret," Fred said with a pout.

"We promise," George batted his eyelashes.

"No, boys, you have to wait."

"How will you feel if the train crashed on the way to school and you never told us what's happening?" George frowned, but the train jerked as they pulled away.

"Quickly, tell us!" Fred said, his mother shaking her head with her hands settled on her hips.

"Muuuuuuuuummmmmm!" The twins called as they grew further and further away from the station. When they'd pulled away completely, Hermione laughed at their defeated expressions as they slumped into their seats and stuffed their hands in their pockets, pouting.

"Don't worry, boys, we'll find out when we reach Hogwarts," she placated.

They spent the next hour laughing and planning pranks for the year to come, not to mention, brainstorming ideas for new products.

"I'm getting peckish, should we go and find the trolley?" She asked.

"Yeah, let's go for a walk, stretch our legs," George agreed with a nod.

Leaving their belongings in their compartment, they wandered drown the train aisle, passing several people in the process, all of them whispering with their eyes darting between her and the twins. Hearing the voice of the lady with the food trolley, they made their way down the next aisle, bumping into Seamus and Dean as they returned to their own compartment.

"Fred, George," Seamus greeted.

"Is this a new student?" Dean questioned, looking at Hermione as if he'd never seen before.

"What're you talking about, Dean?" She frowned in bemusement.

"Hermione!" Her fellow fourth years spluttered, their eyes widening.

She rolled her eyes. "Well, who else would I be?"

"Sorry, you just look different," Dean replied, his eyes slowly scanning her form.

"Yeah, good different," Seamus muttered, nodding in agreement as his eyes roamed her body.

The twins glared at them, the younger wizards feeling their gazes lifted their eyes to them, both of them taking a step back out of fear. The twins looked to one another pleased. 'Maybe we can keep boys away from her after all,' they thought.

Not wanting to be in the presence of their terrifying glares, they were quick to make their excuses and leave, still stealing glances as they walked away.

"Why do people keep doing that? I haven't changed at all," she frowned, gesturing to herself with a wave of her hand, her eyes falling downcast and narrowing, searching for any changes she might have missed. It was her body, she would know if something was different. The twins shared an amused glance before shaking their heads.

As they were about to step through to another cart, a group of first years stampeded through the door frame and knocked into Hermione and she tipped backwards. She braced herself for the impact but it never came. Slowly opening her eyes, she was instantly caught in Fred's gaze as he looked down at her smugly, having caught her before she had the chance to fall.

Seeing her gaze, Fred's smug expression quickly vanished and he was unable to tear his eyes from her, seeing the emotions that sparkled, familiarity and recognition, but there was something else. Something neither Oliver nor George had mentioned. Love. Fred's breathing haltered and his grip on her tightened, that being the thing that seemed to snap her back to attention. Shaking her head, Hermione smiled her thanks and disentangled Fred's arms from around her, continuing down the aisle towards the confectionery trolley she could see slowly approaching. Fred couldn't keep his eyes off her retreating back and with her slightly ahead of them and out of earshot, he whispered to George,

"I saw it!"

"I thought you did," George nodded, "And?"

"The same as you, but I swear, I think I saw love," he whispered.

George halted on the spot and sucked in a breath.

"Love?" He questioned disbelievingly.

Fred nodded slowly. "It reminded me of the way mum and dad look at each other, only more intense."

"Well, then it shouldn't be much longer. We should owl Oliver tonight and let him know about this new development."

Hogwarts

Hermione stepped through the doors and into the entrance hall and she took in the sight of the corridor. Hogwarts was a home away from home and she was glad to be back. She was one of the last Gryffindors to arrive and she quickly made a detour to the kitchens to say a quick greeting the house-elves, all of them being happy to see her, and then she headed to the great hall, being stopped before she could step through the great doors.

Twisting on her heel, she came face to face with a group of Slytherins, all of them leering at her. Before her stood Theodore Nott, Blaise Zabini, Crabbe, Goyle and of course in the centre, stood Malfoy. Taking a breath, she reminded herself that couldn't afford to lose control of her emotions.

Blaise Zabini was every bit the charming Italian he was born to be, with cameral toned skin, dark curls for hair and deep mocha brown eyes, his body looking to have filled out a little of the summer. Just looking at him Hermione realised he screamed sex appeal and it was the reason she knew he did well with the witches.

Theodore Nott stood beside him with his dark blue eyes and light brown hair that curled at the tips, he had the body of a chaser and tanned skin looking as though he had just gotten back from a holiday in the Bahamas, which she knew he most likely had. Crabbe and Goyle stood beside one another and hadn't really changed, both being tall and chubby with short light brown hair and brown eyes, looking wider than usual. Malfoy stood in the centre, not looking to have changed since she'd last seen at the World Cup. He had the perfect seeker's build, being tall and skinny, his white-blonde was gelled back as was usual for him, and his stormy grey eyes wandered over her in the same manner they had when they'd seen each other over the summer, making her feel uncomfortable.

"Hello, beautiful," Zabini purred.

"What can I help you with, Zabini?" She asked, hoping her voice was friendly enough to not seem rude. Even if she didn't like them, she wouldn't give them the satisfaction of saying she had no manners simply because of her filthy upbringing.

"Granger!" He choked.

"Yes," she replied slowly, "What can I help you with?"

"What happened to you?" He muttered, his eyes not on her face but her body.

Hermione huffed in annoyance. "Why does everyone keep asking me that? I haven't changed at all!"

"Hate to break it to you, but you have changed. A lot. I didn't even recognise you. I thought you were a new student, if I'm honest," Theo said to her.

"Thanks, Teddy, but I still don't understand how I've changed. I mean, I look the same, aside from being a little taller, that is."

"'Mione, you've changed, believe me."

Malfoy snapped his attention away from leering at Hermione's figure and looked between the two. "Teddy? You two know each other?" He questioned, not only surprised but feeling jealous at their familiarity. He didn't like it; Malfoys didn't feel jealousy.

"Yes, we study together in the library," Hermione replied, eyeing him cautiously. Why hadn't he insulted her yet? "Teddy's really quite intelligent. I'm surprised he wasn't placed in Ravenclaw," she said proudly and she smiled at him. Theo blushed at her comment.

"Well, if Theo has a nickname, I want one, too," Zabini purred.

"Zabini suits you fine."

"Beautiful, don't be like that. I'm sure you would gladly give me a nickname if we got to know one another a little better. Maybe more intimately," he spoke in his mother tongue, waggling his eyebrows suggestively.

His housemates groaned and rolled their eyes; usually, when Blaise spoke in Italian, the witches flocked to him and went weak in the knees, then no one stood a chance. Hermione was not one of those witches, she was far from impressed. Laughter erupted and she couldn't squash it down, Theo's laughter soon followed when he saw Zabini's confused, unimpressed expression at her reaction. No witch had ever laughed at him before, giggled and simpered, yes, but never full out laughed in his face.

"What?" He asked in confusion.

"That was a good one, thanks for the laugh, Zabini," Hermione replied in his native language, taking joy in seeing their eyebrows rise and nearly disappear into their hairlines, almost as if it'd been pre-planned.

"You can speak Italian?" Zabini questioned, both surprised and impressed.

"Enough to get by," she tipped her head slightly.

"How did I not know this about you?" Theo frowned.

"I suppose it never came up in conversation and you never asked."

"Do you speak any other languages?" Malfoy purred.

Hermione took the smallest step back, feeling uncomfortable and wondering why the hell he was civilly conversing with her. Was he planning something? "Yes, I can, nine."

"NINE!" The three Slytherins chorused in surprise.

"Are they alright?" She frowned, ignoring their outburst and gesturing to Crabbe and Goyle. "They haven't done anything but stare at me."

Their eyes were glued to her and they even seemed to be drooling a little. Grimacing, Hermione took that as her cue and excuse to leave.

"Never mind, I'll see you later, Teddy."

She turned and walked away before they had the chance to speak and she stepped into the great hall, heading for the Gryffindor table and taking her seat. Even during the feast, she was aware of their stares but she resolved to ignore it, focusing on conversing with Fred and George and as they prepared to take their leave and head to their dorms, Dumbledore stood from his chair, the room plummeting into silence as all eyes turned to him.

"Hogwarts has been chosen to host a legendary event. The Triwizard Tournament," he started.

"YOU'RE JOKING!" Fred yelled, spluttering as he choked on the pumpkin juice he'd just sipped at. The room burst into laughter and Fred gave a sheepish expression but was far from embarrassed.

Professor Dumbledore released a chuckle. "No, Mr. Weasley, I am not joking. For those of you who do not know, the Triwizard Tournament brings together three schools for a series of magical contests. From each school a single student is selected to compete. The schools set to compete are Hogwarts, the Durmstrang Institute and Beauxbatons Academy of Magic. They will arrive along with their headmaster and headmistress on Friday 28th October. I am sure you will make our guests feel welcome. The names of the contestants will be drawn after the Halloween Feast. Now, everyone have a pleasant first night back, classes start in the morning."

When Dumbledore retook his seat, Hermione, Fred and George all stood from the table and left the great hall, not needing to wait for the Gryffindor prefects, unlike the first years.

"I'm going for it," George said to Fred, as they headed down the halls.

"Me too," he replied and Hermione chuckled at them.

"What's so funny, Mione?" They asked together, slipping their arms around her shoulders or waist.

"That you two think you'll be allowed to compete."

"And why wouldn't we be allowed to compete?" George looked down at her. He thought it was adorable that she was so tiny compared to him and Fred.

"I've read about the Triwizard Tournaments in the past, they're incredibly dangerous; people have died from the tasks. That's why they stopped it all those years ago; the death toll was too high."

"Your point is?" Fred arched a brow, his mouth tugging into a smirk when she huffed in annoyance. He loved winding her up, she was beautiful when she was hair sparking mad.

"My point is, that in order to stop people from getting too badly injured, it's only logical that a great number of spells and incantations be known, which means it's only logical they will have to be a certain age and be required to have a specific skill set. I'm betting it's seventeen, the legal adult age in the Wizarding World."

They looked to one another, realising she most likely right.

"Well, if there is an age limit, we'll find a way to get passed it, but I suppose we'll have to wait until it's been announced and we can see what precautions have been put in place," Fred said with George nodding agreement.

Hermione shook her head but saw no point in arguing with them, besides, she had much to do. Once she'd unpacked, she had every intention of heading to the library, needing to find one last spell to put the finishing touches on the communication device she was creating to allow her to keep in touch with Oliver and Sirius.

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Hogwarts - Monday 5th September 1994

Hermione sat at her usual desk in the DADA classroom, Neville sat beside her and Harry and Ron sat to her left at a desk of their own, their current positioning surprising her given they were sat at the front of the classroom, rather than the back as they had a habit of doing.

Hermione's leg bounced nervously and she tapped the tip of her wand against the edge of the desk, feeling apprehensive about what was about to happen. The twins hadn't really been all that forthcoming about what to expect but they had hinted that it most certainly wasn't suitable for younger students, and that filled her with nerves.

When the door slammed against the stone wall, Hermione startled in her seat, poor Neville almost falling off his chair and would've done had she not reached out instinctively and gripped his robes, preventing him from doing so. Professor Moody hobbled inside, using his crutch for balance, the scars on his face pronounced as she scowled and his magical eye sweeping the room. She'd read about him before and there was a reason he was referred to as 'Mad Eye Moody'.

"Alastar Moody, ex-Auror. I am your new defence against the dark arts teacher. I am here because Dumbledore asked me. End of story, goodbye, the end! Any questions?" When no one raised their hand or spoke, he continued. "When it comes to the dark arts, I believe in a practical approach. First, who here can tell me how many unforgivable curses there are?"

"Three, Sir," Hermione answered, already feeling sick and the lesson had only just begun. She had a bad feeling in the pit of her stomach.

"And they are so named?"

"Because they are unforgivable. The use of any one of them will..."

"Earn you a one-way ticket to Azkaban," he interrupted, "Correct. Now, the Minister says you're too young to see what these curses do. I say different, you need to know what you're up against, you need to be PREPARED! You need to find another place for your chewing gum besides the underside of your desk, Mr. Finnegan!"

"What! No way the old cotter could see out of the back of his head," Seamus muttered, everyone turning to look at him.

"And hear across classrooms!" Moody said gruffly, throwing the chalkboard eraser across the classroom and people ducked as it hit the floor with a clatter. "So, which curse should we learn about first? WEASLEY!"

Ron jumped out of his seat and squeaked out a "Yes, Sir."

"Give us a curse," Moody instructed.

"Err, well my father did tell me about one. The Imperius Curse."

"Your father would know about that one, gave the Ministry a bit of trouble a while back. Perhaps this will show you why."

He hobbled over to his desk and lifted a jar, reaching inside and removing a spider as it sat in his palm. After enlarging it to a size that could be seen by everyone, he cast the Imperius, controlling the spider's movements of dancing, climbing up people's faces and floating in mid-air. Hermione could barely stand to watch and was grateful when he ended the curse.

"Many claimed that they only did You-Know-Who's bidding under the Imperius Curse. But here's the problem. How do we sort out the liars? Longbottom! Maybe you can tell us another/"

Neville darted a glance to Hermione before turning his eyes to Moody. "The... The Cruciatus Curse," he answered softly.

"Correct!" Moody brought the spider over to their desk and set it on the surface before Neville, lifting his wand and growling, " Crucio."

The spider screeched and wriggled against the surface, everyone cringing and wincing at the high pitched noise but Neville was the worst. Not long ago, Neville had confided in Hermione, telling her about his parents having been tortured to insanity during the war and it being the reason he was raised by his Grandmother.

Hermione, seeing Neville's horrified expression, lost her temper.

She stood from her chair so fast it toppled to the ground.

"Stop it! Can't you see it's bothering him?! Stop it!" She cried, slamming her hands against the desk until she felt the sting in her palms.

The classroom shook, items and trinkets falling from shelves and desks. She'd tried to control it, she'd tried the breathing exercises and remembering Sirius' advice but it hadn't worked. Seeing Neville so frightening and witnessing the innocent creature suffering under Moody's wand, it'd been too much to take.

Moody was quick to cancel the curse, his magical eye searching the room both confused and suspicious until he landed on Hermione.

Harry stood from his desk and approached, settling his hand on Hermione's shoulder, the violent tremor ceasing.

Harry stood up and put his hand on Hermione's shoulder, the room ceased to shake and everything stopped moving. Everyone was watching the interaction between Hermione and Harry.

"Sorry, Harry, I tried," she muttered sadly, lifting her gaze from the table and to his green eyes.

"I know, it wasn't your fault. You can't always be in control," he replied softly.

Moody observed them both carefully. 'I should keep an eye on that one. She's unpredictable. She's more powerful than she should be for her age. She has a bond with Potter, that could be useful.'

"Perhaps you can tell us the last unforgivable curse, Miss. Granger," Moody drew her attention. She shook her head, refusing to answer; she didn't want to say it, she couldn't.

"Avada Kedavra," he hissed, the hideous green light shooting from his wand and striking the spider, killing it instantly.

Hermione turned away and towards Harry as he hugged her tightly against his side and she cried softly, missing the expression that crossed his face.

"The Killing Curse, only one person is known to have survived it and he's sitting in this room," Moody said gruffly, his focus solely on Harry.

When the class ended, Hermione couldn't wait to leave but she stayed behind to comfort Neville, hugging the taller wizard until Moody interrupted. She hadn't wanted to leave him but she'd been sent on her way, her gaze never straying from him even when she collected her belongings. As she made to leave, she paused, catching sight of the dead spider on the surface of the desk and she wasn't sure what possessed her to do so, but she cupped it between her hands and stepped out of the classroom, seeing Harry and Ron waiting for her.

"I wish there was something I could do," she sighed, falling into step with them.

"It's just a spider," Ron snorted.

Hermione halted in her steps and glared at him.

"That doesn't matter, Ronald. It was tortured and killed. If it happened to a person would it just be a human? Spiders are living creatures, too, and they can feel pain and they can suffer. It didn't have to suffer and die for a bloody demonstration. It didn't do anything to deserve that sort of treatment!" She cried, tears welling in her eyes. She only wished she could've done something, that it hadn't been harmed and killed for such a horrific reason.

She'd barely taken a step before she halted once more, her watery eyes widening when she felt movement against her palm.

"What is it?" Harry frowned, seeing her expression.

Slowly and hesitantly, her eyes darted to her cupped hands and she took a breath before opening them, and there, sat in her palm, was a moving spider. It was alive.

"How did you do that?" Harry whispered.

"I... I don't know, I didn't mean to!"

"It was dead and now it's alive," Ron muttered. "You brought it back from the dead!" He said, horrified. His current horror and surprise meant that his fear of spiders was overridden for the time being.

"What's happening to me, Harry? I'm scared. Sirius said my powers were just growing, but no one has the ability to reverse death. No one. It's impossible!" She whispered, tears streaming down her face.

Harry reached out, slipping his arm around her shoulders and tugging her into his side.

"I think you should owl Sirius, see if they've found anything yet," he advised.

Nodding, Hermione stepped over to a window and set the spider free before wiping at her face with the sleeves of her robes, and they continued on their journey to Gryffindor Tower. Stepping into her dorm room, she placed her belongings on the ground and retrieved a notebook from her bedside table drawer. It was bound in dark red leather with a golden lion printed in the centre and the initials 'SB' and 'HG' in opposite corners.

She was glad she'd finally completed her project, making long-distance communication easier and removing the need for owls, and with two notebooks, one for Sirius and one for Oliver, she'd never get herself muddled up, conversing with the wrong wizards. The notebook was simple enough to use, the messages written on the pages being sent to the other's notebook, and with the added features of never-ending pages, Privacy Charms to prevent anyone but the owner from seeing the contents, and Hermione's modified Sizing Charm, it was easily portable, making it a highly effective form of communication.

Taking a seat at the desk, she waved her hand over the notebook and a muggle pen soon appeared, Hermione plucking it from the air and pressing it against the page.

Padfoot, are you there?

Yes, Kitten. What's wrong?

Something happened in DADA today.

What?

I lost control, the room shook and things fell off tables and shelves but Harry was able to calm me. I'm sorry, I tried. I really did but it didn't work. There were too many distractions. I feel so ashamed.

I know no one was hurt, and you've nothing to be ashamed of. What happened?

We had our first lesson with Professor Moody, he taught us about the Unforgivables and demonstrated them on a spider. I was angry and disgusted but I could handle it, but when he cast the Cruciatus in front of Neville, I couldn't stop myself. He was horrified. You know what happened to his parents! I had to make him stop! He used the Killing Curse in front of Harry, killing the spider.

HE DID WHAT!?

Hermione knew Sirius was furious, the indents of the pen during the writing were deeper on the paper, as if he were writing with the pen pushed harshly against the page

Something else happened.

What? What is it?

Padfoot, it scared me, I'm terrified of myself.

WHAT HAPPENED?!

The spider! I don't know why but I couldn't leave it there, so I took it with me. I was arguing with Ron about the morality of harming an innocent creature. I was so upset and all I can remember thinking is that I wished I'd have been able to help, to stop it from happening. I felt movement and when I opened my hands, the spider, Sirius. It was alive!

His reply never came, she'd expected it.

I don't know how I did it. Did I do it? I'm scared. What's happening to me? Have you found anything in your research?

No, Kitten, we haven't, but we'll keep looking until we do. Until then, try to not think about it.

That's easy for you to say.

Don't worry about it, you leave that to me. You need to focus on your school work and having a good year. You haven't got many of them left now, enjoy it whilst you can.

Chapter Fifty-Three

Hogwarts - Friday 28th October 1994

Hermione honestly didn't know what was happening. Lately, she'd had more interaction with both Malfoy and Zabini in the last few weeks than she had in the previous three years, and if that weren't odd enough, they were civil if not annoying, and it worried her, put her on edge. She did her best to avoid them when they possible and if necessary, unfortunately, they shared a couple of classes together and it made it more difficult. And if she thought dealing with the two Slytherins wasn't bad enough, she'd noticed a huge spike in the number of boys that spoke to her, too.

Oliver had also kept his promise and visited her once a week, spending their little time together conversing and informing her of the goings-on back home and his new training schedule as an official professional Quidditch player, and with his last visit being two days prior, she wasn't expecting to see him until next week, though she wasn't quite sure what he was helping Dumbledore with that required his presence in the castle, being tight-lipped on the matter no matter how much she begged and pleaded that he tell her.

As Hermione's class schedule had stayed the same, thankfully, but having dropped divination and being so far ahead with regards to the lesson content, Hermione not only no longer required the use of a time-turner, but she also excused from having to attend every less, allowing her time for personal study, so long as her expected assignments were handed in by the due date.

After stopping by Gryffindor Tower to drop her belongings in her room after finishing up with classes, Hermione was making her way towards the library, in need of some new reading material. Unfortunately, she didn't make it and her plans were interrupted when Fred and George stepped around the corner and bumped into her, almost as if they'd known she was there. They did. Silently, they each clasped a hand around hers and pulled her in the opposite direction, leading her through the corridors and down staircases.

"Hello, Hermione. Why hello, boys. Would you be so kind as to follow us down this dark and deserted corridor? I would be more than happy to," she snarked, the twins chuckling at her. her.

"Sorry, Love," George smiled over his shoulder at her. "The other schools are arriving any minute now in the courtyard, it's not something you want to miss," and as he said this, they reached the entrance courtyard, students bustling about and crowding and pushing one another, trying to get a better vantage point.

Unconcerned, the twins pushed their way through the crowd and to the front, finding Harry, Ron and Ginny and getting the best view possible. As expected, there were protests but with a single glance from the twins' narrowed eyes, there were soon silenced. The threat of a Weasley Twin prank was something to take seriously.

Hermione, hoping they'd arrive soon and it would all be over with so she could retreat to the library, folded her arms over her chest and leaned her shoulder against George's arm. Not long later, Beauxbatons were the first to arrive, flying above Hogwarts' grounds in a large golden carriage that was pulled by beautiful white Pegasus', admittedly, it was impressive. Hagrid stood in the distance, his massive form standing out easily as he directed the carriage to the correct landing point. Unfortunately, the carriage looked to be a little out of hand and Hagrid's height did him no favours when it seemed to be flying a little too low to the ground and he was forced to dive off to the side to avoid being harmed, laughter erupting. Whilst Hermione did feel a little guilty for laughing at his misfortune, she couldn't deny it had been funny.

"There's something you don't see every day," George commented loudly, the laughter around them rising.

Hermione didn't even look at him when she thumped him in the arm, smiling smugly when he winced and rubbed at the aching spot, but a scowl quickly replaced it when he winked at her. He'd been faking it and she hadn't hurt him at all.

The Durmstrang Institute arrived shortly after in a magnificent ship that emerged from under the Black Lake, the vessel reminding her of something she'd see or read about in a pirate-themed novel.

"That's brave; obviously no one's told them what's in there," Hermione muttered, the twins snorting at her, barely taking their eyes off the lake.

As soon as it was clear the show was over, Hermione ducked through the crowd and away from the twins before they could stop her from leaving, and she hid away in the library until it was time for dinner. After checking out a new book with Madame Pince, something that was both new reading material and that could be helpful in the development of a new product she was working on for the twins, Hermione blindly navigated the corridors, her destination being the great hall.

As she neared, her nose was firmly in her book, paying no attention to where she was or her surroundings, relying solely on her memory of the castle layout, but people new well enough to step around her when they saw her coming. With her attention elsewhere, she didn't see the students of Beauxbatons or Durmstrang lined up against the wall, muttering between one another as they awaited their introduction, and neither did she see Fred and George sneaking up behind her.

She halted in her steps, her brow furrowing and her teeth nibbling at her lip as she tried to wrap her mind around the words on the page and once she felt she had an understanding, she nodded to herself and continued with her steps, but when the twins closed the distance and George reached out, settling his hands on her hips, Hermione shrieked loudly, almost dropping her book to the ground in surprise. She whipped around, a scowl settled on her face as they smiled at her angelically, and she lifted her book, whacking George in the arm and then Fred, too.

"Ow!" They whined, rubbing the sore spot and she didn't bother to look sympathetic.

George stole the book from her, partially so she couldn't hit him with it again, and partially so he could take his hand in hers while Fred did the same, them both tugging her down the corridor and the short distance to the great hall, stepping past Hogwarts' newest visitors partially hidden in the shadows.

"Why, hello, Hermione. Hello, Fred, George. Would you be so kind as to accompany us to the great hall for dinner? Boys, I would be delighted," she said sarcastically.

Before they reached the doors, Hermione heard the mutter of Bulgarian, but that wasn't what caught her attention; it was the voice. She knew it. Twisting to look over her shoulder as the twins continued to tug her forward, she squinted her eyes and searched, her gaze landing on someone she instantly recognised. The boy she'd helped during the World Cup and he stood between his headmaster and someone she assumed was a friend of his.

She halted in her steps, the twins' arms being pulled tight before they were tugged backwards, almost slipping on the ground, but her gaze was locked on him.

"It's you," she spoke in surprise. She saw his mouth tug into a smile.

"And it is you," he replied.

A friendly smiled crossed her face and she pulled her hands from the twins' turning to face him rather than looking at him over her shoulder, the action starting to ache.

"Did you get your injuries looked at?"

"Da, I did. There vos no problem, you did good job healing them vor me."

"Oh, I doubt it was good, but I did what I could. And you were fine? You took a nasty hex to the shoulder and hit the ground fairly hard."

"Da," he tipped his head, his mouth tugging up in the corner. "I am vine, and thanks to you, I am still alive."

"I doubt it, I'm sure you could've managed on your own," she said kindly.

"'Mione, we have to go, I'm hungry," Fred interrupted.

She rolled her eyes, turning her head towards him. "You're always hungry, Fred."

"She's got a point," George agreed before they shared a glance and then reached for her once more, pulling her away from them and towards the great hall.

"Manners," she chastised, before calling a "See, you later," over her shoulder.

Fred, deciding that she wasn't moving fast enough and he just had to get to his seat, paused only to swoop Hermione up and over his shoulder.

"FRED GIDEON WEASLEY! YOU PUT ME DOWN THIS INSTANT!" She shrieked.

Fred winced but held his ground, George stepping back and out of the way, his mouth tugging into a smirk and his arms folding over his chest.

"Fred, so help me, I will hex you!" She threatened dangerously.

He halted in his steps and then slowly placed her feet on the ground, backing away from her with his hands held up in surrender, ducking and hiding behind his sniggering twin. Hermione pulled her wand from her robes and advanced on Fred, George shoving him away from him because there was no way he wanted to be caught in the crossfire, and Fred made a break for it down the corridor.

Hermione didn't bat an eyelash as she flung the Bat Bogey Hex at him, smiling smugly when Fred called out in surprise, trying to fight off and defend against the flying snot bats. Fred, catching sight of Harry leaving the great hall in search of them, called,

"Harry! Help me!" As he ran past the younger wizard, Harry stepping out of the way before he got hit by a rogue snot bat, laughter bubbling out of him and mixing with George's.

"You're brilliant," Harry complimented through his laughter, Hermione smiling cheekily at him.

"Where's Colin Creevey when you need him?" Hermione mused, their laughter seeming to double as it grew louder.

"Spitfire! Please!" He yelled, now running in the opposite direction.

"Are you sorry?"

"Yes!"

"Do you promise not to do it again?"

"Yes!" He called, his voice desperate.

"Alright then, Finite Incantatem!"

Once the snot bats vanished, Fred collapsed to the floor, sprawled out on the ground as he stared up at the ceiling, trying to calm his breathing Hermione approached, stopping beside him and looking down at him with an arched eyebrow.

"You're an evil woman," he muttered.

"That's why you love me," she shrugged.

"I suppose," he agreed, accepting her hand and she pulled him to his feet. "Thanks for the help," Fred snarked, glowering at Harry and his twin as they approached.

"Sorry, Mate, but I was not getting involved, she scares me," Harry admitted with no shame, sharing a quick and not so subtle high-five with Hermione.

Fred turned his eyes to George, cocking an eyebrow.

"Sorry, brother mine, but she scares me more than mum does," he shrugged, sharing a high-five with Hermione, too.

"Come on, dinner's about to start," Harry informed them, slipping his arm around Hermione's shoulders as they fell into step on either side of them.

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"Viktor, come, we haff to go," his friend Aleks said as he knocked on the door.

Viktor groaned; he hadn't wanted to come to Hogwarts; he'd wanted to stay at school, for his final year to be calm and quiet. He believed he got enough attention as it was and he didn't want any more but he didn't have a choice. His headmaster had insisted he be part of the select few that would spend the year at another school.

Sighing and scrubbing his hand over his face, he reluctantly stood from his bed and left his room, heading for the ship deck. He'd had much preferred to have walked beside his friends but Karkaroff reached for him when he made to pass, pulling him to a stop.

"Viktor, you vill valk vith me, by my side."

"Yes, Sir," he replied respectfully, ensuring his posture was perfect and tone clear.

Karkaroff led the way to the castle, stepping into the entrance courtyard and being met and greeted by a member of staff who took them towards the great hall, lining them up outside the doors as they prepared and waited for their introduction. The Beauxbaton girls stood along the same wall but with a divide between them, his classmates watching them closely as they giggled and batted their eyelashes at them. Viktor rolled his eyes; he'd had enough of simpering women throwing themselves at him.

But the girl he'd met at the World Cup, the one who'd saved his life, she didn't even seem to recognise him, let alone know him. No one was that good an actress. That was something that never happened. He hadn't been able to get her out of his mind.

"You're still thinking about girl? Yes?" His friend Nikoli said knowingly. Viktor nodded, seeing no point in denying it. "You should vorget her, you vill never see her again."

"I know," he scowled, the furrow in his brow smoothing out when he heard it. Her voice. His head lifted and his eyes searched until he saw her, hitting two laughing redheaded twins with the book she grasped in her hand.

"Why, hello, Hermione. Hello, Fred, George. Would you be so kind as to accompany us to the great hall for dinner? Boys, I would be delighted," she spoke, not looking surprised as they dragged her down the corridor by her hands. Viktor's mouth tugged at the corners in amusement.

"It's her," he muttered in his mother tongue, several of his classmates who knew of her turning their heads towards her curiously.

Several of Viktor's classmates heard what he said and turned to see the girl being pulled towards them by two boys.

"That's her? She's beautiful," Nikoli commented in Bulgarian and Viktor nodded in agreement, watching as they grew closer to the large doors and without seeming to notice them, or if they did, they didn't seem to care.

Nikoli's words must have carried as he found himself being pulled into a dark gaze, as she twisted to look behind her, her brow furrowed until her eyes widened.

"Here we go, another fan who's going throw herself at him," one of his classmates grumbled, mutters of agreement sounding from the rest of them as they watched her carefully.

"It's you," she said in surprise.

His mouth tugged at the corners. She remembered him.

"And it is you," he replied.

Viktor saw the indicators that his headmaster was to say something most likely mean and snappish, so he subtly shook his head, asking him to let him handle it. She didn't deserve to be on the receiving end of Karkaroff's temper. He saw his classmates blink slowly when a kind smile pulled at her face, not flirty or forced, but genuine.

"Did you get your injuries looked at?"

"Da, I did. There vos no problem, you did good job healing them vor me," he answered.

"Oh, I doubt it was good, but I did what I could. And you were fine? You took a nasty hex to the shoulder and hit the ground fairly hard."

His classmates glanced to one another, surprised at her lack of a reaction to personally interacting with him, something most witches would kill to have happen. There didn't seem to be any recognition on her part, if only as the boy she'd helped when in need.

"Da," he tipped his head, his mouth tugging up in the corner. "I am vine, and thanks to you, I am still alive."

"I doubt it, I'm sure you could've managed on your own," she said kindly.

He made to respond but was interrupted by one of the redheaded twins saying, "'Mione, we have to go, I'm hungry."

She rolled her eyes, turning her head towards him. "You're always hungry, Fred."

"She can tell them apart?!"

"How? They are identical!"

"She's got a point," the other twin agreed before he shared a look with his brother, and they reached for her hands and tugged her back down the corridor away from him.

"Manners," she chastised, Viktor's mouth twitching in amusement.

Viktor kept his eyes on her retreating back, a frown settling on his face and he made to step forward to offer assistance when one of the twins hoisted the small girl over his shoulder, but Nikoli prevented him from doing so by placing his arm out in front of him and shaking his head.

"FRED GIDEON WEASLEY! YOU PUT ME DOWN THIS INSTANT"

"Why does he look so afraid of her?" Aleks asked in confusion.

Viktor chuckled. "He should be, she saved my life by fending off seven attackers by herself."

"Beautiful and handy with a wand," he commented, tipping his head slightly as they watched the scene unfold.

"Not just a wand," Viktor corrected. Nikoli arched an eyebrow. "She is capable of non-verbal and wandless magic, I have witnessed it."

"It's him. It's Harry Potter!" Jamous, one of his classmates hissed, his chuckles having trailed off after witnessing the amusing hex the girl had used against her friend. Viktor could sympathise with the younger wizard, to have everyone know your name could be both a blessing and a curse, particularly at such a young age.

"You're an evil woman," the redhead sprawled on the ground breathed out.

"That's why you love me," she replied with a shrug, helping him off the ground. the girl said.

"Thanks for the help," he scowled at his twin and Harry Potter. they chuckled at his sarcastic comment.

"Sorry, Mate, but I was not getting involved, she scares me," Harry Potter admitted, not seeing to be surprised she'd resorted to such measures.

"Sorry, brother mine, but she scares me more than mum does," his twin said, Viktor hearing the sniggers of his classmates. Every teenage boy was afraid of their mother whether they admitted it or not and for him to say he was more afraid of a teenage girl spoke volumes.

"How old is she?" Jamous asked curiously.

"I'm not certain, when I asked, she gave me two answers."

"She doesn't know vho you are, does she?" Jamous mused, slipping back to broken English.

"No, I don't think so," Viktor shook his head.

"Vho is this girl?" Aleks asked aloud.

"I don't know, but I intend to vind out. Learn vhat you can."

Before they knew it, they were being introduced and Viktor walked down the aisle of the great hall next to Karkaroff with an impressive passive expression, whilst his friends and classmates put on a show for Beauxbatons and Hogwarts.

"Bloody hell, it's Viktor Krum!"

"Ronald, leave the poor boy alone!"

Viktor barely turned his head, wishing to see those responsible for the comments and he was surprised to see it was her. He didn't know what surprised him more, that she didn't seem to be bothered or impressed by what his classmates had spent weeks choreographing as she read a book, or that she was defending him without taking her attention away from said book.

"But, 'Mione, it's Viktor Krum!"

"I heard you the first time, I am not deaf, Ronald. Leave him be; he's just a regular human being like ourselves, so don't be bothering him."

"A regular human being?" He replied in disbelief.

"Yes, now be quiet, I'm trying to read."

Viktor's mouth tugged into a smirk before he schooled his features and took his seat at the table beneath a silver and green serpent banner, where he'd been informed before entrance they were to take their meals. He sat beside a young blonde wizard with his hair slicked back, Aleks took the seat beside him and Jamous and Nikoli took the seats opposite, and when the feast began, he shared an impressed glance with his friends before they selected their food.

"Draco Malfoy," the blonde beside him introduced, holding his hand out for him to shake it. Eyeing his hand, Viktor reluctantly took it. His father had warned him about the Malfoy family before his departure from Durmstrang.

"Viktor, this is Aleks, Jamous and Nikoli," he gestured to each of them with a tip of his head.

"That's Crabbe, Goyle, Theo Nott and Blaise Zabini," Malfoy returned the gesture, pointing out each as he spoke. Viktor was aware they were all Purebloods, three of the four of them being members of the Sacred Twenty-eight. He, himself, came from a long line of Purebloods, too, and they were well known in Eastern-Europe.

"Malvoy, vhat can you tell me about girl over there?" Viktor questioned, subtly gesturing to the red and gold table with the banner emblazing a roaring lion, as she laughed, slapped one of the redheaded twins upside the head, hit the other in his arm and then returned to reading her book.

"Who? Her? Sat in-between the Weasley Twins?" Blaise arched an eyebrow. Viktor and his friends nodded. "Hermione Granger, Muggleborn extraordinaire, Gryffindor Princess, bookworm, know-it-all, Brightest Witch of our Age, defender of the innocent, protector of the weak, third member and the brains of the Golden Trio, the third Weasley Twin, prankster and Hogwarts newest beauty." Viktor blinked slowly, sharing a dumbfounded expression with his friends.

"Nicknames and monikers," Theo Nott shrugged his shoulders. "Pretty much everyone loves her, disregarding most Purebloods and Slytherins, of course."

"She's pretty now, too, she didn't use to be When I saw her at the World Cup I thought she was a completely different person. Apparently, she's rich, too. Too bad she's a Mudblo..."

"Don't call her that!" Theo snapped, Malfoy flinching back in surprise.

The Krum's hadn't believed in blood purity for several generations, and neither had his friends' families but they knew such practices were still common in Britain, so Theo's outburst took them by surprise.

"You've bullied her for years, you called her a Mudblood at every opportunity you had and now that she's pretty and you know she has money, she's suddenly good enough for you, regardless of her blood?! That's not the way things work, Malfoy. What you fail to realise is that she's the kindest person your spoilt little arse will ever meet, and she's downright brilliant."

Malfoy's eyes were wide and his mouth parted whilst Zabini arched a questioning eyebrow, his mouth tugging into an amused half-smirk half-smile.

"She took care of Sirius Black when he was a fugitive, ensuring he was clothed, fed and safe. When you were busy spreading rumours about Professor Lupin, Hermione spent her time making chocolate gift baskets and researching how to make it more bearable for him. She faced off against the Ministry to prove Black's innocence and she handed them the true culprit on a silver platter, that was last year alone, don't get me started on the two years before that."

"How d'you know all of this?" Blaise asked curiously.

"Some of it she told me, some of it I read about it in the Prophet. And I wouldn't bother trying to get close to her, not only will she hex you and verbally destroy you, but Potter and the Weasley Twins won't let any male near her, they've been running interference for weeks," Theo sent a withering glare to Malfoy.

Malfoy's stunned expression quickly morphed into a smirk. "Nott, are you in love with Granger?"

Theo's glare darkened. "No, Malfoy, I am not in love with Hermione, I see her as a sister. Now, if you will excuse me, I need to use the bathroom."

"What's his problem?" Malfoy huffed, watching Theo's retreating back as he stormed away from the table and out of the great hall.

"He's right, you know? You treat her differently than you used to now that you know she's got money and she's coming into her looks," Blaise commented.

"Like you don't," Malfoy scoffed.

"True, but I've never bullied her; I've never given her a reason to hate me. You, on the other hand..." Blaise trailed off, letting it sink in.

When footsteps approached they all lifted their heads, seeing Hermione approaching with a concerned frown on her face, ignoring the silence that seemed to settle over the room and the many eyes watching her; no one ever strayed from their tables.

She stopped in place opposite Malfoy and beside Blaise, sending a quick friendly smile towards Viktor and his friends before it morphed into a glare she aimed at Malfoy, Viktor hearing the sniggers of his classmates and his own mouth twitched in amusement.

"Granger, you're looking good this evening," he leered at her, wiggling his eyebrows.

"Excuse me why I throw up a little," she grimaced.

"She's a firecracker," Nikoli said to his group of friends in muttered Bulgarian.

Hermione's head turned towards them, a smile pulling at her mouth.

"Only when I'm mad, my family is insulted or someone I care for is harmed," she replied.

Viktor stared in surprise, his expression matched by the rest of his classmates who'd overhead.

"You can speak Bulgarian?" Viktor questioned.

She smiled and nodded. "Enough to get by."

"That makes it three," Blaise said thoughtfully.

"Vhat do you mean?" Jamous asked him.

"Well, we've recently discovered that Granger, here, can speak nine languages."

"Nine!" They spluttered, looking to her in surprise.

"I get bored easily and I like a challenge, but I had a Grandmother that migrated to Bulgaria before I was born, she taught me some of the language before she died."

"That's English, Italian and Bulgarian. That leaves six, what are they?" Malfoy leaned closer.

"That's none of your business, Malfoy. What did you say to Teddy?"

"Why d'you call him that?" Blaise frowned.

"What?" She blinked, not expecting such a question. "I don't know, it suits him; he reminds me of a cuddly teddy bear that you just want to hug."

"Theodore Nott? Teddy bear? Cuddly? Are we speaking of the same person?" Blaise said disbelievingly.

"Yes, now stop distracting me, Zabini, what did you say to Teddy?"

"Your parents are muggles, how are they wealthy?" Malfoy asked.

Hermione huffed, folding her arms over her chest in annoyance.

"Just because my parents are muggles doesn't mean they can't be wealthy, they're quite successful in their field of work and have their own business. And, I feel I should tell you, I was adopted."

"Excuse me?" He blinked slowly.

"A-dop-ted," she pronounced each syllable slowly. "Granger is my adoptive name, my biological parents died when I was a child. Had I had only other living relatives I would have been placed with them. I don't have access to the records and I don't know my birth name, so for all I know, I might not even be a Muggleborn."

She pierced him with a significant look before turning and heading out of the great hall, likely in search of Theo. When they followed her with their gaze, Blaise and Malfoy caught sight of Crabbe and Goyle drooling and they both reached up to smack them over the head, the two wizards giving their heads a shake and returning to their food as if nothing had happened.

"That never gets old," Zabini commented. .

"Vhat doesn't?" Aleks asked.

"Granger putting Malfoy in his place," he shrugged. "She's the only one that's not afraid to. She beats him in everything. Arguments, classes, magic, duelling and she's first in our year for grades and academic achievements. There's been a few rumours that she's received higher exam marks than some of the seventh years, too."

"Are you ready, Teddy?" Hermione asked, coming up behind him as he sat at the table.

When they'd both returned to the great hall, he'd looked a lot calmer and once they'd retaken their seat at their own tables, Dumbledore stood to give a speech on the Triwizard Tournament, and Barty Crouch –who refused to even glance Hermione's way- had explained the rules of participation, something the twins hadn't been happy about.

"Yeah, let's go," he stood to leave.

"Where are you going?"

"Library," they said in unison.

Malfoy rolled his eyes.

"If you skipped the library, I'm sure we could have some fun," he muttered, his eyes roaming her robe-clad body.

"Over your dead body," she said.

"I'm pretty sure the correct phrase is 'over my dead body,'" Theo corrected.

"Nope, said it right the first time," she assured him, the Durmstrang boys, Theo and Blaise snorting at her reply.

"Can I come to the library with you? I'm sure we could find more fun things to do," Blaise spoke in his mother tongue.

Hermione snorted. "But reading is fun, Zabini."

"Beautiful, why do you hate me so?" He questioned, his expression one of mock hurt.

Hermione chuckled. "Oh, Zabini, I don't hate you."

"You don't?" He asked surprised.

"No, I don't, I just don't like you. There's a difference," she cheeked. "Anyway, we best get going."

Hearing a call of her name, she turned towards the Gryffindor table.

"Heads up!" George shouted, two blueberry muffins came flying from the other side of the hall, Hermione catching each of them in one hand. "Snack food! Gotta keep your brain fed!"

"Thanks, Georgie!" She raised her voice so he could hear and then she turned and handed a muffin to Theo, who took it gratefully.

"We're thinking of having a game of Quidditch later, you're playing!" George called.

She snorted. "Not a chance in hell. I would rather face a dementor," she said replied, George chuckling before his attention returned to his food.

"You shouldn't say that, Granger," Blaise frowned.

"Why not? It wouldn't be the first time I'd have to face one."

"You've faced a dementor?" Malfoy and Blaise questioned in surprise.

"Twice," she said vaguely.

"So you're capable of casting a Patronus?" Malfoy surmised. "What is it?"

"I'm not telling you."

"What? Come on," Blaise whined.

She turned to her eyes to Viktor. "If you tell them what it is, I'll Bat Bogey you," she threatened.

"Bat Bogey?" He tipped his head in confusion.

"What I did to Fred in the corridor."

He chuckled and his friends sniggered at him facing such a fate. "Your secret is safe vith me," he promised.

"Good," she nodded once.

"Why don't you like Quidditch? You've never told me," Theo asked.

"You're kidding, right? I love Quidditch. I just don't like it when my boys are playing. I've lost count of the number of injuries they've had. And that's only here at school, don't get me started on the injuries they get when they're at home."

"You don't play 'cause you're afraid of heights," Malfoy said smugly.

She made to reply but paused in doing so when she felt two very familiar arms snake around her shoulders and waist and she leaned against them without thinking about it.

"Weasels!" Malfoy sneered. Hermione glared murderously, the Durmstrang students leaning back slightly in surprise at how terrifying it was.

The twins didn't look surprised or rise to the bait, grinning in response.

"Malfoy," they chorused cheerfully.

"Our Spitfire's an amazing flyer, taught her ourselves we did. Took us almost three years to get her over her fear of heights but we did it," Fred said proudly.

"She dabbles in muggle sports, too," George picked up, "Her father being quite the fan and teaching her when she was younger. She doesn't play Quidditch 'cause she thinks it dangerous. -"

"- She could tell you anything and everything about it. -"

"- But she won't play it. Anyway, we best be going, got some pranks to plan -"

"- And products to create. -"

"- See you back at our dorm?"

"Yes, George, I'll be back before curfew," she nodded, and they gave her a squeeze before unwinding their arms from around her and leaving out the hall.

"You share a dorm?" Viktor questioned, appalled at the thought.

"Ask them, they like a good gossip, I'm telling you, they're worse than a bunch of third year girls," and with that, she and Theo left the hall.

"So?" Aleks prompted.

"There's been rumours for a while that she shared a dorm with some of the boys. The Gryffindors were always muttering about how they'd see her coming from the boys' staircase and they never saw her in the girls' dorms, and no one had her as a roommate. But the Professors never investigated the rumours so we assumed it was nothing. I think that's the first time I've heard them give credit to the rumours," Blaise said thoughtfully. "Which means it was four boys. Oliver Wood, he graduated last year and is now a reserve keeper for Puddlemere, there were rumours going 'round he'd changed dorms, too. And there's Lee Jordan, sixth year like the Weasley Twins, the one with the dreadlocks," he tipped his head towards him in gesture.

"And vhy does she share room vith boys and not vith girls in her year?" Jamous asked, Viktor frowning at what he'd learned.

"Beats us," Blaise shrugged. "Might have something to do with her being severely bullied our first year."

"So vhat is her relationship vith Harry Potter and those boys?" Nikoli asked, darting a glance to Viktor who tipped his head subtly in thanks.

Blaise arched an eyebrow, his mouth twitching in amusement. "I'd say Potter's more of a brother to her, she's fiercely protective of him. And the only time she's seen without the Weasley Twins is in classes or when she's with Potter, Weasel and Weaslette. They're pretty much inseparable, they do everything together. From what I can remember, they've been that way since our first day here."

"They are togever?" Aleks asked.

Malfoy's eyebrow shot up on his forehead at their fishing for information. "Why?"

"Just curious," he shrugged nonchalantly.

"We don't think they are. At least, not yet. But I wouldn't be surprised if they ended up together in the future. That's why all the boys are trying to get to Granger first."

"You know, Granger's powerful, too, especially for her age," Blaise mused, looking to Malfoy. "You witnessed it, what she did in Moody's class? When she freaked out over him doing the Unforgivables in front of Longbottom, the room shook."

"It was just a coincidence," Malfoy waved it off, missing Viktor exchanging looks with his friends.

"Oh? Then why did it stop when Potter touched her?" Blaise questioned, pushing his plate away from him and then standing from the bench, leaving him with food for thought.

Chapter Fifty-Four

Hogwarts - Monday 31st October 1994

Hermione stood waiting for her turn to come. She was in DADA and Professor Moody was casting the Imperius Curse -of all bloody things!- on the students so they'd know what it would feel like. If they could, they had to try and fight it but no one had managed to succeed so far, something that had been expected, but Harry seemed to be doing fairly well.

He was stood on top of the desk, jumping up and down on the surface but appeared to be fighting it off, his movements tense and his hands clenched into fists. Professor Moody soon lifted the curse and Harry climbed back to the floor and retook his seat, slumping into his chair tiredly.

"Not bad, Potter," Moody praised. "I was attempting to Imperius Potter to jump off the table and leapfrog around the room, but he fought it, resulting in the jumping on the spot. Not bad at all, Potter. Miss. Granger, you're next."

She took a breath before moving to stand in the centre of the classroom, seeing Harry give her an encouraging smile.

"Imperio," Moody said, aiming his wand at Hermione.

Hermione gasped out loud; she could feel a presence inside her mind. It was pushing her to do something but she couldn't hear it properly. It made her head hurt. Hearing a voice, she focused, she listened carefully, the moment she did so, a feeling of calm swept over her.

"Climb onto the table! Dance like a ballerina! Climb onto the table! Dance like a ballerina!"

Almost as sudden as it had come, the voice changed to one she didn't recognise. It's wasn't gruff like Moody's, this was something different. It seemed colder and crueller.

"Must get Harry Potter! Harry Potter must die! Must get Harry Potter! Harry Potter must die!"

She didn't want to do that. She didn't want to hurt Harry; he was her family and she loved him. She would always protect him. She didn't like that she could feel a presence in her mind and she definitely didn't like someone else telling her what to do, so she did the only thing she could think of; she tried to push the presence out of her mind.

It was so painful, her eyes began to water and sting and she could feel the pressure building in her head, as if it was going to explode. Hermione's hands fisted in her hair in a desperate attempt to dull the pain, she folded over on herself and collapsed to the ground on her knees.

A scream of pain fell from her lips, and with a powerful and unintentional thrust, her hands came away from her head, Professor Moody not only being thrown from her mind, but across the classroom, too. Gasps sounded around her but she couldn't focus.

Slowly, Professor Moody sat up and stared at Hermione. That's impossible. She's too young! Not even the Dark Lord was capable of such a thing at that age. She shouldn't be able to do that. What is she? She's a bigger threat to the plan than I thought.

Hermione remained on her knees, crying in relief as the pain was no longer present and the voice in her mind had quieted, but she couldn't seem to calm down, to catch her breath. When Harry dropped onto his knees before her, he engulfed her in a hug and she clutched his robes tightly in her hands.

"Fred, George," she whispered. She needed them and she didn't care why.

"Wwhat you have just witnessed is Miss. Granger successfully throwing off the Imperius Curse," Moody said gruffly in disbelief, the rest of her classmates watching as she cried into Harry's robes, a bond between them shared that could never be faked or mimicked.

Before the class could continue, Fred and George appeared at the door, looking worried. They'd been allowed out of class early due to the drawing of the champions later that evening and they'd been drawn to the DADA classroom, unsure of why. Seeing Hermione's distraught form, they darted forward, crouching down before her.

"What happened?" George demanded, a frightening look entering his eyes.

"The Imperius Curse, she threw it off, she didn't even move. She just screamed and collapsed on the floor, and she threw Moody across the room," Harry whispered, not wanting anyone to overhear.

The twins shared a glance and without any words passed between them, Fred removed Hermione from Harry's hold and settled her in his arms, cradling her against his chest as she automatically wrapped her arms around his neck, crying into his shoulder. He knew she needed him. .

"Take her stuff to our dorm will you, Mate?" George asked, not waiting for answer as he and Fred rose to full height and left out of the room without permission, leaving behind speechless students. Harry quickly grabbed his and Hermione's belongings and left the room, following behind them.

The twins quickly and quietly rushed down the corridors with people making way for them and watching in curiosity and disbelief and people began whispering. As they rounded the corner, they walked past four Durmstrang students who looked at them in surprise, not at them not acknowledging their presence as the polite thing to do, but at the crying witch in Fred's arms and the matching worried expressions they wore.

"Harry Potter, vhat is vrong vith Miss .Granger?" Viktor asked worriedly, halting Harry mid-step.

He paused and allowed the twins to continue on their journey.

Harry released a tired sigh and pushed a hand through his hair. "Moody was casting the Imperius Curse on us so we'd know what it felt like. Hermione was the last to go but she didn't do anything, like the others had, and before we knew it, she was screaming and she hit the ground. She not only pushed off the Imperius Curse but she threw Moody across the classroom. I'm sorry, but I have to go," with that said, Harry rushed off and headed to Gryffindor Tower so he could drop his and Hermione's belongings off.

Viktor and his friends looked at each other.

"She threw off the Imperius Curse at her age? That's impossible," Aleks spoke in surprise.

"No one is that powerful", Jamous stated.

"Apparently there is," Viktor replied, fascinated.

Fred and George reached the hospital wing and rushed in with Hermione, Madam Pomphrey bustling over and directing them to a bed.

"What happened?"

"I think it's best that we explain it to Professor McGonagall. But in short, she threw of the Imperius Curse" George explained and at the mention of the Unforgivable, Professor McGonagall was summoned, arriving minutes later.

"What happened to her?" She questioned worriedly, pulling them off to the side they couldn't be overheard and allowing Madam Pomphrey the space she needed to tend to Hermione.

"All we know is what Harry told us. Moody was putting the Imperius Curse on Hermione, only she collapsed to the floor screaming. She threw off the curse and she threw Moody across the classroom," Fred explained and McGonagall looked both impressed and horrified.

"We felt that she needed us so we rushed to her, we found her on the floor struggling to breathe whilst she sobbed into Harry's robes," George said and he looked at McGonagall thoughtfully.

"I suppose you have been kept in the loop about Hermione's powers growing," Fred said and she nodded. "So you know what happened at the World Cup, and that Sirius has worked with her to stop the emotional outbursts from happening?" She nodded again. "Which means you also know that she has perfect control of wandless and non-verbal magic?" She nodded again. "We're keeping an eye on her, she's only used wandless and non-verbal magic twice since we returned to school, both times in Moody's class, but other than that, she seems to be fine."

"Yes, I have been corresponding with Sirius regarding her outbursts and he believes that she can handle them."

"So I guess you also know that she's becoming suspicious, and that she asked us if she was a Muggleborn. She's terrified of her magic, of herself. But they wouldn't let us tell her," George said angrily.

"She is not ready yet," McGonagall responded.

"Professor, you don't understand; she sometimes has these moments where she looks at us like she knows who we truly are to her, she's more dependent on us now. She needed us today and the only reason we knew that was because she told us. We've been reading up on Sirens, bonds and mates. When the bond is completed we'll be able to feel each others' emotions as well as block them after practice. But Sirens can also send out distress calls and she did that today, that's how we knew. "

"She's been getting this look in her eyes, we've all witnessed it. She may not be ready yet but given the signs, she will be very soon. And I hope it's before she figures it out for herself. It's best if we tell her," Fred sighed tiredly.

"Well, in that case, you boys should ensure that she feels safe and is comfortable and you best keep an eye on her. Professor Snape and I will also watch for any other signs as well as wandless and non-verbal magic."

"Just how powerful will she be? She threw off the Imperius Curse for Merlin's sake, for someone her age, that's never happened before. Hell, dad says a fully grown wizards struggles, it's virtually impossible. And she brought a spider back from the dead!"

"She did what?" McGonagall asked disbelievingly.

"You don't know?" George frowned. "According to Harry, Moody used a spider to demonstrate the Unforgivable curses and when Hermione left the classroom she had the dead spider in her hands. She'd been arguing with Ron and when she opened her hands, the spider was moving; it was alive!"

"Merlin!" She gasped. "That's not even possible, particularly with the Killing Curse."

"And the boys are bloody annoying us? Do you know how many we've glared at and threatened to prank?" George spoke annoyed and McGonagall smirked. "I hate this whole bloody Siren beauty thing. People are noticing her now, boys are noticing her now. But she was beautiful before the Siren kicked in. They're drooling, staring and following her around. It's exhausting trying to keep them away from her!" He groaned and Fred agreed, nodding silently beside him with a angrily furrowed brow.

McGonagall bit back a laugh. "Well, keep doing a good job, boys," she said, walking away to speak to Hermione.

The boys followed behind her and when they reached the bed, she looked a lot better than she had when they'd found her.

McGonagall smiled at her. "Miss. Granger, how are you feeling?"

"Better now, thank you, Professor," she replied politely.

"Will you tell me what happened?"

"I'm sure you already know."

"Yes, but I have not heard it from your point of view."

Hermione nodded. "Well, when Professor Moody placed me under the curse, I could feel something in my mind trying to tell me what to do and I didn't like it. At first the voice told me to climb onto the table and dance like a ballerina, but then the voice changed."

"It changed?"

"Yes, to a voice I didn't recognise. It just kept repeating that it wanted Harry and that he must die, and that's when I started to try and fight off the curse. It was so painful. I felt like my head was going to explode and then I fell to the floor. I screamed and pushed my hands away from my head and then the voice disappeared. I threw Professor Moody across the room, I swear that didn't mean to. And then Harry was hugging me and the twins arrived."

Professor McGonagall and the twins looked at her shocked.

"Moody tried to Imperius you to kill Harry?" George said horrified.

"No, George. Why would Professor Moody do that? It was a different voice. And I don't think it wanted me to kill Harry. It just wanted him dead."

"Thank you, Dear, for telling me. I believe you should be allowed to leave. The Choosing Ceremony will begin shortly and you better get yourself sorted."

The twins had been relentless in wanting Hermione to attend the Choosing Ceremony during the Halloween Feast. Knowing it was mandatory, she'd have attended anyway but with an hour and a half before the feast began and the submitting of contestants, they'd dragged her to the hall when she'd had much rather read her book.

Upon their arrival, Hermione spied Cedric placing his name into the Goblet of Fire, a look of relief crossing his face when he stepped away from it and his friends clapped him on the back and Hogwarts' students applauded.

"Hermione," he smiled, meeting her by the door as she intended to enter and he intended to leave.

"Hey, Cedric, good luck,"

"Thanks, you think I'll get it?"

"Probably," she smiled. "Well, I'll see you later," she finished, feeling the twins tug on her hands insistently.

When they stepped inside, Hermione was almost knocked to the ground when Ginny came out of nowhere, hugging her tightly.

"You okay?"

"I'm fine, Gin. Or at least, I will be when I can breathe," she amended playfully, the twins sniggering.

"Sorry," she muttered sheepishly, pulling back from her and allowing Lee his moment of checking her for injuries, smiling and then hugging her before he returned to his girlfriend's side, Alicia Spinnet.

"Right, we've brewed the Ageing Potion," Fred said, pulling Hermione over to an empty seat, pushing her into it and them removing the potion from his pocket as George did the same.

"It's not going to work," Hermione said in a sing-song voice.

They glanced to one another and then down to her, amused.

"Oh yeah? And why's that?" They chorused.

"That's an age line, Professor Dumbledore drew it himself," she pointed out.

"So?" They arched identical eyebrows.

Hermione scoffed. "So, Professor Dumbledore will not be fooled by something as pathetically dim-witted as an Ageing Potion."

"You see, Spitfire, that's why it will work."

"Yes, Love, because it is so pathetically dim-witted."

She snorted and shook her head.

"Bottoms up, Fred!"

"Bottoms up, George!"

They toasted to another before linking arms and downing the potion, both grimacing at the God awful after taste. It served them right, Hermione thought.

"Kiss for good luck?" They asked, bending with their hands braced on their knees, heads turned and cheeks held out in offering.

Rolling her eyes, Hermione complied, giving them both a quick peck on the cheek. They beamed at her before confidently strolling towards the Goblet of Fire with their hands stuffed in their pockets, and after sharing a smile, they leapt forward. Hermione bit her lip and held her open book against her chest, waiting for the backlash. When the twins cheered loudly and the crowd around them applauded as they placed their names into the Goblet of Fire, Hermione saw the flames change colour and then noise erupted as they were both thrown backwards, far away from the age line and landing on their backs.

Groaning, they slowly pushed themselves into a sitting position, their eyes darting to the other and widening in surprise. Their once vivid redhead was now bushy and white and they'd grown a beard similar in length and style to Dumbledore's. Hermione sniggered, hiding it by covering her mouth with her book, not that anyone would see or hear her when the hall had burst into laughter.

"You said!"

"No, you said!"

Hermione's brow furrowed and she released a sigh, when the twins lunged at one another, rolling around on the floor and attempting to land punches. They never fought! Not liking the situation, an uncomfortable feeling settling in her stomach, she snapped her book shut and rose to her feet, approaching them.

"No, I said!" She called loud enough for them to hear, it drawing their attention and they pulled back from one another, looked to her, to each other and finally a laugh fell from them.

"So, what do you think?" They asked, stroking their beads with arched eyebrows. It was frightening.

"Well, you certainly look of age," she shrugged, her mouth tugging into a smile when they burst into laughter.

At that moment and in with her attention being on the twins, she didn't see Viktor Krum entering the hall, placing his name in the Goblet of Fire or that he'd barely taken his eyes off her during the whole ordeal.

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"Now the moment you have all been waiting for; the champion selection," Dumbledore's voice carried in the silence of the great hall, no need for a Sonorus Charm.

Reaching out and touching the Goblet of Fire with his wand, flames of brilliant purple soon followed, as did a piece of parchment being thrown out of the flames which he caught.

"The Durmstrang champion is Viktor Krum!"

Cheers and applause broke out and Hermione clapped and smiled politely, watching as the chosen champion stood from his seat and approached Dumbledore, giving his hand a shake. So, that's his name, no wonder he seemed so familiar, she thought. As if, the boy she'd helped at the World Cup was Viktor Krum. Ron would have a field day.

A second piece of parchment burst from the flames, delicately floating down into Dumbledore's hand.

"The champion for Beauxbatons is Fleur Delacour."

As the great hall filled with noise, she beamed a smile and stood from her seat, approaching Dumbledore and giving his hand a gentle shake.

The great hall fell silent, everyone waiting for the Hogwarts champion to be selected, and when the parchment flittered down to Dumbledore, the hall grew tense.

"The Hogwarts champion is...Cedric Diggory."

The hall burst into loud cheers and applause, Cedric walking proudly to Dumbledore and shaking his hand.

When Dumbledore turned to address the hall once more, Hermione wasn't paying attention to his words, rather, she was focused on the Goblet of Fire. Something was wrong. She could feel it. The flames turned purple.

"Not Harry. Don't be Harry," she muttered, the twins looked sit on either side of her and staring down at her in confusion, their gazes lifting and following her line of sight.

Another piece of parchment burst from the flames, Dumbledore whipping around and catching it, slowly opening the folded strip.

"Harry Potter," he muttered. The hall was silent. "Harry Potter," he repeated louder. All eyes turned to the Gryffindor table. "HARRY POTTER!"

"Harry, go, for Merlin's sake, go now," she instructed, giving him a shove.

Hesitantly, he stood from the bench and approached Dumbledore, the crowd rioting, throwing insults and screaming of him being a cheat and not yet of age. When Dumbledore briskly walked to the room behind the head's table where all of the champions had convened after their selection, Hermione stayed in her seat as long as she could before she broke. She sprang from the table and hurried towards the hidden room, pausing before stepping inside and lifting her wand, muttering,

"Expecto Patronum!"

The majestic blue-silver lion came to stand before her, Hermione ignoring the gasps, whispers and mutters that followed.

"Sirius, it's an emergency, Harry's in trouble," she said, sending the lion off with the missive.

Hermione entered the room just as Harry released a panicked, "Yes, Sir," to Dumbledore.

"Hermione?" Cedric smiled. "What're you doing here?"

"Harry," she explained and he nodded slowly, his eyes darting between her, him and Dumbledore. When Dumbledore shuffled off to the side to speak with the other adults present, she approached Harry. "Sirius is on his way," she informed him, hoping the news would make him feel more settled, he looked a little peaky as it was.

"Really?" He frowned. "How' he find out?"

"I sent my Patronus."

"In front of everyone? But we didn't want anyone to know."

"You're more important than some secret, they would've found out eventually anyway. I'm going to get to the bottom of this. Remember what I said? Nothing's going to hurt you..."

"Over their dead bodies" Harry interrupted, a smile tugging at his mouth.

"I'll be right back, I think Sirius is here."

After Harry's nod, she turned and exited the room, stepping into the great hall and slowly walking down the aisle, more than aware of the many eyes on her. Without warning, the doors burst open and slammed against the stone walls, the sound echoing through the hall with the majority of its residents startling, not only at the disruption, but the sight of Sirius Black stood in the doorway. Whispers and murmurs quickly spread through the hall.

"Padfoot," Hermione sighed in relief.

"Hello, Kitten," he greeted, accepting her hug when she closed the distance between them. "We have to go." She pulled back and reached for his wrist, tugging him towards the champion's room.

"What's the emergency?"

"Harry's name came out of the Goblet of Fire despite not having entered it. I think he's going to have to compete as the fourth champion."

"WHAT?" He roared.

Inside the champion's room, Harry flinched.

"What the bloody hell was that?" Cedric asked.

"My Godfather," Harry replied.

Just as he said that, the door burst open and everyone startled as Sirius Black marched into the room, approached Harry and hugged him tightly before stepping back and pulling the adults over to a quiet corner, his whispered-hisses not heard but his anger known.

"Professor McGonagall, can I have a word, please?" Hermione asked the older witch as she'd been tasked with keeping a watch over Harry for the time being.

"Of course, Dear," she nodded, stepping away from the champions for a little privacy.

"Are you aware of what happened at the World Cup with me?"

"Yes, I have been informed," she confirmed.

"Then you know about my dream. You know Harry didn't do this, don't you?"

"Yes, I believe he didn't do it."

"Well, I've got the feeling something's going to happen. That thing at the World Cup happened, plus the last three years. And there was that voice telling me that Harry had to die. Add all of that together along with his name being drawn... It can't all be a coincidence. Someone is trying to kill him and I won't let that happen."

Her expression softened. "I know you won't, and rest assured, we will discover who is to blame for this development."

They returned to the others at the same time as the others did from their silenced argument. Sirius did not look happy.

"It is a magical binding contract, Harry has no choice. From this day forward you are a Triwizard champion," Barty Crouch spoke, doing an impressive job of not withering under Sirius' glare, and Hermione's, too.

They all left the room, stepping into the great hall, being stood closest to the Slytherin table the any other, the hall falling silent at their appearance.

Harry gripped onto Hermione's hand tightly and Sirius stood behind them, one hand on Hermione's shoulder and the other on Harry's, his expression cold and angry. Viktor and Cedric stood beside one another on Hermione's right whilst Fleur stood beside Harry.

"Due to a magical binding contract, there are now four Triwizard champions," was all Dumbledore said before he left the great hall with the other heads of the visiting schools as well as the professors, all except two.

The hall remained silent until Pansy Parkinson stood from the table and shrieked,

"Potter is not even of age!"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Really? Thank you for telling us all that since no one was aware." Parkinson opened her mouth to reply, her gaze cold and cruel but Hermione intervened. "Oh, be quiet and sit down, Barkinson," Hermione snapped, the hall filling with sniggers and laughter.

"Hermione, her name is Parkinson," Harry corrected.

"It's not," she said in disbelief.

"It is," he nodded.

"You're joking,"

"I'm not," he promised.

"Oops, my bad," she said guilty, Sirius bursting into laughter.

"Oh, I've missed having you around every day. All Molly does is try to get me to do chores; I have no one to break me free from her constant mothering and mumblings. She's a pain in my arse," he pouted and Hermione sniggered at him.

"Drakey? Are you going to let her treat me that way?" She whined as she clung to him. Malfoy looked decidedly disgusted as Parkinson practically draped herself over him.

"Oh, leave the poor sod alone, will you? He looks a little green," Hermione said. Blaise and Theo shared a chuckle.

"You're helping Malfoy?" Harry questioned in disbelief, looking at her as thought he didn't know who she was.

She rolled her eyes at him. "He may be rude, arrogant, mean and a complete tosser and I may not like him, but would you want Parkinson draped all over you like that?"

Harry's face scrunched up in disgust.

"Fair point," he conceded, a shudder running through him.

"So, Granger? A lion?" Blaise arched an eyebrow.

"Yes?"

"It suits you," he smirked.

"And don't you forget it either."

Theo stood and motioned that he needed to talk to Hermione and she nodded, dropped Harry's hand and made to step away.

"Where are you going?"

"Just need to talk to someone, be right back," she informed him, heading over to Theo as he stood in the corner. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing, just... Did Potter enter his name?"

"No, Teddy, he most certainly didn't but I know people won't believe him. But believe me, he didn't do this. Not only does he not want anything to do with such a competition, he hasn't been left alone since before the Goblet of Fire was revealed. And even during curfew, the great halls doors are locked so he wouldn't have been able to get in even if he'd snuck out. It's Harry, for Merlin's sake. How would he, of all people, figure out how to break the age line? Why would a fourteen-year-old willingly enter a competition they are not magically, physically or mentally prepared for?"

"Okay, you're right, I believe you. He's an idiot but he's not stupid."

She smacked him in the arm and laughed. "Thank you."

When they returned, Theo greeted Harry with a, "Potter," before holding his hand out.

Harry looked at it and he hesitantly shook it. "Nott," he replied.

"Good luck," Theo nodded, tipping his head to Sirius and then waking back to his seat at the Slytherin table.

"What was that about?" Harry asked in confusion, scratching the side of his head whilst Sirius arched an eyebrow.

"That was Theo, he believes you didn't put your name in the Goblet of Fire and he wanted to wish you luck."

"But he's a Slytherin."

"And he's my friend."

"I'd be very careful who you mess with, Mudblood!" A voice spat from behind her, Hermione pausing in the corridor outside of the great hall.

"Oh, very creative, because I haven't been called that in the last hour," she rolled her eyes, slowly twisting to see Pansy Parkinson stood with her wand pointed and aimed at her. "I suggest you take your own advice Parkinson, lower your wand."

Pansy laughed cruelly before calling, "Incendio!"

Hermione released a tired sigh and then stepped to the side, the spell disappearing down the corridor.

"Seriously, Parkinson, you have no idea what I'm capable of."

"Incendio!"

Hermione pulled her wand and blocked it effortlessly with a muttered, "Protego Totalum!"

She and Parkinson had somehow changed positions, Parkinson advancing and Hermione slowly backing up and into the great hall, it quickly falling quiet at their entrance. The twins looked furious, standing to intervene and in the process of pulling their wands but were intercepted by Lee and Ginny.

"Parkinson, never use the same spell more than once. It's too predictable," she said, the Slytherin released a screech like a banshee at being chastised by the Gryffindor.

"Flipendo!"

Hermione side stepped it.

"Parkinson, you're a fourth year now; you shouldn't be using first year spells," Hermione scolded.

All eyes and ears were on them, Professor Snape and Moody being the only professors currently present but neither of them seemed all the bothered about putting a stop to what was happening; Snape wanting a little bit of entertainment and Moody hoping to see her capabilities.

"Petrificus Totalus!"

Hermione blocked it with a flick of her wrist.

"Not bad, but that was a second year spell."

"She's having too much fun with this," Sirius commented, Harry hearing and sniggering, knowing it was true. Hermione was never one to turn down the opportunity to put someone in their place whilst also teaching them a life lesson.

"Look, Parkinson, I'll help you out. I'll even give up my wand," Hermione sighed, seeing Parkinson's fury riddled expression, and she lowered her shield, twisted and threw her wand across the room, Harry catching it in his outstretched hand without issue. Boy, did the wizard have good reflexes and she was glad. Not only had it saved her life, but if her wand had clattered to the ground and broken, she'd have killed him. "Right, now concentrate," she instructed, facing Parkinson once more.

Pansy shrieked. "Stupefy!"

Hermione, seeing the poor aim, didn't bother to move, allowing it to whizz past her shoulder as she remained rooted to the spot.

She released a sigh of disappointment. "Come on, Parkinson, you can do better. You need to work on your aim."

"Incendio"

Hermione side stepped.

"Better, but that's the third time you've used that spell. Be more creative, think out of the box."

"Locomotor Mortis!"

Hermione ducked, the spell flying over the top of her head. She admitted she was slightly impressed.

"Didn't even know you knew that spell, Parkinson, not bad," she praised.

"Locomotor Wibbly!" Pansy shrieked, the spelling missing Hermione.

"And we're back to square one," she sighed in disappointment, sniggers ringing out in the hall. "I told you, don't be predictable. You used two leg jinxes, one after another."

"Expelliarmus!"

Hermione ducked.

"Parkinson, that's a Disarming Charm and as you can see, I don't have a wand."

Snape's attention darted between her and Pansy, rather impressed with her ability to offer instruction and insult at the same time. It reminded him of himself.

"I've had enough of this, you're boring me and I have things I need to do."

With that said, she twisted behind her, holding her hand up until her wand was ripped from Harry's hand, sailing over to her. The room filled with mutters and Parkinson's eyes widened in surprise.

Hermione aimed her wand and muttered, "Somno Leporem," Parkinson falling to the ground and a loud snore sounding from her.

Hermione paused mid-step when she made to leave the hall, three Slytherin fourth year girls stepping in front of Parkinson with their wands drawn. Hermione knew it wasn't out of respect or defence of Parkinson, rather, they hated her and didn't wish to see her victorious in a duel, especially when she'd embarrassed one of them in front of the entire school and their guests and given up her wand freely.

"Bulstrode, Davis, Greengrass," Hermione tipped her head. "ou sure you want to do this?"

"Shut up, Granger!" Greengrass sneered.

"Fine, have it your way," she sighed.

"20 galleons she beats them in under five minutes," Sirius said to Harry, barely taking his eyes from the scene before him.

"You're on," Harry agreed.

"Stupefy!" The three Slytherins chorused.

"Protego Totalum," Hermione muttered, the shield protecting her from the Stunners.

"Expelliarmus!"

As three Disarming Charms headed for her, one missed, one collided with her shield and the other disarmed her of her wand, it clattering to the ground and rolling across the floor. Smug, cruel expressions crossed their faces and Hermione snorted. Did they think being without her wand made her weak? That they'd won?

"Not bad, Davis was that you? You've got good aim. Shame the same can't be said for the other two."

"Incendio!" They chorused together, three large balls of flames barrelling towards her. There were too many to duck or avoid and on instinct, Hermione lifted her hands and held them out before her, a blue-hued shield forming and covering the entire width of the hall, protecting any there was behind her as well as herself. Sirius' eyes widened slightly; he recognised the colouring but it never been that large or powerful! It was nothing like he'd ever seen before.

Gasps and mutters filled the silence, the shield never once faltering as it took the force of the three fireballs, smoke rising as it was all that was left. Lowering her hands and the shield, she made one small circular motion, the three Slytherins dropping to the ground and her wand soared into the grasp of her other hand at the same time.

The hall was alive with gasps, murmurs and whispers. Snape arched an eyebrow at her otherwise effortless display of wandless and non-verbal magic and Moody appeared to be anxious, realising that Hermione was a threat to him. A threat which had to be contained or eliminated.

"Perfectly controlled and executed wandless and non-verbal magic. Told you she was powerful," Blaise muttered smugly to a stunned Malfoy.

.Viktor's classmates looked between him and Hermione in surprised astonishment.

"Who is this girl?"

"Anyone else want to have a go?" Hermione asked but no one stepped forward. "Right then, if you will please excuse me, I have some things I have to do."

"What did you do to them?" A random voice called.

"Nothing, they're just asleep. Bye, Sirius," she threw over her shoulder.

"See ya later, Kitten!" He called after her.

"You really did teach her to control her magic," Harry muttered.

"No, Little Prongs, I didn't. She already had control of magic, I taught her to control the emotion behind it. She stayed calm throughout and she didn't have any magical outbursts. If anything, I think she was both bored and amused."

"You're proud of her," he stated knowingly.

"Yep, very," Sirius nodded.

"Wait a minute; Little Prongs?" Harry frowned.

"Yep, your father was Prongs, so you're Little Prongs. Anyway, I have to get back; the others will want to know what's happened and I'm not stupid enough to risk Molly's wrath."

Hogwarts – Wednesday 2nd November 1994

Hermione sat in the Gryffindor common room studying, having decided to skip her lesson for that period and focus on doing some independent study without interruptions, having already studied the class material her peers were learning that day. All she had to do was ask her professors for a layout of the planned syllabus for the term and she could plan which lessons required her attendance and which didn't in advance. After all, it was pointless sitting in on a lecture she'd already perfected or studied, when that time could be used more productively for something else. With her books spread out before on one of the study tables, she scribbled away at the parchment before her, using the time and silence wisely and focusing on completing an assignment that was due the following week.

Without warning, something welled up inside of her, distracting her from her work and she brought her hand up to her stomach, a grimace pulling at her face. Something didn't feel right. There was a tugging sensation, as if she was being pulled towards something and having the feeling it wasn't going to go away unless she figured out what was wrong, she stood from her chair, left her belongings on the table and headed out of the common room, having no specific destination in mind and allowing her feet to guide her through the castle. Coming to a stop at the great doors of the hall, Hermione frowned and stepped inside, seeing it deserted but she'd expected nothing less given the time of day.

The tugging in her stomach grew more insistent and her brow furrowed as she stepped in, walking down the aisle and heading to the back of the hall, past the head's table and to a door off to the side. It was the room they'd used after the Champion Choosing Ceremony. She reached out, opening the door and stepping inside, three pairs of eyes turning to her.

"Hermione?" Cedric greeted with a wide smile. "What're you doing here?"

"I don't know, to be honest," she replied, stepping further into the room, not seeing Harry anywhere. "Where's Harry?"

"Having his interview with Skeeter."

"Where?"

"Over there," he tipped his head in gesture towards a small cupboard.

"In a broom cupboard?!" She fumed, the older wizard nodding slowly and eyeing her carefully.

She huffed before marching forward, gripping the handle and wrenching the door open, both Harry and Skeeter's eyes darting to her, seeing her furious expression. Harry released a sigh of relief and Skeeter looked annoyed. Hermione didn't care.

"Harry, let's go,"

She reached for him, taking his hand in hers and tugging him from the little stool and out of the broom cupboard, slamming the door shut in Rita Skeeter's face. Harry bit his lip to stop him laughing as she pulled him towards the exit.

"Excuse me; we weren't finished with the interview," Skeeter's voice carried.

Hermione halted, Harry almost running into the back of her and she spun around, her hair whipping about her face.

"Interview? That was not an interview, it was an interrogation!" Hermione hissed angrily. "You're supposed to be asking him questions about the tournament, not his past."

"How do you know I was asking him questions about his past?" She said testily.

"I'm a quick reader. Speaking of which…" She pulled her wand out of her robes and pointed it at the quick quotes quill that was writing down everything that was being said. "Incendio" she mutter, taking pleasure in the way it burst into flames, the ashes falling to the floor.

Skeeter looked enraged. "You are going to pay for that!"

"Actually, I'll think you'll find that I'm not, and it's you that is going to pay. Are you aware that it is illegal to interview a minor without an adult present? And that it's also illegal to use a quick quotes quill without an adult present?" Hermione glared, Skeeter paling having not expected her to know such laws. .

"It's not my fault there are no professor's present for the interview process," Skeeter defended.

Hermione bit out a harsh laugh, the hairs on the back of Harry's neck standing on end at the sound.

"No, it's not your fault, and I can assure you, I will be having words with Professor Dumbledore. But there are, however, three legally of age students currently in attendance, any one of them could've been present during the interview. And making Harry take an interview in a broom cupboard is rather insensitive given his past, don't you think?" Hermione glared before making to leave.

"What about my quill?" Skeeter asked, annoyed.

"Guess you'll just have to use a regular quill. You can spell, can't you? Besides, it means that nothing can be taken out of context and I suggest that only the answers that are given are used. Wouldn't want a lawsuit on your hands, now would you?" Hermione smiled sweetly.

"A lawsuit? How dare you threaten me?"

"Yes, a lawsuit," she confirmed. " But let's get one thing clear, Miss. Skeeter, that was not a threat. It was merely an observation. And don't test me because you have no idea what I'm capable of. In fact neither, do I, but it would be fun to find out. If I can have Sirius Black cleared of all charges, no matter him being wrongfully accused and sentenced, I will wipe the floor with you. That is a promise."

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Hermione Granger," Cedric clapped, giving her an amused looked whilst both Viktor and Fleur looked surprised but impressed.

Hermione's darted to them and she took a breath before curtseying, "Thank you, you have been a wonderful audience. Have fun with your interviews," she called over her shoulder, pulling Harry back into the great hall and towards the Gryffindor common room.

"That was brilliant," he grinned. "How'd you know?"

"I told you, Harry, I always know."

Hogwarts - Thursday 24th November 1994

Dragons! Dragons were the first task; that was what Charlie had meant by his 'you'll see me sooner than that,' comment. She'd spent the last week teaching Harry how to summon his Firebolt. That was the plan; Harry didn't know enough spells to defend himself against a dragon, but he did know how to fly and fly well.

After sneaking off to visit with Charlie, they spoke about her concerns for Harry's safety in great length, Charlie assuring her that he and the other tamers wouldn't allow anything to happen to him. She didn't believe him, not entirely, anyway. Injuries were an exceptionally high likelihood but given the tournaments of the past, she was sure there were measures in place to prevent death, but still, that didn't make her feel better, especially when she discovered the four dragons the champions would be up against: a Swedish Short-Snout, a Hungarian Horntail, a Common Welsh Green and a Chinese Fireball.

Hermione had spent as much time in the library as possible researching the four dragons, wanting to be prepared so she could prepare Harry for the task. Whilst there, she'd run into Viktor Krum and Cedric Diggory a few times, the former more than the latter. It shouldn't have bothered her because they were champions and they needed to do their research, too, but they always seemed to appear when she was in the library. They would ask her where certain books were and she would help them find them but then they would sit at the same table as her and try and engage her in conversation. She placated them and spoke to them not wanting to seem rude but she was focused on Harry.

And Hermione had never been prouder of Harry; he'd told Cedric what he'd be up against for the first, making it a level playing field as she knew both Fleur and Viktor knew, too, and she was sure the other champion's wouldn't have done the same. He'd been working so hard lately, his worry clear but he'd yet complain about being thrown into the deep end of such a dangerous competition, but she supposed there wouldn't be any point in him complaining.

But that wasn't her only problem; Ron was being an arsehole and he refused to speak to Harry, believing that he'd put his name in the Goblet of Fire willingly. Hermione couldn't understand why he believed that, but then it hit her; he was jealous, Ron was jealous of the attention Harry was getting and that annoyed her. It wasn't Harry's fault that people treated him the way they did, he didn't want that treatment. He just wanted to be a normal teenaged wizard who didn't have to worry about fighting for his life. But that was a luxury he didn't have.

Hermione was furious with Ron; he'd abandoned him when Harry needed him the most and she was stuck in the middle and she didn't like it. Don't get her wrong, she loved Ron, but Harry came first in her mind and in her heart. That was why she often sided with Harry more often than Ron. She was exhausted and she couldn't wait until it was all over.

It was the day of the first task and Harry had been freaking out all morning. She'd practically forced food down his throat. At first, he'd protested but with a few choice words and a terrifying glare, he'd eaten everything she'd placed in front of him, something that had made their housemates laugh.

When he left the great hall to ready for the task, Hermione watching his retreating back, the panic and the worry set in. Seeing the tenseness of her form, the change in her behaviour and her breathing, the twins silently pulled her from her seat at the table, out of the great hall and down the corridors until they came to a broom cupboard, giving her a shove inside. They followed her in, George muttering a Lumos and Fred shutting the door behind them.

"It's alright, Love, breathe. Just breathe," he coached, deliberately exaggerating his own breathing until she unconsciously mimicked his, her own slowing and calming.

"What if he gets hurt? What if what we did wasn't enough? I can't help him now. No, that isn't good enough; if the slightest thing goes wrong, I'm jumping into the arena and fending off the bloody dragon myself!" She paced in the small space agitatedly.

"Dragons?!" The twins spluttered, their eyes widening.

"Yes, dragons, honestly, keep up, boys," she rolled her eyes, her attention slipping as she muttered to herself, tugging at her hair as he paced, the twins watching her as though she were a caged animal.

Fred'd had enough and when she made to turn for the hundredth time and pace in the opposite direction, he reached out and gently caught her arm, tugging her towards him. They stood face to face, Fred ducking down a little as they gazed at one another.

"'Mione, he will be fine. And do you know how I know that?"

"How?"

"Because, Harry has something the other champions don't have. He has you! You've taught him everything he needs to know, you've helped him prepare for this and he has you on his side. If anything goes wrong the professors will intervene."

"Not if I do first," she muttered and he chuckled at her.

"Harry will do fine," he promised.

George watched from the sidelines, leaning against the wall and keeping the Lumos active, seeing Fred's eyes widen slightly when he saw the change in Hermione's eyes. It was happening again, for the first time since that day on the Hogwarts' Express. Hermione slowly inched closer to him, not even realising that she was doing it. Fred held his breath; she was so close to kissing him... And then it stopped. She tilted her head at the last second and hugged him tightly, being grateful that she had him in her life. They always knew how to make her feel better, how make her feel safe and calm and she was always happier when they were around.

"Thank you, what would I do without you boys?" She whispered, pulling back from him and then crossing the small space until she reached George, pulling him into a hug, too. "We better get going; the task will be starting shortly."

She took a breath and then left out the broom cupboard, shutting the door behind her softly. Fred slumped against the wall and groaned.

"I was this close," he grouched, showing George the distance with his thumb and index finger, "This close to kissing her."

George chuckled at his brother. "That was the first time that's happened in a while, and it's the closest anyone's gotten to kissing her."

"How much longer do we have to wait? I'm getting sick of scaring off all the boys. Sooner or later, I'm going to pee on her to mark my territory like a bloody dog."

George snorted. "Better not, Freddie; don't think she'd like that. Probably do something to you worse than that Bat Bogey hex of hers. She's rather creative that woman of ours," he said proudly and Fred shivered at the thought alone.

Hermione made her way to the champion's tent, Harry's Firebolt being shrunken down and slotted in the pocket of her coat. She didn't think she'd be allowed to visit him but given what was to come, she knew Harry needed her more than ever and she'd be damned if she let something stop her from being with him when he needed her. If she got detention, so be it. For the first time in her life, she'd gladly accept a detention.

Reaching the tent, she slipped inside easily enough and did a quick survey of her surroundings, seeing there being an open space in the centre but the tent was otherwise divided into four, one sector being for each champion. She spied Viktor, Fleur and Cedric quietly speaking between one another and then Harry caught her attention as he paced back and forth the length of the tent.

"Harry?" He ignored her. "Harry?" She said louder but he still wasn't paying attention. She huffed. "Harry! There's a dementor!" She called.

Harry's reflex was to pull his wand and aim it above their heads as he halted on the spot, no longer pacing as his eyes darted about wildly. Hermione saw the three champions blink slowly, looking a little stunned at his fast reflexes. Good, she thought. Let them see he wasn't completely at a disadvantage.

"That wasn't funny," he grumbled, slipping his wand back into his robe pocket.

"Don't get your wand in a knot. It was funny and you know it," she smiled cheekily.

Harry chuckled. "Alright, it was," he said defeated. "Did you bring it?"

"Yes," she patted her coat pocket. "Harry, relax, if you stick to the plan everything will be fine," she sighed, quickly closing the distance between them and she took him in a hug, one that would put Mrs. Weasley to shame.

A sudden flash of white light seemed to blind them both, Hermione actually seeing spots for a small moment and they both startled, pulling back from one another to the sight of Rita Skeeter smiling like the cat that got the cream.

"My, oh my, young love, how stirring. If anything goes unfortunate today, you two might even make the front-page," she chirped. Hermione's glare was far from friendly.

"You haff no business here, this tent is vor vamily and vrifends," Viktor Krum said as he, Cedric and Fleur crossed to them, a grateful smile pulling at her mouth and her heated glare softening at their show of support.

"No problem, we've got what we came for," Skeeter replied smugly, her eyes darting between the three teenagers in a way Hermione didn't like.

As she walked away, stepping out of the tent, Hermione turned to Harry.

"Can I feed her to the Giant Squid?" She asked playfully, he and Cedric snorting at her.

"No, you can't," he replied, amused by her little pout.

"But it's not a bad idea," Cedric tipped his head, flashing her a dazzling smile.

"Vhat is a Giant Squid?" Viktor asked confused.

"It's quite self explanatory, a giant squid that lives in the Black Lake. I'm surprised you haven't seen it, yet, although I wouldn't be surprised if Professor Dumbledore placed a barrier around the ship to keep it away," she mused.

Their eyes darted away from her and to Dumbledore as he stepped into the tent along with the other judges, calling for them to gather around in a circle.

"At last, the moment has arrived; this is something only you can appreciate...Miss. Granger what are you doing here?" Dumbledore arched a brow at her, pausing mid-speech.

"Oh, sorry, moral support; I'll just wait over there," she replied sheepishly, gesturing over her shoulder, Dumbledore chuckling as she left to Harry's section and perched on the hospital bed that was there. That didn't do anything to quell her worry. Do they expect him to get hurt?

She hadn't been sat there long when Harry wandered over, looking a little ill.

"Well?"

"The Hungarian Horntail," he whispered, taking a seat beside her.

Hermione groaned. "It would be you, wouldn't it?"

He looked at her confused. "What d'you mean?"

"It would be you that gets the most dangerous and aggressive flaming dragon. You just can't help it, can you?" She huffed.

"No pun intended?" He questioned, his mouth twitching.

"No, the pun was intended," she nodded and he snorted at her.

"Nicely done,"

"Why, thank you," she stood from the bed and curtsied.

Before they knew it, the cannon had sounded and Cedric Diggory was up first and he returned with his egg and some burns to the face. Next up was Fleur Delacour and she returned with her egg and her skirt burned. Viktor Krum was next up and he returned unscathed and with his egg.

Finally, it was Harry's turn and he stepped up to the entrance of the arena with the other champions watching him. Hermione removed the Firebolt from her pocket, returned it to its original size and placed it on the ground.

"Okay, stay calm, stay focused, say the incantation clearly and don't get hurt."

"Easier said than done," he muttered.

"If anything goes wrong I'll be jumping into the arena and fighting off the dragon myself." He laughed at her which is what she'd wanted. "Charlie and the other tamers are on hand to step in. So, don't worry; you've got this. We've been through worse things these last few years."

"Yeah we have, haven't we?" He agreed softly, sadly.

Hermione hugged him tightly and kissed his forehead, right over his scar.

"No matter what, I'll always be proud of you," she promised before she quickly turned and ran to a ladder in the tent, climbing the steps until she stood on a platform that connected to the stands and she ran to her place in-between Fred and George.

"All set?"

"Yes, he's good, everything's set," she confirmed.

"So, what have you two been planning then? -"

"- How's he getting passed the dragon? -"

"- Actually, what dragon did he get? -"

"The Hungarian Horntail." The twins winced. "And I'm not telling you the plan, you'll have to watch like everyone else, but it's something the other champions didn't think off. It's rather brilliant, actually."

Just as she said that, the Hungarian Horntail was brought into the arena and minutes later the cannon sounded and Harry entered.

He saw the basket of eggs and raced to them but he didn't see the dragon and he narrowly dodged the flames. He had a few more narrow misses and he was currently hid behind a large boulder being protected from the flames. Hermione was gripping the twins' hands tightly, they winced a few times but they didn't complain; they couldn't as Harry was one of her mates. They briefly wondered if this was what she was like when they were playing Quidditch.

"YOUR WAND HARRY! USE YOUR WAND!" She yelled over the crowd.

Miraculously, Harry seemed to have heard her.

"What was that supposed to do?" George frowned.

"Wait for it. And...NOW!"

Harry jumped from behind the boulder, landing on his Firebolt and taking flight, zooming around the arena with the crowd cheering and booing loudly.

"That's brilliant!" Fred yelled.

"But I thought brooms weren't allowed," George looked down at her.

"They're not, but he was allowed a wand. We used a Summoning Spell."

The twins looked at each other. "Brilliant!" They exclaimed.

The entire crowd gasped as the dragon broke free of her chains and chased after Harry, no longer confided to the arena and it went silent, not being able to see or hear what was happening.

Hermione's chest tightened painfully.

"Breathe, breathe," the twins coaxed, rubbing her back comfortingly as she struggled for air. "He'll be fine."

Hermione nodded absently. Then it hit her, a way to help Harry. She took out her wand and pointed it in the air. "Accio Nimbus 2000," she said and she waited for it to arrive.

When it did, she caught it and was about to mount it when she saw something, something flying towards the arena off in the distance and as it got closer, she could see it was Harry.

She screamed and cried in relief and joy and the crowd cheered loudly for him. His broom had caught on fire and he landed roughly, falling off his broom but he got the egg. Charlie and the dragon tamers quickly went off to find the dragon and Harry went into the champion's tent with Hermione mounting her broom and flying down to the tent, it being faster than walking as she could avoid the crowd.

As she entered the tent, she breathed a sigh of relief and quickly approached, hugging him as tightly as she dared.

"You did it,"

"All thanks to you," he smiled tiredly.

"I wasn't kidding when I said I was going to jump in the arena. When that dragon took off after you I Accio'd my broom from my dorm. I was about to fly after you when you arrived."

He chuckled at her.

At that point, Charlie walked into the tent sporting a pleased expression, crossing over to them and sharing a hug. When Hermione pulled back from him, she balled her hand into a fist and thumped him in the arm.

"Ow! What was that for?"

"You promised me he would be safe. That he wouldn't get hurt," she glared, her hands settling on her hips.

"And he didn't get hurt, well, not majorly."

She punched him in the arm. "Ow! What was that one for?" He scowled, rubbing the aching spot. .

"The dragon got loose and chased him to Merlin knows where!" She said, hysterical.

"I'll admit, we didn't see that one coming," he grinned gingerly.

The other champions and their friends had been watching the scene and they laughed at them; a sixteen-year-old girl intimidating an almost twenty-two-year-old, muscular, tattooed dragon tamer.

"I must say, you got one over on the Horntail, Harry. We found her unconscious by the astronomy tower."

"She's going to be alright though, isn't she?" Hermione asked Charlie, worried for the dragon and he shook his head at her amused.

After returning to Gryffindor Tower, a celebratory party was quickly underway with the twins and Lee smuggling food into the common room, Hermione believing they'd had help from her favourite elf, Bopsy.

When Harry and Ron had finally reconciled, Hermione had never felt more ease, being grateful that she no longer had choose sides. Caught up in the celebrations, Harry hadn't taken much convincing to open his egg and reveal the clue to the next task, everyone soon disbanding after the horrid screeching that left them with headaches.

"Don't be a prat, Neville, that's illegal. They wouldn't use the Cruciatus Curse on the champions. I thought it sounded a bit like Percy singing... Maybe you've got to attack him while he's in the shower, Harry," George said, brushing off Neville's theory of what the next task may be.

Sharing a look, he and Fred stood from the couch and crossed to the middle of the common room, putting on a show the way only the Weasley Twins could.

"Canary Creams!" Fred shouted excitedly. "George and I invented them ourselves, only 7 sickles each. It's a right bargain!"

"Turn unsuspecting friends and enemies into canaries with only one bite," George continued proudly and people flocked to them, wishing to purchase some.

"Aren't you going to stop them?" Ron asked Hermione, looking up from his game of exploding snap and being surprised by the prideful expression on her face.

"No, they would only find another way or place to sell them although... Fred! George!" She called.

The twins twisted to look behind them. "What!" They yelled to be heard over the crowd.

"Not the first years!"

They didn't bother trying to argue with her as they turned back to the crowd before them, saying,

"Sorry, firsties, -" George started apologetically.

"- But you heard the lady. -" Fred finished. The first years groaned loudly and in disappointment. "- Hey, don't blame us. -"

"- Blame the scary witch over there!"

"I HEARD THAT!"

The twins gulped.

Chapter Fifty-Five

Hogwarts – Friday 25th November 1994

With the ending of the first task of the Triwizard Tournament came a three day weekend, allowing the students of all three schools an extra day free from their studies, and Hermione could be found in the great hall sitting in-between the twins with Harry and Ron opposite, eating breakfast as the mail arrived. Dozens of owls swopped in through the open windows, circled above and dropped the mail before the recipients, some staying behind to receive a little treat and some attention and some leaving without a second glance.

Hermione hadn't been expecting any mail that morning but when the Daily Prophet arrived, she couldn't help reach for Harry's copy and scan the front-page, a huff of annoyance sounding from her as she slammed the article face down on the bench, startling some of those nearby.

"What now?" Harry questioned, eyeing her annoyed expression carefully.

"She's done it again!" She fumed. She received nothing but looks of confusion and questioningly raised eyebrows from the twins. "Rita Skeeter," she clarified, "Listen to this… Harry Potter's Secret Heartbreak. Hermione Granger, a plain but ambitious girl, seems to be developing a taste for famous wizards. Her latest prey, sources report, is none other than the Bulgarian Bonbon, Viktor Krum," she scoffed. "No word yet on how Harry Potter is taking this latest emotional blow," she ended with slamming the paper against the bench and glaring down at it as if her gaze alone could set it alight.

The twins snorted and Hermione turned her glare to them, Harry's chuckles soon erupting when they sobered immediately.

"Seriously though," she narrowed her eyes at the twins and then turned back to Harry, "You should've let me feed her to the Giant Squid," Hermione said, laughter bubbling from the twins, Harry and Ron as she sulked.

Unfortunately, she received mail she hadn't been expecting, and a lot of it. A dozen letters lay upon her empty plate and she stared down at them cautiously as she hadn't recognised any of the delivery owls. Her curiosity got the best of her and she reached for the first envelope, sharing a glance with those around her who appeared to be just as clueless, and then she hesitantly opened it. The moment it was unsealed, a white powder burst free, screams and cries sounded around her and Hermione dropped the letter, throwing her hands up and forming her own shield, one that was becoming easily recognisable.

Moments passed before Professors McGonagall and Dumbledore were stood before her, the former raising her wand and vanishing the powder and the cloud of smoke before it could cause any serious damage.

"Miss. Granger, may I please see those letters?" Dumbledore asked.

"Of course, Professor," she replied, gathering the letters in a pile and then handing them over to him, not missing the way he gazed at them as if he could see their content. "Do you think they're all like that, Professor?"

"I believe so, Miss. Granger. Do you mind if I keep these?"

She had no issue with his request and gave her head a shake. As if she'd want to keep them.

"I don't understand," she spoke.

"I believe it is hate mail."

"Hate mail?" Her brow furrowed. "I haven't done anything to deserve hate mail."

"I believe it may be caused by the recent article in this morning's Daily Prophet, My Dear," McGonagall commented, giving her a look of sympathy.

Hermione rolled her eyes and released a tired sigh. "They can't seriously believe the rubbish that hideous woman wrote. Harry's my best friend, my family, that's disgusting," she grimaced, "No offence, Harry," she added, looking to him as he snorted and waved her off. "Honestly! And Viktor…Well, he's Viktor. I help him with his book searches in the library and we sometimes have a chat, but that's it. I've had enough of her; it's about time someone stands up to her. She's going to pay for what she's done and it will be far worse than feeding her to the Giant Squid!"

Hermione stood from the bench, bracing her hands on the surface before she turned and left down the aisle, heading for the doors.

"Freddie! Georgie! We have some planning to do!" She called without a second glance over her shoulder.

Fred and George exchanged a smirk before standing up, grabbing some muffins to go and quickly following after her.

Hogwarts - Thursday 1st December 1994

After deciding not to attend lessons that day due to her having already learned all of the material, Hermione had spent the majority of her time in the library, putting the finishing touches on her assignments and finding a new book to read. When it neared lunch, she'd packed up her belongings, returned them to her dorm and made her way to the great hall, her nose buried in her book and relying on her subconscious to lead her to her destination without worry.

In her distraction she hadn't noticed Viktor, Nikoli, Aleks and Jamous appearing before her and blocking her path, not until she heard a throat clearing. She startled, the book falling from her hands and to the ground and she pulled her wand, aiming it in front of her, four surprised expressions coming into her view the moment her eyes focused. Looking between her wand and Viktor stood on the receiving end of it, Hermione's cheeks tinted pink and she lowered her wand arm, slipping it into her robe pocket before bending to pick up the book. Viktor's eyes had crossed, fixing on her wand and had she not felt so bad about what'd just happened she would've laughed.

"I'm sorry, Viktor, you startled me," she gave him a sheepish expression.

Viktor blinked twice before giving his head a shake, an amused chuckled falling from his lips as he looked down at her.

"I'm glad that you not a Champion in the tournament. You vould…How you say? Kick my butt."

Her cheeks darkened. "I'm really sorry about that," she replied, ignoring the sniggers of the other three Durmstrang wizards.

"No, I am sorry, I should not haff startled you," he replied sincerely.

"Can I help you with something?" She asked kindly, wishing to move far from the subject of what'd just occurred.

"Yes, haff you heard of ball happening at Christmas?" Jamous asked slyly.

Hermione's brow furrowed. "No, no one has mentioned it," she shook her head. "Why?"

"Vell, the potions professor spoke of it today in class," Aleks informed her, not so subtly looking between her and Viktor.

"Professor Snape? Umm...Well, no one's told me," she said thoughtfully.

Unbeknownst to Hermione, the twins had been nearby and listening into the conversation. They shared a frown before quickly intervening, already knowing what turn the conversation would be taking.

"Hey, Hermione," they chorused, quickly closing the distance between them.

She twisted to look behind her, a smile pulling at her mouth. They never got tired of the way she smiled at them. It was different from the way she smiled at everyone else; it was always happy and soft and they wished to see her smile like that every minute of every day.

"You want to do some planning during lunch?" George asked, slipping his arm around her waist and she leaned into him.

"Yes," she nodded, "The sooner we complete the planning, the sooner we can move onto the productive stage."

"And the sooner we can put it into action," Fred added, slipping his arm around her shoulders.

"She's not going to know what's hit her," the three finished as one, smirks twitching at their mouths, missing the surprised expressions that crossed the Bulgarian's faces.

"Vho?" Nikoli asked intrigued.

"Rita Skeeter," the three replied together.

If they were honest, it was frightening.

"Vhy are you planning revenge on Rita Skeeter?" Viktor arched an amused eyebrow.

"It's obvious, isn't it? She's a hideous woman and her career focuses on spreading rumours and lies about celebrities, effectively ruining their lives. She's vile and she deserves what's coming to her, especially after the way she treated Harry and that article she wrote about us. I received hate mail for that stunt and several people could've been injured due to its contents. Besides, we're not going to hurt her or do something illegal. We just plan on messing with her a little," she tipped her head, smiling innocently. "Anyway, we've got to go, I'll see you later," she said, giving a little wave of her fingers before she and the twins continued the short distance to the great hall, the identical redheads looking far too pleased with themselves.

"They can speak in unison?" Aleks arched an eyebrow in amusement. "That's something that you don't see every day, and if I'm honest, it's a little frightening."

"You don't stand a chance, Viktor," Jamous snorted.

Viktor's brow furrowed. "We may have to move the plan up."

"And quickly. Who knows how much longer she will be single, particularly since you're not the only one trying to win her favour," Nikoli agreed, being far too entertained by the situation.

They shared a nod before stepping into the great hall, taking their seats at the Slytherin table and seeing Hermione and the twins whispering conspiratorially between one another.

"I don't know whether I should feel sorry for that Skeeter woman or amused at what's coming to her," Nikoli muttered, turning his attention to selecting his lunch.

Hermione's attention was pulled from her conversation with the twins when an unexpected parcel arrived, being dropped on Ron's plate. Frowning, Ron reached for it, removing the packaging and opening the box to reveal a set of hideous burgundy robes.

"She sent me a dress!" His voice rose in disbelief before he gave his head a shake, stood from his seat and walked further down the table to where Ginny was sat with her friends.

"Ginny, mum sent this. It must be for you," he said, holding the robes up as evidence.

She took one look at it, her face showing disbelief. "I'm not wearing that, it's ghastly," she grimaced, looking horrified and laughter erupted from those around her.

Hermione burst into giggles, the twins arching their eyebrows in amusement as Ron trudged back over to his seat.

"What are you on about?" He muttered grumpily.

"They're not for Ginny, they're for you," she responded, laughter bursting from those close enough to hear. Ron's face flushed bright red, almost matching the colour of his hair.

"WHAT?" He shrieked before clearing his throat, realising how girly he'd sounded, which only made people laugh louder.

"They're dress robes," she explained.

"Is there a bonnet?" Harry questioned, digging through the box. "YES!" He exclaimed, holding it up victoriously like a trophy for all to see.

"What do I need dress robes for?" Ron asked, looking ill.

They'd received word during lunch that Gryffindor fourth through to seventh years were to meet in a classroom, all afternoon classes having been cancelled for some unknown reason.

The girls and the boys had been separated and were sat on either side of the room against the stone walls facing each other. Fred and George leaned back against the wall, stood behind Ron who was perched on a chair, and they pulled faces, trying to make her laugh. She didn't wish to with McGonagall being present but she'd been unable to help herself and they looked immensely pleased with that fact.

"The Yule Ball has been a tradition of the Triwizard Tournament since its inception. On Christmas Eve night, we and our guests gather in the great hall for a night of well-mannered frivolity. As the host school, I expect each and every one of you to put your best foot forward and I mean this quite literally because the Yule Ball, is first and foremost, a dance."

At McGonagall's words the girls gasped and began talking animatedly and the boys groaned, muttering between each other in disgust.

"Silence," McGonagall commanded, the room quieting down. "Now, the house of Godric Gryffindor has commanded respect for centuries, I will not have you in the single course of an evening, besmirch that name like a bambling bumbling band of baboons. Inside every girl, there is a secret swan that longs to burst free."

Hermione's eyes narrowed when she saw Ron whispering to Seamus, Dean and Harry, all of them sniggering at his words. Knowing him, it can't have been a pleasant comment.

"Inside everyone man, there is a lordly lion prepared to prance."

Hermione's mouth tugged into a smirk when she saw McGonagall's attention snap to Ron, her eyes twinkling in a way that reminded her a little of Dumbledore.

"Mr, Weasley, will you join me please?" She asked, approaching Ron and holding her hand out expectantly.

Ron's face flamed red as he was pulled from his seat and tugged to stand in the centre of the room for everyone to see.

"Now, put your right hand on my waist," she instructed.

"Where?" He spluttered, both mortified and horrified.

"My waist," she repeated.

Fred and George whistled loudly and sent a wink her way as Ron's face darkened in embarrassment, even more so when he struggled to pick up the steps as the music began on the gramophone.

"Everybody together," McGonagall instructed, the vast majority of the girls flocking to the centre of the room to find a dance partner.

Hermione remained where she was, quite happy to sit back and watch in amusement as all of the boys stayed put, looking highly uncomfortable. Surprisingly, Neville was the first to stand and find a partner, Hermione being quite proud of him for doing to.

Fred approached, having ducked his way through the crowd of girls still waiting for a partner and he held his hand out expectantly, bowing.

"May I have this dance, my lady?" He asked.

She giggled at him, stood from her chair and curtsied. "Why, of course you may, kind sir," she played along.

She slipped her hand into his, a laugh falling from her when he pulled her closer and turned, slotting into the slowly growing crowd of reluctant dancers with ease. Hermione's eyebrow arched when he was lead them quite comfortably and his mouth twitched.

"Mum made us learn when we were kids," he shrugged, sensing her surprise. Her eyes darted to Ron and then back to him and he laughed. "Well, not everyone can be as talented as the Weasley Twins."

Without warning, he spun her away from him and instead of Fred catching her, George did. He smiled at her.

"Hey, Georgie," she greeted happily.

"Hey, Love, so I see you're a good dancer," he observed.

"When I was little my dad used to stand me on his feet and we'd dance around the room," she laughed a little at the memory, her smile slowly falling into a sad expression before she gave her head a shake, her smile returning.

"You miss them, don't you?" He said softly. "It's okay to miss them, you know?"

"I feel like I'm betraying your parents by thinking of my parents. And I love your parents, but I feel like I'm betraying my parents by not thinking about them and being as close as I am to yours. Am I a bad person? For being the way I am with your parents?" She questioned, her gaze lowered and her voice quiet.

Frowning, George halted in the dance steps before pulling her over to the corner of the room for privacy.

"No, Love, you're not a bad person. It's okay to love my parents; it doesn't mean you love yours any less regardless of where they are."

"Or if they're alive," she muttered, a tear falling down her cheek.

George reached up and wiped it away with his thumb. "I'm sure Dumbledore will tell you."

Hermione shook her head. "He won't tell me anything, I've asked. It's been almost four years since I last heard from them, George. I think it's time I gave up, I'm never going to see them again."

"Yes, you will, you have to have hope."

She shook her head again. "George, you don't understand, it's like they are dead. I can't remember the way my mum's perfume smelled or what she looked like when she smiled. I can't remember the sounds of my dad's footsteps coming up the stairs to wake me up in the morning for breakfast. I can't remember the sound of my father's voice when he used to read to me. I can't remember the smell of my mother's cooking and I can't remember what my dad looked like when he was celebrating a football win when he was watching a match."

A heartbroken, horrified expression crossed her face and George felt his heart snap in two.

"Oh God! I've forgotten them, George. I've forgotten my parents!" She cried, her voice taking a hysterical tone as she fell into a fit of sobs.

He was quick to pull her into his arms, muttering soothing words into her ear and sharing a worried glance with Fred when he rushed over, effectively squishing Hermione between them.

McGonagall had been watching them with a small smile. At that moment, she was very proud of her cubs.

Later that night, they were convened in the common room, Hermione reading, Harry attempting his homework under Hermione's watchful eye and Ron was making a house of cards from exploding snap cards. Hermione rolled her eyes when they exploded right in his face, soot marring his skin and his eyebrows being singed, just when Fred and George entered the common room.

"Nice look, Ron. It'll go well with those dress robes mum sent you," Fred commented, sending Hermione a wink when she sniggered behind her book. "Where's Pig? We need to borrow him."

"Why?" He replied gruffly.

"Because we want to send a letter, you stupid great prat," George rolled his eyes.

"Who'd' you two keep writing to, eh?" Ron asked nosily.

"Nose out, Ron, or I'll burn that for you, too" said Fred, waving his wand threateningly. Ron's face paled dramatically and relented, explaining he was in his dorm room.

Hermione watched as the twins left up the staircase. She had a feeling they were writing to Bagman, she knew he'd ripped them off but she wasn't going to get involved... Well, not yet, at least.

Hogwarts - Wednesday 7th December 1994

"So, boys, who're you taking to the ball?" Fred asked as he and George took seats on a couch in the common room, receiving half-hearted shrugs from the younger wizards.

"Well, you better get a move on or all the good ones will be gone," George warned.

Ron glared at them. "It's not easy to ask them; they always travel in packs," he muttered.

The twins snorted. "'Course it's easy, watch, Katie -" Fred said.

"- Alicia, -"

"Want to go to the ball with us?" They finished together, the two witches exchanging a glance before nodding their acceptance.

"See? Easy," Fred shrugged, turning back to Harry and Ron.

"I thought Lee was dating Alicia," Harry's brow furrowed in confusion, but as the words left his mouth, Hermione happened to be approaching and when she neared, she pushed a hand through his hair, ruffling it. Harry gave her a mock-glare as he reached up and tried to right his raven mop as Hermione squeezed onto the armchair beside him.

"Lee and Alicia broke up last month, keep up, Harry," she teasingly scolded, Harry rolling his eyes at her. "So, what did I miss?"

"Twins got dates to the Yule Ball," Harry shrugged. Hermione's head snapped to them.

"No, we didn't," Fred denied, his eyes locked on Hermione. "We just proved how easy it was to ask a girl to the ball."

"You said and I quote 'Katie, Alicia, want to go to the ball with us?' And they nodded," Harry argued.

Fred and George looked to another in horrified surprised. That hadn't been their intentions. They'd had every intention of asking Hermione to the ball and had even been working on the perfect way to do it, wanting it to be right. To be special. This was a highly formal event in wizarding traditions and they hadn't wanted the experience to be tainted for Hermione.

The pain and disappointment flittered through her eyes for all but a second, the twins' insides twisting painfully at the action before Hermione stood from armchair and smoothed out her skirt.

"Right, well, congratulations, I'm sure you'll have a great time," she forced a smile. "I have to go to the library, got some things to do, you know? See you later."

Not waiting for a response and unsure of how long she'd be able to keep her resolve, she left the common room with every intention of journeying to the library. As she stepped inside, she headed straight for her favourite table at the back of the library, summoned a notebook and pen from her dorm and set it on the table. Before she'd left the common room, she'd already decided she wished to do some research into the strange happenings surrounding her. Sirius hadn't gotten back to her on the findings of his research and a part of her believed that he wasn't actually even trying. She wanted answers and she'd had enough of waiting. She was going to do it herself. Who better than the one the instances centred around? Who understood what she was going through better than her?

Taking a seat, Hermione made herself comfortable before opening the notebook and taking hold of the pen, flipping to the first empty page she could find. In order to do it right, she needed a list, a reminder of things she wished to look into, a starting point. Tapping the pen against her chin, she mentally compiled the instances before translating them onto paper.

*1. First year Welcoming Feast, Sorting Hat ceremony*

*2. Oliver, Fred & George. Feelings - Bonds? (Ginny's thoughts)*

*3. Physical symptoms when apart from Oliver, Fred & George. Why?*

*4. Wandless and non-verbal magic – whilst not impossible, quite difficult, particularly for a minor*

*5. Magic ability and learning – highly impressive according to others.*

*6. Apparent appearance change (according to boys)*

*7. Increase in male attention*

*8. Knowing, feeling when Harry needs me*

*9. Premonitions? Dreams?*

*10. Why does my scar hurt?*

*11. Knowing when something bad is going to happen*

*12. Who were my biological parents?*

*13. Am I really a Muggleborn?*

*14. Why does it hurt Fred & George have dates to the Yule Ball?*

She set her pen down and her eyes scanned the page, searching for anything she may have missed or forgotten to include and being happy with her notes, she stood from the chair and went in search of reading material.

She wasn't exactly certain why but there'd been a voice in the back of her mind, pushing her, urging her forward and before she knew it, her feet had carried her fight to the Magical Beings and Creatures section. Deciding not to ponder on it any further, she retrieved the most common used book, Magical Beings, Vol 1 Revised and then left, finding herself returning to her table with Bonds, The Magic and Meaning, in her grasp, too. She wasn't sure she could remember actually retrieving it.

As she retook her seat, she placed one book off to the side and placed the other before her, opening up to the contents page and scanning the list before, hoping to find something promising.

*Acromantula, Basilisk, Centaur, Dementor, Dragons, Flobberworm, Ghosts, Ghouls, Giant, Griffin, Hippogriff, Manticore, Merpeople, Pegasus, Phoenix, Siren, Troll, Thestral, Unicorn, Veela, Werewolf and Yeti.*

Through logic, she eliminated the ones she knew had no use to her and being left with a small number, she relied on instinct to narrow the pool further, leaving only *Siren and Veela.* Her brow furrowing in confusion, she gave her head a shake and then reached for the other book, searching the contents page until something immediately jumped out at her, as if it had been wanting to get her attention.

*Sibling bonds, pages 125 – 133.*

Harry's face flashed through her mind instantly.

Pursing her lips, Hermione found the correct page number and her eyes did a quick skim reading, releasing a sigh and rolling her eyes to herself. Wizards never got straight to the point. Half of what she'd skim-read had been repeated three times before she finally found a few extracts of use.

*A sibling bond does not occur between siblings who are bound by blood but rather two or more individuals who feel they have a kinship. Those who are a part of a sibling bond will feel connected to the other individual(s) and it will form a bond that will be almost impossible to break. This type of bond generally occurs within those who have lost their families and have no one but each other.*

*Individuals can grow to heavily rely on each other and seek comfort when needed. Unlike soul bonds or mates, a sibling bond does not have a bond mark to claim territory or ownership.*

*Siblings bonds are exceptionally rarer in modern times than they once were, the number of reported and recorded bonds having decreased significantly over the centuries. In the last three centuries, there have only been four known cases of a shared sibling bond, the last being recorded during the winter of 1739. It is unknown if the bond remains to exist or if the magic that once bound individuals has simply vanished or evolved into something else entirely.*

*Signs of a shared sibling bond include but are not limited to:*

*a) Affectionate behaviour, i.e hand holding and hugging.*

*b) Individuals may grow uneasy if separated for long periods of time.*

*c) Knowing when comfort is needed and the need to comfort during times of great stress or sadness.*

*d) Mimicking of mannerisms or potential speech patterns.*

*e) Shared thoughts or feelings.*

*f) Communication through no or little speech.*

Hermione scanned the information before her once more before her mind wandered, slowly slotting the pieces together. She was certain that she and Harry shared the majority if not all of the signs indicating a sibling bond. It was too much of a coincidence to just discard what she'd learned. She mused that whilst there hadn't been a reported case since 1739, that didn't mean there hadn't been any actual siblings bonds since. If she did share such a bond with Harry, the magic binding them would be powerful and precious and she'd certainly never want the information to be made public knowledge should it ever be used against them.

Believing she'd gotten somewhere with Harry, she turned her attention to finding a possible connection between herself, Oliver and the twins. That one was the one that worried her the most. As she returned to the contents page, scanning the titles of the chapters, she blinked slowly and did a double-take, landing on Soul bonds. She could've sworn the writing grew larger and shimmered gold, as if purposely trying to get her attention but when she looked, it appeared the same as the rest of the text. Sighing and giving her head a shake, she turned to pages 156 – 167. She did a quick skim-read, selecting specific passages that stood out to her.

Soul bonds are similar to sibling bonds but also differ vastly. Soul bonds are found when an individual has a mate or magically perfect match. They are said to each hold one part of the other's soul, making it virtually impossible to live without the other, hence the origins of the term 'soul mate'. A soul bond can rarely be found amongst witches and witches, but are most commonly seen amongst magical beings and creatures.

A soul bond can be found, recognised or formed, intentionally or otherwise, no matter age but interactions and behaviours will differ depending on circumstances.

If a soul bond is recognised by individuals upon a first meeting, a sudden and fast friendship is highly likely to be formed. As the individuals age, the bond, in time, will change into that of romantically involved mates.

Upon the completion of the bond between mated individuals, a bond mark will appear, marking the skin. Due to no case being the same, it is impossible to say what the bond mark may look like or where it may appear on the body but it is said they will match that of the mated's.

Signs of a shared soul bond include but are not limited to:

a) Affectionate behaviour ie. Hand holding, hugging, touching of the lower back, face or inner wrists.

b) Being loyal and fiercely (sometimes fatally) protective of the bonded mate.

c) Feelings of happiness when the mated is nearby and the opposite when they are not present.

d) Potential ability to sense the mated's emotions.

e) Insomnia – the inability or difficulty of sleeping without the presence of the mated.

f) All individuals involved becoming physically ill or suffering of magical control when without or separated from the mated for long periods of time. Note, improvements will not be seen until the mated are reunited.

g) It is known that once the individuals are aware, have recognised and accepted the bond, they will be unable to be involved with any who are not the intended mate.

Unfortunately, those that share a soul bond will not be safe until the bond is sealed, as the bond may weaken and can be broken resulting in the death of the magical being or creature and the further suffering of the mate. Whilst the mated pair are known to be safe after the sealing of the bond, it does not prevent the individuals from being targeted or used for other's personal gain. Soul bonds can form between two individuals, the most known case being that of a Veela and their mate, and whilst there is known to be two individuals per bond, it is not completely impossible for there to be more involved. Since the reported beginning of magic, there have been two reported cases of a soul bond holding more than two individuals.

Hermione released a puff of breath and slumped back into her chair, blinking slowly as her mind processed the information held before her.

Immediate friendship? Check. Protective and loyal? Check. Inability to sleep and physical illness? Check, check. Happiness and sadness? Check. Sensing of emotions? Check.

Needing more information, Hermione pulled the page free of her notebook and set it off to the side, being sure to make a list of notes on what she'd already learned. Happy with her note-taking, she turned her attention back to Magical Beings, Vol 1 Revised, turning to the section pertaining to Veelas.

Veela are incredibly beautiful and sexual beings that have the ability to attract members of the opposite sex. The general population of Veela are female, however, it is not unheard of for there to be male Veelas. Veela are often identified by their platinum-blonde hair. Like werewolves, Veelas also have enhanced senses; hearing, sight, smell and taste and they have enhanced speed and strength.

The changing process will take place when the Veela comes of age and it can take anywhere from one to seven days depending on the individual. The pain involved is often compared to that of the Cruciatus Curse. After the transformation is complete the Veela will be focused on nothing but finding their mate and once they have been found and accepted, a Marking and Mating Ceremony will take place. It is unknown what this entails as the ceremony is a private event between the Veela and their mate, and Veelas whilst notorious sexual beings, are highly private where their mate is concerned.

Once bonded, the Veela and their mate will have the ability to feel each other emotions, the Veela will be fiercely protective of their mate and they have been known to kill anyone who causes harm or threatens their mate.

If the Veela does not find its mate or the mate rejects the Veela's advances, it will result in the Veela dying of heartbreak and the mate will suffer, too. When angered or they feel the need to protect their mate, Veelas are known to turn into harpie-like creatures, grow feathered wings and a large beak.

After finished with her note-taking, she leaned back in her chair, reaching up to push her hair back from her face, silently remarking on the lack of information but knowing Veela were highly secretive beings. Giving her head a shake, she turned her focus to Sirens, searching until she found the correct page.

Sirens are immensely beautiful and powerful beings and they are said to possess the ability to easily and effortlessly control non-verbal and wandless magic. Unfortunately, Sirens are highly rare beings, considered to be almost extinct due to the Siren Hunts several centuries ago, being feared of their power. It was once recorded there was approximately thousand Sirens in Britain but currently, there is only two known and identified living Sirens, both nearing their 130th birthday. The Siren population is known to only produce females and there are said to only have one life mate, usually a wizard but there have been reported cases of a Muggle, Werewolf and Vampire mate.

Sirens do not go through a painful transition when they reach their full maturity. They, instead, begin the process before they become of age at which point the process will be complete and they will be ready to find their mate if they are not already known. Several things can influence the start of the transformation such as: age, magical ability and potential and their mate's presence or health.

Only the Siren will know when it is time for the Mating Ceremony to be completed and due to their secretive nature regarding such private instances, it is unknown what the ceremony entails or how long it may last. Although there are no written accounts, a Siren once reluctantly revealed that the Mating Ceremony is instinctual and it won't occur until the Siren knows it is the right time, at which point instincts and emotions take over.

If a Siren was fortunate enough to find her mate before reaching her maturity, they may face and suffer from a variety of ailments or abilities including:

a) Being loyal and fiercely (sometimes fatally) protective of her mate.

b) Feelings of happiness when the mated is nearby and the opposite when they are not present.

c) Potential ability to sense the mated's emotions if said emotions are felt in great force.

d) Insomnia – the inability or difficulty of sleeping without the presence of the mated.

e) All individuals involved becoming physically ill or suffering of magical control when without or separated from the mated for long periods of time. Note, improvements will not be seen until the mated pair are reunited.

After the completion of the Mating Ceremony it has been heavily speculated but not yet confirmed that a mind link may possible develop between the Siren and her mate, allowing for telepathic communication. It is also speculated that not only can emotions be felt by the other, but that they can be influenced or manipulated.

History was made when there was a reported case of a Siren and her mate being able to successfully join their magic together and use it as one, and since, there have been three separate cases.

It is known that after the Mating Ceremony and once bonded and marked, a Siren's mate cannot die before her and a Siren has yet to die of age. The oldest living Siren on record was 304 years of age when both she and her mate were fatally injured in a potion brewing accident.

It is recorded that once mated, the Siren and her mate will age at of rate of hundred times slower than that of a regular human, only to cease ageing once they reach a particular age, of which, differs from each mated pair. The current youngest age on recording is fifty-nine whilst the oldest is one hundred and thirty-eight.

Some Sirens, those that are more powerful than others, have been known to possess an 'extra' ability. Although little is known surrounding the why and how, previous abilities have been recorded as the capability of controlling one or more of the Earth's elements, natural healing and premonitions.

Non-verbal and wandless magic? Check. Inability to sleep and physical illness? Check. Inseparable? Pretty much. Happy, content, loyal, protective? Check. Sensing each others' emotions? Check.

Her mind reeling from what she'd learned, she slumped forward until her forehead pressed against the surface of the table, lightly banging it on the hard wood repeatedly. Admittedly, it was giving her a headache but this was the only way she felt she could release some of her frustration.

"Mina?"

At the call of her name, Hermione slowly lifted her head, not being all that surprised when she saw Viktor stood on the other side of the table. Only the Durmstrang students referred to her as such as they had difficulty pronouncing her name.

"Hi, Viktor," she greeted, rubbing at the sore spot on her forehead.

"Vhat is vrong?" He asked, taking a seat opposite her.

"Nothing, I'm just doing a little research and it's proving to be a headache," she grumbled.

"Do you need some help?" He offered.

Her mouth pulled into a smile. "No, thank you, Viktor. I appreciate the offer but I think I'm finished for the time being, but I do need to quickly grab a book and then I'll be right back and we can talk."

It was only after he nodded that she stood from her chair and disappeared through the stacks, Viktor watching her retreating back. As he waited for her to return, he ran the plan repeatedly through his mind and lowered his gaze, catching sight of the neat handwritten notes that covered the many pages that were scattered about the table. Being curious, he pulled one closer to him and whilst he could read some English, he wasn't fluent and was sure to cast a Translator Charm.

Once the words appeared more legible in his mother tongue, a frown pulled at his brow as he scanned the contents before him but when he heard Hermione's footsteps approaching, he was quick to cast a Gemino, creating copies of her notes which he stuffed into his pockets. What he'd done was highly improper, incredibly rude and a betrayal of her privacy but he couldn't and didn't feel guilty. He wanted to know what she was up to and why she was researching such topics.

When Hermione retook her seat, she closed both books, placed her newly retrieved ones into a separate pile, gathered her scattered notes and then turned her eyes to Viktor.

"So, Viktor, what can I help you with?"

Viktor tipped his head slightly, eyeing her curiously. "I vas vondering if you had someone to go to ball vith?" He voiced, not being blind to the flash of pain and disappointment that flittered through her expression before it disappeared.

"No, I'm afraid I don't. Why?" She answered, taking the first newly acquired book from the pile and opening it before her.

"Maybe you vould like to go to ball vith me?"

Her eyebrow arched and her mouth twitched in amusement.

"Do you want me to scare off the fangirls? I can threaten them with my Bat Bogey Hex if you'd like? I'm all but certain they'll leave you be," she replied, her eyes falling down to her book, skimming the contents page. She was intending to do a little research for the revenge scheme against Rita Skeeter; she and the twins were almost ready to start production but there were a few final details that had to be addressed and considered first.

He chuckled at her. "That vould be a benevit," he agreed, "But I vould be honoured to accompany such a beautivul voman." He felt amused by the pink in her cheeks but she soon released a light laugh, giving her head a shake.

"That was a good one, Viktor."

"Vhat do you mean?" He asked confused, tipping his head.

"You called me a beautiful woman, it was a funny joke."

"It vas not a joke," he frowned, "You are a beautivul voman," he assured her, his expression serious.

"That's kind of you to say, Viktor, but I'm really not."

His furrowed brow deepened. How could she not see how beautiful she was?

"Mina, you are most beautivul voman I haff seen. Surely people haff told you?" Hermione gave her head a shake. "But vhat about boys that talk to you?"

"Oh, them? They just say things like that because they want my help with something, they always do. They just pretend to be nice to me when it suits them and their needs and wants."

"Vill you go to ball vith me? I vould very much like to share your company vor the evening."

Hermione's eyes carefully scanned his hopeful expression, her mind thinking it over before she nodded in acceptance.

"Okay, I'll go to the ball with you. At least it will stop your fangirls from attacking you."

Durmstrang Ship

As Viktor journeyed back to the ship, he couldn't help the pull of a smile at the corners of his mouth. He was rather pleased with himself; his plan had been successful. He slipped his hands in his robe pockets, feeling something against his skin and being reminded of Hermione's research he'd copied and hidden from her view. As he stepped onto the ship, he crossed paths with Aleks, Nikoli and Jamous and was quick to invite them back to his private room, closing the door and erecting Privacy Wards.

"Viktor vhat is vrong?" Aleks asked, seeing his friends frown.

"Ve may haff problem. Mina vas researching some things," explained, pulling th pages from his robes, enlarging them and fitting them with a Translator Spell.

Viktor was sure to remind them to be quick, the Gemino he'd cast would soon wear off and the pages would disappear. After scanning the contents, they looked to one another in surprise and then their eyes darted to him.

"It seems she has most in common with Sirens," Jamous mused, referring to Hermione's checklist of attributes and similarities between herself, veela and Sirens.

"But why is she researching such creatures?" Nikoli asked. "As far as I'm aware, they are secretive beings and not a lot is known about their species, nor is it a part of the curriculum for most schools."

Viktor released a sigh before removing a second page from his pocket, repeating the process of enlarging it and casting a Translator Charm.

"That is a lot of things to be curious about," Aleks commented thoughtfully.

"Do you think she is a possible Siren?" Jamous said. "Her checklist and signs are almost identical, and we have witnessed her magic ability. She is beautiful and we all heard her mention her lack of knowledge on her birth parents."

"If...If she is a Siren, then we cannot tell anyone. She will be in danger," Viktor said gravely.

"You know what this means?" Aleks questioned amused. "Viktor won't marry Mina and she won't have his babies," he teased, Viktor's cheeks tinting slightly and the others laughed at him.

"I could be her mate," Viktor argued. They snorted at him.

"I highly doubt it. It's likely one of those redheaded twins or this Oliver boy," Jamous commented with a shrug, his eyes trained on the names on the page in his hand.

Hogwarts - Saturday 10th December 1994

As Hermione approached the great hall to sit for lunch, she found herself stopping when Cedric appeared from nowhere, standing before her.

"Hello, Hermione," he grinned down at her

"Hello, Cedric. What can I do for you?" She replied kindly.

He took a step forward and she took a step back until she hit the wall behind her, Cedric closing the distance and placing his hands against the wall on either side of her head, caging her in.

"Well, I was hoping you would go to the Yule Ball with me."

Hermione blinked in surprise before giving her head a light shake. "Cedric, I'm really sorry but someone's already asked me and I said yes," she said, feeling uncomfortable at his close proximity.

He leaned closer and whispered in her ear, his breath tickling her. "Are you sure I can't change your mind?"

She squirmed uncomfortably. "Sorry, Cedric, it wouldn't be fair to him, he did ask me first."

"Damn," he muttered in annoyance. "Who is it? Who asked you?"

"Why does that matter?" She frowned in confusion.

"Because I want to knock his block off for beating me to you," he shrugged, half-teasing, half-serious.

"Well, in that case, I'm not going to tell you."

She used her smaller size to her advantage and she ducked beneath his arm, slipping away from him as she continued towards the great hall, only when she reached the doors, someone else stepped in front of her, blocking her entrance.

"Malfoy?" She questioned.

"Granger, go to the ball with me," he purred. It wasn't a request but an order.

She sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose. "Sorry, Malfoy, but someone has already asked me."

"What? Who?" He stood tall, his expression annoyed and angry.

"Why?"

"So I can pay him to dump you, of course. Then you can attend the ball with me, a Malfoy," he responded, giving her a look that all but said that was the obvious answer and she should've known that.

Hermione sighed tiredly. "I'm not telling you who it is."

She stepped around him, wondering what the hell was going on with the Hogwarts' populace lately, only to huff in annoyance when Blaise stepped in front of her, effectively blocking her path to the Gryffindor table. Seeing his seductive smile, she knew was what coming and cut him off before he could ask.

"Sorry, Blaise, someone's already asked me to the ball. Should've been quicker," she breezed past him, hearing his mutter of merda!

Hogwarts - Friday 16th December 1994

As she sat in the great hall studying, Hermione was sat in-between Harry and Ron with Fred and George sitting opposite them and Professor Snape wandering about the room, ensuring it remained silent and those present focused on their parchment and textbooks. She did her best to drown out the whispers but it was hard when both Harry and Ron were complaining about their lack of dates to the Yule Ball. She'd lost count of how many times the topic had been brought up over the last few days and gave a roll of her eyes before tuned them out, needing to focus on her studies, but that didn't mean she wasn't aware of every time Snape wandered passed, hitting them over the head with a book or pushing their heads down towards their work, ordering them to get on with their work.

They'd barely waited for him to move further down the table when Ron drew her attention, saying,

"Hermione? You're a girl."

She lifted her head, giving him a look of stupidity. "Well spotted," she snapped irritably.

Fred and George each pulled their attention to them, observing carefully, just knowing Ron was going to upset Hermione and they'd have to cheer her up again.

"Well, it's one thing for a boy to go alone, but for a girl, it's just sad," he shrugged his shoulders, giving her a pointed look.

Hermione took a calming breath. It didn't work.

"Well, I won't be going alone because believe it or not someone's already asked me," she snapped. Standing from her seat, she closed her book and approached Snape, holding it out to him. He eyed her carefully and seeing her clear irritation and upset, he nodded, excusing her. When she retrieved her school bag, she stopped by Ron, growling, "And I said yes."

She was sure to fling her bag over her shoulder, it smacking Ron in the head as she stormed off. She didn't care.

As Fred and George watched her leave, guilt and nausea set in. They should've been the ones to ask her to the ball. They'd failed in keeping the boys away from her.

"Bloody hell!" Ron exclaimed, looking to Harry in surprise at her behaviour. "She's going on her own."

Harry eyed him strangely, giving his head a shake. "Whatever you say, Ron," he muttered, turning his eyes back to his parchment.

The twins both stood from their seats, reached over to smack Ron with their books for hurting Hermione's feelings, handed their books to Snape and then left the hall in search of Hermione.

Hogwarts - Saturday 24th December 1994

She stood before the mirror in the bathroom, carefully scrutinising her appearance in silence. The boys had insisted she have the dorm to herself so she could ready for the Yule Ball and had taken themselves off to the fourth year's dorm room a while ago. While she was grateful for their thoughtfulness, she hated the silence and she could really do with a bit of a pep talk.

She barely recognised herself, her head tilting this way and that way and her eyes slowly took it all in. Her hair which had long since sorted itself out now fell in sleek soft curls which she'd hopelessly styled into a half-up half-down do, a few fallen strands framing her heart-shaped face. Not being all that bothered with makeup, muggle or charms, she'd kept her look simple, opting for a clear lip gloss, a dash of mascara and a nude, sparkly eye shadow.

The dress she'd admittedly worried about but the moment she'd slipped it on, those worries had vanished. The bodice periwinkle gown fit to her body smoothly, the sweetheart neckline and thin shoulder straps were both modest but non-traditional and the flowy skirts of her dress fell down the ground, swaying gently whenever she moved. She'd taken a little time to paint her fingernails snow-white and she'd charmed her heels to match the gown, not that it mattered as they were hidden by the skirt. Knowing she wouldn't be able to manage wearing them for long, she'd had the foresight to fit them with Cushioning and Balancing Charms, for comfort and to prevent her from tripping and falling flat on her face. For jewellery she'd settled on her charm bracelet, simple silver studded earrings and a silver chain that sat a heart-shaped pendant that sat perfectly in the valley of her breasts, a gift for her birthday from Oliver.

'Maybe being girly once in a while isn't so bad, she mused, giving her head a shake when the nerves began to set in. This was why she needed a pep talk!

Taking a breath to calm herself, she smoothed out her dress before turning on her heel and leaving her dorm, slowly descending the stairs. She was pleased to see that the common room was empty, there being few people to stare at her or pull her into conversation when she was already running a little behind, something she'd never admit to. She knew the Champions were expected to open the Yule Ball and lead with the first dance and with it due to be starting soon, she was quick but careful in her journey to the great hall.

As she stopped at the grand staircase, she caught sight of Harry, his messy mop of black hair easily identifiable. He was staring at Cho Chang and Hermione smiled knowingly. His crush on the Ravenclaw seeker was not only adorable, but she found it amusing how flustered he got when she was nearby.

"She looks beautiful," Pavarti, Harry's date commented.

"Yeah, she does," Harry agreed, his eyes remaining on Cho but as if sensing her presence, he twisted to look over his shoulder, his eyes widening when he stared up at Hermione. His mouth pulled into a smile and he left Pavarti's side, climbing the stairs until he stood one step below her.

"You look beautiful, 'Mione," he complimented, pressing a quick kiss to her cheek.

Her cheeks heated and tinted pink as she smiled shyly. "Really, you don't think it's too much? That it's not me?" She worried at her lip and her hands tugged at her skirts.

"No, you look great. No one's gonna know what's hit them when you walk into that hall."

"Thanks, Harry," she ducked her hear, being grateful she had him in her life; he always made her feel better.

"So, who's your date?"

She was prevented from replying when she spied Viktor standing by the staircase, his eyes wide and mouth parted the slightest bit as he stared up at her. Harry, following her line of sight, felt his mouth twitch into a proud smirk. Ron is not going to be happy about that.

"Viktor Krum's your date?" He arched an eyebrow.

Her cheeks darkened. "We're just friends, Harry. I'm only going with him because he asked me first and to help keep the fangirls from attacking him."

Harry was quite sure that hadn't been Krum's intentions when asking her to the ball, but he kept his suspicions to himself. He raised his hand, waiting for her to place hers in his before he escorted her down the stairs like a gentleman. Once they'd finished their descent, she pressed a kiss to his forehead, right over his scar.

"You look very handsome," she told him, fixing his black bowtie that accompanied the black muggle tux he was wearing.

Once done, she turned her attention to Viktor, smiling. He gave his head a light shake before stepping closer, clicking the heels of his shoes together and bowing low, taking her hand in his and kissing her knuckles.

"You are most beautivul voman I haff seen. You look stunning, Mina," he complimented softly, far softer than he was presumed capable of.

"Thank you, Viktor," she smiled, her cheeks darkening and to put his attention elsewhere, she was sure to comment on his attire, the red and black of his Durmstrang formal wear and the fur cloak strapped over one shoulder.

Placing her hand in the crook of his elbow, he led them towards the doors, lining up with the rest of the Champions. Catching sight of Cedric, she gave him a smile when he caught her eye, his cheeks tinting pink as he watched her closely.

When the doors opened, Hermione took a breath and Viktor gave her hand a gentle squeeze but kept his attention forward. When they stepped inside, Hermione couldn't help marvel at the decorations. Snow had been charmed to fall from the ceiling but it vanished before it fell over any of the students, four large Christmas trees sat in the corners of the room, decorated in red, gold, and silver and they had real fairies sat at the top of the trees.

The tables and chairs were white and had blue table cloths and lights twinkled and sparkled as they covered the stone walls. White and blue fabric covered the windows and doors and an entrance had been made to allow access to the newly created garden.

She heard the hall fill with gasps and whispers, and she looked to see most of the female population looking at her in jealously and the boys' eyes seemed to have glazed over.

Thankfully, the music soon began and the Champions led the first dance. When it finished, Hermione curtsied to Viktor and he bowed as was tradition and when the second song began, others joined in.

Before Hermione knew it, hours had passed. She'd danced and laughed with Viktor and his friends, she'd shared a dance with Theo and Harry who did his best but it was clear he was quite uncomfortable, it sending them into a fit of laughter which held to ease the tension. After taking another spin on the dance floor with Viktor, he excused himself to use the bathroom and Fred appeared from seemingly out of nowhere.

"Will you dance with me?"

She didn't reply with words, both knowing she wasn't going to deny his request, and she placed her hand in his without hesitation, allowing him to lead her to the dance floor, falling into the crowd of students and dancing together like they'd been doing it all their lives.

"You look beautiful, 'Mione," he complimented, his eyes boring into hers.

She blushed. "Thank you, Freddie, you look very handsome," she replied.

He and George had both opted to wear black dress robes, black trousers and white crisp shirts with a black bowtie. They'd also had their hair cut at some point so it was shorter than usual but it still fell in their eyes.

"How's Katie? Are you having a good time?" She questioned.

"Katie's alright," he shrugged. "I would be having a lot more fun if I'd have asked the person I wanted to come to the ball with, instead of accidentally asking Katie," he admitted.

"So, who's the lucky girl?" She grinned teasingly.

His eyes didn't leave hers but he avoided the question, saying, "George wants to have a dance," and then spinning her away from him, George catching her and quickly falling into step with the rest of the crowd.

"You look breathtaking," he muttered, his gaze intense but soft. She blushed and his mouth twitched at the sight.

"Thank you, George, you don't look so bad yourself," she shared a smile with him. "So, how's Alicia doing? Are you having fun tonight?"

"All she talks about is Lee; I don't understand why they broke up, all they talk about is each other," he rolled his eyes. "And as for fun, it's alright, I suppose. I would've had more fun if I had asked the girl I wanted to come with me to the ball, before I accidentally asked Alicia."

"Who is she?" She asked curiously.

He remained quiet for a moment as he watched her and when he made to open his mouth to answer, he felt a tap on his shoulder. Twisting to see it was Viktor, he barely stopped himself from growling and he stepped back from Hermione, pressed a kiss to her forehead and then left in search of Fred and their accidental dates.

Hermione shared two more dances with Viktor before he excused himself and Hermione took the opportunity to approach Harry and Ron, taking the seat beside Harry as they sat at a table.

"Viktor's gone to the bathroom and then he's getting drinks, would you care to join us?" She asked politely.

"No, Hermione, I would not care to join you and Viktor," Ron snarked.

"What's got your wand in a knot?" She frowned.

"He's a Durmstrang, he's the enemy!" Ron protested.

"Enemy?" She arched an eyebrow. "Who was it wanting his autograph? And the whole point of this tournament was to promote international magical cooperation and to make friends," she defended.

"I think he's got a bit more than friendship on his mind," he scoffed.

Harry spotted the hurt expression that crossed Hermione's face and when she stood and left, he sent Ron a less than pleased glance.

"Why would he even ask her?" Ron muttered, stuffing his hands in his pockets.

Harry blinked slowly. Did he really not see it?

"Have you not seen her? She's beautiful, kind, caring and smart. And if you can't see that, then you're an idiot and it's your loss," Harry said none too kindly.

When Viktor returned from the bathroom and collecting refreshments, he and Hermione spent a little time conversing before he had to use the bathroom for the third time in such a small window. Now she was suspicious.

"Viktor, maybe it's time to call it a night. The ball's ending soon and it's late. You should head back to the ship; you're obviously not very well."

"No, it's vine," he assured.

"No, it's not, Viktor, you look pale and you're clearly not well, you should get some rest. I don't want you making yourself worse."

Reluctantly, he agreed and after bowing and kissing her knuckles, he left her in the corridor. She waited until he disappeared from view before beginning her journey back to her dorm, feeling tired after a night of dancing and conversing. Unfortunately, she bumped into Ron and she wasn't all that appreciative of the strange way he looked at her.

"He's using you."

Hermione, who'd previously decided to ignore him, halted to a stop and whirled around so fast that had it not been for the Balancing Charm, she'd had surely fallen over.

"How dare you?!" She fumed, not taking kindly to his words. It was an insult to her and Viktor. "Besides, I can take care of myself"

"I doubt it," he scoffed. "He's way too old," he argued.

"WHAT? That's what you think?"

"Yeah, that's what I think," he stood taller.

"Well, then you know the solution then, don't you?" She fought back the tears.

"What?" He narrowed his eyes.

"The next time there's a ball, you pluck up the courage to ask me before someone else does and not as a last resort!"

"Well, that's completely beside the point," he spluttered, his ears turning pink.

"And by the way, Ronald, Viktor is just a friend; I only went to the ball with him so his fangirls would leave him alone!"

At that point Harry made an appearance, coming up behind Hermione and hearing her sniffles, his eyes darting to Ron and narrowing.

"What did you do now?" He gritted his teeth.

"Nothing, they get scary as they get older," Ron shrugged.

"RON! YOU RUIN EVERYTHING!" She cried, reaching up to wipe her eyes with the backs of her hands before she took a breath and turned to Harry, her voice being much softer. "Off to bed, Harry, it's been a long night and it's Christmas day tomorrow, you're going to need your rest."

Not wanting to argue with her when she was clearly upset, he nodded in agreement, gave her a quick hug and left for his dorm with Ron following after. Harry didn't speak to him for the rest of the night.

Once they'd disappeared, Hermione fell onto the stairs in a heap, silently crying.

When she stepped into her dorm, she paused for a moment, blinking slowly as she took in the scene of Fred and George pacing back and forth, crossing paths. They'd removed their robes at some point, lost their bowties, untucked their shirts and unfastened the first couple of buttons.

When the door made a noise as she closed it, identical turquoise eyes darted to her, their expressions morphing from worry to relief to anger once they saw her tear-streaked face.

"What did he do?" Fred said through gritted teeth.

"Who?" Her brow furrowed.

"Krum!" George spat, his fists clenched tightly. They glanced at one another, silently making a plan for retribution.

"Nothing," she interrupted before they could settle on specifics. Viktor wasn't the issue. "Viktor's done nothing wrong. I had an argument with Ron."

They both seemed to calm but their expressions were one of guilt and upset. She knew the twins always took it personally when Ron upset her, simply because he was their brother. Hermione didn't know how many times she'd told them they weren't to blame for Ron's behaviour but they never took her words to heart and she didn't think they ever would. Sharing a glance, they both approached, crowding on either side of her and pulling her into a hug.

But the moment they made contact, Hermione's mind was suddenly flooded with images, memories that weren't her own. She recognised some of them, having been present, but it was as though she was seeing them from someone else's perspective. In a matter of moments Hermione observed years' worth of conversations, memories and discussions between those that were the most important in her life. Feeling overwhelmed, she immediately stepped back from them, away from their reach when they raised their hands as if to reach for her, to steady her when she wobbled slightly.

"What's wrong?" They chorused, matching frowns of worry on their faces.

"Blake," she muttered, her eyes darting between each of them.

"Huh?"

"Blake, I'm Hermione Blake. My parents died during the war, I'm prophesised to be a beacon of light, to make things better, right? I'm a Half-blood. Merlin! I'm a Half-blooded Siren! Do you know how rare they are? Godric! That explains everything! My magic, abilities, bonds; you're my mates, you and Oliver, and Harry, too! Oh God, I'm getting a headache. I'm coming into my heritage! Everything makes sense now! And I'm related to Voldemort by blood!" She shivered in disgust, her hands unknowingly fisted in the skirts of her dress, her eyes locked on their wide-eyed, parted mouths, disbelieving expressions.

"You... You kept it a secret, everything, to protect me, didn't you? But you wanted to tell me, you tried to convince them but they wouldn't let you," she trailed off, her brain pounding as all the newly revealed secrets swam through her mind, trying and waiting to be processed.

The twins' eyes were focused solely on her, a myriad of emotions swirling together. Relief that she finally knew the truth, that they no longer had to hide it or themselves from her. Shock that she'd figured it all out and within such little time. Joyous that she seemed to be taking it all so well. Anxious that she would be upset with them for lying to her for so long, for keeping secrets from her. Love, loving that she finally understood, that she knew who they were.

And as their eyes slowly catalogued her expression, they were reminded of the times she'd shown little glimpses of herself to them, when her eyes shone with adoration, love and understanding. They were seeing that now and there were no signs that it would be disappearing anytime soon.

Hermione slowly and quietly stepped forward, her gaze darting between them and they both swallowed nervously, unable to read her expression or predict what she would do next. She paused momentarily before taking a step towards Fred, standing so close their noses were almost touching. The added height from her heels made it so she didn't have to tip her head so far back as she usually would and their gazes locked, turquoise to chocolate brown.

"You knew. You knew and did everything you could to protect me," her voice was little above a whisper.

Fred remained silent and still, not wanting to risk startling her and allowing her control.

And then she did something he definitely wasn't expecting.

Her eyes fluttered closed, she tipped her head the slightest bit and she kissed him.

Chapter Fifty-Six

Hogwarts - Saturday 24th December 1994

George's eyes widened in disbelief as he watched Hermione unexpectedly kiss his brother, finding it difficult to actually process the sight; meanwhile, Fred could hardly believe what was happening. He'd been waiting years for Hermione to know the truth and he'd thought about how she would take the news many times over the years, never had he expected her current reaction. Quickly realising that he'd frozen in surprise and not wanting Hermione to even have the chance to think her advances were unwanted when they most certainly weren't, he reacted. His eyes closed, his arms moved to fold around her waist and he pulled her closer to him, slowly pulling and pressing his lips against hers.

It was Hermione's first kiss but when she'd made the decision to kiss him she knew what to do; the Siren within her guided her. At first, she was worried that she'd upset Fred when he didn't respond, but he'd soon proven her wrong after tugging her closer to him. Instinctively, she raised herself up onto her tiptoes, she wrapped her arms around his neck and one of her hands found its way into his hair at the nape of his neck, relaxing against him as she grew lost him.

Arching an amused eyebrow, George leaned back against the bedpost and folded his arms over his chest, partially being a little worried one of them might pass out from oxygen deprivation until they finally broke apart, their foreheads pressing together as they smiled and released a breathy laugh.

"It's about time, I thought someone'd placed a Sticking Charm on you two and I'd have to wait until it wore off," George pulled their attention, smirking at them.

The moment Hermione's eyes landed on him, he couldn't look away. Fred slowly removed his arms from around her, allowing her to take four steps until she stood before George, staring up at him with her eyes shining brightly.

Silently, her hand reached up and touched his cheek, tracing her index finger down his face until she paused at his neck and then she leaned up and pressed her mouth against his. Unlike Fred, George's reaction was instant, wrapping his arms around her and drawing her as close as possible to his body. As her hand rested at the base of his neck and the other tangled into the hair at the nape of his neck, one of his shifted to cup her cheek, George feeling the curve of her lips against his when she smiled before pulling back from him and tipping her forehead to rest against his.

"It's about time, I thought someone'd placed a Sticking Charm on you two and I'd have to wait until it wore off," Fred echoed his brother's words, hearing their chuckles.

Without worry that he'd be interrupting, Fred approached and hugged Hermione from behind whilst George did the same from the front, sandwiching her between them.

"So you're not mad at us?" George asked quietly.

Hermione pulled free of them both, taking a step off to the side, a frown marring her features. "Why would I be mad at you?"

"We didn't tell you," Fred answered, sharing a glance with his twin.

Hermione's expression softened and she smiled, the love in her eyes had yet to vanish and the twins hoped that it never did. Silently, Hermione reached for their hands and tugged them over to the bed, laying in the centre with the twins either side of her, lying their sides and propping their heads up with their hands so they could look down at her.

"No, I'm not mad at you or Oliver. I saw everything and I know you wanted to tell me, but they wouldn't allow you to," she replied.

"Are you mad at them?" George questioned.

"Yes. They lied to me, I've been asking them since the World Cup if they knew what was happening to me and they lied to me, right to my face and in writing. They allowed me to fear and doubt myself," her voice lowered, feeling sadness and betrayal. She released a sigh, "He should be here with us"

"Who should?" Fred frowned.

"Oliver, he should be here. I want him here. The Siren in me wants him here. I miss him," she admitted. "I miss him all the time; I guess I know why now."

"He misses you," George promised, his hand raising until he traced a finger over her cheek, feeling her soft skin beneath it.

Hermione looked up at him, George's mouth tugging into a smile at the expression she wore on her face.

"I'll never get used to that. I hope it never disappears," he confessed.

"What?" She tipped her head slightly, leaning into his touch.

"He means your eyes. The way you're looking at us now," Fred explained, Hermione turning her gaze to him. "Your eyes, they've always been expressive but now more so than ever. Happiness, adoration, love, take your pick. You've looked at us that way before."

"I have, when?" Her smile marred by the crease in her forehead.

"George saw it at the World Cup after you landed on him after port-keying, Oliver saw it when he'd healed your injuries the same night and I saw not only on the Hogwarts Express, but when we pulled you into the broom cupboard before the first task. It never lasted for more than a few seconds, this is the longest we've seen it."

"We think it was the Siren in you, helping you to realise who we are to you and it was telling us that you would be ready to know everything soon," George said, lifting her right hand in his, twining their fingers together.

"It was," she confirmed, "I can remember it now. The Siren was trying to help me understand, to discover the truth for myself. The night I found out you had dates to the Yule Ball, I went to the library wanting to do some research about everything that's happened; I'd gotten tired of waiting for others to find the answers and thought it best I do it myself."

"We're sorry," they chorused, their expressions sad and riddled with guilt.

"It wasn't your fault," she shrugged half-heartedly.

"We wanted to ask you to the ball and we had it all planned out, but we accidentally asked Alicia and Katie when trying to prove a point. We didn't mean to do it."

"I know it wasn't your fault," she promised, pulling her hand from George's and then lifting them both to press to either of their cheeks. They leaned into her touch before each taking a hand in theirs, pressing a kiss to the backs of them and twining their fingers together.

Pulled from the moment by an unexpected knock on the door, they shared a confused glance before Hermione reluctantly climbed from the bed and made for the door, the sounds of her heels on the floor echoing in the quiet room.

The moment she opened the door to see a worried Oliver stood on the other side, wearing a pair of grey drawstring pyjama bottoms, a pair of trainers on his feet, shirtless and holding his wand in his grasp, she smiled brightly and couldn't stop herself from launching herself at him.

Oliver instinctively caught her, holding her above the ground with her feet barely touching the floor. He looked up at her, his eyes widening as she peered down at him, her eyes bright with happiness and love and before he knew what was happening, she was tenderly touching his cheek and she leaned down and kissed him.

Oliver had been lying in bed, attempting to sleep and when he finally found himself drifting off, his eyes widened and he bolted awake, feeling a number of emotions swirling through him and struggling to name them, but at the very least, he knew who they belonged to. Hermione needed him.

After climbing from the covers, reaching for his wand and slipping on the first pair of shoes he could find, he raced to the nearest fireplace, flooing into Dumbledore's office and being met by a curiously arched eyebrow.

"She needs mae, a dunno know why but she needs mae here," he exclaimed.

Dumbledore nodded, unconcerned. "Do you know the new password to the Tower?" He asked, continuing when Oliver confirmed he didn't. "It is tree topper... Christmas theme," he chuckled at Oliver's expression. "Try not to let any students see you, there may be a few stragglers left after the Yule Ball. We wouldn't want to give the females a heart attack with your state of dress, would we?" He said with his eye twinkling.

Oliver cleared his throat before leaving his office, quickly making his way through the halls and corridors and being mindful to watch for any students still wandering the castle. When he reached Gryffindor Tower, he gave the password to the Fat Lady and darted through the common room and up the stairs until he found the right dorm room.

He knocked on the door before footsteps could be heard and when it opened, it revealed Hermione stood on the other side, a smile on her face. She looked well... She looked beautiful and he didn't know what to say. When his eyes locked on hers, he felt the breath leave his lungs, seeing the emotions swirling in the chocolate pools.

When she unexpectedly jumped into his arms, he caught her and held her above the ground and she peered down at him, her smile soft as her hand pressed against his cheek and then she lowered her head, her eyes fluttering closed and her mouth pressing to his.

He stood paralysed, struggling to understand what was happening but Hermione stroked his cheek with her thumb, it pulled him back to reality and he finally kissed her back. He hugged her tighter to him and their mouths moved against each other's slowly, a smiling tugging at his mouth. He was revelling in the moment; he couldn't believe it was finally happening!

As Hermione was kissing him, she saw all the conversations, images and memories from Oliver over the last few years, conversations that occurred without the twins, as well as from his perspective.

When Hermione drew back, she tipped her forehead to rest against his, sliding down the length of his body until her feet hit the ground and she locked gazes with him.

"It's about time, we thought someone'd placed a Sticking Charm on you two and we'd have to wait until it wore off," Fred and George chorused, repeating their words from earlier and Hermione laughed. Drawing away from Oliver, she pulled him into the room by his hand and then shut the door behind him before turning and crossing over to the bed, laying down in between the twins and making herself comfortable as they each took a hand, lacing their fingers together.

"What did a miss?" Oliver asked dazedly.

"She knows," the twins grinned.

"She knows?" He repeated dumbly.

"She knows."

"She knows?"

"I know," she laughed, looking to him in amusement.

Giving his head a shake, he said, "Did ye tell her?"

Beaming, he kicked off his shoes and climbed onto the bed, sitting by the foot of the bed, crossing his legs and looking to them.

"No, they didn't," answered Hermione. "Do you remember when I showed you my memories of meeting Sirius for the first time? And do you remember what happened when I touched him?"

"Aye, ye saw his past... Ohhhh right, got ye," he trailed off in understanding.

"I got into another argument with Ron at the Ball and returned here upset. Fred and George hugged me and when we touched, I saw everything."

"Ev'rything?"

"Yes, everything, every image, memory and conversation you have ever had about me with the others."

"What 'bout mae?" He asked.

"When I kissed you just now, I saw everything from your point of view."

"Am sorry," he sighed, guilt filling his expression.

"What for?"

"We should've told ye when we found oot."

"I know you wanted to tell me and you tried to convince the others but they wouldn't allow it. You tried to protect my feelings, to protect me. You have nothing to be sorry for. But, I'm happy that I now know."

"Speaking of which, you were telling us a story before Oliver rudely interrupted," George joked and they chuckled at him.

"I was, wasn't I? So, let's see... The night that I found out you had dates to the Yule Ball, I went to the Library because I wanted to do some research about what was happening to me as Sirius hadn't gotten back to me and no one was telling me anything. After making a list of things that I deemed strange or important, I went in search of some research material and then I got this feeling; a voice in the back of my head telling me that I should get Magical Beings, Vol 1 Revised, and when I returned to my table, I'd also found Bonds, The Magic and Meaning. I didn't even remember looking for it. After looking through Magical Beings, Vol 1 Revised, I narrowed it down to veelas and Sirens, and I did the same with Bonds, The Magic and Meaning, I was drawn to sibling bonds. "

"I realised that a lot of the content related to Harry and I, but I was sceptical as there hasn't been a recorded sibling bond since 1739. But the more I think about it, the more it makes sense to me. I love Ronald but I realised that I would pick Harry over him if it ever came down to it. Does that make me a bad person?" She looked to Fred and then George, nibbling at her lip.

"No, it doesn't, you're bonded to Harry and not Ron," said Fred. "Besides, Ron doesn't treat you very kindly and the only reason he's still walking is that he's our brother."

"Now, back to the story," George prompted.

"Once I'd found what I was looking for regarding Harry, when I thought of you three, soul bonds stood out to me so clearly that I had to read the chapters, and when I was finished, most of what I'd learned I could apply to us. And the fact that soul bonds commonly occur between a magical being and a witch or wizard had me confused; I was sure none of you were magical beings and with me being told I was a Muggleborn, I was sure I wasn't a either. But I read about veelas and I noticed some similarities, but once I turned to Sirens, I had a headache; it was like the chapter had been written about me and our relationship. But with Sirens only having one mate, I was confused. That is, until..."

"Ye touched the twins," Oliver interrupted.

"They should've told me," her brow furrowed and she sighed, seeing their guilty expressions. "I know they said that I wasn't ready to hear it all, but I was. The Siren within me was starting to come into effect. It was giving off signals to let them know it was time to tell me."

"It was?" Fred said surprised.

"Like what?" George asked curiously.

"Well, my wandless and non-verbal magic for a start, the fact that I've had an apparent appearance change -although I can't tell the difference- and the male population won't seem to leave me alone," they chuckled at the annoyed tone in her voice. "The looks that I sometimes gave you at random moments, along with my premonitions and dreams, they were all signs that I was ready. I think the Siren grew impatient and when I hugged the twins, she decided to show me everything rather than having to wait for your parents to decide when the time was right."

They sat in silence for a few minutes, mulling over her words; they had been right, she had been ready.

"Did you know having premonitions is an ability of Sirens?" Hermione broke the comfortable silence. "Apparently, it's rare and only a small number of Sirens have had the ability since the beginning of magic."

"Hoo do ye know tha'?" Oliver tipped his head.

"I read it in the book in the library," she shrugged her shoulders.

"Love, it doesn't say that in the book," said George, sharing a confused glance with the others. "In fact, there's little information on Sirens written in that book. Less than veelas, actually."

"What're you talking about?" Her brow furrowed. "It's in the book. I read it."

Sharing a look, George climbed from the bed and rummaged through his trunk, pulling free the exact same book Hermione had read in the library before retaking his seat on the bed and handing it to her.

She arched a questioning eyebrow, George explaining, "Dumbledore gave it to us so we could do some research and be prepared."

Nodding, she opened the book and flipped through the pages until she found the correct chapter, absentmindedly reading it aloud.

Sirens are immensely beautiful and powerful beings and they are said to possess the ability to easily and effortlessly control non-verbal and wandless magic. Unfortunately, Sirens are highly rare beings, considered to be almost extinct due to the Siren Hunts several centuries ago, being feared of their power. It was once recorded there was approximately thousand Sirens in Britain but currently, there is only two known and identified living Sirens, both nearing their 130th birthday. The Siren population is known to only produce females and there are said to only have one life mate, usually a wizard but there have been reported cases of a Muggle, Werewolf and Vampire mate.

Sirens do not go through a painful transition when they reach their full maturity. Only the Siren will know when it is time for the Mating Ceremony to be completed and due to their secretive nature regarding such private instances, it is unknown what the ceremony entails or how long it may last.

After the completion of the Mating Ceremony, it has been heavily speculated but not yet confirmed that a mind link may possibly develop between the Siren and her mate, allowing for telepathic communication. It is also speculated that not only can emotions be felt by the other, but that they can be influenced or manipulated.

The oldest living Siren on record was 304 years of age when both she and her mate were fatally injured in a potion brewing accident.

"What?" Her frown deepened. "I don't understand! Where's the information on the signs that the Siren has found her mate before the transformation begins? Where's the information on the abilities and powers that will happen to the Siren and her mate after the Mating Ceremony? Where's the information on the Mating Ceremony? Where's the information on the rare abilities a Siren may have? I read it in the book. I know I did!"

"If ye read information on all af tha', ye know more aboot it than us an' it wasn't from this book," Oliver said.

"But it was and I can prove it," she said confidently.

She shuffled off the bed and crossed over to her desk, rummaging around until she found what she was looking for and then she turned to face them, seeing she had their full attention.

"Listen," she instructed, lowering her gaze to her notepad and reading aloud. "Sirens that mare more powerful than the average being have been known to possess an extra ability such as the capability of controlling one or more of the Earth's elements, natural healing and premonitions... Then about the Mating Ceremony it says it won't take place until the Siren feels it is time, but when it does, the Siren will know what to do as if it instinctual. As for the signs of a Siren finding her mate before her transformation: insomnia and difficulty sleeping, being physically ill when not in the mate's presence for long periods of time, potential ability to feel one another's emotions if they are strong enough, being happy when in each other's presence, and being loyal, fiercely protective and inseparable."

"It does describe us," Fred muttered.

"Yes," she nodded in agreement, her eyes briefly darting to each of them before lowering back to her notepad. "It also mentioned the abilities and capabilities that may be present after the Mating Ceremony, and that there have been three reported cases of a Siren and her mate being able to join their magic and use it in unison. Also, once mated, the mates cannot die before the Siren and a Siren has yet to die of age. Sirens and their mates will age at a rate of one hundred times slower than a regular human and when they reach a certain age, they'll stop ageing altogether. The youngest recorded age is fifty-nine and the oldest is one hundred and thirty-eight."

"That's good to know," George mused and they looked at him confused. "That we'll stop ageing," he clarified. "It means that I'll always be this good looking, unfortunately for Fred since I'm the better-looking twin."

"Oi, we're identical you tosser," Fred scowled and Hermione giggled.

"And I won't have to deny the public the right of looking at my handsome face," George continued and Hermione giggled again with Oliver and Fred rolling their eyes at him. "You know more than Dumbledore and Sirius combined," George remarked.

"Yes, but I swear, I read it in that book."

"You didn't 'cause that book is the one Dumbledore used to gather information on Sirens. And Sirius knows more about Sirens than Dumbledore 'cause of the books that were in the library in the house he grew up in," Fred said.

"So, the question is; if ye used the same book as Dumbledore, hoo did ye read information tha' wasn't in the book?" Oliver injected.

Hermione's eyes lowered to the ground and she nibbled at her lip thoughtfully, the boys silently watching her, chuckling when her eyes lit up and her gaze darted to them.

"The information was in the book I read but it was only for me to see. The Siren in me wanted me to know everything I could about myself. I don't know how but she's responsible, she put it in there for me to find."

"Why would she do that?" George tipped his head, bemused.

"I told you, she was impatient. She didn't want me to wait any longer for everyone to tell me the truth; she'd been dropping hints since the beginning of summer."

"She gave you all that information 'cause she wanted you to know so you were prepared?" Fred checked. He had a headache forming.

"Exactly!" She exclaimed excitedly. "There's hardly any information on Sirens in books and that's because Sirens don't need to read about themselves. They just know everything. We're born that way. She showed me what I needed to know in a book because she knew it would be the thing I went to for information. She knew I was most likely to believe something I read than something I dreamt or thought."

"Okay, me mind's officially blown," Oliver remarked, Hermione turning her eyes to him and tilting her head adorably. "Hoo long befere tha' look in ye eyes disappears? A could get used tae ye looking at us like tha'."

"Never, I will always look at you like this. Now that I know, these feelings won't disappear or fade. You will always see me this way," she promised, moving to retake to her seat in-between the twins.

Reaching for their hands, she slotted their fingers together and silence fell around them. Everything between them had now changed and they couldn't be any happier or grateful.

"A never told ye, ye look incredibly beautiful," complimented Oliver.

Her cheeks tinted pink and her eyes lowered shyly. "Thank you, Ollie."

His mouth twitching, he leaned closer and traced the colouring with a fingertip, Hermione tilting her head into his touch. Drawing back, he climbed off the bed and held his hand out to her, Hermione taking it without hesitation and he pulled her to her feet. He reached for his wand and with a wave, he conjured a gramophone and music began to quietly full the room.

He grinned cheekily at her as he said, "A never got a chance tae dance with ye at the Yule Ball 'coz a wisnae invited."

She laughed before she kicked off her heels and they walked into the middle of the room, slowly dancing in the space they had before Oliver twirled her around and when Hermione was facing him again, she arched an eyebrow.

"Let me guess, your mum made you learn when you were a child?"

Oliver shrugged. "Pureblood thing."

"See, me being a Muggleborn and all..."

"Ye are a Half-blood," he corrected.

"That's going to take some getting used to," she sighed and shook her head.

Oliver chuckled at her before he twirled her again and when she was facing him, she smiled at him. He leaned down and kissed her sweetly.

She smiled when he pulled away. "What was that for?"

"'Coz a can now," he smiled "Been waiting a while," he shrugged.

"I'm sorry" she apologized guiltily.

He frowned. "What fer?"

"For not figuring it out sooner. If I had, none of you would've had to keep it a secret and lie to me. Everything would've been different."

"It wisnae ye job tae figure ev'rything oot, they should've told ye. An' a imagine tha' if ye had known befere now, ev'rything would've been the same except we could've..." He leaned down and kissed her again. "Kissed ye sooner." He twirled her under his arm before pulling her closer to him. "Yer wearing the necklace a gave ye," he noted.

"I never take it off," she nodded.

"Why?"

"Because you gave it to me, even if I didn't know you were my mate before now; you're important to me, which means that anything you, Fred or George give me will always mean the world to me. But that doesn't mean you can go out and buy me things whenever you want because you'll have a fight on your hands getting me to accept it, particularly if it's expensive," she warned.

He chuckled and shook his head, smiling down at her before he leaned down to kiss her. This time, they stopped dancing and he pulled her closer to him. She stood on her tiptoes, one arm looped around his, a hand in his hair and the other sat on his chest, resting above his heart. They slowly moved their lips together, getting lost in each other and making up for the years they'd had to wait.

Fred and George were watching the two with amused smirks tugging at their mouths. They weren't jealous because they all belonged to her and she belonged to them. They were their own family. Despite Oliver being the one that was kissing her, they were happy. They'd now begun a life together and it could only get better for them.

Oliver and Hermione pulled apart for air and they continued dancing as they stared into each other's eyes, but when Oliver saw George approaching, he spun Hermione out and George took his place dancing with her as he retook his seat on the bed. He noticed Fred's amused look and he shoved him.

"Like ye wouldn't do the same," he snorted.

"I would and I know it," Fred grinned, "I'm just waiting for my turn."

When they turned their attention back to Hermione and George, the two were kissing and paying no attention to their surroundings. Hermione's hands were fisted as she clung to George's shirt, keeping him flush against her body, George had one hand set on her waist and the other was in her hair. Fred and Oliver chuckled and George and Hermione pulled away for air and they danced around the room, George spun her out and Fred caught her. Before she could say anything, his lips were on hers and they kissed for as long as possible before they required oxygen.

When they looked up from one another, George was dressed in his pyjama bottoms and Fred quickly changed into his in the bathroom. When he returned, Hermione took his place and changed into her own pyjamas. Stepping out in a cotton shorts and the matching top, she smiled at them before she reached for her wand and cast her Patronus, the majestic lion stood before her patiently.

"Family meeting, tomorrow at 9:30am in Dumbledore's office. We need to talk. And that means everyone including you Remus - you're family, don't make me drag you by your wolfy ears, like a child," she said and sent the Patronus to every member of the family except for Lee, Ginny, Harry and Ron.

She climbed into bed and snuggled down into the covers with her boys surrounding her.

"Hey, boys?"

"Yes, Love?" Questioned George sleepily.

"Did you do something to Viktor?" She asked. The twins sniggered. "I'll take that as a yes," she sighed, completely unsurprised.

"Yeah, we slipped something in his drink once," Fred admitted.

"Or twice," George added sheepishly.

She was torn between laughing, rolling her eyes and scolding them.

They each kissed her and she drifted off to sleep, for the first time in a long while, feeling truly happy and safe.

Hogwarts - Sunday 25th December 1994

Christmas morning came with Hermione waking with a smile on her face and after slowly peeling her eyes open, she noticed the boys were already awake and they smiled at her.

"Morning, boys," she greeted, stretching with her arms above her head and her hands clasped.

"Morning," they sang happily.

"You were right," George smiled.

"Hmm?"

"The look, it's still there," Fred clarified.

After climbing from the bed, she crossed to the bathroom and washed her hands and face, but when she was drying her hands, something caught her eye.

On both her wrists with a pale golden band made of vines, roses and ivy beautifully and intricately twined together. On her left wrist and in the same golden colour, ''Fred' sat above the band and on her right wrist, "George" did the same. Confused, she turned to leave the room before she halted, catching something from the corner of her eye in the mirror. Upon closer inspection, at the junction of the right side of her neck, in-between her neck and shoulder, read "Oliver" with the same design banding around her neck like a choker.

Frowning, she stepped out of the bathroom and said, "Fred, George, show me your wrists."

"Why?" They chorused but hesitant to do as she'd asked.

Hermione, taking their wrists in her hands, saw they were sporting the exact same design. Fred's was on his left wrist and George's was on his right wrist, mimicking her own, with "Hermione" written above the bands. The twins looked at it in but interest and confusion, having only noticed for the first time when she'd pointed it out. Taking their wrists from her grasp, they each trailed a finger over the band.

"Ollie, you have one, too. In the same place as mine," she gestured to her own choker-like band and he reached up with his hand, his fingers pressing against his neck.

"What are they?" He asked.

Hermione's brow furrowed when she heard a voice in the back of her mind and concentrated, listening carefully.

"They are our bond marks," she explained, a smile pulling at her mouth. Sharking glances and seeing her smile, smiles of their own appeared. "It means the bond between us has been accepted. When the Mating Ceremony's completed, the bands will darken. It's to show people that I belong to you and you belong to me. Basically, it's the Siren's way of marking her territory."

They snorted at her. They liked the idea of the band; maybe it would keep the boys away from her.

Giving herself a mental shake, she retrieved their Christmas presents and handed them to their correct owner, Hermione briefly noticing that Lee hadn't been back to the room that night, but she'd seen him talking with Alicia before she'd left the Yule Ball. Taking a seat on the bed, the boys smiled in thanks before one by one, they opened their gifts.

George, she'd gifted a box of rare and illegal potion ingredients, and his eyes briefly scanned the contents before they landed on the note she'd included.

*Georgie,*

*I know that some of the things you plan cannot be carried out as the ingredients you require are hard to obtain and are more than likely highly illegal. I hope these will help you create many exceptional products, just as I know you are capable of doing.*

*No matter what anyone says, you are one of the most intelligent people I have ever met and I am grateful to have you in my life. I will always stand by you no matter what others say and you will always have my support. I couldn't be any prouder of you and what you have achieved in such a short time and I look forward to what is yet to come.*

*Love, Hermione*

Lifting his gaze, he stared at her in surprise before he leaned closer and kissed her, drawing back and sharing a smile before his eyes lowered to the box once more, having a closer look at its contents, noting that each jar contained something that was rare or illegal.

"How'd you get this?" He questioned in surprise, holding up a jar of Gillyweed.

"It's best if I don't answer that," she grinned cheekily and they laughed at her. George gave her another quick kiss before Fred opened his gift.

She'd finally finished the notebook she'd been making for him and it was made of black leather and had the initials 'F.G.W' monogrammed in gold in the centre of the cover. He ran his hands over it, feeling the magic within it tingle against his skin. It felt like Hermione, it was as if a part of her was in the book.

"What's this for?"

"I created it for you. It's similar to the one I made for myself, Ollie and Sirius. I noticed that you use a lot of muggle notebooks, so I wanted to help you. It's for you to jot down anything you want to; pranks, plans, spells, charms, potion ingredients, potion brewing instructions, designs for products. Anything really. I've fitted it several charms, too."

"Yeah? What?" He asked, already amazed that she'd made something so thoughtful for him.

"Well, I placed the modified Shrinking and Enlarging Charm on it, so you can carry it with you at all times. I've also fitted it with an Invisibility Charm, so if inspiration strikes at any time, like say in class, you can write it down without a teacher catching you not paying attention. Only you will be able to see it when the Invisibility Charm is in effect, unless you want someone to see it. You activate the charm by tapping the bottom left-hand corner of the notebook three times with your index finger," she explained, demonstrating it.

She tapped the notebook and it vanished. George and Oliver's eyes widened.

"Can you see it?" Fred asked them excitedly.

"No," they replied together with shakes of their heads.

"If I want someone to see it what do I do?"

"You think of the person you want to see it."

Fred looked at his hands where the book was and then it reappeared in his hands.

"Amazing!"

"Wicked!"

"Awesome!"

She smiled at their praise. "And to return it to normal, you tap the bottom left-hand corner three times."

"Wait, a dinnae think there was an Invisibility Charm," Oliver said confused.

She smirked. "Oh, there isn't, so I created one."

"Should've guessed," he chuckled, completely unsurprised.

"I also did it wandless and non-verbally," she shrugged and they blinked at her slowly before snorting. "I'll teach it to you later, it comes in handy."

They shook their heads at her fondly. "So, are there any more charms on the notebook?" Fred asked joyously.

"Of course, there is. You'll never run out of pages, so everything you do will be kept in one place. Also, if you wave your hand over a page when the book is open, a muggle pen will appear and it will never run out of ink. You can change the colour of the ink with just a thought and you simply wave your hand over the page again if you wish for the pen to return to the book. I would've given you a quill and inkpot but muggle pens are easier to write with, they don't make as much mess and they're less fragile. On the back cover, if you wave your hand over it, a necklace chain will appear that will attach to the book and you can wear it around your neck if you don't have any pockets. If someone tries to read what's inside the book without your spoken permission, then all they will see is either blank pages or Latin."

"Anything else?" George questioned, looking at the book in Fred's hands in pride and awe.

"I've placed a Locator Charm on the notebook. Should you lose it, only you and I can activate it and I will show you the charm later on. Oh, one last thing, open the book," she grinned.

Fred opened the first page of the book to see a small paragraph written in the middle of the page, the writing very familiar to him.

*Freddie,*

*This is another step forward to helping shape your future, which I am certain, will be filled with success and achievements. I am incredibly proud of you for what you have achieved so far and I can't wait to see what else you are capable of.*

*I know that you will have some trouble with your mother and you don't exactly see eye to eye on your future plans, but I will always support you and your choices.*

*Better get to work; you have a world in need of laughter and joy.*

*Love, Hermione*

He looked up at her with the softest expression she had ever seen on his face and he leaned forward and kissed her. She smiled when he pulled away.

"Thank you," he whispered.

"There's more, turn the page," she said, indicating with her finger.

He did and there were potion ingredients written down. He turned the page again to see a prank that he and George had planned two years ago that they hadn't gone through with because they couldn't figure out the correct charms to use. He turned the page again and saw a list of spells that could be useful in pranking. He continued to flip through the pages, he must have flipped through a hundred pages or so and they were all filled and had something on them. The further into the book he got the more plans that appeared for the joke shop. She had even included the plans they were working on for Skeeter. Hermione was right; every time he thought he would come to the end of the book, another page would appear.

He looked at her with his mouth hung open.

"You..." He trailed off; he didn't know what to say.

She smiled at him and George and Oliver looked confused; to them, the book appeared empty.

"What is it?" George asked.

"Well, I found as many of Fred's plans and notebooks as I could and I copied them all down into this book for him, so now everything is in one place."

"She has plans that go back as far as the day we met on the train. She even included plans that we didn't go ahead with or that failed," Fred said, amazed. "Why?"

"Just because you couldn't figure them out in the past doesn't mean you can't now, especially since you know more now than you did before. Oh, I almost forgot, if you want to find something in particular, you hold your hand over the book and say what you are looking for. Like this..." She held her hand over the book and said "Canary Creams" and the book opened by itself and the pages flipped as if there was a breeze in the room until they stopped at the correct page. There was a list of the spells, ingredients and plans for Canary Creams.

"That's! Well, that's..." Fred couldn't find the words.

"I was able to do that because I created the book, as soon as you write in the book, only you will be able to do it unless you give someone verbal permission."

Still lost for words, George spoke for him. "How long did it take to make?"

"It only took me about a week to make the book and place the charms but it's taken me almost two months to get all of Fred's previous notes into that book. First of all, I had to find them, then I had to sort through them, then I had to copy them down and I also had to do it without being caught. I didn't want Fred getting suspicious. The things I do for you boys," she chuckled with a shake of her head.

Fred leaned forwards and kissed her again, to thank her again and just because he could. Then she moved on to Oliver and he ripped open the wrapping paper to see a large box. He opened it and pulled out a black leather jacket. He'd been talking about getting one since she first took him to the Muggle World after the Grangers' attack and he'd seen someone wearing one. But he had yet to buy one, so Hermione took the opportunity to do it for him.

He smiled widely and put it on. "Hoo do a look?"

"Snazzy," she said, chuckling at his pleased expression. Oliver quickly kissed her.

She then removed another box from behind her and put it in front of the twins. They looked at her confused.

"I also got you two a collective gift."

"You didn't have to do that, Love," George's expression softened.

"No, but I did. So open it. I think you'll be rather pleased."

That had the twins intrigued and they ripped the wrapping paper off the box.

When they opened it, it was to see several small items. Hermione had created some products in secret for their future joke shop.

"What are these?" George asked, looking at the candy-like items curiously. He went to eat one but she stopped him.

"NO!" Her voice rose and she took it out of his hand, setting it back in the box. They looked at her amused. "I made some products for your shop. I thought we could test them on Skeeter."

The twins looked at her in wonder. "You made us some products?" George checked and she nodded with a smile.

"Yes, look..." She picked up an orange and green marshmallow flump. "I call these Oompa Lumpa Flumps. When they are eaten, it turns the skin turns orange and all hair green, like that prank I pulled on the girls in first year," she explained and they laughed at her pleased expression. "These..." She said, picking up a seemingly innocent chocolate bar. "I call them Barney Bars. Back in the Muggle World, we have this character that children grow up watching. He's called Barney and he's a friendly singing purple and green dinosaur. So when you eat these the skin turns purple, hair turns green, a purple tail with green spikes grows and weight is added, giving a round and green stomach."

They burst into laughter.

"Using muggle inspiration and magic to make ingenious products," Fred remade, impressed.

"Always, Freddie," she grinned. "Now, these..." She reached for a small red hard-boiled candy and showed it to them. "I call Godric's Glue. They will work on anyone who isn't a Gryffindor."

"What do they do?"

"Well, anyone who eats it will become physically stuck to the person next to them. It's an edible Sticking Charm; although, if a Gryffindor eats it, it will have no effects. It will just be a regular hard-boiled candy. It should wear off after a few hours."

"That's brilliant!" The three boys exclaimed.

"How'd you manage to get it to differentiate between the houses?" George questioned, scratching at his chin thoughtfully.

Hermione winked. "If I told you, I would have to kill you." They chuckled at her. She then looked at Oliver. "Now, Ollie, your other gift won't arrive until lunchtime."

"Ye dinnae have tae get mae another gift," he replied, his expression softening.

"Well, I did. You think the twins' gift was good? Wait until you see yours," her mouth twitched into a smirk, something that, admittedly, worried him.

With their gifts now opened, they handed her wrapped presents to her. Fred had given her a silver train charm (Hogwarts Express) and a book on Healing Charms, she kissed him in thanks before turning her attention to George's gifts. He'd given her a silver castle charm (Hogwarts) and a book on advanced runes and she kissed him before she opened Oliver's gifts, finding that he'd given her a silver stag charm (to represent Harry) and a Puddlemere United jersey with Oliver's name and number on the back. He looked far too pleased when she arched an amused eyebrow at him and the twins chuckled. She kissed him and then they quickly opened up their gifts from everyone else.

The boys then used the bathroom whilst Hermione tidied around the room and got her clothes ready for the day. When they exited the bathroom, she entered and quickly showered and dressed, stepping out of the bathroom sporting black leggings, a pair of white converse and her newly knitted Weasley jumper. It matched the twins' and Oliver's which were navy-blue and had the initial of their first name in the centre.

"Better make sure the bands are covered for now," she said sadly, tapping her wand to her neck and muttering a Glamour Charm before doing the same with Oliver, hers and the twins' bond marks already being covered by their jumper sleeves.

Once done, they exited their dorm and made their way to Dumbledore's office, pausing before the gargoyle.

"Well, he's probably changed it to something more festive," Hermione mused. "Chocolate hangings... Seasonal snaps... Tree topper treats... Candy cane."

The staircase appeared and they stepped onto them, being lifted towards his office door and after knocking, they entered after being given permission to do so.

The door magically closing behind them, their eyes scanned the office, seeing Professors Snape, McGonagall and Dumbledore, Bill, Charlie, Percy, Sirius, Remus, Mr. and Mrs. Wood and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley all being present and spread about the room.

"Wolfy ears?" Remus asked amusedly. Hermione grinned at him, briefly noting that he didn't look as raggedy as usual, no doubt Molly Weasley's doing.

Sirius, Bill and Charlie wore matching expressions of arched eyebrows, seeing the smiling, joyous expressions of the three teen wizards. When Hermione's smile fell from her face, Remus' brow furrowed in confusion as he soon detected the change in Hermione's stance and aura. She was annoyed. He could smell it, the werewolf side of him allowing him to smell the emotional change in humans.

"Miss. Granger, why was a meeting called and in my office, no less," asked Dumbledore, his eyes twinkling.

"Yes, what's wrong, Dear?" Said Mrs. Weasley.

"She's annoyed," Remus stated knowingly. "I can smell it."

"Why are you annoyed, Kitten?" Sirius questioned with an amused smile, it quickly fading when her eyes snapped to him, a glare marring her pretty features.

"You lied to me."

"Lied?" Mrs. Wood frowned in confusion.

"I know everything."

"You've lost me," Charlie admitted, scratching at his chin.

Her eyes narrowed and her arms folded over her chest.

"Very well, the cliff notes version it is. I'm Hermione Blake and my birth parents died during the war after being placed in a safe house by Professor Dumbledore. I am the subject of a prophecy in which I am said to banish the darkness from the Wizarding World and be the beacon of light to make everything better. I'm a Half-blood and a Siren, which explains my magic, my abilities, my power and my relationships. Fred, George and Oliver are my mates, and Harry is my sibling. I'm what the Grangers were given to protect and that's why the male population hasn't left me alone; I'm coming into my heritage and by my seventeenth birthday, the transformation will be complete. And, I'm related to Voldemort and his followers are still after me. Did I miss anything?"

Wide-eyed, surprised expressions watched her closely as silence fell in the office.

"YOU TOLD HER!" Mrs. Weasley suddenly shrieked, looking to the three teen wizards unimpressed and disappointed.

"No, they didn't tell me," Hermione cut in, glaring at her unhappily for her words and treatment of her mates, her protective instincts flaring up. "They didn't have to."

"What do ye mean by tha'?" Mr. Wood's eyes darted between her and the surprised Mrs. Weasley, the older witch taken aback by Hermione's behaviour.

"They didn't have to tell me because the Siren did," she replied, unsurprised by their current expressions. They were all looking at her as though she'd lost her mind. "You should've listened to my boys. They were right; I was ready to know the truth. The wandless and non-verbal magic, the magical outbursts, the appearance change, the random looks I would give the boys, my dreams and premonitions and the attention of the male population. They were all signs from the Siren in me, letting you know that it was time to tell me."

"That's impossible," Percy denied.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Perce, I didn't know you were a Siren, too," she snarked. He paled at her tone of voice, Bill and Charlie smirked and her boys sniggered. "When you wouldn't listen to the boys," she continued, silently daring Percy to interrupt her again before she darted a glance around the office, "The Siren grew impatient and she showed me everything I needed to know. I was researching in the library when I heard a voice telling me to look at bonds and magical beings. After being drawn to sibling bonds and soul bonds, I eliminated the magical beings down to veelas and Sirens. I had most in common with Sirens but I was sceptical."

"And so, how did you discover the truth?" Snape arched an eyebrow, looking unsurprised at the turn of events.

"When I returned from the Yule Ball last night, I was upset..."

"Why?" Sirius interrupted, standing taller, a protective look flashing through his eyes.

"I'd gotten into an argument with Ronald about Viktor. He said that I was fraternizing with the enemy before he explained his opinion that Viktor was using me for one thing and one thing only, later insinuating that I couldn't take care of myself and that Viktor was too old for me."

"HE SAID WHAT?" Sirius roared before spinning on his heel and making for the door.

"Sirius, kindly refrain from killing my son," Mrs. Weasley said snappishly, her hands settling on her hips and an unhappy expression crossing her face.

He halted on the spot, took calm, deep breaths for several moments before returning to his previous spot, observing as she leaned back into Oliver and his arms came up to loop around her stomach, his chin resting against her shoulder whilst the twins reached for her hands, slotting their fingers through hers. He stopped, took a deep breath and walked back to his spot.

"I only went to the Ball with Viktor as he asked me first and to help keep the fangirls away from him. Anyway, when returned to the dorm, seeing that I was upset, Fred and George hugged me and then it happened. When they touched me, I saw everything; years worth of conversations, memories and images from both of their points of view. My Siren was tired of waiting and she intervened, taking matters into her owns hands. And when Oliver arrived, I saw everything from his point of view, too!"

"Merlin!" Was muttered and whispered throughout the room, eyes darting between her, Oliver and the twins.

"You should have told me, you never should've of kept it a secret from me," Hermione said sternly, looking wholly unimpressed and disappointed in all of them.

"We didn't believe you were ready," Mr Weasley replied gently.

"But I was, and I'd been ready for a while. In fact, you should have told me the moment you found out for yourselves."

"We wanted to protect you, to keep you safe," offered Bill, looking to be struggling between guilt and being confident with the decisions they'd made. "We wanted you to have a semi-normal life."

"I know, Bill, but you went the wrong way about it. This is who I am, this is my heritage and it never should've been kept from me. In doing so, you denied me the knowledge of my past and future; you denied me the right to know my bloodline and what happened to me family. If anything, you may have put me in more danger by keeping it from me."

"How were you in more danger?" Charlie frowned.

"If I was aware of what and who I am, I would've taken more care, I would've been more cautious. I wouldn't have used my wandless and non-verbal magic as freely as I have been around Hogwarts. If someone put two and two together with everything that has happened to me, I would've been in danger. And if you had told me, I wouldn't have been terrified of myself when everything started to change. You said you wanted me to be safe but I didn't feel safe. I didn't trust myself or my magic and you allowed me to feel that" she explained, her gaze lowering to the floor, missing their guilty expressions. "If you had told me from the beginning, I would've had a semi-normal life because I would've been aware of what was happening to me and I wouldn't have batted an eyelash when things started to happen, because, to me, it would have been normal. It would have been my normal. You had several chances to tell me. When I asked, you brushed it off and told me not to worry about it. Of course, I was going to worry about it; I didn't know what was wrong with me."

"I'm sorry, Kitten," sighed Sirius, brushing a tattooed hand through his hair.

"I know you are, and I forgive you, all of you," she gazed at each of them in turn. "But what you did was wrong and don't ever lie to me again. Not when it concerns me, Harry or my mates, as I promise, you will not like my response," she warned.

"Miss. Granger?" Dumbledore drew her attention. "You say that you had similarities between yourself and a Siren, how did you know this? I assume you used the same book as I and there is very little information on Sirens."

"That was my Siren. I've determined that since my Siren knew that I would turn to books for information, she'd projected everything I needed to know onto the pages in front of me, and it was quite detailed. The reason there's so little information on Sirens is that we already know everything we need to, either before or after the transformation, it depends on the individual. We're born with it and it stays dormant until the time's right."

"And what do you know that we don't?" Snape arched an eyebrow.

"I know the symptoms of a Siren having found her mate before her transformation, what happens during and after the Mating Ceremony, including some of the rare abilities that the Siren and her mate may share. I know that some Sirens are born with rare abilities including controlling one or more of the Earths elements, premonitions and natural healing. I know that a Siren's mate can't die before she does and I know they can't die of old age, both will age at a rate of one hundred times slower than a witch or wizard and when they reach a certain age, they stop ageing altogether. The youngest case was fifty-nine and the oldest was one hundred and thirty-eight," she listed.

Charlie whistled appreciatively. "You really do know everything," he said impressed.

"The Siren told me."

"Why do you do that? Separate yourself from the Siren?" Remus asked.

"I don't know. Why do you separate yourself from the wolf?" She countered.

Sirius barked a laugh. "She's got you there Moony."

"I want to change my name," Hermione said suddenly. "To Hermione Blake," she clarified.

No one spoke, silence falling as they stared at her.

"What?" Whispered Mrs. Weasley.

"I want to change my name to Hermione Blake," Hermione repeated.

"No. You can't, it'll put you in danger," Sirius shook his head vehemently.

"When am I ever not in danger?" She rolled her eyes.

"They'll come for you," he argued.

"I know," she nodded, "I don't want to live my life in fear and I want to represent my birth parents for as long as I can. I've been Hermione Granger for twelve years, you've been my guardians and family for four years and now I want to have something of my biological parents. I want to honour them. I don't know who they are and I want to have something that connects me to them. If I don't have permission, I will do it when I turn seventeen, but if I do, this way people will become accustomed to it. Besides, people may know that I'm related to the wizarding version of Hitler..."

"Who's Hitler?" Interrupted Charlie.

"The cause of World War Two in the Muggle World, which ran from 1939-45. Hitler committed genocide and along with his followers, was responsible for millions of deaths. They believed that Germany should only be populated by people they dubbed as 'the Aryan' race. They had fair skin, blue eyes and blonde hair, and they killed anyone who didn't meet their beliefs including Jews, Romas also known as Gypsies, Jehovah Witnesses, Homosexuals, men, women, children, babies, people of all races and ethnicities, prisoners of war, anyone with physical or medical deformities and disabilities and many more that I've likely forgotten to mention"

Everyone stared at her.

"Seriously?" George choked, looking at horrified.

"Yes, but we won the war and lives were saved and every year, we have one day dedicated to those who lost their lives in the war and we remember them and the horrific times of the past. The Muggle World's learned to live with what happened but they'll never forget it. Anyway, my name change... Aside from the reasons I mentioned before, the public most likely won't know that I'm a Siren. That was a highly kept secret as far as I can tell. They will only know if I tell them."

Her guardians exchanged glances, and Mrs. Weasley, ignoring Sirius' furious glare, sighed.

"If you wish to change your name, we will support you."

"Thank you. Now, no more secrets."

"No more secrets," was frighteningly chorused in return.

"There's something else, too."

"And that is?" Remus asked amused.

Sharing a look with the twins and then peering at Oliver over her shoulder, the twins tugged their sleeves up and Oliver removed the Glamour Charm with Hermione doing the same, revealing their bond marks.

"They are our bond marks," she began, "My Siren told me we have these as we've accepted each other and it's to warn people away. Essentially, I belong to them and they belong to me. Once the Mating Ceremony is complete, the bonds will darken."

They crowded closer to better see them.

"They're beautiful," Mrs. Wood remarked softly and Hermione smiled, fondly tracing the design on her left wrist with her index finger.

"One more thing."

"What now?" Charlie said in mock annoyance and she chuckled at him.

"Harry should know," Hermione said, daring them to argue with her and if even if they did, she wouldn't have listened. He deserved to know. He was magically tied to her. "Bopsy," Hermione summoned and the house-elf appeared before her.

"What cans Bopsy dos for Misses Mione?" The little elf squeaked.

"Will you please fetch Harry?"

Bopsy disappeared without a reply and reappeared with Harry moments later, the wizard looking dazed before he gave his head a shake, looking about the room, taking in the sight of them all convened in confusion.

"Thank you, Bopsy. I have something for you."

Hermione pulled a red and gold knitted bobble hat out of her back pocket, crouching down and sitting it on his head.

"For me Misses Mione?" He asked with tears in his eyes.

"For you, Bopsy. Merry Christmas"

Bopsy threw himself into her arms and hugged her before disappearing, sobbing in happiness.

"Err...What's going on?" Harry questioned nervously.

Rising to full height, Hermione said, "I need to tell you something..." And then she proceeded to tell Harry everything.

Sometime later, Harry was staring at Hermione lost for words; he tried to speak but he resembled a goldfish.

"Spit it out, Harry," she said amusedly.

"Let me get this straight... Your biological parents were powerful people; your mum was a Siren and your dad was related to the Gaunt family which makes him related to Voldemort. That makes you a Siren and related to Voldemort. Like my parents, yours were placed in a safe house but it was infiltrated and your parents died protecting you. Like me, you were placed in the Muggle Word and given to the Grangers for protection. People are still after you, like they are me. You're a subject of a prophecy. Fred, George and Oliver are your mates and I'm also your mate but a sibling version," he said, rubbing at his forehead; he had a headache forming.

Hermione stepped closer to him and she ran her finger over his scar, seeing the way he visibly relaxed, his shoulders slumping.

"Yes, you're my brother in everything but blood. You have a family, Harry; the Blakes, Grangers, Weasleys, Woods, Blacks and Lupins. We're your family. I'm your family and you're mine. It makes perfect sense, think about how we are with each other...You will never be alone, Harry; no matter how alone you feel, I promise you will never be alone and I promise you'll always have a home and you'll always be loved" she whispered to him, seeing his teary eyes and she pulled him into a hug.

When he drew back, a laugh fell from him.

"What?"

He laughed harder.

"I thought I had it bad...It turns out you have it worse. Voldemort's after you, too. And he has more reason to be afraid of you than me. And you're related to him."

"You think your scar's bad, you haven't seen mine," she snorted.

His laughter sobered, his brow furrowing as he looked to her. "I forgot about that. Will you show me?"

Sighing, she said, "It's really bad," she warned before she cancelled the Glamour Charm, turned her back to them and tugged her jumper up her back, hearing the intakes of breath from around her, Sirius' angered cursing and Charlie's Romanian profanities.

She felt someone gently touch the scar and trace it with their finger, knowing it was Harry. She flinched a little; it was hurting more every day and she didn't know why. She stepped forward and lowered her jumper, turning to face them.

"I said it was bad," she muttered, seeing their horrified and angered expressions.

"Why did you flinch when he touched you?" Percy asked.

"It's hurts."

"It hurts? But you've had it since you were a baby," Mr Weasley frowned

"It did look a wee bit red an' itchy," Mrs. Wood commented.

"Have you been using the cream I gave you?" Mrs Weasley asked.

"Yes, but I'm almost out," she replied, sharing a glance with Harry. He hadn't spoken yet.

"Here I am moaning about my scar when you've got that on your body," he said quietly.

"I cover mine so people can't see it, and given it's positioning, it isn't easily seen by others unlike yours. You have every right to complain about being stared at like an animal at the zoo," she assured him, feeling a sudden fluttering in her stomach.

"What's wrong, Lassie?" Oliver asked, noticing the change in her even if she didn't herself.

"I don't know, my Siren's trying to tell me something," she replied distractedly.

Without realising it, she had walked forward and she halted, standing before Dumbledore's desk, Snape arching a curious eyebrow, his dark eyes moving between her and the Headmaster.

"Is there something I can help you with, Miss. Granger?" Dumbledore asked her.

She tilted her head slightly, watching him curiously, barely feeling the stares from those around her.

"Is there something you need to give to me, Professor?" She countered.

"No, I don't believe so, Miss. Granger."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," he replied.

Hermione tilted her head to the other side. "You're lying to me."

"Am I?"

"Yes, you are," Remus stepped forward, closer to her. "There was a spike in your heart rate, a common indicator that a lie is being told. Why are you lying, Albus?"

Before Dumbledore could respond, instinctively, Hermione raised her hand and held it palm up, only for a box to unexpectedly appear before her, gently lowering to sit on her palm.

Dumbledore's eyes widened. That box had been in his personal vault at Gringotts; she shouldn't have been able to do that with all of the security measures in place.

Turning, she absentmindedly moved to the centre of the room, her eyes and focus on the box. It was a dark wooden jewellery box fitted with an intricate design of roses, vines and ivy, curiously, it matched their bond marks. In the centre, in elegant white calligraphy, it said, 'To our darling Hermione, love mother and father'.

"This is mine," she whispered, her gaze lifting from the box and to Dumbledore.

"No, it's not," he denied.

"To our darling Hermione, love mother and father," she quoted. "And the design matches my bond marks. I believe it is mine. Why did you keep it from me?"

"Yes, Albus, why did you keep it from Hermione?" Mrs. Weasley narrowed her eyes unhappily and suspiciously, her hands settling on her hips. He didn't answer.

Hermione turned her attention back to the box and she slowly lifted the lid, music gently drifting through the quiet office. A blurry memory surfaced.

"I know this song," she muttered softly. "It's a lullaby, they used to hum it to me when I was a baby."

Giving her head a shake, she reached for the folded envelope that sat in the box, drawing it out, seeing her name scrawled on the front. Her hand began shaking and Harry stepped closer to her, reaching for the box. Surprisingly, she let go and allowed him to hold it.

"Open it." She looked at him. "It's okay, go on, open it," Harry encouraged.

With trembling hands, she opened the envelope and removed the letter, Harry taking it from her as her eyes locked on the neat, flowy black script and taking a breath, she read it aloud, unsure if it was for herself or those in the room.

*Hermione,*

*Our darling little dove; if you are reading this, it means that we are no longer with you and the war is over. We are sorry that we could not be there to watch you grow into a beautiful woman.*

*I am writing this letter as I watch your father cradle you in his arms and he is singing you to sleep. Unfortunately, your father doesn't have the best of singing voices and it seems to be upsetting you rather than settling you. Your father will never learn. As he hums to you his favourite childhood lullaby, you quickly fall to sleep, gripping onto his finger as he smiles down at you. I will never tire of the sight of the two of you together. Even whilst you sleep peacefully, your father is adamant that you remain in his arms should you need him.*

*Your father and I wonder- will you have a love for books as he does? Will you have his unruly curls? Will you share his love of Quidditch? Will you have my passion for helping those in need? Will you be strong-minded and intelligent? Will your life be filled with happiness and love? Will you be safe?*

*We pray to Merlin that you achieve all you wish in life and that you fulfil your destiny.*

*This may or may not come as a shock to you, but I am sorry to say that I am a Siren. It was a long-kept secret within the White family but as you can understand, it had to be kept so. Your father was my mate, my bonded.*

*He worked for the British Ministry in the Department of Magical Games and Sports, when preparations for an upcoming match between Brazil and England resulted in him being in Brazil. I worked in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and we stumbled into each other in the halls merely by accident, but from the moment we looked into each other's eyes, we knew. Barely one month passed before we were married, I moved to England to be with your father and eleven months later, you, my little dove, were born. And with your birth came a love I never knew existed. You were our entire life and world. Nothing else mattered but you, me and your father.*

*Your father learned of my Siren heritage and I learned of your father's ancestors, the Gaunts, and his relation to He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.*

*When the war reached its highest peak, we were approached by You-Know-Who. He wished for our family to join him and his cause. I, being a Pureblooded Siren and your father being related by blood, he wished to have our support, particularly you, Hermione. When you reach your maturity and the Siren transformation is complete, you will be exceptionally powerful and the Dark Lord knew that.*

*I am certain that you are of age by now, or at least, your transformation is partially complete, and that means you are aware of the abilities that you may possess. You will be aware that once you have found your mate and the Mating Ceremony is complete, your mate will be unable to die before you.*

*What you may not know is that if you have sexual relations with anyone before you find your mate, that fact may also apply to them. The partner will be unable to naturally die of age until after you do.*

*That's why he wanted you; with you on his side, he would be immortal. We had to protect you and so we fled to Albus Dumbledore and pleaded for his help. If you are reading this, something must have gone wrong and we lost our lives, but you survived and for that, we owe our thanks to all those that protected you. Please know that we love you more than life itself. We may not be with you in life but know that we are with you in death. We will always be watching over you, my little dove.*

*Remember, our darling girl; be careful with who you can trust, people may fear you and your life will be in danger. Be prepared. But most importantly, don't live your life in fear, find your mate and be happy.*

*We love you.*

*Love, your mother and father.*

Hermione's voice trailed off, her voice catching in her throat as tears streamed down her face. Harry pulled her into a hug and she clung to him as she cried before slowly drawing back and wiping away her tears.

"That's why they're still looking for me...So they can become immortal by raping me." Her eyes snapped to Dumbledore. "Why would you want to keep this from me? Something like this should not have been kept for me."

He remained silent under the many unhappy gazes in the room.

"Hermione, there's a picture," Harry interrupted, handing it to her.

The moment it made contact with skin, her mind was filled with memories but they didn't belong to her. They belonged to her parents.

She could see the first time her parents met, their wedding, all the laughter and smiles they shared, she could feel their happiness. She saw her parents holding her as a baby and smiling softly, she saw a small cottage and all the time they spent together in that ivy-infested property. Then it changed and she could see an explosion, she could hear screaming and then there was a green flash of light and she could feel pain.

She gasped out loud and stumbled back with Harry righting her before she fell to the ground.

"What's wrong?" He asked, concerned.

"I saw them, my parents. I saw their lives together... They were so happy. I saw their lives with me and despite being in a safe house and under threat, they were happy. And then... I saw them die. They died trying to protect me," she explained sadly, her gaze lowering to the photo in her hand, seeing a man and woman smiling down at a bundle held in the woman's arms. Her mother and father.

Her mother had long blonde pin-straight hair and a heart-shaped face that held wide hazel eyes and a peaches and cream complexion. Unsurprisingly, given her Siren status, she was abnormally stunning. Her father had an oval-shaped face and a tanned complexion that held a smattering of freckles over the bridge of his nose. His brown hair was short with unruly curls and warm chocolate-brown eyes darted adoringly between his wife and daughter.

Hermione could see the resemblance. She had her father's hair, eyes and the same smattering of freckles, but she had her mother's smile, heart-shaped face and complexion.

Taking a breath, she lifted her gaze and returned the photo to the jewellery box along with the letter before banishing it to the safety of her dorm room. It was the only thing she had of her parents and she'd take on the Devil himself to keep it safe.

"Well," she took a steadying breath, "It's been an eventful morning and the Christmas Feast will be starting shortly. I suppose we best get down to the hall. And, Remember, Harry, don't tell anyone yet. I'll tell Ginny, Lee and Ron in my own time."

With the ending of the meeting, those present had been granted permission to remain at the castle and attend the Christmas Feast. After arrangements had been made for an extra table to be prepared so they might all sit together as a family, they made their way down to the great hall. With the students curious as to why there was an added table, and many eyes turned towards the great hall doors at the arrival of a crowd of witches and witches.

Hermione had been teasing Charlie about his hair as it had long since grown again and Mrs. Weasley was trying to persuade/pressure him into allowing her to cut it for him.

"Oh, just do it, Charlotte," she teased, a laugh falling from her when he reached down, scooped her and flung her over his shoulder, marching towards their table. Her laughter drew the attention of the hall with Ron, Ginny and Lee and blinking in surprise at the sight of everyone being present before they quickly stood from the Gryffindor table and moved to greet everyone.

"Charlotte, put me down," Hermione laughed.

He halted in his steps and set her on her feet, only to attack her ribs with tickling fingers and she squirmed and laughed, trying to escape his attack.

"Charlie, I'm sorry," she apologised breathlessly.

"I know you are, little sister," he chuckled, ruffling her hair.

"Hey," she scowled, reaching up to try and smooth it out before curling her hand into a fist and aiming for his arm, only he danced out of the way, laughing at her.

"Mina?"

Hermione turned her eyes towards the voice, noticing she'd stopped by the end of the Slytherin table were the Durmstrang students sat.

"Oh, hey Viktor, are you feeling better?" She asked.

"Da, thank you," he nodded and she smiled at him.

Seeing him curiously watching the others, she said, "Oh, right sorry, that is Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Bill, Charlie and Percy," she pointed to each in turn as they were already taking their seats at the table before the head's table. "And that is Remus, he was a Professor here last year, and that is Mr. and Mrs. Wood... And, that is Oliver," she finished as he approached her.

He gave her a smile, his hand settling on the small of her back as she tipped her back, watching him with her eyes shining with adoration and she smiled at him tenderly. Drawing her gaze away from him, she nodded to the Durmstrang students and allowed Oliver to guide her over to the table, taking a seat beside him.

"Did you see that?" Aleks said amused in his mother tongue.

"The way she was looking at him?" Jamous nodded.

"He's very good looking," Aleks observed, the wizard having always been comfortable and confident with his sexuality.

All of his classmates knew that he didn't care for gender, he was attracted to who he was attracted to and he did so without shame or embarrassment. He never allowed anyone to shame him and for that, he was greatly respected amongst his peers, even if he did cross the line from time to time, being too or overly flirty and friendly with his peers to the point he made them uncomfortable.

"I think it's safe to say you are not her mate, Viktor," remarked Nikoli, seeing Viktor's disappointed frown.

With the feast underway, half of the hall kept their attention on Hermione and those that surrounded her and despite being the smallest table in the hall, they were making the most noise with talking, laughing and arguing and a few pieces of food were thrown, too.

As the feast neared its end, unexpectedly, an owl arrived and all eyes turned upwards, tracking who it was delivering the package in its beak to.

"It's here," Hermione said happily.

"What is?" Charlie asked curiously.

"Ollie's present," she beamed, catching the package the owl dropped before her and after offering up some turkey, the owl took its leave.

Turning her attention to the package in her hand, she resized it and set it on the table before Oliver. He reached for it, drawing it closer before ripping the wrapping paper off and they laughed at his enthusiasm. A note was taped to the box and he pulled it free, flipping it open.

*Ollie,*

*I hope that this will aid you well in your future career as Puddlemere's Keeper. And before you argue, you will be the starting Keeper before you know it. You are exceptionally talented and this is something you were born to do, and I believe this will suit you well.*

*I am incredibly proud of you and I will always be your number one fan.*

*Love, Hermione*

Finished with the note, his eyes darted to her in surprise and after she gestured to the large rectangular box with a tip of her head, he set the note down and tore the box open.

"NAW BLOODY WAY!" He cried excitedly and they startled in surprise as Oliver removed the item from and the held it up for everyone to better see.

"That's a FireFly3000!" Ron exclaimed loudly. Mutters, whispers and gasps filled the hall.

"Hoo did ye get this? It's not due oot fer another eight months?" Oliver struggled to speak, his wide, surprised eyes darting between her and the broom in his grasp.

"If I told you that, I'd have to kill you," she teased and those around the table rolled their eyes and snorted at her.

Returning the broom to the box, he reached and picked her up, holding her against him as he twirled her in circles and she laughed.

"How the hell did she get that?" Malfoy asked in disbelief, his eyes darting between the box on the table that hid the broom from sight and Blaise and Theo as they sat opposite him. "My parents tried to get me one for Christmas but their request was denied, only being given the option of purchasing a FireFly one week before their release date. I'm a Malfoy for Merlin's sake!" He complained.

Theo smirked at him. "Don't underestimate her," he shrugged, knowing he should be surprised but he wasn't. Not in the slightest. She was a tricky little witch, something he admired about her. She didn't conform to one House, rather, she possessed qualities that would see her succeeding in Ravenclaw, Gryffindor, Hufflepuff and Slytherin. And if she had been sorted into Slytherin, Theo was certain it would never be the same, and not because of her status as a Muggleborn.

It was at this point that Hermione stepped away from the table and made to leave the hall so she might use the bathroom.

"Granger?" Malfoy called.

She halted to a stop, searched for the one responsible and then she approached the Slytherin table, offering Theo a smile, Blaise a nod of the head and then she turned her eyes to Malfoy.

"Yes, Malfoy?"

"How did you get Wood a FireFly3000? They're not due to be released for another eight months. My parents have been denied purchase until the week before their release."

Hermione tipped her head, her mouth twitching. "Well, I would tell you but I don't like you," she said lightly. Blaise, Theo and the Durmstrang students sniggered at her and Malfoy's affronted expression. "Oh, I feel it only right to tell you, I'm not a Muggleborn."

"Really?" Both pale eyebrows shifted upwards.

"Yes, so, I suppose that means it would no longer be correct of you to call me a Mudblood. In fact, last night, I discovered the identities of my biological parents; they died during the war trying to protect me."

"Who were they?" He asked curiously, his eyes carefully scanning her face, no doubt in search of any physical traits that might be associated to a specific bloodline, such as the Malfoy's white-blonde hair, the Black's grey eyes and dark hair, the Parkinson's squished noses, the Lestrange's copper-tinted hair, the Weasley's freckles and red hair, the Zabini's indigo-coloured eyes or the Nott's tall, weedy frames and deep blue eyes.

"You'll have to wait and see, I'm having my name changed within the next couple of weeks, but believe me when I say, you will get the shock of your life. Your father will probably want to know, too," she mused, "So you better keep him in the loop," she said before walking off, feeling their eyes on her until she stepped out of the great hall.

"Who do you reckon she is then?" Blaise asked.

"I don't know but she looked far too pleased with herself. It must've been someone of importance given that she mentioned my father," Malfoy replied, his eyes gleaming. Maybe she was good enough for him after all.

When Hermione was on her way back from the bathroom, on her journey to the great hall, she ran in Oliver.

"Hey, Ollie..." She was interrupted when his mouth latched onto hers unexpectedly.

Surprised but not disappointed, she was quick to respond, her eyes fluttering closed, her hands twining through his hair, his arms folding around her and taking the brunt of the force as he backed her up to the stone wall. This kiss was different than the few they'd previously shared. They had been gentle and slow but this one was filled with passion and fire.

"What was that for?" She breathed out, her chest rising and falling as oxygen returned to her lungs once she'd drew back from him.

"Fer the broom an' 'coz a can now," he smiled down at her. She looked thoroughly snogged and he felt incredibly pleased with himself. Her lips were red and swollen, her cheeks tinted pink and her chest heaving but he didn't look much better with his hair a complete mess, swollen lips and chest heaving, too.

Hermione did her best to tidy his hair and after casting a quick Glamour Charms to hide the evidence of what they'd been up to, they walked back into the hall hand in hand, unnoticed by the students. When they retook their seats, the twins looked between Hermione and Oliver, smirks pulling at their mouths. Even with the Glamour Charms, they could see what'd happened between them.

Later that night, they all thanked her properly with kisses and unfortunately, Oliver had to leave the castle and return home. They were just grateful they'd had the day together.

Chapter Fifty-Seven

Puddlemere United Stadium - Tuesday 3rd January 1995

Oliver had floo'd to the Puddlemere United stadium and had finished changing into his practice wear before he reached for his FireFly3000 and headed to the Coach's box where the team and the coach were huddled close together.

"Wood," Coach Burton nodded in greeting. Coach Burton had been the Coach of Puddlemere for the last six years. He was in his mid-forties, he had short black hair, a small nose, sharp brown eyes and he stood at five-foot-eleven, and he was currently gripping a clipboard in one hand and gesturing wildly with his other. He worked the team hard, he was easily frustrated but he was fair.

"Coach," he greeted, stepping into his place within the group.

"Now that everyone's here, we can get started. Quidditch season is only a few months away and we need to be ready. Pallie, (Captain) Bishop, Malloy, (starting Chasers), I want you running plays. Kings, Wilks, (starting Beaters) I want you running drills and Fox, (starting Keeper) I want you practising with Jones, McGee and West (reserve Chasers). Fisher, (starting Seeker) Thompson, (reserve Seeker) I want you running drills, Kelsy, Briggs, (reserve Beaters) I want you hitting bludgers at Pallie, Bishop and Malloy. Wood, I want you..." Coach Burton's speech suddenly halted as his eyes latched onto the broom in his hand, his clipboard falling from his hand and clacking against the ground as his eyes lit up.

"IS THAT A FIREFLY3000?" He cried, looking very much like he was about to cry. He startled several of the players, including Oliver, and all eyes turned to him, openly gaping.

"Aye," he replied nervously.

"Where? How? When? They're not due for release for another eight months," Coach fired rapidly.

"Errr... A got it fer Christmas from me girlfriend," he answered sheepishly, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly.

He didn't notice the look of jealous anger that crossed over Jones' face. She was the only female member on the team and a reserve Chaser. She'd believed that he was single and she'd been hoping that she'd soon find herself his girlfriend. She didn't care that he was smart, passionate or kind. She could admit she was the superficial type of witch, just as her mother and sisters were the same. She'd been taught to go after the wizards with the money. And not only was Oliver's family known to be wealthy, but he was very handsome with his large brown puppy dog eyes and light brown hair that fell into his eyes. He had both money and looks. The holy grail.

"Your girlfriend?" Wilks probed, looking like he'd just won the World Cup.

"Aye," Oliver replied, eyeing him warily.

"How did she get you that? I put in a request with the company for the entire team but they denied it no matter how big a sum the big bosses were willing to cough up. The best I could do was purchase a month before the scheduled release date," said Coach Burton, eyeing the broom as though it was a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

"A dunno," Oliver admitted. "A asked, af course, but she refused tae answer."

"Do you think she'll be able to get them for the entire team?" He questioned, his expression as hopeful as a child asking their parents for a puppy.

"Am not sure, Coach, a suppose a could ask her?"

"Yes, do," he nodded vigorously with a gleam in his eyes before he crouched down and retrieved his fallen clipboard.

"So, Wood, who's your girlfriend?" Bishop arched an eyebrow.

"Why?" He asked slowly, eyeing him warily.

"Just curious," he shrugged, smiling innocently. Oliver didn't believe him. He was the youngest on the team and they all liked to tease him.

Oliver shifted slightly under his teammates' amused looks and when he did, they caught sight of his bond mark peeking out from beneath his collar.

"Wood, what's that?" Kings asked with a smirk, gesturing to the bond mark.

Oliver's eyes widened and he reached up to touch the mark instinctively. He knew he should've Glamoured it, it shouldn't have trusted his clothing to solely hide it.

"Nothin'," he denied and they laughed at him.

Malloy was stood beside Oliver and he pried his hand away from his neck, tugging the collar of his jumper down to reveal he choker-like bond mark. Coach Burton's eyes widened and his mouth parted; he'd seen a mark like that before.

"Who's Hermione?" Malloy arched a questioning eyebrow, spying the name in golden ink sat in the junction of his neck and shoulder.

"Me girlfriend," he admitted, batting Malloy's hands away and shifting his collar back into place until his bond mark was hidden from view.

"She's already had you branded... That's priceless!" Pallie laughed loudly, slapping at his knee as he bent over with laughter.

"Naw, she hasn't, she dinnae do this," he defended in annoyance. Well, it was sort of true anyway.

"Hermione what?" McGee questioned.

"Granger," Oliver answered carefully.

"The one that's playing Viktor Krum and Harry Potter off against each other? The slag?" Jones' spat laughing.

Oliver's glare was instantaneous and murderous, and her laughter faded upon noting it. Everyone was watching Oliver carefully and they subtly took a step back from him.

"She's not playin' them aff against each other, she hardly sees Krum an' when she does, she's jus' helping him find a book in the library. An' Harry's our family, he's her little brother in everything but blood. The only reason Skeeter#s writing those articles aboot Hermione is 'coz she threatened her with a lawsuit for violating Harry's right," he snapped, his teammates nodding at him eagerly as if trying to get him to believe that they understood. "An' a think ye should be more careful with what ye say aboot me girlfriend, believe mae when a say ye wouldn't stand a chance against her. There's a reason she's referred tae as the Brightest Witch af her generation."

"Okay, we believe you," swore Pallie, eyeing the younger wizard curiously. That was more than just a guy defending his girlfriend, that was something else entirely. "She's still in school, right?"

Oliver snapped his eyes to him, scowling. "Don' look at mae like tha', am not a damn paedo. A've known Hermione since she came tae Hogwarts an' a've always been protective af her. It wisnae until recently tha' we got taegether. Fer reasons tha' don' concern ye, she's older than those in her year. She turned sixteen in September, an' am only eighteen. Even if me birthday is next week, there's only three years separating us an' she's always been mature fer her age. In fact, she's more mature than a am."

His teammates eyed him carefully and slowly nodded, admitting that a three year age difference wasn't bad, especially when she was sixteen, one year away from being considered an of age adult.

"Got a photo we can see?" Pallie asked, no longer fearing for his life now that Oliver appeared to have calmed down.

"She's Harry Potter's best friend, she freed Sirius Black an' she's been in the papers a lot recently. Why do ye want tae see a picture?"

"Just curious," he shrugged. "To be honest, I don't pay much attention to the papers unless the headline's about Quidditch."

Rolling his eyes, Oliver drew his wand from his practice robes and summoned the most recent photo he had of Hermione, a photo he'd duplicated with one sitting at home in his bedroom and the other stuck to his locker door in the stadium locker rooms. And it just so happened, the photo showed Hermione being stood atop the stairs with Harry the night of the Yule Ball. Colin Creevey had been taking photos that night and during the Christmas Feast, he'd given Hermione copies of the photos he'd taken of her, mainly of her dancing with Harry, Fred and George.

When he reached out and caught the photo whizzing towards him, he glanced down at it, a smile tugging at his mouth when the Hermione in the photo turned to him, smiled and waved before her attention returned to Harry. She looked absolutely stunning.

Oliver reluctantly handed it to Pallie, the Captain of the team being crowded around as mutters and whispers picked up, their eyes darting between the photo and him.

"Well, Wood, you did well for yourself, she's beautiful," Pallie commented, handing the photo back to Oliver.

"She's well out of your league," Malloy remarked and they laughed.

"Don' a know it," Oliver grinned.

"That's enough," interrupted Coach Burton. "Everyone get a move on, you've got training to be getting on with," he instructed, pinning them with a frightening glare that had them all mounting their brooms and flying onto the pitch. "Not you, Wood," he held him back, and seeing Oliver's confused expression, he said, "I want to talk to you about something."

Turning and walking over to the stands, Oliver followed, sitting beside him.

"What's up, Coach?" He asked carefully.

Oliver arched an eyebrow, seeing Coach Burton drawing his wand and erecting a Silencing Charm around them.

"I want to talk to you about that," he said, gesturing to Oliver's now covered neck.

"What about it?" Oliver questioned warily, feeling his stomach twist nervously.

"It's a bond mark," he stated, a snort falling from him at Oliver's surprised expression.

"H-h-hoo?" Oliver stuttered.

"I'm estimating that Hermione, your girlfriend, is a Siren and you're her mate," he said confidently.

"H-h-hoo?"

"My Grandmother was a Siren," he admitted, Oliver's eyes widening further in surprise. "Of course, no one knew. It was kept a secret for reasons I'm sure you know. My Grandparents had a bond mark similar to yours, although, it wasn't as detailed or as pretty."

Oliver tried to speak but no words seemed to leave his mouth. Coach Burton watched amused.

"The Mating Ceremony hasn't happened yet," he remarked and Oliver choked and began coughing, his face turning red. Coach Burton burst out laughing. "Merlin, I haven't had this much fun a long time," he shook his head. "I know because the bond mark isn't the right shade, it will darken once it's completed." Oliver had nothing to say; he was surprised, anxious and embarrassed. "Don't worry; your secret is safe with me. I just wanted you to know that I understand," he assured him.

"Err... Thanks, Coach," Oliver said awkwardly.

"I take it she's not a Muggleborn?"

"Naw, she isnae, she's a Half-blood, Siren Pureblood mother an' a Half-blood father. Ye'll find oot who they were soon; she's changing her name tae honour her biological parents. If ye know aboot Sirens, ye'll might know aboot her parents."

Coach Burton nodded. "I'll keep an eye out. I'm guessing it's going to rock the boat as the muggles say."

"Aye, it certainly will," Oliver agreed.

"Does she have any of the rare abilities? My Grandmother didn't," he questioned curiously.

"Aye, she has premonitions," admitted Oliver.

Coach Burton arched an eyebrow. "She's powerful then," he mused. "Out of the three rare abilities a Siren may have, the ability of premonition is the rarest. It's only been seen in two cases since the beginning of magic."

Oliver's eyebrows shot up. Seriously, hoo does he know so much aboot Sirens? He thought.

"Ye have naw idea."

"She's sixteen? So, the transformation isn't yet complete. Has it even started yet?"

"She started at the beginning af last summer befere her sixteenth birthday, an' it hit her within a few weeks. Her magic was a right nightmare. She kept having ootbursts; causing earthquakes an' sending people flying fifteen feet across a room if they startled or angered her. It seems tae have slowed doon now. She has perfect control af her magic an' has learned hoo tae control her emotions."

Coach Burton chuckled. "Sounds like my type of woman. She forced earthquakes? That's a sign of exceptional power. But it's odd," he mused thoughtfully.

"What is?" Oliver tipped his head.

"She started the transformation early and it's not yet complete. Yet you have a bond mark. Speaking of, you should probably find a better way to hide that, if anyone else recognises it for what it is, you'll be in danger and you'll put her in danger, too. You're lucky I've only good intentions given that I understand more than the average person might, having witnessed a bonded Siren and her mate throughout my youth," he shook his head.

"Anyway, I also wanted to talk to you about your position on the team." Oliver's face dropped and his stomach once more knotted. "Fox has made the decision to retire in a year or two, feeling that he's taken too many injuries and he's worried a few more might mean the end of his career or affect his health beyond the point of return. He'd rather retire on his own terms than being forced out by an injury. Also, he made a pact with a wife that they have children after he retires, and he feels he's ready to be father, not that you need to know this, mind. Anyway," he cleared his throat, "If you continue to work hard, prove yourself and are committed to this team, the position of starting Keeper will be yours."

"Yer serious?" Oliver questioned in surprise.

"Yes."

"Yer not messing with mae? Ye know, prank the new guy?"

He chuckled. "No, I'm not messing with you. But I would keep an eye out; the team hasn't given you the initiation prank yet," he warned.

"Thank ye, Coach. Well a supposed a better get trainin' then."

Standing, he shook Coach Burton's hand and mounted his broom, elated by the news he had someone he could talk to about being a bonded mate to a Siren, that he was a shoo-in to be the next starting Keeper when Fox retired, and being given the opportunity to finally test his new broom.

An hour and a half into training, he got an unpleasant feeling in his stomach and the bond mark tingled. He could feel it; something was wrong and Hermione needed him.

"Coach?" Oliver said, dismounting his broom and approaching the older wizard.

"Wood, why aren't you training?" He asked, lifting his gaze from his clipboard.

"Something's wrong, a have tae go," he said, shifting on his feet anxiously, his body tense and muscles bunched. Coach Burton watched him carefully, noting Oliver's worried expression and that he was touching his bond mark.

"Return if or when you can," he said in understanding.

"Thank ye," Oliver sighed, rushing away from the coach's box, into the building and to the closest floo network.

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Hogwarts

He stepped out of the floo and into Dumbledore's office, noting that it was empty. He made to leave the office but halted, feeling an insistent tugging in his stomach and without realising it, he'd returned to the floo, had grabbed a fistful of floo powder and was calling out his next address, being surprised when he stepped out and into the hospital wing.

There was only one bed occupied and it was by Hermione whilst Harry, Fred and George surrounded the bed.

Oliver rushed towards them. "What happened?"

"Ollie," Hermione beamed despite her clear confusion at his presence.

His eyes carefully scanned her appearance, noting that half of her face was covered with white bandages as were both her hands.

"What happened?" He repeated.

"Someone attacked me from behind when I was on my way to the library. They threw a jar of undiluted Bulbadox powder over me," she answered calmly.

"Did ye see who it was?" He asked, his expression furious. Hoo could she be so calm?

"No, whoever it was were skilled enough to cast a Disillusionment Charm."

"Tha' narrows it doon tae at least a fifth year," his brow furrowed. Hermione cocked an eyebrow. "Ye know, unless it's ye," he amended, and they snorted at him. "Why did this happen?"

"One guess," she sighed.

"People are still on aboot tha' stupid article," he growled.

"Ollie, I'm fine," she promised, offering a smile. "I have to stay here for three days and I'm not allowed to leave, even to go to the library," she grumbled and they smiled at her adorable pout. "Aside for being on lockdown, I'm fine. Now, go back to the stadium," she instructed.

"Hoo did ye know a was at trainin'?"

"Time of day and you're wearing your practice robes," she shrugged.

"Taday a found oot tha' Fox is retiring in a year or so. Coach said the position's mine if a continue tae work hard. But don' tell anyone, am not sure if he wants people tae know yet."

"Well then, you better get back to training," she smiled at him proudly. "I'm fine, just go before I confiscate the FireFly."

Oliver nodded, kissed her on the forehead and mindful not to catch her bandaged injuries, he said goodbyes to the twins and Harry and made his way to the floo. He stopped just before stepping into the fireplace.

"Oh, by the way, Coach knows tha' yer a Siren an' am ye mate."

"WHAT?" The four younger magical folk chorused.

"Don' worry, he won't tell anyone. He saw me bond mark, he only knows aboot mae an' not the twins or Harry. Turns out, his Grandmother was a Siren, tae, an' he recognised what the bond mark meant," he shrugged. "He also said tha' the power af premonition is the rarest af the possible abilities; it's only been seen in twa cases since the beginning af magic. Jus' thought a'd let ye know, give ye something tae think aboot."

Puddlemere United Stadium

As he descended the stands of the coach's box, Oliver noted the gathered Quidditch players, listening and Coach Burton instructed them on which plays he wanted them to practice.

"Wood, you're back," Pallie said, noticing his arrival and turning his attention away from Coach Burton. "Coach said you had a family emergency," he looked to him questioningly.

"Is she alright?" Coach asked him.

"She will be," Oliver nodded.

"Who will be?" Malloy asked curiously.

"Hermione, she's been gettin' hate mail from Krum's fans since tha' damn article was published. Dumbledore made sure tha' it never reached her after the first time. She was walking tae the library when she was attacked from behind, someone threw a jar af undiluted Bulbadox powder over her."

His coach and teammates all held expressions of horror and disgust, excluding Jones, who looked unbothered.

"Is she alright?" Bishop asked.

"Half her face an' her hands are bandaged. She's not allowed tae leave the hospital wing fer a few days. She's furious she cannae attend classes or go tae the library," he chuckled fondly.

"Do you know who did it?" Coach Burton asked.

"Naw, they used a Disillusionment Charm."

Hogwarts - Wednesday 11th January 1995

Hermione had told Ginny, Lee and Ron with the help of the twins and Harry, about who and what she really was. Ginny and Lee took it surprisingly well – they had known something was different about Hermione and now they knew what it was, although, they never would've considered the possibility that she was related to Voldemort and a Siren.

Ron, on the other hand, had just stared and tried everything he could to discredit Hermione's story. Hermione had been offended and Harry and the twins hadn't reacted well.

*Flashback... Hogwarts - Tuesday 27th December 1994*

"I knew it!" Ginny screeched happily through a laugh.

"That I'm a Siren?"

"Merlin, no! That you had a bond with the twins and Oliver. I was right," she said excitedly.

"It makes sense," Lee mused. "You're exceptionally powerful and your magical ability is like nothing I've ever seen. I reckon you could give Dumbledore a run for his galleons."

She rolled her eyes at him before they all turned their eyes to Ron. He hadn't spoken yet, he was sat staring and unblinking. It unnerved Hermione. No one could go that long without blinking.

She waved her hand in front of his face but he didn't budge so Fred shoved him and he fell off the bed. That did the trick.

"You? A Siren?" He said in disbelief. Harry, Hermione and the twins nodded as one.

"But aren't Sirens ridiculously beautiful?" He said stupidly, pointedly looking Hermione up and down. Ginny gasped in outrage, the boys stared murderously and Hermione felt hurt by his words, shrinking in on herself, her arms wrapping protectively around her torso.

"She is beautiful you tosspot," Fred snapped angrily.

"Didn't you see her at the Yule Ball? Every guy there was staring and drooling. They never took their eyes off her," Harry argued.

"It was really annoying; we spent most of the night glaring at guys that approached her," George grumbled and they chuckled at him, except Ron who still looked confused.

"So, you're bonded to the twins and Oliver?"

"Yes, and Harry, but he's my sibling bond. The twins and Oliver are my mates."

A couple of days after noticing the bond marks, it was getting difficult to cover them and people would soon notice, and so Hermione, reluctantly, did something about it.

She had given the twins each a silver cuff bracelet with her name carved into the metal, and they were fitted with Glamour Charms that would hide their marks. They had tried to Glamour their skin, but since that day they'd noticed the marks and despite having used a Glamour to cover them before, they no longer took and the marks were still visible. At a loss, Hermione experimentally Glamoured her charm bracelet on a hunch and it'd worked. They wore the cuff bracelets on the wrist of their bond mark.

Hermione had also given Oliver a matching silver cuff bracelet carved with her name and he wore it on his right wrist, but Hermione had to do some tinkering with the spellwork so that the charm's radius of coverage was enlarged. She would've given him a neck chain but a cuff bracelet was a safer choice given his career.

Hermione wore two silver cuff bracelets that matched the twins', the one on her left wrist said 'Fred' and the one on her right wrist said 'George', and she had tweaked the Glamour Charm and placed it on the love heart pendant necklace Oliver had given her and it covered Oliver's mark. On the back of the love heart, it said 'Oliver'.

As long as no one took off their bracelets or necklace, no one would be any the wiser.

She looked at the boys and they all removed their items, their bond marks proudly standing on display.

"Oh Merlin! They're beautiful," Ginny whispered, tracing the pattern on Hermione's wrist with her index finger. She smiled at her and looked down at the bands adoringly.

"Does this mean the Mating Ceremony's been completed?" Lee asked, puzzled.

There were several coughs as they choked on their breath.

"No, Lee, these bands mean that we have accepted each other, that I belong to them and they belong to me. When the bond is completed the band will darken in colour. Now do you believe us?" She asked Ron and he just stared at her. She sighed.

They spent the next hour or so asking Hermione as many questions as they could think of and she answered them all. By the end, Ron finally admitted that he believed her.

*Present time...*

Hermione had been given permission to leave Hogwarts after dinner so that she could attend a meeting at the Ministry of Magic with Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and Mr. and Mrs. Wood accompanying her as her guardians and escorts. They had checked in at reception and were escorted to the Family Affairs Department before being led to the head office and after entering, greetings were exchanged and they took their seats.

"I am Eddie Carmichael, the head of the Department of Family Affairs," he introduced. "Miss. Granger, what can I help you with?"

"I wish to change my name," she replied simply.

"I see," he mumbled, flicking his wand and the correct documents flew out of a filing cabinet and landed in front of him before he reached for his quill, dipped it in the inkpot and began filling out the rather large form.

"And what do you wish to change your name to?"

"Hermione Jean Blake."

His head snapped up to attention. "Blake?" He checked.

"Yes, Blake," she confirmed.

"Why?"

"I've recently discovered that my biological parents were Amy and Spencer Blake."

"They both, along with their child, perished in the war," his eyes narrowed distrustfully.

"Actually, that's not true. It is true that my parents died in the war, but I was rescued before I died of my injuries. I was healed and adopted by muggles."

"Is this true?" He asked her guardians.

"Yes, it is true. Albus Dumbledore told us of Hermione's true parentage four years ago," Mr. Weasley said.

Clearing his throat and sitting taller, he said, "I am going to have to complete a lineage test, to confirm that you are, in fact, the daughter of the Blakes. It is mandatory as Spencer Blake and Amy Blake nee White were both the sole heirs to highly important, noble and respectable families, one being a Pureblood of South American descent and the other a Half-blood of British descent. If you are the biological daughter of the Blakes, you will set to inherit all properties and possessions from both bloodlines when you turn eighteen, and you will be the sole heir."

"I understand, Mr. Carmichael," Hermione tipped her head.

"Very well then, from previous medical records, we do have a sample on file. As such, I will cast the appropriate spellwork. Please, remain still."

Lifting his wand, he spent the next five minutes concentrating on casting the spells correctly, as if he messed up the results, he could find himself in bother either way.

"Miss. Granger, it seems that you are correct in your beliefs. You are the biological daughter of Amy and Spencer Blake," he said shocked, not believing what he had just come across in the form of the young girl.

"Will I be allowed to change my name?" She asked hopefully.

"You are underage; do you have the permission of your guardians?"

"Yes, my legal guardians are present with me today," she gestured towards them with a sweep of her arm.

"Very well, if you just fill out these forms and sign in the appropriate places as marked, the paperwork will be filed, checked and approved."

Hermione smiled as she took the forms from him, concentrating on filling them out before she and the others signed in the appropriate places. Once down, she handed the forms back to him and he signed it one last time. The forms glowed neon red before it disappeared.

"Well, Miss. Blake, everything is complete. It may take a couple of days for the paperwork to be processed. I suggest that when you have the opportunity you visit Gringotts. A letter will be sent out asking for you to make an appointment, however, you may not receive one until after you become of age. The goblins will inform you of everything that you set to inherit when you're eighteen and what you might have access to now."

"Thank you, Mr. Carmichael," she said gratefully and she smiled widely.

They left the office and he stared at the empty chair in surprise before he smirked and pulled out a piece of parchment. He quickly wrote a letter and sent it off with his owl to the Daily Prophet headquarters. His pockets would soon be weighed down with galleons.

Hogwarts - Thursday 12th January 1995

As Hermione was quietly eating her breakfast, she was interrupted by the arrival of an owl dropping a letter before her. Seeing that it was her very first letter addressed to 'Hermione Blake', she couldn't help but smile.

She opened the letter cautiously; despite the fact that Dumbledore had prevented any hate mail from being delivered, she was still careful.

*Dear Miss Blake,*

*It has come to our attention here at the Daily Prophet, that you have been identified as the only child and living heir of Amy and Spencer Blake.*

*We were wondering if you would please consider having an interview with us. We would have our best reporter assigned to you if you agree.*

*Please owl a reply.*

*Perry Winkle, Chief Editor of the Daily Prophet*

Hermione sighed and brushed her hair back from her face.

"What?" Harry asked.

"The Daily Prophet, they want to interview me about my parents and my name change."

"How'd they find out so fast?" Fred frowned.

"Probably that Mr. Carmichael, I knew something was off about him," she scowled. "I wouldn't be surprised if he got a few galleons for handing the Daily Prophet the information on a silver platter. Maybe we should send him some Oompa Lumpa Flumps," she said thoughtfully.

They chuckled at her. She then noticed the owl that had delivered the letter was perched on the table, waiting for a reply. Rolling her eyes, she removed a sheet of parchment from her bag and a muggle pen, writing her reply.

*Dear Mr Winkle,*

*I am surprised to hear that you know of my name change, given the fact that it only happened yesterday evening. Only my family knows; not even the Professors have been made aware yet. I can only assume this information was learned from Mr. Carmichael.*

*I will arrange for an interview to take place on Saturday 14th January, here at Hogwarts. I will answer any questions given to me to the best of my ability.*

*If the reporter you have in mind is Miss. Skeeter, then you can say goodbye to the interview. I want a trustworthy, intelligent and credible reporter to conduct the interview. If I see one glance of Miss. Skeeter anywhere near Hogwarts, the interview will be terminated and all answers given will be retracted, and I must be the presence of an adult, given that I am still a minor.*

*If these conditions are acceptable, please let me know and I will arrange a time.*

*I look forward to hearing from you,*

*Hermione. J. Blake*

She sent the letter off with the owl and then stood to leave the room. As she was heading out the doors, she was called over to the Slytherin table by Theo.

"What's got your wand in a knot?"

"Oh, shut up Nott," she sighed and he laughed at her.

"Seriously though, what is it?" He questioned, noticing her unhappy expression.

"I had my name legally changed yesterday evening. It seems that Mr. Carmichael, Head of the Family Affairs Department, sold information about me to the Daily Prophet. They want me to do an interview."

"Can he do that?" He frowned.

"No, it's illegal," she shook her head. "The information in those files is confidential. I'm thinking about sending him some of Fred and George's Canary Creams in the post and then later file a complaint or a lawsuit, I haven't decided yet."

He chuckled at her.

"Are you going to do it?" Blaise asked.

"Yes, if I don't, they won't leave me alone but I made it clear that if I see Skeeter anywhere near Hogwarts, I will retract any and all information given."

"So, Granger, I'm curious. Who were your parents? What is your name? I need to know what to call you since Mudblood and Granger are no longer appropriate," Malfoy smirked with his eyebrow raised.

"You'll find out soon."

Hogwarts - Saturday 14th January 1994

With the arrival of dinner that evening came the arrival of the evening edition of the Daily Prophet. After having completed her interview earlier in the day, the article had been written and rushed out within a few hours, and to ensure nothing had been said or done that was inappropriate, Professor McGonagall had been present, a stern expression locked firmly in place which she never once removed from the reporter during the entirety of the interview.

As the hall filled with hooting and squawking owls, newspapers rained from above, dropping onto the tables. Having no idea what to expect and with nerves fluttering in her stomach, she braced herself and reached for a copy, the twins leaning closer and peering over her shoulder.

Hermione Granger? No more! Now it's... Hermione Blake.

Written by Caitlyn Banners

On Wednesday evening of the 11th of this month, the Daily Prophet was unexpectedly alerted by a trusted source that Hermione Granger, Muggleborn and best friend of one, Harry Potter, attended a meeting with the Head of the Family Affairs Department.

It was revealed later that day that Hermione Granger wished to legally and magically change her name to Hermione Blake. After the appropriate and mandatory Lineage Detection Charms were conducted, it was discovered that Hermione Granger is, in fact, Hermione Blake, the biological daughter and heir of Amy Blake nee White, a Pureblood from the South American enclaves, and Spencer Blake, a British Half-blood.

It was believed that the Blakes, along with their daughter, tragically perished during the war. Hermione Blake graciously took time out of her studies to sit down and have a talk with us.

"Miss. Blake, as you might imagine, given this reveal, we have many questions and we at the Daily Prophet would like to clear up any confusion for the public, and search for the truth. Firstly, how is it that you survived? Have you always been aware that Amy and Spencer Blake were your biological parents?"

"During the war, my parents and I were placed in a safe house for the protection of our family, but as the end of the war approached, that safe house was infiltrated. In trying to protect me and ensure my safety, my parents lost their lives that night. I was found in the rubble of the cottage, alive but injured. After I had been treated, I was taken to the Muggle World and adopted by a muggle couple," explained Miss. Black. "No, I have not always been aware of my lineage, but my adoptive parents have always been open about the topic of my adoption, unfortunately, they knew nothing of my past before adopting me. If they had, I'm certain they would have told me. As for how I discovered the news, that's a little more complicated to explain. All I can say on the matter is that it was time that I knew the truth."

"Have you been to Gringotts and learned what you stand to inherit?"

"No, I haven't yet, but I am aware that I stand to inherit the Blake's fortune as well as the White's."

"And your adoptive parents, what career have they pursued?"

"My parents are dentists, teeth Healers, and it's a highly respected career in the Muggle World. A career that requires six to eight years of further education and study after graduation from school," Miss. Blake answered.

"Before my arrival on Hogwarts' grounds, I was made aware that Arthur and Molly Weasley and Bethany and Henry Wood are now your joint legal guardians. Would you care to explain the reasoning for such an uncommon occurrence?"

"My parents discovered that a relative who resided in Australia, had, unfortunately, died from illness, and as such, my parents made the decision to travel abroad and tend to the funeral arrangements and the like. Upon their arrival, they came to the decision that they would remain in Australia for several years as they work to run and improve the dentist practice that was left to them in the will reading. Their own practice in London is being tended to by a trusted friend until their return. Rather than make the decision to remove me from Hogwarts and transfer me to a closer wizarding school, and knowing that it would be exceptionally far for me to travel during the school holidays, they were aware of my close friendship with the Weasleys and Woods, and knowing that I belonged in the Wizarding World and not wishing to take me away from my friends, they came to the decision that both Molly and Arthur Weasley and Bethany and Henry Wood, would take full and legal responsibility of me until I either became of age, or my parents returned, whichever may happen first."

"And what can you tell the readers of the Prophet about your relationship with Harry Potter and Sirius Potter, one a known friend and the other, for which you are well known in having a hand in his overturned conviction?"

"Sirius Black is a one of a kind wizard," Miss. Blake began, a fond smile pulling at her mouth. "To me, he's a big brother, a father and the crazy, kind uncle all rolled up into one package. And I greatly admire him for his ability to put the past behind him and find something that makes him happy, for finding something to hold onto whilst moving forward. He is kind, passionate, caring and so full of life, joy and laughter. He's the most incredible person I've ever met. But, of course, he does have a temper and he is incredibly protective of those he cares for."

"And Mr. Potter?"

Miss. Black sighed and rolled her eyes, saying, "I am quite aware of the articles Rita Skeeter has been writing about myself, Harry and Viktor Krum, but I assure you, they are false. I have never and will never be Harry's girlfriend. He is my family; my little brother in every sense but blood. I could never envision Harry in such a way. And, Viktor... He's a friend, a friend who is remarkably kind, generous and smart."

"If you might be so kind, I wish to ask a personal question."

"Haven't you already?" Miss. Blake's mouth twitched and her eyebrow quirked. "Please, feel free. I don't have anything to hide."

"Rumour has it that the Blakes are related to You-Know-Who. Is there truth to this or simply falsified reports?"

Miss. Blake gave an expression of surprise, tipping her head curiously, her lips pursing thoughtfully. "And where did you hear that rumour?" She countered. "It was of my understanding that such information was kept classified, only being known by those necessary."

"You admit that it is true?"

"As far as I am aware, the Blakes are descendants of the Gaunt family. Our ancestry is traced to Marvolo Gaunt and after Morphin's release from Azkaban, he married a Squib and later changed his name, not wishing to be associated with his family line. My parents were known to be powerful and for that reason, they were approached and later targeted after they refused to pledge their allegiance to His cause."

"You did not answer my question."

"No, I didn't," Miss. Blake agreed with a smile. "Regardless, I don't see why such information is relevant. No matter if I am or am not related to Him, I don't share his beliefs. For eleven years, I believed myself to be a Muggle. For four years, I believed myself to be a Muggleborn, something I admit, I found myself being bullied for. No matter that my blood status has changed, I believe that everyone is equal. No being or creature should be made to feel inferior. I believe that if one has the facilities and ability to help someone, then one should."

"I've also heard a rumour that the White family was suspected of producing a long line of Sirens. Is this true?"

"If it were, I imagine such a matter would be kept confidential and private amongst the family. Given the danger and the decline of the Siren population, to near extinction I might add, for the protection and survival of their bloodline, it would be a highly kept secret. And as such, I imagine they would do everything in their power to ensure such a secret isn't revealed. Sometimes rumour are simply rumours."

"You did not answer my question."

"So it would seem. If that rumour is true, something I highly doubt, I wouldn't know for myself until I become of age and discover that I am or am not, going through the transformation procession."

"And before this interview comes to an end, I have one final question. What is your opinion on Harry Potter's involvement in the Triwizard Tournament?"

"I am quite aware that many believe Harry cheated in order to compete in the tournament, but I can confidently say that he did not. The days leading up to the Champion selection Harry was never alone, and at night when the castle was quiet, the great hall doors were charmed and locked, preventing access. Not only would he have had to pass through the doors, but the age line, too, something I highly doubt a fourteen-year-old would be capable of doing. As for my opinion, I am incredibly proud of Harry for his current achievements despite being at a disadvantage, and I know he'll continue to work hard. The Triwizard Tournament is allowing the building of relationships between wizarding schools and students, and I am proud of all the Champions regardless of school affiliations and rivalries. This tournament is dangerous as been known to take lives in the past, and for that, the Champions should be commended on their bravery."

"Damn," muttered Harry, lowering his own copy of the Prophet and looking to her. "How the hell did you manage to skirt around Him and your heritage?" He said quietly, not wanting anyone to overhear him.

"She's a genius," the twins beamed proudly, their arms slotting around her waist and shoulders.

"A terrifying genius," added Ginny, looking to Hermione in both amusement and pride. "You managed to give information whilst remaining vague, I wouldn't be surprised if Sirius owls you a celebratory gift," she shook her head and they snorted at her. "I kind of wish Skeeter had been the one to interview you, I can only imagine how that would've gone."

"It wouldn't have been pretty," Hermione agreed. Feeling the magnitude of the stares, she pushed away her plate, saying, "I'll see you later."

Standing, she headed towards the exit, pausing when she heard her name being called, her eyes searching for the one responsible before she sighed and approached the Slytherin table.

"Yes, Malfoy?"

"Blake?" He choked.

"Yes," she replied calmly.

"Blake?"

"You've said that already," she pointed out.

"You're related to You-Know-Who?" He whispered, looking horrified.

She rolled her eyes. "I can neither confirm nor deny that."

"Are you a Siren?" Theo arched an eyebrow, drawing her attention, Hermione noting the eyes and ears that were aimed their way.

"As I said, that is something I'm unaware of. If that were the case, I'm certain my parents, as a precaution, might have left me something, a book or diary perhaps, to explain what would happen to me. Wouldn't you want your child to be prepared, especially when you are aware that you might not survive to tell her yourself? And given that I haven't been left anything, that I've only heard the rumours and that there is no evidence to validate such claims, I'm going to assume that it is simply rumours. Do I look like a Siren to you?" She challenged before walking away, not seeing Viktor and his friends staring after her.

"She's related to You-Know-Who, isn't she?" Said Nikoli.

"Probably," nodded Aleks. "Given His actions before his death, I wouldn't want to admit that I shared blood with such a wizard, either. And that was quite clever of her to avoid the question without refusing to give an answer," he commented.

"She knows she's a Siren, doesn't she?" Mused Jamous.

"I think so," nodded Viktor. "And she knows who her mate is. She's protecting him."

Hogwarts - Friday 24th February 1995

It'd been over a month since her reveal to the world about her identity and people had been treating her differently, particularly, the Slytherins including Pansy and her harpies, something paid no notice to, not when she had all of her focus on Harry since the reveal of his second task.

It was currently one o'clock in the morning and Hermione was in the library with Harry and Ron, trying to figure out a way for Harry to breathe underwater for an hour. They'd been there for hours and had no luck so far and Hermione was losing it; she'd smacked Ron over the head with a book more than once for falling asleep or making stupid comments.

"Love, Ronniekins," greeted George as he and Fred approached their dimly lit nook. "You're wanted in McGonagall's office. We're to escort you."

"How'd you know we'd be here?"

Fred snorted. "Because we know you. Where else would you be given the second task's tomorrow? And McGonagall might've mentioned she'd given you permission to stay in the library past closing."

Walking over to her, Fred hugged her from behind, his arms folding around her stomach and his chin resting atop her shoulder as she leaned back into him and sighed tiredly.

"I will never get used to that," Ron muttered.

"Oh, do be quiet, Ronald," she scolded. "We can't go, Harry needs us here, there's less than nine hours before the task..."

"Exactly, Harry needs his rest," Fred interrupted.

"Neville?" George called, knowing the wizard was skulking about the library and he soon made an appearance, the others looking surprised to see him there.

"Yeah?"

"Do us a favour and help Harry put his books away, will you?"

"Yeah, of course," he nodded.

"Thank you, Neville," Hermione smiled at him, a blush settling on his cheeks as Fred took her hand and pulled her through the library with George and Ron following.

"Do you want us to wait for you?" Fred asked once they reached McGonagall's office.

"No, it's okay, I'll meet you back at our dorm room."

Nodding, the twins each gave her a kiss and Ron groaned and pulled a face of disgust."

"Get used to it," the twins chorused, sending an unhappy glance before they kissed once more and took their leave.

She and Ron entered the office to see both Cho Chang and Gabrielle Delacour present and they were ushered into seats before McGonagall's desk.

"You have been called here tonight regarding the second task," McGonagall informed them.

"It's us, isn't it? We're the things that the Champions have to seek," Hermione sighed with McGonagall chuckling at her.

"I should have realised that you would figure it out," she said fondly. "You will be given a Sleeping Draught that will put you into a deep sleep. Thirty minutes before the task begins, you will be placed into the Black Lake and you will be guarded by the Merpeople, so no harm will come to you. You will wake the moment you resurface from the water. If the Champions are not able to retrieve you, the Professors will. You will not be in any danger."

"Who am I meant for, Professor?" Hermione asked confused.

"Miss. Chang is for Mr. Diggory, Miss. Delacour is for Miss. Delacour, Mr. Weasley if for Mr. Potter and you, Miss. Granger, are for..."

"Viktor?" She frowned. "But that makes no sense. We're friends but I wouldn't say we were close."

"I agree," she nodded. "You were originally meant for Mr. Potter, however, Mr. Krum didn't seem to have anyone he would greatly miss apart from you."

Hermione blinked in surprise. "But I don't really spend that much time with him," she argued.

"I am aware. Please, Miss. Granger, just grin and bear it," she said as she removed a plate from her desk drawer, it sitting four cupcakes. She handed one to each of them.

"The boys aren't going to like this," muttered Hermione.

Hermione coughed up water from her lungs and she gasped for breath as she broke through the surface of the Black Lake, a hysterical scream falling from her lips upon the sight of the giant shark's head.

"Viktor, you idiot! You scared the hell out of me!" She exclaimed, trying to calm her racing heart once the transfiguration was cancelled, revealing the Bulgarian Champion.

"Sorry, Mina," he chuckled before he helped her to her swim towards the centre stand.

"HERMIONE!" She heard two voices cry and she looked to see Fred and George, horrified, terrified expressions marring their faces.

Seeing this, she broke free from Viktor's hold and she swam quickly towards them, faster than she thought possible, and when she reached the edge of the platform, Fred and George pulled her out of the water and into them, hugging her between them tightly.

"I look like a drowned rat," she complained. "I'm soaked and you'll get your clothes wet," she melted into their warm, comforting embrace.

"We don't care," they muttered in unison.

"We were so worried when we woke up and you still hadn't come back," Fred whispered sadly.

"And we couldn't find you this morning. No one had seen you," George breathed out.

"I was perfectly safe, I was asleep the whole time and I didn't feel the cold. Which, I now do," she shivered.

Fred and George quickly drew back from her, grabbing a blanket each and settling them around her, Fred rubbing at her back and George, her arms.

"What did Harry use?" Her teeth clattered together.

"Gillyweed," they answered.

Hermione smacked herself in the forehead and they snorted at her.

"That's genius. Why didn't I think of that? I bought it for you for Christmas for Merlin's sake!" She huffed.

At that point, Ron and Gabrielle Delacour resurfaced alone and they made their way to the platform.

"Where's Harry?" Hermione demanded.

"I don't know," Ron admitted, shivering.

Hermione's stomach knotted and twisted and she couldn't help but pace back and forth and a few minutes later, after Ron's resurface, Harry shot out from the water and landed with a thud on the platform. Hermione rushed forward, removed the blankets from her shoulders forgetting about the cold and she wrapped them around Harry tightly, pressing a kiss to his forehead and over his scar.

"Personally, I think that you acted admirably," she told him proudly.

"I finished last, Hermione," he pointed out.

"Next to last," she corrected. "Apparently, Fleur couldn't get passed the grindylows," she said imitating a French accent and Harry laughed.

She reached for her wand and directed it at Harry, muttering a "Siccatio Fascinationem," Harry's clothing and hair drying, unfortunately, his hair was messier than she'd ever seen it.

When Dumbledore announced the scores, Cedric achieved first place, Harry achieved second for 'outstanding moral fibre', Viktor achieved third place which he quite clearly unhappy with, and as expected, Fleur finished last.

As Hermione's eyes darted about the platform, she spotted Rita Skeeter. No more articles had surfaced regarding the love triangle between Hermione, Harry and Viktor. Truth be told, Skeeter was afraid of what Hermione was capable of and now that the Wizarding World was divided on whether or not she was related to You-Know-Who, having not explicitly denied or conformed it, Skeeter didn't want to get on her bad side. Hermione, however, hadn't had her fill of getting revenge on Skeeter.

When Rita Skeeter approached Harry, Hermione shared a smirk with the twins and they both removed a chocolate bar from their robe pockets and handed them to Hermione. The packaging was exactly the same but one was a chocolate bar and the other was a Barney bar.

"Miss. Skeeter?" Greeted Hermione.

"Miss Granger?" She replied warily.

"It's Blake," she corrected. "I want to apologise for my behaviour, please accept this gift as an apology." She looked at it sceptically. "It's a muggle brand. It's the best in the Muggle World, quite expensive, too."

Hermione took the regular chocolate bar, opened it and took a bite with Skeeter pointedly watching her and when nothing happened, Skeeter opened her bar and took a bite.

Hermione and the twins smirked and watched as their product worked its magic and those on the platform stared in surprise.

Just as Hermione had described, Skeeter's skin turned purple and her stomach gained weight and size and became more rounded and green. She grew a purple tale with green spikes and green hair.

"Merlin! She looks like Barney the Dinosaur," Harry breathed out, looking to Hermione in surprise.

"I must've given her the wrong chocolate bar," Hermione said with an innocent frown, something Harry didn't believe and his mouth twitched. "Well, on the bright side, at least I know it works."

Viktor and his friends had burst out laughing at Skeeter; they were impressed and reminded themselves to never get on the bad side of Hermione. Viktor had long since given up on trying to win Hermione's favour and they were now just friends. He knew he wasn't her mate and although that thought saddened him, he knew it wasn't her fault. But he still had feelings for her and she was still the thing he would sorely miss.

"I really am sorry, Miss. Skeeter. The prank chocolate bars and the real chocolate bars have the same packaging, we haven't had a chance to label them yet. I must've picked the wrong one up," she said angelically.

Skeeter glared at her and stormed off, her tail dragging along the floor after her.

Chapter Fifty-Eight

Hogwarts – Friday 17th March 1995

Unsurprisingly, things had gone done hill pretty quickly after the second task, as later that night, Barty Crouch had been found murdered in the Forbidden Forrest. And the people to find the body would have, of course, been Hagrid, Ron and Harry. Harry had confided in Hermione (seeing as she told him her biggest secret about her heritage and relation to Voldemort) and he'd told her that his scar had been hurting more frequently and that he'd felt it burning when they'd found Crouch's body. He'd also told her that the dream he was having at the beginning of the summer was becoming more regular and vivid and learning that information had her worried.

What Hermione hadn't told Harry was that her scar was becoming more painful and she'd begun having dreams and since the death of Barty Crouch, it was always the same one. It would start with cheering and applause and people would run into what looked like a giant maze. It would then change to a dark and foggy graveyard with people wearing black robes and silver masks - no, not people, Death Eaters – arriving and surrounding several people in a large circle. She could see flashes of spells, someone was hit and they fell to the ground and then she would wake up in a sweat and finding it difficult to breathe.

The twins would wake and help calm her down and they never pressed her for information, knowing that it would only make her retreat into herself, but they knew it was bad and it had them worried whether they admitted it or not.

Hermione had the dream at least four times a week and it was distressing. She knew it was a premonition and she was literally losing sleep over it. That's why she hadn't told Harry; she didn't want to worry him, he had enough to deal with and it was killing her to lie to him but she had to do it for his sanity. She'd tried to figure out what it meant, she'd researched as much as she had time for but she was at an impasse. She had her suspicions that the maze may be the third task but she couldn't be certain.

Hermione needed a break, Harry needed a break, hell, everyone could do with a break, and so, she'd come up with a plan and she'd gotten permission from Dumbledore and with the help of Oliver (who was visiting for the day) she had everything set up. All classes had been cancelled and she had organised a day of Quidditch.

When she'd told Harry and the twins the news, they were ecstatic and had hugged her profusely in thanks and excitement. And that's where they could be found; at the Quidditch pitch. The stands were full. The Beauxbatons had decided to sit out and watch from their seats amongst the Ravenclaws, who also weren't playing along with the Hufflepuffs who'd opted for cheering. Which meant it was Durmstrang versus a mixture of Slytherins and Gryffindorsm and it was a very interesting combination, something Hermione never thought she'd see.

Playing for Durmstrang was Viktor as Seeker, Jamous, Nikoli, and Aleks as Chasers, Stony and Aspen as Beaters and Ivank as Keeper. Playing for Hogwarts was Harry as Seeker, Blaise, Theo and Katie Bell as Chasers, Fred and George as Beaters, and given that Durmstrang had a professional player with Viktor, they had Oliver as Keeper to make it fair.

Malfoy had put up a fit about Harry being chosen as Seeker over him, but when put to a vote, the people had voted in favour of Harry as he was clearly the better and most talented Seeker of the two, his track record spoke volumes.

The Professors had no involvement, allowing the students the responsibility of organising and running the match as they watched from their own section of the stands. For that reason, Hermione was the referee, much to the pleasure of the twins and Oliver. She was finally physically participating in the sport they loved, even if she was only refereeing!

And now, she was currently perched on her broom two hundred feet above the ground, with her hair tied back from her face and a whistle hanging from a chord around her neck. The players were spread about the pitch, sending each other teasing looks and playful taunts.

Clearing her throat and with the tip of her wand pressed into her skin, the Sonorous Charm in full effect, she said with her voice carrying, "Okay, I want a nice, clean game. Let's try and keep the injuries and fouls to a minimum, alright? Fred, George, I'm talking about you," she looked to the twins and they smiled angelically at her.

Turning to the Durmstrangs, she warned, "That's goes for you, too; keep the injuries and fouls to a minimum. And you should really watch out for the twins. They're the best Beaters I've ever seen."

Lowering her wand and shooting a spell towards the chest on the ground, the bludgers and snitch broke free, and after darting a look towards both teams, she lifted the whistle to her mouth and blew at the same moment she threw the quaffle into the air, quickly moving out of the way and to the sidelines.

The game was under way with Harry and Viktor immediately flying high above the pitch in search of the snitch, Fred and George and Aspen and Stony quickly got into position and were watching for bludgers and the Chasers rocketed towards the quaffle.

Katie was the first to reach it allowing Hogwarts to take possession and cheers rang out from the stands. Katie passed to Blaise, who passed to Theo, who passed to Katie, who passed back to Theo, who passed to Blaise, who scored passed Ivank.

Of course, it wouldn't be a Quidditch match without Lee occupying the commentator's box, and his voice could be heard amongst the cheering crowd, commenting on the match, with Hogwarts taking the lead 10-0.

The quaffle was thrown back into play by Ivank and Jamous took possession for Durmstrang, passing to Aleks, who passed to Nikoli, who passed back to Aleks, who passed to Jamous and he threw the quaffle towards the left hoop, Oliver easily deflecting it and he threw the quaffle back into play with Durmstrang taking possession once more.

Nikoli passed to Aleks, who passed to Jamous who had to dodge a bludger sent his way by Fred. As a result, he dropped the quaffle and Theo caught it, putting Hogwarts back in possession.

"Where the hell did that come from?" He mumbled with a shake of the head before getting back in the game.

Hermione saw Fred and George high-five as they flew past each other and she chuckled at them.

Katie now had the quaffle and she was heading towards the hoop and as Aspen sent a bludger her way, George quickly intervened. He hit the bludger forcibly and it was sent back towards Aspen, who had to duck.

Aspen's eyes widened at the speed of the bludger that was heading his way. He'd barely managed to duck in time.

"Fuck!" He muttered in shock at the speed and force of the bludger that had almost taken his head off.

And with George's aid in keeping the bludger from Katie, she managed to score, Hogwarts leading 20-0.

Above the game, Harry and Viktor circled the pitch, carefully searching for the snitch and far, there had been no sign. That was until Viktor spotted it and raced after it; Harry was about to follow but Viktor halted to a stop upon losing sight of it.

An hour and a half later and the game was still in play with Hogwarts in the lead; 100-70 points.

Fred hit a bludger with such a force that when it collided with Jamous' stomach, it winded him, broke a couple of ribs and knocked him off his broom. And with quick reflexes, Hermione caught him with an Arresto Momentum, slowing his descent towards the ground before she used her free hand to wandlessly and non-verbally levitate Jamous back to his broom and he climbed on, struggling for breath.

A time out was called, the Durmstrang players rushed to him before he fell off his broom again and the Hogwarts players remained still whilst Hermione flew across the pitch, halting to a stop beside him.

"Jamous, look at me," she commanded, the wizard lifting his head to her, Hermione seeing his wide and panicked eyes and his face turning red as he gasped and wheezed, only remaining on his broom because Nikoli had a steadying hand on his shoulder.

Without realising it and not being completely aware of her actions, she pressed her right palm against Jamous' forehead, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath and when she opened her eyes and drew her hand back, Jamous was looking at her speechless. His breathing had returned to normal and was now under control and his ribs had been healed. He felt better than he did before the collision with the bludger had even happened.

"Thank you," he whispered.

"You're welcome," she replied, turning around and returning to her previous position on the side lines before blowing the whistle and the match continued.

Another thirty minutes later and Harry had finally spotted the snitch and it was right above Viktor's head. He leaned forward and he jetted towards Viktor, the older Seeker's eyes widening at the sight of him heading straight for him. He pointed his broom down and he descended a few feet, letting Harry effectively pass over him without a collision.

They'd done as she asked and kept the game clean; she hadn't had to call any fouls, although she did have to warn the twins more than once. Hermione was going to call a foul and give a penalty to Durmstrang for Harry's attempt at blatching, but she refrained when she realised that he was simply heading for the snitch that flittered above Viktor's head, and she sighed in relief when a collision didn't occur.

When Viktor noticed Harry continue on like he hadn't just tried to blatch him, he scowled at him and Hermione for not calling a foul, but he soon caught sight of the snitch and he understood, re-positioned the broom and followed after Harry and soon they were side by side, racing to catch the snitch.

Viktor turned his head slightly to see Harry completely focused, admittedly being impressed by his determination, but he knew he would win, he'd worked hard to gain the title of the World's Best Seeker.

The snitch took a sudden dive towards the ground and they instantly followed, angling the broom downwards and as the ground grew closer, a game of chicken was in play; who would pull up first with the snitch in hand?

They went from two hundred and fifty feet, to two hundred feet, to one hundred and fifty feet, to one hundred feet to fifty feet, and Viktor was the first to pull out of the dive at thirty feet above the ground. He halted to a stop, his eyes widening at the sight of Harry continuing with his path. Was he stupid? Did he want to die?

Harry didn't notice Viktor pull up out of the dive, his focus was on the snitch and he continued his descent towards the ground, sharply pulling his broom upwards barely a foot above the ground and gasps rang out in shocked horror. Harry steadied himself before he stood up on the broom, and he took a leaping jump, reaching out and catching the snitch in his outstretched fingers, hitting the ground and rolling to a stop before he climbed to his feet and held the snitch victoriously for everyone to see.

Viktor's eyes bulged as he watched Harry pull up from a dive a foot above the ground before he stood and leapt off his broom and caught the snitch. He couldn't believe that he, Viktor Krum, the World's Greatest Seeker, had been beaten by a fourteen-year-old boy who barely had half the experience he did. He'd even pulled up from a two hundred and fifty foot dive at a foot above the ground! Viktor had only ever managed twenty feet, knowing anything lower resulted in injury. What Harry had just done should've been impossible! He'd never seen anyone do that before.

"HARRY POTTER CAUGHT THE SNITCH! HOGWARTS WINS 280–100! BAD LUCK DURMSTRANG!" Lee called from the commentator's box and she laughed at him.

The Hogwarts team flew down to Harry, hugging and cheering loudly and Hermione was quick to follow. When the Durmstangs dismounted their brooms, she had them all line up and shake hands, showing good sportsmanship.

"You did very vell, you vould make good provessional player," Viktor complimented Harry. "You gave me a run vor my galleons," he said, impressed.

"Thanks, I thought you had me beaten there for a moment," Harry admitted, rubbing at the back of his neck awkwardly.

"No, you had the game von the moment you vere in the air. You are very skilled," Viktor shook his head. Continuing further down the line, he reached the twins. "Mina vas right, ve did haff to watch out vor you. I dare say you are better than the Beaters on the Bulgarian team," he confessed.

"Thanks, you're not so bad yourself," they chorused and Hermione snorted at Viktor's confused expression before he gave his head a shake.

"Haff you considered playing provessionally?" He asked curiously.

"Nope, we're opening up our own joke shop," Fred replied, not that he knew it was Fred.

"You vould do well at that," he said nodded, having seen some of the pranks they'd pulled during their stay; if they had the Weasley twins at Durmstrang, they all agreed it would be a far less morbid place.

"We know," Fred, George and Hermione all chorused as she approached.

Fred and George smiled widely at her and Viktor couldn't understand how they did that; it was bad enough when it was just the twins but when Hermione did it, it gave him a headache.

"Well, I'm glad that I didn't have to call any fouls during the game," she said happily.

"You did not call voul vhen Potter vas heading my vay," Viktor argued.

"Yes, that was because he wasn't attempting to blatch you. He was going for the snitch; it was above your head."

"It vas?"

Hermione nodded. "Yes. And don't think I didn't see what Aspen and Stony did," she told him.

He flushed under her gaze.

"Yes, good call," he cleared his throat, walking away embarrassed at the fact Hermione had caught his teammates trying to cheat.

"Mina," she heard someone say and she turned around to see Jamous. "Can I please speak vith you vor a moment?"

Eyeing him curiously, she nodded, walking a little ways down the pitch with Hermione arching a questioning eyebrow when he drew his wand and muttered a Silencing Charm.

"What can I do for you?"

"Are you a Siren?"

Hermione was not expecting that question. People had long since stopped asking her questions relating to the topic and the rumour of her being related to Voldemort, given that she had gotten quite good at avoiding their questions and redirecting their attention elsewhere..

"No, not that I know of."

He snorted, giving his head a shake. "I know you are. There's no point in trying to hide it vrom me."

Her eyes narrowed and she folded her arms over her chest. "And how do you know such a thing? Where's your evidence? Who else 'knows'?"

"Viktor, myselv, Aleks and Nikoli, and Viktor vound your notes and we all came to the conclusion that it was possible that you vere one."

"He did, did he?" She asked, her expression unhappy.

"Yes, ve haff not told anyvone and ve vill not tell anyone," he vowed. "I promise, your secret is save vith us."

"And what secret would that be?" She arched an eyebrow.

His mouth twitched and the corners of his eyes crinkled. "That you are a Siren."

"Oh, and where did you hear that?"

He snorted, rolling his eyes at her. "Very well, if you vere a Siren, I would tell you that I think you haff the ability ov natural healing."

"And if I were a Siren, I would tell you that I don't."

"Yes, a think you do, you healed me," he pointed out.

"Yes, using healing charms," she replied.

"No, Mina," he gave his head a shake, "You did not use your vand or say any spells."

Her folded arm dropped to her sides, her brows furrowed forming a crease and she nibbled at her bottom lip.

"You haff to be carevul, even more so than bevore," he warned, giving her a grave expression. "If you are a Siren or not, I will ensure the others take a wizard's oath as a precaution," and with that said, he cancelled the Silencing Charm, turned and walked away.

Still confused with the turn of events, she didn't hear Oliver, the twins or Harry approaching her.

"What was all that about?" Harry asked.

Startling at noticing their presence and seeing their worried expressions, she drew her wand and muttered a Silencing Charm, explaining the conversation she'd just had with Jamous.

"Bloody hell, that's brilliant, just brilliant," George sighed sarcastically, "Another four people that know your secret."

"They don't know for sure, only suspect, especially since they don't have evidence and I haven't admitted it. And they don't know about any of you, either. Regardless, Jamous said he'd make sure the others took a wizard's oath to keep quiet," she replied.

"Tha's somethin' at least," Oliver said.

"And you have the ability of natural healing? How's that even possible?" Fred asked.

"Well I don't know, do I?" Hermione sighed and he gave her an apologetic look.

"That's what you were doing when you were surrounded by the Durmstrangs? Healing him?" Harry frowned.

"I guess so," she shrugged. "He said I didn't use my wand or say any incantations. I just healed him."

"What did I do to him?" Fred asked curiously.

"From what I could see, winded him and broke some of his ribs."

Fred looked proud until Hermione glared at him and his expression quickly dropped with George, Harry and Oliver sniggering.

"Ye should write tae Sirius an' let him know aboot this development with yer abilities," Oliver suggested.

Later that day, when Hermione returned to her dorm room, she retrieved her notebook and wrote to Sirius, explaining about that day's happenings.

His response to her was simply...

'Are you kidding me? Great, just great. Another mystery that I have to solve.'

Hogwarts – Saturday 25th March 1995

Hermione was currently spending her day in Hogsmeade with Fred and George, having decided to attend together as a secret date situation. After visiting Zonko's in order to scope out the competition, they headed to the Three Broomsticks for lunch, found a secluded table and allowed Hermione to make herself comfortable whilst they headed for the bar.

"Hey, Rosie," the twins chimed together.

"Boys," she greeted. "What can I get for you?"

"Three butter beers and three of today's house specials," George answered, setting enough coins on the bar to cover their payment.

"Coming right up," she nodded before walking away towards the kitchen to tell the chef the order.

Their eyes curiously scanning the occupants of the bar, they happened to land on a certain wizard who'd been avoiding them and ignoring their letters since the World Cup.

"Hello, Mr. Bagman, can we buy you a drink?" Fred asked deviously, coming to a stop beside his stool whilst George stepped on his other side, effectively blocking him in.

"Er… No, no thank you," he replied, pushing his half-touched beverage away from him, standing from the stool and all but sprinting out of the building.

"We've tried being polite, it's time to play dirty, like him. He wouldn't like the Ministry of Magic knowing what he did," George smirked, taking his eyes away from the now closed door and turning to his twin.

"I'm telling you, if you put that in writing, its blackmail," warned Fred.

"You're starting to sound a bit like our dear older brother Percy, you are," George rolled his eyes. "Carry on like this and you'll be made a Prefect." George sniggered at the look of horror that crossed his twin's face.

Having witnessed the exchange, Hermione snuck out of the Three Broomstick without being seen and she followed Bagman.

"Mr. Bagman?" She called and he halted to a stop, peering over his shoulder, looking relieved .

"Oh, it's the girl that knows everything about Quidditch."

"That's me. I need to talk to you."

"About?" He asked anxiously.

"You owe Fred and George money, don't you?" She said knowingly.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he denied. "Now, if you will excuse me, I have somewhere I need to be." He tried to leave but she stepped in front of him, blocking his path.

"You're in debt, Mr. Bagman, serious debt and it doesn't help that you owe money to the Weasley Twins. Surely you've heard of their reputation?"

"You're point is?"

"You admit that you're in debt and owe money to Fred and George?"

"Yes, I admit it," he grumbled.

"Good, that's all I wanted to hear." She turned to walk back to the Three Broomsticks but she paused and looked back at him. "I suggest you check your vault, Mr. Bagman. I think you'll be surprised with what you will find in there. Use it to pay off your debt. If you use it for anything else, I will not be happy," she warned. "And for future reference, I am Hermione Blake." With that, she returned to the Three Broomsticks and retook her seat at the table, her previous absence going unnoticed.

When the twins returned with their lunch and butterbeers, halfway through the meal, the topic of conversation turned to Bagman.

"We thought about telling the Ministry if he didn't pay up," George told her and Hermione snorted.

"Something funny?" Fred questioned.

"First of all, Freddie, if you tell him that if he doesn't pay up you'll tell the Ministry, that's a little thing called blackmail and it's illegal. And second of all, the Ministry won't take you seriously."

"Why's that?" George asked confused.

"You were gambling."

"And?"

"And you're underage; it's illegal to gamble under the age of seventeen. You've got no case, they wouldn't side with you."

Their faces fell at hearing that news. "Looks like we're going to have to come up with another plan. Back to the drawing board," Fred said defeated.

"Don't worry about, Bagman, I had a few choice words with him; he shouldn't be a problem much longer."

The twins winced at hearing that news. It was one thing to piss of the Weasley twins, but to piss off Hermione Blake was another thing entirely. They would've felt sorry for the poor sod if he didn't owe them money.

Hogwarts - Friday 9th June 1995

Hermione had long since ceased in her pranking Rita Skeeter, having felt that she'd made her point quite clear. But something had been bothering her for a while. How did Rita Skeeter get the information? How did she find out about her and Viktor's friendship? How did she find out that Hagrid was half-giant? How did she find out that Viktor had once asked her to visit him in Bulgaria during the summer?

Hermione had been researching ways to listen to private conversations in the library but she hadn't found anything, but then she'd been hit with a sudden burst of inspiration. It was something that Harry had said to her regarding Sirius and she smacked herself in the forehead for not thinking of it before.

So, she set a trap for Skeeter hoping to confirm her suspicions. She had sent an anonymous message to Skeeter saying that Hermione Blake would be in a very compromising situation later that day and that the opportunity was too good to pass up. And like magic, it had worked.

Hermione had been right when she saw a certain beetle on the wall outside of a broom closet and before Skeeter could suspect something, she quickly cast her Sleeping Charm and the beetle fell off the wall. Hermione caught it before it could hurt itself and she looked at it closer. Around the beetle's eyes she could see markings that looked similar to Skeeter's glasses. She quickly cast the Anti-Animagus Charm on Skeeter and put her inside a glass jar, fitted with tiny puncture marks in lid to allow suitable oxygen flow. Hermione had been kind to Skeeter and placed leaves and small twigs in the jar to make it comfortable for her; not that she deserved it.

Hermione returned to her dorm feeling victorious, she removed the jar from her bag and put it out of sight so that only she knew where it was and the boys wouldn't find it and ask questions. When the twins and Lee entered the room later that day to see Hermione smiling brightly and looking innocent, they knew she had been up to something.

Hogwarts - Friday 23rd June 1995

It was the day before the third and final task of the Triwizard Tournament. One more task to go and it would all be over and summer would be upon them.

Hermione and Harry were currently in an abandoned classroom, practicing spells that Hermione thought might be useful and it was always best to be prepared, especially given the circumstances. It'd been confirmed that the third task was, in fact, a maze, and even though she didn't want to admit it, she had known it would be.

Harry had just finished practicing the Petrificus Totalus spell when he noticed that Hermione was quieter than normal and he crossed over to her, perching on the desk opposite her.

"What's wrong?"

"Hmm? What? Oh, nothing, Harry," she smiled, something he saw right through.

"You're lying, I know you are. You've been off since I told you about my recurring nightmare. What is it?"

Hermione sighed, knowing she couldn't keep it to herself any longer, she needed to tell him. If she told him he would be prepared in case the worse happened.

"I need to tell you something," she admitted, unable to hide her worried expression. "It's about your nightmare... I've been having one, too. They started the night you found Crouch, and I've been having them at least four times a week."

She saw the look on his face. It made her heart clench, it was pure worry and fear. That was exactly what she'd wanted to avoid.

"When you say nightmare, you mean premonition, don't you?" She nodded her head sadly. "What happens?"

"It starts off with cheering and applause and then people run into a maze, then it changes to what I think is a dark and foggy graveyard. People are surrounding several others and spells are fired. Someone gets hit and then falls to the ground and that's when I wake up."

"That doesn't sound too bad," he said, trying to lighten the mood. "Maybe it's just another part of the task," he supplied.

"Maybe," she nodded, "Well, you better keep practicing then."

Later that night, they snuck back into the common room using the cloak and they were so tired, they didn't even make it to bed. They fell asleep on the couch, leaning against each other, the way only siblings could. And that's how they were found the next morning.

Hogwarts – Saturday 24th June 1995

Fred and George woke to find that Hermione hadn't returned to the room last night and it worried them. They quickly dressed and headed down the stairs to the common room ready to go searching for her, but when they descended the staircase, they both sighed in relief at the sight that met them.

Harry was on the couch asleep and next to him was Hermione. She had her legs pulled up onto the couch and tucked beneath her whilst she was leaning against Harry, her head resting on his shoulder and his cheek rested atop her head, his glasses askew on his face and looking to be in dangerous of falling off.

Reluctantly, they had to wake them both; they wouldn't be able to sleep with all the noise as people were beginning to wake for the day and convening in the common room.

"Harry, go to bed, Mate," said Fred, after waking them.

"The same for you, Love, go to bed and get some sleep," spoke George.

"Can't, tournament's today," they muttered incoherently whilst still half asleep. It made them snort; even when they were mostly asleep they could talk in unison, they weren't even sure they could do that.

"You've done all you can to prepare, now you just need rest. We'll wake you before dinner. The task doesn't start until dusk."

"Bed, now," Fred commanded, pointing to the staircase.

Hermione and Harry stood unsteadily on their feet before they mock saluted the twins, muttered a "Yes, Sir," and headed for their dorms.

"I think they're worse than we are," Fred remarked amusedly and George snorted.

After heading down to the great hall for breakfast, they soon returned to their dorm after smuggling food out with them, so Hermione might eat when she next woke. Setting the food aside, they darted glances down to her sleeping form burrowed under the covers before they both climbed atop the covers, snuggling her between them, a smile tugging at their mouths when a sigh slipped past her lips.

An hour before dinner, Hermione woke and after waking the twins and heading to the bathroom to shower and dress, she collected the food the twins had brought for her and headed to Harry's dorm.

Stepping inside and seeing it empty of all its usual occupants but a sleeping Harry, she crossed to his bed and gently woke him.

"How d'you feel? You get enough sleep?" She asked.

"I think so," he yawned tiredly, pushing a hand through his hair, propping himself up against his pillow and then reaching for his glasses, slipping them on. "Eat this," she instructed, pressing a muffin and cereal bar into his hand. "Then you need to get ready, dinner's in less than an hour."

After eating his food and crossing to the bathroom, Hermione patiently waited for him to emerge before they headed down to the common room, meeting up with Ron, Ginny, Lee and the twins. They walked down to the great hall together and took seats in a group, spending their time giving him Harry encouragement, praise and trying to ease the tension.

When dinner ended, all students were instructed to make their way towards the third task seating area, whilst the Champions were expected on the Quidditch pitch. Hermione was sure to stick to Harry's side like glue, seeing the instant change in his mood and posture.

After changing into the provided clothing, comfortable black shoes, black trousers and a red and gold long-sleeved t-shirt that read 'Potter' scrawled in-between his shoulder blades, Harry was now pacing the length of the tent.

Despite her calm demeanour, inside Hermione was in turmoil, panicking, and she tugged at the sleeve of her rolled up red and black checked shirt. Black jeans covered her legs and comfortable black converse were on her feet. Her bracelets and necklace were proudly on display, covering her bond marks, and her hair was pulled atop her head in a mess, stray curls already escaping and framing her face.

"Harry?" She called softly. He ignored her, his mind consumed by his thoughts as he continued to pace. "Harry?... Harry, dementors!"

He halted to a stop, drew his wand and he spun to face her, a scowl pulling at his face upon the realisation there was no dementor in sight.

"Not funny," he grumbled.

"Oh, it was funny and you know it," he folded her arms over her chest.

"Okay, it was," he admitted.

"Does it feel like we've had this conversation before?"

"Yes, because we have. First task, dragons," he reminded her.

"Ahh, that makes sense," she nodded.

Ten minutes later, the Weasleys, Woods, Remus and Sirius all made an appearance, having been invited to watch the final task, as had all the families of the Champions. After ensuring Harry he had their support, they were ushered to their seats and the Champions were issued their ten minute warning.

"Harry, you've got this," she said confidently. "They may be older and have a greater knowledge of spellwork, but in all honesty, you have more experience in this area than Viktor, Cedric and Fleur do combined. Defence is just as important, if not more so, than offense. Remember your Patronus, if something happens use it as a distraction and get out of there. If you can't, then use Periculum and a professor will remove you from the maze."

"Then I'd lose," he pointed out.

"I don't care. I would rather you alive and a loser, over dead and a winner. I'm proud of you and that won't change whether you win or lose."

Hermione, slipping her hand into Harry's, gave him a comforting squeeze before they made their way towards the entrance of the maze, trailing behind the other Champions.

"Do you know what happed to Skeeter?" Harry asked unexpectedly. "From what I've hear, she hasn't turned up to any of her scheduled interviews and no one's seen her for weeks."

"Oh, she took some time off from work, two months, I think," she replied offhandedly.

Hermione had written a letter, posing as Rita Skeeter to the Daily Prophet's Chief Editor, explaining that she would be going undercover for a story that would rock the Wizarding World.

"What did you do?" He asked, eyeing her suspiciously.

"Nothing," she said innocently.

"Hermione," he said sternly, as if warning a child.

She sighed. "Let's just say, we have an understanding." Harry arched an eyebrow but didn't ask her to further elaborate as they reached their destination and she turned to face him. "Remember everything we've gone over these last few days. Stay calm, stay focused and your Patronus is your friend. Periculum will get you out of the maze. You've got this, I know you do. Stay alert and stay alive. Don't make me come in there and get you; we both know I will."

He chuckled at her, they hugged tightly and she kissed his scar before going their separate ways, Hermione taking a seat in-between Fred and George, the twins taking her hands in theirs, seeing the bouncing leg and her nibbling at her lip. And before they knew it, the cannon had sounded and the Champions had disappeared in the maze.

"Are you okay, Love?" George asked.

"You don't look well," Fred said in concern.

"Is it the nightmare?"

"Nightmare?" Was unintentionally chorused by the elders of the group, all eyes snapping to her and away from the maze.

"I've been having the same one since Crouch was found, but it's not a nightmare, it's a premonition," she confessed, quickly explaining what she'd seen.

"Maybe it's part af the task," Oliver offered.

Twenty minutes later, Fleur emerged covered in leaves and twigs. Twenty minutes after that, Viktor emerged with a blank expression and his eyes clouded over. Hermione's stomach twisted uncomfortably. The Imperius Curse.

Snatching her hands from the twins and uncaring for the onlookers, she darted out of her seat, down the stands and over to Dumbledore who was stood with the Champions and the heads of their schools.

"Miss. Blake?" Dumbledore questioned in surprise.

"Sir, does the task involve a graveyard?" She breathed out, her chest rising and falling as she struggled to catch her breath.

"No, it does not. Why?"

"Since the death of Mr. Crouch, I've been a recurring dream," she answered, giving him a look she hoped he would understand so that she wouldn't have to go into further detail and potentially reveal herself.

"Is it..."

"Yes, Sir, it is," she confirmed.

He barely spared her a glance as he turned and made towards the gathered group of professors.

"Professor?" She called after him.

"Is there something else, Miss. Blake?" He turned to look behind him.

"Sir, please don't tell Professor Moody. I don't know why, but I don't trust him. He's been acting strange recently, more so than usual."

Eyeing her curiously, he continued and his way and unable to stand still the nervous energy filling her, she paced back and forth. There was a painful tug in her stomach, a pounding in her head, a tingle in her fingertips. Harry was in trouble. He needed her.

I have to protect him. I have to find him, she thought.

And she spun on her heel to pace in the opposite direction, there was a second and more insistent tugging in her stomach and a feeling of being squeezed through a too-small and too-tight tube. And then she was gone with a sharp crack.

"HERMIONE!" Was chorused as her family all stood to their feet, their wide eyes locked on the empty stop she'd was occupied.

"Where's she gone?" Oliver asked terrified. "Hoo the hell did she do tha'?"

"To Harry," Sirius replied distractedly. "She's gone to Harry."

Little Hangleton Graveyard

Hermione landed with a thud behind a gravestone and after getting her bearings, she realised she was in the graveyard from her dreams. Hearing a cry of pain, her eyes searched for the one responsible, seeing Harry clutching at his scar. She knew how he felt. Her scar was burning with an intensity she had never felt before and it took everything in her to keep quiet, not wanting to give her positioning away. She was there for a reason. She had to remain hidden until the time was right.

"Cedric, get to the cup and get out of here," she heard Harry say through clenched teeth.

She then saw a figure walking towards Harry and Cedric and it was carrying what looked to be a small child wrapped in a blanket.

"Kill the spare!" It hissed.

Hermione reacted quickly, barely registering her actions when her eyes darted to Cedric and she waved her hand in a circular motion, the older wizards collapsing to the ground in a state of sleep, just as the Killing Curse was about to collide with him. As a precaution, she placed a Silencing and full Body-bind Charm over his sleeping form, not knowing if he snorted at fidgeted, something that would alert the others to him being alive.

Upon closer inspection, she saw that the figure was Pettigrew and she felt anger flare up inside of her, barely finding the strength to remain calm and not curse him with every spell she had in her armoury.

She clenched her hands into fists when Harry was restrained from behind by a large statue and Pettigrew dropped whatever he was carrying into the large, boiling cauldron before he removed a bone from a grave and put it in the cauldron, later cutting off his own hand and adding it to the concoction, something she'd had to turn away from, her stomach rolling at the sight. When he approached Harry, cutting deep into his skin and taking his blood for the concoction, she'd barely stopped herself from intervening. But it wasn't time, not yet. She could feel it.

Pettigrew scurried away from the cauldron and with good reason, too, as it burst into flames that grew in size and soon after, the cauldron turned into smoke before it formed into a man.

It was Voldemort.

He looked pale and ill, as if he had been made from candle wax. His eyes were blood-red and he had two slits for a nose, something that reminded her of a reptile. He ran his long skeleton-like fingers over his bald head and through it back, a hysterical laugh falling from him. It sent shivers running down Hermione's spine. From what she could tell, his clothing consisted of only black robes that were so long, she didn't know how he didn't trip over them when he walked.

Pettigrew hurried forward and handed him his wand, which Voldemort later pressed to the man's uninjured arm, right where Hermione knew the dark mark would be found. The already dark clouds overhead darkened and transformed into a large dark mark in the sky. The wind picked up and several columns of mist slammed against the form, Death Eaters appearing in its wake.

"Welcome, my friends..." Hermione was surprised at the sound of his voice. She'd expected it sound like hissing and cold, but instead it was smooth and soft. "Thirteen years it's been and yet you stand here before me as if it were only yesterday. I confess myself disappointed, not one of you tried to find me."

He pulled the masks off the Death Eaters faces and they fell to the ground in pain. "Crabbe, McNair, Goyle. Not even you, Lucius."

"My Lord, if I had detected any sign or whisper as to your whereabouts, I would've..."

"There were signs my slippery friend and more than whispers."

"I assure you, My Lord, I have never renounced the old ways." He rose to his feet and lifted his head. "The face I have been obliged to present each day since your absence is my true mask.

"I returned, My Lord," Pettigrew squeaked pathetically.

Voldemort turned to him. "You returned out of fear, not loyalty. Though, you have proven to be useful these last few months," he conceded, Hermione's eyes widened when Voldemort waved his wand and Pettigrew's hand grew back. She didn't think was possible! When Voldemort crossed to Cedric's form, he stared down at him, tutting. "Shame, he was such a handsome boy."

"DON'T TOUCH HIM!" Harry snarled.

"Ah, Harry, I had almost forgotten you were here, standing on the bones of my father. I'd introduce you, but word has it you're almost as famous of me these days. The-Boy-Who-Lived. How lies have fed your legend, Harry. Should I reveal what really happened that night thirteen years ago? Should I divulge how I truly lost my powers?" He questioned, crossing back over to his followers. "It was love. You see, when dear, sweet Lily Potter gave her life for her only son, she provided the ultimate protection. I could not touch you. It was old magic; I should've foreseen it but no matter, no matter, because things have changed. I can touch you now, Harry Potter." Voldemort crossed to Harry's restrained form, pressing his finger against Harry's scar, a scream of agony falling from his lips.

Hermione bit her lip, a hiss falling from her as she tried to fight back her own pain from her burning scar.

"Astonishing what a few drops of your blood can do, eh?"

She honestly didn't know how she remained still after Voldemort hit Harry with the Cruciatus Curse. She'd been filled with so much fury, she'd have gladly killed him with her bare hands, no matter the consequences.

"Attaboy, Harry," he praised mockingly. "Your parent's would be proud, especially your filthy Muggleborn mother."

Whilst everyone was distracted, Hermione summoned Cedric and the port-key to her, being careful not to physically touch the port-key, waiting for the right moment.

"Expelliarmus!" Cried Harry.

"Avada Kedavra," Voldemort hissed.

The two spells collided and a large bubble was formed, wrapping around the two duelling wizards. Beams of light shot out from the point of collision, unexpectedly morphing into people; Frank Bryce, Bertha Jorkins, James and Lily Potter and Amy and Spencer Blake. Hermione's breath caught, her stomach fluttered and her heart pounded in her chest. She could see their lips moving but she couldn't hear what they were saying. Giving her head a shake, she took that as her chance to intervene and she waved her hand, Harry being propelled towards her, breaking the spell and connection.

"Hermione? What're you doing here? You shouldn't be here!" His eyes widened and his voice rose slightly in alarm.

"I told you I'd come for you."

"He killed Cedric!"

"No, he didn't, I put under my Sleeping Charm before he was hit. It just appears as though he's dead. Now, grab the port-key and go, there's something I have to do."

"I'm not leaving you," he said forcefully.

"Yes, you are," she snapped, rising to full height and stepping out from behind the gravestone, drawing the attention of a Voldemort and his Death Eaters. "Harry, go now."

"No, I'm not leaving you!" He argued.

"YES, YOU ARE! HARRY, GO NOW!"

Without taking her eyes from those before her and as tears filled his eyes, she directed the port-key into Harry's outstretched hand, watching as he disappeared with Cedric's body.

Hogwarts

Harry landed with a thud with Cedric on the floor, hearing the cheers that surrounded him morph into terrified, horrified screams.

"What happened, Harry?" Dumbledore pressed from beside him.

"HE'S BACK, VOLDEMORT'S BACK. HERMIONE SAVED US; SHE MADE ME LEAVE WITHOUT HER! HE'S GOT HER!" He cried, tears blurring his vision and the back of his throat burning.

"What do you mean she saved you?" Sirius questioned, kneeling beside his Godson and laying a hand on his shoulder.

"I was duelling with Voldemort and she pulled me away from him. She Accio'd the port-key to me and Cedric, he's just sleeping. Pettigrew cast the Killing Curse but Hermione made it look like he died. I refused to leave her but she Accio'd the port-key into my hand, I couldn't help her, I didn't have a choice! He's got her!"

Amos Diggory pushed his way through the crowd, a cry falling from his lips as he fell to the floor on his knees.

"Amos, he is alive", Dumbledore interrupted.

He looked hopeful at that news. "He is?"

"Yes, Miss. Blake put him into a state of sleep before he could be hurt. If I am correct in my assumptions, he should be asleep no more than eight hours."

"What do we do about Hermione?" George muttered, pacing back and forth, his hands fisted into his hair, matching his brother's actions.

"We don' know where she is, we cannae go an' get her," Oliver breathed out, his hands balled into fists, his eyes wide and fearful.

"I am afraid we will have to wait until she arrives," Dumbledore replied.

"Dead or alive?" The three wizards snapped in unison, glaring at Dumbledore.

Little Hangleton Graveyard

Meanwhile, Voldemort and the Death Eaters observed Hermione carefully.

"Well, you're a pretty, little thing, aren't you? And your name?"

"What? Your sheep haven't told you?" She folded her arms over her chest, her wand held tightly in her grasp. Her body was tense, waiting to spring into action and her posture was straight and tall.

Was she worried he might kill her? Of course. Was she terrified of the monster stood before her? Absolutely. Was she angry at the suffering he'd caused? Yes. Did she want him dead? Yes. Was she afraid of dying and leaving behind her mates and family? With every fibre of her being. Was she going to do everything she could to stay alive and return to her loved ones? With everything she had.

She couldn't allow fear to rule her. She had to be brave for her family, for her mates and most importantly, for herself. And so, she flooded her mind with images and memories of her mates, allowing them to soothe the fear and offer a cold, calculating expression. She had to be smart if she wanted to survive. She'd saved Harry and Cedric, now she had to save herself.

"You have some nerve to insult my friends," he replied, looking to be amused by her response, no matter how disrespectful it may have been. Yes, she probably shouldn't have said that, she realised. "I ask you again, who are you?"

"Do you want to tell him or should I?" She asked the Death Eaters but she received no reply as they were too busy devouring her with their eyes, she sighed. "I don't know if I should be offended that you don't recognise, thought it has been thirteen years since you killed my parents for refusing to join you... I'm Hermione Blake"

"What?" He hissed, his red eyes flashing dangerously as he whipped around to face those behind him, all of them being too absorbed in staring at her to notice. He raised his wand and angrily slashed it through the air, the rest of the masks being ripped off their faces, the robed figures collapsing to the ground on their knees in pain.

"Why was I not informed of this development?" He demanded, hisses bleeding into his words as though he was so angry, he was struggling not to blend his English and his Parseltongue.

As her eyes scanned her surroundings, looking for an escape route, she caught sight of Pettigrew cowering behind a grave stone, a glare settling on her face. He took one look at her, emitted pitiful cry of terror and then ran away from her in the opposite direction.

"Not this time," she muttered, unfolding her arms and throwing her hands out, propelling him off his feet until he slammed into a nearby tree, hitting the floor and being knocked unconscious.

The action had turned Voldemort's attention from his followers and back to her, his head tipping as he observed, almost like a confused puppy, she noted, a shiver heading down her spine at the thought. He was watching her as thought he didn't quite believe what he was seeing, something she supposed was quite accurate.

Voldemort wanted her parents to join him due to their family names and their power, and if he'd gotten his hands on her, when she was older, he'd have used her to gain power and immortality. And now that he knew she was alive, he had a chance at persuading her to his side. As he observed her, he thought that perhaps he might keep her around after he'd gotten what he wanted from her, instead of locking her away? She had fire in her eyes, perhaps she might offer entertainment when needed.

"You're a Siren," he stated unexpectedly.

"Am I?" She challenged, her eyes flittering behind him and those that stood behind him, being wary of what they might learn and perhaps let slip to others, and then before she knew it, her secret would be exposed and she and her mates would be in danger. And despite that, his followers didn't appear to be paying attention to their exchange, once more staring at her as thought in a trance.

"Yes," his eyes narrowed, his mouth set in a thin line and his expression dared her to challenge him. "You are. Have you begun the transformation process?"

She watched his warily, "Yes," she admitted, once more looking to those behind him, their dazed expressions remaining firmly in place. It reminded her of the World Cup, when the veelas had made an appearance and all the males had been affected, even her mates. "It happened fairly quickly but I've yet to complete it, something that won't happen until I became of age."

"Have you found your mate?"

She narrowed her eyes and pursed her lips, knowing exactly why he wished to know such a thing.

"Yes, I have, and that means I am of no use to you. Of course, there's the possibility of you attempting to persuade me to join you, but that would mean betraying my mate, beliefs and family."

"I am your family," he argued, his eyes flashing.

"Technically," she nodded, "However, my other family took me in when your idiot followers attacked my adoptive parents, an attack that almost killed them." Her mouth twitched when she saw the furious expression that flittered through his eyes. "Oh, they didn't tell you about that, did they? A few years back, they tracked me down, tortured my parents to near death and still left without my identity or location, and the real kicker, I was upstairs, asleep in my bedroom," she sighed and shook her head. "It seems they're not that smart, your followers. So, the question is; were they looking for me for you or for themselves?" She tipped her head, fighting off a smile. "Now, if you will excuse me, I had better get to Hogwarts. We wouldn't want them to think I'm dead, would we?"

"We are not done here."

"We are; you know who and what I am, I know who and what you are. There's nothing left to discuss."

She saw it from the corner of her eyes, an unrecognisable beam of light heading her way and she barely ducked it in time, sending an annoyed glance in the direction it came from.

"Well, that wasn't very nice," she frowned.

Seeming to have snapped out of their daze, a dozen or so beams headed her way and her eyes widening slightly, she rose to her feet and threw her hands out, summoning her shield. Thankfully, it held strong, barely budging under the force of the barrage of spells and they rebounded, Hermione seeing several other shields being cast whilst others simply dodged or ducked. When they dropped their shields, all eyes turned to her, watching in fearful surprise, knowing their Dark Lord had never before produced a shield quite like hers, something Voldemort seemed to think, too. She was too powerful to be allowed to live if she wasn't to be under his control.

"Avada Kedavra!"

Hermione felt panic well within her upon the sight of the neon green beam leaving the tip of his wand and heading straight for her, and she did the only thing she could think to do. She held her hands out further away from her body, siphoning more magical power into her shield, reinforcing it. Her eyes slammed shut, not wanting it to be the last thing she saw but when she heard a shudder, her eyes opened, widening at the sight that not only had her shield withstood the force of a curse that had never before been blocked, it appeared to be absorbing it.

Her eyes darting to Voldemort's stunned expression, she took that as her distraction. She dropped her shield, turned and ran towards Pettigrew, created a port-key from the bobble on her wrist and whisked them away to the safety of Hogwarts.

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Hogwarts

Landing in the hospital wing, as she'd intended, her feet hit the ground and Pettigrew landed face first. Unconcerned that he'd likely broken his nose, she was sure to cast her Sleeping Charm to keep him from escaping for the time being, and her eyes searched the large room, spying a horde of witches and wizards that surrounded a single bed. Some of them were pacing back and forth agitatedly, some were whispering between one another and others remained silent and unmoving as they perched on chairs.

"Who died?" She voiced.

All eyes snapped to her, surprise, relief and concern flooding their expressions.

Fred, George and Oliver were before her before she could blink, being sandwiched between them in a hug that was so tight, she could barely breathe. They slowly and reluctantly released her, drawing back and their eyes searching her for injures, something she knew they wouldn't find. Hugging her once more, they drew back and ushered her towards the others, being guided into a seat and after offering the others a smile, her eyes fell to Harry, seeing his sleeping face. He'd been given a Sleeping Draught, she realised. There was no way Harry would willingly sleep knowing that she had been trapped with Voldemort.

"It was for the pain, Dear," Mrs. Weasley offered, her motherly gaze darting between her and Harry. "They are struggling to heal his arm."

"Why?"

"Madam Pomphrey said it was something to do with the dark magic used to cause it," Ginny told her.

Frowning, Hermione leaned forward, lifted her hand and brushed Harry's hair away from his forehead before she gently ran her finger over his scar and setting her palm against his forehead.

They all watched mesmerised as she closed her eyes and took a deep breath and when her eyes fluttered open, she drew back from him, everyone noting in wonder that he looked considerably healthier. He didn't look as pale, his scar no longer looked red and sore and when they looked at his arm, a very faint scar was all that was left.

"It's going to come in handy," she sighed, seeing their expressions. "And it should take care of the side effects."

"Side effects?" Sirius frowned, his eyes darting between them, watching as she slipped her hand around Harry's.

"He put him under the Cruciatus Curse," she muttered.

"WHAT?" Sirius barked furiously.

"Are you trying to wake China?" She looked to him, arching an eyebrow. "We're all here, you don't need to shout."

"Sorry," he cleared his throat, his concerned gaze moving to Harry.

"Tell us what happened," Remus encouraged.

"Before or after?"

"After. Harry has already told us what happened before," Mr. Weasley clarified.

"Well, good old Tommy and I had a little chat," she brought her free hand to her face, brushing the fallen curls behind her ears. "To summarise, He knows who I am, I threw Pettigrew across the graveyard and knocked him unconscious, when I tried to leave, I cast my shield after a spell was thrown at me, and I later discovered it has the power to withstand a dozen simultaneously cast spells. At that point, He realised how powerful I was and since I refused to join his side, he saw me as a threat and he threw the Killing Curse at me." Ginny, Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood all gasped in horror, whilst the others looked furious, particularly her mates. "When it hit my shield, it didn't penetrate it, rather, it was absorbed by my shield. And using their surprise as a distraction, I created a port-key, grabbed something to go and came here, to the hospital wing, because I had a feeling this was where you'd be."

"The Killing Curse didn't get through your shield?" Bill said in disbelief.

"But tha's impossible; nothing can stop the Killing Curse," spoke Mr. Wood.

"Way to go, little sister," Charlie said proudly, holding his hand out expectantly for a high-five. Sniggering, she lifted her free hand and slapped it against his, the first laugh to happen in hours ringing out.

"Wait, you 'grabbed something to go'?" George arched an eyebrow.

"Yes," she smirked, giving a gesturing wave and the sleeping form of Pettigrew slid closer, coming into their view.

"You caught him!" Sirius and Remus cried in disbelief.

"I wasn't going to leave him behind. Once again, I did the Ministry's job."

"Don' yea always," Oliver snorted.

With a shrug of her shoulders and a lazy wave of her hand, her Patronus stood before her and she sent it off to find Dumbledore.

"What?"

"You just cast your Patronus wandlessly and non-verbally," Ron stuttered.

"I did?" Her brow furrowed. "Oh, that's new," she commented and they snorted at her.

Not long after that, Dumbledore arrived with the Minister of Magic, Snape and McGonagall.

"Miss. Blake, what can I do for you?" Dumbledore questioned.

Hermione gestured with a lazy wave of her hand and they followed the direction until they saw a sleeping Pettigrew on the floor.

"As I said at the World Cup, Minister, I would do your job for you."

"What happened to his hand, Miss. Granger?" He pressed, his face pale and queasy.

"Blake," she corrected automatically. "He cut it off in order to bring Voldemort back. He was rewarded and given another one. I witnessed it."

"What happened got Messers Potter and Diggory to safety?" Dumbledore asked.

"Can we do it tomorrow, Professor? I'm exhausted."

"Of course, Miss. Blake, we'll leave you to get some rest."

"Make sure that moron doesn't escape, will you, Minister? If he escapes again, I think I'll just kill him instead of capturing him," she grumbled tiredly, watching as they left the hospital wing with Pettigrew in tow.

"Do you have no fear?" Sirius chuckled.

"What?"

"You just gave the Minister another dressing down and told him that you would kill Pettigrew if he escaped again."

Shrugging her shoulders, she asked, "What happened to Professor Moody?," seeing his sleeping form across the room.

"Turns out the person who's been teaching us was Barty Crouch Junior, Polyjuiced as Moody. He kept him locked away in a chest all year," answered Fred.

"It was him, wasn't it? He was the one to put Harry's name in the Goblet? He turned the Triwizard cup into a port-key?"

"I would love to see how the inside of your brain works," Fred remarked, settling a hand on her shoulder and squeezing.

"What about the others?" She gestured to the other Champions in the room with a tip of her head.

"We don' know, as we're not family, Madam Pomphrey was unable tae tell us," answered Mr. Wood.

Releasing Harry's hand, she stood from her chair and crossed over to Fleur, examining her. Seeing she had no visible injuries, she crossed to Viktor. Although he didn't appear to have any visible injuries, she knew he'd been under the Imperius and didn't wish to take any chances with his health. Pressing her palm against his forehead, she closed her eyes, took a breath and then drew back, noting that he looked healthier. Moving to Moody, she frowned thoughtfully. He doesn't look good at all. She repeated the process before crossing over to Cedric's bed, his mother and father perched in the chairs beside it.

"Miss. Blake, thank you," said Mrs. Diggory, her gaze darting between her and her sleeping son after Hermione had introduced herself. "We've been told that you saved our son's life."

"Would you mind if I checked him over for any injuries."

"Okay," she said replied slowly in confusion.

Hermione smiled at her kindly before stepping closer, spying the cuts and bruises on his face and knowing he likely had them on his body, too.

"Miss. Blake, will you tell us what happened?" Mr. Diggory asked.

"Cedric tried to protect Harry when he was hurt and for that, he was targeted by the Killing Curse. Knowing what was to happen, I placed him under the influence of a Sleeping Charm, and when he hit the ground, it gave the appearance of death. As a precaution, I also cast a Silencing and full Body-bind charm, as I was unaware if he snores or fidgets in his sleep. He should wake in an hour or so."

Hermione smiled at them and then she placed her palm on Cedric's forehead, closing her eyes and taking a breath before she drew back, seeing his parents' eyes widening at his now healthy and uninjured appearance.

"I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell anyone about this," she said and they nodded, speechless.

"Dumbledore has arranged for us to spend the night," said Mr. Weasley after she returned to Harry's bedside. "I think we should all get to bed and rest, it's been a trying day," he advised.

They all made to leave but halted when Hermione stayed firmly in place, unmoving from Harry's side.

"Hermione, Dear, he'll be fine," Mrs. Weasley assured.

"I know... But I can't leave him. I need to be here."

"He will be fine, ye need ye rest," added Mrs. Wood, watching her with concerned eyes.

"I know, but I can't leave him. I feel uneasy and I need to know that he'll be fine in the morning."

They reluctantly nodded, understanding that it was the Siren within her that wanted to be with him and whilst they took their leave, Fred, George and Oliver stayed behind.

"You really scared us, Love," muttered George, his hand reaching for her free one and he gave it a tight squeeze, as if he was afraid if he let go, she'd disappear.

"I'm really sorry, boys, I didn't known what'd happened until I landed in the graveyard."

"We know, Harry's your sibling mate and you need to protect him, but that doesn't mean you didn't worry us. When he came back with a lifeless Cedric and without you, sobbing about how he had left you. It felt..." Fred trailed off, struggling to put it into words.

"You don't have to worry about me. They didn't hurt me. With me now against him, he's terrified of me. And rightly so; I can stop the Killing Curse now."

"Aye, tha's an interesting development," agreed Oliver. "It'll come in handy. Does he know aboot ye?"

"Yes, he knew who my parents were, more specifically, what my mother was. When he realised that I knew who my mate was, he knew I was useless to him in that way, but he could still use my power. He doesn't know that you're my mates; he thinks I only have one and he doesn't know that the bond isn't complete. Basically, he knows hardly anything new to what he knew when I was born." They all sat in silence for a while before Hermione saw Fred stifle a yawn. "You should go to bed."

"What about you?" George asked.

"I'll be up when Harry wakes, but I need to be here."

They nodded reluctantly and stood from their chairs and checking the coast was clear, they kissed her and left the hospital wing, her eyes following their movements until they could no longer be seen.

"Right, Harry," she sighed, "It's just you and me now."

She leaned forward and kissed his scar before settling in to the seat beside the bed, getting more comfortable. She had a long night ahead of her.

Chapter Fifty-Nine

Hogwarts - Sunday 25th June 1995

Hermione woke to the feeling of her hair being moved out of her face, knowing she probably resembled a scarecrow. She opened her eyes and lifted her head from where it rested on the bed but she didn't release Harry's hand.

"Hey," she greeted sleepily, "How long have you been awake?"

"Not long."

"How are you feeling?"

"Better," he replied, absentmindedly touching his forehead before his eyes darted down to his arm where he now had a faint scar. "Pomphrey said she couldn't heal it."

"I know, so I did. The scar should fade soon."

"I'm mad at you," he told her.

She chuckled at him. "I know, but I was perfectly safe."

"Perfectly safe?" He whisper-shouted not wanting to wake the other occupants of the hospital wing.

"Yes, he didn't hurt me."

"What happened?"

"Well, we had a chat, I defended against a barrage of spells and I escaped. All in all, a normal day... You know, apart from the darkest wizard in the world being resurrected."

"It's not funny," he muttered.

"It is and you know it." He cracked a smile at the familiar words. "I also captured Pettigrew again, he should be in Azkaban by now."

"You caught him?" He said disbelievingly

"Yes, anyway, how's your scar?"

"It feels better, thanks to you. How's yours?"

"It stings a little," she admitted. "Voldemort killed my parents."

"I know," he said softly.

"I knew they were murdered, but I thought it was by Death Eaters. What he said about you last night and your mother sacrificing herself for you, I think my mother did the same."

"You do?" His brow furrowed.

"When I touched the photo of my parents, the last thing I saw was a green flash of light."

"The Killing Curse," he mumbled in understanding.

"My scar, it's similar to yours, we got it the same way."

"From Voldemort."

"Yep, Tommy's so generous, isn't he? Just the gift that keeps on giving," she snarked and he snorted at her.

"When you were in the graveyard, did your scar hurt?"

"Yes, it felt like an intense, unrelenting burn. But when he touched you I could feel it, too. It was like I could feel your pain. I suppose that's another reason as to why we share a sibling bond."

"I've lost count, we find more every day," he snorted. Looking to her, he saw her mouth twitching into a smile. "What?"

"Does this mean that I'm The-Girl-Who-Lived?"

He stared at her before laughter burst from him and she was quick to throw up a Silencing Charm as to not disturb the other sleeping patients.

"I guess it does."

"We're quite the pair, aren't we?" She tipped her head with a smile before her expression grew serious. "When my parents' projection was talking to you, what did they say?"

His expression softened. "They said they were proud that I was your brother and my parents said they were proud that you were my sister. They were proud of both of us. They said that even if the war hadn't taken place and our parents hadn't have died, we would've found each other. We're destined to be family."

"They're proud?"

"Of both of us," he nodded. "The twins and Oliver didn't look so good yesterday."

"I know," she sighed, a guilty expression crossing her face. "They stayed here for a while after the others left for bed. And after we talked things through, I forced them to go to bed," she said, a yawn breaking free.

"How long have you been here?"

"Since I got back from the graveyard."

"Why didn't you go to bed?" He frowned.

"I couldn't leave you."

"Yeah, you could, I was fine. Got the best night's sleep I've had in a long time."

"No, Harry, I couldn't leave you," she said and he looked into her eyes. That's when he saw it and understood. It was the Siren, not Hermione.

"Right, well now that you know I'm fine, go to bed... Hermione go to bed, it's only early, I'll go back to sleep. Please, go to bed, for me."

"I'll be back shortly," she promised, rising from the uncomfortable chair.

"I don't want to see you in here until at least after lunch," he told her and she grumbled but agreed, giving his hand a squeeze and leaving the hospital wing.

She entered the dorm to see the boys asleep. Lee hadn't shared a bed with them in as long as she could remember, especially since he'd started dating Alicia, the witch stating that it was weird. Lee and Alicia had finally gotten back together the night of the Yule Ball, much to everyone's relief.

Crossing to the bathroom, she snorted when she walked past Lee's bed, spying the wizard's current sleeping position before she had the blankets pull up to his chin and the curtains draw closed.

After showering and dressing in her pyjamas, she retrieved her cream and moved to the bed, doing her best to climb into the space left between Fred and George without waking them, but Fred roused from sleep and gave her a sleepily smile.

"What time is it?"

"Still early, I'm not sure," she replied with a shrug, immediately regretting the action when the scar felt like it was burning her skin. She'd ignored the pain the night before being too focused on Harry but now she was feeling it.

"What's wrong?" He frowned, pushing himself up onto his elbows.

"My scar hurts," she confessed.

"Give it here," he instructed, holding his hand out expectantly.

Placing the cream in his hand she moved to lay on her stomach, removing the Glamour Charm whilst Fred pushed her hair over her shoulder and lifted her pyjama top to reveal the red scar tissue.

"Spitfire, it doesn't look good," he told her in concern.

"I didn't think it would, it felt like I was on fire."

"It looks that way, too," he muttered, scooping a generous amount of the cold cream onto his fingers before rubbing it into and round the scar, a hiss falling from Hermione's mouth, startling both Oliver and George awake.

"What is it?"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, boys, go back to sleep."

"What the hell happened to your scar?"

"Way to make a girl feel good about herself, George," she teased, turning her head on her folded arms to face him. "It happened at the graveyard when He returned, she explained, feeling Fred's fingers no longer applying the cream but still flittering over the inflamed scar tissue, his touch helping to soothe her. "I saw my parents," she whispered.

"We know, Harry told us," Oliver spoke softly and she turned her head towards him.

"Death Eater's didn't kill my parents. Voldemort did. That's why Harry and I saw our parents. Prior Incantatem. It shows the last spell cast from a person's wand. When Harry and Voldemort's spells collided, it caused a shadow, showing the last person or people he'd killed. He killed my parents before he did Harry's and my mother died the same way Harry's did"

"She did?" Fred asked, still running his fingers over her scar.

"She sacrificed herself for Harry, that's why Harry survived the Killing Curse, it was a form of old magic. My mother sacrificed herself for me."

"So, He's back," George stated.

"Yes, he is and a war's brewing. People are going to have to choose sides. It's going to be worse than the first one."

"You're in danger," Fred said sadly.

"Everyone's in danger, but if he comes anywhere near our family or Hogwarts, I'll make Him regret it. Compared to me, I'll make him look like a cuddly little bunny. He's terrified of me, so he'll keep his distance, try and win me over to his side or kill me... Anyway, I'm exhausted, we should try and get a few more hours of sleep."

They snuggled under the covers and got comfy, Hermione lying in-between Fred and George and Oliver was on George's right. George had his arm thrown around Hermione's stomach and Oliver had a hold of Hermione's right hand whilst Fred and Hermione were facing each other. George and Oliver quickly fell back to sleep but Fred and Hermione stayed awake, staring at one another.

"I realised something recently," she said quietly, not wishing to wake Oliver and George again.

"And that is?" He questioned, twining his fingers through her left hand.

"You each do something for me. You each give me something. You each affect me in different ways."

"Hmmm?"

"You and George; you make me laugh, like full belly, eye-watering, rib-hurting, almost wet yourself laugh..." He chuckled at her. "I didn't really laugh before I met you but now you make me laugh every day. And you're both incredibly smart and generous, kind and caring. You're hard-working, joyful, gentle, humble, resourceful, reliable, warm, charming and surprisingly organised," she listed and he snorted. "I don't think I have a vocabulary big enough to describe you both. That's what you bring to my life. And I'm exceptionally proud of you for following your dream." He smiled brightly at her. "And Oliver... He's selfless, smart, warm, caring and a nutter..." He chuckled. "He's passionate, sweet and thoughtful, trustworthy, charismatic and humble. And he has determination and devotion. He's doing what he wants with his life, he's working hard and I'm proud of him. And you three together, you make me happy, you make me smile and you make me feel safe and protected. You've given me a family, you've given me hope. You always find the light in a bad situation. You are my home."

"Not to mention, we're devilishly good looking," he added smugly.

Rolling her eyes, she agreed. "Yes, you really are, it should be illegal. And it'is completely unfair that you're stuck with me."

"Don't say that, you're beautiful."

She snorted. "I'm average at best and that's me being kind."

"No, you're not," his brow furrowed.

She scoffed at him. "I have bushy hair, I'm pale, I have buck teeth, I have no figure and I'm short."

"You're incredibly beautiful. Your hair's silky and shiny and falls in beautiful wild curls. When the sun catches it, it shows different shades of brown, gold and purple. You have soft skin, large chocolate-brown eyes that fill with emotion and I love watching when they shine and sparkle. You've a breathtaking smile and you're forgetting I've seen you in a bathing suit more than once and I love your figure. And you are not short; you're 'average height' I believe you once said. You're the perfect size, you fit perfectly with us since Oliver, George and I are fairly the same height. And they'll tell you the same. It was like you were made for us."

"I kind of was, prophecy, remember?"

He chuckled. "You are beautiful, you have boys flirting with you and drooling over you where ever you go, you just don't notice it. And, you're a Siren, a notoriously beautiful being. Of course, you're gorgeous. You need to stop being so harsh on yourself, you don't see what we do. Now, what were you saying?"

Clearing her throat, she continued, "You each affect me in different ways. With Oliver, it's his voice. I don't know why but to me, it's soft, smooth and charming. His voice calms and soothes me; he's like my very own lullaby. It's just for me and no one else. When he speaks to me, I get goosebumps. He brings passion, energy and determination to my life. With George, it's his smell and the way he looks at me with such intensity, it makes me shiver. He smells like parchment, freshly cut grass in the summer and a cold winter's day. He reminds me of home. He brings honesty, tranquillity, playfulness and patience to my life."

"And then there's you. You, for me it's your touch." His mouth twitched, his hand lifting, his finger ghosting over her cheek and she leaned into his touch. "Your touch, it lets me know that you're there, that you'll protect me. It makes my heart feel like it's going to jump out of my chest. You're always the first to hug me when I'm upset and you talk to me like this. You're more sensitive. You bring understanding, wit and gentleness to my life. I honestly don't know what I would do without you all in my life, you're my lifeline, you keep me afloat when I feel like I'm going to drown."

"You won't ever know what it feels like to be without us; you will always have us," he promised.

Seeing the tears welling in her eyes, he leaned closer and kissed her, their lips moved slowly together before it became more passionate and heated. Fred deepened the kiss, cupping Hermione's cheek and angling her head the way he wished and he ran his tongue over Hermione's bottom lip, begging for entrance. Hermione instinctively parted her lips and Fred slipped his tongue into her mouth and stroked her tongue with his.

This was a new development; none of the boys had kissed her this way before, they tended to hold back and remain gentlemanly and sweet. Not that she was complaining, and she allowed the Siren to guide her. Hesitantly, she moved her tongue against his and he groaned when her hand tangled in his hair, tugging. He withdrew his tongue and sucked her bottom lip into his mouth which pulled a surprised moan from her, Hermione taking the initiative to run her tongue along his top lip and when he parted his lips for her, she slipped her tongue in, being greeted by his. Drawing back for air, their eyes locked.

"You need to sleep," he muttered, his mouth twitching when she scowled unhappily. "Go to sleep," he said softly. He kissed her sweetly before settling down, waiting until she fell asleep before following after her.

Fred woke to see the sun shining through the windows and when his vision cleared, he noticed that George and Oliver smirking at him.

"What?" He whispered tiredly. Hermione was still asleep and he didn't want to wake her.

"You and 'Mione got pretty close last night," George remarked innocently.

Fred groaned and his head flopped down onto the pillow. "I should've known you two nosey sods weren't asleep."

"Well, a'll admit we did listen tae ye talking, but then we fell asleep," Oliver said.

"Yeah, what woke us up was all the moaning and groaning going on," George sniggered.

Fred rolled his eyes. "You're just jealous that you didn't get to kiss her."

"Yes, we are," they chorused without shame and Fred snorted.

"Anyway, me voice gives her goosebumps," Oliver gloated.

"Yeah, but the way I look at her makes her shiver and I smell like home," George spoke with his chest puffed out.

"I beat you both; when I touch her, she feels like her heart's going to leap out of her chest," Fred smirked.

"You all affect me, let's just leave it at that," Hermione grumbled. They looked down at her and smiled.

"Morning, Sunshine," George sang.

Hermione grabbed the pillow next to her and hit George in the face with it. He grunted and Fred and Oliver laughed at him.

"It's too early. Do you have to be so happy in the morning?"

"I thought you loved that I was so joyful?" He smirked until she whacked him in the stomach with the back of her hand and he winced.

"I do, but not when you wake me up," she sighed before pushing herself up into a seating position. "I'm up now. I suppose I better get ready, I've got a meeting with Dumbledore and I want to check on Harry and Cedric today."

Climbing from the bed, she crossed to the bathroom, noting that Lee had already left for the morning. When she stepped out, she was wearing blue converse, black leggings and a blue denim button-down long-sleeved shirt rolled-up to her elbows and her hair was pulled into a mess atop her head. The boys stepped into the bathroom and the first to emerge was George, being partially dressed and with towel-dried hair.

Hermione was rummaging through the drawers, looking for shirts for the boys, when she looked over her shoulder to see George. She smiled at him and he returned the gesture, walking towards her. When he was close enough, he pulled Hermione to him and she went willingly as he wrapped his arms around her waist and she wrapped hers around his neck and stood up on her tiptoes.

As usual, the kiss started off sweet and gentle but it soon deepened as George brought his hands up into her hair, angling her head how he wished. One of her hands moved to tangle in his hair and the other she brought down to rest over his heart, his skin still warm and slightly dewy from his shower. She could feel his heartbeat quicken under her hand and she smiled into the kiss.

George ran his tongue over her bottom lip and she gave him entrance, he slipped his tongue in, being greeted by hers. Hermione tugged on his hair and he groaned in appreciation, responding by pulling her closer until she was flush against him and he sucked on the end of her tongue and she moaned and shivered against him.

They broke apart for air when they heard chuckling, seeing Fred and Oliver leaning against opposite sides of the door frame, looking amused.

George's hair was a mess, his lips were red and swollen and his chest rose and fell with each quick breath he took. Whilst half of Hermione's hair had fallen from its restraint, her lips were red and swollen and her chest was heaving.

"Enjoy the show?" George questioned shamelessly.

Oliver arched an eyebrow. "Show?" He said in a challenging tone and George nodded smugly.

Oliver grinned before pushing away from the door frame and he stepped forward until he stood before Hermione. He lowered his head and latched his mouth onto hers, Hermione responding quickly, folding her arms around his neck and reaching up on her tiptoes whilst his arms slotted around her, tugging her against him. He walked her backwards until her back hit the nearest wall beside Hermione's bed and she once more reached up on her tiptoes. Oliver's hands lowered until he reached below her arse and he lifted until she instinctively wrapped her legs around his waist, being pressed into the wall as he set one hand palm flat against the cold stone and the other held her hip.

A sigh slipped from and Oliver took the opportunity to slip his tongue into her mouth and they explored each other's mouths properly for the first time. Hermione tugged on his hair and he groaned.

Another thing Hermione had come to notice was that the boys all kissed her differently. Whilst she considered them all to be passionate and sweet, no matter how long it may last, they each had their own little way of doing so.

Fred was gentle and slow, never changing the speed or pace but taking his time to deepen the kiss, to explore and bask in the moment. He kissed her like she'd been away from him for too long and they were getting reacquainted with each other. Like he was worried he'd hurt her if he held her too tightly. It was with longing.

George started off sweet but then the kiss would intensify and he would quickly deepen it, alternating and changing the speed and pace regularly, as if to confuse her, overwhelm her, infuriate her and keep her on her toes. He kissed her with barely restrained want and playfulness. He liked to tease her, to rile her up.

And Oliver was also quick to deepen the kiss, kissing her as though he was a man starved, as though he would die if he didn't, as though she was his lifeline and kissing her was what he had to do to survive. It was like he had to overwhelm her, devour her.

When a groan rumbled in Oliver's chest after she'd tugged on his hair at the feel of his teeth nipping at her lip and his tongue soothing the sting, he pressed her firmly against the wall before he drew back for air, only he surprised her when he didn't set her on her feet as she'd expected. Rather, his mouth moved to the left side of her neck, kissing from behind her ear and down to the junction of her neck and shoulder, nosing the collar of her shirt aside.

By this point, Hermione could feel something hard pressing against her, knowing what it was and feeling a flush of heat crawl to her cheeks. She knew that it wasn't time for the Mating Ceremony, but that didn't mean that she couldn't take her relationship with her boys to the next level, right? Besides, it felt too good to stop. She thought she would be embarrassed, but she wasn't. How could she be? They're her mates.

They'd been together since Christmas and all they'd done was kiss in the privacy of their dorm or around their family when no one was looking and even those were nothing like the ones she'd shared with her boys last night and that morning.

Liquid heat pooled down below and damped her underwear; she knew she needed friction so she tightened her legs around Oliver's waist and she let the Siren guide her as was usual when there was something she didn't understand or she lacked experience in. She ground her hips down against Oliver and he gave a surprised groan and pushed her harder against the wall.

Hermione let out delightful little mewls of pleasure that had the twins uncomfortably readjusting their jeans and they walked into the bathroom and left them to it with a snort. Hermione tilted her head to give Oliver better access and he took full advantage, alternating between kissing, licking, nibbling and sucking, leaving behind love bites, something he'd done intentionally.

When the twins emerged after brushing their hair and teeth, they shared a chuckle, seeing that neither Oliver nor Hermione had moved since they'd left them, only now, Hermione was kissing Oliver's neck. Shaking their heads and rolling their eyes, they crossed over to the bed, pulling on the shirts Hermione had set out for them. George's white and Fred's dark blue.

Hermione moved her mouth to the right side of Oliver's neck, mimicking what he'd done to her, her mouth trailing over his bond mark that was proudly on display after he'd removed his cuff bracelet for showering and he'd yet to slip it back on. Seeing the golden shimmer, Hermione took the opportunity to kiss and nibble the mark, Oliver's groan rumbling in his chest, his eyes rolling into the back of his head and a shiver racing down in spine.

Interesting, she thought and she continued paying attention to his bond mark, wishing to see what else might happen.

Minx, he thought, knowing her intentions.

Drawing away from her, he latched his mouth back on hers, ensuring he was correctly supporting her weight before he used both hands to untie her necklace, drawing back with it and he threw it in the direction of the bed closest to them. When he required air, he moved his mouth to her neck, latching onto the spot that held his name in gold shimmering ink.

She gave a loud moan, her head tipping back against the wall, a shiver racing through her and the twins' heads snapped towards them, almost giving themselves whiplash. Their eyes glazed over and their hearts seemed to want to jump from their chests.

Growing lost and deeper in each other, Hermione's hands flittered over Oliver's bare back and around to his torso in exploration, feeling the muscle twitch beneath her touch and the trail of fire that she left in her wake. In response, his hands slipped beneath her shirt, his calloused fingertips ghosting over the small of her back and over her sides, his thumbs brushing against part of her stomach.

At that point, there was a knock on the door; Fred and George shook out of their daze and Fred grabbed a jumper and held it in front of him to hide his problem when he opened the door. He peeked around the edge to Colin Creevey on the other side and he opened it a little wider, looking down at the third year.

"Creevey, what can we do for you?" He asked.

But Collin was too busy staring wide-eyed and with his mouth hung open to reply, his eyes locked on Hermione being wrapped around Oliver and pressed into the wall as they kissed unabashedly. Of course, Hermione and Oliver hadn't noticed the interruption and continued to be oblivious to anyone but themselves.

Fred smirked and clicked his fingers in front of Colin's face to gain his attention.

"Eyes over here, Creevey," Fred said and his attention was back on him.

Colin went bright red in the face and stuttered out, "S-s-s-orry, I-I-I w-was as-as-asked t-to gi-give th-this t-to you." He awkwardly thrust out his hand with a letter in it and Fred took it, pulling it from the envelope.

Miss. Blake,

Please come to my office at precisely two pm. You may bring with you those who you wish to be present.

Professor Dumbledore

P.s. I do enjoy lemon drops.

When he finished reading the letter, Hermione and Oliver both moaned loudly and Colin looked rather uncomfortable but couldn't seem to take his eyes from them. Fred quickly decided that he didn't like anyone seeing Hermione that way, she was their mate and only they got to witness her in such moments.

"Well, thank you, Creevey, for bringing us this letter, bye." Fred shut the door in his face and he had to adjust his jeans once more. He walked over to George, who was watching the two with glazed over eyes, and he nudged him with his elbow, drawing his attention. "It's probably gonna be 'round the school soon, knowing Creevey."

"Well, at least people'll know that she's taken, even if it isn't us. I mean, we can't complain, can we? We're with her all the time, the least we can do is allow Oliver to publicly date her," George shrugged, taking the letter from Fred and scanning it with his eyes. "Who's going to break those two up?" He said amusedly, looking between Oliver and Hermione.

"I'm not sure I want to," Fred admitted.

"I know what you mean, brother mine," he sighed. "But if we don't and she misses this meeting, she'll bet mad."

"If we do she'll probably be mad," he argued.

"Fair point," George tipped his head.

They looked at each other. "You do it," the chorused before frowning. "No, you do it," they chorused once more.

"Okay, this isn't working," Fred said. "Together?"

George nodded. "Oi! Grindy McGrinders -"

"- Dumbledore wants -"

"- Hermione in his office -"

"- In less than an hour," Fred finished.

Hermione pulled away from Oliver briefly. "What?" She said breathlessly.

"Meeting in Dumbledore's office in less than an hour, Love," repeated George.

She and Oliver both groaned in annoyance. They were so close. She reluctantly unwrapped her legs from his waist and slid down his body and when he released her, she walked to the bathroom but stopped before she entered and turned back to face him.

Her hair was completely out of the bun it used to be in and it was all over the place, messy, bushy and spilling down her back and over her shoulders. Her face down to her neck was flushed a lovely pink, her lips were red and swollen, her button-down denim shirt was rumpled and her eyes were the darkest they'd seen them.

The twins barely covered their groans. She looked... Well, she looked... They couldn't describe how she looked. She looked at Oliver with longing and as if she was going to bolt back over to him and continue with what they were doing.

"Dumbledore," Fred reminded her.

She sighed and walked into the bathroom to try and sort herself out.

Oliver looked at them with the biggest grin they had ever seen. "Enjoy the show?"

"Definitely," they nodded.

"Show off," George muttered under his breath.

"You're going to have to fix that problem of yours," Fred said amusedly.

"So are ye," he replied, sharing a smirk with them.

"Well, it's not our fault Hermione turned all sex kitten on you," George argued.

"Hmm, but at least ye have something tae look forward tae."

"Right, to take care of this problem now," Fred clapped his hands.

They looked at each other.

"Filch having sex with McGonagall," Oliver offered.

"Moody naked," George supplied.

"Mum and dad having sex," Fred grimaced.

That did it; they no longer felt uncomfortable in their own jeans. Oliver grabbed his shirt and finished getting dressed, reluctantly slipping his cuff bracelet into place.

"Don't be surprised if people know about you and Hermione," Fred warned.

"What?"

"Creevey just saw you two getting frisky," George smirked.

Oliver just shrugged. "At least people'll know she's with mae an' leave her alone. Me teammates have known she's me girlfriend since January," he responded, being pleased with the knowledge that people would know she was his. He could kiss her in public, but he did feel sorry for the twins before he remembered that they shared a bed with her every night and could kiss her whenever they wanted to.

Hermione stepped out of the bathroom looking more presentable and she retired her necklace from the bed. Oliver took it, kissed her on his mark once more and she sighed, her eyes fluttering closed before he slipped it into place, fastening it, the mark disappearing from view.

"What's with the bond mark?" George asked, confused.

In response, Hermione walked over to him and took his hand in hers, removing the cuff bracelet and pressing her lips to the mark. A surprised groan caught in his throat, his eyes closed and he shuddered. She sniggered before setting the cuff bracelet back into place.

Spying Fred's expression, she did the same to him, her mouth twitching when his eyes rolled into the back of his head, he visibly startled and he choked on a groan.

"I guess they do more than just mark our territory," she mused, slipping the cuff bracelet back into place.

As they made their way down the corridors and towards Dumbledore's office, they were more than aware of the whispers and stares that picked up at the sight of Hermione and Oliver walking beside one another. And as they neared their destination, they were halted in their tracks when Lavender and Pavarti stood before them, blocking their path. She had long since forgiven them for what they'd done to her in their first year and they'd since apologised (grovelled, actually) and they were now civil with each other.

"Yes, girls?" Said Hermione.

"Is it true?" Lavender asked excitedly.

"Is what true?" She arched an eyebrow.

"That Colin Creevey saw you and Oliver getting pretty frisky against a wall," Pavarti clarified, all but bouncing on the spot.

Hermione's cheeks flushed pink, her boys smirked and she cleared her throat, saying, "Well, he is my boyfriend."

"He is?" They squealed and she winced at the volume.

"Aye, since Christmas," Oliver said proudly, smiling down at Hermione widely.

They looked in each other's eyes, and like a moth to a flame they closed the distance between them, their mouths locking together. Fred and George rolled their eyes and chuckled at them; they had no self-control. Lavender and Pavarti giggled and ran off to spread the news.

"Meeting," Fred chimed in a reminder, the two breaking apart reluctantly.

They quickly finished their journey to Dumbledore's office and Hermione gave the password before stepping onto the staircase, knocking on the door when they reached it and entering when told to.

"Miss. Blake, Messers Weasley, Wood," Dumbledore greeted.

"Professor," the four said in unison, not noticing they'd done so and he chuckled at them, his eyes twinkling.

Looking around the room, they saw everyone present including Professors McGonagall and Snape but Harry, Ginny, Ron and Lee hadn't been invited to attend. After greeting everyone, they took the four remaining chairs in the room.

"You wished to see me, Professor," stated Hermione.

"Yes, I want to discuss the happenings from last night."

She nodded, unsurprised. "To be honest, I'm not certain I wish to explain it all again, so perhaps my memories might do?"

Not waiting for a response, she drew her hand and pressed it to her temple before casting her Projection Spell and a large screen appeared. She'd chosen to begin from the moment she'd pulled Harry to safety, being sure he'd already explained what had happened before that.

"Hermione? What're you doing here? You shouldn't be here!" Harry said in alarm.

"I told you I'd come for you."

"He killed Cedric!"

"No, he didn't, I put under my Sleeping Charm before he was hit. It just appears as though he's dead. Now, grab the port-key and go, there's something I have to do."

"I'm not leaving you," he said forcefully.

"Yes, you are!"

Their eyes widened when Hermione walked out into the open facing Death Eaters and the horrifyingly-looking You-Know-Who.

"HARRY, GO NOW!"

Their eyes widened when Hermione walked out into the open facing Death Eaters and the horrifyingly-looking You-Know-Who. When Harry and Cedric were whisked away to safety once she'd forced the port-key into his hand, the memory changed.

"Well, you're a pretty, little thing, aren't you? And your name?"

They all flinched back and bristled, disgusted in the way Voldemort and his followers were looking at Hermione. The twins and Oliver leaned closed to her.

"What? Your sheep haven't told you?"

Despite their fear as to what might happen next, they chuckled nervously at her insulting Death Eaters.

"You have some nerve to insult my friends," he replied, looking to be amused by her response, no matter how disrespectful it may have been. "I ask you again, who are you?"

"Do you want to tell him or should I?... I don't know if I should be offended that you don't recognise me, though it has been thirteen years since you killed my parents for refusing to join you... I'm Hermione Blake."

"What? Why was I not informed of this development?"

They shivered at the sound of his furious hiss, their eyes darting towards Hermione when her eyes narrowed at the sight of Pettigrew and she threw him across the graveyard and into a tree, knocking him unconscious. Sirius barked out a laugh, sharing a proud smile with Remus.

"You're a Siren," he stated unexpectedly.

"Am I?" She challenged, her eyes flittering around her warily.

"Yes," his eyes narrowed, his mouth set in a thin line and his expression dared her to challenge him. "You are. Have you begun the transformation process?"

She watched him warily, "Yes... It happened fairly quickly but I've yet to complete it, something that won't happen until I became of age."

"Have you found your mate?" He probed.

"Yes, I have, and that means I am of no use to you. Of course, there's the possibility of you attempting to persuade me to join you, but that would mean betraying my mate, beliefs and family."

"I am your family," he argued, his eyes flashing.

"Technically," she nodded, "However, my other family took me in when your idiot followers attacked my adoptive parents, an attack that almost killed them... Oh, they didn't tell you about that, did they? A few years back, they tracked me down, tortured my parents to near death and still left without my identity or location, and the real kicker, I was upstairs, asleep in my bedroom," she sighed and shook her head. "It seems they're not that smart, your followers. So, the question is; were they looking for me for you or for themselves?... Now, if you will excuse me, I had better get to Hogwarts. We wouldn't want them to think I'm dead, would we?"

"We are not done here."

"We are; you know who and what I am, I know who and what you are. There's nothing left to discuss."

They watched as a spell was thrown at her and she dodged it, later defending against twelve spells with her shield. When the Killing Curse was thrown her way by Voldemort, gasps and mutters filled the otherwise silent room, as they watched her shield absorb the neon green light. Of course, she'd told them it had happened, but it's another thing to see it for themselves.

Then Hermione created a port-key and took a hold of Pettigrew, leaving behind a furious and worried-looking Voldemort.

The screen disappeared and all eyes snapped to her.

"Miss. Blake, how did you arrive at Hogwarts?" Professor Snape asked her strangely.

"Well, as you have just seen, I used a port-key," she replied, tipping her head slightly, unsure of why he was asking her such a question when he already knew the answer.

"But that is impossible, not only are there Anti-apparition Wards around the grounds, there are also Anti-port keying Wards," he told her, something she already knew, of course, from Hogwarts, a History. "So, how did you port-key onto the grounds?"

"I honestly have no idea, but the Triwizard Cup was a port-key and did the same. All I did was think of my mates and that I had to get back to them. I had a feeling they'd be at the hospital wing and so I had the port-key take me there. I don't know the mechanics behind it."

"Incredible," McGonagall muttered.

"I told you we've the advantage," Hermione said to her boys and they nodded.

"I'll say, he looked petrified," said George.

Charlie shook out of his daze; he smiled and held out his hand. Hermione leaned forwards and high fived him.

"Way to go, little sister," he said proudly.

"Why, thank you, big brother," she replied and they chuckled at them. Returning her attention to Dumbledore, she said, "I take it that Minister Idiot, is acting like nothing happened and it was just an accident?"

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled. "Yes, he is."

"What a Goddamn, idiotic, moronic spanner," she huffed, sitting back in her chair and folding her arms. They chuckled at her. She could've said a lot worse, in fact, she seemed to have contained herself. "People need to know so they can prepare. War is coming, I can feel it and it's going to be much worse than the first one. I can only protect so many people," she sighed, rubbing her forehead. She was getting a headache.

"It's not yer job tae protect ev'ryone," muttered Oliver and Fred took her hand in his and rubbed his thumb over the back of it gently.

"But it is; I have all this power and the ability to help and protect those that can't do it for themselves. If people knew, it would shorten down the list of people that need my protection. But because the Minister's a bloody idiot, he's pretty much just shoved them towards their doom," she grouched, her eyes darting about the room before landing on Percy. Her mind ticking, she said, "Perce?"

"Yes?" He arched an eyebrow.

"Can I talk to you for a minute?"

Eyeing her, he nodded and stood, followed her over to the corner of the room and she cast a Silencing Charm, seeing the others observing them curiously.

"What do you need?"

"How good of an actor are you?"

"Why?" He tipped his head slightly, a frown pulling at his brow.

"I want you to do me a favour, a really big one that could possibly affect the fate of the Wizarding World."

"No pressure," he muttered. "What is it?"

"You've just been named the Minister's Junior Assistant?"

"Yes," he said, confused.

"Well, I've got a plan and it's... Dangerous"

"And that is?"

"I want you to go undercover and watch him for me."

"Excuse me?"

"I want you to go undercover and keep an eye on him," she repeated.

"I thought that's what you said," he nodded. "Well, that's easy."

"No, Perce, it's not," she disagreed. "If you're discovered, it'll not only put you in danger, but the rest of our family, too"

"So what do I do?"

"You cut ties with us. You make people believe that you hate us and you side with the Ministry."

"I don't want to do that. That means I won't be able to visit or speak with anyone," he frowned.

"I know and I'm sorry about that, but I'll keep in contact with you."

"How? People will find out?"

"No, they won't," she shook her head confidently. "I'll make you one of my notebooks."

"The one's that you made for Oliver and Sirius?" He checked.

"Yes, and I'll write every day, you can even stick in photos and they'll appear in the other connected notebook."

"And you're certain it's safe?"

"Yes, I'll combine the spells on both of Fred's and Sirius' and Oliver's notebooks into one for you. No one but me and you will know what's inside. I'll fit them with a Locator Charm so if anything happens, I can find you and if you lose it you can activate the spell to find it. I'll place a muggle pen and never-ending pages in the book, as well as privacy charms; when you write in the notebook, to other people it will appear to be empty or a book on... I don't know, Wizarding Law or something equally as boring. I'll also fit it with the Invisibility Spell that I created not long back, so only you will be able to see it. I'll find a way to ensure that it's on you at all times, maybe I'll conceal it inside an item or object, something that people won't suspect. It will be undetectable."

Percy whistled. "You should be an Unspeakable," he remarked.

"Can't do that, I love talking too much," she said seriously.

He took one look at her before laughing, giving his head a fond shake.

"I'll do it," he agreed.

"You're sure?"

"Yes. I'll help you in any way that I can. You're going to win us this war before it's even started," he commented.

"The less people that know, the better. So, the question is, who do we tell and who don't we tell?" She mused.

Percy glanced at the others over his shoulder, seeing them watching him curiously. Turning his head forward, he and Hermione spent several minutes debating over those that should be involved and those that didn't.

"They're going to hate me for this," she muttered sadly.

"No, they're going to think that you're a genius," he said softly, patting her on the shoulder.

Taking a breath, she stood taller and cancelled the Silencing Charm before they crossed the room, standing before everyone who looked to them expectantly.

"Is there something you would like to share with the rest of us?" Dumbledore asked.

"Yes, but it's for certain ears only," she replied.

"It must be important. Who is allowed to hear this information?" Mr. Weasley asked, his eyes darting between his son and his all but adopted daughter.

"Everyone but Professors Snape and McGonagall, Fred, George and Oliver," answered Hermione.

"What not us?" Fred frowned, gesturing between himself, George and Oliver.

"I'm not sure yet," said Hermione, "But I'll let you know."

They scowled but left the room with McGonagall and Snape in tow and the door closed behind them.

"What about Oliver and the twins?" Percy frowned.

"I don't know, the more people that know, the more danger you're in," she replied.

"But could you lie to them for the foreseeable future?" He asked.

She didn't have to speak for him to know her answer.

"And that leaves Ron, Ginny, Harry and Lee," he said.

"No, we need them to believe it's real. What says real like an angry little sister and being betrayed by someone you thought was a friend and brother?"

"I see your point," he nodded.

"Does someone want to let us in on what the hell you're talking about?" Bill spoke up, drawing their attention.

"Sorry," they muttered.

Sighing, not feeling completely comfortable with the unsettling feeling in her heart and stomach, Hermione crossed to the door and opened it, seeing the boys waiting outside the door and looking put out.

"Oh, stop pouting and get in here," she scolded.

"You're letting us in on the secret?" George questioned in surprise.

"Yes, I can't lie to you, it would kill me. Now, get in here," she ordered, stepping aside to allow them room.

Once they'd retaken their seats, Hermione returned to standing beside Percy, stood before everyone as they looked to them for answers.

"What needs to be believed to be real?" Charlie asked.

"Why would Ginny be angry and people feel betrayed?" Remus asked curiously.

"We've come up with a plan..." Hermione started but was cut off by Percy.

"No, Mia's the one that came up with the ingenious plan; I'm just the one that it revolves around."

"Okay, now I'm interested," Sirius sat forward, his elbows resting atop his knees.

"Right, so we've come up with a plan that will benefit us in the long run. But it's dangerous."

"And the plan?" Mr. Weasley asked.

"How good of an actor are you all?"

"Why?" Fred tipped his head, arching an eyebrow questioning.

"Because it's imperative that if you can't go along with the plan, you leave now. As I said, it's dangerous."

"I think we can handle it, Dear?" Mrs. Weasley assured her.

Hermione looked around the room and saw nods of agreement.

"Well then," she cleared her throat and shifted on her feet. "As you know, Percy has recently been promoted to the Minister's Junior Assistant, which means that he will spend a fair amount of time around the Minister."

"So, I will be going undercover and keeping an eye on the things at the Ministry and with the Minister," Percy explained.

"As a result, given the current times, Percy will have to side with the Ministry and cut ties with all of us for it to be believable and so he is deemed trustworthy. This means that you'll have to act as though you've betrayed. There won't be any contact with him."

"Hoo will we know what he learns an' if it's useful?" Oliver frowned.

"I'll be his handler; he'll only be in contact with me."

"Hoo? Floo calls are monitored an' owls can be intercepted?" Mrs. Wood pointed out.

"The notebook" she stated simply.

"That's genius," Sirius beamed proudly.

"I'll create Percy a notebook similar to Sirius's and Oliver's, but I'll combine the spells that are on theirs with the spells that are on Fred's notebook for extra security."

"You can do that?" Bill asked, impressed.

"Yes, Freddie, show them," she instructed.

Nodding, he removed the notebook he always carried with him from his pocket and clicked his fingers, resizing it.

"So, the notebook will be equipped with a muggle pen and never-ending pages," Hermione explained and Fred flicked through the book, showing them that more pages appeared before he reached the end, and then he conjured the pen and put it back. "It will have Privacy Charms so that only Percy and I can read what is written."

Fred opened a page in his notebook to show that it was empty, saying, "This page actually has a list of ingredients and the instructions for brewing a Shrinking Potion."

"It will also be fitted with a Locator Charm so I can find Percy if I need to. And I will work on a way to have Percy carry the notebook around with him at all times. I'm thinking about concealing it in another item or object. I created an Invisibility Spell not long back and I'll place that on the notebook, too. When it's activated, only Percy will be able to see it."

They looked at her sceptically so Fred showed them, tapping the correct corner of the notebook and it turned invisible in his hands. "And watch this..." Fred said. "I want Remus to see," he said aloud, Remus' eyes widened.

"Can you see it?" Charlie asked him.

"Yes, you can't?" He questioned, receiving confirmations that they couldn't.

Fred tapped the notebook once more and it returned to everyone's sight before he clicked his fingers and it returned to its smaller size so he could slot it back into his pocket.

"You've got a knack for inventing completely ingenious things," Bill remarked proudly.

"This plan is very dangerous," Mr. Wood stated.

"I know," nodded Percy. "But I trust, Mia. She won't let anything happen to me and the fewer people that know, the better. We're going to stage an argument in a few days at the Burrow for everyone to see. You're reactions must be genuine and no one must find out the truth."

"That's what you meant about angry little sisters," George said in understanding.

"Yes, if anything will convince people of Percy disowning his family, it will be the reaction of his family."

"When will he go undercover?" Mrs. Weasley asked sadly.

There was no point in fighting or arguing; his mind was already made up and he was of age, she couldn't stop him even if she wanted to. The least she could do was ensure she did her best to keep her son safe, something that she wouldn't find all that difficult given that she would be losing contact with her son and knowing that he'd be working on a dangerous undercover mission. If discovered, he could be tried for treason.

"A few days, maybe when everyone returns from school," Hermione said and they nodded.

"This will give us the advantage," Dumbledore mused.

"That's the point; we'll be able to see what Minister Moron is up to."

Snorting and shaking their heads, they breezed over the rest of the details of the plan, repeating them when necessary until they were all happy with the outcome.

Once they left Dumbledore's office, Hermione, Oliver and the twins headed to the hospital wing, their journey being filled with students giggling, scowling and whispering between themselves when they crossed paths. Oliver didn't help matters when he flung his arm over her shoulders and kissed her temple, looking far too pleased with himself.

When they stepped through the doors, they saw there were only three beds occupied but the patients were awake, and so, the boys headed for Harry and Hermione crossed to Cedric.

"Hi," she greeted, taking a seat next to his bed. A book sat in his lap and he was already dressed, waiting to be released by Madam Pomphrey.

"Hey," he returned, closing his book and setting it beside her, giving her his full attention.

"How are you feeling?"

"Better than I have in a long time," he admitted, "And it's all thanks to you," he smiled gratefully.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," she shrugged in denial.

He snorted. "I've been told that you saved my life, someone tried to Avada me. You were there at the graveyard"

"Fine, I was and the person who tried to Avada you is now in Azkaban, I made sure of it. It's not the first time he's killed someone."

"You don't like this person, do you?" He noted.

"No, I really don't. He was the one that framed Sirius all those years ago," she said bitterly.

His eyes widened. "Seriously?"

"Yes, I caught him last year and handed him over to the Ministry during the trial, but the idiots let him escape whilst escorting him to Azkaban."

He looked surprised at hearing that news. "How did you stop the Killing Curse from hitting me?"

"Oh, I put you to sleep and used a Silencing and full Body-bind Spell on you as a precaution."

"Thank you, you saved my life."

"I'm sure you would've done the same for me. And, I know you tried to protect Harry."

"Is it true? That He's back?"

She sighed. "Yes, Cedric, it is. I saw Him. Unfortunately, the Ministry's refusing to inform the public of the truth, sticking to the belief that Dumbledore and Harry are lying."

"But you were there, too," his brow furrowed.

"I was, but they're saying that what happened that night was an accident. Things are going to change, you should be careful, Cedric. And you may get dragged into this mess because you were technically there, too, so prepare yourself. Are you certain you're okay, no injuries, no aches or pains?"

"I'm healthy and well-rested," he nodded, "Which is strange; I had cuts and bruises covering my face and body before I ended up at the graveyard and when I woke this morning, there wasn't a mark on me."

"Madam Pomphrey is an efficient healer," she agreed.

"Hmm? But she didn't heal me."

"Really? Then who did?" She arched an eyebrow.

He nodded smirking at her. "You."

"I have no idea what you're talking about"

"I know it was you, I could feel your magic healing me."

"Seriously?"

"Yep," he popped the 'p', nodding his head.

"Brilliant, just brilliant," she sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose.

"I won't tell anyone," he promised. "You're a mystery, Hermione Blake, and I can't wait to figure it out"

"Well, then I wish you luck, Cedric Diggory."

"I'm going to need it," he chuckled.

Standing, she said her farewells and crossed over to Viktor, taking the seat beside his bed. Just as Cedric had been, he was dressed and waiting to be discharged.

"Mina," he greeted with a smile.

"Hi, Viktor."

"Thank you," he spoke in his mother tongue, his eyes darting about for potential earwiggers.

"What for?" She tipped her head.

"Last night, you healed me."

"I'm sure I didn't," she denied.

"Nice try, but I know it was you, I could feel your magic healing me."

"Fine, it was me," she confessed with a sigh of annoyance.

"Is it true?" He questioned, his expression grave.

"Yes, it is. He's back and war will be breaking out in the near future. The Ministry's refusing to acknowledge it, saying that it's lies, but it's not. I'm certain they'll keep their focus on Britain so it shouldn't be too bad in Bulgaria, but be careful. If they do go to Bulgaria, they'll be recruiting, so keep your eyes and ears open. If you want to remain neutral then take your family and disappear somewhere safe," she warned.

"I have already chosen sides, I do not wish to follow someone who believes that he is superior and everyone else is inferior, particularly based on blood. Magic is magic no matter the one gifted."

Hermione smiled at him but her attention was drawn elsewhere by Harry calling her name.

"Well, I best get over there. I can't leave those boys alone for too long, they're probably planning to blow up the Whomping Willow or something equally as stupid and dangerous," she shook her head fondly and he snorted. "Remember, Viktor, be careful and help will always be found at Hogwarts if you need it," she reminded before she stood and crossed to the other side of the room, eyeing the four hysterically laughing teen wizards cautiously."What are you laughing at?"

"Love, are you worried?" George's mouth twitched into a smirk and his eyebrow quirked.

"Yes," she replied honestly and without thought.

Oliver reached out for her hand and tugged her until she fell into his lap, sitting sideways. She arched an eyebrow, receiving a cheeky grin and wink and she snorted before pressing a kiss to his cheek.

"Seriously, what were you laughing at?" She repeated.

They burst into laughter once more and she eyed them warily, as if they were a few sickles short of a galleon. She supposed she wasn't getting an answer. She wasn't certain she wanted to know, if she was honest.

"A cannae stay much longer," said Oliver, stopping Hermione by doors of the great hall after she and the others attended lunch once Harry had been given a clean bill of health and was released from the hospital wing. "A told Coach what happened last night an' he's allowed mae the mornin' aff but a have tae be there after lunch."

"Okay, we better get some food into you; I don't want you falling off your broom. The Siren doesn't like the idea of you getting hurt."

He chuckled at her. "Yer worried aboot mae?"

"Always," she replied without pause. "Whenever you're not in my line of sight."

"A'll be fine," he promised.

"Yes, but it's one thing for you to say it and another for the Siren to believe it," she said. He chuckled again before leaning down and kissing her.

They entered the hall together, taking seats at the Gryffindor table and choosing their lunch from the options before them.

They took their seats at the table and began eating before Hermione wrote a quick note to Theo and sent it flittering across the hall until it settled on his plate, it reading,

Teddy,

Meet me at the Black Lake after dinner and bring Malfoy and Zabini.

~Hermione

Looking to him expectantly, he lifted his eyes and quickly found her gaze before nodding in agreement, their attention being drawn to Dumbledore when he stood from his seat at the head's table and moved to the podium and the hall fell quiet.

"A terrible incident occurred yesterday evening, in which, we almost lost the lives of two of our students. You see, the Ministry does not wish for me to tell you all this, but Lord Voldemort has returned."

The hall broke out into whispers and murmurs.

"Now the pain that we all feel from the losses of the war many years ago, reminds me, it reminds us all that although we come from different places and schools, and we don't speak in the same tongues, our hearts beat as one. In light of recent events, the bonds of friendships made this year will be more important than ever. You may or may not believe what I have said this evening to be true, but I implore you to be careful when you are home for the holidays and in the words of Alastor Moody, constant vigilance."

He stepped down from his podium, signalling the end of dinner and soon the hall was emptying, the students all going their separate way. Hermione and Oliver made their way towards the Black Lake and once they arrived, he removed his broom from his robe pocket and resized it, with the intention to fly from the grounds and use the floo network at the Three Broomsticks to floo to the stadium.

"I'm going to miss you," she said sadly.

"Ye'll see mae in less than three days," he reminded her, giving her hand a squeeze.

"I know, but still…"

"A'll be fine, if not a'll use me notebook tae get in touch with ye," he promised.

"You better," she grumbled.

He chuckled before leaning down to kiss her, Hermione's arms reaching up to wind around his neck as she stood on her tiptoes and his arms slipped around her waist, holding her to him. The kiss soon deepened when Hermione licked along his top lip, begging for entrance and he gave it to her as she slipped her tongue into his mouth, twirling and dancing against his, fighting for dominance.

Hermione pushed Oliver backwards and he stumbled with his back hitting the large oak tree, groaning when she followed him and pressed her body flush against his. He held her tighter before turning them until she was the one pressed against the tree, his hands ran down to her legs and he lifted her, Hermione wrapping her legs around his waist. Her hands twisted into his hair, tugging and she drew back for air, her mouth moving to nip and kiss at his neck, exactly where she knew the bond mark to be, pulling a groan from him, his hands tightening on her hips and his eyes fluttering closed. His hands slipped beneath her shirt, fingers ghosting her sides and the small of her back, goosebumps being left behind and she latched her mouth onto his once more, their tongues moving against each other in perfect harmony.

Hearing a throat clearing followed by laughing, she untangled a hand from Oliver's hair and reached down to remove a shoe, throwing it in the direction of the sound, never once drawing back from him.

"Missed me," she heard an amused voice say. Annoyed, she reached down and pulled at her other shoes, blindly throwing it until she heard a wince of pain, knowing she'd hit her target. "You're the one that wanted to meet me," it said and she groaned in annoyance and pulled away from Oliver.

"You have to go, you have training," she whispered against his lips.

He sighed before pecking her on the mouth and setting her feet on the ground. With one final kiss, he stepped back, mounted his broom and kicked off the ground, flying off into the distance.

Watching his retreat until she could no longer see him, she turned around, seeing an amused Theo and a flushed and uncomfortably shifting Malfoy and Blaise. She would've blushed if she wasn't already flushed from her snogging session with Oliver.

Theo, heading to the Black Lake with Blaise and Malfoy in tow, slowed his steps upon seeing two figures in the distance, halting to a stop completely when he saw it was Hermione and Oliver Wood, kissing!

"I guess the rumours are true," said a surprised Blaise, both him and Malfoy having stopped beside him.

They all shared a look of surprise, being wholly unprepared for seeing Hermione push Oliver against a tree and soon, her legs were around his waist and she was pressed into the tree. Snorting, Theo continued with his approach, clearing his throat to alert them to their presence. Neither of them noticed.

"Who knew she had it in her?" He mused, snorting when Hermione took off her shoe and lobbed it in his direction. "Missed me," he teased, not noticing the other shoe heading his way until it was too late and it hit him in the head. "You're the one that wanted to meet me," Theo said amusedly, rubbing the aching spot on his head.

Once they drew back and parted ways, Hermione turned to him.

"So, you wanted to see us?" He questioned, throwing her shoes back to her and once she caught them, she motioned for them to follow her, taking a seat on the ground and Hermione erecting a Silencing Charm before speaking.

"Before we say anything, I need a wizard's oath from you all. What I'm about to share with you is sensitive information."

"Why?" Malfoy asked.

"Just do it or go away."

"Fine," he huffed.

"Where did you even learn how to do a wizard's oath?" Blaise asked amused.

"I can read."

"Fair enough," he conceded.

"Teddy, you first." He held up his right hand and Hermione removed her wand from the waistband of her leggings. "Theodore Nicolas Nott, do you swear upon your magic to not reveal a single word of the upcoming conversation to anyone, unless they are already in the know, upon the punishment of death?"

"I do so swear it," he replied.

Hermione did the correct wand movements and a green and silver knotted design lingered in the air before it hit Theo in the chest and then disappeared. She completed the wizard's oath with Malfoy and Blaise and she had a giggle at Blaise's full name. All six names of it.

"Do you believe Dumbledore?"

"Should we?" Theo asked.

"Yes, He's back."

"Where's the proof?" Malfoy arched a challenging eyebrow.

"I saw him last night, he tried to kill Cedric and Harry but I was able to get them to safety. Whether you believe me or not, a war is coming and you need to be careful."

"Why are you warning us?" Blaise asked.

"I'm telling you because I know you'll be forced to choose sides. You should know what's going to happen in the future, what's waiting for you outside the castle walls. You need to be prepared. You keep to yourself and you don't bully others and your family has no history of blood supremacy, that makes me think you'll stay neutral, whilst Malfoy and Theo will be pushed into becoming Death Eaters by their fathers."

They sat in silence for a short while, digesting her words before Blaise turned to her with a smirk.

"So, you and Wood?"

"Yes?"

"Nothing, just heard a rumour."

"It wasn't a rumour, we've been together since the Yule Ball," she shrugged.

"Since we're under a wizard's oath and can't talk about this conversation when we've finished," Theo began, "Are you a Siren?"

She froze in place, being brought out of her daze by a hand waving in front of her face.

"What?"

"Are you a Siren?" Blaise echoed, tipping his head curiously.

She sighed. "Yes, I am," she confessed, knowing they wouldn't be able to tell anyone given that they were under oath.

"I knew it!" Cried Theo.

She watched in shock as Malfoy and Blaise both groaned before pulling out a pouch of galleons from their pockets and handing them over to Theo who took them victoriously.

"You made a bet? About me?" She scowled.

"Sorry," he smiled sheepishly.

"How long have you known?" Blaise questioned.

"I found out the night of the Yule Ball."

"The night you started dating Wood? Is he your mate?"

"Yes, one of them."

"One of them?!" They spluttered.

"Siren's are known to only have one mate," said Malfoy. "How many do you have?"

"Four."

"That's impossible," he scoffed.

"Well, obviously it's not," she argued.

"Who are they?"

"Oliver, Fred, George and Harry."

"Oliver and the twins I understand... But, Potter," grimaced Blaise.

"He's not a mate-mate, but a sibling mate."

"Like a brother?" Theo guessed.

"Exactly, it's why I'm so protective of them. My Siren recognised them as my mates when we met and it's why we were inseparable."

"It makes sense, certainly explains a lot," he nodded. "Do they know that they're your mates?"

"Yes, they do."

"Do you have any of the rare abilities?" Blaise asked intrigued.

"Yes, I have the power of premonition and natural healing."

"Bloody hell," they muttered.

"Anyway, moving away from my being a Siren and returning to the reason I wished to meet with you... If you side against Him, Dumbledore will protect you, or, I will protect you, whichever you prefer. I am offering you protection."

"Why?" Malfoy frowned.

"Because I have the power to protect people and it should be used, especially since the Minister's being a complete idiot and putting people at risk. But with your families, you're at a greater risk. I want to help you. You don't have to make a decision now but what I will do is give you something so if you need me, you can contact me quickly. It will be untraceable and no one but you and I will know what it is. Trust me, I'm good at this. I've already created about five of them and no one's able to read what's written... Anyway, I better get back to my boys, the Siren doesn't like being away from them for too long, it has her on edge."

"Thank you for warning us," Theo said as they all rose to their feet.

Smiling, she hugged him and kissed his cheek. "No problem, Teddy."

Blaise held his hand out for her to shake and she looked at him.

"Oh, what the hell, we're friendlish now, I suppose," she said and she hugged him and kissed his cheek, much to his surprise.

She pulled back and chuckled at his stunned expression before turning her eyes to Malfoy, noting that his body language showed signs of him expecting a hug from her, too. Walking past him, squeezed his shoulder, not yet being at the hugging stage yet. She then flicked his ear and punched him in his arm before walking away.

"Ow! What was that for?" He griped, rubbing his injured arm.

She twisted to look over her shoulder as she walked. "I felt like it," she shrugged, her shoes (which she'd yet to put on) swinging back and forth in her grasp.

"Why do you two get hugs and kisses and I get a dead arm and a shoulder squeeze?" He demanded, scowling at them when they sniggered.

Chapter Sixty

Hogwarts – Sunday 25th June 1995

Hermione entered her dorm to see Fred and George standing over their cauldron, their attention focused on creating a new product.

It was still early but she didn't feel like leaving the dorm that night and so she retrieved a pair of pyjamas and walked to the bathroom, kissing the boys on the cheek as she walked past them, barely receiving a reply from their distracted forms. After showering, dressing and drying her hair, she walked out of the bathroom sporting pink cotton shorts and a white short-sleeved t-shirt that was too big and fell off one shoulder and the hemline fell to her mid-thigh.

Retrieving the Numbing Cream, she crossed over to the bed and climbed atop the mattress, folding her legs beneath her.

"Is your scar still hurting?"

"Yes, it will be for a while with Tommy being resurrected," she sighed.

Fred left George at the cauldron to continue working and he crossed over to Hermione, taking the cream from her and she smiled gratefully before moving to lay on her stomach and pulling her hair over her shoulder, out of the way. He held out his hand and Hermione smiled gratefully and handed him the tub. When Fred lifted the hem of her t-shirt and began to gently apply the cream in and around the scar, she sighed at the relief it brought.

"Why doesn't Harry's scar hurt?"

"It does when he's around Him or when something happens. He sometimes has dreams like me."

"So why doesn't his scar hurt after yesterday?"

"It did, but when I healed him I took the pain away from his scar."

"Can't you heal yourself?" He frowned.

"No, it doesn't work that way. I have my abilities to help others and not myself"

"Even if that means you suffer?"

"It's not that bad, I've had worse injuries," she assured her.

"And sadly, I believe you when you say that and neither does it make me feel better."

"What are you working on?"

"A new product, Love," George answered with his head stuck over the cauldron.

"I know that," she rolled her eyes, "I meant what is your new product?"

"You'll have to wait until we're finished to find out," he sang.

"Okay, but I should confess that I'm also working on some new products for you."

"You are?" They both chorused excitedly.

"Hmm?"

"What are they?" George pressed, finally looking towards her with a gleam in his eyes.

"You'll have to wait until I'm finished to find out" she sang, feeding his words back to him and he scowled whilst Fred chuckled at Hermione's pleased expression.

When Fred finished applying the cream and he lowered her shirt and set the cream on the bedside table, Hermione rolled onto her back and reached out to grab Fred's hand when he stood to return to the cauldron.

"Stay," she pleaded. "I need a cuddle."

Chuckling, he laid beside her and she moved closer, snuggling against him.

"Did you see Oliver off?" George asked from across the room.

"Yes, we were interrupted though for the second time," she grumbled and they arched their eyebrows at her, smirking.

"Why? What happened?" Fred asked amusedly.

George stepped away from the cauldron and moved to lay behind Hermione, his left hand propping his head up and his right arm slipping around her waist, his hand settling on her stomach.

"Things may have gotten a little bit heated to the point I was pinned against a tree," she confessed, her cheeks tinting pink. Fred and George exchanged a look and shared a smirk.

"Oh yeah?"

"And how were you interrupted?"

"By Malfoy, Blaise and Teddy, they arrived a little earlier than our agreed-upon meeting time."

"And how'd it go?"

She twisted to lay on her back between them and Fred shifted on his side, mimicking his twin's position.

"Not too bad, but now they know.

"Know what?"

"About me."

"You?" They chorused, sharing a worried glance.

"They know I'm a Siren, they know about you, Oliver and Harry, and they know about my abilities but they don't know anything else."

"How'd they find out?" Fred asked with a crease in his forehead.

"They asked and with them being under a wizard's oath, I saw no harm in admitting the truth."

"Why are you offering to help them?" George asked.

"Well, Blaise isn't that really bad. He isn't a bully like Malfoy and I don't think he cares much for blood status. Besides his friends and girls, he pretty much keeps to himself, and he's slowly becoming a friend. And given he's a Slytherin pureblood, it's likely he'll be recruited. However, Teddy and Malfoy are at the most risk with both of their fathers being Death Eaters. Teddy's my friend, he doesn't care for blood purity and he only proved that when he befriended me when we thought I was a Muggleborn. He's secretly kind and intelligent. And Malfoy... I may not like him and he may be an arrogant bully, but that doesn't mean he deserves to have a life of slavery and have to serve under Him. It's not his fault; he was raised to believe in blood purity, if he had a different upbringing, he might not be so cruel."

"The amount of kindness, forgiveness and generosity you have in you in astounding," George muttered.

"I'm not sure anyone else would've done what you're doing for them," Fred agreed.

"You know, I'm glad they know the truth."

"You are?" George's eyebrows nearly disappeared into his hairline in surprise.

"Yes, I don't like keeping you a secret."

Pushing into a seating position, she tugged them closer to her, hugging them against her tightly as she sighed happily.

"You'll a lot more affectionate lately," Fred remarked.

"I've always been an affectionate person," she retorted.

"That's true," George agreed from his place on her left.

The cauldron began bubbling and it pulled their attention.

"Your turn, Freddie."

With Fred tending to the cauldron, George moved to lay on his back and Hermione lay on her side beside him, her head propped up by her hand as she looked down at him thoughtfully.

"What?"

"I've just realised that I know pretty much everything about you..."

"Hmm?" He encouraged her to continue.

"But there are some things I still don't know," she frowned unhappily. "Little things/"

"Like what? Ask me anything."

"I don't know..." Her lips pursed in thought. "What was your first accidental magic incident?"

"I was five and everyone was sat at the table eating dinner. Mum wouldn't let me have any more dessert so I set the table on fire and then levitated another slice of pie onto my plate whilst they were trying to put the fire out."

Hermione burst out laughing... It was such a Weasley twin thing to do and he joined in with her laughter.

"What was yours?" He asked after they'd calmed.

"I was four and I was in the garden with my mum. She'd been trying for months to grow these roses and it never worked and she'd get frustrated. One day, she stood up, pulled off her gardening gloves and threw them to the floor in a fit, and I walked over to her. I stared down at the soil really hard and then they just sprouted from the ground. My mum fainted," she laughed at the memory. "Your turn, ask me anything."

"Okay, let's see... Who was your first ever crush?"

"I can't remember," she said, looking as though she was trying to search through her memories. "Oh wait, I know, it was Bobby Lawrence, we were seven and we were in the same classes together and we lived on the same street, but it didn't end well."

"What happened?"

"He stole my sandwich when we were at a neighbour's barbeque, so I pushed him in the paddling pool. People thought he tripped," she said with a smirk. George laughed at her. "Okay, now you?"

"I was nine and her name was Jenny. She worked at Diagon Alley at the Quidditch shop."

"Let me guess, she was twenty, beautiful and blonde."

"Nope, she was thirty-five, a mother of two and a redhead," he corrected, sniggering at her surprised expression. "Your turn."

"What was your most treasured item as a child?"

"It was a grey and white knitted jumper. I wore it every day for three weeks straight; mum had to magic it off me so she could wash it. Yours? Besides your teddy bear and books," he said, anticipating her answer and she scowled at him for knowing her so well.

"It was my bunny slippers," she answered, seeing his arched eyebrow. "Yes, I owned a pair of bunny slippers. With big googly eyes and floppy ears. I'd wear them every day and when I got to school, my mum would make me change and put my shoes on, and when I was picked up from school, I would take my shoes off and put my slippers back on."

"I can't believe you owned bunny slippers," he sniggered. "With big googly eyes and floppy ears."

"Did I mention they were fluffy and pink and had little bows on the ears?"

"Hey, I'm just gonna head down to the kitchens and grab a few snacks," Fred interrupted as he crossed to the door.

Acknowledging him with a wave of their hands, they looked back to each other.

"It's your turn," Hermione said, and with her hand beginning to go numb, she set her head against the pillow and George turned onto his side so they were facing each other.

"Right... tell me five things that you like about me."

"Only five?" She said in amusement.

"What? I'm a modest person," he joked.

"I love that even though you annoy your family with pranks and jokes, you clearly respect and love them. Pranking is your way of showing that. I love that you're dedicated to pranking, to making people laugh and making your future a successful and happy one. I love how intelligent and creative you are. I love that you can always find a way to make people laugh in difficult situations. And I love that you are who you are. You don't put up a front and you never betray yourself by being something that you're not/"

He smiled brightly and he leaned forward to press a chaste kiss to her mouth. "My turn," he grinned.

Hermione groaned. "You really don't have to, in fact, I'd prefer it if you don't."

Ignoring her plea, he began with, "I love that you're so selfless and loving. You put everyone before yourself, even if you don't like them; case and point, Malfoy. I love that you accept people for who they are and you never try to change them, you encourage them to be themselves. I love that when you get mad, your eyes sparkle and your skin flushes. I love that you don't complain when life gets difficult, you just get on with it. And I love that you're so strong. After everything you've been through, you still find the strength and courage to get up each and every day and face the world."

She smiled at him and they stayed silent for several moments.

A smile tugged at her mouth and when George questioned her, she smiled shyly and buried her face in the pillow.

"What? Tell me," he chuckled, pushing her hair back from her face when she peered up at him.

"I..."

"You what?" He prompted.

Sighing, she looked him dead in the eye and confessed, "I love you."

George's eyes softened and his face brightened with one of the biggest smiles she'd ever seen from him.

"I suppose I always have, you and Freddie and Ollie, it just took me five years to figure it out. You were different and I've always treated you differently to others. I'm lucky, it's rare for a Siren to find her mate so young and before her transformation, and even after, they may not find them for several years. But I found you when I was eleven. I had the opportunity to grow with you. I got to know you. I got to love you without the influence of the Siren telling me I had to. I loved you before the Siren even came into the equation."

George lifted his right hand and rested against Hermione's face, rubbing his thumb tenderly over her cheek.

"I love you, too," George whispered and she smiled brightly at him.

He tilted his head forward and they shared a kiss that quickly became heated. George's tongue darted out to seek entrance and she granted it, being sure to greet him. She rolled onto her back, pulling George with her until he shifted onto his elbows so he didn't crush her with his heavier bodyweight. In response, she tugged him down and onto her, her hands tugging at his hair.

When her hands left his hair and smoothed down his back, slipping beneath his clothing to trace the hot skin of his lower back, he shivered beneath her gentle touch. She somehow found the strength to roll them and she moved to straddle his waist before drawing back for air, her mouth latching onto his neck.

Her hands wandered up George's shirt and they traced every bit of skin she could reach and George's muscles twitched under her ministrations, whilst his slowly ghosted under Hermione's t-shirt and he rubbed circles on the small of her back and on her left hip and she shivered under his touch, a soft moan vibrating against his neck.

Frustration setting in, she latched her mouth back onto his, feeling his hands wander a little higher but he hesitated when he brushed the fabric of her bra. She drew back long enough to give her permission and he groaned in surprise before his hands cupped and gently kneaded her bra-clad breasts, Hermione's hip moving against him without her say so.

When she moved to sit up, George followed, his arms folding around her to keep her to him, kissing her with everything he had. When she drew back, he looked to her in confusion.

Come on, Hermione, you want this to happen, she thought.

Taking a breath, she reached down and grabbed the hem of her t-shirt, tugging it up and over her head before dropping it to the floor. George's eyes widened in surprise as he watched the rhythm of her quickly rising and falling chest, before his eyes travelled down to her breasts, spying the white lace bra.

Hermione silently thanked Ginny for forcing her to buy new underwear during one of their trips to Hogsmeade, the younger teen stating she was getting older and it was about time she started taking care of her appearance, and that included underwear no matter of the fact she was the only one expected to see it. Apparently, that wasn't the case.

A sound was caught in the back of George's throat and as his mouth pressed against hers, his hands wandered to her breasts without hesitation. Hermione gave a nudge until he was flat on his back and he shifted their position, rolling them until he hovered above her. He trailed a blaze of kisses from the left side of her neck (knowing that the right side was for Oliver only as that was where his mark was located) and down to her collar bone, where he nipped her and Hermione released little mewls of pleasure, which made George press against Hermione harder, particularly when her legs wrapped around his waist.

He left her collar bone and he kissed the top of her breasts before he moved and licked the valley between her breasts and he lifted his head slightly so he could see Hermione's reaction.

It was fair to say he was more than pleased to see her panting and her eyes closed tightly, her head tipped back with her hair fanning across the pillow and her cheeks tinted pink. When her eyelids fluttered open and she looked to him, he noticed her eyes had darkened considerably. One could even say they looked more onyx than the regular chocolate brown that was usually shown.

Hermione pulled him back up to her and kissed him, once more rolling them until she was straddling him and she sat up and pulled him up by his shirt so that he followed her. Her hand snaked between them, gathering the hem of his t-shirt before drawing it up and over his head with no resistance from him, and it was at this point, Fred returned.

Closing the door behind him, he did a double-take before laughing to himself.

"Honestly, I can't leave you two alone for ten minutes," he shook his head, crossing over to the cauldron.

When Hermione's hands smoothed over George's chest, her nails scratching at his skin teasingly, he groaned in surprised and his hips bucked against hers, drawing a moan from her. His hands found their way to her hips and he helped guide her movements against him.

Hermione could feel something building within her; she began to feel light-headed and her breath kept catching. Her skin felt as though it was burning and she could feel something within her tightening.

She pulled away from George's mouth and set her hands and either side of George's head to help hold her up and keep her balanced. She leaned over with her head bowed and her hair fell to one side over her shoulder as their gazes locked.

"I'm so close," she whispered and George groaned, choking on his words. He gripped her hips tighter and sped up her movements. Fred looked at the two of them with a raised eyebrow and a smirk, despite his jeans being very tight and uncomfortable for him to move around in.

Hermione could feel the tension in the room and just when the coil in her stomach was about to snap and give her the release she begged for, there was a knock at the door.

Hermione movements halted to a stop and she turned and glared at the door. She reluctantly climbed off George, reached for her shirt and pulled it on before storming over to the door. Fred was laughing hysterically and George looked to be amused, annoyed and frustrated at the same time.

When Hermione reached the door, she pulled it open forcefully, outright glaring at the person on the other side.

It was a first year wizard, but when he noticed Hermione's death glare, he scampered away without explaining his reasoning for being there. Hermione slammed the door shut and leaned against it.

Fred was leaning against the wall next to the cauldron with tears rolling down his face.

"That's three times in one day," she muttered in annoyance.

"You looked like some dragon lady... I thought you were going to breathe fire and have smoke coming from your nose," he barely managed to get out through his laughter, and then he slid down the wall, landing on his arse in an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

The Hogwarts Express - Wednesday 28th June 1995

Two hours into the seven hour train ride home, Hermione decided a visit was in order, and after promising the twins she'd be careful, she left their compartment in search of three Slytherins.

As she journeyed down the train aisle and glanced through the windows of each compartment, she finally stumbled across the one she was looking for, it containing Theo, Blaise, Crabbe and Goyle all with disgusted expressions held on their faces whilst Pansy draped herself around a sickly-looking Malfoy.

Sniggering to herself and deciding to step in before they all lost their breakfast on the carpets, she straightened her stance and cleared her throat before sliding the compartment door open. All eyes snapped to her, the majority looking relieved to see her.

"Granger?" Pansy glared.

"It's Blake, as you well know," Hermione corrected, looking her in the eye unflinchingly. "Will you leave the poor bugger alone?" She gestured to Malfoy with a tip of the head. "He looks as though someone's thrown hippogriff dung at him. What did he ever do to you to deserve that?... If you don't mind, I have to speak to these three without eavesdroppers."

"These compartments are reserved for Slytherins only," Pansy hissed, her eyes flashing with hatred.

Hermione sighed tiredly. "No, they're not; any student regardless of house affiliation can use any compartment they wish to. Compartments are not assigned to houses. So, if you will please leave, I'm sure your friends need help brushing their hair and picking on the first years."

Huffing, Pansy stood to her feet and left the compartment, nudging into Hermione as brushed past her. With Pansy gone, she turned her attention to Crabbe and Goyle, digging her hand into her pocket and drawing back with a handful of galleons.

"Why don't you two find the trolley and get some lunch?" Hermione suggested, depositing the galleons into Goyle's hand. Sharing a glance, they were gone from the compartment before Hermione had the chance to blink and with them gone, she shut the door and took a seat opposite the three Slytherins before erecting a Silencing Charm.

"Silencing charm," she explained to their questioning looks.

"Do you use your wand for anything anymore?" Theo asked amusedly.

"Only spells that I haven't figured out how to do wandlessly and non-verbally and in classes. I don't want people getting too suspicious; I've already done enough damage with my shield. Anyway, I have something for you," she told them, removing the notebooks she'd stashed in her pockets and placing one on each of their palms.

"What are these suppose to be?" Malfoy frowned, staring down at his.

"Click your fingers," she instructed.

Giving her a strange glance, they did as she'd said, the notebooks returning to their original size and being identical in appearance, all except for the initials. They were bound in black leather with green trim, in the four corners sat two entwined snakes, one green and the other silver, and in the centre of the cover in silver calligraphy was the initials "DM", "TN" or "BZ".

"What are they for?" Theo asked.

"So you might contact me if you want or need to. I have a notebook, too, and it connects to each of yours so we might write to each other. They cannot be traced or tracked and they are perfectly safe. They are fitted with safety measures that only I know how to remove, so even if your families do find them and they suspect anything, they won't be able to remove the charms or see the contents."

"And the charms?" Blaise probed curiously.

"You will never run out of pages, a muggle pen is included and privacy charms ensure that only you can read what is written. If someone else were to find the notebook and open it, they'll either see empty pages or a book about Quidditch. And an Alert Charm will alert you that I've replied to your message.

"Anything else?" Malfoy arched an eyebrow.

"Just the Sizing Charm, which allows you to carry it at all times."

"These are brilliant," Theo praised.

"Thank you," she smiled. "And whether you decide to accept my help or not, for your safety you must continue with your previous behaviour. If you're seen interacting with me too often..." she trailed off allowing them to come to their own conclusions. "If the subject is brought up by your families, just explain that we were forced to work on a project or assignment together. If you've already sided with Him, tell them that you're trying to get close to me to get access to Harry or tell them you're trying to persuade me to His side."

"You've really thought this through," Theo observed.

"It's war, Teddy," said smiled sadly. "I have to be prepared. Anyway, I'd better get back to my boys before they start to worry I've been abducted."

Rising to her feet and taking her leave, she returned to her compartment.

"She's quite scary when she wants to be," Blaise remarked.

A few hours passed with Hermione and the twins before she went in search of Harry and Ron, wishing to ensure they were staying out of trouble. After being in their compartment for no more than fifteen minutes, the door slid open and Malfoy stood on the opposite side with his signature sneer in place and Crabbe and Goyle flanking him.

Words were exchanged, wands were drawn and spells were fired before the three boys collapsed to the floor, the Trio noticing that Fred and George stood behind them with their wands drawn.

"Thought we'd see what you three were up to," said Fred in greeting as he stepped into the compartment, making sure to stand on Goyle. George followed him, making sure that he stood on Malfoy, pulling a laugh from them.

"Interesting effect," George mused as he stared down at Crabbe with a tilted head. "Who used the Furnunculus Curse?"

"Me," Harry admitted proudly.

"Odd," George spoke. "I used Jelly-Legs; looks as though those two shouldn't be mixed."

They all looked down at Crabbe and nodded in agreement before they started laughing.

Privet Drive

Once they'd reached Kings Cross Station, it had been planned that Hermione would travel with Harry alone to minimise the number of people in their travel party and reduce the risk of drawing attention. After creating a port-key, she and Harry took their leave, arriving in a previously scouted alleyway not too far from the Dursley family house.

"How long do I have to stay with them?" Harry asked with a slight pout on his lips.

"Just three weeks, and then I'll pick you up. There's nothing to worry about, use this time to rest up and relax the best you can. I have something planned this summer."

"You do? What is it?"

"You'll have to wait and see," she sang.

He nudged her with his elbow and she reached up and smacked him over the back of the head before she darted away from him, Harry chasing after her. It turned into a game of tag as they ran down the street, laughing and joking with each other, and after ten minutes, they finally reached the Dursley's house. Taking a moment to catch their breath, Hermione knocked on the door, Dudley answering.

"Yo-yo-you're ba-back," he stuttered, his eyes widening and his mouth parting.

Harry bit back a laugh when Hermione elbowed him in the side.

"Yes, Dudley, we are," she agreed, stepping past him with Harry following her into the living room.

"Good evening, Mr. and Mr. Dursley," she greeted, being unsurprised by their response. "Harry will be here for no more three weeks. We would, of course, have him sooner but a requirement of the adoption contract between Harry and Sirius is that he remains here for three weeks of the summer until he reaches the age of seventeen."

Stepping closer to Harry, she tugged him into a hug, muttering, "If something's wrong, I'll know and I'll be here," she promised. "Be safe, Harry."

Stepping back from him and spearing the Dursleys with a threatening expression, she drew the port-key from her pocket and disappeared from their view.

The Burrow

Arriving at the Burrow, Hermione was quick to greet those she passed as she headed to the twins' bedroom, stepping inside to see them silently staring at two pouches that sat on Fred's desk. Pouches she assumed were filled with galleons.

"Hey, what're you looking at?" She questioned, coming up to stand beside George.

"Harry gave us his winnings from the tournament," Fred replied quietly, his eyes locked on the pouches.

"All 500 galleons of it! He and Cedric split the money as they tied for first place," George finished.

"And the other pouch?" She pressed.

"That's from Bagman, 700 galleons," Fred muttered.

"I told you that you didn't have to worry about him," she grinned.

"What did you do?" George asked her.

"Nothing, as I said, just had a few choice words."

At that point, they heard yelling from beneath them and their eyes were drawn away from the galleon-filled pouches and to each other.

"Here we go," Hermione sighed. "The mission's underway, play your parts right," she reminded them.

Together they headed for the living room, stepping into the crowd of people already present whilst Ginny hugged her crying mother tightly.

"YOU'RE AN IDIOT TO BLINDLY FOLLOW DUMBLEDORE, HE'S HEADING FOR TROUBLE AND YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE US ALL DOWN WITH HIM! YOU'RE GOING TO RUIN THIS FAMILY! EVERYONE KNOWS HE'S AFTER THE MINISTER'S JOB. MY LOYALTIES LIE WITH THE MINISTRY!" Percy bellowed, his chest heaving and his cheeks flushed pink.

"AND WHAT HARRY SAW? HERMIONE?" Mr. Weasley demanded in frustration.

"THEY'RE LYING!"

"You think I'm lying, Perce?" Hermione stepped forward, deliberately keeping her voice quiet and hurt. "And Harry's injuries? Moody's abduction and imprisonment? That I was surrounded by Death Eaters? I barely got out alive."

"You were scared, your imagination overcompensated."

"And Pettigrew? I caught him."

"What of your loyalties to this family?" Mr. Weasley intervened, drawing Percy's attention.

"As I said, my loyalties lie with the Ministry. If you are going to be traitors to the Ministry, I will ensure that everyone knows I don't belong to this family. This family of traitors."

"You're leaving?" Hermione questioned. "But where will you go?"

"That's none of your business."

He took his leave, storming out of the house and leaving behind silence that was only broken by his mother's sobs. After staring at the empty spot, Hermione followed after him.

"Percy, wait!" She called, and once they reached the edge of the Burrow's property line, he halted to a stop and turned to face her.

"How was that?" He checked.

"Brilliant, even I believed you, I almost forgot about the plan," she replied, her breathing slightly heavier due to the fact she'd just chased him across the grounds. She reached into her pocket and drew back with a silver watch before handing it to him, seeing his confused expression darting between it and her. "Your notebook's concealed inside, who's going to expect a watch?"

Nodding, he fitted it around his wrist and secured it in place, Hermione waving her hand over it several times and seeing his questioningly arched eyebrow.

"It's fitted with a Sticking Charm so it can't be removed, a Strengthening Charm and a Water Resistant Charm to prevent damage. To remove the notebook and put it back, you click your finger on your left hand, and in order to resize it, you use your right," she explained.

"You really are a genius," he remarked.

"Have you got everything you need?"

"Everything's packed," he nodded.

"Okay. Good luck, you can do this."

She hugged him tightly and once Percy was able to pry her off him, he crossed over the barrier line and apparated away.

As Hermione slowly made her return to the Burrow, she needed to make herself cry in order for the others to believe that her reaction to Percy's betrayal was real. To do so, she forced herself to relive some of her most horrifying memories and by the time she stepped into the Burrow, she was a sniffling, bubbling mess.

"What happened?" The twins chorused in concern.

"He said that I wasn't as smart as he thought I was and that Harry and I were attention-seeking orphans," she sniffled.

"He said what?" They demanded angrily, sharing a conspiratorial glance. She had to give it to them, they were brilliant actors.

"He's just upset, I'm sure he'll come around," she defended.

The crowd quickly dispersed and Hermione, the twins and Oliver gathered upstairs in the twins' bedroom, a Locking and Silencing Charm being erected for their privacy.

"I've got to give it to you, boys," she began, wiping beneath her eyes with the backs of her hands. "You're really good actors."

They smiled, albeit somewhat sadly. "You're not so bad yourself. How'd you make yourself cry?" Said Fred.

"Ye thought af ye parents, dinnae ye?" Oliver said, noticing her fallen expression and when she nodded, he crossed over to her, pulling her into a hug and she went willingly.

Snuggling against him, she released a quiet sigh before whispering, "I love you."

She felt Oliver's form tense against her for but a moment before he relaxed, looking down at her as she tipped her head back to meet his gaze.

"A love ye," he muttered in reply, pressing a kiss to her forehead.

Drawing back, she approached Fred, being pulled into a hug. "I love you."

Fred, although surprised, was quicker to recover and he beamed at her.

"I love you, too, Spitfire."

After drawing back from him, George tugged her into him, Hermione saying, "I love you."

"And you know that I love you," he said without hesitation.

12 Grimmauld Place – Friday 30th June 1995

Two days after they'd returned home from school, it had been decided that for the safety of the family they would spend the summer at Grimmauld Place, the childhood home of Sirius Black.

The townhouse would be overrun with the entire Weasley Clan, the Woods, Sirius and Remus, as well as Harry once he'd been collected from Privet Drive. Hermione was saddened to know that Lee wouldn't be spending the summer with them as was custom, as this year he'd chosen to visit with Alicia Spinnet and her family before visiting with his father and step-mother for the remaining two weeks of the holidays.

Despite Sirius' clear reluctance to return to his childhood home, he had agreed to do so as it was the safest option available. With him returning to Grimmauld, he'd offered up the townhouse to the Order of the Phoenix, a secret organisation dedicated to protecting people and taking down Voldemort. Hermione had learned it'd been established during the War and disbanded shortly after. Unfortunately, with the return of Voldemort came the return of the Order.

With the townhouse being under the Fidelius Charm for security and safety, only those who had been given the address could gain access, and only the Secret Keeper had the ability to do that. As an added security measure, the townhouse was fitted with Anti-Apparition wards, preventing apparition into and out of the building, the floo network could only be used if one was specifically keyed into it.

Upon their arrival, they'd been given the tour, showcasing a grand total of five floors, a basement and an attic. A bathroom could be found on each floor bar the attic and basement, and the second, third, fourth and fifth floors each boasted four bedrooms. The first floor boasted a kitchen and pantry, a large living room, a study and a library, whilst a smaller living room and study could also be found on the third floor. A small garden sat out of the back of the townhouse and after some persuasion, Hermione had agreed to do her best to create a makeshift Quidditch pitch.

The townhouse was dingy, cold and dark, evil and cruelty seeming to seep through the very walls and into the atmosphere. The decapitated heads of house-elves and magical creatures lined the walls that were fitted with the same hideous brown floral pattern wallpaper, and the furniture matched with darkly stained oak.

And if that wasn't bad enough, Grimmauld came with a house-elf that had to be older than Merlin himself, the little being making it his mission to skulk around and insult anyone that walked through the door, and the portrait Mrs. Black's portrait was a true delight, shrieking and crying insults and profanities whenever she was woken or disturbed

Those of legal age had tried their best to remove the portrait without success, even Fred and George who'd gotten quite creative with their attempts. And unable to magically silence her, they'd resorted to covering the portrait with a curtain to help muffle her shrieks.

Sirius had taken great enjoyment when he'd seen the horrified expression of his deceased mother when he'd loudly exclaimed that Hermione and the others might redecorate the entire property however they wished. He wanted Grimmauld Place to be completely transformed, to no longer hold the reminders of his childhood torture and suffering.

Hermione and Ginny had been given a bedroom to share on the second floor, and when they'd gone to unpack, they quickly discovered that the decor wasn't all that bad. The room simply needed a good clean to remove the dirt, dust and cobwebs. For the time being, they could live with the white and cream colour scheme and the white bedroom furniture.

The teen boys had all been directed to the third floor where they might find their rooms, with Ron and Harry sharing the bedroom that had once belonged to Sirius' younger brother, Regulus. Their room was fitted with a green, black and silver colour scheme, much to Ron's dismay. Fred and George's bedroom was similar to Hermione and Ginny's, and Oliver's room was slightly larger, boasting a king-sized bed and an en-suite bathroom. The parents had claimed rooms on the fourth floor, both being similar to Oliver's.

Finally, Remus' and Sirius' room were on the fifth floor. Sirius room was decorated in Gryffindor red and gold, and it appeared to have been untouched since he was a teenager. His room held posters and photos of muggle motorbikes, Hogwarts, his friends, playwizard magazines and Quidditch players.

When everyone had unpacked, Mrs. Weasley had set everyone to work, assigning them tasks to complete and rooms to clean. If they were underage, they had to do everything by hand, unfortunately for Ron and Ginny. Luckily, Hermione could use her wandless and non-verbal magic.

Hermione had started with the entrance hallway and with Sirius' aid, the decapitated heads were removed and correctly disposed of, but they'd found a disruption in the form of Mrs. Black portrait, and it didn't help matters when Sirius decided to pick a fight with her.

"REMOVE THAT FILFTY HALF-BREED FROM MY HOUSE!" Mrs. Black shrieked.

"IT'S MY HOUSE," Sirius bellowed in return. "BUT DON'T WORRY, WE'RE NOT GETTING MARRIED YET!"

"YOU ARE NOT MARRYING THAT DISGUSTING CREATURE. YOU WILL NOT SULLY THE HOUSE OF BLACK!"

"BUT I ALREADY HAVE, AND IN YOUR BEDROOM, TOO. I'LL GIVE REMUS YOUR REGARDS!"

She hadn't been able to help herself and she'd burst into sniggers, knowing that his statement was false as Sirius much preferred the company of women, as did Remus.

"YOU ARE NO SON OF MINE, BLOOD TRAITOR! YOU BRING SHAME TO THE HOUSE OF BLACK!"

"I think that's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me," Sirius mused, looking to Hermione and pretending to blink back tears, something that her falling into a fit of giggles as covered her mouth with her hand in an attempt to smoother them, but it still drew Mrs. Black attention her way.

"YOU BROUGHT A FILTHY MUDBLOOD INTO MY HOUSE?!"

Sirius released a dog-like growl, his eyes flashing but Hermione released a tired sigh before moving until she stood directly before the portrait.

"YOU AND YOUR DIRTY BLOOD DARE LOOK UPON ME?!" Mrs. Black cried.

"Yes," Hermione answered simply. "My name is Hermione Blake," she introduced herself, seeing the portrait's surprised expression and her mouth snapping shut. "And I'll be sure to let my cousin, the Dark Lord, know your opinions on our line of magic."

Sirius laughed behind her as the portrait's expression morphed into one of terror and Hermione reached up, drawing the curtains closed before turning to face Sirius.

"I don't think I've ever seen her speechless. It was brilliant."

"No, brilliant was you telling her that you had sullied yourself with Remus in her bedroom," she sniggered.

"Please," was scoffed. "Padfoot wishes he could sully himself with me."

Tipping their heads back, they spotted Remus stood on the floor above, leaning over the bannister and smirking down at them. After sharing a laugh, Remus returned to his previous task, as did Hermione and Sirius.

As Hermione set to work on removing the dated wallpaper and changing the colour of the walls, Sirius stood back and allowed her to do so, watching in amusement and intrigue whilst also marvelling at her ability to perform wandless and non-verbal magic so easily, regardless of her parentage and status as a Siren.

"Are you done?" He asked once she took a step back, scrutinising her work.

"Not yet, just one more little touch, be right back," she promised, making a quick trip up the stairs before returning with her arms laden with photo frames.

After she enlarged them and placed them in the order she wished, she set them on the wall using a Permanent Sticking Charm.

"Right, what d'you think?" She asked him, stepping back and standing beside him as their eyes darted about the newly improved and decorated entrance hallway.

The front door was now white along with the wood detailing around the top and bottom of the walls, the walls themselves were light grey, the bannister and spindles were white and the hideous carpet was gone and replaced with a soft light grey carpet that ran straight up to the attic, covering all floors, staircases and hallways. The hallway floor was now light brown laminate flooring, metal coat pegs sat on the wall by the door and a small light brown oak table sat in the corridor.

His eyes followed the photo frames, seeing they ranged from his childhood to his current age. There was a photo of him, James and Remus after they'd just pulled a prank and they were running down the halls laughing. The next photo was taken during Christmas with Sirius, Remus, James and Mr. and Mrs. Potter sat around a Christmas tree exchanging gifts. Then there was a photo of James and Lily Potter's wedding with Sirius and Remus stood next to them, smiling widely. Then there was a picture of Sirius holding a newborn Harry and grinning happily.

The next selection of photos showed Sirius' life recently with a photo of everyone at the park where they were eating and laughing, and Padfoot ran and jumped on top of Hermione before running off with her sandwich. The next photo showed Harry and Sirius laughing together. The next one showed everyone eating dinner at the Burrow in the garden and they were laughing and smiling.

"How?" He questioned in surprise.

"A little magic," she shrugged. "Some I already had and simply copied them, others I found by accident when snooping through the rooms. I'm planning on placing photos in every room and hallway in this house. You know, except the bathroom, that would just be weird," she scrunched her nose up and he chuckled at her. "I'm doing this to remind you that you have a family that loves and cares for you. No matter what you think, you will always have a family."

He cleared his throat and she sniggered at him. "I like it, it's brighter and welcoming," he nodded to himself, slipping his hands into his jean pockets.

"Good. The grey carpet's on every staircase and floor up to the attic. Do you want to make the walls the same colour on every wall? Do you want to alternate between white and grey? Or do you want to use an entirely different colour for each floor?"

"I don't know, whatever you think's best. You've got an eye for decorating," he observed.

"My mother, she grew bored easily and re-decorated the house every couple of years," she explained. "But, I suppose we could use a different colour for each floor to give it its own personality, even if we do keep the grey. If we don't like it we can always change it."

Nodding in agreement and with most of the hard work already done, they were finished within the hour. All the doors and woodwork had been changed to a brilliant white; the second floor had been given the colour scheme of a tasteful blush pink with grey accents with a matching colour scheme in the bathroom. The third floor had been decorated in the same manner but with a pale blue, the fourth floor with lilac, and the fifth floor pale green.

When lunch was called, they headed to the kitchen and quietly took their seats with sandwiches being placed before them

"How much progress have you made?" Mrs. Weasley asked Hermione and Sirius.

"We've finished the entrance hallway, the five floors and we've put up more photo frames, as well as finished the woodwork, bathrooms, and staircases."

"In only a few hours?" Mrs. Weasley questioned in surprise.

"Yeah, we've only finished the main living room," Fred grumbled, stifling a yawn before brushing his dust-coated hair back from his face.

"Sirius and I will move onto the main living room and make a start on decorating it, I'm hoping everything will be done before Harry gets here."

"At the rate 'Mione's going, we'll have this place done in a couple of days," Sirius remarked.

"How are you getting it done so quickly?" Ginny asked as she reached for her glass of water.

"Magic," she shrugged.

"It's not fair you get to do magic," Ron grumbled, biting into his sandwich with more force than was necessary.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Ronald, would you rather be the Siren and have Moldyshorts and his followers out for your blood?" She asked sweetly.

"No," he muttered guiltily.

"Then I think being able to do wandless and non-verbal magic is only fair, don't you?"

"Yes," he agreed, glaring at those that laughed.

"Yeah, but we're using magic and you're still getting more done than we are," George interrupted.

"Work faster," she shrugged and they chuckled.

After they finished lunch, they all parted and returned to their tasks with Hermione calling out,

"LEAVE THE STUDY AND LIBRARY!"

With chuckles ringing out through the house, she and Sirius set to work in the main living room, Hermione slowly taking in the sight before her.

A wooden coffee table in-between two large, hideous armchairs, the carpet matched the floral wallpaper and the drapes and a dark wooden fireplace dominated the back wall. Two large couches sat at a ninety-degree angle and a large wooden coffee table was placed before them. The only item in the room Hermione didn't mind was the black grand piano that sat in the corner.

"Your parents were cruel," Hermione commented, her attention otherwise focused on rearranging the contents of the room.

"You have no idea," he replied.

"I mean, did they want you to claw your eyes out? This room's disgusting. What kind of deranged person would choose those drapes?" She pressed, gesturing to said drapes whilst he laughed at her.

Giving her head a shake and getting into the right frame of mind, she quickly set to work, first transfiguring the couches into a black leather corner suite, ensuring the armchairs matched. She immediately got to work. With that done, she transfigured the two coffee tables into glass, gave the grand piano a quick clean and polish and painted the framework on the fireplace. The drapes were given a deep clean before being transfigured into a white, lighter weight material to better fit the summer season and allow more natural light into the room, brightening it up. A cabinet now sat in the corner and was filled with wizarding and muggle board games, a plush back rug sat before the fireplace along with a selection of beanbags.

Before she retrieved and set the photo frames on the wall and around the room, she brought attention away from the dreary wallpaper by removing it and magically altering the top half of the walls to be black, and the lower halves to be white.

When she set the photo frames in place, there was a photo of Sirius, James and Remus roughhousing by the Whomping Willow, one of Sirius and the twins laughing as they listened to him tell stories about the Marauders, one of Hermione, Padfoot and the others pranking the boys as they fell into the pond at the park. There was the photo of Hermione and Harry when they had fallen asleep in the common room the day of the third task, and there was a photo of Padfoot tackling Harry to the ground in the park.

"What do you think?" Hermione asked, absentmindedly making sure that the last photo frame stayed in place.

"Once again, you've outdone yourself, Kitten," he praised. "I like those things," he tipped his head towards the beanbags.

"Beanbags? You've never seen one before?" She questioned in surprise.

"Nope," he confirmed, and much to her amusement, he unceremoniously dived onto one of them. "They feel weird, don't be surprised if I steal one for my room," he commented, deliberately wiggling about whilst she laughed at him.

Later that night, Hermione was in her room with Ginny. She hadn't slept well and she'd been unexpectedly woken by a premonition. She wasn't entirely certain what it was depicting; only that it involved Harry.

With her heart pounding in her chest, sweat slicking her forehead and her breathing heavy, she silently crept out of bed and to the floor above. She'd barely knocked on the twins' bedroom door before it was opening and she was tugged inside, Hermione spying the two beds that had already been pushed together, as well as Oliver perched on a chair by one of the desks.

They'd anticipated her arrival.

"What happened, Love?" George muttered, hugging her shaking form against him in concern.

"I've had another premonition," she admitted quietly.

"What did ya see?"

"I don't know. It didn't make any sense."

Drawing back from her, he tugged her over to the bed and they all climbed in, getting comfortable.

"He'll be gone for three weeks. How much trouble could he get into?" Fred chuckled, one hand rubbing comforting circles on her back whilst she cuddled into his side.

"Do you want an answer to that?" She muttered, hearing their sniggers.

Almost fifteen minutes later when they were all drifting off to sleep, the door opened and Mrs. Weasley stood in the doorway, her lips pursed and her brow furrowed.

"Hermione, what are you doing here?" She questioned, a slight disapproving tone to her voice.

"Sorry, Maji, but I need them," she said sleepily, barely being able to lift her head from Fred's shoulder in her exhaustion.

"You're on the floor below," she pointed out.

"It's not close enough."

"It was at the Burrow," she argued.

"That was before. I'm more dependent on them than I was before; our bond's stronger and now I can't sleep without them. I tried. I had a premonition."

"You did?"

Her disproval morphed into concern as she stepped further into the room and came to a stop by the foot of the bed. Hermione forced herself into a sitting position and Mrs. Weasley leaned closer, brushing Hermione's hair back from her face and feeling her forehead with the back of her hand.

"You're burning up," she noted in concern.

"It's a side effect of the premonitions," Hermione replied tiredly. "I don't know what I saw, only that when I woke, I needed them."

"Very well, if you need them I suppose there's nothing I can do."

"Thank you, Maji, there's nothing for you to worry about. It isn't time for the Mating Ceremony," Hermione assured her.

"Do you think you might know when it will happen so we might start preparing?"

"No, I don't."

"Okay, Dear, try and get some rest. You boys look after her," she warned, looking to the three teen boys sternly.

"Always," they chorused without hesitation.

Chapter Sixty-One

12 Grimmauld Place – Wednesday 19th July 1995

Three weeks since their move into the London townhouse, Hermione had seen a massive difference in Sirius, the Animagus seeming to always be whistling and walking with a bounce in his step.

Due to the risk to Hermione and the others, no one had been allowed to leave the townhouse with the exception of Remus, Mr. Wood, Mr. Weasley and Oliver, the latter three having careers. This had been driving all teens insane and Hermione's previous plans for the summer had been discarded, knowing they'd never be approved as it meant leaving the safety of Grimmauld and stepping out into the world.

Those that knew of Percy's mission within the Ministry had been playing their parts exceptionally. When Percy's name was mentioned the twins would curse, Mrs. Weasley would burst into tears and something was always broken. Hermione had been corresponding with Percy regularly but he had nothing to report, only that the Ministry was working in overdrive to dispel the rumours of Voldemort's return.

When the nights grew dark and Hermione fell asleep in her shared bedroom with Ginny, she suffered from a premonition, woke and headed to the twins' bedroom, Oliver joining them soon after. And as the nights passed and her premonitions slowly grew vivid, it revealed a dementor attack. It wasn't clear on the who and when, but as a precaution, she'd been preparing, always being sure to have one of her notebooks on her at all times and to be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

As three weeks passed and the day to collect Harry from the Dursleys arrived, Hermione went about her morning routine as usual; waking, showering and dressing before heading down to breakfast. After sitting at the table and eating breakfast, everyone went their separate ways with Hermione heading to her room so she might complete some of her summer homework before she left to collect Harry at twelve o'clock.

She'd only been focused on her work for ten minutes when she felt an uncomfortable twisting in her stomach but she pushed it away to the back of her mind, not believing it important enough to worry about, not yet at least. As the next hour passed slowly with the twisting in her stomach growing increasingly more uncomfortable, it wasn't until she felt an insistent tugging at her navel that her book fell from her grasp.

"Harry!"

Scurrying from the bed, she reached for the pre-made port-key from the bedside table and it whisked her away.

Privet Drive

Landing with a thud and barely keeping her footing with her hasty retreat from Grimmauld, she startled Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, both of who were lounging in the living room and watching TV.

"Just what do you think you're doing?!" Mr. snapped, his face flushed and expression pinched.

"Where's Harry? Is he here?" She questioned, her dislike for the man being put aside as she was otherwise distracted by worrying for her best friend.

"How would I know?" He sniffed.

"Please, is he here? It's important," she all but pleaded. "He's in trouble, I know he is, I can feel it. There are things going on in the Wizarding World that you don't understand. Terrible things. If you might know where he is, please tell me."

He eyed her strangely, answering with, "As far I'm aware, he's at the park with Dudley. Down the street, around the corner and through the tunnel."

"Thank you," she breathed, making to take her leave when she heard Mrs. Dursley speak.

"Is Dudley in danger?"

"Not if I get there in time," she promised, not allowing any further conversation as she took off in a run, darting out of the door and down the street, her chest tightening as it fought for oxygen.

As she reached the entrance to a tunnel that led directly to the park, she halted to a stop, simultaneously breathing out a sigh of relief and inhaling a lungful of oxygen when she spotted Harry perched on a swing, otherwise unharmed but surrounded by a group of five teen boys.

Her brow furrowing in concern and her lips pursing, she approached slowly, wishing to hear as much as possible before she stepped in, allowing Harry to deal with whatever was happening himself.

"He squealed like a pig," she heard one of the boys say laughingly.

"Yeah, brilliant punch, Big D," another agreed.

"Did you see his face?" Another of the boys questioned, his mouth twitching into a cruel smile.

"Five against one, very brave," Harry snarked.

"Well, you're one to talk; moaning in your sleep every night," Dudley taunted nastily. "At least I'm not afraid of my pillow... He's going to kill me, Mum. Where is your mum, Potter?"

Hermione's expression morphed instantly and she stood taller, her shoulders straightening and her head tilting higher before she called Harry's name, the younger wizard turning to look behind almost before she'd finished addressing him. She'd never seen him look so relieved and as she stepped through the gate and approached, he stood from the swing, ready to catch her when she ploughed into him and hugged him tightly. As she drew back from him, her eyes searched him slowly for both injuries and weight loss, but she saw no signs of anything being untoward.

Standing at Harry's side, she looked to Dudley, saying his name in greeting and doing her best to keep her tone even but knowing she failed.

"Yo-your ba-back," he stuttered, his eyes wide, his cheeks flushed and his hands twisted into the hem of his t-shirt.

"Evidently," she replied coolly, her eyes moving to the four teen boys that flanked him, noting them all staring at her in surprise, their expressions mirroring the ones she received on a daily basis from the opposite gender. Making an unhappy sound in the back of her throat, she turned to Harry, saying, "We have to leave."

"Why? What's wrong?"

"You know my special talent for knowing when something's wrong? Well, something's wrong," she replied, seeing the widening of his eyes behind his glasses as the understanding sunk in.

Taking Harry's hand in hers, she barely spared the five teens boys a second glance as she took her leave and tugged Harry behind her until he fell into step.

"What's wrong?" He questioned, his eyes subconsciously darting about his surroundings and Hermione spied his hand twitching, fighting back the urge to reach for his wand.

"Full discloser... I've been having premonitions, but they weren't exactly clear on the happenings, I only know it involves dementors, so obviously I've been worried. After breakfast, I had that feeling, the one that tells me you're in trouble and you need me and admittedly, I panicked and left without telling anyone so they're going to be furious, but I'll handle that later. There's been some changes that we need to discuss but it'll have to wait." Peering over her shoulder, she spied Dudley trailing after them; she'd known he would follow them and it had been her intention. "Dudley! Get a move on, we don't have a lot of time!" She called.

As they reached the centre of the tunnel and Dudley had finally caught up to them, Hermione halted in her steps unknowingly, her eyes closing briefly and her hands tightening into fists.

"What is it?" Harry asked in concern.

"Do you feel that...? It's cold all of a sudden?" She replied, deliberately huffing out a breath to show the cloud forming from her lips.

"Dementors," Harry breathed out in concern, both he and Hermione drawing their wands without further thought.

"'Mione, use wandless magic," he scolded but his eyes were elsewhere, searching for their would-be attackers.

"I'm not letting you be the only one that faces punishment," she rebutted, "And if I don't, it'll face further suspicion and that's something we want to avoid... Dudley?"

"Wh-what?" He replied, Hermione being unsure if that was due to his nerves of being around her or the fact he'd clearly picked up on there being something wrong.

"Stay behind us and don't move," she instructed steadily, and as she and Harry instinctively drew closer together, they felt the happiness being drained from them, their vision blurring as a dark, hooded figure approached.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" They chorused, the beautiful stag and majestic lion charging at the dementor in tandem.

As they peered over their shoulders to see a further two dementors approaching from behind, their Patronuses changed directions and fought against those two. Knowing they had to get to safety and being unsure if they could make it back to the Dursleys on foot despite the short distance, Hermione didn't wish to take any chances and so she removed the pre-made port-key from her wrist and held it out in offering. Harry, understanding what it was, automatically gripped the elastic hair tie, but Dudley appeared shell-shocked, his expression sickly and haunted.

Silently, she reached out, her hand encircling his wrist before they were whisked away to temporary safety, she and Harry landing smoothly on their feet but Dudley took a tumble to the ground.

"What did you do to him?" Mrs. Dursley demanded waspishly as she knelt beside her ashen, shaking son, holding his face in her hands in worry.

"Saved his life," Hermione responded, looking down at the horrid woman, briefly noting Harry moving from her side and leaving for the kitchen.

"From?" Mr. Dursley demanded, his hands on his hips and his gaze darting between his wife, son and her.

"Dementors, they attacked us."

"The soul-sucking..."

"Yes, those," she interrupted hastily, accepting the chocolate bar from Harry upon his return and crouching down beside the shaking, sweating teen boy. "Dudley," she called, being sure to soften her voice so she might better hold his attention. "Eat this, it'll make you feel better," she promised, being unsurprised when he slowly reached for it but his gaze remained locked on the fireplace opposite him.

Rising to her feet, she shared a glance with Harry, both knowing that they had to be quick before trouble found them and leaving the Dursley's behind would only ensure they were found. No matter how much she and Harry disliked the family of three, neither wished for them to suffer at the hands of dementors or Death Eaters.

"If you want your family to survive, you best pack your belongings and quickly. We have to leave," said Hermione.

"We are not going anywhere without an explanation, and certainly not with you," responded Mr. Dursley, his face reddening in his anger.

Hermione pursed her lips unhappily. "I never said you would be coming with us," she replied coolly, a staring match forming between them and the only thing that broke it was Harry clearing his throat and nudging her with his elbow. "Trust me, where Harry and I are going, you won't be welcomed."

"Hermione," Harry chastised by her ear so only she could hear him and she sighed before folding her arms over her chest.

"Fine," she acquiesced. "I'll give you the summarised version and after this, we really must get going. Essentially, there is a war brewing between an immensely powerful dark wizard and his followers and those that oppose him. For simplicity's sake, think of him as Adolf Hitler... Like him, this dark wizard wishes to eradicate any who he believes is not of pure blood, namely Muggleborns and Muggles, such as yourself. He was defeated in the eighties but has since returned to full power and due to the nature of his defeat, he has an axe to grind with Harry, for reasons you don't need to know, not yet at least because one, I don't think you'll believe us and two, I don't feel you'll care. Whilst our government refuses to acknowledge his return out of fear, the Order of Phoenix, a group of people who fought against Him during the First War, has been reinstated and are searching for a way to defeat him for good."

"Wait... What?" Harry said from beside her, blinking in surprise.

"I know," Hermione nodded in understanding of his surprise at her reveal. "Anyway, not only does He, Voldemort, wish to kill Harry, he also holds an incredible dislike for me, too."

Mrs. Dursley slowly rose to her feet as she also helped Dudley from the ground and they drew closer to Mr. Dursley, Dudley looking better but they all wore matching expressions of trepidation and uncertainty.

"And you? Why does he take issue with you?"

"I don't see how that's your business."

"We're not going anywhere until I know everything."

She gave him an unhappy scowl before rolling her eyes. "I've recently discovered who my biological parents were, and not only were they both magical practitioners and both powerful in their own rights, my birth mother was a Siren, a magical being that is highly powerful and revered for their beauty. Such knowledge was kept secret as Sirens are almost extinct due to others wishing to possess us and in doing so, they killed off the majority of the species."

"Us?" Mrs. Dursley echoed, the snotty expression gone from her face as she carefully scrutinised Hermione.

"Yes, I'm a Siren," she admitted. "And it's the reasoning behind Him wishing to harm me. I refused to join him, not only for Harry's safety but my mate's, also."

"Mate?" She parroted once more, her head tipping somewhat curiously.

"Yes, Sirens are known to have a soul mate, the one person that is magically, physically and emotionally their other half. A Siren is not complete without her mate and unless they are found, she will never experience true happiness and might die."

She caught Harry staring at her questioningly and she subtly shrugged. She agreed to tell the truth, and she had. Just not everything.

"And you have found yours?" She guessed.

"Yes," Hermione replied. "I have found mine and I wish to protect them. And that's everything you need to know. They know where we are and if you stay, they won't hesitate to torture and kill you. For your safety, you'll have to be placed in a safe house."

"I work fulltime," Mr. Dursley remarked.

"And that's more important than your family's safety?" Hermione arched an eyebrow. "Pack the essentials; clothing, toiletries anything that can't be replaced if damaged... Go, now," she snapped, finally losing her patience with his insistence to be a pain in her arse.

Harry sniggered beside her when the three Dursleys stalked from the room and up the stairs, Mr. Dursley glaring at her from over his shoulder and almost tripping over his own feet in the process.

Sighing, Hermione drew her notebook from her pocket and quickly wrote a message to Sirius, letting him and the others know that she was safe for the time being.

*Padfoot,*

*I know I should've told you before I left but the Siren didn't give me the chance. I'll explain everything in detail when I return with Harry soon. Please, prepare a room on the third and fourth floor, I've a feeling we'll be needing them.*

*WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?! Where are you?! Oliver and the twins had to be Petrified!*

*I promise I'll explain later. I'll use a port-key for safety, we'll enter through the front door. Unfortunately, the Dursleys are in danger and until a safe house can be arranged, I've a feeling they're going to have to stay with us. I'm not happy about this either but for the sake of keeping the peace, warn the others and tell them to leave them be.*

*Do I have to be nice to them?*

*YES!*

*Fine... How long until you arrive?*

*We should be no more than an hour; I'm going to pay a visit to Dumbledore first. Hopefully, he already has a safe house available, if not... Just prepare everyone.*

Snapping the notebook shut and slipping it into her pocket, she lifted her gaze to see Harry looking at her expectantly.

"Just explaining to Sirius that we're fine for the time being," she told him. "What I haven't told you yet is that we aren't staying at the Burrow, rather Grimmauld Place, Sirius' childhood home which he offered up to the Order. Currently, it's the safest place for us due to the security measures in place and the blood wards."

Harry blinked in surprise but otherwise didn't ask for further information as he nodded slowly.

"They're coming with us, aren't they?" He grumbled knowingly.

"Hopefully not," she replied. "I'm hoping Dumbledore already has a safe house but if not, the only place that's safe for them is Grimmauld Place and they'll be with us until Dumbledore arranges something, and it better bloody be quick... Do you have everything packed?"

"Yeah," he nodded, knowing the plan had always been that he be collected that day, only Hermione had arrived earlier than expected. "I sent Hedwig to the Burrow this morning."

"She'll know where to find you," Hermione assured him. "We best get your things and check on them," she gestured to the floor above. "They're taking too long and we don't have time to waste."

As Harry led the way up the staircase and he headed for his bedroom so he might collect his trunk, she checked in on the Dursley parents, seeing the myriad of items piled high on the bed and the two open suitcases that were clearly too small.

Silently and with a wave of her hand, the items on the bed (clothing and footwear, toiletries, photographs and albums, jewellery and perfume) shrunk in size, magically entered the two suitcases and snapped shut before they too shrunk in size, leaving behind two small suitcases that would fit into a pocket.

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley looked to Hermione, their expressions morphed with horror, anger and begrudging acceptance.

"Magic isn't evil," she said simply before taking her leave and not offering a second glance.

She spotted Harry hiding his laughter behind his hand as he stood in the doorway of Dudley's bedroom and when Hermione approached and peered inside, she rolled her eyes at the sight of the muggle teen struggling to close his suitcase that was bulging with his muggle electronic toys and games. It seems he didn't know the meaning of essentials only.

Giving Harry a shove until he understood and moved aside, she stepped inside and repeated the process of shrinking both the items and the suitcase until it would easily fit in the teen's pocket.

When she returned downstairs with the Dursleys unhappily following after her, Harry was waiting by the window, peeping through a small gap in the curtains that he'd previously drawn closed.

"Anything yet?"

"Not yet," he shook his head, drawing back and as Hermione reached for a pen with the intention of creating a port-key, both she and Harry froze, feeling the cold seep into the room and spying the window clouding over with frost through the small gap in the curtains.

"What is it?" Mrs. Dursley questioned anxiously, cowering by her husband's side as her eyes darted about her.

"Dementors," she and Harry chorused, instinctively seeking each other out.

When the windows cracked and the glass shattered, the curtains being the only thing that stopped it from projecting towards them, five hooded dementors appeared.

Harry and Hermione were quick to conjure their Patronuses and as they worked against the dementors, Hermione and Harry all but shoved the Dursleys out of the house with the intentions of putting some distance between them and the dementors. However, they halted to a dead stop on the driveway, being surrounded by approximately fifty dementors.

Sharing a quick glance, she and Harry automatically reached for the other's hand, seeking strength and reassuring themselves that the other was unharmed, they conjured their Patronuses for a second time, the seconds slowly ticking by until the final dementor was gone and the sky was clear.

They'd barely blinked when a jet of light skimmed past Harry's shoulder and collided with the wall of the house behind him, a dozen or so darkly robed and masked Death Eaters appearing before them with cracks of apparition.

"Who are they?" Mr. Dursley demanded with a shaky tone, whether it be from fear or the effects of the dementors was to remain unknown.

"Death Eaters," they chorused without taking their eyes from those before them.

"Protego Totalum," Hermione called the moment a jet of light headed in their direction and after it rebounded, she threw her own Stupefy, hitting one of them firmly in the chest until he hit the ground.

Knowing they were severely outnumbered, she instinctively released her grip on her wand until it fell to the ground and she held her hands up, her shield forming around the five of them like a protective bubble. As the Death Eaters' hexes and curses rebounded in their direction, Harry crouched down and silently retrieved Hermione's wand before slipping it into his pocket, his gaze darting between the Death Eaters and Hermione, being concerned for his friend. He couldn't imagine it being easy for her to maintain her shield for so long, no matter of her power, abilities or habit of making things look easier than they were.

"Harry, do you trust me?" She muttered and no matter how hard she tried to hide it, he knew her too well. She was tiring.

"Yes," he answered without hesitation.

"I'm going to try something I've never done before and I'm not entirely certain it's possible... When I tell you to, I want you to duck... All of you... Ready?... Now!"

She didn't have the time to see if they'd listened to her and when she dropped the bubble-like shield, she drew the shape of an 'M' with her right hand before thrusting her arms outwards, her head swimming from both the tug she felt on her magical core and seeing that it appeared to have worked as twelve beams of light collided with each Death Eater until they collapsed on the ground.

"Wow," Harry muttered in disbelief, subtly reaching out to steady her when she swayed a little and it took her a moment to centre herself.

"How can you be so calm?" Mrs. Dursley demanded with a cry of horror.

Harry and Hermione shrugged, offering up the answer of, "Happens all the time."

"Wait! Are those muggles?" Hermione said aloud, spying the three men that were crowded together, staring at them in confused horror from across the street.

"That's not good," Harry muttered.

A headache forming, Hermione cursed Voldemort to hell for making her afternoon so difficult and before the muggles had the opportunity to turn tail and run, Hermione was quick to Stun and Obliviate them, silently being grateful she had some experience with the Mind-Altering Charm so she didn't harm the muggles.

"That's taken care of; they won't remember anything that just happened."

She removed the pen that she'd nabbed from the coffee table from her pocket and took a moment to finish the spellwork and complete the port-key before holding it out expectantly.

"Take a hold of this and don't let go," she instructed. "Unfortunately, this is going to be a rough landing," she warned.

Once they'd all taken a hold of the pen, the port-key activated and whisked them away, leaving behind a partially destroyed house, dazed muggles and a number of unconscious Death Eaters.

Hogwarts

Their arrival on the grounds of Hogwarts brought Harry and Hermione landing smoothly on their feet and the Dursleys landing in a pile of limbs as Hermione and Harry did their best to stifle their laughter.

Once they'd gotten their bearings, stopped their complaining and climbed to their feet, they openly stared slack-jawed at the large castle that stood before them.

"Hogwarts," Hermione explained. "I can only imagine your surprise at discovering that freaks are taught and housed in such a beautiful place," she said airily with Harry sniggering at her less-than-friendly-but-not-quite-cold-and-cruel behaviour towards the Dursleys.

Slipping the used port-key into her pocket for the time being, she took off towards the castle, not sparing a glance over her shoulder as she said,

"Try to keep up, we wouldn't want you getting lost and being at the mercy of Peeves."

"How'd you get them past the wards?" Harry asked quietly from beside her, briefly looking over his shoulder to ensure they were being followed, and they were, despite their silence and eyes darting about in every direction.

"To be honest... I knew my magic would allow us to bypass the wards as I've done it before, but I wasn't certain if it would work with muggles. I assume our magical signatures were enough to fool the Anti-Muggle Repellent Charms, and our quick arrival meant they didn't have time to affect them as they usually would."

Harry stared at her in surprised horror before silently slapping her over the back of the head. She winced and glared at him.

"What was that for?" She hissed.

"I might not like them and they might've treated me like rubbish..."

"They abused you," she corrected, "And now that you're free of them, I no longer have to be nice to them."

"You've been spending too much time with the Slytherins," Harry sighed and pushed a hand through his hair. "The point is, I might not like them but I don't want them dead, and that might've happened had your experiment not worked."

"Well, they might've died had it not worked back at the house," she argued with a shrug.

They continued the rest of the journey to Dumbledore's office in silence and once they reached the gargoyles that marked the entrance, they halted to a stop.

"Lemon drops," Hermione said aloud, sighing when nothing happened.

He'd changed the password. Again.

"Cauldron cakes," Harry tried, receiving the same results.

Sharing a glance, they rolled their eyes before each taking a turn to name a wizarding treat in hopes it would allow them access.

"Liquorice wands," Hermione tried for their fifth attempt but with little success.

"What're you doing?"

Hermione froze and slowly turned to look behind her, recognising the voice as belonging to Dudley and it was the first time he'd spoke to her without stuttering.

Giving herself a mental shake, she answered simply with, "He's changed his password again. Harry, your turn."

"Pumpkin pasties."

"Sugar quills," she tried.

"Acid pops."

"Ice mice."

"Pixie puffs."

"Pepper imps."

It was silent until there was a rumble and the winding staircase slowly rose from the ground, and after she and Harry shared a smug smile, they took the lead in ascending the stairs, Hermione knocking on the office door once they reached the top.

"Professor," Hermione and Harry greeted as they entered after being given leave to do so, and the Dursleys trailed behind them apprehensively, huddling close together and remaining close to the door.

"Miss. Blake, Mr. Potter?" The old wizard greeted slowly in surprise.

"Port-key," she offered with a sheepish shrug to his unvoiced question.

"That is impossible. The wards have since been strengthened," he replied, his twinkling blue eyes watching her somewhat in amusement and exasperation.

"Apparently not enough," Harry snorted before rubbing the back of his neck guiltily and glancing towards Dumbledore in embarrassment but the Headmaster was looking to the Dursleys in confusion.

"Siren magic," she shrugged once more. "Anyway, a quick explanation... So, after a premonition, I was able to warn Harry of a dementor attack. After a brief explanation to the Dursleys regarding the current politics as they refused to leave unless I gave them one, we were later attacked by approximately fifty dementors followed by thirteen Death Eaters. Unfortunately, the incident was witnessed by three muggles but I did alter their memories. During our departure, we left behind thirteen unconscious Death Eaters so it might be best to get someone to Privet Drive as soon as possible, just in case they are still there and before the muggle authorities arrive. Admittedly, we didn't stay long enough to clean up the mess left behind; we couldn't be sure when the next attack would happen."

He barely batted an eyelash as he simply raised his wand and conjured the blue-silver flaming phoenix, the misty bird taking its leave through the window and carrying with it instructions. The Dursleys made muffled noises of surprise, reminding Hermione of their presence. Honestly, she'd never seen them so quiet.

"Do you happen to have a safe house?" She asked hopefully.

Dumbledore's expression told her everything she needed to know and she and Harry both deflated.

"Unfortunately, all of the Order's previous options have been discovered or destroyed and we are currently working to create more as troubled times lie ahead and I am certain they will surely be needed," Dumbledore began. "We do have two safe houses that have been created since the ending of the school term but they are not suitable for muggles. It will take some time to liaison with the muggle government and ensure the correct channels are followed, but in the meantime, until something can be arranged and for their continued safety, I feel the only option available is..."

"For them to stay at Grimmauld," Hermione finished knowingly. "I had a feeling that would be the case," she admitted. "As such, I've already sent word ahead to Sirius and asked that he sees two rooms readied, and I've warned against malicious behaviour. Not only did I wish to warn you against what's just happened before the Ministry get involved for our use of underage magic, and I wished to create an obstacle should someone try to follow us through our port-key usage, but also Harry and the Dursleys require the passcode to enter Grimmauld."

"Even to this day your intelligence astounds me," Dumbledore remarked. "And I do believe that Severus would happily applaud your cunning if he were here."

"Thank you," she responded, ducking her head slightly and scowling at Harry when he nudged her with his elbow and wriggled his eyebrows.

Dumbledore chuckled at the display before briefly turning his attention to writing the passcode on a sheet of parchment, standing from his chair, stepping out from behind his desk and moving to stand before them, his eyes slowly examining them.

"We're fine," she assured him. "No physical injuries, just tired."

"Then be sure to get plenty of rest upon your return and as always, consume chocolate to battle the after-effects of the dementors, particularly given that you were forced to face so many. I dare say no ordinary magical practitioner would be able to boast such a feat."

"Well, not only do I have the advantage of Siren magic and not only is Harry powerful, but we were also together and we have been in a similar situation before."

"Ah, so you have," Dumbledore agreed.

When he handed the parchment to Harry, he looked down at it, puzzled.

"Grimmauld is under the Fidelius," Hermione explained. "In order to enter the property, only the Secret Keeper can give the passcode," she gestured to the parchment in his hand with a tip of the head. "You have to say it aloud."

"The home of Sirius Black is found at 12 Grimmauld Place between houses number eleven and thirteen," Harry read, later handing the parchment to Hermione who then walked the small distance to the three Dursleys, who were quite clearly afraid of and intimidated by the powerful Headmaster.

After being under her impatient stare, they reluctantly muttered the words from the parchment and once done, Hermione destroyed the evidence.

"Thank you, Professor. Before we leave, would you mind if I spoke with Bopsy?"

"Not at all, Miss. Blake," he responded with a knowing twinkle in his eyes.

"Misses Mione is back," cried the little elf once Hermione had called for him, the witch laughing as he wrapped his arms about her legs and hugged her tightly. She diligently ignored the gasps of surprise and muttered insults sounding from behind her.

"I missed you, too, Bopsy," she smiled. "I was wondering if I might bother you for some chocolate..." Not that they deserve it, thought Hermione. "Unfortunately, we had some bother with dementors today."

"Misses Mione never bes bothering Bopsy," he stated firmly before vanishing from view and returning moments later with two chocolate bars.

"Thank you, Bopsy, we appreciate it," she said, taking them from him.

"Yous is welcome, Misses Mione, I took thems from Proffy Snape's secret hiding place in kitchens, he not be needing so manys," he said with Harry and Hermione laughing at him and even Dumbledore shared a chuckle. "Dementors bes bad bad creatures," he set his hands on his hips disapprovingly and after hugging her legs once more, he disappeared from view.

Giving her head a fond shake at the little being, Hermione brushed her hand through her and looked to Dumbledore. "If I'm honest, I'm worried about the Ministry," she confessed.

"I imagine your letters will already be on route to Grimmauld," he nodded in agreement.

"It was self-defence and we used as little magic as possible; Harry cast a Patronus no more than three times, as did I, and I also cast a Stunner, a shield and I used the Memory Altering Charm on the muggles. I was careful to use my wandless magic for the rest."

"Everything will be fine, Miss. Blake," he assured her, looking down at her with that Grandfatherly stare of his.

Nodding, she decided to say no more on the matter and after saying their goodbyes, Hermione and Harry took their leave from his office, being followed closely by the Dursleys who were eager to be far away from the Headmaster. As Hermione handed Dudley a chocolate bar to share with his parents, she and Harry nibbled at the other one as they slowly returned to their previous arrival location.

With the aid of a rock found on the ground, Hermione created a port-key for the final time that day, their destination being Grimmauld Place.

12 Grimmauld Place

Hermione barely allowed the Dursleys a moment to recover or climb back to their feet when she strode forward and towards the row of townhouses, the ground and buildings shaking as townhouse twelve appeared before her without drawing the attention of passersby or the current occupants of the other townhouses noticing.

Realising that she wasn't being followed, she halted and peered over her shoulder, spying the Dursley's dazed expression and Harry wasn't fairing any better, if she were honest.

"Come on," she called, climbing the steps to the door and pausing with her hand latched on the handle when they stood on the steps below her.

"Now, I know you will be uncomfortable and I've no doubt you'll hate every moment of this but keep in mind this is for your safety and everyone inside will be just as uncomfortable as you and in just as much pain. You don't care for them and they don't care for you. I've already warned them to behave but I'm a teenage girl and they're all adults, they can and will do as they please, especially if you upset them. My advice would be to remember that Sirius, the owner of this house, is being gracious enough to allow you to stay in his home no matter of his dislike for your family. In order to avoid arguments, keep any nasty comments and looks to yourselves, and if you can't do that, stay clear."

Mr. Dursley lifted his chin and stood taller, his gaze locking with hers challengingly.

Her mouth twitched. "You are sorely outnumbered. You might not be afraid of me, but if I were you, I'd be very afraid of the occupants of this house. There is not only an overprotective Godfather inside, but two very terrifying mother bears, and due to your past transgressions against Harry, they are not your biggest fans. And this is only temporary, I'm certain Dumbledore is working as quickly as possible to find a solution and we can all go back to hating each other from a comfortable distance. And don't look so troubled about the size, this is a magical building, it's bigger on the inside."

Harry sniggered and she turned her eyes to him, her expression softening.

"Don't mention Percy," she warned quietly.

Harry's amusement was quickly replaced by a confused frown.

"Why? What's happened? He's not here?"

She sighed softly. "It's a long story and I'll explain later, but don't bring it up, I don't want Maji crying again, it took an hour to calm her down last time."

When she opened the door and ushered everyone inside, she'd barely taken a step when a crowd of three appeared before them, Hermione being tugged forward and crushed in-between, the witch feeling their concern and fear fade into relief and happiness, both through the bond and in the release of tension from their bodies.

"I'm so sorry," she apologised, her voice muffled by Oliver's training robes. "The Siren sensed there was something wrong and Harry needed me. I had to go."

They shared a collective sigh; they couldn't argue or complain as they knew it wasn't her fault. She was protecting Harry and they knew she'd do exactly the same if it were one of them.

They'd barely drawn back and had the chance to check her over for injuries when Sirius appeared, shoving the twins and Oliver out of the way before he crushed her tiny frame against his larger one.

"You had me worried, Kitten," he admitted quietly.

"I was fine, Padfoot. But we do need to talk."

Drawing back, he immediately pulled Harry into a hug, she and her boys sharing a smile at the gesture. When he drew back, he barely spared the Dursleys a glance which Hermione supposed was for the best.

"Everyone's waiting in the main living room," he informed her before he took his leave down the hall.

"This doesn't seem the kind of place a Black would live?" Harry commented distractedly.

"It's not, the entire building's been cleaned from top to bottom and Sirius allowed me to redecorate however I wished. Be grateful you never bore witness to the atrocity of the previous decor," she replied and the twins snorted in agreement.

"Or that you had to help clean," added George.

"Yeah, twice a doxy bit me on the arse," Fred agreed in outrage and Hermione burst into giggles before she melted against Fred when he slotted his arm around her and pressed a kiss to her forehead.

Harry rolled his eyes good-naturedly and George reached out, taking her hand in his and twining their fingers together as she smiled at him lovingly.

Harry spied his God-awful Aunt frown in confusion? Horror? Disapproval? Whatever it was, he was able to catch her gaze and his expression must've clearly shown what he was trying to convey as she sniffed and lifted her chin. It was going to be a long summer.

"Do you like it, Harry?" Hermione asked, drawing his attention.

"It's more modern than I was expecting, but it does make the place feel bigger."

"That's what I was going for, it was time to drag it into this century and it's certainly brighter than it once was. Sirius is beyond happy with it, he keeps saying that he wishes your parents were here to see it," she smiled sadly before cutting a terrifying glare towards the Dursley parents at the noises they made in the backs of their throats. "Do not test my patience," she warned. "You're about to walk into a room where I can guarantee one hundred percent of the occupants dislike you."

Silently, George tugged on her hand and down the hallway with Fred in tow and Harry gestured for the Dursley to follow after them, noting their reluctance to do so. Was it bad that a part of him wished they did upset someone? Just so he could witness their response.

Would Moony come forward in Remus? Would Sirius bite them? Would the twins prank them within an inch of their lives and turn them into guinea pigs for their new products? Or better yet, Hermione? Would Mrs. Weasley charm knitting needles and wooden spoons to attack? Would Mrs. Wood simply smack them in the face?

The thought of each one brought forth a snigger and he had to force it down.

Stepping into the room behind Hermione, they barely managed a glance to see who was present (and that was everyone, the older wizards having been called home from work due to the panic of Hermione's unexplained disappearance) when Mrs. Weasley cried their names and tugged Hermione away from the twins and pulled Harry along, too, the two teens being squeezed in a hug that was quite capable of dislodging their spines.

"Can't... Breathe," they gasped out, chuckles and laughter sounding in the room.

Mr. Weasley was able to pry his wife from them before giving them the once over and nodding to himself. When he noted the three Dursleys stood in the doorway, he felt his wife stiffen by his side and silently folded his arm around her waist, both to offer comfort and prevent her from scratching the Dursley woman's eyes out. From the corner of his eye, he spied Oliver's father mimicking his actions on his own wife.

"I'm unsure of what Sirius has told you, so, I'll start from the beginning," Hermione began, being sure to raise her voice to draw everyone's attention to her and away from the Dursleys. The tension in the room was stifling. "Bullet points... Premonition... Harry needed me... Attacked by three dementors... Escaped... Briefly explained the current goings on to the Dursleys... Attacked by approximately fifth dementors... Followed by thirteen Death Eaters... Defeated them all with zero injuries and we escaped to Hogwarts. Clear? Good," she continued, not allowing them the opportunity to ask further questions or derail her explanation.

"The Dursleys are now targets and after speaking with Dumbledore, the only current option is that they stay here for the time being, just until he is able to arrange a suitable safe house, something that I imagine won't take long. So, I'll give you the same warning I gave them. They don't like us, we don't like them but we must all occupy this house no matter how big a space it is. If you don't have anything nice to stay, keep your mouth closed or avoid them altogether. This isn't the place for fighting and arguing, not when we have Him waiting for us to make a mistake and slip up. Clear? Good."

"When you say you explained briefly?" Prompted Sirius, his gaze locked with Vernon Dursley in defiance and challenge.

"Stop it," she scowled at him.

He held his hands up in surrender before folding his arms across his chest and leaning back to perch on the armrest of the chair Ginny occupied, the tiny firecracker of a witch scowling at the Dursleys, something that made Sirius' mouth twitch in both pride and amusement as she stared them down unflinchingly.

"I told them what they needed to know... He hates me and Harry and he's after us, He's a magical Hitler that wants to eradicate muggles and that I'm a Siren and I've found my mate," she shrugged, seeing their eyes widen in horror. "Calm down," she rolled her eyes. "I was very vague, as I said, I only told them what they needed to know, if only to get them out the door as they refused to leave unless I did so."

"Should've left them to the dementors," muttered Ginny.

Remus' mouth twitched into a smirk despite his efforts to hide it, Sirius sniggered and Hermione chose to ignore her comment, just as she chose to ignore the twins sharing a fist bump behind her back and the winks they sent in Ginny's direction.

"A quick introduction and then I'll show them to their rooms and allow them a chance to get settled... We have Vernon, Petunia and their son, Dudley." She turned her back to her family and faced the Dursleys. "I won't bother wasting my breath on an introduction because one, I don't think you'll care enough to listen and two, I don't think you'll be here long enough to use their names."

"And that suits us just fine," Mr. Dursley said bravely.

"As it does us," she responded firmly. "Follow me," she instructed, briefly informing the others that she'd speak to them in greater detail when she returned, before taking her leave. "The kitchen is at the end of the hall... The study and library is on the right, for your safety, stay clear and it's my only warning."

She climbed two floors before stopping in the centre of the hall, turning to face the Dursleys, Hermione noting Dudley's and Vernon's flushed faces from the exertion of climbing the stairs.

"This is the third floor, it houses a second study, a smaller living room, a separate bathroom and four bedrooms, three of which, are already occupied. Dudley, that leaves you with this one. "

She reached out to the left, twisted the doorknob and pushed the door open, stepping back to allow him the opportunity to peek inside. She couldn't help the twitch of her lip when she saw his surprised expression. Whilst the room lacked colour as she hadn't gotten around to decorating it, it was clean and did house furniture including a large bed. And not only did it have an en-suite bathroom, but it was also almost double the size of his bedroom at Privet Drive.

"In case you have noticed yet, you do have an en-suite bathroom," she informed him, hearing his choked noise of surprise. "Harry and the twins also occupy this floor, as do Oliver and Ron... The twins' room, stay away, they're currently working on product development and we wouldn't want any accidents... Not after last year."

His eyes widened in horror and he made a squealing noise similar to a pig and all Hermione could picture was the incident in which Hagrid had illegally given him a pig's tail. Oh how she loved Harry for sharing that tale with her. She supposed she was being a little mean but she was enjoying herself. The twins were a bad influence sometimes. Actually, perhaps it was Sirius and Remus. The sandy-haired werewolf wasn't as innocent as he looked.

"I should probably warn you... The twins have recently passed their test and received their apparition licence... They're legally allowed to teleport and they've developed a habit of teleporting around the house, so watch where you're going. I'll leave you to get settled."

Turning, she silently crossed to the next flight of stairs, hearing Mr. Dursley's heavy breathing behind her as this staircase was steeper than the previous ones.

"The fourth floor houses four bedrooms and also a bathroom. Two rooms are currently occupied by Oliver's parents and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, so... We'll place you here, as far away from them as possible."

Opening the door, she stepped aside and allowed them to enter, their eyes slowly taking in the large and fully furnished room, sporting a colour scheme of plum and white.

"Suitable?" Hermione arched an eyebrow.

"If this is all you have to offer, it will have to do," Mrs. Dursley replied snootily.

Hermione took a slow, steady breath. Honestly, the only one that hadn't annoyed her that day was Dudley. Perhaps there was hope for him yet. His parents? Not a chance.

"Well, seeing as this room is newly refurbished, almost double the size of your own bedroom, boasts an impressive en-suite bathroom and possesses silk curtains that cost more than the mortgage for your house, I'm sorry we could not offer you more," she responded.

Okay, perhaps she'd been spending too much time with Ginny. The young witch had a way of bringing out someone's inner bitch, whether she meant to or not.

Mrs. Dursley flushed pink in embarrassment and outrage.

"Hopefully, it is but a few days in which you have to suffer within such horrid conditions. Lunch will be served soon, are you joining us?" She asked, receiving a glare from Mr. Dursley. "Very well, I will arrange for it to be brought to you. Be sure to not stain the bedding or carpet, Sirius will throw a hissy fit to rival all hissy fits."

She snorted when the door closed in her face before she returned to the living room, feeling the much calmer and less tense atmosphere almost immediately. As she crossed to take a seat on one of the empty beanbags, George caught her hand and tugged her to sit in-between him and Fred on the armchair they'd enlarged.

"What?" She asked, spying Remus' and Sirius' amused expressions.

"You're a hypocrite," Sirius answered.

"I don't know what you mean," she feigned ignorance.

He and Remus snorted.

"Unlike the others, we can hear you, Kitten," he reminded her.

"I was nice," she argued.

"Yeah, if that's nice, I'm terrified of meeting your bad side."

"Smart," chorused the twins.

"So, Love, you giving them a hard time?" Grinned George.

"Not really," she shrugged whilst "Yes," was said by Remus and Sirius and sniggers sounded in the room.

"I was nice," she repeated.

"If you say so," Sirius shrugged.

She scowled. "They've been pushing my buttons all bloody day," she grumbled, pushing her hand through her hair and dragging it back from her face. "Let's all just try to stay clear of them. There's no hope for Petunia or Vernon, but Dudley's barely spoken and he seems less hostile towards our magic use. His reaction to the house was vastly different from his parents, so there might be the possibility of something changing... Anyway, boys, do not apparate into their rooms, whether they are present or not."

"Can we prank them?" Fred negotiated. "It's been a while since we've had fresh meat."

"To keep the peace and prevent a backlash, I'd really rather you didn't but I'm not going to stop you."

"So don't get caught is what you're saying?" George clarified.

"No, it's not."

"Subtly, got it," Fred nodded.

"Yeah, say they just happen to stumble into a prank that was meant for someone else? That's such a shame."

"And bad timing," agreed Fred. "And say it happens more than once? Oooh, that's some incredibly bad luck they've gotten."

"Give me strength," Hermione grumbled, tiredly rubbing at her eyes. "Maji? Some help would be appreciated."

"I don't know what you mean, Dear," she smiled innocently and Hermione blinked in surprise. "My boys are perfect angels, they'd never harm a fly."

"Exactly, we'd never harm a fly," the twins chorused.

"Damn Prewett genes," Hermione muttered as sniggers and chuckles filled the room. "Harry?"

"What?"

"A little help?"

"With?" He tipped his head like a confused puppy.

"I hate you," she grumbled. "Remus?"

"Yes?" The sandy-haired man replied.

"Be the voice of reason," she all but pleaded.

He smiled and it wasn't his usual smile, no, this was one frightening. Mischievous.

"You're looking to the wrong person."

"You're the calm and collected one," she protested. "You always do what's best."

"And that's exactly what I'm doing now."

"How?" She demanded.

"Moony wants to bite them," he stated simply. "So, it's bite them or allow my need for justice to be satiated by less violent means."

"Bloody hell," she sighed. "Anyone else?"

She looked about the room, Mr. Weasley, Mr. Wood and Ron avoided her gaze, Bill and Charlie shook their heads, Mrs. Wood smiled sweetly and Ginny arched an eyebrow.

That only left Oliver and as she looked to him pleadingly, he looked about ready to cave until his mother caught his gaze. A panicked expression overtook his face, his eyes darting between them as he was suddenly forced to chose who he was most afraid of; his mother or his girlfriend.

Hermione sighed in defeat, slumped into the cushion behind her and buried her face in her hands, releasing a muffled noise of frustration.

"Fine!" She admitted defeat. "Be subtle, don't give them any evidence that proves they were the intended targets, nothing that's permanent and don't cause harm or injury."

"Best girlfriend ever!" The twins exclaimed proudly, each pressing overly dramatic kisses to her cheek.

"Whatever," she grumbled, lifting her head from her hands.

Mr. Weasley unexpectedly cleared his throat and shifted on his conjured chair before giving her a stern glance.

"You have some explaining to do, young lady."

"I know," she nodded. "And I'm sorry that I left without telling anyone."

"That was a very dangerous thing to do, You-Know-Who wants you dead," Remus added.

"Can we all agree to refer to him as Tommy? It's less horrifying and makes him sound like a toddler that throws himself to the ground and screams when he doesn't get what he wants... I'm sorry that I disappeared but I honestly didn't have the time to tell anyone what was happening, I wasn't entirely certain I knew myself. I just know that Harry was in danger and he needed me. I couldn't have stopped it even if I wanted to, my Siren instincts were too powerful to control or prevent."

"An' aside from what ye told us earlier, is there anything else we need tae know?" Mr Wood asked.

"The entire ambush was witnessed by three muggles, but I was able to alter their memories before they got away."

"And she did something with her magic I've never seen before," Harry added.

"And that is?" Sirius arched an eyebrow.

"We were outnumbered and I wasn't certain I could comfortably hold my shield in place for much longer, I could feel the drain on my magic, but I couldn't risk lowering the shield unless I had a way of taking them all out at once. And so I did. I'm not entirely sure how I did it, only that it worked. I cast Petrificus Totalus twelve simultaneous times."

"That's amazing," the twins muttered in surprise.

"An' ye have zero injuries?" Oliver checked.

"I'm fine, just a little tired, nothing some rest and food won't fix."

"Why did you use your wand so much?" Bill asked curiously. "We know you're a capable duellist without it, if not better."

"Underage magic, I didn't feel comfortable with Harry being the only one to be potentially punished, and I'd run the risk of drawing suspicion if I used too much wandless magic. Not only have I yet to perfect Obliviate without the use of my wand, when they check the spell log, they'll see I used only defensive spells and the Obliviate, proving that I was careful and ensured there were no muggle witnesses, and in doing so, I kept the secret of magic from the muggles whilst the Death Eaters were the ones to put it at risk."

"That's ingenious," Sirius murmured. "You're using their laws against them."

"I'll have to do a little digging in the library and brush up on the laws surrounding minors and magic use," she mused to herself. "If I can have you cleared of murder charges, getting us off on these underage magic charges should be a walk in the park. Anyway, I'm starving, what's on the menu today?" She asked, looking to Mrs. Weasley.

"Oh," she perked up, "We're having Harry's favourite," she answered.

She'd never seen Harry move so fast as he straightened his posture and righted his glasses on his nose.

"Homemade lamb casserole, mash potato and treacle tart for dessert?" He checked.

"Yes," the older redhead confirmed with a pleased smile at seeing him so happy from something as little as preparing his favourite dish. "And for dinner, we're having chicken and turkey with vegetables, roast potatoes and stuffing."

"Desert?" Ron asked.

"I'm baking," Hermione injected, snorting when they all sighed or groaned.

"Chocolate or regular sponge?" Ginny asked.

"Both," she shrugged.

"I love you," Ginny sighed.

"I just need ten minutes to set the table," said Mrs. Weasley and as she rose to her feet and headed for the kitchen, she didn't bat an eye when she was immediately followed by her children.

Those that weren't Weasleys shared amused glances before they decided to join the others in the kitchen, the sound already carrying halfway through the house and they'd barely taken their seats, Hermione sitting in-between the twins with Oliver and Harry opposite her.

As she patiently waited for lunch to be served, her eyes surveyed the newly refurbished kitchen and she admitted that it was the room in the house that took the longest to complete. With a colour scheme of lemon yellow and white, the space was bright, open and welcoming. The kitchen walls had been given a spruce of life with white paint and yellow accents, white tiles made up the flooring whilst the cupboard doors and kitchen drawers were yellow with silver bar handles.

With Sirius' approval and he'd been all too happy to give it, he'd had a blast skimming through the muggle catalogues with Hermione so they might purchase some muggle appliances for the kitchen, and after using the nearby phone box to place the order and having it delivered, the kitchen now boasted a white dishwasher, two large ovens, a white kettle and microwave, and a giant double door fridge-freezer.

It had taken some effort but Hermione and Bill had been able to put their heads together and create a solution for running the appliance on magic rather than electricity, but it does require the re-casting of the spell several times a week.

Unfortunately, showing Sirius the wonders of muggle catalogues and explaining the process of ordering over the phone and having the items delivered did come with a drawback. They were now receiving five to ten deliveries a day of completely random and useless products. He'd developed a bit of an addiction, something Remus thought was hilarious.

An overly expensive glass table sat close to the entrance door with a large number of padded chairs surrounding it and of course it had to be magically altered to comfortably fit the army of people that occupied the house. White marble made up the countertops and in the centre of the room sat a newly added kitchen island.

Before lunch was dished out, she'd reminded Mrs. Weasley to serve the Dursleys first otherwise there'd be nothing left and after the three trays had been magically delivered to the appropriate rooms (Hermione having dealt with the Dursleys enough for the day and everyone else refusing to do it by hand) they all tucked in.

As they finished with lunch, Oliver gave Hermione a kiss goodbye before returning to the stadium now that he knew she was safe, whilst his father and Mr. Weasley returned to work, too.

They all went their separate ways and Hermione returned to her bedroom so she might finish where'd she'd left off with her summer homework before she'd been pulled away to help Harry. Barely ten minutes passed before her book slipped from her hands and she almost fell from her bed as she startled.

"WHAT THE BLOODY FUCK! EXPULSION?! THEY CAN'T DO THAT! THEY HAVE NO RIGHT! FUCK THE GOD DAMNED MINISTRY!"

Hermione rubbed her hands over her face and released a slow breath. "Letters must be here," she muttered to herself, climbing from her bed and making her way towards the noise.

Unfortunately, it woke Mrs. Black's portrait.

"DISGUSTING HALF-BREEDS! YOU ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE IN THE HOUSE OF BLACK! THIS HOUSE IS OVERRUN WITH BLOOD TRAITORS! VERMIN! YOU BROUGHT FILTHFY MUGGLE VERMIN INTO MY HOUSE! THEY SHOULD BE KILLED!"

Oh, shut it, you old hag," she grouched before drawing the curtains closed and continuing on her way to the kitchen, stepping inside to see the kitchen dotted with people as they all silently observed Sirius as he paced back and forth.

"What's going on?" Hermione questioned.

Sirius halted to a stop and spun to face her.

"Expulsion! They're threatening you with expulsion from Hogwarts," he seethed, gripping a crumpled piece of parchment tightly as he shook his fist. She knew it was a serious subject matter but she couldn't help the snort that escaped. It was serious, but it comical, too.

"From what I remember, they can't do that as this is my first official warning and I have the right to a trial. Not only am I certain Dumbledore will help and no doubt has a plan up his sleeve given how crafty he is, what Harry and I did was done in self-defence. We protected not only others but we contained the mess. After a quick refresher session in the library, I'm sure I'll have a clearer understanding of the laws and I'll be able to put together a solid defence. I did it for you, I can do it for us, too. It's been a while since I challenged the Ministry. I'm actually looking forward to it," she grinned.

Sirius' mouth opened and closed comically before he blinked slowly, shook his head and cleared his throat.

"You're right, absolutely nothing to worry about, you've got this," Sirius said confidently, gleefully tearing the parchment in his hand into pieces before throwing them in the air and allowing them to rain on the ground.

"And seeing as I've been disturbed whilst studying twice today, I get the feeling I'm not getting anything done, so, shall I attempt a makeshift Quidditch pitch? "

The answer was instantaneous and expected and after retrieving the book she needed for reference, she headed for the garden, being unsurprised to see everyone present with the adults perched on conjured chairs courtesy of Mrs. Wood.

Hermione continued towards the centre of the small garden before kneeling on the ground and searching through the pages for the correct extract.

"You're certain no one will see this?" She asked distractedly.

"The Fidelius covers the garden," Sirius answered. "No matter how big or high you make it, no one will see it."

After finding the correct page she shifted to get more comfortable, sitting on the ground and folding her legs whilst she set the book in her lap and silently read the pages.

She'd already attempted the spell before and whilst she could cast it with her wand and she'd learned to do it wandlessly, non-verbally was a little trickier. Setting the book aside once she'd finished with it, she pressed her hands against the ground, warm blades of grass slipped through her parted fingers and her nails digging into the mud beneath.

Closing her eyes, controlling her breath, centring her magic and focusing her mind, she muttered,

" Capacious Extremis."

As the ground began to shake, she ignored the worried calls of her names and pushed more of her magic into the earth beneath her, feeling the shaking grow more violent until a thundering crack sounded and it halted to a sudden stop.

Inhaling deeply and fighting the effects of the dizziness, she slowly climbed to her feet and scanned her new surroundings, proudly noting there was more than enough space for an actual Quidditch pitch.

"Big enough?" She cheeked.

"I'd so say, Kitten," Sirius snorted.

Turning her back to them and with the hardest part of the job done, she quickly and efficiently resized the pre-bought hoops and set them in their correct positions; three hoops on either side of the pitch. And that was it.

"I'd wait half an hour to let the magic settle in the ground but it's otherwise done."

"I wasn't expecting an actual pitch," Ginny commented.

Hermione snorted. "As if I'd give you anything else," she rolled her eyes.

"What are you doing now?" Ginny asked, noting that Hermione was heading across the garden and towards the top left corner.

"Buckbeak's housing," she called over her shoulder.

She'd never thought Sirius' new obsession with muggle shopping would come in handy but she'd noticed a delivery crate earlier in the day and with it, she was able to transfigure a suitable and cosy barn, meaning the hippogriff no longer had to live in the attic.

"Is it time yet?" Harry asked impatiently once she'd returned.

"It should be fine," she confirmed, snorting when the majority of them disappeared into the house to retrieve their brooms and the equipment.

"Teams?" Hermione questioned once they all returned, Hermione soon noting there was an odd number and as made to comment, her attention was drawn as Oliver and his father stepped into the garden, also and unexpectedly being followed by Cedric Diggory.

"What are you doing back?" She asked him, happily accepting his kiss in greeting.

"Coach gave us the rest af the day aff. A like what yer've done with the place," he remarked, his eyes darting about the garden-turned-pitch.

"Cedric, what are you doing here?"

"I ran into Oliver at the Puddlemere Stadium. After I graduate, there may be a place for me as the Reserve Seeker," replied the Hufflepuff.

"That's great," she beamed.

"Dumbledore gave him the address," Oliver spoke, answering her unasked question. "His father's an old Order member, so..." He trailed off with a shrug.

"Okay. Do you want to join in; we have an uneven number for the teams?"

They'd barely taken any convincing and soon the teams were split into Fred, George, Harry, Oliver, Remus and Sirius, against Bill, Charlie, Cedric, Ron, Ginny and Mr. Wood.

"We'll play with two chasers rather than three," Hermione decided as they were two players short.

After Fred, George, Bill and Charlie retrieved the beater bats and flew into position, Hermione changed the colours of everyone's shirts, Harry's team being black and Ginny's white.

With Hermione in position, the quaffle was thrown into play, the whistle was blown and Mrs. Wood released the snitch and bludgers from the ground.

Hermione blew the whistle and threw the quaffle into the air, preparing herself for a long game.

After dinner, Hermione returned to her room, wishing to have a third and final attempt at completing her summer homework before she called it quits for the days. After kicking off her shoes and making herself comfortable on her bed, she was unsurprised when barely fifteen minutes later, she gave a yelp of fright when Fred apparated into her bedroom and unceremoniously landed sprawled across her bed, which resulted in Hermione whacking him in the arm with her textbook.

"You idiot, I could've hurt you. You should know better than to sneak up on a powerful, half transformed teenaged Siren," she scolded and he snorted at her. "You need to work on your landing," she critiqued before finding where she'd left off and continued with her reading.

"What? Don't I get a kiss?"

"And why would I give you a kiss?" She arched an eyebrow but her eyes remained on the book.

"Because I was injured during the match," he pointed out.

"I healed you," she sang.

"My team won the match," he gloated.

"But if I gave you a kiss that means that I would have to kiss the others, too. It's only fair."

He sighed dramatically before stealing her book from her hand and holding it out of her reach.

"Freddie, I have homework..."

His mouth pressed against hers, not only cutting off her words but succeeding in distracting her when his tongue traced the seam of her lips and she parted for him, her hands fisting into his t-shirt.

"You were saying?" His mouth twitched into a smirk.

"Homework; never mind, I can do it later," she muttered, being the one to fuse their mouths back together.

Tugging him by his t-shirt, she shifted until she lie on her back and she pulled him against her, Fred propping himself up on his elbows so he didn't crush her with his heavier weight. She didn't agree and wanted him closer, tugging until he did as she wished and only then did she release her grip, her hands slipping beneath his t-shirt, her fingers ghosting over the warm skin of his lower back. He visibly shuddered.

As she rolled them until she was comfortably straddling him, she drew back for oxygen but her mouth quickly latched onto the skin of his neck, feeling Fred's warm hands slip beneath her t-shirt to hold her hips, his calloused fingers ghosting patterns against her skin, drawing forth a shiver and goosebumps.

She stilled when her hips rocked against him and the action tore a strangled noise from the back of his throat. Drawing back and peering down at him, she noted his dishevelled clothing, red and swollen lips, glassy eyes and she was quite aware of the hardened length pressed against her. All thoughts of homework were forgotten.

Her stomach flipped, her heart raced in her chest and her breath hitched. She hadn't gone any further than kissing, or at least, not for a lack of trying, but staring down at Fred and with their current positioning, all those pent up emotions and feelings came flooding back to her. She barely blinked when she realised she'd locked and silenced the door, preventing anyone from disturbing them. Well, unless they apparated into the room and if that were the case, she'd be pissed.

Fred watched in a trance as her eyes changed right before him; the chocolate brown he adored so much was gone, replaced by a colour so dark it was almost onyx and he could see his own reflection. As she stared down at him, bestowing him with love, passion and heat, her eyes finally fluttered closed and she pressed her mouth against his.

Her hands slipped beneath his clothing, her fingertips tickling at his skin until he shivered and after pulling him into a seating position, the thought had barely crossed her mind before she was reaching for the hem of his t-shirt and drawing it up his body until it cleared his head and found purchase on the ground.

Pushing him onto his back once more, her mouth moved to bestow kisses to his newly uncovered skin, tracing every freckle, ridge, line and sculptured muscle from years of playing Quidditch, and she followed the small patch of barely visible hair that started at his navel and disappeared under the waistband of his jeans.

Her hands replaced her mouth, leaving a blaze of tingling skin in its wake. Unhappy that he couldn't give her the same attention, he used his larger form and strength to gently settle her on her back and he hovered above her, his hands burying under her t-shirt, tickling over her flat stomach. Similar to George, Fred's hands hesitated when he came into contact with the fabric of her bra and she forced her eyes to open and lock with his.

"It's okay," she promised, and much to his surprise, she barely batted an eyelash as she dug her hands between them, gripped the hem of her t-shirt and tugged it up and over her head, having to shift beneath him to do so without obstacle.

He felt his mouth go dry and his heart pound against his ribcage as he peered down at her, hair wild and covering the pillow like a halo, cheeks flushed pink, mouth red and swollen and her chest rising and falling with each accelerated breath she took, bringing further attention to her breasts held snugly in the cream lace bra she sported.

Drawing him into a kiss, he sighed and his hands slowly found their way to her breasts, cupping, kneading and squeezing carefully, not wishing to hurt her. When his head grew fuzzy, his mouth trailed from her mouth and across her cheek, over her jaw and down her neck, his mouth licking, nipping, kissing and sucking at her flushed skin. As he moved lower, his mouth flittered over her chest, taking his cues from her and the soft, little noises that slipped from her mouth.

Panting, mewling and wriggling beneath him, Hermione folded her legs around his waist to hold him against her, her hands alternating between gripping his shoulders and biceps and tugging at his hair as they instinctively began to rock their hips together, both searching for that friction they craved.

His mouth bestowed kisses to her stomach, a breathless giggle escaping her when he tickled her belly button before she tugged him back to her mouth, using what little leverage she had to roll them until she was the one on top. His hands settled on her hips, helping to guide her in movements of rocking their bodies against one another and she tore her mouth from his, her hands helping to prop up her weight as they pressed against the mattress on either side of his head, her hair surrounding them like a curtain and their gazes locked, brown to turquoise.

Hermione could feel it building within her. Her breath was catching and she was becoming light-headed. Something was tightening in her stomach and she knew that soon she would find relief.

"I'm so close," she breathed out, feeling it building, feeling a coil in her stomach tightening until it couldn't anymore.

As Fred's hands tightened on her hips and he doubled his efforts, finally she felt it. Her hands twisted into the bedding, her eyes closed, her heart pounded and stars seemed to burst before her eyelids when a tidal wave rocked through her. She'd tried to be quiet but a cry broke free of her lips and as her arms shook with the effort of her holding her tired, sated up, she felt Fred's hips moving beneath hers, she felt his face burying against her shoulder and his rhythm slowed to a stop.

Finally, she thought.

Slumping into the bed, he pulled her against him and she shifted to get more comfortable, laying beside him with her leg draped over his and her arm over his stomach as he held her close, their breathing being the only sound in the room.

When the minutes had passed, Hermione cast a quick and simple charm to clean them up, Fred pressed a kick to her forehead and then she shifted until she was lying beside him on her stomach, her arms propping her up and her legs crossed at the ankles.

"How long?" Fred voiced, folding his hands against his stomach and turning his head to look at her.

She smiled at him sleepily, knowingly. "Not long," Hermione promised. "She's getting impatient and anxious."

"Impatient and anxious?" He echoed in confusion and concern.

"She's impatient because she wants you. All of you. She wants you to be hers, to be ours and she wants me, us, to be yours. Once the ceremony's complete only death can take you from us and vice versa. And she's anxious due to the current politics; she's worried that something might happen before our bonds are sealed. The only thing that's keeping her sane is that you're with here me and safe and He doesn't know about you, George or Oliver."

"If you had to guess?" He pressed.

She bit her lip in thought. "Fifth year, maybe?"

He smiled at the news. That was no longer than a year. In less than a year, their bonds would be sealed and everyone would be safer.

"Do you know anything new about the Mating Ceremony?"

"Now that you mention it," she trailed off, her eyes closing and her brow furrowing before she nodded slowly and then looked to him once more. "She's just divulged a little more, to help put us both at ease. The ceremony must be completed individually and then all together. From what she told me, we can't be interrupted because she'll deem it as a threat and in response, she'll do anything to protect you. And it varies in length, some ceremonies may only take a few hours but others have been known to take up to seven days."

"Seven days alone with just us? Sounds good to me. Do you know who gets the honour of being your first? Or are we just playing it by ear?"

She felt her cheeks flush with heat and Fred's mouth twitched in amusement, but not wanting to give him further ammunition, she answered without further delay.

"Oliver, that's the feeling I'm getting at least," she tipped her head slightly, her eyes seeming to glaze over for a moment. "It's Oliver," she confirmed confidently. "She's a little more possessive of him than with you and George, she knows."

"She knows?" He parroted, arching an eyebrow questioningly. "She knows what?"

"She knows that whilst he'll be my first, I won't be his. It's a territorial thing."

"How do you know that?"

"She can sense it," she shrugged half-heartedly.

Fred gave her a sheepish expression. "George and I knew. He mentioned it our third year and it was before we found out about you. He's felt guilty ever since and he hasn't been with anyone else."

"I know, once a Siren and her mate find each other they don't want to be with anyone else, and once mated, they can't be with anyone else. The Siren, she doesn't know who it was with or when exactly, but even after the years that have passed, there's still a strange a... Scent... Aura... That surrounds Oliver and it won't fade until after the bonds are sealed and it's been replaced by my own magical energy, it's one of the reasons I'm so affectionate with him. My magical energy replaces the faint traces of the ones that surround him, at least for a short while. But from that aura, I know he's been with three separate women and I can guesstimate he was between the age of fifteen and sixteen at the time."

"You should talk to him," Fred advised. "He's been worrying about the day that you found out and it might help to alleviate his guilt."

"I don't blame him and I'm not angry. I admit, the Siren doesn't like it and she is a little upset, but even she knows that most mated pairs don't find each other until adulthood. We were lucky to have met so young and to have gotten the chance to grow together. Oliver didn't know and neither did I. There's no one to blame."

Fred pushed himself up into a seating position and brushed a hand through his hair, his hand falling to her collar bone and spying the red fading mark left behind from his mouth. Thankfully, it was easily coverable.

"I've a feeling someone's going to come looking for us soon. We should probably tell the others the updated info on the ceremony, the non-invasive parts, at least," said Fred.

Hermione nodded in agreement and after quickly climbing from the bed, they both slipped on their shirts and did their best to make themselves look more presentable. As she headed for the door, Fred reached out and took her hand in his, pulling her to a stop and turning her to face. She peered up at him in confusion, seeing his gaze slowly tracing the features of her face.

"I love you," he declared.

Hermione's mouth pulled into a smile. "I know, I love you, too," she promised.

After pressing a kiss to her forehead, he was the one to unlock the door and lead the way down to the others.

Chapter Sixty-Two

12 Grimmauld Place – Wednesday 19th July 1995

As Hermione and Fred entered the main living room, it was occupied to almost full capacity with everyone having convened after dinner. Sirius, Bill and Charlie were crowded together as they sipped at fire whiskey and conversed, Remus' attention was held by a book but he did occasionally look towards Harry and Ron when something particularly violent occurred with the chess pieces on the wizarding chessboard whilst George offered commentary, Oliver was humouring Ginny after she'd begged him to play exploding snap and the parents were chatting amongst themselves.

"Hello, Dears," Mrs. Weasley greeted after noticing their arrival.

"Family meeting?" Hermione asked.

The redhead gave her a curious glance but other nodded, calling the attention of the others.

"So, what's this about, Kitten?" Sirius asked, drinking the last of the amber liquid in his tumbler before setting it aside on the ground by his feet.

"Harry, Ginny, Ron, leave the room, please?" Hermione said, feeling uncomfortable.

"Why? What can you tell them that you can't tell us?" Harry frowned.

"It's nothing personal, Harry," she began, their gazes locking. "It's just an uncomfortable subject."

After a few moments of silence, Harry slowly nodded and rose to his feet.

"We'll give you some privacy," he agreed.

"I'm not leaving, whatever you say to them you can say to us," Ginny argued, stubbornly folding her arms over her chest.

"I'm not going either," Ron added.

"Ron, mate, leave it alone," Harry warned, his tone clear that his own annoyance with their behaviour was growing. It was none of their business and Hermione clearly didn't feel comfortable with speaking freely with them in the room.

"Anything she wants to tell them she can tell us," he protested.

"It's about the Mating Ceremony," Hermione snapped in annoyance, Ronald's reaction involving his face flushing and him struggling to respond as he stuttered. "Ronald, I suggest you leave before I create a hex just for you."

Ron took her threat seriously and was quick to leave, Harry following after him and dragging Ginny along, all but shoving her through the door and closing it behind him. To prevent them from attempting to listen in, she was wise to cast a Silencing Charm before Fred ushered her towards the couch, Hermione sitting in-between him and George whilst Oliver automatically moved closer to her, sitting by her feet.

"The Mating Ceremony?" Mr. Weasley prompted, his eyes darting between the Siren and her mates.

"Is it time, Dear?" Oliver's mother asked, her hope and excitement unhidden in both her tone and body language.

"Not yet," she shook her head, seeing her deflate. "But I can feel it's getting closer, I think it might happen during my fifth year."

"And you wish to start planning," Mrs. Weasley suspected.

"For what I can," Hermione agreed. "She's made me aware of some of the aspects involved but the rest won't be revealed until the Mating Ceremony itself. I'm not comfortable revealing all of the details that I now know, but I will explain in full detail to George and Oliver later."

"That's understandable," Charlie nodded. "Sirens are highly private beings and we're broaching on the subject of highly intimate details of the sealing of bonds between mates."

"What do you feel comfortable sharing?" Remus questioned, putting his book aside and leaning forward.

"Well, I know enough to start making a plan regarding location, things that may be needed... Excuses?"

"Excuses?" Oliver's father echoed, arching an eyebrow.

"The Mating Ceremony can take between a few hours and seven days."

"Seven days?" Mrs. Weasley spluttered in surprise, whilst George and Oliver looked rather pleased at the possibility of being alone with Hermione for so long.

"Hence the possible need for an excuse. If it does happen whilst we're at school, we don't want anyone getting suspicious should we be missing for so long. We need to be isolated from everyone else in a safe, comfortable and secure environment. We can't be disturbed during the ceremony otherwise the Siren may see it as a threat..."

"And she'll do anything to protect her mates," Charlie finished.

"Exactly," Hermione agreed. "So if the ceremony does take more than a few hours we'll need access to food and drink, and if that's the case, I think the only option would be to use a house-elf, one of the few beings the Siren won't believe to be a threat. Again, depending on the length of the ceremony, we might need access to a bathroom. As for location, we need to make a decision. Should it happen whilst at Hogwarts, will we be given a separate, isolated room? Will we be taken off school grounds and brought home? Will we be taken to a secure location? What excuse will we use? And Oliver's training schedule?"

"A can see why we need tae form a plan," Oliver's mother mused thoughtfully, her eyes darting between them.

"We don' need tae worry 'boot me training, Coach already knows tha' Hermione's a Siren an' am her mate," Oliver explained.

"WHAT?!"

"I think we forgot to mention that part," said Hermione.

"He saw me bond mark an' explained tha' his Grandmother was a Siren. He grew up with them an' understands the bond, so he's been givin' mae a lot af leeway an' covers fer mae when a have tae leave early or somethin's wrong. But he only knows 'boot mae, no one else."

"He's trustworthy?" Sirius checked.

"Aye, a believe so," Oliver nodded.

"For an excuse during school time, maybe we say we've caught a contagious illness and we've been quarantined? Coach Burton can use the same excuse for Oliver."

"That could work," Bill nodded. "And location?"

"I don't know. I just know we need to be somewhere comfortable, safe and secure. Somewhere we can't be disturbed and only a house-elf can enter."

"That makes things difficult," George sighed, brushing his hair back from his eyes and absentmindedly fitting his hand around Hermione's.

"You can use this place," Sirius offered. "You already have everything you might possibly need and we can lock it down so no one can disturb you. It's already protected with the wards and Fidelius, we can shut down the floo and stay elsewhere until the ceremony's complete."

"This is a family home now and things might be a little awkward afterwards," she replied.

"With the size of Hogwarts and should it be necessary, I'm sure there'll be a hidden room or chamber that might be used," said Bill.

"Or there's other Black properties available," Sirius added.

"There is?" Hermione questioned in surprise.

"The Blacks have a history of hoarding," he shrugged. "There's a few unknown and unlisted properties throughout Europe, each one a viable option, it'd just require a little fixing up and some updated wardings."

"I can do that," Bill injected.

"That could work," Hermione agreed. "But won't the properties be fitted with blood wards? Or potential magics that might harm anyone less than a Pureblood?"

"Ah, didn't think of that?" He admitted with a frown.

"Still, it's an option. As for house-elves, I think we'll need two so they might swap shifts should it be needed.

"Who'd you have in mind?" Fred asked.

"Bopsy and Kreacher."

"Kreacher?" Sirius scoffed, looking at her as though he thought she was mental. "Bopsy I understand... But Kreacher?"

"He's just lonely," she defended. "And it's not his fault that he lived in a volatile, cruel environment with blood supremacists, he was here with your parents a lot longer than you were, and taking into account the master-elf bond, his behaviour and opinions are understandable. He doesn't know anything else and it's our responsibility to show him otherwise."

Pursing his lips, he folded his arms over his chest and leaned back into the cushions behind him.

"I believe that's everything for now. Sirius, call for Kreacher."

"Why? I'm trying to avoid the little monster."

Her glare was frightening and Sirius wisely kept any further comments to himself as he called for the grumpy house-elf.

"Blood traitors," the little being grumbled as he appeared in the room. "Master called for Kreacher," he croaked, refusing to look at Sirius as he kept his eyes on the floor.

He was an old house-elf; he shuffled when he walked and with his back slightly hunched, like an old man using a walking stick. He wore a dirty, stained pillowcase, his face was wrinkled, his nose large and pointed, his ears curled at the tips and his hands were bandaged from a previous injury caused through self-punishment.

"Miss. Blake wishes to speak to you and I expect you to treat her with respect," Sirius warned darkly.

"Yes, Master," the elf sneered before turning towards Hermione.

"Kreacher, please meet me by Mistress Black's portrait in five minutes," she instructed before he took his leave. Standing to her feet, she said, "George, I'll speak with you in about an hour and then I'll meet with Oliver."

After their nods of agreement, Hermione pressed kisses to their cheeks before heading for the door, being unsurprised that when she opened it, Ron and Ginny unexpectedly stumbled forward and landed in a pile of tangled limbs on the ground. Arching an amused eyebrow at their attempt to eavesdrop and being caught, she stepped over them and headed down the hall, hearing Mrs. Weasley cry,

"YOU TWO ARE GROUNDED! HOW DARE YOU TRY AND LISTEN IN ON A PRIVATE CONVERSATION?"

"They were caught, I see?" Remarked Harry from his position perched on the staircase.

"Red-handed," Hermione nodded, hearing Harry's snorting laugh as she approached Mrs. Black's portrait and then drew the curtains open. "I'm about to divulge some sensitive information to Kreacher and I need you to order him to secrecy."

"Why would I do that?" The portrait sneered.

"I'll tell the Dark Lord, my cousin, that you refused to help when I asked for it. I'm sure he won't mind, he's very understanding."

The woman in the portrait paled as her eyes widened in fear.

"No, no! I'll do it."

"Wonderful," Hermione smiled triumphantly. "Any and all information divulged must not be repeated to another creature, being or soul, including yourself... Ah, right on time," said Hermione as Kreacher appeared by her side, staring up at the portrait adoringly. "Well, we don't have all night," she prompted.

The woman cleared her throat and shifted on the chair she occupied before looking down to Kreacher, her expression pinched and cruel.

"Kreacher," she barked nastily, startling the old elf. "I order you to secrecy when conversing with this woman. All content must be kept private and you are forbidden from sharing anything you may learn with another, including myself. "

"Even if you order him to," Hermione prompted.

"Disregard any order I may give you to share what you have learned. This will be and is a permanent order and supersedes any I may otherwise give. "

"Yes, Mistress," the elf croaked.

"Thank you, you have been most helpful and I'll be sure to inform my cousin," said Hermione before she reached out and drew the curtains closed, rolling her eyes to herself. That was too easy, she thought. "Kreacher, please meet me in my room in five minutes."

"Why were you talking to Mrs. Black's portrait?" Harry asked as she passed him in the hallway on her way to the staircase.

"I had her instruct Kreacher not to share anything I tell him with anyone else."

"Why didn't you just ask Sirius to do it for you?"

"Kreacher's more loyal to Mrs. Black than she is to Sirius. To him, her word is law. And after a thinly veiled threat regarding Tommy, she was more than willing to co-operate."

"Only you," he sighed, unsurprised.

Leaving him, she returned to her bedroom and spent a few moments tidying away her summer homework and reading material before taking a seat on her bed, Kreacher arriving moments later.

"Miss. Blake wishes to see Kreacher," he croaked, standing before her.

She startled slightly due to his silent arrival before locking and silencing the door with a simple wave of her hand.

"Yes, Kreacher, come and join me on the bed," she offered, patting the space beside her in invitation. His eyes darted between her face and hand, appearing highly uncomfortable and confused. "It's okay, Kreacher; I want to be able to talk to you like a friend"

"Kreacher is not friends with blood traitors," he spat.

"I'm not a Pureblood, Kreacher, and therefore I can't be a blood traitor. And neither am I a Muggleborn; I'm something else entirely and I wish to share that with you. So, join me." She patted the mattress once more and he begrudgingly climbed atop whilst grumbling out insults. "Firstly, my parents were Spencer and Amy Blake, my mother's maiden name being White. What many don't know it that my mother was a Siren."

With the widening of his eyes, Hermione worried they might fall out of his head.

"You a Siren, Miss. Blake," he surmised.

"I am, yes," she nodded, offering a small smile. "However, I am different from most Sirens as I do not have one mate but four. The Dark Lord now wishes to mill me and my mates as I refused to aid his cause. Thankfully, he is unaware of their identities."

"Harming your mates would harm you," the old elf remarked without his usual sneer. In fact, if Hermione wasn't mistaken, there was a crease in his forehead that hadn't been there before.

"Yes, it would. This is one of the reasons we are refusing to aid with his cause and believe in ideals. We have chosen to protect the people we love rather than help destroy innocent civilians. Wouldn't a house-elf do anything for the family they serve, Kreacher?" She asked, seeing him nod slowly in response. "And so you can understand that even if my family are considered blood traitors, they have not betrayed each other? They have chosen life and love over death."

"I can," he muttered.

"My mates are currently in Grimmauld - Oliver, Fred and George. Harry is considered a sibling mate," she explained. "And for them, I would do anything that ensures their safety and that ensures our future is protected, and that most certainly means I will fight against Him. I will fight for everyone in this house, including you, Kreacher. I wish to be your friend."

Kreacher's head lowered, seeing the now brilliant white colouring of his pillowcase and he slowly looked to her, his expression difficult for her to decipher, knowing she was the cause.

"As you likely know, Sirens a Mating Ceremony but mine has yet to occur, and when it does, I would be honoured if you were to help."

"Miss. Blake wishes for Kreacher to help?" He questioned, his surprise evident with his wide eyes and quiet voice.

"Yes, I need two trusted house-elves to possibly help with the ceremony and I trust you to be one of them. It is unknown how long it may take for the ceremony to be complete and as such, my mates and I may require a few essentials of food, drink and clothing, possibly someone to guard the ceremony site, too. Would you like to help?"

"Miss. Blake, Kreacher would be honoured to help a Siren and her mates," he replied, tears welling in his large, dark eyes.

"That's wonderful," she beamed. "Now, I imagine you are quite bored having a lack of chores to complete."

"The house is clean and the redheaded lady does not let Kreacher in the kitchen," he said sadly.

"I will speak with Mrs. Weasley and try to convince her otherwise. Or perhaps you might help me bake? Given the number of occupants, it is a time-consuming task and I would love to have some help. Perhaps you know a recipe I don't and we might try something new."

"Miss. Blake is too kind to Kreacher."

"I only treat others as I wish for them to treat me... Unless they deserve it," she corrected. "I can see you are in pain, might I heal your injuries?"

"Wizarding magic cannot heal house-elves," he replied.

"But I'm not the average witch," she reminded, moving to crouch before him and without further comment, she lifted her hand and pressed her palm against his forehead. After taking a moment to control the flow of her magic and concentrate on her intention, she drew back with a smile, seeing his stunned expression.

She almost startled with his sudden and unexpected movement of jumping from the bed and landing perfectly on his feet, standing flawlessly straight and without pain. As he walked a small length of the room in a daze, Hermione noted that he looked far younger than he did before. Many of the wrinkles had smoothed out, his skin appeared lighter and his eyes were brighter. The years had dropped from him.

"Thank you, Miss. Blake," he said graciously, bowing before her.

"You're welcome. Will you please show me where it is you sleep?"

Without hesitation, he nodded and reached for her hand, transporting her to the hallway that led to the basement. When Kreacher gestured to a small cupboard, Hermione pursed her lips unhappily and drew open the door, seeing the rumpled blankets on the floor and the myriad of trinkets and items that were shoved into a messy pile. It seems he was a bit of a hoarder.

"Now this most certainly won't do," she said aloud, her hands settling on her hips as her brow furrowed in thought. "Let's see about finding you more suitable accommodations. Perhaps the attic? Yes, that's perfect," she nodded to herself. "Given that it is getting late in the evening, we'll make a start in the morning. Anyway, from now on, will you please refrain from insulting the others? You don't have to be nice the muggles... But don't tell anyone I said that," she mock-whispered, her mouth twitching when he cracked a smile.

"Kreacher will do his best to behave, Miss Blake."

"Wonderful. It's getting late and if we're to ready the attic tomorrow, we should both get some rest so we might be on top form. Let's get you some tea before bed," she suggested.

Silently, Kreacher took her hand and transported her to the kitchen where they prepared a pot of tea. Once done, the tea tray was levitated to the living room whilst she and Kreacher stepped in hand in hand, the room immediately falling silent.

"Kreacher thought it would be a nice idea to say goodnight before he headed to bed. He helped me make tea," she explained and with a flick of her wrist, teacups and saucers floated towards Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Wood. "He has kindly accepted to play a role in the Mating Ceremony should we require his help. He has also agreed to assist me when baking, and would appreciate it if he might be allowed to help with preparing meals."

"Oh, of course," Mrs. Weasley agreed after snapping out of her surprise.

"Excellent. I wish to inform you that the attic is not off limits and is not to be accessed by anyone. From tomorrow, it is to be Kreacher's new accommodations, understood? Lovely. Do you feel you are ready to retire for the evening, Kreacher?" She asked the little elf.

"Goodnight, Miss. Blake, Master... Miss. Blake's family." He bowed before accepting the tea Hermione offered and then he was gone from the room.

"What did you do to him?" Sirius whispered in surprised horror.

"I treated him with kindness," she folded her arms over her chest and gave a smug smile. "I've been telling you for weeks that showing a little compassion can go a long way."

"I've never seen him smile before," he muttered, giving his head a shake, his wavy hair falling into his face. "You spent twenty minutes with him and he's a completely different house-elf... You're something else, Kitten."

Hermione knocked before stepping into the twins' bedroom, briefly admiring the newly changed decor. With a colour scheme of orange and magenta, they clashed horribly and chaotically but the twins had been adamant they use those colours. Several cauldrons were perched on small single desks, and piles of products in different stages of development sat beneath the window.

Closing the door behind her, she crossed to the bed and climbed on, moving to snuggle against George who'd been waiting for her, her head resting on his chest and his arm folding around her.

"What'd you want to talk about?"

"The aspects of the ceremony I wasn't comfortable mentioning before the others. From what I can gather, it's quite simple. We each have to complete the bond individually and then in order to seal the bond that connects you, Fred and Oliver, we have to do it together. How that works, I won't know until it's time."

"Who's your first? Do to you know?"

"She wants Oliver; she knows he isn't a virgin and wants to basically stake her claim on him."

"You know?" He questioned in surprise

"Yes, I know that he's been with at least three women and I know it was when he fifteen to sixteen," she confirmed.

"Bloody hell," he muttered. "How?"

"She can sense it. There's a faint trace surrounding him and it won't fade until our bond's complete and it's replaced by mine. She feels irritated and upset but she otherwise understands; he was four years older than us at the time and neither of us knew. Girls are always after him. And it's common for a Siren and her mate to not be virgins, or at least, for the mate not to be."

"And that's it? There's no other reason?" He probed, feeling she was holding something back.

"I don't know if it's silly, but I suppose I want each of you to have my firsts."

"Firsts?"

"You're the first I admitted my love to, Oliver will get my virginity and Fred was my first kiss and..."

"And? And what?" He prompted when she hesitated, peering down at her to see she'd buried her face against his chest but he still noted the pink tint to her skin. "Okay, now I'm intrigued."

She mumbled something he didn't hear or understand.

"What?... Nope, sorry, Love, didn't catch that. Louder for those at the back," he teased.

"Orgasm," she squeaked.

George fell silent and he arched an eyebrow. "Really? And when was this?"

"Before the meeting," she admitted.

George stared before he threw his head back and burst into laughter.

"That sneaky git! I knew he wasn't preparing potion ingredients!"

Pushing herself up and away from him, she scowled down at him before her own laughter bubbled free and once she calmed she said,

"I best talk to Oliver."

"See you later tonight?"

"Probably, I don't like being away from you for too long."

After sharing a kiss, she climbed from the bed and took her leave, crossing to the room directly opposite twins'. The door was already open and so she stepped inside, being unsurprised to see Oliver lounging on his bed as he read through one of his Quidditch playbooks.

With his room finally complete, it held the colour scheme of midnight blue, white and yellow; Puddlemere United colours. A soft blue carpet lay beneath their feet, playbooks were piled high on his chest of drawers, cushions littered the floor after he'd kicked them off the bed, a collection of photos sat on the desk and a one of Hermione perched on his bedside table.

At her entrance, he shifted until he was propped up by the pillows and he set his playbook on the nightstand, giving her his full attention. She smiled before climbing on the bed and cuddling against him.

"What did ye want tae talk aboot?" He asked, pressing a kiss to her forehead, chuckling when she snuggled against him like a kitten searching for warmth. "Yer such a kitten," he teased.

"Not when I'm mad," she pointed out.

"Aye, tha's when the claws come oot," he agreed. "Yer Patronus suits ye well."

"I just wanted to tell you things I couldn't tell the others." She pushed away from him, turned until she faced him and then crossed her legs. "As I told the twins, we each have to seal the bond individually and then all together so the bond connecting you as my mates can be sealed, but I don't know how that's to happen yet and I don't think I will until the actual ceremony," she explained. "And she wants you to be my first."

"Me?" He tipped his head. "Why not Fred or George?"

"She knows."

His face was the perfect expression of confusion. "Ye know what?"

"Ollie," she began softly, preparing for his reaction. "We know."

It took only three seconds before she noticed the change. His expression fell, guilt surfacing as his eyes pleaded with her to forgive him, terrified that she wouldn't. She'd never seen him so afraid; so distraught as his eyes watered with unshed tears. He looked about ready to bolt and so she moved until she straddled his lap, her hands settling on either side of his face and holding him in place so their gazes could remain locked, her thumbs swiping over his cheekbones in a soothing gesture.

"It's okay," she whispered.

He shook his head vehemently. "It's not," he disagreed. "A feel like a've betrayed ye," he choked, pain and sadness clouding his voice. She'd never seen Oliver so distraught, filled with so much self-loathing.

"You didn't betray me. You didn't know that I was your mate and I didn't know that you were mine. I know you've celibate since finding out about me."

"Hoo'd ye find oot? Did the twins tell ye?"

"No, and they didn't have to. She can sense it. We know there's been three separate women whilst you were between the ages of fifteen and sixteen. We're not mad, we understand. After doing the math, I discovered it took my parents ten years to find each other. Do you think they were virgins when they met? Not likely. It's common to be in this situation. The only way I would've felt betrayed is if you had found out that I was your mate and you rejected me and continued to sleep with other women. I don't care about when it happened. I don't care about how it happened. I don't care about where it happened. And I certainly don't care to know who it happened with."

Taking her hand from his face, she removed her necklace and reached for his right hand with her left, removing his cuff bracelet. When their bond marks stood proudly on display, Hermione moved her right hand and traced her bond mark and she lifted his right hand and placed it against the junction on her neck over his mark.

"This proves that you didn't betray me. You are loyal to me and you always have been. You gave yourself to me. Maybe not your virginity... But I'm much luckier than the girls that you have been with. I'm lucky because you gave me everything; your heart, your soul, your magic, your life, your future, your body and your mind. I think I've come out on top. I love you so much that I don't think I have the words to express it. In fact, I want to try something... Keep your hand on your mark," she instructed.

Bringing her hand to press against his chest until she felt the beating of his head against her palm, she reached for his left hand pressed it against her own chest before closing her eyes and concentrating hard on projecting her emotions towards him, being curious to see if it were possible without the bond being complete. She didn't understand why it wouldn't be, especially when they were able to feel the stronger emotions.

"What're ye doin'?" He muttered.

"Sometimes, if an emotion's strong enough we can sense what the other is feeling, right?"

"Aye, like the night we found ye parents."

Silence fell as Hermione didn't acknowledge his words and as she felt her chest swell, her head swim and her stomach flutter with butterflies, a smile tugged at her mouth. Leaning forward, she pressed a kiss to Oliver's mouth, projecting her own feelings towards him before drawing back and opening her eyes, seeing his adoring expression.

"Did it work? Did you feel it?" She questioned, Oliver simply nodding in response as he couldn't find the words to speak. "That's how much I love you. I've just projected my feelings onto you and when the bond's complete we'll do it without realising it. I imagine it'll take some time for us to learn to control those urges and to block each other. Feeling four people's emotions in one body... I imagine that would be exhausting. And by projecting my feelings just now, I've only proved that I don't feel as though you've betrayed me."

"But hoo can ye not? The twins havnae been with anyone," he argued.

"I should hope not since they've known since their third year, but I understand why you did it?"

"Ye do?"

"No," she admitted, "But as I said before, I don't and I don't blame you. I don't care if it was peer pressure, or if you were drunk... and if you were, you're stupid and I might have to hex you," she threatened and he finally gave a snort of amusement. "To be honest with you, part of me is relieved that it happened."

"Are ye feeling alright?" He questioned in concern, having expected more of an outburst.

"Fine," she promised. "Because it happened, you're the experienced one between us so we won't be fumbling around having no idea what to do, and you're less likely to hurt me. What happened in the past can't be changed, and I don't love you any less because of it. I love you."

His eyes closed and he seemed to take a moment to gather his thoughts and when he looked to her again, Hermione was happy to see he no longer looked tormented or guilty but as though a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. She supposed it had; he was no longer carrying around this secret.

Oliver drew her closer to him, his arms folding around her back and holding her in place, Hermione burying her face against his neck, one hand playing with the hair at the nape of his neck.

"Will ye marry mae?" He muttered, his words leaving him without conscious thought or decision making.

Hermione spared his words no thought. Surprisingly, it didn't terrify her as she thought it might. It was one thing to know who you were destined to spend your life with and who you were destined to love and cherish, it was another to for it to actually happen, for it to become a reality.

Drawing back to look down at him, she arched an amused eyebrow. "Don't you think you should wait for the twins to catch up with you?"

As the words left her mouth, there were two cracks of apparition and who should appear but the twins, almost as if they'd heard their names, and with them being across the hall, she thought they likely had. They did love to make an entrance.

"Yeah, Oliver, don't you think you should wait for us?" They chorused, both moving to crowd the bed, Fred on the left and George on the right, neither sparing a second glance at Hermione comfortably straddling Oliver's lap. "Will you marry us?" Fred and George asked her without further delay.

Hermione blinked slowly, her mouth parting in surprise as her eyes darted between them. "You're being serious?"

They tipped their heads and offered their most charming smiles. "Of course we are, we'd never mess with you," answered George, reaching for her right wrist and removing her bracelet before pressing a kiss to her bond mark, a sigh falling from her.

"Yeah," Fred agreed, reaching for her left wrist, removing the bracelet and pressing a kiss to the bond mark, pulling a second soft sigh from her lips. "Because you terrify us. We love you, too, of course, but mainly because you terrify us."

"The bond isn't complete yet," she reminded them.

"We know, but that doesn't change how we feel or what we want. That doesn't change that you're ours and we're yours."

"And the war?"

"We'll wait until after the war's won, it doesn't hoo long it takes. We'll wait until it's safe fer ye tae marry us an' tae take our name, if tha's what we want," said Oliver.

"If word spreads that I'm engaged..." She trailed off, trying to contain the nauseous feeling in her stomach as thoughts of her mates being harmed swirled through her mind. "I've been openly dating Oliver since Christmas, if He doesn't already suspect, he will after."

"Ah, but as far as He's concerned, you might be publically dating Oliver in order to protect your 'real' mate, to draw away suspicion," argued Fred. "We love you."

"We want to start a life with you," George continued.

"An' we want people tae know tha' yer ours," Oliver finished.

In a move that almost looked as though it had been previously practised, Oliver and Fred drew their wands and summoned two small velvet boxes, one black and the other plum. Hermione's eyes darted down to them in surprise as they comfortably sat in their palms.

"Will you marry us?" Her three mates chorused, the boxes being opened to reveal two engagement rings, one from Oliver and the other from Fred and George.

The plum-coloured velvet box that sat in Oliver's palm held a white gold band encrusted with diamonds, a heart-shaped ruby sat in the centre and was encased by tiny diamonds, and two smaller round diamonds sat on either side.

The black velvet box occupying Fred's palm also held a white gold band, a heart-shaped sapphire sitting in the centre with two oval-shaped diamonds sitting either side.

"You alright, Love?" George asked in concern as the moments of silence continued to pass.

"Yes," she said in barely above a whisper.

"Yes, you're okay or yes, you'll marry us?" He checked.

"Both."

It took a moment for them to digest her answer but once they did, they released joyous whoops before Hermione found herself crushed between them. When they finally released her, George removed the ring from the black velvet box and slipped it onto Hermione's left ring finger, it magically resizing until it fit perfectly. Before she had the opportunity to examine it more closely, Oliver slipped the second engagement ring onto her right ring finger, it also resizing until it fit perfectly.

"You didn't have to get me two rings," she sniffled, a tear streaking down her face.

"We did," they disagreed.

"In the Wizarding World, a ring is chosen with meaning, and each stone has properties and characteristics affiliated with it. Wizards choose stones they believe represent the relationship and the witch," George explained.

"Sapphires and diamonds, not only are they our birthstones," Fred began, "But sapphires symbolise kindness, wisdom, hope, faith, protection, power and strength, good fortune and royalty. Diamonds are said to represent new beginnings, courage, perfection, purity and faithfulness."

"Rubies an' diamonds," Oliver picked up, his eyes darting to the ring on her finger and his mouth tugging into a smile. "Rubies are said tae signify love, passion, nobility, closeness, commitment, prosperity an' protection."

"These precious stones describe you perfectly," said George.

"They portray our relationship now," added Fred.

"An' they describe what we hope will be our relationship in the future," finished Oliver.

"You honestly shouldn't have gotten me a ring, let alone two. I would've been happy with a Haribo ring," she sniffled, reaching up to wipe away the falling tears as they chuckled at her comment.

"And that's one of the reasons why we love you. You don't care for material possessions and we each wanted to give you something," said Fred. "And, you can't eat it," he added as an afterthought.

"Please tell me these are heirlooms and you didn't purchase them new. I can see by the quality they weren't cheap."

They gave her sheepish smiles and shrugs of their shoulders.

"Technically me ring was an antique. It belonged tae me great, great, great, great Grandmother or somethin' like tha'. A had a some slight alterations done," Oliver told her.

"And despite being Pureblood, you know our family's far from wealthy and we make do with what we have. We have very few heirlooms as most were buried with our ancestors," George drew her attention. "We dipped into the shop fund."

"You shouldn't have done that," she protested softly, her eyes darting between them. "The shop's your future, your dream."

"We can live without the shop, we can't live without you," Fred argued. "Besides, between the winnings from Harry and Bagman and the money we made last year selling out products in school, we have more than enough to jump-start the business and buy an engagement ring. And that's not including the payment were expecting to receive from the orders already taken for the summer."

"I'm incredibly proud of you," she remarked. "And I'm confident that you'll have a happy and successful future."

"Hoo could we not when we have ye on our side supporting us," Oliver smiled.

"So, soon-to-be Mrs. Hermione Jean Weasley-Wood..." George began but was interrupted.

"Wood-Weasley," Oliver chimed.

Hermione fought back her laugh as they looked to each other, frowning.

"Weasley-Wood," Hermione decided, "Rolls off the tongue better... Double barrel name, don't I sound posh?"

"So, soon-to-be Mrs. Weasley-Wood," George repeated, his mouth twitching into an amused smirk. "Have you told Oliver what you and Freddie got up to before the family meeting?"

"No," she muttered, burying her face in her hands as her cheeks tinted pink.

"Now am intrigued," said Oliver, seeing Fred's smug smile and Hermione's clear embarrassment.

"It seems that Freddie and 'Mione got a bit... Hot and heavy," revealed George.

"Ye tosser," Oliver exclaimed, looking to Fred who showed no sign of remorse or embarrassment. "A knew ye weren't taking a shower!"

"Change of subject... Should we tell everyone about our engagement?" Fred asked.

"No," sighed Hermione, looking grateful for him redirecting the conversation towards something more comfortable. "I want to see how long it takes them to notice... Thirty galleons Ronald figures it out first," she offered whilst admiring her rings.

"No way, 30 galleons it's mum," Fred said.

"Sirius," George said confidently.

"It'll be me mother," Oliver disagreed.

"I'll collect my winnings later," she sang.

"So, any details on what happened with ye an' Fred?" Asked Oliver.

"You want to embarrass me? Two can play that game... What was your boggart before meeting me?" She brought her hand up, her finger tapping against her chin thoughtfully. "Oh, that's right, it was..."

His hand covering her mouth silenced her and she arched a challenging eyebrow.

"What? What was it? Tell us!"

Pulling Oliver's hand from her mouth, she said, "Teddy bears," just before his hand covered her mouth once more, being too slow to prevent her from revealing the answer.

As the twins laughed, Oliver's hands shifted to Hermione's ribs and he tickled her mercilessly. As she cried with laughter and tried to wriggle free, she tipped backwards and landed on the mattress, Oliver following her. Fred was quick to help pin her arms in place whilst George pinned her legs down, making it impossible for Hermione to break free.

"ABUSE! ABUSE!" She cried through her laughter, her stomach hurting from laughing and her vision blurry from the tears that leaked from her eyes. "Okay! Mercy! I give! I give!" She gasped out and they finally relented, drawing back from her. "Phew, that was a close one, I almost wet myself."

"Thank Merlin you didn't," snorted Fred, as she took a moment to calm herself and then she pushed up into a seating position.

"Teddy bears?" George questioned, looking to Oliver expectantly.

"They freak mae out!" He defended. "It's the eyes, a always feel like they're following mae. A used tae have nightmares where they'd come tae life at night an' try tae kill mae in me sleep."

"Remind me never to show you Chucky."

"Who?"

"It's a character from a muggle movie; it's about a clown-doll that's possessed by the spirit of a serial killer."

"Lovely," George deadpanned.

"It's terrifying, I walked in on the babysitter watching it once. I had nightmares for weeks, I was only eight."

"Thanks, now a'll have nightmares 'boot it as well," teased Oliver.

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12 Grimmauld Place - Thursday 20th July 1995

After Hermione woke and dressed for the day she quickly ate breakfast. She made the announcement that she was not to be disturbed in the attic and that she would send everything down to the main living room to be sorted through. She then headed up to the attic where she called for Kreacher and he popped in.

"Miss. Blake called for Kreacher," bowed the friendlier house-elf.

"Good morning, Kreacher," Hermione greeted, standing in the centre of the dusty and cluttered attic. "Our first order of business is to pack up the attic and send the contents downstairs so the others might sort through it and decide what is to be kept and what is to be discarded. I hope you had a good night's rest because this is going to be a challenging job, with both of our magics. So, let's begin."

Without further delay, she and Kreacher got to work packing the many items and articles into boxes before they were sent downstairs. That alone took nearly an hour and Hermione was glad she'd decided to get an early start, heading to the attic as soon as she'd finished breakfast.

With the attic no longer looking like a dumpsite, she and Kreacher spent some time cleaning away the dust and cobwebs and scrubbing the floor clean. Once done, she stepped back, her eyes carefully examining her surroundings, seeing what she had to work with.

"Kreacher, are there any colours you would prefer?"

"No, Miss. Blake."

Humming to herself, she decided on changing the two white brick walls to a natural brick red and the remaining two walls to white. Once done, she fixed up the wooden single beds and one of the smaller wardrobes, being sure to hang plenty of clean pillowcases up ready for use. Completing the furnishings was a small side table, a comfortable armchair and several shelves that were hung low she Kreacher might easily reach. Overall, it was simple but practical.

"What d'you think, Kreacher?"

Looking down to him, she felt panic rise at seeing his wide eyes and trembling form and when she thought he was going shout insults and bawl with tears, he clung to her legs, hugging her tightly.

"Miss. Blake is too kind to Kreacher."

"Nonsense," she disagreed. "You work hard and you deserve to have your own space. Now, what do you say we get your things and find them a new home?" She suggested, the house-elf nodding in agreement and releasing her legs.

After summoning his belongings, the dirty blankets were sent to be washed, they sorted the plastic shopping bags into one container and the cardboard boxes into another and the trinkets and odd knickknacks were placed on the shelves - a broken teapot, a chipped teacup, a cracked remembrall, a chocolate frog card, a fork and spoon... But the one that caught Hermione's attention was the silver locket.

"Kreacher, would you mind preparing some tea, please?" She asked.

"Of course, Miss. Blake," he bowed and popped out of the room.

With him gone, she reached for the locket and examined it closely, turning it over in her hands several times so she might see it from different angles. Spying the serpent symbol in the centre of the locket, her curiosity got the better of her and she reached out, the pad of her index finger tracing the shape. Her skin tingled and she could've sworn the locket vibrated in her hand.

She felt a feeling of familiarity wash over her. It was as if the locket was speaking to her. She found a latch on the side of the locket and went to open it to see what was inside, but something stopped her. Something in the back of her mind that was telling her that she shouldn't open the locket, that it wasn't the right time.

Frowning, she set the locket down and tried to forget about it but her eyes were drawn to it and in that moment, she made a decision that would make her feel guilty for the rest of her life, but she couldn't shake the feeling that the locket was important. After casting the Duplication Charm, she used a Permanent Sticking Charm to lock the duplicate locket in place against the wall, hoping it would prevent the magic from wearing off as she banished the real locket to her bedroom where she might find a hiding spot for it later.

"Great, Hermione, now your stealing from adorable, defenceless house-elves" she muttered to herself, burying her face in her hands.

When Kreacher returned with tea and a selection of biscuits, she took the teacup from him and sipped at the hot liquid.

"I've placed the locket on the wall with a Permanent Sticking Charm so you can't lose it," Hermione told Kreacher. Liar, she said in her mind, taunting herself.

He gave her a thankful smile, his eyes darting to the locket and peering at it as though it were his most treasured possession, his lifeline.

"Kreacher, may I ask you a question? How old are you?"

"Kreacher is one hundred and thirty-six, Miss. Blake. House-elves live longer than wizards," he revealed and her eyes widened in surprise.

"So, if we were to convert that into wizarding years, how old would you be?"

"I would be in my mid-twenties, Miss. Blake."

"You talk differently to my friend Bopsy. He works at Hogwarts," Hermione mused.

"That is because he is most likely an adolescent house-elf. How old is he?"

"I'm not sure, if I had to guess I would say approximately late-forties."

"A child," he confirmed. "Once a house-elf reaches the age of one hundred, that is when they enter their wizarding teen years. Your friend is most likely between the ages of seven and ten. His speech will improve as he ages."

"That's fascinating," Hermione chirped. "I didn't know house-elves aged differently. Can house-elves read?"

"Yes, Miss. Blake, we can."

Hermione's eyes lit up. "I'll be back in a moment, Kreacher," she promised.

Taking her leave from the attic, she descended the stairs until she reached the third floor, halting at the twins' room and knocking on the door before entering.

"What's up, Love? I thought you were up in the attic," greeted George as she approached him where he stood by at the cauldron and she pressed a kiss to his cheek before moving to Fred who sat at the desk, pressing a kiss to his cheek, too,

"I was," she leaned against the edge of Fred's desk, peering down to see he was working on fixing a faulty recipe in his notebook. "I was just wondering if you had a spare fake wand I might have."

"Hang on a minute," George said, stepping away from the cauldron and rummaging around inside one of the larger storage boxes. "Ha, got it!" He held it up triumphantly and she chuckled at him, giving him a kiss of thanks when he handed it to her. "What do you need it for?"

"Kreacher, he has a collection of strange and broken items so I thought he'd like this. Which one is it?"

"The rubber chicken, I think," he scratched at his chin thoughtfully.

"Thank you for this, I'll see you later, happy inventing," she kissed them both once more before taking her leave, and after making a pit-stop in her own bedroom, she returned to the attic with her favourite childhood book in hand.

"I have something for you," Hermione sang, holding the fake wand out in offering. "This is a fake wand, the twins invented it and I'd thought that you'd like it because it is brilliant magic on their part. And I also have a muggle children's book... Now, don't look at me like that Mr. Grumpy. These are stories that you likely haven't heard before and they're extremely popular in the Muggle Word. We call them fairy tales."

"Kreacher cannot take those, Miss. Blake, they belong to the family and Kreacher is not allowed things that belong to the family."

"Well, as they are my belongings, I decide what does and does not happen to them. And because I am not your Mistress, anything I give to you cannot free you. It is simply a gift."

"Miss. Blake is too kind to Kreacher," he parroted the words he'd said many times that morning.

"You deserve kindness, Kreacher. Now, I think I'd like to Oliver at the stadium. It's Puddlemere's first game of the season on Friday and he's likely working himself up into a tizzy. Would you like to help me bake some cupcakes for the team?"

"Kreacher would be honoured to help, Miss. Blake."

"Then I would be honoured to share the kitchen with you."

Kreacher took her hand and transported them to the kitchen where she immediately set to work retrieving the ingredients and making the cake batter. She showed Kreacher how to bake the muggle way and despite his clear resistance at first and his refusal to do anything but observe, he did eventually join in, picking it up rather quickly.

Sooner than they both knew, lunch was almost upon them and they'd finished baking and decorating the cupcakes, thirty vanilla sponge and thirty chocolate sponge, sporting the Puddlemere colours of midnight blue, yellow and white. And with a little help from Kreacher, they'd been able to charm the logo into the icing.

After taking a moment to admire their work, they soon set to cleaning the kitchen, being thankful Mrs. Weasley had already prepared lunch earlier in the day. Wishing to take lunch to the stadium for Oliver, just so she was certain he was taking care of himself and eating, Kreacher helped her prepare enough sandwiches to cater to the entire team. After them placing them inside a paper bag along with the boxed up cupcakes, they also included a number of plastic cups and pumpkin juice.

"Thank you for your help, Kreacher," Hermione smiled, handing him a plate that sat two sandwiches and a second plate that held six cupcakes.

"Miss. Blake, Kreacher cannot take this."

"Of course, you can," she disagreed. "You helped with the preparations and so you get to enjoy the food. Now, off you go and have a wonderful lunch."

After he took his leave, she gathered her belongings, shrunk down the paper bag and stashed it in her pocket before removing a chocolate cupcake from the secret hiding place where they would be safe until after dinner, and she went in search of Sirius, finding him in the main study, doing Merlin knows what.

"Padfoot," she greeted.

"Hey, Kitten."

"I'm going to visit Oliver at the stadium and bring him and the team some lunch."

"You've been baking, I can smell it."

She laughed before removing the cupcake she'd hidden behind her back and setting it on the desk, being unsurprised when she nearly lost her hand to him when he reached for it. He was like a damn crocodile.

"I've hidden the rest of them until after dinner."

"Smart," he mumbled around a bit of the chocolate sponge. "I don't think you should be leaving Grimmauld," he confessed. "You know I'd never tell you what to do but it's not safe out there."

"I'll be fine," she assured him. "I plan on flooing directly to the stadium, I'll be sure to stay in Oliver's line of sight at all times and I won't be gone for too long. My arrival there will be unexpected and it should be quiet given it's a non-game day. As a precaution, I'll take my notebook and contact you should I need to."

"I want updates every fifteen minutes."

"Really," she rolled her eyes. "Have you and Remus suddenly swapped roles? Over the last few weeks, I've noticed that you're becoming the responsible one and he the rule-breaking bad boy."

"I don't know if that's a compliment or insult," he admitted.

"Neither do I," she shrugged, her mouth twitching.

"Have you seen them?"

"No, not yet," she shook her head. "Breakfast was sent up this morning and I haven't heard anything since. I reckon they plan to spend the entirety of their stay in their rooms."

"Fine by me," Sirius grumbled. "It's almost like they aren't here. Almost. I can still smell her perfume, it's stinking the house out."

"Don't be so dramatic," she snorted.

"I'm not!" He protested. "I was a fugitive that went weeks without a bath and that slept in dirt and shit. Trust me, it stinks."

"Cast a Ventilation Charm," she suggested. "Anyway, I best go."

"You chose the right day, you'll be able to leave without an argument. Molly and Beth had Order business in the Alley."

"That explains why she made lunch this morning. You're in charge?" Hermione arched an eyebrow.

"Of course, I am," he leaned back in his chair and folded his arms behind his head. "And it's my house."

"You're in charge by default," Hermione argued. "You're the only adult. Mr. Weasley and Mr. Wood are both at work, Charlie's back in Romania, Bill was shipped off to Peru, Remus is out running errands, Oliver's at the stadium and despite the twins being of age, even I know it's a bad idea to leave them in charge. Which leaves you by default, and still, I wouldn't have chosen you."

"Hurt my feelings, why don't you?" He scowled.

"Alright, you're in charge because you're the oldest one here. You're in your forties, aren't you?" She tipped her head innocently.

He gasped in outrage. "Forties? How dare you!" He barked, his hands slamming against the desk angrily. "I'm twenty-nine and looking fabulous," he flipped his wavy hair over his shoulder.

"You were, several years ago," she corrected.

"You're not my favourite anymore," he told her, folding his arms childishly.

She sniggered. "Who'd she really leave in charge?"

"You," he admitted.

She smirked. "Well, seeing as I'm heading out for a little while..."

"I'm in charge?" He arched an eyebrow.

"Merlin, no," she laughed, shaking her head. "Ginny is."

"Shit," he whispered fearfully. "She's a clone of her mother."

"And twice as terrifying," Hermione nodded. "Be sure not to wind her up. Good luck."

Puddlemere United Stadium

Stepping out of the floo and dusting the soot from her clothing, Hermione following the length of the corridor before she found a signpost that directed her towards the reception area. Stepping from a second hallway and into a large open space, the walls were immaculately white, the floor white marble and floor to ceiling glass windows covered the entirely one wall, not only allowing plenty of natural light but showing a view of what she thought was the training pitch. She couldn't be sure; she knew they had two, one for practice and the other for games.

"Welcome to the home of Puddlemere United. How may I help you?" Drawled the blonde that occupied the chair behind the marble counter, her attention otherwise focused on filing her nails and refusing to actually look at her.

"I'd like directions to the training pitch, please," replied Hermione politely.

"The pitch is closed for practice."

"Yes, I know, but I'm here to see my boyfriend."

"Nice try," the blonde snorted, "But the pitch is closed," she repeated.

"I've brought him lunch," Hermione explained. "I don't plan on staying long, I just wish to drop it off and then I'll be on my way. I'll be no more than fifteen minutes and I'll be sure not to disturb his teammates. I know he usually breaks for lunch around this time."

The blonde lost her bored, unbothered expression as she slammed the nail file on the counter and sat up in her chair, finally looking to her.

"Listen. The pitch is closed. You're not getting access. So if I were you, I'd return to whatever street corner it is that you came from."

Hermione pursed her lips in annoyance, peering down at herself and wondering what item of her clothing had the receptionist believing she was a prostitute. Was it the white spaghetti strap top tucked into her black denim shorts? Was it her pale pink high-top converse or the pale yellow and pink checked shirt she wore open with the sleeves rolled-up to her elbows? With her necklace, bracelets and studded earrings, was she wearing too much jewellery? Was too much skin on show?

Looking back to the receptionist and seeing her unpleased expression, Hermione knew wasn't going to receive any help from the woman no matter how politely she asked or how much she explained herself. Clearly, the blonde didn't believe her.

Sighing to herself, she decided it best to simply help herself, and so, she headed towards the windows and the pitch it showed, hoping it was the training pitch and if not, that she might run into someone who could direct her to where she needed to be.

"Hey! You can't go back there! The pitch is closed!" The blonde called, standing from her chair and rushing after Hermione, her heels clacking against the marble flooring.

Ignoring her, she continued with her steps until she reached the one glass panel that offered access. Stepping through, she was relieved to see it was the training pitch. There were a few figures high above on their brooms but the majority of the players were on the ground, surrounding an older man who grasped a clipboard in one hand whilst he gestured with the other one comically as he animatedly spoke.

Slowly descending the stands of what she now knew was the coach's box, she headed straight for the players so she might ask if they could point her in the direction of Oliver who she assumed was one of the players in the air. Stepping off the last step until her feet touched the ground, she'd only taken a few steps when she felt a hand encircling her upper arm, the grip tight and unrelenting, biting into her skin and possibly capable of leaving a bruise.

Being tugged backwards, she almost slipped and lost her footing before she twisted to better face the receptionist glaring at her.

"Are you thick? You're not supposed to be here. This is a closed practice and I'm sure no one would be interested in your services," she said nastily.

Hermione took a calming breath, forcing down her instincts to break free and hex the woman. She was used to such comments and behaviour from women given her Siren heritage, case and point, the horrendous bullying she'd faced her first year, something she now understood was unknowingly caused from jealousy and fear. It was how most women felt when in close proximity to her and meeting her for the first time, but eventually, the jealousy and fear faded. Unfortunately, Hermione didn't believe the receptionist's behaviour was solely down to jealousy or fear, she thought her to be an unpleasant person in general. There were too many red flags to ignore.

"Let go of me," she instructed, her tone deceptively calm despite her building anger. She could feel the Siren inside her, and she wasn't happy with being kept from her mate. "Now."

In response, the blonde narrowed her eyes and tightened her grip, her nails biting in Hermione's skin through the fabric of her clothing.

A hiss slipped through her teeth before she forced it back, once again taking a calming breath, fighting back the Siren's wishes of maiming the receptionist. Peering over her shoulder, she noted the grounded players looking in their direction with interest and confusion, but still no Oliver.

"You asked for this lady," Hermione warned before calling out, "CAMPFIRE!"

Oliver was happily minding his own business guarding the hoops when his teammates approached, Captain Pallie, Bishop, Malloy, Kings and Wilks, halting before him.

"What's going on down there?" Pallie asked nosily.

"I don't know but it doesn't look good," Kings mused.

Oliver rolled his eyes and choose to keep his attention on searching for potentially rogue bludgers, knowing Coach Burton had a habit of releasing more than was necessary onto the pitch as a way of keeping them on their toes, improving their reflexes and ensuring they were paying attention.

"CAMPFIRE!"

Oliver froze and almost lost his balance as his head snapped to the coach's box so fast, he might've given himself whiplash. As worry and confusion set in, he leaned forward and put on a burst of speed, manoeuvring between his gathered teammates with only one destination in mind.

"WOOD, WHAT'S GOING ON?!" Bishop called after him, but his question went unanswered, his vision getting better the closer to the ground he grew.

His feet hitting the ground, he dismounted his broom, ignoring his teammates rushing to keep up with him. His eyes narrowed into slits, his grip on his broom tightening as he saw Hermione being witch-handled by another. He stalked forward, his expression and aura clearly indicating his fury and his teammates and Coach Burton dispersed, opening a clear pathway to Hermione.

As he approached, Hermione twisted to peer at him over her shoulder, her own annoyance fading and being replaced by a smile and bright eyes. Seeing his fury, she subtly shook her head in warning and he halted in his steps, stopping several feet away from them. He didn't want to get too close, then it would be too easy to reach out and strangle the blonde.

"Will ye let go af her?" Said Oliver, but it sounded more like an order than a request.

"I'm trying to remove her, Mr. Wood," replied blonde, throwing in a flirty smile. "She's actually deluded enough to think that someone on the team is her boyfriend. Like anyone would want her services," she laughed.

His very expensive broom fell from his grip and clattered to the ground, his hands tightening into fists in an effort to keep from drawing his wand.

"Ollie," Hermione chastised, her lips pursing.

"He hates that name," smirked the receptionist.

"Not when I call him it," Hermione responded, turning her eyes back to the blonde.

Coach Burton observed silently, his eyes darting between Oliver, Hermione and the receptionist, knowing that if he didn't intervene, nothing good would happen, especially when a Siren was being harmed in the presence of her mate and regardless of the power difference, they were equally as protective of each other.

Clearing his throat, he drew closer, ignoring the wide-eyed and startled expressions of the team, them also having come to an understanding of who she was. His girlfriend. His girlfriend who he was very protective over.

"Miss. Blake, it's a pleasure to meet you," Coach Burton greeted.

"Coach Burton," she offered her best attempt at a smile. "Ollie's told me a lot about you. I would shake your hand but this idiot's currently cutting off my blood circulation. Will you please ask her to remove her hand? Otherwise, I might just have to hurt her," she smiled sweetly but her eyes were cold and her anger was slowly building. "I'm not certain how much longer I can refrain from defending myself," she warned.

With a single nod, he looked to the receptionist. "Release Miss. Blake," he ordered.

The blonde blinked slowly in surprise, her mouth parting slightly but she didn't release her grip. Using her distraction, Hermione tore her arm free and before she had the chance to rub the feeling back into it, she released a huff when she collided with a hard chest, Oliver having reached out and tugged her into him. His arms folded around her, his nose burying in her hair as he breathed in her scent deeply, it helping to calm him.

He drew back from her, his eyes examining her for any sign of injury or discomfort.

"I'm fine," she assured him.

Oliver released a sigh of relief before drawing her back against him, pressing a tender to her forehead and hunching over to bury his face in her neck, trying to convince himself that she was fine and he was just overreacting.

Pulling away from him, she turned to face his teammates, noting their surprised expressions.

"Would you mind if I asked you a question?"

The only response she received was a collective head nodding and Oliver noticed the slight glazing of their eyes, being drawn in by Hermione's Siren beauty with her being in such close proximity. They'd only seen a photograph of her and that had been taken seven months ago, she'd grown since then.

"Do I look like a prostitute to you? Because she seemed to think I came from a street corner in order to offer up my services to you."

"WHAT!?" Oliver roared in fury, his eyes snapping to the receptionist.

"Shhh..." She chastised, lightly smacking his chest in admonishment and Coach Burton smothered his smile of amusement. "Am I dressed like a prostitute? Is this what prostitutes wear in the Wizarding World? Because if it is, you're in for a real shock when you see what prostitutes wear in the Muggle World."

Oliver felt his anger deflating and he snorted, reaching out to settle his arms around her stomach, tugging her to lean against his chest and he pressed his chin atop her head happily.

"What's your name?" Hermione asked the receptionist.

"Britch," she replied automatically despite her clear confusion.

"Miss. Bitch..."

"It's Britch," she corrected.

"Bitch?"

"Britch!"

"Bitch"

"BRITCH!" She burst

"That's what I said, isn't it?" Hermione tipped her head innocently. "A little advice? Pay more attention to your job than your manicure, and whilst you're at it, an improvement of your customer service skills won't hurt either. You're lucky I'm not suing you."

"For what!?" She demanded.

"Verbal and physical assault, and should the owners discover how you treated a member of the public, one of the team's girlfriends, might I add, I can't imagine them being pleased. I wouldn't be surprised if you lost your job," she smiled, hearing a slow whistle sound from behind her.

"Is that a threat?"

"No, merely an observation. You were quick to dismiss me, no matter of the fact I explained my reasoning for being here, and you rude when doing so. Neither did you bother to ask for my name and had you, with a simple check of the VIP list I know is kept at the reception desk, you would've known that I am Oliver's one person allowance, meaning the training pitch is closed to the public but not to me. And had you done your job correctly, you would've avoided not only embarrassment but physically harming a VIP, too. And given the nature of your position, would I be correct in thinking there's a policy that states you're never to lay hands on a member of the public no matter the circumstances? You don't know, do you? Read the policies and procedures," she suggested.

"Now that everything's been cleared up, I think it best you get back to your work station. We wouldn't want a prostitute to wander into the closed practice session and offer up her services, would we? And does that pass the dress code?" Hermione gestured to the Britch's skirt, or what little of it there was, and her blouse seemed to be missing a few buttons, too. "You're no longer needed, off you pop," Hermione said, gesturing to the stands.

Glaring at her, Britch turned away and stormed up the stands, Hermione sniggering when she almost lost her footing. It was her own fault. Who thought wearing heels at a sport stadium was a good idea? Hermione thought she was just asking for trouble.

"I like her," was muttered from behind her.

"Do you think I was too harsh?" She asked Oliver, tipping her head back and looking up at him.

"If anythin', a think ye were tae nice, she's been getting on ev'ryone's nerves these last few weeks. She's a nasty piece af work, even tae the other staff," Oliver replied.

Humming, she looked towards Oliver's gathered teammates. "I'm sorry, that wasn't how I wanted this meeting to go," she gave them a sheepish expression.

"I think this is the best meet and greet I've ever been a part of," one of the team commented.

"Hermione, that's Jack..."

"Pallie," she finished, looking to the brunette with the unusually grey eyes and tanned skin, his sharp jawline and straight nose lending tale to his pedigree background. Pureblood. "Captain of Puddlemere for two years, highest-scoring Chaser in the league for the past four years, with a ratio of 4:1 – for every five times he enters the scoring zone, he successfully scores four times with the quaffle being saved once. He's been with Puddlemere since he was seventeen but was offered the place of reserve Chaser in his sixth year as long as he kept his grades up. He was a reserve Chaser for one year before making his debut as starting Chaser in 1991."

Oliver's mouth tugged into a smirk before he pressed a kiss atop her hair, amused by the surprised response of his teammates.

"Did a ferget tae mention she knows ev'rything aboot Quidditch?" Oliver said proudly.

"Yeah, you left out that little detail," Pallie laughed in disbelief.

"She's the reason Gryffindor won any game between me fifth an' seventh year. It was all her doin'," Oliver boasted.

"Meaning?" Coach Burton arched an intrigued eyebrow.

"She was the brains behind the operation. The tactics, the plays, the rules, critiques, improvements, the statistics af other players. Merlin! She even pulled it oot the bag during a game with torrential rain an' gale-force winds."

"Plays? Rules? Improvements? Statistics?" Coach Burton listed, looking to Hermione expectantly.

"In my free time, not that I had much, I invented plays never before seen, however, we weren't able to try all of them as they were a little too difficult for some of the other players. I made it a point to study and memorise every rule and foul, so we might use it to our advantage. During practice, I'd sit and carefully examine each player, picking out their faults and strengths, as well as worked to improve their confidence and teamwork. And it was advantageous to know the other teams' players' statistics as we were able to use their weaknesses against them."

"She's a great flyer, tae," Oliver beamed. "It took us a while tae get her over her fear, but we did."

"Do you play?" Pallie tipped his head curiously. .

"And kick all of your arses? Please, I'd hate to embarrass you."

"I really like her," commented one of the players to another as chuckles rang out.

"Thanks, Austin Kings, you're not so bad yourself."

"You know who I am?" He questioned in surprise. He stood as one of the tallest on the team at six-foot-three, his hair raven and curly and his eyes so dark, they almost appeared black.

"Have I been living under a rock? Of course, I know who you are. You've been with Puddlemere for three years and you've a wicked backhander on you, by the way, very impressive. You transferred from the Montrose Magpies after being the reserve Beater for two years and starting Beater for two years. I must say though, this team suits you better."

"Where've you been hiding her, Wood? She's brilliant! I ought to hit you upside the head with that broom of yours!" Coach Burton exclaimed. "Speaking of brooms..."

"I've been in touch with my contact about the broom," she intervened knowingly.

"How'd you know what I was going to say?"

"A ferget tae ask her," Oliver admitted, seeing Coach Burton's glare.

"Intuition. My contact's agreed to give Firefly3000s to the team, but since the release date's been pushed back by a month, you'll be receiving them two months before everyone else. So, expect them in about a week's time. As far as I'm aware, Puddlemere will be the first team to officially own the Firefly before any other professional team."

"You're messing with us?" Spluttered the blonde-eyed, shaggy-haired blonde.

"No, Ben Malloy, starting Chaser of three years, I'm most certainly not."

"I like her," he told Oliver confidently and they snorted at him.

"Anyway, I came by to drop off lunch. I know that you're all training like nutters because the match is tomorrow, which means you've forgotten to eat and I don't want you fainting and falling off your brooms. And don't even attempt to wriggle out of it, if I have to, I'll force-feed you. Just ask Oliver."

"Oh, she'd do it withoot hesitating," Oliver agreed. "She's terrifying."

"Exactly, I'm terrifying. So, everyone, park your backsides over there," she instructed, gesturing to the stands. When no one moved, she clapped her hands together. "Now, come on, move your arses before I move them for you... "And you, Coach, get moving," she made a shooing motion with her hands, watching happily as they all did as she'd said.

Moving to stand before them, she clicked her fingers to enlarge the paper bag she'd stashed in her pocket and then began to remove two sandwiches at a time, throwing both to each player and allowing them the responsibility of catching them.

"One's ham and cheese and the other's chicken, turkey and pork... Leftover meat from dinners and I couldn't decide which to use so I used them all, it all goes to the same place anyway," she pointed out and Oliver snorted, being unsurprised.

With the sandwiches dished out, she withdrew the plastic cups and the pumpkin juice, filling each cup and handing it to each player, patiently waiting for them to finish with their food.

"Dessert time," Hermione chirped.

"Did ye make what a think ye did?" Oliver asked, looking at her expectantly.

"Yes, and I decorated them with extra love and care, too. Who prefers chocolate sponge and who prefers regular sponge?" She asked, being sure to hand each player their correct preference.

"You made these?" Asked the green-eyed redhead as he peered down at the Puddlemere inspired cupcake. If Hermione didn't know any better, between his height, hair colour, pale complexion and freckles, she would've mistaken him for a Weasley.

"Yes, Tony Wilks starting Beater of five years, I did. And the muggle way, too; it's the only way I bake, without magic."

"I love her, we're keeping her," he decided.

"So, has anyone noticed yet?" Oliver questioned, knowing she'd understand what he was referring to.

"Not yet, no, but your mum almost did this morning at breakfast," she answered.

"Am gonna win."

"No, you're not, I am," she argued, glaring up at him from her place sat on the ground.

"What're they going on about?" Pallie asked the others in confusion, receiving shrugs in response as they were just as clueless.

"Ye picked Ron, the most clueless person a've ever met."

"Exactly, which means he'll be the first one to notice."

Oliver scoffed. "Am gonna win," he said confidently.

As the lunch break ended and everyone gathered in preparation to continue with the training session, Oliver and Hermione stood off to the side, Oliver peering down at Hermione whilst she looked up at him with her arms lazily slotted around the back of his neck.

"Yer sure ye have tae leave? A think Coach wants ye tae stay an' help," he chuckled.

"Being out in the open for too long is risky, especially after everything that happened yesterday, and I promised Sirius I wouldn't be gone for too long."

"Be careful."

"You be careful, I'm not the one hundreds of feet above the ground with bludgers looking for a way to kill me."

"Bit dramatic."

"It's not," she argued. "No matter how much you love the sport, it's dangerous and nothing you say can convince me otherwise. There's been too many incidents over the years for me to ever be comfortable watching you play."

He leaned down and kissed her sweetly.

"A'll be fine."

"You better be, because if you get injured, I'm holding all of the Beaters responsible."

He winced. "Cannae imagine tha' being pretty."

"Definitely not," she agreed.

After sharing a kiss and drawing back once the team whistled and cheered louder, Hermione pulled away from Oliver and made her way towards the stands.

"I'll help you with the team next time, but I have to get back, it's dangerous for me to be out in the open for too long. I'm sure you understand," she said to Coach Burton as passed him.

"How'd you know I was going to ask you to help with the team?" He called after her, hearing her tinkling laughter as she ascended the stands and disappeared into the building.

"Where'd you find her?" Asked Fisher, the blue-eyed, raven-haired Seeker looking up at him as he was the shortest member of the team, standing at five-foot-ten.

"She found mae," Oliver shrugged.

"I want one," complained Bishop, the brown-eyed brunette being a starting Chaser for the team.

"Yer not gettin' mine," Oliver vowed, reaching for his broom and taking flight. They had a game in less than twenty-four hours. The first game of the season.

The Ministry of Magic – Friday 21st July 1995

Standing side by side, Hermione and Harry's hand were tightly entwined as they stood, surrounded by Wizengamot members as they faced the Minister of Magic.

Their expectance at the Ministry did come as a surprise that morning as they originally hadn't been scheduled to face a trial for a further four weeks, something that admittedly worried Hermione. She was certain it was a play of power, only she wasn't certain why or what they were planning.

In attendance were their guardians, Mr. Wood and Mr. Weasley for Hermione given their joint custody, and Sirius for Harry.

"Disciplinary hearing for the offences committed by Harry James Potter and Hermione Jean Blake. Interrogators Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister of Magic..."

"Witness for defence; Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore."

Their relief was quick and evident the moment Dumbledore stepped into the room, the large doors opening and closing without being touched.

"You got our message that the time and place of the hearing had been changed," commented Fudge, his unease clear to see.

"The owl carrying the letter must have gotten lost," replied Dumbledore.

So that was their plan, Hermione realised. Without Dumbledore's presence, the trial was more than likely to go terribly no matter the defence she prepared.

"Fortunately, Miss. Blake thought it best to check that the information given matched otherwise I might not have been capable of arriving on time... Charges?" He prompted.

"The charges against the accused are as follows: that they did in full awareness of the illegality of the act, perform underage magic in the presence of muggles. Do you deny using said magic, in the form of a Patronus?"

"No," Harry and Hermione chorused.

"And you are aware that you are forbidden to use magic outside of school while under the age of seventeen."

"Yes," they replied.

"Witches and wizards of the Wizengamont..."

"We only did it because we were attacked by dementors," Harry interrupted, murmurs sounding from around them.

"Dementors? In Little Whinging?" Questioned a woman from high above, looking to them expectantly.

"That's quite clever, muggles can't see dementors. Highly convenient," said Minister Fudge.

"We're not lying. Why would we cast a Patronus without having a reason to, knowing that we would potentially face expulsion?" Hermione argued, pinning the Minister with a stare that had him shifting uncomfortably.

"Your charges are more severe, are they not, Miss Blake?" He challenged.

"They are," she agreed. "Harry, his muggle relatives and myself were also attacked by a number of people who wore dark robes and masks, similar to that of the World Cup incident last year. If you search my wand, you will find that I cast my Patronus, a Stunner, a shield and I also used a Memory-Altering Charm on three muggles who happened to witness the attack. So not only did Harry and I defend ourselves and Harry's family who were already aware of the Wizarding World, I ensured there were no witnesses to expose the secret of magic, showing responsibility."

"And how many dementors were present?" Asked a second woman from the Wizengamot.

"Harry, myself and Harry's muggle cousin were attacked by three dementors and we conjured our Patronuses so we might escape to Harry's muggle residence. Sometime later, a further five dementors appeared, and as we made to escape, approximately fifty more were waiting outside the house. After we used our Patronuses and the dementors were defeated, that was when thirteen robed figures ambushed us, and they showed no care for protecting the secret of magic or for harming us."

"That was a well-rehearsed story of events, Miss. Blake," said the Minister, "But seeing as you cannot produce a witness..."

"Pardon me, Minister," Dumbledore interrupted, "But we can."

Dumbledore gestured to the large doors before they opened and a small, old woman was ushered forward, a hat perched on her head and a bag held to her chest tightly.

"That's Mrs. Figg, she lives on my street and she used to babysit me when I was little," Harry whispered into her ear.

"This is Arabella Figg," Dumbledore introduced. "She is a Squib and she did witness the incident."

"Please, describe the attack, what did they look like?" Asked a third woman from the Wizengamot.

"Well, one of them was very large, the other very skinny and the young girl... She was lovely, very beautiful," the old woman answered and Harry sniggered at her misunderstanding the questions.

"Not the children, the dementors," Fudge clarified.

"They were hooded, cloaked, then everything went cold as though all the happiness had been sucked out of the world," she corrected, her voice taking a haunted, frightened tone.

"The odds of a dementor wondering upon a wizard in the muggle suburbs are astronomical," Fudge protested.

"I don't think they were merely there by coincidence," offered Dumbledore.

A throat clearing echoed before being followed by,

"Pardon me, Professor..."

Hermione followed the voice, an instant dislike forming. Her hair was brown and short, curled tightly about her face and her eyes were deceptively friendly. She wore a God-awful pink blazer and skirt, making her stand out amount everyone else currently in attendance, no matter the large number.

"But dementors are under Ministry control, surely you are not insinuating that the Ministry had ordered the attack," she said in a sickly sweet voice that seemed to change to a higher frequency the more she talked.

"That would indeed be disturbing, Madam Under Secretary," Dumbledore agreed. "Which is why I am sure the Ministry will impose a full investigation as to why half the dementors employed by the Ministry were so far away from Azkaban, and why they attacked without authorisation."

A snort unexpectedly sounded and Hermione winced. She hadn't meant for that to happen.

"I apologise, but it is obvious that the Ministry didn't have a clue half of their dementors were missing. You're very good at losing things aren't you, Minister?" Hermione smiled sweetly, and Harry bit the side of his cheek to stop from laughing, whilst a bark-like laugh sounded before it was suddenly silenced. "The Ministry doesn't seem to be doing well lately," she observed. "Firstly, Sirius Black is allowed to escape jail no matter of his later proven innocence. Secondly, the true culprit was all but handed to you on a silver platter and no matter of the warnings of him being an Animagus, he escapes within the hour."

"You kept his escape from the muggle government and yet you showed no hesitation in splashing Sirius Black's face across the country when it was him who escaped. And let's not forget that neither the Ministry nor its employees were the reason for Pettigrew's recapture. In fact, it was I. Again. What message does that send to the public? That they would have better fortune putting their trust in a sixteen-year-old girl?"

Harry sniggered beside her and she heard Sirius wheezing laughter in the silence of the chamber, Hermione being well aware of the stares of surprise, disbelief and horror at her fearless takedown of both the Ministry and its leaders.

"Back to the matter at hand. You allowed dementors to leave the Wizarding World and enter the Muggle World. Was it just a coincidence that they happened to find and attack us? I don't think so. Someone wanted Harry and me dead. London has a population of millions and we're supposed to believe it was an accident?... These charges are preposterous and the threat of expulsion is ridiculous..."

"These charges, Miss. Blake, are not preposterous," chimed the tiny, pink-wearing witch. "They are the law."

"Madam Under Secretary," she began politely. "Currently, I believe myself to have a better understanding of Wizarding Law than the majority of those wishing to persecute Harry and myself... So, let's begin... Neither I nor Harry have been given an official warning on or off the record and this is our first disciplinary hearing. You do not have grounds for expulsion according to the section of underage magic clause 1765-B. Not only that, I believe clause 1812-Z states that magic can lawfully be used in times of extreme distress and life-threatening instances, not only by minors but in the presence of muggles, too... We were responsible when using magic; we saved multiple lives and we cleaned up after ourselves."

Harry's hold on her hand tightened briefly.

"If these charges aren't dropped and the appropriate course of action isn't taken, I won't hesitate to take legal action against the Ministry, citing neglect and reckless abandonment, harassment and employing known dark creatures that cannot be controlled. Our lives were threatened due to your mistake. I imagine the public will cry outrage when they discover what happened to us."

"Is that a threat?" Harry muttered from beside her.

"Me, threaten the Ministry? Of course not," she denied innocently.

The chamber fell to silence for several long seconds before a vote was called, the majority of hands being raised in favour of innocence.

"Cleared of all charges," Minister Fudge reluctantly called.

Chapter Sixty-Three

12 Grimmauld Place - Friday 21st July 1995

"So?" Mrs. Weasley greeted them before they'd even closed the door, finding themselves standing before an expectant crowd.

"Sorry?" Hermione tipped her head.

"Hoo'd the hearing go?" Mrs. Wood clarified, giving them a disapproving glance.

"Oh, you should've just said," said Harry innocently.

"Put the poor sods out of their misery," Sirius chuckled.

"Cleared of all charges," Hermione admitted with a lazy shrug of her shoulders.

"Oh, thank Merlin," breathed Mrs. Weasley, pulling both Hermione and Harry into a hug.

"A wouldn't have expected anythin' less," Mr. Wood injected. "Despite there bein' a few hiccups, they were cleared."

"Meaning?" His wife demanded.

"Hermione may have insulted the Under Secretary, the Minister and the Ministry as a whole in front of the entire Wizengamot," Sirius sniggered, sending Hermione a proud wink whilst she was currently cuddled between Fred and George. "She read them the riot act and threatened a lawsuit."

"It's not my fault they're so incompetent at their jobs," Hermione defended herself. "They seemed to be under the impression I was an idiot that wouldn't have the forethought to do a little research into Magical Law, and as such, that I would be clueless to the illegality of their charges against us. With no previous warnings, on or off the record, and with no previous punishment or charges, we were first-time offenders. The threat of expulsion was ridiculous, particularly given the extenuating circumstances."

"You'll be the Mistress of Magic someday," Remus sighed, brushing his sandy hair back from his eyes.

As everyone dispersed much more relaxed now they knew the outcome of the trial, Oliver pulled Hermione off to the side. With the match not scheduled to start until two o'clock that afternoon, Coach had called for an early morning practice had started half an hour prior but he'd granted Oliver a later start time, being in the know about the hearing.

"It's only ten o'clock in the mornin' an' in as little as an hour, ye took on the Ministry an' won," he remarked unsurprised. "Am leaving fer the stadium soon, do ye wanna come with mae? A don' think Coach'll mind."

"What about the others?" Hermione asked.

"They've already gotten their tickets," he shrugged lazily. "They'll arrive not long befere the match begins. They'll be in the family box as it's the first match af the season. A cannae imagine them havin' a problem with it. Security's tighter than usual taday an' ye'll never be alone."

"Give me a minute to change and I'll be right down."

"Wear the..."

"I know," she laughed, heading towards the staircase and disappearing from view.

With a brief stop in her bedroom, she changed from her robes and slipped into her comfortable converse, her favourite black skinny jeans and a Puddlemere jersey complete with Oliver's name and number fitted across the back. Taking her leave, she descended the stairs and found Oliver in the main living room along with the twins, Sirius and Remus.

"Be careful," were the first words out of Sirius' mouth before she'd even stepped through the door and into the room.

"I'll be fine, don't worry," she rolled her eyes. "As Oliver said, the stadium's crawling with security, I won't be alone and I've got my notebook in my pocket should I need it."

"Good," he nodded once.

"Ye better wear Puddlemere colours," Oliver warned.

"Sorry to say, I was planning on wearing Kenmare green and yellow," Sirius shrugged.

Sniggering, Hermione took Oliver's hand and pulled him towards the fireplace before a duel took place.

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Puddlemere United Stadium

Stepping out of the floo and brushing the soot from her clothes, Oliver took her hand and led the way down the corridors and towards the training pitch, Hermione noticing the unimpressed glance she received from the blonde manning the reception desk as they walked passed, apparently still upset about the dressing down she gave her the day before.

Once they arrived in the coach's box, Hermione held back her snigger at the sight of the older wizard pacing back and forth agitatedly, his hair sticking out at odd angles as though he hadn't been able to keep his hands out of it.

"Wood! Get over here now!" Coach Burton called.

"I think he's having a mental breakdown," Hermione whispered to Oliver as they quickened their steps.

"Miss. Blake? What are you doing here?" Coach Burton questioned, his eyes darting between her and the clipboard in his hand, his gaze frustrated before morphing into confusion.

"I had a suspicion you'd be a little... tense," she settled for, ignoring the snorts from the players crowded around them, "And thought you might appreciate an extra pair of eyes."

"Brilliant," he breathed in relief. "I could use your expertise."

He reached out, snagging her wrist and tugging her away from Oliver until she stood directly beside him.

"I'm sorry, did you say something?" Hermione arched an eyebrow in the direction of Jones' after hearing a scoff.

The slightly taller reserve Chaser looked to Hermione with her hazel eyes and flipping her onyx-coloured hair over her shoulder.

Hermione wasn't blind. She'd known from the moment she'd met the only woman on the team that she'd had a problem with her, and her Siren beauty wasn't entirely to blame. She was jealous, but not for her beauty and power. No, she was jealous because she had Oliver. Hermione had seen the glances the woman had been sending Oliver the previous day (and from the moment they'd arrived) when she thought no one was looking, but Oliver never spared her a second glance; he only had eyes for her.

Being a woman in Quidditch was hard and being the only woman on the team was even harder, but that didn't lend the woman the right to be so judgemental or mean. This woman, despite knowing very little about her background and character, something about her reminded Hermione of Pansy Parkinson and the witch was horrid. That didn't lend her a lot of hope for liking the reserve Chaser, especially with her current behaviour.

"Expertise? What are you? Twelve?" She said cruelly.

"Sixteen, seventeen in September," Hermione answered, casually folding her arms over her chest. "You believe that my knowledge on the sport is lacking? Let's put it to the test. What year were scoring zones introduced on both sides of the pitch?"

"1623," the witch answered confidently.

"Nope," Hermione shook her head. "It's a common misconception. They were actually introduced on Thursday 17th May in 1620. What year were baskets replaced by hoops?"

"1893."

"Unfortunately not. As a professional, I'd have expected you to know the answer. You've been with Puddlemere for what? Six years? And correct me if I'm wrong, but you've yet to play a game, are you not? If I were you, I'd be seeing red flags. Despite not having a chance to play, if you were thought to be a true talent, other teams would've tried to poach you from Puddlemere but you've been on the bench for more than half a decade. Pallie was a reserve Chaser for a short period of one year before making starting Chaser at the age of eighteen, one of the youngest in history," said Hermione, seeing the older woman narrowing her eyes into slits and her jaw clenching. "The answer is Monday 5th January 1883. We'll do one more; you've one more chance to prove me wrong and it's the easiest one yet. When was the golden snitch introduced to Quidditch?"

Jones silently seethed as Hermione looked to her in expectancy of her knowing the answer.

"1887," answered another.

"Not quite, Bobby Fisher, starting Seeker who's ranked at eighth place for the league's best ten Seekers," she looked to him. "But it was close; the answer's Tuesday 22nd January 1883, exactly seventeen days after the hoops were introduced into the game. The officials had a busy month it would seem."

"Is there anything else you'd like to say, Jones?" Asked Coach Burton, his eyes looking to her, daring her to respond. "Thought not. Miss. Blake?"

Hermione nodded before dropping her arms down by her side and turning her eyes towards the gathered team. "In less than four hours the game will begin and in this time, you not only need to complete the pre-game practice and ready for the match, but you need to allow time for a lunch break. I'm not willing to take the risk of one of you fainting and falling from your broom because you haven't eaten. I'm sure Coach Burton's already given you your drills or warm-up exercises, so off you go... Go on, move it, shoo," she clapped her hands, watching in amusement as they all mounted their brooms and took to the sky, glancing at her over their shoulders.

"I don't know how you do that," said Coach Burton. "If I want them to do something I have to threaten them with a no-fly ban."

Shrugging in response, she crossed to the railing, casually leaning against it as she turned her eyes to the sky, observing the players above. Coach Burton stood beside her, his attention darting between the players and his clipboard whilst Hermione focused on pinpointing each player's strength and weaknesses.

Absentmindedly conjuring a notepad and pen, she scribbled at the lined paper blindly, barely taking her eyes from those above. As she jotted down her notes, a gleam caught his eye and it drawing his attention, he looked to it, spying the engagement ring on her left hand, the sapphire and diamonds glittering in the sun, whilst also wondering where she'd gotten the writing utensils from.

"Mrs. Wood..." He began innocently but found himself being interrupted.

"Weasley-Wood," she corrected instinctively, freezing almost instantly as she slowly turned her wide eyes to him.

"Weasley-Wood?" He arched a questioning eyebrow

She gave a nervous laugh. "Truth time?"

"Truth time," he parroted in agreement.

Nibbling at her lip, she crouched down and set the notepad and pen on the ground before rising to full height, her hands subconsciously reaching to touch her bracelets, drawing his attention to them.

He eyed her curiously when she gave a simple and lazy wave of her hand before she folded her arms over her chest, not only as a subconscious defensive tactic, but to prevent her from nervously toying with her mate related jewellery.

"Silencing Charm," she explained to his questioning glance. "I know you know, Oliver told me and he's confident that you're trustworthy and have nothing but good intentions. And I know I haven't yet thanked you for being so understanding and helpful to our circumstances, especially when Oliver's needed elsewhere. So, thank you and I appreciate it. With that said, I know you know things but you don't know everything. Oliver told you what he believed was necessary and it's not due to mistrust but rather him wishing to protect us and our privacy."

"And what else do I need to know?" He leaned back against the railing, both the players above and his clipboard being forgotten for the time being. She had his sole focus.

"Oliver isn't my only mate; I have four."

His eyes widened comically and he almost dropped his clipboard.

"That's impossible," he disagreed.

"Usually," she nodded. "But there are other factors in play, things you don't understand."

"Explain it to me," he all but ordered.

"Simply, I'm different from other Sirens. I am the victim of a prophecy that was told before I was born, and essentially, this prophecy states that I'm to help the Wizarding World with the help of my mates. My jewellery," she briefly gestured to her cuff bracelets and necklace, "Are currently hiding my bond marks. As I've previously mentioned, I have four mates. Oliver and Fred and George Weasley. My fourth mate is in the form of a sibling bond, and that would be shared with Harry Potter. To better my chances of success, I not only have four mates but a number of abilities; premonition and natural healing."

"Having one ability is considered rare, never mind that it's the power of sight and the rarest of them all, but you have natural healing, too!" His voice rose in surprise.

"I know," she nodded in understanding of his reaction. "We discovered it accidentally, to be honest. And no matter how long I've had to digest the knowledge of my circumstances and powers, a part of me will never truly believe it to be real. It's almost like it's a dream and I'm afraid that one day I'll wake up and I'll be in my muggle house preparing to go to a muggle school of classmates that hate me, and I'll have just imagined meeting my boys."

He cleared his throat uncomfortably, hearing the sadness and fear in her voice.

"Oliver proposed?" He probed, wishing to get her mind onto a happier subject and it worked as she gave her head a shake and she smiled brightly, her eyes lighting up. It was at that moment that he saw it for the first time. Her Siren beauty. Had he not grown up with a Siren for a Grandmother and had he not already given his heart to his wife of twenty-four years, he'd have fallen victim.

"He did, along with Fred and George. I wasn't expecting it, it came out of nowhere. I know that they're my life, my future, but for them to make such a big decision so quickly and with us still being so young, I wasn't prepared. And although a part of me feels a little scared for it all to be happening so quickly, it didn't stop me from accepting. But now we have to be careful more than ever. The Dark Lord, he already suspects."

"Excuse me?" He spluttered, physically releasing the clipboard from his grasp until it clattered to the ground.

"He's back. Truthfully, yes, I am related to him," she admitted, reaching out to steady him when his knees almost buckled and she gave him a look of concern.

"Tell me, I can handle it," he assured her after clearing his throat and pulling himself to full height, his gaze locking with hers.

Sighing and brushing her hair back from her face and over her shoulder, she continued, "The Ministry's doing their best to brush it under the carpet and make Harry, Dumbledore and me out to be liars. We saw him. He tried to kill Harry and he attempted to kill me once he discovered I'd already found my mate and I refused to aid him."

"I believe you."

"Good, not many do, besides my family, of course. We're on high alert and they've got Harry and me on a tight leash. I was only allowed here today due to the increased security, the fact I wouldn't be alone and I promised to send them regular updates."

"That's understandable," he nodded, his eyes suddenly darting about his surroundings suspiciously and she rolled her eyes.

"You seem to know more about Sirens than most, can I ask you something?" She began. His eyes returned to her and he nodded curiously. "The power of premonition, does it only show the future? Or can it show the past, too?"

"As it's the power of sight, I imagine it might do both but I can't say for certain. Why?"

"I've had episodes in which I've touched a person and seen images and memories of their past. But when I sleep, premonitions of the future play out in my dreams..." Trailing off, she caught movement from the corner of her eye and she silently conjured a whistle before bringing it to her mouth, the sound ringing out and reaching the players above.

"MALLOY, FOUL FOR BLATCHING!"

"WHAT? I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING!" The Chaser called back in protest.

"NO, BUT YOU WERE GOING TO!" She argued.

"HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?" He questioned, his surprise at having been caught red-handed evident.

"I ALWAYS KNOW; PLAY FAIRLY!" She chastised. "Boys," she muttered beneath her breath.

"How'd you spot that?" Coach Burton demanded.

"One learns to keep an eye on the game after watching Fred and George play. If I can spot when they're about to foul, I can do it for anyone."

Crouching down, she collected the notepad and pen, her hand flying across the pages as she quickly wrote her thoughts, feeling Coach Burton's eyes on her. Soon after, she asked him for the time, being informed it was a little after half-past eleven.

"Have you finished?" He asked, noting she'd stopped writing.

"No, I've just run out of paper," she told him, missing his blink of surprise. "This wasn't one of my empty notepads but I hate wasting paper. I don't think much of this will be useful to you today, there's not enough time."

"We'll do it tomorrow."

"Aren't you going to give them time to rest after the match?" She arched an eyebrow. "They're going to need it."

"They can rest when they're dead and buried," he deadpanned.

"Fair enough," she held her hands up in surrender before her eyes darted above. "Oh, for Merlin's sake," she huffed in annoyance before following it with a blow of the whistle. "KINGS! WHAT IN THE NAME OF MERLIN ARE YOU DOING?! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE HITTING BLUDGERS! AND THOMPSON! YOU'RE MEANT TO BE LOOKING FOR THE SNITCH AND NOT MAKING GOOGLY EYES AT MY BOYFRIEND!" She called, her voice carrying in the breeze and the laughter from above returning to her.

Bishop actually fell off his broom after losing his grip. Hermione's eyes widening, she threw her hand out, catching him mid-fall before levitating him back to his broom, sighing in relief no one seemed to notice.

"ALRIGHT, THE FUN'S OVER, GET BACK TO WORK!"

Once they'd calmed, they returned to their training with Hermione watching them like a hawk and Coach Burton skimming through the parchment attached to his clipboard, snorts and chuckles escaping him whenever Hermione blew the whistle and chastised the players above.

Sometime during this, Hermione had conjured another notepad and wrote down her thoughts and observations, filling almost a third of the notepad before she'd even realised it.

"I think we should break for lunch," suggested Hermione.

In agreement, Coach Burton gave the order and called the players down for a thirty minute break.

"These notepads in my hand," she gestured to them with the other hand, standing before them as they quietly ate their lunch."They contain my thoughts and observations on what I've seen from you today. Of course, they are merely preliminary findings as I've not had much time to observe each of you individually and in detail, neither have I witnessed you during a match, but they will do for the time being. Tomorrow, Coach will go over them with you. For now, you've approximately thirty minutes of practice time left before the public are expected to begin arriving and you must ready for the match."

As the players were instructed to head for the locker room so they might change out of their training robes and into their game wear, Hermione silently followed after Coach Burton as he continued down the hall and to the door on the left, closest to the locker room.

Stepping inside, Hermione gave the room a brief once more, an office, she realised. It was spacious and fitted with a large desk and a chair that almost appeared to an armchair. A couch sat before the large floor to ceiling windows that composed the entirety of the back wall, with a coffee table and couch sat before it. Medals, trophies and other memorabilia were protected in the glass storage case that sat on the right, a collage of newspaper articles detailing the team's past and most impressive wins sat on the wall behind the desk and signed and autographed paraphernalia was mounted on the wall above, along with a broom that looked to have seen better days.

As Coach Burton crossed to the desk and set his clipboard down, Hermione paused by the waiting, watching as he reached for a midnight blue summer jacket with a white and yellow stripe down the sleeves and a Puddlemere logo on the right breast-side pocket and he slipped it on. He silently crossed to a closed door by the glass cabinet and stepped inside, revealing that 'Coach Burton' was scrawled across the back in a bold white.

"What are you doing?" Hermione asked curiously after he'd started rummaging through the contents of the cupboard, throwing items behind him until their clattered to the floor, one almost hitting Hermione.

She noted the objects on the ground: a Beater's bat, a whistle, a box of chocolates that looked to be several years old given the layer of dust, an empty flask, two broken potion vials and a deflated quaffle.

"Found it," he muttered to himself, otherwise ignoring her previous question.

"What did you find?" She tipped her head as he turned to face her.

"This," he answered simply before her vision was momentarily blinded as something was thrown towards her face. "It's yours now."

She'd barely managed to catch it and being curious, she silently removed the protective plastic covering and unfolded the item, holding it out before her. It was an exact replica of the jacket Coach Burton was currently wearing, the only difference being 'Junior Coach' was scrawled across the back.

"And explanation would be appreciated," said Hermione, lowering the jacket so she might look to him unobstructed.

"Isn't it obvious?" He arched an eyebrow. "You're my Junior Coach. From now on, I'm calling you Junior. "

She almost had a choking fit but she was able to force it back.

"Very funny," she deadpanned, throwing the jacket back to him.

He'd barely caught it before it was sailing through the air and smacking her in the face, falling into her arms as she blinked in surprise.

"I'm not trying to be funny and this isn't a joke. I've spoken to the bigwigs and given you a glowing recommendation, which was hardly needed when they learned you'd managed to secure the Firefly3000 for each member of the team two months before its release. I've never seen them make a unanimous decision and so quickly, too. It's official, you're my new Junior Coach, and the youngest in history."

"You can't be serious!"

"Oh, but I am, Junior."

"This can't possibly work," she argued. "I'm sixteen. I haven't graduated yet. I have to attend school for the majority of the year."

"Already taken care of," he shrugged lazily, slipping his hands into his jacket pockets. "During term time hours, we will communicate through owl post and you may relay anything you need to through Oliver as I know he visits you once a week to protect your bond. I've spoken to Dumbledore -difficult man to get a hold of- and he's given you permission to leave school grounds every other Saturday so you might attend a training session, but you mustn't leave the stadium, be left alone and you're expected to return by four o'clock in the evening. During the school holidays, you're free to attend all scheduled training sessions and with the game season being during the summer, that doesn't pose an issue with scheduling. See? Anything's possible with a little effort," he boasted. "Besides, I always get what I want and I want you on this team."

"I haven't agreed to anything yet," she reminded him.

"But you will," he responded confidently. "Why wouldn't you? This is a legitimate career, one that's surprisingly difficult to get into and you've already got a foot in the door. After you graduate, there's no telling where this might take you. Not to mention, it pays exceptionally well and you'll be in frequent proximity to your mate."

She brushed her hand through her hair in exasperation. She hadn't expected the wizard to be so... Well, she didn't know but it was annoying.

"Quidditch is Oliver's chosen career, not mine. I'm only invested because of him and because I wish to ensure his safety."

"And that's exactly what you'll be doing," he pointed out. "And I'm certain he'll be overjoyed with the news that you'll be here more often, helping to better the team. I've never seen a wizard so proud of his partner, mate or not."

"Again, I haven't agreed to anything."

"But you will, stop denying the inevitable and put the damn jacket on. There are no drawbacks from accepting... Not that you have a choice," he added and she rolled her eyes. "I've already put in a request to beef up security, not just on game days but permanently. No matter your future carer, this will look great on any job application, you have the opportunity to be close to your mate and you're permitted to shout and insult the players when they're being idiots. And that's ninety percent of the time. So, stop stalling and make it official, put the jacket on."

"And people say I'm stubborn," she grumbled, reluctantly pulling the jacket on, immediately noticing that it was far too big and the sleeves hid her hands. Her brow furrowing, it soon smoothed out and transformed into a smile when her magic took control, resizing the jacket until it fit perfectly. "I can't imagine Oliver being happy about his jersey being covered," she remarked.

"He'll get over it."

"Who knows about this?" She waved a hand before herself, gesturing to the jacket she now wore.

"Us and the big bosses. We thought we'd make today your big debut."

"Why don't you have an Assistant Coach?" She asked, folding her arms over her chest.

"I don't like people," he answered steadily.

"So what am I?"

"My secret weapon, of course. Keep up, Junior," he scolded, stepping past her and through the door, journeying the short distance to the locker room and after Coach Burton checked to make sure the team was appropriately dressed, Jones was sent for from the female locker rooms and they gathered inside.

"Everyone," called Coach Burton, silencing falling and all eyes turning to him. "Welcome the newest member of the team..."

Suddenly feeling nervous, she stepped into the room with her hands in her pockets to prevent her from anxiously playing with the zip on her jacket or the hem of her shirt.

"Junior Coach Hermione Blake," he introduced.

Silence reigned for a small moment as they stared at her in surprise before cheers and applause sounded, Hermione shifting on her feet and smiling sheepishly. Only two players remained silent, Jones (and if looks could kill Hermione would be dead and buried) and Oliver.

"Ollie?" She said his name in concern, receiving no reply. "I think we've broken him," she remarked.

Pallie clicked his fingers in front of Oliver's face, receiving no response or movement. "I think you're right," he agreed with a laugh.

"That's easily fixable... Ollie! Your broom's on fire!" She called.

He blinked rapidly, his head turning as he eyes darted about his surroundings in panic before they lowered to his hand in which currently gripped his broom.

"You alright?" Hermione asked, drawing his eyes back to her.

Nodding, he set his broom to lean against the wall before taking her hand and tugging her out of the locker room and a little further down the corridor.

"When did ye find oot?"

"Just before you did," she answered, her bottom lip being captured by her teeth.

"Ye were worried aboot tellin' mae," he said knowingly. "Why?"

She shrugged her shoulders and lowered her gaze. "I wasn't certain how you'd react."

He snorted. "Ye kidding, this is the best news a've heard since Christmas. Not only will a get tae see ye ev'ryday an' anno from experience hoo brilliant yer brain is, a also know Coach; he wouldn't have given ye a choice in the matter. He's good at his job an' the bosses give him what he wants. What's the plan when ye return tae school?"

"Correspondence through owl post, or you during visitations and Dumbledore's allowing me to leave Hogwarts every other Saturday so I might attend a training session. Security's going to be tighter around here, too, and obviously, there's no issues with and I'm free during the school holidays."

He grinned down at her. "So, am marrying me boss?" He teased. "Tha's got tae come with some perks, right?"

She snorted. "No. Unfortunately, in order to avoid the accusation of favouritism, I'll have to be stricter with you than the others. So, prepare yourself."

She pushed away from the wall and returned to the locker room with Oliver chuckling as he followed after and as they stepped through the door, they caught the tail end of Coach Burton's speech.

"... So, get your arses on your brooms, get out there and win! Don't you dare embarrass me or you'll find yourselves doing five hundreds lap of the pitch! Both on foot and broom!"

"Very inspirational, Coach... Makes me want to go out there and win," Hermione teased.

As the team sniggered, Coach Burton brushed a hand through his hair and looked to her.

"If you think you can do better," he trailed off, gesturing towards the players in invitation.

"I'll give it a go," she shrugged, moving until she stood before the gathered players and they looked to her expectantly. "You've each been training exceptionally hard and it's finally the moment you've been waiting for. The first game of the season. Now, it's time to show the world that Puddlemere's a team that should be feared for your hard work and talent. Go out there and make your fans proud, make your families proud, but most importantly, make yourselves proud. You've worked hard for this and you deserve it. If I see anyone even attempt to do an illegal move I will personally find your number one fan and give them your address."

"You don't know where we live?" Malloy pointed out.

"No, but I'm the Junior Coach now, I have access to that information," she corrected, seeing his face fall in fright. "And with the niceties over with... If you don't win, Coach won't make you do five hundred laps."

"Yes, I will," Coach Burton argued.

"No, you won't. because I will," she smiled sweetly. Both seeing this and recognising the too-innocent tone of voice she'd used, Oliver felt trepidation fill him. "Do any of you know what an obstacle course is?"

"Ye wouldn't," Oliver said in barely above a whisper.

"You know me better than that," Hermione tipped her head and smiled.

"Why so fearful, Wood?" Pallie arched an amused eyebrow.

"Ye don' wanna know," he grumbled.

"We do," Kings disagreed.

"In Hogwarts, she'd have us do these fitness courses," Oliver began, his face pulling into a grimace at the reminder. "By the end af the training session, we'd be crawling back tae the castle. A don' know hoo many muscles a've pulled 'coz af her an' it hurts like hell fer days after. Am hurting now jus' thinking aboot it."

With the players equally terrified and fired up, they made their entrance as their introduction was given by the commentator and to the roaring and booing crowd of fans. Hermione and Coach Burton stood by the railing as they occupied the coach's box with the remaining members of the team perched on their seats.

"AND PUDDLEMERE UNITED WOULD LIKE TO GIVE A BIG WELCOME TO THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE TEAM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GIVE IT UP FOR PUDDLEMERE UNITED'S NEW JUNIOR COACH, HERMIONE BLAKE; THE YOUNGEST JUNIOR COACH IN QUIDDITCH HISTORY!" Cried the commentator.

She practically felt the surprise and confusion being directed towards her from the family box, but with the distance between them, she was unable to see their expressions. However, the Weasley red hair was hard to miss.

As the game began, twenty minutes passed incredibly quickly, bringing in a score of 40-20 with Puddlemere narrowly in the lead. Unfortunately, that's when the injuries began.

Two of Kenmare's Chases were knocked from their brooms by Wilks and Kings, being forced to be removed from the game in order to undergo treatment whilst their reserve players were put in.

Fox, unfortunately, was next. With his attention being focused on the quaffle, he'd failed to notice the bludger drawing near and despite Hermione's best efforts to warn him, it'd been too late. Luckily the bludger collider with his broom, unluckily, it snapped in two. As Fox fell towards the ground, the air had been forced from his lungs and he passed out, thankfully being caught before he collided with the solid floor. Whilst he received no injuries from the impact or bludger, he was harmed from the shrapnel of his broom and he was taken away to be tended to.

"Good thing we've got those FireFly3000's coming in next week," Coach Burton muttered.

Turning to look over her shoulder, she saw Oliver's broom gripped in his hand whilst his leg bounced nervously. Unfortunately, there wasn't time to give him a pep-talk or calm his nerves.

"Ollie, you're up," Hermione called.

He nodded before climbing to his feet, approaching the raised platform and off to the side and as he mounted his broom and prepared to take flight, Hermione placed a quick kiss to his cheek.

"You've got this."

As he managed a smile at her confidence in him, he kicked off the ground and flew into position by the hoops before Kenmare had a chance to earn more points.

"He'll be fine," assured Coach Burton.

"He better be," she grumbled.

As the game continued, Hermione's hand fisted around the metal railing tightly until her knuckles turned white, when the Kenmare Chasers entered the scoring zone, a chorus of cries and boos sounding when Oliver managed an impressive save.

"He's got this," she told herself, one hand coming up to hold onto her necklace.

As a further two hours passed since the start of the match, Puddlemere and Kenmare were currently tied.

"FISHER, GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF YOUR ARSE!" Coach Burton directed.

"AND CATCH THE BLOODY SNITCH WHILE WE'RE TIED!" Hermione finished, both she and Coach Burton missing the double-take the players currently occupying the coach's box shared.

As two blurs unexpectedly streaked across the pitch in blue and green, the crowd fell silent and the atmosphere thickened in intensity. Hermione and Coach Burton leaned so far over the railing in an attempt to get a better angle for viewing, it was a wonder neither of them toppled over.

When the two streaks took a sudden dive towards the ground, Hermione held her breath, counting only three seconds before the blue blur sharply did a u-turn, halting to a sudden stop, his arm raised victoriously when the golden snitch grasped in his hand.

It was silent until the commentator roared, "PUDDLEMERE WINS! 230-80!"

Applause, cheers, singing and boos filled the stadium, Hermione finding herself being pulled into a hug so tight it rivalled Mrs. Weasley's. When Coach Burton released her and bowed over the raising, laughing in joy, disbelief and relief, she sucked in a sharp breath, her lungs being grateful.

As the team finished their victory lap and shook the Kenmare players' hands in a show of sportsmanship, they appeared in the coach's box, Oliver being assaulted when Hermione threw herself at him, folding her arms around his neck and colliding with him with such a force he almost toppled backwards.

"I'm so proud of you," she cried loudly against his ear, wishing to be heard over the raucous cheers surrounding them.

"Okay," called Coach Burton. "Press interview in ten minutes!"

"Prepare yourself," advised Pallie as he came up beside them and Hermione drew back from Oliver. "These people are like vultures."

"I can handle it," Hermione assured him.

"I was talking to him," he responded, slapping Oliver on the shoulder before walking away.

"Should a be offended?" Oliver asked her in confusion.

"I don't know," she admitted. "But if we want to get there on time and avoid Coach's wrath, we should get a move on. We've plenty of time to celebrate at the after-party."

Nodding in agreement, Oliver slipped his hand around hers and tugged her in the direction of the dispersing team, all heading towards the conference room for the first interview of the season. Thankfully, they'd won.

Chapter Sixty-Four

Puddlemere United Stadium – Friday 21st July 1995

Stepping into the PR media room, both Hermione and Oliver surveyed their surroundings, being the only two who'd yet to see it. It kept with the theme seen through the stadium; marble floors, white walls fitted with Puddlemere logos and banners and floor to ceiling windows that replaced an entire wall. The room was empty of furniture but for the fold-out chairs that sat in the centre, facing the team who'd gathered on the raised platform, standing behind the podium, the reserve players on the right and the starting players on the left, separate by Coach Burton who stood in the centre.

Hermione's vision blurred briefly when camera flashes followed their entrance and if Oliver didn't have such a tight hold on her, she would've tripped over her feet as she ascended the three steps of the raised platform. Coach Burton gestured for her to stand beside him on his left, putting Oliver right beside Pallie as neither wished to release the other's hand.

For the first fifteen minutes, Coach Burton directed the press, only allowing the team to answer questions he deemed important or appropriate, steering away from topics that touched on personal, private or irritating. When a number of questions had been aimed at Oliver, Hermione was hard-pressed to keep her heart from bursting from her chest in pride. But it was after that the questions for her started flying in, and that was only because Coach Burton had deliberately ignored such questions until after the rest of the team had been questioned, allowing them their moment to shine and to bask in their first win of the season. Something Hermione wholly approved.

"Miss. Blake?" Began the blonde, her glasses perched on the tip of her nose and her ID badge indicating she worked for the Daily Prophet. "How does it feel to be the youngest appointed Junior Coach in Quidditch history?"

"Honestly, it hasn't quite registered yet and I imagine it's something that will take time to process. Arriving here this morning, I hadn't expected to be given such an opportunity, particularly being so young, and I hadn't expected for Coach Burton to be so stubborn."

"What are you going to contribute to the team?" Asked the wizard with the receding hairline, his ID badge identifying him as belonging to Quidditch Hour.

"That will remain to be seen," Coach Burton answered before she was able to.

"Miss. Blake?" Directed a redhead with round glasses, the witch belonging to Witch Weekly. "Sources report that you and Oliver Wood have a close relationship. Are you dating?"

Hermione pursed her lips and tipped her head, glancing up at Oliver questioningly. They both knew that sooner or later the press was bound to find out about them and if they didn't, someone might spill the news, accidentally or otherwise. They were publically dating, they simply didn't parade it in front of everyone's faces. With suspicions rising, it was best it came from them, that way they could control what was said.

"Aye, we are dating," answered Oliver, looking to the gathered reporters as there was a sudden onslaught of camera flashes. "An' it's not a fling or a publicity stunt. We attended Hogwarts tagether an' we've always been close. It wisnae until Christmas last year tha' our relationship grew from friends tae more. We've been tagether since."

"Quidditch related questions only," Coach Burton warned the reporters, Hermione's mouth twitching in amusement when they quickly settled down under his unhappy stare.

"A question for the team?" Said a middle-aged blonde that belonged to a magazine Hermione hadn't even heard of. Coach Burton eyed her curiously before nodding in acceptance and she continued with, "What is your opinion on the recent Junior Coach hiring?"

"As Captain," Pallie began, drawing all eyes to him, "I know I speak for the team when I say that despite her age, Hermione is more than qualified and she knows exactly what she's doing. We might have only officially met for a few minutes yesterday and we might have only had half a day's training session with her, but we know she's fair, structured and creative. And although we're completely in the dark regarding her intentions or plans, we know she's going to shake this place up and she'll help us on our road to success."

Hermione offered Pallie a smile in thanks, spying his eyes glazing over for a small moment before he was drawn from it by an indignant scoff.

"Please," snorted Jones, "She's nothing but a..."

A Silencing Charm collided with Jones, noises of surprise filling the room and mixing with the rapid camera flashes and questions that followed. Looking to Oliver, Hermione's brow furrowed in concern at his furious expression, his left hand gripping hers and his right grasping his wand, now held down by his side.

"Interview over, that's enough for today. Security will escort you from the building," Coach Burton intervened, calling for security to usher the reporters from the room until only the team remained.

Hermione eyed Oliver warily as the Silencing Charm was removed from Jones, her face having turned red in outrage.

"Go on," Hermione encouraged, tightening her hold on Oliver's hand in warning. "You've obviously got something you wish to say."

Jones didn't hold back.

And it was with her next words that Hermione knew it was more than her Siren side affecting Jones.

"You're a whore who'll through yourself at anyone! You think you're better than everyone else and I'd bet my last sickle that you're just using him," she spat at Hermione, turning her eyes to Oliver. "When she's had enough, she'll dump you quicker than a snitch and latch onto someone else. I wouldn't be surprised if it's Pallie or Malloy, she seems to have a type... Harry Potter. Viktor Krum. You! She's a spoiled bitch that plays the dead parents card to get what she wants!"

Silence fell in the room with the team looking to Jones in shocked horror and Coach Burton annoyance and worry over how Hermione and Olive would respond.

Unsurprised by Oliver's quick movement of raising his wand in Jones' direction and a hex on the tip of his tongue, Hermione was quick to summon it from his hand to her, ignoring the surprised reactions from those around her at the display.

"Oliver, it's fine."

His hand fell from hers and he took a step back, his furious expression being drawn from Jones and to her.

"It's not fine!" He burst, his cheeks tinting red, his eyes blazing with rage and his hands clenching into fists by his side, the team subtly taking a step backwards as if to get further away from the line of fire. "She brought yer parents intae this! The stupid hag hasnae got a fucking clue 'boot the sacrifices yer've made, the lives yer've saved, the threats yer under! She's not got a fucking clue what it's like tae wake up tae ye crying in yer sleep almost ev'rynight from nightmares, what it's like tae constantly worry 'boot yer safety or the people tha' wanna hurt ye. She has naw idea what yer've sacrificed so tha' stuck-up bitches like her can have a life!"

She blinked slowly in surprise at his outburst before releasing a quiet sigh and closing the little distance between them, their gazes locked.

"I know she doesn't, but it's a secret for a reason," she began quietly, knowing she had his attention. "No one can know, Oliver. For your safety, for the others, it must be kept secret. If not, they'll be after me, us. They'll use you to get to me and I won't let that happen." She reached up, the pads of her fingers ghosting over the covered bond mark at his neck, his response being a deep inhale and some of the anger fading. "It's my job to protect you, to protect all of you, to make you happy. Since when do I care what people think of me? Especially people like her? All I care about is your safety and happiness. People like her don't matter to me."

"But..." He tried to argue.

"No," she said firmly. "It doesn't matter. Her words are just that."

Hearing a throat clearing, Hermione turned her eyes to Coach Burton, looking to him over Oliver's shoulder and she nodded slowly in understanding. Dropping her hand from Oliver's neck, he automatically reached it, lacing their fingers together and she turned to face Jones, the witch looking even madder at Oliver defending her and later being ignored.

"My turn," said Hermione coolly, feeling Oliver's hand tighten on hers briefly in support. "My parents are dead as they were murdered when I was still in the room. My mother died in front of me and no matter my young age at the time, those memories have resurfaced. I wake every night from nightmares, remembering the despair in the atmosphere, the smell of my father's blood and the sound of his voice as he yelled as many spells as he could to protect my mum and me. I can remember the sounds of my mother's screams when my father died, her cries of pain, and, I can remember the flash of neon green light as it left the wand of Lord Voldemort and struck my mother in the chest."

Mutters between the team picked up but she diligently ignored them, her eyes being locked in an unwavering gaze with Jones.

"You're pissed that I'm not afraid of you and I'm not afraid to call you out on your bullshit. You're annoyed and I'm guessing embarrassed that you're almost twenty-seven-years-old and you've never set foot on the pitch professionally. You're irritated that the guys on the team won't give you the time of day. You're jealous that Oliver won't look your way and that he's with me. I bet you were livid when you found out he had a girlfriend. I mean, who wouldn't be given his personality? But I know your type. You don't want Oliver for his kindness or intelligence; you want him for his name and money, and with his performance in today's match, his career's on the fast track."

"But the real kicker? Your true hatred stems from your lack of talent. I can't speak for anything else but as for Quidditch... I spent the majority of my morning observing each member of this team and despite not having as much time as I would've liked, what I did witness was very telling. For everyone in the room, I was able to pinpoint seven strengths minimum. And you? I couldn't find one. Weaknesses, however, I was spoilt for choice. I honestly have no idea what the scouts saw in you but the standards weren't as high back then as they are now, obviously."

A muttered "Shit!" sounded from behind her.

"If you committed yourself to the training those weaknesses could be fixed and you'd have a better chance at being chosen to stand-in during a match, unfortunately, you don't have the drive or care. Your teammates are committed, they love the sport and they work their arses off and it's unfair of you to drag them down into your hell-pit. I can easily name a dozen candidates to replace you."

"Really? A dozen?" Coach Burton interrupted with a thoughtful expression.

"At least," she confirmed, her eyes still locked with Jones.

"Their names?" He inquired.

As Hermione opened her mouth to offer up the names and she took her eyes from Jones, she barely caught the movement of a wand being drawn and the furious shriek of Incendio.

Dropping Oliver's hand, Hermione raised both of hers, her shield forming around them like a dome and the fireball being absorbed by the shield, leaving a single puff of smoke as evidence.

Jones released a noise of surprise in the back of her throat, her anger replaced by fear. Rolling her eyes, Hermione disarmed Jones and hit her with a Sleeping Charm, the witch crumpling to the ground before Hermione had even caught her wand.

"She's not dead, is she?" Coach Burton checked, barely sparing the witch on the ground a second glance.

"No, she's just sleeping," Hermione assured him.

"That would've been hard to explain," he remarked, unconcerned.

"What the fuck!" Pallie whispered.

"What the hell just happened?" Malloy demanded.

"None of your business," Hermione replied.

"Ye wanna Obliviate them?" Asked Oliver, partially serious, partially joking. "They know tae much."

"We don't know anything!" Thompson exclaimed.

"Good," Hermione responded. "What are we doing about Jones?" She asked Coach Burton. "She's going to be a problem."

He snorted in response. "Don' worry about her, she's off the team. At least, she will be when she wakes up. Can you do that?"

"I can try," she shrugged, her brow furrowing in concentration and she lifted her hand, making a circular motion.

Jones stirred on the ground, a sleepy noise of confusion leaving her before she slowly pushed herself into a position, looking to everyone questioningly.

"Jones, you're off the team," Coach Burton said casually.

The witch blinked slowly as the news settled in and once it did, she sprung to her feet, her anger resurfacing as she shrieked,

"WHAT?! YOU CAN'T DO THAT; I HAVE A CONTRACT!"

Unphased by her outburst, he calmly replied, "Which you haven't met the terms of for the past five years, it's long overdue. The bosses have been in talks about replacing you after the season anyway and I believe I now have at least a dozen candidates for your replacement. Turn in your uniform, practice wear and equipment provided by the club and remove yourself from the grounds. You have twenty minutes before you'll be escorted out by security."

"You'll regret this," she vowed, looking to each member of the team angrily before storming from the room and slamming the door behind her, everyone's eyes following her movements.

"Well," began Hermione cheerily, "We've an after-party waiting for us. Off you go, have a shower and spruce yourselves up."

They hesitated for a moment and after Hermione clapped her hands and shooed them, they took their leave, the team to the locker rooms, Coach Burton to his office and Hermione and Oliver trailed behind them slowly.

"Do me a favour and use the very last shower?" She said to Oliver, pausing before the locker room door.

"Why?" He arched a suspicious eyebrow. She was up to something.

"You'll see," was all she offered, smiling sweetly before pressing a kiss to his cheek and continuing to Coach Burton's office.

Twenty minutes later, yells and profanities echoed through the halls of the stadium and Coach Burton looked to Hermione when she smirked victoriously.

"What did you do?" He asked.

"Trust me, this is something you want to witness in person. And bringing a camera along would be advisable."

"I don't have a camera," he replied, eyeing her warily.

"Then it's a good job I do." She withdrew a camera from her pocket with a smile. "It pays to be prepared."

When she stood from the couch and took her leave for the locker room, Coach Burton followed her, hearing Oliver's loud laughter mixing with the cries and profanities. The moment they stepped through the door, laughter peeled from Coach Burton and Hermione laughed proudly as she snapped photo after photo.

The twins would love this one, she thought.

She hadn't been lying to them when she'd confessed to working on a new product for their shop and after weeks of tweaking the recipe, she'd needed a test subject. The team. And she'd chosen them for more than one reason.

One, they were ridiculously easy targets with no prior knowledge to her pranking tendencies (and despite no longer being as active as she was when she was younger, she knew it was something she'd never truly grow out of) or affiliation with the Marauders and Weasley Twins. Two, she wanted revenge for Oliver. They'd carried out the initiation prank as Coach Burton had warned, and they'd done so by stealing Oliver's FireFly3000 and hiding it for three days. Three, in order to avoid facing the initiation prank, she'd gotten to them first. And lastly, they now knew not to mess with her.

"You did this!" Kings exclaimed, pointing an accusing finger.

"I did," she agreed through a laugh.

Hermione had slipped the potion into the water system of every shower cubicle when she'd gone to the bathroom earlier during the pre-game practice, but she'd placed the antidote directly into the showerhead of the last shower cubicle, protecting Oliver.

Leaning back against the wall and folding her arms over her chest, she admired her work proudly.

Whilst each of them had the same blue-coloured skin, they were assigned a different character, their clothes automatically transfiguring after their shower into something more befitting.

Pallie stared down at his blue skin in horror, apparently having yet to notice the white beard, red trousers, hat and boots. As the captain of the team, he made a wonderful Papa Smurf.

Thompson's shaggy brown locks had grown down past his shoulders and were now blonde. A white hat perched on his head and he wore a white dress with matching shoes, making him Smurfette.

Fisher sported white trousers, a hat and boots and a pair of black rounded glasses, depicting Brainy Smurf.

Kings wore a yellow straw hat, green trousers with suspenders, brown shoes and held a pitchfork, being unable to put it down due to the Sticking Charm.

Everyone else was dressed similarly; blue body, white boots, hat and trousers. Bishop was Show off Smurf, Malloy was Vanity Smurf and had a mirror glued to his hand, Wilks was Lazy Smurf and had on a white bed hat, Fox was Hefty Smurf, Briggs was Greedy Smurf and he had a bar of chocolate stuck to his hand, Kelsy was Wild Smurf, West was Clumsy Smurf and McGee was Clueless Smurf.

"What do you think?" She asked a laughing Oliver and Coach Burton.

"Brilliant!" Coach Burton exclaimed, wiping a tear from the corner of his eye.

She grinned. "Think the twins will like it?"

"Withoot a doubt," Oliver snorted.

"Oi, remember us? The guys you turned into Merlin knows what," Pallie glared.

"Oh, I could never forget you, especially in the state you're in," she replied, lazily snapping another photo, the flashlight momentarily making him see spots as Oliver and Coach Burton sniggered.

"Why?" Kings questioned, looking down at himself, horrified.

"It's simple really... You're an easy target as you were unknowing of my pranking tendencies, I needed to test a new product, and it's revenge for your initiation prank on Oliver..."

"Revenge? We didn't do anything to you?" Thompson rebutted, holding the hem of his dress out pointedly.

"I beg to differ," she disagreed. "When you hid Oliver's broom he stalked around the house for three days like a damn werewolf on a full moon. He couldn't even look at me, believing himself to have lost something I'd gifted him... And I should inform you, I haven't yet perfected the antidote," she lied. "You'll have to wait until it wears off and you'll be the talk of the party for not just your victory over Kenmare, but your stylish fashion choice."

Wood Manor

Arriving at their destination via port-key, it took only three seconds for Hermione to recognise her surroundings and she looked to Oliver questioningly.

"Tradition dictates the new guy on the team hosts the after-party," he shrugged, a roar of laughter drawing their attention as the team sulked and pouted before dispersing and going in search of food and alcohol.

"I take it you have something to do with that, Kitten," Sirius said knowingly as she approached.

"Yes, they were my test subjects."

"What are they?"

"Smurfs," she and Harry chorused.

"Muggle?" Asked Mr. Wood.

"Yes," she nodded.

"And what's this news about you being the new Junior Coach?" Sirius arched an eyebrow.

She smiled sheepishly. "Trust me, I'm as surprised by this as you are. I tried to decline and use logic to convince Coach Burton otherwise but he's the most stubborn person I've ever met."

Harry snorted and looked to her pointedly. She scowled at him and reached out, smacking his arm with the back of her hand as he winced.

"I don't know how but he's gotten Dumbledore's permission to allow me to attend a training session every other Saturday during school term, and we'll correspond through owl post."

"Molly'll have a thing or two to say," he pointed out.

"I know, but I'll be safe. Security's being upgraded and increased, I'll never be alone and Oliver will be there, too."

"Good luck," he offered. "The twins were looking for you."

Nodding, she went in search of them on the grounds, mingling with the guests as she did so.

"Loved the prank, Spitfire," Fred greeted, coming up behind her.

She startled before turning to face him and George with a smile.

"Thought you would. It's the product I was telling you about. I call it Smurfs Worth Solution."

"It's genius, how does it work?" George asked.

"Potion. It assesses a person's personality in order to choose the correct character. Like Pallie, he's the Captain, so he's Papa Smurf. You like the beard?"

"Nice touch," they nodded.

"It can be put in the victim's bath water or in the shower. It doesn't take effect until the victim is completely dry and clothed, so they don't suspect a thing until it's too late."

"How'd you do it? Why hasn't Oliver been affected?" George asked curiously.

"I slipped the potion into the water system for the locker room, but I applied the antidote to only a single shower cubicle, the one I told Oliver to use. Don't tell the team, though. I told them there isn't an antidote yet."

"I'm so glad you're on our side," Fred muttered and she grinned at him.

The after-party continued with everyone in high spirits and celebrating the win. Eventually, the team saw the funny side and happily posed for photos, but Hermione suspected their alcohol intake may have helped that along.

12 Grimmauld Place

"I'm proud of you," Hermione declared, coming up behind Oliver and folding her arms around his stomach.

After finishing readying for bed, she headed for the twins' room, spotting Oliver in his own, standing with his back to her and a Quidditch playbook in hand.

"It was jus' luck," he replied.

"No, it wasn't; it was hard work, talent and commitment. I don't think it was bad luck that Fox was hit either. I've been going over articles mentioning his name and in the last few years he's suffered a fair few injuries. I can see why he's retiring."

"He's only twenty-eight; he's still got a few years ahead af him," Oliver disagreed.

"No," she shook her head. "He's been injured too many times during his career and they're starting to catch up with him. I wouldn't be surprised if this is his final season. Anyway, I'm shattered and we've practice tomorrow. Let's get some sleep."

Drawing back from him, she took his hand in her own and tugged him into the twins' room, climbing into bed and settling down with the four teens cuddled together.

"That sounds weird, doesn't it? 'We have practice tomorrow'. I think it sounds weird," she remarked.

"A like it," he shrugged.

"Yeah, 'cause you get to spend most of the day with her," Fred pointed out.

"But ye get tae share a bed with her ev'ry night an' see her ev'ryday at school," Oliver fired back.

"The man's got a point, let him have his fun," said George.

"Jones was kicked off the team today," Hermione told the twins.

"What?"

"Why?"

"Too many reasons to name, but I don't doubt Oliver will tell you the story later, but now, we all need sleep."

Puddlemere United Stadium – Saturday 22nd July 1995

"Good Morning, Mr. Wood, congratulations on playing your first game yesterday. You were brilliant," greeted Britch with a flirty smile as Hermione and Oliver approached the training pitch, having to pass the reception's desk in the process. "Don't you ever go home?" She looked to Hermione, her flirty smile morphing into an expression of dislike.

"Is that any way to talk to the newest member of the team?" Hermione arched an eyebrow. "Follow us," she instructed.

Pulling Oliver towards the pitch, they entered the coach's box, approaching the gathered the team.

"Junior?" Was all Coach Burton said in greeting, his eyes darting between her and Britch.

"Morning," she smiled, releasing Oliver's hand and moving to stand on Coach Burton's left. "Coach, I've only been Junior Coach for no more than a day and I've yet to have the chance to read the policies and procedures or sign a contract, so please tell me, what does someone have to do to have their employment terminated?"

He looked to her questioningly but his eyes soon moved to Britch as he said, "Not meet the terms of their contract, physical or verbal abuse to a staff member or visitors, too many filed complaints, sexual harassment claims by a staff member or player, behaving in an unprofessional manner and drinking alcohol on the premises, to name a few," he listed easily. "Why?"

"Wouldn't you say that Miss. Britch has violated more than one of those rules on more than one occasion? She physically and verbally assaulted me as a visitor, her behaviour is unacceptable towards staff and visitors, and, I'd imagine her clothing violates the uniform policy. And Sexual harassment?" Hermione probed, looking to the team questioningly.

"She's made inappropriate and suggestive comments in the past," Pallie admitted. "At least, she has to me, I don't know about the others."

"I caught her snooping in the locker room a couple of months ago," Kings added.

"My, that's certainly pushing your luck," Hermione commented.

"Are you threatening me?" Miss. Britch demanded, narrowing her eyes hatefully.

"No, it's a warning," she corrected. "I'm giving you one last chance to change your behaviour towards the team and staff. Dress more appropriately, I've seen the schedule and there's a few visitations expected with children and I don't want the parents complaining. Actions have consequences. Now, we've work to do, as do you."

Glaring, the blonde turned on her heel and stomped back to her desk.

"THAT'S NOT IMPROVING YOUR BEHAVIOUR!" Hermione called after her as the team sniggered in amusement.

"I'm glad it was you and not me," remarked Coach Burton. "She's been getting on everyone's nerves for months. If I'd have been the one to caution her, she'd have cited sexism and filed a lawsuit."

Hermione snorted. "I doubt she even knows what that word means. Anyway, let's begin... I don't know what Coach has told you yet but the plan for today less physical and mostly lecture-based. There's a lot to go over but if we can get through this quickly without too much interruption, perhaps we might finish early and you can enjoy the rest of your day. So, find a seat and park your bottoms."

As the team did as she instructed, she stood before them with Coach Burton by her side. Looking to him with an arched eyebrow, he cleared his throat and took the hint, also moving to take a seat, shooting a warning glance to those that laughed.

"And now we're ready... Today we are going to discuss your weaknesses. I'm certain you're each aware of your strengths, but when asked, it's common for most to struggle to pinpoint their weaknesses, and that's what I'm here for."

Reaching into the bag she'd brought with her, she removed the two notepads used the previous day, skimming through the pages until she found what she was looking for. "Wilks, we'll start with you," she said, seeing the redhead sit taller, his green eyes locking on her. "Strength-wise, there's a few, your most noticeable one being the power in which you're capable of hitting a bludger, it's quite impressive. However, and I mean this in the nicest way possible, your aim's rubbish."

The team sniggered and Coach Burton glared at them over his shoulder, settling them down.

"Actually, this applies to all the Beaters so Kings, Kelsy, Briggs, pay attention... You've a ratio of 5:2, for every five bludgers you hit, three miss your target, so we do need to work on your aim. Briggs, we need to improve your backhander, I noticed that you struggled a little in practice yesterday. Just because you're a reserve doesn't mean you shouldn't be on the top of your game; you never know when someone may get injured or if another team shows interest in you."

"So what's the plan to help us?" Wilks asked.

"I've a few ideas; I'm struggling to decide between them so I'm likely to use them all at some point. Beaters, in general, I noticed that you're out of sync with one another. It's your job to know what the other is thinking so you can coordinate offensive and defensive manoeuvres quickly. I know two people who do this better than anyone I've ever met, and sorry, boys, but they're the best Beaters I've ever seen. I'm going to work on bringing them in so they might demonstrate their technique and you can learn from them."

"Ye talking 'boot who a think ye are?" Asked Oliver.

"Yes, they'll be great," she nodded.

"Do ya think the team's ready tae meet them?"

"No, but they'll get used to them," she shrugged. "Besides, as long as I'm here they shouldn't be too bad. I'll make sure they're fairly well behaved."

"Yer standards af fairly well behaved or theirs?" He checked.

"Theirs, let's not be cruel. They'll keep the team on their toes."

"Who are you talking about?" Coach interrupted.

"You'll see," she smiled. "You'll probably want to recruit them once you see what they can do. It'll knock your socks off... Or maybe your head if they aim a bludger at you, in which case, you duck, and you duck quickly. You'll have to keep your eyes peeled."

"She's not kidding, Coach, don' take yer eyes af them," Oliver warned.

"Anyway, Pallie... You may be the highest scoring Chaser in the league which did make it difficult to pinpoint your weaknesses, I was able to find a couple. However, before I reveal what they are, I want to give the others a chance to identify them. Grab a quaffle, get in the air and take five throws at the hoops," Hermione instructed.

"On it, Junior Coach," he nodded, standing to his feet and reaching for his broom, receiving a smack upside the head from Hermione. "Ow! What was that for?" He grumbled, rubbing the aching spot.

"Yesterday, what did I say about calling me that?"

"Not to do it," he reluctantly answered, avoiding her gaze and scowling at his laughing teammates. "I'm going to report you for abuse," he threatened, mounting his broom.

"Please, it's a form of affection, you should feel honoured. Did you see me slapping Jones or Britch upside the head? No, you didn't," she rebutted. Collecting a quaffle from the pile off to the side, she threw it to Pallie before he flew into position. "Fox, are you good to be Keeper or are you still sore from your fall yesterday?"

"I'm okay," replied the starting Keeper.

"You're sure?" She checked. "If you fall off your broom, I'll do a lot worse than slap you upside the head."

"I'll be fine," he assured her.

"Very well, grab your broom and follow me."

Doing as she asked, she pulled him off to the side, quietly giving him his orders before he also took his position on the pitch. After gathering the team by the railing so they might better see, she pulled a whistle from her pocket.

"I want you to keep an eye on Pallie, watch what he does and see if you can spot his weakness," she said before blowing the whistle, signalling for Fox and Pallie to start the demonstration.

Pallie entered the scoring zone and took aim for the right-side hoop, successfully scoring. As Fox threw the quaffle back to Pallie, he focused his attention not on the quaffle but on Pallie, watching carefully and as he entered the scoring one for a second time, he did as Hermione instructed and automatically moved to protect the left-side hoop, successfully blocking the goal. On the third attempt, Pallie chose the left-side hoop once more, allowing Fox to successfully block him.

Those actions foiled Pallie's statistics of a 4:1 ratio was successfully scoring.

As the Captain and Chaser entered the scoring zone for the fourth time, he took aim at the right-side hoop, successfully scoring. With his fifth and final attempt, he once more chose to go left, Fox blocking it.

As Hermione blew the whistle to signal they were to return to the coach's box, they all retook their seats and looked to her.

"Did anyone notice what happened out there?" Hermione asked them.

"He only scored twice, whatever you told Fox to do worked," said Bishop, clearly confused.

"Yes, but why did it work?" She questioned, receiving no response. "Pallie, your biggest weakness is that when you enter the scoring zone, you tend to favour one hoop."

"I do?" His brow furrowed.

"Afraid so," she nodded, "You favour the left hoop. I asked Fox to protect the left-side over the middle and right side, which is how he was successful in blocking you. I noticed it almost immediately when observing you, so I wouldn't be surprised if other league teams start to notice, too, and use it against us. It's what I'd do. So, we have to knock that habit out of you so you're no longer predictable."

"And how do we do that?"

"I was thinking that generating a scoring pattern might work, but it will be so random that only we will know what your next move will be. That should shake things up for a while."

"So while others will think I'm aiming randomly, what I'm actually doing is following a pattern?" He surmised.

"Exactly. We'll be improving your weakness and it can be used as a scoring tactic."

"That's genius," Coach Burton muttered, his eyes locked on his clipboard as he scribbled something down on the parchment.

"Now, Malloy, you're doing the same thing as Pallie only you favour the right hoop. We'll also generate a scoring pattern but we'll be sure to make it different, preventing anyone from noticing potential similarities."

"Bloody genius," Coach Burton repeated.

"Bishop, I've noticed that you drop the quaffle more frequently than Pallie and Malloy but I don't think it's entirely your fault. Can I see your gloves, please? In fact, everyone take out your gloves and give them to me, I'm not doing anything mischievous; I just want to confirm my suspicions," she promised after seeing their suspicious glances.

Removing their gloves from their pockets, Hermione collected them before carefully examining each pair.

"Just as I thought," she said to herself, walking over to the railing and then throwing the pile of gloves over the side and to the ground.

"What did you do that for?" Coach Burton asked, looking to his horrified players.

"Those gloves are rubbish; they're old, worn out and useless," she answered. "The stitching's coming loose and they've lost their grip, meaning that the quaffle is being dropped and a proper grip can't be found on the brooms, putting the players in danger of slipping and falling. Uniforms and equipment need maintenance just as much as a broom does."

Slipping her hand into her bag, she removed a brown box.

"Hoo do ye get so much stuff in tha' bag?" Oliver asked amused.

"Undetectable Extension Charm," she answered distractedly as she passed a pair of Quidditch gloves to their intended new owners.

Looking down at them, they were fingerless, made of black leather and they'd been customised, having the player's surname and number stitched onto the back.

"There you go, brand new Quidditch gloves, these should improve the handling of the quaffle and your grip on your brooms."

"These are awesome," Kings remarked, absentmindedly slipping them on and flexing his hand. "Very comfortable."

"Where'd you get them?" Said Coach Burton, eyeing Thompson's as he occupied the seat closest to him.

"My connection with the FireFly3000 gave me them for a discount."

"Are you ever going to reveal who this connection is?"

"Nope, never," she vowed. "Fisher, Thompson, there aren't many weaknesses you can have given you spend most of your time above the game searching for the snitch and way from the other players, but... I've noticed that you have trouble dodging bludgers. I know that you're focused on looking for the snitch but you have to be aware of your surroundings. And secondly, you're a little too slow in recovering from dives and it does worry me that you'll get injured."

"The solution?" Fisher probed.

"Simple, have you ever heard of dodgeball?" She asked, seeing their confused expressions. "I thought not, it's a muggle game. The whole point of the game is to, well, dodge the ball. Later on, I'll split you into two teams and each team will throw balls at the other team's players. If you are hit by a ball you are out of the game. If someone throws the ball and you catch it without dropping it, then the person who threw the ball is out of the game. The last person standing, that's the team that wins. Simple?"

"Seems it," Pallie agreed.

"It can get quite rough so a few injuries might occur, please just avoid the face and you should be fine. As for the pulling up out of a dive, I thought I would bring someone in to advise you."

"Is it who a think it is?" Oliver questioned.

"Yes, do you think it'll work?"

"If anyone can help them, it's him," he agreed. "A think they'll be impressed, they've never seen him play befere, not like we have."

"Who are we talking about?" Coach Burton arched an eyebrow.

"Just some Seeker we know, he's amazing. A natural. I'd say he's the best Seeker in the world but I'm biased."

"Viktor Krum?" Fisher suggested, his eyes lighting up at the prospect of meeting the world-renowned player.

"No, it's someone else; who Viktor agrees is a better Seeker than him, might I add. But it's a surprise. I'll see about getting him here later. Moving on to the next order of business, the Keeper. Fox, you're rubbish at dodging bludgers," she said simply and they chuckled at her. "You're a great Keeper and you've tremendous focus, the only problem is you're so focused on the quaffle you're not checking your surroundings. We'll use dodgeball for that as well. I know I haven't mentioned West or McGee yet, and thank Merlin, Jones isn't here otherwise we'd be here all day," she said gratefully and they laughed at her. "I know that it's messing with the numbers a little bit, but when you were showering yesterday I had a chat with Coach and with his permission I owled several possible replacements. They'll be coming for a tryout tomorrow morning. So, everyone gets a sleep in, I don't want to see anyone here until one o'clock."

They cheered at the news and she rolled her eyes.

"Who're the newbies?" Pallie asked.

"I haven't told Coach, so I'm not telling you," she replied. He huffed at her and crossed his arms childishly.

"Please tell mae one af them isnae Flint," Oliver said hopefully.

Hermione snorted. "Don't be ridiculous, as if I'd let him anywhere near this team. Now, to bring this to an end and finish off... West, McGee, your weakness is that you use the same plays repeatedly and that makes you predictable. It makes it easier for the opposing team to get into position and wait for the time when they can steal the quaffle. The solution's simple; we reinvent your playing tactics. For now, we'll work on the weaknesses I've mentioned as they're the most problematic. Coach, anything to add?"

"Nope, I think you've covered everything, Junior. How do you plan to improve their skills?" He asked, his muggle pen poised and ready to take notes for reference.

"Muggle sports. Sports such as cricket, tennis and baseball will be most helpful to Beaters as they involve hitting a ball with a bat. Basketball or netball will be most helpful for Chasers as they involve throwing a ball through a basket that is not much bigger than the ball itself. And sports such as rounders, cricket and baseball will be useful to Seekers as they also include catching a ball. All of these sports will improve reflexes, hand-eye coordination, teamwork, stamina and confidence, to name a few. Not to mention, we may be able to use some tactics from those sports and apply them to Quidditch. They're also fun to play so it won't feel like a chore or the day's dragging. I want you to love your job and I want you to want to be here, rather than you having to be here."

"You really do know what you're doing, don't you?" Bishop remarked, impressed.

"I suppose so," she shrugged.

"We're winning the League Cup this year," Coach Burton said confidently.

Snorting, she said, "Alright, everyone take a quick break; have a drink, use the bathroom, jump off a broom, I don't care. I believe I have a contract to read over and sign. You have twenty minutes before we get to work."

Chapter Sixty-Five