

# Hermione Granger

AND THE UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

HERMIONE  
GRANGER

AND  
THE UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

BY  
CARTER CHEVIOT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KAILLEIGH  
BLUE

This story is a work of fiction. Names, people, happenings or locations are either used fictitiously or are a product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual names, people, happenings or locations are purely coincidental. The characters, location, story and setting were created by and are the property of J.K. Rowling and licensed by Warner Brothers. This story was not written for profit.

Copyright © 2006-2007 by Carter Cheviot

All rights reserved, including right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

This story takes place concurrently with the events of Harry Potter  
and the Half-Blood Prince.

Edited by JohnDoeNo5

Special thanks to Martin, arack, Darian Shields, Dr. JKL thefatman,  
Lyze, F\_Ron, lepent, Palomine, Rivan 51 and Voodoo Zombie  
And Special thanks to SandyInRI

See more of Kaileigh Blue's artwork at  
<http://olympic-dames.deviantart.com>

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ONE

A NIGHT VISITATION - 1

## TWO

THE CHEMISTS ORDER - 8

## THREE

SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A  
VERY OUTGROWING GIRL - 19

## FOUR

THE SIXTH YEARS NEW CLOTHES - 29

## FIVE

THE MYSTERY OF  
THE PREGNANT PREFECT - 39

## SIX

HIDE AND SEEK - 56

## SEVEN

THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE - 68

## EIGHT

THE OTHER HOGWARTS - 83

## NINE

A BIRD IN THE HAND... - 98

**TEN**

A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE • 113

**ELEVEN**

ROUND & HEAVY, HOT AND SWEATY • 126

**TWELVE**

AN OVERSIZED PAIR • 146

**THIRTEEN**

SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHLEHEM • 162

**FOURTEEN**

YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE • 179

**FIFTEEN**

REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS •  
201

**SIXTEEN**

INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS • 214

EPILOGUE • 228

## CHAPTER ONE

### A NIGHT VISITATION

"You insufferable..." Draco Malfoy began, reaching for his wand, as Ron Weasley stepped between the three Slytherin and Hermione Granger. The few students in the transfiguration courtyard turned and watched silently as Ron spoke.

"Shove off Malfoy," Ron said as Hermione glared at the back of his head.

"I can handle this myself," Hermione said sharply.

"You should pick your battles, Weasley," Malfoy grinned, "Potter isn't here to protect you this time."

"I don't need Harry's help to defend Hermione from a git like you!" Ron said.

"Defend?" Hermione snapped as she grabbed Ron by the shoulder and spun him around to face her, "I don't need anyone defending me. I can do that quite well on my own, thank you!"

"Trouble in the bedroom?" Malfoy smirked. Crabbe and Goyle couldn't help but snicker as Ron turned to Malfoy, his anger quickly replaced by embarrassment.

"But, no, uh, we never..." Ron said, abashed, his cheeks turning a bright shade of red.

"RON!" Hermione said, her face turning an ashen gray even as her eyes seemed to catch fire.

"From what I've heard you're one of the few," Malfoy grinned, "Can't say that I blame you. I wouldn't want to get within ten feet of *that* without *its* clothes on." Malfoy's voice dropped to a whisper as he leaned close to Ron's ear. "Still, put a cloak over her head, bend her over... I suppose it's all the same then."

The next thing any of them knew Malfoy was laying on the ground, flat on his back between Crabbe and Goyle's feet while Ron stared at his outstretched, and tightly clenched fist, as if wondering how it had gotten there.

## A NIGHT VISITATION

“Weasley.” Severus Snape said, his voice seemingly coming from a point just behind Ron and Hermione, but when the pair turned the Professor was nearly thirty feet away, although he was quickly closing the gap.

“Sna... Professor, I was just... Ow!” Ron yelled as Snape grabbed him by the ear.

“Mr. Weasley, I would have thought that you might have gotten it through that oh so thick skull of yours that physical violence is unacceptable at Hogwarts,” Snape said with barely concealed delight. “To my office, where we can discuss the matter more thoroughly.” Unable to resist as Snape swiftly turned and walked away, his ear in hand, Ron following behind as they left the courtyard and headed toward the dungeons.

“No one here to protect you now, Granger,” Malfoy said, still sitting on the ground, lightly rubbing his cheek, smirking at Hermione.

“I told him and I’m telling you. I don’t need protecting!” Hermione shouted.

“Well then, perhaps I should take a few minutes now that Weasley is gone and show you what a real man is.” Malfoy said, a wide grin on his face.

“From what I’ve heard a few minutes is all you’ll last,” Hermione spat.

“What was that, Granger?” Malfoy replied, for the first time in the argument appearing truly angry.

“That’s what Daphne and Pansy have said and they’d be in a position to know, wouldn’t they?” Hermione said.

“They would never...” Malfoy said, now on the defensive.

“It’s a small community, Hogwarts... Word does get around, especially when the news is as amusing as theirs was about...” Hermione stopped, unwilling to go further.

“What do you think you heard, Mudblood?” Malfoy hissed.

“You foul, little...” Hermione began, then paused for a moment. Malfoy’s slur seemed to fuel her resolve and she continued, eerily calm, “I don’t know how you’ve managed to have so many trysts given what all your partners have to say regarding your stamina... and size.” Hermione did not wait for a reply before she turned and walked away from the dumbstruck Malfoy and his chuckling companions.

“You don’t turn your back on me Granger! No one turns their back on me!” Malfoy shouted as he got to his feet. Quickly he reached into



## A NIGHT VISITATION

his robes and pulled out a small box. He opened it and swung it in a wide arc, sending its contents, a small sachet, flying across the courtyard, striking Hermione squarely in the back. If she had even felt the object as it hit her she ignored it and strode away purposefully, the crowd dissipating as the argument ended.

Malfoy turned to Crabbe and Goyle, "How dare she speak to me like that. She's treated me that way for the last time. I'll soon put her to heel."

"Dunno," Crabbe grunted, "Got an attitude on her."

Malfoy walked across the courtyard and picked up the sachet he'd thrown at Hermione. "She won't tonight," Malfoy said, bouncing the small packet in his hand, a dim golden glow puffing out from the sachet each time it hit his hand.

Crabbe and Goyle seemed confused for a moment, but when they saw the golden puffs of light they both smiled, then began to chuckle. Draco walked between them and the two boys turned and followed him from the courtyard, their laughter echoing against the high, stone walls.

§§§

That evening Hermione sat in her bedroom telling Lavender and Parvati of the events in the courtyard earlier in the day.

"I can't believe you told him!" Lavender giggled.

"He must have heard people talk," Parvati replied.

"You'd have thought, but judging by his reaction..." Hermione trailed off, scratching her back, a slight smile on her face before she paused and cleared her throat, her face taking on a much more serious look. "Still, I doubt I'll be having any more problems from Malfoy any time soon."

"No, I suppose not," Lavender laughed but Hermione barely heard her. Instead she was trying to understand the rapidly building fire deep within her. She couldn't explain it, but her heart was racing, her breathing was rapid and a light mist of sweat began to form on her forehead.

*What is wrong with me?* Hermione thought, reaching over and taking her own pulse. The sound of her roommate's voices blended into a drone as she felt the heat building in both her chest and pelvis. *I feel so charged, so alive, so...* "Draco!" Hermione blurted out.

## A NIGHT VISITATION

Lavender and Parvati stared at Hermione as their conversation fell silent, interrupted by Hermione's outburst. "Are you alright?" Parvati asked.

"What?" Hermione said, obviously distracted as she looked around the room.

"You look a bit peaked and you just called out Malfoy's name," Parvati continued.

"I'm fine," Hermione said, distracted, climbing out of bed and grabbing her robe, only barely acknowledging her roommates, "I'll be right back." She wrapped the robe tightly around her as she rushed out of the room.

§§§

It took Hermione less time than she would have imagined to run down the many flights of stairs into Hogwarts' dungeons. The kitchens were here, as was Snape's office... but tonight she had something different in mind. Several years ago when Harry and Ron had used the Polyjuice potion to imitate Crabbe and Goyle, the boys had been lucky enough to have Malfoy himself lead them to the Slytherin common room. Likewise, Hermione had been lucky enough that once she'd gotten out of hospital Harry had shown her where the hidden door that led to the Slytherin common room was, along with its password. Still, it was too much to ask that they wouldn't have changed the password in all this time, but from her perspective she had little choice but to try it.

Less than a minute later a heavy wooden bedroom door flew open, banging heavily against the wall as it came to a stop.

"Wha.. Close the door you nitwit." Draco Malfoy called out, barely raising his head from his pillow.

"Draco," Hermione said, drawing out the name, her voice husky and breathy and she leaned into the doorway, her hands grasping either jamb, as if they were the only thing keeping her on her feet. Her hair was wild and unkempt, her head hanging down even as her eyes searched the room. Her robe hung open, revealing her frilly and semi-transparent nightgown beneath. Her eyes darted around the room like a hungry predator's before settling on Malfoy.

"Ey, time for the show," Crabbe said as he pushed himself upright in his bed. If Hermione heard him she did nothing to acknowledge him as



## A NIGHT VISITATION

she crossed the room to Malfoy's bed and climbed atop the chest at the foot of his bed.

"Draco," she said, licking her lips.

"Granger? What are you doing here?" he said, appearing to an objective observer to be completely serious but in Hermione's eyes he was gently teasing, almost daring her.

"You know just why I'm here," Hermione replied, ignoring the sound of Crabbe and Goyle snickering quietly in their beds.

"Didn't get enough abuse this morning?" Malfoy replied sarcastically. Without a word Hermione allowed the robe to drop from her body, revealing her nightgown, which was nearly transparent due to the light pouring in from the open doorway.

"That's your cue," Malfoy said sharply.

"Aw, come on," Goyle replied.

"Shove off!" Malfoy shouted. The other boys got the message and left the dormitory, closing the door behind them.

"Now, where were..." Malfoy began before Hermione dived onto his bed, landing heavily on mattress next to him. She reached over, running her fingers down the front of his pyjama top.

"I don't know what's come over me," Hermione said quietly, "but you're just so...." she trailed off, staring deeply into his eyes.

"Is this some sort of trick?" Malfoy replied, smirking, now only making the slightest attempt to sound like he meant his words.

"No tricks," Hermione smiled. "I don't know how I waited this long..." she said as she unbuttoned his top.

"Now, now," Malfoy said, obviously amused with himself. "If this is going in the direction it seems to be...well, I must insist that we use some protection."

"Bugger that," Hermione said, ripping the remaining buttons from Malfoy's shirt before untying the drawstring on his pants.

"Well," Malfoy smiled as Hermione began kissing his chest, "I suppose a virile man such as myself can't be expected to resist..." As Hermione began kissing her way down his chest Malfoy reached over to his nightstand and grabbed his wand. In one quick motion it waved it above Hermione's head, mouthed something silently and returned the wand to his nightstand before Hermione had reached the waistband of his pyjamas. She barely even noticed as the gossamer threads of Malfoy's spell settled across

## A NIGHT VISITATION

her head and shoulders, sending a chill down her spine and moments later Malfoy had far more pleasurable things to concern himself with than thoughts of how successful his last spell had been.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

Hermione awoke early the next morning to an unfamiliar scent surrounding her. She tilted her head slightly to one side, her nose clearing the pillow her face had been buried in, one eye opening just a tiny bit. She glanced around sleepily, surprised that the morning light wasn't filling the room. Instead it seemed to be lit by...torches? She wrestled with that thought for a moment before, in rapid succession, she realized that the scents in the room reminded her of how boys smelled after a Quidditch match, then that this was a boy's dormitory, and finally the memories of the events of the previous evening came flooding back to her with all the vividness of a wizarding world photograph.

Minutes later Hermione was creeping through the corridors, a pilfered school robe and shirt covering her nightgown and bathrobe as she made her way up from the dungeons and into the entry hall. From there it was a simple matter to climb through the main stair hall, onward to Gryffindor tower, her dormitory and to safety.

"Hey Hermione, where have you been?" Ron asked as she crossed the entrance hall, "You've missed Prefect rounds."

"Uh, sorry," Hermione said, "I had to go talk to... Professor Snape... about... my Defense Against Dark Arts assignment," she said, grasping at straws.

"Alright then. Better hurry up, you're going to miss breakfast," Ron added as he turned toward the Great Hall.

"I'll be right there. I just have to..." she began and turned toward the stairway just as Harry turned the corner from the last landing and headed down into the entry hall.

"Morning Hermione," Harry said, looking her over, "Uh, why are you wearing Slytherin robes?"

"What?" Ron said, turning to give Hermione a look.

"And where's your tie?" Harry continued.

"Oh, did they?" Hermione said, sounding confused, her face turning bright red, "Washing must have mixed it up with one of mine. I'd best

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

change." She ran past Harry, up the stairs and around the corner, her two friends watching her go.

"Slytherin robes?" Ron asked. "The house elves never make mistakes like that."

"I'm more curious why she was barefoot," Harry replied, still looking up the empty stairwell.

"She wasn't!" Ron said with an odd look on his face, looking back to where Hermione had been standing when they'd been talking, as if replaying the incident in his mind.

"What are you two doin' out here when there's breakfast tha' needs eatin'," Hagrid said, dropping his oversized hands on the boy's shoulders in a friendly gesture.

"Just waiting for Hermione, she had to run upstairs to change," Harry volunteered.

"She should 'ave done that before she went down into the dungeons," Hagrid replied, "There's breakfas' that's gettin' cold."

"She had to talk with Sna...Professor Snape about an assignment," Ron volunteered.

"Well then, she'll have to go talk to Professor Snape later, won't she," Hagrid replied.

"Why's that?" Harry asked cautiously.

"Well, Snape's been upstairs in Dumbledore's office since the wee hours of the mornin', hasn't he?" Hagrid said as he walked toward the Great Hall.

"But Hermione said she'd..." Ron began but stopped as Harry's glare fell on him.

"She said wha'?" Hagrid asked, as he opened the doors to the Great Hall and strode inside.

"Nothing, Hagrid," Harry said.

"Strewth," Ron said under his breath and turned, following Harry and Hagrid into the Great Hall.

§§§

Several days later Hermione stood in the Prefect's bathroom at three in the morning, staring at her still damp face in the mirror above the

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

sink, her robe untied and standing open, the front of her nightgown damp with spilt water. Dark circles underlined her half-open eyes, her pale, clammy skin almost seeming to glow in the room's faint light.

Suddenly Hermione's eyes shot open and her hand went to cover her mouth. She turned and stumbled into one of the toilet stalls, just making it in time before she vomited. She coughed painfully and clutched her middle before making her way back to the sink, a moan escaping her lips.

Her hand shaking, Hermione drew a cup of water from the sink and rinsed her mouth. Then her eyes returned to her sickly reflection. "I have to see Madame Pomfrey," she whispered. "She'll clear this up, whatever it is." Hermione turned and shuffled toward the door when suddenly she doubled over and fell to the floor, clutching her stomach. She moaned again, louder this time as she tried to catch her breath. She was about to stand when suddenly her lower abdomen pushed out slightly, just below the elastic of her panties.

Hermione's eyes shot wide open as she ran her hand across the bump, her mouth falling open. "No," she whispered. She forced herself to her feet and turned toward the mirror, now nearly ten feet away. From her vantage point she could see nearly her whole body, from knees to head. Hermione turned to face the mirror sideways and pulled her robe back. She reached over her shoulder and scratched at an itchy spot in the center of her back before she frowned slightly and tried to smooth her nightgown over her belly.

Realizing this wasn't working, she went to the door and locked it from the inside before she returned to her previous position, allowing her robe to drop to the floor. She pulled her negligee over her head, turned sideways to the mirror and looked at her reflection. Despite the warmth of the room Hermione felt a chill go through her as she stood nearly naked in the middle of the bathroom. She turned slightly, running her hand across her panty-clad lower abdomen, as she twisted slowly, back and forth. After a moment she rolled her eyes. *I'm just being foolish*, she thought as she allowed her hand to come to a rest against her lower abdomen, *I'll just go back to bed and see Madame Pomfrey in the morning. A bit of sleep and I'll be...* Hermione's thoughts were cut short as her lower abdomen swelled again, just beneath her hand.

She looked down, shocked, her mouth falling open. She ran her fingertips across the new bulge beneath her skin, testing it with gentle pres-





## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

sure. Breathing heavily she stared, first at the bulge, then at her reflection, then back again. *No, this is impossible*, she thought. *There's absolutely no way I could be...* She paused, thinking the unthinkable. *No! Not him. Never! It's not possible!* Hermione grabbed her nightgown and robe and clutched them tightly in her arms. She leaned against the locked bathroom door, tears streaming down her cheeks, *What am I going to do? I just can't be... I've got to...* Even as she tried to come to a solution for her dilemma she slid down to the floor, her thoughts disappearing into quiet sobs.

§§§

The next morning when Harry and Ron came downstairs from their dormitory to the Gryffindor common room they found Hermione waiting for them and if anyone could tell that her trousers were not and could not be buttoned under her robes they certainly weren't letting on. "Harry!" she called out, getting to her feet as soon as she saw him.

"Morning Hermione," Harry said, "How are you?"

"Could I ask a favor?" she smiled to Harry.

"This isn't some spew thing again, is it?" Ron asked defensively. Hermione shot Ron a cold look.

"I suppose," Harry replied, "What is it?"

"Could I borrow Hedwig to run a little errand for me to London?" Hermione asked.

"London?" What's in London?" Harry asked.

"Diagon Alley," Hermione replied. *Technically not a lie*, she thought, *he didn't ask where I was sending Hedwig, just what's in London...*

"I suppose," Harry replied. "I guess you'll..."

"I'd send Crookshanks," Hermione said, cutting off Harry, "but he's useless at long trips. He'd be gone for months."

While that was most certainly true, Hermione had another reason for not sending Crookshanks. He wasn't an ordinary cat, he was half Kneazle, which made him an excellent companion for a young witch, but he was far too intelligent not to figure out what was going on if she sent him to pick up what she needed. She'd seen the disapproving stares Crookshanks gave Harry and Ron when they so much as thought about cheating, she

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

couldn't bear to see how he'd stare at her once he realized what was going on.

"Not a problem," Harry replied. "What did you need to..." Harry began, but Hermione was already halfway through the painting and into the hall leading downstairs.

"Hey! What about rounds?" Ron called after her. He swore, even at this distance, that he could hear Hermione's disapproving grunt.

"What'd I do to deserve this treatment?" Ron asked.

Harry sighed, "She's not going to wait for you forever you know."

"I'm not good with this sort of thing," Ron said coolly, "Besides, she's not interested in me... She's got her championship Quidditch players."

"You've got to get over that," Harry said, "It was just a dance, two years ago..."

"She's been writing him as well," Ron replied.

"Come on, there's only one person in Hermione's heart and we both know it," Harry replied.

"Sure," Ron said, with absolutely no enthusiasm, "Victor Krumm."

§§§

Hermione ran down the stairs from Gryffindor tower and down the seventh floor hallway to the west tower. Huffing and puffing she made her way up the stairs to the owlery. Halfway up the stairs she paused to catch her breath, amazed at how tired she'd become in such a short trip. In the years she'd been at Hogwarts she'd become used to running up and down long flights of stairs, so this feeling of exhaustion was unusual. Still, it wasn't long before she reached the top of the stairs and entered the owlery.

The owlery was a large stone room with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of perches, each with its own owl. The window frames held no glass, allowing the owls to fly freely in and out of their temporary home but also had the side benefit of allowing some of the horrid smell to be wafted away by the breeze. As Hermione looked around she realized that she had no way finding Hedwig among the crowd. Perhaps had there only been ten or twenty owls she could have spotted Hedwig easily, but with hundreds... she

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

realized she couldn't even see all of the owls in the room, much less tell which one was Hedwig.

Hermione just stood there for a moment, thinking aloud. "How am I going to find Hedwig in here?" she sighed as she rubbed her eyes with her fingers, realizing she should have thought this through. Moments later she felt a breeze blow across her face and when she opened her eyes a snowy owl was sitting on a perch only a few feet in front of her.

"Hedwig, its good to see you," she said. The owl nodded, as if it understood her. Hermione closed the distance between them. "I talked to Harry and he said it was all right if I had you deliver a message for me," she said. Hedwig just stared at her, waiting.

"Oh, right," she said, pulling an envelope from her pocket and holding it out to Hedwig but he was having none of that. He just stared at the envelope for a long moment before he tapped it with his beak.

"What? Oh, money!" Hermione rolled her eyes as she dug through her pockets. At Hogwarts she had no need for Muggle money, but she always kept a few pounds on her just in case. And this was certainly a just-in-case. She finally pulled a ten pound note from her pocket and placed it into the envelope before sealing it and offering it back to Hedwig.

Now Hedwig was in a fine state, hooting and pecking at the envelope, almost as if she was cross with Hermione. It took a long moment before she realized the problem. "The address!" she said as she picked up the envelope, Hedwig now hooting in an approving tone. She considered sending Hedwig to London, as she told Harry before deciding there was no need for such a long trip.

She quickly addressed the envelope.

Nearest Muggle Pharmacy  
Chemist's Counter  
Scotland

She reread the envelope quickly before offering it to Hedwig again. This time she showed no hesitation as she grabbed the envelope in her talons and took flight, soaring out the window and into the morning light. "Godspeed," Hermione said and watched Hedwig until she had flown out of sight. Only then did Hermione turn and head back down the long flight of stairs to start her Prefect rounds.

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

An hour and a half later Hermione sat in the Great Hall with Harry and Ron eating breakfast and talking among themselves. "Feeling better?" Harry asked as Hermione pushed her breakfast into her mouth as quickly as she could chew.

"What?" she asked as soon as her mouth wasn't full.

"Are you feeling better?" he asked again. "The Fat Lady said you'd gone out last night looking very ill."

"She should keep to herself," Hermione said under her breath.

"What?" Ron asked, barely slowing down enough to speak as he ate.

"I said I'm feeling much better now," Hermione replied.

"I could tell that by the way you're stuffing it in," Ron replied, gesturing with his fork at her nearly empty plate.

"Ron!" Hermione said tersely, her eyes blazing. Luckily for Ron, at that exact moment they were interrupted by the sound of dozens of owls swooping into the Great Hall from above and circling the tables, dropping letters, small packages and newspapers in front of the eating students.

"Expecting something?" Ron asked Hermione as she watched the various owls swooping overhead.

"Me? No...I was just..." she began before Hedwig flew by overhead and dropped a small brown paper bag, folded over with a short note stapled to the folded top.

"Not expecting anything?" Ron asked before he leaned forward, looking at the bag. "Thank you for your order, I must say I've never received post via owl before today," Ron read from the note on the bag before Hermione grabbed it and turned the note so that she, rather than Ron, could read it.

"What did you order from the chemist?" Ron asked.

"The chemist? What are you talking about?" Hermione said, laughing it off.

"The note, it's on stationary from Boots," Ron replied. "Why didn't you just go to Madame Pomfrey or down to the chemist in Hogsmeade?"

"It's personal," Hermione said tersely.

"Oh, female stuff," Ron said with a bit of bravado, as if he knew exactly what was in the bag. "I thought they had those in the girl's toilets."

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

“Ow! Hey!” Ron shouted as Hermione kicked him under the table. “Harry, you ... Hey!” Harry, smartly, had somehow managed to evaporate into thin air, leaving Ron alone to trip over his own tongue. Realizing this was the perfect opportunity Hermione stood up from the table, took her bag and, after a long, cold stare at Ron through narrowed eyes she turned and left the Great Hall.

“Oh come on, what did I...” Ron began to ask as he turned and watched Hermione go, stopping as she walked away, out of earshot. Ron sighed and put his head down on the table, quietly banging it against the hard wood.

Hermione headed upstairs to the only room she knew would be totally unoccupied by students and staff alike, the second floor girl's toilets. There was only one person ever there and she'd never known even her to be there in the daytime. She quickly made her way up the stairs and into the disused toilets, ignoring the huge “out of order” sign on the door. The room was a huge depressing cathedral dominated by a heavily chipped central basin pedestal, the mirrors were spotted and cracked, the floor damp and dirty. She looked around for a moment and once she realized the room was empty she headed to the central bank of sinks that held the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. She opened the brown paper bag and dumped its contents into the sink. After pulling out her change all that remained was a small box. She tore open the end and pulled out two small cardboard strips and a short instruction sheet.

The instructions were simple enough, but they said the test wouldn't be effective until at least one week after... Hermione tossed the instructions back into the washbasin and headed into the nearest stall, home pregnancy test in hand.

“Alright then,” she said quietly, “It says I have to wait five minutes for the...” Hermione stopped as a thick pink line appeared across the strip. She stared at it open-mouthed. “But... but... That's supposed to take five minutes!” She considered for a moment. “Must be defective. That's why they give you two,” she surmised and returned to the washbasin and grabbed the second strip before she returned to the stall.

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

"NO!" Hermione shouted at the test strip that, like the first, had developed a thick pink line almost instantly, not waiting for the required five minutes to pass. "This can't be. It just can't."

"Mmmm, looks like someone's gotten themselves in trouble," a girl's sing-songy voice said from behind Hermione. She let out a scream as Moaning Myrtle floated through her and turned around, positioning herself directly in front of Hermione. "Someone's been a very naughty girl."

"Get out!" Hermione shouted.

"Me? You're in my bathroom," Myrtle said, nonplussed. "So, who was it then?"

"None of your business!" Hermione shouted, tears coming to her eyes.

"It best not have been my Harry," Myrtle mused. "and it certainly wasn't Ron..."

"No, it... how do you know?" Hermione asked.

"Ron takes his girlfriend to the Prefects bathroom," Myrtle said, "and when he's with her, believe me, getting clean isn't what's on his mind."

Hermione stared at Myrtle for a long moment before she broke into loud sobs, tears rolling down her cheeks. Moaning Myrtle smiled for a moment before something seemed to occur to her and her face took on a very sad look. "Now, now, I'm sorry... Shhh, I was just making a joke.... It's alright..."

"So... Ron... girlfriend..." Hermione got out between sobs.

"No, no. Please. Have you even met him?" Myrtle mused, "He's hopeless, nearly as insecure as you are."

"Really? Hold on!" Hermione said, Myrtle's words taking a moment to register..

"You're going to have enough misery in your life these next months without me helping you along," Myrtle replied. "But don't worry..."

"Don't. Worry." Hermione said, emphasizing each word, "I'm..."

"You're pregnant. It's not like that's not happened here before." Myrtle replied.

"What?" Hermione asked, scratching furiously at an itchy spot on her back, "There've been pregnant students here at Hogwarts in the past?"

"Oh yes," Moaning Myrtle sighed, "The stories I could tell you, If I started naming names..."

## THE CHEMIST'S ORDER

"Well, the school has been around more than a thousand years. I'd imagine it's come up occasionally," Hermione said, cutting Myrtle off.

"Two girls just this last year," Myrtle said nonchalantly.

"What?" Hermione asked, her sobs now completely stopped, although she was still crying, "That's not possible, everyone would have been talking about it."

"Anything's possible. You **are** confiding in a ghost who lives in a wizarding school's disused lavatory." Moaning Myrtle said, "The first thing you need to do is talk to Madame Pomfrey."

"Madame Pomfrey? Are you mad?" Hermione shouted.

"Mad am I," Myrtle said raising one eyebrow, seeming about to start off on one of her trademark tirades before she took a deep breath. "I suppose you don't need my help after all," Myrtle floated backwards, out through the toilet stall door. "You come back when you're feeling a bit more polite..."

"Wait! Don't go!" Hermione said as she opened the stall door and followed Myrtle across the bathroom until she floated up through the ceiling.

"Don't," she repeated as she dropped to her knees, alone in the deserted lavatory.



CHAPTER THREE

SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A VERY  
OUTGROWING GIRL

It wasn't until after Potions with Professor Slughorn that Hermione saw Draco Malfoy again. They were walking down the third floor hallway in opposite directions, Hermione with Parvati, Malfoy with Crabbe and Goyle. Malfoy was laughing, sneering and joking with his friends, his normal *modus operandi*... but suddenly when Malfoy caught sight of Hermione his whole attitude changed. The nasty grin he'd been sporting faded away to an innocent, curious look. Then he did something that made Hermione's blood run cold. He flashed her a smile. An honest, loving and innocent smile.

Hermione kept walking, looking down at the floor, occasionally making noises so that Parvati would think she was still following the conversation. "Ey," a voice said from in front of the two girls. It was Crabbe and Goyle.

*Weren't they just behind us?* Hermione thought.

"McGonagall wants to talk to you," Crabbe said, looking directly at Parvati.

"Me? What?" Parvati said confused. "And she sent you? Too right!"

"Fine," Crabbe said shortly, "You just make sure you tell her I told you when she asks." He and Goyle turned and walked away.

"I'd better go," Parvati said. "They're not the best liars in the world and that sounded genuine. I'll see you at dinner," she called out as she headed down the hallway, leaving Hermione behind.

Hermione stood in the hallway a moment before she turned to head back to Gryffindor Tower when she nearly ran straight into Draco Malfoy.

"Hi Hermione," Draco said quietly, a slight blush coming to his cheeks.

"Malfoy," Hermione sneered, "What do you want? And since when are we on a first name basis?"

## SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

Malfoy actually looked offended, "I'm...I'm sorry," he said. "I thought... after the other night... You and I..."

Hermione grabbed Malfoy by the shoulders and spun him into a doorway, slamming him against the door. "Firstly, there is no you and I. Secondly, there was no 'other night' and thirdly, what did you do to me?"

Now Malfoy seemed genuinely confused, "What? I didn't... Did someone do something to you?" Now another look that Hermione was unaccustomed to seeing on Malfoy's face appeared, self-righteous fury. "Weasley, that little troll! If he did anything to you so help me..."

Now Hermione was completely confused, "No, he didn't do anything," she replied as she looked onto the amazing sight of Draco Malfoy appearing sensitive and caring. "Perhaps it's best if we didn't see each other again," Hermione said, bracing for the expected angry barbs.

"If that's what you think best," Draco said cautiously, "Is it something I did?"

"No...no, it's not you..." Hermione said. *I wouldn't have believed I'd ever be letting Malfoy down gently, she thought, but whatever got into me that night seems to be affecting him even more than me*

"I'll see you around then," Malfoy said sadly and before Hermione could even get out of the way he leaned forward and kissed her gently on the cheek. That was more than Hermione could take. She jumped back, nearly tripping over the other students who were going down the hall. As soon as she got her balance she shot a horrified look Malfoy's way before she ran as quickly as possible in the opposite direction.

Draco stood and watched her as she ran until she turned a corner onto another hallway. "So'd it work?" Goyle asked from just behind Malfoy. The gentle and kind look on Malfoy's face melted away, replaced with his normal sneer.

"Of course it did, I was brilliant," Malfoy grinned, "She's not half as bright as she thinks. It's going to be weeks, maybe months before she figures it out... If I play my cards right I might be able to work out some sort of arrangement."

"Shagging Mudbloods?" Goyle laughed.

"Goyle, please." Malfoy said, feigning shock, "What else are Mudbloods good for?."

## SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

Goyle chuckled, followed quickly by Crabbe and Malfoy.

"Chin up," Malfoy said, "If things go well this will keep Granger out of my business for the whole year, perhaps Weasley along with her." Malfoy thought for a moment, "You know, once Granger's situation becomes clear Potter might just wind up sucked in as well... and I'll finally be free of their meddlesome eyes."

§§§

Hermione returned to the Gryffindor common room from the library after classes ended for the day. The school's library was the best in Great Britain for magical tomes, but when it came to the mundane mechanics of pregnancy it offered very little. From a magical standpoint things were different, but not very practical for a student. Almost all of the pregnancy related magic she'd found revolved around horribly complex potions and draughts. She'd thought Polyjuice potion was problematic and time consuming to make, but compared to these potions it was a walk in the park.

She found potions to slow a pregnancy down, speed it up or even stop it dead in its tracks. At first she was thrilled when she'd discovered them, until she realized the easiest took nearly six months to prepare. *What good is that? I need to stop it now, not when I'm nearly ready to deliver*, Hermione thought, then swallowed hard as the import of her thoughts struck home. She shook her head and continued her search. There were various spells regarding lactation and curing nausea, not to mention mood swings but nothing she would consider useful. She was able to rule out one thing immediately though. For all the spells involving fertility, there were none that actually caused pregnancy. *As if there needed to be a spell*, Hermione thought, *I took care of the hard part myself*.

Researching love spells was equally useless. Unlike in books or film a love spell could only push a person so far and even then only to romantic obsession. Hermione felt many things for Malfoy, but any sort of warmth or love wasn't one of them, much less a romantic obsession. She knew she hadn't been slipped a potion. So she'd returned to square one.

She fared no better in explaining what happened to her that night in the toilets either. There were spells to speed a pregnancy along certainly,

## SHES ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

but they were complicated affairs that left evidence of their use and aside from the small bulge in her lower abdomen, barely enough to stop her from buttoning her trousers, there was no evidence of anything at all.

She thought again about Moaning Myrtle's advice. *There's no way I can go to Madame Pomfrey, she thought, I might as well just hang a sign 'round my neck, go live at a council estate and stock up on Burberry.* Then a thought came to her. *There's no magic to make someone pregnant, but there are plenty of ways to make someone **think** they're pregnant. None of them would hold up for long, but they weren't supposed to. Even Fred and George used to sell their own joke shop version, Keith's Cherry Cheggers, before someone bought a box and fed them to all the first year Hufflepuff girls. Supposedly they'd stopped selling them, but something like that would explain the whole bathroom incident completely. But who?*

"Crabbe and Goyle," Hermione whispered under her breath. It made perfect sense. They could have done it all. Set up the get together with Malfoy somehow, arranged the spell to make her think she was pregnant. It all fit together perfectly. Then she realized the whole idea was preposterous. Crabbe was the smartest of the pair and he could barely tie his shoelaces. Goyle could hardly read. There was no way either had set up a plot to make her look foolish. But either way she had her answer. *Joke shop magic, nothing more.*

§§§

The next few months went smoothly for Hermione, at least as smoothly as any year at Hogwarts was. Hermione had managed to completely ignore her slightly expanded middle and had pushed the memory of her night with Draco Malfoy far into the deeper recesses of her mind. With the larger issues safely brushed under her mental rug, certain other changes found their way outside of her mind's eye as well. Things were busy enough without worrying about problems with no solutions.

Harry continued to excel at Potions, helped by his mysteriously annotated potions book. Ron's confidence at Quidditch, however, was not improving, despite his fairly obvious skill and the continuous encourage-

## SHES ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

ment by Harry, Ginny and herself. His confidence certainly wasn't helped by being left out of Professor Slughorn's Slug Club, but given how things were going for Hermione as winter approached she found herself glad that neither Harry nor Ron were around very often. Harry was busy with Quidditch and his private lessons with Dumbledore, Ron's time was taken up by Quidditch and studying, making it a bit easier for Hermione to hide her little issue.

Many students, away from home for the first time, tended to gain a few pounds, but Hermione had thankfully been unaffected by this little problem, at least before now. But this year, this year things were different. Since she'd arrived at Hogwarts in September Hermione had been slowly gaining weight. She thought the problem was under control. Slowly her clothes would grow tighter, then looser as she presumed she lost some of what she gained. Still, she felt increasingly uncomfortable with her appearance. Luckily her flowing school robes hid the deficits in her figure. Still, there's a limit to how much a robe can hide...

"Miss Hermione," a house elf said, standing in front of Hermione's seat in the Gryffindor common room, a bundle of clothes in his arms.

"Thank you Winky," Hermione said as she tried to lean forward in her seat. She groaned uncomfortably as she bent forward, obviously having problems bending at the waist. "You normally drop my clothes in my room without my noticing. It's good to see you."

"Oh, don't thank Winky, Miss Hermione" the elf said, "Winky could not fix these," she said, obviously distressed.

"What do you mean?" Hermione said very quietly.

"Winky isn't sure how to say..." she said, looking down at the stack of clothes in her arms.

"What?" Hermione whispered.

"There is only so much Winky can let out clothes before there is no more to let out," Winky explained carefully, obviously not liking what she was having to say. For that matter neither was Hermione, who couldn't help but notice that her fellow students were starting to overhear bits of their conversation.

"Come along," Hermione said, pushing herself to her feet with a quiet grunt and heading up the stairway leading to the girl's dormitories,

## SHES ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

Winky following closely behind. The pair entered Hermione's dorm room and she closed the door behind them. "You've been letting out my clothes?"

"Yes Miss, Winky thought you knew. House elves alter and repair all the student's clothes as needed when we do the washing up. It's part of our duties."

"But why would my clothes need to be altered?" Hermione asked as she reached over her shoulder, scratching her back.

Winky stood there silently, staring like a deer caught in headlights.

"Alright, let's try this then. You said you couldn't let them out?" Hermione said leadingly.

"There's no more room Miss Hermione," Winky said, unfolding a pair of trousers from the pile. "Look," she said, pointing inside at the seam running down the seat of the pants. Hermione could see the sewn and re-sewn seam, a few inches of fabric had been flattened and sewn together, leaving only a tiny bit of fabric on either side of the seam.

"This is just ridiculous," Hermione said, stepping back from Winky and pacing around the room. "Someone must be playing some sort of a game. I don't have time for this."

Winky stepped up shyly, obviously not wanting to interrupt, but just as obviously needing to do so. "Miss Hermione," Winky began, "Winky can make you new trousers, much faster than ordering them. Winky can have them finished tonight. Winky only needs to take some measurements."

"Thank you Winky," Hermione replied, obviously relieved as she removed her robes. "After this is sorted we can find out who's been toying with my uniforms."

"Oh my." Winky said quietly as Hermione turned and put her robes on her bed. Hermione's trousers appeared to be nearly ready to explode. The seams, both down the seat and at either side of her hips were stressed and puckered and there was no question as to why. While her robes had hidden the several inches her hips and bottom had grown over the last few months, her trousers were incapable of doing the same. Her hips flared to either side, now much more full and womanly than they had been and not to be outdone her bottom had filled out as well, swollen into two very curvy hemispheres. Certainly not overly plush, but it was much more curvaceous than anyone would expect for the lithe Hermione Granger.

## SHES ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

It was only when Hermione turned around that Winky couldn't help but gasp. She quickly covered, turning the gasp into a muffled cough. Hermione's lower abdomen was pushed outwards, holding the buttonhole and button of her trousers apart by at least six inches. Her blouse had several buttons undone, allowing it to stand open across her middle, leaving a glimpse of exposed flesh between her shirttails. "Well, go on, measure." Hermione prodded.

"I'm sorry Miss Hermione," Winky explained, "Winky can't measure you wearing those. If they're too tight it will make the measurements come out wrong." Hermione sighed and crossed the room. She grabbed a desk chair, pulled it across the room and wedged it under the doorknob.

"There, a bit of privacy," she said under her breath before she returned to her bedside and began peeling off her over-tight trousers. As Hermione's pants came off her bottom and thighs almost seemed to swell, no longer restrained by the fabric. Her undergarments were obviously too small, looking more like a thong at the moment than panties. She bent over as best she could, pushing the trousers down over her thighs before allowing them to fall to the floor. She stepped out of her pants and turned around.

Now Winky did gasp and this time she did not remember to pretend the noise was something else. Hermione's entire lower abdomen was pushed out into a shallow oval shape, the highest point just above her belly button. The curves of her belly blended into her sides on the right and left, and it tapered off as the curve made its way up toward her ribcage. Winky's eyes, however, were fixed firmly on the lower curve of Hermione's belly, where the elastic of her panties seemed to cradle the full, lush and unmistakable roundness of Hermione's pregnant belly.

"What is it?" Hermione asked casually.

"Nothing miss," Winky replied. "Winky just didn't... It's just that... Congratulations Miss Hermione!" Winky finally decided.

"Congratulations?" Hermione almost chuckled, "Congratulations are hardly in order for having gained weight."

"No Miss Hermione," Winky said as she put down her tape measure. It only took her a moment to reach out and press her hand against the





## SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

swelling of Hermione's belly. "When will be the child's birth day?" Winky asked.

Hermione almost laughed before the carefully constructed house of cards she'd built around her conscious mind came crashing down around her. It was as if a great weight fell upon her, taking her down with it. She collapsed, first to her knees, then onto all fours, hyperventilating. She kept trying to speak, but whatever it was she was saying Winky could make nothing of it.

"Miss Hermione, please!" Winky said as she stood next to Hermione, her hand gently caressing Hermione's hair.

"You don't understand," Hermione said between sobs. "This can't be happening!"

"Don't understand?" Winky said, stepping back, obviously offended. "Winky understands! Just because Winky isn't a wizard doesn't mean Winky doesn't understand!"

Hermione looked up at Winky through her tears and realized that of all the people to be putting down Winky she should have been among the last. "I'm sorry... it's just..." Hermione began as she stood up and began sobbing again.

"Now, now," Winky said as she approached Hermione again, "First thing Winky must do is make you new clothes."

"Thank you Winky," Hermione said as she pulled herself up to sit on the edge of her bed. "But they mustn't be anything that will stand out in the washing up if someone else sees them," Hermione explained. *Maternity clothes would be the end of me.*

"Of course Miss Hermione," Winky said.

"At least that will get me through the week," Hermione said, "but I'm still going to be found out. My robes can help hide me for now," she began, running her fingers along the hem of her robe as it lay across her bed, "but it can't hide this for long," she continued as she looked down, past her breasts to the rise of her belly, one hand on either side of the bulge.

"You let Winky worry about that," Winky said, picking up her tiny tablet and tape measure. "First Winky must measure you for a new uniform."

# SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A VERY OUTGROWING GIRL

Hermione wasn't listening though, all she could manage was staring into the nearby mirror as Winky measured her, her eyes fixed on the full, round swelling of her once flat abdomen and the flare of her hips and thighs.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

Hermione pushed herself through the day, careful not to strain the overstressed seams of her uniform any more than was absolutely necessary. Still, she heard the occasional creaking as threads stretched and occasionally snapped. At first she imagined that everyone heard the sounds coming from the straining seams of her uniform, the sounds echoing in her mind but it soon became apparent that she was the only one noticing the creaking.

Now that she'd admitted to herself the truth of what was happening to her suddenly it seemed like everyone was staring at her. She kept noticing classmates watching her as she went by, or at least imagining them doing so. She knew that when she was sitting down or standing still that no one could see anything. She spent all the time before Herbology that morning staring at herself in the mirror, making sure that no one could notice any difference in her appearance. She knew there was a chance though, that when she moved, that her robes would brush against her, momentarily revealing a bit of her figure.

She knew she was being ridiculous but she also knew that whatever she'd managed to convince herself was true over the last few months had given her the confidence to walk through Hogwarts without betraying herself to her classmates. Now that safety was gone and Hermione had to trust in her own behavior to hide in plain sight.

When Hermione finally finished her classes for the day she was relieved to escape to the relative safety of her dormitory room. She entered the room and after confirming she was alone let out the deep breath she'd been holding and headed to her desk. Halfway there she noticed a large gift box sitting atop her duvet. She walked over to her bed and looked over the baroque decorated boxes, each tied with several fabric bows with an envelope stating "Happy Birthday Hermione!" in flowery handwriting.

Given that her birthday was in September and that it was now nearly November she found herself highly suspicious of the package. It

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

wasn't as if someone hadn't been playing some sort of game on her... She picked up the envelope and pulled the card from within.

Miss Hermione,

I've taken the liberty of wrapping your new uniforms as gifts in case anyone was to find them. Pay extra attention to your new robes. They are special and must be pulled over your head, not unbuttoned.

Winky

Hermione re-read the letter again before opening the first of the boxes. At first blush the uniforms looked perfectly normal. It was only when she held the slacks and skirts up to her body she realized they'd been cut to be more full at the hips and waist than usual. The shirts and sweaters, however, didn't appear to have been altered at all, which suited her just fine. *Less for the other girls to stumble upon*, she thought.

The second and third boxes were more of the same, shirts, sweaters, skirts, trousers, bras and panties. The fourth box, however, was different. She pulled her new Gryffindor robes from their box, letting the cloth slide between her fingers. The fabric was smoother than the wool of her normal robes, and had a slightly more luxurious look to it. She turned the robe around and was about to undo the clasps when she remembered Winky's warning and gathered up the robe in her hands before allowing it to drop over her head.

Hermione turned and looked at herself in the mirror. The robes themselves looked slightly better than the average house robes, but aside from that they seemed completely normal. "Nothing unusual about these robes at all," Hermione mused as she stepped toward the mirror for a closer look.

She stopped suddenly, slightly puzzled, and then took another step, then another until she was directly in front of the mirror. Hermione pressed the fabric of her robe against her abdomen, which now appeared completely flat, as it had before the events of earlier this year. Surprised, she turned, first to the side, then to the back, pulling the fabric tight against her body, watching the robe conform to her old shape. She lifted the robe and looked at her

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

lower body, confirming that the robe hadn't actually changed her back to her old shape, but merely had hidden her bottom heavy and obviously pregnant body.

The door to the dormitory room opened suddenly, leaving Hermione just enough time to drop her robe before Lavender and Parvati entered, talking about the upcoming start of Quidditch season. That conversation stopped abruptly when the girls saw the open boxes on Hermione's bed and her new robes. After explaining that she wasn't sure why she'd received the new uniforms the girls took to admiring Hermione's new robe.

"It's just brilliant," Parvati said, "It really shows off your figure."

"Oh really?" Hermione smiled.

"I didn't want to say anything," Parvati continued in a stage whisper, "but your old robes made you look a bit dumpy."

"Well, I don't think that will be a problem any longer," Hermione smiled, looking past her roommates at her reflection in the mirror.

§§§

In Herbology the next day Hermione finally made up her mind. With much of her confidence restored, along with her appearance, she decided that if Ron wasn't going to make even a first move she would have to take matters into her own hands and invite Ron to join her at Professor Slughorn's Christmas Party. It was bad enough she'd been avoiding Harry and Ron, but Ron was in a fine state from being excluded from a slice of Harry and Hermione's social life.

As she brought the conversation round to a convenient place to ask Ron to accompany her, Ron's attitude took a sharp turn into nastiness. By the time Ron suggested she go with their classmate Cormac McLaggan as the Slug King and Queen Hermione had had enough.

"We're allowed to bring guests and I was going to ask you," Hermione said coldly as she scratched her back with her pencil, "but if you think that it's stupid I won't bother!"

"You were going to ask me?" Ron asked uncomfortably.

"I **was** going to ask you to come with me," Hermione said angrily, "But obviously if you'd rather I hooked up with McLaggan..."

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

"No, I wouldn't," Ron said in a very quiet voice, unable to meet Hermione's gaze.

Hermione couldn't help but smile at the sudden change in Ron's attitude, realizing that Ron was just nervous and his low self-esteem wasn't helping. That was when she felt it, a gently fluttering, like a butterfly beating its wings against her belly. Without even thinking she gasped, her hand going straight to her abdomen, but it landed on the phantom form created by her robes rather than her real middle. However, just as soon as the feeling began it stopped. She paused, momentarily forgetting where she was in her conversation with Ron.

She looked up at Ron, who was just beginning to look up at her when she felt it again, the same unfamiliar stirring from deep within her. It was then that she realized what that feeling was, her eyes growing wide with the realization. She knew there was no way she could face Ron now and she quickly looked for an escape. She looked around frantically, and seeing Harry fighting with the Snargaluff pod they were all supposed to be juicing she got an idea. As Harry leaned forward on his stool hacking at the pod with a trowel, Hermione put her foot on the lowest rung of Harry's stool and pushed. Harry slid forward, missing the pod with the trowel and shattering the bowl.

Suddenly Ron's attention was pulled away from Hermione and to Harry. Hermione pretended to be equally distracted by Harry's "accident". Harry quickly repaired his bowl with a simple spell, but that gave Hermione the excuse to return the conversation back to the class.

"Hand that over Harry," Hermione said and reached for the pod. As her hand grabbed the pod she glimpsed Ron's eyes, a slightly embarrassed but pleased expression on his face. "It says we're supposed to puncture the pods with something sharp..." The rest of the class passed without any further extra-curricular discussion between Ron and Hermione, but the two of them seemed to be a bit more polite to each other and a bit more friendly from then on.

As soon as Herbology class was over Hermione dashed for the nearest toilets and secured herself in a stall. She lifted up her robes and pushed aside her sweater and shirt, neither large enough to cover her belly completely and undid her trousers. She ran her hand over her bump, feeling for the fluttering she'd felt earlier, but it was gone. She waited a moment and

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

began to lower her robe when she felt it again, both from within and with her hand.

"Bloody hell," Hermione sighed.

§§§

Several days later Ron's good mood had evaporated and he was doing his best to make everyone else as miserable as he was.

It had started the night after Hermione invited Ron to Professor Slugworth's Christmas party. Ron and Harry stumbled upon Dean Thomas and Ginny Weasley snogging in the hallway outside the Gryffindor common room. Evidently Ron had started to tell off Ginny, but she was having none of it and put Ron in his place. Worst of all, Ron had found out Hermione had kissed Victor Krumm two years before.

Since then Ron had been in a foul mood. He'd utterly ignored Dean and Ginny and treated a confused and hurt Hermione with icy indifference. What's more, Ron had become very touchy, ready to lash out at anyone at the slightest provocation.

§§§

For Hermione, this presented a unique problem. With her hormones in a flurry of activity she found herself crying when she dropped a pencil. Now with Ron treating her poorly she could barely hold back the tears whenever they were together. Harry did his best to mend bridges between them, but eventually Hermione could take no more and set off for her dormitory, furious.

*How dare he!* Hermione thought as she entered her room and slammed the door behind her, the tears she'd been holding back all day now flowing freely. *After I invited him to that damned party!* Hermione crossed the room and lay on her bed, staring up at the ceiling. *I can't manage by myself right now,* she thought as she tried to figure what she'd done to upset Ron so. She'd tried asking Harry earlier, but he wasn't about to give up his best mate. She stewed all night until eventually she cried herself to sleep.

Something had happened with Ron that night, but Hermione never did find out what it was. It was obvious something had happened. Ron

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

was dejected, and obviously sad. He'd stopped lashing out at people... or most people anyway. When Hermione saw that whatever had been bothering Ron might have passed she tried to break the ice, but whatever had improved Ron's mood with his fellow classmates, it didn't seem to apply to Hermione. Once she realized that she was just going to get more of the same again that day, she cut her losses and avoided Harry and Ron for the rest of the day.

The next morning Hermione was so tired of Ron's attitude that she'd not bothered to come down to breakfast with them. As she came up behind Harry and Ron on the way to her seat she paused for a moment before she asked, "How are you both feeling?" wincing as she spoke.

"Fine," Harry replied shortly as he handed Ron a glass of pumpkin juice. Hermione looked at the glass of orange-gold liquid curiously, then back to Harry, who had a small bottle secreted in his hand. It only took a moment for her to put two and two together, and she didn't like the result.

A month and a half before Professor Slughorn had held a contest among his potions class with the prize being a vial of Felix Felicis, a very powerful luck potion. With the help of Harry's annotated textbook he'd won the contest and with it the vial of what amounted to liquid luck.

And now Harry had that bottle in his hand, the morning before the first Quidditch match of the season and he was giving a drink to Ron, the worst player on the team. It didn't take much thought to see what was going on.

"Don't drink that Ron!" Hermione said sharply.

Ron and Harry both turned to look at her. "Why not?" Ron asked, one eyebrow raised.

Hermione looked at Harry, her eyes wide in shock, "You put something in his drink!"

"What?" Harry said, feigning confusion.

"You heard me, I saw you," Hermione said, "You just tipped something into his drink, you've got the bottle in your hand right now."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Harry covered, discreetly stowing the tiny bottle in his pocket.

"Ron, I'm warning you. Don't drink that!" Hermione said sternly.

Ron looked from Hermione to the glass before a trace of a grin crossed his face. He drained the glass in one gulp. "Quit bossing me around, Hermione."



## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

Hermione looked shocked. She leaned over and whispered in Harry's ear. "You should be expelled for that! I'd never have believed you'd..."

Harry cut her off, "Look who's talking, confunded anyone lately?"

Hermione only looked at him for a moment before she turned and left the Great Hall. Hermione hadn't been aware that anyone knew she had confunded some of Ron's competition to join the Gryffindor Quidditch team, much less Harry. She was already to the second floor, well on her way back up to the Gryffindor common room when she realized that despite her anger at both Ron and Harry, she had to see what happened. Besides, the trip back up to the common room was a long one and these days she tried to avoid long climbs upstairs as much as possible.

As soon as she reached the Quidditch pitch she knew she was right about Harry and Ron. Two of the Slytherin's players were out, Vaisey and Malfoy. It seemed lucky to Hermione... too lucky. Once the match started any doubts she might have had evaporated. Ron had been playing miserably through the last few weeks' practices, but now he was playing like an expert, making one save after another, each more spectacular than the last. Even before Harry caught the Snitch their win was nearly a foregone conclusion, but his catch cemented the win.

Hermione seethed as she made her way down from the stands where she'd been sitting, just out of sight, and headed for the changing rooms. She knew it wouldn't endear her to either Ron or Harry, but with the way Ron had been treating her she didn't care much for his feelings at the moment and as for Harry...

By the time she'd reached the changing rooms it was nearly deserted. It was empty save for Ron and Harry. She entered, wringing her scarf in her hands. "I want a word with you," she said, her voice quiet but determined. She took a deep breath. "You shouldn't have done it, Harry. You heard Professor Slughorn, it's illegal."

"What are you going to do, turn us in?" Ron shot back.

"What are you two talking about?" Harry said as he hung up his robes, his back to Ron and Hermione.

"You know perfectly well what I'm talking about," Hermione said, "You spiked Ron's juice with that good luck potion, Felix Felicis!"

Harry turned back to face them both, a wide grin on his face. "No, I didn't."

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

Harry explained his plan, that he'd wanted Ron to play with the confidence of knowing he had luck on his side so he'd play his best, regardless of his previous mood. Harry was more than willing to offer proof, showing the pair the Felix Felicis bottle, still corked and sealed with wax.

Ron's mood lightened as he realized he'd been played and just how well he was capable of playing. He was beaming with pride and even seemed a bit taller. Then Ron turned to Hermione.

"You added good luck potion to Ron's drink, that's the only reason he saved anything," Ron said, imitating Hermione. "See, I can tend goal without help Hermione!"

"But... I never said you... Ron, you thought he'd given it to you too!" Hermione said, but Ron was already out the door, his broomstick over his shoulder.

"Er," Harry said, mumbling something about the party, but Hermione wasn't listening.

"You go," Hermione shouted, "I'm sick of Ron and his outbursts. I don't even know what I'm supposed to have done." Angry, Hermione stormed out of the changing room as well.

By the time Hermione made her way up the long flights of steps to the Gryffindor common room she was exhausted but no less angry with Ron. *Still, if it took an unnecessary apology to smooth over their friendship, she mused, I'll have to be the bigger person and...*

The thought was cut off as she entered the common room through the portrait hole. The party was in full swing and the noise was nearly deafening. She scanned the room for Ron. She quickly found him, standing in the corner of the room with Lavender Brown snogging, wrapped around each other so tightly it was hard to tell whose hands were whose. She turned on her heel and left the room.

Not even thinking about her destination, Hermione ran into the nearest classroom, tears pouring down her face and sat at the teacher's desk. She felt so lost, so confused, as if she'd just banged her head... and in a bit of tragic humor she conjured a group of small cartoonish birds which immediately began to fly around over her head in a circle.

Just as she rested her head in her hands, her palms covering her red, blurry eyes she heard the door to the classroom. She froze, terrified for a moment of whom it might be.

"Hermione?" Harry said quietly.

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

Hermione opened her eyes and noticed Harry was looking at her crown of flying birds. "Oh, hello..." she said, her voice crackling as tears poured down her cheeks. "I was just practicing," she said as she reached over her shoulder and scratched her back.

"Yeah... they're... uh... really good," Harry offered.

Neither of them knew what to say. They looked at each other in an uneasy silence, before Hermione finally decided that if Harry wasn't going to say what was on his mind she would say what was on hers. "Ron seemed to be enjoying the festivities," she said bitterly with an edge to her voice that Harry had never heard from Hermione before.

"Er... he was?" Harry answered.

"Oh please..." Hermione began when the door to the classroom opened, and Ron stepped in laughing, pulling a giggling Lavender Brown along behind him.

"Oh," Ron said, taken aback.

"Oops," Lavender said, still giggling as she backed out of the room, closing the door behind her.

The silence was deafening and seemed to go on forever. Finally Ron turned to Harry, avoiding Hermione's gaze. "Hi Harry, wondered where you'd gotten off to..." he said awkwardly.

Hermione pushed herself up, out of her seat, not bothering to dry her red, tired-looking eyes. The tiny flock of birds continued flying around her head like an odd, feathery crown.

"You shouldn't leave Lavender waiting outside," Hermione said quietly, her voice low but steady, "She'll wonder where you got off to." She crossed the room very slowly, holding herself sharply erect as she approached the door. Suddenly a thought crossed her mind and the tiniest bit of a smile turned the corners of her mouth upward.

In the blink of an eye she pulled her wand and spun around. "Oppugno!" she shouted, pointing her wand at Ron, her eyes wild. Suddenly the birds that had been circling Hermione's head changed course and headed straight for Ron, pecking and clawing at every inch of his exposed skin.

Hermione didn't stop to watch. She turned, oblivious to Ron's shouts and yanked open the door and left the room. It was only as she exited the room that she let out a sob, unable to hold it back any longer. She passed Lavender Brown who stood in the hallway waiting for Ron. Hermione didn't even look at Lavender and ignored whatever it was Lavender tried to say to

## THE SIXTH YEAR'S NEW CLOTHES

her as she headed back down the hall and into the common room. She crossed the room quickly and headed up the stairs, into her dormitory room, pinning the door closed with a chair beneath the doorknob.

Now the tears flowed freely as she tried to understand what she'd done to deserve how Ron was treating her. She turned awkwardly toward her bed and accidentally spotted herself in the mirror. Sick of the illusion Hermione gathered up her robe and tossed it aside. *I swear, every time I look, it's bigger*, she thought, looking down at her bump.

It had only been a week since Winky had talked to her about altering her clothes, but already she could see quite a difference. She could no longer button the bottom three buttons of her blouse, up from two a week ago. She'd switched from her pullover uniform sweaters to the buttoned variety this week. Parvati had mentioned something about Hermione's sweaters getting a bit stretched out of shape. She didn't think there was any way her bump was large enough to stretch a sweater, but she decided to take no chances. She switched to cardigans. She wore them unbuttoned, aside from the top button, to avoid stretching them out as well. She took off the sweater and shirt, revealing her b-cup bra, and, more impressively, her swollen middle. Her belly pushed out much further than a week before, the high point of her belly now seemed to be just under her belly button, the round swelling equal both above and below. She ran her hands over her bump, exploring the flesh. In the last week her belly had firmed quite a bit, becoming much less soft than it had been. Before she'd easily been able to mistake it for just a bit of fat around the middle, but now it was obvious it was not, even by touch.

Hermione turned sideways, looking in the mirror as she ran her hand down over the curve of her belly. *No wonder Ron wants nothing to do with me, I'm a big, fat chav*," Hermione sighed, ignoring the fact that Ron couldn't possibly know she was pregnant. *Who'd want me now?* she thought, before the answer jumped to her mind. *No. Not a chance*, she thought. *I still don't know why I...* she paused, unable to even think of it, *with Malfoy*.

She looked down again and wiped her eyes. She looked down, between her breasts, at the large swelling at her waist. She wrapped her arms around it, holding her belly firmly, hugging herself.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PREFECT

Things did not improve before Christmas. Hermione was in quite a state when she realized she had no way to hide her condition when she returned home for the holidays. Things had been difficult enough in the few minutes each morning and night when she was out of her uniform, but faced with two whole weeks when she wasn't going to be wearing a uniform at all... She didn't even know where to begin.

Part of the problem was simple to solve. She simply made arrangements to stay at Hogwarts over Christmas. She didn't like the idea of staying away from home and family, but she liked the idea of her parents discovering her predicament even less. She had to be careful that Harry and Ron didn't find out she'd decided to stay. While her excuses might hold water with her parents, the same could not be said of her fellow students. They had to believe she'd gone home for the holidays.

However, staying at Hogwarts only changed the problem, it didn't eliminate it.

Students stayed at the school during breaks all the time, but when class wasn't in session they didn't wear uniforms, they wore their own clothes... and not a stitch of Hermione's regular clothes came close to fitting any longer.

She thought about all her options, but she kept coming back to the same point. In two days classes would be out for the term and people would start questioning why she was still in uniform. Questions would be asked and the truth would come out, not only about her pregnancy, but her child's parentage as well and while she'd begun to steel herself to the idea of her friends eventually knowing she was going to have a baby, she couldn't bear for them to know that Draco Malfoy was the father.

There was a bit of a surprise in store for her when she awoke the first morning after classes ended for the term. There, standing next to her bed, was Winky, carrying several boxes.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PERFECT

“Merry Christmas, Miss Hermione,” Winky said, holding the boxes up.

Hermione blinked and tried to push herself upright, but the increased size and weight of her body made that far more difficult than it should have been. She rubbed her eyes, only now beginning to focus. “Winky?” she asked, then looked at the boxes. “You didn’t...” she said, suddenly awake.

“Winky did her best, Miss Hermione,” Winky replied, offering the boxes again.

Hermione threw the heavy duvet aside and turned in bed, throwing her legs over the side of the mattress and using the momentum to pull herself upright. If Winky was surprised by the changes in Hermione’s formerly slim body since she’d last seen it she did a good job of not showing it. Hermione took the boxes from Winky and sat them on the bed next to her.

She pulled open the first box and pulled out a frilly silk nightgown. “Winky thought you might be having trouble,” she said, “It works just like your house robes, Miss Hermione,” Winky continued. “Pull over, don’t unbutton.

Hermione looked down at her ever-increasing bump, “You have a point.” Hermione tried to slouch, but her belly was in the way, stopping her from bending at the waist at all. She moved onto the second box and pulled out a hooded sweatshirt, big enough to come down over her hips. She looked at it curiously for a moment before setting it aside and opening the third box, containing several pairs of blue jeans. “Oh thank you Winky!” she said holding up the first pair of jeans. “These will just do the trick. I need something to hide my bottom, its become simply vast!”

“Oh....” Winky paused, obviously distressed. “I’m sorry Miss Hermione, the charm doesn’t work on anything besides robes.”

“But what about the hoodie?” Hermione asked as she reached over her shoulder and scratched her back.

“It’s really just a short robe, Miss Hermione,” Winky said, “Trousers are completely different.”

“Well, that solves the worst of it,” Hermione said, sliding off her bed and getting to her feet, “But people can’t help but notice this,” she said turning around, placing one hand on each side of her buttocks.

# THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PERFECT

Hermione had a point. Her hips were full and womanly, her bottom plush, round and firm. Quite unlike what people expected from Hermione Granger.

“Winky is sorry Miss Hermione, but there is only so much Winky can do,” the house elf explained as she looked down, away from Hermione’s gaze.

“No, I’m sorry,” Hermione said, shaking her head, “Where are my manners? Thank you Winky. You’ve saved me! Without these I’d have no choice but to go see Madame Pomfrey.”

“You haven’t?” Winky said, obviously worried. “You really should, there’s...”

Hermione cut her off. “No, I’m not going to have everyone at school talking about me.”

§§§

A few hours later, just after lunch, Hermione had a brief discussion with Professor McGonagall and Madam Hooch outside the Great Hall before she headed back upstairs to the Gryffindor common room. Professor McGonagall turned and looked at Hermione as she walked away before turning back to Madam Hooch.

“These girls,” Professor McGonagall said, “They grow up so fast. One day they’re gangly eleven year olds...”

Madame Hooch cut her off, “and the next they need to get out of the classroom and onto a broom for a bit of exercise.”

McGonagall looked around for a moment before continuing in a whisper, “Perhaps I should find a subtle way to suggest something to Miss Granger, things are getting a bit out of hand.” She turned back to see Hermione quite a way down the hall, the difference in her oversized, denim-clad hips and bottom visible even from this distance.

With her new clothes the rest of the holiday break went relatively smoothly, however, as it continued she grew more and more concerned. Rather than deal with the issue, Hermione pushed it to the side and remained dressed in various charmed clothing as much as possible. Once she realized that no one would care if she wore a bathrobe to meals as long as

# THE MYSTERY OF THE PREG- NANT PERFECT

classes were out, she wore her charmed nightgown all day, every day. Now she need never actually look at her growing problem.

§§§

On the day the Christmas break ended Hermione readied herself for the slight deception she had planned. Dressed in her hat, coat and gloves, Hermione visited Hagrid and Buckbeak, the hippogriff that they had rescued from certain doom at the hands of the Ministry for Magic several years before, then stopped in the Great Hall and grabbed a snack before heading up to the Gryffindor common room. As she approached she spotted Harry, Ginny and her own personal He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named arguing with the fat lady about the password to Gryffindor tower.

"Harry, Ginny!" She called out, wobbling slightly as she hurried down the hall. The faster she went the more trouble her hips seemed to give her. There was no pain, but her hip joints just didn't seem to be working properly. "I just got back a few hours ago," Hermione explained. "I've just been down visiting Hagrid and Buckbe... Witherwings," she said, remembering his new name. "Did you have a good Christmas?"

"Yeah," Ron replied. "Very eventful. Rufus Scrimsha..."

"I've got something for you, Harry," Hermione said, neither looking at nor speaking to Ron. "Oh, the password..." Hermione paused.

"They've changed it over the break," Harry said. "How are we to know it when we weren't even here?"

"You're totally useless, you know," Hermione smiled, "The password is..." Hermione paused as she seemed to come to a realization. She weighed her options for a moment before she sighed, her shoulders dropping. "The password is 'abstinence'."

"Exactly," The fat lady replied in a quiet, sickly voice and her portrait swung away.

"What's wrong with her?" Harry asked.

"Overindulged over Christmas break apparently," Hermione rolled her eyes as she waited for the others to enter before following them



## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PERFECT

into the common room, "She and Violet drank their way through all the wine in the picture of the monks down by the Charms corridor. Anyway..."

"How'd you know that then?" Ron asked, "You were home for Christmas too."

Hermione ignored him as she dug into her bag and pulled out a parchment with Dumbledore's writing on it and handed it to Harry.

"Great," Harry said as he quickly read the message. "I've got loads to tell Dumbledore and you. Let's find a table."

"Won-Won!" Lavender squealed. She'd apparently appeared out of nowhere and catapulted herself into Ron's arms. Several students laughed. Hermione chuckled unenthusiastically, "Come on, there's a table over here, coming Ginny?"

"I promised I'd meet Dean," she said without much enthusiasm. Harry led Hermione to an open table, away from the vertical wrestling match that was Ron and Lavender.

"So how was your Christmas," Harry asked.

"Oh fine," she shrugged, "Nothing special. How was Christmas at Won-Won's?"

"In a minute," Harry began, "Hermione, can't you..."

"No, I can't," she said flatly. "So don't even ask."

"Well, I thought," Harry began, "Maybe over Christmas..."

"The fat lady drank a whole vat of wine over Christmas Harry, not me. So what was this important information you wanted to tell me?"

Hermione seemed far too determined to argue with at the moment, so Harry moved on and described the conversation he'd heard between Malfoy and Snape before Christmas. Hermione, with more pressing things on her mind at the moment, barely seemed interested. When Harry finished Hermione paused for a moment before speaking.

"Don't you think Snape was just pretending to offer help so he could trick Malfoy into telling him what he was doing?" Hermione said.

"Ron's dad and Lupin think the same thing," Harry admitted, "But this proves Malfoy is up to something, you can't deny that."

Hermione thought for a moment. While she was very suspicious of Malfoy for obvious reasons, she wasn't sure if she wanted to Harry digging into Malfoy too much. That could lead to trouble for her.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREG- NANT PERFECT

“No, I can’t,” she replied cautiously.

“And they’re acting on Voldemort’s orders, just like I said.” Harry said.

“Harry...” Hermione began, making it clear that she wasn’t going to entertain the subject again.

The rest of the evening passed quickly, with both of them heaping abuse on Snape and the Minister for Magic. In this Ron and Hermione agreed, the ministry had some nerve coming to the Weasley’s over Christmas and asking for Harry’s help after how they treated him the year before.

Hermione headed off to bed early that night. As the school year had passed she found herself growing increasingly tired earlier in the night. Also, if she retired earlier than her roommates she didn’t need to talk to Lavender Brown, not to mention having a bit of time to change clothes, away from prying eyes.

When Hermione reached her room she took the precaution of jamming the chair under the doorknob before beginning to disrobe. She paused for a long moment, standing in front of her dressing table. It had been nearly two weeks since she’d fully disrobed, removing all her magical protections and she was very concerned about the odd feeling she felt in her hips whenever she tried to move about.

She tossed her coat and other winter clothes aside and unbuttoned her jeans, allowing them to fall to the floor. She kicked them aside as she grabbed the lower hem of her hooded sweatshirt and shook it, allowing her nightgown, bunched up underneath to fall to her ankles. Only then did she pull her sweatshirt over her head, leaving her wearing just her charmed nightgown.

She paused, staring at her reflection, for a long moment before she swallowed and took a deep breath. She grabbed her nightgown and lifted it up, over her head. For a moment it bunched up around her eyes and chin, but then it was off and cast aside. Hermione gasped, her eyes wide and mouth open.

In the three weeks she’d kept herself blissfully unaware of her growth her belly had expanded greatly. She was no longer chubby, or even slightly pregnant. She was in the full bloom of motherhood. While Hermione

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREG- NANT PREFECT

didn't have much experience with pregnancy she certainly knew that someone who was only four months along shouldn't look like this.

Her belly was full and round, looking far more like seven months than the four that had actually passed. Her bump dominated her body, its swelling coming up to her rib cage and beginning to wrap around her sides. Without even realizing she was doing it she reached down, placing one hand on either side of her belly, pressing in on its firmness. As she stared at her reflection, she began running her hands across her belly, still unwilling to believe all of this was real.

Hermione wiggled her shoulders, as if trying to relieve an itch on her back before she took a step toward the mirror. Now she knew what the odd feeling in her hips was. She paused and widened her stance a bit before she continued walking toward the mirror, now waddling slightly with each step.

"No, this isn't right," she whispered, her eyes beginning to mist up. It had taken a moment, but now she began to notice changes to the rest of her body. Thankfully Hermione's bottom and thighs seemed to have stabilized, not having grown much at all in the last three weeks. Her breasts, however, appeared to have gained a cup size or so and Hermione had to admit, for a fleeting moment, that she wasn't displeased by that particular development. Almost immediately her thoughts came back to the problem that was literally right in front of her.

She began pacing, waddling awkwardly back and forth across her room, one hand on either side of her belly, trying to think. Unfortunately the waddling was driving her to distraction. "I have to think... somewhere relaxing..." said in a quiet voice. Then it came to her, "The prefect's bathroom. Perfect."

§§§

A few minutes later Hermione was back in her enchanted nightgown and bathrobe and on her way to the Prefect's bathroom. The location was perfect. It was quiet, only the twenty-four Prefects and the head boy and girl even had the password to the Prefect's bathroom and it was never busy

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREG- NANT PREFECT

late at night. The Prefect's bathroom also was the only co-ed bathroom at Hogwarts and when it was in use the door could be locked from the inside, leaving her in complete privacy.

Hermione stepped in carefully, trying to suppress her waddle, at least until the door closed behind her. As soon as she heard the door close and lock she let out a breath she hadn't even been aware she'd been holding. She looked around, thankful that the lights had remained low even as she entered. A gentle glow came from the bathtub, a huge affair the size of a swimming pool, which began filling with warm water and bubble bath from the dozens of spigots that lined the pool as she approached.

Hermione doffed her robe, nightgown and undergarments and stepped up to the pool. Hermione found it difficult to pull her gaze from the massive and unwelcome outcropping preceding her, but with effort she looked up at the painting of the mermaid. She was glad to see the mermaid was sleeping, her head resting on a bit of coral and seaweed, her eyes firmly closed. Noting this Hermione relaxed and stepped carefully into the warm, soapy water.

The water was almost too hot, just hot enough that she felt her muscles begin to relax as soon as the hot water hit them. She reveled in the buoyancy of the water, relieved as the extra weight she almost wasn't aware she was carrying seemed to fall away as the water lifted her up. She leaned back, allowing the back of her head to drop into the water before she returned upright, treading water as she returned to the edge of the pool, breathing in the heavily perfumed purple clouds that hovered just over the surface of the water.

She remained there, soaking in the tub, until she nearly fell asleep, her hands and feet pruning up. Reluctantly she realized it was time to leave before someone began banging on the door. She pulled herself slowly from the pool, the additional weight she carried dragging her down as she left the water. Hermione grunted involuntarily as she stepped from the pool and waddled to the stack of fluffy white towels and began to dry off.

Taking advantage of her time, Hermione grabbed the few bras and panties she'd brought with her and began to wash them in the sink. While she could get practically everything else cleaned in the washing, there was nothing a dormitory full of girls would notice faster than large cup size bras

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREG- NANT PREFECT

and panties for someone with a large backside. She still dropped her old bras and panties into the washing up, so they'd be seen coming back with the other clothes, but she had to wash by hand the ones she actually wore.

With her hair drying, head wrapped in a towel, and washing her unmentionables, Hermione couldn't see the mermaid painting. The mermaid was staring at her, eyes and mouth wide open, obviously shocked. The mermaid seemed to realize she was about to be caught peeping as the young pregnant girl finished drying her hair so she closed her eyes and lowered her head to the lump of coral she'd been resting on.

Hermione finished drying her hair and turned, heading toward the dirty towel bin. It only took a moment for her to drop her towels in the bin and put on her nightgown and robe. She stepped into her slippers and wrapped her wet hair in a towel, glad to be once again rid of her large bump and the awkwardness of trying to work around it.

As Hermione headed for the door, her back to the pool, the mermaid took the opportunity to peek at the very pregnant girl who was waddling out of the bathroom, but at this distance and angle, there wasn't much for the scandalized mermaid to see. She seemed to muse for a moment before she swam away into the distance.

§§§

The next morning as the new term started a notice appeared on the common room bulletin board, a sign up sheet for apparition lessons. Hermione signed up and turned, only to see Ron approaching with Lavender creeping up behind him, about to pounce. Hermione strode purposefully away, awkwardly trying to suppress her waddle, followed closely by Harry. Both were surprised to find Ron had caught up with them, Lavender nowhere in sight.

Without a word Hermione sped up, leaving Ron walking behind her with Harry. *Now, there's only one person I can talk to about this*, Hermione thought, *the one person that already knows and hasn't told anyone. Perhaps she has some idea what's going wrong.* As Hermione approached a group of girls ahead she felt a horrible sinking feeling as she overheard their conversation.

# THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PREFECT

"From what I heard she must have been pretty far along," Romilda said in a loud whisper, "her bump was positively vast!"

"But a Prefect? That's just astounding!" Ginny replied, "I just don't believe it."

"The mermaid wouldn't lie," Romilda said, "would she?"

Hermione turned, trying her best to hide her surprise and headed in the opposite direction. However, as much as the main conversations in the room seemed to be about apparition lessons, the gossip about the mysterious pregnant Prefect seemed to be just as much a topic of conversation, if not more so.

"So which is it? There's only twelve girls it could be," Dean asked.

"Thirteen, counting the head girl. Did the mermaid say anything else about her?" Seamus replied.

"Just that she was pale," Dean replied.

"Well, that rules out Padma," Seamus laughed. "Who'd you think it is?"

Hermione was in no mood to find out what they thought. She turned abruptly and headed for the exit. As she was about to leave the portrait hole opened and Professor McGonagall stepped inside. "Ah, Miss Granger," she said, "There's to be a meeting of all the Prefects in Professor Dumbledore's office in one hour. Attendance is mandatory."

"Oh, what's going on?" Hermione asked innocently.

"You can't be unaware of the rumors floating around the school this morning," Professor McGonagall said with utmost seriousness, "This meeting will endeavor to put an end to those rumors. If you'll excuse me I have to notify the other Gryffindor Prefects." Hermione continued onward toward the portrait hole, for the moment forgetting to hide her waddle as she fretted about the rapidly approaching meeting.

§§§

An hour later the Prefects and heads of houses had convened in Dumbledore's outer office. The small tables of interesting mechanical gadg-

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PEEFECT

ets that normally filled the room had been cleared away, leaving a rather large open area for the Prefects to assemble.

It wasn't until the last of the Prefects arrived and the head boy and girl had stepped to the front of the group that Dumbledore seemed to appear, as if from nowhere, sitting at his desk. "Thank you all for joining us here this morning," he said and paused as he stood up and walked around his desk to stand in front of the students. While all eyes were on Dumbledore, Hermione leaned back and pressed her hands into the small of her back for support, relieving the nearly constant pressure, at least for a moment.

"As you must all be aware there is a rumor that has spread among the students, one with the potential to cause a great deal of disruption, both for the general student population and, more directly, for all of you." Dumbledore said and paused for a moment, twisting his beard. "It's imperative that we determine the validity of this rumor and, if it is true, make the appropriate arrangements."

A murmur went through the group of Prefects before Professor McGonagall cleared her throat, returning the room to silence, "If anyone has anything they would like to discuss regarding the identity of this student speak with your head of house as soon as possible."

"Thank you all," Dumbledore said, "I will see you all at breakfast momentarily." It was a dismissal and the Prefects began to head down the spiral staircase out of the office. Some of the Prefects had stopped to speak to their heads of house. Hermione turned and headed for the stairway when a voice sent a chill down her spine.

"Miss Granger, if you have a moment," Dumbledore said. Hermione froze in place and the room grew silent as the remaining Prefects turned to look at either Hermione or Dumbledore. "If you could, I have a message for you to deliver," he continued, holding a small parchment scroll. Realizing it was a false alarm, the Prefects turned and continued on their way.

Hermione turned and approached Dumbledore, making a great effort to avoid waddling. "Yes, Professor Dumbledore."

"Would you deliver this scroll to Mr. Potter," Dumbledore asked, offering the scroll to Hermione.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREG- NANT PREFECT

"Yes, of course," Hermione replied, trying very hard not to dwell on Dumbledore's blackened, withered hand.

Dumbledore began to walk away, speaking as he went. "A terrible business, this rumor," Dumbledore said, "There is much we could do for such a student if he or she would step forward."

"He?" Hermione asked, bewildered.

Dumbledore smiled, "There are more things on heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Dumbledore paused, chuckling quietly, "It's my understanding that certain confections from the Weasley boys shop work just as well on male students as the female ones, not to mention the unexpected effects of certain spells and relations with certain other beings."

Hermione nodded. Dumbledore turned toward Hermione. "Before you go," he began as he walked back toward her, "Is there anything you would like to tell me, Hermione?"

Hermione paused for a long moment, "No, professor," she said, holding her breath, forcing herself to keep straight and not lean back.

He looked deeply into Hermione's eyes for a time, "Very well," he said and smiled kindly as he began to turn away. Hermione began to turn as well. Once she'd taken a few steps she stopped as Dumbledore spoke to her again.

"I must complement you on your new robes," Dumbledore said, "The fabric is exquisite."

"Thank you, sir," Hermione said and hurried away, down the spiral stairwell, scratching at her back as she went.

§§§

When Hermione left Dumbledore's office she had only one destination in mind. She went as quickly as possible to the second floor girl's toilets, allowing herself to waddle and to lean back with both hands pressed into her lower back when she was alone in the hallway to increase her speed. As she entered the second floor hallway she was forced to slow down as two second-year girls walked past her, eyeing her and her Prefect pin suspiciously. She



## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PREFECT

walked stiffly, ignoring the girls as they looked back at her. She was almost to Moaning Myrtle's toilets when a voice chilled her to the bone.

"So, a pregnant Prefect? Who would have guessed her name was Hermione Granger!"

Hermione spun around, trying to locate the sound of the voice. Then she spotted the little translucent fellow floating in midair, "Peeves!"

"The mermaid told me, she did! Knocked up, ripe as a melon you are," Peeves cackled, "Best watch you don't tip over, else you'll pop!"

Hermione looked down the hall, spying the two second-year girls she'd seen just moments earlier staring at her, bug-eyed with their mouths hanging open. She turned back toward Peeves, just in time to see a group of other students coming up the stairs, looking around curiously. Blushing furiously Hermione dashed into the second floor girls toilets and slammed the door closed. She leaned against the door, holding it in case anyone tried to follow her.

*They know, they **all** know*, Hermione thought, the idea repeating through her head over and over as tears ran down her cheeks. Even now she could hear Peeves screeching about the pregnant Prefect and she knew she was doomed, *by now everyone in the whole of Hogwarts must know!*

"Oh my, aren't you just a sight," Moaning Myrtle said as she floated over to Hermione, only noticing Hermione's tears as she got close. "Dear, what's gone wrong? Are you..."

Hermione cut her off, "It's Peeves! He's told everyone! They all know it's me!"

For a moment Moaning Myrtle stared at Hermione before she burst into laughter. She doubled over and lost whatever grip kept her upright and began doing somersaults in mid-air, laughing uproariously as she spun slowly, out of control.

**"It's not funny!"** Hermione screeched.

"But it is!" Myrtle replied still unable to control her laughter, "Open the door!"

"Open the door? Are you..." Hermione paused, holding her tongue. Myrtle had already stopped laughing, staring coolly at Hermione, waiting to hear her next words.

# THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PREFECT

Defeated, Hermione turned toward the door, "Fine," she said quietly and opened the door an inch or so, just enough to hear what was happening in the hallway.

"Middle all swollen up like a balloon! They'll have to roll you to class!" Peeves ranted as he flew tightly around Padma Patil as she swatted at him.

"I am **not** pregnant, Its someone else," Padma said in a loud whisper as she tried to quiet Peeves down. Slowly an amused crowd began to gather.

"He's been doing that to all the girl Prefects," Myrtle explained from behind Hermione's left ear, just close enough to make her jump.

"Don't do that!" Hermione said, "You gave me a fright!"

"I'm sor... wait, I'm a ghost. I'm supposed to give you a fright!" Myrtle said, indignant.

"Well, I was very scared," Hermione said unconvincingly.

"Right," Myrtle said, disappointed. "What are you doing in my toilets then?" she demanded.

"I just came here to talk," Hermione said quietly, "You're the only one that knows... about me."

Myrtle's expression melted, a gentle smile coming to her face, "Awww, you poor thing! If I still had a body I'd give you a hug."

"Thank you," Hermione said as she stepped away from the door and waddled toward the island of washbasins, her hands pressed into the small of her back.

Myrtle looked at Hermione as she passed, an amused smile on her face, "Don't you think you're overdoing it a bit? You're only just four months along?"

Hermione turned to Myrtle and rolled her eyes, "That's what I was coming to you to talk about," Hermione said as she turned and continued on into one of the stalls. She bent forward carefully, closing the lid on the toilet before she awkwardly turned around. Hermione gathered up the back of her robes in her hands, lifting them up, and sat down heavily.

Myrtle followed her at a leisurely pace and looked into the stall curiously, "So, what's this all this then?"

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PREGNANT PREFECT

"This," Hermione said, gathering up the front of her robe in her hands and lifting it up. Underneath her blouse and sweater were both unbuttoned, revealing the massive, full swelling of her surprisingly large pregnant middle. Her slacks hung on her hips, the two front flaps folded down upon themselves, her very round belly far too large for them to ever have a chance of closing.

Myrtle, for once, looked surprised. "My... now that's unexpected," she said as she reached forward, one finger extended and tried to poke Hermione's bump. So surprised was Myrtle that she had forgotten she was incorporeal and that her finger would pass straight through Hermione. "How'd that happen then?"

"You think I know?" Hermione said, exasperated.

"Well, it's your bump," Myrtle shot back.

"This is all mad," Hermione sighed as she allowed her robe to fall back down over her middle.

"If you'd just have gone to Madame Pomfrey as I said..." Myrtle began.

"Then everyone would know by now," Hermione finished. "Why do you and Winky keep going on about that?"

Moaning Myrtle paused for a moment before she spoke, "I can understand you might not be thinking clearly what with all the hormones swirling in your head, but just where do you think those two girls went last year after they found out they were pregnant?"

"They both went to Madame Pomfrey?" Hermione asked.

"Why are you surprised?" Myrtle asked, "It's not like they laced their fingers and skipped into the infirmary together. Where else would they go?"

"But, then... how'd they keep it a secret if Madame Pomfrey knows?" Hermione asked.

"She's taken an oath, medical privacy decrees and such," Myrtle said, rolling her eyes, "She would no more tell Professor Dumbledore you were pregnant than I would."

"Why didn't you tell me??" Hermione said.

"I did, I told you to go see her and you called me mad!" Myrtle said, offended.



# THE MYSTERY OF THE PREG- NANT PREFECT

"Well, I'll just go right now then," Hermione said and tried to pull herself to her feet.

"It's a bit late for that now, isn't it?" Myrtle said.

Hermione did a double take, "What do you mean?"

"I suspect by now there are a few first or second-years up there just waiting to see which Prefect goes to visit her. Then they'll know it's you." Myrtle explained.

"So that's it then, I'm doomed," Hermione said, putting her head in her hands, "What am I going to do?"

"Well, that's obvious. You're Muggle-born, go to a Muggle doctor." Myrtle suggested.

"But what's a Muggle doctor going to know about this?" Hermione said as she pulled her robe up and held it under her chin before she slapped her belly with both hands, "It's huge! It's just not natural, not in four months!"

"Well, let me take a look," Moaning Myrtle said and without another word plunged her head into Hermione's oversized bump. An icy cold fell over Hermione, almost as if she'd been doused in freezing water. Myrtle looked around for a moment before she pulled her head out again, a very concerned look on her face.

"Oh, this isn't good," Myrtle said quietly. "Not good at all."

"What?" Hermione asked as Myrtle began floating away, her brow furrowed. "Myrtle, what?? Myrtle!!" she shouted as she tried desperately to get to her feet but by the time she'd exited the stall Myrtle was already gone, having floated up through the ceiling. Hermione stared at the spot in the ceiling where Myrtle had fled, now more afraid than ever.

## CHAPTER SIX

### HIDE AND SEEK

Over the next week Hermione visited the second floor girl's toilets as much as possible, sometimes several times a day, but despite her efforts she'd not managed to see Moaning Myrtle at all and only once did she even come close enough to hear Myrtle's voice. The following week she continued visiting, but with less frequency as it became apparent that Myrtle was deliberately making herself unavailable.

Meanwhile, the hunt for the pregnant Prefect continued on. The pot for Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes betting pool had now reached nearly five hundred galleons and copies of the odds sheets were posted throughout the school, despite their prohibited status. For her part, Hermione had mixed feelings regarding the sheets. She was unsure whether to feel complimented or insulted that she was consistently rated with the worst odds. Regardless, she was relieved.

Several of the third year students had set up traps along all the approaches to the Hospital Wing, hoping to catch the pregnant Prefect on her way to see Madame Pomfrey. Thankfully, Peeves had grown tired of harassing the female Prefects and had started in on the male Prefects, much to Ron and Lavender's embarrassment. Hermione had to admit, she did find *that* amusing.

A few days later, on her way from Herbology Hermione happened upon something odd going on in the hallway. Pansy Parkinson and Draco Malfoy were heading toward the entrance hall, along with Daphne Greengrass and Millicent Bulstrode, Crabbe and Goyle lagging behind. Hermione noticed a crowd beginning to gather in the hallway ahead, the other students rushing to see what was going on. Hermione looked around and, after confirming no one was watching, hurried along after them, waddling as quickly as she could, leaning back, her hands supporting the weight of her belly.

Pansy Parkinson was standing in the center of the hallway, looking around, clearly terrified. The other students stood in a circle around her, watching cautiously as Pansy stretched, pressing her hands into the small of her back as she cried out, as much in shock as in discomfort.

## HIDE AND SEEK

For a long moment no one seemed to know what was happening, but then suddenly all became clear. Pansy's belly began to swell, pushing out against her robes, slowly at first, but rapidly pulling her robe taut. She gritted her teeth and a long groan escaped her lips as her back began to relax. As she raised her head she looked out over her still expanding middle in shock. Suddenly, the buttons of her robe began to give, popping one by one until her robe hung open revealing her blouse and exposed belly.

As they watched her school uniform began to morph and change. Her tie and neckline shifted and grew into a wide sailor-style collar, the remainder of the shirt growing much shorter and more blousy, looking more and more like an undersize baby-doll maternity top, the hem far too short to even cover half of her expanded belly, which itself was continuing to grow, taking on a slight sheen as her belly button popped. Her skirt shifted, the waistband sliding under her belly, as it tightened on her hips.

As the transformation came to a halt Pansy forced herself further upright, one hand still pressing on the small of her back, the other involuntarily rubbing her tight and apparently itchy belly.

Where the laughter began was impossible to tell, but shortly it was coming from all directions. Pansy spun around, first apparently just looking for a friendly face and short of that, an escape. She didn't have much luck finding either. As she turned around, waddling heavily, her eyes flashed across laughing face after laughing face, including her companions, Millicent and Draco. She looked around, trying to see past the crowd, but by now word had begun to spread and students were flooding into the hallway, hoping to see what was going on.

Pansy waddled around in a tight circle, still looking for her escape. That was when she spotted the one person that wasn't laughing, the only one in the hallway who looked shocked and embarrassed. At the same moment Hermione realized that Pansy was staring right at her, her eyes ablaze with fury. "Granger!" she shouted as she crossed the distance between them. "It's you!"

"What? I..." Hermione began, trying to keep calm.

"You and your prim and proper, I should have known," Pansy said, sneering.

"I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about," Hermione said weakly.

## HIDE AND SEEK

"Any other time you'd be the first one to laugh," Pansy said, still furious, "But today I'm getting sad eyes and appalled looks. Why might that be?"

"Even a villain deserves pity in their time of suffering," Hermione replied hopefully.

"We'll see," Parkinson said forcing her hands from her back and belly with difficulty before grabbing Hermione's robe. "We will see," she said. Hermione reached for Pansy's hands, but it was already too late. Pansy pulled at either lapel of Hermione's robe, ripping off the top two buttons and severely straining the third before she let go. Pansy stepped back as the sides of Hermione's robe fell open revealing... Hermione's perfectly pressed shirt and tie, along with her school sweater, all looking very normal. Hermione looked down briefly at the small rise of her breasts and her flat stomach before her eyes returned to Pansy, triumphant.

"See what?" Hermione replied with relief and barely restrained glee. Pansy, for her part, seemed surprised and just as she was about to reply Professors McGonagall, Flitwick and Snape swooped in, as if from nowhere. "You all have places you ought to be," Professor McGonagall said loudly, projecting as she glared into the crowd. Meanwhile Professor Flitwick took Pansy by the hand and spirited her out of the hallway. As the corridor began to clear Professor McGonagall approached Hermione, "Miss Granger, what happened here."

"I'd think that's obvious," Professor Snape said before he waded into the crowd of students before he returned, pulling Ron Weasley along by his ear, "Someone's been doing a bit of shopping at the Weasley's joke shop. Who that might that have been... Mr. Weasley?"

McGonagall turned and watched, concerned and a bit confused as Professor Snape strode away, Ron Weasley in hand. "I'd like a word with Mr. Weasley myself," she said and turned, following Professor Snape.

"What was that about?" Harry asked as he came up behind Hermione.

"I think someone slipped Parkinson a cherry chegger," Hermione said, attempting a devilish smile, hoping to avoid suspicion.

"Where'd they get one of those? They've been banned here for nearly two years. Fred and George don't even make them any more." Harry said, curiously.



## HIDE AND SEEK

"I don't know," Hermione said, stealing glances down at her open robe. "I'll see you later, I have to..." she said, trailing off as she turned and headed off in the opposite direction.

Hermione found the nearest empty classroom and stepped inside, closing the door behind her. The classroom was nearly empty, most of the tables and chairs gone, decorated only by a large scorch mark covering most of the floor and the far wall as well as a statue of Cassandra Trelawny, the world renowned seer and great, great grandmother of Professor Trelawny, the not so talented divination teacher, standing alone in a dusty corner. Now that she was alone Hermione immediately looked down at her b-cup chest and flat belly. She marveled at the quality of the illusion. *Pull over, don't unbutton*, she thought, *Well, unbuttoning seems to work just fine*. Curious, she pushed her tie aside and undid the top few buttons of her shirt, peering inside at her bra and bare skin. *This charm is just brilliant!* she marveled as thin wisps of smoke began to rise from the back of her robes.

Hermione continued to probe, pressing in on the bare skin of her chest with her fingertips, when she noticed smoke beginning to rise from her arms. For a moment she didn't understand what was happening, but in the moments it took for her to realize the truth, her robe's seams began to smoke and suddenly fell apart, the robe splitting at the weakened seams and falling to her feet.

Hermione tried to look down at the falling fabric, but only saw the outcropping of her larger breasts and huge belly, her blouse and sweater parted around the massive ball of flesh. In the last two weeks her belly had become much more round and firm, now looking much like a ball that had wrapped around her body. All available space from her pubic bone to ribcage was covered by the huge sphere. Without even thinking about what she was doing she placed her hands in the small of her back and worked them around to her sides, feeling where the roundness of her belly curved out from her sides, forming a heavy, tight and slightly itchy ball. Not wanting to be left out, Hermione's breasts had continued to grow as well, straining and slightly bubbling over the fabric of her d-cup bra.

*How can I still be getting bigger?* she thought incredulously, *That candy that Parkinson just ate make you look nine months pregnant and as vast as Pansy is, I'm even bigger and it's not even been five months!* That thought was almost instantly overshadowed by the realization that she was trapped on the ground floor, seven floors away from Gryffindor Tower, her magical robe

## HIDE AND SEEK

laying in tatters on the floor, her huge pregnant belly, bosom and oversized bottom weighing heavily upon her, impossible to hide, the sounds of students in the corridor a reminder of just how close she was to getting caught.

After a few moments reflection Hermione realized that she'd be caught instantly without a plan. She thought through several possible routes, each eventually ending in either a dead end or disaster. Discouraged, Hermione went to the teacher's desk and sat down, taking the pressure off her back and feet. The more she tried to think things through in her head, the more lost Hermione became.

Hermione looked around the room and with great effort she pushed herself to her feet and stepped up to the nearby blackboard. She picked up a piece of chalk and began to write. After several false starts due to her belly dragging across the blackboard as she wrote, Hermione found a comfortable stance and distance from the board and began to work out her path through the castle to safety. Forty minutes later the path was written on the board, including convenient safe rooms, if necessary, along the way. It wasn't foolproof by any means, but it was the only chance she had.

Hermione waited for the hallway to fall silent as students and professors alike reached their classrooms before she opened the door and peeked out into the corridor. She eased herself into the hallway, closing the classroom door silently behind her. Hermione leaned back, bracing her back with her hands and took off, waddling down the hallway.

She passed Filch's office, neither Filch nor Mrs. Norris anywhere in sight. She continued onwards, ducking into the shallow alcoves that surrounded each classroom door whenever she could to avoid being seen by anyone looking down the corridor. She was blissfully unaware that even with her back pressed to the classroom doors, her belly extended far enough that a sliver of her pale flesh could be seen, poking into the hallway, even from quite a distance away.

She leapfrogged slowly from one doorway to the next, avoiding the entrance to the staff room, ducking into a disused classroom as Professor Sprout came down the hall. Hermione held her breath as she looked through the barely open door, not willing to risk drawing attention by allowing the door to close, even with the slightest noise. Professor Sprout, none the wiser to Hermione's location, entered the staff room, the door closing behind her.

Hermione sighed and returned to the corridor, quickly making her way to the doors leading to the entrance hall. From here she had several

## HIDE AND SEEK

choices, none of them good, but only one with the possibility of success. She could head into the Great Hall, but that was a dead end, as was the antechamber where first-years waited for sorting when they first arrived at Hogwarts. She could go outside, but that would lead right into the presence of perhaps dozens of her classmates. She could go downstairs, either toward the kitchens and the Hufflepuff common room, or toward the dungeons and the Slytherin common room, but of all these, only the kitchens offered any possibilities at all

Hermione had considered simply going to the kitchens and waiting for Winky or Dobby to arrive, but she knew she didn't have that long to wait. Before long Harry would realize she'd missed classes and would head back to his dormitory for the Marauder's Map. Then he would know where she was, and he would come looking for her. *No, she thought. I have to keep moving or I'll be found out.* Only one direction led to safety, the main stair hall, but in and of itself it was inherently unsafe. Due to the massive moving staircases and the danger of falling everyone there was constantly alert. The less time she spent there the better.

After waiting as long as she thought safe Hermione waddled quickly across the entrance hall and up the large marble stairwell. As she turned onto the first landing she looked up and found herself nearly face to face with Hagrid, barreling down the stairwell. Hermione stepped aside as Hagrid flew down the stairs, barely even acknowledging her existence. "scuse me," was all he managed and then he was gone, leaving Hermione with her eyes wide and heart racing, but very glad for whatever had Hagrid occupied.

After she collected her nerves, Hermione continued up the stairs into the first floor hallway. She could hear various classes going on behind closed doors as she trundled down the hallway, moving as quickly as her wide stance and wobbling belly would allow. She passed Professor McGonagall's office and continued down the hallway and up the stairway to the west corridor.

Ahead lay Professor Snape's office. Hermione crept along the hallway as quietly as she could, scratching her belly absentmindedly as she went. As she passed Snape's office she could hear both Professors Snape and McGonagall's voices, intermittently they paused and she heard a bit of Ron before Snape cut him off. Hermione grinned, unable to ignore her own

## HIDE AND SEEK

amusement at someone finally putting Ron in his place, despite the fact that Snape was doing the honors.

Still, she didn't have time to dawdle. As she listened she realized she was hearing less of Snape's voice and more of McGonagall's. She suspected that signaled Ron's imminent release from Professor Snape's office and knowing Ron, he'd make a bee-line straight for Gryffindor tower, right along her path. *Now what?* Hermione thought, thinking back to the map she'd drawn on the blackboard. *There are two safe spots nearby. The second floor girl's toilets and the passage to Hogsmeade.* Their relative positions made the choice easier. *No retreat,* Hermione said to herself and headed down the hall to the next stairwell, toward the secret passage.

In the main stair hall Hermione heard voices echoing in the distance somewhere below, but she had no time to consider who they were now. She climbed the stairs with difficulty, unable to fully catch her breath from the exertion. By the time she reached the third floor she had to pull herself to the top of the stairs, her right hand holding firm on the railing.

Hermione stood there for a moment, trying to catch her breath, but it was no use. Between her panic and all the activity she was nearly out of energy. *Brave heart, Hermione,* she thought, *I can't give up now, not even half-way there yet.* Suddenly Hermione's belly jumped, knocking what little wind she'd collected out of her. *Bugger!* she thought as she pressed against the movement that shook her entire belly from within, distorting it as the entire contents of her abdomen seemed to roll. *Can't stop,* she thought, grunting aloud involuntarily as she held her bump with both hands, trying to contain the kicking.

Still breathing heavily Hermione turned into the third floor hallway. She would have loved to have turned right and headed down the charms corridor to the back staircase, but that staircase also abutted the hospital wing, and going anywhere near there was a bad idea.

Instead she turned left and headed toward the corridor that had been off limits during her first year. Having not been able to use the corridor her first year she had always been reluctant to use it since. Not that there was anything wrong with it, but there was almost never a need for her to get to the few rooms that lined the hall. Now, the lack of traffic was a blessing as she headed past the trophy room and armor hall to the secret passage hiding behind the statue between the end of this corridor and the back staircase.

## HIDE AND SEEK

Hermione pushed onward, forcing every last bit of energy into her legs to drive her forward before Ron came bounding down one of the third floor corridors on his way to Gryffindor tower. When she reached the end of the hall Hermione could hear the heavy clomping of a boy's running footfalls in the distance, slowly growing louder.

Hermione sighed and let out a deep breath before she lunged forward, pressing onward toward the statue of the humpbacked witch, itself only ten feet from the rear stairwell. She'd nearly managed to waddle the entire distance when she heard the footfalls drastically increase in volume. She turned and saw Ron turning the corner about fifty feet away.

She threw herself sideways, toward the statue, bracing herself next to it as Ron approached. Hermione had only been down this passage once before, but it was easy enough to enter, if you knew the secret. She drew her wand and tapped the statue, "*Dissendium*" she whispered. Silently a narrow opening appeared in the witch's hump. Hermione began to press forward when she realized, she would never fit. They'd only just fit through the narrow opening the last time they'd gone through and while she doubted Harry or Ron would have any trouble there was no way her oversized belly was even going to be close to fitting through the hole.

The footfalls grew louder as did Ron's breathing as he approached. Hermione, for her part, squeezed as close to the hole in the statue's hump as she could, but it was useless trying to force her way into the tiny opening. Then, just as she began to panic in earnest, the timbre of Ron's footfalls changed. He'd turned onto the rear stairwell and was running along, his sounds quickly blending into the background noise of the school.

Relieved, Hermione began to back out of the tiny space behind the statue before being forced to retreat as three second or third-years ran down the corridor, playing ball. Mrs. Norris, Filch's cat, was in hot pursuit, running along behind the students, watching their every move. After the little group passed into the charms corridor Hermione again backed out into the hallway... and right in front of Mrs. Norris.

For a moment she felt a bit of the old panic that Mrs. Norris' appearance had engendered before she was a Prefect, but now Mrs. Norris merely looked her over and meowed before she turned and ran after the playing students. Hermione leaned heavily against the statue and let out a deep breath.

## HIDE AND SEEK

She turned, the exhaustion evident in her face as she waddled away and up another stairway. Hermione entered the fourth floor corridor and, realizing she was in the last leg of the path to Gryffindor tower had given her fresh resolve. She waddled down the center of the corridor as fast as she could, momentarily ignoring the possibility of anyone entering from the other side. It was nearly the end of morning classes and lunch would be beginning soon.

All she had to do was make it to a safe spot to wait out the deluge, then she could head to the Gryffindor common room and to safety. *So close*, Hermione thought, as she waddled to the stairway leading to the Prefect's bathroom. Any other time *that* would have made the perfect hiding place, but now that she knew that the mermaid had a distinct lack of discretion she knew she had to find some other refuge.

She fought her way up the stairway, nearly having to resort to crawling as she reached the top few steps. She stopped to rest, bent over, her hands on her knees, her belly and breasts making the whole affair amazingly uncomfortable, not to mention the continued squirming from within. A minute or two later Hermione forced herself upright and began on her way to the statue of Boris the Bewildered. On her way she tried the various doors in the hallway with increasing desperation after discovering, one by one, that they were all locked.

Hermione waddled past the statue, now fully realizing she was living on borrowed time. Any moment she knew she'd be inundated by the denizens of Gryffindor tower and the students leaving divination, headed to the Great Hall for lunch. She pressed onward, trying each door, her frustration increasing with each doorknob. Finally she reached the stairwell.

She turned and headed up the stairway, her back aching and calves burning with every step. The weight that had seemed to be just a nuisance as Hermione waddled throughout her day now felt more like she was carrying a cannonball within her. She could barely move and, what's more, the itching was becoming unbearable now that both her hands were needed on the handrail to keep her ascending.

After several long minutes Hermione reached the sixth floor landing and made a desperate decision. Rather than continuing on into the sixth floor Hermione turned and headed up the next flight of stairs, to the seventh floor. She hadn't believed it possible, but this flight of stairs was even harder to tranverse than the last. By the time she reached the top she was on her

## HIDE AND SEEK

hands and knees, her naked belly brushing against the cold stone floor as she crawled forward.

She crawled along for ten feet or so, her time to reach a hiding spot coming rapidly coming to an end as she reached the statue of Lachlan the Lanky and used it to pull herself to her feet. Wobbling uncertainly on her feet, Hermione headed to her last chance refuge, hoping it wasn't in use.

As Hermione waddled down the hallway she concentrated with all her might, *I need a place to hide!* She turned and waddled back the way she came, still concentrating, *I need a place to hide!* She began to turn as the eleven forty-five bell rang and, off in the distance, she heard the beginnings of the thunderous stampede of the students in Gryffindor tower and the divination classrooms heading for the stairway she'd just climbed.

She took a deep breath and waddled down the hallway, back toward the fat lady's portrait, *I need a place to hide!* She thought and a door faded into view, the Room of Requirement. Without a moment to lose she opened the door and stepped inside, the door fading from the hallway. Hermione couldn't help but marvel at the huge, cathedral-like room, completely unlike how the room had appeared when they'd used the room for the DA.

The room of requirement was now packed with the most odd assortment of things Hogwarts students had needed to hide over the last thousand years or so. There was broken furniture, stacks upon stacks of textbooks, love letters galore, dozens of half-emptied bottles of various alcoholic beverages and huge baskets of rusted, bent swords.

Hermione found one chair that seemed a bit less bent and broken than the others and pulled it upright before she sat down, relief washing over her as she did so. As she took the opportunity to rest she scanned the room looking for something she could wear to cover her belly.

The problem wasn't a lack of items, but their condition. One set of robes sat in a bucket, perpetually drenched in water. Another was covered with huge blobs of sticky, greasy sludge and another was shredded, loose strips of fabric hanging from the collar. In the next ten minutes she went through dozens of robes, each with one issue or another that made it useless for covering up. *Even if I found one that was wearable, all it would do is cover my skin, not hide this ridiculous shape,* she thought and sighed.

Still, by now the hallways and Gryffindor tower would be clear, all the students in the Great Hall for lunch. Rejuvenated, Hermione exited the

## HIDE AND SEEK

Room of Requirement and waddled down the hallway to the fat lady's portrait. She opened her mouth to say the password before she hesitated, rolling her eyes. "Abstinence" she said reluctantly, but before the fat lady could reply the picture swung out of the way.

Ron and Harry looked out of the portrait hole, wide eyed, open mouthed and speechless for on the other side of the portrait of the fat lady stood Hermione Granger. But it was no Hermione Granger they'd ever seen before. She stood there, her blouse pulled tightly across her breasts, the fabric puckered at the buttons, as if they were about to pop. The lower buttons were not buttoned by necessity, as her entire torso was dominated by a massive, egg-shaped belly, the skin pulled taut and shiny, one hand resting atop her over-tight belly, the other doing its best to support her lower back and the massive weight it held.

They stood there momentarily, Hermione staring at the boys as she rubbed her belly, the boys staring at her as they groped for something to say.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE PERFECT PREFECT'S DISGUISE

"They got you too then?" Ron asked, his eyes fixed on Hermione's round middle.

Hermione thought about it for a moment, realizing this was her chance, both to save the situation with Harry and Ron as well as to see Madame Pomfrey. She handled cures for magical ailments and spells gone awry. She could go to see Madame Pomfrey with impunity now.

It took Hermione a moment to brush aside her relief and force herself to be angry. This was made a bit easier just by looking at Ron's face. Hermione turned to Harry. "I don't know how they did it, I haven't eaten a thing since breakfast," she said, furious.

"You're the second then, after Pansy Parkinson," Harry said. "Who would have something against both you and her?"

"Can we worry about this later?" Hermione asked, "For now I'd just like to get down to the hospital wing and be rid of all... this... before someone sees me," Hermione said, looking down over her enlarged breasts at her oversized belly.

"No need," Harry replied, drawing back a step when he saw Hermione's expression. "Madame Pomfrey said that the cherry chiggers wear off on their own after a few hours, if anyone had..." Harry paused for a moment, considering his words, "symptoms... they're to return to their dormitories and wait for it to wear off. In the meantime we're to report it to Professor McGonagall."

"But I want to see Madame Pomfrey," Hermione said, "I want this dealt with now!"

"I'd imagine," Harry said, the magnetism of Hermione's belly having now ensnared Harry's eyes as well as Ron's. "but Professor McGonagall said there's nothing to be done."

"Do you mind?" Hermione asked, draping her arm across her belly, trying in vain to cover it, as if her worst suspicions about how her friends would behave toward her had begun to come true.

"Sorry it's just so..." Harry began before Hermione cut him off with a screech.

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

“What are you doing?!” she shouted, twisting away from Ron’s hand that had obviously just been resting on her belly.

“Sorry, it’s just so real,” Ron said, sounding shell-shocked.

“Good on you, any more brilliant observations?” Hermione said, rolling her eyes, “Now, if you please?”

The boys continued staring at Hermione’s exposed belly for a moment before they realized she wanted to get past them, into the common room. Both Harry and Ron stepped back awkwardly, barely allowing enough room for Hermione to waddle through the space between them but not with enough clearance to avoid brushing her belly into them as she went.

Hermione didn’t slow as she waddled across the common room toward the stairs to the girl’s dormitories. “What are you doing here?” she asked as she stopped and turned around, her magnetic middle attracting Harry and Ron’s eyes again, “I came here because everyone should have been at lunch.”

“We didn’t mean to embarrass you,” Harry said, his eyes still fixed on her massive middle. “When you weren’t in class we decided to come up here and see if you’d stayed out for some reason. When we found you’d not been here we were setting out to find you.”

“We?” Hermione said, looking back at Ron, her eyes very narrow.

For the first time since Hermione entered the common room Ron looked away from her belly. “I’m just on my way to lunch,” he said, looking at the floor.

“Hmmf,” Hermione grunted and turned awkwardly, heading up the stairs to the girls dormitories, unable to see the boys’ eyes shift from her oversized belly to her oversized bottom as she turned.

“Why did you say that?” Harry asked, shooting his friend a nasty look, “You’re the one who wanted to go looking for her!”

“Just to see who she was off snogging today,” Ron said with a bit of a sneer. “Guess that won’t be an issue tonight,” he chuckled.

“Ron!” Harry said in a disapproving tone, but his rapidly growing smile belayed his tone.

“Come off it,” Ron laughed, “you have to admit, that was brilliant!”

“Yeah, Fred and George did a great job with those,” Harry agreed, “It looks frighteningly real.”

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

"No, not the candy," Ron corrected, "Little miss proper, up the duff! It's brilliant! Did you see the size of her? She's about ready to explode. See if Victor Krumm would get near her now," Ron laughed.

"Come on," Harry said, disappointed, "Let's get to lunch and tell Professor McGonagall they've gotten Hermione too."

§§§

There was no general announcement, no owls sent, no gossip at lunch, but within the hour Hermione's dormitory room began to fill up with all her female friends and close acquaintances, all nearly ready to burst with curiosity about Hermione's condition. Without even realizing it, Hermione was encouraging them. After all these months keeping carefully covered up, swathed in layers of hot, charmed clothing she took advantage of the brief respite. Now she lay on her side across her bed, clad only in her bra above the waist and a uniform skirt below, her head propped up on a pile of pillows, making no effort to hide her size as her left hand traced circles across the itchy, taut skin of her belly.

"Does it hurt," Parvati asked from the closest circle of friends, who sat on the edges of Hermione's bed.

"No, it's just **very** uncomfortable and **very** itchy. I can't stop rubbing it all the time." Hermione said, twisting slightly to try to get a bit more cozy.

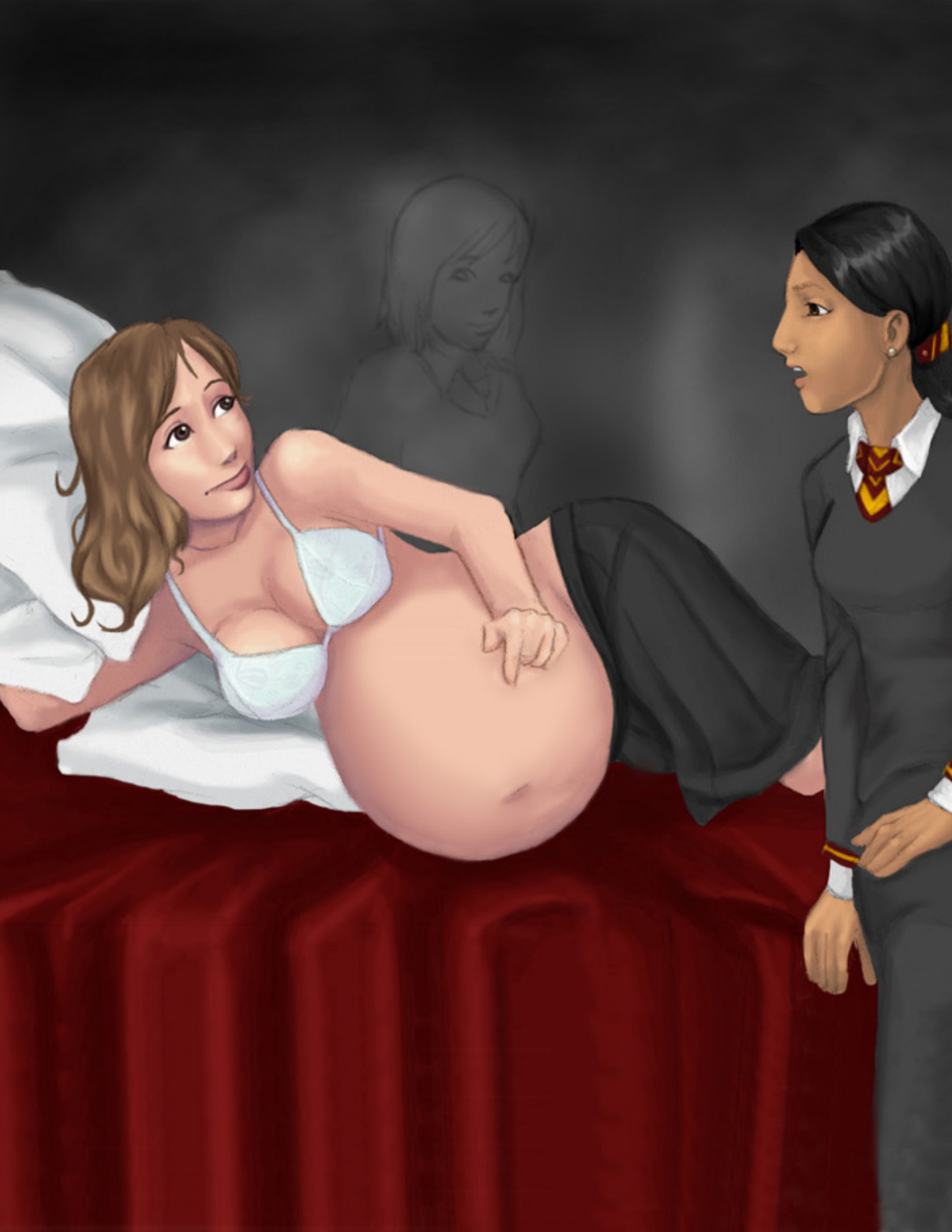
"It looks it," Padma replied, looking on with a mixture of disapproval and awe as Hermione's hand continued sweeping back and forth across her belly.

"May I?" Parvati asked, holding out her hand.

Hermione paused a moment before she nodded, "Fine, but no poking. It's not as firm as it looks."

Parvati reached forward hesitantly, her palm open, until it rested delicately on Hermione's belly. "It's so warm!" Parvati smiled.

"Feels like I swallowed a furnace," Hermione said, a bit of anger coloring her words.



## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

"How long did Madame Pomfrey say this would last?" Susan Bones asked.

"I haven't seen her," Hermione said, "but they told the other prefects it lasts just a few hours."

"I don't know about that," Susan Bones said quietly as Parvati began to get a bit more bold, moving her hand around on the surface of Hermione's belly.

"What do you mean?" Luna Lovegood asked from her perch on Lavender Brown's bed. Lavender, not surprisingly, was not in attendance.

"When they fed cherry cheggers to all the first years right after Weasley's offered them... most of them were right as rain by that night, but some of them hung onto a bit of a belly or the chubby cheeks for weeks. Amanda Kendell's bottom was simply vast until the end of the term, took her all summer to lose it."

"Perhaps you'll get to keep a bit of the boobs," Parvati laughed.

"No thanks," Hermione smiled, "Once you've had to lug them around a bit it changes your perspective."

"Well, so long as you're not stuck with the rump," Susan laughed, soon joined by several of the other girls, Hermione's voice almost unnoticeably absent.

"This is all so dreadful," Luna said wistfully. "I can't believe they'd go to all this trouble."

Hermione closed her eyes slowly and opened them again. She knew she was going to regret this. "Who'd go to all the trouble?" Hermione asked.

Luna stared at Hermione, "Isn't it obvious? The Ministry of Magic and Borgin and Burks are working together to repeal women's suffrage and leave us trapped in the home, barefoot and pregnant."

"But she's not really pregnant," Susan replied.

"It's all about public perception," Luna replied before being interrupted by an "Ewww," from Parvati Patil. All eyes turned to her hand, which she was pushing slightly back and forth on Hermione's belly. While the skin looked tight and shiny, where Parvati was pushing it around it acted more like slightly stretchy rubber that had lost a bit of its elastic. "Sorry," Parvati said, "I didn't think it would be like this, it looks so firm."

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

"I know, it's so strange..." Hermione began before being cut off involuntarily as her belly distorted from within forcing a long, low grunt from Hermione.

"Oh!" Parvati exclaimed, yanking her hand back, her eyes growing wide.

"That must be uncomfortable," Luna said emphatically, adding, "I don't know how you can stand all that."

"Alright," Padma said authoritatively, "We all have classes to get back to and Hermione could use a bit of rest. It can't be easy lugging all that about, she must weigh four stone more than normal."

"Four?!?" Hermione said, clearly upset before she dialed back her response, "Anyway, doesn't matter," she added calmly, "It will be gone in a few hours anyway."

The girls cleared out, wishing Hermione well, Parvati giving her belly one last rub before she left as well, leaving Hermione alone.

"That went as well as could be expected," Hermione said quietly to herself, "Still, if they knew the truth..." Hermione let the thought drift away as she lowered her head to her pillow, allowing the gentle rhythm of her fingertips tapping and tracing against her belly to lull her into a gentle sleep.

When she awoke several hours later, a fine sheen of sweat covered her skin, making her sticky and uncomfortable. She wiped her brow with the back of her hand and began to roll over, before the inertia of her massive middle reared its ugly head, reminding her that rolling over was a thing of the past. She sighed and kicked her feet over the edge of her bed, hoping to use the momentum to pull her upright. This time, however, that momentum was insufficient. Hermione sat there, half upright for a moment, kicking and pushing, until she finally grabbed her bed sheets and used them as a rope to pull herself upright. As she teetered uncertainly she heard a large thump as something fell off the other side of her bed.

Carefully Hermione pushed herself out of bed and to her feet before waddling around to the other side of her bed. There was something on the floor, she could feel it with her feet, but her view was blocked by her breasts and belly. Now that she thought about it and took a moment to notice she realized that although her belly was much larger, her breasts were now becoming quite a nuisance as well.

Before her breasts had begun to get truly large she could easily look past her belly by looking just slightly to the left or right, but now her

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

breasts blocked that view. What's more, with her belly pushing up between them, her breasts had nowhere to go but outward, where she couldn't help brushing against them with her arms as she waddled about, her belly and breasts swaying back and forth with each step as if they were one unit.

Hermione took a step back then turned as much as she could to the right before peering over her left side. There was a large garment box lying on the floor, *One just large enough to hold a new robe*, she thought hopefully. Having the box here was one thing, getting to it was quite another. Hermione simply wasn't built for kneeling anymore and although she was still very good at squatting, that left her unable to reach around her legs, breasts and belly to pick up what she'd squatted down to pick up.

She nudged the box gently with her feet, managing to move it out from the bed into the center of the room, but no closer to her hands. Finally she gave up on the box, returned to her nightstand and picked up her wand. "*Wingardium Leviosa!*" she said, the box obediently floating about five feet in the air. Hermione quickly waddled over to the floating box and took it, placing it on her bed. She took the envelope from atop the box and opened it.

Miss Hermione,

One of the other house elves found what was left of your robes in classroom eleven this morning. Winky has sent along another robe, but be very careful with this one. It's the last Gryffindor robe in stores. Winky will make more, but robes like these take months to make.

Best of luck,

Winky

Hermione pulled open the box, revealing a Gryffindor robe, made out of the same luxurious fabric as the last. She pulled it out of the box and put it on, watching as her awkward and very conversation-worthy shape disappeared to be replaced with the thin form everyone would be expecting to see when she left the dormitories tonight.

*One crisis solved*, Hermione thought, *Now, I just need to a new plan for getting to Madame Pomfrey*. Hermione's thoughts were already spinning



## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

like a whirlwind and by the time she met Harry in the Great Hall for dinner she knew exactly how she would do it.

§§§

After dinner Hermione went to Professor McGonagall's office. She knocked softly, not sure if the professor had made it back to her office yet.

"Come in," Professor McGonagall called out.

Hermione entered, closing the door behind her.

"Ah, Miss Granger," Professor McGonagall said, setting aside the scrolls she'd been grading, "I trust you're no worse for wear."

"Thank you professor, I'm fine," Hermione said. "Is there any news about who's been giving people the cherry cheggers?"

"No, but my understanding is that you don't even remember taking one?" Professor McGonagall asked.

"No, professor," Hermione replied, "It just suddenly happened."

"I can't imagine that was comfortable for you," Professor McGonagall said, "but at least you only had to deal with it for a few hours, not nine months."

"Professor?" Hermione said, wondering where McGonagall was going with this.

"Oh never mind," Professor McGonagall said nonchalantly, "don't mind my ramblings."

"I meant to ask you," Hermione began cautiously, "You'd mentioned an advanced transfiguration text I might like to read?"

Professor McGonagall blinked, "Yes, last term wasn't it?"

"Yes," Hermione blushed. "I'm sorry it's taken so long but with all the trouble..."

"I understand," Professor McGonagall replied, "You're at that age when there's more to school than textbooks and exams."

"Professor!" Hermione blushed, very glad that Professor McGonagall had turned away and was looking through her bookshelves. Hermione took the opportunity to look over the professor's desk. Not finding what she needed she waddled over behind Professor McGonagall and spotted her quarry, a single white hair that had fallen down the back of McGonagall's

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

robes. She nabbed it, holding it tightly between her fingers, just as McGonagall turned around, book in hand.

"Here you are," Professor McGonagall said, handing the heavy tome to Hermione as she stepped back out of McGonagall's personal space. "I'm sure you'll find something interesting there," she smiled.

"Thank you again, professor," Hermione said and turned to leave.

"Miss Granger, do you mind if I make a personal observation?" Professor McGonagall asked.

Hermione froze in her tracks, turning around slowly, "Not at all, professor."

Professor McGonagall stepped out from behind her desk and approached Hermione. "At the risk of embarrassing you I just wanted to complement you on your recent weight loss."

"Professor?" Hermione said, confused.

"Don't act so surprised," McGonagall said, "I must keep a certain professional detachment but that doesn't mean I don't notice personal things about my students. Since Christmas break you must have lost two stone. I know how difficult that can be."

Now Hermione realized what McGonagall was talking about. It was those first few days of Christmas break when she was in her oversized blue jeans, before she started wearing her robe all the time. She hadn't realized her increased size had been so obvious.

"Anything you set your mind to," Hermione said gamely.

"Tish-tosh," McGonagall said, "As I said, **I know** how hard it can be."

Now Hermione did blush, embarrassed that this personal moment with Professor McGonagall was predicated on a lie, a quiet "Thank you," was all she could manage.

"You're very welcome," Professor McGonagall replied, "I expect you won't be absent from class tomorrow," she continued, her voice returning to the calm, professional detachment she was known for.

"I expect not, professor," Hermione replied.

§§§

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

Minutes later Hermione was in the dungeons, waddling toward Professor Slughorn's offices, carefully watching for any other students. However, for the moment she was lucky and she reached the door to Professor Slughorn's office without incident. She knocked on the office door.

"Come," Professor Slughorn's voice echoed through the hallway.

Hermione stepped inside, closing the door behind her.

"Hermione Granger!" Professor Slughorn said, pulling himself to his feet and hurrying over to greet her. "To what do I owe this honor?"

Hermione stifled her laugh and merely smiled, "You'd mentioned that if any of us ever needed access to your stores we should just ask."

"Yes, it's a certain privilege I extend to those in my circle," Professor Slughorn said, "Of course, I have to be satisfied you won't be using it to get up to no good," he said seriously before he broke into an artificial, planned laugh. "As if you'd ever be up to no good," he chuckled.

"Of course not, professor," Hermione said, giving him her best innocent look.

"What is it that you need?" Slughorn asked.

"You'd mentioned you keep a bit of different potions on hand, especially the ones that take longer to prepare..." Hermione began.

"Oh, and you need one," Professor Slughorn replied, as if she'd just asked to borrow a pencil. "Certainly, take what you need."

"You don't need to know what it's for?" Hermione asked. Despite being glad that she didn't need to try her ludicrous excuse she was very surprised Slughorn would let her get about doing whatever she wanted.

"Not at all," Professor Slughorn replied, "I trust you implicitly," He said and paused. "However, that's only true of students like you, who I know will come to my aid if I ever needed it as quickly as I came to yours."

Hermione knew the hook was coming, but this one wasn't as sharp as she'd worried. "Thank you, professor," she said turning to the door for the potions stores, "You can always trust in me."

It only took a moment to locate what she needed. She filled an empty bottle and hurried off to the kitchens. It only took a few moments to find Dobby and Winky and after a brief misunderstanding she was on her way again, this time with traditional, non-charmed Gryffindor house robes. She returned as quickly as she could to the empty classroom on the ground floor that she'd ducked into when Pansy Parkinson had her unfortunate accident this morning, the one with the statue of Cassandra Trelawny.

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

There were very few people that could walk the halls of Hogwarts with impunity. There was Dumbledore of course, but seeing him out and about in the castle was actually an event, not an everyday occurrence. Professor McGonagall though, she could go anywhere she wanted without being questioned, including the hospital wing. Now Hermione would finally have a chance to see Madame Pomfrey.

Alone in the classroom she brought her plan to fruition. With a wave of her wand the Gryffindor robe she'd just borrowed was transfigured to look exactly like Professor McGonagall's black and emerald robes. The enchantment wouldn't last, this sort never did, but it would outlast the next step in her plan, and that was all that was important.

Hermione doffed her charmed robes as well as her sweater, blouse, bra and trousers before dressing in the replica McGonagall robes. She took the bottle of Polyjuice potion she'd gotten from Professor Slughorn and added in the single hair she'd gotten from the back of Professor McGonagall's robes. Hermione paused a moment, looking down at how her very pregnant form distorted McGonagall's trademark outfit before she opened the tiny bottle and drank the Polyjuice potion.

She braced herself, hoping nothing went wrong. The last time she'd tried this she wound up half cat and stuck in the hospital for weeks. This time, however, things seemed to be going her way. As she watched she gained several inches in height and lost nearly two dozen in circumference. She stared at her hands, first as her fingers grew longer and pointier, then as they grew older and more wrinkled, small brown spots speckling the back of her hands.

Hermione turned and looked at her reflection in the darkened windows. She was the spitting image of Professor McGonagall. It only took a moment for her to adjust her hair, but something didn't seem right. *Glasses*, she thought, *I forgot her glasses!*

Hermione drew her wand, about to make what she needed, when she noticed a problem. It was her right hand. As she pointed her wand she noticed that the age spots on the back of her hand were fading, the network of wrinkles smoothing themselves out as her hands became more and more youthful. She stared at them as they regained their youthful appearance. Soon they were back to normal. *Or are they?* Hermione thought. Her fingers still seemed much longer and thinner than she was used to.

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

Hermione turned to the darkened window and was greeted by an unfamiliar but not unattractive face. It was a girl, about Hermione's age, with long, strawberry blonde hair. She walked over to the window, tilting her head back and forth. Something seemed very familiar about it, but she couldn't immediately place it. It was only as she whispered to herself "Who's this then?" that she recognized the voice, and then the face.

She'd heard Professor McGonagall's voice thousands of times, but never without the hint of a rasp that she presumed came to her with age. Now not only did she know what McGonagall sounded like as a teenager, but what she looked like as well. *But why is this happening?* she wondered as she headed back to her stack of supplies, thankful to be free of both the weight and her incessant waddling.

Then she realized, she might have the information she needed right here. She put her neatly folded clothes aside and took the book she'd borrowed from Professor McGonagall in hand. Polyjuice potion was listed under advanced transfiguration potions and only in reading over the cautions did she remember the one caution she'd ignored with a laugh four years before.

Consumption by pregnant wizard or Muggle may have unexpected results.

Hermione could vouch for that now as her robes changed shape and color around her, becoming normal Gryffindor house robes. The transformation continued for a long moment, her breasts and belly surging forward, not as large as they had been, but enough that she would be back to waddling. Hermione stood there for a long moment, staring down at herself, waiting to make sure nothing else was going to happen.

After she was convinced that the transformation had stabilized she reached for her enchanted robes, meaning to switch them with the normal robes she now wore that did nothing to hide her pregnant form. Then it dawned on her. She'd already wasted fifteen minutes of the hour that the Polyjuice potion would last, and no one could recognize her anyway. She was free to walk right into the hospital wing and explain the situation to Madame Pomfrey. She would get a few stares, but no one would know who she was and that was the important bit.

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

Hermione left the classroom, for the first time free to waddle down the hallway, hand pressed to her lower back, ignoring the looks she received from the occasional student who happened by, staring at her as she went. She crossed the entry hall and began to make her way up the stairs. Even for her smaller pregnant self the stairs were slow going, but she made it to the first floor easily. *Only three flights to go*, she thought. Suddenly she heard the heavy pounding of footfalls that could only be one person. Hermione stepped to one side as Hagrid came striding down the stairs, nearly running into her.

"Sorry, Minerva," he said as he passed and continued down the stairway. Continued about five feet down the stairway, that is, before he froze in place and turned around slowly. Hermione knew it was useless to try to get away, she couldn't outrun Hagrid's long strides on a good day, much less when she was pregnant, even this smaller version of pregnancy than she was used to.

Hagrid stared at her for a long moment, "Minerva?"

"Hagrid, I can explain..." Hermione began in young Minerva McGonagall's voice.

"You can explain in a minute," Hagrid said frostily, "Alright, follow me then..."

§§§

"Professor?" Hagrid said to Professor McGonagall, standing in front of her desk, wringing his hat in his hands.

"Yes, Hagrid," she smiled, "What can I do for you?"

"Well, it's like this..." Hagrid began and fell silent.

After a long moment Professor McGonagall realized he wasn't going to continue. "Hagrid, what is it?" she asked, now growing very curious. As she looked over Hagrid she realized he was out of sorts, "You're shaking, what could have possibly given you such a fright?"

"I'm not afraid... it's jus'..." Hagrid paused again, as if trying to choose his words properly.

"It's just what?" McGonagall continued, "Rubius, we've known each other for fifty years, if you can't share your thoughts with me by now I don't know..."

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

Hagrid cut her off, "Normally I'd take this to Professor Dumbledore, but given the circumstances, I thought you'd like to handle it yourself."

McGonagall sighed, "Handle what Hagrid?"

Hagrid raised one finger and walked to the doorway, ducking as he exited, leaving the door open. He had a very brief conversation with someone before he held the door open wide. Professor McGonagall wasn't sure what she'd been expecting but a sixteen year old, pregnant Minerva McGonagall wasn't something she'd even considered. Hagrid shooed her into the room before he closed the door, leaving Hermione and Professor McGonagall alone.

After a long moment Professor McGonagall spoke. "Well, hello," she said, her voice a bit hesitant.

"Hello, professor," Hermione began, "I can explain, I was just trying to..."

"Get away and be anonymous?" McGonagall replied, her eyes appearing to stare right into Hermione's soul.

"In a way, I suppose," Hermione said.

"So, it was you in the Prefect's bathroom three weeks ago?" McGonagall asked.

"Yes, but there's a..." Hermione began before she was shhed back to silence.

"Do you have any idea what trouble you've caused here?" McGonagall said, not sounding angry, but disappointed.

"It's just... you don't understand," Hermione said.

"I understand perfectly well," Professor McGonagall replied, almost sounding offended. "I remember wanting to just pack up and disappear, away from all the prying eyes." Hermione's eyes must have widened a bit, her expression goading McGonagall on, "Oh yes, believe me, I've walked a mile in your shoes, quite literally, and you have to understand, you can't run away from your problems."

Seeing the confused look on Hermione's disguised face Professor McGonagall walked toward Hermione, taking off her glasses and folding them in her hand as she walked up as close to Hermione as the pregnant belly between them would allow.

"Minerva, don't you realize who I am?" Professor McGonagall asked with the most kindness and feeling she'd ever heard from her in the last six years. It took a moment of reflection, but now Hermione understood

## THE PERFECT PREFECTS DISGUISE

and that understanding made her blood run cold. Rather than having instantly seen through her disguise, somehow Professor McGonagall had managed to just ignore her doppelganger's obvious pregnancy and had mistaken Hermione for a younger version of herself. Hermione swallowed hard, realizing she was now either completely safe or in a much worse spot than before.

"Oh, I've always known something went on," Professor McGonagall explained, "Temporal wizardry leaves a bit of fog in your memories, to prevent you from knowing things you shouldn't...and I have quite the blank spot from those days. Still, I didn't think I had the confidence let alone the skill to pull off a spell like this, not in..." McGonagall eyed Hermione, as if looking for certain hints or clues, "The fall of 1942?"

"You can try to run from your decisions, but there's nowhere you can run from yourself," McGonagall said, "You have to face your choices head on, embrace them... and you can't do that here, or rather, you can't do that now..." McGonagall cleared her throat, "I won't lie to you, you're not in the best point in your life, the war, being removed as prefect, problems with your friends and school as well as at home, and the things to come in just the next year..." McGonagall shook her head before she continued. She opened her desk drawer and pulled out a small velvet bag, "But what I can tell you is that you can't hide from life, not here, not now," she continued, handing Hermione the velvet bag, For a long moment Hermione just stared at the bag. "Go on, open it," Professor McGonagall prodded.

Hermione undid the knot in the drawstring and emptied the contents into her hand, but she'd already recognized the bag from 3 years before. A time turner dropped into her hand, her time turner. Hermione stared at it for a long moment before she realized what Professor McGonagall had planned. "No," Hermione said firmly, "You can't do this."

"Everything has its place, every one their time," McGonagall said, her voice a bit melancholy as she drew her wand, "*Revolutio!*" The time turner began to spin, slowly at first, then quickly gaining speed. "Stop! I'm not you! I'm Hermione!!" she screamed, but Professor McGonagall was already gone in the blur of time. The room stayed nearly the same as the blurs of people came and went so fast she barely even saw them. Then the blurs began to slow down again, looking more and more like people that were merely moving very quickly until she'd finally come to a stop.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE OTHER HOGWARTS

The office looked the same, but the occupant certainly was not. Sitting at the desk was Dumbledore. For a moment she doubted that she'd actually moved in time. Dumbledore certainly looked nearly the same. Then she began to notice differences, most notably his hair. It was a light brown, not the white she was used to, but otherwise he appeared nearly the same as he had as long as she'd known him.

She stood there for a moment, staring at him as he corrected scrolls before he looked up, "Ah, please have a care not to get any ash on the carpet, Miss McGonagall." he said and returned to grading the papers on his desk, apparently having assumed she'd arrived via the flue network.

"Yes, professor," she managed and headed out of the office, into the second floor hallway.

The hallway was alive with noise and students bustling by, almost indistinguishable from the Hogwarts she knew. Superficially, things looked exactly the way she'd remembered, but it was like she was in a surreal version of the school she knew. Everywhere she looked there were half-familiar faces and voices that seemed so close to those of people she knew, but then again different. She wandered aimlessly at first, not sure where she should go or what she should do when she got there.

As she waddled along she noticed people were staring at her, but this wasn't the stare of the recently surprised, this was a familiar, morbid fascination, combined with furtive whispers and quiet laughter. The further she waddled along down the hallways, the more the prying eyes of the students seemed to be attacking her, their oppressive gaze dragging her down even just as she waddled along.

"Are you alright?" a young woman said, stopped just in front of Hermione, handing her a handkerchief. "You look horrid," she said, smiling. "Where've you been, I've been looking all over for you?"

"You know me?" Hermione asked, perhaps a bit too cautiously.

"Did you take a bump to the head, Minerva?" the young woman replied.

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

Hermione blinked. “No, it’s just... I don’t look the least bit odd to you?” Hermione asked, glancing down at her middle.

“Don’t tell me, you’ve popped out a bit more today?” she answered, looking over Hermione’s middle.

“Girls,” Professor Slughorn said from just behind them. Both turned toward the slightly fresher-faced version of the professor Hermione knew. “Minerva, Augusta, you’re some of my favorite students, but there won’t be personal invitations,” he laughed as he strode off.

“What was that about?” Hermione asked as they turned and headed up the stairway to the second floor.

“About us both missing his class this morning I suppose,” Augusta smiled. “Now where’s your head today?” she said as they reached the top of the stairs, guiding Hermione toward the second floor girl’s toilets.

“It’s not what you think,” Hermione said. “I’m not who you think I am.”

“Oh really,” Augusta replied, smiling as she held the door to the toilets for Hermione. “You certainly look like my best friend. Same strawberry-blond hair, same cheery disposition,” she continued, looking at Hermione’s frowning face, before she poked Hermione gently in the belly, testing its reality, “plus you’re in the pudding club. Seems pretty conclusive to me.”

“And who are you when you’re home?” a familiar voice said from directly in front of them.

Augusta and Hermione turned to the sound of the newcomer’s voice. Hermione felt confounded. There, not six feet away, was the young Minerva McGonagall, the genuine article, looking identical to Hermione in every way, including the pregnant belly filling her robe.

Hermione began to speak when a girl pushed past, between her and Augusta. She’d tripped over Augusta’s leg as she ran by and tumbled, nearly knocking Minerva to the ground before she collapsed in a heap, clutching her knee to her chest.

Minerva and Hermione immediately bent down to help her, despite their awkwardness. Augusta, however, stayed firmly erect. “Are you alright,” Minerva asked and after a long moment the girl clutching her knee on the floor looked up.

“They were chasing me again,” the girl replied, tears running down her cheeks.

“Moaning Myrtle?” Hermione asked, stunned.

# THE OTHER HOGWARTS



## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

Myrtle looked between Hermione and Minerva then back again before she came to the obvious conclusion, at least for Myrtle. Her upper lip pulled out to the right and a truly nasty look filled her eyes. "You too then! After all this, after I was nice to you even after everyone knew you're expecting... and you're playing tricks on me. Why? Why?!?!" Myrtle pushed herself to her feet and limped away, deeper into the toilets before disappearing into one of the stalls, the echoing sobbing all too familiar to Hermione.

"Now look what you've done," Minerva said, reaching out to Augusta for a hand up. "It's bad enough people call her that in private, much less to her face. Now, who are you and why do you look like me?"

"Maybe you look like her?" Augusta said smiling, "Prove you're the real thing then."

"Do you really want me to get into what I saw you and a certain Daniel Longbottom getting up to down at the Quidditch pitch Tuesday last?" Minerva replied with a wicked smile.

"Longbottom?" Hermione said quietly, her mouth dropping open slightly.

"Alright, Alright," Augusta said, offering her hand, "You're the genuine article," she added as she pulled Minerva, with difficulty, to her feet. "Who's this then?" she asked Minerva, nodding toward Hermione.

"I can explain, but I've only a few minutes until the Polyjuice potion wears off and I'd rather not go through that in public."

"Polyjuice... that explains a lot," Augusta said.

"Fine," Minerva said in a very serious tone, "But so help me, if that's you Rubius, you'll never hear the end of this."

§§§

The girls crossed the hall and began to head down a long, dead end corridor on the second floor toward a large stone gargoyle. Hermione was glad for some company for a change, Minerva was walking as slowly as she was. "Where are we going?" Hermione asked.

"Professor Dippet," Augusta explained. "He'll know what to do with you."

The girls continued onward, waddling slowly toward the statue of the gargoyle. "Oh, Armando Dippet, he's the headmaster now," Hermione said,

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

remembering his name from 'Hogwarts: A History'. "Good. If there's anyone here that can help, he can." Minerva and Augusta stopped and stared at Hermione as if she'd lost her mind. "What?" Hermione asked.

"Well, we can't scare you into telling the truth if you don't know enough to be scared," Augusta sighed.

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked.

"Professor Dippet is the last person we should talk to," Minerva said, looking curiously at Hermione's hair. "Polyjuice must be wearing off. You're going brown and wavy."

Hermione raised her hand to her head, "Then where are we going?"

"The common room seems as good a place as any, everyone will be in class," Augusta said, "Do you know where the Gryffindor tower door is?"

"Yes, but I don't know if I'll make it that far," Hermione said, looking at her hands as her fingers began to change back to their normal appearance.

"Please," Minerva laughed, "If anyone should be complaining about the trip it's... Oh my..." Minerva stepped back as Hermione's belly began to press outward against her robes, even as the robes shifted, first into Professor McGonagall's emerald and black robes, and then back to Gryffindor house robes... robes that were quickly growing tight over Hermione's belly and breasts.

"You're having an elephant then?" Augusta asked, eyes wide.

Both Hermione and Minerva turned to Augusta, sharing an angry stare.

"Wait, who are you?" Augusta asked. "I'd assumed you were a student, having a bit of fun, but I don't recognize you..."

"Nor do I," Minerva said, looking curiously at Hermione's normal face.

"Can we get out of the hallway?" Hermione asked, scratching furiously at her back.

"Hmmm, alright then, where can we go that's close?" Minerva thought aloud.

"What time is it?" Hermione asked. "If it's early or late enough the Great Hall would be empty."

"You don't even know what time it is?" Augusta asked, "Anyway, it's not very close."

"But it is down the stairs, that's an easy enough trip," Minerva said, "and it won't be supper for hours."

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

"A little help," Hermione said, now leaning back to help support the weight of her breasts and belly. The girls looked over and the trouble was immediately apparent. The Polyjuice potion had nearly worn off and the robe she was wearing simply wasn't large enough to contain her rapidly growing middle.

"No problem," Minerva said, drawing her wand, "*Inresco!*"

"No!" Augusta and Hermione shouted, Minerva only realizing her error as she heard their voices.

Hermione looked from one girl to the other before her eyes were drawn to her belly and breasts. They'd only just reached their pre-Polyjuice size, the Polyjuice potion having completely worn off, when Minerva's spell hit. Hermione's belly surged forward, her breasts not far behind. "What are you doing???" Hermione shouted.

"*Cresico!*" Augusta said, pointing her wand at Hermione, expanding her robe a moment too late, just as the front buttons ripped away, leaving her now larger belly and breasts exposed.

"I'm sorry," Minerva said, looking genuinely disappointed in herself, "since I've been... I've just been so scatterbrained recently."

"It could have been worse," Augusta said, "You could have used *Engorgio*."

"And how would that be worse?" Hermione asked, still trying to balance her now larger self, spreading her feet wider to better support the weight.

"Believe me, when you're with child it's much worse." Minerva said, "Let me just try something. I don't want to get your hopes up. I really don't think this will work."

"What won't work? Wait, stop!" Hermione pled as Minerva drew her wand.

"Finite Incantatum," Minerva shouted, pointing her wand at Hermione. She waited expectantly for a moment, but nothing happened. Hermione looked to Minerva, rolling her eyes. "Sorry..." was all Minerva could say.

"Now what?" Hermione sighed as she tried to re-button her robe, but her hands came short of meeting, even if the buttons hadn't ripped away. She gave up, flinging her arms in frustration.

"First things first," Augusta replied, "*Reparo!*" she said, the buttons reattaching themselves to her robe. Minerva stepped forward and reached

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

out to button Hermione's robes, but found her belly was too much in the way to permit her to help.

"You're just useless," Augusta said, stepping up and buttoning Hermione's robe. "Why aren't you wearing a blouse and skirt under your robe?" Augusta asked curiously.

"I'll explain later, but first I've got to sit down..." Hermione replied.

"Now more than ever," Augusta teased.

"Right, the Great Hall," Minerva said as she shot Augusta a nasty look before turning back towards the way they came.

The girls backtracked across the second floor, all of them moving slowly as to not allow Hermione to fall behind. The hallway was nearly empty as they headed to the stairs to the first floor. It wasn't until they were in sight of the stairs that they had to slow down.

"Great, just what we need," Minerva sighed.

"What is it," Hermione asked, looking at the tall, neatly dressed students walking casually off the stairs into the hallway, the green highlights of their Slytherin robes visible quite a distance away.

"The Noble and Most Ancient House of Black," Augusta sneered.

The group of students strode down the center of the hallway, talking and joking among themselves. To Hermione they seemed perfectly normal, if a bit effete, like very wealthy children out of some television programme. The group paid no attention to the girls at all until they'd walked right up to them. Once the Blacks had realized the three girls weren't getting out of their way, one of the girls, about Hermione's age, turned toward them, still draped on one of the boys.

"Minerva, darling, how wonderful it is to see you," she said, her voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Walburga," Minerva replied. "What are you doing out of the dungeon, I'd have thought the sunlight would reduce you to ash."

If Walburga Black had heard Minerva, her expression didn't show it. "And Augusta," she said, shaking her head, "slumming again? You could do much better for friends."

"No, I'm sure I couldn't," Augusta replied.

"My, oh my," another girl said, pulling herself away from one of the boys and strolling over to Minerva, dragging her fingertips over Minerva's belly as she passed and turned her attention to Hermione. "I knew you're anxious to increase the family line, but this..." she said, resting her hand on

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

the side of Hermione's outsized belly, patting it repeatedly, "bringing in outsiders and fertility spells?" She began to walk around Hermione, allowing her hand to drag along behind running over Hermione's oversized belly. As she stepped behind, Hermione let out a yelp, jerking forward, as if pinched. "My, you certainly are a healthy girl," the young woman winked as she stepped around Hermione, running her hand along Hermione's belly. "How big a litter do you need?"

"Lucretia is a bit... odd," Minerva explained to Hermione.

"So I'd noticed," Hermione replied still scowling and red from embarrassment.

"Come, come," one of the elder boys said, "We've let these... people take up enough of our time." The girls turned and returned to their perches, hanging from the boys, but slowly and reluctantly. Then the entire group just stood there, staring at the girls.

After a long moment Hermione couldn't stand the anticipation any longer, "What are they waiting for?"

"For us, the lesser beings, to get out of their way," Augusta replied.

"As long as we understand each other," the eldest boy said.

"Not so fast," Minerva began, raising a pointing finger to the eldest Black.

"Alright, what's this," a voice said from just down the corridor. It was another student, a young man, about Hermione's age. At first Hermione's eyes lit up as she saw his prefect's badge, but she almost immediately cringed when she saw the color of his robes... Slytherin.

"We're just trying to get to class and these ne'er-do-wells are blocking our path," the oldest boy said, "Clear them away, would you?"

The Prefect turned to the girls. "We have just as much right to be here as they do," Minerva said defiantly.

"Well, you're the prefect," he said and began to step out of the way before he stepped forward again. "Oh wait," he said with a very narrow, cruel smile, "You're not a prefect any longer, are you? Step aside."

Minerva stood, nose to nose with the prefect for a moment before she shook her head, frowning, and stepped aside, waving the other girls to follow suit as the House of Black sauntered by, ignoring both the girls and the prefect that had helped them. If he'd noticed their antipathy he didn't show it as he turned and headed down the stairs.



## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

After the Blacks and the prefect were out of sight Hermione turned toward the stairwell, looking down where the prefect had gone. "That was odd," she said, pressing both hands into the small of her back.

"About par for the course," Augusta said.

"But he's Slytherin," Hermione said, "Why'd they..."

"Treat him like something the hippogriff dragged in?" Minerva laughed. "He's Muggle-born and an orphan. They'd never get on with him, Slytherin or no."

"So why does he side with them?" Hermione asked.

"It's a house thing, possibly respect or fear of the family, although I doubt he really cares much for the Blacks, one way or the other," Augusta replied, "I'll never understand Riddle." She paused for a moment before breaking into a wide grin as she realized her pun.

"Quiet you," Minerva said, smiling as well.

Hermione, however, was very serious. "Riddle? Tom Riddle?" she asked, her mouth falling slightly open.

"Yes, you know him?" Minerva asked curiously.

Hermione stared silently down the stairwell for a long moment, "Only by reputation," she said quietly, very concerned. "What's the date?"

"Today? November 12<sup>th</sup>," why?" Augusta asked.

Hermione seemed to relax a bit, but just a bit, "Never mind, it's months away."

"What are you talking about?" Minerva asked, "You can't keep going on like this and expect us to..."

Hermione cut her off as she leaned back, emphasizing her belly even more, "Please, let's go sit down first, and then I'll tell you the whole story."

§§§

The girls sat with their backs to the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff tables in the Great Hall, leaving plenty of room for their bellies and widely spaced legs. It had taken a surprisingly long time to explain her current situation to the two girls, especially considering she skipped the bit about first transforming into Professor McGonagall to make things a bit easier on Minerva's credulity.

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

“But that’s preposterous,” Minerva said, barely restraining a laugh. “Time travel, sneaking to the hospital, fertility magic...”

“Fertility magic?” Hermione asked.

“Well yes, how else would you explain that,” Augusta said, waving her hand toward Hermione’s fairly massive middle and breasts.

“Arrgh,” Hermione grumbled, reaching over her shoulder and scratching furiously at her back, “I can’t stand this any longer!”

“I don’t think I could deal with that,” Minerva replied. “I’m having enough trouble as-is.”

“It’s not that, this itching is driving me mad,” Hermione explained.

“Itching? There’s an anti-itching charm I’ve used,” Minerva explained. “That will help with your bump. I can teach it to you.”

Hermione looked at them oddly, “It’s my back bothering me, not my bump. You must have noticed, I’ve been scratching since I got here.”

Minerva and Augusta looked at each other for a moment before looking back to Hermione. “Anyway, can you prove any of that story?” Augusta asked.

“You saw the Polyjuice wear off,” Hermione said, “and then there’s this,” she added as she pulled a velvet bag from her pocket, holding it out to Minerva.

“What’s this?” she asked, teasing the drawstring open and looking into the darkness. She spotted a glimmer of shining metal and reached in, snagging the chain with her fingernails.

“Ooh, a necklace,” Augusta teased, “What other great and wonderful treasures await...” Augusta trailed off as the time turner on the end of the necklace came free of the bag. “Oh my stars,” she gasped.

“Is this real?” Minerva asked, giving the wheel a tap, barely starting it spinning. Then Minerva disappeared.

“Oh no! Minerva!” Augusta called out.

“She can’t hear you, you know,” Hermione began just as Minerva reappeared in the same seat she’d been using before.

“It’s real,” Minerva replied.

“I know,” Hermione said emphatically, a bit of superiority creeping into her voice.

“Well, first things first. What’s your doctor say about your.. size?” Minerva asked.

“Well, I can’t say as I’ve been,” Hermione admitted reluctantly.

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

“What? You can’t go nine months...” Minerva began before Hermione cut her off.

“Five months,” Hermione corrected.

“You can’t go five months without... five months?” Minerva asked, one eyebrow raised as she looked at Hermione’s belly.

“Five,” Hermione said coolly.

“Looks to be more like ten,” Augusta said before the two girls stared her down.

“You can’t go this long without seeing a doctor. What could have possessed you?” Minerva chided.

“I was trying to keep it a secret,” Hermione explained.

“You should try vertical stripes,” Augusta said, staring right at Hermione’s huge belly, “They’re very slimming.”

Hermione sighed, “I was using an enchanted robe.”

“How did you get that to work?” Minerva asked, very curiously, “Whenever I enchant a robe the charm fails at the worst possible time.”

“I couldn’t say,” Hermione admitted. “The house elves do the real work. I understand it takes months.”

“House elves,” Minerva said, as if a candle had lit inside her head. “Perfect sense. Their magic is different than ours. That just...”

“So,” Augusta said, staring at Minerva until she’d gotten her thoughts back to the task at hand, “There’s time to worry about fashions later...”

“So,” Minerva repeated, “Our first priority is to get you to Doctor Weasley.”

“Doctor Weasley?” Hermione asked as she raised one eyebrow.

“He’s the school physician,” Minerva explained. “He’ll check you up and we can find out why you’re not looking so much like you’re five months along.”

§§§

The trip was hardly quick, but soon enough the girls reached the hospital wing on the third floor. The ward was empty as Augusta led the way to Doctor Weasley’s office, Minerva and then Hermione waddling slowly behind.

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

"Doctor Weasley," Augusta called as she leaned into the office at the end of the ward.

"Augusta," an eerily familiar voice replied, sending a cold chill down Hermione's spine, "What brings you back? Did you break that arm again? I've told you, Quidditch is a man's game."

"Noooo," Augusta said, nearly flirting, "We've brought you a new patient."

"I do *not* like the sound of this," Hermione said quietly as the doctor and Augusta continued to speak.

"Well, I suppose we'll have to take a look then," the doctor said. Hermione listened as his chair pushed back from his desk against the floor and moments later he stepped out into the ward.

"Minerva!" Doctor Weasley said warmly, "You're not due for another checkup until Tuesday next."

Hermione, for her part, stood there silently, mouth slightly agape, staring at Doctor Weasley.

"Well, a girl can't stay away from her doctor," Minerva smiled. "But I'm not here for me, I've brought someone new," she continued, moving her hand to indicate Hermione.

"Well, hello," Doctor Weasley said, "Who might you be?"

Hermione knew this whole visit was not going to go well. Doctor Weasley was very obviously a close relative of Ron's, perhaps a great grandfather or great uncle. Either way, he simply looked like an older, wiser Ron Weasley. The differences were few, but striking. Gone was the bit of baby fat that clung to Ron's cheeks, replaced with a firm, square jaw line. He was taller still than Ron, his shock of red hair barely restrained by the brass reflective headband he wore on his forehead, his broad chest set off perfectly by the labcoat he wore. It took no imagination what so ever to imagine that this is exactly how Ron would look ten or fifteen years from now, or how she'd hoped he'd look... and what's more Hermione began to transfer a bit of her anger at Ron to the doctor, even as her quickening pulse and hormones began to betray her.

The doctor stared at her for a long moment, seeming to grow concerned the longer the silence between them lasted.

"Hermione," Minerva said quietly as she tugged Hermione's robe.

"Oh, Sorry," Hermione said, shaking her head. "I don't know where my head is,"

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

"It's quite alright," Doctor Weasley replied, "So, your name?"

"Hermione Granger," she said, not even thinking.

"Well Hermione Granger, it looks like you're having a spot of bother," Doctor Weasley smiled.

"Just a spot?" Hermione asked. "More like a puddle."

The doctor laughed warmly, "Well, I don't know about that. Let's get that robe off you and get you on the exam table."

Hermione clutched the top buttons of her robe, holding it closed without offering an explanation, lowering her eyes to escape the doctor's gaze.

"Hermione's not wearing her uniform under her robe," Minerva explained.

"Teenagers these days," the doctor sighed. "It's alright," Doctor Weasley said, putting his bent finger under Hermione's chin, lifting her head up, "Nothing I haven't seen before under those robes."

"I don't know, whatever is under there is surprisingly large, I don't think a uniform would fit." Augusta smiled. "Fine, fine," she continued, turning and leaving after all three of her companions stared at her. "I'll wait for you outside."

"Now, now," Doctor Weasley said as he led Hermione into an exam room, "There's nothing to worry about."

*Except dying of mortification,* Hermione thought as she reluctantly followed Doctor Weasley into the exam room.

§§§

"Well, that wasn't quite so bad as you'd imagined," Doctor Weasley asked. Hermione sat on the exam table, dressed only in an oversized hospital robe, her tiny bare feet dangling from beneath its hem. She didn't respond verbally, although her seemingly permanent blush spoke volumes. "Now, we just have a few things to go over, then you have some choices to make."

"I'd like Minerva here as well please," Hermione said, avoiding Doctor Weasley's eyes.

"Certainly," he said, opening the door and motioning for Minerva to join them. Minerva took one look at Hermione, waddled over to her side and began whispering immediately.

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

"What happened?" Minerva whispered, "You look like you've been out in the sun too long."

"I was fine until the pelvic exam," Hermione whispered.

"Oh," Minerva said quietly, her voice full of understanding.

"Now," Doctor Weasley said, as if he'd not overheard their conversation, "First of all, congratulations, you're pregnant."

"So it's not an illusion or..." Hermione asked.

"No," the doctor said slowly and firmly, "It's not."

"Oh," was all Hermione managed, the tears she'd last spent over this a month ago now beginning to return.

"There are some serious questions that I'm afraid I do need to ask," the doctor said. "Will that be alright or would you rather wait?"

Hermione sniffed and wiped her eyes. She tried to answer him, but her first words came out more as a croak than anything understandable. She paused and took a deep breath before continuing. "Let's just get this over and done."

Doctor Weasley nodded and sat down on a stool next to the exam table. "I take it this wasn't planned?"

"No," Hermione replied.

"Then I'm afraid I have some more bad news. Someone, most certainly quite close to you, has used certain family planning spells on you."

"What?" Hermione asked, some of her normal fire returning.

"There's no delicate way to ask this," Doctor Weasley said, "You do know who the father is?"

"Of course!" Hermione snapped, the anger she felt toward Ron easily jumping now to Doctor Weasley.

"Alright, alright," he replied, his voice soothing and calm. All Hermione could think was, *Why can't Ron ever sound like that?*

"Two spells have been cast upon you. The first is a fertility spell, the second is designed to accelerate pregnancy," Doctor Weasley said cautiously.

"Fertility? I don't like the sound of that," Hermione replied, tears still intermittently running down her cheeks, "But the accelerator, that's why I'm so large then?"

"Partially," the doctor said reluctantly, "That spell is why you're nearly seven months pregnant when you should only be five."

## THE OTHER HOGWARTS

“Alright,” Hermione said, looking down at her huge bump, “But that’s still not right. Seven months? Someone used a false pregnancy charm on one of my classmates and they didn’t get nearly as large as I am now.”

“That would be the fertility spell,” Doctor Weasley replied, “and the triplets.”

“What?” was all Hermione could manage before she began to sob.

## CHAPTER NINE

### A BIRD IN THE HAND...

Once Hermione had regained some semblance of composure Doctor Weasley continued, "I'm afraid the worst is yet to come. These spells, they're intimate, far more intimate than most. They can't be cast by just anyone." Hermione wiped her eyes, and looked up at the doctor. "One of the parents has to cast them, and given your reaction, I'd gather they weren't cast by you."

Doctor Weasley stepped back as he felt a change come over Hermione. It was as if something clicked inside her head, switching her from one state of mind to another. Her eyes were still bloodshot, her cheeks still red, her hair still in disarray, but her tears had stopped like a faucet had been turned, her melancholy replaced with a fiery, vengeful fury.

"Malfoy," she hissed. "So it was him. I can't believe I was so blind. How could I have not known Malfoy was using magic on me to make me have... do... with him!?" Hermione continued, unable to actually say the words.

"Abraxas Malfoy?" Doctor Weasley asked, surprised.

"Wait," Minerva said, "Isn't there anyway to undo any of this? The acceleration or the fertility spell?"

"The spells aren't actually in effect now," Doctor Weasley explained. "They did their work months ago. There's no way to reverse the effects." For a long moment Hermione and Minerva held hands, looking into each other's eyes before the doctor broke the silence. "There is one other thing," Doctor Weasley said more brightly, as if he could possibly brighten their mood. "Whatever that itching was you'd complained of? I can't find a thing. No rash, no irritation, no magic."

"Nothing?" Hermione hissed, seizing on the opportunity to change the subject as she reached over her shoulder and scratched furiously at the spot on her back. "I'd at least expect it to be red from all my scratching."

"Well, next time you scratch use this," he said, holding out a squat bottle for her to take, seemingly oblivious to the fact that her right hand was



## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

busy scratching, even at that moment. She continued scratching until the latest bout had passed before she took the bottle of paste.

"There's one last awkward question," Doctor Weasley asked, "Just where are you from? I've double checked and you're not a student here."

"Not yet," Minerva said, "She's from the future." Minerva took Hermione by the hand and pulled, leading her behind a privacy curtain to get dressed and out of the hospital wing.

"The future? My, have you spoken to Professor Dippet about this?" Doctor Weasley asked cautiously.

"Of course," Minerva said, "We'd never be able to keep something like this from him. We're just sixth years, we need help to get her home," she continued, dragging the now robed Hermione behind her, handing Hermione's shoes to Augusta as they padded down the hallway.

"One last thing," Doctor Weasley said as he followed them into the hallway. Augusta turned and looked back, Hermione and Minerva stopping a few steps later. "You do know what you've suggested is a serious crime? Tampering with someone's mind to get consent is nasty business. I've never heard of it even being possible."

"I just need to prove it," Hermione said quietly before she suddenly came to a realization. "Wait, do you have a pensieve?"

Doctor Weasley blinked, "Hmmm, that's an excellent idea. Normally it would only be used for a trial... but as a way to gather evidence you can take back with you..." the doctor seemed to be thinking long and hard on this. "I'll have to make a few arrangements," he said as he headed back into the hospital wing and grabbed his white lab coat. "This will take some time. Perhaps you can have lunch here and I'll return with what we need."

§§§

While the doctor was gone the girls had lunch in the hospital wing, courtesy of the house elves. The food seemed a bit richer than what Hermione was used to but that didn't slow her down. At first it seemed lunch would be a race between Minerva and Hermione, but Hermione quickly outpaced her, despite the difficulty she seemed to be having reaching around her newly expanded middle, eating everything and anything in sight. "I'm just famished." Hermione explained between bites.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

"Certainly not letting a bit of bad news get in the way of a good meal," Augusta said quietly.

"What?" Hermione asked.

"What?" Augusta replied.

"It's so good of Doctor Weasley to let us stay here," Minerva changed the subject. "Not only do we save a spot of bother with you, but we'll be excused from classes as well."

"We will?" Augusta replied before she had considered it, "Oh, doctor's note." Augusta paused for a moment to think. "I don't see why we're doing this now," she continued. "Wouldn't you be better off getting the evidence when you return?"

Hermione put down her fork for the first time in twenty minutes, "No one knows I'm... expecting back home. I'd rather not make a scene, just show up with the proof and get things taken care of quietly."

"Those charmed robes must be a godsend," Minerva said wistfully. "It must be nice to walk the halls without being stared at."

"I don't know that I could stand it," Hermione said, "all the leering, knowing looks..."

"I don't know that I could deal with lugging all that about," Minerva replied. "How can you even stand?"

"It's not easy," Hermione admitted, "I just wish that I could..." Hermione gasped, her hand reaching down and pressing against her belly.

"They're so active!" Augusta said, marveling as Hermione's belly shifted from within.

"It's been getting worse," Hermione said, "and it's itching more," she said, rubbing her belly.

"That's from the skin stretching. Let me do an anti-itch charm. I'll need to see your bump," Minerva said. Hermione opened her robe, revealing her oversized belly. The skin was tighter than before and the small shiny patches had begun to join together, covering a large area of her belly in taut, itchy skin. Hermione's hands returned immediately to either side of her belly and resumed scratching as Minerva drew her wand. Just then the double doors to the hospital wing opened. Doctor Weasley had returned pushing a small cart carrying a large stone bowl atop it. The pensieve.

"Alright," Doctor Weasley began. Hermione quickly pulled her robe closed as he approached, "I don't know if you've ever done this before but you want to concentrate on the particular memory you want to extract,



## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

touch your wand to your temple and pull back slowly, pulling the memory from your mind. Then you can drop it into the pensieve and observe it.”

Hermione slowly waddled over to the chair Doctor Weasley had placed next to the pensieve before she slowly and awkwardly lowered herself into the seat. Hermione looked to Minerva, then to Augusta with a bit of a doubtful smile before she raised the tip of her wand to her temple and closed her eyes. Slowly she began pulling the tip of the wand away from her head, a long silvery strand following her wand as she moved it away from her head. After an excruciatingly long time the memory had been completely extracted and Hermione dropped the silvery ribbon into the pensieve.

“There,” Hermione said, obviously drained from the effort. “The way Harry described it I thought it would be easier.”

“Not to put a damper on your mood, but I’d expect that was the easy part,” Augusta said. “Now you have to watch it happen again.”

Hermione seemed gloomy at the prospect. “At least I can get the proof I’ll need,” she said doubtfully.

“Whatever you need, we’re here for you,” Minerva said as she rested her hand on Hermione’s, giving it a bit of a squeeze.

“Could you,” Hermione began before she stopped. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t be asking... but could you come with me?”

“To watch your memories?” Augusta said, “I thought that invitation had already been implied.”

“What Augusta means,” Minerva said, stepping between Hermione and Augusta, “is that we’d be honored to accompany you.”

“Well, I suppose I’d best lead,” Hermione said nervously as she forced herself to her feet.

“We will be right behind you,” Minerva said. “Right Augusta?” After a moment Minerva jabbed Augusta with her elbow.

“Oh, yes, sorry... Right,” Augusta replied.

“This is supposed to be easy,” Hermione said, carefully leaning forward, supporting herself with her arms as she lowered her face into the swirling white/silver swirl of gaseous liquid. Moments later she felt her feet leave the ground and she realized she was falling through darkness before she suddenly found herself standing in a dark stone hallway, the only light coming from torches mounted every ten feet or so. Moments later Minerva, then Augusta landed beside her.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

"This is amazing," Minerva said, looking around. "It's the dungeons, down past the potions classroom."

"Yes," Hermione said quietly. "The Slytherin common room is just ahead."

"What is this," Augusta said, running her hands over the wall. Both Hermione and Minerva stepped to her side, staring at the blurry, indistinct brick that made up the wall.

"It's an effect of emotion," Hermione and Minerva said, both repeating a quote from the third year charms class. The girls looked at each other and chuckled before Hermione continued. "The more calm you are the crisper your memories. The more emotional or excited, the less detail there is to things not germane to the task you were concentrating on."

"So you must not..." Augusta said before a much thinner and more scantily clad Hermione Granger came rushing down the corridor. She was dressed for bed, to the extent that she wasn't even wearing slippers on the cold stone floor. Her white cotton robe hung open, the lapels flapping, her nearly transparent nightgown fluttering beneath it as she ran past the three girls and stopped at a blank section of wall not five feet away.

"Pure Blood," the phantom Hermione said. A door seemed to appear out of the wall, as if had always been carved there. As soon as it had fully materialized the door swung open and Hermione nearly leapt through the opening and ran across the common room, not even looking if anyone was there before she crossed.

Hermione, Minerva and Augusta followed at a much slower pace, one set by Hermione's slow, waddling gait. The girls didn't have time to dawdle, even as they all seemed to notice the blurry, washed out quality of the Slytherin common room. Moments later they had crossed the room and followed the other Hermione down a darkened corridor.

Luckily the other Hermione didn't seem quite sure where she was going. She kept running from door to door, reading the name plaques at eye level. The girls had caught up with her by the time she'd found the door she was looking for and threw the door open, holding the doorframe for support.

As the three girls approached they could see the sweat beading on the other Hermione's forehead, her skin looking especially blush compared to her white robe and nightgown, her hair wild, in nearly complete disarray.

"Close the door, you nitwit," Malfoy yelled from the darkness inside the room.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

"Ah, the sounds of love," Augusta said wistfully.

Minerva gave her a kick to the shin, "Shh!"

"Draco," the phantom Hermione said slowly, letting the name roll around her tongue as her eyes adjusted to the lack of light. One of the other boys in the room said something, an unintelligible mumble as Hermione crossed the room and mounted the chest at the foot of Malfoy's bed. She stopped there for a moment, kneeling on the chest, staring at Malfoy, licking her lips. "Draco..." she teased.

"I hate to interrupt, but am I missing something?" Augusta asked.

"Granger? What are you doing here?" Malfoy replied, his eyes narrow. He'd pushed himself up in bed, but his sheets still came up to his abdomen.

"I don't know why I'm here," the memory of Hermione said in a breathy voice.

"Didn't get enough abuse this morning?" Malfoy said, grinning.

The phantom Hermione gave her arms a shake, allowing her dressing robe to fall to the floor. Now her nightgown appeared nearly transparent from the bright lights backing her.

Malfoy's eyes popped open in shock. "That's your cue," Malfoy said to his roommates, his eyes never leaving his Hermione. One of the boys grunted a reply, but Malfoy was having none of that. "Shove off," he said, tilting his head toward his roommates, his eyes still not leaving Hermione.

The girls watched as three figures left the room, each of them making some sort of unpleasant sound, but there were no details, nothing more than shadows. Soon they'd left the room and the door slammed shut behind them.

"Now, where were..." Malfoy said, stopping as the past Hermione dove from the chest at the foot of his bed, landing on the mattress next to him. She propped her head up with her right hand and ran the fingertips of her left hand across Malfoy's pyjama-covered chest.

"I don't know what's come over me," Hermione's doppelganger said in a quiet, breathy voice. "but you're just so..." she trailed off, staring into his eyes.

"I think we should go," Minerva said, embarrassed.

"No, you don't understand," Hermione told her.

"Is this some sort of trick?" Malfoy replied, seeming genuinely concerned.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

"No tricks," the other Hermione said, licking her lips. "I don't know how I waited this long..." she continued as she unbuttoned his top.

"Now, now," Malfoy said, taking Hermione's free hand in his own, "If this is going in the direction it seems to be, I have to insist we use protection."

"That's it, I'm leaving," Augusta said flatly and turned, striding into the hallway. She considered a moment and turned right, walking quickly away.

"You don't understand!" Hermione called out desperately, "This..." she motioned toward the other Hermione ripping the buttons off Malfoy's pyjama shirt, "This is just part of his twisted plan!"

"Yes, how sneaky of him, tricking you into having sex with him by insulting you repeatedly," Augusta as she passed the doorway, this time headed left. "How do you get out of this thing?" she sighed.

"Minerva?" Hermione said. Minerva was turned away from the bed, doing her best to ignore the sounds that had begun to erupt.

Minerva took a deep breath and looked at Hermione doubtfully, "I believe you, Hermione... but you can't go to the headmaster with this. He'd laugh you out of Hogwarts."

"But he..." Hermione began.

"He asked if you wanted to use birth control," Minerva pointed out, now speaking louder to be heard over the din behind them, Hermione wincing with every shout or moan.

"Leaving!" Augusta shouted from the hallway. Minerva gave a sympathetic look to Hermione before she turned and waddled from the bedroom. Reluctantly Hermione began to do the same.

"Mmmm, yes... yes Draco... uh, could you... a little to the.. **Yes! Draco! Oh YES!!!**" the other Hermione screamed from the bed.

"Oh shut up!" Hermione sneered and turned, waddling from the room.

§§§

"How did it go?" Doctor Weasley asked as soon as the girls had returned from the pensieve. "Did you get what you needed?"

"Well..." Minerva began, avoiding looking at Hermione, who was avoiding eye contact with everyone. "It was never what I expected."

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

"He must have done something to me before, some thing I didn't see happen," Hermione said, blushing furiously as she tried to avoid eye contact with Minerva and Augusta. She needn't have tried. Both girls were actively avoiding looking at her. *And Winky and Myrtle wonder why I didn't want anyone to know.* Hermione thought. *These girls have only known me a few hours and I can't bear how they're looking at me. What would I do if that was Parvati or Professor McGonagall or heaven forbid Harry.... or Ron....*

"Oh?" Doctor Weasley asked before he looked over the three girls. "Oh," he said again, flatly. "There is always that possibility," the doctor said, wincing, "memory is an imperfect thing."

"This changes nothing. He planned it that way so I'd look the fool if I tried to report him." Hermione blurted out. "He still had to be the one. You saw it, he was the only one there."

"He was the only **other** one there," Augusta said. "Now I'm just playing devil's advocate," she continued, "but how do we know it wasn't you? You're a stranger to us."

Hermione looked at Augusta, mouth agape. "You think I did this to myself?" she said, placing one hand on either side of her bump for emphasis. The room was silent for a long moment.

"Perhaps we should just concentrate on getting you back home," Minerva said as the doctor retreated to his desk.

"Minerva?" Hermione pled.

"I'm just being practical," Minerva said. "We can't do anything with you here except get you caught." As much as Hermione didn't like her logic, she knew Minerva was right. She had to get home and the sooner the better. Once she was home she could confront Malfoy, and this time pretending to be gentle and loving would not hold her back.

"Fine, how do we send me fifty years forward in time," Hermione asked shortly.

"What about that time turner," Augusta asked, "Can you just spin that and go back."

"Too long a trip. It's not that powerful normally," Minerva said, "It must have been charged somehow to go back this far."

"So let's get it charged up again," Augusta said.

"That means a professor," Hermione said. "None of us are nearly powerful enough, not yet... and even though temporal magic supposedly takes care of people's memories, I'd rather not deal with any professors,"



## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

Hermione explained. "I suspect that Professor Dumbledore wouldn't be affected by anything that affects memory regardless."

"Dumbledore, Dumbledore, Dumbledore," Augusta said, "First you, Minerva, now Hermione. He's just another wizard."

"He's one of the most powerful wizards in the world!" Minerva said.

"And he thinks you have a special talent at transfiguration," Augusta added.

"There is that," Minerva admitted.

"So..." Hermione began, trying to bring everyone back on topic, "The time turner is out. What else is there?"

"Is there any way to apparate through time?" Minerva asked.

"Wouldn't that take as much power as charging the time turner?" Augusta asked.

"More," Hermione said. "And we'd have to actually manage the spells."

"I can just barely manage to apparate normally," Augusta said.

"This is getting us nowhere," Hermione sighed as she slumped in her chair, gently rubbing her belly.

"Fine, why don't we just petrify you and prop you in the corner until it's time," Augusta said sharply.

"That's not funny," Hermione said, "I've been petrified. I was stiff and sore for weeks after. Besides, the potion for petrification uses oleander, and I'm allergic."

"Wait a moment," Minerva said, a very clever look in her eyes, "So we can't petrify you, but what if we turned you to stone. I was turned to stone for almost a week once. One moment I was standing in one place, the next moment I was in the hospital wing. No ill effects."

"But someone had to undo it," Hermione said, "and someone might notice me standing around for fifty years."

"Ah, but that's the clever bit," Minerva said, "It took someone to wake me because it was a spell... but if we were to use a potion..."

"Then you can set a condition to cause the dissolution of the potion's effects!" Hermione and Minerva said together, as if quoting from a textbook.

"Perhaps I should just leave you two alone," Augusta said as she rolled her eyes.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

"Oh come on," Minerva said, "It's brilliant."

"Even so, Hermione would have to really trust us," Augusta replied, "And we'd need to find a safe place to put her."

"And it needs to be somewhere close to classroom eleven on the ground floor," Hermione said. "That's where my charmed robes are... or will be."

"Eleven?" Minerva asked, "That's the empty classroom? It's still not used in fifty years?"

"Still?" Hermione asked, "It's not used now?"

"No," Minerva replied, barely suppressing a laugh.

"Don't," Augusta said. "Just don't."

"I wasn't going to," Minerva said, no longer able to hold back her laughter.

Augusta stood there with her eyes closed and face impassive as she waited for the laughter to die down. "A safe place? What's wrong with classroom eleven?"

"Well," Hermione said as Minerva got her laughter under control, "That's no good. There's already a statue in that room and it's not a very large classroom to begin with."

Minerva looked confused as she turned to Augusta, who had the same look of consternation. "There's no statue in that classroom," Augusta said. "I nearly destroyed everything in there and I'd remember a statue."

"But there is," Hermione explained. "It's of Cassandra Trelawney looking mysterious."

"No there isn't," Augusta said, "Just desks, chairs, a blackboard and that damned birdcage." Hermione looked ready to argue, but a look of dawning realization was coming to Minerva's face.

"Oh... Ooooh.... We are too good, too good by far," Minerva said looking around the room for a moment. "Doctor Weasley," she called out, "Can we borrow the pensieve again?"

"Why would we need that?" Hermione said, sounding a bit hurt. "You don't need to see the statue in my memories to know its real, do you?"

"I'm sorry," Doctor Weasley said from his desk not four feet from where the girls were talking. "I don't know where my mind's at, I don't think I've heard a word you've been saying."

"We were just saying how we need to use the pensieve one last time," Hermione said as she pushed herself slowly and awkwardly to her feet

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

before lumbering over to his desk. “and thank you,” she added as she leaned forward and kissed him on the forehead.

“Alright, what’s all this then?” Augusta said, pushing in between the doctor and Hermione.

“Come along, don’t dawdle,” Minerva said, sounding every inch of her future self.

“I still don’t see what you’re expecting to find,” Hermione said, “We’d be better served finding a solution to my problem.”

“Expecting has really made you dense, you know,” Minerva said, “Don’t you see? Not only do we already have a solution, but we’ve already implemented it. You’re already home, you just don’t know it yet.”

§§§

Minutes later the three girls were standing in the phantom version of the disused classroom, eleven. “Alright, we’re here. Now what?” Hermione asked just as another Hermione came into the classroom, carrying a load of supplies. “There I am, but I already told you what I did.”

However, neither other girl was looking at either of the Hermiones, instead both were approaching the statue of Cassandra Trelawney in the far corner of the room. “See, I told you!” Hermione said as she waddled over to where the girls stood, looking the statue over.

“Perhaps you should take a closer look,” Minerva said, beaming at Hermione.

Hermione lurched slowly across the last ten feet or so to the statue of Cassandra Trelawney, the very famous, very skilled seer and great, great grandmother of Hogwarts professor Sybil Trelawney. The last few times she’d been in the classroom she’d all but ignored the statue, but now, looking upon it with fresh eyes, she realized how beautiful Cassandra Trelawney was. Certainly her hair was wild, her glasses were overly ornate, more of a party mask, seeming to hide her face rather than to compliment it and her robes were a mess of tassels and various woven textures but still... something struck Hermione as very odd and very beautiful about Cassandra Trelawney’s face. She got closer, trying to figure out what was bothering her.

Then she realized... it wasn’t a statue of Cassandra Trelawney at all, it was Hermione herself, wearing a wig, a fancy dress mask and overdone

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

robe, turned completely to stone. "I don't believe it!" Hermione said and turned awkwardly toward the girls, her voice falling silent as she saw the scene before her.

The other Hermione was standing there, dressed in the professor's robes, her hands held in front of her, her face rapidly aging into the familiar face of Professor Minerva McGonagall, as Minerva and Augusta looked on. Hermione-become-McGonagall looked at her reflection in the darkened classroom windows, and raised her hand to her face as she realized she'd forgotten McGonagall's glasses.

"What's all this about?" Minerva asked, "Who's she?"

Hermione hesitated a long moment before sighed. "That's Professor McGonagall, the transfiguration instructor and deputy headmistress of Hogwarts in my time."

"Well, that makes sense then, she'd be a brilliant disguise... but how'd you get... Did you say McGonagall?" Minerva stopped as the memory of Hermione raised her wand to create a pair of glasses and froze as she began to grow younger and younger, until both her body and robes matched how Minerva looked right now. She looked at her reflection in the darkened windows, obviously confused, "Who's this then?" she asked.

"Deputy Headmistress?" Augusta said, turning to Hermione. "Her???" she exclaimed, pointing at the real Minerva.

Minerva turned and slapped Augusta on the upper arm with the back of her hand, "You don't need to sound so surprised!" Moments later the memory of Hermione had left the room and they all found themselves back in the hospital ward.

"Deputy headmistress," Minerva crowed, her face permanently affixed with a smile.

"Now see what you've done? She'll be like that for weeks," Augusta sighed.

"So I'll never make anything of myself," Minerva said in a teasing voice, "So I've ruined my life..."

"Anyway," Augusta said, "See? It was you. So we know we did it in the past, we just need to do it again."

"But what do we use to trigger the potion to stop its effects," Hermione asked. "I thought of using my entering the classroom, but I was there earlier this year."

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

"That's the easiest part," Augusta said, "What's the simplest manual condition for the dissolution of a spell? Any third year could tell me that."

Hermione looked piqued, "A pass phrase," Hermione said, "But I didn't say anything."

"Oh yes you did," Augusta reminded her, "You said 'Who's this then?' when you changed from old to young Minerva."

"And that's our pass phrase," Minerva smiled.

In the end it took them longer to round up supplies than the final casting itself did. Augusta did most of the running about to save time. While Minerva, as one of Professor Slughorn's favorites, got the enstoning potion, Augusta found the wig, fancy dress mask and robes Hermione would wear as Cassandra Trelawney.

It took a few minutes to dress Hermione. They replaced her robes with the oversized, tasseled robes then posed her, positioning her arms and the folds of her robe to hide her massive belly. Soon they were ready.

"Just remember, once you drink the potion hand the bottle right back to me and don't say a word or it will become part of the pass phrase," Minerva explained.

Hermione nodded, "And since I won't be there to say my part I'll be trapped. Got it."

"Alright, everything ready?" Augusta asked. The girls thought for a moment before nodding and Minerva handed Hermione the small bottle of potion.

"I just want to thank you both so much for all your help." Hermione said, smiling.

"You're thanking me? I'm going to be **deputy headmistress**," Minerva beamed.

"Oh, really? I hadn't heard," Augusta said, looking skyward. "I don't even want to know about my future. That's not for me to know," she continued, unconvincingly.

"Oh stop it, Augusta Longbottom," Hermione said, a huge grin on her face, before she downed the potion in one gulp. Augusta spun on her heel, her eyes shooting open even as her hand came to her mouth as if to stop her from saying anything as she grinned.

Hermione handed the potion bottle to Minerva and resumed her pose as Minerva said, "Who's this then?" just as Hermione's skin turned cold and gray.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND...

§§§

For a moment Hermione was disoriented, not sure where she was as she heard someone creeping around. As her vision cleared Hermione realized someone was in the room with her, but it wasn't until the classroom door slammed closed that Hermione came to her senses, back in classroom eleven, the supplies she'd evidently used just moments before to change her appearance to that of a young Minerva McGonagall sitting on a nearby desk.

Hermione allowed the heavy robes to fall to the floor as she crossed the room, dropping the overly ornate glasses and wig before getting dressed awkwardly in her own clothes, finally sealing her return to her own time when she donned her charmed robes, hiding her pregnancy once again.

"Thank you Minerva, Augusta," Hermione said, a tear in her eye as she turned and waddled from the empty, abandoned classroom.

## CHAPTER TEN

### A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

Hermione lay in bed, unable to sleep. She wanted nothing more than to simply roll over in bed and bury her face in her pillow, but her body simply wouldn't cooperate. The steadily increasing weight of her belly had her nearly pinned to the bed. She knew from experience that the only way she'd get into another position was to climb out of bed and climb back in, *but by the time I do that, she thought, I'll be wide awake. I can't stand this!* Hermione glanced at the clock. *Five A.M. and I've not slept more than an hour. Again.* She stared at the clock for several long minutes, watching the second hand slowly turning. *Enough! If I'm not going to be sleeping I might as well be studying.*

Hermione threw her legs over the edge of her mattress and pushed herself upward, brushing aside thoughts of how it seemed to get just a bit harder to get up every day. She drew herself fully upright, her bump forcing her thighs apart as it settled in between them. It took Hermione several minutes of rocking back and forth before she could get to her feet, the momentum almost pushing her too far forward, nearly causing her to fall. Once she'd caught herself she put on her robe and grabbed her books. It only took a few minutes to make her way slowly down the stairs to the common room and spread her books across the table. Hermione carefully lowered herself into one of the chairs and opened her Herbology textbook. She began to read, working her way through a packet of biscuits as she read.

"The sap of any of the members of the dogbane family..." she began before an odd, tumbling sensation distracted her. Hermione sighed as she looked down at her middle. Reluctantly she put aside the book and pulled her left arm inside her robe, using her hand to press against her belly, trying to calm its occupants.

Satisfied that the little ones were calm Hermione began scratching at the incessant itching of her belly while she pulled the book open with her other hand to where she'd been reading. "The sap of any of the members of the dogbane..." she began, again interrupted, this time as a hard kick to her ribs nearly knocked the wind out of her. Hermione jumped upward in her seat, her Herbology textbook forgotten as she pulled her other arm inside her robe and tried to rub away the continuing kicking with both her hands.

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

This time the kicking did not slow down. *Why do they have to be so active?* Hermione thought.

"Listen," she whispered under her breath, "I can't get any work done with the three of you...oof," Hermione stopped, interrupted by a firm, hard kick.

"Please," she continued, "just give me an hour and..." Hermione gasped as her entire middle seemed to roll.

"Stop it," she said quietly, "I only came down here because you wouldn't..." Hermione groaned as her belly stretched massively to the right.

Slowly she gathered up as much of her dignity as she could manage. *Fine then, she thought, I'm perfectly capable of doing this without your cooperation.* "The sap of any of the members..."

Suddenly her whole upper body shook. "Hermione?"

Hermione raised her head, disoriented. "Wha... Harry?" she asked.

"Hermione, it's nearly breakfast, have you been up all night?" Harry asked, obviously concerned. Hermione glanced around the room as she pushed her arms back into her sleeves. Bright light shone through the windows, highlighting the students running by on their way to breakfast.

"I must have fallen asleep," Hermione said, rubbing her eyes. "It's morning?"

"It's nearly breakfast," Harry said.

"Breakfast?" she asked, brightening slightly at the thought of food as Harry took her by the arm and tried to help her to her feet. He was very surprised when he could barely budge her weight. Hermione thought quickly, pulling her arm from Harry's grasp and pushing herself upright, seemingly unaware that her robe was hanging open, revealing her semi-transparent charmed nightgown beneath.

Hermione stretched awkwardly, leaning far further back than Harry would have thought possible without her falling over. "I'd best get dressed then," she said, leaving her books on the table, but taking her half-eaten pack of biscuits, before she stumbled toward the stairs to the girls dormitories.

Behind them the portrait hole opened and Ron Weasley stepped into the common room as Harry stacked up Hermione's books. "Harry, where've you... Hermione? You been up all night then?"

"I don't thee how it'th any busineth of yours," Hermione replied as she mounted the stairs, her mouth already full of biscuit.



## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

“What’s wrong with her then?” Ron asked. “This is four days in a row she’s missed Prefects rounds. I can’t keep covering for her.”

“Too much Won-Won I expect,” Harry said.

“Oh, you don’t think...” Ron said, waiting for Harry to interrupt. “Oh.”

“Yes. Oh,” Harry replied, “Come on, we’re going to be late.”

§§§

That morning at breakfast Dumbledore announced that the mystery of the unknown student that had been seen in the prefect’s bathroom had been solved and that the individual involved was not currently a student at Hogwarts. That seemed to dull the inquisition Hermione’s fellow students had organized as they tried to find the secretly pregnant prefect, but unfortunately, it didn’t eliminate the rumors, especially among the more conspiracy minded students like Luna Lovegood, who was said to be conducting her own investigation for the Quibbler.

§§§

Over the last few weeks since she’d come back from her trip to the past Hermione had tried to get back to her normal school life, however, the steady march of her pregnancy could not be denied. Her insomnia was only the most obvious of her problems.

“Now,” Professor Slughorn said, “Stir in a counterclockwise direction until the contents of your cauldron turns slightly pink with a hint of honeysuckle.”

Potions class was not going well. It was bad enough she’d arrived late for the third time in as many lessons but now her potion simply wasn’t coming together no matter how hard she tried to concentrate. Hermione stirred her cauldron clockwise, but her mixture was turning a sickly green, not the pleasant pink it was supposed to. Hermione turned to her potions textbook, or rather tried to turn. Her middle simply refused to cooperate, her belly pushing back against the twisting motion, leaving her standing in place as her potion began to emit an angry red smoke. Hermione stepped awkwardly

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

to the side, turning with her feet rather than her waist, and consulted her potions book.

By the time she'd gotten back to her cauldron the red smoke had turned into a torrent, shooting upward and spreading across the ceiling. Hermione stirred furiously, but that only seemed to increase the amount of smoke.

"Hermione, you'd best..." Harry began.

"I can handle this..." Hermione began. Then the contents of the cauldron exploded, a shower of thick green liquid shooting up into the air, half covering Hermione on its way up, the other half showering on her as it fell.

The class fell silent for a moment before the Slytherin side of the room erupted in riotous laughter. The laughter wasn't just confined to the other house, however. Quite a few of the Gryffindors joined in as well, although they were not quite so joyous as they did so,

"Now, now, enough of that," Professor Slughorn said, "I expect a two foot scroll tomorrow on the dangers of potion preparation without the proper safeguards." The students groaned. "Class dismissed."

The students began to shuffle out of the room even as Hermione started wiping the slime from her face. Harry had stayed behind to help her, but Professor Slughorn sent him on his way.

"Miss Granger, are you alright?" the professor asked.

"Just a bit sticky, Professor. I'll be fine," Hermione replied.

"No, not the potion. Are you alright?" Slughorn persisted.

"I... I don't know what you mean, professor," Hermione said as she cleaned the muck off her fingers before she drew her wand.

"You were stirring clockwise, not counterclockwise per my instructions. That's not like you...at least not like you earlier this term," the professor said, his concern evident as he picked up Hermione's books and other belongings from her desk.

"Evanesco!" Hermione said, the green slime disappearing from both her and the desk.

"I just have a few things to work through," Hermione said, but Professor Slughorn wasn't so much listening to her words as he was staring at her face.

"You look like you've not slept in a week," Professor Slughorn said, frowning.

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

For a moment Hermione was tempted to sit down and tell Professor Slughorn the whole story. Surely he'd know how Malfoy had made her do the things she'd done on that night in September. He could help her, she was one of his favorites. *Was is too right*, Hermione thought. Since her predicament had begun to affect her grades Professor Slughorn's invitations to Slug Club events had dried up... and even if she still had been one of his favorites, she had no evidence to show what Malfoy had done. The pensieve had proven that. *Even if I show him*, Hermione thought, *all Professor Slughorn would see is what Minerva and Augusta saw, a tramp throwing herself at Malfoy. Not exactly the sort of thing I feel like sharing.*

"I'm fine," Hermione said, her need to leave the classroom suddenly taking on a new urgency as she tried to remember where the closest toilets were.

"I want you to promise me something," Professor Slughorn said, holding out Hermione's books for her, a small bag of candy atop the pile. Hermione reached out to take her textbooks but Slughorn didn't let them go. "I want you to go speak to your head of house. You're far too good a student to fail out in your sixth year."

A lump formed in Hermione's throat at Slughorn's words. She nodded silently and the professor released the books into her hands. Hermione clutched the books to her chest before she fled the classroom, rushing toward the nearest toilets.

§§§

Later in the week Hermione woke again, this time closer to three A.M. Unfortunately for Hermione, the reason she'd awoken was all too obvious, even in her groggy, half-awake state. Hermione's stomach growled, the twisting emptiness tugging at her. It had only been a few hours since dinner, but she needed something to eat now. Without even opening her eyes Hermione reached for her nightstand, pulling open the drawer and groping inside for a snack.

She felt around blindly for a moment before she realized all that remained were empty wrappers. Hermione grimaced and pulled her arm back under the covers, to try to get back to sleep, but it was no use. These days,

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

when Hermione needed to eat, she **needed** to eat, whether she wanted to or not.

Now, at three A.M. she was foodless, and it was more than a half-hour walk to the kitchens to get anything to eat. Hermione swung her feet over the edge of her bed and rocked herself to her feet. For a moment she looked over her roommates, wondering which of them might have something to eat stashed up here. Hermione lumbered over to Parvati's bedside and gave her roommate's shoulder a gentle shake.

"Parvati," Hermione said quietly, eager not to wake any more of her roommates than necessary. "Do you have anything to eat up here? Some of that treacle tart you got on Thursday?" Hermione asked hopefully.

Parvati opened her eyes and groaned, barely focusing on Hermione. "You ate it all, last night and before. Go back to bed."

Hermione's shoulders sank, "But what about those chocolate frogs?"

Parvati groaned as she rolled over and staring at her clock. "Three!" she moaned, loud enough that some of the other girls began to get restless.

"You don't need to be rude about it," Hermione said, giving up on Parvati and heading for the stairs, grabbing her robe on the way.

The trip down through the castle was long and slow, only made a bit more bearable by the fact that she could waddle along, her hands pressed into the small of her back rather than pretending to walk normally. That wasn't much comfort anytime though, much less when it meant gallivanting around the school in the middle of the night, less than four hours before she had to be up for class.

Hermione stopped several times along the way to catch her breath, nodding off for a moment leaning against the wall on the third floor before she woke herself and continuing, her hunger driving her on. *Finally*, Hermione thought as she caught sight of the painting leading to the kitchens. *I swear this place gets farther and farther away each time I make the trip. Feels like I've been walking for hours.*

Hermione tickled the pear on the painting leading to the kitchens and stepped inside. At this hour even most of the house elves were asleep and the fireplace had cooled to dull embers.

Hermione looked around in the dim light, quietly calling out Winky's name. It only took a moment until Winky came bounding up to Hermione, wide-awake and full of pep despite the hour.

"Oh Miss Hermione," Winky said, "It's so good to see you!"

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

“Good to see you,” Hermione said. “I just stopped by...”

Winky cut her off. “Winky is sorry Miss Hermione, but I haven’t had a chance to make your new clothes.”

Hermione dismissed the thought with the wave of her hand, “I’m just here to pick up some snacks to hold me over to breakfast.”

“Your new uniforms will be ready this week,” Winky explained, “I’ll need to stop up and get some measurements to make sure they fit properly.”

“Fine, whatever,” Hermione said, “I just need to...”

“Maybe a new dress to wear on the weekends and evenings?” Winky suggested.

“Winky, please!” Hermione said, raising her voice, nearly shouting. “I just... Can you please get me something to eat,” she continued, her eyes glistening.

“Of course Miss Hermione,” Winky said, staring at Hermione as if she was ill. “Would you prefer...”

“Anything,” Hermione said, nearly begging.

It only took a moment for Winky to gather two boxes of pastries and chocolates and hand them to Hermione. She barely had the boxes in her hand before she pulled open the first box and grabbed a chocolate éclair, eating it in only two bites before starting on the next.

“Than you tho mush, Winthy” Hermione said, her mouth full as she turned and walked toward the door, now switching from éclairs to bear claws.

“You’re welcome,” Winky said, watching as Hermione left, then staring at the door for a long moment after, shaking his head. “Poor Miss Hermione,” she said, wringing her hands.

The trip back up to Gryffindor tower took nearly twice as long as her trip down, but at least her desperate hunger had been sated, at least for the moment. Now all she had to do was make it back to bed. By the time she reached the seventh floor hall leading to the Gryffindor common room the earliest morning sunlight had begun to appear over the horizon.

Hermione gritted her teeth and said the password, the portrait swinging open. She stepped inside and was about to head up the stairs to her dormitory when a voice interrupted her.

“Hermione, do you have a minute?” Harry asked. Hermione turned sharply. There sitting next to the fire was Harry Potter, in his robe and slippers, waiting for her return.

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

Hermione took a long moment, swallowing the mouthful of chocolate frog she'd been eating before she replied. "Harry, what are you doing up? It's the middle of the night."

"No, it's nearly morning. It was the middle of the night when Parvati came to tell me you'd gone off to the kitchens again," Harry said as he got to his feet and closed the distance between them. "I'm worried about you, Hermione," he said, "We all are."

"I'm fine, really," Hermione said, closing and opening her eyes, as if trying to wake herself up.

"You're joking, right?" Harry said, looking at her haggard features, "You look exhausted, you have dark circles under your eyes, your hair is a mess..."

"Thanks for noticing," Hermione said sharply, "Sorry if I'm not pretty enough for you." Hermione turned and headed for the stairs to the girls dormitories.

"Oh no," Harry said, stepping in front of Hermione blocking her path. "I'm going to have my say, I shouldn't have let it go on this long."

Hermione stared at Harry, her eyes half closed, as if she was already half-asleep.

"You're up at all hours of the night," Harry said, "either eating whatever you've hidden in your room or the other girls' snacks and if you've cleared them out you're taking an hour long trip to the kitchens for candies and pastries."

"I don't see what business it is of yours," Hermione said, pulling a chocolate éclair from the box and raising it to her mouth. Harry grabbed it before she managed to take a bite.

"You're not sleeping, you're not eating properly, you're always late for class and I'd never known you to do worse than Ron on a test before, much less fail one completely... and what about this?" Harry said, holding up the éclair before he threw it in the fireplace. "I can't remember the last time I saw you without your mouth full."

"I'll have you know I eat like a bird," Hermione said, furious.

"No, you don't eat much at once," Harry admitted, "But you eat constantly. It's like an assembly line with you at the end."

"What difference does it make?" Hermione said as she ran her hands down her robe and charmed nightgown. "It's not like I'm putting on weight."

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

"Have you looked in a mirror lately? Your cheeks are puffy and round and you've got a bit of a double chin," Harry said, not trying to avoid Hermione's hand as she slapped him hard across the face.

"That help you feel better?" Harry asked as the red mark spread across his cheek.

"Why won't you leave me alone!" Hermione screamed in Harry's face, her voice echoing throughout the tower.

"Because you're my friend," Harry said calmly, "I need you and if you keep this up, whatever it is, you're going to fail out of Hogwarts."

"Friends?" Hermione scowled. "So this is about friendship then?"

"Of course!" Harry replied instantly.

"Then where's Ron?" Hermione jabbed.

Harry looked away, unprepared for the conversation heading in this direction. "He's... busy. Off studying."

"Studying? Oh, I'd forgotten, he's been preparing for his N.E.W.T.s in Advanced Snoggology with Professor Lavender Brown!" Hermione hissed.

"Is that what all this is about? You're going to wind up kicked out of Hogwarts and your wand broken over Ron?" Harry asked.

"Is that what you really think?" Hermione shouted, "Why do my problems have to be about Ron Weasley? I'm a big girl Harry, I have problems of my own."

"So you admit you have a problem?" Harry said, relieved, "Let me help you!"

"I'm going to bed," Hermione said, trying to sidestep Harry, but he was too quick for her, grabbing her boxes of snacks.

"Not with these," Harry replied, tossing the boxes into the fireplace. Hermione turned and watched them and for a moment Harry could have sworn Hermione was going to dive after them.

"You have no right!" Hermione bellowed at him before she turned and shoved him out of the way.

"I have every right," Harry shouted after her as Hermione stomped up the stairs to the girls dormitories, "We're best friends and I care about you," he continued, the echoes following her up the stairs.

"Could have gone better, eh?" Ron said quietly, sitting in the darkness of the stairs leading to the boy's dormitories.

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

“Could have used your help,” Harry replied, pushing past Ron and heading back up the stairs to bed.

§§§

The week after Harry’s intervention wasn’t pleasant for anyone in Gryffindor tower, least of all for Hermione’s roommates. “Come on Hermione,” Parvati said, “You have to eat.”

“You’ll forgive me if I’d rather not eat with people who think I’m fat,” Hermione exclaimed.

“No one said you’re fat, Hermione,” Parvati explained. “We’re just worried about you. Why can’t you just get it through your thick head that we just want to help you?”

“Now I’m thickheaded and fat? You’ll forgive me if I decide I don’t need your help,” Hermione said pointedly, “Seems you’re the one in a hurry for dinner.”

“I...” Parvati began before stopping abruptly, “I can’t do this,” she continued, shaking her head as she turned and headed to dinner, leaving Hermione alone in the dormitory.

Hermione strode across the room, bracing the door with a chair for good measure before she went to the chest at the foot of her bed. She opened the lid, revealing three large boxes of candies and pastries from the kitchens. It was only when she tried to reach down to pull them out that she realized that there was no way she could reach them.

Hermione carefully lowered herself toward the floor, holding onto the bed frame for support as she squatted down to reach the boxes, the bakery-fresh scents already beginning to fill the room. For her part, Hermione was sick of it. The cloying sweetness, the scent of fresh baked goods, the odor of yeast. She’d had her fill. Hermione grabbed the boxes and pushed them up onto the mattress before forcing herself slowly to her feet, her hips and ankles creaking painfully with the effort.

Finally she was back on her feet and she wasted no time in throwing the first box open and practically inhaling a chocolate éclair. Hermione grabbed another before she turned, catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror. She turned and waddled over to her mirror and straightened herself out, pushing her hair back from her face, noticing for the first time the chocolate



## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

sauce ringing her mouth like clown makeup. She sighed, her shoulders dropping, the bland expression on her face replaced by one of tired sadness.

She looked down her front, realizing the robe just wasn't enough to hide her condition any longer. It's all the little things, she thought. The waddling and the sore back and the itchy, kicking belly and the constant hunger, not to mention the dark circles under her eyes and her puffy, overweight face. Together they told anyone with eyes to look that she was pregnant just as clearly as her oversized belly would have. Now all the illusion the charmed robe provided was good for was to comfort her, but for now, at least for tonight, the time for illusions was over.

She started to lift her robe off, over her head when she got frustrated and began fighting with it, almost as if she was attacking something underneath the heavy woolen fabric. Finally she got the robe gathered up over her head and tossed it aside, revealing her oversized, over-heavy and overly awkward body. *This is all real*, Hermione thought, running her hands over her massive bump, *there are real babies in here, Malfoy's babies*, she thought, *my babies*.

She tried to keep the horrid thoughts at bay, but the images kept coming to her mind. *I'll be stuck in some dingy apartment with my babies, on the dole raising them on my own with no way out. Stuck dealing with Malfoy and his family while my own family and friends disown me*. Hermione shivered, trying to push the thought out of her head.

Hermione wobbled across the room and climbed onto her bed. She sat against the headboard, her legs outstretched, forced apart by her oversized bump, her breasts resting on its upper curves, even with her bra on. Her bra was a problem all its own, her breasts compressed and overflowing the undersized cups, but that wasn't the main problem.

In actuality, the increase in the size of her bump and breasts due to Minerva's absentminded spell casting wasn't that great, but it was enough to push her to a new level of awkwardness. Now every movement, every time she reached for something, it was if she had to maneuver around her bloated middle. Hermione's hands found their way back to her belly, rubbing at its itchy tightness before she pulled them away, hating the forced intimacy. *No matter what I do, it's everywhere*, she thought, *It's like it's making me think about it being there, just to drive me mad!*

As if on cue Hermione's belly began to roll, the not-so-tiny occupants within beginning to kick and stretch. More and more often they'd been do-

## A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE

ing this, but as difficult as it was to ignore the feeling from within, it was downright impossible to ignore her visibly distorting bump and the feeling of the jabs coming through her skin and hitting her hands, arms and occasionally and painfully, her ribs or bladder.

Hermione slouched, then sighed as she realized her bump wouldn't even let her slouch properly. Her shoulders dropped, just, but they had barely slumped at all before they were stopped by her oversized belly and breasts. She sighed again, her head dropping as her hands were yet again drawn back to her belly.

Hermione began to pull them away again when she stopped and just gave in, tired of fighting. Her head sank, her eyes shifting out of focus as tears began to run down her face, dropping onto her breasts, her tiny hands trying to rub away the horrid itchiness and to sooth the overly energetic motion within as her tears turned to quiet sobs.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

Two days later Hermione pushed her way through Herbology, barely talking to Harry and not at all to Ron. All she could think of was confronting Malfoy between classes and finding out just what he thought he was up to.

Hermione was staring past Harry for a long moment before she realized he was talking to her. "What?" she asked. Harry said something to her, but she just heard the wordless drone of his voice before she turned away, ignoring him as she reached into her bag and grabbed another biscuit.

That was the last they spoke that class and if Harry had said anything else Hermione didn't hear him. Her mind was swimming with thoughts about her upcoming confrontation with Malfoy. It had taken her more than a month since she returned from the past to craft her plan. In the end it would be Malfoy's own prejudices that did him in more than anything Hermione could do. All she needed to do was explain things in language that someone like Malfoy would understand and this nightmare would be over.

*Over except for the birth.* Hermione pushed that thought aside, but the realization that she was nearly out of time, her body betraying her at every turn, was never far from her thoughts.

After class Hermione tried to move as quickly as possible so she could intercept Malfoy, but her awkwardness and need to hide her waddling slowed her down a great deal, as did her snacking as she left the classroom. Luckily, Malfoy and his little group of malcontents weren't racing to their next class. They walked along at a slow, leisurely pace, now reminding Hermione of the Blacks as they walked through the same corridors fifty years before. Hermione waited until the last moment before she stepped out in front of Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson.

Pansy seemed to be giving Malfoy the cold shoulder, and after the way he'd laughed at her when the cherry chegger she'd eaten took effect it was no surprise, but Malfoy seemed to be making an effort to chat her up.

"Draco," Hermione said, having forced a smile to her face, "Could I speak with you a moment... alone?"

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

Malfoy cast a knowing look to Crabbe and Goyle and nodded to a flabbergasted Pansy Parkinson before he walked off with Hermione.

“What’s going on?” Malfoy asked in the same quiet, caring voice he’d used the last time they spoke. Hermione held her index finger to her lips as she led Malfoy into the frigid courtyard, away from the prying ears of the other students. “What’s so important, Hermione? Are you ill?” He asked, looking with concern at her pale face and the dark circles under her eyes. “I thought you didn’t want to speak to me,” Malfoy said now that they were alone, acting every inch the gentleman.

“Shove it,” Hermione said, the smile dropping from her face. “What the hell did you do to me?”

Malfoy’s gentle, kind expression melted away, replaced with the sneer she’d come to know over the last six years. “Stupid mudblood, it took you this long to figure it out and you still don’t know what happened.”

“I know what happened alright,” Hermione said sharply, “I just don’t know how. Not yet. You’re about to tell me.”

“Or?” Malfoy said, a bit of a cruel smile coming to his face.

“Or?” Hermione repeated, “Or I go straight to Dumbledore and let him handle things.”

“Please,” Malfoy chuckled, “If you were going to Dumbledore you’d have done it ages ago. Besides, it was just a bit of fun, no harm, no foul.”

Hermione slapped Malfoy hard across the face, “A bit of fun!” she said, “I’m pregnant,” she whispered through clenched teeth.

Malfoy’s eyes grew wide for a moment before something seemed to occur to him and he broke up laughing. “It’s not funny!” Hermione shouted.

“You just found out now then?” Malfoy said, still chuckling, “It’s been nearly six months. I don’t think you’d have to tell me you were up the duff, I’d be able to see it.”

Hermione leaned in close to Malfoy, “I’m wearing a charmed robe,” she hissed through clenched teeth, fire burning in her eyes.

Malfoy stared at her for a long moment, his eyes growing wide, his mouth falling open. Hermione had the satisfaction of seeing Malfoy shocked and scared for the next few moments before he looked slyly at Hermione, “So, we’re going to Dumbledore? What if I decide not to?”

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

"I don't think you've realized the situation you've put yourself in," Hermione said, a cold smile on her lips.

"Oh really," Malfoy sneered, "You'd best explain it then."

Hermione just stared at him for a long moment, her mouth falling open, "You actually want to hear me say it?"

"Yes, I would," Malfoy said smugly.

"I'm muggle-born and you had sex with me, so my children..."

"Children?" Malfoy asked. "Got hit with a fertility spell, did you? I wonder who did that then?" Malfoy said sarcastically, "How many? Twins?" he asked.

"It's not twins," Hermione replied, momentarily distracted before Malfoy's burst of laughter focused her thoughts. She shook her head before continuing. "I'm muggle-born, so my children aren't pureblood."

"So?" Malfoy asked, obviously not understanding the spot Hermione had him in.

"So... unless you help me find a way out of this, two owls will be dispatched," Hermione said triumphantly, "One to your mother and one to your father at Azkaban... explaining how you've tarnished your pureblood line with mudblood children. Between the two of them I don't expect you to live out the week. Just in case, I'm heading straight to Dumbledore as well."

Malfoy just stared at Hermione for a long moment, as if this was a consequence he'd not considered. He stood there, thinking for nearly a minute as Hermione watched, confident her plan had succeeded. Then Malfoy turned and began walking across the courtyard.

It took a moment for Hermione to regain her senses and shout after him, "Where are you going???"

"You've got me, there's no hope, so I'm off to tell Potter and Weasley what I've done and the awkward position I've left you in," Malfoy said, walking backwards as he explained to her, "What's the password to Gryffindor tower? I might as well tell everyone at once. Then we're off for your meeting with Dumbledore."

"Don't you understand? You..." Hermione began.

"No," Malfoy said coldly, quickly closing the gap between them. "You don't understand a thing. Not. A. Thing. Tell whomever you want. I wouldn't give a knut to stop you. Because as much as you might try to prove

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

that I used fertility magic on you, you can never prove that or explain why you practically attacked me in my own bed.” He let his words sink in a moment before continuing. “Besides, you’re far more worried about your friends finding out that tidbit than I’m worried about the penalty I’ll endure for impregnating some mudblood slut.”

Hermione swung her hand to slap Malfoy, but he caught her hand in mid-swing, squeezing her hand painfully in his own. “More to the point,” Malfoy continued, “You’d do whatever I tell you to do just to stop me from telling your Potter and Weasley what’s gone on... and just in case...” Malfoy continued as he released her hand and pulled a cell phone from his pocket. “I don’t suspect these are that hard to use, even without having taken Muggle Studies.”

He held the phone up to his ear without touching the keypad. “Mr. and Mrs. Granger? Draco Malfoy here. Just calling to say I’ve sullied your daughter’s virtue, such as it is. Oh yes, knocked up, big as a house. Oh, you want to talk to her? Of course...” Malfoy took the phone from his head and dropped it back into his pocket.

“You can’t be serious,” Hermione said, feeling like the bottom of her stomach had fallen out as her carefully laid plan disintegrated around her.

“Not serious? Let me show you how serious I am... Here’s a little something you **can** prove I did,” Malfoy said, drawing his wand, “*Engorgio!*” he shouted, pointing his wand directly at Hermione. A thin blue bolt of light emerged from his wand and struck Hermione in the chest, the light dissipating over her robes.

“What? You...” Hermione began as she pulled her own wand but Malfoy was too quick for her. He closed the distance, pressing his body against hers as he held her wand hand down and to her side.

“I’d think long and hard about what you’re about to do,” Malfoy hissed, “If I feel even the slightest bit put out by you it’s straight to Weasley I go. Understood?”

“You’d never,” Hermione said, staring him down.

“Let’s go together and tell him,” Malfoy suggested, “Now.”

Suddenly Hermione realized. It was all very simple. Malfoy had gone mad. Perhaps Harry was right and he was working for Voldemort or perhaps working for him indirectly through the Death Eaters, but either way the

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

strain had pushed him around the bend. From what she'd heard about his family, Malfoy might escape his mother with serious injuries if she found out he'd fathered a half-blood child, but his father would kill him. Not beat him severely. He'd be killed... and Draco Malfoy didn't care.

"Now," Malfoy hissed into Hermione's face, his expression wild, "Do we understand each other?"

Hermione nodded.

**"Do we understand each other?"** he repeated.

"Yes." Hermione whispered through pursed lips.

"Good, don't forget it..." Malfoy said and released Hermione's wand hand, backing a step away from her. "and that spell? Just a little something to remind you of our little discussion. You'd best get to your next class, wouldn't want you missed."

Hermione just stood there for a long moment. "Run along," he said, waving her away. Slightly bewildered, Hermione turned and waddled away, completely forgetting to hide her gait from any students who might be passing by.

§§§

Saturday morning Hermione awoke early to a throbbing ache coming from her chest. She tried to push herself up in bed, again momentarily forgetting how her added size and weight made that nearly impossible to do. She inched herself towards her headboard, growing more and more uncomfortable as she turned from her side onto her back as she sat up.

As she forced herself upright she couldn't miss the sensation of pressure, heat and weight lying heavily on her chest. She desperately wanted to look beneath her robes, but the enchantment would only allow her to do that if she removed her nightgown entirely. That simply wasn't an option with a room full of nearly awake roommates. Hermione rocked herself out of bed and began to gather her robe, snacks and other necessities for a morning bathroom trip when she came to the realization that she was waddling whether she wanted to or not.



## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

Hermione tried all the little tricks she'd used to mop up her pregnant gait over the last months but it wasn't working. Her hips refused to cooperate now that her womb had settled more deeply into her pelvis. Trying to walk normally was useless, her legs simply wouldn't move that way any longer. Even if she tried to force them it only resulted in her back hurting more than usual. The only way she was making any progress at all was to walk with her feet shoulder-width apart, her arms akimbo, her hips forcing her belly and breasts to swing back and forth with each step.

As soon as she realized how she was walking she knew she was out of time. Even without every student looking for the pregnant Prefect, she was just too obvious now. As if the slipping grades, sunken eyes and hormone driven rages weren't enough, just catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror from across the room was enough to immediately identify her unmistakable lumbering gait. Hermione sighed, aching to talk to Minerva and Augusta again. Still, she had someone she could talk to here, the only question was would she talk to Hermione.

It was a long walk to the second floor girl's toilets, especially when you're exhausted and desperate not to be seen. Luckily, it was very early Saturday morning and as a prefect Hermione could simply stand and watch any students she ran into, resting and waiting for them to pass before she continued waddling along her way. The only obstacle she'd run into worth mentioning was when she met Ernie Macmillan on the third floor as he walked prefect rounds. Even so it only took a bit of small talk before she was on her way.

Hermione put her ear to the door to Moaning Myrtle's toilets and listened. The eerie, echoing sounds of Myrtle's sobbing was unmistakable. She opened the door and lumbered inside, the heavy, hot weight pressing on her chest the bouncing against her upper belly becoming more and more of an irritant and concern with every passing step.

Hermione looked around the cathedral-like bathroom, blinking slowly, still trying to wake up, her footfalls echoing in the eerie silence. "Myrtle, I know you're here!" Hermione called out. "Please, I need someone to talk to and you're the only one I can trust." The room remained silent, save for the fading echo of Hermione's voice and the quiet drip of one of the sinks.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

"I know what you saw," Hermione said as she continued further into the room, slowly circling around the huge pedestal sinks in the center of the room. "Please, you're the only one I can talk to..." Hermione sighed, realizing today was going to be just like the last dozen times she came looking for Myrtle and headed for the door. *What am I going to do now?* Hermione thought. *Who can I confide in? Maybe I could...*

"Hello," Myrtle said as she floated down through the ceiling. "What brings you down here?" she said, as if she'd not been avoiding Hermione for the last few weeks.

"Oh Myrtle!" Hermione shouted as she turned quickly about, nearly losing her balance and tipping over as she did so. "I'm so glad to see you, I could give you a hug."

"Owww you," Myrtle said shyly. Hermione could swear she could almost see her blushing. "So, you know then?" Myrtle asked flatly.

"The triplets, yes, I know," Hermione said sadly.

"Oh, cheer up, it will all come out in the wash." Myrtle said as Hermione removed her bathrobe, tossing it and her bag of snacks into one of the sinks before she began struggling with her nightgown. "What are you up to there then?"

"I don't know what happened, it might be the spell he cast on me yesterday, but there's this huge weight on my chest," Hermione explained.

"Achy and hot?" Myrtle asked cautiously.

"Yes, how did you know," Hermione said as she finally threw the nightgown off. The sports bra Hermione had taken to wearing to bed was stretched to its limit, its seams ready to fail, her breasts swollen and bloated on her chest, as if under pressure. Hermione looked down incredulously at her vastly expanded breasts, now at least triple the size they'd been the day before. They were red and a bit angry looking, large blue veins crossing just under the skin.

Hermione laid her fingers across her breasts, amazed by the amount of heat they were emitting, slowing becoming aware that they were pulsing slightly in time with her heartbeat. She pressed down gently with her fingers, gasping as the dull ache increased sharply, her fingers barely sinking into her very firm flesh.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

"What is this?" Hermione asked, her mouth agape. She turned slightly toward Myrtle, feeling the underside of her breasts slapping against the upper surface of her belly. That sensation alone was enough to make her pause.

"I suppose it could happen on its own," Myrtle said cautiously, "but since you said someone's cast a spell... It looks like..."

"Engorgio," Hermione said quietly.

"It's a fine spell on its own," Myrtle said, "really. but when you're expecting..."

"But they can never stay this size!" Hermione said.

"Well, no, they can't," Myrtle said cautiously.

"Your tone is not inspiring confidence," Hermione replied.

"I've only met one other girl that's had Engorgio cast on her," Myrtle said as she turned and floated slowly back and forth about ten feet from Hermione.

"And?" Hermione asked, turning to face Myrtle, the stitching on the cups of her bra beginning to give, the snapping threads easily heard even ten feet away. "I can't believe this bra is wearing out already, Winky said it could stretch more than I'd ever need it to."

"It's started then," Myrtle said, not looking back as she headed across the length of the room, away from Hermione.

"Oh no," Hermione said, lumbering over to Myrtle as quickly as she could, even as she had begun to float toward the nearest wall. As she moved Hermione's breasts began to bounce heavily and painfully against her belly, "You can't leave me alone again over some unpleasant truth you don't wish to share. I'm all alone," Hermione continued, close to tears, "I can't bear to go through this by myself."

Myrtle stopped and looked back reluctantly, "Alright," she replied reluctantly, "But you won't like what I have to say." Myrtle turned slowly in mid-air.

"Then out with it," Hermione said, steeling herself, "It seems this bra won't last much longer before it's totally worn out."

"Your bra, it's not worn out," Myrtle said quietly, "The stitching isn't worn out, its that... you see they're..." Myrtle closed her eyes, "The spell hasn't run it's course yet, they're still swelling."

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

“What?” Hermione replied, her face looking more disappointed and sad than incredulous as she looked down at her massive breasts. She reached upward but stopped as her hands were within inches of touching them. “They can’t be! They’re already massive!”

“That’s what Miner... one girl I used to know thought too,” Myrtle replied. “Her best friend had heard what Engorgio does when you’re expecting, but only just. She thought it would be a good joke to cast it on her friend. Even with a salve they made she was still miserable for the better part of a week.

“There’s a salve?” Hermione asked desperately, “It reverses the effects?”

“No... but it does stop them from getting worse,” Myrtle said, the stitching on Hermione’s bra creaking on cue.

“Well then, we’d best get started,” Hermione said. “What do we need to make the salve?”

“I don’t remember everything,” Myrtle said, “I’ll have to go find out, but it’s mainly herbal though, oleander and perovskia with a bit of a wing of a billywig and touches of some other things. What’s wrong?” Myrtle asked as she saw Hermione’s expression.

“I’m allergic to oleander,” Hermione sighed, the tiny brightness in her eyes fading. “It gives me this horrid itchy rash,” she explained.

“Sounds worse than the Engorgio,” Myrtle mused, “Almost...”

“It doesn’t matter,” Hermione said quietly, “I don’t know how I thought I’d get the supplies anyway. I won’t get ten feet from here before I’m caught.”

“Oh, something wrong with your robe?” Myrtle asked.

“No,” Hermione said, “as if these massive things weren’t enough,” Hermione began, indicating her breasts with her hands and growing more and more angry as she spoke, “But now I can’t even walk properly. All I can manage is this bloody waddling!” she continued, setting off across the room, her feet set far apart, her abdomen and breasts shifting heavily from side to side with each step, her hands pressed into the small of her back for support.

“Well, that happens, doesn’t it?” Myrtle asked. “I’d guess that extra weight pushed you over the edge,” she said as Hermione crossed the room to the sinks and her robe and bag.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

"You don't understand!" Hermione said, frustrated. "Even before this people must have been starting to guess. I look like hell, I can't sleep, I scream and cry at the drop of a hat." Hermione grabbed her bag and pulled out a bear claw. She took a bite and rolled her eyes as soon as she realized what she'd done. As soon as she swallowed she continued. "I can't stop eating! If I go out there with all that and toddling along like a penguin I'm as good as found out, robe or not."

"Did you think they'd never find out?" Myrtle asked gently, "People will start to ask questions when they see the cribs next to your bed."

Hermione stared at Myrtle for a long moment, her mouth open slightly, before she burst into tears.

"Now, now, it's going to be alright," Myrtle said. "Your friends are true, and true friends always stick by you. Remember when everyone thought my Harry cheated his way into the Triwizard Tournament?"

"And everyone treated him like a leper!" Hermione said, half inconsolable, half furious as she shoved the bear claw into her mouth.

"No..." Myrtle reminded her, "You didn't. Ron didn't after he thought about it. Even Ginny didn't," Myrtle added with a sneer. "Everyone that knew him got over it."

"That's different," Hermione said, her mouth still half full, "That was because we knew he didn't do it. This is different, I did do it!"

"Well, why not do a Phantasmagoria charm and find out?" Myrtle asked.

"How would that help?" Hermione asked, "It just makes a waking dream."

"Right, so use it to dream of the school. Then when you're dreaming tell Harry and Ron. Then you'll know how they'd react," Myrtle explained.

"I've got more pressing things to worry about at the moment," Hermione said impatiently, looking down at the splitting seams on her bra.

"You just want to put it off," Myrtle said.

"I just want them to stop aching," Hermione said, gently pushing on her left breast with her fingertips, almost as if she was afraid to press any harder. Slowly she worked her fingers underneath her left breast and lifted it slightly before giving it a gentle squeeze.

"What are you doing?" Myrtle asked.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

"It's driving me mad," Hermione said, giving her breast another gentle squeeze. "I know how this must sound, but it feels like there's something in there that needs out." She winced as she gave another, slightly firmer, squeeze.

Myrtle came over to Hermione's side as Hermione gently sat her breast back on her bump. "That's better... now..." Myrtle began as Hermione reached behind her back with both hands and, after a brief scratch, released the hooks on her bra and tossed it aside. Her breasts spilled forward, almost seeming to expand now that they were unrestrained. Hermione gasped at the sight of her nipples and areola, now huge and brown. Her surprise didn't seem to affect her hands though, they jumped back to her left breast, lifting it in her hands and gently pressing it, starting at her chest, wincing as she worked her way toward the oversized, darkened nipple.

Myrtle sighed, "That's not going to work."

"How do you know?" Hermione said tersely as she continued to poke and prod her oversized breast.

"You're not the first girl who's been expecting and alone," Myrtle said quietly, "Eventually they've all needed someone to listen."

"I'm sorry," Hermione said as she continued to fight with her breast, "It's just so frustrating and... Arrgh! It's as if they're growing larger from the inside and my skin isn't big enough to hold it all!"

"You're joking?" Myrtle asked. Hermione looked up at Myrtle as she continued fighting with her breast. Myrtle took one look at Hermione's face, rolled her eyes and shook her head. "You can be so dense sometimes."

Hermione gave Myrtle a sad, tired look, "I'm doing the best I can with all this."

"You just have the most amazing ability to deny the obvious," Myrtle replied, "They're not just growing. You're only half right. They aren't just growing larger, they're filling up..." Myrtle waited for a moment to see if Hermione jumped to the obvious conclusion, but when she didn't, Myrtle rolled her eyes and continued. "With milk."

Hermione paused for a long moment thinking, looking as if she was about to argue. "But they just keep getting more achy and hot..."

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

“They’re not the smartest organs,” Myrtle said, “There’s a reason they call dense people boobs,” she giggled. “They don’t stop making milk just because you’re not using any of it. That spell isn’t helping either...”

Hermione sighed, looking down at her chest, “Brilliant, just brilliant.”

“Just go to the chemist in Hogsmeade,” Myrtle suggested, “they’ll have everything you need.”

“I’ll have to use my charmed hoodie. I suppose I can fit through the secret passage with it on,” Hermione said hopefully, “so no one will see me lumbering along... but its such a long way to walk...”

“You’ll make it, and with those smarts... it’s not a wonder you’re a prefect” Myrtle smiled. “You’re going to be just fine.”

“If I’m so smart why am I pregnant then?” Hermione asked as she looked down at her breasts and belly, rubbing the latter with both hands in large, circular strokes, as if playing a harp.

“Oh stop,” Myrtle replied, “You’ll just want to take down a few things you should pick up.”

§§§

Hermione escaped to Hogsmeade with a minimum of fuss that morning, although she wasn’t pleased to discover that her undisguised hips and bottom were large enough to cause a great deal of difficulty when she tried to slip through the hidden passage in the back of the humpbacked witch’s statue. Perseverance eventually won out, but she was almost certain she wouldn’t be able to force her way back up the way she’d forced herself down, having gravity working against her rather than with her.

Worse was the fact that she no longer had a bra that fit. When Hermione had been her normal size going without a bra hadn’t been an issue, but now her breasts bounced and slapped against her belly whenever she moved too quickly. Her charmed clothes hid most of this, of course, but the slapping was still easy enough to hear, and the robe did nothing to stop Hermione from experiencing the amazingly uncomfortable feeling of her breasts bouncing off each other and her belly.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

It took far longer than she'd expected to lumber through the long, winding passage to Hogsmeade. She finished off all the snacks she'd brought with her, long before she arrived but eventually got into the basement of Honeydukes in her winter coat and hat, charmed hoodie and jeans. It took a few minutes to slip out of the basement, through the store and out onto the street. Almost as soon as she exited the store she was forced to step to one side as a gaggle of third years headed past her, through the door. *Now for the difficult part*, Hermione thought, *slipping across Hogsmeade to the chemists without being seen.*

In only a few moments she had her chance as a group of students left Honeydukes. Hermione did her best to blend into the slow-moving, chatty group of students. It soon became apparent, however, that they would leave her behind, lurching along alone in all her waddling, big-bottomed glory. Although the group of students heading in the opposite direction wouldn't get her any closer to the chemist, they would provide the camouflage she needed.

Hermione slipped out of the group of students she was with and turned around, nearly running right into a group of students headed the other way before she managed to merge into the flow of traffic with just a few quiet apologies. The group was heading past the post office and was obviously headed toward the Three Broomsticks.

*This won't do at all*, Hermione thought, *The Three Broomsticks might be popular, but it's alone on that part of the street. I might as well stand under a neon sign.* Hermione ducked into the post office, confident that very few of her fellow students would be stopping by for the tour of the owlery and postal dispatch.

Hermione spent a moment looking around inside before ducking out the side door into the alley, leaving her barely closer to Willowings Pharmacy than when she'd started. After ten minutes of staring out of the alleyway at the passing students and Hogsmeade residents, leaning against the wall, resting, she'd had enough. She was about to step out onto the street, her appearance be damned, when she had an idea.

Moments later Hermione stepped out onto the street, the largest box the post office had in her arms. With the box in her hands she hoped that it



## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

wouldn't take much imagination for anyone who saw her to conclude her gait was due to carrying a heavy load of goods, rather than her pregnancy.

She waited a long moment before looking around. While there were a few groups of students milling around as well as passing by on their way to and fro, no one seemed to be paying any attention to Hermione. Taking advantage of the moment Hermione turned and headed down the street as quickly as possible, quickly passing Honeydukes and Zonko's, which had been closed and boarded up ever since word had gotten out that You-Know-Who was back.

Hermione headed west, ignoring the cross street leading to the Hogshead and stepped up to the door to Willowings. She turned around backwards, the box still in her arms, and nudged the door open with her backside.

"Hermione!" Luna Lovegood called out from across the street.

"Luna," Hermione replied, watching dejectedly as Luna crossed the street, weaving through her fellow students until she was right in front of Hermione and her box wearing a bright orange mack and black sundress, several overstuffed bags awkwardly held in her hands.

"It's good to see a friendly face," Luna said.

"It's good to see you as well," Hermione replied, "How have you been?"

"My good shoes have gone missing again, " Luna admitted, "I'm wearing an old pair and my feet hurt terribly. I suspect the nurgles are involved."

Hermione smiled sadly, "Things could be worse, believe me, a **lot** worse."

"I suppose," Luna mused, "I've heard you've been ill." Hermione raised her hand, wiping her eyes, obviously tired.

"I really need new shoes," Luna said, dropping the subject. "Arch support is very important," she paused, "I wish we were still doing the D.A. It was nice to have friends."

"Oh Luna..." Hermione said sympathetically.

"What's in the box?" Luna said, her mood changing in an instant from melancholy to her normal flighty exuberance.

"Well, It's... difficult to explain," Hermione said, grasping at straws.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

"Oooh, a secret," Luna said curiously, "What could it be?"

"I'm sorry," Hermione began, "It's been great talking to you, but I can't keep blocking the doorway."

"Oh, I suppose not," Luna said a bit sadly, not making a move toward saying her goodbyes.

"See you back at school," Hermione said, backing through the doorway.

"See you there. Oh, did you hurt your leg?" Luna asked offhandedly.

"What?" Hermione asked, freezing in the doorway.

"You're leg, I saw you limping along just earlier," Luna continued.

"Oh...Oh," Hermione replied a bit nervously. "That's just this box, it's so heavy."

"But you didn't have the box," Luna said. "You'd just left Honeydukes."

"Oh," Hermione said, making a show of remembering something. "It must be my new shoes, they're really pinching. Not worn in yet."

"Oh," Luna said as she turned and began to walk away, "You should get a more comfortable pair then."

"I will, I really have to stop at Gladrags, they'll have something," Hermione said, smiling as Luna walked away.

"Maybe we could go together as we both need a pair," Luna suggested.

"Sure, sounds grand," Hermione said almost dismissively, pushing against the door into Willowings.

"Right," Luna said sadly as she turned and walked off, "Like my aunt always told me, The most important thing you can do when you're expecting is wear a comfortable pair of shoes."

"I'll see you tonight!" Hermione called after Luna, smiling as she walked away. Hermione actually managed to back halfway into Willowings before what Luna had said hit her. Hermione turned ashen, her mouth falling open as she watched Luna skipping off into the crowd, far too late to catch her.

Hermione watched Luna heading through the crowd until she disappeared among the other students. *Well, I can't stand here forever*, Hermione thought, backing her way into Willowings Pharmacy. She had never been to

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

a wizarding pharmacy, but it looked surprisingly like a muggle pharmacy, aside from the age-old wooden shelving and fixtures, not to mention the overly colorful packaging that looked more like quack medical treatments than genuinely useful products.

Hermione gravitated toward the rear where two shopkeepers were working. One, an older man, was with a customer, the other, an older, grandmotherly woman, was stocking shelves and occasionally commenting on the discussions the other two were having. This made her choice easy. Hermione waddled up to the counter as far away as she could from the other customer, hopefully out of earshot and glanced over, trying to attract the matronly shopkeeper's attention, but she had disappeared. She'd only just been standing there, behind the counter next to the older man but suddenly she was gone.

"What can I get for you little miss, perhaps a sleeping draught?" The old woman asked from directly in front of Hermione. For her part, Hermione nearly jumped out of her skin. "Now, now, I didn't mean to startle you,"

"No, I should be sorry..." Hermione said, her eyes closed, shaking her head back and forth slightly as she sat her large box on the counter. It took her a moment to catch her breath before she continued, "I just need to pick up a few things," Hermione said as she pulled a list from her pocket.

She looked over the list for a moment, unsure if she should read it or simply hand it to the woman. *I don't know what half these things are*, Hermione thought, *Myrtle suggested most of the items. Best to just hand it over and hope for the best.*

Hermione handed the list to the old woman. She looked over the list, scanning down the many items. The old woman smiled broadly, "You never wrote this list..."

Hermione paused for a long moment, "I did write it down, but I was told what to ask for."

"I thought as much," the old woman chuckled, "Much of this, it's not been made in fifty years. Doctor Jorkin's Spirit Salve..."

"I don't suppose you have any candy or snacks?" Hermione asked as the old woman went down the list, skipping item after item, chuckling quietly to herself. This was not good. The list had been purposefully padded to make it less obvious what she was here to buy. So far though, aside from a

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

tin of Altoids there was nothing pulled for her order that didn't raise awkward questions.

First there were breast pads, then Loughton's All-Purpose Ever-Slick Personal Lubricant, Nev-R-Itch Mother's Skin Emollient and St. Mungo's Ever-Stretch Birth Preparation Plaster. As item after item was added to the pile Hermione grew increasingly red, hoping as each box, tin or bottle was pulled that it would be one of the innocuous items that Myrtle had added to the list and not yet another item that pointed to exactly why she'd come here. Finally the woman got to the bottom of the list and placed a box on top of the pile. Lact-Aide Mother's Milk Breast Pump, Heavy Duty.

"I'm sorry, I only have the heavy duty breast pump," The old woman said in a stage whisper. "I don't think you'll be complaining much," she smiled with a wink.

"Oh...Oh no!" Hermione explained, "None of this is for me. It's..."

"For a friend" Hermione and the shopkeeper said together.

"Oh please," the old woman said, "Every year some girls from the school discover that these things are good for more than what they're intended for. I don't judge."

Hermione seemed confused for a moment before she looked at the stack of creams and balms with new eyes, her face growing even more red than before. "No! You don't understand!" Hermione continued, her face nearly seeming to glow red.

"You even brought a box," the old woman said, smiling, "Perfect. This would never fit in a bag." The old woman looked surprised, "Most girls don't come prepared."

"It's never for me," Hermione continued to explain, "That's why I have a list, I was sent."

"Of course dear," the old woman said, "I believe you."

"Good," Hermione said, her blush beginning to dim before the old woman winked at her and placed her index finger on the side of her nose.

"That will be fifty two galleons, eight sickles and one knut," the shopkeeper said, totaling the order.

Hermione did some math in her head, sighing at the realization of just how much money she was spending. *This had all best be necessary*, Hermione thought.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

§§§

The walk back to Hogwarts was a long one, especially with the large box Hermione was now carrying. It was bad enough when it only held the items from Willowings, but now that she'd filled the empty space with candy from Honeydukes it weighed twice what it had before. Still, it was nice to be out and about, the fresh air and sunlight brightening her mood and the box kept her hands away from her itchy back and belly. However, the main problem remained.

*At least the box gives me an excuse for this bloody waddling,* Hermione thought as she trundled along down the road to Hogwarts. Throughout the trip Hermione's breasts ached more and more and the long walk to Hogwarts without a bra wasn't helping. The cobblestone road leading from Hogsmeade to the school was rough and uneven. With every step Hermione's breasts bobbed a bit, bouncing up and slapping down with varying degrees of discomfort.

*It wouldn't be so bad,* Hermione thought, *but everyone wants to chat with me along the way.* At this moment that person was Parvati, taking advantage of Hermione's rare good mood, breaking the ice with a discussion of the upcoming potions exam. Hermione barely heard her, her mind a million miles away, mainly occupied with covering the minor groans of discomfort she couldn't manage to contain and with visions of her Honeydukes haul dancing in her head.

By the time Hermione got back to Hogwarts she was exhausted, even before climbing the stairs to the seventh floor. By the time she'd reached the common room, and finally her dormitory she was ready for a very long nap, despite the early hour. Still, she had something she had to do first, despite her exhaustion.

While the pressure was bad this morning it was nearly maddening now. Once Hermione got to her room and dropped her heavy box on the bed she was free to brace the door. With that done Hermione ripped away at her clothes, quickly pulling off the hoodie and t-shirt she wore, revealing her swollen, hot breasts.

Hermione hadn't thought it was possible, but they seemed even bigger and firmer than they had been this morning. More importantly, the urge

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

to get the milk within them out was even stronger than it had been. With her top off it took every ounce of her willpower not to grab her breast and squeeze, but remembering how painful that had been and the fact that she now had the right tools at hand made it a bit easier to resist.

She sat on the edge of her bed and took out the breast pump. The wrapping was easy enough to remove leaving her with a glass cone attached to a small bottle. Hermione almost placed it to her breast when she stopped, remembering what she'd been told. She sat the pump to the side and dug through the box for the tube of Loughton's Lubricant. She opened the tube and squeezed a small bead of the transparent, jelly-like substance on her finger before spreading it over her nipple, areola and the surrounding breast.

Hermione's areola grew darker and shiny under the gel as it sank in, leaving a gleaming coating on the surface of her skin. *Great, just what I need, darker and shiny. Why would I want them to show more?*

Hermione picked up the pump, realizing for the first time that the glass cone meant to fit over her breast wasn't up to the task. The cone was simply too small and shallow to do the trick. Desperate for relief she pressed the glass against her breast. Hermione yelped as the cold glass cone seemed to come alive, stretching itself over her breast until it fit like a second skin. Then the pump went to work.

"Oh my!" Hermione gasped as the pump sucked her nipple into the end of the glass cone and slowly and carefully began to massage her breast, gently pressing from her chest towards her nipple. Hermione stretched as it continued its work, her eyes closing as her head tilted back, a slight smile coming to her face as she began eating éclair after éclair.

An hour later Hermione's initial elation with her new device was gone, replaced with the same frustration she felt earlier, except now she was even more desperate. Over the last hour the pressure continued to grow, as did the firmness, heat and weight, not to mention the overwhelming need to get the milk out in any way she could.

Desperate, Hermione tried working on her right breast as the pump continued to work at her left, but it was no use. Soon the pump even gave up, the massaging action slowing, then stopping before the glass returned to its original shape, releasing her breast. The frustration was awful, but her exhaustion was even worse.

## ROUND & HEAVY, HOT & SWEATY

Even as she fought with her breasts she began to yawn over and over, starting to nod off. Worse, after ignoring it for so long the itching of her bump was excruciating. After her head dropped toward her chest for the second time as she almost fell asleep she realized she couldn't continue. If she did she would just fall asleep and be awoken by her shocked roommates a few hours from now, poking at her curiously.

Hermione pushed herself to her feet and placed all the items into the box. She was about to close it and place it under her bed when she saw the tube of Nev-R-Itch Mother's Skin Emollient. She grabbed the tube and squeezed a bead of the thick cream onto her hands before she rubbed them together and spread the cream over her belly. While the cream didn't eliminate the itch it certainly helped with it, but it made her skin feel strange as well and the lessening of the itching only made her feel closer to sleep.

Hermione dropped the tube of emollient into the box and closed it before dropping it to the floor and nudging it under her bed with her foot. Hermione grabbed her hoodie and pulled it over her head and down over her belly to her hips before sitting down. She leaned back and pulled her legs up onto the bed. Before her head hit the pillow she was fast asleep.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### AN OVERSIZED PAIR

Hermione woke up slowly, sticky with sweat and overly hot from the sunlight shining upon her. Hermione blinked several times and glanced at the clock. It was mid-afternoon and she realized she had slept through lunch. She shifted in bed, about to sit up when her breasts slid, slapping together and the amazing sensation of pressure and aching returned to her, much more intensely than before she'd fallen asleep. With difficulty Hermione pulled herself to her feet and, after checking the door, pulled her charmed hoodie off, over her head. What she found shocked her.

Her breasts were more swollen now, even more so than earlier. The pressure had given them a red cast, blue veins visible very close to the surface and a strong pulsing rhythm to their aching. Hermione stuck her foot under the bed and ran it across until she found the box underneath and pushed it into view. She drew her wand and levitated the box onto her bed. Hermione threw the lid off and grabbed the breast pump. She debated reapplying the lubricant, but the aching, pressure and the intense desire to empty her breast won out. She pressed the pump to her breast, watching as the glass warped and expanded, enveloping her breast.

Moments later the liquefied glass began pulsing and Hermione leaned back in bed, resting against her headboard. She closed her eyes, a pleasant smile coming to her face as the pump gently got to work. Moments later she realized something was different. It was as if something inside had changed or given way within her breast. After a few minutes she felt a definite change and a palpable sense of relief as the first droplets of milk began to flow. Soon the flow increased and after fifteen minutes or so Hermione grew concerned with the amount of milk she was pumping.

She thought of removing the pump, but it didn't seem to want to come off and, more to the point, Hermione wasn't sure she wanted it to come off. Time seemed to pass at a different speed when the pump was on and the gentle massage of the pump only added to her relaxation. After some time had passed, Hermione wasn't sure how long, the weight of the milk stored by the pump had become hard to ignore. As she wondered what to do about it the glass bottle seemed to stretch, splitting off from the pump and



## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

dropping onto her bed, sealed with a cardstock cap. *That works*, was the limit of the depth she gave to thinking about the workings of the pump.

After close to two hours and two more full bottles the pump stopped pumping on its own, releasing Hermione's breast. Her left breast was no smaller, but the hot, firm, achy congestion was gone. The only trade off seemed to be that her nipple and areola were swollen to an obscene size. She looked at her left breast, lifting it in her hands for a better look, concerned with the effect the pump caused. Still, the aching of her right breast called to her, made even more obvious by the milk dripping from her nipple. *Fine, fine, I'm getting to you...*

After a few more hours the pump released her right breast and Hermione lay on the bed, for the first time in several days feeling relaxed and ache-free. She basked in the setting sun shining in through her dormitory window, soaking up the light and warmth. Still, there was a limit to how long Hermione could lay on her back given the size of her bump and breasts... and two minutes was well past that limit. Reluctantly she forced herself upright in bed and looked at the clock. *Nearly dinner*, Hermione thought, *I missed lunch, I can't miss another meal, at the rate I'm going my snacks will only hold out so long...* Hermione pushed the thought out of her mind and began cleaning up the supplies scattered atop her bed.

Hermione considered the bottles she'd pumped for a long moment, realizing that she had nowhere to put six pints of milk. Rather than deal with the issue Hermione drew her wand and froze the bottles before putting them in the box with her other supplies. For a long moment Hermione considered the tube of Nev-R-Itch Mother's Skin Emollient. She ran her hands over the tight ball of her belly. *It did help a bit with the itching*, Hermione admitted to herself, *but now it's tight and shiny, almost as if it's been stretched taut...* As she thought about it, Hermione reached over her shoulder, scratching her back furiously before she stopped, rolling her eyes. *This cream has to be good for something*, Hermione thought, taking the cream and rubbing it into her back. As little as the cream did to help her bump though, it did nothing to help soothe her back.

With a sigh Hermione dropped the tube inside and closed the box, securing it under the bed before glancing around the room, sniffing at the air, trying to identify an unusual sweet, cloying smell. *Now, it comes down to timing*, Hermione realized. *At this time of day I'd normally be the only one in the common room. The Quidditch fans will be watching Slytherin and Huf-*

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

*flepuff playing and those that weren't will be outside in the first warmish day of the year.* Hermione smiled as she got dressed, pulling on her hoodie and wishing that Winky would realize her bras were undersized to the point of uselessness and make her larger ones. *If not I'll stop down in the kitchens and ask her nicely,* Hermione thought.

Dressed, Hermione set off for the Great Hall, a small cache of snacks in hand, hoping to beat her fellow students there and take the opportunity to waddle in to her seat and sit down without anyone spotting her. She carefully worked her way down the circular stair to the common room. Two students were there, working at the table, but they were preoccupied with writing scrolls and didn't even look up as Hermione lumbered past. In no time she was through the portrait hole and into the hallway... and right in front of Luna Lovegood.

"Luna," Hermione said, startled, "What brings you up here?"

"I wanted to say I'm sorry," Luna replied as she looked at the portrait of the fat lady. "I didn't expect her to invite me in but she was so rude. She wouldn't even send a message inside that I was waiting."

"There aren't any portraits inside for her to go to," Hermione explained. "How long were you waiting?"

"Just a few hours," Luna replied, looking around, as if trying to place an odd smell.

"Luna!" Hermione said unhappily, "Why would you do that?"

"It's been weeks since we had a chance to talk before I saw you at Willowings and didn't know when I'd have a chance again," Luna explained, "I wanted to apologize for Hogsmeade. I shouldn't have put you on the spot like that."

"Oh," Hermione said, as if what Luna had come to talk about was a complete surprise, "You didn't. I just think there's been a bit of a misunderstanding."

"There has been?" Luna asked cautiously, "I thought... We're friends and friends can talk about all sorts of things..."

"Of course we can, Luna," Hermione replied, choosing her words carefully, "You were just wrong... about this."

"Oh, I see..." Luna replied quietly, obviously disappointed. "It's just... When I talked to Moaning Myrtle she said..."

"You what?" Hermione asked, cutting her off. "Myrtle talked to you, about this?"

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

"Yes," Luna said, drawing back, "There's nothing wrong with that, she likes to help people... even if she is a bit gruff."

"I can't believe she'd be talking about this with anyone," Hermione said, her blood boiling.

"I don't make friends... easily," Luna said awkwardly. "I don't see why I can't have someone to talk to," she continued, getting a bit angry on her own, "I've not talked to you or Harry since the Christmas party, neither of you is ever around and Neville is always revising."

"You can talk to whomever you want," Hermione said, furious, "But she can't be..." Hermione centered herself and continued more calmly, "There are things she shouldn't be talking with anyone about."

"Oh, so just because you think it's wrong everyone else has to agree?" Luna said, a bit more strongly than her normal tone.

"So you think it's alright?" Hermione said, incredulous. "Going on about other people's personal business?"

"If they ask her to, why not?" Luna argued.

"Because..." Hermione paused for a moment, considering, "Wait, I'm getting confused."

"Just because something offends you doesn't mean other people can't talk about it," Luna said sternly but quietly, "I should never have come up here. Seven floors, Seven! With my hips aching... I never expected this from you." Luna turned and began to walk away.

"Wait, Luna, please?" Hermione said, setting off after Luna, but Luna was far too fast and with Hermione's slow, wobbling gait there was no way she could hope to catch up. "Luna! Hold on!"

Luna turned back toward Hermione and seemed about to say something when she spotted Hermione's waddling stance. "There's no need to be cruel," Luna said, barely above a whisper.

"I'm not being cruel," Hermione said, closing the distance. "What did you mean about your hips aching?"

Suddenly the cool, angry look seemed to drop from Luna's face, replaced with a sort of curious confusion, "Are we having one of those amusing misunderstandings that seems very important at the moment but is actually comical in retrospect?"

Hermione thought about Luna's words for a moment before a small laugh forced itself from her lips. "Maybe we should go somewhere to talk,"

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

Hermione suggested before she paused, thinking for a moment. Finally she sighed, "Second floor girl's toilets?"

"All those stairs," Luna said sadly, "My poor hips."

"I know, believe me, I do..." Hermione said, "but I think we could use a referee who we've both talked to, at least for the moment." Hermione reached into her bag, "Would you like an éclair?"

§§§

A few minutes later Luna and Hermione made it to Myrtle's bathroom, both nearly out of breath. It took a minute or two, but Hermione was first to recover.

"Myrtle! We need to talk," she called out.

The girls waited, but after a long moment Myrtle had not appeared. Hermione looked to Luna.

"Myrtle, please!" Luna called out just as Myrtle arrived, floating up through the floor.

"Oh hello.... you," Myrtle began cautiously, "what brings you two here?" Suddenly Myrtle seemed to realize something and her attitude changed, becoming much more angry, if not believable. "This is my bathroom! It's mine! You can't be here!"

"I don't know," Luna said quietly to Hermione.

"I don't like people talking behind my back!" Myrtle shouted angrily as she flew around the bathroom, but her heart simply wasn't in it.

"Myrtle," Luna said, "There's no reason to be this way."

Myrtle continued flying around for a moment before she slowed, descending to the girls level, "There isn't?"

"I come here and talk to Myrtle quite often," Hermione explained.

"I do as well," Luna said.

"Oh. Well, if you both know..." Myrtle began awkwardly, "I'd offer you tea but we're in the toilets."

"I suppose one of us is going to have to start," Hermione began before Luna cut her off.

"I had relations with David Bones," Luna said casually.

Hermione turned to Luna, her mouth hanging slightly open.

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

"He said I was special, he never called me names..." Luna began, her head down. "When the others were cruel he would stay with me and tell me they were wrong."

"Oh Luna," Hermione said quietly.

"What about you?" Luna asked, wiping her eyes as she raised her head.

"That's... complicated," Hermione replied.

"And I'm simple," Luna said quietly.

"No," Hermione said adamantly, "I never meant that. It's just... complicated."

"I thought we were weren't keeping any secrets from each other," Luna said.

"We're not," Hermione said. "It's just so embarrassing."

Luna just stared at Hermione.

"No one is going to stare at you just because David Bones is the father," Hermione said.

"Oh please, how bad could it be? It's not as if it's Draco Malfoy," Luna laughed.

Hermione just stared at her.

"Oh," Luna said, a wide-eyed, sympathetic look coming to her face. "Oh, no."

"Don't look at me that way," Hermione said, turning her back to Luna.

"Who's Draco Malfoy then?" Myrtle asked.

Hermione turned and gave Myrtle a long, hard, angry stare before she turned and stormed out of the bathroom, an odd slapping sound punctuating her steps.

Luna turned and ran after Hermione.

"Where are you going then?" Myrtle asked.

"After Hermione," Luna said as she pulled open the door and left the bathroom. "It's almost dinner and she doesn't have her shoes. She can't be out in the halls. She'll be caught for sure."

"Hermione," Luna called out as she ran out of the bathroom in the direction she'd seen Hermione go. She needn't have run. Hermione was only about fifteen feet down the hall, waddling slowly and awkwardly toward the stairway upward. Her charmed hoodie did an admirable job hiding her much more bountiful upper body but between her oversized, denim-clad

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

bottom half and her exaggerated waddle there was no chance she could escape notice.

If Hermione heard Luna she didn't make any move to slow down. Luna rapidly caught up with her, resting her hand on Hermione's shoulder. "Hermione," Luna began cautiously.

Hermione stopped but did not turn around. "You know I'd never...He's... It's disgusting," Hermione said in a loud whisper. "He must have done something, some sort of spell or charm to make me..."

"But that's the first thing we were told when they mentioned love spells in potions." Luna said quietly, "There's no potion that will make you allow liberties you wouldn't otherwise want to."

Hermione spun around on her heel, her face a mask of fury, her eyes puffy and red, tears running down her cheeks, "Don't you think I know that!" she screamed. "I've spent more hours than I can remember in the library going over every little possibility! But it doesn't matter! He did it! He made me and I'm going to find out how!"

Luna looked into Hermione's eyes for a long moment before she reached out, taking Hermione's shoulders in her hands, pulling her close. Hermione fought for a moment as the space between them closed, but it was a half-hearted effort. Even that ended once Hermione's face came to rest on Luna's shoulder and the tears began. At that moment Hermione seemed to melt, the fight going out of her even as her entire body relaxed. Luna buckled almost immediately under Hermione's massive weight. The two girls slid to the floor, Hermione still held to Luna's chest and shoulder, sobbing uncontrollably. Luna clutched her tightly, one arm across Hermione's back, her other hand gently stroking Hermione's hair.

Soon the quiet thunder of footsteps echoing in the hallways drew their attentions, first Luna and then Hermione. No words were spoken as Hermione pulled herself back from Luna, smiling gently. Luna smiled back as she pushed herself to her feet and offered a hand to Hermione. After a long moment of fighting Hermione was back on her feet and they returned to the girl's bathroom, hand in hand, with only moments to spare before the horde of students flew by, drawn by the imminent arrival of dinner.

They stood there for a long moment, leaning heavily against the door as the crowd ran by. "That was so close..." Hermione said, chuckling very quietly under her breath.

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

"Wouldn't have needed to rush," Luna said, trying to catch her breath. "But why aren't you wearing your shoes?"

"Shoes?" Hermione asked. "I am wearing shoes."

"No," Luna said, still breathing heavily, "the charmed ones so you don't waddle like a great penguin."

"They make charmed, anti-waddling shoes? Why am I just hearing about this now?" Hermione said, surprised.

"What?" Luna asked, "I mentioned. Remember? I had to get new ones today because mine went missing and the old pair made my feet ache."

"You never said they were because you're pregnant though," Hermione said.

"Yes I did," Luna replied. "I said my aunt said the most important thing for a pregnant girl was good shoes."

"But you were talking about me," Hermione said, "You'd seen me waddling along."

"No I hadn't. I thought you'd tripped and stubbed your toe," Luna replied, "I said as much."

"I thought..." Hermione began, breaking into relieved laughter. "I thought you'd found me out."

"Then... you weren't going to give me the brush off?" Luna asked cautiously.

"I would never," Hermione replied, "You're my friend."

Luna sighed, "So, I was right."

"Right?" Hermione asked.

"We **were** having one of those amusing misunderstandings..." Luna smiled, shifting back and forth from foot to foot.

Hermione smiled, enjoying the moment. "Are you alright?" Hermione asked.

"My poor hips," Luna said, "All those stairs... so much standing. Helping you up earlier just pushed me over the edge."

"My back isn't the best either," Hermione said, stretching. "We'd best find somewhere to sit down... and I could use a bit of a snack"

"Yes," Luna said, rubbing the flat belly of her sundress. "And I need to do something about this itching. I know a place..."

"Then let's go," Hermione said.

Luna groaned. "Oh my hips," she said sadly, "All those stairs..."

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

§§§

The Room of Requirement had seen many uses over the centuries and just recently Hermione had seen it used for a training room and a storage room for lost and hidden items, but she had never seen it like this.

The room was huge, the ceiling stretching up into a beautiful mosaic-covered dome. The floor was likewise covered with colorful mosaics, typical of Byzantine Roman baths. A series of large, colorful, striped cabanas lined the room, surrounding the mosaic-covered floor. Chairs and chaise lounge lined the lightly steaming, star-shaped baths at the center of the room.

“Oh come on, Hermione,” Luna said, standing at the side of the baths, dipping her foot into the waters. Luna had removed her charmed sundress and shoes, replacing them with a bikini and colorful, clashing sarong. While not at all close to Hermione’s size, Luna was not exactly petite. She was in the full bloom of motherhood, apparently due to deliver her child soon. Her bump was full and round, wrapping around her torso, the tight, itchy skin shining slightly in the light reflected off the water. Still, aside from her middle and a slight overall weight gain Luna’s body was almost the same as it had been before her pregnancy.

“In a moment,” Hermione called out from within one of the cabanas. Luna rolled her eyes at Hermione’s words. Carefully she lowered herself onto one of the chairs just next to the pool before allowing her feet to dangle into the hot, bubbling water. Luna leaned back in her seat, a relaxing sigh escaping her lips. She closed her eyes, allowing her hands to leave the armrests and rest on her belly, gently stroking back and forth across the taut surface, carefully avoiding her outthrust belly button.

“This is just so peaceful,” Luna said quietly a few minutes later as she swirled her feet in the water. When there was no reply, Luna spoke a bit more loudly. “Hermione? Isn’t this peaceful?”

“I’m almost ready, I’ll be right out,” Hermione called, obviously still in the cabana.

Luna sighed, and grabbed the armrests, starting to pull herself up. “You’re being ridiculous,” Luna said.

“I’m almost ready, just taking a moment to get dressed,” Hermione said, a bit desperately.



## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

Luna rolled her eyes as she propped herself up on her elbows. “There’s no one here but our little meeting of the pudding club, nothing to be embarrassed about. So come out or I’m coming in.”

“Alright, Alright,” Hermione said, “Here I come.” The cloth door to the cabana opened just wide enough for Hermione to slip through the opening. Luna glanced over, curious as to what had taken Hermione so long, but as Hermione stepped out nothing seemed amiss. Her foot and calf seemed perfectly normal, as did her knee. From there on Luna’s recollections and reality did not agree.

Hermione’s thigh was heavy and thick, and while there was no cellulite a few stretch marks were present near her hips. She had modest saddlebags that tended to draw attention to her hips. Luna was careful not to react as she realized how wide Hermione’s hips had grown. From that point on, Luna did not need to worry. Hermione wore a large cover up of vibrant, red fabric. Its straps hung on her shoulders, hanging downward, over her breasts and belly before tapering in a bit at her hips. While it certainly hid the details of her shape, it did nothing to hide her size, more to the point, it’s moderately snug fit accentuated it.

Hermione appeared to have grown quite large, her like top projecting outward more than a foot from her chest before it draped over her breasts then stuck out even further over an even larger ball below. While Luna couldn’t see any details, she could see a flash from moment to moment as Hermione moved, her top momentarily brushing against the flesh underneath. What struck Luna even more so than how much Hermione’s breasts and bump projected forward was how wide Hermione was now. Her breasts projected to either side, lying heavily on her belly, making it impossible for her to reach forward without her upper arms pushing her breasts aside. Not so with her belly, which couldn’t be pushed aside at all and had to be reached around awkwardly.

“See? You look grand,” Luna said, with no genuine enthusiasm and only the most vague hint of false cheer.

“I look like a tea cosy,” Hermione said.

“You wouldn’t if you’d take that silly thing off,” Luna replied.

“I’m not taking off my swimsuit,” Hermione said, shocked.

“Not your swimsuit,” Luna said, “just that baggy cover-up thing.”



## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

Hermione waddled slowly over to the seat next to Luna, unable to resist a glance to Luna's figure before she began lowering herself to the chair. "You're positively tiny," Hermione said, changing the subject.

"I don't feel so tiny," Luna said quietly, looking down as her hands returned to her belly. "What's happened to you then?"

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked guardedly as she lowered her feet into the water.

"I'd wondered why you were having such trouble in the hall," Luna said, her eyes fixed on Hermione's torso as she stroked her own belly, "but... really."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean," Hermione said as she leaned back in her chair, coming to a rest with her belly and breasts blocking almost her entire field of vision forward.

"Right, no idea," Luna smiled.

For a long moment Hermione stared at Luna before she gave up and sighed, "It's triplets."

"It's not!" Luna gasped before regaining her composure. "I'm sorry, I'd thought maybe twins but I'd never..."

"It's not something I like to think about," Hermione said as she tried and failed to adjust her position to clear her downward view.

"I could never cope with all that," Luna said quietly, "could do with a bit of those boobs though."

"Luna!" Hermione said, shocked but nearly laughing.

"Oh please," Luna replied, "every girl wants a bit of boob, at least if they don't already have it."

"I'm firmly in that category now," Hermione said with just a touch of anger.

"So," Luna asked carefully, "What's it like then, being busty?"

"This isn't busty, this is bovine," Hermione sighed.

"Still, after you put aside the negatives," Luna began before Hermione cut her off.

"You mean after you ignore the massive weight and the gigantic size?" Hermione began sarcastically, "The aching, the heat, the constant sweating? The bloody huge nipples? The pressure, the damned milk and that horrid smell? Aside from all that?"

"Smell?" Luna asked.

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

"You must have noticed," Hermione sighed, "that sweet, cloying smell?"

"That's you?" Luna asked.

"So, how is it, aside from all that?" Hermione said, returning to the subject at hand.

"Uh... yes..." Luna said timidly.

"Aside from all that..." Hermione considered for a long moment. "They're brilliant," she admitted reluctantly, but with a bit of a mischievous gleam in her eye.

"I knew it," Luna said, pulling herself up to rest on her shoulders. "So tell..."

"The negatives definitely outweigh the positives," Hermione said, "and the Engorgio spell isn't helping."

"Engorgio? What's that got to... Ohhhhh," Luna said as she came to the realization of what the spell did.

"It makes the whole thing even more miserable. They must ache ten times worse now than they did before all the milk." Hermione shook her head.

"Milk... It just sounds awful," Luna said.

"It is. It gets everywhere, there's nowhere to go with it... and the smell. You just can't get rid of it. Even when you've pumped all you can it still leaks," Hermione explained as she reached over her shoulder and scratched furiously at her back.

"Leaks?" Luna asked.

"Constantly." Hermione said as she rolled her eyes. "I have to wear these little pads to sop it up." And the pump..." Hermione said, her voice growing unintentionally wistful, "Don't start me on the pump."

"I don't have anything bad to say about the pump," Luna said casually.

"What?" Hermione said, surprised.

"Madame Pomfrey had one on my list," Luna said, "Well, I had to try it out, didn't I?"

"It certainly does the job," Hermione said, turning a bit red. "It's..."

"Brilliant," Luna continued. "I wish I had a pair. I'd use them all day."

"Luna!" Hermione laughed.

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

“You don’t need to be embarrassed here. Now take that silly top off and relax.”

Hermione paused, her face showing a hint of melancholy, “I’m not embarrassed... well, I am, but not with you. I’m just sick of looking at it, it’s bad enough I have to feel it all the time.”

“Feel what?” Luna asked.

Hermione sighed, her shoulders sinking as she closed her eyes, before she reached down and grabbed the bottom hem of her cover-up and lifted it up, uncovering her belly.

Luna wasn’t sure what she was supposed to be looking at when Hermione lifted her top. Certainly she was big, very big in fact, but aside from that and the almost painfully tight shininess of her skin she saw nothing unusual except some very energetic kicking.

“Is the itching really that...” Luna began before she realized the Hermione’s middle was still undulating. Her eyes were drawn to Hermione’s belly in sort of a horrid fascination as her belly distended and rolled, the largest of the motions synchronized with the tiny grunts and moans Hermione was making.

After several minutes Luna found her voice, even as Hermione let go of her cover-up, leaving it bunched up atop her bikini-clad breasts as she began rubbing at her middle, “How long do they keep that up?” she asked.

“They don’t seem to stop anymore,” Hermione sighed, rubbing her belly furiously. “As soon as one calms down for a moment and another kicks him and it starts all over again.”

“How do you sleep?” Luna asked, allowing her hands to drop to her bump.

Hermione gave Luna a long, tired stare, “Does it look like I’ve been sleeping?”

“Sorry,” Luna said as she began stroking her belly, “Isn’t there anything to be done to help you?”

“Even if I could get the kicking to stop the itching still drives me mad,” Hermione explained. “Besides, I’m up three times a night to eat. No matter how much I shove down it’s never enough.”

“I don’t know about the eating, but there’s supposed to be a great salve for the itching.” Luna said.

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

"I picked up Nev-R-Itch at Willowings but it's not done much good," Hermione said, "It helped a bit with the itching, but it made my skin so tight and shiny and now..."

"Now you're itchier than you were before?" Luna asked.

"Exactly!" Hermione said, rubbing her belly furiously.

"Didn't Madame Pomfrey warn you off Nev-R-Itch?" Luna asked. "Turns out they make a whole variety of products, they all seem to work well enough, but they just make the problem worse in the long run so you use even more of them. My father had an article about it in The Quibbler a year or so ago."

"I don't believe this," Hermione said, rubbing furiously, "as if this isn't bad enough. It's outrageous!"

"If people would just read our investigative reports," Luna chided gently. "Madame Pomfrey can give you something for it your next visit."

"That's another rub," Hermione said, "I've not been to see her."

Luna began to speak before she stopped, staring goggle-eyed at Hermione, "Are you mad? You need antenatal care."

"I've been trying to avoid everyone finding out," Hermione sighed, "there would be very awkward questions." Hermione slid back and forth in her seat, rubbing her back into the seat. "Arrgh."

"What's wrong?" Luna asked.

"It's my back," Hermione explained, still shifting back and forth slightly in her seat, rubbing against the back, "It's been itching like mad but everyone says nothing's the matter."

"Perhaps a bit of balm or something," Luna suggested.

"I've tried all that," Hermione complained and she leaned forward, reached over her shoulder and scratched vigorously at the rash on her back. "Nothing helps."

"Hold on then," Luna said and slowly pushed herself upright and then to her feet. "Just lean forward and I'll have a look."

Hermione twisted her head around, looking over her shoulder, "I don't go any further forward."

Luna made her way from her own seat to behind Hermione's. After a moment to position herself to actually reach Hermione's back she ran her hand down Hermione's spine. "Where does it itch then?"

"Right here," Hermione said, scratching with her index finger at the tiny raised bumps.

## AN OVERSIZED PAIR

“Here?” Luna asked, pressing on a spot a bit too low.

Hermione sighed. “No, a bit higher. Up here,” she said, tapping with her finger.

Luna slid her hand upward until Hermione gasped slightly, “That’s it.”

“Hmm,” Luna said, “There’s nothing there.”

“I know, that’s what Minerva and Doctor Weasley said,” Hermione sighed as she continued to scratch.

“Doctor Weasley?” Luna smiled.

“It’s complicated.” Hermione sighed, leaning back into her seat.

Luna sighed. “I’d ask Professor Slughorn about that if I were you,” Luna said. “My father said he’s the best when it comes to cures for magical ailments and I’d say an invisible rash qualifies.”

“Perhaps, but it’s a bit difficult to show him without...” Hermione began.

“I know, I know... anyway, since I’m up,” Luna began, “I’m going to take a trip to Gladrags and pick up a pair of shoes for you before it gets too late. What shoe size do you wear?”

“A five,” Hermione said, “You’d really walk all the way down there for me?”

“Of course, we’re friends,” Luna replied. “I wear a six, so you can borrow mine while I’m gone. I’d expect you’d need to get something to eat soon.”

“Dinner!” Hermione exclaimed, clearly disappointed. “That’s two meals I’ve missed today. I can’t live on pastries and candy,” she continued, grabbing a handful of Bott’s Every-Flavored Beans.

“Alright then, I’ll be back in a bit,” Luna said, “You’d best get down to the kitchens while I’m gone.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SLOUCHING TOWARDS

BETHLEHEM

Hermione lay on her side in bed, half-asleep, a pillow between her knees, waiting for it to be time for her to get up. Unfortunately, waiting until her roommates awoke was no longer an option. She reached around under the covers, feeling for the rope tied to the footboard. Once she found it she grasped it with both her hands and pulled. Hermione grunted quietly as she pulled. *Gets harder every day*, Hermione thought as her side slowly came up off the bed. *Now comes the difficult bit*, she thought as her belly pressed into the space between her legs, forcing them apart even as she needed to keep them together so she could pivot out of bed. The problem was that today it just wasn't going to work. Hermione pulled as hard as she could, but all she succeeded in doing was pressing her outstretched leg into the mattress with her bump. *If I could just twist a bit at the waist*, she thought, forcing her mouth closed so that she wouldn't make any noises that would wake up her roommates.

Hermione sat there in bed, half reclined, for a long moment, gathering her strength for another attempt when she realized there was possibly a simpler and easier way. She lay back down on the bed, allowing herself to rest briefly and very uncomfortably on her back. As quickly as she was able she swiveled her body on the bed, pushing her feet over the edge of the mattress before spreading her legs as far apart as they would go. Only then did she grab the rope again and pull. It was still slow going but eventually she was nearly upright when her weight shifted and she suddenly slid forward, landing on her feet next to the bed, tottering back and forth, trying to regain her balance. Finally she lunged, stumbling forward until she reached the corner post of Lavender's bed and grabbed it, holding on tight until she finally stopped moving.

Lavender rolled over in her sleep and for a moment Hermione was afraid she was about to wake up when suddenly she grew quiet and still. Hermione sighed and pushed herself away from the bedpost, holding her arms out to her sides to help her regain her balance. Satisfied that she was as stable as she was going to get she waddled over to her own bed and, while



## SLOUCHING TOWARDS

### BE'THLEHEM

bracing herself against the headboard, slipped into her shoes one at a time. Now much more surefooted, Hermione stepped away from her bed and gathered up everything she needed for her morning bathroom trip. Although she was walking steadily and was no longer having balance problems she moved very slowly, as if very tired or carrying a great weight.

It only took Hermione a few minutes to reach the showers in the dormitory tower with her small basket of toiletries in hand. She crept to the back of the showers, to the furthest stall from the door, where she would have the most time to react if someone else came in. Not that anyone ever did. Getting here nearly an hour and half before anyone else was even up ensured her private use of the showers and these days she could use all the privacy she could get. Hermione doffed her robe and hung it on a hook just outside her shower stall before she pulled her nightgown over her head. Any notion that all her midnight snacking had resulted in a general weight gain was pushed aside as soon as her gown came off. Her bump was, in a word, enormous, and her breasts had fared little better. Hermione might have avoided that particular problem if the Hogwarts library had more to say on the subject of pregnancy and birth, but as it was it wasn't until bit more than a week after her first visit to the baths that an off-hand comment from Luna made the situation clear.

§§§

"Hermione, where have you been?" Luna called from across the entrance hall as Hermione came down the stairs.

"Sorry, just been a bit busy upstairs," Hermione said adding in a whisper, "I'll explain when we're outside."

The girls left the castle, heading for the lake, forgoing the long Saturday walk to Hogsmeade.

"So what's the matter then," Luna asked as she zipped the bottom of her mac.

"Nothing, just needed to stop in the spa and take the edge off," Hermione replied.

"What are you talking about?" Luna asked.

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BE'THLEHEM

Hermione sighed, "If I let it go too long I start leaking so I try to pump before it gets that far. Doesn't seem to be helping though. The pressure is just getting worse and they're leaking more now than ever."

If Hermione had expected sympathy from Luna she was disappointed, "So, you didn't go to the midwife in Hogsmeade as you said?" she asked.

"I was expecting a bit of sympathy," Hermione said.

Now it was Luna's turn to sigh, "Remember when you complained that no matter what you did your boobs just kept getting bigger?"

"Well, that's the Engorgio, isn't it?" Hermione replied.

"Did you even read up on Engorgio? The effects only last a week or so," Luna said.

"Well, everyone's different, aren't they?" Hermione said dismissively as they neared the lake.

Luna took a very deep breath, "It's not the Engorgio, at least not anymore. How often have you been pumping?"

"Just when I need to," Hermione began before Luna cut her off.

"Just when you need to..." Luna replied, shaking her head, "If you'd gone to the midwife like you said you would you'd know you just can't keep pumping like that. Haven't you ever heard the saying? The more you take, the more you make?"

Hermione stared at Luna for a long moment before she shook her head, half-smiling, "Oh no, that can't be... I haven't..." Hermione took a few steps, walking away from Luna as she spoke before turning around, "Why didn't you say anything?"

"You said you were going to midwife," Luna replied.

"And you believed me?" Hermione asked.

"I realize that I sometimes seem a bit flighty," Luna said, "but that doesn't mean I'm up for entertaining the idea this is my fault." Luna rolled her eyes, "You can't go on like this, not telling anyone but Myrtle and I." Luna seemed to realize something. "This isn't why I've not seen you in the baths, is it?"

"Of course not, I've just been busy," Hermione explained.

"If you've been pumping as much as you say you must be there all the time, unless you've found another private spot," Luna said leadingly.

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BETHLEHEM

"No..." Hermione said, "It's just..."

"So you have been avoiding me," Luna said sadly.

"No, that's not what I meant at all," Hermione said. "I just.. I'm.. It's so embarrassing, I've gotten so big."

"I know you're a bit bigger than me," Luna laughed, "but please, you're bump isn't that big."

"It's not my bump I'm worried about," Hermione said quietly.

"Hermione?" Luna began before continuing in a quieter, softer voice, "Just how much have you been pumping?"

"Just when I'm leaking," Hermione said, not looking at Luna, "Or going to be leaking, or when the pressure gets to be too much..."

"Oh Hermione," Luna began, "You can't..."

"Or when I get bored," Hermione added almost silently.

"What?" Luna laughed uncomfortably.

"Nothing," Hermione replied quickly.

Luna stepped to Hermione's side, "Remember, I tried the pump, I know how good it is."

"I remember how good it was the first go too," Hermione explained quietly. "This is different. The more I've pumped the more the blasted things have grown..."

"That makes sense I suppose," Luna mused, "The more milk you make the bigger they'd have to be..."

"And the bigger they get the more sensitive they've become," Hermione whispered, her cheeks turning slightly red.

"Even so, you've got to stop," Luna said.

"Stop?" Hermione laughed, "That's just not an option. They don't stop making milk just because I'm not using it up. They just swell until they're full up and ache terribly. Then there's the leaking..."

"I thought you got pads to sop that up," Luna replied.

"Yes, but then there's that lingering smell following me wherever I go..." Hermione explained.

"You're just going to have to learn to cope with it, at least for the time being," Luna replied. "If you keep this up... If you think you're embarrassingly big now..."

"I know," Hermione sighed. "It's just not going to be easy."

## SLOUCHING TOWARDS

### BETHLEHEM

“Well, I’ll make it easier for you,” Luna said. “We’ll arrange times for you to express and I’ll keep the pump in my dormitory.”

“That’s a bit drastic, isn’t it?” Hermione asked. Luna just gave Hermione a long stare. “Fine,” Hermione said exasperated, “We’ll do it your way.”

§§§

Hermione stepped carefully under the warm spray of the shower, her feet set far apart, leaning back to support her weight. She took the soap in her hands and lathered up before carefully soaping up her breasts, one at a time. Hermione sighed as she lifted one in her hands. Even though Luna’s help had slowed her breast’s growth almost to a stop Hermione still wished she’d found out what was going on before her breasts reached this size. Even without the soapsuds she could barely lift her breast with both hands. Hermione’s hands were simply too small to cradle the mass of flesh, even now that it was much more firm than a breast of this size would normally be. She allowed her breast to slide between her fingers, coming to a rest on her bump. Hermione looked around guiltily, as if someone might see her. She shook her head, dismissing the thought as she placed one hand on the lower curve of her breast, just under her nipple and pressed the upper surface of her breast with the other hand. Hermione’s eyes slid closed, a contented smile coming to her face as she coaxed milk from her breast, keeping up the pressure for a long moment before she stopped. *That’s not nearly as much as it had been*, Hermione thought, *thank goodness Luna was there to help me*.

§§§

“Please,” Hermione whispered to Luna as they walked from the Great Hall, “You don’t understand.”

“I understand perfectly,” Luna said. “Someone wants to slip back to where they were last week, pumping every hour, blowing up like a balloon...”

“It’s not like that!” Hermione said emphatically, “It’s just too soon for me to last this long.”

## SLOUCHING TOWARDS

### BE'THLEHEM

Over the last week Luna had slowly been weaning Hermione off her nearly hourly pumping and today was to be the longest test of Hermione's resolve yet. Hermione had last pumped early this morning, before classes began and she was to wait until classes were over for the day to continue. Hermione took a deep breath and closed her eyes before exhaling slowly through gritted teeth. It had started as it always did, as a minor pang that was easily dismissed. By halfway through Arithmancy it had slowly grown into an irritating twinge. Now, just after lunch that twinge had developed into a throbbing ache, an ache that had grown impossible to ignore.

"I'm not asking to change the schedule," Hermione explained, "I just need a bit of relief so I can make it until after class."

"I had a feeling this might happen," Luna said, shaking her head, "Come on, let's get this taken care of so we can get back to class."

"Thank you," Hermione said, wiping her forehead with a kerchief. "You don't know what this means to me." Hermione relaxed as Luna led her down the hall, but soon she began to look around, puzzled. "Where are we going?" Hermione asked.

"The Room of Requirement," Luna said.

"But... you keep the pump in your dormitory," Hermione said.

"Don't worry about that," Luna replied.

"I knew it. I knew you kept it somewhere in the Room of Requirement," Hermione said smugly as she scratched her back, "You just didn't trust me not to go looking for it on my own if I knew it was there."

Luna sighed, "You know what they say... never trust an addict." Hermione shot her a nasty look but didn't reply.

Hermione brooded silently for the rest of the trip up to the Room of Requirement, despite Luna's attempts at casual conversation. When they finally did arrive Luna was all business. Without a word she crossed the room and stepped into her cabana as Hermione walked slowly to the edge of the baths, breathing deeply, inhaling the steam coming off the water, trying to ignore the pain of the worst engorgement she'd ever experienced.

Now that Hermione was alone she pulled her arms inside her robe and gingerly touched her full, aching breasts. She winced, not expecting them to be quite this painful. *They feel like bloody rocks!* she thought. Carefully she slid her fingers underneath her right breast and lifted it upward,

## SLOUCHING TOWARDS

### BETHLEHEM

separating it from the sticky, sweaty undercleavage. *Ugh, more like boulders* she thought as she sighed through gritted teeth.

"Alright then," Luna said before looking at Hermione from the brown paper sack she carried in her hands, "This should do nicely."

"Finally," Hermione said as she turned and began to waddle over to Luna, pulling her robe off, over her head as she went.

Luna opened her eyes wide, half surprised and half amused, "Not wasting any time I see..." Then she took a closer look, "My, that looks uncomfortable." Hermione looked down once she had tossed her robe aside and gasped, surprised at how bad her breasts looked. She still wore both her school blouse and cardigan, although now only the top button of her shirt and none of the buttons on her sweater could be fastened. Her breasts spilled out through the opening, sitting heavily atop her belly, the fabric of her shirt draped over either side leaving about half her breasts exposed. What Luna could see of Hermione's breasts were angry and red and far less compressed by gravity than she would have expected.

"The pump?" Hermione asked, trying to get Luna's mind back on the task at hand. "Luna? The pump?" Luna pulled her eyes away from Hermione's chest.

"The pump?" Luna replied, "You won't be getting that until after class. I have something else to hold you over."

"What?!?" Hermione asked, clearly agitated. "I don't need something else. Give me the pump," Hermione added, stripping off her sweater and blouse and tossing them aside. Now that Hermione was closer and topless Luna couldn't help but stare. Hermione's breasts had taken on a slightly pointed shape, much like a rugby ball, capped by her enlarged and darkened nipples and areola. Her skin was bright red with beads of sweat slowly swelling before running down into her cleavage. A very slow but steady stream of leaking milk ran from each of her breasts and down her belly.

"Now, now," Luna said, shaking her head as if to clear her thoughts. "Midwife said this will do the trick. Remember, you're meant to be getting off the pump."

"To blazes with that!" Hermione nearly shouted, "Where do you have it hidden?"

## SLOUCHING TOWARDS

### BE'THLEHEM

"Calm down," Luna said as she began to close the distance between them.

"Calm? Down? You're not the one with armpits filled with aching milk ducts," Hermione said as she pushed past Luna and wobbled into the cabana Luna had just left. "Don't suppose you have some horrible aching that's getting worse by the minute, so much pressure they feel like they're going to explode?" she asked, calling out from within the tent. "Your boobs feel so heavy they feel like they're about to rip off?" Hermione didn't wait for a reply. "I didn't think so!" Luna listened as crashing sounds came from within the cabana. "It's not here!" Hermione shouted.

"I told you, I've got something else," Luna said patiently. "Now are you going to let me help you or should I just leave and get back to class?"

The sounds of destruction increased for a moment before the room fell silent. A moment later Hermione hobbled out of the tent and slowly got between Luna and the exit. "Where is it?!"

"Back in my room under my bed," Luna said calmly and deliberately.

Hermione glanced toward the door, then back to Luna, then back to the door as if unsure what to do. She seemed to realize all at once that Ravenclaw tower was too far away for her to reach quickly, that even if she did get there she couldn't get in and that Luna wasn't going to get the pump for her. Hermione burst into tears.

"Now, Now," Luna said as she closed the distance between them. "There's nothing worth all that. We'll have this all sorted in a few minutes. Midwife said this would do the trick."

"You really think so?" Hermione said, not bothering to wipe her eyes.

"Well..." Luna began doubtfully, "She was very confident."

"What is it then?" Hermione asked.

"Promise you'll hear me out," Luna said as she reached into her bag.

"That doesn't sound reassuring," Hermione said as Luna pulled her hand from the bag. "What?! Lettuce??"

"Cabbage," Luna corrected, "and don't look at me that way."

"I'm trying to be patient," Hermione said, her anger beginning to build again, "but I'm in pain and you've brought salad."

"It's not lettuce, it's cabbage," Luna sighed.

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BE'THLEHEM

“So you’ve brought horrible tasting lettuce,” Hermione snipped.

“Please, it’s not as if you’ll be eating it,” Luna replied, “it’s to be applied topically.”

Hermione looked at Luna through narrowed eyes, “I think you’re using the wrong word. What you said would mean I’d be putting cabbage on my breasts.”

“No,” Luna said cautiously, “That’s the right word.”

Hermione just stared at Luna for a long moment, “You can’t be serious.”

“I nearly said the same thing,” Luna explained, “but she was very clear and specific. It does work. It’s an ancient remedy.”

“Why do I have to be allergic to oleander,” Hermione sighed under her breath. “How does this potion work then?”

“It’s not exactly a potion,” Luna said as she walked over to Hermione. “It’s more that we just wrap one of the leaves around your breast.”

Hermione stared dubiously as Luna pulled one leaf off the head of cabbage and held it up to Hermione’s engorged breast, as if trying to figure the best way to wrap Hermione’s breast in the entirely inadequate leaf. After trying to position the leaf for a minute or so Hermione grew irritated.

“Give me that,” she said, yanking the leaf from Luna’s hand. “So I’m meant to wear a cabbage bra?”

“You’re actually meant to line your bra with the leaves,” Luna explained quietly.

Hermione cut her off, “What bra?” she asked incredulously. “I haven’t had one that fits for weeks!” Hermione said, simmering.

“Well, we’ll just need to adapt it a bit, due to your... situation,” Luna said delicately. “We’re going to have to tape them in place, like a plaster.”

Hermione stared at Luna through narrowed eyes. “Thought of everything then, have you?” she said, handing the leaf back to Luna before carefully sliding her fingers beneath her left breast and slowly lifting it off her belly. “Best get started,” Hermione winced. “Slide that one underneath.”

“This may be a bit cold,” Luna said as she slid the cabbage leaf under Hermione’s breast.

“Just a bit? I could do with a bit of a cold comprESSSSSSSSS!” Hermione began, squealing as the cold cabbage leaf hit her skin.



# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BE'THLEHEM

Luna looked over Hermione's breast, realizing for the first time that despite how large the cabbage leaves were, they weren't going to cover nearly as much of Hermione's breasts as she hoped.

"I think we might need a few more," Luna said as Hermione began to tape the first leaf in place.

§§§

*That first time took forever,* Hermione thought as she soaped up and washed her breasts. *I can't believe how uncomfortable that was... and the stench.* Not only was the odd, leafy texture of the cabbage uncomfortable against her skin, but as the cabbage wilted it slowly began to smell, as if the cabbage was cooking. *and I hate cabbage!* Still, she couldn't argue with results. After only three days the engorgement was almost completely gone and between that and Luna's help she'd managed to rein in her rampant pumping and lactation.

*If only there was some way to rein this in,* Hermione thought as she began to soap up her belly, scrubbing away at the itchiness even as she fought to keep her balance on the wet stone floor. While Hermione had been large for her dates ever since her pregnancy had begun as the last few weeks went by it was if her growth went into overdrive. Previously her weight gain had been gradual and generalized, now it seemed every ounce she gained went straight to her already oversized bump. Worse, the pounds were piling on so quickly that she could easily feel the difference day to day, not to mention the great increase in the size of her middle. Now she knew there was no way she could continue her charade. She couldn't even get through a routine day without major problems, as the day before had proved.

§§§

Hermione moved slowly down the sixth floor hallway on her way from the Astronomy tower to the Great Hall for dinner. In times past she would have returned to the Gryffindor common room to drop off her books and relax for a bit before heading downstairs, but these days she needed

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BETHEHEM

every moment she could take just to get from place to place. As the weeks wore on Hermione's weight had increased dramatically, and with that she had slowed down to the extent that it now took nearly an hour for her to reach the Great Hall from Gryffindor tower, a trip that normally took less than ten minutes.

She stumbled along awkwardly, one hand pressed into the small of her back, the other pulled inside her robe rubbing her belly in large, sweeping strokes, less from a need to attack the itchiness than from force of habit. As Hermione approached the stairs she headed toward the nearest wall and leaned against it for support. She tried to catch her breath, inhaling sharply. Without even thinking she pulled her hand from her stomach, pulled out a cruller and began to eat, gasping for air between bites. A few minutes later she had recovered and was on her way again, wiping the sweat off of her forehead with her forearm.

As recently as a few weeks ago Hermione had taken slightly longer but less traveled paths when she had to travel long distances so as not to arouse suspicions. *Someone is going to notice how slowly I'm moving sooner or later or catch me resting*, she thought at the time. Now she took the shorter path regardless of what others might think, even though she was much slower now and needed to rest much more often.

Hermione reached the stairway and looked down from the landing at the long winding staircase leading down to the next floor. A few weeks ago her shoulders would have sank and a sigh would have escaped her lips before heading down the stairs, clutching the handrail like it was a lifeline. Today she paused for only a moment before she simply headed down the stairs, her eyes half open, her hand sliding loosely along the handrail as she took the steps one at a time. If the slow going bothered Hermione she didn't show it, her face nearly expressionless aside from her obvious exhaustion.

In the past few weeks Hermione's relationship with her middle had changed. Before she had merely felt heavier and more awkward in general, not to mention hot, tired and hungry, as if she'd just gained weight. But as the weeks pressed on she felt less and less heavy and clumsy in general and more and more like she'd swallowed a large cannonball, one that was growing heavier and more awkward by the day.

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BETHELHEM

It was a challenge just keeping her balance while walking, much less trying to do stairs. Before it had been automatic, her feet staying under her center of gravity, stopping her from losing her balance and tumbling to the floor, but now it was as if her belly had a mind of its own. Once she started out in one direction there was no stopping her, the great mass of her middle continuing forward whether she wanted to or not, dragging the rest of her along for the ride. In the best-case scenario if she needed to stop quickly she would simply work her way over to a wall, allowing it to absorb her momentum, but on the stairs that simply wasn't an option.

Hermione took the stairs one at a time, trying to pause for a moment on each step to allow her momentum to dissipate before she continued onward. However, after the fourth step she found herself forced forward onto the next step as her belly went a bit further forward than she wanted. *Bloody thing wants me to topple over and fall on my arse!* she seethed. There was only one way not to fall. She forced herself forward, keeping her feet under her great ball of a middle. That saved her balance, but propelled her to the next step, now moving even more quickly down the stairs as her belly dragged her forward, her arms clinging uselessly to her belly. Her hugely swollen womb bounced heavily inside her, alternately pressing all the air from her lungs then coming down hard on her bladder. She didn't even manage a grunt from the blow to her bladder before her breasts slapped painfully down atop her belly, the impact pulling her even further forward. Hermione stumbled onto the landing holding her hands out in front of her, allowing them to absorb the impact as she came to a stop. She stood there a long moment, breathing heavily as she looked at her outstretched hands. It only took a moment for her to regain her balance and turn to the next flight of stairs. *Going to have to look into a back support*, Hermione winced as she pressed both hands into her lower back, rubbing at the sudden bouncing-induced soreness.

She arrived at the Great Hall just minutes before her classmates. She walked past the end of the table closest to the entrance hall, where the seventh year's sat and past where she, Harry and Ron sat earlier in the year when they were still talking. Their continuing disagreement only served to help her. She walked down to midway into the fifth year's seats and slowly and carefully eased herself into the seat. She just managed to sit down and

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BETHLEHEM

rest her head in her hands before her classmates stormed the room, quickly filling the seats for dinner.

Hermione ate silently, there being little time for talk between bites as she forced food into her mouth. The students surrounding her watched with a mixture of awe and disgust. If Hermione noticed their stares she didn't show it as she worked her way through one course after another. Eventually the other students went back to their own meals, the spectacle of Hermione's dining habits becoming a bit easier to ignore each day.

Hermione finished cleaning her plate, mopping up the last bit of gravy with a dinner roll and popping it into her mouth. Only then did she realize that dinner had ended, the last few students trickling out of the Great Hall. Hermione looked around, almost disinterested, as she waited for the last of the students to leave the Great Hall before she pushed her plate back from the edge of the table. She leaned forward, resting her palms on the edge of the table and pushed, grunting with the effort before she stopped, her arms going limp, a confused look on her face. She tried again, pushing against the table, her eyes growing wide. *I don't believe this*, Hermione thought. *I didn't have much of a problem at lunch*. She pushed again, this time her effort noticeably weaker than before.

*Well, that's perfect*, Hermione thought as she pushed her plate off to one side and tossed her messenger bag onto the table in front of her. *I suppose it had to come to this sooner or later*, she thought as she unbuckled the flap on her bag. *Now I'm found out for sure*, she thought, without a bit of panic. *Sooner or later someone's going to find me here and when I can't get off this damned seat they'll wisk me off to Madame Pomfrey. Then I might as well hang a sign that says 'slut' around my neck*. Despite her thoughts Hermione didn't seem upset or angry. Her expression didn't change as she reached into her bag and pulled out a pastry before taking a bite, vaguely recognizing that the frosting on her bear claw was mixed with the flavor of gravy from tonight's meal. She didn't need to look down to realize her lips were covered with gravy and now vanilla frosting from her pastry. She didn't even glance at her napkin before she took another bite.

Several hours and several attempts to rise later Hermione was nearly out of snacks and out of ideas. *I'd best get used to the idea I'm about to get caught*, she thought. *At this point it would almost be a relief*. Hermione low-

## SLOUCHING TOWARDS

### BE'THLEHEM

ered her head into her hands, her eyes closed as tried to clear her head. A minute or so later she heard a rapid clicking sound in the distance. As Hermione listened she realized the sounds were getting closer. She turned and saw Mrs. Norris scampering down the aisle between tables before stopping directly behind her. Hermione looked at the cat curiously when suddenly it began to mew loudly, as if trying to attract attention.

“Aye! What are you doin’ in here then?” Filch shouted from the other end of the Great Hall. “It’s half past seven! You’re out of bounds. Get movin’ before I haul you off myself.”

Hermione turned and gave Filch a long, tired stare before she looked back to the table, just by her messenger bag. Filch’s mouth twisted into a malicious smile as he crossed the room, stopping just behind Hermione. “Granger,” he said, clearly relishing the moment. “Up and out on your own or you’ll be in my office, serving my detention.”

*Great, just what I need,* Hermione thought before an idea popped into her head. “Serve your detention? No, I don’t think I’ll be doing that,” Hermione said. “Shove off,” she continued, wincing even as she said the words. She held her breath, bracing her feet beneath her, her hands on the tabletop, just waiting for the right moment to push. Filch didn’t disappoint. He grabbed Hermione roughly by the arm to yank her to her feet. Hermione seized the moment and pushed against the table with all her might, the extra effort by Filch being just enough to allow Hermione’s tired legs to push her, ever so slowly, to her feet. Filch gave Hermione a long, suspicious stare before he tightened his grip on her arm, leading her out of the Great Hall, moving much more slowly than he would have liked.

“You’re only making things harder on yourself,” Filch ranted as he led Hermione slowly toward his office.

§§§

Hermione turned away from the pounding water of the shower and continued soaping up her belly, at least as much of it as she could reach with her arms maneuvering awkwardly around her vastness. Even standing with her feet as far apart as she dared, leaning back as far as she was able she could barely balance the massive orb within her. Her weight and size had

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS

## BE'THLEHEM

simply grown too vast, too heavy for her to make it through even an easy day without an amazing amount of difficulty. Hermione looked down, past her oversized breasts to her massive belly. Its sides and top were covered with suds, but the furthest bit, around her outthrust belly button, were soap free, her hands unable to reach fully around it. *At least washing it helps with the itching*, Hermione thought as she stopped trying to soap up and just ran her hands back and forth over her taut, hard belly.

The longer Hermione stared at her oversized bump and breasts the more clear it became in her head. *I'm done for. I can't even get up from meals on my own. I'm not ABOUT to be found out, I'm already found out. I just don't know it yet. Best to just get dressed and head straight up to Dumbledore's office. Perhaps if I tell him every...* Hermione gasped, a sharp pain jabbing at her bump.

Instinctively she reached down, pressing her hand onto her lower belly, into the tight, pinched muscles. Here her belly had gone from being merely taut and firm to hard and rigid. Hermione stared down at her belly in shock as the muscles tightened, growing more and more uncomfortable as she watched her bump deform under the pressure, her belly seeming to shift and push upwards even as it pushed even further outward than before, the pressure pushing her belly button out from a tiny nub into a large, fleshy knob. She gritted her teeth as the pressure grew stronger and stronger, her entire belly now feeling hard as a rock as she desperately clutched it with both hands as she gasped, trying to take a breath. Then, just as suddenly as it had begun, it was gone.

Hermione exhaled sharply and stared at her oversized bump and breasts, the contraction strengthening her resolve. *Even if they've not noticed I'm pregnant they won't miss three screeching babies...*

"Hermione!" Parvati shouted as she ran into the girl's bathroom. "Hermione!" Hermione turned sideways, pressing her belly into the cold wall of the shower stall, hoping Parvati wouldn't see any need to come any deeper into the showers. "Hello? Yes?" Hermione shouted.

"Hurry up! You have to get to the hospital wing!" Parvati shouted.

*She knows!* Hermione thought, the idea pounding in her head.

"You've got to hurry!" Parvati continued as she began to navigate through the room to the shower stalls at the rear.

# SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHLEHEM

“Hurry?” Hermione called out, realizing her suspicion was wrong.  
“What’s the rush?”  
“It’s Ron,” Parvati explained, “He’s been poisoned.”

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

Hermione made her way to the hospital wing as quickly as she was able, in fact, faster than she thought possible. From the moment she'd heard Parvati's words Hermione's thoughts were focused solely on Ron, and whatever she had been thinking of before Parvati came to deliver the news, she didn't remember. Outside of the hospital wing a small crowd of students had gathered, milling about, the din of their conversations echoing down the hall as Professor McGonagall and Professor Slughorn stood quietly talking to each other.

"Hermione," Harry Potter called out, stepping out of the crowd as Hermione stepped up to the group.

"I came as soon as I heard. How is he?" Hermione asked in between gasps for breath.

"He'll be fine," Harry began as he looked Hermione over. For the first time in weeks she looked presentable. Her hair was neatly brushed, her tie neatly tied about her neck and the slack look of tired ennui was gone. Before Harry even had a chance to open his mouth and comment on the change he was interrupted by Professor Slughorn.

"Fine thanks to Harry," Slughorn said, slapping Harry firmly on the back. "If it wasn't for Harry and his bezoar I doubt Mr. Weasley would be with us today."

"I suppose you'll have to thank Professor Snape then," Hermione sighed.

"Snape?" Harry said, confused, before he continued in a whisper. "No, from my potions book. You see, you were wrong about the Half-Blood Prince. Why'd you mention Snape?"

"From the first day of potions... in our first year... He explained about bezoars," Hermione replied exasperated.

"Why can't I see my Ron!" Lavender Brown cried out. Only Harry and Hermione turned to look at Lavender as she shouted at Professor McGonagall, the others obviously used to her outbursts.

"Are Ron's parents on the way?" Hermione asked.

"They're in there now with Fred, George and Ginny," Harry explained, his voice sounding a bit odd as he said the youngest Weasley's



## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

name. Hermione was about to ask Harry about it when the doors to the hospital wing opened, the Weasley clan pouring through the doors.

"Mr. Weasley," Harry began but Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were already headed toward Harry and Hermione.

"He's going to be fine thanks to you," Mr. Weasley said as he beamed at Harry, Mrs. Weasley coming around to Hermione's side.

Mrs. Weasley embraced Hermione warmly as her husband and Harry spoke. "If there's anything I can do," Mrs. Weasley whispered into Hermione's ear. "You just let me know."

"What? I'm..." Hermione started to explain before Mrs. Weasley shhed her.

"Not that there's anything wrong," Mrs. Weasley mused, "But if there's something you can't handle yourself you know you can always come to me."

"You know, he'd be dead a half-dozen times by now if you weren't around," Fred said popping up between Harry and his father, interrupting his mother's quiet conversation with Hermione.

"More like a dozen," George added. "You'd think he'd be bright enough not to drink poison though."

"But I don't understand, who would want to poison Ron?" Hermione asked as she turned to Harry, only to find him talking quietly to Ginny, standing a bit closer to each other than she would have expected. Harry looked over to Hermione, aware on some level she was speaking to him, his face turning a gentle red as he noticed Hermione's raised eyebrow. Hermione was about to say something when Harry was rescued. Madame Pomfrey slipped through the hospital wing's doors and was immediately besieged by students, Lavender Brown first and loudest in line.

"I need to see my Won Won!" Lavender cried but Madame Pomfrey was having none of it.

"Mr. Weasley needs his rest," Madame Pomfrey explained, gently ushering the students away from the doors she had just exited. Hermione and Harry began to move away with the other students, but Mrs. Weasley and Ginny held them fast as the other students, Lavender included, were ushered away.

"Couldn't have the whole bunch pushing in," Fred said as soon as the group was nearly out of earshot.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"Have to keep out the riff-raff," George said, nodding toward the crowd. Harry and Hermione shared a smile as they watched the other students leave. Hermione was unable to suppress a wide grin as Lavender stared back at her, clearly realizing Hermione was going to visit Ron and she was not. Madame Pomfrey ushered Harry and Hermione quietly to Ron's bedside. Despite the matron's protests, Ron seemed fine, bright eyed and rosy cheeked. Hermione was so surprised to see Ron looking so well that she rushed to his bedside and dropped heavily onto the mattress next to him. She grabbed him by the shoulders, wrapping her arms around him in a tight hug.

"If I knew it'd turn out like this I'd drink more poison," Ron said, belying his surprised expression.

"Ronald Weasley!" Hermione shouted, pushing him away from her and holding him at arms length. "You think this is funny? You almost died!"

"I was just joking," Ron said as he held up his arms to fend off the blows from Hermione which quickly followed.

"That's exactly what I mean, joking around about something as important as this!" Hermione complained as she continued to pummel him. Unnoticed by either of them Harry's smirk had long since given way to quiet laughter and he turned and headed for the exit.

Ron grabbed Hermione's wrists, finally stopping the constant blows. She fought for a moment, but even in his weakened condition Ron's strength was much more than a match for Hermione's. Soon she stopped fighting, her arms going slack as she rested, breathing heavily just inches from Ron's face, the pair staring into each other's eyes.

"You know," Ron began, tilting his head as if he was about to look away from her gaze.

"Oh shut up," Hermione said as she leaned in and kissed him.

Neither of them took any notice when the doors to the hospital wing closed behind Harry as he left.

§§§

A few days later Ron was out of hospital, sitting next to Hermione in the Gryffindor common room, just before bedtime. Somehow Ron's poisoning and recovery had an almost magical effect on Hermione. Still, no

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

amount of good attitude could change the physical problems she was having. Luckily the contraction that had hit Hermione in the showers was a false alarm, but her other problems continued to grow. Now though, with Ron's help, things were at least a bit easier. They sat in front of the fire, Hermione working on one of Ron's scrolls as he read through his potions textbook. Hermione shifted in her seat awkwardly, grunting quietly as she did so.

"You alright?" Ron asked quietly, leaning in closer to Hermione.

"Uh... yes," Hermione began, searching for an answer that didn't involve explaining her chronic back pain due to dragging around what she guessed must be an extra seven stone on her normally lithe frame. "It's just..." she said, trailing off.

"If there's anything I can do to help," Ron began.

Hermione sighed as she thought up an answer sure to change the subject. "I did a lot of walking today and my feet are a bit tender," she explained. "So unless you're offering a foot massage..." musing to herself that while not the whole truth, her explanation certainly was true. Her feet certainly didn't enjoy the extra punishment of carrying her oversized body about the school. They ached nearly all the time, at first just when she was standing, but now nearly anytime they touched the floor and she knew exactly how Ron would react at the suggestion of a foot massage.

"Alright," Ron said, sliding a bit down the settee, away from Hermione, making space for her legs as he closed his book. "Up here then," he said, patting his lap with his hands.

"What?" Hermione whispered, wide eyed, completely unprepared for this turn of events.

"Why not, it's not like we're snogging in the corner," Ron said, realizing as soon as he spoke that it was the exact wrong thing to say. Luckily Hermione seemed to have other things on her mind as she looked cautiously around the room at the few students still awake. A few were in the corner playing chess, Colin Creevey sat in the overstuffed red chair by the room's entrance, fast asleep. Three more sat at a table behind them revising. Absolutely none of them were paying any attention to Ron or Hermione.

"Come on, what's the hold up?" Ron whispered. Finally Hermione shrugged and gently eased her shoes off her feet. It took her a long moment to maneuver her body around to allow her feet to sit on Ron's lap, but if Ron noticed the delay he didn't mention it. She finally settled in, laying back

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

against the arm of the davenport, allowing her legs to clear the underside of her oversized belly as she lifted her feet, one by one, into Ron's lap.

Ron raised his hands to Hermione's feet, but now that her feet were nearly under his hands he hesitated, either unsure of how to begin or suddenly realizing his lack of confidence in the whole affair. "What's the hold up then?" Hermione whispered, smiling coyly. Ron shot Hermione a slightly embarrassed glance before he swallowed and took her feet in his hands, slowly and delicately running his thumbs down the arches of her feet. Hermione lifted her head and opened her eyes, giving Ron a dubious look. "You've got to be kidding," Hermione whispered. "That's not even firm enough to be ticklish. You have to put a bit of effort into it."

"I don't want to hurt you," Ron replied.

"Hurt me?" Hermione sighed. "Ron... I'm not a delicate flower that needs to be pampered so I won't bruise. Just get on with it."

Ron shook his head and sighed before pressing his thumbs firmly into the soles of Hermione's feet, just at the base of her toes. Hermione moaned softly, her back arching slightly as she settled back against the arm of the sofa. For a moment Ron stopped, unsure if Hermione was in pain or not, but one quick glance from her was enough to answer that question and Ron got back to work. As he worked his way into Hermione's insteps she seemed to relax even more, a gentle smile coming to her face, her eyes sliding closed as a quiet purr escaped her lips.

Ron continued working up and down Hermione's insteps, pressing slowly and forcefully. Hermione slid deeper and deeper into the warm, relaxed state she now found herself in. After several minutes she suddenly was yanked from her reverie as she noticed that Ron had stopped rubbing her feet and that the room had grown suddenly quiet, the only sound being the quiet crackling of the logs in the fireplace. Hermione lifted herself off the arm of the sofa and opened her eyes as she spoke. "What's the hold up then," she whispered, suddenly realizing there was no need to ask.

The other students in the room sat silently, their books set aside, their chess games ignored, as they stared at Ron and Hermione. It wasn't that they weren't used to seeing public displays of affection. Ron and Lavender were responsible for quite a few such displays in the common room. No, Ron giving a foot rub wasn't terribly surprising. Hermione receiving one, however, was. With only a glance around the room she instantly realized that the

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

warm, loving feelings she thought in her naiveté were a secret only she and Ron shared, were immediately recognized by everyone in the room.

Hermione's face turned crimson as she struggled to get off the couch as quickly as possible. Ron offered a hand but Hermione was having none of that. Despite her weight she was surprisingly quick, although as she finally got herself on her feet she tripped and nearly landed in Colin Creevey's lap. She quickly righted herself and stormed from the room, up the spiral staircase leading to the girl's dormitories. Moments later Ron was on his feet running after her, but as he set foot on the girls stairwell, the step collapsed beneath his foot, collapsing into the staircase, sending him down to the floor, landing with a heavy thump.

Ron got to his feet and peered up the girl's stairway. He was about to call out to her when he heard the door to the girl's dormitory slam shut at the top of the stairs. Ron's shoulders sank as he turned and looked back at the couch, where Hermione and his own schoolwork still sat where they had set it aside. Then he noticed the other students peering at him curiously. "What are you looking at then?" Ron shouted at the other students in the common room, who quickly found things to keep themselves occupied. Satisfied, Ron turned and headed up the stairs to the boy's dormitory, muttering under his breath, "Bugger."

§§§

Ron wasn't one to be embarrassed easily, but Hermione certainly was. Every time Ron even so much as glanced at Hermione over the next few days he swore he could feel the heat radiating from her blushing cheeks and her expression warning him away. Three days later Hermione sat in the common room very early in the morning. She sat on the sofa in front of the fireplace wearing her civvies and wrapped in a blanket as proof against the early morning chill, only her charmed-hoodie clad shoulders and head outside the comfort of the quilt, her books to one side, ignored.

She glanced down at the blanket, lying wrinkled across her lap. She glanced around the room, knowing before she did so that she was alone. She reached down and grabbed the bottom of her hoodie and pulled it up, over her belly, the tightness of the band almost refusing to clear the massiveness of her middle. With a bit more effort it stretched just enough to clear her roundness and it bunched up in front of her breasts.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

*I did pretty well, two hours without scratching,* Hermione thought as she began rubbing her belly with both hands. Even after all these months of slowly growing to this size, something still seemed unreal about it, possibly because she didn't have to see it all day, every day. Still, there was a certain reality that comes with rubbing the huge fleshy sphere that no amount of denial and magical clothes could overcome. She quickly grew engrossed in the rubbing, the long circular strokes helping her to relax. She had nearly fallen asleep when a noise from behind startled her.

"Hey," Ron said as he stepped out of the stairwell towards Hermione. "I was hoping you'd be up."

"Ron!" Hermione nearly shouted, instantly awake as she turned her head quickly in Ron's direction before turning back and looking down at the very large bulge beneath her blanket in a panic. She grabbed the lower hem of her hoodie and pulled and although it began to slide down over her belly, the fabric wasn't as willing to stretch as it had been earlier in the night. She pushed as hard as she could, an audible grunt forcing itself from her lips as Ron stepped around to the front of the sofa.

"You alright?" Ron asked, concerned and slightly confused as he watched her struggling beneath the blanket.

"No! I'm fine!," Hermione said as she gave up on her hoodie and fluffed the blanket in her lap, doing her best to disguise what was hidden underneath. She flashed him an attempt at a wide-eyed, innocent, expression.

*Now I know something's going on,* Ron thought as he glanced at the lump sitting on her lap. *Still, it won't take long to find out what she's got under that blanket.* Ron looked back to Hermione's face to find she was still looking at him hopefully. "I saw the light on the way to the loo, surprised to see you're still up." Ron said, "Thought you'd got that insomnia beat."

"I thought I did too," Hermione sighed. "Some nights I still get a bit uncomfortable. A few minutes by the fire to warm up and I'll be back to bed."

Ron stood there looking at Hermione for a long moment. "Sorry about the other night. Didn't mean to embarrass you."

"You didn't.. It's not..." Hermione began before stopping to gather her thoughts. "I'm not used to people looking at me that way," Hermione explained.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"Come off it. You must have had blokes eyeing you up before," Ron said disbelievingly, a look of deep thought flashing across his face as he realized other guys must have given Hermione the once over.

"Charming," Hermione sighed, "but I wasn't talking about you," Hermione said dismissively. "It's them, everyone in the common room just staring. I'm not used to that sort of attention."

"Well, I guess you're going to have to start getting used to it," Ron replied as he stepped over to stand nearly in front of Hermione, just in front of the empty seat cushion next to her. "At least we will if we're going to make a go of this."

"Oh Ron," Hermione smiled as she leaned forward, as if about to leap to her feet to embrace him, momentarily forgetting how the great mass of her body restrained her. Just as suddenly as her movement began Hermione stopped and leaned back into the sofa, an angry look coming to her face.

Ron's face dropped, obviously disappointed. "What's wrong? What did I do?"

"Nothing," Hermione replied a bit too quickly. "I mean it's not you,..." she continued, trying to come up with an answer that didn't involve explaining that she was simply too vast to get to her feet quickly, and that even if she managed it, there was no way she could hug him without giving away her condition.

"It's not you, it's me? You were really going to say that then?" Ron said, a bit of attitude tingeing his voice.

"No!" Hermione said, a bit louder than she had meant to. "It's not like that at all."

"What is it like then?" Ron asked, sitting down next to Hermione.

"It's just..." Hermione began as she again began wrestling with her hoodie under the blanket, trying to pull it back down over her massive belly, the lower hem repeatedly catching on her outthrust belly button. "It's hard to explain."

"What have you got under there anyway? A Quaffle?" Ron asked, with a gentle, warm smile.

To Hermione it might as well have been a leering grin. "I should say not. It's a pillow."

"Better be careful you don't rip it in two then," Ron said and reached out, patting the bulge in her blanket with his hand. Hermione nearly leaped away, as if he'd slapped her, a look of shocked horror on her face. Ron drew

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

back, his face growing red. Hermione hadn't touched him, but from the look of him Ron might as well have been slapped across the face.

"Guess I'll get back to bed then," Ron said as he pulled himself to his feet and turned toward the stairs.

"Wait," Hermione called after him as she struggled to try to get to her feet, but it simply wasn't happening. She began rocking back and forth to build up enough momentum to get out of the overly comfortable cushions and follow Ron before he was on the stairs and away. "Ron, wait!" Ron turned and glanced back, just long enough to see that Hermione had not even risen from the sofa to follow him. He shook his head slowly, a sigh nearly escaping his lips before he turned and climbed the stairs to his dorm room, the door closing behind him just as Hermione finally managed to get to her feet, her blanket falling to the floor, leaving it abundantly clear exactly why she'd been having so much trouble getting to her feet, her hands, even now, scratching at the sides of her tight, oversized belly as its taut skin shone in the firelight. She stared up at the closed door leading to Ron's dormitory as she called out into the darkness, her voice a quiet whisper.

"Ron."

§§§

When Luna caught up with Hermione the next day and managed to get the whole sorry tale retold she was ready to try anything to lift Hermione's spirits, but she was inconsolable. "How could I be so daft!" Hermione railed.

"It's not your fault," Luna said. "Perhaps we could get him a pair of Brooks Transmorfifying Glasses so he wouldn't notice, you know... your bump."

"He'd notice the bloody glasses," Hermione nearly shouted, losing her patience with Luna's mad ideas. If Luna noticed the outburst she ignored it.

"Well, that's out then," Luna mused. "But you couldn't let him put his hand there. What if he pushed down or grabbed the blanket?"

"I've just made a mess of everything," Hermione sighed. "Now Ron's not talking to me, I have three scrolls to finish for class tomorrow, my feet ache, my back feels like it's about to snap in two, if I get any itchier I'm going to scream, and if I don't get something to eat soon I'm going to collapse."



## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"I can't help with a snack," Luna said, "but it sounds like you just need a relaxing swim."

"Good on you," Hermione said calmly, the fight having gone out of her, "But Hogwarts doesn't have a pool and the closest the Room of Requirement will do is the Turkish baths. That's far too shallow and hot. A swim is just out of the question, impossible."

"Oh, I don't know, impossible is my middle name," Luna said wistfully. "Just meet me in the entry hall after dinner and wear your swimsuit under your robes."

"Swimsuit? You must be joking. There is no way my swimsuit even comes close to fitting anymore," Hermione sighed.

"You always look at the negative," Luna chided, her voice remaining overly chipper. "Just charm it and meet me here. I think I'll have a little surprise for you."

"Really." Hermione replied flatly as Luna began to walk away.

"Wait," Luna said, stopping in her tracks. Hermione paused expectantly. "I was wrong. My middle name is Evanna. Still, should all come out in the wash." Hermione just stared at her. The idle thought completed Luna skipped down the hall, leaving Hermione standing alone, even more confused than before.

§§§

"Professor!" Filch called out as he headed down the second floor hall after evening meals, chasing after Professor McGonagall, a large brown bag in hand. "They've gone too far now, they have!"

McGonagall stopped and turned, closing her eyes slowly before opening them again. "Yes, Mr. Filch, what have the ruffians done this time?" she said, obviously familiar with the similar conversations she'd had with Argus Filch in the past.

"This...it's just beyond... I've never seen the like..." Filch said, his cheek beginning to twitch as if just contemplating their heinous act made it that much worse.

"Mr. Filch, please?" McGonagall said, trying to get his attention.

Filch shook his head. "They've gone too far! What do they expect to do with it?"

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

“Argus!” McGonagall said, seeming to shout even though her voice remained at nearly the same volume.

Filch grunted. “A statue. I don’t see what they would do with it or where they could have put it. Must weigh two tons. Don’t see how they could have moved it at all.”

“I’ll have Filius do a locator spell for it in the morning,” McGonagall sighed. “Until then there isn’t...”

Filch interrupted her, “Already asked Flitwick,” he grunted. “It’s not in Hogwarts, on the grounds or in Hogsmeade.” McGonagall rubbed her forehead as she closed her eyes, shaking her head. “How’d anyone even know it was there, that’s what I’d like to know,” he continued.

“Where was it,” McGonagall replied, hoping to push the conversation to its inevitable end.

“First floor classroom, the busted up one, eleven.” Filch replied. “But I’ll get them, they left clues they did!” Filch began digging through his bag, but McGonagall’s eyes had glazed over, as if troubled and deep in thought. “They left this robe,” he said, pulling a long, elaborately woven robe from his bag, “and these,” he added, pulling a wig and fancy dress mask from the bag as well. “You alright?” Filch asked, looking at McGonagall’s slightly pale face.

“I feel as if someone just walked over my grave,” she replied, her eyes unfocused. Filch looked at her for a long moment before he continued.

“Why’d they pick that statue, that’s what I’d like to know. What students even remember...”

“Cassandra Trelawney,” McGonagall said, cutting him off, her eyes taking on a cold, steely glare.

“Right, that’s her,” Filch said as McGonagall, her thoughts apparently elsewhere, began running her fingers along the front lapel of the robe Filch had found, allowing the rough texture of the fabric to brush against her fingertips as the distinct scent of sage wafted from the fabric. Now her eyes narrowed, a slight redness coming to her face as a slow, simmering fury began to work its way to the surface. Filch wasn’t the most observant man, but he knew something about the robe had struck a nerve.

“You know who did it then?” Filch asked, almost brimming over with glee now that McGonagall seemed nearly as angry as he was.

“No, I don’t quite.... But I know who does....” McGonagall said shortly. “Hermione Granger.”

# YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

§§§

Just after dusk Hermione was treading water in the lake, less than half a dozen feet from the docks that had been used just a few years before during the Tri-Wizard competition. She'd not been in the water here since then, not that she was complaining. The water was cool and murky and otherwise thoroughly inhospitable. But despite all of its faults it did have one saving grace. It was private, hidden in plain sight. While at other schools students might practice rowing or some such, at Hogwarts the lake remained almost entirely unused, except as a landing spot for the occasional flying tall ship.

At first Hermione had been resistant to the idea. She'd only ever gone swimming in an indoor pool before and certainly wasn't used to the dominant force of nature so intrinsic to a lake, but now that she was actually in the water, her natural buoyancy taking her massive weight from her back and legs, the approach guarded by Luna, she had to admit that this was exactly what she needed. She barely needed to move her arms and legs at all to keep herself just at the surface of the water, which was lucky, as her massive middle combined with her oversized thighs made moving her legs a struggle. Still, she was able to stay in one place without much effort, her shoulders occasionally rising above the surface for a moment before descending again into the inky darkness.

Hermione looked down and smiled, for the first time in months happy to look down to find not only that she could not see her massive belly and breasts, but that their weight gone as well. The relief she felt was palpable. She leaned her head back, her center of gravity keeping her upright as she drifted slightly, nearly falling asleep in the cool, relaxing water.

"Ey," Ron said, standing on the dock, a large red and gold towel with the Gryffindor seal in his hand.

For a moment Hermione was totally flustered, and trashed about in a panic before she realized that as places to hide her body from Ron's roaming eyes, the lake was close to ideal. The darkness, combined with the few lights on the dock made the water into an inky, uneven mirror, blocking his view of Hermione's massive body hidden beneath its surface. "Ron!" she gasped, obviously surprised.

"Didn't think I'd ever see you swimming," Ron said.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"I don't make a habit of it," Hermione said, relaxing again. "How did you know I was here?"

"I didn't, but I saw you and Loony in the entrance courtyard and went to have a look for you. Didn't take long to find Luna and she said you were in the drink."

"She did, did she?" Hermione asked, glancing toward where Luna must have been standing, doing the complete opposite of guarding the approach to the lake.

"Once I told her why I was looking for you she told me where you were right off," Ron replied.

"And why is that?" Hermione asked cautiously as she continued treading water. Ron paused a moment and even in the near darkness Hermione could swear she could see him starting to blush.

"It's just... I know I haven't always been... whatever I did to make you cross, I'm sorry." Ron began, staring down at his feet. "I didn't mean to. I just, sometimes, I'm not good at this sort of thing. Don't think things through. That's just how I am. I don't do it on purpose, but some things just come out wrong for me, no matter how I try."

Hermione smiled warmly and sympathetically, "That's not true. When you put your mind to something you're smashing! Just look at Quidditch."

"I wasn't talking about Quidditch," Ron said, now lifting his gaze from his shoes to Hermione's face. "I was talking about you."

"Oh Ron," Hermione said, beaming, "There's nothing for you to be sorry about. If anyone should be sorry it's me. I've been a total wreck these past months."

"I wish you'd let me help you with whatever the problem is," Ron replied, looking straight into Hermione's eyes.

"I wish you could help," Hermione said sadly, "But this is something I have to work out for myself."

Ron nodded slowly and paused for a moment. "Well, that might be true but there's one thing you don't need to do alone," Ron said, dropping his towel on the dock.

"What's that?" Hermione asked, growing suspicious.

"Swimming," Ron said as he pulled his t-shirt up over his head and tossed it on the dock next to his towel.



## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"Oh...no, that's not a good idea," Hermione said as Ron kicked off his shoes, and pulled off his pants, revealing swim trunks beneath.

"Why not, I'm due for a swim. Don't get much call for swimming 'round the Burrow."

"But..." Hermione objected just as Ron dove into the lake, not more than ten feet from where she was treading water, sending a surprisingly small splash into the air. Ron quickly returned to the surface and took a deep breath.

"I didn't know you could dive," Hermione said as she began to paddle slowly away from Ron.

"I can't," Ron said, paddling toward Hermione, a wide smile on his face, "Beginner's luck." As Ron continued toward Hermione he seemed puzzled for a moment then redoubled his efforts. "There must be some current in here," he said, "It feels like you're getting further and further away. Hold on." With that Ron dove forward and began swimming toward Hermione, stopping just a few feet in front of her and coming to the surface. "There' that's better," he smiled.

"Yes, it is, isn't it," Hermione said hesitantly.

"What's wrong?" Ron asked, tilting his head slightly to one side.

"Nothing, really," Hermione said, smiling sadly.

"Anything a bit of a hug would help?" Ron asked sheepishly, closing the gap between them.

"No!" Hermione shouted, kicking away from Ron as hard as she could. Unfortunately, rather than hitting water her foot impacted on something far less forgiving. Ron screamed, bobbing beneath the surface of the water before coming back up, gasping for breath, moaning as if he'd just been kicked in the balls, which in fact, he had been. Ron struggled, trying to force himself out of the tight knot his body instinctively insisted on rolling into, but it seemed to be a losing effort. Ron was barely managing to keep his head above the water, much less paddle to shore. Ron did the one thing he could manage. He thrust his arm out in Hermione's general direction and hoped for the best.

Ron grasped at the water and air as he flailed, barely able to make any other sounds aside from a horrible moan. Still after a few moments he regained enough of his senses to call out "Hermione, help," he shouted as loud as he could, which turned out to be little louder than a whisper, before he sank under the water again. When he got back to the surface he looked

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

around frantically for anyone or anything to hold onto. *Where the hell is Hermione, the least she could do is...* but the thought was cut off as he saw Hermione treading water not ten feet away, eyes wide open, a shocked expression on her face, but not lifting a finger to help. *Maybe she just didn't see me*, he thought as he reached out for her one last time as he began to sink below the water. This time he saw her wake as she paddled slightly backwards, away from his reach.

Ron took a deep breath as he went under, holding it until he again broke the surface. This time he didn't bother looking or reaching for Hermione. The dock was less than five feet away and he pushed himself toward it with what little energy he had left. It almost wasn't enough. Just inches from the ladder rung that would allow him to climb to safety his hand sunk beneath the water. His eyes grew wide as he watched the dock slipping from view but just as he was about to fall beneath the surface again his foot hit on one of the submerged rungs of the ladder. Frantic, Ron grabbed a hold as if his life depended on it. Somewhere in the distance Hermione was saying something to him, but between the water in his ears and the way his mind was swimming he didn't hear a word. Slowly he pulled himself up the ladder and collapsed, flat on his back, on the dock.

"Ron! Are you alright?" Hermione shouted as Ron lay there, gasping for breath, the cramps slowly lessening in intensity. "Ron! Say something!" Slowly Ron rolled over onto his side, coughing up a puddle of water.

"Bloody hell, what do you think you're playing at!" Ron gasped staring across the dock at Hermione, still about ten feet away in the water.

"I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to kick you!" Hermione said, tears running down her anguished face.

"Not that! Why didn't you help me?" Ron said as he pushed himself up into a sitting position.

"I couldn't," Hermione said, fumbling for words, "I panicked. I'm not that good a swimmer."

"Then help me now," Ron said as he tried to push himself to his feet, failing miserably, his eyes firmly locked on Hermione's face. Although her eyes grew wide for a moment she didn't make a move toward the dock.

"You're a bloody nutter you are!" Ron shouted at her, as he tried pushing himself to his feet again, this time semi-successfully. "I nearly drowned back there."

"Ron, you don't understand," Hermione pleaded with him.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"I understand enough," Ron said, leaning against the railing for support as he caught his breath. "I could have died just then and you wouldn't even lift one damn finger to help."

"I..." Hermione called out.

"Just leave me the hell alone. Don't talk to me, don't look at me, nothing. Just leave me alone. I've had my fill." Ron said and turned, limping away down the dock toward the shore. Even after Ron must have made it to the shore and halfway up the long stairway to the entrance courtyard, long after it was apparent that he wasn't coming back, Hermione continued to call his name, over and over, hoping he would return.

§§§

A half hour later Hermione trudged through the main stair hall, her wet hair plastered to her head, water still dripping from beneath her robes, now leaving only the faintest of trails as she continued through the stairways and corridors toward Gryffindor tower. As she passed the second floor landing she heard someone shouting something in the distance, but her mind was a million miles away, the only thing she could hear were Ron's final words to her, echoing over and over again in her head. She only made it a few steps further when she felt a hand on her shoulder.

"Miss Granger, I do have to apologize for..." Professor Slughorn paused as Hermione turned around, looking miserable, her hair plastered to her head, her eyes bloodshot, tears still running down her cheeks. "Well, nothing that can't wait until tomorrow," he said, suddenly unsure how to proceed. "Just be sure to stop by my office. It's of the utmost importance."

*It's of the utmost importance,* Hermione thought, the words repeating in her head. Those were words she'd never thought she'd hear a professor say to her. They were Hogwarts-speak for "you've gone off the trolley and you're about to be expelled." However, after the night she'd had even that thought didn't mean that much to her, at that moment nothing seemed to matter. For now all she could think about was getting dried off and curling up, toasty warm in her bed and getting a good night's sleep. *Everything looks better after a good night's sleep. Things can't look any worse.*

Hermione turned and headed up the stairs, not even bothering to reply to Slughorn. It was a long way to the top of Gryffindor tower and given



## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

her normal energy levels as of late it would be a long trek, but tonight she was moving at half her normal, sub-normal speed such that when she arrived at the door to her dormitory nearly an hour later she could think of nothing more than kicking off her charmed shoes and sliding into bed.

"But they must have done," Hermione heard a voice say through her dormitory door. "Just look at the size of them, they're vast!" Hermione's hand froze as she had reached for the doorknob and she paused listening to the giggling voices within.

"But what about these," another voice said, quickly followed by the same riotous giggling as before.

"But who's could they be? I don't know any girl at Hogwarts that could wear this lot? Whose bum is this big?"

Suddenly Hermione realized what the other girls were talking about. Somehow her altered clothing had gotten mixed up in the rest of the washing up or the house elves delivered it wrong or something. No matter what the mix up, the result was the same. Her roommates were going through her oversized knickers, bras and jeans. It was only a matter of time before one of them...

"Oh my, you don't suppose... The odd hours, all that eating, the pregnant prefect," squealed a voice that could be no one other than Laverda Brown's. "You don't think..."

"We're all thinking it," Parvati replied, barely stifling a laugh, "It just doesn't seem possible!"

Hermione had heard enough. She turned as quietly as she could and hurried back down the stair to the common room. She had no idea where she was going, but she knew that she needed to be away from Gryffindor tower, if only to buy herself a few minutes to think. She crossed the common room and headed out into the main stair hall, headed for the fifth floor when she saw Harry Potter and two other students coming up from the fourth floor. She looked around, but between floors there was nowhere for her to turn. Besides, there was no reason for her to avoid Harry, except perhaps because....

"Hermione, are you alright?" Harry asked cautiously, looking at her matted hair and red eyes, pausing as the other students rushed past.

"I'm... never mind," Hermione said as she rubbed her forehead and began to walk past him.

"McGonagall and Filch are looking for you," Harry volunteered.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

“What?” Hermione said, incredulous, “About what?”

“McGonagall wouldn’t say, but Filch was muttering something about a missing statue. They had a an old robe, a wig and a fancy dress mask, I don’t know what all that’s about, but I’ve never seen McGonagall so angry.”

Even in Hermione’s state it didn’t take her long to put two and two together. “Thank you Harry,” she said and leaned forward, kissing him on the cheek. “In case I don’t see you for a bit.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Harry called after her, but Hermione was already away.

Luckily for Hermione, going down stairs was much easier than going up them, what with gravity working with her rather than against her. And for her purposes tonight that worked out well, even if she was speeding down the stairs, nearly out of control. She needed somewhere to hide out for a bit, somewhere to think, somewhere people wouldn’t go looking for her... and that meant one place as far as she was concerned. Hermione knocked soundly on the door in front of her.

“Come.” Professor Slughorn said, his voice echoing slightly in the dungeon hallways. Hermione stepped into the office and looked around for a moment, allowing her eyes to become accustomed to the light before walking toward Slughorn’s desk.

“Miss Granger, I wasn’t expecting to see you until tomorrow. Really, this isn’t necessary,” Slughorn said kindly.

“I’d rather just get it over with,” Hermione said quietly.

“If you insist, please, have a seat.” Professor Slughorn pushed his chair back and stood at his desk, looking down at Hermione as she sat, waiting, as if reluctant to begin. “There are certain duties at Hogwarts that no professor wishes to perform. But, given the realities of the situation and how far it has progressed certain outcomes are inevitable.”

Slughorn continued to speak but Hermione barely heard a word of it. Instead she was trying to work through what few options she had remaining to her, trying to find that one perfect solution to remedy this situation. Slughorn’s constant talking was not helping her concentration. Still, even without listening to the individual words it became apparent simply from his tone that the conversation was coming to an end.

“It’s astoundingly rare that a student’s behavior and performance at Hogwarts require them to leave our halls, but in those cases it is my sad duty

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

to inform the student of the consequences of their actions,” Slughorn explained.

“Yours?” Hermione interrupted, hoping to buy herself some additional time, “Wouldn’t something like this be more Professor Dumbledore’s responsibility?” Hermione scratched furiously at her back as she waited for Slughorn’s reply.

Her question seemed to catch Slughorn off guard, and not only because he wasn’t expecting her to interrupt. He seemed genuinely confused as he thought about Hermione’s words. “Well, yes... Indeed, but... Regardless, in this case it’s my sad duty to inform you that...”

“Professor,” Hermione said, pulling her hand from her back and looking curiously at her nails, “You’re an expert at medicinal potions, aren’t you?”

Slughorn understood that Hermione was just delaying his saying the words she didn’t want to hear, but modesty wasn’t one of Professor Slughorn’s best qualities. “This really isn’t the time to discuss it, but yes, I do consult for St. Mungo’s occasionally on their more difficult cases and create new potions for them to treat certain magical illnesses that previously had no cure.”

“Then there’s something I have to ask you about,” recalling Luna’s earlier suggestion.

“Perhaps this isn’t the most appropriate time for this,” Slughorn said tersely. “If this line of inquiry is still something you wish to pursue in five minutes we can continue then, but...”

“What would you say about very itchy rash that not only can no one else see, but that no one seems able to see me so much as scratch?” Hermione asked hopefully, not waiting for the response before her mind began to churn over her options, crossing them off her mental list, one by one, realizing that even with the extra time talking to Slughorn had given her she was out of ideas.

Slughorn, for his part, seemed intrigued. “No one can see you scratching? Hmmm, that does narrow things down. Assuming this isn’t a ploy to delay the inevitable, could I see this rash?”

“If it wasn’t invisible,” Hermione replied, not bothering to add that the only way to “see” it would be for her to remove her charmed robes, revealing the massive bloating beneath, something she was not prepared to do. “I’m told there’s nothing to see or feel, although I feel little raised bumps.”

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"Have you been in contact with poison ivy, oak or sumac?" Slughorn asked mechanically, as if reading off a list.

"No, besides, this has been going on for months," Hermione said, "Don't those rashes just..."

"Last for weeks, not months, not to mention they're visible. Correct Miss Granger, just narrowing things down." Slughorn took a moment and looked off into the distance before he looked back to Hermione. "Several months ago you asked to access my potion stores. May I ask what you needed."

Hermione thought it over for a moment and realized there was no harm in admitting it, "Polyjuice potion. But I had the rash before then."

"Hmmm, that shouldn't cause a problem... unless... Any allergies?" Slughorn asked as he circled Hermione's chair.

"Just oleander," Hermione sighed, "That's not even in Polyjuice potion."

"Not very common, still, narrows it down. Do you recall any curses, charms or such hitting you at the spot where the rash has occurred? Perhaps not even recently..."

Hermione thought about the question, but aside from something making her vaguely uneasy as Slughorn said "hitting", nothing rang a bell. She shook her head.

An idea seemed to strike Slughorn, one that obviously amused him, but he seemed reluctant to share the object of his amusement.

"This oleander allergy, it produces an itchy rash?" Slughorn asked, his eyes narrowed even as a sly smile came to his face.

"Yes, but it only lasts for a day or so unless I manage to eat it," Hermione said dismissively.

"I wouldn't be so quick to dismiss oleander," Slughorn said as he stepped through the doorway leading to the potion stores. Hermione turned her head to follow his movements, but between the high back of the chair and her weight pinning her down she was unable to see what he was doing. Moments later Slughorn returned with a small wooden box, his right hand covered in a thick, dragon-skin glove. "Miss Granger, I want you to think back very carefully, to before you had this rash. Do you ever recall seeing something that looked like this?" Slughorn opened the box, revealing a small cloth packet resembling a beanbag.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

"No, I don't believe I have," Hermione said curiously, obviously unaware of what the sachet was.

"Think of the place you would most like to be right at this moment," Slughorn commanded.

"Professor?" Hermione asked, now beginning to wonder if her delaying tactic was working too well.

"Indulge me Miss Granger," he replied warmly as she considered the possibilities.

Even her inherent respect for her professors couldn't stop her from rolling her eyes as she thought about herself with Harry and Ron at the Burrow a few years before, a smile coming to her face. Before she realized what was happening something flew at her and she caught it just before it struck her in the face. It was the small cloth bundle, golden, glowing dust puffing out from the seams of the bag. She froze, staring at the object for a moment before lowering her hand from her face.

"Miss Granger, are you still with us," Slughorn asked, having obviously just thrown the packet with his gloved hand.

Hermione stared at her hand, her face scrunched up, seemingly frozen. Slughorn's expression went from one of cautious anticipation to dejection. Then Hermione sneezed. "Yes..." Hermione said before giving her head a bit of a shake.

Slughorn's face lit up as he laughed aloud, such a joyous and unrestrained sound that Hermione was shocked to hear it coming from a professor's lips, much less Slughorn's. Although his laughter quickly died down he was obviously still very amused, his wide smile seeming permanently etched into his face.

"What's so blasted funny?" Hermione said, a bit more rudely and loudly than she intended.

Professor Slughorn turned to Hermione and raised a finger as he tried to catch his breath. "I, I'm sorry Miss Granger," Slughorn said through his laughter, "It's just there are some unique situations one can only possibly find themselves in once in a lifetime and this is one of those rare instances. How long have you had that rash then?"

Hermione thought about it for a moment, "Nearly 8 months."

Slughorn erupted with a burst of laughter at Hermione's reply.

"There's nothing funny about it!" Hermione said, this time raising her voice.

## YOUNG WIZARDS IN LOVE

“I am sorry,” Slughorn replied, still sounding amused, “ But in a few minutes I expect you’ll see the irony, if not the humor, in this situation. It appears you won’t be leaving Hogwarts after all. Your worries, such as they are, are over.” Hermione’s spirits were not raised. “Oh come now,” Slughorn said, holding out the wooden box and giving it a shake. Hermione dropped the packet into the box. “This is excellent news. No expulsion for you. Back to exceeding requirements in no time.”

“Thrilling,” Hermione said flatly. “But getting expelled is the absolute least of my worries right now,” Hermione sighed.

“Perhaps you should brace yourself then,” Slughorn replied, “As any problems you think you’re having are about to evaporate into the ether. Whatever problems have befallen you, insomnia, sleepwalking, tardiness, poor grades... whatever happened after you acquired your rash... It’s a fiction, a magically induced fantasy with no more substance than a twice-told-tale. You, Miss Granger, have been hoodwinked.”

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

For a long moment Hermione just sat, staring at Slughorn, allowing his words to sink in. Her eyes spun around the room, looking everywhere but focusing on nothing. She felt an unfamiliar heat building in her chest as she forced herself slowly and awkwardly to her feet. She began pacing around the room, her mind swimming as she thought over all the unlikely events and curious moments of the last eight months in her head.

"None of it?" Hermione said, turning suddenly to face Slughorn, her face a mask of restrained fury, "Not a thing?"

Slughorn laughed at Hermione's reaction. "It's called a Phantasmagoria charm. It's used to construct false realities, mainly for thought experiments and training. Nothing that occurs within is actually happening, including your recent academic woes. The packet I tossed you was a phantasmagoria charm. You couldn't enter again, you're already within its fictional world."

Hermione slapped her forehead, remembering when Luna had suggested using just such a charm to see how her friends would react to her condition. Slughorn was surprised that despite his own assurances Hermione seemed to be growing more and more angry. "I know there is much to be upset about Miss Granger, but I would think that this would be more of a relief than a cause for anger, at least for the moment," Slughorn said as he removed his glasses and wiped the lenses with his handkerchief, still chuckling quietly.

"How much of the last eight months was real then?" Hermione demanded.

"Your memories certainly," Slughorn replied, growing more and more amused with Hermione's stubborn anger, "But beyond that..."

"I'm going to kill him," Hermione said, her words stripped of adolescent hyperbole, obviously serious, her eyes aflame, her breath coming in quick, short bursts, "All these months... all this mess. What he's put me through!"

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

Slughorn returned, at least for a moment, to his role as a professor. “Now, now Miss Granger. You need to calm down. While certainly this was a great betrayal by whoever did this to you, when the Phantasmagoria charm is broken you’ll return to the exact moment it was cast, with absolutely everything exactly the way it was before. So whatever slights or misdeeds you imagine have been done to you...” Slughorn said as he paced across the room, his back to Hermione.

Slughorn felt something hit him from behind and turned, finding a Gryffindor house robe half draped over his shoulders and head where Hermione had tossed it. He pulled the robe away only to find Hermione standing in front of him in just a red bikini and her anti-waddling shoes, her massive belly and breasts gleaming in the illumination of the gaslights and candles lining the room.

“Slights or misdeeds **I imagined!**” Hermione sneered at Slughorn. “He did this to me and you’re laughing like a hyena!”

For a moment Slughorn was flustered, staring at Hermione, his mouth slightly open. “Forgive me, I spoke out of ignorance. I apologize. It seems I vastly underestimated your difficulties,” Slughorn finally replied, averting his eyes as he held Hermione’s robe out to her. “This explains a great deal.”

“I don’t understand,” Hermione said taking the robe from Slughorn and tossing it on her now empty seat. “Everything I’ve read, everything I’ve been told... Love spells, magic...It can’t make you.... Well... Do...”

“Intercourse,” Slughorn provided. “But that would have occurred after the Phantasmagoria charm took effect, wouldn’t it?” He asked, motioning uncomfortably at her now undisguised middle, “You didn’t actually have relations, you merely thought you did.

“Does this look like something I imagined?!” Hermione said, her voice again growing in volume as she looked down at her massive front, slapping her hands against either side of her belly with a firm, fleshy smack.

“You misunderstand,” Slughorn replied. “All of this is your imaginings, yours and the one who cast the charm. This room, myself, everything you have seen or heard for the last eight months. Even your...delicate condition... is just another of those illusions. Speaking of which, are you planning on putting your robe back on.”



## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

"It certainly doesn't feel like an illusion, my back is about to break!" Hermione began. "And no, after eight months wearing that bloody thing I'm glad to be rid of it, at least for a moment." Hermione sighed. "Fine, I understand, none of this is real. Let's just break the spell. How to we end it?"

"Ah yes," Slughorn said, stroking his chin. "That is the rub, isn't it. Perhaps you'd best take a seat. This could take a bit of time."

§§§

A half an hour later Professor Slughorn's office was filled with all the professors he could gather at this late hour. Although a fair number were not present, the most notable exceptions were Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall and Snape. Conversely to their normal sense of decorum, the professors were having what amounted to a party, drinking and chatting, all but ignoring Hermione who sat fuming off to the side of the room, her charmed robes again covering her massiveness, her mug of butterbeer untouched on the table beside her.

Professor Sprout passed Hermione, obviously tipsy and stopped, as if noticing the student for the first time, "Why such a long face?" Sprout asked, nearly chuckling, "There are very few times in your life that you can do anything you like without consequence."

"I'm real, remember?" Hermione said through gritted teeth. "Just because you're fictional doesn't mean you have to rub it in my face." Hermione watched Sprout as her words sank in, "You don't know how to break a Phantasmagoria charm, do you?"

"Not unless you cast it," Sprout said. "I don't really recall the details, its been a very long time since seventh year charms."

"Then shove off," Hermione said quietly.

"What?" Sprout said, shocked, her mouth falling open.

"You're not real and you're not helping. Just leave me alone." Hermione said, not angry, just resigned. With a sniff Professor Sprout did just that. A moment later Professor Slughorn was at Hermione's side.

"There was no cause for that," Slughorn said reproachfully.

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

"You don't understand," Hermione hissed quietly. "Fictional or not, I've already had a quite painful contraction a few days ago." Seeing the look on Slughorn's face she continued, "Oh please," she continued sarcastically. "False labor I expect, but I am not going to just sit here, bloated, hot and miserable, waiting for the pain of childbirth to send me screaming to Madame Pomfrey. Because real or not, those contractions bloody well hurt!"

Slughorn looked like he had been slapped across the face. "Childbirth. I hadn't even considered... When you grow to be as old as I perhaps you'll find that you've become as unintentionally focused as I can be." He turned to the others and raised his voice. "Please... a moment of everyone's time!" The room grew suddenly silent. "While I can certainly empathize with your desire to cast aside the normal strictures of propriety at a time like this, we still have young Miss Granger to consider. There are certain time constraints that she is unfortunately faced with which we must help her overcome."

"They don't know I'm pregnant?" Hermione whispered.

"I didn't think they needed to," Slughorn replied, barely tilting his head in her direction. She reached forward, squeezing his hand in her own.

"Thank you, the last thing I needed was to be treated like a sideshow freak."

"I think you underestimate the staff," Slughorn said, "certain members in particular, there are some I could tell you stories of..." There was a noise across the room as Slughorn's office door opened, Professor McGonagall and Mr. Filch striding into the room. Before they had a chance to speak to anyone they had both spotted Hermione sitting on the opposite side of the room and made a beeline straight for her.

"Miss Granger, a word if you please," McGonagall said, her words laced with anger as she grabbed Hermione's upper arm in her vice-like grip.

Slughorn stepped up to McGonagall and leaned in closely, cupping his hand around her ear as he spoke. McGonagall looked incredulous, but after looking around the room and seeing how the other professors were behaving some of the fight seemed to drain out of her. McGonagall certainly wasn't calm, but she was no longer furious.

"Miss Granger, a word?" she repeated, this time her voice much more composed.

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

"I would professor, but these days getting out of deep chairs isn't my..." Hermione began, breaking away the thin veneer of calm McGonagall was displaying. Quickly and wordlessly McGonagall pulled out her wand and pointed it at Hermione, unceremoniously yanking the girl to her feet.

"A moment?" McGonagall said firmly, her calm demeanor restored.

As McGonagall turned with Hermione at her side was reminded of Filch's presence. "Mr. Filch, you may go. I'll handle this from here."

The gleeful gleam in Filch's eye was quickly replaced with a look of horrible sadness. "But... I got her dead to rights!"

"That will be all, Mr. Filch," McGonagall repeated emphatically. She led Hermione past him and into the hallway, proceeding some ten feet from the doorway before she stopped and turned to her companion.

"I'm very disappointed in you," McGonagall said. "I never expected you would deceive me in this manner."

"I never intended to," Hermione said, almost pleading, as if she had forgotten for a moment none of this is real. "I only meant to use the polyjuice potion to get to the medical wing unnoticed. I never expected..."

"But... Oh dear Lord, you're expecting," McGonagall said, her hand reaching to cover her open mouth as she noticed the fabric of Hermione's robe along with the realization of the Polyjuice's normal effects and the results Hermione had achieved became clear to her.

"You don't remember?" Hermione asked.

"Temporal magic clouds the mind regarding your own past, I remember very little of the details," McGonagall explained. "I expect the reason I remember anything at all is that the Phantasmagoria charm is breaking down. They're not meant to work for more than a few weeks, a month at the longest. Odd things start to happen as the false reality begins to break apart under the pressure."

"And this one has been running for eight months," Hermione sighed. That certainly did explain quite a few oddities she'd noticed around the school over the past few months.

"Eight... dear lord, we have to get you out of here before..." McGonagall replied, cutting herself off before actually saying the words.

"Thank goodness someone else is thinking the same way I am," Hermione said, relieved.

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

"I'm assuming you didn't cast the Phantasmagoria charm..." McGonagall looked to Hermione before continuing, "And I'm not going to stand and watch you go through the pain of childbirth as part of someone's twisted sense of humor." McGonagall considered for a moment. "This wasn't some trickery from the Weasley boys gone wrong, is it?" McGonagall said, her tone making it clear that even going as far as using the cruciatus curse was not out of the question if they were at fault.

"No, I don't have any proof, but I know it was Draco Malfoy," Hermione said, talking faster as thoughts occurred to her in rapid progression. "It explains everything. Why nothing I said worried him, why he didn't try to get me to leave him alone... he could stop everything anytime he wanted!"

"So Mr. Malfoy is the..." McGonagall began, stopping as she saw the look Hermione was giving her. "Unfortunately Mr. Malfoy has powerful friends, particularly now."

"They're fictional," Hermione said. "How much can they help him."

"They may be fictional, but as everything else here is as well that's very small comfort." McGonagall sighed. "If only you'd had seventh year charms. You have to rid yourself of the notion that none of this is real. As long as you're within this charm everything except death is just as real and permanent as it is in the real world. Since you didn't cast the spell you have no means to escape. You have to be let out. Unless we can figure out something this could go on indefinitely."

Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of rapid footfalls coming down the hallway behind them. The women turned to see Professor Snape headed toward his old offices, only changing course when he spotted McGonagall.

"So, it's true then," Snape asked tersely.

"The Phantasmagoria charm? Yes, it's been confirmed. We're going to need your help, it seems young Malfoy is behind this," McGonagall explained.

"In the morning," Snape said, turning on his heel.

"Wait, what?" Hermione said. Snape froze and turned, closing the distance almost instantly until his nose was nearly touching Hermione's.

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

"Previously I had to listen to your insipid prattling with professional detachment, but now that I know this is within a Phantasmagoria charm I don't really feel the need to act with kid gloves... Miss Granger."

"Severus," McGonagall said sternly, "I'll have you remember that while we may be fictional, Miss Granger is not."

Snape continued to glare into Hermione's eyes. "Fortunately for you there is someone else I'd far rather be torturing at the moment. A more polite person would thank you for this opportunity." Just as quickly as he approached Snape turned and headed back down the hallway.

"We have to stop him," Hermione said. "The things he'll do to Harry!"

McGonagall chuckled. "If Professor Snape can even manage to get into Gryffindor tower Mr. Potter is more than capable of holding his own, especially with all the Gryffindor members of the D.A. fighting beside him. Yes, I expect Mr. Potter will quite enjoy himself this evening. It's a shame I shan't be there to watch."

"Professor," Hermione gasped, her voice a mixture of shock and glee.

"There is far more history between us than you know, but even now there are things far better left unsaid," McGonagall said, "But perhaps it's time for you to rouse Mr. Malfoy and see what he has to say for himself. I'm sorry, I should have gotten the password for the Slytherin common room before Professor Snape set off."

"It's 'pure blood'." Hermione said.

"How sadly predictable," McGonagall replied. "Oh, Miss Granger... As I said, I don't clearly recall the events of 1942 due to the effects of temporal magic but I'd consider it a personal favor if your own memory lapses echoed my own. I would expect, however, that if the need arises you would come to me for assistance in these matters, even after you return home."

Hermione seemed confused for a moment before she realized exactly what McGonagall was alluding to. "I'm not sure what you mean," Hermione replied. "My memory is a bit foggy as well."

"Good girl," McGonagall said, a gentle smile coming to her face. Hermione turned and headed down the dungeon corridor toward the Slytherin common room.

# REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

§§§

"Malfoy, wake up," Hermione said, poking at Malfoy's sleeping form with her wand.

"Wha... Granger, what are you doing here?" Malfoy replied, barely awake, "And why do you look like a drowned rat?"

Hermione's hand involuntarily reached up to her hair, now dry but matted. "I know about the spell," Hermione said, anger evident in her voice. "Break it... now."

"What's she talking about then?" Crabbe said, barely lifting his head from his pillow.

"All right, everyone out," Malfoy said, nodding to Crabbe and his other roommates. It only took them a few moments to wake themselves up and leave the room. "So, Granger, what are you going on about now?"

"You know very well what it's about," Hermione said, a thin smile on her face. "The Phantasmagoria charm. The lies, the dirty tricks. I know all about it."

"Took you long enough. I didn't think even a mudblood could be so dense that it would take them months to figure it out," Malfoy sneered.

"Enough. It's over," Hermione said.

Malfoy looked at Hermione for a moment, feigning confusion. "Oh, is it? Wait a moment, I don't think so."

"What?" Hermione asked.

"You really don't think these things through, do you? What did you think I would do, hear that you've figured out what happened and break the spell in a fit of ennui? I knew mudbloods were stupid..." Malfoy said, shaking his head, as if talking to a disobedient puppy.

"What **do** you want then?" Hermione asked.

"Isn't it obvious? All I ever wanted was for you to leave me alone. I must have tried half a dozen different ways to keep you, Potter and Weasley occupied and this... well, this worked the best by far. You stumbling around stuffing your face with pastries at all hours of the night and running around the castle half-naked, Potter following you around, asking after you as if

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

there was something he could do to help and Weasley has been either trying to make you jealous or following you around like a lapdog.”

“But this isn’t real. What good does keeping us occupied here do,” Hermione asked.

“I was just trying different things so I’d know what would work at the real Hogwarts,” Malfoy sneered, “If something didn’t work I could just wipe someone’s memories and try again. But you’re not thinking clearly, not asking the important question...”

Hermione thought about it for a moment, the question and answer coming to her at the same time. “Why are you telling me all this?”

“Because there’s not a damned thing you can do about it,” Malfoy laughed. “The only way out is for me to voluntarily end the spell, and I’m not about to do that. From the description the mermaid painting gave of you a few months ago I figure you must be about ready to explode by now. After wasting eight months of my time here the least I can do is wait for you to squeeze out Draco Jr. and his brother and sister from between those pasty thighs of yours.”

Hermione slapped Malfoy full in the face. “I expect it will be very painful,” Malfoy said, nonplussed. “Don’t worry though, I’ll be there for you in the delivery room,” he continued, pursing his lips and making a kissing sound.

“You won’t get away with this!” Hermione exclaimed as she pounded her fists against Malfoy’s chest. “You think I’m just going to sit and wait to give birth to your evil spawn?”

“Our evil spawn,” Malfoy smiled, his mood improving as Hermione’s face turned an even deeper shade of red. “You shouldn’t get so upset. It’s not good for the babies,” Malfoy sneered. “So, exactly how large have your thighs gotten under those charmed robes anyway?”

“Arrgh!” Hermione shouted, nearly growling before she turned and stormed from Malfoy’s bedroom.

§§§

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

"I'm afraid he's mostly correct," McGonagall explained in Professor Dumbledore's office once Hermione was calm enough to listen. "There's very little we can do to force him to break the spell."

"Can't we have him arrested," Hermione suggested, fidgeting in her seat.

"Miss Granger," Dumbledore said from behind his desk, "While the staff here at Hogwarts are willing to believe that all of this reality is a magically generated illusion given the proper evidence I doubt very highly you could find a single person in a position of authority at the Ministry who would agree."

"But Malfoy has to end this sooner or later," Hermione said, shifting awkwardly in her seat, "I don't understand why he doesn't seem concerned with the consequences of his actions."

"If you're uncomfortable don't feel the need to follow normal seating etiquette. There's no reason to aggravate the situation," McGonagall said.

Hermione leaned back in the chair and spread her legs before leaning forward again, allowing her oversized belly to settle in against her thighs, sighing loudly as she traded one unwelcome pressure for another. "But why isn't he more concerned? He can't stay in here forever."

McGonagall exchanged an awkward glance with Dumbledore before continuing. "I thought you might ask that. I should have roused Professor Binns. He would be much better at explaining this than I." McGonagall cleared her throat, "As a function of the Partition Accords in 1412 responsibility for magical crimes was separated into two distinct groups. Firstly..." McGonagall paused and shook her head before continuing. "Essentially, since no time passed during the spell and no physical harm was done, using a phantasmagoria in this matter is not considered criminal."

"What?!" Hermione gasped.

"Wizarding law often isn't just," McGonagall explained. "Punishments are more often determined based on politics and historical precedent rather than fairness."

"But... How do I get out of this!" Hermione said loudly. "He's made it clear that he won't break the spell voluntarily!"



## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

“Voluntarily is a very strong word in this situation,” Dumbledore said, “Things could become very uncomfortable here, given the right circumstances. You merely need to apply pressure to a vulnerable spot.”

“A vulnerable spot?” Hermione asked, confused. Then slowly, the corners of her mouth began to turn upwards, her frown replaced with a mischievous grin. “I think that can be arranged... I just don’t know if I could actually...”

“Would you like to talk it through?” McGonagall asked.

Hermione considered for a long moment before nodding slowly. “Could I talk to Harry for a bit in private?”

“Of course Miss Granger, but you should be aware your roommates have been less than discreet. Rumors and innuendo echo in the halls,” McGonagall replied.

“I’d guessed as much. I overheard them talking before I went to Professor Slughorn’s office.”

“I’ll send Mr. Potter here then,” McGonagall said and turned, heading for the stairs.

“Professor,” Hermione said to Dumbledore, “If I decide to go ahead with this there are a few people I have to send owls to... and they’re not the most... savory individuals...”

“Miss Granger, I regret that I cannot offer an owl, however I’m sure Fawkes would be more than willing to deliver your messages, no matter how harrowing the endeavor might be,” Dumbledore replied, a bit of a sparkle coming to his eyes. “I’ll leave you to speak to Mr. Potter, please remind him of our lesson tomorrow.”

“But... this isn’t real,” Hermione said, confused.

“He doesn’t know that,” Dumbledore smiled as he turned and left the room, leaving Hermione alone.

§§§

“Hermione, what’s going on?” Harry said as he reached the top of the stair and looked around Dumbledore’s office. Hermione was pacing back

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS

and forth in front of Dumbledore's desk but upon Harry's arrival he had her full attention.

"Oh Harry," she exclaimed as she walked quickly to him and embraced him, "It's so good to see you!"

"You as well," Harry said awkwardly before Hermione released him. "What's happening? Ron isn't talking, the gossip is just mad."

"We can talk about that later," Hermione said. "I'm not sure what I should do right now and... that's not true. I know what I must do, I just don't know..."

"If you're ready to do it," Harry said.

"Exactly." Hermione blurted out, "You get into these sorts of situations all the time. How do you know when it's time to jump in and just do what needs to be done?"

If Harry came any closer to laughing Hermione would have been very offended. As it was the sound came out as a mix of a cough and a grunt, "Hermione, I think you're... I'm never that confident. Lots of things happen to me, but I'm never the instigator and I'm never in it alone. You and Ron and I found the Philosopher's Stone and the Chamber of Secrets. You and I rescued Buckbeak and Sirius. Professor Mo... Barty Crouch Jr. got me through the Triwizard. When things happen I try to pick the right thing to do with the help of my friends, but its not always easy and I'm not always right."

"But even if I choose poorly you wouldn't think any less of me?" Hermione said.

"Not for a moment," Harry said instantly.

"Thank you Harry," Hermione said, now confident in how the real Harry Potter would have reacted, not just now, but if she had confided in him in the first place. "I need my bed."

"Yeah, it's four a.m." Harry said with a hint of a smile. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Harry," Hermione began, calling Harry back. "Tomorrow things may get very odd and may seem very dangerous. Just remember, this is my fight, not yours... and try to keep Ron from making a mess of things."

"If that's the way you want it... but I don't know," Harry said, shaking his head.

## REMONSTRATIONS AND RECrimINATIONS

“I need to do this alone,” Hermione said firmly.

“It’s not that,” Harry said. “I don’t think anyone can stop Ron from making a mess of things.” Hermione’s face erupted in a broad smile.

“See you at breakfast Harry...” Hermione said as Harry turned and headed back to the stairwell.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

The next morning Draco Malfoy was talking and laughing with his friends as he made his way from the dungeons up to the Great Hall for breakfast. The entire school was abuzz over the rumors swirling around Hermione Granger. Her roommates had found her oversized clothes and enchanted nightgown and hoodie and word of that discovery shot through the school like a golden snitch. The fact that all the professors had a secret meeting the night before, involving only themselves and Hermione Granger only caused the gossip to build.

As the group of Slytherin entered the Great Hall Malfoy looked around, hoping to catch sight of Granger being stared down and questioned by the other students. If he was lucky they might even damage her charmed robe, revealing her true form. *Not that I'm especially keen to see Granger's bloated, pale belly and huge arse but seeing Granger that humiliated? That would be well worth it,* he thought.

Suddenly a hush fell across the room. Malfoy looked about, but nothing was immediately amiss. He looked over to Pansy Parkinson, then glanced backward, his view blocked by Crabbe and Goyle. He looked at the other students, noticing they were all looking behind him, toward the entrance of the Great Hall. Frustrated, Malfoy turned around and pushed Crabbe and Goyle apart, clearing his view to the back of the room.

In the gap between the two large boys Hermione Granger's face appeared, pushing into the empty space and kissing Malfoy full on the lips, followed quickly by a gasp from the crowd.

"Granger! What?!?" Malfoy shouted, only now seeing all of Hermione as Crabbe and Goyle turned to look at her as well. Gone were Hermione's charmed robes. Now she wore an overly tight t-shirt that didn't even attempt to cover her hugely swollen belly, a motto "Slytherin Inside" with an arrow pointed down emblazoned across her vastly oversized breasts. Below her belly, much too small black running shorts attempted to cover her huge bottom, but were much more successful at highlighting the size of her belly and thighs. Flip-flops and a Burberry baseball cap completed her ensemble.



## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

"I'm sorry Draco, I tried to keep it a secret as long as I could, but everyone knows about us now, so I didn't see the point in hiding anymore," Hermione said sweetly, looking wide eyed at Malfoy, her accent a few steps lower on the social ladder than normal.

"This changes nothing," Malfoy hissed at Hermione. However, before he could say another word he was spun around as Pansy Parkinson pulled him around to face her.

"What's all this about then," Pansy said, the menace in her voice clear.

"Uh, Nothing!" Malfoy began just as Hermione wrapped her arm around Malfoy's waist, leaning her head against his shoulder.

"Now I've told everyone, it's your turn now. It's not like a simple paternity spell wouldn't prove the truth." Hermione cooed. Before Hermione even finished the sentence Pansy's wand was already in her hand and pointed at Hermione's belly. A small spark ignited from the tip of Parkinson's wand. Only moments later Malfoy began to glow with the same bright white light. As Malfoy looked down at himself Pansy stepped forward and slapped Malfoy full across the face.

"With a bloody mudblood! You bastard!" Parkinson said.

"Pansy, I can expla..." Malfoy began before he was slapped again by Parkinson. "It's simple rea..." he began again, but was stopped by a third slap. "Stop hitting me!" Malfoy shouted at her, more frustrated than angry, but Pansy had already walked past Malfoy and Hermione, headed for the door out of the Great Hall. Malfoy looked from Parkinson's back to Crabbe and Goyle. Both looked away and stepped back slightly, as if trying vainly to disassociate themselves from him.

Hermione took the moment, as Malfoy looked around from one friend to the next, to look over to the Gryffindor table. As expected most everyone was staring wide-eyed at the spectacle at the Slytherin table, but two people's gazes drew her immediate attention. Ron stood, slack-jawed, staring at Hermione, his face red, expressing a mixture of embarrassment and shock. Even from this distance she was sure she could see a bit of spittle leaking from the corner of his mouth and running down his chin. She couldn't help but grin. Hermione looked slightly to the left, her smile only growing wider as she caught Harry's gaze. Rather than the reproachful look she feared Harry was smiling, nearly laughing, and when he realized Hermione was looking at him he gave her an approving nod.

## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

In the meantime Malfoy seemed to realize that getting to a seat and out of the aisle could only help his situation, and it would have, would any of his Slytherin friends sit near him. In fact a large number seemed to be walking out rather than even sit within ten feet of him at breakfast. “Crabbe, Goyle??!” Malfoy shouted.

“Snogging mudbloods is one thing,” Crabbe said, “But bastard children screwing up the bloodline? You were pureblood. What are you now then? Another ruddy blood traitor.” They turned and walked away.

“Oh darling, we don’t need them as long as we have each other,” Hermione said, dropping heavily onto the bench next to Malfoy, her back facing the table so the two were nearly face-to-face.

“I don’t know what you’re playing at Granger, but it won’t work. I’m not breaking the spell.” Malfoy hissed.

“Spell? What are you talking about?” Hermione asked before leaning in and whispering, “This is just the start. Break the spell and it ends. Otherwise...”

“Otherwise what?” Malfoy said contemptuously. “Embarrassing me in front of our imaginary friends isn’t going to make me break the spell.”

“We’ll see,” Hermione said, swinging her leg over the bench so she could sit sideways against the table, the size of her belly making sitting at the table normally impossible.

As soon as the food materialized from the kitchens Hermione began eating ravenously. She was one of the few. Malfoy was content to stare at Hermione’s face stewing. The other students, practically everyone with a clear line of sight, Slytherins and Ravenclaws in particular, were staring at Hermione, wondering exactly what was going on. The gossip had escalated to the point that the drone of the conversations nearly drowned out any other sound, including the arrival of morning owls.

A few feet from Hermione a copy of the Daily Prophet landed on the table, followed moments later by a bright red envelope landing right in front of Draco Malfoy. Malfoy looked at the envelope for a long moment before turning to Hermione with an icy stare. For her part, Hermione merely shrugged unconvincingly. Malfoy picked up the howler and after looking over the front for a moment before flipping it over, reading the return address. His face blanched just as the envelope jumped out of his hands and ripped itself open.

## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

“Draco Malfoy!” a haughty female voice shouted, “I cannot believe that you would neglect the responsibilities of your heritage with.. that woman! Our bloodlines are... **were** pure for thousands of years in both the Malfoy and Black families. If your father was here you can certainly imagine how he would respond, much less if your grandfather was still alive. In their absence I will try to live up to your grandfather’s example and your father’s expectations. I will be arriving at Hogwarts to deal with this shortly. I expect to find you ready with an explanation and perhaps you will live to see another day. You had best pray, for all our sakes, that the Dark Lord has not heard of this. Prepare for my arrival, I will arrive shortly.”

The room fell silent as the howler tore itself into tiny pieces. Malfoy turned to Hermione, incredulous.

“Should I not have sent her a birth announcement and a photo of us in bed together?” Hermione asked innocently.

“A what???” Malfoy asked as the room erupted in laughter so loud that Hermione’s answer was completely drowned out by the noise.

As the room quieted Hermione repeated, “You’re such a sound sleeper, I didn’t want to wake you just to take a photo for mum,” Hermione grinned.

“Arrrgh!” Malfoy said, nearly tripping on the bench as he jumped to his feet and left the Great Hall, walking as quickly as he could without actually running. Hermione sighed and pushed herself to her feet, waddling slowly after him.

“Draco,” Hermione called after him, “Where are you going? You said we could talk about baby names after breakfast!” By the time Hermione reached the entry hall Draco was gone. She waddled slowly over to the stairs leading to the first floor and looked up before turning to the stairs to the dungeons and looking down. Perturbed, Hermione turned to the doors of the entrance courtyard only to find herself face to face with Ron Weasley.

“I...” Ron began before falling silent, staring, his eyes locked on Hermione’s belly and breasts. Hermione waited a long moment for him to continue, but it soon became clear that Ron wasn’t going to say any more. Hermione sighed and turned, walking past Ron, across the room and pushing on the doors to the entrance courtyard.

“I don’t care!” Ron shouted, loud enough for Hermione and everyone in the Great Hall to hear, the volume of his own voice even seeming to sur-



## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

prise Ron. Hermione froze in place, as if stunned. The low roar of gossiping voices echoing from the Great Hall immediately fell silent.

"I don't care," he repeated more quietly his cheeks turning pink, the pair now observed by a silent crowd of female students who had quickly filled the open doorway from the Great Hall to the entry hall. "Not about you and Malfoy, not about you being up the... pregnant... not about what happened yesterday, not about Victor Krumm. I just care about you."

Hermione turned slowly back toward Ron, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Just when I think I have you figured out," Hermione said, barely able to get the words out as she waddled back towards Ron, "you go and say something like that."

"I sometimes," Ron began and stumbled before continuing. "I have a hard time saying what I mean."

"Not today," Hermione said quietly, now standing right in front of Ron, her belly nearly touching his torso.

"No, I..." Ron began before Hermione reached forward pressed her finger to his lips.

"Ronald Weasley, if you weren't fictional and I didn't need to find Malfoy before his mother gets here I'd give you such a kiss you wouldn't sleep for a week," she said and lumbered off toward the doors to the entrance courtyard. Ron looked at her, then looked down and momentarily over at the crowd gathered at the doors to the Great Hall before he heard a voice just to his left.

"The hell with it," Hermione said as she grabbed Ron and pulled him to her side, kissing him firmly on the lips. A cheer went up among the girls piled in the doorway to the Great Hall as they embraced. For a moment neither Ron nor Hermione seemed to know what to do with their hands, but once Hermione wrapped her arms around Ron he didn't hesitate to wrap his around her, running one hand across her belly, the other down her back to her bottom. "I guess you **don't** care," Hermione said as they briefly separated before they came together again, but a moment later they separated again, both slightly pink in the face, their hearts racing.

"I have to find him," Hermione said.

"I'll check the dungeons," Ron said and nodded, "Go!"

Hermione nodded back and slowly crossed the room and stepped into the entrance courtyard, bathed in morning sun.



# INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

§§§

An hour later Malfoy and Hermione were sitting in Dumbledore's office. Narcissa Malfoy ranted and raved at Draco, as Dumbledore watched over by them with a look of detached amusement.

"But I told you, none of this is real! It's a Phantasmagoria charm!" Malfoy repeated, but his answer only seemed to disgust Narcissa.

"You're having bastard children with a mudblood and the best explanation you can come up with is that it's not real?" Narcissa said, eerily quiet, her voice filled with menace. Without waiting for a reply she pulled her wand and pointed it at Malfoy. "Electromis" she said. Small electrical sparks began to jump across Draco, leaping from place to place. Malfoy grew stiff, his eyes rolling back in his head for a moment before the shock passed and the lightning stopped.

"You haven't had enough yet?" Hermione said, forcing a smirk to her face after the unexpected severity of Narcissa's punishment.

"My mother was never one to spare the rod," Draco smiled through gritted teeth. "I'm used to her normal punishments."

"What kind of hellhole did you grow up in?" Hermione gasped.

"No one is speaking to you, mudblood whore," Narcissa said, turning her wand toward Hermione.

*You wouldn't want to hurt your grandchildren,* Hermione thought, but didn't want to risk the very real possibility of getting electrocuted. *I'm running out of options though, If only I could have gotten Lucius Malfoy out of Azkaban, but without Sirius to help that was impossible. Now there's just one chance left, and it's very risky.* Hermione raised her hands slightly, keeping silent until Narcissa lowered her wand and turned back to Draco.

"You don't understand, mother," Malfoy said

"As you've said, it's a Phantasmagoria charm," Narcissa said sarcastically.

"The only unusual event at the school this year is Miss Granger's unfortunate predicament. I doubt highly that a Phantasmagoria charm could be used as young Malfoy describes, even if he had the skill to cast it," Dumbledore said. "Surely we'd be aware on some level that we're magical constructs."

## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

Narcissa merely glanced contemptuously at Dumbledore before turning back to Draco. “Unfortunately, with school administration privy to our private family business...”

“Not to mention the whole school,” Hermione added with a bit of cheek.

Narcissa glared at Hermione, but before she could open her mouth to speak a chill swept through the room. Everyone glanced toward the windows ringing the room, where the chill seemed to originate, but there was nothing there. Draco turned back and glared at Hermione. “I’m going to make you so miserable, mudblood. You thought things were bad before...” Hermione just smiled at Draco, but as she turned her gaze toward Dumbledore she realized that Narcissa was still staring at the window, her face deathly pale. Hermione turned to look out the windows, as did Draco moments later. Although it was ten a.m. the grounds were totally dark, as if it was the dead of night rather than mid-morning, the only illumination coming from the torches that lit at dusk throughout the grounds at Hogwarts. A chill went down her spine as she looked into the darkness.

“Students of Hogwarts,” A voice said, seeming to come from everywhere at the same time, it was cool and calm, almost reasoned. “I have no wish to harm you. I do not wish to spill magical blood. Send the blood traitor and his associate to me.” The school grew silent, not even crickets were chirping. Just as the few people in Dumbledore’s office turned to look to one another the voice returned. “Give me Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger and no one else will be harmed. Give them to me and I shall leave this school as it is. Give them to me and there will be no bloodshed. Give them to me in the Forbidden Forest and none of you need die. You have one hour.”

Now Narcissa Malfoy turned to Dumbledore, “You cannot do as he says. I have already lost a husband to the Dark Lord, I will not lose a son as well.”

“It would seem your husband isn’t so much lost as indisposed,” Dumbledore said, keeping an even tone to his voice. “Perhaps if you’d taken more care selecting the company you keep... but if you wish to join your husband I’m sure that I can make the proper arrangements.”

“Well, I’m off,” Hermione said, slowly forcing herself to her feet, teetering for a long moment before gaining her balance.

“What?” Draco and Narcissa Malfoy said as one.

## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

"I'm off to see He-Who-Shall-Not-Be-Named," Hermione said, sounding much braver than she felt. *He's just as fictional as the rest of this damned charm*, Hermione thought. *And he may be my last chance to get out of this hell.*

"I don't care what the girl does," Narcissa said, "But Draco isn't going anywhere."

"I'll be sure to tell him you said that," Hermione said as she waddled toward the stairwell.

"What?" Narcissa said quietly, for the first time sounding anything but confident.

"Since you and Draco aren't coming I'll be the one to do the talking. I'll explain that Draco wouldn't come and that you forbid him to go. That should settle things," Hermione smiled.

"He'll kill us all," Narcissa said, shocked at Hermione's suggestion.

"I'm not letting you go alone, Granger," Malfoy said contemptuously. "After all these months I want to see you squirming under the Dark Lord's wand."

"No, I won't allow it," Narcissa said, stepping in front of Draco.

"Mother, I have to go... but if you escort us you can plead my cause to the Dark Lord," Draco explained, giving Hermione a clever smile.

"I'm afraid there's no other choice," Dumbledore said, "We aren't prepared to defend the school against attack and I am not prepared to see students perish to protect Death Eaters."

§§§

"What are you up to Granger," Draco called to Hermione, who was lagging behind Narcissa and Draco as they crossed the grounds, headed towards the forbidden forest.

"Up to? Me?" Hermione shouted back.

"Yes, you." Draco replied. "The Dark Lord isn't exactly a fan of mudbloods."

"Doesn't much like blood traitors either," Hermione called out, "Sad that it takes so little to get you worried though."

"Worried? Me?" Draco said with a laugh.

## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

"Then why are you running up ahead," Hermione said. "Need to talk to him first to make sure things go your way?"

Draco laughed, "Making sure the Dark Lord hears the truth first isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of intelligence. How did you get him here anyway? You can't just send an owl, his headquarters is always unplottable."

"Perhaps, but Fawkes had no problem finding him. As a matter of fact, I suspect that Fawkes delivering the invitation is part of the reason he decided to come," Hermione smiled.

"Fawkes the phoenix? Wait, then Dumbledore knows?" Draco said, stopping and turning to see her reply.

"The whole staff knows," Hermione smiled. "What did you think we were all talking about last night?"

"How disgraceful you were for getting yourself knocked up with a boy you hate," Draco said, watching to see if the words struck any delicate spots. They didn't.

"More about how this spoke so poorly of you, sacrificing all your beliefs just for a laugh," Hermione replied as she slowly caught up with Draco and his mother.

"Don't speak to my son that way," Narcissa Malfoy said.

"Mother, don't," Draco said and turned to Hermione, who had now caught up to the mother and son. "This was about an important job I have to do and how to keep you and your bratty friends from interfering... although I have to admit, seeing you wobbling around, bloated and miserable, it's nearly worth wasting all this time."

"Nearly?" Hermione said, her stance changing as his insult struck home.

"Yes. I planned on having apparating your parents into the delivery room as a surprise. Between your screams during childbirth, their horrified looks and yours when you saw them there, I figured it was worth a few extra weeks in here," Draco smirked.

For the first time since the night before Hermione was angry. No, not angry. Furious. She took two steps toward Draco, her face turning bright red before she stopped and looked around.

"What's the matter Granger, lost your nerve?" Draco laughed.

"No, we're here," Hermione said.

Draco and Narcissa looked around. They were in a clearing in the forbidden forest.

## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

“What sort of trickery is this?” Narcissa asked Hermione.

“No trickery,” a cool, thin, calm voice said from somewhere nearby. I saw you and the children and thought to speed you on your way.”

“Lord,” Narcissa said, kneeling after turning to face Lord Voldemort, who stood at the opposite edge of the clearing, Wormtail and several men she didn’t recognize at his side. “I must explain...”

“No you must not,” Voldemort said, stepping forward. Hermione drew back slightly at his presence. She’d heard about his appearance, his snake-like features, his cool demeanor, but seeing him in person, there was an aura of evil around him.

“Lord, I can explain,” Draco explained, stepping forward.

“I think the explanation is obvious,” Voldemort said, looking past Draco to Hermione’s gravid form. “I don’t require further explanation from you at this time,” he said, turning to Hermione.

“But Lord, I...” Draco began before Voldemort pulled his wand and in one fluid motion pointed it at Malfoy. Moments later Malfoy landed, flat on his back, nearly ten feet from where he had once stood.

“Now, Miss.... Granger,” Voldemort said, stepping toward where Hermione stood. “You and your friends have been a thorn in my side. My Death Eaters have standing orders to kill you on sight. But I am curious,” Voldemort said, rubbing his chin. “Why did you request a meeting that you and your mudblood spawn could never hope to survive?”

“But I will,” Hermione said, “and I want to trade the knowledge of how and why I will survive for assurance that you’ll leave us alone, myself and my children, despite Draco’s deceit.”

“Interesting,” Voldemort replied. “And you trust me to honor my promise.”

“I have no other choice,” Hermione said.

Voldemort stared at Hermione for a long moment before turning back to Draco, who was pulling himself to his feet, then to Narcissa before looking back to Hermione. “If what you say is true you and your children will be safe from my wrath.”

Hermione took a deep breath. *Now comes the tricky part*, she thought. “You can’t kill me because Draco used the same protection spell Harry’s parents used on him. He discovered how to do it and thought to keep the knowledge from you to protect his mother and father.”

## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

Narcissa Malfoy spun to face Draco, her mouth falling open, shocked into silence. “Young Malfoy, is this true?” Voldemort said calmly, drawing his wand as he approached the Malfoys. “Did you truly seek to keep this knowledge from me?”

“No, my lord, I can explain,” Malfoy said. “This, it’s not...”

Voldemort pointed his wand at Draco, “It’s not? Let us see.” More quickly than any of them would have thought possible Voldemort turned, pointing his wand at Hermione. “Avada Kedavra!”

Hermione barely had time to raise her hands as the glowing green bolt of light shot towards her from Voldemort’s wand. The bolt passed through her hands as if they weren’t there, striking her full in the chest. Momentarily her eyes were dazzled by the bright light in the darkness, but seconds later she could see again, could see Voldemort and his Death Eaters staring at her, along with Narcissa and Draco Malfoy, all of them shocked beyond words, save Voldemort and Malfoy.

Voldemort slowly turned from Hermione to Draco, “Is there something you wish to tell me?”

“You don’t understand!” Malfoy said. “Let me explain! Please Lord!”

“Yes, you are correct. I do not understand, but shortly I will know all of your secrets,” Voldemort said, pointing his wand at Draco. “Fenrir, kill the Granger girl.”

“You said you wouldn’t harm me!” Hermione shouted, but Voldemort ignored her. She looked at the large, wild looking man who was walking towards her, knowing her luck had run out. While she couldn’t be killed within the Phantasmagoria charm, she could certainly feel the pain of being ripped apart. Fenrir could only be Fenrir Greyback, the werewolf that attacked Bill Weasley and cursed Remus Lupin. Fenrir seemed to be taking far too much pleasure in the idea of killing her, his unpleasant smile gleaming in the moonlight.

“Now Draco, you can explain, just as you’ve wished to since you arrived,” Voldemort said as Fenrir grabbed Hermione’s right arm and yanked her off her feet. “Time to die,” Fenrir whispered into Hermione’s ear, taking her other arm in his opposite hand before pulling with all his might.

“Crucio.” Voldemort said, and a hot tendril jumped from Voldemort’s wand to Malfoy. Draco convulsed, falling to the ground screaming. Hermione realized she heard another voice screaming, that of a woman. The



## INCOMMODIOUSLY YOURS

voice sounded familiar, too familiar. It took her a moment to realize the scream was coming from her own throat.

Then the searing pain and pressure on her arms were gone. Hermione was nearly blinded by the bright light surrounding her on all sides. She turned, squinting, to see what had happened to Fenrir, only to see the shadowy figures of three people in the distance. Slowly her vision cleared. Hermione stood in the transfiguration courtyard, some twenty feet from where Crabbe and Goyle stood, Malfoy pulling himself up off the ground. Hermione took a step forward, relieved to see her feet without magical assistance for the first time in eight months. She quickly crossed the distance between herself and the three boys, feeling light as a feather now that she was relieved of her massive burden. She kicked Malfoy firmly in the stomach, sending him tumbling onto his back, a small wooden box and sachet spilling out of his robes, onto the ground. She kicked him again, this time not managing to move him, but eliciting a satisfying grunt.

Crabbe and Goyle didn't seem to know how to react, and with a dangerous glance from Hermione, both stepped back away from Malfoy. "You won't be needing this," Hermione said, scooping up the phantasmagoria sachet in its box and depositing it within her robes. She turned to stride away and thought better of it. She turned to Malfoy and, kicked him once more in the stomach. Then she turned and strode from the courtyard.

## EPILOGUE

Malfoy lay in his bed, trying to get back to sleep, but it was impossible. It wasn't the memories of the eight months he'd spent in the Phantasmagoria charm or thoughts of the repercussions of his actions. That was settled within just a few days after their "return". Granger had quickly found that although there were many who sympathized when she told her tale of woe, they explained, as he knew they would, that he'd broken no laws or school rules and with no punishable offenses he was free to go about his business, although the professors involved swore they would be watching him from now on, as if they were not before. It certainly didn't help her cause that she left out the most embarrassing part of the story, her pregnancy, from her retelling, but so many of the professors seemed on the edge already it didn't seem prudent for him to inform them of her omission and give them more of a reason to be angry with him.

"Ey," Crabbe said, "You'd better get up. Breakfast in ten minutes."

"I'm not feeling well," Malfoy said as he lay in his bed, unmoving. "Go on, I'll be up in a minute."

"Fine, but you'd better check in with Madame Pomfrey, they're gunning for you as it is since you messed with Granger," Goyle smirked as he and Crabbe grabbed their books and left the dormitory.

Malfoy wiped his forehead, clearing away the sweat from his brow. He wasn't making an excuse to skip class, he really did feel awful. Sort of like the flu. Achy, hot, sore. *No matter*, Malfoy thought, *Pomfrey will set me right once I get to the hospital wing*. Malfoy closed his eyes for a long moment and rubbed them before he drifted back to sleep.

"Mr. Malfoy," Snape said, standing at the foot of Malfoy's bed. "Wake up." Malfoy raised his head, taking a moment to glance at Snape's face before his head fell back to his pillow. Snape stepped around to the side of Malfoy's bed. "Is it possible that you're actually ill and not simply seeking to avoid class?" Snape stood above Malfoy's bed for a long moment before drawing his wand. "Mr. Malfoy, time to get up," he said, pointing his wand at Malfoy's sheets and tossing them aside with a flick of his wand.

"Mr. Malfoy, just what exactly have you been up to?" Snape asked as he looked down at Malfoy, sounding almost amused.

§§§

## EPILOGUE

“There’s no need for all this,” Malfoy replied as Madame Pomfrey looked deep into his eye with some odd device. “I know exactly what’s going on here.” Pomfrey ignored him and began checking his other eye. “I ask you, what could possibly be in my eye that would explain this?” Malfoy sighed.

The screen surrounding the exam table was pushed slightly aside as Professors Snape and McGonagall approached talking quietly among themselves. Malfoy reached to cover himself but the thin cloth on the exam table did very little in that regard.

“Mr. Malfoy,” Snape said, “Professor McGonagall wishes to examine you to determine if this is a transfiguration effect or something far more serious. Please dispense with that sheet.”

“I don’t need to be examined. I know what’s going on,” Malfoy complained.

“Humor me,” Snape replied, his voice completely devoid of humor. Malfoy’s shoulders sank and he rolled his eyes before grabbing the sheet and tossing it aside.

Malfoy’s stomach was huge and round, swollen into a tight, shiny looking, itchy ball of flesh. Even now his hands were drawn back to it, scratching at the sides, near where its curve met his flanks. Resting atop his belly was a huge set of breasts, covered in an oversized utilitarian nursing bra.

McGonagall spent several minutes looking over Malfoy before she excused herself to speak with Madame Pomfrey. Shortly the pair of them returned.

“Mr. Malfoy, I’m afraid I have what is almost certainly bad news,” Madame Pomfrey began. “I know this will sound a bit nonsensical, given your gender, but you’re pregnant.”

“I’m not,” Malfoy said. “This is just a trick. Granger cast a Phantasmagoria charm on me in revenge for the one I cast on her earlier this term. None of this is real. Just get her up here and I’ll force her to break the spell”

Snape and McGonagall exchanged glances, both looking slightly confused. “A Phantasmagoria charm is far beyond your current skills,” McGonagall said. “I doubt even Miss Granger would be successful in creating one.”

“Mr. Malfoy, as much as I would enjoy having something to blame on Potter and his friends, you’re mistaken,” Snape explained. “Miss Granger



## EPILOGUE

has been studying abroad for the last several months, since the beginning of the term. If you insist on speaking to her she will be returning here in the fall after her year at Beauxbaton. In the meantime if you insist on contacting her you could certainly reach her by owl, but why you would wish to, or why she would wish to reply is beyond my comprehension.”

“She’s where?” Malfoy asked incredulously.

“Mr. Malfoy,” McGonagall said, trying to get the conversation back on track. “I handle liaison duties between our pregnant students and Madame Pomfrey,” she explained. “It makes things a bit easier on you, both as a practical matter as well as aiding you in hiding your condition over the next seven months or so if that’s what you desire.”

“Seven months?” Malfoy said incredulously, looking down at his massive middle.

“As I would assume you will,” Snape added, ignoring Malfoy’s outburst. McGonagall shot him an angry glance.

“But I can’t be pregnant, obviously! I’m male,” Malfoy protested.

“They all think they’re the first one to say that,” Madame Pomfrey laughed. “You’d be surprised.”

“I’ve had the house elves bring up a charmed robe to help hide your condition,” McGonagall continued pointing to a bundle on a nearby bed. “Unfortunately the charm only works on a robe or other gown-like clothing, so there will be little else they can do for clothes, besides possibly,” McGonagall looked around, “I believe it’s called a hoodie”

McGonagall kept talking as Malfoy slowly and carefully slid off the exam table, nearly losing his balance as the massive weight he was supporting landed not quite over his feet. Across the room Hermione Granger watched from beneath Harry’s invisibility cloak as Malfoy struggled to bend over enough to reach the robe laying folded on the low bed, nearly tipping over several times in the process before he managed to snag the hem of the robe with his fingertip.

“When I get hold of Granger she’s dead,” Malfoy said, barely audible as he was nearly out of breath from the effort of walking from the exam table to the bed, unconsciously leaning back, pressing his hand into his lower back. Hermione noticed a thin smile was coming to her lips as Malfoy turned, his new robe in hand and waddled back toward the exam table. “Do you have anything to eat in here? I’m famished.” Malfoy asked as Hermione turned to leave lest she burst out laughing. *See you in a few months*, Hermi-

## EPILOGUE

one thought as she turned toward the hallway and the nearest fireplace to catch the flu network back to Beauxbaton. She paused, covering her mouth with her hand as she heard Malfoy complaining about his awkward gait far behind her. She didn't stop to listen as McGonagall began explaining about anti-waddling shoes. Hermione had dealt with eight months of this and now she had far better places to be.