Hermione walked confidently down the halls of the Ministry. She’d had a meeting with in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and thought she might stop by and see Arthur Weasley, it had been a while since she’d seen him.

As she approached his office, she heard squeals of laughter.

“Did you like the zoo, Jamie?” Arthur asked.
A childish voice answered, “It was lots of fun, Grandpa. I like the lions best.”

“I liked the elephants,” another child’s voice chimed in.

Hermione froze as she listened to the children talk to their grandfather. A familiar voice added, “I like the fact that we will be living so close to the zoo that we will be able to visit often.”

“Thank you for stopping by, love,” Arthur said. “I am so glad you are back in the country. We’ve missed you.”

“I know, Dad. I’ve missed you as well.”

“Bring my beautiful granddaughters next time,” Arthur said.

Silvery laughter floated out. “I will. Lily wasn’t feeling well so she was happy to stay home with daddy.”

Shrinking back into a shadowed alcove, Hermione watched as Ginny Potter walked by holding two little boys by the hand. The both had a very familiar head of messy black hair. While she wasn’t close enough to see eye colour, she could tell both boys looked a lot like their famous father. Shaken, she hurried home.

Hermione slowed her breathing and tried to calm herself as she entered the lobby of her Greenwich apartment building. Normally she enjoyed the beautiful lobby with its minimalist décor and the white marble wall behind the concierge desk, but she didn’t even notice it today. She forced herself to smile at the concierge as she headed for the lift. All she wanted to do was reach the safety of her flat so she could collapse and indulge in a good cry. After years of rebuilding her life, she was married to a wonderful man and had a great job. But right now she felt she was once again fifteen years old and devastated at the unintended consequences of her actions.

Upon reaching the safe haven of her flat, she closed the door and leaned against it. Taking a moment to collect herself, she deposited her handbag on the small table and hung her jacket up in the closet.

Heading down the hall, she almost jumped out of her skin when she heard, “Hermione?”

Placing her hand against her racing heart, she tried to smile at her husband of five years. He was standing in the doorway of the kitchen looking puzzled.

“I didn’t realize you were coming home so early, love,” he remarked as she walked over to him. As she neared, he must have seen the signs of tears on her face. “What happened?”

“I ran into an old friend today,” she said after a moment.

David Bollinger obviously wasn’t fooled by his wife’s attempt to downplay whatever happened. Hermione was one of the most cool, calm, and collected women he’d ever met and right now she was not at all calm, cool or collected.

“An old friend as in from…your other world?” David asked curiously. After they had married, Hermione had explained about the wizarding world. She was well-respected as a solicitor with a top London firm. The firm she worked with was one that specialized in working with both the wizarding world and what he thought of as the normal world.

She nodded and he could see the pain in her eyes. He pulled her into an embrace and was shocked when she started crying. Hermione rarely cried. The last time he’d seen her cry was when she told
him about her world and the war in which she’d found herself as a school girl. Running his hand down her hair, he comforted her as best he could. Once she’d calmed down, he pulled her into the sitting room and poured her a glass of wine.

“What happened?” David repeated. “Was it…was it your ex-husband?”

Taking a sip of her wine, Hermione shook her head. “No, it was his sister actually. I was going to stop by to see my former father-in-law.”

David nodded. He knew her former father-in-law had helped her bridge the two worlds and directed her to her current firm so she could use her expertise in Muggles and the law.

“I have a case that I thought he could help me with. As I approached his office, I heard my former sister-in-law, Ginny. She was talking to her father. She and her husband just moved back to Great Britain. What really spooked me was when I heard her two little boys playing in their grandfather’s office. Two little boys who look just like their father. I couldn’t face them, I ran away.”

“You knew her husband as well?” David asked curiously.

“He was one of my best friends,” Hermione replied softly.

David’s attention was called to the kitchen where he was preparing dinner. As he finished his sauce and cooked the pasta, Hermione disappeared into their bedroom. He presumed she was going to change into more comfortable clothes. As he put together a salad and heated up garlic bread, he thought about his wife.

They had first met seven years earlier when he’d tagged along with his university roommate to a function in Central London. Hermione had just joined the firm. He’d been entranced with her from that first night. She was so intelligent and obviously very passionate about her work. It had taken him a while to detect the fragility in her. While she presented a strong and competent front, she hated disappointing people and she hated failure.

He knew she’d been briefly married to a boy with whom she’d attended school. Unlike David, her first husband was firmly enmeshed in the wizarding world. While Hermione never spoke much about the demise of her marriage, she’d talked about her friendship with her ex-husband often enough. David knew he was called Ron Weasley and they’d divorced after two years of marriage. Hermione had told him enough stories of her school career that he realized how important Ron was in her younger days. After her divorce, Hermione continued her education and became a solicitor. Frowning, he tried to recall if she’d ever mentioned her former sister-in-law, but he didn’t think so.

Hermione entered the kitchen wearing a pair of jeans and a faded red shirt that showed a stylized lion on the front with the word ‘Gryffindor’. He smiled. “Are you hungry, love?”

When she nodded, David moved the plates of pasta and salad to the small table. As they ate, he talked about his day. He was a professor of classics at King’s College and he usually managed to find some fun stories to share with Hermione, but today she hardly reacted.

After dinner, he quickly cleared the table. Once he was done in the kitchen, he found Hermione sitting on their balcony looking out towards the river. “Are you ready to talk about it?”

She sighed. “When I was little I had difficulty making friends. I was a little too smart and a little too weird. I didn’t realize at the time I was doing accidental magic. When I discovered Hogwarts, I thought it was the answer to all of my problems.

“Unfortunately, the first few months of my first year weren’t much better. Other kids thought I was a
know-it-all and I had trouble making friends. That all changed on Halloween. Ron had said some unkind things during class and I was crying in the bathroom when a Mountain Troll was let into the castle.”

“A troll?” David asked in astonishment. He still had a hard time believing some of the creatures he’d heard about were real.

Hermione nodded and told him about Ron and Harry rescuing her from the troll. “That is when I made my two first and best friends, Harry Potter and Ron Weasley. I’ve told you about my ex, Ron. When we first met, I didn’t imagine we’d have anything in common. He would rather play and waste time than study, but he was also very loyal and could be quite clever when he put his mind to it. Unfortunately as the youngest of six boys he was also rather lacking in self-confidence and felt overshadowed by his older brothers and eventually by Harry as well.”

“I don’t believe I’ve heard much about Harry.”

“Harry was…is an amazing wizard. Remember the little boy who defeated Voldemort as a baby and grew up to defeat him again in the Battle of Hogwarts?”

Frowning David nodded. “I didn’t realize that you knew him. Honestly if it wasn’t you telling the story I would have thought it was a myth. He seems like the perfect mythic hero.”

She smiled wryly. “No, he wasn’t a myth and he wasn’t perfect. For several years, he was my best friend. While Ron could be rude and loud, Harry was quiet and well mannered. He was quite bewildered by his celebrity because he thought anyone would have done the amazing things he’d done. He didn’t realize how strong and powerful he was. Harry was raised by his aunt and uncle who hated magic and didn’t tell him anything about his heritage. When Harry entered the wizarding world, I knew more about it than he did.”

Hermione told her husband about helping Ron and Harry to save the Philosopher’s Stone, the terrifying events of her second year, and the lonely, exhausting days of her third year.

Opening another bottle of wine, David refilled her glass as he tried to wrap his head around everything she’d explained. Trolls, Basilisks, werewolves, time travel? It was a lot more exciting and terrifying than his school years.

“Why do I get the feeling that this is where it goes pear shaped?” he asked gently.

Hermione smiled wryly as she sipped her wine. “It is. After the fighting and worry of my third year, I was determined to make my fourth year a great year. Honestly, it was amazing that we’d made it through the previous year with our friendship intact. It started off wonderfully — I was invited to the Weasleys’ house for the last part of the summer and really started to get to know Ginny for the first time. She was the only girl in a family with six boys and she was the youngest. We were almost two years apart and didn’t have many interests in common, but surprisingly we got along well. The biggest thing that happened that summer was the Quidditch World Cup.” Glancing at her husband, she asked, “You do remember Quidditch?”

He nodded. “The game played on broomstick that your ex was so fond of.”

“Not just Ron, but Harry was one of the best players in the school,” Hermione explained. “The World Cup was thrilling, it was in England for the first time in years and we saw witches and wizards from all over the world. Ron’s father had been given tickets for all of us. Harry joined us and it was a wonderful time, until after the match. A group of robed Death Eaters were torturing a Muggle family, actually I don’t even know if they were really Death Eaters or they were pretending
“Death Eaters were Voldemort’s followers?” David asked as he tried to recall what she’d told him about the wizarding war. It seemed ludicrous that there had been a wizarding war fought all over the UK, but he believed her without question.

Hermione nodded pensively as she looked out over the lake from the Greenwich Ecology Park. She’d thought those years were long behind her, but seeing Ginny with her sons today brought everything rushing back.

“That year Harry started showing some initiative in his schoolwork, he even signed up for Ancient Runes instead of Divination. He hated having his death predicted in each class and apparently Sirius encouraged him to take Ancient Runes.”

David nodded absently as he recalled what Hermione had told him about her classes. It had fascinated him — the subjects she’d learned and topics she’d studied. He remembered her being rather disparaging about Divination — something about it being a very imprecise branch of magic.

“I was thrilled that he was applying himself. Ron was rather appalled that Harry would be in with the third year students, but Harry was determined. He was so much stronger that year. His godfather had spent quite a bit of time with him over the summer and they’d become very close. I’m afraid I didn’t really understand their relationship at the time.”

“His godfather was the chap who escaped from prison?” David clarified.

She nodded. “I think that must have coloured my thinking a bit — the fact that Sirius had been to prison. Harry looked up to and admired the man. Ron thought Sirius was fun — he’d had a reputation as a prankster at school. I underestimated the fact that Harry saw Sirius as a link to his parents. Harry loved Sirius as almost a surrogate father and I didn’t see that at the time. He was so excited to have someone who was there just for him. Neither Ron nor I stopped to think what that said about Harry’s home life.”

“It was bad?”

Hermione sighed as she took another sip of wine. “I’m not sure how bad it was, but from what I heard later it was bad enough. His aunt and uncle were not nice people and they didn’t treat him well. Harry made jokes about being locked up and not getting enough to eat, but for some reason I thought he was just joking.”

“You were just a kid yourself.”

“I know. I just wish I’d paid a bit more attention. To my mind, he had a family in his aunt, uncle, and cousin so Sirius was just another adult in his life. He was a lot more than that — he was basically the only adult who was looking out for Harry. I wish I’d understood his importance to Harry.”

David refilled both of their glasses. Hermione smiled and gripped his hand for a moment as if drawing strength from him.

“My fourth year changed everything,” Hermione said with a sigh. She explained about the Triwizard Tournament and Harry being selected as the fourth champion.

“Did you believe him?” David asked curiously.

“I did,” Hermione replied promptly. “Harry never wanted the fame that goes along with his name. He wanted to watch the tournament from the stands with the rest of us and root for the Hogwarts’
Champion. Unfortunately, Ron didn’t believe him. Ron was extremely jealous of Harry’s wealth and fame. A lot of Ron’s problems in school came from the fact that he felt overshadowed. He had five older, extremely successful brothers and as soon as he started at Hogwarts he befriended the most famous person in the wizarding world. I know he felt as though he couldn’t compete. If he’d been thinking rationally he would have realized that Harry wouldn’t have wanted the attention that came with the tournament, but he wasn’t. He was focused on the thousand Galleon prize and he thought Harry should have told him how to enter as well.”

Sighing, she took another sip of her wine. “I tried to be impartial, or at least that’s what I told myself. Looking back, I can see I was jealous of Ginny’s growing friendship with Harry. I had been friends with Harry since first year and he never gave me the attention he gave her. I felt she took advantage of Ron and Harry’s fight and wormed her way into Harry’s affections.”

“Did she?”

Hermione shrugged. “She may have taken advantage of the fight, but she was there for Harry. She helped him prepare for the first task while I wouldn’t help him.”

“That doesn’t sound like you, love,” David remarked gently.

“Looking back, I can’t believe it either,” Hermione admitted. “I was upset about the fight between Ron and Harry and I was trying to get Ron to come around. Ron was always more stubborn than Harry and he was actually in the wrong so I was trying to get him to see reason. I thought that Ginny becoming involved would make it harder for Ron and Harry to make up and I tried to explain that to Harry, but he didn’t buy that. We had an argument before a visit to the local village because he was going with Ginny. I think I was also a little jealous of the relationship that seemed to spring up between the two of them so easily.”

“Did you have feelings for Harry?” David asked curiously.

Hermione shook her head. “I had a brief crush on him first year, but after that it was all Ron for some reason. Even when Ron would say mean things or pick a fight, I thought it just proved we were right for each other. We fought because we were passionate people. Opposites attract — I fell for all of the rot. I think I was jealous that he turned to her instead of me. It was like he didn’t need me anymore.”

“So what happened to Harry?”

“The first task was actually amazing,” Hermione said with a small smile. “The champions had to get past a mother dragon and retrieve a golden egg from their nest.”

She burst out laughing at the look of shock on her husband’s face. “That’s exactly how I felt when I found out about it. The morning of the first task, I wanted to check in with Harry. I was starting to feel badly that I hadn’t helped him prepare at all and I wanted to make sure he had some sort of plan. We were in the History of Magic.”

_Harry looked up in surprise when Hermione sat down next to him. She had been avoiding him since the trip to Hogsmeade._

“Have you prepared for the first task?” she asked a bit stiffly.

“Yes,” Harry replied calmly. He shrugged. “At least I’ve prepared as best I can.”

_Hermione looked at him appraisingly. “Do you know anything about the task?”_

_Happy that she seemed to want to be friends again, Harry told her about the dragons. She was_
shocked. “Dragons? That’s…that’s horrible. How are you supposed to know how to handle
dragons? What are you going to do?”

A thought seemed to cross her mind and she gasped, “Please tell me that you aren’t using some
ridiculous spell that Ginny has assured you will work on dragons. I know you haven’t been spending
enough time in the library.”

Offended at her tone, Harry said, “I do have a plan and actually Ginny did help me come up with it.
Why are you so down on Ginny? She’s been one of the few people who has been willing to help
me.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Yes, I know she’s trying to help you, but honestly how much help can
she be? She’s only a third year and I don’t think she’s near the top of her class. I don’t know how
well she is doing this year, but I know she received a lot of extra tutoring last year.” She huffed for a
moment. “What is your plan?”

Torn between wanting to defend Ginny and wanting to repair his friendship with Hermione, Harry
swallowed his irritation. “I’m going to Summon my Firebolt and fly past the dragon.”

“What?” Hermione shrieked. She looked horrified. “Have you even managed to perform the
Summoning Charm yet?”

He nodded proudly. “I worked with Alicia yesterday and I’m getting good at it. She’s in the
Charms’ Club and helped me.”

Glancing around the room, he summoned Neville’s book off of his desk before sending it back. He
looked over at Hermione who seemed mollified that he had indeed mastered the Summoning
Charm.

“I guess that’s a good plan,” Hermione acknowledged. She sighed. “I’m sorry, Harry. This whole
thing has been so upsetting. I’m sure you will do very well this afternoon.”

“You really must not have liked Ginny,” David observed.

“I never really gave her a chance,” Hermione admitted with a sigh. “I always saw it as me, Ron and
Harry friends forever. I thought she was pushing herself in where she wasn’t wanted and certainly
wasn’t needed. We were friendly enough over the summer and I think if things hadn’t fallen apart we
would have become closer.”

Tucking some errant hair behind her ear, Hermione continued with her story. “Harry performed
brilliantly during the first task. He came in first place. In the joy of his win, he and Ron made up and
we were all friends again.”

Standing, Hermione walked over to the edge of the balcony and looked down. The decisions she’d
made so many years ago were haunting her more than ever. Glancing at her husband she worried,
would he still think so highly of her after he realized what she’d done?

David was such a strong, decent man. In many ways he reminded her of Harry with his courage and
loyalty, but David also had an intellectual curiosity that rivalled her own. She’d told him all about the
wizarding world and the war, but she’d never really touched on the friendships that had shaped her
years at school.

He deserved to hear the truth, Hermione realized. Taking a deep breath, she continued. “I was
thrilled to have both of my best friends talking again. It was almost like the fight had never happened,
but there were differences. Harry was taking his studies more seriously. I was rather put out that
Harry didn’t seem to need or want my help anymore. I offered to lend him my notes and he said he didn’t need them. I didn’t really believe him at first. When I realized he was getting good grades and challenging me for top of the class in some of the classes, neither Ron nor I reacted well. Ron kept trying to distract him with games and teasing him about working so hard and I reacted with a bit of anger and redoubled my efforts in school to maintain my place at the top of the class.”

“Did Harry keep his distance?” David asked.

“He did,” Hermione confirmed. “He continued to revise with Ginny. Ron and I both felt left out. I didn’t even stop to think how left out Harry must have felt when Ron thought he’d cheated and I wanted to be neutral. Harry didn’t have many other friends. During their fight, I’d helped Ron a bit more than I probably should have and Harry found out. We were working on Switching Spells and Ron never really had a good grasp on the topic.

“Ron never bothered to take good notes in class or organize his notes later, so I was always there to help him. I’d given him a list of points to cover in his essay. I probably shouldn’t have done so much, but I thought I was helping him. Harry was upset that I was giving Ron so much help when I supposedly wasn’t taking sides. When I asked if he needed me to look over his essay, he made a comment about being able to write an essay even without my help.”

Her smile slipped as she recalled what happened next. “I think the biggest thing that Ron and I underestimated was Harry and Ginny’s friendship. I don’t even think it was romantic then, but they were very close. For some reason Ron and I assumed that Harry wouldn’t tell her everything.”

“Everything?” David asked knitting his eyebrows. “She was there for what happened in your second year and...you thought he wouldn’t tell her about his godfather.”

Hermione nodded sadly. “We thought of it as one of our ‘adventures’ or a ‘secret’. Of course Harry didn’t see it that way. Ron and I both thought he would never tell anyone about Sirius. We thought of it as ‘our secret’ instead of ‘Sirius’ secret’. We really didn’t get it. After the first task, Sirius stuck around for a while in his Animagus form.”

“So he was hanging out pretending to be a dog?” David asked trying to wrap his head around the idea.

“He wasn’t pretending to be a dog,” Hermione corrected. “He turned into a dog. When he was in his Animagus form, he kept his human mind, but his actions were mostly that of a dog. It was kind of sweet to see Harry out there playing with this big black dog. Ron was upset that Ginny was hanging out with Harry. He thought it was funny that she was playing with an accused murderer and didn’t even know it.”

“She didn’t know?”

“We thought she didn’t.”

Hermione stood, suddenly unable to sit still. Looking over the rail, she watched a leaf swirling in the current. That was rather how she’d felt that year - swirling around in the current, unable to do anything to help herself. Closing her eyes, she thought back to that awful meeting with Professor McGonagall.

“Miss Granger!”

Picking up her bag, she turned to see Professor Babbage looking down at a scroll in her hand. “Yes, Professor.”
Professor Babbage held the scroll out to Hermione. “Professor McGonagall would like to see you.”

Hermione quickly made her way to Professor McGonagall’s office, her mind racing. Why on Earth would Professor McGonagall want to see her? Her grades were excellent and of course she hadn’t done anything to warrant a detention. As she neared the office, she noticed Ron approaching from the other direction. They met in front of the Professor’s door.

“You were asked to come as well?” Ron asked in puzzlement.

Hermione nodded with a look of confusion on her face. “I can’t figure what it might be about.”

“Harry,” Ron said with conviction. “It must be something wrong with Harry.”

With a worried look on her face, Hermione knocked on the office door. Within a few moments, Ron and Hermione were sitting across from Professor McGonagall’s desk. Professor McGonagall did not look happy. Hermione was almost frantic with worry. What could have happened and why was the professor so upset? Hermione had been in awe of Professor McGonagall since she’d started at Hogwarts. The look of disappointment currently showing in their Head-of-House’s eyes had her feeling very low.

“Miss Granger, Mr Weasley. I had a visitor this afternoon. Miss Bones came to me to report a conversation she overheard between the two of you about Mr Potter and Miss Weasley playing with an escaped convict. She saw Mr Potter and Miss Weasley playing with a large dog out on the grounds and she became concerned. She may have written it off as Mr Weasley teasing his sister except for the fact that Miss Granger agreed with him. Miss Bones asked around and then discovered that Mr Weasley has been making comments of this sort all week. She came to ask me if it was possible that Sirius Black was an Animagus.”

Pinning Ron with a stare, she said softly, “I thought you understood the importance of keeping Mr Black’s identity secret. Can you imagine what would have happened if Mr Malfoy had heard your conversation, not Miss Bones? Apparently you have been quite indiscrete in your conversations, so we don’t know for certain who has overheard your comments and correctly interpreted them.”

Ron paled as he listened to Professor McGonagall. Hermione opened her mouth, but the Professor silenced her with a glare. “Do you understand that your casual conversation could have killed a man?”

“We didn’t mean for that to happen,” Hermione burst out. “I’m so, so sorry.”

“I’m sure Mr Black will be relieved to hear that,” came the acerbic reply.

“Does Harry know?” Ron asked.

“Certainly,” she said. “He and your sister are with Mr Black at present. I’ve summoned Madame Bones to the school and hope that she will actually listen to us. I trust if it comes to it that the two of you will testify as to the events at the end of last year.”

“You know?” Ron blurted out. “Ginny knows?”

“Yes, Mr Weasley,” Professor McGonagall replied tersely. “I’ve spoken to Mr Black and he told me about the events since the Potters’ deaths. Your sister appears to have already known the story. I don’t know when she learned of it, but she was well aware of the identity of big, black dog with whom she was playing.”

“What’s going to happen now?” Hermione asked quietly.
“As I said, I am expecting Madam Bones this evening and plan to share the story with her in the hopes of exonerating Mr Black. I’ve spoken to Mr Bill Weasley. He had already started investigating the matter on Mr Potter’s request and discovered evidence of the change in Secret-Keepers — it was so indicated in the Potters’ will.”

She surveyed both of them. “I will admit I’ve been torn about what to do. You did not break any school rules in revealing Mr Black’s Animagus form and although I would have hoped you would understand the gravity of the situation, you are children. It might have been a better idea to Obliviate the pair of you after the events of last year. For now, Mr Weasley, you will lose thirty points and serve a week’s worth of detention for making fun of your sister and malicious gossip. Miss Granger, you will also lose thirty points for indulging in malicious gossip. While you were indiscrete, I can’t very well punish you for that when so many other students are also indiscrete.”

“What about Harry?” Hermione asked with tears in her eyes.

“What about Mr Potter?”

“Is he very upset with us?”

The icy look she received from Professor McGonagall answered Hermione’s question even before the woman replied, “He is devastated and very worried about his godfather. I would expect he is very upset with the two of you.”

Hermione chanced a look at David. He looked concerned, but he didn’t seem to blame her as she was afraid.

“Is that what ended your friendship with Harry?”

Hermione laughed bitterly. “I wish it was. Harry was of course, very upset with the two of us. I felt so incredibly guilty. I don’t know what possessed me to discuss Sirius so freely. Initially, I tried to convince myself that Ron was more culpable than I was, but I soon realized that was not the case. I’ve always prided myself on being discrete.”

“It’s a huge secret to trust three teens with,” David said gently.

“We would have argued, but obviously you are right. Harry didn’t talk to us for much of the winter. He and Ginny went to the Yule Ball together at Christmastime. I think that may have been when they started dating.”

David smiled. “Did you go with Ron?”

Hermione shook her head. “I was asked out by the Durmstrang Champion, Viktor Krum. He was older than me and an international Quidditch star. He had groupies following him around and he chose me.”

She smiled. “I was flattered, of course. We didn’t have much in common, but we had a good time. Ron waited until the last minute to get a date. He went with one of my roommates and was a miserable git the whole time. He was so jealous that someone else asked me that he couldn’t see straight. Fool that I was, I took it as a good sign that he cared that much about me.”

“Viktor is the bloke in the lovely picture of you all dressed up?” David asked.

Hermione nodded. “He was a nice man. Unfortunately, he died in the war.”

After a moment of silence, she continued, “The second task entailed the Champions rescuing the
person they would miss the most from the bottom of the Hogwarts Lake.”

At the look of horror on David’s face, she couldn’t help but laugh. She quickly explained the task and the safety measures that had been taken.

He shuddered. “I can’t even imagine. Being trapped under water like that sounds terrifying.”

“It wasn’t,” Hermione said. “I was the person Viktor would miss the most. I remember going to Professor Dumbledore’s office and then I don’t remember anything until Viktor pulled me from the lake.”

“Who did Harry chose?”

“Ginny,” Hermione replied. “That should have told me the strength of his feelings for her, but it didn’t. As the spring wore on, Harry was under a lot of stress preparing for the third task. He started talking to me and Ron again, but mostly if it was required for class. He didn’t really seek to become friends again, but he wasn’t ignoring us. I think Ginny was a bit less forgiving.”

Running her finger around the rim of her glass, Hermione recounted the events of the third task. David was horrified.

“That’s how that monster was reborn?”

She nodded.

“Poor Harry,” David murmured.

“Yes, he suffered greatly,” Hermione said. “Ron and I didn’t see much of it first hand, but we heard about it. Ron’s parents and older brother joined an organization called the Order of the Phoenix to fight Voldemort. Obviously, no one really trusted us with any information so we only heard bits and pieces. Ron spent the summer with his older brother, Charlie, in Romania and I spent the summer travelling with my parents. Ron discovered that Harry was living with Sirius, but he was suffering from nightmares after what he went through at the graveyard. I didn’t realize it at the time, but he was showing all of the symptoms of PTSD. Sirius was helping him through all of that.”

“What happened with Sirius?”

“Madam Bones interviewed him at Hogwarts and was working with some of the Aurors she trusted to investigate what really happened on Halloween 1981. We didn’t discover this until later, but most of the adults were quite nervous because Fudge wasn’t budging in his insistence that Sirius must be guilty. Lucius Malfoy, who was a high ranking Death Eater, pretended he’d been forced to help Voldemort. He testified that he’d seen Sirius working with the Death Eaters on more than one occasion. Malfoy’s wife was a cousin of Sirius’ and I believe they thought if Sirius was convicted, she would inherit the Black estate. Peter Pettigrew had disappeared and it appeared that Professor Dumbledore had been correct that the word of a werewolf and three teens did not carry much weight.

“They managed to put off his trial until late that summer. It was just a few weeks before we were to return to school. Sirius hired an excellent barrister, but unfortunately I think the decision was pre-determined.”

Taking a deep breath, Hermione said, “It was the first day of the trial.”

“Hermione are you sure you don’t want me to come with you?” Mr Granger asked a bit nervously as he looked around the rather run down looking area that had been indicated in the summons
Hermione received.

“I will be fine, Dad,” Hermione reassured her father. “I’ll call you when I’m finished. You won’t be allowed in the trial and I don’t want you to wait around forever and ever.”

“Okay, love,” Mr Granger said with a proud smile for his daughter. He kissed her on the cheek and watched in a bit of bemusement when she entered the phone booth and seemed to lower into the ground as if she was on a lift.

When the lift doors opened, Hermione pinned the silver badge that read, ‘Hermione Granger, Trial Witness’ onto her shirt. Pausing, she checked her appearance in the reflective surface of the lift. She thought she looked well. She was slightly tanned from her time on holiday with her parents. Her bright blue blouse and dark trousers looked good on her; she hoped it was appropriate for court. She hadn’t been certain, but after checking with Ron it seemed like it would be okay.

After going through security, she was directed to the courtrooms. She noticed a group of people outside of courtroom ten. Ron’s height and bright red hair made him instantly noticeable. She hurried over to join him. He seemed happy to see her and Mr and Mrs Weasley greeted her pleasantly. Professors McGonagall, Lupin, and Dumbledore were there as well with several people Hermione didn’t recognize in wizarding robes.

“I think they are members of the Order of the Phoenix,” Ron said quietly. “The tall bloke in the Auror robes is Kingsley Shacklebolt. The girl with the pink hair, Tonks, is also an Auror and she’s Sirius’ cousin as well. Charlie knew Tonks in school. She was in a different house, so he didn’t know her very well, but he remembers that she was cheerful and fun.”

Hermione glanced over at Harry where he was standing with Ginny and Sirius. She could tell Harry was nervous. Sirius seemed to be trying to reassure his godson.

“I’m glad you could come back for the trial,” Ron said quietly as he watched the three of them.

“It…surely they will realize Sirius is telling the truth, won’t they?” Hermione asked plaintively.

“My dad is really worried,” Ron said, not meeting her eyes. “Harry…he’s been having a rough time of it between what happened at the end of the year and worrying about this trial. Ginny’s been spending a lot of time with him.”

Hermione looked between the two siblings. Answering her unasked question, Ron shook his head. “She’s not talking to me. She’s furious with me. The first day of the holidays she screamed at how stupid I was for thinking Harry wouldn’t tell her about Sirius and also for blabbing about Sirius where others could hear about it. I’ve been hit with her Bat Bogey Hex more than once. It was a good thing my parents sent me to stay with Charlie because Ginny would have killed me living in the same house.”

“Has Harry talked to you?”

“No really,” Ron admitted. “He’s said hi, but nothing more. I almost wish he would curse me like Ginny did. Sirius doesn’t seem to be upset with us, but a lot of the others are. My mum was upset that I didn’t get prefect, but I wasn’t surprised. McGonagall was really upset.”

“I didn’t get it either,” Hermione admitted. “I… I’d really hoped that I would get it, but Professor McGonagall wrote me a note. She said that while she considered me a leader of our year, she couldn’t in good conscience elect me to the position after everything that happened.”

“That’s not fair,” Ron protested. “It was much more me than you. I thought for sure you would
Hermione tried to blink back her tears. She would never admit to Ron, but she’d cried herself to sleep after receiving Professor McGonagall’s letter. “Parvati and Neville will be the Gryffindor prefects.”

“Not Harry?”

She shook her head. “I don’t know why. I thought he would be a shoe-in.”

The door opened and they were told to enter. Hermione saw Harry give Sirius a big hug before they entered. Surely it would all work out, right?

By the time they broke for lunch, she was not feeling quite so confident in the judicial system. Minister Fudge and Lucius Malfoy had testified to Sirius’ supposed crimes and commitment to the Dark Arts. While Harry had perfected the art of hiding his feelings, Hermione could see the toll the testimony took on him.

Madam Bones had arranged for lunch for all of them with an Auror guard for Sirius. It was a tense meal with very little talking. The guard was Kingsley Shacklebolt and several other people Ron identified as members of the Order of the Phoenix acted as guards as well. After lunch they all headed to the Atrium.

Hermione stayed close by Ron and his parents while Harry and Ginny stayed close to Sirius. Sirius was talking intensely to Harry and Hermione was surprised to see Harry give the man a big hug which Sirius returned with equal measure. Sirius dropped a kiss on the top of Harry’s head whispering to him.

It was almost time to return to the courtroom when it happened. A man, whom Hermione hadn’t even noticed, casually walked over towards Sirius. Kingsley turned towards the man, but he hadn’t been the problem.

An older man who had been watching them since they arrived, jumped up and rushed towards them. With anger in his eye, he yelled, “Avada Kedavra!”

Hermione accepted David’s handkerchief as she wiped tears from her eyes. “The one thing I can remember clearly is the grief and anger in Harry’s voice as he screamed Sirius’ name over and over.”

David blinked back a few tears of his own. “Sirius was killed.”

“He was. Kingsley apprehended the man who killed Sirius, but it was too late. The man was a grieving father whose daughter had been killed during the first war by Death Eaters. He’d read about Sirius’ trial in the paper and was determined to get even with at least one Death Eater. He didn’t know anything about Harry or Sirius personally. He had no idea who had killed his daughter, but he took it out on Sirius. Harry was beside himself when he found out. With all of those actual Death Eaters around, the man killed the one person who wasn’t a Death Eater.”

“Did Harry blame you and Ron?”

“I’m not exactly sure,” Hermione admitted. “People whisked him away. I saw him briefly at the funeral, but he didn’t return to Hogwarts. He studied with Kingsley Shacklebolt and Bill Weasley. Remus Lupin was beside himself with grief. It took him a long time to recover. He blamed himself for Peter escaping and Sirius being vulnerable.

“When school started again, Harry didn’t return, but Ginny did. She didn’t speak to either me or
Ron. I think Ron and I started dating that year in part because we felt so isolated from everyone else. During the first Hogsmeade visit, an attempt was made to kidnap Ginny. After that, she joined Harry in his training. Harry defeated Voldemort the following autumn. Harry and Ginny married once she finished her schooling, but even though we were related by marriage we still never saw much of them. They travelled a lot after they first married. We saw them occasionally, but our friendship never really recovered. Ron and I…we probably should have remained good friends. We didn’t work as well as a couple and our marriage didn’t last long.”

“What upset you so much today?” David asked as he emptied the bottle into both of their glasses.

“I’m not exactly sure,” Hermione mused. “I was so surprised to see Ginny and then her little boys… they reminded me so much of Harry. It just brought everything rushing back. I feel so horrible that my actions in any way caused Sirius’ death.”

“Have you thought about contacting them?” David asked.

She shook her head. “Not before today. Once Ron and I broke up…I pretty much put the wizarding world behind me. Most of the people I work with are Muggle-born like me and aren’t fully immersed in the wizarding world. I was shocked to see Ginny at the Ministry.”

Squeezing her hand, David said, “It’s been over ten years since Sirius died and you haven’t seen Harry in over seven years at least. It might do you some good to clear the air with him.”

Hermione nodded dubiously. “Perhaps.”

Standing he pulled her out of her chair and into an embrace. “I can’t believe how horrible your school years were. I wish I could do something to ease the guilt and anguish you obviously feel. Whatever you choose to do, I will support you one hundred percent.” Kissing her on top of the head, he looked down at her. “If you don’t want to pursue anything, you don’t have to, but if you do — I will be there for you.”

Blinking back the tears that she felt burning in her eyes, Hermione melted into his embrace. David always made her feel so safe. “Thank you, love.”

“I love you,” David said. “Come on, let’s get you to bed. It’s been a long, emotional day for you.”

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Hermione laughed with the rest of the crowd as she watched the production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Open Air Theatre in Regent’s Park. She and David tried to attend all of the productions. It was something they both enjoyed. As the show ended, they decided to head towards one of the cafes for some tea and something to eat.

“I’ve always loved Regent’s Park,” David commented. “When I was little I loved the zoo.”

“Really?” Hermione wrinkled her nose. “I’ve never been a huge fan of the zoo. I guess I don’t like animals all that much.”

“I was fascinated by the tigers when I was a kid. My mum used to bring me and my brother here and we would spend the day exploring. It was like a window into a whole other world.”

Hermione shrugged. “I’d rather go to a museum. I think my mum brought me here once, but I didn’t really enjoy it.”

“We should make plans to go to the zoo one day,” David said firmly. “You might like it now.”
“I’ll give it a go.”

“Excellent.”

Tucking her hand in the crook of his arm, Hermione smiled up at her husband. She was thankful that somehow they had found each other. Since revealing to him all that had happened whilst she was at school she somehow felt more at peace.

It wasn’t something she’d ever talked about before. Her parents knew the basic facts. Arthur Weasley had contacted them to explain what had happened, but she’d never discussed it with them. She and Ron…well, it was difficult to discuss with Ron because they both felt so guilty that they couldn’t really talk about it without descending into a huge row.

Several minutes later, the pair were seated at a table enjoying an expresso and pastry. David smiled at her indulgently. “Did you enjoy the show?”

“I did,” Hermione said, “but I will say I am more looking forward to Henry V.”

“Ah, ‘we few, we happy few, we band of brothers’,” David quoted from the famous play.

“Yes, it was always one of my father’s favourite plays. He loved the film adaptation. We went to see that several times.”

“That is an excellent film,” David concurred. “It was one of the things that inspired me to delve into history. Whilst I obviously ended up interested in ancient history, I loved the stories about the medieval battles.”

Hermione relaxed as she listened to David talk about his own schooling. It was a fascinating glimpse into a world she’d chosen not to experience. She had wondered from time to time what would have happened if she’d never gone to Hogwarts. She’d often wondered if she would have gone in the first place.

Hermione kissed David goodbye and settled down to enjoy a bit of tea and toast before heading into the office. David had an early class on Mondays, something she did not envy him at all.

A tap on the window brought made her turn. Opening the window, she paid the owl and relieved the bird of the paper. She felt it was important to keep up to date on events in the wizarding world. *The Daily Prophet* had much improved since her school days.

Her eyes widened when she saw the large picture of Harry and Ginny on the front page.

**Potters returned to England** the headline blared.

*Harry and Ginny Potter have moved back to England to raise their family. The Potters married shortly after their epic defeat of the He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and his followers. They trained with our current Minister of Magic, Kingsley Shacklebolt, and Mrs Potter’s oldest brother, William Weasley, instead of finishing their education at Hogwarts. The death of Harry’s godfather, Sirius Black, at the hands of a vigilante, Harry tells us was the deciding factor in him not returning to school.*

‘I loved Hogwarts,’ Harry declares. ‘It was one of the first places that felt like home to me. I was learning magic, I learned to fly, and I made some great friends. Unfortunately, I also faced many trials whilst at Hogwarts. My final year there I was made to participate in a tournament in which I hadn’t entered. I was shunned and ridiculed by most of the school and I lost my two best friends over
the events of that year. Sirius and I had talked about me not returning. He didn’t like the fact that I was put in dangerous situations so often. After he died, I didn’t want to go back to school.’

As most Prophet Readers remember, Sirius Black was hiding in plain sight in his Animagus form until Harry’s two best friends at the time, Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger, were overheard discussing Black’s Animagus form. Black was able to put off the trial and stay at his godson’s side during the Triwizard Tournament. Black was tragically killed by a vigilante during a break in his trial.

When asked if he has any animosity towards his old friends, Harry denies it. ‘I certainly wish it never happened, but I know they never meant for any of it to happen. It was a huge secret to trust three teens with and unfortunately, Ron and Hermione forgot what was at stake.’

Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger were themselves briefly married following their schooling, but the marriage did not last and they were divorced after two short years of marriage. Miss Granger is a solicitor and has remarried. Mr Weasley has not remarried and works with his brothers at their joke shop in London.

Mrs Potter echoes her husband’s words. ‘We are just glad to be back with our family.’

The Potters have worked as curse-breakers for the past seven years. After the each earned a Mastery in Ancient Runes, they worked as freelance curse-breakers all over the world. In addition to their work, they’ve also been growing a family.

Their oldest son James is five. Sirius is four, Lily is two and baby Violet is eight months old. Both boys look much like their father while Lily and Violet both have their mother’s red hair. Sirius and Violet both have their father’s distinctive green eyes.

‘We wanted to give our children a chance to know their family,’ Mrs Potter explained.

The Potters have purchased a large flat overlooking Regent’s Park in London in addition to the home they have restored in Godric’s Hollow. Mrs Potter will be staying at home with her children while Mr Potter has taken a job at Gringotts working with his oldest brother-in-law, Bill Weasley.

We are thrilled to have the Potters back in Great Britain and wish them well in their new endeavours.

Hermione felt the bile rising in her throat as she tried in vain to swallow. Jumping up she ran to the sink and lost the small amount of tea and toast she’d eaten. Rinsing her mouth, she wiped her face with a shaky hand.

Returning to the table she picked up the paper again and re-read the article. She cursed the cheerful way the reporter gleefully re-hashed all of the mistakes she and Ron had made. The pictures in the paper were lovely. Harry and Ginny had beautiful children. She wasn’t overly surprised that they’d had so many. She knew that Harry had always wanted a family.

While she was glad that Harry didn’t seem to be harbouring any ill will towards her, Hermione dreaded what she would face at work. A short time later, Hermione entered the floor that housed her firm. The receptionist smiled at her as she passed by. Her Muggle colleagues all greeted her as usual.

Entering her office, Hermione had just settled at her desk when her supervisor, Janet, knocked on the door.

“How are you doing?” Janet asked sympathetically.
Hermione shrugged. “I’m not entirely certain. I’m glad the Potters have returned, but I really wish the paper hadn’t felt it necessary to remind everyone of all of my mistakes.”

With a sigh, she looked over at Janet. “Has there been any fallout yet?”

“Not yet, but you know some of the old snobby Purebloods are going to react,” Janet said. “I may have to pull you from the Ministry for a while.”

“That’s what I was thinking,” Hermione said. “I’m not their favourite person in the best of times. I’m afraid with the reminders of how I wronged the Potters, the Purebloods won’t hesitate to use it against me.”

“I wish I could disagree, but I can’t,” Janet said. “At least they didn’t name the firm, but I imagine some enterprising reporter will discover it before long. I will have your mail screened and don’t leave the office without security.”

Hermione nodded.

Two weeks later, Hermione was not feeling so optimistic. As expected, several clients had asked for her to be replaced with another solicitor. There was an avalanche of nasty letters, but the firm was able to screen them so only a few slipped through. The worst part for Hermione was the question she now saw in the eyes of her colleagues.

“Miss Granger.”

Turning, Hermione saw one of the senior partners, Matthew Curtis. “Yes, sir.”

“May I speak to you for a moment?”

Nervously, Hermione followed him into his office. Once he was seated behind his desk, he asked, “How are you doing?”

“I am doing well, sir.”

“I highly doubt that,” he replied kindly. “Miss Granger, I help found this firm to form a bridge between our two worlds. As a Squib, I know first-hand how cruel the wizarding world can be. I’ve seen the press coverage you’ve received and I find it appalling. I would like to give you the opportunity to work in the Muggle world for a while. We have plenty of Squib clients who need help in the Muggle world who won’t care that you made a mistake when you were fifteen.”

“Won’t they have the same low opinion of me?”

“I don’t believe so,” Matthew reassured her.

Hermione nervously entered the Leaky Cauldron. She normally didn’t frequent Diagon Alley, but today she was meeting someone. Hannah Longbottom gave her a sympathetic smile as she approached the bar.

“I’ve put you in the first private room,” Hannah said.

“Thank you,” Hermione said, grateful for the other woman’s discretion.

Upon entering the room, Hermione shed her cap and jacket. Hannah had prepared a tea tray as well as a mouth-watering plate of little cakes. If she had any type of appetite, she would have helped
herself, but her nervousness at the upcoming meeting prevented her from taking one. Luckily she only had to wait a few minutes before her guest arrived.

“Miss Granger.”

Turning, Hermione smiled to find her former head of house. “Hello Professor.”

“Please, call me Minerva.”

“I don’t know if I would be able to do that,” Hermione admitted, “but please call me Hermione.”

“It is good to see you,” Minerva said after she sat down. Hermione smiled nervously as she poured tea for each of them.

“Thank you and thank you for agreeing to see me. I wasn’t sure if you would.”

“I imagine you’ve been having a rough time of it since Harry and Ginny returned to the country.”

Hermione nodded as she blinked back tears. “I don’t know what to do. I never thought my thoughtless words and mistakes of the past would be thrown back in my face after all this time. I’ve had to stop going to the Ministry and have an owl block placed on my flat.”

“You have the misfortune of being perceived as someone who has wronged Harry Potter. Harry has sacrificed so much and given so much. One of the greatest tragedies of his life was the murder of his godfather and you are unfortunately linked to that event.”

“I never meant for any of that to happen and I am incredibly sorry for what happened.” Hermione sighed. “I wanted some advice. Should I get in touch with Harry? Is there anything I can do to… rehabilitate my image? I thought living in a Muggle area and just working with the Ministry tangentially I would be able to avoid the fall out, but that doesn’t seem to be the case.”

“Have you reached out to Harry?”

Hermione shook her head. “I’ve been afraid of his reaction. He and Ginny have been…cool towards me and that was before Ron and I split. I don’t know what his reaction would be now.”

Minerva nodded. “I don’t believe he is angry with you and I understand that he is upset about the tenor of the articles. I haven’t seen him myself, but he and Ginny are coming to tea next week. I will certain broach the subject with them.

“I don’t know what will help. Sirius’ death ushered in a period of intense…fear and discord. Lucius rose to even more power behind Fudge and led to many arrests in the name of public safety. We were very lucky that Harry was able to stop Voldemort.”

Looking over at the younger witch, she said compassionately. “I’m sorry that you and Ron are taking the brunt of this. There are many people much more culpable than the two of you, but you are visible and Rita Skeeter has waged a highly effective smear campaign against you.”

Hermione toyed with her cake. “I heard from Ron last week. He had to leave the Department of Magical Games and Sports. He’s working with George in his shop. He’d been seeing a witch at the Ministry and she broke up with him when the papers started getting nasty.”

“It is unfortunate that you have come to symbolize indiscretion.”

“Is there any way to reverse that perception?” Hermione asked almost desperately.
“I don’t know,” Minerva admitted. She shook her head. “I feel so badly that we weren’t able to shield you more. After the events at the Shrieking Shack in your third year, I suggested we wipe your memory. Sirius’ identity was simply too big a secret to trust to three teenagers.”

Hermione nodded. “My husband said the same thing. He is encouraging me to retire from the wizarding world. He’s appalled how I’m being treated and wants me to concentrate on Muggle law.”

“What do you think of that idea?”

Hermione sighed. “I like it and hate it at the same time. I’d love to have a blank slate and not deal with the mistakes of my past. David and I have a great life together and we don’t have to deal with the wizarding world. Another part of me feels like a failure. I am a good witch. I love magic and I love many aspects of the wizarding world. I still get a thrill upon entering Diagon Alley and I love Arithmancy and Ancient Runes. I hate to give all of that up.”

“I believe your problem isn’t with magic, it is with your public image,” Minerva said after a moment. “Perhaps you could retire from public view for a while, but continue to practice your magic. Don’t give up on your magic, you are very talented, Hermione.”

“I shall think about it,” Hermione agreed. The pair spent some time catching up before Hermione surprised both of them by giving her former professor a hug and leaving.

The warm summer breeze blew in from the beach. Hermione pulled her dressing gown on a bit tighter. David had walked to their favourite bakery and was bringing back breakfast. Hermione reread the letter that had just arrived.

**Dear Hermione,**

*I am so sorry for all of the trouble you have been experiencing since we returned to England. Ginny and I spoke to Professor McGonagall and she told us how difficult it has been. We didn’t mean to bring up the past and I’ve spoken to the reporter. Before he died, Sirius made me promise not to hold onto a grudge and I’ve been trying to live up to that. The first few years after his death I was so focused on training and defeating Riddle that I didn’t have much time for anything else. I took the rage and anger I was feeling and funnelled them into training. Once Riddle was gone, I had to face my feelings about everything that happened. It wasn’t pretty. I know that you and Ron had no idea what your conversation would cost. I was angry with Ron for so many things — his lack of trust in me and his jealousy chief among them. I thought he understood how important it was to keep Sirius’ identity secret. I felt so betrayed by both of you even before you revealed Sirius’ identity. You claimed you would be neutral, but you were helping him out all along. I was preparing to face a dragon and you wouldn’t help me, but you were helping Ron with his essay. I think in many ways your betrayal hurt more than Ron’s because I never saw it coming. I’m sorry, Hermione. I shouldn’t be beating you up for ancient history. I slowly realized that many others contributed to what happened. I was angry at Dumbledore for not doing more for Sirius in the first place and not helping to secure him a trial. I was angry with myself for playing with Sirius out on the grounds and not insisting he leave. I was angry with Sirius for being there for me, if that makes any sense. I detest the Wizengamot. It took me a while to work through my anger and I’m sorry I was so stubborn and didn’t contact you before now. I am very sorry that I let our friendship be swept away with so little effort to repair it.**
I am grateful that I was able to spend the whole summer with Sirius and really get to know him. I think he was afraid things wouldn’t go well so he really talked to me. He told me stories about my parents and grandparents. He taught me so much. Although it had a devastating end, it was one of the best summers of my life.

I guess you know that Ginny and I married shortly after she turned seventeen. We’d been receiving tutoring and both finished school at the same time. I wanted nothing more than to get out of Great Britain, so we travelled for several years. We have four beautiful children - James is five, Sirius is four, Lily is two, and Violet is eight months.

We decided it was time to move back to England. We have a flat in London near Regent’s Park and we are also rebuilding my parents’ house in Godric’s Hollow. I understand you and your husband will be out of the country for a while, but when you return I would like the opportunity to meet him and see you in person.

Harry

Hermione wiped away tears as she folded up the letter. It had arrived soon after she and David had relocated to Greece. David had been offered a visiting professorship and had leapt at the chance. She still hadn’t decided what she was going to do in regards to the wizarding world, but she and David had decided to meet with the Potters. They were coming to meet them in Athens in a few weeks. Hermione was looking forward to renewing their friendship. Her talk with Professor McGonagall has convinced her that even if she left the wizarding world behind, she could still keep in touch with her friends.

“Are you okay, love?”

Hermione smiled as David placed a bag of pastries on the table. “I am.”

“You’re not having second thoughts are you?”

She shook her head. “No, I’m glad I put my wand in the safe deposit box. I don’t need it.” Placing her hand over her stomach she said, “We’ll see how our baby turns out. If she is a witch, I would love to help her discover magic, but if she isn’t a witch I don’t need to be either.”

“I’m glad,” David said as he kissed her on the cheek. “I think this year will be a great new start for us.”

Hermione nodded as David poured her a cup of tea. Taking a page out of Harry’s book, she had decided she didn’t want to hold onto anger. Since resigning from the firm and leaving the wizarding world she already felt calmer. She was no longer receiving nasty letters and she didn’t have to deal with the whispering and talking at the office. She was auditing one of David’s classes and preparing for their baby, perhaps after searching for most of her life she’d found the place she belonged.

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