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## Skimming Stones & Skinny Dipping

by [KariAnn1222](#)

### Summary

COMPLETE! Skimming stones leads to other worthwhile activities. Inspired by the deleted Ron/Hermione "skimming stones" scene from Deathly Hallows: Part 1. Nominated for Best Romance, Best Ron, & Best Hermione in the Romione Awards!

### Notes

This is just a little sumthin' sumthin I came up with during one of my frequent bouts of insomnia, inspired, of course, by the deleted skimming rocks scene in DH:PT1. Hope you enjoy!

Warning: This will contain strong sexual content (although this particular installment isn't so bad) and is intended for adult audiences only, so if you're not old enough to buy a pack of cigarettes or get into an rated R-rated movie without adult supervision, then there are other, more appropriate stories for you on this site. By observing the posted rating and warnings and choosing to read on, you are thereby certifying that you are of the legal age of consent in your country or place of residence.

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## Chapter 1

"Now, here's the key: the flatter, the better. Try that."

She watched on, feeling lighthearted for the first time in days as Ron Weasley bent down, plucking a water-smoothed stone from the embankment; the lake that they faced was an accumulation of melted snow from the surrounding, majestic mountains.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione had been camping for two days in a deep valley, and though the scenery was quite beautiful, food was, as usual, scarce, which had served to keep morale low; empty stomachs contributed to bickering and arguing, particularly on the part of Ron and Hermione—and *much* particularly when it was Ron's turn to wear the Horcrux.

It hadn't helped that the weather had started to turn cold, which only served to exacerbate their irritability and generally downtrodden spirit, but, today, a Wednesday, Hermione believed it was though she couldn't be sure, had proven to be...unusually peaceful. The trio had kept mostly to themselves: Hermione had immersed herself in *Beedle the Bard* again, Harry had sat brooding outside of the tent for much of the morning—it was his turn to wear the locket—and Ron had wandered off to be alone, as he so often did.

Having gotten the urge to stretch her legs after an uninterrupted period of a couple of hours, Hermione had shut her book with a sigh and ducked outside of the tent; Harry hadn't even acknowledged her, he was so immersed in his brooding, so she'd turned her attention on the figure silhouetted on the distant embankment: He was skimming stones.

Her legs had begun to move in his direction before she'd made any sort of conscious decision, as if she were drawn to him like a moth to the flame despite the fact that they'd been continuously rowing. To her relief and undeniable pleasure, he'd grinned at her as she'd approached in that adorable lopsided way of his—something she hadn't seen too often since they'd joined Harry on this rambling, endless journey—and offered to teach her.

"All right," Ron said as he leaned back, swinging his arm in an arc as he demonstrated: "Lean back a bit. Get quite low...flick the wrist." When he released the stone, it skimmed remarkably along the surface, bouncing several times before sinking into the water. "Whoa," he said in a triumphant laugh, and Hermione had to admit she was impressed.

"Wow, you're really good at it," she agreed. "So, what, kind of like that?" She then swung her arm back and chunked her own stone sloppily into the water. She was well aware that she hadn't done it properly, but she was enjoying this rare opportunity of having Ron teach her something he was good at; she knew that he was also good at Chess and Quidditch, but she somehow hadn't known this about him.

Ron looked at her with a mischievous smirk on those features that she adored so much. "No," he said with a shake of his head. Wordlessly, he retrieved another stone from the embankment and placed it into her open palm.

When she again did nothing more than hurl it at the mass of water, he graced her with another amused smirk that clearly stated, "Not even close." Then he did something that she'd secretly hoped he would but that she hadn't actually expected him to: He moved closer to her, placing his large hands on her shoulders from behind: "Get—get down," he said almost shyly, applying gentle pressure, and she obediently bent her knees as her entire body hummed, her every nerve ending acutely aware of his close proximity, "and, uh, just..."

When he pressed his body to hers more closely still, his right arm sliding around her waist to grasp her wrist, her heart began hammering so loudly in her ribcage that she could scarcely concentrate on his instructions: "This arm back," he murmured, very near her ear as he guided her arm in an arc, "and then..." The stone sailed smoothly out of her hand as she released it, and it skimmed on the surface of the water much as his had.

However, Hermione found that she couldn't feel too proud over the little victory, because the instant the rock had left her hand, Ron had released his hold on her and stepped back.

"That's two," she said with a grin, ignoring her disappointment at the loss of physical contact.

"Two," he agreed.

"Good?" she asked, but he was already arcing his arm and letting loose another stone of his own. Bending down, she plucked up another one. "So, what, kind of like—?"

Once more, she chunked it rather than performing the proper motion, and he smiled at her in a manner that said, "I know you're doing this on purpose." Nevertheless, he humored her as he bent down to retrieve more stones, saying, "You're getting there. You're getting there."

The truth was that Hermione wanted to feel his arms around her again, and he didn't disappoint: He moved toward her once more, his arms sliding around her from behind, and she could feel his body heat scorching hers even through their layers of clothing as she allowed him to guide her movements once more; she had difficulty focusing on the task at hand with Ron so near to her.

Even still, she experienced a thrill of victory a moment later when her rock skipped three times.

"Not bad," Ron said in approval. "Three. Try and get a bit—a bit lower..." She was entranced by him as he bent down and leaned back, swinging his arm in another arc: "Flick of the wrist," he said as he released it.

They continued much in that manner for quite a while: Hermione was getting better at it, but periodically she let one dud just to feel the heat of his body scorching her, his hands on her body, and the warmth of his breath on her ear.

Each time he "helped" her, his body became closer to hers until he was unapologetically spooning her, her bum tucked into his hips; after five or six times, he stopped moving away from her, and Hermione reveled in the feel of his roaming hands on her as they slid over her arms after he'd released her wrists, gliding down her waist and lingering on her hips.

Hermione and Ron then completely forgot about skimming stones as they stood together, their bodies fused as his thumbs rubbed circles over her hipbones, both of them acutely, painfully aware of the other. She could hear his labored breathing in her ear, and there was a heavy bulge pressed against the small of her back through his jeans, which served to increase her own nervous excitement, but he wasn't pulling away from her or apologizing.

She heard him swallow hard. "Er-my-nee," he breathed, his voice raspy; then she experienced a thrill of excitement course through her veins as he pressed his lips against a spot just behind her ear in a tender kiss, the contact physically jolting her.

She gasped as his hands gripped her hips tighter, pulling her more firmly against his body. One of his large palms had moved around her hip, tentatively snaking beneath her jacket and shirt and finding the smooth skin of her belly; his hand was cold as it slid hesitantly up her ribcage, but she didn't care; she was gasping in unfettered desire, the area between her legs swollen with her need as his fingertips skimmed the underside of her breast through her cotton bra.

She was on the verge of turning in his arms, of acting on an intense, undeniable impulse to snog senselessly this boy that she'd loved for years. (Until recent months, she hadn't thought he'd reciprocated those feelings.)

Abruptly, however, Hermione remembered Harry's presence just outside the mouth of the tent. Even though he was a distance away, it would be quite obvious even from that distance that Ron was quite literally wrapped around her.

"Ron," she murmured, her voice barely more than a croak as she pulled away from him hesitantly, not ready to end the contact but knowing that she must before things got out of hand. She turned then, facing him in the midday sun.

"Fuck, I'm sorry," he breathed, his ears bright red as he ran his hands through his hair and attempted to catch his breath. "That was stupid... I don't know what I was thinking—"

"Don't be," she said quickly, attempting to steady her own erratic breathing. "I'm not. I'd just rather not make a spectacle of myself."

## Chapter 2

Ron was driving her barmy.

For once, however, his behavior was driving her barmy in a decidedly *pleasant* way, which, although a nice reprieve from his usual complaining about their food situation, was, nevertheless, unnerving.

It was also maddening, infuriating, exciting, and a million other things all rolled into one giant, overwhelming, confusing tidal wave of emotions.

When Ron and Hermione had walked back to the campsite after their skimming rocks session, she'd at first been unsure whether Harry had noticed how Ron had literally been wrapped around her, but the quirk of the corners of his lips had served as a dead giveaway.

Thankfully, however, Harry had always been discreet with these matters and had chosen not to comment. However, she couldn't help but wonder if Harry would ask Ron about what had happened the next time the boys were alone together.

Wordlessly, Hermione had relieved Harry of the Horcrux, not quite meeting his eye.

The following morning, the trio had Apparated to another random leaf-strewn forest that Hermione had found on a map, and the day had continued in much the same manner as the previous ones, only with one notable difference: Ron seemed to be taking advantage of every opportunity to touch her, if only minutely.

When she'd gone inside to make tea after an inadequate lunch of stale bread, which they'd consumed outside on a blanket that she had placed on the forest floor in an attempt to create a "picnic atmosphere," he had cheerfully volunteered to help her. As Ron had followed her inside the tent, she'd been extremely aware of his hand that had pressed gently but firmly against the small of the back, scorching her through her jacket.

When they'd stood in the cramped kitchenette together, Hermione putting on the kettle while Ron retrieved the teacups from the cupboard, their legs and arms had been touching: Her hands had trembled the whole time she'd worked, as if she'd never stood in a small space with Ron before, which was ridiculous, of course. There was no reason she should be having such an intense, physical reaction to him—

*Except that he was spooning you not twelve hours ago, she'd reminded herself. You felt his—his ...erection against your back, and then you very nearly let him fondle you beneath your clothing.*

Her breath had quickened at the recent memory, warmth originating from her womb spreading outward to heat her entire body. Ron had chosen that moment to step up behind her and reach for something in the cabinet over her head; his front brushed her back ever-so-slightly as he retrieved whatever item he was searching for, and then he'd winked at her roguishly as he'd retreated, the gesture clearly telling her that he knew *exactly* what he was doing to her, the smug prat.

That afternoon, she'd decided that she fancied a shower, and so she'd stood beneath the Ever-Replenishing hot water for longer than usual, relishing the heat. When she'd finally emerged from the tiny loo, dressed in flannel pajama bottoms and a long-sleeved t-shirt, Ron had brushed by her in the relative confines of the tent on his way to retrieve his chess board; she could've sworn that as they'd brushed past each other that he'd turned and actually smelled her hair.

From anyone other than Ron, that sort of behavior would've been creepy, but, as it was, she'd secretly reveled in the attention.

Now, an hour or so later, Hermione sat in the open mouth of the tent, her old, reliable copy of *Hogwarts, A History* open in front of her, but she found that she couldn't concentrate on the text: She was too distracted by her thoughts of Ron and of his baffling yet admittedly exciting behavior.

The sun was on the verge of setting—she estimated that they had about a half-hour of daylight left—and her stomach rumbled almost painfully. The boys had managed to snag a couple of meager fish from the nearby pond, and Hermione had done her best with it—which wasn't much, unfortunately. At least Ron hadn't complained as he normally would have, and Hermione was thankful for that, at least.

She contemplated the mystery of why it was that things had changed between them so abruptly. Although, she reconsidered, perhaps nothing *had* changed, exactly, but maybe everything was finally starting to fall into place; maybe things were finally starting to line up for them just as it was meant to.

After all, even though they'd been arguing as of late, she was aware that it was merely the result of all of the extra stress, the hunger, and the cold, but, before that, over the summer Ron had been... complimentary, thoughtful. He'd danced with her at Bill and Fleur's wedding. At Grimmauld Place at the end of summer, they'd chosen to continue sleeping next to each other in the drawing room even after Harry had moved into Sirius's old bedroom; they'd fallen asleep talking quietly and holding hands every night.

Hermione shivered, wrapping her arm that wasn't holding the book more firmly around her middle when she felt something warm and soft sliding over her shoulders. Looking over her shoulder, she was somewhat surprised to see that it was Ron, who'd brought her a blanket.

She smiled gratefully as he lifted her hair over the top of the quilt, the warmth of his fingers lingering on the back of her neck and causing her to shiver for completely different reasons than the cold.

"Thanks," she murmured almost shyly, and he smiled that beautiful crooked smile of his.

"No problem." Then he reached out and grabbed her book from her hands. Hermione was on the verge of protesting, but all he did was turn it right side up and hand it back to her. "Reading books upside down, are we?" he said with a flippant chuckle. "Now *that's* talent."

She felt herself blushing furiously, but he was already stepping around her. "I'm going for a quick walk. Be back in a few."

She merely nodded as she continued to blush, accustomed to his frequent but brief disappearances. As she watched him pick his way through the trees, his lanky form silhouetted in the late evening sun, which was now low in the sky, Hermione experienced an abrupt, undeniable curiosity.

Glancing back inside the tent, she concluded that Harry must be in the loo or his bunk, since she couldn't see him. Coming to a quick but admittedly rash decision, Hermione rose to her feet before she could talk herself out of it and began to slowly walk in the direction that Ron had disappeared into the woods.

## Chapter 3

Ron couldn't stand it anymore.

If he didn't get some relief soon, he felt that it was only a matter of time before he did something stupid to embarrass himself in front of the girl he loved and his best mate.

Like hump his pillow in his sleep. Yeah, Harry would take the piss for sure if he and Hermione woke to find Ron practically shagging his pillow and moaning Hermione's name. And Hermione...well, she was kind and wouldn't purposely humiliate him, but he'd most likely never be able to look her in the eye again, and that just wouldn't do.

Ron still couldn't believe that she'd let him touch her soft skin the day before. (She had to've felt his raging hard-on, 'cause he'd been all but grinding it against her.) He still couldn't believe that he'd actually had the nerve to try it to begin with, and he *really* couldn't believe what Hermione had said to him afterward: She'd told him not to be sorry, because *she* wasn't.

He couldn't help but obsess over the meaning behind her words even as he'd jumped at every chance to touch her: He'd purposely invaded her space in the kitchenette, gauging her responses to him and coming to the conclusion that she...well, wanted him as much as he wanted her.

It wasn't *exactly* a revelation, considering the obvious jealousy she'd shown when he'd dated Lavender last year, but he was still having trouble wrapping his mind around the idea that this brilliant, fuck-hot woman actually wanted *him* when she could have...well, Harry, for one.

The bloke wasn't bad-looking—well, according to the girls, anyway—he was smart, brilliant at Quidditch, he had that sensitivity thing going for him that girls seemed to like, and, well, he was the bloody Chosen One, wasn't he?

Ron Weasley, on the other hand, he was just the sidekick, not particularly smart or accomplished, not particularly good-looking (even though Lavender hadn't seemed to be able to get enough of him, a puzzle he still hadn't quite figured out); he was also hopelessly unorganized and a bit of a slob. Okay, more than a "bit." He reckoned he was all right at Quidditch, and no one could beat him at chess. His sense of humor was decent, even if he wasn't an all-around comedian like Fred and George, but, even still, that didn't account for how a woman like Hermione Granger could possibly want the likes of *him*.

But evidently she did, and who was Ron to look a gift-hippogriff in the mouth? Or however that stupid expression that his mum liked to use went.

When he'd stepped up behind her and reached into the cupboard over her head—he hadn't actually been looking for anything; he'd just wanted to see what she'd do—her breathing had hitched, her chest heaving in response and her fingers tightening on the edge of the stove in a white-knuckled grip. An incredibly sexy blush had also spread up her neck and tinged her cheeks as she'd bit her lower lip.

At that moment, he'd experienced a rush of animalistic lust so intense that he barely restrained himself from yanking her around to face him, shoving her jeans down her hips, and shagging her right then and there, with Harry right outside the tent, and damn the consequences.

Instead, he'd grabbed an item at random, winked at her, turned, and ducked back out of the tent. It wasn't until he'd plopped back onto the blanket that Hermione had lain out that he realized that the object he'd taken had been the paprika.

"I know that bread didn't quite cut it, mate, but you're actually resorting to eating the spices?" Harry was eyeing the object in Ron's hand with an expression of amusement on his face.

"Shut it," he'd muttered in embarrassment, his ears heating as he'd shoved the little container of paprika deep into his pocket.

Later that afternoon, when Hermione had emerged all fresh-faced and smelling all sweet like vanilla or cinnamon, or a combination of the two, her hair still wet, he'd gotten an instant woody just thinking about the stream of hot water rushing down her tits, her flat belly, and her plump little arse, just as he always did.

He'd imagined her running a washcloth between her breasts and down between her legs...

Ron had never been so envious of a washcloth in his entire life.

He'd discreetly adjusted himself in his jeans before rising and brushing by her in a pretense to get his chess board from a nearby rickety end table. As he'd passed by her, he couldn't help but turn his head subtly in her direction and breathe in that vanilla-cinnamon scent that he'd come to associate with Hermione.

He was aware that he was completely mental over this girl, but he found that he didn't care.

Despite the fact that his stomach felt like it was eating itself, he'd had the presence of mind not to complain as he'd scarfed down his meager portion of mushy, disgusting fish for dinner. Although he enjoyed a good row on occasion, things between them had been going so well since he'd taught her how to skim stones that he hadn't wanted to ruin it.

Finally, the day had winded down, and Hermione had volunteered to stand first watch. Noticing her shivering in the mouth of the tent, Ron had brought her a blanket, which she'd seemed surprised about—which stung him a bit. He'd made a mental note to start doing nice things for her more often. He'd gotten good at it over the summer, but the last few months he seemed to have resorted back to his old, thoughtless self, something he intended to fix.

First, though, he feared that if he didn't have a nice wank, he might just explode.

After turning her book right side up in her hands—he couldn't help but hope that he was the reason she was so distracted—he set off into the surrounding woods. He couldn't go past the border of their protective enchantments, but he wanted to get far enough away that there was no chance of him being seen or heard.

Stopping in a thicket of closely-grown trees, Ron quickly undid his pants and freed his cock; conjuring images of Hermione in the shower was all it took, and he was hard as a rock, stroking himself with practiced ease while his free hand braced against the bark of a tree. He pictured himself pushing her up against the stall door, parting her legs, and sliding inside of her...

Ron had never had sex: Lavender had never allowed him to touch her below the waist in the short time they'd "dated," claiming that she wasn't "that kind of girl" even as she'd removed her top for him—not that Ron had ever really wanted her to begin with. It had always been Hermione that he'd been thinking about even as Lavender had allowed him to titty-fuck her on the floor in an empty classroom.

But he could imagine. Ron had quite a good imagination, actually, and even if he didn't, he had five older brothers (to hear them talk, Bill and Charlie had both been lady-killers, and George and Fred were both pretty smooth; even Percy had had a girlfriend or two) and friends who liked to brag about their conquests. As a result, he could easily envision how slick and smooth Hermione's



pussy would be, how sweetly tight... She would moan his name as he thrust into her, her fingernails digging into his shoulders...

His fantasy shifted, and he imagined her naked on the forest floor, her round, perfect tits jiggling as she sucked him off. He'd never seen her bare breasts, of course, but he'd memorized their outline, and he could imagine that her nipples were just as pink as her lips...

For that matter, he wasn't sure what he liked about her body the most—her tits or her arse. At that thought, the vision shifted once more, and she was suddenly on her hands and knees on the forest floor, and Ron was braced between her legs, his hands gripping the soft, smooth flesh of her arsecheeks as he plunged into her from behind.

In his mind, she mewled in pleasure, screaming his name, and that did it for him: "HERMIONE! Oh, fuuuck, Hermione, uungh....fucking *love* you..." It streamed from his lips unthinkingly as he came forcefully, his cock convulsing as he jetted all over his hand, the tree trunk, and the leaves gathered at the base.

Ron collapsed in satiation against the bark, giving himself a moment of recovery before straightening once more. Still trembling in the aftermath of his orgasm, he pulled his wand out of his back pocket and hastily cleaned up the mess he'd made of himself before tucking his now-limp dick into his jeans and straightening his clothing.

He'd just turned to start walking back to the campsite when he heard it: A sharp *snap*, as if an animal had stepped on a twig—at least, as his eyes searched the surrounding trees, he *hoped* it was an animal and not a person...

## Chapter 4

Hermione froze, her hands clamped firmly over her mouth to prevent herself from gasping as she caught sight of Ron's bright ginger hair, which stood out in sharp contrast to the surrounding foliage. He had one hand braced against the trunk of the tree, and she could see from her vantage point that his other hand was moving vigorously over his erect penis.

Ron was masturbating.

She wasn't sure what she'd been expecting to stumble upon when she'd made the decision to follow him—okay, perhaps that wasn't entirely true. Hermione was aware that boys masturbated; for that matter, many girls masturbated as well, since human beings were inherently sexual creatures, and she certainly wasn't deluded enough to think that Ron was an exception; nor was Hermione herself an exception.

Therefore, she grudgingly admitted to herself that she'd partly expected this—that she'd actually *wanted* to catch him in the act of self-stimulation. However, she found herself more than a bit overwhelmed by what she was witnessing and torn on what she should do: She found herself simultaneously aroused and somewhat disgusted, mortified from the perspective of an inexperienced girl and yet fascinated from a scientific viewpoint.

Hermione had always possessed an insatiable curiosity, and matters regarding sex and human nature were definitely inclusive to that inquisitiveness. She had, of course, studied male anatomy extensively.

Also, the summer before she'd turned fourteen, she'd accompanied her mother to one of those gargantuan Muggle bookstore chains in London. She'd wandered away from her mum, and when Hermione had by chance stumbled upon the section of the store that contained pornographic magazines, she hadn't been able to help but take a peek—even as her eyes had glanced about nervously over the fact that she was breaking the rules. She'd expected to be scolded by an employee at any moment, but no one had appeared to chase her away.

Her thirteen-year-old self hadn't been aroused by what she'd seen, but, rather, shocked. How one of *those* was expected to fit inside...well, she'd come to the conclusion that sex must be exceedingly painful; she hadn't even wanted to *think* about what giving birth must be like.

Afterward, she'd been somewhat disturbed by why she hadn't responded to the images she'd seen on a physical level; she'd even questioned her sexual orientation. However, she'd soon confirmed that she wasn't aroused by images of nude women, either.

It wasn't until Hermione had picked up one of her mother's romance novels, which she'd read beneath her sheets out of fear of getting caught, and she'd had a definite physical reaction to the admittedly cheesy descriptions—especially once she'd mentally replaced the characters on the page with herself and Ron—that she'd realized that not only wasn't she gay, but that she was hopelessly attracted to Ron.

That's also when she'd learned to masturbate by rubbing herself between her legs to release the tension there.

*Ron*, of all people. At the time, she'd wondered why it couldn't be, well, *Harry*, to be quite frank. Harry, at least, made sense on a rational level: She didn't argue with Harry, he didn't say hurtful things to her, and he was kind.

But Ron...he was fiercely protective of her; there was a fire there, a passion, even when they rowed—*especially* when they rowed. She'd known that it was their way of releasing their pent up energy—at least on her part, even if she hadn't wanted to admit it to herself for what it was.

Now she knew that it was sexual energy, pure and simple, and she knew that Ron knew it, too.

Hermione bit her lower lip as she watched Ron pleasure himself, wondering whether he was thinking about her. It was an incredible turn-on, and she couldn't help but study him from a scientific standpoint: Even from a distance, she noted that his penis appeared long and thick—at least, it was in proportion with his body, which had become broader in the past year—and he seemed to be approaching his climax, judging by the way he was grunting, the tension in his shoulders becoming more obvious as his hand quickened its pace.

She held her breath in anticipation of his release, knowing that out of respect for him that she should turn around right now and pretend she'd never seen this, but she *wanted* to watch him, dammit: She wanted to break the rules. If she had been a bolder person, she would approach him, silently help him finish, but instead she remained rooted to the sidelines, watching on in aroused fascination as his shoulders hunched and his entire body shuddered before going rigid, and then he literally erupted:

"HERMIONE! Oh, fuuuck, Hermione, uungh....fucking *love* you..."

The first thing that crossed her mind as she watched him ejaculate was, *That's a lot of seminal fluid*, followed by, *He's more vocal than I imagined*, before it dawned on her:

*He was thinking about me. And he said he loves me.*

Of course, logically, she knew that it was entirely possible that he hadn't known what he was saying, that meaningless words had come out of his mouth at the height of orgasm, but, on the other hand, he clearly wanted her at least on a physical level, and they were friends; she knew that he cared about her, and she *wanted* him to love her the way she loved him, but there was a large part of her that couldn't get past last year's Lavender Brown fiasco, as she'd come to think of it.

If Ron loved *her*, Hermione, then what had he been doing with Lavender?

She knew that he didn't love Lavender—that much was clear—but that hadn't stopped him from gluing himself to Lavender's face in public, and Hermione shuddered to think what might have gone on in broom cupboards and empty classrooms. After all, three months was a long time for a couple of hormonally-charged teenagers...

*Stop it*, she ordered herself as she watched Ron tuck himself into his pants. She couldn't think about him and—and *her*.

On that thought, she decided that it was probably a good time to turn around and get back to the tent.

*Snap.*

*Drat.* She'd stepped on a twig.

Hermione ducked as quietly as possible behind the nearby brambles and silently prayed that he hadn't seen her.

"Harry?" she heard him call. "Hermione? Anyone there?"

She shoved her knuckles into her mouth, silently debating on whether it would be possible to get

out of this situation without making her presence known, even as she called herself a coward. If she were a real Gryffindor, she would step out and admit that she'd spied on him, but that would only serve to mortify them both...

Before she'd made any sort of decision, there was a rustle of leaves as he moved toward her.

## Chapter 5

She had to make a decision fast, because he was going to discover her crouching behind the brambles at any moment, and there was absolutely nothing she could do about it: Her choices were to sit idly by and wait to be discovered or to reveal herself, and the former would be the way of a coward.

*Woman up, Hermione. You're a Gryffindor, remember?*

Bracing herself mentally, she slowly rose to a standing position, unable to look him in the face: She watched his step falter as she focused on his long, jean-clad legs.

"Her—Hermione? What the bloody hell are—? How—how long were you—?"

He sounded just as mortified as she'd expected him to be, and her own face burned in a humiliation of her own as she finally forced herself to look at him: His ears were a shocking scarlet, and the burning in her own cheeks indicated that she was just as red-faced as he was.

"Long enough," she confessed in a small voice, deciding that she might as well be completely honest with him. "I-I followed you."

He stared at her, his mouth opening and closing in an expression that would have been comical if the entire situation hadn't been so mortifying for them both. "You saw?" Impossibly, his ears turned even redder.

She nodded as she bit her lower lip, unable to meet his gaze any longer and instead focusing on the ever-darkening foliage just over his shoulder, noting absently that they were quickly losing daylight.

"Fuck," Ron finally said, his hands moving up to run through his hair. "Fuck, Hermione, I'm —*fuck*—"

"Ron..."

"I'm s'fucking sorry—I didn't—You weren't supposed to see—"

"Ron, you don't have to be sorry," she said quickly, desperate to make him stop. After all, this entire situation was her fault. If she'd only resisted the temptation to follow him in the first place, then they would've avoided this entire awkward, humiliating happenstance. She could still be immersed in *Hogwarts, A History* at this very moment; her curiosity wouldn't have been satisfied, but at least she wouldn't be guilty of being a Peeping Tom—or whatever the female equivalent may be. "I was in the wrong," she continued. "I shouldn't have—I'm the one who's sorry...for spying..."

"Fucking Merlin," Ron growled as they continued to face each other awkwardly, both red-faced and sputtering, neither knowing what to say. "Fuck, Hermione, *you're* sorry? I was...that was...I shouldn't've...in the first place..."

"Ron, if you say 'fuck' one more time I'm going to assume that you mean it literally." The words had left her mouth before she'd even comprehended what she was saying, and she blanched at her own unexpected boldness as Ron gaped at her with an expression that suggested she'd sprouted a second head from the side of her neck.

*Sod it.*

They'd been beating around the bush for years, and she'd *literally* just caught Ron beating *on*, well, not a bush, exactly, but a tree. What were they waiting for, exactly? To find all of the Horcruxes? To beat Voldemort?

Hermione was intelligent enough to realize that that was something that may never, in fact, occur. She, Harry, and Ron were three teenagers on a rambling, seemingly pointless journey; they were blind, groping in the dark, with no idea what their next step should be. They didn't know where any of the other Horcruxes were, and they didn't know how to destroy the one that they currently possessed.

What would it take for her and Ron to finally admit their feelings for each other? To actually *do* something about it? Especially while knowing that there was a very real possibility that they might not even live to see their next birthdays?

Experiencing an abrupt and overwhelming urge to do something, *anything* to end the awkwardness, Hermione gathered up every ounce of Gryffindor courage that she possessed and stalked toward him, not allowing herself to weigh potential consequences as she stood on the tips of her toes, threw her arms around his neck, and pressed her mouth to his in a fumbling but daring kiss.

She'd only ever kissed Viktor Krum, and that had been more experimental than anything—spurred out of a need to discover whether she could actually experience physical desire for a boy other than Ron—and, as such, she didn't really know what she was doing, but it didn't matter.

Ron was at first startled into inaction, and she couldn't say that she blamed him, yet it didn't take long for his arms to close around her waist tightly, pulling her flush against his body, and his full lips to part, seeking her tongue demandingly. She was overwhelmed by him, by his abrupt, unrestrained urgency, yet she reciprocated in kind, her hands sliding up the back of his neck, her fingers tangling in his shabby hair as she sought more, more...

This was better than she could have imagined in her wildest fantasies; he tasted like toothpaste and something decidedly masculine—something decidedly *Ron*—and she couldn't seem to get enough of him as her tongue now dueled insistently with his, the awkwardness having completely melted away. She drew his lower lip between her teeth, nipping gently and causing him to groan into her mouth. Pleased by that response, she did it again, slightly harder, and his hands lowered from their position on her back, gripping her arse aggressively as he ground her body against him.

Ron. She was kissing *Ron*, the boy she'd loved since she was thirteen, and he was kissing her back just as eagerly, and her entire body was alive; her very *soul* soared. This was everything—*everything*.

"Ermione," he groaned with a pant, breaking away from her lips abruptly, his hold on her loosening as he took a half-step back. "Hold up a sec..."

"What is it?" she said in confusion, breathing heavily, her brain fuzzy with the strength of her longing as she gazed up at him. "Don't you wanna kiss me?"

"Do I want—? Are you *mental*?" Ron placed his large hands on her hips and pulled her roughly against him before slowly rotating his hips against her belly; she gasped in a renewed spike of lust at the feel of his erection through his jeans. Briefly, she recalled the erotic sight of Ron pleasuring himself that she'd witness minutes before. "O'course I wanna kiss you," he continued in a shaky, raspy voice. "I wanna do so much more than that, but that's the problem, sweetheart—I want you so fucking bad I don't—I don't think I'll be strong enough t'stop if we start something." He swallowed hard then. "I've wanted you for so fucking long, 'Ermione—you've no idea."

Warmth bloomed low in her womb in response to his words and the lustful rasp in his voice; she was having difficulty making out his facial features in the ever-fading light, but it didn't matter. "I think I have, actually."

"What's say we just...talk for a bit?" he added, and Hermione nodded, feeling embarrassed for having first spied on him during such a private act and then having practically attacked him.

"All right," she said as evenly as she could, attempting to hide her embarrassment as she stepped away from him, shivering in the growing coldness now that she wasn't absorbing his body heat. "I'd like that."

In the next moments, as the sun completely disappeared behind the trees, Hermione had conjured some of her blue flames to hover about while Ron Transfigured a bed of leaves into a blanket. They now sat huddled together, Hermione's eyes fixated on one of the flames she'd created, all the while very much aware of Ron's close proximity.

She could hardly believe everything that had transpired between them in just the past twenty-four hours; it was all more than a bit surreal, actually, and she had to fight the urge to pinch herself to ensure that she wasn't dreaming.

Hermione licked her chapped lips as she rubbed her hands absently on her thighs; she didn't know how to start the impending conversation, and the silence was now awkward. "Did you mean it?" she finally asked, deciding to dive right in. "What you said...before?" Her face burned at her own words, as she thought about what he'd blurted out during his climax, but it was too late for shyness now. They'd already crossed a line, and there was no going back—not that she wanted to, mind you.

"Before...? Oh. *Oh*. Er...well, I mean, *yeah*. Yeah, I did."

She couldn't suppress her grin at his response or the rush of joy she felt.

"What about...y'know...you? Do you...?"

One of his arms had come up around her shoulder, shielding her from the cold, and she turned to face him: "Yes. Yes, for a long time, Ron."

That lopsided grin that she adored so much broke across his features at her simple response, and she wanted to kiss him again, but she had an idea that they'd get carried away if she did.

"Well, that's—that's brilliant," he finally said. "When you say a long time...?"

She smiled as she sighed, having anticipated the inquiry. "I first realized that I was *attracted* to you when I was thirteen," she confessed, electing not to elaborate on that, "but I'm not sure when precisely it turned into something decidedly *more*... But I would have to say—"

"Yule Ball," Ron interrupted. "That's when it did for me." He paused. "Well, not that I knew *then* that that's what it was. All I knew is that I wanted to gut Krum."

"I wanted it to be you," she said quietly. "I wanted you to ask me—I mean, I wanted you to ask me because you *wanted* to take me, as opposed to a last resort."

"Blimey, I'm sorry for everything, Hermione," he replied, genuine remorse in his voice. "I think a lot about how I'd redo last year if I could... Or the last *three* years, actually. I should've asked you to the Yule Ball. I should've gone to Slughorn's Christmas party with you last year. You've no idea how bloody sorry I am that I didn't."

"What happened?" she breathed. "Before the Christmas party?" This was something that had tormented her for quite a while. Just when it had appeared as if they were finally going to get together last year, that's when Ron had abruptly starting going out with Lavender.

"It was just me being an insecure git," he said with a sigh. "It wasn't any one thing... Okay, well, Ginny *might've* had something to do with it, but I don't wanna put the blame on her, 'cause it was all me, really..."

"Ginny? What do you mean?"

"I was rowing with her about Dean, see. I didn't like what some people were saying about her, 'bout the way they were carrying on in public, and, well, you know how mental she can be, and she started on about how I was only jealous 'cause I'd never been snogged, since Harry'd snogged Cho, and then she said you'd snogged Krum... I know it was stupid, Hermione, but it brought up all that old jealousy stuff, and I was already a bit cross with you for thinking that I was rubbish at Quidditch without the Liquid Luck—"

"I didn't think that," she said quietly.

"I know. I never claimed to be *reasonable*," he said with a small smile, and she couldn't help but smile back at him. "I'm just trying to explain the barmy inner-workings of the mind of a bloke. Anyway, well, and then there was Lavender..."

"And then there was Lavender," Hermione agreed with a nod, urging him to continue.

"I don't know why I—I mean, I didn't even like her, really, but she laughed at all my jokes, acted like I was a Quidditch god or something, and she made me feel...I don't know...good-looking?" In the light of the flames, she saw his ears darken. "I'd never really felt witty, athletic, *or* handsome before," he admitted.

"I thought all those things about you," Hermione said softly. "I'm sorry I never told you."

"See, there you go apologizing again, when I'm the one who fucked up. Bloody hell, Hermione, I know I hurt you, and that's the worst part about the whole thing for me. I don't even know why I let it go on with her for as long as I did, 'cept I was a bloody coward and didn't know how to end it... She was just so...*needy*...and I felt like a tosser." He sighed, closing his eyes briefly. "I'm not proud of myself...for the way I acted...for the way I treated *both* of you. What I did to her was just as cruel as what I did to you."

As she watched him speak, she experienced a flood of sympathy in response to the regret and shame in his voice, even as she felt overjoyed by the fact that he was being so open, so honest with her. However, there was one thing she needed to know, one thing that had been plaguing her thoughts almost continually in the past year: "Ron, I promise I won't be angry, but I need to know—did you...I mean, y'know, with her?"

"No," Ron said quickly. "Thank Merlin, no."

The flood of relief she felt in that moment was absolute.

"But," he continued hesitantly, "we did some other stuff... I mean, she wouldn't let me—"

"I don't need the details," Hermione said quickly, cutting him off. "It's fine. I don't want to know."

"Oh, right. Sorry." There was a moment of silence before he asked, "What about you?"

"Me? No, of course I've never—"



"No," he said with a laugh, "I mean, did you really snog Krum?"

"Oh, well, yes," she admitted, blushing profusely. "Just for the record, though, you should know that I felt nothing for him beyond friendship. Was I flattered that he was an older boy who could've dated any girl at Hogwarts? Of course—I *am* human, you know—"

"That's a relief, 'cause if you'd revealed to me that you're really a Veela in disguise, I don't know if it'd work out between us."

"At any rate," she continued, unable to suppress a grin as she nudged him playfully, "I only kissed him as an experiment, to find out whether I could experience...physical desire for a boy...that wasn't you," she continued, ignoring her own blush. He'd been completely honest with her, after all. They may as well get everything out in the open.

"And the result of your 'experiment'?" he breathed, seeming enraptured.

"No," she whispered. "The result was negative."

"So what you're saying," he said, a wide, smug grin cracking his face, "is that I'm the only bloke that does it for you."

"Yes, I suppose you could say that, you smug prat," she replied, again ignoring her blush. "What about me? Am I the only girl who does it for you, then?" She was shocked by her own boldness, by the fact that she was actually allowing herself to flirt with him, but she didn't care: She was thoroughly enjoying herself. Everything was all so new between them, and they were being honest and open with each other for the first time in...well, for the first time.

"Let's just put it this way—you know what I was doing earlier? It's *always* been you, pretty much for as long as I've been wanking."

Her body warmed from the inside out at his words. "And you, um...do that frequently, do you?"

"Bloody hell, Hermione," he said with an embarrassed chuckle.

"You're the one who brought it up." *Pun most definitely intended.* "Besides, there's no need to be embarrassed—it's perfectly natural—"

"And what about *you*, then? Do you ever, y'know...?"

Her face burned hotter than ever: "Honestly, Ron, I fail to see the importance—"

"Honestly, Hermione, it's perfectly natural," he teased. "C'mon, now, sweetheart, you owe me since you *did*, y'know, spy on me and all. Enjoy the show, did you?"

"Fine!" she hissed, partially mortified, yet unable to prevent herself from grinning along with him. "Fine. Yes, I do—on occasion, and yes, it *is* perfectly natural—"

"Have you...you know...in the tent? While I was in it?"

She bit her lower lip, the expression on her face telling him everything he needed to know. "That is so fucking hot," he growled, something changing in his expression as he turned to face her more fully on the blanket that was spread out on the forest floor. On impulse, he brought one hand up to trace her lips, and she reacted instinctively, kissing his fingertips gently before sucking two of them into her mouth, all the way to the knuckle.

"Fuck," Ron groaned, the simple vulgarity stirring something inside of her as she released his

fingers with an audible *pop*.

"I love you," she whispered. "I love you, Ron."

In that moment, pure adoration and love bloomed in his eyes, overshadowing the lust from mere moments before. "Love you, too, 'Ermione," he breathed. "So fucking much it hurts." Then he leaned in and kissed her.

In contrast to their first kiss, their second was a slow burn. It started out sweet, tame, and Hermione felt utterly connected to Ron, body, mind, heart, and soul, as the passion between them erupted gradually, building languidly into a heated inferno and leaving her gasping for breath as they shifted on the blanket, and Ron was now lying on top of her, nestled between her parted thighs.

Her heart and body had taken over completely, and when she felt Ron's hands beneath her layers of clothing, inching their way up, she didn't protest. "Yes," she breathed to the contrary, and then he touched her breasts through her bra, cupping them experimentally as his lips left her mouth, kissing and nipping their way down her jaw and thrusting himself against her core through their clothing.

Hermione cried out at the mutual sensation, arching against him, and he responded by moving aside the cups of her bra and rolling her nipples, pinching gently. She gasped his name, grinding her hips upward against his, desperate for a release...

"Bloody hell," Ron groaned, his lips against her clavicle. "I want you so fucking bad, 'Ermione." He emphasized his point by thrusting against her again, and her hands that had been exploring the flesh of his back beneath his clothing glided down and gripped his arse, pressing him more fully against her.

"I-I want it, too," she breathed before she could stop herself. She knew what she wanted—what she'd always wanted, and it was Ron. "Please, Ron."

He froze, hovering over as he met her gaze. "Are—are you sure?" he stammered.

"Yes, I'm sure," she whispered. "I've known what I've wanted for a long time, and now that I have you, I don't wanna wait."

## Chapter 6

"I-I want it, too. Please, Ron."

He froze, his breathing hitching as he took in her words. Surely he'd misunderstood her, because there was no possible way she'd just said what his ears were telling him she'd said. Logic told him that this had to be one of his perverted, juvenile fantasies, because there was no way in hell that Hermione had not only given him permission to shag her—but that she'd actually tacked on *Please, Ron* as if she were just as desperate for it as he was.

Below him, her chest heaved in what he took to be anticipation or nervousness—or both—as she gazed up at him, her doe-brown eyes shining with such sincerity that it left no doubt in his mind that, yep, Hermione Granger had just asked him, Ron Weasley, for sex.

"Are—are you sure?" he stammered like an idiot, feeling abruptly nervous beyond all reason. He'd declared his desire to shag her unthinkingly, being the stupid, randy wanker that he was, but he hadn't actually expected her to *reciprocate* that desire.

The Hermione he knew should've pushed him away and hexed his bollocks off.

"Yes, I'm sure. I've known what I've wanted for a long time, and now that I have you, I don't wanna wait."

Ron swallowed hard at this declaration, acutely aware, despite the fact that they were both fully clothed, of every inch of their bodies that touched as he considered their predicament: He wanted it, there was no doubt about that. He'd wanted her since he was fourteen and had wanked himself stupid every night to fantasies of snatching her away from Viktor Krum, dragging her into an empty classroom, and ripping off those blue robes she'd worn to the Yule Ball.

But what if he boggled it up? What if he was rubbish at it? Other than what his brothers had told him and pictures he'd seen in Seamus's stack of *Wicked Witches*, he knew next to nothing about, well...female anatomy.

Briefly, he pictured how Lavender had panted and moaned beneath him as he'd fucked her tits like she'd actually gotten something from the encounter, but he quickly shoved that thought out of his mind with a surge of guilt. He didn't want to think about *her* when he was with Hermione.

"It's okay," Hermione said suddenly in apparent response to his hesitation, and in the light from her blue flames, he saw her face flush. "I know this is fast—we don't have to..."

"No," he said quickly, eager to not only reassure her that he definitely wanted to, but to save her from embarrassment. "Believe me, sweetheart—I'm a bloke. The words 'too fast' aren't in my vocabulary."

She returned his smile as he met her eyes, and as he lost himself in those deep brown orbs, his insecurities seemed to melt away, and all that mattered was this girl in his arms that he'd loved for so long—this girl whom he'd denied in his own stupidity and immaturity. For a split second, he recalled the hurt and anger in her expression in the moment that she'd set those birds on him last year.

As he leaned in to kiss her again, he desired nothing more than to erase his past transgressions, to somehow redeem himself in her eyes, to make himself worthy of her: Lips and tongues met once more, hands fumbled, pushing aside clothing, touching skin; he could feel her heart racing against

his own chest, and he slid one hand between their bodies and lifted her shirt, placing his palm over her heart through her cotton bra.

Breaking away from her lips so he could look at her, he saw the way her chest flushed beautifully and the nervousness in her eyes when she bit her lower lip, watching him expectantly: Without further hesitation, he pushed the cups of her bra over her chest, his breath hitching at the sight of her small but perfect tits. He delighted in the way her pink little nipples hardened in response to the seeping coldness of the night despite the warmth emitted by the flames. Ron swooped down, pulling one of her nubs eagerly into his mouth, rolling it with his tongue, nipping lightly, and reveling in her little gasps as she squirmed beneath him and her hips bucked against his yet again, her fingers gripping in his hair.

"Ron!" she gasped out. "That feels so good..."

He smiled around her nipple, pleased by her response before he turned his attention to her other breast, his hands meanwhile trailing down her torso, lightly skimming her ribs before reaching the button of her jeans. She continued to heave against him in nervous anticipation, and his fingers trembled as he slowly undid her jeans and pushed them down her hips.

He couldn't believe this was actually happening. He was undressing Hermione, and she was encouraging him as her lips met his desperately, her tongue forcing its way aggressively into his mouth as one of her hands helped him push down her trousers and the other snaked up his shirt, exploring, seeking. He gasped against her mouth, kissing her harder in a renewed spike of lust when she pinched his nipple.

With a groan that was more animalistic than human, he ripped her jeans the rest of the way down her hips, shifting off of her so he could pull them from her ankles before settling himself between her thighs once more and sliding down her body: With her knicker-clad pussy now level with his face, he could smell her desire, and it was overwhelming. He had to touch her; he had to taste her.

*Fuck.* He had to fuck her...

Something purely animal in him had taken over, and Ron didn't even think as he shoved the crotch of her knickers aside, barely registering damp, pink flesh and brown curls before he sank his index finger knuckle-length into her folds. "Fuck, 'Ermione," he gasped in amazement at the feeling of her tight, slick walls encasing his finger. His cock gave a jolt as he imagined what she would feel like sheathed around him... "You're so fucking wet...*sotight*..."

It took him a moment to realize that she had given a strangled cry at the instant he'd penetrated her, her body going rigid, and when he looked at Hermione's face, he felt horrified to see pain written there.

"Sorry!" Immediately, he withdrew his finger, thinking what a bastard he was to have just...dived in like that. He knew from Fred and George that penetration could be painful for virgins. What the hell was wrong with him? "Hermione, sweetheart, I'm so sorry..."

"It's okay," she said quickly, propping herself up on her elbows on the blanket as she gazed down at him with a heavy-lidded expression. "Just try...touching me..." she added shyly, and Ron experienced confusion. Hadn't he just been touching her and it had hurt her?

In evident response to the question on his face, Hermione slid her hand down her own belly and pushed her sopping knickers down her hips. After he'd helped her pull them from her ankles, he watched on in aroused fascination as she began stroking herself, concentrating on a bundle of flesh just above the opening in her tight little pussy.

*Duh, you tosser*, he told himself, feeling like an idiot. Again, he felt woefully inexperienced as he studied the way she touched herself, becoming more turned on by the moment by the little panting noises she was making. He could tell by the shy flush of her cheeks that she was embarrassed, but he also knew that she wanted to give this to him, to let him watch her because she'd watched him against his knowledge.

Unable to stand the restriction in his trousers any longer, he undid his jeans and pushed them down his hips with one hand while he took over what Hermione was doing with his other, stroking her the way she'd been stroking herself...

"You—you're a faster learner than you let on at Hogwarts," Hermione gasped, her hips thrashing against his strumming fingers.

"Yeah, well, this subject actually interests me," he returned before dipping down, his tongue delving toward her center in order to taste her as he continued to work her clit with his fingers. He paid close attention to her reactions, quickly learning what brought her the most stimulation, when he should speed up his pace or slow it down...

"Fuck, Ron!" she gasped, her hips now bucking violently against his face. "So close..."

Inspired by the incredibly hot way that she thrashed about and the curse that left her lips, he changed tactics, lapping her clit with the flat of his tongue while he penetrated her with just the tip of his forefinger this time. He concluded that he must've been doing something right, because her back arched up off the ground as she grabbed her own tits with one hand, her other threading in his hair while her thighs clamped around his head and her muscles began contracting around the tip of his finger. Encouraged, he increased the pace of his lapping as he pumped his finger inside her, penetrating her more deeply still with every stroke...

With a final strangled cry, Hermione collapsed beneath him like a ragdoll, panting as she attempted to control her breathing. "That was..." she whispered, clearing her throat. "I mean, you're..."

"Never seen you at a loss for words, Hermione," he said with an impish grin as he raised himself from between her legs; he could smell her all over his face, which only served to turn him on even more: Ron was very aware of his own raging hard-on. It was taking all of his control not to climb back up her body, sink into her, and start pounding her into the ground until he exploded inside her. "For that matter, I've managed to get you to say 'fuck' twice, so I'll take that as a compliment."

"I did not," she protested halfheartedly, grinning as Ron slid back up her body, kissing her deeply, and she returned his kiss eagerly, apparently not caring that she could taste herself on his lips—which was good, since he hadn't thought of that 'til he'd already started snogging her.

He thrust against her instinctively as their embrace spiked passionately, his entire body very aware that the only thing preventing him from slipping inside her was the very thin barrier of his pants. He could feel her heat and dampness through the cotton, and it was driving him mad. If he didn't have her soon, he seriously thought he might lose it... "Ron," she whispered against his lips, her voice breaking into his thoughts as he felt her hand sliding between their bodies; he moved back slightly in order to allow her to slip her palm into his underwear and grasp his cock.

He hissed in pleasure when Hermione began stroking him, burying his face in her throat as he pumped into her warm little palm instinctively, thinking that she felt so much better than his own hand. "Now, Ron," she whispered, lifting the waistband of his pants down over his erection, and it took him a moment to register what she was saying.

He pulled away from her throat, meeting her eyes and feeling nervous as fuck as he wrapped his

hands beneath her arse, parting her wide and positioning the head of his dick against her sopping-wet folds.

Ron couldn't believe that they were actually going to do this. He and Hermione were about to fuck on the forest floor, in the middle of nowhere. It wasn't exactly romantic, and he couldn't imagine that this is the way she'd envisioned losing her virginity, but he was so horny that he couldn't talk himself out of what they were about to do, even if he wanted to.

Especially when she whimpered, pushing her hips against his yet again, and the very tip of his eager cock sunk into her wet heat—

"Ron? Hermione?"

"Fuck," Ron muttered, flying off of her as Harry appeared through the nearby trees, his lit wand in hand. Hermione sat up quickly behind Ron while he did his best to help her cover up her exposed bits.

"Oh—er—sorry—I'll just—uh—yeah—" Harry was already wheeling around in obvious mortification, heading presumably back to the tent.

"Talk about a mood-killer, yeah?" Ron commented, staring at the spot in the trees where Harry had just disappeared while, next to him, Hermione continued to cover herself, looking possibly more mortified than she had when Ron had caught her watching him wank.

After several moments of stunned silence, she abruptly burst into uncontrollable laughter.

"What are you on about, you lunatic?" he said even as he chuckled along with her. "Our best mate catches us practically shagging, and you think it's funny?"

She only laughed harder in response, doubling over and clutching a stitch in her side. "I'm sorry," she said, attempting to control herself as she straightened, wiping tears from her eyes. "I know it's not funny...okay, yeah it is..." She let out another snort of laughter at that.

"Okay, fine, a bit," Ron conceded with a wide grin, shaking his head as his...girlfriend?...finally managed to calm herself.

"We should probably get back," she said somewhat sheepishly, a look of regret in her eyes as she reached out and squeezed his hand.

"Yeah," he agreed, aching aware of his hard-on that still demanded his attention, but he just couldn't bring himself to make love to Hermione after Harry had caught them. It now felt... tainted, somehow. "Yeah, you're probably right. He's gonna take the piss as it is."

Ron turned away from her as they stood and quietly dressed, wanting to afford her some privacy even though he'd just gotten up-close and personal with all of her bits.

They walked hand-in-hand back to the campsite, throwing each other shy sidelong glances along the way; Harry was waiting in the mouth of the tent when they approached, and Ron couldn't quite look at his mate's face, even as he felt Harry's eyes on their intertwined hands.

"That was fast," Harry commented flippantly, and Ron glanced at Hermione to see her blushing profusely.

"Bugger off, Harry," she muttered good-naturedly, her face a deep shade of scarlet in the light spilling from the open mouth of the tent as she dropped Ron's hand and stormed past Harry. "I'm going to bed."

Only then did Ron meet Harry's gaze: His mate's expression was a mixture of embarrassment, amusement, and chastisement. "I drifted off," Harry finally said. "When I woke, it gave me a bit of a turn when I realized that you and Hermione were gone. I couldn't help but think the worst..."

Ron sobered at his words. "Sorry about that, mate," he said as he sat down on a log in front of his friend. "I didn't think about that."

"Clearly." One of his eyebrows was raised, and again his expression contained that odd mixture of emotions. Harry glanced over his shoulder before moving to sit next to Ron on the log and casting Muffliato in the direction of the mouth of the tent. "I know it's none of my business, and I'm happy for you—I really am," he finally said, again not quite able to meet Ron's eye, "but I need the two of you, now more than ever, and I'm aware of how selfish this is going to sound, but...what if..."

"What if what?" Ron said somewhat nervously. "Spit it out, Harry."

"What if you get her pregnant?" Harry finally blurted.

Ron stared at him, aghast. "P-Pregnant?"

"Ron, you do know where babies come from, don't you?"

"Of—of course I know where babies come from," he stammered, his ears warming considerably, but the truth was that that possibility hadn't even crossed his mind—not even once. "We didn't—I mean—we weren't—"

"That's not what it looked like to me, mate."

"We were sorta interrupted before we could get that far, actually," Ron stated, unable to rein in his annoyance at Harry, since it was *his* fault that he was gonna have a serious case of blue balls if he didn't wank again.

"I didn't know that you two were even...you know...that close...not that it's any of my business," he tacked on hastily. "Just...be careful."

It was only then that Ron understood what this was truly about: Harry was scared of being abandoned. He was relying on him and Hermione more than he wanted them to know, and he couldn't handle the idea of being left to his fate. After all, he and Hermione could walk away at any moment.

Harry couldn't. This was his fight, his mission.

"Yeah, all right," Ron finally said. "Hey, I know things have been tough—and that bleedin' Horcrux doesn't help," he added, indicating the locket concealed beneath Harry's sweater, "but I'm not going anywhere. Afraid you're stuck with me, mate."

Harry nodded, a small smile turning up the corners of his lips. "Glad to hear it. By the way—if you hurt her, it'll be my brotherly duty to hurt *you*."

"But you're not her brother," Ron stated flatly.

"I'm as good as."

He grinned widely at that. "Fair enough."

## Chapter 7

Much to his embarrassment, Ron was walking around with a perpetual hard-on.

He could still hardly believe all that had transpired between them; he could hardly believe that Hermione was now his girlfriend, even though they hadn't actually said it exactly like that. Even still, she'd told him that she loved him, and he'd said it back. And then they'd very nearly shagged.

Bloody hell, being alone with her was all he could think of—he wanted to get her alone and shag her senseless, but he didn't want to be a brute about it: He wanted to treat her with the love and dignity that she deserved, but he was so randy and his hormones were on overdrive to the point where it was making it difficult for him to consider anything remotely romantic.

They were in a bleeding tent, for Merlin's sake, on the run and in the constant presence of their best mate. Not to mention, they were starving, freezing, and had that bloody Horcrux messing with their heads. Nothing romantic about any of it.

Despite all of that, though, he couldn't get Hermione off of his mind: While lying in his bunk in the evenings, turning his Deluminator over in hand while he watched Harry and Hermione across the tent as they pointlessly discussed possible Horcrux locations *yet again*, Ron's eyes would be drawn to her denim-clad thighs.

Instantly, his thoughts would flash to what it had been like to bury his head between her legs, remembering vividly her taste and smell and the way she'd panted beneath him, her fingers gripping his hair, and *bam*—instant woody.

It'd be all fine and dandy if they weren't sharing the tent with Harry, but, since they *were*, it was a bit mortifying every time his thoughts drifted in the wrong direction, and without any warning he'd be sporting a tent to rival the one in which they currently resided.

"Blimey, Ron," Harry snapped the third time this happened in a twenty-four-hour period.  
"Really? *Again*?"

The two friends were playing a game of Wizard's chess two days after "the day," as Ron had come to think of it, and he'd just made a move and leaned back in his chair when he'd taken yet another peek at Hermione: She was submersed in a book in the mouth of the tent, reading by the light of her lit wand, since she'd agreed to take first watch. As if sensing his eyes on her, she had looked up and smiled at him almost shyly, pulling her plump lower lip between her teeth. Ron had returned her smile as he began fantasizing about her mouth, which had led to yet another raging erection—and which his tracksuit bottoms did nothing to hide.

"It's not like I can help it!" Ron protested, his face, neck, and ears heating as he tried to conjure up images of Millicent Bulstrode naked in an effort to make his dick control itself. Bloody fucking hell, the thing had a mind of its own. "Can *you* bloody help it when it happens to *you*, Harry?" Glancing at Hermione, Ron could tell by the flush in her cheeks that she was following their conversation.

"Look," Harry said, lowering his voice so that only Ron could hear, "you two are driving me mad with this...this *thing* between you—"

*The only "thing" I want between me and Hermione is my knob*, Ron thought.

"—never thought I'd be saying this, but bloody get on with it already. Maybe if you just—just got



the sex thing out of the way, you could actually concentrate on the mission again."

Ron stared at him, agape, before recovering and hissing just as lowly, "Pretending that we actually had even the vaguest lead on the other Horcruxes—which we *don't*, by the way—as I recall, we *tried* 'getting it out of the way,' but we were interrupted—"

"Merlin's pants, Ron, just give a bloke fair warning, all right? How was I supposed to know that you and Hermione had gone off to shag? As far as I knew, you two had never even kissed, much less—"

"Yeah, yeah, all right," Ron said, raising his hands in defeat. "Should I do it now, then? Why don't you go for a stroll, and I'll give her a bang?"

Harry couldn't help but laugh at Ron's crudeness, and Ron joined in while thinking, *No, really, go for a stroll...*

Soon after, though, it had been Ron's turn to take over wearing the Horcrux, and, as usual, the headfuck associated with the bleeding thing began to set in, which was somehow compounded by the fact that he hadn't eaten anything solid in over twenty-four hours:

*How do I know it's really me she wants?* he asked himself as he and Harry finished up their game and he made his way to the loo to do his business. *What if she's just lonely out here and thinks that Harry's too hung up on Ginny? That would make me her only other option. Would she really choose me if, say, Viktor Krum were here? I know she said she didn't think about him like that, but I didn't miss how...flustered she got over him at Bill's wedding. She could hardly contain herself...*

*Get stuffed! Hermione's not shallow like that,* he told himself firmly as he finished up in the loo and made his way back toward his bunk, unable to resist glancing at Hermione, who caught his eye and smiled warmly again.

He returned her smile, but he couldn't stop the rancid thoughts from eating away at his mind like a disease. Thoughts of Hermione preferring Harry to him lent their way to thoughts of his mum preferring Harry as a son—He was the bloody Chosen One, wasn't he?—and the fact that Ron was the youngest of six boys. His parents had stopped having kids once they'd gotten Ginny, their precious girl, the child they'd wanted *him* to be...

His troubled thoughts melded into troubled dreams in which he walked in on Harry, Krum, and Cormac McLaggen all...doing things to Hermione while Ginny, Fred, and George laughed at Ron and told him he was rubbish at everything. "They're right, you know," Hermione said matter-of-factly once Krum had climbed off of her. She then sat up from the table in the Hogwarts library, straightened her clothing, sat down in the nearby chair, and began to study as if nothing had happened...

Ron awoke with a start when a familiar, quiet voice murmured, "*Muffliato*." Then he felt the mattress shift, and a warm body snuggled up to his under his sheets.

"Hermione," he mumbled, his brain sluggish and confused, feeling disturbed by the images from his dreams. All the lights in the tent had been extinguished, and as such it was almost pitch black—with the exception of a blue-ish glow from the entrance.

"Shh," she whispered, and he felt her hands slide up his chest, tugging on the chain of the Horcrux, and he sat up slightly, allowing her to pull it over his head. Immediately, his anxiety eased considerably, and the fears he'd harbored seemed foolhardy as his insignificant dreams melted away. "Better?"

"Loads," he whispered graciously, wondering for the millionth time why Harry insisted that they sleep with the bloody thing. "Thanks." At that moment, he became very aware of Hermione's body heat as she cuddled closer to him, her hand roaming over his chest while she pressed her face into the crook of his neck. Ron hadn't shaved in a couple of days, and he wondered how she could possibly tolerate his scratchy stubble against her soft skin.

"You smell good," she murmured, and then he felt her lips press against his throat.

"Not that I'm complaining, love," he said, his voice strained as his body instantly reacted to her, "but what are you doing?" While he wanted to shag her so badly he could hardly stand it, Harry was currently sitting feet away in the tent's mouth.

While it was dark in here and Hermione had cast Muffliato, he still couldn't envision doing *that*... well, okay, yeah, maybe he *could* envision it.

"Honestly, Ron, it's not like I'm seducing you," she teased as she trailed her sweets lips up his jaw and pulled his lower lip lightly between her teeth. "I know that Horcrux makes you think daft things, but I don't want there to be any question in your mind about how I feel about you... Don't worry—I've made certain that Harry won't hear or see a thing..."

"Hermione..."

"Just relax."

With an audible gulp as he swallowed, Ron relaxed into the mattress, his breathing hitching as he felt Hermione's hand drift down his abdomen below his shirt, and dipping even lower. "Is this for me, Ron?" she whispered against his lips as she cupped his hard-on through his cotton bottoms.

"No, it's for Draco Malfoy," he said tightly, an attempt at humor to assuage his nervousness. "Didn't you know I swing that way?"

She chuckled almost shyly as she then delved her hand below his waistband, gripping his dick experimentally. "You feel so...long and *thick*," she breathed in wonderment, a blunt statement which had Ron's ears burning hot.

"Er...well...it's...decent, I suppose," he managed to choke out, one of his hands fisting in her hair and the other in his sheets. In truth, he'd never thought he was anything special in the size department, but, then, he supposed he could do worse. As long as Hermione was pleased, then that's all that really mattered to him.

He helped her push his pajama bottoms and pants down his hips, and then she wasted no time in stroking him once, from tip to base and back up, his hips jerking in response. Fucking hell, he knew he was going to embarrass himself by coming way too soon. Just a few strokes with her small, warm hand, and he'd be done for. "You're so...*hard*...but soft at the same time," she whispered in that same tone of amazement; she sounded a bit like she'd just discovered a particularly interesting book that she'd astonishingly never read before.

"Hermione?" he croaked, his ears impossibly hot. "Could you not...y'know...talk about it?"

"Oh, right—sorry."

Ron's eyes had begun to adjust to the darkness, and he could've sworn he saw her blush, but all rational thought was lost in the next moment as her clumsy, unsure hand began to rapidly stroke him.

"Am—am I doing it right?"

In response, Ron reached between their bodies and placed his hand on hers, showing her what gave him the most pleasure—just as she had for him the other night.

"L-like this?" she breathed, her hand cupping his bollocks on the downward stroke before gliding back up and stroking the head of his dick.

"More—more pressure," he grunted as his hips began thrusting of their own accord, and she responded in kind, squeezing him harder, her fist rapidly and repeatedly plunging...

"*Fuck*, 'Ermione, gonna come," he groaned as his stomach muscles began to contract after only a few minutes of her ministrations. Hermione kissed him as he pulsed forcefully into her palm, her tongue delving into his mouth as she swallowed his groans and pants of pleasure.

When it was over, Ron fell limp against his pillow, spent and satiated. Hermione shifted over him, placing a kiss against his shoulder, and he knew that she was discreetly using his wand to clean the mess he'd made.

"Was—was that okay?" she asked shyly, and Ron laughed as he pulled her to him, crushing her to his chest.

"Was that okay? Bloody hell, woman. It was more than *okay*. It was bloody fucking brilliant, is what it was."

She smiled against his mouth as he kissed her again, seemingly pleased by his response. His hands were on her body, eager to reciprocate, to give her back some of the pleasure she'd given him, but she was pulling away, gently disentangling herself from him. "This was about you," she explained, leaning down to kiss his lips one more time. "I figured it was only fair, given what you did for me."

"I'm not keeping score, Hermione. This isn't Quidditch. And even if it was, you've already caught the Snitch, sweetheart."

She smiled in the dark. "I know that, Ron." She kissed him again, her lips lingering on his. "Soon," she promised.

## Chapter 8

It had been three days since Hermione had made the decision to climb into Ron's bunk and...and give him an impromptu handjob.

Her face burned at the thought, at her own daring born of a confidence that she hadn't known that she possessed. Certainly, Hermione had always set goals for herself, planned, studied, and planned some more in order to obtain said goals—but until very recently, she hadn't admitted to herself that she considered Ron Weasley to be among those goals.

Hermione had always put her academic pursuits before all else, followed shortly by her other passionate and noble pursuits, such as her determination to help rid the world of bigotry and prejudice. However, now that Voldemort's regime threatened not only her own freedom, but the freedom of countless innocents, her latter pursuits had been propelled to the top of her list out of necessity, making academic achievement a thing of the past.

Even before the war, though, romance and sexuality had always been nothing more than...trite curiosities—or so she'd told herself.

When she'd accompanied that contemptible brute McLaggen to Slughorn's Christmas party last year, she'd made a valiant attempt at convincing herself that she hadn't been compelled to do so out of her own jealousy and a need to *cause* jealousy to a certain adorable, infuriating, ginger-haired young man. No, such trivial actions were beneath Hermione Jean Granger.

It was all a load of rubbish, of course; she knew that she was capable of the pettiest of teenage angst-ridden emotions such as jealousy and vengeance, but she was also capable of more—so much more.

She loved Ron Weasley, and, almost as significantly, he loved her as well. Even if he hadn't spoken the words aloud (but he *had*, she reminded herself with a flare of joy), she could see it in his eyes when he smiled at her: Yes, there was unmistakable lust and sexual desire there, but there was also pure, unadulterated, all-consuming *love*.

*Soon*, she'd promised him after she'd felt him ejaculate in hot spurts into the palm of her hand, the memory making her shiver with desire.

She'd masturbated Ron.

And promised him sex.

A year ago, if someone had told her that she would have the audacity to take such uncharacteristic actions, what would she have said? She imagined that she would have hexed that someone properly. Or at the very least assigned them a detention.

She cringed slightly as she recalled how she'd very nearly allowed her hormones to overtake her head—something she'd hadn't previously thought possible—in the woods after she and Ron had had The Discussion: She'd very nearly had unprotected sex with him, and if Harry hadn't intruded on them...

Luckily, however, even if he *hadn't*, Hermione had scoured her books on Healer spells afterward and had not only found the Contraceptive Charm that she'd previously discovered in passing, but there was also an *Emergency* Contraceptive Charm that was over ninety-nine percent effective if performed within two hours of having intercourse. (She found herself blushing at the term

"intercourse," even as she tried to be pragmatic about it, reasoning that sex was a perfectly normal human function.)

Even still, it was rattling to know that Ron Weasley possessed the capability of robbing her of her good sense and practicality—particularly in their current predicament. These were dire circumstances indeed: Even if Hermione wasn't a known associate of Harry Potter's, she was an outlaw for the mere fact that she was a Mudblood. She couldn't afford to allow her raging hormones to interfere with her level-headedness. The lives and freedom of countless people, Muggle and magical alike, were riding on Harry's ability to defeat Voldemort—and he couldn't do it alone. Whether he would admit to it or not, Harry was depending on her impeccable sensibleness.

Therefore, she felt a fair amount of guilt that she should be thinking about commonplace things such as physical intimacy and romance when she should be concentrating on the mission, yet she tried reasoning with herself that she was allowed *some* degree of selfishness, wasn't she? After all, they were at a standstill where the Horcruxes were concerned.

After much debate, the trio had reluctantly decided yesterday to visit the site of the orphanage in London where Voldemort had been raised, desperately hoping to find something, but office buildings had long since been erected at the site. They'd not-so-enthusiastically considered digging in the foundation, but in the end Harry had declared it unlikely that Voldemort had left a Horcrux there to begin with.

Ron and Hermione hadn't argued, and their last stop before Disapparating away from civilization once more had been to stop off at a market for some decent food supplies.

When they'd set up camp in yet another frost-covered forest near a small pond, Hermione had disappeared into the loo to practice performing the Contraceptive Charm. According to *Preventive Medicinal Magic*, the spell was good for up to twenty-four hours, so she should be protected as long as she successfully cast it at the same time every day. Additionally, Hermione had long ago become familiar with her body's cycle: Her menstruation was regular, and so she estimated that she had another four days before ovulation.

She was determined that she would make it happen before then; she didn't see the logic in waiting. She'd loved and wanted Ron from a very young age, and there was a very real, sobering possibility that they might die at any moment. They could wake up tomorrow morning surrounded by Death Eaters, and Hermione refused to go to her death knowing that she'd had ample opportunity to physically show Ron how much she loved him and that she'd wasted it.

Then there was the fact that she simply *wanted* to. That's right: Prudish, book-loving, work-obsessed Hermione Granger wanted a shag with the boy she loved because she quite simply desired him on a physical level.

The thought made her cheeks warm, especially when said thought was accompanied by a flash of Ron's head between her legs, his warm mouth and strong hands on the most intimate part of her anatomy...

"Hermione?"

Her head snapped toward Ron and Harry as she was abruptly pulled out of her thoughts, realizing that they were both staring at her expectantly.

It was the day after their trip to London, and the three of them were gathered around the rickety table. Their bellies were full and, as such, spirits were atypically high.

"I'm sorry—what?"

"I said," Harry replied, an embarrassingly knowing expression on his face as he grinned at her, "how about we take a break from the Horcrux for a bit? Thought it might be good for morale."

"Oh, er, good idea." She flushed hotly as she reached up and pulled the chain over her head—she'd actually forgotten for once that she was wearing it—and reached over, placing it by the sink in the cramped kitchenette.

She then began cleaning up their dinnerware to occupy herself, magicking the dishes clean and sending them sailing into the cupboard.

"I know," Ron said abruptly, lurching to the feet, his ears bright red as he bumped the table before stumbling toward his bunk. "How about a little celebration?" He returned after a moment of rummaging in his rucksack, presenting Harry and Hermione with a glass bottle filled with the sort of amber-hued liquid that her parents kept in their liquor cabinet: "It's not Firewhisky, but I reckon the Muggle variety's gotta be close enough, yeah?"

"And I reckon you're brilliant," Harry responded upon learning that Ron had taken more than just food while they were in London, while Hermione pursed her lips disapprovingly:

"Really, Ron, it won't do to be intoxicated in the event that we get a surprise visit from Death Eaters."

"Lighten up, 'Ermione. Your protective enchantments are brilliant! We'll be fine—it's only this one time. Don't we deserve a break?"

She pretended to be annoyed even as she felt pleased by the compliment. Maybe it was her full stomach after almost a month of subsisting off of mushrooms, or perhaps it was the result of giddiness born out of her newly established relationship with Ron—whatever the reason, she found the idea of drinking with the boys strangely appealing.

"Oh, all right," she relented while Ron and Harry stared at her imploringly. "Perhaps just one," she added, unable to help but smile as they whooped in delight. "What are we celebrating, anyway?" she asked as Harry retrieved some glasses, and she couldn't help but feel impressed as she watched him shrink them into three perfect little shotglasses.

"Oh, you know," Ron said as he unstopped the bottle, pouring them each a generous shot, "full bellies, friendship...being nowhere bleeding close to finding the other Horcruxes..."

Harry snorted as he raised his glass. "I'll drink to that."

Ron and Hermione mirrored him, and they downed their glasses as one.

The liquid burned its way down her throat, and she coughed and sputtered, tears rising in her eyes.

"All right, Hermione?" Harry asked, sounding annoyingly amused while Ron appeared at her side, placing his hand on her back.

"Ack," she said once she'd straightened, wiping the tears on the back of her sleeve. "What is that? Battery acid?" She'd had hard alcohol on a few occasions, and it tasted just as terrible as she remembered.

Ron raised a questioning eyebrow at her comment while Harry chortled.

"Well, Firewhisky *is* smoother, isn't it?" Ron said, somewhat defensively, as he glared at Harry.

"This Muggle shite is rubbish."

She smiled up at him, noticing how close he was in the chair next to hers and thinking that she'd somehow never before noticed the dark flecks in his cerulean eyes. "You're cute when you're defending me," she said, reaching up to pat his cheek and delighting in the sensation of his stubbly skin against the palm of her hand. "It's okay, Ron—I know I'm a terrible drinker."

His ears flushed scarlet at her words and her touch, and Harry suddenly found his empty shotglass very interesting. "To Hermione agreeing to drink with us," he said suddenly, pouring them all another round.

"I'll *definitely* drink to that!" Ron concurred enthusiastically, clinking his glass against theirs. "Bottoms up."

This time, Hermione cringed as she brought the glass to her lips, bracing herself for the burn and the putrid taste...

Again, she sputtered and coughed and gagged as she forced the liquid back, but by the third shot it seemed to go down much more smoothly. As a point of fact, nothing seemed to be troubling her anymore. She felt so...absurdly happy, and Ron was looking so adorable beside her that she couldn't repress her impulse to climb in his lap. He seemed surprised when she did this—almost upturning the table in the process—but his large hands immediately found her hips, and Hermione hummed in contentment.

"To Hermione being frisky when she's pissed," Ron said with a smirk when Harry poured them all another round.

"I am most certainly *not* pissed!" she protested a little too loudly while Harry snorted:

"I'm not drinking to Hermione's 'friskiness,' mate. You're on your own with that one."

"And I'm not frisky, either!" she added, peering up at Ron with a look that she hoped would convey outrage, but the room seemed to be spinning as Ron's right hand left her hip to pick up his glass.

"Of course you're not, love," he murmured in a placating manner as he kissed the top of her head. "That won't stop me from drinking to it, though. Cheers." With that, he slammed back his shot.

*Oh, sod it*, Hermione thought as she joined him. "To being pissed and frisky."

After that, the world seemed to tilt on its axis a bit, and once it righted itself, Hermione realized that she was now straddling Ron in his chair, her tongue shoved down his throat while he enthusiastically gripped her bum, effectively grinding her into him.

"If you guys are gonna shag now, I think I'll be going for a walk. Just...don't be starkers when I come back in twenty minutes, all right?"

Harry's words had an immediate sobering effect on her, and she ripped her face from Ron's—she was briefly reminded of the nauseating displays that Ron had put on with Lavender, but she quickly shoved that unpleasant thought aside—and climbed out of Ron's lap. "That won't be necessary, Harry," she said, embarrassed, as she pressed her face into her hands, willing the tent to stop spinning. "I—I think I've had just a bit too much to drink. Could you get me my wand? And a glass of water?"

She needed to hydrate—and perform the Sobriety Charm. She'd never meant to drink this much in the first place.

A moment later, she downed the glass of water that Harry pressed into her hands and was aiming her wand at herself, trying to remember the incantation with her fuzzy brain.

"What are you doing?" Harry asked her curiously, but she ignored him.

"*Denebris*," she said, concentrating on the spell: Immediately, the room stopped spinning, and she was once more in full control of her faculties. Blinking as if coming out of a fog, she glanced over to see Ron had passed out in his chair, his head tilted back, mouth wide open, and arms hanging chimp-like at his sides.

Hermione burst out laughing at the sight, and Harry, seeing the direction her eyes had wandered, joined in.

Once she'd calmed somewhat, she walked toward him—still letting out the occasional giggle—and performed the spell on him as well. "This way he won't be hung-over," she commented for Harry's benefit, turning to face him as Ron jerked and let out a snort. Harry's eyes were bloodshot, and he seemed to be swaying slightly on his feet. "Want me to do you, too?"

"Save that for your boyfriend," he replied with a snort, indicating Ron, who seemed to be coming around.

Hermione rolled her eyes, barely concealing a grin as she bit her lower lip. "Fine, suit yourself, but you're still standing watch tonight as usual."

"Oh, all right," Harry said with a good-humored smile, "since I know you're not having fun until you've ruined everyone *else's* fun."

She grinned back at him as she performed the incantation on him as well, watching as his eyes unglazed, and he lifted his glasses in order to rub his face. "Wow, that's quite a trick," he commented. "Need an intoxication cure often, do you?"

"Only when dealing with a bunch of over-exuberant Gryffindors who thought it would be a good idea to consume copious amounts of Firewhisky after Quidditch matches. Didn't you ever wonder why you were never hung-over, Harry?"

He stared at her for a moment, his eyes widening comically, and she knew that he was picturing her picking her way around the Common Room on a Saturday night, performing the spell on all those passed out there. "I—I just thought I had a high tolerance for the stuff," he replied. "Ron's right—you really *are* amazing."

"Hey, don't get any ideas about my girl, Harry," Ron stated, lumbering to his full height and looking quite alert, and Hermione warmed at both Harry calling her amazing and Ron declaring her to be his girl. Both comments felt nice.

"I have an idea," Hermione said suddenly, "now that we're all sober again and there's little risk of anyone drowning."

"Drowning'?" Ron repeated, looking confused as he stopped next to Harry, his arms crossed over his chest.

She grinned up at her two best friends, feeling mischievous. "Anyone fancy a swim?"



## Chapter 9

"Anyone fancy a swim?"

Ron stared at Hermione's naughty expression, suddenly wide awake as the remaining remnants of his intoxication from only minutes before faded away as if they'd never been. She was glancing between him and Harry, biting her lip in anticipation as if expecting them to deny her but hoping they wouldn't—or, he told himself, hoping that *he*, Ron, wouldn't.

A sudden image of Hermione's half-naked body gliding through the nearby pond in the moonlight came to mind, and his body reacted instantaneously, his breathing quickening as his dick stirred in his trousers. His eyes darted quickly to Harry, preparing to silently signal to his best mate to sod off, but he found that any such signal was unnecessary: Harry was already in the process of backing away, his hand coming up to his mouth in an exaggerated yawn.

"I'll pass this time, thanks," he said with exaggerated casualness, a knowing smile on his lips. "I'm knackered; think I'll be going to bed now, but you two have fun."

"Harry, are you sure?" Hermione asked, her cheeks flushed the prettiest shade of pink Ron had ever seen while he glared at Harry, conveying a silent message: *You'd better be bloody sure.*

Again, though, the message was unnecessary because Harry was already riffling in his toiletry kit, and he waved a dismissive hand at the two of them, clearly trying not to smirk.

"Well, looks like it's just us, then," Ron said, turning back to Hermione and feeling both triumphant and nervous as fuck. He made a mental note to thank Harry for taking a hint and giving them the time they needed.

"Looks like it," she agreed, swallowing visibly and looking as nervous/excited as he felt, her eyes flashing briefly toward Harry as if she both wanted and yet *didn't* want to be left alone with Ron. "I'll just, um, be changing into my swim things then..."

"Oh, all right," Ron replied, flushing hotly as he ran his hand nervously through his hair. "Hermione?" he added as he watched her rummaging in her beaded bag and thinking of the red one-piece swimsuit she'd worn over the summer. "Won't the water be too cold?"

"A simple Warming Charm will suffice to heat up the pond, Ron," she said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world and he was simply being daft. Which he was, of course. The idea of swimming alone with Hermione at nighttime was making him all kinds of mental.

When she slipped around Harry, who'd just come out of the loo and was climbing into his bunk, Ron rummaged through his own rucksack, digging for his swim trunks with shaking hands and ignoring Harry.

When he finally found them at the very bottom of his bag, a half-melted chocolate frog stuck to them—he hastily Scourgified them before quickly yanking down his trousers and pants and stepping inside them before Hermione could come out of the toilet—he couldn't help but think about the conversation he'd had with Harry about Hermione getting pregnant.

Ron knew there was a potion: His parents kept a stash of it in their bathroom, which Fred and George had bragged about raiding more than once; Bill had mentioned once that there was an incantation, and Ron had even looked it up once at the library when he'd been younger and had first started thinking about sex, but that was years ago, and he couldn't remember the words.

Hermione would probably know it, though. She was prepared for everything, that one—but then he realized that he had no idea how to bring it up. What was he supposed to do? Stop in the middle of it and be like, "So, Hermione, since us Weasley blokes are known for breeding like garden gnomes in the springtime, and there's a pretty good chance I could knock you up if we do this, do you happen to know the birth control incantation?"

*Bloody hell.* Maybe he was making assumptions about this whole thing, anyway. Even though she'd said "soon" after she'd wanked him off the other night—the best moment of his entire effing life and something he relived in his mind over and over again—maybe he'd somehow misunderstood her meaning. Maybe she really *did* just want to swim.

"Harry," he said slowly, his ears hotter than ever as he turned to his best mate, who was lying propped by his elbow, a book with Quidditch players zooming in and out of the cover photo open next to him.

"Hmm," Harry replied noncommittally, his eyes never leaving the book.

"D'you think she...I mean..." Impossibly, his ears burned even hotter, and he cleared his throat, trying to figure out the best way to word what he was wanting to ask. "What I mean is—"

"Ron, I think swimming is the very last thing on her mind, and I assure you she didn't really want me to come along; she was just trying not to be too obvious about her intentions." Again, he never looked up as he spoke, and Ron breathed in sharply at his friend's statement, but before he could formulate a response the door to the loo swung open, and Hermione stepped back out.

"Ready?" she asked, not quite looking at him, and then she proceeded to march toward the mouth of the tent.

Ron's eyes flickered to Harry briefly before he darted out the tent after Hermione. "Have fun!" Harry called, and just before he stepped through the flap, Ron saw him smirking, one eyebrow raised.

He rolled his eyes as he wordlessly followed Hermione to the pond in the moonlight, shivering violently and deeply regretting not pulling on more clothes over his swim trunks. It was bloody freezing out here; he was much too cold to even feel nervous about what he and Hermione were about to do.

He stopped at the water's edge, hugging himself as he watched Hermione circumnavigating the pond, her wand raised as she muttered words that he couldn't quite make out. When she finally stopped in front of him, the temperature of the surrounding air had warmed considerably, and Ron's nervousness resumed now that his teeth no longer felt like they might chatter right out of his skull.

Despite his nerves, though, he couldn't help but feel impressed by her; the frost had already begun to melt inside the circle that she'd created around the pond, and it felt like a warm summer night at the Burrow. Abruptly, Ron experienced a surge of homesickness so intense that it nearly overwhelmed him. For a moment, he allowed himself to think about those he'd left behind: his family, who were in danger under Voldemort's regime. The longer they delayed on finding and destroying the Horcruxes, the longer his family remained in peril.

"What's wrong?" Hermione asked him, apparently sensing his mood change.

"Nothing," he said quickly, giving her a reassuring smile; he didn't want to ruin this by bringing up heavy stuff. "I just was thinking that you really are amazing...and that I love you so bloody much." He could feel his face burning as he said the words, but he didn't want her to think that all

he wanted was to get his rocks off with her. Well, while he *did* want that—there was no denying it—he also wanted her to know how special she was to him.

She returned his smile, her face flushing in the moonlight as she took a shy step in his direction. "You know, you can be pretty sweet sometimes. You should show that side of yourself more often." She paused before adding, "Even though you can't seem to get through a sentence without cursing."

His grin widened at that: "What can I say, Hermione? You bring out the best in me."

She laughed nervously, moving even closer to him, and Ron leaned down, capturing her lips in his, forcing himself to kiss her slowly, sensuously, moving his lips over hers in a silky caress. He wanted to plunge his tongue into her mouth, push her down into the ground, and rip off her clothes, but he wanted to do right by her; he wanted her to feel loved and comfortable.

After several moments, she stepped back, smiling at him shyly as she bit her lip. He wanted to ask her what she was doing, but again he managed to restrain himself as she began to undress. Ron literally forgot to breathe as he watched her remove her jacket and her jumper; then she slid off her trainers and peeled down her trousers, revealing, as he'd guessed, the virginal one-piece swimsuit that she'd worn over the summer.

On her, though, it was fuck-hot. She was all creamy skin and curves in the moonlight, and he wanted nothing more than to step forward and run his hands over her body, to pull the straps down 'til they revealed her perfect tits, to push aside the material between her legs...he wanted to make her scream his name.

"Ron?" she whispered, her voice tremulous, and he realized with an embarrassed flush that her eyes were locked on his crotch; he wasn't bothering to hide how fucking turned on he was. Why should he, after the stuff they'd already done?

"Yeah?" he breathed, clearing his throat before taking a calming breath. If he didn't calm the fuck down, he knew he'd end up embarrassing himself, and *really* didn't wanna fuck this up.

"I think I'd like to go for a swim," she said sweetly, and he knew instinctively that she was silently daring him to chase her. "Catch me if you can, Ron!"

oOo

Without waiting for his response, and ignoring the nervous fluttering of her heart, Hermione turned abruptly and ran full-force at the small pond. Taking a deep breath, she dived beneath the surface of the pleasantly warmed water, swiftly removing her swimsuit and discarding it before she could lose her nerve, and then she proceeded to kick through the water, gliding smoothly, feeling freer and bolder than she'd ever felt in all her eighteen years.

When her head broke the surface, her eyes flitted back to the darkened embankment as she sought him out, but he'd vanished, undoubtedly swimming toward her now beneath the surface. Briefly, she envisioned Ron circling her like a shark circles its prey, and the idea, amazingly, thrilled her.

Feeling more excited than ever, she paused to tread water, loving the feel of it sliding over her nude body as she trembled in anticipation, knowing that she would truly be a woman soon. She was really going to do this; she was going to make love to Ron, right here, right now—and there would be no regrets. She was prepared, mentally and physically. There would be no interruptions—Harry was far from daft—and she'd done the incantation today.

Shivering from combined nerves and excitement, she resumed her swimming, gliding through the

water, which shone like ebony marble in the moonlight, and aimed for the for the opposite rock-covered embankment. Slipping back beneath the surface, she pumped her arms and legs, enjoying the sensation of the water sliding over her naked flesh when she felt large, strong hands on her waist, dragging her back to the surface.

Ron's demanding, needy mouth descended on hers before their heads even broke the surface. She was cognizant of the fact that the water must be just shallow enough for him to stand in, for his hands were on her arse, rooting her in place as his mouth eagerly and greedily consumed her, ripples of water gently slapping against their stationary forms.

She kissed him back just as urgently, her need for him having gone well beyond the point that could be described as 'fever pitch,' overwhelming her, overpowering all rationality: All that mattered in this life was *this*. As she lifted her legs, wrapping them around his waist and unabashedly grinding herself against his erection—he was still wearing his swim shorts—she felt one of his hands leaving her arse, sliding up and around the top of her leg and between her thighs, his fingers prodding clumsily at her sex.

She loosened her grip around his waist somewhat, and he took advantage of the opportunity, slipping two long, thick fingers inside her and pumping insistently. Unlike the first and last time he'd penetrated her with his fingers, the pain was minimal, and she cried out against his mouth in response, her nails scratching instinctively down his back, her toes curling when his thumb found her clitoris. "Does this feel good, 'Ermione?" he growled, their lips breaking apart as he continued to fuck her with his hand.

"Yesss."

"I can give you more, love. Fuck knows I wanna. Just say the word."

"Yes! Yes, *please*, Ron..."

She felt his lips curl up where he'd been nipping and suckling the tender underside of her throat. "You're gonna have t'be more specific than that, 'Ermione, just so there's no mistake."

She growled in frustrated agitation at his teasing as his fingers slipped from her body, traveling upward to find her breast, teasing her, gently tugging her nipple and sending exquisite shimmers of pleasure straight to her core. "I—I want you to f-fuck me, Ron—Is that what you wanna hear?" She could've died with the force of her embarrassment, but she was beyond the point of caring too much. Something truly animalistic had taken over, and she had every intention of giving into her base instincts.

His partially smug, partially nervous chortle was cut short when she abruptly slid her hand between their bodies and beneath his waistband, grasping his hot, velvety length firmly and eliciting a shuddering groan from him as he automatically pumped into her hand. His blue gaze dark with passion and his jaw jutting out in that sexy, masculine way that she'd always secretly loved, he gathered her more fully against himself with a growl of something like possession, his arms locking around her waist as he swiftly carried her back toward the embankment where she'd abandoned her clothing.

As he laid her out on a boulder halfway protruding from the water, he reached up, fumbling with something on the shore, and Hermione realized that he'd grabbed his wand. He cast a Cushioning Charm on the boulder before tossing the wand away quickly as her back sank into the now spongy-feeling rock. He then parted her widely with one trembling hand while shoving his shorts hastily down his hips with the other.

"Hermione, are—are you sure?" he croaked suddenly, his voice now serious as he met her eyes.

His entire body trembled as he looked at her, the expression on his face more earnest than she'd ever seen him.

"I love you, Ron," she whispered, reaching up to touch his whiskered face. "I'm so sure—I'm more sure than I've ever been about anything in my life."

His face broke into his beautiful trademark smile, but then that smile faltered. "What about—y'know—what if...you get...?"

"Pregnant?" she whispered, her stomach lurching strangely at the thought, and his ears reddened in confirmation. "It's taken care of."

"Oh. Okay. Well, good."

Deciding she was done with conversation and eager to get on with it, she reached between their bodies, gripping his length, her eyes catching a glimpse of the eager trickle of fluid from his thick tip as she positioned him at her opening with shaking hands. She arched against him, meeting his eyes as she wrapped her legs around his waist once more, silently begging him for it.

His gaze never leaving hers, Ron hiked her knee up high, hitching it over his forearm braced against the boulder near her head, and, trembling in either nervousness or anticipation—or both—he rocked forward, slipping inside her to the hilt. Hermione arched against him violently, crying out at the sudden, overwhelming sensation of being stretched to her limits; there was a certain amount of pain, but the pain somehow served to augment her pleasure, pushing her to the very near to the pinnacle of desire.

"Hermione!" he grunted as he paused, giving her time to adjust to him as his arms trembled on either side of her head, "you're...s'fucking sweet..." His voice was strained, and he continued to tremble with the effort it took not to start plunging into her.

"Prove it," she moaned as her body adjusted to him, overcome by a rush of lust as she thrust upward against him, desperately wanting him to move, to drive his manhood into her body until he'd pounded her into the boulder and she was left unable to walk...

Swooping his head down, he savored her peaks, suckling and tonguing her sensitive nubs as he began to move over her in unpracticed, raw thrusts; though inexperienced, he seemed to know what she wanted instinctively, his hands on her body, stroking her erogenous zones, driving her mad with wanton, unbridled lust and wild, untamed passion. His body crashed into hers with such unfettered ferocity that she feared she might break in two with every thrust, yet she found that she absolutely loved every moment of it as she whimpered and mewled and groaned and dragged her nails over the dips and planes of his stomach and broad chest, yearning for her orgasm with such feral intensity that she might just literally die.

"Ron..." she groaned, unable to keep the edge of frustration out of her voice, shifting her hips so that there was more friction over her clitoris.

"Er-my-nee?" he responded, his voice strained, slowing his pace as his large palm came up to swipe across her breasts and down to her sex, just above where their bodies were connected.

"Please... I-I can't stand it..."

"Is this what you want, sweetheart?" he whispered, rubbing two fingers teasingly over her swollen clitoris, causing her to shudder against him as he lifted up slightly, affording her with an incredibly erotic view of where their genitals were joined: He appeared insanely large in comparison to her body, and Hermione couldn't help but wonder what she must feel like to him.

Hermione couldn't quite believe this was happening; she was actually having sex with Ron, the boy she'd loved for years, and it was the most incredible feeling to finally be joined with him; it was devastatingly carnal, and he was so beautiful to her in that moment that she was overwhelmed by an intense feeling of pure, unequalled *love*.

"You're so fucking gorgeous," he panted into her ear as he stroked her clit between their bodies, his words echoing her thoughts. "You've no idea..." She lost it at that moment, the climax screaming through her limbs as loudly as she screamed his name, her legs and arms tightening around him as his hands gripped her hips, and he began slamming into her repeatedly, her release triggering his own.

"FUCK! Oh, *fuck*, Hermione! Oh! Baby, so fucking good!" he bellowed as he ejaculated deep inside her, his hips locked against hers as his orgasm went on and on and on. Hermione whispered sweetly into his ear, kissing him as she encouraged him to give it all to her, her legs locked tightly around him: There was something about Ron's semen inside her that was an immense turn-on, and she felt like she could stay like this forever.

Too soon, Ron collapsed on top of her, his weight crushing her, but she didn't care as her hands came up to run through his sweat-dampened hair, pushing his fringe out of his eyes as he smiled at her with an adorable/goofy expression on his face. "That was," he finally whispered, rolling off of her and catching his breath, "fucking brilliant. Why didn't we do that sooner?"

She grinned, turning on her side to face him, one hand floating lazily down his chest as she became aware of the stickiness and slight soreness between her legs. "Well, if you'd only asked me to the Yule Ball, we might have done it a hundred times by now, or a thousand. Who knows?"

His eyes widened at that thought as he kissed her. "Bloody hell," he whispered when their lips had parted. "Guess we're gonna have to make up for lost time, then, aren't we?"

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Notes

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

### Epilogue

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"What are you doing?"

Hermione stared at him, aghast, unable to believe that this was actually happening. Three days ago, they'd made love, and now he was staring at her with such heartbreaking accusation in his eyes that she hardly recognized him.

What had happened? How could things have possibly turned so sour in such a short period of time?

She bit her lip in order to suppress a sob of despair as the rain continued to tattoo against the canvas roof of the tent. "What do you mean?" she asked in a small voice, knowing what he meant but not wanting to believe it.

"Are you staying, or what?"

She glanced between Ron and Harry, who both looked murderous, torn on what to do. What was he expecting of her? To just abandon Harry? How could he possibly ask that of her? "I... Yes—yes, I'm staying. Ron, we said we'd go with Harry, we said we'd help—"

"I get it. You choose him." With that, Ron ducked out of the tent and disappeared into the storm.

When Hermione made to follow him, however, she was impeded by her own Shield Charm. "Ron, no—please—come back, come back!" she called as she finally managed to hastily remove it, dashing out into the sweeping rain; it was coming down in torrents, half-blinding her, intermingling with her tears of anguish. "Ron!" she called, propelled by desperation as her eyes searched the silhouetted trees, at first unable to see anything past her tears and the rain—

And then she saw him: He was standing in the near distance in a copse of trees, frozen in a half-turn as if he'd been in the process of Disapparition and had hesitated. She called his name again, sobbing as she sprinted toward him, nearly tripping over something—possibly a tree root—in the process. *Don't leave me, don't leave me, don't leave me*, she silently begged him.

When she got halfway to him, even with her vision obstructed by the darkness and the downpour she could see his head snap in her direction, and then, as her heart soared triumphantly, he was striding purposefully back in her direction: He reached her in moments, his hands coming down almost roughly on her hips as he dragged her against his body. "Hermione," he said simply before his lips were on hers, devouring her, and her hands came up to thread in his rain-soaked hair as his tongue delved into her mouth resolutely.

"Ron," she gasped when they'd broken apart, both a bit breathless, but before she could say anything else, he cut her off:

"I'm sorry," he said quickly. "I'm so fucking sorry, Hermione. I must be outta my bleeding mind. That Horcrux—"

"I know. I know, Ron; it's—"

"It's not okay," he said, taking a half-step back, the pouring rain plastering his hair to his face in the moonlight. "I-I nearly fucking left."

"But you didn't. Ron, you didn't." Before he could say anything else, she threw herself into his arms once more, kissing him again, passionately. "We'll figure this out," she whispered against his lips. "We'll figure this out, Ron. Together—the three of us."

## Chapter End Notes

I just wanted to say that I recognize that it was absolutely necessary for Ron to leave in the canon timeline for his personal growth and character development. However, for the purposes of this story, since Ron & Hermione had not only already talked through the majority of Ron's insecurities, but they'd actually admitted their feelings for each other and done the deed - I felt it would've been a bit dramatic for him to still leave at this point, especially since he'd removed the Horcrux from his person. (I'd demonstrated in a previous chapter that his anxiety and fears had lessened almost the instant Hermione had taken the locket from him.)

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